November 29, 2018

She joined the U.S. Senate in 2013 and has served in a Congress often divided by partisan views. She has been willing to work with President Trump and to work across the aisle on many issues, all for the good of the people of North Dakota. I have been one of those she has worked with, and I am happy to call her a friend.

The accomplishments that brought her to the Senate are substantial. Before serving in the U.S. Senate, Senator HEITKAMP served as North Dakota’s tax commissioner and, later, attorney general. I have had the privilege of working with Senator HEITKAMP on many issues. Notably, we worked together on an issue that has long been important to Wyoming, forgiving parity between brick-and-mortar stores and e-commerce. During her time as tax commissioner, North Dakota sought to make an out-of-State mail order retailer, and pay use tax on an out-of-State mail order retailer, which House For-

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act, WEEE Act, which the Senate For-

eign Relations Committee reported yesterday afternoon. It has been my honor to work with Senator BOOZMAN on this legislation, which House For-

eign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed ROYCE and Representative Lois FRANKEL originally introduced. The House passed the measure on July 17, 2018. Yesterday, the Senate took a big step toward passing this important bill into law.

Both here in the U.S. and abroad, how a country treats its women is a bar-ometer of its success. I believe that, when women succeed, so do our com-

munity, especially economically. The WEEE Act is critical in achieving this goal. It brings attention to helping women entrepreneurs, including those living in poverty, to access the tools they need to start and grow their busi-

nesses and invest in themselves, their families, and their communities. It rec-

ognizes that women are not always on a level playing field, particularly when they face discrimination, gender-based violence and harassment, and restric-

tions on their opportunities.

Roughly 1 billion women around the world are currently left out of the for-

mal financial system, which causes many to rely on informal means of sav-

ing and borrowing that are riskier and less reliable. In many countries, be-

cause men are considered legal heads of household, married women are re-

quired to receive permission from their hus-

bands just to open a bank account. As a result, we have observed the propaga-

tion of savings groups, primarily com-

posed of women, recognized as a vital entry point, especially for poor and very poor women, to formal financial services. There is a high demand for such groups to protect and grow the savings of women with formal financial institutions. Evidence shows that, once such groups are linked to a bank, the average savings per member increases between 40 to 100 percent, and the aver-

age profit per member doubles. Invest-

ing in financial literacy, business lead-

ership training, and mentorship are key elements to these outcomes.

By requiring that 50 percent of the U.S. Agency for International Develop-

ment’s—USAID—micro, small, and med-

ium-sized enterprise resources are tar-

geted to activities that reach the very poor, as well as enterprises owned, man-

aged, and controlled by women, the WEEE Act will help break down the barriers preventing women from participating in their local economies. It will help diminish the estimated 700 million women worldwide who are unac-

counted for, and the barriers that women face when seeking credit for their small enterprises.

WEEE Act will help open doors for 

women to participate in their local economies, to access the formal financial sector that are unserved or under-

served in terms of access to financial services, resulting in a financing gap of $300 trillion for women-owned small businesses. Furthermore, the WEEE Act will improve USAID’s development assistance toolkit to include inno-

\veative credit scoring models, financial technology, financial literacy, in-

surance, and actions to improve prop-

erty and inheritance rights.

We know that women’s economic ad-

vance can lead to greater security and resilience, as well as stronger in-

vestments in health and nutrition, edu-

cation, and safety—not only for women but for their families and communities too. According to the World Bank, for each additional year of schooling, a woman’s labor earnings increase by nearly 12 percent. CARE reports that participation in village savings groups has increased spending on children’s school fees by 76 percent in Tanzania and nearly doubled the health spending for families in Rwanda, along with in-

creases in their spending on food and nutrition. This is exactly the evidence-

driven development work that the U.S. should be supporting.

We are making enormous strides, but there is still much to be done. Enacting the Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act into law will help equip women to overcome the critical barriers they face when seek-

ing economic opportunity and will open doors for children, families, and communities to benefit as well. A McKinsey Global Institute report esti-

mates that achieving global gender parity in economic activity could add as much as $23 trillion to annual global gross domestic product by 2025. These stark statistics serve both as a beacon of hope and a reminder of the great challenges that still must be overcome.

The WEEE Act will help us advance to-

ward this goal, and we must not stop fighting until such parity is reached.

THE ISRAEL ANTI-BOYCOTT ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today I wish to add myself as a cosponsor of S. 720, the Israel Anti-Boycott Act, and urge my colleagues to support this im-

portant legislation in its modified form. I have long and staunchly op-

posed the BDS movement and associ-

ated efforts to unfairly isolate Israel in international forums. This legislation will prevent international entities from imposing their will on U.S. busi-

nesses regardless of their strong, consistent with U.S. law, to conduct commerce with our close ally Israel and its citizens.

After carefully examining the pro-

posed changes to the legislation, I sup-

port the amended version of this bill put forward by my colleagues, Senator CARDIN and Senator PORTMAN. This revised version of the legislation makes

meaningful revisions to the original language to clarify and improve First Amendment protections. Initial con-

cerns about this bill have been due to

fringed on individuals’ First Amend-

ment rights have now been addressed by these changes, agreed upon earlier this year, and I feel confident that these modifications safeguard Ameri-

cans’ constitutional right to free speech.

CAMEROON

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, today I wish to raise the alarm about the escalating violence in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon and to urge the administration to develop
and execute a meaningful strategy to help prevent additional bloodshed.

For several years, Cameroon, a historically stable country bridging west and central Africa, has faced a significant security threat in its far north. Boko Haram, a violent extremist group from Nigeria, has crossed the border into Cameroon and carried out hundreds of attacks on local residents. Reports indicate Boko Haram killed more than 900 people in 2017 in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin subregion, which includes northern Cameroon. Boko Haram’s Islamic State-aligned splinter faction, ISIS-West Africa, also poses a threat to the country. With U.S. help, Cameroon has been responding to the challenge, although some of these efforts have prompted concerns about its military’s respect for human rights.

Now, Cameroon faces another challenge, one that some observers fear has already burgeoned into a civil war. A building separatist insurgency emerged in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions in 2017. Insurgent attacks and a brutal military crackdown have caused significant internal displacement and given rise to credible allegations of serious human rights abuses by both separatists and government security forces. The separatist movement grew out of longstanding grievances among Anglophones over their perceived political and economic marginalization. These grievances, which surfaced in 2016 in response to the central government’s appointments of French-speakers to local schools and courts in Cameroon’s Anglophone majority western provinces in 2016.

The government violently suppressed a largely peaceful protest movement that arose in response, quashing demonstrations by force, arresting prominent civil society activists on what appear to be trumped up terrorism charges, cutting internet access to the region, and banning some civil society organizations.

On October 1, 2017, secessionists symbolically declared the independence of “Ambazonia.” According to Amnesty International, security forces responded by killing at least 20 protesters and arresting over 500. Cameroonien soldiers have reportedly killed civilians, used excessive force against peaceful demonstrators, tortured and mistreated suspected separatists and detainees, and burned hundreds of villages. While this administration may fail to understand that democratic values, human rights, and good governance promote long-term sustainable peace, Members of this body understand that these values are and must remain a core component of U.S. foreign policy. I am pleased that the administration has finally seen fit to set aside money in Fiscal Year 2018 funds for such activities, after years of disappointing neglect for the sector. But the amount, $1 million, is far too modest an amount to provide a meaningful strategy to combat corruption in Cameroon. As Benin’s then-President Mathieu Kerekou said in 2009, you do not leave power, power will return to federalism. It is time for President Biya to cement his legacy by laying the groundwork for meaningful political competition in Cameroon. As Benin’s then-President Mathieu Kerekou said in 2009 when he decided not to change the constitution and run for a third term, “if you do not leave power, power will leave you.”

Future elections must take place on a level playing field. In this year’s elections the field was heavily tilted in favor of the ruling party. Addressing meaningful barriers to political participation may go a long way towards addressing the root causes of discontent in the Anglophone regions.

I call upon separatist leaders and their supporters to commit to seeking a peaceful, negotiated solution to the
Anglophone crisis. The separatists too must support accountability for all actors engaged in hostilities who may have committed human rights abuses. Attacks on civilians are inexcusable. All armed and political actors must unequivocally condemn human rights abuses.

Finally, the diaspora has a critical role to play. I urge members of the diaspora to clearly and unambiguously condemn violence in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. The inflammatory rhetoric on social media by some Cameroonians at home and abroad is unhelpful. All diaspora should scrupulously investigate the charterizations to which they are contributing funding lest they unwittingly send money to organizations that have engaged in violence against the very people they are trying to help.

Mr. President, the U.S. and Cameroon have a long history of cordial relations. Peace Corps has been in Cameroon since 1962. State Department and USAID-administered bilateral funding amounted to $83 million in FY2017. And for the first time, we have partnered with Cameroon to counter terrorism and maritime piracy, with U.S. security assistance rising substantially since 2014 in response to the Boko Haram crisis. Since 2015, Cameroon has hosted hundreds of U.S. military personnel who conduct regional intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance operations and otherwise support counterterrorism efforts. As conditions on the ground deteriorate, the U.S. is in a position where immediate concentrated action to support a resolution of the problem might disrupt the cycle of violence and send all parties working toward a negotiated solution. Our diplomatic intervention, if well thought out, could make a difference. I urge the administration to take swift, meaningful action.

I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO ELIAS THOMAS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, each year, the 1.4 million members of the National Association of Realtors recognize five of their own with the Good Neighbor Award for their service to others, locally or globally. I am delighted to congratulate 2018 Good Neighbor Elias Thomas of Shapleigh, ME, for inspiring contributions from his hometown to some of the poorest villages in India.

Mr. Thomas, broker-owner of EXIT Key Real Estate in Shapleigh, has spent 40 years volunteering with Rotary International. His compassionate work began in the late 1960s when, after traveling to Cozumel, Mexico, for a project to prevent the island’s garbage dump from polluting the water system, he returned to India every year since then, leading teams of volunteers and personally immunizing about 500 children against polio. He has raised more than $350,000 for Rotary International’s charitable endeavors.

During a 2008 trip to India, he became aware of another dire situation there: the lack of safe drinking water in desert communities in the northern Indian state of Rajasthan, which can lead to illness and death due to dysentery. Mr. Thomas assembled a team of 78 volunteers from eight countries and worked with village councils on a plan to build dams to capture the runoff from monsoons for drinking water and crop irrigation. Every year for the last 10 years, Mr. Thomas has led a total of 350 volunteers from around the world, and working with local residents and without mechanized equipment, they have hand-built nine dams that provide clean and safe water to more than 45,000 people.

A fellow Rotarian who has been part of that team describes Mr. Thomas this way: “Elias has deep faith that we can bring about change. He’s a man that has dreams, and while most people talk about what they wish they could do to help others, he does it. To Elias, everyone in humanity is critically important.”

Elias Thomas exemplifies the motto of Rotary International, “Service Above Self.” His caring spirit and boundless energy are improving and even saving lives here at home and around the world.

TRIBUTE TO HANNAH ROSENTHAL

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Hannah Rosenthal’s extraordinary career as she celebrates her retirement as President and CEO of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. Hannah has had a long and distinguished career as an influential advocate of tolerance, and her mark on the Jewish world is immeasurable.

She is best known for building bridges between disparate factions and believing that everyone, no matter their background or perspective, deserves a seat at the table.

Hannah transferred from Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts to the University of Wisconsin-Madison after falling in love with the city and the university during a Hebrew class she attended the summer after her sophomore year. She received her bachelor of arts degree from UW-Madison and studied for the rabbinate in Jerusalem and California.

Hannah’s father was a rabbi and Holocaust survivor who inspired her to lead a life shaped by her Jewish faith. Rabbi Franz Rosenthal’s experiences as a prisoner at Buchenwald and a refugee in this country helped forge his daughter’s identity as an avid champion of human rights.

Hannah’s extensive career includes impressive experience at State, local, national, and international levels. She served as the founding executive director of the Wisconsin Women’s Council and head of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. In 1995, she was appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve as the midwest regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Although I had the pleasure of working with Hannah at many points in her remarkable career, I am especially grateful for all she taught me about effective advocacy, particularly advocacy on behalf of women. Early in my career, I worked with her on her role leading the Wisconsin Women’s Council to organize support for State efforts to guarantee equal pay for equal work.

Hannah is perhaps best known for her role as the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. Appointed by President Barack Obama in 2009, she used her role to build coalitions of sometimes unlikely allies to denounce hatred around the world. She was not afraid to come to the head on. She personally took those who denied the Holocaust on tours of concentration camps. In 2010, she switched her speech on anti-Semitism at an international conference on tolerance with the Special Representative to Muslim Communities so that she condemned Islamophobia in the strongest possible terms while her Muslim counterpart strongly denounced anti-Semitism. She summed up her philosophy succinctly in an address at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum by saying, “This isn’t just about the Jews, this is about hatred, and that affects everyone.”

Hannah is bold, resolute, and fearless. She believes there is no room in this world for intolerance toward others, and she has made it her mission in life to speak out against hatred and bigotry in all forms. It is the mindset that shaped her legacy at the Milwaukee Jewish Federation and led her to take a young people to volunteer at organizations that serve people unlike them through the creation of the Hours Against Hate global campaign.

Hannah deserves to be proud of her many national and international accomplishments to her heart remains rooted at home in Wisconsin with her friends, family, and community. Hannah has made many close friends along her journey who stuck by her through thick and thin. She also takes much pride and delight in her two daughters and young grandson.

Public servant, activist, icon, and pioneer are words that only begin to