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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Roundtable with Venezuelan Exiles on Dangers of Court Packing

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Ahead of the first meeting of President Joe Biden’s commission on packing the U.S. Supreme Court, Attorney General Ashley Moody is meeting with Venezuelan exiles, including Venezuelan Supreme Court Justices in exile, who fled the country to evade authoritarian rule. Attorney General Moody held a roundtable discussion in Miami on Tuesday, with 12 former Venezuelan judges, elected leaders and legal experts to discuss court packing.

The exiles told the Attorney General that court packing was a key component of the totalitarian takeover of Venezuela and has led to the imprisonment and torture of those speaking out against political corruption. President Biden’s Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States, which will explore adding justices to SCOTUS, is scheduled to hold an inaugural meeting online Wednesday.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “We should not silence the voices of those political exiles forced to flee Venezuela under the threat of an authoritarian regime. Nor, should we fail to connect the dots from court packing in the early 2000s to the chaos and destruction we see today in this failing nation state.

“I am moved by what I heard from these brave exiles, many of them legal experts and Justices of the Venezuelan Supreme Court in exile, about how court packing helped unravel democracy and destroy their nation. I am calling on President Biden and every member of his Commission on the U.S. Supreme Court to meet face-to-face with Venezuelan exiles and those from other nations who saw democracy fade and socialism prevail after similar radical changes to their nations’ highest courts. Look them in the eyes and hear their stories. Then, study how court packing has elevated dictators and diminished freedom and prosperity in South American countries.”

Venezuelan Supreme Court in Exile Chief Judge Antonio Marval said, "The refusal of the regime to accept that the legitimate National Assembly in 2017 elected the new magistrates in a democratic process, caused our persecution and forced us into exile. The rise of the Maduro regime in Venezuela should serve as a lesson to freedom-loving nations around the world. Destabilizing the judiciary through court packing sets a dangerous precedent that could ultimately lead to the demise of a democracy.”

Venezuelan Judge Alejandro Rebolledo said, "The regime took control of the judiciary by placing its allies as judges. They unbalanced the application of justice and destroyed the separation of powers. The impartiality of the judiciary and the separation of powers is the foundation of the democracy and should be protected."

Venezuelan Delegate Julio Montoya said, "The decision to increase the number of magistrates bureaucratized and politicized the judicial system in the country; by packing the court, the regime destroyed the application of impartial justice in Venezuela. Once the court became a political tool for the regime, their crimes went unpunished."

In 2004, President Hugo Chávez and the Venezuelan Congress packed the Latin American nation's supreme court—adding 12 new justices. A majority of the ruling coalition, dominated by President Chávez's political party, named the justices by filling seats created by a law passed earlier that year—expanding the court's size by more than half, from 20 to 32 members.

According to news reports, President Biden's commission will examine expanding SCOTUS. Following a letter from Attorney General Moody reminding the president that all meetings of the newly-created advisory commission must be open to the public in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, U.S.C. app. 2 § 10(a)(1), the commission announced the inaugural meeting will be [held online tomorrow](#).

For more on Attorney General Moody's letter to the president outlining FACA, click [here](#).

Last month, Attorney General Moody led a multistate effort of 20 attorneys general calling on the president and congressional leaders to immediately halt efforts to pack SCOTUS.

For more on those efforts, click [here](#).