

## Chavez Inauguration Postponed

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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On January 8, Vice President Nicolas Maduro addressed National Assembly Speaker Diosdado Cabello. [He said](#) Chavez:

“asked that (I) inform that, according to the recommendations made by the medical team that is watching over his health, the process of post-operation recovery should be extended beyond 10 January of the current year.”

“For this reason, he won’t be able to appear on that date before the national assembly.”

“This constitutes an irrefutable supervening reason to invoke article 231 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in order to formalize, at a later date, the corresponding swearing-in before the Supreme Court.”

Article 231 states:

“The candidate elected shall take office as President of the Republic on January 10 of the first year of his constitutional term, by taking an oath before the National Assembly.”

“If for any supervening reason, the person elected President of the Republic cannot be sworn in before the National Assembly, he shall take the oath of office before the Supreme Tribunal of Justice.”

No date is specified. It can happen any time. Dominant PSUV National Assembly members can extend Chavez’s absence up to six months. Vice President Nicolas Maduro can replace him for 90 days.

The NA can authorize an additional 90 days. Constitutional wiggle room may permit more.

Cabello responded, saying:

“President Chavez, this assembly concedes to you the necessary time so that you can get better and recover.”

The National Assembly approved Maduro’s request. More on Chavez below.

Presidential illnesses aren’t rare. Noted US heads of state took ill, became sidelined, couldn’t perform their duties properly, or at times at all.

Woodrow Wilson was America’s 28th president. He served two terms from 1913 - 1921. His health was a state secret.

In November 1912, he was elected president. In March 1913, he took office. Few knew his health history.

In 1896, he suffered a stroke. It caused marked right upper limb weakness. Sensory disturbances affected his fingers. For almost a year, he couldn't write.

In 1904, he developed right upper limb weakness. It lasted months. In 1906, he lost vision on his left eye. He had multiple neurological problems. He experienced double vision.

He had severe episodic headaches. They lasted days. Hypertension and atherosclerosis affected him.

In summer 1918, he was frail. He suffered breathing problems. Much worse lay ahead.

On October 2, 1919, he collapsed. He experienced a debilitating stroke. For the rest of his presidency, he remained in seclusion. He was sidelined unable to govern.

Historian John Milton Cooper called his condition "the worst instance of presidential disability we've ever had."

"We stumbled along....without a fully functioning president" for 18 months. Information about his health was suppressed. An official White House statement said he suffered from "nervous exhaustion."

He was dying. Few knew. His top officials and congressional leaders weren't told. His personal physician, Dr. Cary Grayson, said nothing. The public was entirely shut out.

He served two full terms. He hung on longer than expected. On February 3, 1924, he died.

Franklin Roosevelt served from 1933 - 1945. In 1921, poliomyelitis left him paralyzed below the hips. In the 1920s, an enlarged pigmented lesion affected his left eye. Some believed it was malignant melanoma.

In 1944, he was too ill to run. He was advised to step down. In January, he complained of headaches. He was visibly tired. Once he blacked out at his desk. He was gravely ill. He kept it secret.

In March 1944, he developed heart disease and high blood pressure. His condition worsened. Congestive heart disease affected him.

He was in no condition to serve. He ran in November. He was reelected. On April 12, 1945, he died.

A state-sponsored assassination ended Jack Kennedy's presidency. Had he lived, his health might have undone him.

At age two, he nearly died from scarlet fever. He contracted measles, whooping cough, and chicken pox. He had upper respiratory infections and bronchitis problems.

In 1935, he experienced jaundice. His weak physique caused multiple sports-related injuries.

His mother called him "a very, very sick little boy." In the 1930s, he began taking steroids for colitis. Complications followed.

They included duodenal ulcers, back problems, and underactive adrenal glands. It's called Addison's disease.

In 1947, his Addisonism was diagnosed. At the time, he was told he had a year to live. He was given his last rights.

As a WW II naval officer in the Pacific, he experienced malaria. The 1960 presidential campaign exhausted him.

As US senator and president, his health was kept secret. Few knew what later was revealed.

Ronald Reagan served from 1981 - 1989. Before becoming president, he suffered from severe nearsightedness, fractures, urinary tract infections, prostate stones, hearing loss, temporomandibular (jaw) joint degeneration, osteoarthritis, and a trans-urethral prostatectomy.

He had a history of benign prostatic hypertrophy. He experienced prostatitis and skin cancer.

In January 1981, he took office. In March, he was shot. Loss of blood alone might have killed him. Emergency surgery saved him. He never fully recovered.

Early in his presidency, Alzheimer's disease symptoms surfaced. They worsened. He forgot cabinet officer names. On a Brazil state visit, he toasted the people of Bolivia. He served two full terms. He lived to age 93.

Other US presidents experienced serious health problems. John Adams was diagnosed manic depressive. James Madison suffered from epilepsy. He had high fevers. It left him "deranged" for weeks.

George Washington experienced Klinefelter syndrome. Thomas Jefferson suffered from rheumatoid arthritis. Chester Arthur had chronic renal disease.

Lincoln, Roosevelt, Kennedy, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, James Garfield, William McKinley, and Warren Harding died in office.

Presidents are mortal like ordinary people. They carry on best they can.

Hugo Chavez took office in February 1999. He institutionalized Bolivarianism. Chavismo reflects his social justice commitment. He's been reelected four times. On October 7, Venezuelans gave him another six years.

He's recovering from his fourth cancer surgery in 18 months. He needs more time to regain health. He's getting superb care in Havana.

On January 8, the [Havana Times](#) headlined "Chavez to Remain in Cuba under Treatment," saying:

Doctors ordered continued round-the clock treatment. His scheduled January inauguration will be postponed. The governing United Socialist Unity Party (PSUV) plans a mass January 10 supportive rally.

It'll be held outside the Miraflores Presidential Palace. Expect tens of thousands to turn out. Cabello urged everyone to come.

Bolivian President Evo Morales and Uruguay's Jose Mujica will attend. So will Ecuador's Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino. Other regional leaders may come or send representatives.

The opposition Democratic Unity (MUD) coalition urged “civic strike.” Cabello said Chavismo will prevent destabilization.

On January 7, [Granma International](#) headlined “Chavez assimilating treatment and in stable condition,” saying:

Venezuelan Information Minister Ernesto Villegas said he’s “receiving rigorous and constant treatment.” He’s responding well. His condition is stable. He needs more recovery time.

Venezuelans want him to take all he needs. They pray for his full recovery. They reelected him president. They hope he’ll fully recover and serve six more years.

Media scoundrels take full advantage. Roger Noreiga is a former neocon US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs. He’s a world class scoundrel. He’s an unindicted war criminal.

He’s been involved in Washington’s Latin American agenda since the 1980s. He aided Reagan’s Contra wars. He’s militantly hostile to Cuba. He helped force Haiti’s Aristide from office.

He wants neoliberal harshness replacing Bolivarianism. He claims Chavez gave Iran a strategic hemispheric platform. He’s helping Tehran acquire nuclear weapons. He’s developing his own.

He wants America denied Venezuelan oil. He seeks foreign buyer replacements. On January 7, his [Foreign Policy](#) article headlined “Venezuelan Roulette.”

He claims “Chavez cling(s) to life in a Havana hospital.” An “intense struggle is under way.”

“Cuban-backed ideologues (and) narcogenerals” vie for control. The nation’s “future....hang(s) in the balance.”

He and other ideologues make this stuff up. They claim split PSUV leadership. If Chavez dies, power struggles and destabilization will follow.

MUD opposition figures spread Big Lies. Media scoundrels regurgitate them. Unnamed sources, dubious analysts, and right-wing ideologues are cited.

Chavismo is institutionalized. It’s unified and resilient. Bolivarianism is part of Venezuela’s culture. It’s too strong to die. PSUV leaders intend to preserve it.

They respect Chavez’s wishes. Before leaving for Cuba, he asked party officials to elect Nicolas Maduro president if he can’t serve. It’s unthinkable to believe they won’t do it.

Preserving Bolivarianism matters most. Chavez called for unity under Maduro to assure it. PSUV leaders will honor his wish if needed.

On January 8, The [New York Times](#) headlined “Chavez, Too Ill to Return to Venezuela, Will Be Sworn In Late, Official Says.”

Maduro announced it. He “invoked a disputed section of the Constitution that government officials say allows the swearing-in to take place in the future.”

Constitutional language is clear. Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice can administer Chavez's oath of office at an unspecified later date. The Times didn't explain.

The [Washington Post](#) demeaned Maduro. It called him a 'bus driver turned vice president.' He's a former union leader, legislator, National Assembly Speaker and Foreign Minister.

His credentials are strong. He's well-respected. He'll rise to the occasion if called on. In 1999, Chavez did as a relative unknown. Maduro and other PSUV leaders won't let Venezuelans down. Preserving Bolivarianism matters most.

The [Wall Street Journal](#) headlined "Ailing Chavez Seeks to Delay Inauguration," saying:

Failure to return by January 10 "raise(s) the possibility of a constitutional crisis." Demeaning Chavez followed. "The former tank commander" remains hospitalized.

Opposition leaders cried foul. Delaying Chavez's inauguration is "unconstitutional," they claim. Venezuelan law explains otherwise.

Venezuelans "are divided on whether Mr. Chavez's illness means he should step aside," said the Journal. Overwhelming popularity supports him. Scoundrel media misinformation changes nothing.

Venezuela's [Catholic Church](#) weighed in. Regional and Vatican authorities are notoriously right-wing. As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI opposed reform.

His biographer, [John Allen](#), said "today (he) believes the best antidote to political totalitarianism is ecclesial totalitarian-ism."

As cardinal and pope, he's been hardline. He opposes liberal morality. He won't tolerate diluting top-down authority.

On January 7, Venezuela's Catholic Church called it "morally unacceptable" to "alter" constitutional law because of Chavez's health.

Venezuelan Bishops Conference president [Diego Parron](#) said:

"At stake are the good of the country and the defense of ethics. To alter the Constitution to attain a political objective is morally unacceptable."

Chavez's illness puts "at grave risk the political and social stability of the nation."

Expect lots more anti-Chavista rhetoric ahead. Dark forces never quit. Expect Venezuelans to have the last word. They reelected Chavez overwhelmingly. They intend to keep him.

They urge him speedy recovery. No matter how long it takes, he's worth waiting for. He's someone they don't want to lose. Hopefully they won't have to.

Note: On January 9, Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice postponed Chavez's January 10 inauguration for an unspecified date to be named later.

Chief Justice Luisa Morales said:

"As president reelect, there is no interruption of performance of duties."

“The inauguration can be carried out at a later date before the Supreme Court.”

The Constitution’s Article 231 stipulates it. Vice President Maduro will perform Chavez’s duties in his absence. Morales quashed opposition demands for a caretaker president.

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