

The closing of space for faith based organizations and other civil society organizations is a worrying trend in a number of Sub-Saharan African countries. Humanitarian aid workers, journalists, priests and political candidates (and their families), have been increasingly targeted and threatened by governments in Sub-Saharan Africa.

If we look north of the DRC, we can see that in South Sudan, a country I visited twice since its independence, we see humanitarian organizations are harassed by government forces. Last year, humanitarian organizations reported over 700 cases of humanitarian access incidents. The environment for humanitarian operations grows increasingly difficult and dangerous as the geographic scope of humanitarian need continues to expand. South Sudan currently have over 1.7 million IDPs.

There is also growing concern throughout the region on the closing of independent and objective media sources. Most recently, Burundi suspended Voice of America and BBC earlier this week for a period of six months, according to the announcement made at a press conference by the Conseil Nationale de la Communication (CNC). The CNC claims that this suspension is in response to "biased reporting." This suspension comes two weeks before a referendum allowing Burundi's president to serve into the 2030s, in apparent violation of constitutional term limits. VOA's local correspondent told US Embassy Bujumbura that the decision was a complete surprise and we will hear more from VOA's Africa Director as one of our witnesses today.

All of the witnesses today bring us an on-the-ground perspective of the closing space for non-governmental organizations, though they will provide a snapshot of conditions in several countries, their testimony's will provide evidence of the growing regional trend of incursions against civic space. My hope is that this hearing will inform our view of possible U.S. policy responses to better protect fundamental civil and political rights in Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes using sanctions, greater support for faith-based actor via USAID, and support media independence, specifically Voice of America—Africa (VOA).

INTRODUCTION OF THE RECOVER ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 10, 2018

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce the Reducing the Effects of the Cyberattack on OPM Victims Emergency Response Act of 2018 (the RECOVER Act), which would require the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to make permanent the free identity protection coverage that Congress required OPM to provide for 10 years to individuals whose Social Security Numbers were potentially compromised during the OPM data breaches. In 2015, OPM reported that the personally identifiable information of as many as 25.7 million current, former and prospective federal employees and contractors was stolen in two data breaches. I appreciate that Representative C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER is co-sponsoring this bill.

After OPM announced that it would offer identity protection coverage of limited duration

and value, Senator BEN CARDIN and I introduced the RECOVER Act in July 2015, which would have provided affected individuals lifetime protection and at least \$5 million in identity theft insurance. Congress subsequently included a version of our bill in an enacted appropriations bill, but limited the duration of the protection. Under current law, OPM is only required to provide identity protection coverage through fiscal year 2026. Under the bill we are introducing today, OPM would be required to provide the coverage for the remainder of the life of affected individuals.

The current coverage is inadequate, particularly considering that there is no limit to when the thieves (or those they have shared the stolen data with) may exploit the data. Therefore, there should be no limit to the duration of the coverage provided to affected individuals. This bill would give current, former and prospective federal employees and contractors who were affected both some peace of mind and protection. OPM failed to protect these people. It follows that the government must do the right thing to make up for its mistake.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

RECOGNIZING THE 2018 WEST POINT LEADERSHIP ETHICS AND DIVERSITY IN STEM WORKSHOP

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 10, 2018

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the West Point Leadership Ethics and Diversity in STEM (LEADS) Program, and to congratulate the students who have participated in the 2018 LEADS Workshop.

The LEADS program began in 2011 and was designed to engage students in the 6th through 10th grades to help prepare them for the challenging academic courses required for acceptance into top tier schools like West Point, focusing primarily on underserved and minority school populations. While a focus on STEM education has been a top priority in many schools, the West Point LEADS program adds another very important dimension—the role that ethics plays in effective leadership. In addition to robotics and coding workshops, students in the LEADS program also participate in activities to explore and begin their journeys to become not only educated leaders, but also ethical leaders.

Students from forty-five schools are participating in the 2018 LEADS program. I congratulate each of these students and am honored to recognize the following schools who have provided them with this opportunity:

BASIS DC; Bishop O'Connell High School, Colonial Forge High School, DC International School, Deer Park Middle Magnet School, Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School, Episcopal High School, Fairview Elementary School, Forest Park High School, Fort Foote Elementary School, Friendship Collegiate Academy, Frost Middle School, Georgetown Visitation Prep School, Great Explorations School, Hayfield Secondary School, HH Poole Middle School, Imagine Foundation at Morningside, Irving Middle School, Lake Brad-dock Secondary School, Lake Ridge Middle School, Langley High School, Lauren Hill Ele-

mentary School, Mark Twain Middle School, Mount Vernon High School, North Stafford High School, Oakcrest School, Oxon Hill High School, Patriot High School, Paul VI High School, Phillipsburg Middle School, Pinnacle Academy, Potomac Middle School, Rippon Middle School, Rodney Thompson Middle School, Samuel Ogle Middle School, Sidwell Friends School, South County High School, South County Middle School, St. Stephen & St. Agnes School, Suitland High School, Temple Baptist School, West Springfield High School, Westlake High School, and Williamsburg Middle School.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in commending the schools and students who are participating in the 2018 West Point LEADS Program. I thank the West Point Society of DC, the MITRE Corporation, and the Rotary Club of Springfield, for their support of this vital program. I also would like to recognize Ms. Pat Walker Locke, who in 1980 became the first African American woman to graduate from West Point, for her critical role in creating and promoting the LEADS program, as well as for her decades of commitment to the growth and development of our future leaders. She has received numerous national awards and accolades in recognition of her efforts. Her support of all students, but primarily those in underrepresented communities, has improved the lives of countless children and is truly worthy of our highest praise.

HONORING MASTER SERGEANT RUSSELL BERKHEIMER, U.S. ARMY, ON HIS RETIREMENT AFTER MORE THAN 20 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

HON. SCOTT PERRY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 10, 2018

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Speaker, today I offer my heartfelt congratulations to Russell Berkheimer, a native of Thomasville, PA, on his upcoming retirement after more than 20 years of service to the United States of America.

Master Sergeant Berkheimer currently serves as the Technical Director of the Joint Communications Integration Element, where he provides daily guidance on technical issues facing the entire command, while leading research and development projects to meet capability gaps. He entered the United States Army in 1998, and served in numerous assignments, to include Central America in support of counter-narcotics and humanitarian missions, as well as Afghanistan and Iraq during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, respectively.

His numerous commendations and awards, including the Bronze Star Medal, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal (1 OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal and others, are a testament to his steadfast courage, personal integrity, tireless work ethic and impeccable character. His enduring legacy of service to our Nation truly is exceptional and sets a standard for all to follow.

On behalf of Pennsylvania's Fourth Congressional District, I commend and congratulate my fellow brother-in-arms, Master Sergeant Russell Berkheimer, upon his retirement