

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

response, I introduced bipartisan legislation, the Department of Veterans Affairs Website Accessibility Act. When it was signed into law in 2020, the VA Website Accessibility Act required the VA to report on the accessibility of the VA's websites and intake kiosks. The resulting report, released in 2021, had stark findings—fewer than 10 percent of the VA's websites were fully accessible for people with disabilities. The report also included a wholly inadequate plan for bringing the VA's websites into section 508 compliance.

The VA's web accessibility report was a wakeup call; the Federal Government must do better. To start, I used my position as chairman of the Senate Special Committee on Aging to push the VA to improve. I am pleased that my efforts had bipartisan support from the ranking member of the Aging Committee and from the bipartisan leadership of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans Affairs. In response to a letter signed by the bipartisan leadership of three committees and two subcommittees, the VA released a revised website accessibility report, with an updated plan for making VA websites accessible. I also requested that the VA conduct regular section 508 compliance updates for bipartisan House and Senate staff, which the VA has done since March 2022. The VA's recurring progress reports for congressional staff help ensure that the VA's efforts to improve stay on track.

Unfortunately, the shortfalls at the VA are not unique. In recent years, a long list of agencies has settled lawsuits alleging that their websites and technology are not accessible. Further, since 1998, the Federal Government's reporting and oversight for section 508 has ranged from lackluster to nonexistent. The Department of Justice is required by law to report every 2 years on the Federal Government's section 508 compliance but, prior to my oversight, had not done so since 2012. The General Services Administration routinely collected data on Federal website accessibility but did not make that information available to the public or Congress. The Office of Management and Budget maintained a strategic plan for Federal section 508 compliance, but that strategic plan had not been updated since 2013, despite Federal accessibility shortfalls and rapid technological change.

Since 2022, I have authored multiple letters to Federal departments and Agencies urging them to improve section 508 compliance, oversight, and transparency. Many letters were bipartisan, demonstrating the continued, broad interest in accessible Federal technology. I also led two Aging Committee hearings on accessible government technology that included people with disabilities as witnesses. Their testimony helped the committee understand the real-world impact when Federal technology does not allow for equal access. In December 2022, I released Unlocking the Virtual Front

Door, an Aging Committee majority staff report that lays out many of the Federal accessibility failures that I have outlined today. Unlocking the Virtual Front Door includes a set of recommendations for the Federal Government and for Congress for making Federal technology accessible.

I am pleased that improvements have been made in response to my oversight of section 508 compliance. The VA reorganized its technology access office, expanded its outreach to people with disabilities, and bolstered its efforts to make its technology accessible. The VA also reevaluated over 300 exceptions that it had granted to allow the use of inaccessible technology and revoked all but 18. The Department of Justice, meanwhile, released its first report on the Federal Government's section 508 compliance since 2012, and the General Services Administration committed to new section 508 oversight and transparency efforts. The Office of Management and Budget has released updated guidance for Departments and Agencies on meeting section 508 standards, replacing its outdated 2013 strategic plan. Department and Agency inspectors general have also taken an interest in accessible technology, which resulted in a January 2024 inspector general report on technology at the VA.

While there has been progress toward making the Federal Government's technology accessible for people with disabilities, significant shortfalls remain. The Justice Department's latest section 508 report, released in January 2023, found that 1 in 10 public-facing websites at major Departments and Agencies are not fully accessible for people with disabilities. A December 2023 General Services Administration assessment likewise noted that the Federal Government's section 508 compliance is "well below expectations." There are also continued, troubling reports of specific electronic accessibility failures within the Federal Government. For example, there are allegations that the new electronic health record system at the VA is not accessible for people with disabilities. The VA has come a long way since I began my oversight of section 508. The VA must continue to show that it is serious about section 508 by prioritizing accessibility for all new information and communications technology, including its EHR system.

The reports and data that have been released in response to my oversight of section 508 highlight a need to do more. One recommendation in Unlocking the Virtual Front Door was for Congress to significantly update section 508 for the first time since 1998. That is why I have introduced S. 4766, the Section 508 Refresh Act of 2024. My legislation would make changes to ensure that newly purchased or developed Federal technology is accessible before it is deployed. It would also reform the Federal Government's section 508 complaint process by giving the experts

with the Access Board a prominent role. The Section 508 Refresh Act would require regular testing to ensure that Federal technology already in use remains fully accessible over time, and it would require Departments and Agencies to appoint qualified, dedicated section 508 officers. Critically, my legislation would also require the involvement of people with disabilities in the acquisition and accessibility testing of Federal technology. People with disabilities who work for the Federal Government or use Federal resources are the ones who are harmed when Federal technology is not accessible. It is essential for them to have a seat at the table when Federal technology is being acquired, designed, implemented, and tested.

The need to reform section 508 is real. My own constituents have testified to the Aging Committee about the impact when Federal technology does not allow equal access for all Americans. Ms. Jule Ann Lieberman of Devon, PA, is an expert on assistive technology. Yet, during the COVID-19 pandemic, she could not access local prevalence data on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website because it was inaccessible for her screen reader. Although Ms. Lieberman was able to ask a family member for help, she explained to the committee that "repeated requests for help become burdensome for those who support me, potentially leaving me with either no access or not timely information." Sadly, Ms. Lieberman ran into yet another accessibility barrier later in the pandemic, when she could not use her screen reader to access COVID-19 vaccination resources on the CDC website.

Mr. Ron Biglin is a blind Air Force veteran from Clarks Summit, PA. Mr. Biglin can fish, kayak, and do online banking. However, Mr. Biglin could not use the internet to access his VA health benefits. When Mr. Biglin tried to do so, the VA's online portal, My HealtheVet, would not work with his screen reader. Mr. Biglin told the Aging Committee that, "when you are visually impaired you want to be as independent as possible and having problems getting on VA websites takes away this independency." In response to my oversight, the VA worked to resolve the issues that Mr. Biglin was having with My HealtheVet. However, to safeguard equal access, we must ensure that all Federal Departments and Agencies build accessibility into their technology from the start.

I remain committed to ensuring that Federal technology is accessible for people with disabilities and that all Americans have equal access to Federal jobs, information, and benefits. I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress on continued section 508 oversight and to advance the Section 508 Refresh Act.

GUATEMALA

Mr. WELCH. Madam President, last December I joined Senators TIM Kaine, DICK Durbin, JEFF Merkley, and LAPHONZA Butler and Representatives NORMA J. Torres and DELIA C. Ramirez, on a trip to Guatemala. We arrived just weeks before the scheduled inauguration of President Bernardo Arevalo, who had been elected by an overwhelming majority. The Guatemalan people had voted decisively to reject the corruption, impunity, and malfeasance that had been the hallmark of successive governments in that country.

We went to Guatemala to speak directly to Mr. Arevalo's supporters, as well as to the powerful forces in Guatemala, including the Attorney General, opposition members of Congress, magistrates, and those who were corruptly conspiring to prevent President Arevalo from taking office. Our purpose was to make clear that if their efforts to subvert the will of the people succeeded, it would have profoundly negative long-term consequences for U.S. relations—both economic and security—for whoever illegally seized power. It would propel the country down a path of authoritarianism and economic decline much like Nicaragua, leading to further social division, political instability, and isolation.

Their efforts to overturn the election and undermine the people were flagrant; the Attorney General went so far as to attempt to nullify the fair election of then President-elect Arevalo shortly after we met with officials of the outgoing administration to urge a peaceful transfer of power.

Ultimately, the efforts to prevent President Arevalo from taking office failed. But his detractors were far from defeated. They immediately set their sights on preventing President Arevalo from carrying out his anti-corruption agenda and forcing him from office. Those efforts continue today.

I mention this because I recently met with a delegation of Guatemalan indigenous women, led by Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchú. Although their numbers are woefully under-represented in the three branches of government, I have never met more determined and courageous women. Women who have experienced extreme poverty, violence, and loss, yet who have become leaders in their communities and fiercely dedicated to preserving their indigenous identity, improving the lives of their families, and defending Guatemala's fragile democracy.

The United States strongly supports President Arevalo, who offers the best chance Guatemala has had in decades to chart a new path for his country—a path grounded in the rule of law, in the institutions of democracy, in transparency, in accountability. And despite the efforts of the corrupt networks whose only interest is in using the institutions of power and privilege to enrich themselves, I am hopeful because President Arevalo has the support of

Guatemala's indigenous population, exemplified by the fearless women I met this week.

They are not going to let what they won freely and fairly at the ballot box be stolen from them. They are not going to allow a minority of crooked elites deny them and their children the chance for a better life. They have an ambitious social, economic, and political reform agenda. They are committed to working to strengthen education, economic opportunity, equality, democracy, and justice. It is in the interest of the Arevalo administration and the United States to help them achieve these goals for the benefit of all Guatemalans.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MILWAUKEE NAACP

Ms. BALDWIN. Madam President, today I rise to recognize the Milwaukee NAACP on its 100th anniversary. It gives me great pleasure to honor this remarkable organization and to commemorate this historic milestone.

The Milwaukee NAACP branch was established in 1924, which grew out of the national quest to eradicate the eruptions of anti-Black violence. For 100 years, the Milwaukee NAACP has stood at the forefront of the civil rights movement, unwavering in its efforts to achieve parity in politics, education, society, and the economy, while striving to eliminate racial prejudice.

During the emergence of the NAACP, millions of African-Americans were migrating from the south to northern States like Wisconsin in search of greater opportunity and a better quality of life. The newcomers soon learned that they had not escaped racial discrimination in jobs, education, and housing.

Throughout its early years, led by prominent middle-class African-American professionals, including Wilbur Halyard, Ardie Halyard, and James W. Dorsey, the Milwaukee NAACP was instrumental in battling the racial discrimination through political lobbying, legal intervention, and direct-action protest.

Over the past century, the NAACP has achieved significant progress in empowering African-Americans to reach their greatest potential. By supporting initiatives to improve the lives of those who are often left behind, the NAACP has instigated substantial transformations in Wisconsin's largest city.

Despite the NAACP's tireless efforts, the African-American community in Milwaukee continues to face daunting challenges. Factors such as wages, educational outcomes, economic conditions, neighborhood safety, and the opportunity to achieve the American dream are regrettably still influenced by a person's ZIP Code or the color of his or her skin.

By working together, we can ensure that African-Americans and all community members are educated, em-

ployed, and empowered to succeed. The NAACP's persistent commitment to improvement fosters hope for the next generation of leaders in Milwaukee's communities of color.

As we honor the Milwaukee NAACP's achievements and contemplate future challenges, I will be forever grateful for the branch's achievements over the past century, and I look forward to its continued success in the years to come.

RECOGNIZING THE MARYLAND ATHLETES AT THE 2024 OLYMPICS

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to honor the 26 athletes with ties to Maryland who participated at the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics in Paris, France. Olympic athletes compete at the highest level of their craft, showing incredible determination and perseverance to reach their goals. Therefore, I would like to recognize the following athletes for their hard work and successes during the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics:

Katie Ledecky of Bethesda and alumni of Stone Ridge School of Sacred Heart, who won silver in the 4x200m freestyle relay, dominated the 1500m freestyle, won gold in the 800m freestyle, and bronze in the 400m freestyle. Ledecky now has 14 Olympic medals, making her the most decorated female Olympian in U.S. history.

Phoebe Bacon of Chevy Chase and Erin Gemmell of Potomac, who also competed on the U.S. Swim Team, with Gemmell taking silver in the 4x200m freestyle relay.

Alyssa Thomas, a 10-year veteran of the WNBA and University of Maryland Alumni, who won her first gold medal during the U.S. Women's Basketball final against France.

Kevin Durant of Suitland, an NBA superstar who won his fifth gold medal during the U.S. Men's Basketball final against France.

Thea Lafond, another UMD Terp and alumni of Montgomery County Public Schools, who won Dominica's first gold medal ever in the triple jump.

Aaron Brooks of Hagerstown and Helen Maroulis of Rockville, who both won a Bronze Medal in their weight class of wrestling. Maroulis is the first-ever American to win three Olympic medals in women's wrestling.

Aaron Russell of Ellicott City and the Team USA Men's Volleyball Team, who won a bronze medal in their match against Italy.

Masai Russell of Potomac, who won gold in the 100m hurdle.

Quincy Wilson of Potomac, who became the youngest Maryland Olympian and track and field gold medalist in the history of the Olympics for running in the team qualifier for the 4x400m relay.

Skateboarder Rudy Lilley of Ocean City, the youngest Maryland woman at 17 to compete at the Olympic Games.

Grace Balsdon, Leah Crouse, Brooke DeBerdine, Emma DeBerdine, Kelee Lepage, and Nike Lorenze, alumnae of University Maryland, who competed for their respective countries' field hockey teams.

Treyon Jenifer of Huntingtown, who won his third Gold-Medal for wheelchair basketball.

Noah Hanssen of Ellicott City, who placed fourth in wheelchair fencing.

Tatyana McFadden of Columbia, who earned a silver medal in the women's T54 100m, her 20th medal.

Daniel Ramanchuk of Mt. Airy, who won a gold medal in Men's T54 5,000m and a bronze medal in Men's T54 400m.