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## The election and brownwater

By [Damon Vaughan](#) on [DECEMBER 6, 2016](#) [SHARE](#) [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [✉](#)



U.S. Navy tugs moored at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army photo.

It's unknown what a Trump presidency will mean for the marine industry, specifically the brownwater sector. We can hope that the anticipated pro-business atmosphere will bode well for the brownwater industry as we consider new opportunities in Cuba — particularly related to the recent death of Fidel Castro — possibly friendlier regulations related to oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico, and a renewed focus on investing in infrastructure, including bridges and shore side property.

While our nation's doors are now open to Cuba, it remains a Communist country with dated infrastructure. If President Obama's policy changes with Cuba are continued under Trump, the country will likely require considerable construction work, including marine construction that will require U.S. marine experts, equipment, and vessels. However, Trump criticized Obama's Cuban policy changes on the campaign trail, "lambasting the concessions made to the Communist government," according to *The New York Times*.

Since the election, Cuban-American leaders, including Marco Rubio, the Florida senator and former presidential candidate, and human rights activists have been urging Trump and Congress to scale back the eased trade and travel restrictions with Cuba, claiming that Obama's changes have not "yielded the hoped for reforms," according to *FoxNews*. Their calls for rolling back Cuban relations have continued after Castro's death. Despite this, with so many business opportunities in Cuba, it may be unlikely that Trump would change course on Cuba.

When it comes to energy exploration, Trump is widely expected to loosen restrictions imposed by his predecessors, which should bring a boon to all marine businesses in the Gulf of Mexico. Currently, with the low price of oil, many vessels are not working, but with new opportunities for exploration, these vessels could be put back to work. However, what is to become of the price of oil is of course an enormous unknown. More drilling could worsen the oversupply problem and keep oil prices down. However, increased drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and off Alaska and other regulated locations could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and put more U.S. oil workers back to work, including the brownwater vessels that service these areas.

What about Trump's vows to boost infrastructure? [What does this mean for waterways, bridges and tunnels?](#) While Trump has spoken at length about rebuilding America's infrastructure from our airports to bridges and tunnels, it is unknown whether or not these campaign promises will come to fruition. If he gets Congressional support on these initiatives, more jobs could be created for vessel operators.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Damon Vaughan is senior vice president at [Tidal Marine](#), a commercial marine insurance program administered by [Venture Insurance Programs](#). He has specialized in marine business, both primary and reinsurance for 20 years, working in London, Bermuda and New York. Tidal covers a wide variety of commercial marine vessels including supply, utility, and crew boats, to tugs and barges.



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