

and dozens of other species—began to slowly recover in some areas. Scientists estimate that the act has directly prevented the extinction of more than 200 species.

The act has long been a point of contention between industry and conservationists, and has come under criticism from previous administrations. But under the Trump administration, at least 63 separate legislative efforts to weaken the act have been undertaken since January 2017, according to the Centre for Biological Diversity.

Among them were the delisting of various species that conservationists argue are not fully recovered, like grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. The attempts to water down the act are “among the worst” by any administration, said Bruce Stein, the chief scientist of the National Wildlife Federation.

TRIBUTE TO DWAIN “DOC” PRESTON

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in honor of April being National Poetry Month, I want to take a few moments to recognize an extraordinary teacher, poet, and Quincy, IL, legend, Dwain “Doc” Preston.

In the winter of 1936, Doc was born on a farm near Barry, IL. The son of a World War II tank crewman and a tough as nails mother who grew up in Oklahoma surviving the Dust Bowl, Doc attended four different one-room schoolhouses, including Berrian Elementary School in Quincy. After graduating from Liberty High School, he enrolled at Western Illinois University. That was the decision that he said “took me out of the cornfield.”

Doc joined the Air Force, attending Chinese language school, spending 6 hours a day for 8 months, studying at Yale University. To this day, much of his work in the Air Force remains classified. After his service, Doc returned to Quincy and was introduced to Regina Higgins by a friend Jay Lenne at Park Bowl, a bowling alley at the corner of 12th and Harrison. They fell in love, got married, and started their family. They had the first of four daughters in 1963, the second in 1964, the third in 1965, and lastly, the fourth, in—you guessed it—1966.

Doc followed in his uncle’s footsteps—a teacher of 55 years—and accepted a position at Quincy Junior High School after two of his former teachers vouched for him. Six years later, Doc used his G.I. bill to work toward his doctorate at the University of Illinois in Champaign. While working on his dissertation, he taught at Western Illinois University and officially became “Doc” Preston. He then did the unexpected and tried his hand at selling insurance, but Doc had teaching in his blood and returned to the classroom after just 1 year. For the next 26 years, Doc Preston could be found in the classroom, teaching writing, speech, and English at Quincy Notre Dame, where each of his daughters would attend high school. He also supervised the QND student council, teaching leadership skills and important life lessons that aren’t normally found in high school textbooks. Even

after his official retirement, Doc continued teaching creative writing to seniors and others.

Throughout the years, Doc has stayed in touch with many of his students. They will send him notes using words like icon, terrific, great, awesome, amazing, special—to describe him as a teacher or writer, but mostly as a man. When hearing these compliments, he responds in his humble simple way: “That’s always fun.” They just don’t make them like Doc Preston anymore.

Doc and his wife, Regina, spent 44 years, or as Doc put it, “over 16,000 days” together before Regina passed away in 2006, just 4 weeks following Doc’s retirement. In his beautiful poem titled, To Regina, he writes:

For over 16,000 days
You were part of me.
Now only memories are left
Of days that used to be.
But Ah! What memories they are!
The Buoy of my very life,
Which would have been of little worth
Had you not been my wife.

His words are haunting as he takes us on an emotional ride that both breaks the heart and allows us to celebrate the blessings that are memories.

Doc Preston didn’t write to publish or make money. He wrote because he loved it and his audience, consisting largely of his family, loved it. When each of his four daughters were married, Doc wrote them a sonnet. When each of his 11 grandchildren turned 13, he wrote what could be called a “good-bye to their youth” poem. When they were younger, Doc wrote each of them a book. All told, Doc estimates he has written about 150 books. On his 80th birthday, Doc’s children compiled and presented him with a book of his poem’s that he dedicated to Regina.

Despite being a brilliant writer and teacher, Doc’s proudest accomplishment is his family. In an interview last year, he said, “One of the things that is joyful about being a parent is watching them grow up and succeed.” His children certainly did. Two even went into the family business and became teachers. Doc loved parenting, but he once said, “Grandparenting is better.” I couldn’t agree more.

When looking for heaven, many look toward the sky—not Doc Preston. Doc and Regina, looked along the river bluffs of the Mississippi River and built heaven in Quincy, IL. Whether it was with Doc’s wife, Regina, four daughters—Carolyn, Cheri, Debbie, Teresa—11 grandchildren, or countless student, his life, love, and poetry have touched so many lives, including my own.

I want to thank Doc Preston for his dedication to teaching and his generosity to the wonderful people of Quincy. They call Quincy “Gem City.” Well, there is no gem shining brighter than Dwain “Doc” Preston.

Thank you, Doc, for sharing your gift with us all.

I would like to share the final lines of Doc’s poem, Southern Memories.

Oh, yes, I’ll savor snapshots,
To be sure,
But what I’ll treasure most
Are all the memories I made with you.

Doc’s right. I would like to tell him that what will be treasured most by those who know Doc, “Are all the memories [we] made with you.”

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I wish to call attention to what has been called the world’s most neglected humanitarian crisis and call upon the administration to play an active leadership role in helping bring a sustainable peace to the Central African Republic, CAR. Diplomatic attention, especially from the United States, has waned over the past 2 years. If we fail to commit diplomatic attention to CAR, we risk increasing threats to regional stability, U.S. investments, and, most tragically, the lives and livelihoods of millions of Central Africans.

CAR has long been beset by political and social upheaval. Since independence in 1960, the country has endured coups, military mutinies, rebellions, and incursions by the infamous Lord’s Resistance Army. The most recent civil war accelerated in 2013 after rebels opposed to the government of Francois Bozize took over the capitol. Their campaign to seize the capitol and the response by resulting self-defense militias were characterized by widespread violence against civilians. France, the European Union, and the African Union all deployed troops to prevent further bloodshed, and in 2014, the U.N. deployed a peacekeeping mission mandated to protect civilians and prevent further intercommunal fighting. The State Department’s Atrocities Prevention Board identified CAR as a country at risk, and the United States took action accordingly, working on the ground to support interventions to prevent mass atrocities.

These vigorous diplomatic actions ushered in a period of relative calm. In the wake of Pope Benedict’s visit in 2015 and peaceful elections in 2015–2016, the situation on the ground appeared to stabilize. President Faustin-Archange Touadera was elected in what was arguably the most competitive contest of any leader in the central Africa region. Donors pledged \$2.2 billion to support stabilization and postconflict reconstruction in late 2016.

However, in 2017, security in the country began to precipitously decline. Militia and criminal gangs in the north and eastern parts of the country began fighting each other in a quest for control over territory and resources, threatening the fragile peace. Entire villages have been destroyed, civilians targeted and killed. While the government and 13 armed groups signed a notional peace deal in June 2017—the fifth disarmament agreement signed by armed groups in 4 years—renewed fighting quickly followed.

Some armed groups have targeted United Nations peacekeepers, a potential war crime under international law. On April 3, members of “anti-Balaka” militias attacked a United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA, base, killing 1 peacekeeper and injuring 11 others. On April 8, MINUSCA troops came under fire as they were conducting a joint operation with CAR state security forces aimed at disarming and detaining the leaders of what they referred to as criminal groups in Bangui’s last remaining Muslim enclave, the PK5 neighborhood. Two days later, armed groups levied a sustained attack against a MINUSCA base in downtown Bangui, resulting in the death of one peacekeeper.

The resurgence of militia violence has made CAR one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian workers, leading aid agencies to reconsider their operations there. Six aid workers were killed in February this year alone, and attacks and threats continue. In November 2017, Doctors Without Borders shut down a major operation after a string of attacks and threats.

Some may ask why the United States should care about what happens in a small landlocked country in Africa with a population of just under 5 million. I give you three reasons.

First, as members of the community of nations, we have a moral obligation to take action when we see mass violence and human suffering. United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien warned in August 2017 that the renewed clashes were early warning signs of a possible move towards genocide. While thankfully that scenario has not unfolded, violence continues to play out along ethnic and sectarian lines, causing social profound cleavages. Armed groups of various stripes carry out atrocities, including widespread sexual violence, against innocent civilians. In 2014, largely Christian anti-Balaka militia groups, waged a systematic campaign in 2014 forcing most of CAR’s Muslim citizens to flee their homes. Many of those Muslim communities remain largely confined to the rebel stronghold of the northeast and small enclaves in the capitol and other population centers. We must do our part to bring this kind of horrific violence to an end. History offers brutal reminders of what happens when the international community fails to intervene on behalf of persecuted minorities.

We must continue to help those in need. The number of internally displaced persons in CAR has increased by more than 70 percent over the past year. Of an estimated total population of 4 million, approximately 681,000 Central Africans are internally displaced—the highest number reported since the height of the conflict in early 2014—while an estimated 568,000 more are sheltering as refugees in neighboring

countries. Over 87,000 children are at risk of acute malnutrition. Yet the U.N. has received only 5 percent of the \$515.6 million it has requested for its 2018 humanitarian response plan. The World Food Program was forced to cut rations in half for the most vulnerable families nearly a year ago, due to lack of funding. Earlier this year, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ursula Mueller stated unequivocally: “If we do not receive funding, people will die.”

Second, lack of stability in CAR has implications for broader regional instability. CAR is located in a volatile and impoverished region with a long history of development, governance, and human rights problems. Violence in CAR only adds to the enormous human suffering in neighboring countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Other countries bordering CAR continue to struggle against the Boko Haram insurgency. We know that instability throughout the world can directly impact U.S. interests. It is in our interests to promote stability and peace throughout the region.

Third, the U.S. has invested \$1 billion in CAR in the past 2 years; promoting lasting stability and governance is the surest way for our investments to yield positive results. Our Permanent Representative to the U.N., Ambassador Nikki Haley, has spent considerable time focusing on cutting peacekeeping costs, and the administration has signaled its desire to limit funding for U.N. peacekeeping missions. However, it has spent precious little time investing in diplomatic strategies and initiatives to end the conflicts that have necessitated these missions and would support their success. Doing so would be more cost effective, as well as having a positive impact on those impacted by conflict.

The situation is dire. In the absence of action by the administration, along with our partners in the international community, the risk of the CAR fully collapsing is high, but while it might be difficult to turn back the increasing tide of violence facing the country, it is not impossible. I urge the administration to take the following steps: fully staff senior leadership positions at the Department of State and USAID. It is well past time for this administration to put our foreign policy house in order to best advance American interests. The administration has not nominated an ambassador to CAR, leaving the post vacant for over 6 months. It also has not nominated an Assistant Secretary of State for Africa to coordinate policy and engage with counterparts in the region and among our partners in Europe and elsewhere. There is no Assistant Administrator for Africa at USAID at a time of unprecedented humanitarian needs on the continent. We need high-ranking diplomats and aid officials to bring fresh ideas and energy into policy discus-

sions in Washington and galvanize action in capitols of other countries. Quickly filling vacancies is an easily accomplished task that would have a significant impact; formulate an updated strategy for CAR. Fully staffed or not, given the situation on the ground, the administration must act. Three years ago, the Obama administration put forward such a strategy in response to legislation. This administration should follow up and respond to changing conditions on the ground by putting in place a multiyear, comprehensive strategy to support greater peace and stability in CAR as a foundation for future development and prosperity. Such a plan should include humanitarian and development goals in addition to plans for diplomatic actions and engagement; work with other donors and the United Nations to incentivize greater progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform. The 2015 “Bangui Forum” called for all combatants to give up their weapons prior to national elections in 2016. This process was never undertaken. A renewed effort a year ago has yet to yield significant results. We must continue support for rule of law and accountability. Financial and diplomatic support for CAR’s nascent special criminal court is also critical to fulfilling this process.

Finally, we must signal our intention to follow through with commitments to the people of CAR and to our international partners by sending a high-level delegation from Washington to CAR and inviting President Touadera to the United States for an official visit.

None of the policy recommendations I am suggesting are particularly difficult. All it takes is time, attention, and, to be frank, an interest in being involved to devise a strategy and determine how to adequately fund it. I urge the administration not to let a tragedy occur due to indifference.

RECOGNIZING CLEAR SPRINGS FOODS, INC.

Mr. RISCH. Mr. President, today, along with my colleague Senator MIKE CRAPO, I wish to recognize fellow Idahoan Larry Cope who retired from Clear Springs Foods, Inc., in Buhl, ID, in March of this year. Larry, who is president and CEO of the company, has had an exemplary career as a visionary and selfless leader at Clear Springs for the past 45 years. He deserves to retire.

Idaho is very proud to be home to the headquarters of Clear Springs Foods, the world’s largest producer of aquacultured rainbow trout, supplying restaurants and major supermarkets throughout the United States and propelling fish farming well beyond our borders. Larry would tell us it has taken a great team to lead this originally privately owned small business into the immensely successful 100-percent employee-owned operation it is