

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 12, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Under the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's 1999 constitution, the country is supposed to inaugurate a democratically-elected president on January 10, 2019. Article 231 of Venezuela's constitution states that "[t]he candidate elected will take possession of the role of President of the Republic on the 10th of January of the first year of its constitutional period, by oath to the National Assembly." The regime of Nicolás Maduro, however, has turned Venezuela away from the path of democracy and down the path of dictatorship. We therefore request that you condemn the Maduro regime's rule as illegitimate, and formally recognize the Venezuelan National Assembly as the only legitimate democratic institution remaining in the country's national government.

In May 2018, the Maduro regime held fraudulent elections that failed to meet established international standards for a free, fair and transparent electoral process. These elections were rightly denounced as a sham by the United States and democracies worldwide. Moreover, Maduro continues to repress and violate the human rights of the Venezuelan people. According to the nongovernmental organization *Foro Penal*, the Maduro regime has imprisoned 288 political prisoners to date. Additionally, the regime uses food as a political weapon and means of control, providing what little available sustenance remains only to his party's supporters and engaging in a forced starvation strategy against the Venezuelan people for coercive purposes that, we believe, amounts to crimes against humanity.

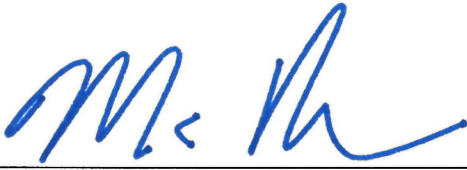
In support of the Venezuelan people, we introduced the *Venezuela Relief, Reconstruction, and Rule of Law Act of 2018* (S. 3486), which unequivocally states that:

It is the sense of Congress that actions taken by the Government of Venezuela that require legislative approval, ratification, or concurrence, including the provision or refinancing of debts, should only be recognized as legitimate by the United States and the international community if such legislative actions are performed by the democratically-elected National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Moreover, S. 3486 declares that it should be the policy of the United States "to recognize the democratically-elected National Assembly of Venezuela as the only legitimate national legislative body in Venezuela."

We support what the United States has done so far to stand with the Venezuelan people in their struggle against the dictatorship of Nicolás Maduro and protect our national security interests in Latin America. We believe our nation can—and must—do more. As we approach January 10, 2019, we therefore urge your Administration to formally recognize the National Assembly of Venezuela as the only remaining democratic institution in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's national government.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', written above a horizontal line.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Menendez', written above a horizontal line.

Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator