

Yet we have seen little effort by this administration to engage in a sustained dialog with Moscow on its human rights record and commitments under the Helsinki Declaration. We did more about human rights violations 20 years ago in Russia than we are doing today. It is like we have tape over our mouth.

As David Kramer of the German Marshall Fund of the United States notes in a Washington Post opinion on September 20:

The human rights situation in Russia is bad and likely to get more worse as [Russia's] March 2012 presidential election nears. Those in power will do anything to stay in power . . . Enough already with U.S. expressions of "regret" about the deteriorating situation inside Russia—it's time to call it like it is: Condemn what's happening there and consider consequences for continued human rights abuses.

I believe the Obama administration's inaction and reluctance to confront Russia on its human rights record sends a dangerous signal to Moscow that there are little or no consequences for bad behavior. At a minimum, such coddling of bad behavior by the West only serves to embolden Moscow as to our resolve to hold Russia to account on its international obligations, a distressing thought as we consider the new START in the Senate.

I have fought all my life to secure freedom for my brothers and sisters in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia. Once they received their freedom, I championed—and continue to champion—their membership in NATO and the EU. I am working with Senator SHAHEEN right now in the former Yugoslavia to see how many of those countries we can get into the European Union and how many we can get into the NATO alliance. I will be darned, at this stage in my life, to do anything that would jeopardize their security and economic prosperity. I have seen too many opportunities for the region slip away during my lifetime. I will not let it happen again.

Political expediency should never be an excuse to rush to judgment on public policy, let alone our national security. Treaties supersede all laws and acts of Congress. The Senate's advice-and-consent duties on treaties are among our most solemn constitutional duties. I cannot, in good conscience, determine my support for this treaty until the administration assures me that our reset policy with Russia is a policy that enhances rather than diminishes the national security of our friends and allies throughout Europe.

Moreover, I must receive the strongest assurances that this policy does not once again amount to the United States leaving our brothers and sisters in the former Captive Nations alone against undue pressures from Russia.

When I finally cash out, I want to know these countries we forgot at the end of the Second World War, where millions of people were sent to the gulag, will never be forgotten again.

I think this President has an obligation to look at this treaty beyond just

the nonproliferation side. He has an obligation to look at it as part of resetting our relationship with Russia, and we ought to get some things cleared up before we go ahead and sign this treaty.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO BILL BARTLEMAN

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a legendary Kentucky newspaperman who, after 39 years, is retiring, and the Commonwealth will certainly be the poorer for it. I am going to miss my old friend, Bill Bartleman of the Paducah Sun, as his service in the fourth estate ends this month.

Bill's first day at the Paducah Sun was January 7, 1972, when the Murray State University graduate was hired as both a reporter and a photographer. In the four decades since, he has covered Senators and Governors, local lawmakers and the Kentuckians whose names you may not know but who, in his words, "make life happen."

He has interviewed a President of the United States, and he has ridden a hot air balloon over the Ohio River. He has become Kentucky's longest running legislative reporter. He has led quite a life of accomplishment, and I wish him well in the next stage of his career.

I first met Bill when he covered my initial race for the Senate in 1984, and he has covered every one of my races since that time. For my last election campaign in 2008, Bill moderated a debate between me and my opponent that was broadcast on C-SPAN. So the whole Nation had a chance to see Bill hard at work. He was fair, honest, and professional, as always.

After 39 years, it would be easy for some reporters to make the mistake of thinking they are the story—but not Bill. This veteran journalist has words of wisdom for young reporters. This is what Bill had to say:

Remember the responsibility of what you do.

He went on to say:

Bill Bartleman isn't important, but what he covers is important. You need to represent the public and report what happens fairly. You can't send people tainted water, and you can't send tainted news.

Those words are well said. Those of us in public life will always have a close relationship with members of the press. Sometimes it is a bit challenging and sometimes it is frustrating. Sometimes the politician and the reporter do not always see eye to eye. I cannot say Bill Bartleman and I agree on everything. But I can say that Bill Bartleman will always have my respect.

For 39 years, Kentuckians have benefited from his incisive political coverage. As he moves on to a position with Mid-Continent University in Mayfield, KY, I know I speak for many Kentuckians when I say: Thank you, Bill. Thank you, Bill, for your dedicated service. You certainly will be missed.

Bill's own newspaper, the Paducah Sun, recently published an excellent article about his life and career, and I ask unanimous consent that the full article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Paducah Sun, Oct. 24, 2010]

AFTER 39 YEARS, BARTLEMAN TO RETIRE
FROM SUN

Kentucky's longest-running legislative reporter plans to retire from The Paducah Sun in November.

Bill Bartleman, 61, will retire from the Sun after 35 years of covering government and politics, and nearly 39 years total working for the newspaper.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my career as a reporter for The Paducah Sun and have mixed emotions about retiring," Bartleman said.

"The profession has provided me with opportunities to experience things and see things that others don't get to see and feel. Most gratifying are the memories of the people I've met and having the opportunity to work for people who care."

The Pennsylvania native graduated from Murray State University in December 1971. Bartleman served his first day at the Sun on Jan. 7, 1972, after being hired as a dual reporter and photographer with the majority of his duties in photography.

He took over the paper's government and politics beat in 1975 and covered, in person, every session of legislature in Frankfort from 1976–2007 while using the Web, phone interviews and less frequent Frankfort visits for coverage in the past three years.

A frequent commentator for more than 30 years on Kentucky Educational Television's "Comment on Kentucky," Bartleman also served as a panelist for KET political debates for governor, U.S. senator and other offices.

In 2008, he moderated a U.S. Senate candidate debate between Sen. Mitch McConnell and Bruce Lunsford, which was broadcast on C-SPAN, the national cable affairs network.

Bartleman said he will become an administrator at Mid-Continent University in Mayfield on Dec. 1.

"I learned early in my career that The Paducah Sun has had a rich tradition and responsibility of reporting news thoroughly, fairly and accurately," Bartleman said. "It is a tradition handed down by Ed Paxton, Sr. I've always viewed myself as one of his caretakers to help carry on that tradition and responsibility. It is time for me to pass on my caretaker role to someone else and meet a new and exciting challenge."

PRIORITIES DURING LAMEDUCK SESSION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, both Republicans and Democrats in the Senate held many meetings this week to assess the priorities of our respective conferences.

I am extremely proud of the clarity my Republican colleagues have used to express what our priorities must be and

that we have listened to the American people. Last night, Republicans expressed the need to cut spending, reduce the debt, shrink the size and scope of the Federal Government, and help spur private sector employment—in short, change the way Washington is doing business to get our economy going again.

There is no question that is a sentiment shared by the American people. I would be remiss if I did not also express some dismay with the priorities that are being put forward on the other side of the aisle.

This is a lameduck session, and they have an opportunity to respond to the American people before we convene for the 112th Congress, but there is no reason why we cannot get to work on their behalf beginning today.

Let me share with you what I believe our priorities need to be during the lameduck session: first and foremost, preventing massive tax increases on families and small businesses and stopping the Washington spending spree. It is critical we send a message to job creators that Congress will not raise taxes on January 1.

In September, I offered a bill that would make the current tax rates permanent. In other words, nobody—nobody—in America would get a tax hike at the end of the year. The White House did not like that idea. Their preference was to raise taxes on small businesses. I think it is safe to say the American people clearly preferred our proposal: no tax hikes on anybody, especially in the middle of a recession. We should be creating jobs, not killing them.

It is my hope that starting today Democrats will turn to the priorities that reflect the wishes of the American people. If they choose that route, I know Republicans will be happy to work with them to get those things accomplished. If not, I am confident Republicans will be eager to chart a different course on behalf of the American people.

When we return from the Thanksgiving break, Republican and Democratic leaders will have an opportunity to discuss these priorities with the President in a meeting at the White House. I am looking forward to the meeting and to the opportunity to share with the President again the areas where we agree. I believe we can work together to increase opportunities for job growth here at home through increased trade opportunities abroad. I agree with the President that we should increase our exploration for clean coal technology and nuclear energy, and Americans feel strongly that we need to reduce spending and our national debt.

We can work together on all those items, and the White House meeting is a good opportunity for congressional Democrats to join us in those efforts. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

FDA FOOD SAFETY MODERNIZATION ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I know my colleague, Senator HARKIN, will be on the floor momentarily to speak about the Food Safety Modernization Act. I wish to preface my remarks by thanking him personally. TOM HARKIN has been not only a great colleague and friend, he has been such an exceptional leader when it comes to this important issue. It is no surprise for those of us who know TOM HARKIN's congressional and Senate career. He has always been an extraordinary leader.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, which literally has changed the face of America and opened doors for the disabled across our Nation, is not only one of the most dramatic steps forward when it comes to human rights and civil rights in my time, it was led by Senator TOM HARKIN of Iowa and Senator Robert Dole, Republican of Kansas, who then served in the Senate.

So TOM HARKIN has been our conscience and our leader when it comes to issues involving safety, human rights, and expanding the reach of freedom in our Nation to those who otherwise might have been denied.

I will tell you why I am passionate about the food safety issue. It goes back to a note I received as a Congressman. It was almost 16 years ago. It was a note from a woman who did not live in my congressional district. She was from Chicago and I was 200 miles away. Her name was Nancy Donley, and she told the story of her 5- or 6-year-old son Alex. She brought some hamburger home from the local grocery store to fix it for her son. She made his dinner. He ate it, and then he got sick, terribly sick. In a matter of a few hours, he was at the hospital, and in a matter of a few days he had passed away.

He was a victim of E. coli. Trust me, his mom would never have done anything to harm him, and she thought she was doing the right thing to cook his meal and bring it to him at the dinner table. Unfortunately, that family decision, which is made millions of times across America every single day, was a fatal decision.

Nancy Donley—heart broken, her life shattered by the loss of that little boy she loved so much—could have shrunk away in despair and anger over what had happened but did not. She made it her passion and her crusade to gather others like her in behalf of the cause of food safety. She started an organization called Safe Tables Our Priority—or STOP—and started lobbying Members of Congress, even a Congressman 200 miles away, to do what they could to make our laws stronger and better across America.

I have kept in touch with Nancy. It has been over 16 years. We are close friends now. I have to tell you that in my pantheon of heroes, Nancy Donley is right up there for what she has done with her life. If we are fortunate enough today and successful in passing this bill—at least moving it forward

procedurally—I wish to say I am doing that in her name and in the memory of her son Alex and the thousands, tens of thousands, maybe even more, across America who are victims of contaminated food.

For some people, it is just a simple case of indigestion or diarrhea that goes away after a few days. It may be mistaken for the flu. For others, it gets more serious. The number of Americans who die or become severely ill due to preventable foodborne illness is unacceptably high, and it has been that way for a long time.

Every year, 76 million Americans suffer from preventable foodborne illness. Mr. President, 325,000 of our family members, friends, and neighbors are hospitalized each year because of food contamination and 5,000 die—100 a week. That means that every 5 minutes 3 people are rushed to the hospital because the food they ate made them sick, and at the end of the day 13 will die.

Throughout the debate on this bill, I have shared the heartbreaking stories of victims such as Alex Donley and his family. Some of these victims who were courageous enough to share their stories will suffer chronic symptoms that do not go away for a long time, if ever. The victims who have died would have wished they were lucky enough to be alive, even with these long-term illnesses.

Today, as we vote to move to this bill, I will be thinking about how much it means to so many of us. I talked about Nancy Donley and her son Alex. They are not the only ones. There are people all across America who understand, when they go shopping at the food store and buy groceries or buy produce, there is a sort of built-in assumption it is safe. Would our government let things be put on the shelves in a store that have not been inspected, that are not safe?

Most people assume that if the government is doing its job like it is supposed to, they should not have to worry about those things. Well, to a great extent, they are right. We have extraordinary resources in the Federal Government dedicated toward food safety. But the simple fact is, there are wide gaps when it comes to food safety in America, and those gaps need to be closed by this bill.

The vast majority of Americans understand this. According to a recent poll commissioned by Pew, 89 percent of Americans want us to modernize our food safety system. Thanks to the leadership of Senator HARKIN and Senator ENZI, our Republican colleague, our food safety bill passed the Health, Education and Labor Committee unanimously more than a year ago.

This bill has substantial bipartisan support. Twenty Republican and Democratic Senators are already committed to it. It is supported by a broad group of consumer protection interests, including those at the Grocery Manufacturers Association and those at the