

This is the first slide. This gentleman is the former mayor of a municipality in Caracas. His name is Leopoldo Lopez. This is the National Guard of Venezuela pulling him into an armored truck last week. Do you know why? He is protesting against the government. He is protesting against the Government of Venezuela, which are puppets of Havana. They are completely infiltrated by Cubans and agents from Havana. Not agents. Openly. There are foreign military affairs officials involved in Venezuela. Do you know why? Because the Venezuelan Government is giving them cheap oil—even free oil—in exchange for help in doing these sorts of repressions. He is sitting in jail right now because he is protesting against the government.

Here is the next slide. This is Genesis Carmona. She is a beauty queen and student in a city called Valencia. She is on that motorcycle because the government in Venezuela and thugs—these so-called civilian groups that they have armed, which is another export from Cuba—shot her in the head. She died last week.

This is the government that the Cubans support, not just verbally, not just emotionally, but with training and tactics. This is what they do, and she is dead. This is her being taken on a motorcycle to the hospital where they were unable to save her life because she was shot in the head by Venezuelan security forces.

Here is another slide. Earlier I showed you Mr. Lopez. These are his supporters being hit by water cannons in the street because they are protesting against the government. This has been going on for 2 weeks. These are the allies of Cuba. Venezuela is a puppet of Cuba. This is what they do to their own people. They are using water cannons to knock people to the ground. Why? Because they are protesting the government.

Here is another slide. This is a demonstrator detained by police. Look at how they dragged him through the streets. This is in Caracas, Venezuela.

I will show another demonstrator. This is a student—by the way, these are all students in the street. This young man was also shot in the head by security forces and progovernment groups in Caracas. This happened on February 11.

This is what they do in Venezuela. This is what the allies of the Castro regime do. This is what they export. This is what they teach. This is what they support.

It doesn't stop here. Who are Cuba's allies in the world? North Korea; before he fell, the dictator in Libya; the dictator in Syria; the tyrant in Moscow. This is who they line up with. This is a wonderful paradise?

What is happening in Venezuela deserves attention in and of itself. This is happening in our own hemisphere. It is shameful that only three heads of state in this hemisphere have spoken against what is happening. It is shameful that

many Members of Congress who traveled to Venezuela and are friendly with Chavez—some even went to his funeral—sit by and say nothing while this is happening in our own hemisphere. This is what the wonderful Cuban paradise government we heard about supports.

Just this morning the dictator—who calls himself the President, even though he has never been elected to anything—Raul Castro announced he is there to do whatever they need to help them do this.

I listened to the stuff about Cuba and what is happening in Venezuela, and it is very similar, not just in the repression part but the economic part. Venezuela is an oil-rich country with hard-working people. We don't have an embargo against Venezuela. They have a shortage of toilet paper and toothpaste. Why? Because they are incompetent, and communism doesn't work. They look more and more like Cuba economically and politically every single day.

What is the first thing the Venezuelans did when this broke out? They cut off access to Twitter, Facebook, and the Internet. They ran CNN out of there. They closed down the only Colombian station. Years before they had to close down all the independent media outlets that criticized the government. Where did they learn that from? Cuba. Yet we have to listen to what a paradise Cuba is.

I wonder. How come I never read about boatloads of American refugees going to Cuba? Why have close to 1½ million people left Cuba to come here, but the only people who leave here to move there are fugitives from the law and people who steal money from Medicare and go there to hide? Why? How come no American baseball players defect to Cuba? Why don't any American doctors defect to Cuba if it is such a paradise?

He cited a poll that more Americans want normal relations with Cuba. So do I—a democratic and free Cuba. But you want us to reach out and develop friendly relationships with a serial violator of human rights that supports what is going on in Venezuela and every other atrocity on the planet? On issue after issue, they are always on the side of the tyrants. Look it up. This is who we should be opening up to? Why don't they change? Why doesn't the Cuban Government change? Why doesn't the Venezuelan Government change?

Throughout this week, I will outline proposals and ideas about what we need to do and the sanctions we should be pursuing against the individuals responsible for these atrocities.

We have sanctions against North Korea. Why? Because they have a terrorist and illegitimate government. We have sanctions against Iran. Why? Because they support terrorism and have an illegitimate government. We have sanctions against Cuba. Why? Well, you just saw why. Sanctions are a tool

in our foreign policy toolbox. We, as the freest Nation on Earth, are looked to by people in this country and all around the world to stand by them in their moment of need when they clamor for liberty and human rights. They look for America to be on their side, not for America to be cutting geopolitical deals or making it easier to sell tractors to the government there. We should be clear about these things.

Here is the great news. I don't know if they get C-SPAN in Cuba. I bet the government people do. I hope you see that in America we are a free society. You are allowed to stand on the floor and say and spread whatever you want. You think Cuba is a paradise? You think it is an example and model we should be following? You are free to say that here, in the press and anywhere you want. We are also free to come here and tell the truth. We are also free to come here and denounce the violations of human rights and brutality.

I suggest to my colleagues that the next time they go to Cuba, ask to meet with the Ladies in White. Ask to meet with Yoani Sanchez. Ask to meet with the dissidents and the human rights activists who are jailed, repressed, and exiled. Ask to meet them. I bet you will hear something very different than what you heard from your hosts on your last trip to the wonderful socialist paradise called Cuba, because it is a joke. It is a farce. I don't think we should stand by with our arms crossed and watch these things happen in our hemisphere and say nothing about them.

I will close by saying over the last week, I have tweeted about these issues. I get thousands of retweets from students and young people—until they shut them out in Venezuela—who are encouraged by the fact that we are on their side. What they want is what we have, freedom and liberty. That is what all people want.

If America and its policymakers are not going to be firmly on the side of freedom and liberty, who in the world will? Who on this planet will? If this Nation is not firmly on the side of human rights and freedom and the dignity of all people, what nation on Earth will? If we are prepared to walk away from that, then I submit to you that this century is going to be a dangerous and dark one, but I don't believe that is what the American people want from us, nor the majority of my colleagues.

I thank the Presiding Officer for the opportunity to share these thoughts.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF JEFFREY ALKER MEYER TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Jeffrey Alker Meyer, of Connecticut, to be United States District Judge for the District of Connecticut.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the time until 5:30 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled in the usual form.

Mr. RUBIO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, this is a sad day for the Senate. What does it say about this body that after having seen so many brave survivors of sexual assault in the military walk through the halls of this Congress for over a year now, we can't even give them the decency of a debate on the reform they so deeply believe in—a reform they believe in so deeply that they have selflessly retold their stories, reliving some of the worst moments of their lives, all so, hopefully, someone else doesn't have to suffer what they did. They may not wear the uniform anymore, but no one can tell me they aren't still serving their country through their sacrifice. Yet we can't even agree to vote for moving forward to debate the issue? They deserve a vote. The men and women who serve in our Armed Forces deserve a vote.

Anyone who has been listening has heard over and over from survivors of sexual assaults in the military how the deck has been stacked against them. For two full decades the Defense Department has been unable to uphold its continued failed promises of zero tolerance for sexual assault. But when the Senate can't even agree to debate the one reform that survivors have consistently said is needed to solve this crisis, we are telling those victims the deck is stacked against them right here in the Senate as well.

Last month this Congress rushed with great speed to remove a reduction in military pensions not slated to begin until 2015—a fix I fully supported. Legislative action was swift, and it was just. But I ask: Where is the same urgency to help stem the crisis of military sexual assault—an epidemic that is happening today? How is it we can't

wait another week to stop a COLA reduction in pensions, but a reform that will lead to more rapists and predators behind bars waits indefinitely. We have been waiting for 20 years now—all the way back to 1992, when Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney stated zero tolerance in the wake of Tailhook.

As many of my colleagues likely saw, the Associated Press revealed new evidence last month that took years of freedom of information requests to obtain. After reviewing the documents from Okinawa, Japan, the AP described the handling of cases as “chaotic,” where commanders overruled recommendations to prosecute or dropped charges altogether.

Among the AP's findings: “Victims increasingly declined to cooperate with investigators or recanted—a sign they may have been losing confidence in the system.”

If that sounds familiar, it is because that is a fact that today's military leaders openly admit themselves. As Commandant of the Marine Corps James Amos put it:

Why wouldn't female victims come forward. Because they don't trust us. They don't trust the chain of command. They don't trust the leadership.

That is what we have a chance to fix right here today, but we are letting it pass us by because some here believe it is not even worthy of debate.

This was never about being a Democratic idea or a Republican idea. It is just about doing what is right. People of good faith from both sides of the aisle, from both parties, can unite to deliver an independent, objective, and nonbiased military justice system that is worthy of the sacrifice the men and women in uniform make every day. It has taken us a long time to get to this point—too long, in fact. Every day we wait is another day the deck remains stacked against sexual assault victims in our military—another day when, statistically, it is estimated that over 70 incidents of unwanted sexual contact occur, and nearly nine out of 10 go unreported.

Nowhere else in America would we allow a boss to decide if an employee was sexually assaulted, except in the U.S. military.

The men and women of our military deserve to have unbiased, trained military prosecutors reviewing their cases and making the ultimate decision about whether to go to trial solely on the merits of the evidence. They deserve a fair shot at justice today, not after another year of a system that is broken under any metric. They deserve a vote that a bipartisan majority of the Senate supports, and they deserve that vote now.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the role.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I am here very proudly and gratefully to support the nomination of Jeffrey Meyer as a U.S. district court judge for the District of Connecticut. I am proud because of his extraordinary credentials. I am grateful to President Obama and, hopefully, to this body for giving Connecticut the services of a professor, litigator, prosecutor, and a person of extraordinary integrity and ability. Jeffrey Meyer has all of the qualifications in extraordinary depth and quality to be a great judge. He is truly a lawyers' lawyer. He is a prosecutors' prosecutor. He will be a judges' judge.

Mr. Meyer served as a legal aid lawyer in Vermont for Vermont Legal Aid and as an associate of two Washington, DC, law firms. He really has made his mark as a prosecutor in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Connecticut, where he served for 10 years, five of them as appeals chief. He also was a law clerk to Judge Oakes for the Second Circuit. He has a grounding in academia, having taught at Quinnipiac Law School and served as Supreme Court advocacy clinic teacher at Yale, where he has also been a visiting professor since 2000.

I am abbreviating and summarizing his credentials because they are well documented and well known in this body. What can't be summarized so easily is the quality of judgment he has and that befits a judge on the Federal court.

Judges on the U.S. district court, as I know from my own experience, having litigated for quite a few years, are often the last point of justice for many people in our country. They are the voice and face of justice for so many people who may not have the means or the persistence to appeal further, and for most litigants he will be the voice and face of justice before his court. That is a very solemn responsibility. It is a responsibility for life.

These decisions about who will serve on the district court are among the most important we make in this body, so we approach it seriously and thoughtfully. Following the high standards we impose, Jeffrey Meyer aptly and abundantly meets the test for serving as a U.S. district court judge: His background in litigation; his experience in actually trying cases; his background as an academic, in thinking through some of the toughest issues of the law and teaching others how to do it, how to actually be a lawyer; and, of course, his judgment and his sense of perspective and, most importantly, his integrity.

I have worked with Jeff Meyer. I know of his dedication to his clients. I have worked with him in very tough personal situations where his advice to a client would make a critical difference in that person's life. I know he