

We must prioritize women's health and reproductive rights by passing comprehensive legislation like the Women's Health Protection Act, the Right to Contraception Act, and the Right to IVF Act.

Last week, ProPublica published two articles documenting the devastating and entirely preventable deaths of Amber Thurman and Candi Miller, two mothers living in Georgia. The deaths of these mothers were due to Georgia's strict abortion ban. According to 10 maternal health experts and doctors on a Georgia State committee who reviewed these two cases, their deaths were impacted by the State's abortion ban—an abortion ban that does not, as promoted, protect the life of the mother.

It has been made clear to the public that pregnant women across the United States are losing their lives for reasons that could have been avoided. Since abortion was banned or restricted in 22 States over the past 2 years, pregnant women have been forced to carry a pregnancy to term, travel across State lines to those without an abortion ban, and even face rejection from emergency room doctors. The right to abortion was deeply held by women for almost 50 years, and the right to access contraception has existed for almost 60 years. Despite the clear constitutional rights the Supreme Court established almost 50 years ago in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, each year, legislatures across the country have passed harmful abortion restrictions in an effort to impede a woman's fundamental right to make the best, informed healthcare decisions for herself and her family.

Reproductive freedom is continuously undermined and attacked, even though 80 percent of the public believe decisions about abortion should be made by women in consultation with their healthcare providers. I urge my colleagues to accurately represent their constituents, who overwhelming support a woman's right to choose, without the interference from Federal, State, or local governments. At no point is a politician more qualified to look at and assess your reproductive health than you and your healthcare provider.

As it stands, we are facing an extreme healthcare worker shortage because of the Dobbs decision. Providers have been forced to relocate or cease offering care altogether, leaving over one-third of women in situations where it is difficult to get abortion services in their State. Clinics and maternal health providers are stepping in to provide care for out-of-state patients who cross State borders to seek care.

In 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) projected that, by 2030, roughly 3,000 fewer OB-GYNs will be practicing in the country. As of 2018, there were around 50,800 OB-GYNs, already too few to meet the country's rising demand. Many providers are afraid of facing criminal

penalties. The criminalization of doctors providing reproductive care to women is appalling.

While doctors struggle to provide care to all their patients, communities of color are facing the largest barriers when it comes to accessing abortion care. Black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth compared to their White counterparts. Many States are facing maternal healthcare deserts, especially areas that typically serve low-income communities.

When abortion is illegal, those who want to terminate a pregnancy may be forced to go a more dangerous route. The World Health Organization (WHO) found that unsafe or illegal abortions account for up to 10 percent of maternal deaths worldwide. Candi Miller tragically died in her home after taking abortion pills she ordered online. She did not visit a doctor because of the current legislation on pregnancies and abortions in Georgia. Due to abortion bans, like the one in Georgia, many women grapple with the decision to manage their abortion alone, even when they would prefer to seek care from a healthcare provider.

The Dobbs decision claimed to hand abortion to the States, but we continue to see challenges to reproductive rights elevated to the Supreme Court. *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA* decided this past term was merely a temporary win for reproductive health, but this is not over. Anti-abortion advocates and supporters of Project 2025 will continue to attack access to medication abortion, a safe and effective drug taken by over 6 million women over the last 24 years.

I am proud that Maryland was the first State to mandate contraceptive coverage in 1998. My State has long been a leader in supporting and protecting reproductive rights. On April 14, 2023, Governor Moore announced that the State would begin to stockpile mifepristone. This is even more important now that there have been threats of weaponizing the Comstock Act against pregnant people. Maryland remains committed to serving as a safe haven for abortion and reproductive healthcare access.

Idaho's challenge to the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) is also far from over. The Biden-Harris administration was clear that States must comply with EMTALA and provide stabilizing care in emergencies, even if that care includes abortion. States like Idaho unjustifiably put women's health and life at risk when they prohibit providers from managing pregnancy complications. Patients have lost their child, their fertility, and even their organs. *Idaho v. U.S.* demonstrated that abortion bans harm all patients.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have worked to dismantle barriers to women's health. The right to choose whether to have a child is fundamental, and it is a decision that should

only be made by women in consultation with their healthcare provider, free of government interference. It is time to elevate the voices that truly know how much is at stake in the fight for reproductive freedoms. Lives are at risk, and we cannot sit back and continue to read about the growing rates of maternal mortality. Amber Thurman and Candi Miller's deaths should have been prevented. In their memory and that of all the women who have lost their lives due to their State's abortion bans, we must fight for a woman's right to reproductive care.

VENEZUELA

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I come to the floor today first and foremost to acknowledge the incredible bravery of the Venezuelan people.

On July 28, despite the Maduro regime controlling Venezuela's entire election apparatus, despite the issuing of arrest warrants against opposition campaign aides and disqualifying opponents, despite blocking nearly all independent international observers, despite the threat of violence from men on motorbikes who attacked people at opposition rallies, Venezuelans from all walks of life went to the polls to vote.

That took courage. And it took a leap of faith that they could take back their country. And had they been given the opportunity, I think it is safe to assume the nearly 8 million Venezuelans who have left the country to escape the chaos and repression in recent years, would also have voted against Maduro.

Venezuelans are tired of living under this regime. They have endured a horrific economic and humanitarian crisis. They suffer through electricity blackouts. Many in Venezuela don't have access to clean water and are instead forced to use open water in the street for bathing, cooking, and drinking.

One UN report found 96 percent of Venezuelans living in poverty. Government corruption is rampant, the regime has carved up the energy sector and given it to loyalists, and parts of the security forces actively participate in drug trafficking.

In the face of all this, Venezuelans took a chance and went to the polls. Predictably, Maduro claimed victory within hours. But thanks to the receipts from the voting machines, academics and news outlets ranging from AP to the Washington Post to the Guardian were able to analyze the results and have all concluded that the opposition won in a landslide. One election forensics professor at the University of Michigan found the opposition beat Maduro 66 percent to 31 percent.

Despite this, Maduro, without irony, declared victory, saying that the "popular will" had to be respected. More than a month later, he still hasn't released the official precinct-level results. And in attempt to distract from what he has done, he has picked fights with social media companies and has

moved the Christmas holiday to October. That is just crazy, and it reeks of desperation.

No one thinks he won—not the President of Chile who wrote that the results were “difficult to believe”; not the Costa Rican Government who called the results “fraudulent”; not the President of Colombia, who said Maduro should “accept the transparent results, whatever they may be”—and indeed, Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia released a very important joint statement calling for “impartial verification of the results.”

Of course, there are those who still support Maduro. Vladimir Putin congratulated him. And the Cuban President said Maduro “cleanly and unequivocally defeated” the opposition.

But Venezuelans know the truth; Maduro lost. That is why, despite the clear threat of violence, they poured into the streets in protest.

Before the election, Maduro warned of “a bloodbath,” and indeed, his crackdown has been swift and deadly. At least 24 people have been killed and about 2,400 people arrested in relation to the protests, according to Human Rights Watch.

Just days ago, Mr. Gonzalez, the winner of the July 28 Presidential election, was forced to flee to Spain after Maduro issued a warrant for his arrest. Earlier this week, I spoke with Ms. Machado, the opposition leader who bravely traveled across Venezuela and mobilized a peaceful, democratic movement to change the country at the ballot box. Now, she has been forced into hiding by Maduro’s campaign of repression and intimidation.

As the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I condemn the actions of the Maduro regime, and I believe we must do what we can to support the Venezuelan people. That is why I fully support the leveling of targeted Magnitsky sanctions against those in the Maduro regime engaged in serious human rights abuses as part of this violent crackdown. That is why I am here on the floor today, to lift up the voices of the Venezuelan opposition, so their struggle for democracy is not lost to the next news cycle. And it is why I am working on legislation that I will introduce in the coming days—legislation that will add support for Venezuela’s democratic institutions; provide humanitarian relief for Venezuelans; support a peaceful democratic transition of power; support the restoration of the rule of law in the country; and contribute to the reconstruction of Venezuela.

Now, I know that reconstruction might seem like an impossible dream. It might seem like Maduro will never leave power.

I am here to underline a critically important point: Nothing is impossible, so do not give up hope.

I am not naive; I realize Maduro is desperate to hold onto power. I know that, after years of failed maximum pressure campaigns by previous administrations, Maduro is still there.

But that does not mean we should give up hope. Simon Bolivar once said: “A people that loves freedom will in the end be free.”

For so many decades in my life, the Soviet Union seemed indestructible. Then almost overnight, it collapsed. I remember being in Berlin with my wife Myrna. My wife and I hammered at the concrete of the Berlin Wall that was covered in graffiti showing a crossed-out hammer and sickle. The collapse of the Soviet Union is an important example for those of us who are fighting for a better Venezuela today. It is an example of the good we can achieve, if only we have faith.

But if Maduro agrees to respect the election results, there is much work to be done. We here in Washington recognize that it will be the Venezuelan people who are at the forefront of change in their country. But we in Congress and in the international community generally, we have tremendous power to support the people of Venezuela and their aspirations for a brighter, democratic future.

So to my colleagues here in Congress: Be ready—ready to support, to engage, and to play a productive role in ending this longstanding conflict.

To those in the Venezuelan military and security forces who are ready for a new direction for your country, away from violence and repression: Lay down your arms and be part of the solution.

And to the brave Venezuelan people, do not lose hope that you can change things for the better. Do not give up hope that in the end your country will be free.

ACCESSIBLE FEDERAL TECHNOLOGY

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, I rise today to recognize the 51st anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the importance of the law to equal access for people with disabilities, including equal access to Federal technology.

When it was signed into law on September 26, 1973, the Rehabilitation Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability by the Federal Government, in federally funded programs, and by Federal contractors. Passage of the Rehabilitation Act committed the Federal Government to ensuring that every person, including people with disabilities, have access to government programs and services. As with any legislation, enforcement is key. In the years following passage, people with disabilities needed to advocate that the Federal Government issue regulations and implement the law in order to ensure Federal services and products are accessible. Four years after passage, no regulations had been issued. At the beginning of April 1977, disability advocates started a month-long national protest, pressuring President Carter and his Cabinet. The protests lasted 26 days and resulted in implementation of the first Rehabilitation Act regulations. The Rehabilitation Act and the

resulting regulations laid the groundwork for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

The Rehabilitation Act helped make the Federal Government more accessible for people with disabilities, but with time, new accessibility barriers emerged. Those accessibility barriers were related to America’s information revolution, which has changed society at a rapid pace. In response to the emerging digital revolution, Senator Orrin Hatch led efforts in 1986 to establish guidelines on electronic accessibility, resulting in a new section of the Rehabilitation Act: section 508. In 1998, Senator Chris Dodd and Representative ANNA ESHOO led efforts to further strengthen section 508’s accessibility requirements for digital information, services, and tools offered by Federal Agencies. The Rehabilitation Act amendments in 1998 were the last significant congressional changes to Section 508.

Section 508 requires technology at Federal Departments and Agencies to be accessible for, and usable by, people with disabilities, including Federal employees who have disabilities. Section 508 requires the United States Access Board to develop the specific standards that Department and Agency technology must meet to be accessible for people with disabilities. Technology covered by section 508 includes websites, apps, and electronic documents, as well as physical technology such as kiosks, computers, and telecommunications equipment. Examples of accessible technology include websites, apps, or PDFs that can work with a screen reader or other assistive technology. They include video communications systems that are capable of incorporating sign language. They include kiosks that are properly positioned for a wheelchair user and provide an option for speech output.

Accessible Federal technology is important to ensure all Americans can benefit from government resources, and demographic changes mean more Americans will be disadvantaged if Federal technology is not accessible. Our Nation is rapidly aging, and older adults are more likely to have a disability. That means a larger population will be relying on accessible Federal technology for access to Federal employment, information, and services in the coming decades. Accessible Federal technology also benefits people without disabilities. For example, an accessible Federal website also benefits someone browsing on a small screen, someone browsing with a broken arm, or someone in a noisy environment who cannot hear an online video.

Despite the importance of accessible technology, the Federal Government has a poor record of meeting its obligations under section 508. In 2018, I was approached by blinded veterans who informed me that they could not access Department of Veterans Affairs’ websites using their screen readers. In