

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are concerned about your administrations' decision to ease pressure on the Maduro regime. This change in posture was based on promises made by an indicted international criminal who has a strong record of using delay tactics to remain in power illegitimately. We implore you to reverse course and recommit to a strong campaign of diplomatic and economic pressure to hasten a transition to a democratic government in Venezuela. Failure to do so only benefits the Maduro regime and its strategic partners, China, Russia, and Iran.

In August 2021, your administration pledged support for dialogues in Mexico City between the Maduro regime and Venezuelan political groups. Throughout this time, your administration promised to calibrate sanctions based on progress or regress, while pledging, "Maduro is making a critical mistake if he thinks that our patience is infinite and dilatory tactics will serve him well."

Your administration sought to advance this process by lifting anti-corruption sanctions on individuals in Maduro's inner circle, granting clemency to his drug trafficking nephews, and easing financial sanctions on his regime's oil sector while restricting U.S. energy production. Two years in, it is clear this approach has backfired. The Maduro regime has cracked down on Venezuelan civil society, forced leading opposition figures into exile, seized control over all institutions in Venezuela, banned leading presidential candidates, and deepened cooperation with China, Russia, and Iran.

Your administration's announcement last week of broad sanctions relief to the Maduro regime's petroleum, gas, and gold industries and sovereign debt and equity securities will only further enable this behavior. Additionally, Chinese, Russian, and Iranian state firms are all deeply invested in the petroleum and mining sectors in Venezuela and will profit from this sanctions relief.

The Maduro regime confirmed its contempt for your strategy last week by announcing an accord that fails to free any political prisoners, lift arbitrary bans on political candidates, restore the country's democratic institutions, or commit to a free and fair electoral process.

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Your administration's new standard seems to be merely "competitive elections," which includes none of these conditions.

Concessions under these conditions will fail to deliver a democratic transition, jeopardize American lives, and strengthen the hand of malign external actors and global terrorist networks. Meanwhile, wrongfully detained Americans languish in Maduro's prisons.

We urge you to immediately deem the accord offered by Maduro as inadequate and move to cancel these concessions. Your administration should also fully enforce U.S. sanctions on the regime, recommit to diplomatic efforts for our European allies to match U.S. and Canadian sanctions, pressure the regime to release all Americans detained in Venezuela, and conduct robust freedom-of-navigation and law enforcement operations. We must deny the Maduro regime's ability to benefit from transnational organized crime and global terrorist networks in the Western Hemisphere and around the world.

Sincerely,



JAMES E. RISCH
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



BILL HAGERTY
United States Senator



DAN SULLIVAN
United States Senator



JOHN CORNYN
United States Senator



JOHN BARRASO
United States Senator



MARCO RUBIO
United States Senator



PETE RICKETTS
United States Senator



TED CRUZ
United States Senator