

we have watched as President Maduro and former-President Chavez have systematically dismantled democracy in the country. They have removed checks on the executive. They have corrupted the judiciary and the rule of law. They have usurped the powers of the legislature. They have politicized the military. And they have suppressed freedom of the press.

No one should be surprised that 15 years of democratic deterioration has led to economic ruin, to rampant criminality, and to an increasingly dangerous political polarization. But the first step to correct course and help Venezuelans back from the brink of being a failed state is the exercise this weekend of that most fundamental democratic right with a huge voter turnout that could help move the country back toward democracy and the rule of law.

We should take note that Latin America is speaking out forcefully about the situation in Venezuela, but we in the United States should be preparing our own response. Last week, the Washington Post Editorial Board noted that should the vote be disrupted in Venezuela, the “U.S. should be ready to respond with censure and sanctions.” I couldn’t agree more.

In December of 2014, the U.S. Congress, with the unanimous consent of both Chambers, approved the Venezuela Defense of Human Rights and Civil Society Act—legislation which I authored and introduced with Senators Nelson, Rubio, Kirk, and McCain. This bipartisan bill called for mandatory sanctions against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and provided the administration with the authorities it needs. The administration has used these sanctions once, but we should be prepared, if necessary, to use them again.

We know what is happening in Venezuela: subversion of democracy through state-sponsored violence; repression; hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans in the streets earlier this year protesting alarming levels of violence and crime; sky-high inflation rates; the scarcity of food and basic consumer goods. That is today’s Venezuela. The question is: Can we make tomorrow better for the people of Venezuela?

The world watched as President Maduro and his government responded to protests with a brutal display of force not seen in our hemisphere in over a decade. The results: more than 40 deaths, more than 50 documented cases of torture, and thousands of unlawful detentions. In May, Human Rights Watch released a devastating report that said Venezuelan human rights violations “were part of a systematic practice by Venezuelan security forces” and that these abuses were intended to “punish people for their political views.”

As I have said repeatedly and as is the case today, not one Venezuelan Government official or member of the security forces has been held account-

able for their role in beating, shooting, jailing, or torturing peaceful protesters—not one. Now they threaten to hijack the electoral process, and they must know that the world is watching and that there will be consequences to their actions.

TRIBUTE TO ROBERT DICK DOUGLAS, JR.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring my constituent Robert Dick Douglas, Jr. Mr. Douglas earned Eagle Scout rank 90 years ago today, making him the longest serving Eagle alive.

The Boy Scouts of America recently highlighted Mr. Douglas’ life in their magazine, which I think would impress anyone who reads it. I am pleased to highlight some of the points in the article.

A native of Greensboro, Mr. Douglas eagerly joined the Boy Scouts the very same day that he celebrated his 12th birthday. After earning his Eagle Scout award on December 8, 1925, Mr. Douglas was one of three scouts selected for an African safari with famed photographers and adventurers Martin and Osa Johnson. Upon his return from this journey, Douglas coauthored the best selling documentary “Three Boy Scouts in Africa,” which went on to sell 125,000 copies in its first year of publication. The book afforded Douglas the opportunity to tour the Nation speaking with the likes of Amelia Earhart at school and civic assemblies.

The publisher was evidently so impressed with Douglas’ work that he sent the young Eagle Scout to Alaska to write another adventure book titled “A Boy Scout in the Grizzly Country.” From that experience, Douglas became an advocate of land and wildlife conservation and, when he returned home, began sharing his newfound knowledge with the Nation through public appearances.

Douglas’ successes continued well into adulthood, going on to graduate from law school at Georgetown University and to become a labor and employment law attorney at his father’s legal practice. Mr. Douglas served as a lawyer for over 70 years and managed to make his way before the Supreme Court. Douglas also served in the FBI, where he had the chance to work under J. Edgar Hoover for a time. Mr. Douglas retired at the age of 96.

In recognition of his longevity and commitment to scouting and his community, the 103-year-old Douglas was presented with the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award on September 24, 2015. During the ceremony, Mr. Douglas extolled scouting as a significant influence on his life. He insists to this day that scouting taught him that he could do just about anything that he wanted to undertake. It is with great pleasure that I pay tribute to Robert Dick Douglas, Jr., today on his 90th anniversary of attaining Eagle Scout.

RECOGNIZING MURDOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I wish to applaud Murdock Elementary School of Lafayette, IN, for being recognized as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has recognized over 7,500 public and nonpublic schools that have demonstrated a vision of educational excellence for all students, regardless of their social or economic background. Since its inception, this program has offered the opportunity for schools in every State to gain recognition for educational accomplishments in closing the achievement gaps among student groups.

Murdock Elementary School continues to be one of the best performing schools in the State of Indiana. It has been named an Indiana Four Star School for 4 consecutive years.

In 2014, Murdock Elementary School’s ISTEP+ pass rate for English/Language Arts scores reached 97.7 percent. Mathematics scores exceeded 95 percent, and the overall score for the school hit 94.3 percent.

Murdock Elementary School’s effectiveness can be found in its holistic approach and dedication to student achievement. Murdock staff, students, and students’ families work together to teach and instill values that develop strong character and demonstrate that every kid matters: honesty, effort, caring, respect, and teamwork. With some of the highest English and mathematics scores in Indiana, Murdock Elementary School is a stellar example of the benefits that result from dedication, motivation, collaboration, and family partnership in education.

I would like to acknowledge Murdock Elementary School principal, Janell Uerkwitz, the entire staff, the student body, and their families. The effort, dedication, and value you put into education led not only to this prestigious recognition, but will benefit you and our communities well into the future.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, I congratulate Murdock Elementary School, and I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

RECOGNIZING NORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I wish to applaud North Elementary School of Poseyville, IN, for being recognized as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has recognized over 7,500 public and nonpublic schools that have demonstrated a vision of educational excellence for all students, regardless of their social or economic background. Since its inception, this program has offered the opportunity for schools in every State to

gain recognition for educational accomplishments in closing the achievement gaps among student groups.

North Elementary School continues to be one of the best performing schools in the State of Indiana. It has been named an Indiana Four Star School several times.

In 2014, North Elementary School's ISTEP+ pass rate for English/Language Arts scores increased by over 7 percent to a 94.8 percent. Mathematics scores increased to 97.2 percent combined for third through fifth grades.

North Elementary School's effectiveness can be found in its holistic approach and dedication to student achievement. North Elementary staff, students, and students' families work together to teach and instill values that develop strong character including integrity, responsibility, effort, and kindness. With some of the highest English and mathematics scores in Indiana, North Elementary School is a stellar example of the benefits that result from dedication, motivation, collaboration, and family partnership in education.

I would like to recognize North Elementary School principal, Terri Waugaman, the entire staff, the student body, and their families. The effort, dedication, and value you put into education led not only to this prestigious recognition, but will benefit you and our communities well into the future.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, I congratulate North Elementary School, and I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

RECOGNIZING OAK TRACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I wish to applaud Oak Trace Elementary School of Westfield, IN, for being recognized as a 2015 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.

Established in 1982, the National Blue Ribbon Schools Program has recognized over 7,500 public and nonpublic schools that have demonstrated a vision of educational excellence for all students, regardless of their social or economic background. Since its inception, this program has offered the opportunity for schools in every State to gain recognition for educational accomplishments in closing the achievement gaps among student groups.

Oak Trace Elementary School continues to be one of the best performing schools in the State of Indiana. It has been named an Indiana Four Star School several times.

In 2014, Oak Trace Elementary School's ISTEP+ pass rate for English/Language Arts scores increased by over 2 percent to a full 100 percent. Mathematics scores increased to 98.7 percent combined for third through fourth grades.

Oak Trace Elementary School's effectiveness can be found in its holistic

approach and dedication to student achievement. Oak Trace staff, students, and students' families work together to teach and instill values that develop strong character including integrity, responsibility, effort, and kindness. With some of the highest English and mathematics scores in Indiana, Oak Trace Elementary School is a stellar example of the benefits that result from dedication, motivation, collaboration, and family partnership in education.

I would like to acknowledge Oak Trace Elementary School principal, Robin Lynch, the entire staff, the student body, and their families. The effort, dedication, and value you put into education led not only to this prestigious recognition, but will benefit you and our communities well into the future.

On behalf of the citizens of Indiana, I congratulate Oak Trace Elementary School, and I wish the students and staff continued success in the future.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNUAL NEWPORT WINTER CARNIVAL

• Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I wish to celebrate the 100th annual Winter Carnival held in Newport, NH.

The maiden Newport Winter Carnival was held in 1916, making it the oldest continuous winter carnival in the country and the largest annual event in Newport. For over a week in early February, Newport will be transformed into a winter wonderland. Families, friends, and visitors will gather for this yearly celebration and participate in events that include the ice fishing derby, hockey games, Main Street 1 Mile Run, horseback riding demos, horse show tournament, and countless gatherings, dinners, and historic remembrances, capped off by fireworks to light up the winter sky.

The Newport Winter Carnival is one of New Hampshire's longest and most exciting winter events. The people of Newport are justifiably proud of this unique and treasured tradition. The carnival epitomizes the spirit of the Granite State and celebrates New Hampshire's beautiful landscape and snow-covered season. Providing winter-time fun for the residents of and visitors to our State, Newport's Winter Carnival brings warmth and cheer throughout the frosty month of February.

On behalf of the people of New Hampshire, I join with the residents of Newport in celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Winter Carnival. I commend the people of Newport for this great New Hampshire tradition and wish the town of Newport continued success for generations to come.●

TRIBUTE TO JIM SMITH

• Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the distinguished ca-

reer of a great South Dakotan, Mr. Jim Smith.

Jim was born in Aberdeen, SD, in 1930, and was raised in Pierre. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in 1952 before attending law school at George Washington University. While still in law school, Jim worked as an elevator operator in the U.S. Capitol until he became a legislative assistant to South Dakota Senator Karl Mundt. He eventually served as minority counsel to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations. Upon graduation from law school, Jim became the associate Federal legislative counsel at the American Bankers Association from 1963 to 1968.

From 1969 to 1973, Jim headed the Treasury Department's Office of Congressional Relations, completing his tenure as Deputy Undersecretary of the Department under three separate Secretaries. In 1971, Jim was awarded the Alexander Hamilton Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Treasury Department. He was appointed by President Nixon as the 23rd U.S. Comptroller of the Currency in 1973, where he served until the end of the Ford Administration. Jim returned to the Midwest in 1977 to serve as the Executive Vice President of the First Chicago Corporation.

In 1980, Jim reconnected with his old friend, Charls E. Walker, from their days at the American Bankers Association. Jim joined Mr. Walker's consulting firm, Charls Walker Associates, later renamed Walker/Free Associates, until he formed The Smith-Free Group with Jim Free in 1995. For the past 35 years, Jim has advocated for a diverse range of issues before the Federal Government, including pro bono efforts on behalf of victims of Bernie Madoff's Ponzi scheme.

Jim came to Washington during President Eisenhower's administration, and his career has spanned 10 subsequent Presidents. His reputation as a modest, soft-spoken, and principled man is a testament to his South Dakota roots. He embodies the strong-willed, hard-working, and good-natured characteristics that all South Dakotans share; and his life story proves the continued resilience of the American Dream.

Jim is retiring to spend more time with his wife of 37 years, Karen, along with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. I would like to thank him for his service to both South Dakota and the country and congratulate him on a well-deserved retirement.●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.