

It is therefore very disappointing that President Trump, in an executive order on his first day in office, redesignated Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism. He was once again pressured to do so, as he was during his first term, by the same vocal minority who believe that by making the lives of the Cuban people as miserable as possible they will topple the government.

By doing so President Trump has made a mockery of the list of states that do sponsor international terrorism, like Iran and North Korea. It is not a list of pariah countries. It is not a list of countries whose governments violate human rights. Under the law, it is not even a list of countries that support domestic terrorism. Cuba does not belong on the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, and by relisting Cuba, the President has ignored the law.

JUAN LOPEZ

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, 4 months ago I made a statement about the murder of Honduran indigenous environmental defender and anti-corruption activist Juan Lopez, on September 14, 2024, who at that time was the latest victim of an ongoing epidemic of vigilante violence in that country.

As I mentioned then, my office, like others in Congress, had received reports of recurring threats, attacks, arbitrary arrests, and assassinations of members of the Guapinol, Tocoa, and other communities in the Bajo Aguan region of Honduras. The crimes were intended to silence those who opposed the Los Pinares open-pit iron oxide mine and the Ecotek Thermoelectric Project in an indigenous reserve which threaten their livelihoods and the region's environment, and who challenged the companies and corrupt officials who profit from those projects.

Mr. Lopez, a winner of the Letelier-Moffitt Human Rights Award in 2019, had been a victim of wrongful imprisonment, false prosecution, and had spoken out against corrupt officials in Tocoa.

His assassination was the latest in a pattern of similar killings that have not resulted in justice. Of the six other assassinations of members of the Guapinol water defenders, no one has been prosecuted or punished, nor for the murders of scores of other social activists, journalists, and human rights defenders in Honduras.

Last September, I urged the following steps to be taken immediately: Convene an international commission of experts to support the Honduran prosecutor's investigation, to ensure the investigation is credible, thorough, and impartial; Provide protection for human rights defenders at risk in the Bajo Aguan region; and investigate the abuses and corruption denounced by Juan Lopez and the pattern of violence against the Guapinol defenders.

In the months since Mr. Lopez was killed, the Honduran Government has said that it detained three people who

were responsible. That is encouraging. But government officials believe that the person who ordered the killing is still at large. Also, according to press reports, Honduran prosecutors formally accused company leaders and local government officials connected to the mine of illegally exploiting resources, abusing authority, and "environmental crimes" for mining in the indigenous reserve. Yet people living in the area say the mining hasn't stopped.

After the assassination in May 2016 of Berta Caceres, another Honduran indigenous leader who led protests against the construction of a hydroelectric dam and won the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, international pressure pushed the Honduran Government to arrest and prosecute one of the top officials of the construction company. But he is challenging his conviction, and it is widely believed that there may be others who were responsible and have not been charged.

Before and after her election in 2021, Honduran President Xiomara Castro pledged to combat corruption and impunity, including partnering with the United Nations to establish an international commission for this purpose. Her term ends in November 2025, when a new President will be elected in Honduras, yet there has been minimal progress toward establishing the promised commission. Corruption and impunity remain deeply entrenched in the Honduran public and private sectors.

Not only do those of us who care about justice in Honduras want to see all those responsible for the murders of Berta Caceres, Juan Lopez, and the other land and water defenders prosecuted and punished, we also want to be able to support a new Honduran commission against corruption and impunity. That would be a crucial, tangible way for President Castro to demonstrate that she not only replaced Juan Orlando Hernandez, her predecessor who was sentenced to 45 years in a U.S. prison for cocaine and weapons trafficking, but she also dismantled the criminal enterprise that enriched him, his brother, and their cronies. Otherwise, the Honduran people will continue to suffer from the spiraling poverty and violence and bear the costs and consequences of the complicity of yet another corrupt government in undermining the rule of law.

As I said last September, the people of the Bajo Aguan should not have to live in fear that powerful companies and corrupt officials will steal their land, pollute their rivers, and murder courageous leaders like Juan Lopez and Berta Caceres for peacefully defending the natural resources that are rightfully theirs.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNIZING THE 2025 ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the newest inductees into the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame for their efforts to carry on the Natural State's deep-rooted farming culture and the leadership each has demonstrated in their respective communities.

Arkansas' outsized impact on American agriculture is well-documented. That prominent role is largely the result of the hard work and expertise among our farmers, ranchers, and foresters, as well as entrepreneurs, scientists, educators, and all those who power our State's largest industry. Their dedication has continued to strengthen Arkansas agriculture even amid the tremendous challenges facing rural America and farming communities across the country right now.

This year's inductees represent individuals who support the agriculture community in different capacities.

Aubrey Blackmon of Houston, AR, grew his farm from one cow and calf to over 350 cattle at its peak. He has been involved with the Arkansas Cattlemen's Association for over 50 years and is known as the cattlemen's historian. After receiving the association's lifetime achievement award in 2023, it was renamed the "Aubrey Blackmon Lifetime Service Achievement Award."

Carl Brothers from Stuttgart has made significant contributions to Arkansas' rice production industry, including through policy efforts to create USDA marketing loans for rice farmers. His leadership at Riceland Foods over five decades helped it grow into the world's largest rice miller.

Over the course of three decades, Chuck Culver of Fayetteville served with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and championed research to bolster farmers' ability to produce a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply. Culver also helped lead the establishment of the Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center, as well as the Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center in Little Rock and the National Agricultural Law Center in Fayetteville.

Mike Freeze of Little Rock has been a longtime champion of the aquaculture industry. Keo Fish Farms has been a catalyst for innovation in the industry under Mike's direction. He has advocated for fish farmers before the U.S. House of Representatives Agriculture Committee and served as president of the Arkansas chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Freeze was also appointed to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and went on to serve as its chairman.

Albion, AR, resident Jack Reaper was a World War II veteran who built a diverse and commercially successful farming operation that included broilers and eggs, as well as beef cattle and

dairy heifers. Having started with 24 acres of corn and cotton, by the end of his life, Reaper was widely acknowledged for his novel approach to farming in the Ozark Mountain foothills.

Rison native Frank Wilson and his two brothers started Wilson Brothers Lumber in 1982 and saw it become an industry-leading operation. He would go on to develop critical software programs designed to assist producers with keeping forest management and financial records. Wilson also has helped raise \$11 million for Arkansas Children's Hospital and built multiple local businesses while holding over 17,000 acres of south Arkansas timberland.

On behalf of all Arkansans, I congratulate these deserving individuals for their long-lasting contributions that have improved Arkansas agriculture. Our State remains among the top agriculturally because of them and everything they represent. We are very proud of their achievements, and I am pleased to join the Arkansas Agriculture Hall of Fame in recognizing and honoring these leaders.●

REMEMBERING JERRY ATKINSON

●Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. President, I rise today with a heavy heart to honor and commemorate the extraordinary life of Jerry Atkinson, who sadly passed away in California, while visiting his grandkids, on December 24, 2024. A proud Illinoisian, his insurance business, and dedication to helping others supported many Illinois families plan and secure their futures.

Born to Bill and Aileen Atkinson on November 28, 1955, Jerry grew up in Westchester, IL. In Westchester, he forged and maintained lifelong friendships that meant the world to him. Some of his fondest childhood memories include George's Standard Service baseball team, games of Off-The-Wall, and all things baseball. He loved sports and was a loyal Bears and White Sox fan.

Jerry had a huge heart and was blessed with great empathy for others. He faced adversity in his own life and was always willing to help anyone and would literally give the shirt off his back to a person in need.

Jerry led a successful agency in the western suburbs, where he gave many Illinois families access to affordable coverage.

Jerry met his loving wife of 43 years, Dawn, at work. They started dating and got married on April 4, 1981, at Christ the King Catholic Parish in Lombard. Soon after, they welcomed their children Kevin and Leah into the world. Jerry's heart expanded even more with the births of his grandchildren Silas and Sage.

He was always grateful for his family's strong, loving bond. He is survived by Dawn; Kevin and Leah, with spouse Jeff; Silas and Sage; siblings Mary Lynn Cali and Bill Atkinson with spouses Phil and Sandy, Dan Atkinson

with spouse Mary Ann, and John Atkinson with spouse Bonnie; 11 nieces and nephews; and many great nieces and nephews.

Jerry's passing at the age of 69 marks the end of a life filled with love, passion, and dedication. His legacy lives on through his children, grandchildren, and the countless lives he touched.

I ask my colleagues in the Senate to join me in honoring the life and legacy of Jerry Atkinson for his unwavering love for his family and his lifelong commitment to service. His story is one of love and compassion that we can all strive towards.●

RECOGNIZING HOPE WOMEN'S CENTER

●Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize Hope Women's Center in Newton, KS, for their efforts in declaring January 22, 2025, as the Sanctity of Human Life Day and Respect for Life Day in Harvey County, KS.

Hope Women's Center has long been a leader in promoting the sanctity of life, as they have worked tirelessly to support expectant mothers, providing them with necessary resources, care, and education. Their commitment to protecting and caring for those in need reflects the core values that strengthen our communities, the State of Kansas, and our Nation.

As an OB/GYN and a lifelong advocate for life, I delivered over 5,000 babies, witnessing the beauty of life with every birth. There is no greater moment than handing a newborn to their mother for the first time. I remain committed to protecting life at all stages, including the unborn, the expectant mother, and the new mother. Through my experiences in starting and supervising multiple family planning clinics, I believe we must ensure access to prenatal care, nutrition, and childcare, as well as attend to the social challenges a mother faces. I am proud to support legislation that addresses these points, and I look forward to working with my Senate colleagues on legislative solutions that ensure life is protected at all stages in the future.

Our Founding Fathers understood that the protection of life is the very cornerstone of our Nation. In declaring that all men are created equal, endowed with the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, they affirmed the importance of defending life, from conception to natural death. It is our moral duty to ensure that life is cherished and safeguarded, as this principle serves as the moral foundation of America and should be a guiding beacon for the world.

I now ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing January 22, 2025, as the Sanctity of Human Life Day and Respect for Life Day in Harvey County, KS, as well as in thanking Hope Women's Center for all the great work they are accomplishing.●

REMEMBERING TAYLOR ELIZABETH LONG FISHEL

●Mr. SCOTT of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life of Taylor Elizabeth Long Fishel who passed away on December 23, 2024, at the young age of 31. Taylor was born in Tallahassee, FL, where she graduated from Leon High School and Florida State University. Taylor was a caring friend, wife, and mother who is survived by her husband Howell and their sons Lewis and James. Taylor is also survived by her parents and other family members. Today we acknowledge the wonderful impact she made on all those who knew her.●

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message from the President of the United States was communicated to the Senate by Ms. Kelly, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGE REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate a message from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The message received today is printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 12:04 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Alli, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 186. An act to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts of valor, selfless service, and sacrifice displayed by Medal of Honor recipients.

H.R. 187. An act to provide for the standardization, consolidation, and publication of data relating to public outdoor recreational use of Federal waterways among Federal land and water management agencies, and for other purposes.

H.R. 197. An act to provide for a land exchange in the Chippewa National Forest, Minnesota, and for other purposes.

H.R. 204. An act to require that the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior submit accurate reports regarding hazardous fuels reduction activities, and for other purposes.

H.R. 207. An act to direct the Secretary of Commerce to establish a task force regarding shark depredation, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated:

H.R. 186. An act to authorize the National Medal of Honor Museum Foundation to establish a commemorative work on the National Mall to honor the extraordinary acts