

Army in World War I and was awarded the Silver Star. His father served in the Army in World War II. William had three brothers: Paul, Jim, and John. William's brothers remember him as a dedicated marine who gave his life for a cause in which he strongly believed. They cherish the memories and the stories they keep in their hearts today about their brother.

GILBERT "GIL" BARGMANN

Gil Bargmann was born July 26, 1950. He grew up in Hannover, served in the Army, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment. He died on June 19, 1969, at the age of 18.

Gil had three brothers and two sisters. He grew up on a dairy farm in the Hannover area. One of his squad brothers credits Gil for saving his life by covering his flank the day Gil died.

Gil's niece, Briana, connected three men who served with Gil in Vietnam with Gil's family. Three of Gil's friends and two of their wives traveled to Hannover to meet Gil's mother and siblings.

I am struck as I go through these names and as I review all of the people, and I am struck, sitting by children who are maybe just 2 years younger than these brave men who served our country. I know it is impossible to predict what amazing things they would have done had they not sacrificed their lives. So it is so important that we recognize their heroism, that we recognize their sacrifice, and that we honor them during this period of recognition of the sacrifices of the Vietnam war.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

ATF PROPOSAL ON M855
AMMUNITION

Mr. MORAN. Mr. President, in my home State of Kansas, we enjoy a special way of life. I have talked about it many times on the Senate floor. That special way of life includes a rich tradition of hunting, target shooting, and other law-abiding activities covered by our Second Amendment rights. Our State welcomes nearly 300,000 hunters each year, and in turn those individuals create jobs and economic opportunity for many Kansans.

I was disturbed to learn of a recent proposal by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. On Friday, February 13, the ATF proposed—without any instruction from Congress, on its own volition—a framework to determine whether M855 ammunition, which is popular for hunting and target shooting, is primarily intended to be used for sporting or if it is more likely to be used in handguns by

criminals. ATF indicated it wants to ban the ammunition, which has been used by law-abiding citizens, including Kansans, for decades because it is "armor piercing" and, therefore, poses a risk to the safety of law enforcement officials.

The fact is that almost all rifle ammunition is armor-piercing. The Law Enforcement Protection Act of 1986, which ATF cites as a statutory authority to ban this ammunition, specifically exempts armor-piercing ammunition "which the Attorney General finds is primarily intended to be used for sporting purposes." Congress's intent for providing this exemption was clear: Law-abiding citizens should not be deprived of their right to use this ammo for legitimate purposes, such as target shooting, hunting, and shooting competitions. In fact, Kansans, who expressed their concern to me about this issue in recent weeks, have consistently indicated that the proposed ban would directly interfere with their sporting uses and, more broadly, their Second Amendment rights.

Most troubling about the ATF proposal was how it intended to judge "likely use" of this ammunition. ATF planned to judge that M855 ammunition is more likely to be used in a handgun for criminal purposes rather than for sporting purposes simply based upon the bullet's weight and type of firearm in which it could be loaded. What was missing was any interest by ATF in the law-abiding ammunition consumers across the country. How might they use the ammunition? How could ATF determine primary intended use without conducting a study on how that ammunition actually would be used by the public?

The ATF framework failed to make any objective conclusions and would have served as nothing more than a tool for increased gun restrictions—and I would say increased gun restrictions that weren't passed by Congress.

Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee chairman, Senator GRASSLEY, circulated a letter among my colleagues and to me directed at ATF Director B. Todd Jones outlining these and many other concerns related to the proposed framework to ban this ammunition. I join Senator GRASSLEY in signing this letter, and I am thankful it appears that our message was received because on Tuesday of this week the ATF announced that it will "formally delay" the implementation of the proposed ammunition ban. I thank the thousands—in fact, tens of thousands of Americans who voiced their concerns both to Congress and to ATF. ATF received an incredible 80,000 public comments on the proposed framework.

Congress has never banned this ammunition and has never intended to ban it. In the future, the ATF should not propose to ban any widely used form of ammunition favored by law-abiding civilians for lawful purposes.

Again, I am thankful that the proposed framework has now been re-

scinded, and I will continue my efforts in the Senate to support the Second Amendment freedoms of all Americans. I yield to the Senator from Ohio.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I appreciate the good work of the Senator from Kansas. We have worked on, in the Banking Committee, a number of issues together, and I appreciate the work we have been able to do across party lines. So I thank the Senator for that.

TRADE TRANSPARENCY

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I am joined on the floor this evening by Senator CASEY. Just 2 weeks ago, he and I and a half dozen other Senators came to the floor in an unusual configuration. It is not something Senators do all that often. We came as a group, but each spoke individually about our concerns with trade promotion authority and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, both the so-called fast track and the trade agreement that is being negotiated among the United States, Canada, Mexico, some Pacific nations, and Peru, I believe, too, as well as nations in Asia.

The concerns we have and the concerns an increasing number of Senators have about trade promotion authority, about fast track—they changed the name because they knew the public did not like fast track, so they tried to obscure it by coming up with some technical-sounding name—trade promotion authority. We have increasingly seen the public rising up against these trade agreements because we have watched them for some 20 years, and we have seen the damage the North American Free Trade Agreement did to the United States, to our economy, and to workers around the world. We have seen that has been sort of a prototype for the next generation of CAFTA and other agreements in Colombia and Peru and now the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

I want to discuss this, in part, because we know so little about the U.S. Trade Representative's upcoming trade agenda and specifically the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The way we pass trade agreements, and it is important for colleagues to understand this, stands in a class by itself. No other legislation we do is as hidden not only from public view but even those in this body whose constitutional duty it is to approve or reject them.

Senator CASEY and I stood here in the well of the Senate, we raised our right hands—Senator CASEY and I were honored to come in at the same time, as of January 2007 and then again in January 2013. We raised our right hands and took an oath understanding our constitutional duty to approve or reject trade agreements.

Article I, section 8 of the Constitution entrusts in Congress the authority to regulate commerce with foreign nations, but the current TPP language is

being guarded as though it were a State secret. Members of this body were permitted to view the language only with U.S. Trade Representative staff there, not with their personal staff.

Nora Todd, in my office, who has great skills and expertise and has worked on trade issues for years, because she is not committee staff is not able to view this. The USTR refuses to put down in writing their policy for restricting access. So the access is restricted, but we can't even find out from the U.S. Trade Rep what this actually means, except we know access is restricted. It means few Senators and fewer of our staff—and damn the public who have worked on this issue—have ever seen the text at all.

Trade agreements such as this affect our entire economy. Forty percent of world GDP is included in this Trans-Pacific Partnership, with countries as big as Japan, the United States, and economies as big as Canada's and Mexico's. This will affect the entire economy and cause ripple effects for decades.

We know what CAFTA did, and that was only three countries—the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This is four times that many countries. They should be debated in a transparent process. The public should know, Senators and Members of Congress should know. We don't know enough. Yet the Finance Committee fairly soon is going to push this trade agreement out of fast track and the agreement out onto the Senate Floor, when we simply don't have access to information.

Let me give an example. Last year, the U.S. Trade Rep developed a proposal on something called the rules of origin for automobiles. That really matters in my State. It matters in Senator CASEY's State because they are such a major part of the steel and other supply chain items for autos. I have been trying to work with the USTR to better understand this proposal since last October. I personally spoke again last week with Ambassador Froman to understand it better.

Rules of origin are very important provisions in a trade agreement. They determine how much of a product's components need to come from TPP countries in order to qualify under the agreement. What that means is we know as American consumers it is hard to find a suit, it is hard to find much of anything made in the U.S.A., but we also know many American consumers would like to buy products that are 40 or 50 or 80 percent from the United States—made by workers in Kansas or workers in Pennsylvania or workers in Ohio. But we aren't able to tell under the rules of origin what that number is and where those components come from.

So if there is going to be a trade advantage to Japan—and they have had plenty of trade advantages when it comes to autos—we don't know if those automobile components come 70 or 80

percent from Japan and maybe 20 percent from China or 60 percent from China. We don't know that because the U.S. Trade Rep will not tell us. So what we are concerned about—and China is not in TPP—is that the People's Republic of China will manufacture so much of the supply chain, so many of these components, backdoor it into China, so people in China are hired instead of people in the United States or the people in these countries we are trading with.

These provisions are critical for the auto supply chain in our country because they are already facing fierce competition with China. We need to make sure we have strong rules of origin so cars are made and assembled in TPP countries, not China. The auto supply chain employs 120,000 people in Ohio. It will be affected by the auto rules of origin in TPP.

To understand how important that is, our country, from 2000 to 2010, the end of the Clinton administration until 2 years into the Obama administration—mostly the 8 Bush years—we lost 5 million manufacturing jobs, 60,000 plants in places such as Pennsylvania and Ohio. We know that. Our economy has been growing, however, since two things: the Recovery Act of 2009 and the auto rescue of 2010. We have seen 58, 59, 60 months of economic growth, consecutive months, since then. That underscores how important auto is in my State, where, as I said, 120,000 people are in the auto supply chain.

But we continue to face roadblocks just to getting the basic information on a plan that would have a major effect on Ohio's auto supply chain. What I don't understand is why would this body, why would the 100 people who took that oath, as Senator CASEY and I did in 2013 and 2007 in this Chamber, vote for something we can't get information about? Why would anybody who took an oath of office do that?

We worked with the administration to rescue the auto manufacturing sector, and it helped save our auto industry—tens of thousands of jobs in that supply chain—so I want to make sure the TPP rules of origin for autos will not benefit China. I want it to benefit American companies, and I want it to benefit American workers.

I grew up in Mansfield, OH. I have seen what globalization has done for jobs, and I have seen what globalization has done to wages. Mansfield, OH, is a city of 50,000. We have a lot of Mansfields in my State: Zanesville, Chillicothe, Ravenna, Lima, Springfield. These are cities that used to be prosperous manufacturing hubs that have lost so many jobs. Not all jobs were lost due to globalization, but a big part of that is globalization. That is why, when USTR will not share the information we need to understand this proposal, it is particularly troubling.

We can see what has happened. This trade agreement—corporate handout, worker sellout—look what has happened since 1980. These are the average

salaries, the blue line, of the richest 1 percent in America. Look what has happened to the richest 1 percent starting in the early days of the Reagan administration. Look what has happened to everyone else. We have the richest 1 percent who have seen their incomes go up about 130 percent. We have everybody else's incomes that have gone up around 10, 12 or 15 percent—and that is not for here, that is for overall.

Again, globalization is not the entire reason, but when they will not share, when USTR will not tell us what is going on, it is particularly troubling when we look at this chart. We know our workers—we know Ohio workers and manufacturers can compete with anyone in the world, but they need fair rules and they need a level playing field. They do not have that here. It is clear. The rules of origin aren't the only part of the deal being developed in the dark. News reports yesterday revealed the USTR may be negotiating side letters on intellectual property provisions. The same report indicates the side letters might cover other issues as well.

We remember the NAFTA side letters on labor and the environment and we know how effective they were. They weren't. Clearly, they were sort of the Bush administration, the first, negotiating and then the Clinton administration, trying to get support in the Senate and the House, adding these side agreements that amounted to nothing. It was to placate workers and to placate the environmentalists, but it did very little. We can't make the same mistake with the TPP.

Will the side letters be covered by the agreement's dispute settlement? When will Members of Congress be able to see these letters? What impact will they have on the overall agreement? These are questions Members of Congress are asking and we are not getting answers from Ambassador Froman or the U.S. Trade Rep's office. It is time the USTR provided some real answers.

It is our job to scrutinize every trade proposal to ensure it creates a level playing field. It isn't just another corporate handout that shifts jobs overseas.

This lack of transparency isn't limited to TPP. I have asked the USTR to make the United States-European Union—the so-called TTIP agreement—proposal public. Once again, these requests for more transparency have been met with nothing but secrecy. Meanwhile, the EU makes their proposals public.

This isn't about protecting the privileges of Senator CASEY and me—the privilege of Senators, this is about protecting our small companies, our manufacturing companies that get obliterated when large companies move offshore. This is about protecting the workers in places such as Toledo and Akron, OH. This is about protecting these communities. When plants close in Jackson, OH, and plants close in Waverly and Portsmouth and St.

Clairsville and Lisbon, school districts lay off teachers, police departments lay off cops, and cities lay off firefighters.

We have been down this road too many times in this country. It has been more than 20 years since NAFTA. Too many plants shut down in Ohio, too many shut down in Pennsylvania, and too many shut down in the State of Louisiana—the State of the Presiding Officer. Too many good jobs were shipped abroad, and if they were replaced at all it is with low-wage jobs with little benefits.

Bad trade deals exacerbate the rise in inequality, corporate profits go up, and middle-class families struggle to get by. These trade agreements are all about corporate handouts and worker sellouts. Over the past four decades, worker productivity rose 75 percent, wages rose 9 percent. What that says, since 1946 into the Reagan years, productivity went like this, workers were this much more productive, and wages stayed parallel to that. But since the Reagan years, as productivity went up workers wages have been flat, except for the richest 1 percent, who saw their salaries explode. Everybody else has lived in an economy where things just don't get better.

The report of the Commission on Inclusive Prosperity, cochaired by Larry Summers, concluded that “powerful forces of globalization . . . must be navigated or inequalities will continue to widen, and for many, precarious low-skill work will increasingly become the norm.”

Fast-tracking—that is what TPA is—fast-tracking proposals such as TPP, without congressional input, without congressional knowledge, let alone public knowledge of this—without congressional input, without oversight, even the bare facts of the deal—reduces our ability to navigate the forces of globalization and to advocate for the workers, which is what Senator CASEY and I spend most of our time doing here. It perpetuates the USTR’s approach to trade negotiations. I am in the middle of reading a book, “The House of Morgan,” about J.P. Morgan, Sr., and J.P. Morgan, Jr. I can’t help thinking, that attitude, the public be damned, is what the USTR is doing to us right now. They don’t care to share information with Senator CASEY and me and the rest of this body, supporters of the USTR and opponents of the USTR, and they sure don’t care about the public learning more about this. All of this will only lead to more inequality.

I want trade; I support trade; I want more trade. Ohio workers want access to new markets for our products. But we need trade that works. The way we get trade that works is not by rushing into more corporate-sponsored trade agreements without even knowing what we are signing. The USTR needs to open up the process; otherwise, the public is convinced they are going to see more corporate handouts and more worker sellouts.

I yield the floor to my friend, Senator CASEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I rise to address the same issue Senator BROWN raised, the issue of trade, and I thank him and commend him for not only his leadership on this issue for many years, his time in the U.S. House of Representatives and now in the Senate for the last 8 years, but especially his work and his focus on this issue most recently because we are moving into a period now of great debate about trade promotion authority and trade agreements that will be debated here in the Senate and throughout the country. So I commend him for that.

What Senator BROWN spoke to was a basic economic insecurity that so many Americans feel. It didn’t just arise in the last couple of years. This is a long-standing problem and a long-standing threat to people’s economic insecurity. Trade agreements play a role in it.

I spoke the last time when the Senator and I were here about the concerns I had about these trade agreements, but also the specific concern about jobs or the adverse impact on jobs since the North American Free Trade Agreement and then subsequent trade agreements in the intervening years. Today I rise to talk about a related but very urgent issue, and that is the issue of wages. Senator BROWN spoke to this as well.

We know that middle-class spending power is the main driver of our economic growth and the foundation of the American dream. If people have money in their pockets because they have reasonable and fair wages, they are going to drive the economy in a much more substantial way. But in recent years this spending power that I speak of, of most Americans, has fallen dramatically.

According to the Federal Reserve, the average worker’s weekly earnings were 15 percent lower in 2012 than in 1972, when adjusted for inflation. So just in that roughly 40-year time period, wages were down in real dollars by 15 percent.

Senator BROWN referred to a disconnect between productivity and wage growth, and there was a recent chart that was developed by the Economic Policy Institute. The source for this is the Economic Policy Institute analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of Economic Analysis. I hold it up. It is not big enough for people to see, but there is a big line in the middle of this chart. Because it is a chart, I won’t enter it into the RECORD, but I will refer to it.

The basic conclusion is, when we look at the question of productivity growth and wage growth from 1948 to 2013, here is what we find. It is a two-chapter book. Chapter 1 is a positive chapter; chapter 2 is really disturbing. It is one of the most significant charts I have ever seen of what has happened to the wages of working Americans.

Here is what it says. From 1948 to 1973, productivity up 96.7 percent, hourly compensation up 91.3. So the difference between productivity increase and wage increase basically from World War II to 1973 was a differential of about 6 percentage points.

As Senator BROWN mentioned, an alignment over that time period between wages and productivity makes sense. When workers are producing more, when the economy is, as it was after World War II, producing so much more, wages should go up in a commensurate manner. Unfortunately, that is chapter 1. Chapter 2 of this book starts in 1973 and it ends on this chart in 2013. In that 40-year time period, productivity was up again. It wasn’t up 96.7 percent, but it was up 74.4 percent, so still a strong productivity increase between 1973 and 2013.

What, we might ask, happened to wages? Was it still a line? Was there a gap? Was it exactly the same? Unfortunately, the story is a terribly sad story. Hourly compensation, 1973 to 2013, was up a grand total of 9.2 percent.

So in the first period, wages were up 91.3 percent. In the second period, 1973 to 2013, wages were only up 9.2 percent. No one in this body, no one in the other body in Congress—no one who represents the American people in Congress or any State legislature, no one who represents our country, can be satisfied with a 9.2-percent wage growth over 40 years when we are still having robust productivity increases.

There are a lot of reasons for it. There are a lot of causes we could make that we could attribute to that terrible diminution, but we have to do something about it. Part of that is having an agenda that will speak to wages and the middle class, and not to the issues that are in front of us, including these trade agreements.

I would argue without a doubt that our trade agreements have made this problem significantly worse over the last 20 or 25 years, and I am afraid we are headed down that path were trade promotion authority, the so-called Trans-Pacific Partnership, enacted into law.

Here is what the wage diminution meant in Pennsylvania in a shorter period of time, about 15 years. Pennsylvania median household income fell by 3 percent in the years between 1998 and 2013, according to the Census Bureau.

But this trend we are talking about continues today. Even as our economy recovers and stock markets reach a record high, the average American’s paycheck is barely keeping up with the rising cost of living. So this problem of a lack of wage growth is nowhere near being solved.

The decline in middle-class workers’ purchasing power—another way of saying wages—is not just unfair, but economic analysis also shows it is a drag on our economy, which is primarily driven by consumption. So this isn’t just a story of a worker and his or her

family being pulled down by very powerful forces, only having their wages go up 9 percent in 40 years, it is also about the wider economy. If folks don't have fair wages, it is going to drag down the economy, and we are seeing evidence of that over those 40 years.

But instead of enacting policies that help the middle class and focus on this issue of wages or the lack of growth of wages, like policies such as increasing the minimum wage—that would be one of the right things to do to go at this problem—or facilitating access to high-quality childcare, for a lot of families the second highest cost they have other than housing and maybe some other expense, usually housing or some other expense—No. 2 is usually the cost of childcare. It is a barrier to work. If you can't afford childcare, you can't go to work or you have to accept a job that pays less.

Extended relief to workers displaced by foreign competition. I would put the word “unfair” foreign competition. That is something else we should work on.

So if we are working on raising the minimum wage, growing the middle class, helping families pay for childcare, helping families pay for the terribly high cost of higher education, maybe no other number is more disturbing than this “wage, 9 percent in 40 years” number that I mentioned. Maybe the only other number more disturbing is the cost of college education going up higher than anything in our lives the last couple of decades.

Middle-class workers know this type of policy that some are pursuing is headed in the wrong direction. Instead of them seeing us working on policies that will advance and support the middle class, they see Congress considering a massive trade agreement with 11 Asia Pacific countries. So these same middle-class families who look to us for progress and action and results for the middle class and for their wages are seeing a lot of folks in Washington focus on trade agreements that will make the problem worse.

A recent Pew poll of the Nation found that 83 percent of Americans said free trade does not raise their wages and 45 percent said so-called free trade lowers American wages. For many years, many economists have argued that trade was a net positive for Americans and did not have a noticeable impact on wages. However, recently I think other economists are having a different perspective.

A 2009 paper by three economists, one from the University of Pennsylvania, found that when workers are displaced by trade and switch jobs, they suffer real wage loss of between 12 and 17 percent. So in light of this data by economists that says when you have a job switch or a job change because of trade and your wages are going to go down 12 to 17 percent, and all the other data that we have about what has happened in States such as Pennsylvania, or Ohio, which Senator BROWN rep-

resents—what has happened to those communities and those people—why would we go down the same path of ratifying agreements which will do the same over time? I don't think we should, and that is why this debate is very important.

Another analysis by the Economic Policy Institute, a standard economic model shows that American workers without a college degree earn \$1,800 less each year as a result of expanded trade. Again, further exacerbation of the same problem that trade agreements lead to.

I know people in my home State of Pennsylvania—and I am sure this is true in Ohio and a number of other States—are skeptical of these trade deals because they have experienced these pressures firsthand. This is real life for them. So before we cut another deal, we should work to level the playing field for our own companies and workers, including ensuring workers and companies get real relief from unfair trade practices.

Pennsylvanians and, I think, Americans want Congress and the administration to focus on policies that lead to both good jobs and good wages. Fundamentally, I argue that these agreements cause major concerns on both fronts, the jobs front as well as the wage front.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

SAVING THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak briefly about an issue that all Senators should be concerned about, and that is the future of the Organization of American States.

The origin of the OAS dates to the First International Conference of American States held in Washington from October 1889 to April 1890. The OAS was formally established in 1948 with the signing of the OAS Charter, which entered into force in 1951.

As the OAS Charter states, its mission is to achieve among its members “an order of peace and justice, and to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence.” That is an important and inspiring responsibility, and no less so today than when the OAS was founded, although many of the challenges of one-half century ago have been replaced by new challenges today.

Today the OAS consists of 35 independent States and is, at least in composition and tradition, the primary political, judicial, and social governmental forum in this hemisphere. Another 69 States and the European Union have permanent observer status.

The OAS supports programs and activities in four principle areas to carry out its mission—democracy, human rights, security, and development—and it does so in a myriad of ways, some far more successfully than others.

Few here may be aware that the United States is by far the largest contributor to the OAS, paying 60 percent of its annual budget. Two other countries pay 22 percent and the remaining 32 countries together pay only 12 percent.

Of course, the United States has by far the largest economy and should pay its fair share, but no country should be assessed to pay more than 50 percent. Other members should also pay their fair share, and we should all expect the OAS to be competently managed and to deliver tangible results that justify its expenditures.

The OAS can be proud of the indispensable work of the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and the Inter-American Court, its internationally respected election observer missions, and other activities to support democracy and promote transparent and accountable governance. These priorities should be strengthened, as I will mention shortly.

But the reputation of the OAS as a hemispheric leader has taken a beating. This is partly due to ideological polarization driven primarily by the viscerally anti-United States rhetoric and policies of the leaders of four of its member States, and partly due to the fact that the OAS has failed to exercise effective leadership in response to key issues and events, while recent sub-hemispheric groupings have taken up much of the slack and become the region's principal fora.

The OAS has allowed itself to be spread too thin, accepting too many mandates from its member States without rigorous assessment of the costs and benefits. Scarce resources have been spent on employees—without regard to transparent hiring and promotion practices—some of whom contribute little to the organization. At the same time, the OAS is facing severe budget constraints and there is no monetary reserve to respond to contingencies. It is astounding that because some countries, including Brazil, stopped paying their quotas or are in arrears, and the OAS had nothing in reserve, it had to obtain a loan in order to pay employee salaries. This is not the kind of management the OAS needs; it is mismanagement.

The Inter-American Commission and the Inter-American Court play essential roles as institutions of last resort for victims of human rights violations in countries where impunity is the norm. When corrupt, dysfunctional judicial systems fail to provide access to justice for victims of crimes against humanity or other violations of human rights, the OAS helps fill that void. Likewise, the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression plays a critical role at a time when some governments, such as Venezuela and Ecuador, are engaged in a systematic effort to intimidate and silence their critics in the