

of military nominations that were held up for 10 months by a single person: the Senator from Alabama. Thank God, these military officers will now get the promotions they so rightfully earned.

I am happy that, after so much unnecessary delay by one Senator, we have finally moved forward and given these men and women the promotions they deserve. And we will work to confirm the rest of the nominees that were on hold very soon.

While today's confirmations are good news, these holds should never have happened in the first place. Unfortunately, resolving this impasse took too long, risking our national security and throwing the lives of so many military families into discombobulation. I am glad that pointless and gravely damaging ordeal has finally, finally ended.

Now, let this incident be a warning: No one—no one—should attempt this in the Senate again. The senior Senator from Alabama has nothing to show for his 10 months of delay—no law is changing in any way—except for the damage he did to our military readiness and the pain he caused to military families. If every Senator did what Senator TUBERVILLE tried to do and held up military confirmations because of this or that partisan issue, no matter how deeply felt, it would grind the Senate to a halt. It would be a catastrophe for our military. Holding up military nominations was an unsuccessful and risky strategy in this instance and should never, ever happen again.

I want to thank my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who spoke out in defense of our military families. I want to thank, particularly, Senator REED, the chair of the Armed Services Committee; Senator KLOBUCHAR, the chair of the Rules Committee; and I really want to thank Senators ERNST and SULLIVAN for their courage in helping break the logjam after so, so many months. For all those who played a part in bringing this impasse to an end, thank you. Thank you. It took patience. It took resolve. But we have emerged on the right side of where we should be.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I am rejoicing in the orders that Senator SCHUMER read. The first thing I would like to do is apologize to the hundreds of officers—men and women who dedicated themselves to their country—and also to their families for this unusual, shall we say, disruption of their promotions to ranks they have won through their merit and effort.

I think also, too, that it is important to note the contribution of Senator SULLIVAN and Senator ERNST and Senator YOUNG and Senator GRAHAM and others. They recognized that military officers are not political pawns; that they are men and women who have dedicated themselves and their families to service, to protect the Constitu-

tion of the United States. So they joined in to ensure that, today, we could have these much delayed promotions on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Once again, Mr. President, we have to recognize, in the future, we can never do this again; that these men and women served their lives, decades; they served with courage; they served with integrity; they have served with decency. They do it for this country—not for a political party, not for a cause or a popular emotion. They do it to defend their country. And they are aided every step of the way by their families, by their spouses, by their children. In fact, these spouses and children make as many, if not more, sacrifices than the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and guardsmen themselves, in my view.

But let us commit that, as we go forward, we shall not view a soldier in the context of a political dynamic but in the context of his or her quality of service, her integrity, her decency, and—above all—their not only solemn obligation but complete life of preserving and defending the Constitution of the United States.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

#### VENEZUELA

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, on Sunday, October 22, 2023, more than 2 million Venezuelans around the world made their voices heard and cast their votes in support of Maria Corina Machado, the official opposition candidate for the upcoming presidential elections.

These brave Venezuelans participated in this election at great personal risk but did so united by their dedication to ridding Venezuela of the brutal oppression brought onto them by Nicolas Maduro and returning freedom and democracy to their country.

This is a significant moment in the Venezuelan people's fight for freedom and true representative government—something I have been fighting alongside them to achieve for years. It is imperative that the United States stand with them, recognize Maria Corina Machado as Venezuela's duly elected presidential opposition candidate, and lead the international community in doing the same.

The National Primary Commission is to be commended for its ability to successfully organize and carry out the opposition primary election despite facing numerous obstacles, threats, and attacks from the illegitimate Maduro regime. The work of the National Primary Commission advances the cause of freedom in Venezuela and represents the best interest of its citizens.

It also is in our national security interest and the best interests of all who strive for peace, liberty, and stability for nations in Latin America and across the Western Hemisphere to recognize and support the fundamental role the Commission is carrying out in Venezuela.

The United States must use this opportunity to put the full weight and power of our Nation behind the cause of freedom in Venezuela. Our national security depends on us being strong in this moment. However, we cannot act from a position of strength while negotiating with a murderous, dishonest, and tyrannical dictator.

I have been unequivocal in my condemnation of attempts to negotiate with Nicolas Maduro on any issue beyond how and when he will leave power.

Recently, I wrote to President Biden urging him to acknowledge this moment and immediately revise the conditions of sanctions relief that the administration has recently offered to the Maduro regime. That is the only way to make clear that Maduro and his thugs, who have horrifically murdered and oppressed the Venezuelan people for years, will see no easing of sanctions until free and fair elections are held and democracy returns to Venezuela and the following conditions are met:

No. 1. Maria Corina Machado, as the sole Presidential opposition candidate, should be represented on the opposition delegation of the Venezuelan-led negotiations in Barbados.

No. 2. Maria Corina Machado is officially allowed to run as the sole Presidential candidate of opposition in the 2024 Venezuelan Presidential election.

No. 3. The release of all political prisoners, including all U.S. citizens, by the illegitimate Maduro regime. It is hard to believe that we are negotiating with somebody who is holding American citizens.

No. 4. Reputable election observers are allowed to witness the illegitimate Maduro regime permitting international election observers from the Organization of American States, the European Union, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute to ensure that the electoral process is genuinely free, fair, and transparent.

Finally, No. 5. Recognize the votes of the Venezuelan diaspora in the 2024 Venezuelan Presidential election.

Just a few days after Maria Corina Machado's big win in the 2023 primary elections, we are already seeing Nicolas Maduro, Diosdado Cabello, Jorge Rodriguez, and their thugs threatening, harassing, and attacking the National Primary Commission and everyone who voted for her and the hope she represents. Days after the election, the Maduro regime's handpicked supreme court declared the suspension of "all effects" of the Venezuelan primaries.

We must all see this for exactly what it is—a clear sign that Maduro's true intention is to never give up his power or allow freedom to return to Venezuela.

Lifting sanctions on the illegitimate regime of Nicolas Maduro and permitting the sale of oil and gas would essentially fund Maduro's 2024 Presidential

campaign, further empowering the regime, prolonging oppression and genocide and propping terrorism and narco-trafficking in the region.

President Biden has a historic opportunity to be a part of the recovery of democracy in Venezuela and to stand up for freedom and democracy—values that define us as Americans.

I am here today to ask unanimous consent for the passage of a resolution where the Senate recognizes Maria Corina Machado as Venezuela's official Presidential opposition candidate and commends her for standing up against Maduro and leading the charge for freedom and democracy in Venezuela—that is not easy; condemns efforts by the illegitimate Maduro regime to prevent Maria Corina Machado, Venezuela's duly chosen official Presidential opposition candidate, from participating in Venezuela's Presidential election of 2024; rejects the illegitimate Maduro regime's efforts to carry out fraudulent Presidential elections by barring the participation of the opposition candidate chosen by the Venezuelan voters; demands that the illegitimate Maduro regime permits election observers from the OAS, the European Union, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute; calls on the illegitimate Maduro regime to immediately release all political prisoners, including all U.S. citizens; denounces efforts by the illegitimate Maduro regime to persecute members of the National Primary Commission; calls on the U.S. Government and the international community to institute greater pressure and tighten sanctions against the illegitimate Maduro regime in order to restore freedom in Venezuela.

This is common sense, but more importantly, it is the right thing to do for America's national security and unapologetic support of freedom and democracy for all people.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to address the Senate in Spanish.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. (English translation of statement made in Spanish is as follows:)

More than 2 million Venezuelans voted for a change, and Maduro or his illegitimate supreme court will not change that. Biden and the international community must recognize Maria Corina as the legitimate leader of the Venezuelan opposition and work with her to recover democracy and freedom in Venezuela.

I have been very clear: No deal should be made with Maduro and no sanctions can be lifted until we know Maria Corina is allowed to run and the elections are completely free and transparent, not backward.

Mr. President, I am thankful for the support of my colleague from Florida, Senator RUBIO, and the companion resolution being introduced in the House by Congressman DIAZ-BALART.

I urge all my colleagues to adopt this important resolution today.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 486, which is at the desk. I further ask that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, first, I want to thank my colleague from Florida for bringing this issue to the floor. I have spoken frequently about the tragedies of the Maduro regime, the protracted political, economic, and human rights crisis that has been caused by the Maduro regime. Seven million Venezuelans have left their homes. The Maduro regime is under investigation for crimes against humanity. The list goes on and on and on.

I have the opportunity to chair the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This is a resolution that should go through our committee. Our committee should have an opportunity to review and offer suggestions as to what should be included and how it is worded. For that reason alone, I would have concern about how it is moving forward.

But let me add just a few more parts to this. I support the administration's efforts to pursue diplomatic engagement. By strategically leveraging U.S. sanctions, the administration has empowered Venezuela's democratic opposition in its negotiations with this regime.

We impose sanctions so that we can get changes of actions of those whom we impose the sanctions against. When we see progress in that regard, we should be willing to modify or eliminate those sanctions.

On October 17, in Barbados, the Unitary Platform and the Maduro regime reached an agreement. They created a roadmap for more competitive Presidential elections next year.

By supporting this agreement, the Biden administration has provided political space for the political opposition to hold primaries on October 22. The results were resounding, as my colleague from Florida has pointed out. Maria Corina Machado won the opposition primaries with over 90 percent of the vote. That is an impressive victory. This is the kind of progress that has been desperately needed to help restore democracy in Venezuela.

Of course, the Maduro regime has sought to undermine the results of the primary. We are not surprised by that. The Biden administration has made it clear that if Maduro doesn't allow the candidate to run, they will reimpose the sanctions. That is how it should work. And if it does not release the political prisoners or wrongly detained Americans, the United States will snap back our sanctions. We have made that very clear. We want our political pris-

oners and wrongfully detained Americans released immediately. They should never have been detained. We want to make sure there is a competitive election in Venezuela, and if it is not, we will reimpose our sanctions. And I have called for these competitive elections.

As I pointed out, this resolution has not been considered by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It comes as negotiations remain underway and some initial advancements have taken place. It seeks to dictate actions to the administration as sensitive diplomatic negotiations are ongoing.

The Biden administration has already stated publicly it will reimpose sanctions if the Maduro regime does not follow through on their commitment. We don't trust them—believe me, we don't—and we have the opportunity to reimpose those sanctions.

We must maintain the diplomatic space needed to advance democratic elections. That is our objective. Our objective is to get democratic elections and to secure the release of wrongfully detained Americans and political prisoners.

So I would suggest to my colleague to submit his resolution for consideration to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. That is why we have the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Give us a chance for the input of those of us who have been working on this Venezuelan issue for a long time. Give us the opportunity for input. That is how the system is supposed to work.

I give my colleague the assurances—I want to take this up in the Foreign Relations Committee. I want to see a resolution passed on the floor of the Senate in regard to what is happening in Venezuela, and I certainly will work with my colleague in that regard.

For the reasons I have stated, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Florida.

Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I thank my colleague for his comments about the importance of making sure that we get free and fair elections in Venezuela. It sounds like this is just a procedural issue. There doesn't appear to be—right now, at least—any issue over the substance of the resolution.

I look forward to my colleague scheduling a Foreign Relations Committee markup for this important resolution. Hopefully, we will get to the point where we have real, free, and fair elections. Hopefully, we will get to the point where we get these Americans back. Hopefully, all the things that I think both of us care about are going to happen.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

NOMINATION OF ELIZABETH H. RICHARD

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, shortly, we will be voting on Elizabeth Richard to be the State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism, the motion in regard to invoking cloture. I speak