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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6075

January 7, 2026

The Honorable Tim Scott
Chairman
Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Scott:

I write to request that you hold hearings in the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs regarding the economic implications of President Trump's unauthorized military action in Venezuela, including his proposal to provide massive taxpayer subsidies to oil companies, the status and civilian impact of extensive U.S. sanctions that remain in place, and potentially corrupt financial activity and other concerns about the integrity of our financial markets.

Since invading Venezuela, President Trump has announced that he is "in charge" of the nation;¹ promised to "reimburs[e]" oil companies that rebuild Venezuela's oil industry notwithstanding comprehensive sanctions that remain in place;² and claimed he even tipped off oil executives in advance of his attack.³ Meanwhile, unusual activity in the market leading up to the military action suggests that insiders could have inappropriately used highly sensitive nonpublic information.⁴ These issues demand serious investigation and public testimony before the Committee, which has jurisdiction over financial institutions, export and foreign trade promotion, money and credit, and financial aid provided to commerce and industry.

In the wake of his attack on Venezuela, President Trump has made clear that he intends to actively involve the U.S. government in Venezuela's oil industry – including, potentially,

¹ NBC News, "Trump says U.S. is 'in charge' of Venezuela and warns interim leader to cooperate," Megan Lebowitz and Alexander Smith, January 4, 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/venezuela-trump-maduro-rcna252177>.

² NBC News, "Trump says the U.S. government may reimburse oil companies for rebuilding Venezuela's infrastructure," Kristen Welker and Steve Kopack, January 5, 2026, <https://www.nbcnews.com/business/energy/trump-venezuela-oil-companies-reimburse-rcna252434>; C-SPAN, "President Trump on Venezuela: 'We're in charge.'" January 4, 2026, at 3:17, 2:42, <https://www.c-span.org/clip/white-house-event/president-trump-on-venezuela-were-in-charge/5186717>.

³ C-SPAN, "President Trump on Venezuela: 'We're in charge.'" January 4, 2026, at 3:09,

<https://www.c-span.org/clip/white-house-event/president-trump-on-venezuela-were-in-charge/5186717>.

⁴ Wall Street Journal, "A Mystery Trader Made \$400,000 Betting on Maduro's Downfall," Alexander Osipovich and Caitlin Ostroff, January 5, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/maduro-polymarket-bet-a2e5d100>.

providing subsidies to U.S. oil companies. He has insisted that “we’re gonna be taking out a tremendous amount of wealth out of the ground”⁵ in Venezuela and repeatedly emphasized that big oil companies will stand to profit. He has claimed that “we’re going to have the big oil companies go in” to the country.⁶ Because this endeavor will, inevitably, cost a “tremendous amount of money,” he has promised that oil companies would “get reimbursed by us or through revenue.”⁷ Oil companies, meanwhile, are already “asking that the U.S. government contract directly with them” and some form of “financial security,” and according to energy experts, ramping up oil operations “could be a decade-long process” that “could cost upwards of \$100 billion.”⁸ It is essential that our Committee meaningfully and publicly examine the President’s potential plans to use taxpayer dollars to reimburse the U.S. oil industry, even as he fails to lower costs for American families at home.

Furthermore, President Trump’s focus on increasing Venezuelan oil exports raises significant questions about the status – and objectives – of the extensive sanctions he imposed to weaken Venezuela’s oil sector. Earlier this year, the Administration revoked a sanctions license under which Chevron could produce oil, sell it to the United States, and deposit proceeds into parts of the Venezuelan economy so people other than the regime could benefit from the oil exported from the country. The Administration then reportedly replaced it with a license that let Venezuela’s state-owned oil company sell a share of the oil itself, generating significant revenue for a sanctioned Maduro ally who sold the oil to China.⁹ It remains unclear whether this policy will shift again. Even after the recent military action, Secretary Rubio has threatened to leave in place a blockade on oil export shipments that experts warn could cause “either a famine or mass migration.”¹⁰ President Trump is now assuring that Venezuela instead will be sending millions of barrels of oil to the United States.¹¹ The Administration owes the public a coherent explanation about whether it plans to shift our sanctions policy, the goals it expects to achieve

⁵ Fortune, “Trump says ‘we’re going to run’ Venezuela and is not afraid to put U.S. troops on the ground after Maduro’s capture,” Jason Ma, January 3, 2026, <https://fortune.com/2026/01/03/trump-us-control-maduro-rubio-venezuela-us-troops-boots-on-the-ground>; New York Times, “Venezuela’s Oil Is a Focus of Trump’s Campaign Against Maduro,” Edward Wong and Julian Barnes, December 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/16/us/politics/trump-maduro-venezuela-oil-tanker.html>.

⁶ C-SPAN, “President Trump on Venezuela: ‘We’re in charge.’” January 4, 2026, at 2:42, and 2:50, <https://www.c-span.org/clip/white-house-event/president-trump-on-venezuela-were-in-charge/5186717>.

⁷ NBC News, “Trump says the U.S. government may reimburse oil companies for rebuilding Venezuela’s infrastructure,” Kristen Welker and Steve Kopack, January 5, 2026,

<https://www.nbcnews.com/business/energy/trump-venezuela-oil-companies-reimburse-rcna252434>.

⁸ POLITICO Pro, “Trump administration launches new bid to pressure US oil companies on Venezuela,” Ben Lefebvre, Zack Colman, James Bikales, January 5, 2026,

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2026/01/05/trump-venezuela-oil-fields-00710893>; Bloomberg, “Trump Tells NBC He May Reimburse Venezuela Oil Investments,” Kate Sullivan and Hadriana Lowenkron, January 5, 2026, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-01-05/trump-tells-nbc-us-may-reimburse-firms-for-venezuela-oil-efforts>.

⁹ New York Times, “Trump Revised Chevron’s Venezuela Deal. Maduro’s Oil Trader Profited,” Anatoly Kurmanaev and Tyler Pager, December 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/17/world/americas/trump-chevron-venezuela-oil.html>.

¹⁰ New York Times, “Venezuela Braces for Economic Collapse From U.S. Blockade,” Anatoly Kurmanaev, January 6, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/06/world/americas/venezuela-us-blockade-economy-oil.html>.

¹¹ CNN, “Trump Says Venezuela Will Turn Over 30 Million to 50 Million Barrels of Oil to U.S.,” Kit Maher, Kaitlan Collins, and David Goldman, January 6, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/2026/01/06/business/venezuela-turning-over-oil-trump>.

through that new approach, and how it will ensure that any sales or licenses actually serve the public interest—for the American people and for the millions of Venezuelans who have borne the brunt of extensive U.S. oil and banking sanctions.

Finally, the President’s claim that he informed “all of [the oil companies], basically,” before the attack raises additional concerns about the extent to which the Trump Administration shared nonpublic, sensitive information with external parties and how such information was used in financial markets.¹² These significant concerns are only heightened by new reporting that insiders may have profited by placing bets based on sensitive nonpublic information about the planned military action. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, traders on Polymarket, a major prediction market, placed more than \$50 million in bets regarding the removal of Venezuela’s dictator Nicolás Maduro, not including over \$1 million of bets placed on the night Maduro was captured regarding whether Maduro would be in U.S. custody by the end of the month.¹³ And there are serious questions about whether President Trump’s policy moving forward will be geared toward helping wealthy friends. For example, his intervention in Venezuela “has set up a potential windfall for a prominent Trump-supporting billionaire” who donated millions to his super PAC, bought oil refinery assets in Venezuela at “a bargain price” of \$5.89 billion before the military action, and now stands to be “one of the largest beneficiaries” of it.¹⁴ The deal is reportedly before the Treasury Department for final approval, underscoring the need for a timely hearing to examine potentially corrupt financial dealmaking.¹⁵

The Committee—which has jurisdiction over the federal government’s provision of financial aid to commerce and industry, as well as the integrity of key financial markets—has a responsibility to demand answers from the Trump Administration about this concerning record.¹⁶ The Senators-only briefing that took place this morning, which we both attended, raised further questions and only further underscores the importance of public, substantive hearings on the President’s actions. Yet rather than schedule such hearings, you have instead prioritized jamming legislation through the Committee at the behest of wealthy cryptocurrency executives.¹⁷

¹² C-SPAN, “President Trump on Venezuela: ‘We’re in charge.’” January 4, 2026, at 3:09, <https://www.c-span.org/clip/white-house-event/president-trump-on-venezuela-were-in-charge/5186717>.

¹³ Wall Street Journal, “Traders Made Timely Bets on Maduro Ouster,” Theo Francis, January 3, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/venezuela-strikes/card/traders-made-timely-bets-on-maduro-ouster-31Dg9hjZ63vBLXgLBuVD>; Wall Street Journal, “A Mystery Trader Made \$400,000 Betting on Maduro’s Downfall,” Alexander Osipovich and Caitlin Ostroff, January 5, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/world/americas/maduro-polymarket-bet-a2e5d100>.

¹⁴ Mother Jones, “Trump’s Venezuela Move Could Deliver a Big Win for This MAGA Billionaire,” Judd Legum, January 6, 2026, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2026/01/trump-venezuela-oil-maduro-billionaire-paul-singer-citgo-elliott-management-hedge-fund/>; Dow Jones, “This hedge-fund billionaire bet on a Venezuela-linked oil refiner at just the right time,” Claudia Assis, January 5, 2026, <https://www.morningstar.com/news/marketwatch/2026010597/this-hedge-fund-billionaire-bet-on-a-venezuela-linked-oil-refiner-at-just-the-right-time>; Popular Information, “Venezuela raid enriches MAGA billionaire,” Judd Legum, January 5, 2026, <https://popular.info/p/venezuela-raid-enriches-maga-billionaire>.

¹⁵ Wall Street Journal, “Citgo Is a Crown Jewel of Venezuela’s Oil Industry. Elliott Is Set to Reap the Benefits.” Benoît Morenne, January 5, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/business/energy-oil/venezuela-citgo-oil-elliott-management-f433bb8c>.

¹⁶ Senate Rule XXV.

¹⁷ Punchbowl News, “Vault: Scott plants flag on crypto markup next week,” Brendan Pedersen, January 6, 2026, <https://punchbowl.news/article/finance/economy/tim-scott-crypto-markup/>.

I strongly urge you to, instead, prioritize providing the public with meaningful information on how the President's illegal military intervention in Venezuela will impact our financial industry and implicate the use of U.S. tax dollars to subsidize U.S. oil companies.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs