

Mr. DURBIN. The problem of torture among refugees is significant, with an estimated 44 percent of refugees in the United States having been victims of such horrors. Those from Bosnia, Cambodia, and many other places all receive free treatment at the Kovler Center to recover from their trauma.

During my visit I had the privilege of meeting refugees who had fled the mounting violence in Cameroon. Cameroon is a West African nation that is dealing with a complicated colonial legacy. Following World War I, the League of Nations appointed France and Great Britain as joint trustees to what was previously a German colony. Not surprisingly, the two colonial powers imposed their own cultures on the new Cameroon.

Tragically, following the country's independence in the 1960s, Cameroonian strongman President Paul Biya, one of the world's longest serving leaders—now almost 40 years in office—further favored the French-speaking population over its Anglophone regions.

The results were not surprising. The mounting resentment and calls for greater autonomy within the Anglophone population caused ensuing violent suppression from the Biya regime. The refugees I met with told harrowing stories of this crackdown and violence.

I was pleased to join Senator VAN HOLLEN last year in a letter urging Secretary Pompeo to focus attention on the unrest in Cameroon, and I was equally pleased when the administration scaled back U.S. military assistance to Cameroon due to this government's violent repression. As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I will be watching carefully the level of violence in Cameroon and, when the day comes, when we consider any foreign aid to this Nation.

The work of the Kovler Center is a reminder that if we are going to stand up for human rights we must be willing to be vigilant at all times, even for small countries as far away as Cameroon.

I yield the floor.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Sean Cairncross, of Minnesota, to be Chief Executive Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

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

#### TRIBUTE TO ALANA PETERSEN

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute and express my

gratitude to Alana Petersen, my deputy chief of staff and long time staff leader for the Minnesota congressional delegation. Alana is retiring from her official role after serving the Minnesota delegation since 1993.

During her public service, Alana worked for Congressman Dave Minge, from Minnesota's First Congressional District; Congressman John Oberstar, from Minnesota's Eighth Congressional District; Senator Al Franken; and now for me. In all of those roles, she has served the people of Minnesota first and especially those who most needed an ally and a voice in the halls of power here in Washington: farmers and rural families, new immigrants, Minnesota's Tribal communities, and Minnesota's diverse communities of color.

For those of you who don't know Alana, let me tell you a little bit about her. Alana was born in Minnesota and, like me, spent part of her childhood in New Mexico. In fact, she and I went to the same elementary school, although Alana is younger than me and had the benefit of a new building.

Alana headed Al Franken's Minnesota Senate office beginning when he was sworn in 2009. Before joining Franken's staff, she worked in the office of Congressman Jim Oberstar for 5 years as deputy district director, and she worked for Congressman Dave Minge for 6 years in several capacities.

Alana also served as executive director of Target Market, a statewide nonprofit organization that promoted an anti-tobacco message to teens, and she held a position at Grassroots Solutions, a political consulting firm where she worked with national labor unions, congressional candidates, and pro-choice organizations.

As if her official work weren't enough, Alana has long been a go-to volunteer for her community, where she has served as chair of the East Central Regional Arts Council and board chair for Women Winning, a bipartisan group dedicated to electing more women to public office.

Alana is married to Thom Petersen, who is the Minnesota commissioner of agriculture for Governor Tim Walz, and she is mom to Waylon and Dylan. Alana and her family live on a working farm in Pine County, MN, an hour north of the Twin Cities. The Petersens raise and show miniature horses at county fairs all across Minnesota and at the Minnesota State Fair, earning blue ribbons, not only because of the amazing minis but also thanks to the amazing costumes sewn by Alana.

To Thom, Waylon, and Dylan, thank you for sharing your mom and wife with us and with Minnesota all of these years.

So I can't tell you when I first met Alana, but we have been good friends and allies for decades. As in all great friendships born from working together, we are connected by a sense of shared purpose, a sense of humor, and a complete trust that, when in doubt, we can call the other one. Each of us, in

turn, has been a shoulder to lean on, a strategic adviser, a gut check, and a great excuse for a good laugh when either of us needs it.

This has been true for both of us for years, but never more so than in this last year when I became an accidental Senator and called on my old friend to jump in one more time to help me become a Senator and win a Senate seat, all in 10 months. Alana helped me to see that I could do this job and also win an election in such a short time. It is no exaggeration to say that I couldn't have done any of this without her.

Alana has the heart of an organizer. In fact, she tells the story that she first canvassed her neighborhood as a fifth-grader, knocking on doors for the father of a friend of hers who was running for office. She has been organizing and engaging people in the democratic process ever since.

As an organizer Alana knows that the best ideas come from the ground up, not the top down. She understands that the best work happens when you build relationships with people at the grassroots. She has mentored and taught generations of campaign and congressional office staffers that teamwork based on mutual respect, high expectations, and clear goals makes progress for people possible, and that it can be joyful work.

For years Alana has been the go-to person for young candidates just starting out—and a lot of us seasoned politicians too. The political offices, campaigns, and nonprofits of Minnesota are powered by the people Alana has taught and mentored.

As an organizer, she is rooted in the value that Paul Wellstone best expressed when he said that politics shouldn't be about money and power; it should be about improving people's lives.

It means more to me than I can express that Minnesotans elected me to serve in this seat once held by Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, and Paul Wellstone.

On October 25, 2002, we lost Paul in a terrible plane crash, along with Paul's wife Sheila, his daughter Marsha, and staffers Will, Tom, and Mary Mac, Alana's mentor. In the fall of 2002, Alana had quit her regular job in Duluth to join the campaign for Paul's reelection because she knew she wanted to contribute to the grassroots movement that Paul was building. The plane crash and the loss of our friends was heartbreaking to all of us.

Last year, on October 25, Alana shared a letter her father wrote to the Wellstone campaign team in the days after the crash. It is particularly touching because her father, Thomas Christiansen, passed away on October 25, 2009, 7 years after we lost Paul.

Here is part of what Alana's father said: "For some, public service is the dedication of one's life to the community. I have come to realize that my daughter Alana is one of those elite few."

Alana, you are indeed one of those elite few. Thank you for your service to Minnesota, and thank you for what you will continue to do for many years ahead to move forward the hard but precious work of improving people's lives.

I yield the floor.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I speak in leader time.

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

#### TROOP DEPLOYMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, last night, the Defense Department announced that 1,000 additional troops would be deployed to the Middle East. This is the second deployment of 1,000 or more troops in the past 30 days, ostensibly to deal with Iran's increased activity in the region.

Despite these two announcements, the President has yet to address the Nation about these developments. The President has yet to articulate a strategy about American involvement in the region. He has yet to send a single military commander to testify before the Armed Services Committee. And he has yet to explain what his policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran is supposed to achieve. All we have heard is the Secretary of State, our chief diplomat, rattling the sabers of war.

As U.S. troops again prepare to deploy to the Middle East, this administration has an obligation to explain to the American people exactly what is happening and why. If they have a case, they must make it public. Americans are rightly skeptical and tired of endless wars in the Middle East—a reticence that many on the Republican side don't seem to share. Americans know that smaller actions have a tendency to escalate into larger actions even when there is no congressional authority and no check.

The administration has offered to send various officials to give classified briefings, but, frankly, that is not nearly good enough. We have learned a hard truth from our experience in Iraq—that the drums of war start beating behind closed doors. The President must make his pitch to the Nation instead of another closed-door meeting with Senators. As the Commander in Chief, he owes that to every American but especially to the American service-members, and their families, whom he is sending into the Middle East.

#### BORDER SECURITY

Mr. President, Leader MCCONNELL has indicated he plans to have the Senate consider legislation next week on the administration's request for supplemental appropriations to handle migration at our southern border. As I have said many times, Democrats want to provide the necessary resources to secure our borders and ensure that everyone who arrives there is treated hu-

manely; however, the sheer chaos of this administration's policy, the sheer mismanagement, the erratic nature when the President says one thing one day and another the next, mean that we must be precise and careful about how we do it.

The fact is very simple: President Trump's immigration policies are inhumane, erratic, fleeting, and impossible to carry out at the same time.

Right now, on the Homestead Air Force Base in Florida, the Trump administration has authorized a for-profit company to build a temporary shelter for migrants that is little better than an internment camp. We have heard routinely about the separation of children from parents, about the horrible conditions at the DHS facilities, about children—children—in cages. That is as un-American as anything.

This past week, I read in the New York Times the story of a 4-month-old boy. It wrenched my heart. He was separated from his parents—a cleavage so severe at an age so young that the boy has suffered a great trauma. He is now more than a year and a half old. He is back in his home country of Romania with his parents. He still can't walk on his own. He still hasn't spoken.

What are we doing to these innocent children? What are we doing? Stories like these are heart-wrenching; the policies that create them, unconscionable; and so often, the policies are announced according to the President's whim. Every day, the President seems to have a different crazy idea, often contradicting his previous thought—a national emergency declaration to build a wall, tariffs for Mexico, shutting down the border entirely.

Last night, the President tweeted that ICE was planning mass immigration arrests and removal. The President seems to just invent a new policy in the morning by tweet with the sole purpose of rallying his base.

Ideas like deporting millions of immigrants inside our border have been dismissed by government officials in charge of immigration as unrealistic. The very people the President puts in charge say this policy can't happen. It doesn't bother him. Maybe he was doing this to talk about it at his rally tonight, his election rally in Florida. But I will tell you something. He tried this before the 2018 election—big crisis at the border. It didn't seem to work. What appeals to a base—a rather narrow base of the President's supporters does not appeal to the American people when it comes to being erratic, inhumane, harsh, and ineffective on immigration.

Members of both parties should be weary—wary—about giving the administration additional funding if it is not going to be used to secure our border or provide better conditions for migrants and asylum seekers, especially children.

Again, just remember what the President has called for in the last few months, none of which have happened

and none of which have curbed the flow at the border—so many different things, none of which make sense. Remember the national emergency declaration to build a wall. Remember the tariffs with Mexico. Remember the shutting down of the border entirely. And now mass immigration arrests and removal. It is a policy that is erratic, unsuccessful, ineffective, and maybe worst of all, inhumane—even taking a 4-month-old from his parents and leaving that child with a trauma probably for the rest of his life.

We Democrats have a proposal that is common sense, that would actually do things. At one point, the President seemed to support it, but that was fleeting like every one of his other proposals on immigration. Here is what we propose. I hope the President is listening, and I hope, at least, our Republican colleagues are listening, because we can actually get something done.

We propose to provide more immigration judges at the border to reduce the backlog in cases.

We provide for the allowance of asylum seekers to apply for asylum within their home countries. Why are these people fleeing? The President would have Americans believe they are all drug dealers and MS-13 members. There are a few of those, and they shouldn't be let in, and they shouldn't be given any mercy. Yet the vast majority of these people—you have seen the pictures—is made up of parents and children. Sometimes their daughters have been threatened with rape by gangs or their sons have been murdered or they are going to burn down their houses or burn down their businesses if they don't go along with the gangs. Who wouldn't flee? Who wouldn't? So let them apply for asylum and not have to pay the coyotes and not have them make this dangerous trek of 1,000 miles from their own countries. It is a good proposal. At one point, the President entertained it. Let's do it.

Finally, we provide security assistance to Central American countries in order to crack down on the drug cartels, the violent gangs, the corruption, and the lawlessness.

These are the things we should be doing—having more immigration judges to reduce the backlog; allowing for asylum seekers to apply for asylum in their home countries; and providing security assistance to crack down on the drug cartels, violent gangs, and the coyotes.

Yesterday, unfortunately, the State Department did the opposite. It announced it would cut off all further security assistance, including over \$400 million of already obligated assistance to Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, until the countries reduce the number of migrants coming to the United States. Talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face.

What an insane, insane new policy idea from the President—even crazier than some of the others. The Trump administration is actually doing the