

Senate Resolution Denounces Russian Detainment of American Medical Cannabis User

The U.S. Senate has passed a resolution calling for the release of Marc Fogel, a U.S. citizen incarcerated in Russia over marijuana possession. The resolution emphasizes that Fogel was a lawful medical cannabis patient in Pennsylvania using state-legal products as an opioid alternative.

Senate Action and Presidential Appeal

The resolution, introduced by Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA), cleared committee about two months ago and was passed by the full chamber under unanimous consent on Tuesday. It urges President Joe Biden's administration to intensify efforts to secure Fogel's release.

Disproportionate Sentencing

The resolution argues that Fogel's 14-year sentence for "large-scale drugs smuggling" is politically motivated and disproportionate. It highlights his use of marijuana for chronic pain management, following multiple surgeries and a doctor's recommendation.

Senator Casey's Remarks

Sen. Casey addressed the Senate, underscoring Fogel's medical need for cannabis and condemning the severity of his sentence. He pointed out that Russia typically imposes much lighter penalties for similar offenses.

International and Political Context

The resolution calls on Russia to release Fogel and condemns its use of disproportionate sentences for political purposes. It also urges the White House and State Department to prioritize Fogel's case in diplomatic interactions with Russia.

Ongoing Efforts and Comparisons

The resolution follows a series of appeals from lawmakers for the State Department to designate Fogel as wrongfully detained, similar to WNBA player Brittney Griner's case. Despite ongoing diplomatic efforts, Fogel remains imprisoned, and his health is reportedly deteriorating.

Broader Implications

This action by the Senate reflects growing concerns over the treatment of U.S. citizens detained abroad for cannabis-related offenses, highlighting the need for consistent and aggressive diplomatic efforts to secure their release.