

environmental protections, undermine education programs, or eviscerate Wall Street reform, including taking down the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Think about that.

The Republican Party is trying to make it harder for the American people to know how much money is being poured into the efforts that hurt consumers. In the past weeks alone, Wells Fargo perpetuated a huge scam on their customers, costing account holders millions of dollars and creating over 2 million fraudulent accounts. It was the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau that was instrumental in uncovering the scam and levying the largest fine in history.

So here we are just 2 weeks later sticking in riders to hide dark money from shareholders. That is exactly the type of dark money that attacks the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and the American people deserve to know who is funding those attacks.

The significance of this should not be understated. Ultimately, this is about silencing the voice of hard-working American families in favor of amplifying the speech and magnifying the influence of corporations. Unfortunately, it is all too emblematic of my Republican colleagues' approach to lawmaking. When corporations ask Republicans to jump, they say: How high? When big banks ask Republicans to roll back critical Wall Street reforms, they say: How far? When the oil industry asks Republicans for a tax subsidy, they say: How much? It is shameless. Clearly, my Republican colleagues are defiantly turning their backs on consumers.

We cannot continue down this obstructionist path paved with the shattered remains of our long-held willingness to help each other in times of crisis. If we continue down this path when Republicans are in charge, no assistance would be provided if the east coast suffered another superstorm because those are blue States. It would mean that a slow-moving infrastructure crisis in an inner city would be ignored as "other people's grief." It would mean that when Democrats are in charge, no relief would be provided for tornadoes in Oklahoma or floods in Kentucky because those are red States. That is not what we Democrats would do, and it is not, at the end of the day, the way to govern. We need to stop dividing our country into us versus them when it comes to fundamental human needs.

In this election season, let's remember that, above all, we are all Americans with common votes and shared values. Let's focus on doing right by the American people, rather than telling them we can solve all of our problems if we just turn the clock back to a better time and blame someone else—those people, the others—for our problems. That is not good politics, it is not good government, and it is not who we are as a nation or as a people.

I yield the floor.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, today I voted to move forward with a continuing resolution because I believe it is a fundamental responsibility of Congress to keep the government open. I am deeply frustrated, however, that, among the policies included in the amendment, the authors have failed to provide funding to address the Flint lead crisis or to allow the Export-Import Bank to operate at full capacity. As this body continues to work to develop a plan to keep the government operating, I strongly encourage both the majority leader and my colleagues to address these commonsense priorities.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

NATIONAL RICE MONTH

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, famously known as the Natural State, my home State of Arkansas holds the proud distinction as the Nation's leader in rice production.

Last year, Arkansas produced more than 50 percent of the total rice grown in the country. On average, farmers in Arkansas grow rice on 1.5 million acres each year. Ninety-six percent of those farms are family owned and operated. As the No. 1 producer of this crop, Arkansas has a unique role in the industry. That is why I am proud to recognize the 26th anniversary of National Rice Month.

I am pleased to promote policies that enable our farmers to manage risk and ensure that high-quality U.S. rice remains a staple on tables across the globe.

This industry is not only contributing to a nutritious and balanced diet, it is also an economic engine in rural America. Nationwide, the rice industry accounts for 125,000 jobs and contributes more than \$34 billion to the U.S. economy. In Arkansas, rice contributes more than \$1.8 billion to our State's economy and provides thousands of jobs. We can increase both of these numbers even more if we open additional markets for our rice producers to compete in.

Rice farmers all across America would benefit from a changing policy with Cuba because rice is a staple of the Cuban diet. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that U.S. rice exports could increase by \$365 million per year if financing and travel restrictions were lifted. Arkansas' agricultural secretary has said that the economic impact on the State's rice industry could be about \$30 million.

Rice production is efficient. More rice is being produced on less land, using less water and energy than 20 years ago. As great stewards of the land, rice farmers are committed to protecting and preserving our natural resources. I am proud to celebrate 26 years of National Rice Month and honor the more than 100,000 Americans involved in the rice industry.

Additionally, I wish to make a comment about the devastating floods that northeastern Arkansas experienced in

August. The recent floods caused serious damage to crop production, including rice. Many of these crops were near harvest stage.

The University of Arkansas estimates that the State suffered \$50 million in crop losses due to the recent flooding. This damage has largely flown under the radar, and the final damages may be more than this preliminary estimate. The Governor of Arkansas has requested disaster assistance from the USDA, and last week the Arkansas congressional delegation wrote a letter in support of the Governor's request. Secretary Vilsack committed to me that he would expedite this request as quickly as possible, and I encourage him to do so.

Agriculture accounts for nearly one-quarter of Arkansas' economic activity. One out of every six jobs in Arkansas is tied to agriculture. Rice production is a vital part of agriculture's contribution to Arkansas' economy. I am committed to helping our rice producers succeed in today's global economy.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

RECENT EVENTS IN ETHIOPIA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to bring the Senate's attention to the Ethiopian Government's brutal crackdown on protestors over the past 9 months. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 500 people have been killed by Ethiopian security forces in antigovernment demonstrations since November 2015, including over 100 gunned down in early August of this year alone.

These protests by the country's two largest ethnic groups, the Oromos and Amharas, reflect enduring tensions brought on by the Ethiopian Government's longstanding marginalization and persecution of these communities. But such grievances are shared by even broader segments of Ethiopian society, including from other communities that have been forcibly evicted from their land in the name of development and the journalists, civil society activists, and countless other political prisoners sitting in Ethiopian jails for speaking out against the government's repressive rule.

The international community, including the United States, has paid too little attention to the Ethiopian Government's repressive policies, focusing instead on the country's rapid development gains and the government's cooperation on regional security. But it is time for the Ethiopian Government to acknowledge that grievances stemming from marginalization, abuse, and

exclusive governance cannot be effectively addressed through the provision of basic services alone.

The United States should set an example by redefining its relationship with Ethiopia, starting with the recognition of this reality. In too many developing countries, legitimate concerns about unaccountable governance are given short shrift as aspirational and inconvenient tradeoffs for positive relations with host governments. But the quiet diplomacy of the past—backroom condemnation and public praise—has proven unable to ensure the sustainability of U.S. investments by failing to protect and promote stability, let alone encourage meaningful reform by the Ethiopian Government.

It is precisely because Ethiopia is a strategic partner of the U.S. that we should encourage remedies to the underlying tensions in the country. That does not mean we walk away from our partnership, but we should examine the type of assistance we provide to the Ethiopian Government to ensure it aligns with shared interests and activities that contribute to government capacity in a manner that addresses local concerns.

This is not without its challenges, and the only government that has the ability to successfully reform Ethiopia is its own. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and the rest of the Ethiopian leadership should begin by reassessing its crowd control tactics and ensuring accountability for those who have committed abuses. I support the call by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights for an independent, transparent, thorough, and effective investigation into violations of human rights committed during the unrest, and if the Ethiopian Government is interested in demonstrating its legitimacy, it would welcome such an inquiry.

I look forward to working with other Members of Congress, the Obama administration, and their successors to determine how best we can ensure that the assistance U.S. taxpayers provide to Ethiopia serves our long-term interests in the region.

IMPRISONMENT OF AYA HIJAZI

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to speak about a matter in Egypt, a long-time ally of the United States, a country with a rich history and culture, but whose people have suffered for years due to corrupt, repressive governments and an anemic economy that stagnates under excessive statist control. This is the situation despite more than \$75 billion in U.S. economic and military aid for Egypt over the past 50 years.

Today, more than 5 years after public protests led to the resignation of President Mubarak, followed by the election of the Muslim Brotherhood, the military-supported coup that forcibly removed and imprisoned President Morsi and thousands of his followers, and the election that brought President al-Sisi,

a former army general, to power, the United States and Egypt are struggling to preserve a long history of security cooperation.

That cooperation is important to the Middle East region as a whole, but U.S.-Egypt relations face increasing challenges as President al-Sisi tightens his grip on power by persecuting political opponents, silencing members of the media, including deporting American and other foreign journalists who criticize his policies and imprisoning representatives of civil society.

The brutal torture and killing of Giulio Regeni, an Italian student and journalist who many believe was an innocent victim of the Egyptian police, occurred only 4 months after the Egyptian army attacked a convoy of tourists in September 2015, killing 12 and injuring 10, including an American who continues to suffer from her injuries for which she has received no compensation.

Just last week, a court in Cairo froze the assets of some of Egypt's most prominent human rights defenders in an attempt to silence them and put their organizations out of business. The State Department responded by urging the Egyptian Government to ease restrictions on association and expression.

These and other incidents have cast a dark cloud over efforts to find a common way forward with the al-Sisi government.

In May 2015, after repeated appeals by me, Secretary of State Kerry, and others, the Egyptian Government finally released Mohammed Soltan, a young Egyptian-American who was imprisoned, along with his father, for nearly 2 years. His crime, if one can call it that, was taking part in a public protest. In return for his release, he was forced to give up his Egyptian citizenship, a Hobson's choice that no citizen of any country should have to make.

In the meantime, on May 1, 2014, the government arrested Aya Hijazi, 29 years old and also an Egyptian-American, whose husband, an Egyptian citizen, was also arrested, along with Sherif Talaat Mohammed, Amira Farag, and eventually Ibrahim Abd Rabbo, Karim Magdi, and Mohammed al-Sayyed Mohammed, for operating a nonprofit organization called the Belady Foundation, which is dedicated to helping abandoned and homeless children.

Backing up for a moment, Aya's mother and father came to the United States to pursue master's degrees and because Aya's grandmother, who lived in Virginia, wanted her family nearby. Three of Aya's uncles, an aunt, and their families live in Houston and are all American citizens. Aya grew up here, went to middle school and high school in Virginia, and graduated from George Mason University. At George Mason, she was a volunteer for Search for Common Ground, a respected peacebuilding organization based in Washington.

After graduating, Aya moved to Cairo where she met Mohammed Hassanein, whom she married, and who, like Aya, wanted to be involved in social work. Together they founded Belady, which means "our country," and which Aya and the members of her organization call "an island of humanity." That same year, Aya was accepted to study at the American University in Cairo, a prestigious institution that receives funding from the U.S. Government, focusing on social work and children's welfare, but she and her husband were arrested before she began her studies.

The charges against them are as salacious as they are farcical: sexually abusing children and paying them to participate in antigovernment demonstrations. Since then, Aya, her husband, and the five Belady volunteers have been in prison. After more than 2 years, the government has yet to disclose a shred of evidence to support the allegations, and Aya, her husband, and the other defendants are still awaiting a fair, public trial and a chance to defend themselves.

Aya Hijazi's case fits a pattern. We have seen it time and again, not only in Egypt, but in other repressive societies where governments are unaccountable and abuse the judicial process to silence dissent and intimidate those who are perceived, rightly or wrongly, to be engaged in activities that may reflect poorly on the authorities.

We all want relations with Egypt to improve, just as we want the Egyptian people to enjoy the rights and opportunities they deserve. With ISIS and other extremist groups infiltrating throughout the Middle East and beyond, impoverished Egyptian youths, who have few educational and professional options, are particularly vulnerable to ISIS recruitment.

But the more governments curtail the rights and ability of people with grievances to express themselves and to seek redress through peaceful means, the more likely it is that they will resort to violence. This is not a new concept. Anyone who has read the Declaration of Independence understands it. It is what ultimately brought about the downfall of President Mubarak.

The Egyptian Government has imprisoned Aya without trial for more than 850 days. That alone is inexcusable and a violation of Egyptian law, which holds that no one can be subjected to pretrial detention for more than 2 years without being released with or without bail. On February 3, 2016, the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights published a petition signed by 25 Egyptian human rights organizations against the detention of the Belady founders and volunteers. On May 20, 2016, the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization submitted Aya's case to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, seeking her release. On May 21, Aya's trial date was