

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 20, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to you today to express our deep and growing concern regarding your administration's refusal to hold Venezuela accountable for unacceptable delays in the removal process for illegal immigrants. These delays, sometimes indefinite, not only give the appearance that a foreign nation is being allowed to dictate the enforcement of U.S. immigration law, but also put our communities at risk.

It has come to our attention that local law enforcement in Clinton County, Missouri conducted a traffic stop on October 25, 2024, and identified two Venezuelan nationals. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) personnel confirmed to local law enforcement that one of these individuals was a member of the dangerous Tren De Aragua gang and another was a presumed member. One of these individuals was apprehended in September 2023 and is currently awaiting immigration proceedings, while the other has been issued a Final Order of Removal and is subject to mandatory detention.

Despite the threat these individuals pose to the citizens of Missouri, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel contacted local law enforcement personnel and advised that they release the individuals in question because Venezuela refused to accept them. This is not an isolated incident, of the 334,914 Venezuelan nationals encountered by Customs and Border Protection in fiscal year 2023,¹ only 834 were removed by ICE.²

The United States Department of Treasury has identified Tren de Aragua as a “escalating threat... to American communities” that engages in “diverse criminal activities, such as human smuggling and trafficking, gender-based violence, money laundering, and illicit drug trafficking.”³ Treasury declared Tren de Aragua a Transnational Criminal Organization on July 11, 2024, imposing sanctions on the organization. Despite identifying Tren de Aragua as a “deadly criminal threat,” your Administration reportedly directed local law enforcement in Missouri to release a known member of this organization due to Venezuela's refusal to cooperate on deportation cases.

¹ U.S. Customs and Border Prot., Nationwide Encounters, U.S. DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC., <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/nationwide-encounters> (last accessed Oct. 31, 2024).

² U.S. Immigr. And Customs Enf't, *ICE Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2023*, U.S. DEP'T of Homeland Sec. at 99 (Dec. 29, 2023), <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/eoy/iceAnnualReportFY2023.pdf>

³ Office of Foreign Assets Control Treasury Sanctions Tren de Aragua as a Transnational Criminal Organization, U.S. Dep't of Treasury, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2459>

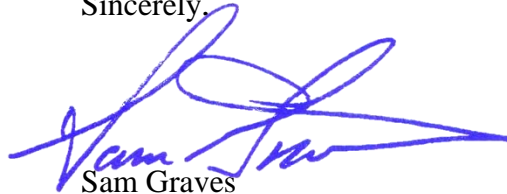
This doesn't just give the appearance that your Administration is allowing Venezuela to dictate U.S. immigration policy, it poses a grave threat to our communities in Missouri and across the United States. Our constituents deserve and demand answers regarding this concerning disregard for their safety and security. To that end we ask for prompt and transparent responses to the following questions:

1. Why did ICE advise local law enforcement in Clinton County, Missouri to release one confirmed and one presumed member of Tren de Aragua on October 25, 2024?
2. What steps has your Administration taken to pressure Venezuela to cooperate on the deportation of dangerous gang members present in the United States illegally?
3. If Venezuela continues refusing to cooperate on deportation cases, what actions will you take to keep dangerous gang members off the streets?
4. How many identified members of Tren de Aragua are present in the United States illegally that have not yet been deported?

In addition, we urge you to immediately resume the Remain in Mexico Policy to ensure that dangerous gang members are not paroled into our communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Sam Graves
Member of Congress



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Eric S. Schmitt
United States Senator



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



Ann Wagner
Member of Congress



Jason Smith
Member of Congress



Mark Alford
Member of Congress



Eric Burlison
Member of Congress

cc: Sec. Alejandro Mayorkas, Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

Ms. Katrina Berger, Executive Associate Director
Homeland Security Investigations