

*Hemisphere Insider***Program News****Policy Recommendations
for a New Administration**

The Americas Program is pleased to announce a series of short web reports on the strategic issues in U.S.-hemispheric relations, with policy recommendations for the next Obama White House. Americas Program affiliates have taken the temperature of U.S. foreign policy in the region and suggest ways they can be made better. Themes include U.S. security assistance; support for rule of law; regional energy policy; and regional issues in North America, the Caribbean, and the Andean region. All reports will be accessible online. Click [here](#).

**In Depth**

Vol. II: Issue 33, December 14, 2012

Venezuela: What a Maduro Presidency Might Look Like

Despite a high profile serving as vice president and foreign minister, little has been reported about the individual that Venezuela's cancer-stricken president Hugo Chávez has named as his successor. Nicolás Maduro has often been referred to as the "former bus driver;" a claim intended to emphasize his humble background and working-class roots. While Maduro's experience as a city employee and union organizer largely corroborates this image, he has also been a steadfast loyalist, campaigning for Chávez's release when he was in prison on coup charges. He helped found Chávez's Fifth Republic Movement and went on to be a deputy in the National Assembly, then served as its president. As his rise continued, he was appointed foreign minister in 2006 and then vice president this past October. How would he govern? On his watch, Venezuela's Foreign Ministry (MRE) became an unhappy camp, according to an article in the Caracas daily *El Nacional*. An unprecedented number of ambassadors, ministers, and advisers have been laid off since 2006, and as many as 150 have "voluntarily retired." Roughly 80 career diplomats have been removed and replaced with people close to Chávez, while others have been forced to check in with the MRE daily to keep their post. Maduro reportedly created a closed circle of 20 people to support him directly. At the same time, the former labor leader seems to have ignored agreements with MRE employee unions. Maduro neglected to enact a 25 percent salary increase required under a collective agreement, and the new labor law passed in August, notable as Maduro led a group charged with ensuring compliance with the new law. His leadership record at the Foreign Ministry suggests that a Maduro presidency would be about him and would do little to end the impunity and corruption of the current regime. —**Anna Lukacs**

In the News*Caribbean: Cuba*

As part of Raúl Castro's economic reform, the Cuban government is now authorizing the creation of nonagricultural cooperatives. The law, which allows the establishment of more than 200 co-ops during an initial trial period, is expected to foster the growth of mid-size businesses. —*Miami Herald (U.S.)*

Central America: Honduras

Deputies in the Honduran National Congress dismissed four out of five Supreme Court justices and swore in their replacements, raising eyebrows. The lawmakers claimed they removed the judges because they had voted against new police transparency measures. Critics countered that the dismissals were a

Reports

Recommendations for a New Administration: Prosperity through Rule of Law and Sound Economics

Safeguarding Progress with Mexico

Americas Blog Posts

CNOOC and Canada: No Hard Feelings?

Don't Cry for Me Venezuela!

Program Affiliate News

See CSIS Americas Program Senior Associate Howard J. Wiarda's new book, *Adventures in Research*, available at iUniverse [online](#).

Upcoming Events

Dec. 17: "Advancing Global Cooperation at the Local Level: A Conversation with Reta Jo Lewis," CSIS, B1-C Conference Center 10:00–11:30 a.m. Register [here](#).

*This will be the last edition of *Hemisphere Insider* until the New Year. Happy holidays from all at the Americas Program!

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reprisal for the Court's approval of an appeal for a recount of the November 18 primary elections in which National Congress president Juan Orlando Hernández won. —[La Prensa \(Honduras\)](#)

North America: Canada

In light of skilled labor shortages throughout the country, Canadian immigration minister Jason Kenney introduced a new program to facilitate the entry of skilled trade workers. "Skilled Trades Stream" will begin January 2, 2013, with an initial count of some 3,000 applicants. —[CBC News \(Canada\)](#)

Mexico

Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto informed foreign media that he plans to drive a constitutional amendment in 2013 to open Pemex to private investment. He reiterated that he will not privatize the state-owned oil company, but intends to open it to competition in the areas of refining, manufacturing petrochemicals, and hydrocarbon transport. —[El Economista \(Mexico\)](#)

South America: Bolivia

Bolivian president Evo Morales signed Mercosur's incorporation protocol during the trading bloc's summit in Brazil last week. This makes Bolivia Mercosur's sixth member, with full membership contingent upon ratification by the other full members' legislatures. —[MercoPress \(Uruguay\)](#)

CSIS Americas Program Thanks Fall 2012 Intern Scholars



Fall 2012 scholars are, from left to right, Alek Suni and Anna Lukacs. Standing in the rear are program coordinator Michael Graybeal and director Stephen Johnson.

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