

## UNREST IN TIBET

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I rise to express my concerns about the continuing unrest in Tibet and the tragic trend of Tibetan self-immolations. Since February 2009, more than 100 Tibetans have set themselves on fire. Many of the self-immolators have called out for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for China to acknowledge the basic human dignity of the Tibetan people.

Like so many others, I wish that Tibetans would not choose self-immolations, a horrific act, as a method of protest. I hope Tibetans will find other ways to express their grievances and despair and halt these self-destructive acts. At the same time, we must understand that these sorts of acts are indicative of the deep sense of frustration felt by the Tibetan people. This is not a conspiracy of “foreign forces” but indicative of the deep sense of hopelessness of a people denied their basic dignity.

Under the Chinese Constitution, “All ethnic groups in the People’s Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China’s nationalities. Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited. . . .”

Yet Tibet today is one of the most repressed and closed societies in the world, where merely talking on the phone can land you in jail. Support for the Dalai Lama can be prosecuted as an offense against the State. Tibetans are treated as second class citizens; their travel within and outside of Tibetan areas is highly restricted. Foreign diplomats and journalists are routinely denied access.

The American people and Congress have demonstrated an abiding interest in the culture, religion, and people of Tibet, as well as a deep respect for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We see Tibet as an issue of fundamental justice and fairness, where the fundamental human rights of the Tibetan people, as embodied in the PRC’s own constitution, are not being respected; where their culture is being eroded; and where their land is being exploited.

So I believe that responsibility falls to us to help the Tibetan people in their efforts to preserve their culture and identity and have a say in their own affairs and to be able to exercise genuine autonomy within the PRC.

Let me offer some thoughts on how Congress can help.

First, we should continue to fund the important programs that help Tibetan communities, both in exile and on the Tibetan plateau. While these provide tangible humanitarian results, they also send a critical signal to the aggrieved Tibetan population that the United States hears their plea.

One measure with which I am familiar is the Tibetan language broadcasts of Radio Free Asia and the Voice of

America. I cannot overstate the importance of these efforts to provide perhaps the only independent source of news to Tibetans who struggle under the heavy censorship regime.

Second, we should embrace the statement last fall by U.N. Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay on Tibet. She stated that “social stability in Tibet will never be achieved through heavy security measures and suppression of human rights.” She called on Chinese authorities to adopt the recommendations of various U.N. bodies and to allow access to Tibet by independent international observers and media members, noting 12 outstanding requests for official visits to China by U.N. Special Rapporteurs on various human rights issues.

Third, the State Department should continue to insist on access to Tibet by its personnel. We need independent and credible reporting on the true situation on the ground, and the Department should work with China to take steps to see that the principle of reciprocity is respected.

Fourth, I encourage the State Department and other government agencies to join in dialogue with China and with others in the region to address the deeper strategic aspects of the Tibet issue. Instability in Tibet is a factor in the broader question of social stability in the entire PRC. Peaceful resolution of the Tibet issue could go a long way in demonstrating to the world that China is indeed a responsible and constructive member of the community of nations. In turn, Beijing’s growing influence in the Himalayan belt, especially Nepal, should be assessed in a broader dialogue with other nations in the region.

Likewise, the United States should look for constructive ways to engage China on the issue of water security, given that Tibet’s rivers provide the livelihood for hundreds of millions of people downstream in South and Southeast Asia. Chinese diversion of these rivers through constructing dams could become a source of conflict in the region.

Mr. President, I close by paraphrasing an oft-uttered phrase by the Dalai Lama. He says that those who raise their voices of concern for Tibet do so not because they are pro-Tibet or anti-Chinese. They do so because they are pro-justice. I second this remark and look forward to working with my colleagues in the Senate, and with China, to promote a durable resolution to the Tibet problem.

## CONGRATULATING MITCH SEAVEY

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the winner of the 41st Iditarod race. Mitch Seavey of Seward finished the 998-mile dog sled race in a time of 9 days, 7 hours, 39 minutes, and 56 seconds. This is Mitch’s second title and I am happy to congratulate him on this significant accomplishment.

Sixty-six teams left this year from Willow, heading out into the dark, cold, and exceptionally rugged terrain of Alaska. This race is not for the weak. Temperatures can plummet, footing is not always solid, and mushers have to deal with the isolation of the Alaskan wilderness, leading an equally brave and athletic team of canine athletes.

Iditarod mushers are not the only people to have witnessed the great ability of sled dogs. American soldiers overseas are now benefiting from the training these canines endure. The U.S. Marine Corps recently decided to study the training regimen of sled dogs that are able to consistently run 1,000-mile races through hazardous conditions. What they observed is what we in the Iditarod community have become accustomed to in sled dog racing—train to the level in which you need to perform. For Iditarod dogs this means training in weather conditions they will encounter during an Alaskan winter and eating up to 12,000 calories a day. Exercise and nutrition techniques were transferred from the Iditarod trail across the world to the deserts of Afghanistan. Bomb-sniffing dogs working in conditions just as extreme, sometimes in heat well in excess of 100 degrees, are now saving lives and limbs every day thanks to the science and innovative techniques developed in our great race. A group of those canines, led by Tanner, a 6-year-old husky, trained their way into peak physical condition and onto the winning podium in Nome.

The Iditarod race exemplifies the greatest assets of my home State: vast nature and beauty, the greatest will and determination in the country, and most of all a sense of community. Those qualities are exemplified in this year’s winner, Mitch Seavey.

This title makes Mitch the oldest Iditarod winner ever. It is only fitting that Mitch crossed the burlled arch on Front Street in Nome a champion, a year after his son Dallas claimed the title and became the youngest winner in Iditarod history. Back-to-back Seavey family championships lead me to believe that there must be some characteristics of this family that give them an advantage in the world’s toughest race.

Mitch Seavey’s inspiring run this year was a testament to his athleticism, tenacity, and character. Mitch recaptured his title in dramatic fashion. His lead coming out of White Mountain, starting a sprint to Nome, was only 13 minutes. He thought he could see the dim light of his competitor’s headlamp coming up behind his team and he reached another gear. Late Tuesday night Mitch crossed the finish line, claiming his second title, the first since his 2004 championship run. This was one of the closest Iditarod finishes ever. Mitch even joked coming out of White Mountain that he was going to grab his sneakers for the finish. In the heat of competition Mitch kept his sense of humor and