

RELEASE IN FULL

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To: H
Subject: Fw: Statement from Senator Lemieux on Shannon Hold

Well, there's something.

From: Kelly, Craig A
To: Sullivan, Jacob J
Sent: Thu Dec 17 18:07:32 2009
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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator George LeMieux (R-FL) today released the following statement regarding his decision to allow the nomination of Tom Shannon to move forward. Mr. Shannon is nominated to be the next U.S. ambassador to Brazil.

Senator LeMieux stated:

As a senator from Florida, the gateway to Latin America, it is incumbent upon me to focus on U.S. policy as it relates to the Western Hemisphere. It is my assessment that U.S. foreign policy in the hemisphere stands at a critical juncture. Our actions in the region signal to all countries where we stand on our commitment to respecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Our policy in Latin America cannot be transactional. We must insist on human rights and other democratic institutions including the rule of law. Fortifying democratic institutions and pursuing respect for human rights is the cornerstone of United States' foreign policy in Latin America.

It was because of these concerns that I placed a hold on the nomination of Tom Shannon. This allowed more time for me to evaluate Mr. Shannon's record and to ask specific questions of Mr. Shannon and State Department officials.

Two countries that represent the direction of the foreign policy commitments of the United States are Honduras and Cuba – Honduras, having just emerged from a constitutional process that resulted in the removal of its president and elections, and Cuba, where a dictatorial regime continues to oppress its people and violate their most basic human rights. In these two areas, the United States must be resolute – demonstrating through action our insistence on democracy and respect for the rule of law.

During this process I have discussed my concerns for the region with Secretary Clinton. I am grateful for her appreciation of the unique responsibility I have to the region as a Senator from Florida. I am confident Secretary Clinton shares my concern about a reverse of the progress of democracy and the rise of authoritarian strongmen in Latin America. I have received sufficient commitments from Secretary Clinton that the Administration's policy in Latin America, and specifically in Honduras and Cuba, will take a course that promotes democratic ideals and goals.

As a result of these discussions with Secretary Clinton and other State Department officials, I am pleased to report several concrete examples of this commitment.

In Honduras, the U.S. will continue to normalize relations with that country's government and President-elect Lobo. Counter-narcotics cooperation will resume, and visa procedures will be normalized.

In Cuba, the U.S. will reopen the process for non-profit organizations to apply for pro-democracy grants, the practice of including members of the Cuban pro-democracy movement in events at the U.S. Interests Section will be restored, Title IV of the Helms Burton Act will be enforced, and the awarding of Cuba Democracy Assistance grants will be done in a fair and transparent manner.

Ensuring our neighbors in the hemisphere recognize our commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law is fundamental. Leaders in nations that seek to destabilize the region are paying close attention to U.S. actions and the way in which we carry out our policies in Latin America. I look forward to a continuing dialogue on how we can strengthen U.S. relations with the nations of the Western Hemisphere.

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