

I thank the Presiding Officer, yield the floor, and note the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume legislative session and proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VENEZUELA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, we are all painfully aware of the many resource rich countries whose leaders care far more about maintaining their grip on power and enriching themselves than addressing the needs of their people. The departed Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich was a good example, and in this hemisphere Venezuela's late President Hugo Chavez and his successor President Nicolas Maduro stand out.

President Chavez, a former army officer who was swept into power in a wave of popular discontent after decades of corrupt, elitist governments, mastered the art of deception. He was a cult personality and virulently anti-United States, who dished out favors to poor communities as he ruined the country's economy, destroyed any semblance of an independent judiciary, changed the constitution so he could hold onto power indefinitely, and used the police to intimidate the press.

In the year since Chavez' death, President Maduro has tried to fill his shoes. He has adopted Chavez' divisive, anti-U.S. rhetoric, but he lacks Chavez' charisma, and the prognosis for positive change in Venezuela is increasingly bleak.

Early last month a few student demonstrations quickly spiraled into the largest public protests against President Maduro since he came to power. Having been elected by a razor-thin margin, the smallest in nearly half a century, many Venezuelans hoped the stultifying reality of widespread unemployment and economic stagnation would inspire reforms. Regrettably, President Maduro did not heed the people's message.

Instead, inflation has skyrocketed in the oil-rich country and food shortages have plagued local markets. Additionally, the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report for

2013-2014 ranks Venezuela number three on its list of economies damaged by high crime rates and violence, contributing to the resolve of the thousands of Venezuelans who took to the streets in protest. From San Cristobal, to Maracaibo, to the capital city of Caracas, the demonstrations have attracted students, merchants, and middle-class professionals in a challenge to government repression and mismanagement.

For several weeks images of the protests trickled out of Venezuela through various social media platforms, offering a limited, unfiltered perspective amidst the state-run media's censorship of impartial coverage. Because of the fog caused by this lack of objective information, it took nearly 2 weeks for many major U.S. news sources to arrive in country to begin coverage.

The distorted, self-serving portrayal of the protestors as treasonous fascists by the Maduro administration and the state-run media has been compounded by the deaths of some 18 people and the arbitrary arrests of hundreds, and risks inciting a further crackdown against the opposition. Additionally, there have been reports that foreign journalists have been detained while trying to cover the protests, with up to 20 having been physically assaulted, according to a Colombian news source that has since been banned from Venezuela for covering the protests.

The U.S. State Department's recently released Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 describes the Maduro government's efforts to impede freedom of expression. The increasingly heavy-handed and violent actions over the last few weeks have exacerbated the situation.

As one of Venezuela's most important trading partners, and as a nation whose people take note of the well-being and basic rights of other peoples in our hemisphere and beyond, the United States has an interest in ensuring that human rights are not violated with impunity. I hope President Maduro will not continue to make the mistake of other messianic, autocratic leaders who demonize their opponents. In Venezuela they represent roughly half of the population. He would do far better to work with all Venezuelans to reduce tensions and find real solutions to the country's problems. The people of his country deserve nothing less.

TRIBUTE TO SHERIFF DOUG GILLESPIE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise to honor Sheriff Doug Gillespie, of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, who was recently named the National Sheriffs' Association's 2014 Sheriff of the Year.

The Ferris E. Lucas Award for Sheriff of the Year is awarded to recognize an outstanding sheriff for contributions made to improve the office of sheriff at the local, State, and national levels, and for involvement in the com-

munity above and beyond the responsibilities required. By this measure, I can think of no one more deserving than Sheriff Gillespie. His tireless service as sheriff has made the Las Vegas metropolitan area a safer and better place to live, work, and raise a family.

Sheriff Gillespie has diligently served the Las Vegas community for 33 years as a metropolitan police officer, the last 7 as sheriff. Under Sheriff Gillespie's leadership, metro has become one of only 72 intelligence-gathering fusion centers in the country. It has won the Webber Seavey Award, given for quality in law enforcement by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, for an outreach effort to strengthen police relations in the Las Vegas area. Metro is also one of only 32 departments to achieve the highest standard of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

In addition to his position as sheriff, he has served in many leadership roles in other law enforcement organizations, such as board director of the National Sheriff's Association Executive Committee, chair of the Homeland Security Committee for the Major City Chiefs Association, vice chair of the Nevada High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force, finance committee chair for the Nevada Commission for Homeland Security, and president of the Major County Sheriff's Association.

On behalf of the U.S. Senate, I congratulate Sheriff Doug Gillespie on receiving the Ferris E. Lucas Award for Sheriff of the Year and look forward to the continuation of a career that has already made Nevada very proud.

SIMMONS COLLEGE OF KENTUCKY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to honor one of the oldest educational institutions in my home State of Kentucky. Recently, the Simmons College of Kentucky announced its accreditation from the Association of Biblical Higher Learning. It is the college's first national accreditation.

The story of Simmons College is one of success. After the Civil War came to an end in 1865, there was no place in my home State where African Americans could obtain a college degree. That changed in 1879 when the Kentucky Normal Theological Institute opened its doors on the corner of 8th and Kentucky Street in Louisville. The school's second president, Dr. W.J. Simmons, transformed the nascent school into a full-fledged university that offered a wide array of liberal arts and theological programs. Simmons increased the school's enrollment from 13 to over 200 during his 10-year tenure. In 1918, Charles Parrish assumed the role of president of the university and aptly renamed the school Simmons University.

Simmons flourished into the 1920s, when enrollment peaked at over 500 students, but this success could not