

all about. That is the way an important inquiry ought to be handled.

There is nothing of value that a special prosecutor would bring to the table, and it certainly would involve significant cost to American taxpayers. In fact, many of us can remember special prosecutors abusing their power, spending millions of dollars of taxpayer money, and going on for years and years without concluding their investigations. Too often, special prosecutors have turned into lawyers' full employment programs. They ought to be reserved for when there is evidence of criminal wrongdoing inside the government. It would be premature to appoint a special prosecutor with the bipartisan Finance Committee report almost finished.

I will just close by saying I am a pretty bipartisan fellow. In fact, sometimes I get a fair amount of criticism for being too bipartisan. I want it understood this is a bipartisan inquiry that is being done by the book. Senator HATCH and I are looking at these matters together. We talk about it frequently. Those witnesses were interviewed together. We brought Mr. Koskinen in immediately. My view is that it would be premature to appoint a special prosecutor with the bipartisan Finance Committee report almost finished.

If we look at this in terms of what is at issue now, we can bring the facts to light with our own investigators and our own bipartisan inquiry and avoid the special prosecutor disasters of the past.

I object to the Senator's request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CRUZ. Madam President, I thank my friend from Oregon for his impassioned comments. I would note for the RECORD a few things he did not say. My friend from Oregon chose not to say a word about the fact that Lois Lerner, a senior IRS official, has twice pleaded the Fifth in front of the House of Representatives. To that he had not a single response.

My friend from Oregon chose to say not a word to the fact that the IRS singled out Senator CHUCK GRASSLEY for special scrutiny. To that, he said not a word.

My friend from Oregon chose to say not a word to the fact that the IRS has now admitted to illegally handing over private personal information from a citizen group to its political opponents for partisan political purposes, and has paid a \$50,000 fine. That is not an allegation. That is not a theory. That is what the IRS has admitted to and paid a \$50,000 fine for with taxpayer funds. Yet I am sorry to say my friend from Oregon had not a word to say about that abuse of power.

I mentioned before that from the Democratic Members of this Chamber, when it comes to the abuse of power by the Obama administration, there are crickets chirping.

Now, I am pleased that my friend from Oregon and the Finance Committee has engaged in an investigation of what occurred. We don't know what that investigation will conclude. But I find it interesting that he said it is premature for a special prosecutor. Fourteen months ago was when President Obama said: I am angry and the American people have a right to be angry—14 months ago. Fourteen months and not a single person has been indicted. Fourteen months and most of the victims haven't been interviewed. Fourteen months they have publicly announced they don't intend to indict anyone. Yet, it is premature. If the American people had a right to be angry 14 months ago, which is what President Obama told us, what should we feel 14 months later after partisan stonewalling and obstruction of justice? The American people had a right to be angry.

I would note a Senate committee is conducting an investigation and will issue a report, but the Senate committee can't indict anyone. The Senate committee can't prosecute anyone. My friend from Oregon says it is premature to have a special prosecutor because, apparently, holding people who break the laws, who commit criminal conduct to abuse IRS power to target individual citizens based on their political views—apparently, holding them accountable—is not a priority for a single Democratic member of this Chamber. That saddens me.

It saddens me that we don't have 100 Senators in this room saying, regardless of what party we are in, it is an embarrassment to have this "investigation"—and I put that word in quotes, because a real investigation involves interviewing the victims; a real investigation involves following the evidence where it leads. I would note my friend from Oregon, in describing the Senate committee's investigation, mentioned that they interviewed some IRS employees, but notably absent from whom he said they interviewed was anyone at the White House, anyone political. Apparently, they were not interviewed. We don't know. But he didn't mention them if they were.

It is an embarrassment that this so-called investigation is led by a partisan Democratic donor who has given over \$6,000 to President Obama and Democrats. It is an embarrassment that the IRS obstruction of justice is led by a major Democratic donor who has given nearly \$100,000. Every one of us takes an oath to the Constitution. Every one of us owes fidelity to rule of law. When we have the Department of Justice behaving like an arm of the DNC, protecting the political interests of the White House instead of upholding the law, it undermines the liberty of every American. I am saddened that Democratic Members of this Chamber will not stand up and say: I have a higher obligation to the Constitution and the rule of law and the American people than I have to my Democratic Party. That is a sad state of affairs, but it is also a state of affairs that is outraging the American people, that is waking up the American people.

President Obama had it right when he said 14 months ago the American

people are right to be angry about this. He was correct. And when elected officials, when appointed officials of the Obama administration mock the rule of law, demonstrate contempt for Congress, and abuse their power against the individual citizenry, against we the people, the people have a natural and immediate remedy that is available in November every 2 years. This November, I am confident the American people will follow the President's advice and demonstrate that they are angry about the abuse of power and even angrier about the partisan coverup in which all 55 Democratic Senators have actively aided and abetted.

If Attorney General Eric Holder is unwilling to appoint a special prosecutor, if he insists on keeping this prosecution in the control of a major Obama donor, then Attorney General Eric Holder should be impeached, because the rule of law matters more than any partisan political problem.

Thank you, Madam President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, first of all, let me thank the Senator from Texas for raising this issue of the IRS. I have commented over the last few days that if this was, in fact, a Republican administration that had been engaged in this issue, this would have led every newscast in America. It would have been leading every newscast in America for the last week. It would have been compared to Watergate. Instead, what we have seen is the American news media, by and large, has largely ignored it.

One of the commentators last night on television added up all the minutes they dedicated to a soccer player who bit some other competitor compared to the amount of time they have dedicated to the fact that one of the most powerful agencies of the U.S. Government not just destroyed records, potentially—but even now we have been given news they tried to target a U.S. Senator for an internal audit—and the soccer player won. He got a lot more attention. There was a lot more news coverage paid to the guy who bit somebody than to the issue of the IRS.

So I thank the Senator from Texas for raising it here today before we head to our respective States for the Fourth of July because it is an issue that deserves our attention.

WORLD CUP SOCCER

Mr. RUBIO. There is another issue that deserves our attention. By the way, on the subject of soccer, since I am on it, I will confess I am not an expert on soccer, nor have I, frankly, historically been an enormous fan. To me football means you wear a helmet and some shoulder pads and you run into

each other pretty hard. But I have grown in admiration of the game given the following it has internationally and given the performance of our team, and I wish to congratulate Team USA. Despite losing today's game, they have achieved the honor of advancing into the round of 16 in the World Cup as we all watched and are excited about those prospects and are encouraged about the future of U.S. soccer and our prospects in the world cup.

So congratulations to them, to their families and to all fans of U.S. soccer all over the world and here in Washington cheering them on. If there is one thing that brought us together here this week, it is that, and we are grateful for it.

VENEZUELA

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, there is a topic I would like to discuss before we leave for the Fourth of July recess and return to our States. One is an enormous story in my home State and, in particular, in my hometown of Miami, and that is the ongoing crisis in Venezuela. I have been talking about it for the better part of 3 months with regard to what is occurring there. It is pretty straightforward. There is an authoritarian government in Venezuela that has cracked down on the people in Venezuela, has crushed any sort of political dissent or tried to crush any form of political dissent. If a person is an outspoken critic of the Venezuelan government, they either wind up in jail or in exile.

In fact, the President of Venezuela, someone who won a fraudulent election just a year and a half ago, has now begun to turn on people in his own party when they dare to criticize him.

But the evidence is clear. First of all, the Venezuelan economy today is a disaster. The state of the Venezuela economy today is increasingly reminiscent of what is happening in Cuba: shortages of basic items, the inability to buy a bar of soap or toilet paper or toothpaste. The shortages are extraordinary.

We are talking about one of the richest countries in the hemisphere—a nation blessed with a talented and educated population and with natural resources, and particularly oil—and this guy in charge of that country has ruined Venezuela and its economy. That in and of itself is worthy of condemnation.

But what is even more apparent is how he has cracked down on political dissent in Venezuela. We have documented how over 40 people have now lost their lives in protests on Venezuela—by the way, protests that began when a student was sexually assaulted at a university. They protested the lack of security, and the security forces of Venezuela responded—not by going after the assailants but by going after the student protesters. Since then, opposition leaders have been jailed, Members of the opposition in

the Parliament have been removed from their seats, and Venezuela continues to spiral out of control.

There have been gross human rights violations in Venezuela at the direction of the Venezuelan Government by organizations of the Venezuelan Government and extragovernmental organizations as well.

So in light of what is happening in Venezuela, and in light of the fact that so many people who live in Florida are impacted deeply by what is happening in Venezuela—because they are originally from there, because they have family there or because they conduct business there or because they care about what happens in our hemisphere—because of all of these things, not only have I been talking about this issue on the Senate floor but we began to take action.

The first thing we did was we passed a resolution from this Senate—and I thank my colleagues; it passed unanimously—condemning these human rights violations. I know sometimes we sit around here and wonder: What is the point of these resolutions?

They matter. I cannot tell you how many people are aware of what we have done here in the Senate, just speaking out and condemning these violations and making it very clear whose side we are on. We are on the side of the democratic aspirations and the rights of the people of Venezuela.

The second thing we did is we worked through the process here because unlike the way Maduro runs his government in Venezuela, here we have a republic and this Senate is an important part of that republic. We filed a bill to sanction individuals—not the government, not the country—individuals in the Venezuelan Government responsible for these human rights violations. In fact, in the committee I named 25 of them. That piece of legislation—that law—sanctioning the leaders in Venezuela passed the committee almost unanimously with bipartisan support.

Let me take a moment to thank Senator MENENDEZ, the chairman of that committee, for his leadership on this issue and my colleague from Florida BILL NELSON for his leadership on this issue, even though he is not on the committee. When we held a hearing on the issue of Venezuela, he went to the hearing and he attended an event we did in Miami with the Venezuelan community to talk about this reality.

That bill passed out of our committee. In addition to passing out of this committee, a very similar bill passed out of the House under the leadership of Congresswoman ROSENTHAL. Both the Senate and the House—and they passed it off the floor of the House.

So the Venezuelan sanctions bill is ready for action here on the floor of the Senate. Knowing that it was a non-controversial issue, that there is almost unanimous support for it, I have attempted to pass this bill by something we call unanimous consent,

which basically means that the cloak-rooms call the respective offices and they ask all of the Members: We are going to try to pass this bill. Do you have an objection? The reason why we do it that way is so we can save time so we have the time available to debate these other issues that are before us—especially on an issue that is not controversial. We pass a lot of law around here that way.

Unfortunately, there have been some objections—one from each side. I am happy to report that one of those two objections has been removed. It came from the Democratic side. The majority removed their objection. So it appears this bill is ready to move forward, but for the objection of one colleague of ours, who has the right to object, and who, quite frankly, has objections to it that he believes strongly about and we are respectful of.

What I am asking for at this point is—given that objection—when we come back from the recess, I am hoping that one way or another we will get a chance to vote. This is an issue that virtually every Member of the Senate but for one or two—at this point it appears one—is supportive of. I hope we can pass it because it is important. It will matter. This is not sanctions, for example, like the ones we have seen in the past on other countries. These are extremely targeted. These are targeted against individuals in the Venezuelan Government who have directed or carried out gross human rights violations.

They will be impactful because many of these people in the Venezuelan Government who are conducting these human rights violations actually spend their weekends in the United States. They fly on the private jets they bought with stolen money to the United States to stay in their fancy condominiums or their mansions. They shop at our stores. They parade up our streets. And then Monday morning they go back to work full time violating human rights.

So these sanctions will matter. These human rights violators in Venezuela have investments in the United States. In fact, when they steal money from Venezuela, often times they use straw companies and straw purchasers to invest that money in our economy—predominantly in Florida, but also in other places.

There is no reason in the world why they should not be sanctioned for what they have done. There is no reason in the world why we should not be going after these individuals for what they have done.

One of the cornerstones of our foreign policy must always be the protection of human rights anywhere in the world where they are challenged or oppressed. This gives us an opportunity to speak in a clear voice in a part of the world that, quite frankly, both parties have been guilty of neglecting. I have spent plenty of time around here talking about what is going on in Syria and what is going on in Iraq, and that