

This bill is also drafted so that its impact would extend significantly beyond its stated goal. Not only would my colleagues' proposal prohibit the Federal Government from operating commercial wireless networks without explicit congressional authorization, but it would also prohibit the government from operating wireline networks, such as fiber and cable networks.

Passing this legislation would bar the Federal Government from offering fiber-to-the-home connectivity to the tens of millions of Americans who currently have no meaningful option for high-speed broadband internet access at home. In effect, it would tell Americans in rural and low-income communities across the country that, if the private sector does not think it can make a profit offering service in their communities, that is the end of the line for them. Outside of providing subsidies, the Federal Government would be barred from addressing these market failures by contracting to build the infrastructure itself.

Time and time again, Congress has, on an overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, maintained the critical importance of delivering broadband to all Americans, and not just those in big cities. This body should not ban any option for internet connectivity without fulsome debate and regular order.

Unfortunately, this need case is far from a hypothetical. As many as 162 million Americans across the country do not have access to internet service at broadband speeds, according to one recent analysis cited by the FCC. Congress should be passing laws that work to close this gap and not those that tie our hands as millions and millions of Americans are left behind in this new digital divide. It is an issue of fairness, it is an issue of equality, and it is an issue that must be subjected to vigorous public debate.

So I rise today with a simple and straightforward request: Before Congress limits possible broadband build-out options for decades to come, let's give my colleagues' proposal the careful consideration that it deserves. I look forward to working with my colleagues to see if we can resolve some of these outstanding issues in a manner that is fair, transparent, and timely.

For all of these reasons, I will object to any unanimous consent agreement to consider S. 918.

#### CONFIRMATION OF HEATH P. TARBERT

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today I applaud the Senate's bipartisan confirmation of Dr. Heath Tarbert to head the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. I am confident that Dr. Tarbert, who is no stranger to public service, will lead the CFTC well. As the former acting Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Department of the Treasury, Dr. Tarbert has exactly the right experience, at the

right time, to lead the CFTC. The CFTC needs a strong leader like Dr. Tarbert. He understands how the markets are impacted by actions taken by Congress and U.S. Federal regulators, as well as those of our legislative and regulatory partners around the world. His experience clearly demonstrates appreciation of what led to the financial crisis 10 years ago. Dr. Tarbert also has the support of a range of agricultural groups, all voicing strong sport and appreciation for his experience in the financial sector, the effort demonstrated to understand priority issues, and the commitment to visiting agricultural operations to reinforce the importance of these markets to farmers, ranchers, growers, and agribusiness.

The CFTC is charged with fostering open, transparent, competitive, and financially sound markets, while working to prevent systemic risk. The regulation and oversight provided by the CFTC allows end users—farmers, ranchers, commercial companies, municipalities, energy companies, pension funds, and others—to hedge commercial risk using the derivatives market. These markets allow companies to generate jobs and produce goods and services for our economy. I look forward to working with Dr. Tarbert in his new role. Thank you.

#### CAMEROON

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the grave situation in Cameroon, specifically the targeted attacks against the English-speaking minority community there, the ongoing conflict between armed separatist groups and Cameroonian security forces, and the country's many political prisoners. In response to the escalation of conflict in Cameroon's northwest and southwest regions, yesterday, Senator YOUNG and I introduced a resolution calling on the Government of Cameroon and armed separatist groups to respect the human rights of all Cameroonian citizens, to end all violence, and to pursue an inclusive dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Since the outbreak of violence in 2016, Cameroon's security forces have been credibly accused of grave human rights abuses, from suppressing the basic freedoms of expression and assembly, and arbitrarily detaining those who challenge the President's authority, to torture and extrajudicial killings. The victims of these abuses include Anglophone activists, some of whom were forcibly returned to Cameroon after fleeing to Nigeria. Since 2016, entire villages have been burned down, displacing hundreds of thousands of Cameroonians from their communities.

Where did this all begin? The current conflict can be traced back to Cameroon's colonial history, as a country formed through merging pieces of a former French colony with parts of a former British colony. The

Francophone majority has held much of the land since 1961, when Cameroon gained its independence. All the while, the Anglophone minority held on to its language and distinct judicial and educational systems as it continued to be governed largely by French speakers.

About 3 years ago, this all began to shift. The Francophone government began implementing the French language and imposing its own laws, judges, and teachers in Anglophone communities, and protestors rose up in response. Anglophone Cameroonians rightly saw this as an unjust imposition on their autonomy, as a tyranny of the majority seeking to do away with their language and identity. The fact that Anglophone Cameroonians are vastly underrepresented in the central government only exacerbates their grievances in this matter. In response to citizens' voicing their discontent, the government cracked down, arresting hundreds of people—including peaceful activists who were given terrorism charges—and deploying the military to Anglophone areas.

Over the past 3 years, violence has claimed 2,000 lives in the Anglophone region. Human Rights Watch has documented extensive burning of villages by members of the security forces in the last 2 years in both the northwest and southwest regions, as well as rampant killings of civilians and sexual violence. According to a July 22 Human Rights Watch report, Cameroonian security forces have killed at least four civilians and raped one woman since mid June alone during their security operations in the northwest region. Shockingly, those killed included an elderly man with a physical disability and a young man with a mental disability.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the circumstances there. My home State of Maryland is home to a large, active population of Cameroonian diasporans. Marylander Sylvie Bello and members of her advocacy organization, the Cameroon American Council, have been a leading diaspora voice calling for the United States to encourage the Cameroonian Government and armed militias to stop the violence. Many in the diaspora community across the United States are working with civil society organizations in Cameroon to address the needs of internally displaced persons, IDPs, in the northwest and southwest regions of the country and refugees on the Nigerian side of the border.

This important community has made something very clear to me and my team, and I would like to take this opportunity to remind my colleagues in the U.S. Congress of it. The conflict in Cameroon greatly impacts Americans here in the United States, whether it be Americans with loved ones affected by the conflict, those who have traveled here to escape the conflict, or simply those of us who understand that being silent on issues of human rights is analogous to being complicit to their

occurrence. I encourage the Government of Cameroon to engage with diaspora organizations, along with a broad spectrum of Cameroonian civil society leader, in meaningful and constructive dialogue to resolve the conflict.

Moving forward, as we look for ways to address the situation in Cameroon, we must look to longtime President Paul Biya and his ongoing attacks on the legitimacy of Cameroon's democracy. President Biya rose to office in 1982 after serving as Prime Minister. In 2008, Presidential term limits were removed from Cameroon's Constitution. Protests ensued, but when the public wished to voice their disapproval of this decision, security forces violently repressed their actions.

In October 2018, Biya claimed a seventh Presidential victory in an election that many considered to be neither free nor fair. There were numerous credible reports of fraud, voter intimidation, violence, and low voter turnout in the Anglophone regions. The opposition party who reportedly came in second place, the Cameroon Renaissance Movement, claims that it had the support of the people. In January of this year, protests and demonstrations against the October elections were summarily suppressed by the Biya regime. Over 200 people were arrested, including opposition leader Maurice Kamto and his close supporters.

The United Nations Secretary General, Amnesty International, and the International Law Commission have called for Mr. Kamto's release, and just last month, thousands of Cameroonians demonstrated in Yaounde with the same demand. Biya's government forces responded as they usually do, by arresting 73 of the demonstrators.

Even members of the President's own inner circle are not immune to his thuggery. In 2012, Mr. Marafa Hamidou Yaya, the former Secretary General of the Presidency, was arrested and sentenced to 25 years in prison for complicity in an embezzlement scheme that many suspect befell him not because of any actual involvement in embezzlement, but as a way to prevent him from ever challenging Biya for the Presidency. His arrest and imprisonment make clear that Biya will target anyone who threatens grip on power.

President Biya has the broad authority to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister, Cabinet members, judges, generals, and governors. The executive and judicial branches are clearly a product of the President's preference, rather than a reflection of the will of the people. Although several press outlets exist and multiple political parties compete in elections, freedom of expression is greatly constrained. Journalists have been jailed, and Reporters Without Borders has described the circumstances for Cameroonian media as a "climate of fear."

In addition to these democratic concerns, Cameroon currently faces three major humanitarian challenges, which are exasperated by President Biya's un-

checked authority. About 275,000 refugees from the Central African Republic reside in the eastern part of Cameroon. In the north, Boko Haram threatens the communities near the Nigerian border. And in the west, where most of Cameroon's Anglophone minority resides, a conflict among government security forces and those seeking independence from the rest of the country continues to escalate.

If that wasn't enough, reports indicate that U.S. military assistance to Cameroon is being used to arm the same forces accused of committing atrocities against English-speaking Cameroonians. For this reason, Senator DURBIN and I filed an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would freeze security assistance to Cameroon, except for those funds that go towards combatting Boko Haram, until the U.S. Departments of Defense and State can certify that Cameroon's military and security forces have demonstrated progress in abiding by international human rights standards, particularly in regards to their actions in the Anglophone region.

Although Cameroon is an important partner in U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region, we cannot turn a blind eye to the extreme violence the government and its security forces have inflicted on innocent civilians. Human Rights Watch has documented extensive burning of villages by members of the security forces in the last 2 years in both the northwest and southwest regions, as well as rampant killings of civilians and sexual violence.

This February, the U.S. withheld millions of dollars in security assistance from Cameroon, on the condition that Biya and his forces work to improve the humanitarian situation there. No country should be able to receive U.S. military assistance while continuing to violently repress the rights of its own population.

America's strength is in our values. We must call out instances of human rights violations wherever they happen in the world. As a Congress, we have a special responsibility to use our voices when it is another government who is the perpetrator of these human rights abuses. This is the case for the situation in Cameroon. The violence must end. Innocent Cameroonians are caught in the crossfires of this political battle.

Communities have become too dangerous to live in. Hundreds of thousands of Cameroonians have been forced to flee their homes to escape the violence inflicted upon them. In November 2018, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs stated that at least 437,000 people were internally displaced in Cameroon from areas affected by this Anglophone conflict.

There are also thousands of refugees who have left Cameroon completely. As of late November 2018, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that it had reg-

istered more than 32,000 Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria who came from the affected Anglophone regions. The persecuted Cameroonians seeking refuge in Nigeria include dozens of Anglophone activists, but in January 2018, 47 of those activists were forcibly returned to Cameroonian authorities. Many of those returned had reportedly submitted asylum claims in Nigeria, so it is especially troubling that they were made to return to the country from which they fled. Ten of the 47 activists who were forcibly returned from Nigeria now face charges before a military court that would be punishable by the death penalty. The other 37 reportedly remain in detention without charge.

Even non-Cameroonians have found themselves in the midst of this turmoil. On October 30, 2018, U.S. missionary Charles Wesco was killed near the town of Bamenda, Cameroon.

We must act in the face of these gross violations of human rights. We must encourage all actors in the Cameroonian conflict to prioritize respect for human life over the desire for political gain. This must be done by first agreeing to an immediate ceasefire and allowing humanitarian assistance to reach those in need. The Cameroonian Government and Armed Forces must exercise restraint in their actions and ensure that protests remain peaceful.

Leaders on both sides must be willing to engage in constructive dialogue with civil society members to achieve to a political solution, one that is based upon respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms. Failure to do so will only prolong the conflict and lead to an increase in violence and mass displacement of the Anglophone minority.

In closing, I would like to again thank Maryland's vibrant Cameroonian diaspora for their continued engagement with myself and my office, and encourage my Senate colleagues to support my and Senator YOUNG's resolution which addresses many of these issues. Congress has a responsibility to continue to shine a spotlight on ongoing human rights abuses and the duty to advocate for upholding the rights of all citizens in Cameroon, regardless of their religious and political beliefs or the regions in which they reside.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### RECOGNIZING THE 2019 ARKANSAS WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame Class of 2019 inductees and celebrate their contributions to our State and our country.

Founded in 2014, the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame honors women whose contributions have influenced the direction of Arkansas in their community or the State as a whole. The