

130 miles per hour. Homes in both small towns suffered severe damage. Several homes had roofs torn off, while others were completely flattened. The tornado that hit Delevan touched down without warning because tornado sirens lost power a few seconds after they began to sound.

Debris from homes and farms was scattered across the community. Many roads in the community were impassible due to down trees and power lines. Emergency responders wasted no time going house to house in both communities. I spoke with Warren County sheriff Martin Edwards on Friday afternoon. Thankfully, there were no fatalities or serious injuries reported.

The communities are busy cleaning up today and utility companies are working to get gas and electricity back on. Over the weekend, Sparky's Smokeshack set up a smoker on the edge of Cameron. The popular rib joint served up free meals to anyone who needed them. American Red Cross volunteers also are providing food and water. As is so often the case when a disaster like this strikes, first responders and friends and family members are helping people whose homes and businesses were damaged. I thank the first responders and all of the members of these communities for their work.

The Illinois delegation and I stand ready to help in any way we can, particularly if the Governor requests Federal assistance. I have no doubt that the people in Cameron and Delevan will rebuild. Our thoughts are with the many people today who lost homes and other property.

GUATEMALA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, with the Congress focused on the U.S.-Iran nuclear agreement, it is not surprising that recent developments in Guatemala have not received the attention they deserve, either here or in the international press. I want to speak briefly about this as it should interest all Senators, particularly at a time when the governments of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras are seeking significant U.S. funding to support the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity in the Northern Triangle of Central America.

The Cold War history of U.S. involvement in Guatemala is not one we can be overly proud of. The role of the United Fruit Company, the CIA, Guatemala's landholding elite, and others in orchestrating the removal of democratically elected President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in 1954, the training and equipping of the Guatemalan military that carried out a scorched earth campaign against a rebel insurgency and the rural indigenous population in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, and policies favoring the financial and political elite who perpetuated the racism, social and economic inequities, corruption, violence, and impunity that persist to this day, are all part of that collective experience.

One of the vestiges of that period is the continuing harassment, vilification, death threats, and even malicious prosecutions of human rights defenders and other social activists. It is regrettable that Guatemala's authorities have failed to condemn or take effective steps to stop this pattern and practice of threats and abuse of the justice system.

Yet while the 1996 Peace Accords that finally ended 36 years of armed conflict were, for the most part, not implemented, since then the United States has sought to help address the causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice in Guatemala. We have funded child nutrition and public health programs, bilingual education for indigenous children, efforts to reform and professionalize the police, prevent violence against women, strengthen the institutional capacity of the Public Ministry, locate and identify the remains of thousands of people who disappeared during the war and ended up in mass graves, support reparations for victims of the Chixoy massacres, protect biodiversity and preserve pre-Columbian archeological sites in Peten. The results of these efforts have been mixed, but they do signify a positive trend in our relations with Guatemala in recent years for which the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank, and others deserve credit.

President Perez Molina also deserves credit for supporting the agreement to finance the Chixoy reparations plan, which some in his own government opposed. It is now essential that the agreement is implemented so the communities who suffered losses are compensated.

The United States has also been a strong supporter of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, otherwise known as CICIG, which, in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General, has played an indispensable role in investigations and prosecutions of cases of corruption, organized crime, and clandestine groups, as well as crimes against humanity and other human rights atrocities dating to the civil war. I commend the way CICIG Commissioner Ivan Velasquez and Attorney General Thelma Aldana are working together to address these issues.

Each year since CICIG's inception in 2007, as either chairman or ranking member of the appropriations subcommittee that funds U.S. foreign aid programs and as a former prosecutor and chairman or ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, I have included a U.S. contribution to CICIG. I have also twice supported the extension of CICIG when it was nearing the end of its mandate. Most recently, when President Otto Perez Molina indicated that he did not intend to renew CICIG's mandate, I argued that the weakness of Guatemala's justice sys-

tem and the continuing high levels of corruption and impunity were compelling reasons to extend CICIG. I was gratified that earlier this year its mandate was extended until 2017.

While Guatemala's justice system remains fragile, the partnership between CICIG and the Public Ministry has played a critical role in advancing the cause of justice in Guatemala. But Guatemala's problems are not unique. Honduras and El Salvador suffer from many of the same conditions—weak justice systems that lack credibility, rampant corruption, threats and assassinations of human rights defenders, journalists, and even prosecutors, and a history of impunity. I hope those governments look to CICIG as a model for how they could benefit from the technical expertise and independence of the international community to help address these deeply rooted problems.

Simultaneous with President Perez Molina's decision to extend CICIG's mandate, the need for CICIG became even more apparent. As a result of its investigations, high-ranking officials in the Perez Molina government, including Vice President Roxana Baldetti and one of her top aides, as well as the President's chief of staff and other senior officials, have either resigned or been arrested due to allegations of bribery and other corruption related to customs and social security. In addition, a leading Vice Presidential candidate of the Lider Party has been implicated. This may only be the tip of the iceberg, as it is common knowledge that corruption is widespread in Guatemala.

Such scandals involving powerful public figures are by no means unprecedented, as other Guatemalan officials—including a former President and Minister of Interior—have been implicated in such crimes and became fugitives from justice. But unlike in the past, these latest scandals have galvanized a diverse spectrum of civil society to join in peaceful public demonstrations over a period of several months calling for an end to corruption and impunity and for the resignation of the President who would be replaced by a transition government in accordance with Guatemala's Constitution.

The timing of these protests is significant, as Presidential elections are scheduled for September 6 and speculation is rife as to whether or not President Perez Molina will serve out his term.

The United States has a strong interest in democracy and justice in Guatemala, as well as a better life for the millions of Guatemala's citizens, particularly indigenous and other historically marginalized groups, who live in poverty. Many, with only a few years of formal education and no reliable source of income, including victims of ethnic discrimination, gangs and violent crime, have risked life and limb in search of opportunities in the United States. It is our hope that the Plan of the Alliance for Prosperity, with complementary and balanced investments

in governance, prosperity, and security, will begin to provide the economic opportunities and address these difficult social and law enforcement challenges in a sustainable way. I look forward to discussing these issues with our friends in the House of Representatives later this year.

More immediately, it is important that the United States carefully calibrates its response to the popular demands for reform. What is happening in Guatemala today is both unique and encouraging in the way it has inspired and united, for the first time in Guatemala's history, indigenous and non-indigenous, both rural and urban groups, poor and middle class who previously did not share a common agenda. This has enhanced the prospects for real change in a country that has been plagued for two decades by the divisive, tragic legacies of the war and by powerful forces in government and the private sector resistant to change for generations.

In this context, civil society requires support and protection, taking into account Guatemala's past history of repression and violence. I urge U.S. officials to make clear that the United States unequivocally supports the aspirations of Guatemalan civil society that is now struggling for the right of all the Guatemalan people to have transparent and accountable government, including honest and professional police and an independent judiciary.

Guatemala is a country with an extraordinarily rich culture, natural resources, and human potential. But without respect for human rights and the rule of law and real change that provides for equitable economic opportunities and political representation, that potential will remain unfulfilled. It is long past time for an end to impunity, including for public officials who misuse their office to enrich themselves, their families, and their friends, and for a new era of effective governance, prosperity, and freedom from fear for all Guatemalans.

TRIBUTE TO BRENDAN J. WHITTAKER

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I wish to take a moment to recognize Brendan J. "Bren" Whittaker, a distinguished public servant and recognized leader in conservation efforts in the New England Northern Forest region. In addition to his conservation work, Bren spent more than 45 years in the Episcopal ministry, leading a full-time parish.

I know Bren first not as a priest, but as a dedicated public servant for more than 40 years. Bren has held many titles at every level of government, including town meeting moderator, town selectman, county forester, chairman of district 1 environmental commission, director of Vermont State Energy Office, Vermont Secretary of Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Agri-

culture FSA State Committee member and more.

In addition to his schooling in theology, Bren studied forestry, and he holds degrees in both disciplines. In the early 1990s, I worked with New Hampshire Senator Warren Rudman to establish the Northern Forest Lands Council, and Bren agreed to be part of that select group. He later joined the Vermont Natural Resources Council as Northern Forest project manager, and continues to work as a board member for conservation organizations in Vermont and New Hampshire. Bren served each post with distinction and has been deeply involved for nearly 40 years in the vast changes taking place across the Northern Forest.

I have been pleased to continue working with Bren since his appointment to the USDA's Farm Service Agency State Committee in Vermont. Bren continues to serve as a selectman in Brunswick, VT, and operates a vegetable farm, roadside stand and seasonal restaurant supply business with his wife, Dorothy.

I have touched on Bren's State and Federal public service, but his even greater contributions to his community may be through his ministry, as so eloquently enumerated in the article entitled Thanks to a Mentor and North Country Champion, written by Rebecca Brown, a member of the New Hampshire legislature and a student and friend of Bren. It was published in 2014 in the Littleton Courier. I ask unanimous consent that Ms. Brown's article be printed in the RECORD as a tribute to Brendan J. Whittaker's decades-long and continuing service to his neighbors, community, the States of Vermont and New Hampshire, and to the Nation.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Littleton New Hampshire Courier, Dec. 2014]

THANKS TO A MENTOR AND NORTH COUNTRY CHAMPION

(By Rebecca A. Brown)

This season of giving thanks and celebration, I want to mark the final retirement of Brendan Whittaker from his Episcopal ministry. "Final" because he retired from full-time parish work many years ago, but has been serving in various priestly roles until the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

I write because Brendan's effect on people and the communities of the North Country have been (and I am confident will continue to be) enormous, yet he has gone about his work over the last couple of decades with little fanfare or notoriety, but with his genuine and affecting warmth. In this way he follows in the footsteps of one of his mentors, Carleton Schaller, also an Episcopal priest who we all lost earlier this year.

For much of his earlier career, Brendan was very much in the public eye, especially when he was Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources for Vermont. Walk through Montpelier or attend a conservation gathering anywhere in VT with Brendan today, and you'll encounter many people who still hold him in the highest regard. I do think he's one of the best-loved people in Vermont. Years ago, he was named the "person from away" (he was born and raised in Massachu-

setts) who most deserved to be a genuine Vermonter.

Brendan and his wife Dorothy have farmed and managed their woodlot in Brunswick, in northern VT along the Connecticut River, for over 50 years. They arrived in the late 1950s, he as a newly minted (UMass) forester working for Essex County. But an additional call pulled at him, and he took a degree from the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston. His first parish work was in Brandon, VT starting in 1963. He later was full-time rector at St. Paul's in Lancaster. He was also rector at St. Mark's in Groveton, in Island Pond, Vt., and the Church of the Epiphany in Lisbon, where he served his last day.

Brendan's divinity school thesis was one of the earliest church "insider" calls to link Christian faith and the environmental movement. His writing foreshadowed his long career as a professional forester and a working priest, and helped move the Episcopal Church to embrace stewardship of the earth as a moral obligation.

I first encountered Brendan from afar through his role in the Northern Forest Lands Council, the pivotal group created by Congress to address the alarming forestland changes in northern New England and New York. Brendan represented Vermont. As a young journalist new in the North Country and exploring forestry, land use, and community issues, I studied the Council's 1994 report "Finding Common Ground" very closely and followed those involved with creating it. Around that time, I noted the formation of the Forest Guild as a progressive alternative to the Society of American Foresters, with Brendan among the founders. I also encountered various essays he'd written, and found him to be among the most articulate writers and thinkers about our region, someone I hoped to cross paths with someday.

We finally did cross paths in 2005 when I joined the staff of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, the VT-NH group advising the two states on issues affecting the river and watershed. Brendan was a VT commissioner. At that time Brendan was filling in occasionally at the Lisbon church (Tod Hall was the regular vicar), and from time to time would leave me phone messages that he'd be preaching and inviting me to attend. As someone who'd never gone to church save for weddings and funerals, I did not jump at the opportunity. But eventually I decided it would be the polite thing to do, and with some trepidation agreed. The night before, he called to explain what to expect, including taking communion, which made me even more nervous. I knew that ritual only through extended family occasions in the Catholic Church where infidels like me could not and did not participate.

He assured me that taking communion could be considered a symbolic breaking of bread together as a community, and did not demand belief in the literal "blood of Christ." This was the first of many alternative insights to the Christian traditions and liturgy to which he introduced me. As someone whose understanding of Christian thought was arrested at the kindergarten level of God as a bearded man in the sky, this was an important awakening, and introduced me to a wide world of spiritual thought.

With his guidance and lending of books from his library, I read many of the now classic and radical theological texts of the mid 20th century. I found an exciting, intellectually and spiritually stimulating pantheon including Tillich, Bonhoeffer, John Robinson, and more contemporarily, Alan Watts and John Spong. At the same time, I found a wonderfully accepting and warm band of people at the Lisbon church.

I enjoyed with Brendan post-church conversations (and many while working in the