

108TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 40

Condemning the current political unrest and political leadership in Venezuela, calling for new elections in accordance with the constitution of that country, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2003

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Condemning the current political unrest and political leadership in Venezuela, calling for new elections in accordance with the constitution of that country, and for other purposes.

Whereas the frustration of a poor Venezuelan majority swept President Hugo Chavez and his “revolution for the poor” to a landslide victory in 1998;

Whereas many Venezuelans have since been disheartened by the lack of progress of the Chavez government in improving economic conditions in Venezuela;

Whereas Chavez’s alliance with President Fidel Castro and the anti-American views expressed by Chavez have caused many Venezuelans to lose confidence in his leadership;

Whereas under President Chavez Venezuela has undergone enormous political changes through the establishment of a new constitution, a new 6-year term for the president, a unicameral national assembly by eliminating the Senate, and even a new name for the country, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela;

Whereas such changes allow President Chavez to dominate most political institutions, and this has caused some in Venezuela to fear that President Chavez is moving toward authoritarian rule;

Whereas the increased role of the military in the government—through the appointment of dozens of retired and active duty officers to key positions, and the mobilization of thousands of army reservists for social projects—has increased the level of concern of many;

Whereas President Chavez has called for the establishment of political cells in schools, hospitals, and businesses to support his revolution;

Whereas such groups known as “Bolivarian circles” could mirror Cuba’s “neighborhood committees”;

Whereas political unrest in Venezuela has increased;

Whereas President Chavez could take actions that would further destabilize the entire region, including war-torn Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru;

Whereas this is a critical time in Venezuela’s history with much at stake: the integrity and credibility of its political institutions; the stability of its economy as affected by the petroleum industry; and economic development to expand its middle class;

Whereas the Venezuelan political parties are apparently weak and some are accused of corruption; and

Whereas the Department of State has withdrawn staff from the United States embassy in Venezuela because of security concerns; Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) condemns the current political unrest in
3 Venezuela and urges Venezuela to hold new elec-
4 tions, under international observers, in accordance
5 with the provisions of the constitution of that coun-
6 try;

7 (2) recognizes the need for measures to
8 strengthen the political institutions in that country;
9 and

10 (3) urges the executive branch to follow through
11 on the agenda and agreements of the Summit of the
12 Americas to strengthen the political institutions in
13 Venezuela and other countries of Latin America and
14 the Caribbean.

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