

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 50

Calling on the Government of Venezuela to uphold the human rights and civil liberties of the people of Venezuela.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 31, 2007

Mr. FORTUÑO (for himself, Mr. MCCOTTER, Mr. MACK, Mr. ROGERS of Michigan, Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, Mr. LINDER, Mr. PEARCE, Mr. TANCREDO, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, Mr. SOUDER, and Mr. FORTENBERRY) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Calling on the Government of Venezuela to uphold the human rights and civil liberties of the people of Venezuela.

Whereas the United States has traditionally had close relations with Venezuela;

Whereas Venezuela has undergone enormous political changes, including a new constitution, a new unicameral legislature, and even a new name for the country since President Hugo Chávez was elected to power;

Whereas the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) has expressed concern that some of these changes have resulted in a growing concentration of

power in the executive branch of government with a tendency to militarize public administration;

Whereas human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, have expressed concerns about the independence of Venezuela's judiciary with respect to a May 2004 court packing law that expanded the Supreme Court from 20 to 32 justices;

Whereas the Venezuelan Government enacted legislation in 2004 placing restrictions on broadcast content affecting the full exercise of freedom of expression;

Whereas human rights organizations assert that freedom of expression remains at threat in Venezuela because of laws that have created onerous restrictions on the media, subjecting them to heavy fines, temporary closures, and threats to suspend their operating licenses;

Whereas President Chávez announced in early January 2007 that the license of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV), one of Venezuela's oldest television stations, would not be renewed;

Whereas the Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), José Miguel Insulza, expressed concern about Venezuela's decision to suspend RCTV's broadcasting license, calling for the decision to be reversed and maintaining that the action gives the appearance of a form of censorship against freedom of expression and serves as a warning against other news organizations;

Whereas the Venezuelan Government amended Venezuela's criminal code in 2005 by broadening laws that punish disrespect for government authorities;

Whereas the Venezuelan Government has investigated and prosecuted several opposition leaders and brought charges against others;

Whereas the Venezuelan Government continues to try civilians in military court, contrary to the appeals of the IACHR; and

Whereas there is ongoing concern by international human rights organizations regarding the deterioration of democratic institutions, threats and intimidations of human rights defenders, illegal wiretapping of private citizens, intimidation of political opponents, and extrajudicial executions of criminal suspects by police: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) expresses its support for the people of Ven-
4 ezuela in their daily struggle for freedom, respect for
5 human rights and civil liberties, democratic self-gov-
6 ernance, and the establishment of the rule of law;

7 (2) calls on the Government of Venezuela to
8 abide by its freely undertaken obligations under
9 international human rights treaties and international
10 humanitarian law to respect and ensure the rights of
11 all individuals, irrespective of their political views;

12 (3) calls on the Government of Venezuela to put
13 an end to all killings, torture, and ill treatment by
14 police and military;

1 (4) encourages the Inter-American Commission
2 of Human Rights (IACHR) to continue to monitor
3 the human rights situation in Venezuela and engage
4 with the Government of Venezuela with respect to
5 the human rights situation in Venezuela;

6 (5) encourages the President and the Secretary
7 of State to reach out to democracy and human
8 rights activists and to assist them in their efforts;

9 (6) urges the adoption and pursuit of these and
10 other policies to support political parties, the rule of
11 law, civil society, and independent media, and other-
12 wise promote democratic accountable government in
13 Venezuela; and

14 (7) expresses support for the Secretary General
15 of the Organization of American States (OAS) for
16 his continued attention and support for freedom of
17 expression in Venezuela.

○