

SCHUMER made clear to those listening to this debate. Why won't Senator MITCH MCCONNELL bring to the floor of the U.S. Senate election security legislation—bipartisan legislation—that will, in the course of passing it, make us safer when it comes to our electoral process? What is this kind of bromance between the President and Vladimir Putin? I don't understand.

But now there appears to be another party on the scene. Senator MCCONNELL is joining in this effort: Keep our hands off of Russia. Don't confront Russia. I don't understand why the Senator from Kentucky is taking that position. He should be pushing forward on a bipartisan basis to protect our election security.

Madam President, now I see my friend and Republican colleague from Utah is here, and I know the purpose of his attendance. I am about to make a statement about TPS status for Venezuelans in the United States. I will preface it briefly, make my request, and allow the Senator from Utah, if he doesn't want to stay here, to respond, and I will continue.

Last year, I went to Venezuela. It was my first time. I met with President Nicolas Maduro, and I said to him: If you have the election you plan to have, it will not be credible, and around the world, you will find the United States and many other nations will reject the outcome. You have to open up the process. Stop putting your political opponents in jail. Have a real election, a free election. Venezuela needs it, not just from a constitutional viewpoint, but your economy is in shambles, and if you want the world to join you in rebuilding the Venezuelan economy, you have to be the credible leader and you can't be if you go through with this election as planned.

That was my speech. It didn't work. He had the election as he planned it. He made sure that his opponents were under house arrest or in jail. He fixed the vote and ended up declaring himself the winner, and no one accepted it. So across the world, you find this resistance to his leadership.

There are some 70,000 people from Venezuela in the United States. They are here on visitor visas, work visas, student visas, and similar capacities. They are now being asked to return to Venezuela. But listen to the circumstances: In Venezuela—we know that it is not safe for Americans to visit. Senator MENENDEZ has spoken on this issue. He is joining me in this effort today. We are warning Americans that it is unsafe to visit Venezuela, but we are telling the Venezuelans who are in the United States that they have to go back.

What we are asking for is temporary protected status for these Venezuelans to be able to stay in the United States during the pendency of this contest that is going on about the future of that nation.

People are literally starving to death in Venezuela. They have no medicine.

It is in the worst possible situation. How can we in good conscience say to these Venezuelans who are in the United States that they have to return?

So the purpose of my effort today on the floor is to say that we should discharge from the Judiciary Committee legislation that allows these Venezuelans to stay here while we have declared it so dangerous in their home country. It is a rational and thoughtful thing to do, although, sadly, the Trump administration has sent me a letter saying they don't approve of it.

It is time for Congress to act. It is time for the Senate to act. I am going to make my formal motion at this point because Senator LEE has come to the floor.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—H.R. 549

Madam President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that the Judiciary Committee be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 549 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration; further, that the bill be read a third time and passed and the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Madam President, I reserve the right to object after raising a couple of observations.

It is important to know that this bill was passed by the House of Representatives Thursday night. We just received the paperwork from the House of Representatives yesterday. This is a bill that did not pass unanimously in the House of Representatives—far from it. There were at least 158 Republicans who voted against it.

There are a number of my colleagues in the Senate who, like me, would like to see this and many other bills considered but would also like the opportunity to adequately review the legislation as passed and to propose amendments and have those amendments voted on. So passing this bill right now without that opportunity to review it, to propose amendments and have those considered, and just passing this unanimously is not the way we ought to be passing this legislation.

I am happy to work with my distinguished colleague and my revered friend from Illinois in moving in that direction, but we are not ready to pass this by unanimous consent right now. We have amendments to propose. So on that basis, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I want to thank my colleague from Utah. I am sorry he objected to my request.

Why are we moving so quickly on this? Because it is a matter of life and death, that is why. Why did we decide that this is of such an emergency nature that the House has moved on this already? Because, literally, people who

are forced to return to Venezuela may face death. That is why we are moving on this as quickly as we are.

I want to thank the House of Representatives for passing this measure. It is time for the Senate to act, and we certainly have the time on the floor to achieve that.

As I mentioned, if you go to Venezuela, as I did last year, you can see literally on the streets the impact of this disintegration of their economy and the problems they are facing.

I visited Children's Hospital in Caracas, and it was heartbreaking for the medical staff to sit down at the table and tell me they didn't have the basic medicines we find in our medicine chests at home or in the clinics of America when it came to treating these children. They did not have antibiotics. They didn't have cancer drugs.

The economy in Venezuela is disintegrating before our eyes, and these people—Venezuelans in the United States, students and others—are saying they would like to remain in the United States and stay here until it is more stable in their country. Historically, there were no questions asked, and we did that. We have done it over and over again. But under this administration, whenever the word "immigrant" comes into the conversation, they freeze.

The same Trump administration has told us that the Maduro regime is unacceptable and that we have to get rid of it because of the terrible things that are happening, that the people of Venezuela should have a free election to decide their leader. This same administration will not help the Venezuelans who say they are fearful of heading home to a country that is so dangerous.

Let me read what this administration, which refuses to give temporary protected status, says to people from the United States who may want to visit Venezuela. To me, it tells the whole story. Here is what the Trump State Department says about Venezuela today in the following travel advisory to American citizens:

Do not travel to Venezuela due to crime, civil unrest, poor health infrastructure, and arbitrary arrest and detention of U.S. citizens. . . . Violent crime, such as homicide, armed robbery, kidnapping, and carjacking, is common. . . . There are shortages of food, electricity, water, medicine, and medical supplies throughout much of Venezuela.

Those are the words of the Trump administration about this country of Venezuela, and when I ask that those who are Venezuelan who are in our country not be forced to return to those conditions, there is an objection not only from my friend the Republican Senator from Utah but also from the Trump administration.

Now, make no mistake, if temporary protected status is granted, that does not mean we won't ask any questions of the Venezuelans here. They will have to go through a criminal background check. If they are a dangerous person, they are gone, period. No questions. They are gone. And that is the

way it should be. But for those, for example, in my State who are university students, who have their student visas coming to an end—they are asking me: Senator DURBIN, will you allow me to stay in the United States until it is safe in my country?

Is that an unreasonable request? If it were Americans in similar plights in places around the world, wouldn't we say: Give them a break. Give them a chance to stay in a safe place.

I will close. I want to defer to my friend from New Jersey, Senator MENENDEZ, on this issue.

When I went to Venezuela last year, in Caracas, I had a meeting. It was a dinner meeting, and it was an unusual one because it was with six members of the General Assembly who are opponents of President Maduro, who is currently their leader in that country. These opposition leaders opposed him, and their lives were at stake because of it.

We had dinner in a restaurant. It was an unusual dinner. It was upstairs in a back room, and the door was closed so that no one could see us. There were six of them, and they said to me: If you come back next year, Senator, two of us will have been deported, two of us will be in prison; and two of us will have disappeared.

That is what happens to the opposition in Venezuela if you happen to oppose President Maduro. It is that dangerous.

One of those six was a man named Juan Guaido. I met him that night for the first time. Little did I know that he would step up several months ago and put his life and his family's lives on the line to say: I think Venezuela needs new leadership. Exceptional courage on his part. I met him then. I have met his wife since. They are literally risking their lives for their country. They understand how dangerous it is.

All I asked for today on the floor is for those Venezuelans who wish to stay here in safety until this political scenario plays out, that they be allowed to stay here. That is all I was asking for—temporary protected status. I am sorry that Senator LEE objected. He did note, though, that in some period of time—I hope very soon—he will reconsider that position and give us a chance to provide safety for the Venezuelans who are visiting here in the United States.

Because he is here and has been such a great ally of mine in this effort, I would like to yield the floor to my friend from New Jersey, Senator MENENDEZ.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, let me thank my colleague from Illinois, who has been a clarion voice in this regard, a strong proponent of human rights and democracy in Venezuela and in other parts of the world, but in this case, in Venezuela; who has traveled there at a time when people

could not travel—certainly from the Congress—in an effort to see if there was a pathway forward and to see the plight of the Venezuelan people. I really appreciate his cosponsorship with me on this temporary protected status for Venezuelans. His leadership is critically important, not only as the Democratic whip but also as a senior member of the Judiciary Committee that I hope can take up this legislation.

I will say this: I regret that our colleague from Utah, No. 1, objected, and No. 2, left. I would just make two observations on his comments. No. 1, there was a strong bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives. So, no, there was not unanimity, but there was a strong bipartisan vote in the House of Representatives. Secondly, this legislation has been over here in the Senate for some time. We have offered it for some time, so it is not new.

Thirdly, I would just say as to whether we get to legislate in this Chamber, that depends on the majority leader and his side of the aisle, who control the floor. We would like to see legislating take place. We would be happy to have a debate on the fierce urgency of this as it relates to this issue of TPS, temporary protected status.

I fear my colleague was unaware of what he objected to. This is urgently needed legislation that would have granted that temporary—underline temporary—protected status. This is a class of people who need to be protected, the approximately 200,000 Venezuelans currently residing in the United States.

As we all know, the Maduro regime has created an unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Venezuela that has now forced more than 4 million Venezuelans and migrants to flee their homeland—more than 4 million. Think about it. This is on the verge of becoming one of the greatest humanitarian catastrophes in a refugee situation that we have in the world—and that is something considering what has happened in Syria and other places in the world—right here in our own hemisphere.

In response to this humanitarian tragedy, last December—this has been around several months—Senator DURBIN offered the first bipartisan bill to provide TPS for Venezuelans, which we reintroduced in February. Last week, the House passed their own bipartisan version of the legislation with support of dozens of Republican Members. It is an unconscionable moral failing for the Senate not to approve this legislation.

Earlier this month, as the senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I traveled to the Venezuela border to see the crisis firsthand. I returned convinced that we cannot afford to sit on the sidelines any longer. My colleague, I think, would not have objected to TPS for Venezuelans if he saw what I saw.

During my trip to Cucuta, I walked on the Colombian side of the Simon Bolivar International Bridge, between Colombia and Venezuela, amidst thou-

sands of Venezuelan refugees—30,000 cross each and every day—and migrants who cross into Colombia each and every day. I joined thousands of Venezuelans who were fleeing hunger as they sought food at the Divine Providence soup kitchen.

I visited patients seeking medical care that is no longer available in Venezuela. By the way, Venezuela should be one of the wealthiest countries in the Western Hemisphere. It has huge oil and natural gas reserves, but despite that they can't get medical care in Venezuela because the hospital system has completely collapsed. When I was there in Colombia at the border, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a report decrying that the Maduro regime's security forces had murdered nearly 7,000 Venezuelans in the last 2 years—7,000. My colleague cannot possibly want to return Venezuelans to the cruel conditions they are fleeing. That is what temporary protected status is all about.

I have applauded—I don't find too many times in which I am in agreement with the Trump administration, but I supported their efforts on sanctions and other efforts around the Maduro regime so we can restore democracy and human rights, but how can you say and do all the things you are doing in Venezuela and then have a deportation force that wants to round up these people who have done nothing wrong and send them back to the country where 7,000 have been killed by Maduro?

These extraordinary conditions have scattered millions of Venezuelans in countries across the Americas. Today 1.3 million reside in Colombia, 750,000 in Peru, 250,000 in Ecuador, and the numbers keep growing. Colombia and its neighbors have largely welcomed Venezuelans as they flee a devastating humanitarian catastrophe.

By not approving this bill today, the United States is failing to match their efforts and failing to approve temporary protected status for the vulnerable of Venezuelans already living in our country.

For those who doubt whether TPS would make a difference for these Venezuelan families, let me share with you a few stories provided to my office by the respected Venezuelan human rights group Foro Penal.

Yuley Gomez is the mother of Luis David, a 4-year-old who has a delicate heart condition. In Venezuela, Yuley asked for help from everyone she could, but all she received was a prescription for painkillers. In a closed-door meeting, she was told privately to wait for the inevitable death of her child, a 4-year-old. Just imagine being told to wait for a son or daughter to succumb to a treatable illness. No parent would do that.

After great personal sacrifice, Yuley made it to the United States and admitted her son into Boston Children's Hospital. Three years later, David is

thriving, but he requires frequent checkups and treatments that remain unavailable in Venezuela to this day.

Then there is Leila Calderon, who resides in my home State of New Jersey. Her nephew, who once lived with her in Caracas, is a pilot in the Venezuela Armed Forces. He was wrongly arrested for plotting to overthrow Maduro. In the absence of evidence, he was released from jail, but on his way home, he received a call warning him that military counterintelligence agents were waiting for him. When he tried to hide, security forces arbitrarily arrested his mother, his girlfriend, and his father-in-law. The following day, he was detained and charged once more, again with no evidence. He remains imprisoned today.

Even Leila, who has publicly advocated for his release, has been labeled as a “terrorist” on national television by the regime thug Diosdado Cabello.

Let me share the story of Omar Acosta. His brother, Captain Rafael Acosta Arevalo, was detained on June 21, 2019, by members of the Venezuela military counterintelligence. After being forcibly imprisoned for a week, on June 28 of 2019, Captain Acosta was rolled into an arraignment hearing in a wheelchair, visibly affected by torture. He died the following day. The kind of torture that took Captain Acosta's life is one of the many dangers Venezuelans in the United States would need to fear if we don't approve TPS.

The Maduro regime's unthinkable abuses have created a full-blown refugee crisis in our own hemisphere. These extraordinary, and what we pray are temporary, conditions prevent millions of Venezuelans from safely returning home, including nearly 200,000 in our own country.

There has been a broad bipartisan support for the Trump administration's effort to confront the Maduro regime. However, as we confront Maduro, we cannot turn our back on the Venezuelan people. Unfortunately, today the Senate has chosen not to act. We could have sent legislation to the President's desk that ensures that vulnerable Venezuelans in the United States are not sent back into harm's way—into potential death or imprisonment. Instead, we did nothing.

This is a tragedy in its own right. This is what we could have avoided today. I am sure Senator DURBIN and I will continue to push forward. We will both challenge the leadership here to allow us either to have this passed or give us a vote. I think the community should know who stands on their side and whether they are willing to protect them temporarily from the enormous humanitarian catastrophe—the great risk of the loss of life or liberty that exists for Venezuelans in the United States who have fled to freedom.

We are going to go out of session the end of this week. That means all these people will languish for the summer, not knowing whether, in fact, they can be deported back to a country in which

they may well lose their life or their liberty. That is pretty outrageous. If we can't get it done this week, I hope to God we can get it done in September. If not, I worry about a continuing crisis that will only lead to greater uncertainty and create greater risk to those simply fleeing freedom and who are being, by the way, very productive citizens here while they are temporarily in our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey for his statement and leadership on this issue.

It is time. When you think about the circumstances, I am reminded of when I was in Caracas last year. It was 11 p.m. at night after I finished with this dinner with the opposition leaders. As I was headed back to the hotel, I saw long lines of people standing by ATM machines at 11 p.m. at night. I asked what that was all about. Well, they are facing hyperinflation in Venezuela—1 million percent, whatever it may be. Every day, these people have to stand in line to withdraw the maximum amount from their savings accounts so the next morning they have enough money to take the bus to work. That is the circumstance. The economy of this country has collapsed.

The medical care, which you mentioned, and I found at this children's hospital and other places, is virtually nonexistent. Diseases, which were once eradicated in Venezuela, are returning. Children are dying from diseases which long ago we believed were gone. Now they are back because there is no vaccine, nothing to treat these children.

When we ask the Trump administration, which has told us they want to get rid of Maduro, to give the Venezuelans a chance at a free election; when we ask them, will you at least show some sympathy for the Venezuelans in the United States who don't want to return, who want temporary protection until this political mess is over—when we ask them will you give them that protection, we get a letter from Mr. Cuccinelli, who is now the head of citizen services, saying: No, we are not going to do that.

How can you have it both ways? How can you say you care for the people of Venezuela, you acknowledge the terrible circumstances of their leader, Maduro, yet when it comes to those in the United States, you force them to return to this circumstance?

As you just described, for many of them, you are forcing the return to a circumstance which is threatening, if not deadly, with 7,000 already killed by their secret police and who knows how many have not been reported who could have been victims as well.

Today we made this request on the floor. A Republican Senator objected. The next time I am going to come to the floor, I will ask our Republican cosponsors to join us. This is a bipartisan effort to try to protect these Venezuela

people. If they will come join us, perhaps the leadership on the Republican side will have second thoughts and give these people of Venezuela a chance to be protected here until their country is safe.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, one final comment to my colleague. The 7,000 who have been killed by Maduro's secret police is reflective of the fact that those who are here are some of the earliest opponents of Maduro—those who tried to create change but fled. They have a heightened reason why, in fact, going back—in addition to the chaos and in addition to the danger—they are particularly threatened, at the end of the day, because they are the ones who were trying to create change and found a situation in which the threat of their life was at risk so they came to the United States.

Getting protected status—if there was ever a moment in which temporary protected status was envisioned, it is for this situation.

I yield the floor.

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

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

SENATE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Mr. THUNE. Madam President, I always find that the end of the July work period in Washington, DC, is a good time to take stock of the year so far.

I am looking forward to getting out of DC in the next few days and heading home to South Dakota. I am lucky enough to get to meet with South Dakotans on most weekends, but congressional recesses provide me with unbroken blocks of time to spend in the State and hear about South Dakotans' needs and priorities.

It has been a busy year here in Washington, DC, so far. In the last 7 months, the Senate has worked to confirm nearly 50 well-qualified judges, has provided funding to address the humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border, has given our military the resources it needs to defend the country, and much more.

I am proud that in May, by an overwhelming bipartisan margin, the Senate passed my bill to address illegal and abusive robocalls. My legislation would increase the financial penalties for making illegal robocalls, and it would give law enforcement more tools to go after these scammers who prey on vulnerable populations. The TRACED Act, which is my bill to address illegal robocalls, is one of more than 80 pieces of legislation I have introduced or cosponsored this year. My