

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 26, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to commend the Biden-Harris Administration for its stalwart commitment to democratic institutions and the peaceful transfer of power in Latin America. We are grateful for President Biden's commitment to democracy, both at home and abroad, and particularly in the Western Hemisphere. In Guatemala and Brazil, specifically, President Biden and Vice President Harris deserve credit for their vigorous engagement with regional partners to safeguard the peaceful transfer of power in both countries.

The July 28th elections in Venezuela offer a rare window for the seeds of democracy to sprout once again in a country that has faced years of protracted political and humanitarian crises.

The Venezuelan people have suffered greatly under the Maduro regime. Almost 9 million Venezuelans, 20% of the country's population, have fled the country, seeking refuge from severe economic hardship, political repression, and violence. 82.8% of the population lives in poverty, and the healthcare system is on the brink of collapse, with hospitals lacking even the most basic supplies and medicines.¹ Malnutrition rates among children have skyrocketed, and an estimated 3.8 million children require urgent humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, the regime has threatened to criminalize humanitarian and charitable NGOs, including faith-based organizations, which are the last lifeline for many desperate Venezuelan families.

In that context, we write to urge the Administration to continue its use of all available tools and work with partners and allies in Latin America and Europe to apply pressure on the Venezuelan government in order to deter any actions that could undermine the electoral process. The Administration has effectively leveraged sanctions as a tool, not a blanket policy, creating a space for the opposition to participate in the electoral process, even if it fails to meet our standards for freedom and fairness. The pressure the Biden-Harris Administration has applied to the regime, as well as its collaboration with partners and allies, has brought us to a point where the regime will now hold elections, albeit under unfair circumstances and out of compliance with the Barbados Agreement, that will include participation by the opposition.

The upcoming elections do not represent the endgame for the prospect of democracy in Venezuela; rather, they are a new beginning. The United States must continue to engage with

¹ Mawad, Tony Frangie, "The ENCOVI Shows a Geographically Unequal Venezuela," Caracas Chronicles, March 13, 2023, www.caracaschronicles.com/2024/03/13/the-encovi-shows-a-geographically-unequal-venezuela/.

civil society and independent observers to safeguard the transparency and legitimacy of the upcoming elections as it pressures the Venezuelan government to refrain from any actions that could undermine the electoral process.

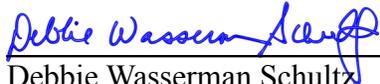
Close coordination with Venezuelan domestic observers, UN election experts, and the Carter Center to monitor the electoral process and provide the necessary support to ensure its integrity should serve as a roadmap for similar efforts in the region. It is crucial that we send a clear and collective message to the Maduro regime. The world is watching and any attempt to undermine the democratic process or threaten the safety, well-being, or eligibility of opposition candidates will be met with strict consequences, including the imposition of targeted sanctions for anti-democratic abuses as outlined in the *VOICE Act* and the suspension of further specific licenses for energy companies to work with *Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA)*.

The upcoming election is a critical juncture for Venezuela. We must fulfill our role as good neighbors and as stewards of democracy. We stand ready to work with your Administration to do everything in our power to support the people of Venezuela on their road to democracy and reaching an end to the humanitarian crisis.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



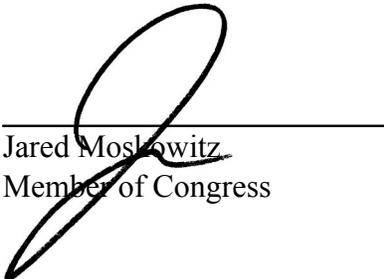
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Abigail Davis Spanberger
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Jared Moskowitz
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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Colin Z. Allred
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