

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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

TECHNET'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize TechNet for its indispensable role in promoting the innovation economy and to congratulate the organization on its 20th anniversary.

TechNet is a national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that represents more than 2 million employees in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, advanced energy, biotechnology, venture capital, and finance. Over the last two decades, TechNet has advanced public policies and private sector initiatives that have helped to strengthen our Nation's position as the global technology leader and to create jobs and opportunities for millions of Americans. TechNet has been at the forefront of championing research and development, broadband connectivity, entrepreneurship, cyber security, tax reform, education reform, high-skilled immigration, and many other issues.

TechNet was founded in 1997 by two giants in the technology industry: John Doerr and John Chambers.

John Doerr's technology career began in 1974 at Intel, where he held roles in engineering, marketing, management, and sales. He later founded Silicon Compilers, a VLSI CAD software company, and cofounded @Home, a nationwide broadband cable Internet service. In 1980, John joined Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, KPCB, and has since supported some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs, including Google's Larry Page, Sergey Brin, and Eric Schmidt; Amazon's Jeff Bezos; and Inuit's Scott Cook and Bill Campbell. John avidly supports entrepreneurs seeking to create the "next big thing" in mobile and social networks, education, and economic development. Ventures sponsored by John have created more than 300,000 new jobs. Outside of KPCB, John also supports entrepreneurs who focus on the environment, public education, and alleviating global poverty. John serves on the boards of Amyris, Google, and

Zynga, as well as several private technology ventures.

John Chambers spent 8 years with Wang Laboratories and 6 years with IBM before joining Cisco in 1991 as senior vice president, worldwide sales and operations. Over the course of 20 years at Cisco, he helped grow the company from \$70 million, when he joined, to \$1.2 billion when he assumed the role of CEO, to \$47 billion when he stepped down as CEO in 2015. He is now executive chairman of the board for Cisco, where he counsels Cisco's leadership on company strategy, digital transformation, and strategic partnerships. John has received numerous awards for his leadership, including being named one of the Best-Performing CEOs in the World in 2015 by Harvard Business Review and receiving the Edison Achievement Award for Innovation. John has also been named one of Barron's' World's Best CEOs, one of Time Magazine's 100 Most Influential People, and the Best Boss in America by 20/20. In addition, John has been widely recognized for his philanthropic leadership and his active role in corporate social responsibility initiatives. He served on President Bill Clinton's Trade Policy Committee and on President George W. Bush's National Infrastructure Advisory Council, Transition Team, and Education Committee.

As chairman of the Senate Republican High-Tech Task Force, I commend John Doerr and John Chambers for their continuing efforts to keep America's technology industry at the forefront of the global economy. I honor them for their significant contributions to the tech industry.

In February of this year, I unveiled my innovation agenda for the 115th Congress and discussed several priorities to strengthen and secure America's place as the global leader in innovation. TechNet shares many of these priorities, including spurring high-tech investment and enhancing America's competitive workforce.

Our Nation is in need of workers with training in science, technology, engineering, and math—or STEM disciplines. We need to encourage our rising generation to focus on hard science and quantitative skills and to provide opportunities for Americans already in the workforce to develop expertise in these fields. Enhancing our competitive workforce also means improving the process by which high-skilled individuals in other countries come to the United States to fill crucial positions for which there is a shortage of American labor. As we endeavor to reform our high-skilled immigration system, we need to ensure that this system is not manipulated to undercut domestic wages or displace American workers. We need to reward good actors who use the system as it was intended and close off the ability of bad actors to profit by sending American jobs overseas.

TechNet provides our Nation an invaluable service as it continues to champion policies that promote the in-

novation economy. As a leader on tech and innovation issues here in the Senate, I look forward to working with TechNet and the rest of the tech community to ensure that the United States remains the global technology leader. I congratulate TechNet on its first 20 years and wish the organization the best of luck in its next 20 years.

REMEMBERING TOM BUTLER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I wish to honor my dear friend, Tom Butler, a longtime journalist from Paducah, KY. After an extraordinary life, Tom passed away March 31, 2017 at the age of 79.

During his 35-year career at WPSD Local 6, Tom worked as an announcer, news director, and the vice president of news. John D. Williams, the general manager of the station, remembered him as "probably the most talented journalist I've ever had the privilege to know." Tom maintained a fierce dedication to accurate and fair reporting. To his viewers throughout western Kentucky, he became a symbol of trustworthy news.

In his decades in the news business, Tom covered everything from the weather to U.S. Presidents, but he may be remembered most fondly for the mentorship he provided. Bill Evans, WPSD Local 6 vice president of news and operations, wrote "[a]t one time, all three television stations in Louisville had prime anchors whom Tom had mentored." He constantly praised those whom he had helped to get their start in the business, instead of accepting any acclaim himself.

I had the privilege of knowing Tom for many years, and I always enjoyed appearing on his show "Accent," where I saw his kindness and professionalism firsthand. I join the entire Jackson Purchase community in remembering Tom's honesty, passion, and faith. Even after his retirement from WPSD, Tom continued to serve at East Baptist Church and as president of the Community Concert Association of Paducah.

Earlier this year, the University of Kentucky Journalism Alumni Association announced that Tom would be inducted into the 2017 Class of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame. Tom's long and distinguished career makes him incredibly deserving of this honor, and I believe it is an excellent way to pay tribute to his legacy.

Elaine and I send our deep condolences to Tom's wife, Janice, and his children, Tom, Jr., and Amy. Tom touched so many lives, and we all stand by the Butler family in their time of grief.

AMBASSADOR NIKKI HALEY ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, on April 19, CNN published a guest column by U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley, "An unprecedented step on human rights." At a time when

President Trump has praised Egypt's President el-Sisi and Turkey's President Erdogan, both of whom are responsible for brutal crackdowns on dissent and for subverting the institutions of democracy, and after the White House lifted human rights restrictions on the sale of military equipment to Bahrain and Secretary of State Tillerson did not participate in the public release of the Department's Annual Report on Human Rights Practices, Ambassador Haley's op-ed is welcome.

In it, she made several statements that I think bear repeating. For example, she said: "[W]idespread human rights violations are a warning sign—a loud, blaring siren—that a breakdown in peace and security is coming."

"[T]here is hardly an issue on the agenda of the Security Council that does not in some way involve human rights."

"The next international crisis could very well come from places in which human rights are widely disregarded . . . we know from history that it will happen. And when it does, the United Nations will be called upon to act. We are much better off acting before abuse turns to conflict."

I strongly agree with all of that and commend her for saying it.

Ambassador Haley singled out several countries, including Syria, North Korea, Iran, and Cuba, where violations of human rights—although of different types and on vastly different scales—are common.

A few days later, Secretary Tillerson rightly criticized the government of Venezuelan President Maduro, who has locked up his political opponents and sought to decapitate what remains of the institutions of democracy in that country.

It is not sufficient, however, as some in this administration have been doing, to defend human rights only in countries whose governments are regarded as adversaries of the United States. That is the politically safe approach, and it weakens the credibility of those who seek to defend human rights.

It is important to note that the governments of a number of U.S. allies, such as Egypt, the Philippines, Turkey, Ethiopia, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Vietnam, also routinely violate human rights by arresting and imprisoning dissidents, independent journalists, and members of organizations who peacefully protest against government policies.

In the Philippines, anyone suspected of using or selling drugs is in danger of summary execution by the police. Thousands have been killed with impunity in the past 9 months. In Honduras, scores of journalists and environmental activists have been assassinated, and rarely is anyone arrested or punished. In Colombia, thousands of social activists and human rights defenders have been killed, many of them victims of the security forces and rightwing armed groups, and few people have

been held accountable. There are many other examples.

I hope Ambassador Haley's statement is a sign that human rights will become a visible and consistent focus of the Trump administration's foreign policy. Freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and due process—these are all rights and ideals that Americans cherish. They are also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As the world's oldest democracy, we have a responsibility, and it is in our interest to defend them wherever they are violated because protecting fundamental rights is necessary, not only for justice and the rule of law, but, as Ambassador Haley points out, for global peace and security, including America's security.

I ask unanimous consent that Ambassador Haley's guest column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From CNN, Apr. 19, 2017]

AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP ON HUMAN RIGHTS
(By Nikki Haley)

Imagine you are the parent of a boy—a teenager. Policemen come to your home in the middle of the night and take your boy away. He is held without explanation for weeks. And when he finally comes home, your boy has all the marks of having been tortured. Bruises from being beaten. Red, open wounds from being burned. Then you look at his hands and the worst is confirmed. Where his fingernails once were, there are only raw, bloody, exposed nerves. Grown men with pliers, he tells you, ripped his fingernails off in prison.

For a group of parents in Syria in 2011, this was not an exercise in imagination but a horrifying reality. Their boys were arrested and tortured for the crime of writing anti-government graffiti on the wall of a school. When the parents marched in protest to demand their children's release, security services opened fire on them. When more people came out to protest the killings, the government fired on them again. Soon, the point of no return was reached.

"We were asking in a peaceful way to release the children but their reply was bullets," a relative of one of the boys told a reporter. "Now we can have no compromise with any security branches."

The Syrian war is just one example of how human rights violations can become a vicious cycle of violence and instability that quickly spirals into all-out war. What began as an act of free expression of the kind Americans take for granted has become a conflict responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of desperate refugees. Nations thousands of miles away have been impacted.

As the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, I've looked at how we can do more to respond to human rights violations before they reach the level of conflict. Traditionally, the United Nations Security Council has been considered the place where peace and security are debated, not human rights. But Tuesday, at the insistence of the United States, for the first time the Security Council took up the connection between human rights and conflict. We debated how widespread human rights violations are a warning sign—a loud, blaring siren—that a breakdown in peace and security is coming.

Syria is not alone. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo today, it is no coinci-

dence that reports of government soldiers and armed groups committing extrajudicial executions of civilians in the Kasais region are occurring at the same time that the security situation appears to be quickly spiraling out of control.

These sorts of allegations demand answers from independent investigations. And when violations are found to occur, the United Nations cannot turn a blind eye. We must engage these violators early and often, in the statements we make and the measures we impose. Human rights violations and abuses suffered by civilians rarely have a happy ending. At best, they drive desperate people from their homes and from their countries. At worst, they radicalize them to take up arms themselves.

In other cases, human rights violations and abuses don't lead to violence down the road, they exist side-by-side with threats to peace and security. In fact, the world's most brutal regimes are also the most ruthless violators of human rights.

In the case of North Korea, human rights abuses literally finance the government's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Political prisoners work themselves to death in coal mines to finance the regime's military. Starvation, sexual violence and slave labor in the prison camps help supply the North Korean nuclear program.

In Burundi, the government is using human rights violations to stifle dissent. The Burundian government services use torture to crack down on protestors. This has forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to neighboring countries and caused massive regional disruption. A U.N. report detailed 17 types of torture used by the government, including driving sharpened steel rods into the legs of victims and dripping melted plastic on them.

In fact, there is hardly an issue on the agenda of the Security Council that does not in some way involve human rights. As president of the Council, I've had great support from U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres in driving home the connection between threats to human dignity and threats to peace. I'm grateful as well to my colleagues on the Security Council, who agreed to take this unprecedented step.

The next international crisis could very well come from places in which human rights are widely disregarded. Perhaps it will be in North Korea or Iran or Cuba. We don't know when the next group of desperate people will rise up or when the next gang of violent extremists will exploit human suffering to further their cause. But we know from history that it will happen. And when it does, the United Nations will be called upon to act. We are much better off acting before abuse turns to conflict.

Imagine if we had acted six years ago in Syria. If we learn nothing else from the torture of children, let it be this: Evil is an inescapable fact of life, but the violence that results from human rights violations and abuses is not inevitable. We can choose to learn from history, not doom ourselves to repeat it.

OPENS ALASKA ACT

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, Senator SULLIVAN and I introduced a bill, S. 883, the Offshore Production and Energizing National Security Alaska Act of 2017, to lift a damaging Federal moratorium, reopen Alaska's energy-rich Arctic waters to responsible production, and ensure our home State receives a fair share of the revenues from development off our coasts.