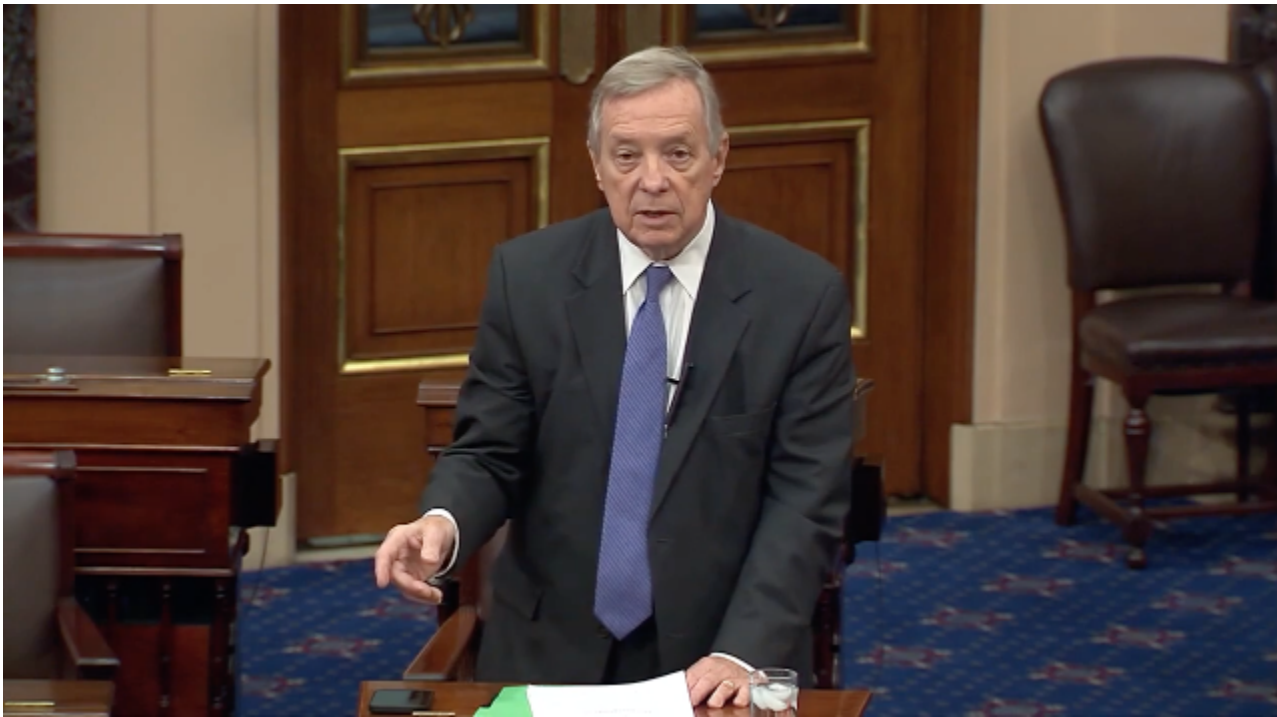


Durbin Leads 17 Senators In Urging President Biden To Act Swiftly To Close The Guantánamo Bay Detention Facility

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today led 17 Senate Democrats in a letter to President Joe Biden urging him to act swiftly to finally close the detention facility at U.S. Naval Station Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. In their letter, the Senators wrote that as a symbol of lawlessness and human rights abuses, the detention facility continues to harm U.S. national security by serving as a propaganda tool for America’s enemies and hindering counterterrorism efforts and cooperation with allies. The Senators also expressed their support of the Administration’s renewed commitment before the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee this fall to ending indefinite detention at Guantánamo.

The Senators wrote, “At a time of mounting threats from China and Russia, we cannot afford such a weakening of our security. Moreover, in addition to the \$540 million in wasted taxpayer dollars each year, the prison comes at the price of justice for the victims of 9/11 and their families, who are still—more than two decades after 9/11—waiting for trials to begin.”

January 11 marked the 22nd anniversary of Guantánamo’s opening. There are now only 30 men remaining in detention at Guantánamo—more than half of whom have not been charged with any crime and have been approved by our national security leadership for transfer out of Guantánamo. Some of these men have been approved for transfer for years, and at least one has been approved for transfer for more than a decade, yet these 16 men have continued to languish in indefinite detention.

In the letter, the Senators applaud the Biden Administration for the “extremely difficult and time-consuming diplomatic efforts” to locate suitable transfer countries for these men.

The Senators’ letter continues, “Continuing to imprison men who have never been charged with a crime and who have been approved for release is inconsistent with American values. No country can hold people for decades without charge or trial and claim to be dedicated to the rule of law. With just a year left in your first term, now is the time for our nation to summon the courage of its convictions and follow-through on our longstanding commitment to human rights and the rule of law. After years of holding people in indefinite detention without charge or trial; a history of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; and multiple attempts at a thoroughly failed and discredited military commission process, it is past time to close Guantánamo’s detention facility. We urge you to act swiftly to do so.”

Joining Durbin in signing today’s letter include Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chris Coons (D-DE), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Peter Welch (D-VT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Tom Carper (D-DE), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM).

Durbin has been an advocate in the effort to close Guantanamo Bay for many years. In 2013, Durbin chaired a [hearing](#) to examine the national security, fiscal, and human rights implications of closing the Guantanamo Bay detention facility. In April 2021, Durbin led 23 Senate Democrats in a [letter](#) to President Joe Biden expressing their

support for finally closing the detention facility. In December 2021, Durbin chaired a Senate Judiciary Committee [hearing](#) entitled, “Closing Guantanamo: Ending 20 Years of Injustice.”

Full text of today’s letter is available [here](#).