

year and kept from running an addiction treatment program for veterans. It happens that Brandon's only "mistake" was to point out poor treatment of suicidal veterans. Eventually, after a concerted effort by my office, Senator JOHNSON's office, and the Office of Special Counsel, Brandon was provided a new position within the VA's Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection. That is how it should be done.

Without the protections established by the Whistleblower Protection Act, Brandon's story might have turned out very differently. Without these protections, who knows how many other instances of waste, fraud, and abuse that we have been able to find and repair thanks to whistleblowers would be continuing now unabated?

Now, make no mistake, we still have a ways to go to ensure that whistleblowers are valued as they should be valued and supported as they should be supported. I still hear from far too many whistleblowers who have done the right thing only to experience retaliation from their Agencies as a result.

We in Congress, including this Senator, shouldn't be hearing those things at all. That is why continued oversight by Congress is so very important. Whistleblowers depend on us—you and me. All of our colleagues in this body ought to be listening to them. We ought to be supporting them and honoring them by following up on their concerns and taking action to fix serious problems when they bring them to our attention.

I thank the whistleblowers who worked with my office over the years. They are truly patriots willing to put their job on the line, willing to put their profession on the line. We have come a long way since the Whistleblower Protection Act first passed in 1989. We owe it to them to build on the progress we made and to continue to improve upon our whistleblower laws for years to come.

You can rest assured that I will be part of those ongoing efforts on this important anniversary of the Whistleblower Protection Act. I encourage my colleagues to reflect on the important role whistleblowers play in our government and to renew their commitment to the same.

I yield the floor.

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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

REMEMBERING FRITZ HOLLINGS

Mr. SHELBY. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon in honor of my good friend from South Carolina, the late Senator Fritz Hollings, who spent many, many years right here in this Chamber.

As we mourn his passing today, we remember the great impact Fritz Hollings had both in the Senate and in his home State of South Carolina, where he served as Governor, as Lieutenant Governor, as a member of the State legislature, and so forth. From 1966 to 2005, which was nearly four decades, he also represented South Carolina in Washington—right here in this body.

Born and raised in Charleston, SC, Fritz Hollings was a distinguished graduate of the Citadel and served as an Army artillery officer during World War II, for which he was awarded, among other things, the Bronze Star.

For 36 years, Fritz Hollings served alongside Strom Thurmond in the Senate, whom the Presiding Officer will remember. He was the junior Senator of his State for six terms, which made him the longest serving junior Senator in the history of the Senate. Throughout his tenure, Fritz served as a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, where I served with him. He was also the chairman of the Budget Committee and the chairman of the Commerce Committee. He was a skilled legislator and statesman.

In terms of influential policy, Fritz made quite a mark. He was instrumental in the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which we know as NOAA. When he was chairman of the Commerce Committee, he also helped to enact laws to alleviate childhood hunger and to expand competition in telecommunications during the early stages of the internet.

He may have spent nearly 39 years in the Senate, but his time in Washington was not all that made up his career.

Fritz Hollings served three terms in the South Carolina House of Representatives. He won his first election in 1948 at the age of 26. He went on to serve as South Carolina's Lieutenant Governor and then as its Governor at the age of 36. In 1984, while he was a sitting Senator here, he ran for President of the United States. He was a true public servant. He devoted his entire life to the betterment of his country, to his State, and to his people.

As we honor his lasting impact and achievements throughout his career, we are reminded that Fritz was what we would call a southern gentleman. With a distinguished Charlestonian southern drawl and a quick wit, Fritz was courteous and well mannered. He built his seniority with patience and respect.

I am grateful for his friendship and camaraderie over the last 40 years. Annette and I join his family as we mourn his passing and celebrate his life and the legacy he leaves behind in the U.S. Senate.

I yield the floor.

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

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

VENEZUELA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last year I made my first trip to Venezuela just 1 month before a Presidential election that by all accounts was about to be rigged by the incumbent, Maduro. His criminal regime was increasingly isolated by its neighbors in the world.

The Venezuelan people are suffering horribly—malnutrition, hyperinflation, levels of disease seen only in war zones around the world. As a result, 3 million Venezuelans have fled the country.

Neighbors in Colombia and Ecuador showed and continue to show incredible compassion to the hundreds of thousands of desperate Venezuelans who are pouring across their borders. In fact, my staff was just in Cucuta, Colombia, on the Venezuelan border, and my staff saw firsthand the humanity and patience of the Colombian people helping their Venezuelan brothers and sisters showing up desperate for food and safety, all amid the stark cruelty of barricaded bridges deliberately blocking aid trucks.

I might just add parenthetically—what a sharp contrast: the suffering in Venezuela and the people in Colombia, their neighbors who are trying to help, and what we are doing on our southern border when it comes to those who are suffering in Honduras and El Salvador and Guatemala. What a contrast.

During my visit to Venezuela last year, I told Maduro that if he went ahead with his stolen election, he would find himself isolated in the eyes of the world, and the Venezuelan people would suffer even greater hardship. I told him that in Washington both political parties don't agree on much, but they do on Venezuela.

Tragically, he ignored me and proceeded with this discredited election.

As a result, when the region's governments on both the left and the right decided to recognize the Venezuelan National Assembly President Juan Guaido as the country's interim President, as provided for under the country's Constitution, I promptly agreed. In fact, I called Guaido immediately, spoke to him personally, and came to the floor of the Senate to offer my support for his ascendancy as the leader of Venezuela.

I had met him in Caracas last year at a dinner that was kind of a secret dinner since he was in the opposition, and I remember at that dinner that five members of the National Assembly said: If you come back here in 2019 and look for the five of us, two of us will be exiled, two will be in prison, and one will disappear. That is what happened in Venezuela.

The courage they showed at that meeting and afterward should not be ignored by the American people.

As President Trump made his case that the world needed to act in Venezuela, in part because of the horrible situation and danger the Venezuelan people found themselves in, I joined in