

assault, intimidation, and violent government-organized counter protests against peaceful dissent; and harassment and detentions to prevent free expression and peaceful assembly.” Now, therefore, be it

Resolved,
That the Senate—

(1) recognizes and commemorates the legacy of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas on the 6th anniversary of his death on July 22, 2018;

(2) honors the commitment of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas to democratic values and principles;

(3) calls on the Government of Cuba to allow an impartial, third-party investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas;

(4) urges the United States to continue to support policies and programs that promote respect for human rights and democratic principles in Cuba in a manner that is consistent with the aspirations of the Cuban people;

(5) urges the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States to continue reporting on human rights issues in Cuba, and to request a visit to Cuba in order to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas; and

(6) calls on the Government of Cuba to cease violating human rights and to begin providing democratic political freedoms to Cuban citizens, including freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, free elections, freedom to start private businesses, and amnesty for political prisoners.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I further ask unanimous consent that the committee-reported amendment to the resolution be agreed to, the resolution, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the preamble be agreed to, the preamble, as amended, be agreed to, the committee-reported amendment to the title be agreed to, and the motions to consider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The committee-reported amendment in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The resolution (S. Res. 224), as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported amendment to the preamble in the nature of a substitute was agreed to.

The preamble, as amended, was agreed to.

The committee-reported title amendment was agreed to, as follows:

Amend the title so as to read: “A resolution recognizing the 6th anniversary of the death of Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, and commemorating his legacy and commitment to democratic values and principles.”

AUTHORIZING TESTIMONY AND REPRESENTATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. Res. 457, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 457) to authorize testimony and representation in Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Co., et al. v. John Doe, et al.

(Ct. of Common Pleas, Cumberland County, Pa.)

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 457) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

SESQUICENTENNIAL OF CONNECTICUT’S NAVY INSTALLATION

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. Res. 458, submitted earlier today.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A resolution (S. Res. 458) designating April 11, 2018, as the “Sesquicentennial of Connecticut’s Navy Installation.”

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be agreed to, the preamble be agreed to, and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate.

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

The resolution (S. Res. 458) was agreed to.

The preamble was agreed to.

(The resolution, with its preamble, is printed in today’s RECORD under “Submitted Resolutions.”)

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TILLIS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

OHIO FIRST RESPONDER APPRECIATION WEEK

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I wish to talk tonight about the brave Ohioans who dedicate themselves every day to protecting all of the rest of us; that is, our first responders. This week is Ohio First Responders Week, a week of appreciation, the theme being “Bringing Help, Bringing Hope.” Well said.

Police officers, firefighters, EMS professionals, and other first responders

put themselves in harm’s way for us every single day. They risk their own safety to care for others. They wake up every day, put on their uniforms, and carry out their duties with an unwavering commitment to their communities and a pledge to protect those around them.

This morning, we had our weekly Buckeye Coffee. We had people from all over Ohio there. Sure enough, a bunch of first responders showed up. It was the EMS chiefs association, and we had an opportunity to talk with them about what they are doing every day.

Of course, EMS help with regard to traffic accidents, gunshot wounds, and so on. But one of the new challenges they face that is taking an enormous amount of their time and effort is the opioid crisis. I would bet if you go to your firehouse and ask them, the first responders in our communities are responding more to overdose runs than they are to fires. This is one example of where they are on the frontlines dealing with this issue and are applying Narcan, the miracle drug that reverses the effects of an overdose to save lives.

We appreciate them, and the service and commitment of these first responders is needed now more than ever. I urge all Ohioans this week to demonstrate their thanks to first responders. If you live in a community that is having an event, which a number are, I hope you will attend the event. If not, if you cross paths with a first responder, thank him, thank her, and tell them we appreciate what they are doing.

I know I speak for the entire Buckeye State when I say that we are grateful for the work our first responders do every single day, and they will continue, as the theme says this year, to bring help and hope to all of us. We thank them.

STOP ENABLING SEX TRAFFICKERS ACT

Mr. PORTMAN. On another topic, Mr. President, today is a big day in the fight against sex trafficking.

I just got back a couple of hours ago from a meeting at the White House where the President of the United States signed legislation that we have been working on for several years to be able to push back against the sex trafficking that is occurring online. It was very emotional. We had a lot of survivors, victims of sex trafficking, who were there.

One of them was standing next to the President. When he signed the bill, he asked whether she wanted to say anything. Fighting back tears, Yvonne Ambrose said: I want to tell you about my daughter.

She told the President about her 16-year-old daughter who was trafficked on backpage.com, a website that has most of the commercial sex traffic, and how she got a call on Christmas Eve a couple of years ago. Her daughter had been murdered. As she said, no mother

should ever have to accept or take that call.

She talked about how her daughter got dragged into this issue of trafficking and said that she hopes the legislation we passed will be able to save other daughters, other granddaughters, other Americans who otherwise would become part of the sex trafficking tragedy we have seen unfold in our country.

This legislation came out of experiences we have all had when we go back home. We talk to victims and survivors, and we have learned over the past several years that trafficking is actually on the increase in this country, in this century. People think: Well, trafficking is going on, but it happens in Africa or it happens in Asia or it happens in Latin America. It happens here. It probably happens in your community. Unfortunately, it happens in my State of Ohio way too frequently.

Through our investigation and studies of this, increasingly, we heard about online trafficking. Survivors have told me: ROB, this has moved from the street corner to the smartphone.

Groups, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, showed that from 2005 to 2015 there was an 800-percent increase in reports of trafficking. All of the experts agree that there is an increase in trafficking, and all agree that most of this is attributable directly to one thing—the movement to the ruthless efficiency of online selling of women and children.

One website in particular kept coming up—backpage.com, which I mentioned earlier. So we launched an investigation over a 2-year period in the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which I chair. We decided to dig deep and find out what was going on, why it was happening, and what the nature of this was. What we found was shocking.

Senator CLAIRE McCASKILL of Missouri is the ranking member of the committee. She and I did this investigation, together with our committee, and we issued the report together. It was bipartisan from the start. I would say it was even nonpartisan, and it is to this day.

The investigation involved asking backpage.com for a lot of information that they were unwilling to give. We had to subpoena them, and they still refused to provide the information. We had to come to this Chamber, to the U.S. Senate, and get a vote of the entire Senate—the first time in 21 years we had to do this—to be able to enforce these subpoenas. Every Member of this body got engaged and involved in this, and by the end of the process, we had a unanimous vote from the Senate to say: Yes, you should be able to force people to provide relevant information to the committees that are doing oversight, like ours.

We got permission to enforce it, which meant potential criminal sanctions, and they still wouldn't give us

information. They fought us at the district level. They lost there. Then they fought us at the circuit level. We fought and won there. Then they fought us at the Supreme Court of the United States. We had to take it all the way to the Supreme Court.

Then, yes, they did provide us with about a million documents. They still refused to testify. They took the Fifth. But they did provide us with the documents because they had to under the threat of penalty of law. Through those documents, we found out something shocking, which was that not only were they selling women and girls online and making a lot of money doing it, but they were purposely selling underage girls and trying to hide the fact that they were doing it. Think about that. They were not only selling girls and women online, but they were taking ads for underage girls, knowing they were underage and running the ads anyway.

In fact, they would go to the people who were trying to place the ads and say: You know what, you need to change this word. You can't use the word "schoolgirl" because this indicates the girl is underage. You can't use the word "cheerleader" because that shows that she is underage. You can't use the word "Lolita," which is a novel about a young girl being trafficked and an older man.

You can't use the description of the girl and put her age in there if she is underage, but they want your ad anyway. They edited the ads, so they were complicit in this.

You would think a prosecutor would be able to go after these people, right? They are engaged in illegal activity online. If that activity were happening offline, on the street corner in your community, it would be illegal. When the prosecutors went after these people online and when the victims of trafficking, like the woman I talked about earlier whose 16-year-old daughter was murdered while she was being trafficked on backpage—when they went after backpage in that case, they were unsuccessful. Why? Because they said: Yes, Desiree died. Yes, Desiree would have a lawsuit here, as well as other women and families who came to testify before us. Kubiiki Pride is one, and her daughter was there today. But there is a Federal law that says: We, the courts, can't even take up this case because the Federal law provides an immunity, a shield, to these websites. Unbelievable.

We had a court in Sacramento last year actually tell Congress, basically: Please change this law. They said: We can't stop this exploitation—this alleged exploitation of women and girls. We can't stop it because Congress has passed a law that protects these websites. No one can go after them.

The more we learned, the more we dug, the more we found out what was really going on, we determined that our report, which you can see here—and I encourage you to check out this

report. You can find it online. "Backpage" is the search, and look on Portman.senate.gov. Go to Portman.senate.gov, and you will see this report, if you are interested in it. The summaries will help. What it says, basically, is that they are trafficking these individuals, and they know they are doing it. Yet they are immune.

Once we determined that was our issue, we determined it was time for us to figure out legislation to actually change our Federal law that was permitting it. The culmination of that was today when the President of the United States signed that into law.

For a couple of years, we had quite a legislative struggle because there were a lot of individuals who said: Well, you can't touch these internet companies because of this law.

The law was passed 21 years ago, at the infancy of the internet. It was well-intentioned, but I do not believe that any Member of this body intended, when they passed that law, to say that you should be able to traffic people online knowingly and not pay some consequence for it, not be accountable for it.

We made a very narrow carve-out for trafficking of individuals online. We made sure that it was consistent with the Federal criminal law that was already in place if you were to do it offline. We ensured that there was a Good Samaritan provision so that if a website was in good faith trying to clean up its site and edit its site and get this information off of it, they would not be liable. That Good Samaritan or safe harbor provision was in our legislation. We proceeded to get it passed.

We had a lot of pushback, particularly from the tech community—not everybody in the tech community but certain people who believe strongly that this legislation was somehow a threat to internet freedom. I do not believe that to this day. I believe it is targeted, it is responsible, and it certainly is an issue on which you would think everybody would agree.

Just because you are online does not mean you are not accountable and responsible for selling people online—again, in the context of more and more trafficking in this country. As you look into it, you determine that is because of this online presence, the ruthless efficiency of the online selling of women and children.

We were able to bring it to the floor for a vote after a committee process. We went through the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. We went through the Commerce Committee. At the end of the day, we got a vote in this Chamber of 97 to 2. That rarely happens around here—rarely, if ever. Again, today, finally, the President signed the bill.

It looks like it was easier to do at the end. I will tell you, a couple of years ago, we were told: This will never happen. You can't make this happen. You can't beat us. We have a lot of

power. We have a lot lobbyists. We have a lot of abilities to stop you in the committee.

Yet, through persuasion and, frankly, through the personal testimony of victims and survivors who were willing to come forward and courageously share their stories, we were able to prevail. Today, it was a victory—not for this body, not for the legislative process, but it was a victory for those victims and those survivors.

One mom told me today: This means my granddaughter won't have to worry about this issue. It means that when my kid goes to the mall, I don't have to worry as much about what might happen, who might try to take her into this web of trafficking.

My hope is that this legislation will be able to curb the online trafficking in a significant way. We are already seeing the results of that. I was told today, in fact, that websites that trafficked people online are shutting down all over America because they don't want to be sued, because they are losing their immunity. It is not affecting the freedom of the internet, but it is affecting those evil websites that were engaged in criminal activity and hiding behind section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. I am told that as many as 80 percent of those trafficking websites have shut down just in the last several days because they don't want to be subject to these lawsuits.

We also had something else that was very interesting happen this week. The Department of Justice went after backpage.com. They actually indicted seven individuals. If you look at the indictment, which I have here—you can find this by going on the Justice Department website, I am sure; it is in the district court in Arizona—you will see that they named seven individuals. These are the same seven individuals we named in our report. They also used the information from our report about the fact that backpage was changing ads, editing ads. In other words, they were knowingly allowing ads about underage girls to be run because they wanted the profits. That is exactly what is talked about in this indictment.

The work of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations was very important because it enabled us to provide to the Justice Department information they used for these indictments. We provided that information 10 months ago, and the indictments came out in the last several days.

My hope is that now, because this law passed, we will see a lot more prosecutions because we have now allowed State prosecutors and attorneys general around the country and local prosecutors, district attorneys, and county prosecutors—who are the ones who ultimately are going to be much more effective and more able to go after this kind of activity—to do so.

Backpage has been in existence for 14 years. Until this week, the Federal

Justice Department had not made these indictments. It was great that they did it. It is also about time, in my view. Now we have this tool to allow other prosecutors to be more aggressive, to do what should have been done years ago—to save the lives of so many girls, women, and boys whose lives have been taken off track because of the trauma associated with this. We also now have the opportunity for the victims themselves to file lawsuits.

This is already having a chilling effect. In other words, it is already taking down these websites that don't want to be sued. They know our legislation—although very narrowly crafted—applies to them because they are knowingly involved in, supporting, assisting sex trafficking.

I think this is a victory for the victims, the survivors, and, maybe most importantly, the potential future victims. It is also an opportunity for us to celebrate something that this Chamber accomplished in a bipartisan way, going through the right process, doing the research, coming up with the facts, narrowly crafting legislation that works, which doesn't have a negative impact, but in fact, it helps to change behavior. We are already seeing it.

My hope is that we will do more of that around here. We have many other issues to address. Earlier, we talked about the opioid crisis. Congress passed some good legislation, but we need to do more.

We have an issue with getting people back to work who are in the shadows of our economy, some of whom have a felony record, some of whom are addicted to opioids, some of whom don't have the skills to engage in a modern economy. That is a huge challenge. To me, it is unbelievable that we have so many people who are in our country but not in our labor force. Our labor force participation rate, as economists call it, is as low as it has ever been for men in the history of our country. There are probably 9 million men between 25 and 55 who are able-bodied and not working today. That is wrong.

There are many issues we need to address. If we can do those studies in the same way and come up with sensible solutions based on research, based on good practices, keep it not just bipartisan but nonpartisan, and say: Let's get the politics out of this, and let's try to figure out how to help people—which is our job around here; that is what we were elected to do—maybe we can make progress in a number of different areas.

Today, at the signing ceremony for this legislation, the SESTA legislation, I had the opportunity to see a friend of mine, Theresa Flores, who runs a group called Save Our Adolescents From Prostitution, S.O.A.P. the reason she uses the acronym S.O.A.P. is that Theresa, who is a survivor—she was trafficked years ago and now has a passion for this issue. She calls her organization S.O.A.P. because she goes to major events around the country, sporting

events, where there tend to be an increase in trafficking. What she does is she goes to the hotels and asks them to put a bar of soap in the bathroom. On that bar of soap, she has listed the national hotline for sex trafficking. A girl can call that number and have someone come rescue her, and she can escape from her trafficker.

That simple act of making these bars of soap and getting hotels to place them in these bathrooms has been remarkably effective. Think about it. These girls or women may have no other time where they have privacy, where they don't have the trafficker with them, where they are not feeling under duress. When they have their private moment in the bathroom, they see the number. Many of them have called that number and have been able to escape this life and get back to a productive life, with treatment, with support, with the kind of longer term recovery that is needed to get through the trauma, to get through, in many cases, the drug addiction. Drugs are involved in this, as you can imagine, as a way to make these women, girls, and boys dependent. In fact, in Ohio, unfortunately, that is a common practice, is that drugs are involved.

Theresa Flores has done something incredible. She has channeled her frustration and all of the trauma she went through into something very constructive. She was there today, and her comment to me was that, by this act, by passing this law, we are going to save lives, and we are going to enable future generations to not go down the tragic and dark road she had to go down. That should make us feel good in this Chamber. It should make us feel good for those whose lives can be helped through this and for those victims to at least have the opportunity to have their day in court, to be able to seek justice.

I thank the President of the United States for signing the legislation today. I thank Ivanka Trump in particular for her support on the legislation all along the way. I hope this legislation will be a model for others to come.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2018

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 9:15 a.m., Thursday, April 12; further, that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed. Finally, I ask that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the Pizzella nomination under the previous order.