

I hope my colleagues will work with me on a more responsible, sustainable, meaningful way to help our brothers and sisters in areas affected by the recent hurricanes. Congress has the authority to lead, especially over Puerto Rico, where we have plenary power that exceeds the authority we have in other parts of the country within States. In this hour of crisis, especially with regard to Puerto Rico, we are the only ones who indisputably have this power, and we are the ones who must act if we are going to achieve meaningful reform.

If we can only offer money and a pat on the head, it will be our fault when the American people continue to suffer as a result of failed programs that haven't worked and call out to us through their failures for reform.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, I urge the Senate to approve the disaster relief supplemental appropriations bill. This bill will provide additional funding for response and recovery operations in areas devastated by recent hurricanes.

The storms this year have been severe in both strength and number. Communities in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are struggling to recover.

Both the Disaster Relief Fund and the National Flood Insurance Program are depleted. They will soon run out of money for disaster response and to pay flood insurance claims.

The supplemental funding in this bill will ensure that first responders and Federal agencies have the necessary resources to continue their important work.

This bill also includes funding in response to the deadly wildfires that have ravaged western States. While these emergency funds are needed now, I will continue working with my colleagues to find a better way to fund wildfire suppression in the future.

This will not be the end of our efforts to respond to this year's disasters. The Appropriations Committee will continue to work with the administration and with the affected delegations to determine and provide for additional recovery needs. I am committed to doing what is necessary to get the job done.

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DAINES. Madam 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.

#### BANGLADESH

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, in correspondence with officials of the Government of Bangladesh over a period of several years and in conversations with officials of our own State Department, I, like many others, have raised concerns about enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, extrajudicial executions, and other flagrant violations of the rule of law by the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed and particularly by the Rapid Action Battalion, RAB.

Like the inquiries and appeals of others, my concerns have been responded to by Bangladeshi officials with blanket denials, obfuscation, and even falsehoods.

Despite such attempts to deflect responsibility, it is beyond a doubt that the rule of law is often violated by Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies. This conduct has become so ingrained that it is not an overstatement to describe Prime Minister Wajed's government as one that condones state-sponsored criminality.

Of course, the government would vociferously reject such a characterization, insisting that individuals who have disappeared were kidnapped by militants or joined extremist groups or simply claiming that their whereabouts are unknown to the government. The problem is that there is often credible eyewitness testimony to the contrary or those responsible for the abductions have identified themselves as members of one of the security forces, the RAB being the most notorious.

The State Department's latest Country Reports on Human Rights describes the situation in Bangladesh as follows: "Human rights groups and media reported that multiple disappearances and kidnappings continued, some committed by security services. The government made limited efforts to prevent or investigate such acts. The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances contacted the government on March 9 concerning the 'reportedly alarming rise of the number of cases of enforced disappearances in the country' and had 34 outstanding cases under review as of May 18, but the working group did not receive a response. Following alleged disappearances, security forces released some individuals without charge, arrested some, some were found dead, and others were never found."

The State Department also cited the practice of torture of detainees in Bangladesh: "Although the constitution and law prohibit torture and other cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment, local and international human rights organizations and the media reported security forces, including RAB, intelligence services,

and police, employed torture and physical and psychological abuse during arrests and interrogations. Security forces reportedly used torture to gather information from alleged militants although members of political opposition parties claimed that security forces also targeted activists within their parties. Security forces reportedly used threats, beatings, kneecappings, and electric shock, and law enforcement officers sometimes committed rapes and other sexual abuses. Two prominent human rights organizations stated that security forces tortured eight persons to death in the first nine months of the year."

The situation has not improved since the State Department published that report earlier this year. Just last week, seven senior representatives of an opposition political party were arrested in Dhaka. Their whereabouts, conditions of confinement, and the evidence against them remain a mystery.

This egregious situation has been cited by the European Parliament, the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, and other reputable human rights monitors; yet the government of Prime Minister Wajed rejects such admonishments out of hand as fabrications or an infringement of sovereignty. Not only do these practices violate the rule of law, they threaten democracy itself. Bangladesh does face a serious problem of violent extremism, which must be effectively addressed, but if peaceful expression and association that challenges government policies or that condemns corruption and police misconduct are equated with terrorism and responded to with threats, arbitrary arrests, and disappearances, extremism will increase, and democracy will suffer.

Other international organizations and governmental bodies have urged the Government of Bangladesh to respond to calls regarding dozens of cases of disappearances and to permanently dismantle the RAB and suspend other law enforcement agencies that have engaged in such crimes until credible investigations of such cases are conducted and those responsible are appropriately punished. I echo those calls and do not support further U.S. assistance for such agencies until the necessary steps are taken.

#### UGANDA

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, I want to speak briefly about the situation in Uganda, which should concern all Senators.

Uganda, located on the Equator in East Africa, has been a friend and partner of the United States for many years, particularly in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Twenty years ago, Uganda was the epicenter of AIDS in Africa. Thousands were dying, testing was nonexistent, condoms were outlawed, and the future was bleak. Since then, dramatic progress has been made in controlling the disease, although more remains to be done.

The United States has also joined in the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army, which ravaged northern Uganda for many years. I remember a time, not so long ago, when thousands of young children, called "night commuters" would walk each evening from their remote villages into towns where they were protected from being kidnapped by the LRA and forced into servitude as child soldiers.

Throughout that period and to this day, President Museveni has remained in power, for five consecutive terms, solidifying his control increasingly through repression, including the arrest, imprisonment, and even alleged assassination attempts of political opponents and social activists. In 2016, at his most recent inauguration after an election marred by fraud and intimidation, Sudan's President Bashir, indicted by the International Criminal Court, was an invited guest.

In 2012, President Museveni announced that he would "certainly not" seek to remain in office after age 75, consistent with article 102(b) of Uganda's Constitution; yet today, with the next Presidential election scheduled for 2021, an effort is underway in Uganda's Parliament, presumably with President Museveni's blessing, to amend the constitution to eliminate the age limit. If successful, Museveni could remain President for life, in the tradition of other African strongmen like Robert Mugabe.

There is no law against amending the constitution. Our own Constitution poses no such age limit on Presidents or Members of Congress, but doing so for the obvious purpose of perpetuating the increasingly autocratic rule of a serving President, who has used the security forces to silence his opposition and who has systematically undermined the possibility of a free election, is wrong.

Such an outcome would be a tragedy for democracy and the rule of law in Uganda, at a time when corruption, economic stagnation, and internal strife are propelling Uganda backwards. The United States and the international community have provided Uganda with billions of dollars in aid since 1986 when President Museveni first came to power. I supported that investment in Uganda's social, economic, and political stability, and President Museveni deserves credit for many positive developments in Uganda since the horrific years of his brutal predecessors, Idi Amin and Milton Obote; yet today much of that investment is at risk of being squandered.

Ultimately this is a decision for the representatives of the Ugandan people, but I hope the Ugandan Parliament recognizes what is at stake, not only for the people of Uganda and for the future of democracy and stability in that country, but for future support from the United States and the international community.

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, unfortunately, I was unable to attend the rollcall vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to concur in the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 2266, emergency supplemental appropriations. Had I been able to attend, I would have voted in favor of cloture.●

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I was unavailable for rollcall vote No. 246, on the motion to invoke cloture on the House message to accompany H.R. 2266, the emergency supplemental. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

#### HONORING NEVADA'S WORLD WAR II FILIPINO VETERANS

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, today I wish to honor several Nevada heroes who are being recognized with a Congressional Gold Medal for their service in the Philippines during World War II: Sergeant Regalado Baldonado, Private Aurelio Dela Cruz, Corporal Benito Anton, Private First Class Leonardo Palao, and the many other Filipino and Filipino American veterans across our Nation. My appreciation for their service and sacrifice is immeasurable.

During World War II, more than 260,000 Filipino soldiers from the U.S. commonwealth of the Philippines answered President Roosevelt's call to fight under the American flag. These individuals fought bravely, some making the ultimate sacrifice in defense of democracy and freedom. More than half a century later, our Nation made a commitment to honoring them for their service.

As a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I believe it is our solemn responsibility to recognize those who put their lives on the line. That is why I was proud to work with my colleague Senator HIRONO to pass into law the Filipino Veterans of World War II Congressional Gold Medal Act, Public Law 114-265, to recognize the dedication and heroism of these individuals.

Now the time has come to award this Congressional Gold Medal to Filipino World War II veterans on October 25, 2017, and I could not be more proud and humbled that Nevada is home to Filipino veterans who served and are most deserving of this medal. Today I would like to again recognize and honor Filipino veterans who are living in Nevada: Sergeant Regalado Baldonado, Private Aurelio Dela Cruz, Corporal Benito Anton, and Private First Class Leonardo Palao. To these heroes, your place in history will not be forgotten. There are also many other Filipino vet-

erans from Nevada who have passed on, but our gratitude extends to their family members who will ensure their legacy lives on.

While the awarding of this Congressional Gold Medal is a proud moment for the Filipino community and America, many Filipino veterans have yet to receive recognition for their service. There is no doubt to me that Filipino soldiers served honorably in the Commonwealth Army of the Philippines, Recognized Guerilla Forces, and New Philippine Scouts alongside U.S. troops during World War II. However, some have still not been verified by the U.S. for their service because they don't have the documentation the U.S. requires. This is an injustice that I will continue fighting so that every Filipino veteran is afforded respect for and acknowledgement of their contributions to our country.

I am honored to acknowledge all Filipino and Filipino American veterans for their dedication to our country and am proud this Congressional Gold Medal will serve as a constant reminder of the importance of the Filipino and Filipino American community in our Nation's history.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

SERGEANT PHILIP J. IYOTTE

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, today I wish to honor and pay tribute to the late Army SGT Philip J. Iyotte, a hero from South Dakota who, after 66 years, has returned home.

At a young age, Philip Iyotte, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, was given his Lakota name of Soldier Who Stands Alone. In 1950, Philip enlisted in the U.S. Army and was assigned to the Army's 21st Infantry Regiment of the 24th Infantry Division. Shortly after, he was deployed to the Korean conflict. On September 2, 1950, Sergeant Iyotte was seriously injured from fragments from an enemy missile. Nineteen days later, he bravely returned to the battlefield.

On February 9, 1951, 21-year-old Sergeant Iyotte was declared Missing in Action after being captured by Chinese forces during Operation Thunderbolt. When the war ended, several returning prisoners of war reported that Sergeant Iyotte passed away around September 10, 1951, and was buried at the main prisoner of war camp in Korea. Sixty-six years after being captured and killed, his remains have finally been returned to his family in White River, SD.

For his bravery and service, Sergeant Iyotte was awarded the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantryman's Badge, the Prisoner of War Medal, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Korean War Service Medal.

I consider it an honor to pay tribute to SGT Philip J. Iyotte. May his family and his Oyate find comfort in knowing that his remains have now been laid to