

RECOGNIZING THE LAS VEGAS LATIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the 40th anniversary of the Las Vegas Latin Chamber of Commerce.

Since its inception, the Latin Chamber of Commerce has been a champion for the Hispanic business community in Nevada. In working to fulfill its mission of promoting the success of its members and the more than 18,000 Hispanic-owned small businesses in the Silver State, the chamber is driving growth in Nevada and enriching the U.S. economy. By cultivating positive business, cultural, and educational relationships and expanding opportunities for Latino businessowners, the Latin Chamber of Commerce has ensured the success of hundreds of new businesses and transformed the very fabric of southern Nevada.

The Latin Chamber of Commerce was founded nearly four decades ago by a handful of determined individuals who were seeking the resources and support necessary to realize their personal and professional goals. Under the leadership of Arturo Cambeiro, the organization's first president, the chamber developed the foundation needed to become a leading advocate for Hispanic-owned businesses and Latino entrepreneurs. Today, the Latin Chamber of Commerce has grown to include more than 1,500 members throughout the Silver State, making it one of the largest organizations of its kind in the country. I applaud the Latin Chamber of Commerce for its 40th anniversary of dedicated service to the Hispanic community. The chamber's work is truly appreciated and admired.

I also commend the leadership of the Latin Chamber of Commerce, particularly Mr. Otto Merida and Ms. Victoria Napoles-Earl. Their tireless commitment to the Latino business community has played a critical role in the growth and success of the chamber. For the last 40 years, Mr. Merida has dedicated his work to developing and expanding the presence of the Latin Chamber of Commerce in southern Nevada. He has worked hard to fulfill the Chamber's mission and led the organization with the highest standards, currently serving as the organization's chief executive officer. Ms. Napoles-Earl joined the chamber in 1987 and recently announced her retirement after 30 years of service. I would like to congratulate her on her upcoming retirement and career accomplishments. From starting as the chamber's office manager to becoming its senior vice president, Ms. Napoles-Earl has dedicated her career to investing in Latino-owned businesses. During their distinguished careers, Mr. Merida and Ms. Napoles-Earl have successfully secured millions of dollars in funding for Latino businessowners, including grants, loans, and contracts. On behalf of the chamber and the thousands of Hispanic-owned businesses in Nevada, Mr. Merida and Ms. Napoles-Earl have

effectively advocated for policies that help Latino entrepreneurs start and expand their business.

In addition to their roles at the Latin Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Merida and Ms. Napoles are active members in the community and have held various leadership positions at the State and local levels. Mr. Merida has worked for the State of Nevada's Department of Education, served as chair of the Las Vegas Housing Authority, and was appointed to the Nevada Commission on Economic Development. Ms. Napoles-Earl has served as a commissioner for the Nevada Commission on Minority Affairs and on the board of directors of Dignity Health's St. Rose Dominican Hospitals. I have had the honor and privilege of working closely with Mr. Merida and Ms. Napoles-Earl throughout my time in Congress, and I can say without reservation that the Hispanic business community in Nevada is fortunate to have them working on its behalf. You will be hard pressed to find more effective advocates.

As the Latin Chamber of Commerce begins its next chapter, I wish them continued success for years to come and thank them for supporting the economic growth and development of Latino entrepreneurs for 40 years and counting.

RECOGNIZING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF PLANNED PARENTHOOD OF NORTHERN NEW ENGLAND

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, this week, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England marked its 50th anniversary with a well-attended gathering in South Burlington, VT. The event came less than a week after the deadly tragedy at a Planned Parenthood center in Colorado. The weight of that tragedy, more than 2,500 miles away from Vermont, was evident as those in the crowd bowed their heads in a moment of silence as the names of victims were read. But this South Burlington gathering also illustrated the depth of support for an organization that plays a critical role in health care for women of all ages throughout Vermont, throughout New England, and throughout our country.

The Planned Parenthood Association of Vermont began in 1965 when a small but active band of women gathered at the Unitarian Church in Burlington. Within the next 3 years, Maine and New Hampshire also established family planning centers, and by the mid-1980s, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England was formed.

In 2014 alone, Planned Parenthood centers around Vermont provided vital primary and preventive services to over 16,000 patients. In a rural State like Vermont, the need for health care providers in remote areas is acute. More than 90 percent of Vermont's Planned Parenthood centers are located in rural or medically underserved areas. Many Vermonters describe

Planned Parenthood as their primary source of health care. In just one example, without the services that Planned Parenthood provides, thousands of low-income women in Vermont would lose their ability to have regular cancer screenings that could save their lives.

Over five decades, Planned Parenthood has weathered many challenges that include ensuring the safety of its own health care providers. In the aftermath of 9/11, more than 500 anthrax threat letters were sent to Planned Parenthood locations and other reproductive health care providers; yet it seems unimaginable that we are here in December 2015, in the U.S. Senate, once again debating whether to defund an organization that does so much to ensure the health and well-being of women across the country.

In August I spoke in opposition to this misguided, distortion-filled, partisan effort. I said at the time that the issue was unfortunately all too familiar. With the critical issues that face us today, why are we spending our time and energy on this ideologically driven effort to bar funding for women's health centers? I am saddened that we are even talking about this provision today, not even 1 week since a gunman stormed that Planned Parenthood in Colorado and caused such carnage. This is shameful, and it is cynical. It is time for the mean-spirited assault on women's health care to end.

I was heartened by the supporters, both women and men, who turned out to mark the 50th anniversary of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England this week in South Burlington. They included the next generation of young women who have been "passed the torch" to stand up for their rights to health care and reproductive freedom. They are committed to making sure Planned Parenthood will be around for another 50 years—and they give me hope. Let us not turn our backs on them by turning back the clock.

SUPPORTING THE COFFEE FARMERS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, like many Senators, I have followed the appalling situation facing citizens of the Eastern Congo, where armed groups have fought for years over control of minerals and territory, pillaging, raping, and killing civilians in the process.

The innocent people who struggle to survive in the midst of this violence and destruction rely on subsistence agriculture, as well as raising crops for export; yet their own government makes it doubly difficult.

For decades, coffee was an important agricultural export from Eastern Congo. But after years of armed conflict, official coffee exports have reportedly decreased by over 80 percent from peak levels 30 years ago. The majority of this coffee is produced by