

many of the perpetrators actually were promoted. We did something about it. As members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, we recognized, in 1975, the countries that comprise the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, including Russia, committed to basic human rights for their people, that their government would be honest, and that they would protect the rights of their citizens. The Helsinki Final Act gave every member state the right to question what other States were doing in compliance with the Helsinki Final Act ideals.

It is legitimate for us to question what Russia is doing in carrying out its commitment, so we did something about it. I introduced legislation known as the Magnitsky Act. I want you to know this was a bipartisan effort. My partner in the passage of the Magnitsky Act was the late Senator John McCain. My partner in passing the Global Magnitsky Act and the Magnitsky Act is my good friend ROGER WICKER, who is the chair of the Senate U.S. Helsinki Commission. We worked together to make sure that we passed these Magnitsky Acts.

What does it do? What it does is the country does not hold accountable those who violate basic global human rights of its citizens; we impose sanctions. Those sanctions prevent that individual who perpetrated these acts from visiting the United States through the issuance of a visa or participating in our banking system.

Why do we do this? Today, we heard from Mr. Kara-Murza, who is one of the activists on human rights in Russia who has been poisoned twice by the Russian Government. What he said about the mantra of the Kremlin is: They steal at home and spend abroad. They don't want their money in rubles; they want their money in dollars. So if we can prevent them from using our banking system, we can really make it hurt.

Let me tell you how important this is. It is not limited to Russia. We passed the Global Magnitsky law so it applies to all of the countries where they have violations of human rights.

If you want to know how important this statute is, it has been reported that when Mr. Putin and Mr. Trump met in their first summit, the first order of business that Mr. Putin raised with President Trump was: Can't we get rid of these Magnitsky sanctions? Believe me, they work. They deter bad actors around the world. It is a legislative initiative.

We talked today about the fact that there is one common ingredient in every country that has considered the Global Magnitsky laws; that is, the initiative that comes from the legislators. There is a natural reluctance among the bureaucrats not to burden themselves with additional problems in their bilateral relations with other countries, but we recognize that it is important for America, the leader of the democratic world, to speak up for

democratic principles. We passed the legislation. We didn't have the enthusiastic support of the administration, but we did it. We did it. And we wanted it to be a global standard that was clear to human rights violators, but we needed other countries to act.

I am pleased that other countries have followed the U.S. leadership. The UK, Canada, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all have enacted similar Global Magnitsky bills. Currently, Japan and Australia are considering similar bills and legislation.

Today, we had a very positive conversation with the European Union, and they are considering the passage of a Global Magnitsky bill. This would add 27 countries to be covered under the Sergei Magnitsky law.

This is one of the, I think, leading moments for the U.S. Senate and Congress, where we showed leadership on behalf of speaking out for those otherwise who would not be heard. As a result of our action, I am convinced we saved many lives, and we made it clear that in our foreign policy, we will embed that in the principles that have made this Nation the great democratic Nation it is, the respect for universal human rights.

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

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

TRIBUTE TO ASYA BRANCH

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon, as I do, to commend an outstanding young American. In this case, a young Mississippian; namely, Miss Asya Branch, from Booneville, MS, who was recently crowned as Miss USA 2020.

For those of you from Michigan, take some pride. She was born in Michigan but moved to Mississippi at an early age and spent her childhood in Booneville, as I said. She graduated this year from my alma mater, the University of Mississippi, having studied broadcast journalism.

Miss Asya Branch has experienced dizzying success during the past 2 years. In 2018, Asya Branch won the title of Miss Mississippi under the Miss America Organization. The following year, she became the first African-American woman to win the other State title, Miss Mississippi USA. She is only the seventh person in history to hold both State titles: Miss Mississippi and Miss Mississippi USA. And now she is the first-ever Miss Mississippi USA to win the Miss USA crown.

Asya Branch has been competing in pageants since 2016, when she won her first preliminary title in the Miss Mis-

issippi competition. She went on to win Ole Miss's Parade of Beauties competition and numerous local titles. She has gained wide recognition because she is beautiful, well-spoken, and she is a gifted vocalist. But, also, there is a serious part of her platform and serious personal story of Asya's in overcoming adversity, and I admire that so much in Asya Branch. She speaks openly about her father's 10 years in the State prison, resulting in his absence for much of her upbringing. That difficult period shaped who Asya Branch is and gave her strength and a unique perspective on incarceration.

During the Mississippi pageant, Asya's platform was empowering children of incarcerated parents. Can you imagine the courage of a young woman taking that on as her platform? It enabled her to reach out to other children, encourage them that their lives do not have to be defined by their circumstances.

During her year as Miss Mississippi, she was part of a White House roundtable, where she discussed criminal justice and prison reform, much as we did here on the floor of the U.S. Senate. And the First Step Act—she discussed this act with President Trump and Vice President PENCE, Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant, and lawmakers, including Senator HYDE-SMITH and me.

She also started the Love Letters Program in which she donated stationery and stamps to inmates, allowing them to write to their loved ones. In her new role as Miss USA, she plans to expand Love Letters to a national level and continue advocating for criminal justice and prison reform.

You can see why I am so proud of Asya Branch and so impressed with her accomplishments. She has the honor of holding two State titles and now a national title. This speaks to her unique gifts, accomplishments, courage, and passion for bringing about constructive change to the world.

I commend Asya for her example of perseverance. She has made Mississippi proud, and I think she is going to make the United States proud as she moves forward next year to the Miss Universe pageant, where I am sure she will do well. I encourage all Americans to root for her next year, as we will certainly be doing at my house.

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

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

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, here it is November 18. It seems like the election was a few years ago. Time is flying