

There was a plot to assassinate the former Prime Minister of Montenegro and take over the Montenegrin Parliament. The suspects in that case scurried back to Moscow, and the Russian authorities refused to turn them over to the Montenegrins or even make them available for questioning in Moscow. To this day, Russian-supported NGOs and media propaganda continue to rail against Montenegro's NATO membership.

Russia does not get a veto over decisions of the alliance. We need to send a strong message of resolve. This is not an isolated circumstance with Russia. We have seen how they interfered in our elections. We have seen what they are doing in Europe today.

We see all these different activities by Russia, and we have to protect ourselves. One way we protect ourselves is by making our own decisions as to who should be admitted into NATO. Another is that we should have an independent commission take a look at what Russia was doing in their interference with our elections and what they are trying to do in trying to compromise our democratic system of government. I think the events that occurred in recent weeks of additional contacts that Russia made with members of the Trump administration just underscore the importance for that independent commission to take a look at what happened.

I stand here today in support of NATO enlargement. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee recently voted by voice vote in support of this bid—unanimously, Democrats and Republicans. This is not a partisan issue. We have had a request from the President to take up this issue. Nearly all NATO members have approved Montenegro's bid. We are among the last to ratify, and we must get the job done. Tonight, we can take a major step forward in that regard.

What is the case for Montenegro's membership? Admission of Montenegro would mark another important step forward, fully integrating the Balkans into international institutions that have helped to contribute to peace and stability over the years in Europe. Croatia and Albania joined the alliance in 2009 and have been valuable contributors to accomplishing NATO's objectives since then. I hope that Montenegro's admission will help them motivate the reforms necessary for other Balkan countries to join.

Montenegro has made outsized contributions to NATO missions, despite not being a full member. I understand that in Afghanistan, Montenegro has rotated 20 percent of its armed forces through the ISAF and the resolute support missions. Twenty percent of their force—that is a substantial contribution. It also contributed to the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and other NATO missions.

No country outside the alliance gets a veto over who gets to join, especially Russia. So we must send a strong sig-

nal. I urge my colleagues to pass this resolution and get it to the President so the President can deposit the instrument of ratification at NATO in support of Montenegro's bid. I urge my colleagues to support the mission.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum call be waived.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

#### CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the Treaties Calendar No. 1, treaty document No. 114-12, Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro.

Mitch McConnell, Cory Gardner, Steve Daines, John Barrasso, Joni K. Ernst, Bob Corker, John Cornyn, Lindsey Graham, Jeff Flake, James M. Inhofe, Roy Blunt, David Perdue, John McCain, Pat Roberts, Tom Cotton, Jerry Moran, Mike Rounds.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the Protocol to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 on the Accession of Montenegro shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Georgia (Mr. ISAKSON).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MORAN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 97, nays 2, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 97 Ex.]

#### YEAS—97

Alexander	Daines	Kennedy
Baldwin	Donnelly	King
Barrasso	Duckworth	Klobuchar
Bennet	Durbin	Lankford
Blumenthal	Enzi	Leahy
Blunt	Ernst	Manchin
Booker	Feinstein	Markey
Boozman	Fischer	McCain
Brown	Flake	McCaskill
Burr	Franken	McConnell
Cantwell	Gardner	Menendez
Capito	Gillibrand	Merkley
Cardin	Graham	Moran
Carper	Grassley	Murkowski
Casey	Harris	Murphy
Cassidy	Hassan	Murray
Cochran	Hatch	Nelson
Collins	Heinrich	Perdue
Coons	Heitkamp	Peters
Corker	Heller	Portman
Cornyn	Hirono	Reed
Cortez Masto	Hoeven	Risch
Cotton	Inhofe	Roberts
Crapo	Johnson	Rounds
Cruz	Kaine	Rubio

Sanders	Strange	Warner
Sasse	Sullivan	Warren
Schatz	Tester	Whitehouse
Schumer	Thune	Wicker
Scott	Tillis	Wyden
Shaheen	Toomey	Young
Shelby	Udall	
Stabenow	Van Hollen	

NAYS—2

Lee

Paul

NOT VOTING—1

Isakson

The PRESIDING OFFICER. On this vote, the yeas are 97, the nays are 2.

Three-fifths of the Senators duly chosen and sworn having voted in the affirmative, the motion is agreed to.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today in favor of the resolution of ratification for Montenegro's accession to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, better known as NATO.

Many of my colleagues are unaware of the fact that the State of Maine has a special relationship with Montenegro. It is through the National Guard State Partnership Program.

I thank the majority leader, Senator MCCONNELL, Chairman CORKER, Senator MCCAIN, the Democratic leadership, Senator JOHNSON, Senator MURPHY, and all of those who were instrumental in bringing this resolution to the floor for consideration today.

Montenegro's accession to NATO will serve the strategic interests of the United States, it will help to promote stability in the Balkans, and it will make us safer. Montenegro has already proven its support for American interests, having sent troops to Afghanistan in support of NATO- and U.S.-led operations there. Although not yet a member of the European Union, Montenegro also voluntarily joined the EU sanctions regime against Russia in response to Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilizing actions in eastern Ukraine. Most important, I have great confidence that Montenegro will meet the collective defense obligations of NATO membership.

For the past 10 years, with the assistance of the Maine National Guard through the State Partnership Program, Montenegro has worked hard to reform its military and to strengthen the rule of law to come into compliance with NATO requirements, as defined in NATO's Membership Action Plan. Even today, Maine National Guard members are deployed to Montenegro to assist its Ministry of Defense in furthering its integration into NATO standards and processes.

I want to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all of the

members of the Maine National Guard who have participated in this operation, including the former and current adjutant general, GEN Bill Libby and GEN Doug Farnham, as well as our current guardsman stationed in Montenegro, Army CPT Nicolas Phillips. All of them have worked very hard during the past 10 years to help Montenegro get ready for this highly significant moment.

We must be clear-eyed about the fact that the Russian Federation has undertaken an extensive overt and covert campaign to derail Montenegro's bid to join NATO. These efforts include a brazen plot to disrupt Montenegro's elections last October and to turn the public against the pro-NATO ruling government there. According to Montenegro's special prosecutor assigned to the investigation, at least two Russian intelligence officers actively participated in this plot, which fortunately was disrupted.

Ratifying Montenegro's NATO membership demonstrates our firm resolve against Russia's efforts to deny other countries the opportunity to participate in NATO free from outside interference. That is why the Supreme Allied Commander for Europe and NATO testified just last week before the Senate Armed Services Committee that it is "absolutely critical" that Montenegro join NATO.

As President Trump prepares to travel to the NATO leaders' summit in Brussels at the end of May, I can think of no better action for the Senate to have taken ahead of his visit than our action tonight to finally ratify Montenegro's membership in NATO. In the meantime, I also look forward to the continued special relationship between Montenegro and the great State of Maine.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION

### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. 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.

### WEEK ON THE STATUS OF BLACK WOMEN

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to request that the U.S. Government officially recognize the last week

in March as the Week on the Status of Black Women. During the week of March 27, 2017, as part of Women's History Month and in honor of the United Nations Declaration designating 2015 as the Decade of Afro-Descendants, this week marks the perfect occasion on which to begin an annual recognition and celebration of Black women's contributions to American society.

Black women have long gone above and beyond the call of duty in their contributions to American society through civic engagement, high voter turnout, and serving as leaders in their communities. Even in the face of grave oppression throughout our Nation's history, Black women have continued to stand strong and contribute to the well-being of their families, communities, and our country as a whole. A recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women by the Trump administration and Congress would send a clear message that the Federal Government recognizes the unique struggles and achievements of Black women in America.

Black women have consistently played a leading role in shaping our Nation's history, often behind the scenes and with little recognition. Harriet Tubman escaped slavery and bravely returned to the enslaved South over a dozen times to lead her people to freedom on the Underground Railroad. A century later, Rosa Parks witnessed the oppression of her fellow Black women and took an active role in organizing the Montgomery Bus Boycott, while also taking up Black women's sexual harassment claims. Today, a Black woman, Carla Hayden, is our Nation's Librarian of Congress. Recognition of the Week on the Status of Black Women would honor the sacrifices of women such as Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks, who paved the way for so many Black women in public service, business, and other industries today.

Yet even as Black women throughout our Nation's history have been leaders in American civic life, Black women today still continue to face many undue burdens. No one in America should have to choose between earning a paycheck and taking care of their family, but too many Black women who serve as primary family breadwinners are forced to make this painful choice. Black women continue to earn less than their male counterparts and also less than women who are not Black. Black women remain at the economic margins of society, and we all have a responsibility to help fix that.

This year, a coalition of organizations advocating for the well-being of women and communities of color will partner to elevate the stories, histories, and realities of Black women's lives. Each day of the week, starting on March 27 and continuing through March 31, will focus on a different challenge Black women face in society today, ranging from disproportionate experience with police violence to dis-

criminatory media representation. Exploring these issues and acknowledging the centrality of Black women to our history and social fabric, along with recognizing the unique intersection of gendered and racialized inequities they face, is critical. As we continue to work to extend equal rights to all Americans, we must ensure that Black women are a leading part of this movement. I hope and request that this year will be a continuation of years past in celebration and intentional recognition of Black women in America through the Week on the Status of Black Women.

### REMEMBERING ENI F. H. FALEOMAVAEGA

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the life and dedicated service to our country of my friend and colleague, Eni F. H. Faleomavaega of American Samoa. I had the honor of serving with him in the U.S. House and was deeply saddened to hear of his passing on Wednesday, February 22, 2017.

Eni served 13 terms as the Delegate from American Samoa, and we worked together because of his close ties to Hawaii. Eni's strong ties and service to Hawaii makes him a "keiki o ka aina." He was a graduate of Kahuku High School and the Church College, the forerunner to Brigham Young University in Laie, HI. Eni was a passionate advocate for indigenous peoples including native Hawaiians. Whether it was Federal recognition or health and housing programs for native Hawaiians, Hawaii could always count on Eni's outspoken support and assistance. One of the stories Eni enjoyed sharing was about his experience sailing on the voyaging canoe Hokulea in 1987, and in August 2014, he welcomed the arrival of the Hokulea and Hikianalia arrival in American Samoa and offered his best wishes to Malama Honua Worldwide Voyage.

I always appreciated his warm presence at the annual Kamehameha Day Lei Draping Ceremony at the capitol where he would often perform traditional Samoan chant and dance. Of course, he also served his American Samoa constituents in Congress with distinction for two decades. During his service in the House, he rose to become the first Asian-Pacific American to serve as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific. He brought his unique perspective as a Pacific Islander to this post and constructively worked to raise the concerns of the region in Congress.

Eni was also a veteran of the Vietnam war and a selfless advocate for his fellow veterans in American Samoa and across the Nation. Thanks to Eni's efforts, American Samoa veterans can now receive their healthcare from a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic built in Pago Pago with funds he helped secure. It is therefore most appropriate that the House and Senate