

UNREST IN TIBET

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to express my concerns about the continuing unrest in Tibet and the tragic trend of Tibetan self-immolations. Since February 2009, more than 100 Tibetans have set themselves on fire. Many of the self-immolators have called out for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for China to acknowledge the basic human dignity of the Tibetan people.

Like so many others, I wish that Tibetans would not choose self-immolations, a horrific act, as a method of protest. I hope Tibetans will find other ways to express their grievances and despair and halt these self-destructive acts. At the same time, we must understand that these sorts of acts are indicative of the deep sense of frustration felt by the Tibetan people. This is not a conspiracy of “foreign forces” but indicative of the deep sense of hopelessness of a people denied their basic dignity.

Under the Chinese Constitution, “All ethnic groups in the People’s Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China’s nationalities. Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited. . . .”

Yet Tibet today is one of the most repressed and closed societies in the world, where merely talking on the phone can land you in jail. Support for the Dalai Lama can be prosecuted as an offense against the State. Tibetans are treated as second class citizens; their travel within and outside of Tibetan areas is highly restricted. Foreign diplomats and journalists are routinely denied access.

The American people and Congress have demonstrated an abiding interest in the culture, religion, and people of Tibet, as well as a deep respect for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We see Tibet as an issue of fundamental justice and fairness, where the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people, as embodied in the PRC’s own constitution, are not being respected; where their culture is being eroded; and where their land is being exploited.

So I believe that responsibility falls to us to help the Tibetan people in their efforts to preserve their culture and identity and have a say in their own affairs and to be able to exercise genuine autonomy within the PRC.

Let me offer some thoughts on how Congress can help.

First, we should continue to fund the important programs that help Tibetan communities, both in exile and on the Tibetan plateau. While these provide tangible humanitarian results, they also send a critical signal to the aggrieved Tibetan population that the United States hears their plea.

One measure with which I am familiar is the Tibetan language broadcasts of Radio Free Asia and the Voice of

America. I cannot overstate the importance of these efforts to provide perhaps the only independent source of news to Tibetans who struggle under the heavy censorship regime.

Second, we should embrace the statement last fall by U.N. Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay on Tibet. She stated that “social stability in Tibet will never be achieved through heavy security measures and suppression of human rights.” She called on Chinese authorities to adopt the recommendations of various U.N. bodies and to allow access to Tibet by independent international observers and media members, noting 12 outstanding requests for official visits to China by U.N. Special Rapporteurs on various human rights issues.

Third, the State Department should continue to insist on access to Tibet by its personnel. We need independent and credible reporting on the true situation on the ground, and the Department should work with China to take steps to see that the principle of reciprocity is respected.

Fourth, I encourage the State Department and other government agencies to join in dialogue with China and with others in the region to address the deeper strategic aspects of the Tibet issue. Instability in Tibet is a factor in the broader question of social stability in the entire PRC. Peaceful resolution of the Tibet issue could go a long way in demonstrating to the world that China is indeed a responsible and constructive member of the community of nations. In turn, Beijing’s growing influence in the Himalayan belt, especially Nepal, should be assessed in a broader dialogue with other nations in the region.

Likewise, the United States should look for constructive ways to engage China on the issue of water security, given that Tibet’s rivers provide the livelihood for hundreds of millions of people downstream in South and Southeast Asia. Chinese diversion of these rivers through constructing dams could become a source of conflict in the region.

Mr. President, I close by paraphrasing an oft-uttered phrase by the Dalai Lama. He says that those who raise their voices of concern for Tibet do so not because they are pro-Tibet or anti-Chinese. They do so because they are pro-justice. I second this remark and look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate, and with China, to promote a durable resolution to the Tibet problem.

CONGRATULATING MITCH SEAVEY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the winner of the 41st Iditarod race. Mitch Seavey of Seward finished the 998-mile dog sled race in a time of 9 days, 7 hours, 39 minutes, and 56 seconds. This is Mitch’s second title and I am happy to congratulate him on this significant accomplishment.

Sixty-six teams left this year from Willow, heading out into the dark, cold, and exceptionally rugged terrain of Alaska. This race is not for the weak. Temperatures can plummet, footing is not always solid, and mushers have to deal with the isolation of the Alaskan wilderness, leading an equally brave and athletic team of canine athletes.

Iditarod mushers are not the only people to have witnessed the great ability of sled dogs. American soldiers overseas are now benefiting from the training these canines endure. The U.S. Marine Corps recently decided to study the training regimen of sled dogs that are able to consistently run 1,000-mile races through hazardous conditions. What they observed is what we in the Iditarod community have become accustomed to in sled dog racing—train to the level in which you need to perform. For Iditarod dogs this means training in weather conditions they will encounter during an Alaskan winter and eating up to 12,000 calories a day. Exercise and nutrition techniques were transferred from the Iditarod trail across the world to the deserts of Afghanistan. Bomb-sniffing dogs working in conditions just as extreme, sometimes in heat well in excess of 100 degrees, are now saving lives and limbs every day thanks to the science and innovative techniques developed in our great race. A group of those canines, led by Tanner, a 6-year-old husky, trained their way into peak physical condition and onto the winning podium in Nome.

The Iditarod race exemplifies the greatest assets of my home State: vast nature and beauty, the greatest will and determination in the country, and most of all a sense of community. Those qualities are exemplified in this year’s winner, Mitch Seavey.

This title makes Mitch the oldest Iditarod winner ever. It is only fitting that Mitch crossed the burlled arch on Front Street in Nome a champion, a year after his son Dallas claimed the title and became the youngest winner in Iditarod history. Back-to-back Seavey family championships lead me to believe that there must be some characteristics of this family that give them an advantage in the world’s toughest race.

Mitch Seavey’s inspiring run this year was a testament to his athleticism, tenacity, and character. Mitch recaptured his title in dramatic fashion. His lead coming out of White Mountain, starting a sprint to Nome, was only 13 minutes. He thought he could see the dim light of his competitor’s headlamp coming up behind his team and he reached another gear. Late Tuesday night Mitch crossed the finish line, claiming his second title, the first since his 2004 championship run. This was one of the closest Iditarod finishes ever. Mitch even joked coming out of White Mountain that he was going to grab his sneakers for the finish. In the heat of competition Mitch kept his sense of humor and

now he has kept the Iditarod championship in the family for another year.

Mitch Seavey may have claimed the Iditarod title in Nome, but getting to that point takes preparation and training that begins months if not years in advance. I would like to congratulate Mitch for all of his hard work and for claiming his second Iditarod title.

I would also like to thank the Iditarod trail team, the many volunteers who came from around the country, the veterinarians, the Iditarod Air Force, and everyone else who has worked to ensure the safety and maintenance of the Iditarod trail and the safety of the dedicated athletes and canines that welcome the challenge. Their efforts are often underrated, but their commitment is resolute. My prayers go out to the families of Carolyn and Rosemarie Sorvoja, and pilot Ted Smith, who lost their lives in a tragic plane crash as they made their way to the eighth check point of Takotna. They had traveled hundreds of miles from the Anchorage area, in hopes of volunteering on the trail. Every volunteer knows the risks associated with their efforts to ensure the safety of others and the success of the Iditarod, but I am surprised each year at how many line up to serve in the face of rugged and extreme Alaskan conditions. This is now a time to remember and honor their efforts, and congratulate Mitch Seavey.

I am proud to congratulate the Seavey team on this amazing accomplishment and historic milestone. I send my best wishes to Mitch and the whole Seavey family as they celebrate this well-deserved victory in Alaska's great race.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

ASCENT OF DENALI CENTENNIAL

• Mr. BEGICH. Mr. President, today I would like to recognize the centennial anniversary of the first successful ascent of the south peak of Mount McKinley. In Alaska, the mountain is popularly known as Denali, which means the "Great One" in Dena'ina language. At 20,320 feet, the south peak is the tallest of its two peaks, and makes Mount McKinley North America's tallest mountain.

Although other climbers attempted the climb or claimed to have summited McKinley before 1913, Walter Harper, Hudson Stuck, Robert Tatum, and Harry Karstens were the first to complete their journey to the top. Among the party, it was Harper, an Athabaskan, who was the first to stand on the south summit after a month-long expedition that started with a mush from Fairbanks by a dog team.

The unsung hero of this accomplishment was another Alaska Native, 16-year-old John Fredson, who travelled with the group and cared for the sled dogs at base camp while waiting for the climbing team to return. This story of triumph and courage underscores the importance of Alaska Natives in the great age of American exploration.

To commemorate the centennial, the Denali 2013 Centennial Climb has been organized. The official party's ascent will commence June 7, 2013, and includes ancestors of the original team: Dana Wright of Fairbanks, the great-grandnephew of Harper; Dan Hopkins, from Ottawa, Ontario, who is the great-great-nephew of Stuck; Ken Karstens, from Colorado; and Ray Schuenemann, from Dallas, Texas, both of whom are great-grandsons of Karstens.

Stuck was a missionary for the Episcopal Church and Archdeacon of the Yukon back in 1913. Stuck had hoped to celebrate communion atop the peak. As part of the recreation of the historic ascent, Mark Lattime, the Episcopal Bishop of Alaska and Reverend at St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Fairbanks, will join the climbing party and celebrate communion at the peak.

The spirit of adventure is something that we embrace as Alaskans and Americans. Let us take this moment to acknowledge this significant achievement of our predecessors and wish the 2013 party a safe and successful climb.●

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL MARK E. WEATHERINGTON

• Mr. JOHNSON of South Dakota. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and congratulate the service of Col. Mark E. Weatherington, who will be ending his command at Ellsworth Air Force Base in early April.

An Air Force Academy graduate, Colonel Weatherington has served in many leadership and flying positions over his impressive 23-year career. He is a B-1 pilot with 2,400 flight hours. Among his many assignments, Colonel Weatherington has served as commander of the 28th Bomb Wing at both Ellsworth AFB and Dyess AFB; served as chief of staff of the Air Force Fellow; was a National Defense Fellow with the Brookings Institution; and previously served at Ellsworth AFB as chief of weapons and tactics and then assistant operations officer of the 77th Bomb Squadron and wing weapons officer of the 28th Operations Support Squadron.

Colonel Weatherington has served as commander of the 28th Bomb Wing, Ellsworth Air Force Base, the largest B-1 combat wing in the U.S. Air Force, since May 2011. He has distinguished himself during his 2-year stint at the South Dakota installation. He has provided expert guidance during the process to bring the first MQ-9 Reaper squadron, the 432nd Attack Squadron, to Ellsworth Air Force Base, while maintaining the great legacy of the B-1 aircraft and the personnel of the 28th Bomb Wing. Last year, Colonel Weatherington presided over Ellsworth Air Force Base's 70th Anniversary festivities.

Colonel Weatherington's current stint at Ellsworth Air Force Base has lasted just shy of 2 years, but he has provided a lasting impact, overseeing 4,300 military and civilian personnel in the day-to-day operations of the base,

as well as the ongoing rotation of airmen to overseas action in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He has maintained a strong relationship between the Base and Black Hills communities, namely Rapid City and Box Elder. For decades there has been a very warm and cordial relationship between Black Hills residents, businesses, and charitable organizations and the personnel and leadership command of Ellsworth Air Force Base. Colonel Weatherington has been committed to maintaining this bond. The relationship between the civilian and military communities remains very strong, and this relationship continues to make the Black Hills a great retirement option for military retirees who once served at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Colonel Weatherington will now move to the Pentagon where he will serve as Military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Ashton Carter. This role will bring new challenges and responsibilities, but I know the leadership, professionalism, and stewardship Colonel Weatherington showed during his time at Ellsworth Air Force Base will serve him well at the Pentagon and throughout his career. I commend Colonel Weatherington for his service to Ellsworth Air Force Base and his continued service to the U.S. Air Force. I wish him, Stephanie, and their family all the best in future endeavors.●

WEST VIRGINIA HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 74

• Mr. MANCHIN. Mr. President, I rise today to bring attention to an effort spearheaded by a native West Virginian, Mr. William J. Friedman. I ask to have printed in the RECORD a copy of the West Virginia-House Concurrent Resolution No. 74, which was passed by the West Virginia State Legislature on March 12, 2012, detailing his efforts.

Mr. Friedman is a proud West Virginian. He is the longest tenured member of the National Democratic Club, and founder of both the 116 Club and the prestigious Georgetown Club.

According to his colleagues, Mr. Friedman is also a veteran who served this country in the Korean War and lived in Africa for almost 15 years. Mr. Friedman was present during a number of movements within the region; including the civil war in Mozambique and the dismantling of South African apartheid.

I am informed that Mr. Friedman served his country abroad by investing millions in the country of Mozambique with hopes of spreading American style capitalism and creating hundreds of jobs.

Further, I am told that Mr. Friedman was inspired by Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano, which led to his relocation to Mozambique. At the time, Mozambique was in midst of a bloody civil war. Even so, Mr. Friedman assisted the newly appointed Presi-