

a hearing earlier this year to raise awareness about the far-reaching and devastating effects of colon cancer. This year 129,400 Americans will be diagnosed with this type of cancer and 56,000 Americans will die from it. However, if detected and treated early, colorectal cancer is curable in up to 90 percent of diagnosed cases. I fully support an expanded colon cancer screening benefit for Medicare beneficiaries and urge all older Americans to put the benefit to use.

For the first time, medical nutrition therapy may be reimbursed by Medicare for patients with diabetes or renal disease. As part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, Congress instructed the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a study of the benefits of nutrition therapy. IOM reported that nutrition therapy would improve the quality of care and would be an efficient use of Medicare resources. I cosponsored legislation to expand Medicare coverage to include nutrition therapy; offering coverage for beneficiaries with diabetes or renal disease is a step in the right direction.

In another first, this bill eliminates the arbitrary time limitation on Medicare coverage of immunosuppressive drugs following an organ transplant. Medicare covers expensive transplant operations but fails to follow through with coverage of the drugs necessary to preserve the transplanted organ; reimbursement is currently limited to the first three years following the procedure. While last year's BBRA extended coverage in some cases for an additional eight months, this legislation drops any time limitation for coverage of drugs critical to the health of transplant patients. This is common sense policy I am glad to support.

I plan to come to the floor on other occasions to discuss other provisions of this bill. While I'm not completely satisfied, I think there is a lot that will help Americans get the health care they need and deserve.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I am going to speak, if I may, over the next few minutes, on a couple of different, unrelated subject matters. The first I would like to spend a few minutes talking about is the situation in Colombia, South America, and, as we have watched events unfold over the last several days, the great concern I have about a deteriorating situation in that nation.

Then, second, I will spend a couple of minutes talking about two of our colleagues who decided to retire from the Senate this year, Senator CONNIE MACK of Florida, my good friend, and Senator PAT MOYNIHAN of New York. I will take a few minutes on these separate, distinct subject matters. I appreciate the indulgence of the Chair.

EVENTS IN COLOMBIA

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I am deeply concerned about events in Colombia. It is a wonderful nation, one of the oldest continuous democracies in Latin America. It is a nation with a wonderful, rich heritage, delightful people, a nation that has made significant contributions to the stability and well-being in Latin America historically. Over the last few decades, we have seen Colombia become a nation whose sovereignty, whose very nationhood, is placed in jeopardy because of the turmoil that is shredding this marvelous nation and wonderful people.

Earlier this year, Congress considered the administration's \$1.3 billion emergency request to support the program called Plan Colombia. I voted for that program, as did a majority of our colleagues in the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives. I said at the time of the debate, that while I believed a substantial assistance package was absolutely necessary to help address the multiple challenges confronting the Colombian people and the Andean region as a whole, I would not have allocated the monies among the various programs in the exact same way as the administration had proposed, nor would I have fashioned the assistance package exactly the same way that the Congressional package which was signed into law.

That is often times the case here. This is not unique. But there were those who expressed deep concerns about how the package was put together. I happened to have been one of them. But I also thought it was so vitally important the United States should take a stand and try to do what we could to make a difference in Colombia, not just because of the relationship we have with the democratic nation to our south but for the very enlightened self-interest of trying to deal with the crippling problem of drug addiction and drug abuse in this country. Let me explain why, as many of my colleagues and others are already familiar.

I believe we as Americans need to respond to Colombia's difficulties because, among other things, Colombia is currently the world's leading supplier of cocaine and a major source of heroin. That means the difficulties Colombia faces are not simply a Colombian problem; they are our problem as well, since these illicit substances end up in the United States, in our cities and small towns all across this country.

Today there are an estimated 14 million drug consumers in the United States; 3.6 million of the 14 million are either cocaine or heroin addicts. Colombian heroin and cocaine are the substances of choice in nearly 80 percent of the total U.S. consumption of these drugs.

The impact on U.S. communities has been devastating. Every year, 52,000 Americans lose their lives in drug-related deaths throughout this Nation.

The numbers are going up, and 80 percent of the product is coming from Colombia. This is why we cannot sit idly by and do nothing.

The economic costs, we are told, of these deaths and drug-related illnesses and problems exceed \$110 billion a year. That is a sizable financial impact.

The \$1.3 billion that we appropriated to help Colombia respond to this situation is what was decided would be helpful. That is why I supported it, despite, as I mentioned earlier, the difficulties I had with it.

A little history is important to give the American people some idea of what the nation of Colombia has been through over the last decade and a half or two decades.

Colombia's current crisis did not just happen overnight. Yet its civil society has been ripped apart for decades by the violence and corruption which rages in that nation. Colombia has long been characterized as having one of the most violent societies in the Western Hemisphere. It means historically Colombian civil leaders, judges, and politicians have put their lives in jeopardy simply by aspiring to positions of leadership and responsibility.

Over this past weekend, for example, there were press reports that 36 candidates running for Colombia's municipal elections had been murdered by the time of the election. That is just in the last 2 weeks. An additional 50 of these candidates for municipal office were kidnapped in the nation of Colombia. On a daily basis, judges, prosecutors, human rights activists, journalists, and even church officials live in fear for their lives.

That has been the state of Colombian life for far too long. Between 1988 and 1995, more than 67,000 Colombians were victims of political violence in the small nation to our south. Political violence continued in the last half of the 1990s. Between 10,000 and 15,000 people have lost their lives since 1995, losing between 2,000 and 3,000 people annually to this violence.

Life in Colombia has been made even more difficult as a result of additional violence and intimidation by drug traffickers, and these are one of the major causes of it. The right wing paramilitaries and left-wing revolutionary groups are also responsible. High-profile assassinations of prominent Colombian officials trying to put an end to the drug cartels began more than 20 years ago with the 1984 murder of the Minister of Justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla.

In 1985, a year later, terrorists stormed the Palace of Justice in Colombia and murdered 11 supreme court justices, gunned down 11 supreme court justices who supported the extradition of drug traffickers.

A year later in 1986, another supreme court justice was murdered by drug traffickers, as well as a well-known police captain and prominent Colombian journalist who had spoken out against these cartels. These narco-terrorists

then commenced on a bombing campaign in that nation throughout the year on shopping malls, hotels, neighborhood parks, killing scores and scores of innocent people and terrorizing the general population.

Before the drug kingpin Pablo Escobar was captured and killed by the police in 1993, he had been directly responsible for the murder of more than 4,000 Colombians. That was one individual.

It is rather heartening that despite the deaths that occurred just in the last few days and the kidnappings of people who run for public office, despite the fears that are pervasive in this society, some 140,000 people allowed their names to appear on electoral ballots last Sunday for various government offices including governors, mayors and other municipal posts. It is an act of real courage.

We are about to have an election in this country, and we think it is a tough day if we face a negative ad run by one of our opponents or if we get a screen door slammed in our face or someone calls us a name. In Colombia, when you run for public office, even at very local levels your life is in jeopardy for doing so.

I express my admiration for the Colombian people and the people of great courage who run for public office who try to maintain this stability which is critically important.

In the midst of all of this, there are over a million displaced people in Colombia. An estimated 1.5 million Colombians have been displaced because of the narco-trafficking wars, and civil conflict that has raged in their society. Thousands upon thousands leave Colombia, their native country, every single year, many coming to the United States, many to Europe and elsewhere to flee the ravaging terrorism that is raging throughout their country.

This is the background for what has occurred over the four decades and why I wanted to take a few minutes this afternoon and make a couple of suggestions to the incoming new administration, whether it is an administration under Vice President GORE and JOE LIEBERMAN or one under George Bush and Dick Cheney. It will be important as we look at Latin America, that this be one of the dominant and first issues to be analyzed and discussed and a new formulation put together to help us do a better job in contributing to the solution of this problem.

In 1994, it became clear that drug money had penetrated even the highest levels of Colombian society and called into question the legitimacy of the Presidential election of Ernesto Samper. Even today fear of kidnapping and targeted killings by members of Colombia's drug organization has Colombia citizens living in fear for their lives.

Colombia's tragic situation was very much on my mind when I voted for the emergency assistance requested this year. I said at that time that I believed

it was critically important that we act expeditiously on the assistance package because our credibility was at stake with respect to responding to a genuine crisis in our own hemisphere, one that was directly affecting the lives of our own citizens.

We also needed to make good on our pledge to come to the aid of President Pastrana and the people of Colombia in their hour of crisis, a crisis that has profound implications for institutions of democracy in Colombia and throughout this hemisphere.

No one I know of asserts that things have dramatically turned around in Colombia since Congress passed the emergency supplemental package. Colombians across the political spectrum struggle each and every day to cope with the escalating violence of warring right-wing and left-wing paramilitary organizations and the existence of narco-trafficking terrorists prepared to coopt all forms of civil society for its own financial gains.

The Colombian economy is in distress with the worst recession in modern history causing significant unemployment, hardship among Colombia's middle class and its poorest people.

The economic situation in the countryside is deeply troubling. A significant percentage of its rural population is barely able to eke out a living, as I mentioned earlier, with more than 1 million rural Colombians already displaced from their villages from economic necessity or continuing fear of the civil conflict.

Not surprisingly, these displaced persons have become the innocent foot soldiers in the ever-expanding illicit coca production that gets processed into cocaine and ultimately finds its way into American schools and neighborhoods across this Nation.

As we have seen over the last several weeks and months, these problems have not remained within Colombia's borders, another reason why I felt a certain urgency to talk about this subject matter this afternoon. The nation of Ecuador has felt the effects of conflict in southern Colombia as refugees from the drug war have fled across the border into Ecuadorean territory.

Kidnaping for ransom, a weekly occurrence in Colombia, seems to have affected its neighbors. Several weeks ago, 10 foreign nationals working for an oil company in Ecuador were abducted into southern Colombia. Two hostages were able to escape, but the fate of the remaining eight is unknown. Sporadic conflict has occurred in recent days with other neighbors.

A Panamanian village was attacked by members of a paramilitary unit and Colombian authorities have lodged complaints about alleged border incursions by Venezuelan forces seeking to eradicate illicit crops close to the Colombian-Venezuelan border. The Brazilian Government has deployed 22,000 troops to the Amazon region in order to strengthen its defenses along its 1,000-mile border with Colombia. Spo-

radic fighting between Colombia forces and FARC units—that is the left-wing guerrilla forces—have led to unwelcome incursions into Brazilian territory by both organizations.

Narco-traffickers have also begun to exploit the Amazon region of Brazil for their own purposes as well.

The Colombian problem is spreading. It is now reaching the borders of its neighbors—Ecuador, Brazil, Venezuela, and Panama. This situation must be high on the agenda of this incoming administration and some new formulation of how to address this is in desperate need.

On the assistance front, at the moment the United States is carrying the lion's share of responsibility for trying to help Colombia. I mentioned the \$1.3 billion in emergency aid we adopted this year. That has to change. It cannot just be the United States. Colombia's requirements are significant and varied, and there are many areas where European and regional assistance would be extremely beneficial to the Colombian people who are on the front lines of this conflict.

Innocent men, women, and children are trapped in the middle of clashes among guerrilla organizations, drug cartels, and Colombia's security and police forces. Government efforts to either protect them or create a climate where alternative gainful employment is available have been insufficient, to put it mildly. U.S. financial assistance is heavily focused on the military component of Colombia's counter narcotic efforts, with lesser amounts available for other programs, such as alternative development programs, the protection of human rights workers, resettlement of displaced persons, and judicial and military reforms.

The United States should do more to assist Colombia on the economic front by moving forward in the remaining days of this Congress—now that we are going to have a lame duck session. This Congress should extend NAFTA parity to Colombia and other members of the Andean Trade Preference Agreement. This would tremendously help Colombia work its way out of its current economic recession, by giving a boost to an important domestic industry, in creating more jobs for average Colombians other than in the coca fields producing cocaine.

I have enormous respect for the manner in which President Pastrana has quickly and so aggressively taken steps to entice Colombia's largest guerrilla organizations to come to the negotiating table following on the heels of his election into office.

President Pastrana is a courageous leader, one who has personally been victimized by these kidnappings I mentioned earlier, someone who has shown great courage, great leadership, in trying to bring an end to the civil conflict in his country. So I admire him immensely and have great respect for the efforts he has made.

The agenda for these ongoing talks that President Pastrana has pursued

was intended to cover the waterfront of economic and social issues that must be addressed if four decades of civil conflict are to be brought to a close in Colombia.

Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, there has been little tangible progress to date in these peace efforts—not because of any lack of effort on the part of President Pastrana, I might add.

I believe Colombia needs more assistance from the international community to help it find a formula for jump-starting this peace process and dealing with the social and economic problems in the country that have produced it.

I laud the interest and attention given to the peace efforts by the United Nations Secretary General, but others in a position to be constructive should also become engaged before the process collapses entirely.

Moreover, in the final analysis, it is not going to be possible to rid Colombian society of the narco-trafficking cancer while the civil conflict is ongoing and a hindrance to building broad-based support for Colombia's counter narcotics initiatives. U.S. domestic and international support would be more readily sustainable were that the case as well.

The international community, by and large, has given only lip service to Colombia's problems and has resisted publicly endorsing Plan Colombia or helping with the peace process. If regional or European political leaders have suggestions for better ways to go about containing illicit drug production in Colombia, and elsewhere, then let them speak up.

I think it is critically important that the Organization of American States take a far more active role in assisting with Colombia's current crisis, particularly with respect to enhancing regional support. Among other things, I believe OAS Secretary General Cesar Gaviria should give serious consideration to convening an emergency summit meeting of the region's leaders before this year's end. The purpose of this summit would be to reach agreement on additional regional steps to ensure that the operations in Colombia do not adversely impact others in the region, either through increased refugee flows or relocated illicit drug operations.

European governments, particularly those that have expressed concerns about the social and political fallout of Plan Colombia and the ongoing civil conflict, need to do far more than simply wring their hands. Civil society needs to be strengthened in Colombia in order to ensure that every Colombian's rights are protected.

Additional judicial and military reforms must be implemented in order for the rule of law to become the norm and military impunity to cease once and for all. Economic investments, especially in alternative development programs, must be forthcoming if peasants who currently depend on coca cultivation to feed their families are to

have meaningful alternative employment. All of these areas are well within the financial resources and expertise of our European allies to undertake, if they are truly concerned about the future of Colombia.

For their part, Colombian authorities must undertake a sustained and serious dialog with local mayors, church officials, civic leaders, and affected communities throughout Colombia to hear from them their concerns and fears about aspects of Plan Colombia that may result in thousands more displaced Colombians, particularly in the rural areas of that nation.

While aerial eradication of cocoa crops seems the most effective method for attacking illicit production at the source, authorities should also be open to at least considering the possibility of funding other methods of eradication, such as manual eradication utilizing local farmer organizations.

Mr. President, to sum up, what I am calling for is a major international commitment to tackle the Colombian crisis. President Clinton has determined that Plan Colombia is worthy of U.S. support; that is in our national interest to do so—and I believe it is—given the impact we are feeling in our own society as a result of the narco-trafficking that occurs here.

A bipartisan Congress signed up to that position when it voted to appropriate the \$1.3 billion in emergency assistance. Having said that, I do not believe Plan Colombia can ultimately be successfully implemented if only the U.S. and Colombian Governments are participants. Unless U.S.-Colombian authorities come to this view fairly soon and begin a serious effort to regionalize and internationalize this effort, Plan Colombia is going to die on the vine for lack of political support.

Time is running out for the people of Colombia. Frankly, time is running short for everyone committed to democracy and democratic values in that country. We must not let international reticence or inertia allow the drug kingpins to win the day.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR CONNIE MACK

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it is with particular and personal regret that I deliver these remarks today about the Senator from Florida. In a number of areas and on a range of issues, I, like many of us, have come to rely on CONNIE MACK'S knowledge and good judgment—and his good humor. He has been an outstanding Senator. More importantly, I have come to cherish his friendship and the friendship of his wonderful wife and partner for four decades, Priscilla.

CONNIE MACK is concluding his 12th year of service in the Senate. In that period of time, he has accomplished a great deal for his State and for our country. He has worked diligently and effectively to protect the environment of his State. He stood against drilling

off Florida's vast and majestic shoreline. He has promoted the restoration of the Florida Everglades, one of our Nation's premier national treasures. Time and time again, in ways large and small, CONNIE MACK has acted to safeguard his State's rare and fragile natural beauty. For this generation, and for generations to come, the name of CONNIE MACK will mean a great deal—to the citizens of Florida and people throughout the country—if for no other reason than for that contribution.

Perhaps the most profound contribution, however, of this very warm and gracious colleague of ours is the contribution he has made to our Nation in the area of cancer awareness and medical research. In these areas, it can be said, I believe without any hesitation, that no one has done a greater service to his fellow Americans in these last number of years than CONNIE and Priscilla MACK.

CONNIE and Priscilla know through hard personal experience the terrible toll that cancer and disease can take on individuals and families. They know as well as anyone that early detection of cancer is the first and best weapon in the battle to save lives. That is why they have made early detection of cancer not just a concern, but a cause.

By educating others about the importance of early detection, by spreading awareness that it is an easy, fast, and safe way to save lives, they have played a very critical role in helping countless Americans avoid the full devastation of this disease. I daresay, among those tens of thousands of American men and women who every year conquer cancer because they detected it early, a great many of them owe a debt of thanks to CONNIE and Priscilla MACK.

Together, they have received numerous honors and awards, including: the National Coalition for Cancer Research Lifetime Achievement Award; the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship Ribbon of Hope Award; the American Cancer Society's Courage Award; and Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation's Betty Ford Award.

But Senator MACK has not been satisfied just with promoting early detection. He has worked for a day when early detection of cancer and other diseases will no longer be necessary because they will no longer exist. He has worked diligently and successfully to increase our Nation's investment in medical research. He understands that research can provide answers and ultimately cures for many of the ailments that continue to plague humankind. Maybe not today, but one day.

And years from now, when—we hope—cures will be found, America and the world will reflect with gratitude on those who dared to envision a better future by supporting the basic research from which those cures derived. And among those whom future generations will thank, I believe that few will be thanked more than the Senator from Florida, CONNIE MACK.