

where the puck will be, not where the puck is. Think about that. I go where the puck will be, not where the puck is.

One of the other things Wayne Gretzky said that I especially like is: I miss 100 percent of the shots—talking about taking a shot on the goal—he said: I miss 100 percent of the shots that I never take. Think about that. I miss 100 percent of the shots I never take.

I am convinced this is a shot worth taking. I am going to push very hard to make sure somebody is here, and DICK DURBIN and my guess is some others, too, will come along and will encourage folks to join us in this effort. This is a just cause.

I don't see anybody else waiting in line to speak, so with that, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

TRIBUTE TO SIEGFRIED AND ROY

• Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to recognize two incredible entertainers and individuals in the Las Vegas community, Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Horn, better known as Siegfried and Roy.

For more than 35 years, this duo shared their captivating magic show with visitors and residents of Las Vegas. Their stage presence and the participation of their trained white tigers kept audiences coming back for performances unlike any other. Siegfried and Roy's award-winning show at the Mirage Hotel and Casino was enjoyed by children and adults, and it opened the door to family entertainment on the Las Vegas Strip.

Through their celebrity and love of animals, Siegfried and Roy have been working to raise awareness for animal conservation and are educating others about endangered species. The white tiger, an animal that became an icon of Siegfried and Roy's performances, is among those listed as endangered and facing extinction. By establishing the Siegfried and Roy Masters of the Impossible Foundation, they are taking their efforts to educate, protect, and conserve animals that are endangered and threatened across the globe.

For the first time in 5 years, Siegfried and Roy's Secret Garden at the Mirage is welcoming four tiger cubs,

Hirah, Maharani, Liberty, and Justice. Siegfried and Roy are calling these cubs "ambassadors of conservation," as they hope these animals will help them share the important message that we must continue to work together to protect endangered species.

I appreciate Siegfried and Roy's dedication to the Las Vegas community and animal conservation. I wish them the best in their future endeavors.●

POLITICAL PRISONERS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, much of our international focus in recent months has understandably been on Iran and Syria. Both will require further attention as we make sure Iran complies with the nuclear agreement and try to bring an end to the catastrophic human suffering in Syria. And we must continue to insist that Russia abide by the Minsk agreement in territory it so brazenly seized in eastern Ukraine.

But amid these important foreign policy challenges, I would like to make sure we do not lose sight of smaller but also important battles for human rights occurring around the world.

First, let me start with a small nation straddling the lines of Europe and Asia, which many had hoped would strengthen its ties with the community of democracies—Azerbaijan. Since 2014, the government has arrested close to a hundred political prisoners representing some of the strongest voices for democracy and transparency in the country.

Many of those who currently sit in prison on trumped-up charges such as tax evasion, fraud, and even treason include noted human rights defenders like Leyla and Arif Yunus, Rasul Jafarov, Intigam Aliyev, and Anar Mammadli. They worked tirelessly before their arrests on issues trying to strengthen the country's democratic institutions.

Just recently, the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE, announced that it is canceling its mission to monitor the upcoming parliamentary elections due to restrictions imposed by the government. Without the OSCE's mission, the likelihood for free and fair elections in November is obviously diminished.

The Azeri Government has been particularly aggressive in quashing freedom of the press, notably arresting in 2014 Khadija Ismayilova, one of the country's top investigative reporters. For years she exposed secret connections between President Aliyev's immediate family and business dealings, including the privatized state airline, the nation's biggest telecom provider, and massive construction projects.

As a result of her work, she faced repeated threats, hidden cameras in her home, and even attempted blackmail by crudely posted videos of private moments with her boyfriend; yet as the Washington Post recently reported on its front page, she pressed forward, be-

lieving that the Azeri public had a right to know about corruption at the highest levels of their government.

Two weeks later, Khadija's employer, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, was raided and shut down. Its staff has faced repeated harassment and some have even left the country out of concern for their safety. Recently she was sentenced to 7.5 years in prison on what can only be seen as a blatant attempt to halt her work.

The U.S. State Department, the OSCE, and the European Union Parliament have all called on Azerbaijan to release its political prisoners. And in July, 15 of my Senate colleagues joined me in a letter to Azeri President Aliyev expressing concern that the space for civil society and the freedom of press within the country is diminishing. I call on Aliyev here today to not further jeopardize his ties to the West by continuing these authoritarian actions against his own people.

Next, let me turn to Latin America where we continue to see democratic backsliding in a number of countries.

First, Ecuador, where President Correa has seemingly no tolerance for criticism and a troubling habit of harassing the media and restricting freedom of association and the press. It is not clear why Correa, who has a large majority in the parliament, has to take such draconian and undemocratic measures.

For example, over the years, the police have raided the homes of journalists working to expose government corruption and shut down an environmental organization critical of the regime's extractive policies. Government thugs have harassed and intimidated Twitter users who criticize the government. And Correa recently seemed set to force the closure of Fundamedios, a respected NGO that promotes freedom of the press.

The NGO's crime? Tweeting links to two political editorials critical of the Ecuadoran government.

Facing strong international condemnation, it now appears Correa has decided to back off this ill-suited vendetta against Fundamedios.

And in Venezuela the other week, leading opposition figure Leopoldo Lopez, who had already been sitting in jail for 19 months on absurd political charges, was sentenced to almost 14 years.

Equally troubling is what the Venezuelan regime has done to Judge Maria Lourdes Afiuni, who tried to maintain a semblance of judicial independence. She was shamelessly jailed after releasing a defendant who had been detained for 3 years without charges and swiftly charged with corruption and abuse of authority. Afiuni sat in jail for 2 years next to violent prisoners she had once sentenced.

While in prison, she was brutally raped and became pregnant—her body terribly destroyed by the violence. She was granted house arrest to recover from emergency surgery. And today