

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 co-sponsors 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

robocall bill grew out of the work that I did on the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, which I have served on now for 11 years, including having served four of those years as chairman.

My serving on the Commerce Committee has given me an up-close look at the issue of consumer privacy. Last year, as chairman of that committee, I convened hearings into consumer data privacy and the accessing of millions of Facebook users' personal data by the political intelligence firm Cambridge Analytica. I also led a hearing to discuss the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation and California's new privacy-related law.

This year, as chairman of the Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, Innovation, and the Internet, I have continued to focus on consumer privacy. I recently convened a hearing to look at the use of persuasive technology on internet platforms like Facebook and YouTube and on how these technologies can be and have been abused. I believe that developing bipartisan consumer privacy legislation needs to be a priority, and it is an issue I will continue to focus on here in Congress.

Another thing on which I have focused on the Commerce Committee is paving the way for 5G technology, which is the next phase of the wireless revolution, and of ensuring that Americans in rural communities have access to the same broadband technology that residents of more urban areas enjoy.

Last year, the President signed my bipartisan MOBILE NOW Act into law, which I introduced to help secure an adequate spectrum for 5G technology. In June, I reintroduced my STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act in order to address the other part of the 5G equation, and that is infrastructure. Among other things, the STREAMLINE Small Cell Deployment Act will make it more affordable to bring 5G to rural areas by addressing the cost of small cell deployment.

I am privileged to represent South Dakota's farmers and ranchers here in the U.S. Senate, and year after year, one of my major priorities has been to make sure that the needs of our Nation's farmers and ranchers have been addressed. One of my priorities right now is to push for the passage of the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement here in Congress. Farmers and ranchers have been through a few tough years, and one of the things they tell me they need the most is market access for their products around the globe. The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement will preserve farmers' access to two of our Nation's most significant agricultural export markets—Canada and Mexico—and will substantially expand market access for U.S. dairy products in Canada. It will expand market access for U.S. poultry and egg producers, and it will make it easier for U.S. producers to export wheat to Canada.

Senate Republicans are ready to pass this agreement as soon as the President formally submits it to Congress. We are just waiting for the Democrats in the House, who—despite the significant steps that have been taken to address their priorities—have still not indicated they are ready to take up the agreement. I will continue to urge them to take up this agreement so that our Nation's farmers and ranchers can experience the benefits. I will also continue to push for swift conclusions to the other trade agreements the administration is negotiating.

Being a Member of Congress doesn't just allow you to push for legislation. It also gives you an important platform on which to advocate on your constituents' behalf with the President and his administration. This year I was able to help persuade the Department of Agriculture to move the hay and grazing date to September 1 of this year for cover crops on prevent plant acres. This will allow farmers and ranchers in Northern States like South Dakota to sow cover crops without worrying that they will not be able to harvest or graze them before the winter weather sets in.

Both here in Congress and with multiple Presidential administrations, I have been advocating for higher blends of ethanol for more than a decade, and I was very pleased this year to know the Trump administration moved to lift the ban on the year-round sale of E15, which is a 15-percent ethanol blended fuel. This is a big win for American consumers, for our growing energy independence, and especially for U.S. corn producers, including those back home in South Dakota. Corn producers are thankful that the President delivered on his commitment to the year-round sales of E15.

Yet it is still a tough environment for agriculture. That is why we need to update the EPA's emissions modeling to reflect ethanol's 40-percent reduction in life cycle greenhouse gasses, which will boost its export potential. Most pressing, the administration needs to curb the issuance of small refinery waivers, which are, in part, forcing ethanol plants to slow down, idle, or shutter across America's heartland. This is critical to our seeing through the President's commitment to farmers.

Throughout my time in the Senate, I have been proud to advocate for Ellsworth Air Force Base, which is near Rapid City, SD. I have spent years working with the other members of the South Dakota delegation in Ellsworth and with community leaders to build up Ellsworth. Among other things, our efforts have resulted in the expansion of the Powder River Training Complex into the largest training airspace in the continental United States. Undoubtedly, it is partly thanks to this airspace that, this May, Ellsworth was chosen as the first home for the future B-21 bomber, and it will host both training and operational squadrons. I

am very proud of Ellsworth for receiving these exciting new missions, and I look forward to there being more great developments for Ellsworth in the future.

I have worked on a lot of other bills this year to make life better for South Dakotans and for the American people. I have introduced tax reform bills to help small businesses, to update the Tax Code for the 21st century economy, to encourage charitable giving, and to permanently protect family farms from the death tax. I have introduced legislation to strengthen the agricultural economy, to support the Second Amendment, to help States like South Dakota—those that have low unemployment rates—to address workforce shortages, and much more. There is a lot more to come.

This fall, I look forward to working with my colleagues to continue building on the economic progress that we have made, to tackle our Nation's infrastructure needs, and, among other things, to lower healthcare costs.

I am proud to represent the people of South Dakota here in the U.S. Senate, and I will continue to do everything I can to address South Dakota's priorities and to expand opportunities for South Dakotans and all Americans.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCOTT of Florida). The Senator from Maine.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise to highlight the bipartisan work that is underway in the Senate to help Americans who struggle with the high cost of prescription drugs. This problem particularly affects our seniors, 90 percent of whom take at least one prescription drug. It is critical that we continue to build on the momentum of this important pocketbook issue that, I believe, bridges the partisan divide.

Since 2015, as the chairman of the Senate's Special Committee on Aging, I have chaired eight hearings on drug pricing, and we have heard so many heartbreaking stories from people who struggle to afford the medication that they need.

I will never forget standing in line at the pharmacy counter in Bangor, ME, where I live, when the couple ahead of me received a prescription drug and the unwelcomed news that the couple's copay was going to be \$111. The husband turned to his wife and said: "Honey, we simply cannot afford this." They walked away and left that needed prescription on the drug store counter. I told the pharmacist I didn't mean to overhear but that I just happened to be the next in line. I asked him how often this happens, and he gave me the terrible news that it happens every single day.

At a hearing on the skyrocketing price of insulin, we heard compelling testimony from Paul Grant, a father of four who lives in New Gloucester, ME, who discovered one day, because the 90-day supply of insulin for his 13-year-old