

expression and association that are enshrined in Ecuador's Constitution. I hope he defends the right of a free press, an independent judiciary, and the right of civil society organizations to function without government interference. These rights are part of the foundation of the representative democracy referenced in the OAS Charter. The alternative is unaccountable government. That is, in fact, where Ecuador was heading, after President Correa orchestrated the adoption of a new constitution in order to run for reelection in 2009 and again in 2013.

I hope the result on April 2 will signify a commitment to uphold Ecuador's Constitution and the beginning of a new relationship with the United States, based on a common devotion to the fundamental rights of citizens.

THE RULE OF LAW IN GUATEMALA

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to call the Senate's attention to the current situation in Guatemala, where upholding the rule of law has too often been the exception rather than the rule.

For centuries, most Guatemalans had no access to justice. This was exacerbated during—and in the years since—the civil war, when an estimated 200,000 people were killed or disappeared. Most of them were innocent victims of the armed forces, and only a small number of the military officers and their accomplices who were responsible have been punished. In fact, the armed forces and their benefactors have for the most part successfully avoided justice, by threatening prosecutors and witnesses and paying off judges.

At the same time, Guatemala is experiencing the corrosive effects of drug gangs, smugglers, and organized crime. Former President Perez Molina is under arrest, and other high-ranking officials have been implicated in corruption. Rampant gang violence and a lack of job opportunities have caused tens of thousands of Guatemalans, including unaccompanied minors, to seek safety and employment in the United States.

Two individuals, Thelma Aldana, Guatemala's Attorney General, and Ivan Velasquez, the head of CICIG, the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, have been courageously investigating these high-profile cases and working diligently to bring those responsible to justice. Both are respected former judges, Aldana a Guatemalan and Velasquez a Colombian.

The United States, with the support of Democrats and Republicans in Congress, has provided funding to both of their offices.

It is difficult, dangerous work. They have received anonymous threats in an attempt to intimidate them, and there is a concern that President Morales may oppose the renewal of Mr. Velasquez's term of duty, which ends in

September, or request the U.N. Secretary General to remove or replace Mr. Velasquez.

This would be of great concern because no democracy can survive without the rule of law, and there can be no rule of law without independent investigators, prosecutors, and judges.

In Guatemala, with its history of impunity, Thelma Aldana and Ivan Velasquez are making history by showing the Guatemalan people that justice is possible. It is possible even in cases in which the perpetrators are high-ranking government officials, members of their families, or others with wealth and power who have long evaded justice.

Guatemala needs our support to reduce poverty and malnutrition, improve education, combat crime, reform the police, and strengthen its economy and public institutions, but none of that can be achieved or sustained without political will and a transparent, accountable justice system. I know this from my own experience, first as a prosecutor, and more recently as the senior member of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

I have been here a long time, in fact longer than any other Senator. I know Guatemala's history and the daunting challenges it faces. Its people deserve better, and they need leaders who respect the rule of law.

If Guatemala's leaders support Thelma Aldana and Ivan Velasquez for as long they are willing to make the personal sacrifice and continue their important work, we will do our part by supporting the Alliance for Prosperity, but if there are attempts to undermine or curtail the work of these two outstanding prosecutors, then Guatemala's leaders should look elsewhere for support.

TRIBUTE TO DR. HARRY CHEN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for over a decade, Vermont has been named one of the healthiest States in the Nation. For those who know the tireless dedication of Vermont's Commissioner of Health, Dr. Harry Chen, this fact is not surprising. Dr. Chen recently made the difficult decision to not seek reappointment. He leaves behind a legacy which future leaders will undoubtedly follow.

Dr. Chen has long graced Vermont as a top leader in healthcare. Before his appointment as health commissioner in 2011, Dr. Chen served in the Vermont House of Representatives from 2004 to 2008 and in his last term was the vice chair of the Health Care Committee. In 2008, he was honored with the Physician Award for Community Service by the Vermont State Medical Society.

Prior to his election to the State legislature, Dr. Chen worked for more than 20 years as an emergency room physician and medical director at the Rutland Regional Medical Center. Dr. Chen also served on the clinical faculty at the University of Vermont's College

of Medicine and as vice chair of the University of Vermont's board of trustees. He obtained his medical degree and completed his residency at the University of Oregon's school of medicine as chief resident.

Dr. Chen's work to improve public health awareness and education has long made Vermont a nationwide leader in healthcare. As Vermont's Commissioner of Health since 2011 and briefly as the interim Secretary of Health and Human Services from 2014 to 2015, Dr. Chen led the charge to expand public health education and resources across the State. Dr. Chen was especially instrumental in the fight against opioid and substance abuse. I was proud when he testified at the field hearing I held on the issue while ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2014. In the years after, he worked to strengthen State resources for treatment and education programs. He has worked to improve the State's prescription drug monitoring system in order to curb harmful opioid prescribing and misuse.

Dr. Chen also led efforts to reduce tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use among youth. In 2013, he and I worked to secure a \$10 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, SAMHSA, to expand substance abuse efforts in Vermont among young adults at risk of developing habits in alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and illicit drug use. Since his efforts, the conversation regarding youth substance abuse, especially on marijuana, has become a major public health discussion in the Vermont Statehouse and beyond. He also worked to expand nutrition education in schools and to increase awareness surrounding the importance of vaccines. For instance, 2 years ago, after the outbreak of Ebola, Dr. Chen worked with Vermont's top health facilities to strengthen defenses against the disease, while educating patients on the importance of disease prevention. He also led efforts to increase vaccinations for children in efforts to prevent the spread of disease at school.

Dr. Chen's dedication to public health promotion did not stop at the State level. In 2009, Dr. Chen testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee on Vermont's experience with healthcare reform and the creation of Vermont Health Connect. In 2014, he became chair of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Food Safety and Modernization Act Surveillance Working Group where he continues to strengthen foodborne illness surveillance systems across the country. He has also long served on the board of the CDC's Office of Infectious Disease, and he currently chairs the Prevention Committee of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Vermont's national role in promoting the health and well-being of patients has made strides under the leadership of Dr. Chen. Vermonters are sorry to