

Venezuela's acting president signs oil industry overhaul

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez on Thursday signed a law that will open the nation's oil sector to privatization, reversing a tenet of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled the country for more than two decades.

Lawmakers in the country's National Assembly approved the overhaul of the energy industry law earlier in the day, less than a month after the brazen seizure of then-President Nicolás Maduro in a U.S. military attack in Venezuela's capital.

As the bill was being passed, the U.S. Treasury Department officially began to ease sanctions on Venezuelan oil that once crippled the industry, and expanded the ability of U.S. energy companies to operate in the South American nation, the first step in plans outlined by Secretary of State Marco Rubio the day before. The license authorization by the Treasury Department strictly prohibits entities from China, Russia, Iran, North Korea or Cuba from the transactions.

The moves by both governments on Thursday are paving the way for yet another radical geopolitical and economic shift in Venezuela.

"We're talking about the future. We are talking about the country that we are going to give to our children," Rodríguez said.

Rodríguez proposed the changes in the days after U.S. President Donald Trump said his administration would take control of Venezuela's oil exports and revitalize the ailing industry by luring foreign investment.

Private companies to control oil production

The legislation promises to give private companies control over the production and sale of oil and allow for independent arbitration of disputes.

Rodríguez's government expects the changes to serve as assurances for major U.S. oil companies that have so far hesitated about returning to the volatile country. Some of those companies lost investments when the ruling party enacted the existing law two decades ago to favor Venezuela's state-run oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA.

The revised law would modify extraction taxes, setting a royalty cap rate of 30% and allowing the executive branch to set percentages for every project based on capital investment needs, competitiveness and other factors.

It also removes the mandate for disputes to be settled only in Venezuelan courts, which are controlled by the ruling party. Foreign investors have long viewed the involvement of



AP PHOTO

Venezuela's acting President Delcy Rodriguez takes part in a rally holding up a copy of a new law after lawmakers approved legislation opening the nation's oil sector to privatization, at the Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Venezuela, Thursday, Jan. 29, 2026.

independent courts as crucial to guard against future expropriation.

Will change Venezuela's economy

Ruling-party lawmaker Orlando Camacho, head of the assembly's oil committee, said the reform "will change the country's economy."

Meanwhile, opposition lawmaker Antonio Ecarri urged the assembly to add transparency and accountability provisions to the law, including the creation of a website to make funding and other information public. He noted that the current lack of oversight has led to systemic corruption and argued that these provisions can also be considered judicial

guarantees.

Those guarantees are among the key changes foreign investors are looking for as they weigh entering the Venezuelan market.

"Let the light shine on in the oil industry," Ecarri said.

Some oil workers support overhaul

Oil workers dressed in red jumpsuits and hard hats celebrated the bill's approval, waving a Venezuelan flag inside the legislative palace and then joining lawmakers in a demonstration with ruling-party supporters.

The law was last altered two decades ago as Maduro's mentor and predecessor, the late Hugo Chávez, made heavy state

control over the oil industry a pillar of his socialist-inspired revolution.

In the early years of his tenure, a massive windfall in petrodollars thanks to record-high global oil prices turned PDVSA into the main source of government revenue and the backbone of Venezuela's economy.

Chávez's 2006 changes to the hydrocarbons law required PDVSA to be the principal stakeholder in all major oil projects.

In tearing up the contracts that foreign companies signed in the 1990s, Chávez nationalized huge assets belonging to American and other Western firms that refused to comply, including Exxon-Mobil and ConocoPhillips. They are still waiting to receive billions of dollars in arbitration awards.

From those heady days of lavish state spending, PDVSA's fortunes turned — along with the country's — as oil prices dropped and government mismanagement eroded profits and hurt production, first under Chávez, then Maduro.

The nation home to the world's biggest proven crude reserves underwent a dire economic crisis that drove over 7 million Venezuelans to flee since 2014. Sanctions imposed by successive U.S. administrations further crippled the oil industry.

Trump says he asked Putin not to target Kyiv for 1 week

KYIV, Ukraine (AP)

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday that President Vladimir Putin has agreed not to target the Ukrainian capital and other towns for one week as the region experiences frigid temperatures. There was no immediate confirmation from the Kremlin that Putin has agreed to such a pause.

Russia has been pounding Ukraine's critical infrastructure, hoping to wear down public resistance to the war while leaving many around the country having to endure the dead of winter without heat.

"I personally asked President Putin not to fire on Kyiv and the cities and towns for a week during this ... extraordi-

nary cold," Trump said during a Cabinet meeting at the White House, adding that Putin has "agreed to that."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was asked earlier Thursday whether a mutual halt on strikes on energy facilities was being discussed between Russia and Ukraine, and he refused to comment on the issue.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy late Wednesday had warned that Moscow was planning another large-scale barrage despite plans for further U.S.-brokered peace talks at the weekend.

Trump said he was pleased that Putin has agreed to the pause. Kyiv, which has grappled with severe power shortages this winter, is forecast

to enter a brutally cold stretch starting Friday that is expected to last into next week. Temperatures in some areas will drop to minus minus 22 Fahrenheit, the State Emergency Service warned.

"A lot of people said, 'Don't waste the call. You're not going to get that,'" the Republican U.S. president said of his request of Putin. "And he did it. and we're very happy that they did it."

Zelenskyy, for his part, thanked Trump for his effort and welcomed the "possibility" of a pause in Russian military action on Kyiv and beyond.

"Power supply is a foundation of life," Zelenskyy said in his social media

post.

Trump did not say when the call with Putin took place or when the ceasefire would go into effect. The White House did not immediately respond to a query seeking clarity about the scope and timing of the limited pause in the nearly four-year war.

Russia has sought to deny Ukrainian civilians heat and running water over the course of the war, which began with Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022. Ukrainian officials describe the strategy as "weaponizing winter."

Last year was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since 2022 as Russia intensified its aerial barrages behind the

front line, according to the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in the country.

The war killed 2,514 civilians and injured 12,142 in Ukraine — 31% higher than in 2024, it said.

A Russian drone attack killed three people in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region overnight and caused a major blaze in an apartment building, officials said Thursday.

Firefighters also

worked through the night to put out fires in the central Dnipropetrovsk region, where two people were injured, officials said.

Zelenskyy said Ukrainian intelligence reports indicate Russia is assembling forces for a major aerial attack. Previous large attacks, sometimes involving more than 800 drones as well as cruise and ballistic missiles, have targeted the Ukrainian power grid.

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE

Boyd County EMS will hold a special board meeting concerning property on

Thursday, February 5th at 2:30pm

This will be held at the downtown bldg. at

2758 Greenup Avenue., Ashland

Published: January 26, 28 & 30

BOYD CIRCUIT COURT CIVIL ACTION NO. 25-CI-00133

MIDFIRST BANK,

PLAINTIFF,

vs.

ADVERTISEMENT

DANIELLA E. SELLERS,
aka DANIELLA ELIZABETH SUE SELLERS;
GARY L. BENGE, II, aka GARY LYNN BENGE,
aka GARY LYNN BENGE, II, aka GARY BENGE;

PMI MORTGAGE INSURANCE CO.;
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
SECRETARY OF HOUSING AND URBAN

DEFENDANTS.

Pursuant to Order to Judgment and Order of Sale entered on January 9, 2026, I shall sell the property described herein below at public auction in the lobby inside the front door of the old Boyd County Courthouse, Catlettsburg, Kentucky, on **Friday, February 20, 2025, at 11:05 a.m.**, to highest bidder on the following terms:

Full purchase price will be due at time of sale, payable by personal, business or official check. We do not accept cash. **IF the Master Commissioner has pre-approved the surety for a bidder's bond**, a down payment of ten-percent (10%) of the purchase price will be due at time of sale, and the unpaid balance with interest at the rate of **6.125% per annum** will be due within thirty (30) days from the date of sale.

Address/Short Description of Property: 15542 Richland Court, Catlettsburg (For Legal Description, see LSOT: Deed Book 844, Page 453, Boyd County Clerk's Office)

Map/Parcel ID Numbers: 026-04-00-005.00

NOTE - Only delinquent ad valorem taxes shall be paid from the sale proceeds. The Purchaser shall be responsible for payment of the taxes for the current year and thereafter.

**BOYD CIRCUIT COURT
CIVIL ACTION NO. 25-CI-00118**

PLAINTIFF,

vs.

ADVERTISEMENT

JUSTIN CONLEY, aka JUSTIN WAYNE GRAYSON,

aka JUSTIN W. GRAYSON;
KELSI CONLEY,

DEFENDANTS.

Pursuant to Order to Judgment and Order of Sale entered on January 9, 2026, I shall sell the property described herein below at public auction in the lobby inside the front door of the old Boyd County Courthouse, Catlettsburg, Kentucky, on **Friday, February 20, 2025, at 11:10 a.m.**, to highest bidder on the following terms:

Full purchase price will be due at time of sale, payable by personal, business or official check. We do not accept cash. **IF the Master Commissioner has pre-approved the surety for a bidder's bond**, a down payment of ten-percent (10%) of the purchase price will be due at time of sale, and the unpaid balance with interest at the rate of **7.625% per annum** will be due within thirty (30) days from the date of sale.

Address/Short Description of Property: 2915 Ohio Street, Ashland (For Legal Description, see LSOT: Deed Book 801, Page 14, Boyd County Clerk's Office)

Map/Parcel ID Numbers: 023-08-03-001.00

NOTE - Only delinquent ad valorem taxes shall be paid from the sale proceeds. The Purchaser shall be responsible for payment of the taxes for the current year and thereafter.

**BOYD CIRCUIT COURT
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