

his caucus to get it through the Senate. He and I both know that a unanimous voice vote in the Judiciary Committee is uncommon and happens on only the most uncontroversial and uniformly applauded bills. This is one of those bills, and we need to pass this today.

Senator MCCONNELL is also a cosponsor of this bill. This effort has been bipartisan from the beginning, and I am proud that we have the minority leader and the minority whip helping to lead this effort. Despite the support of the Senate Republican leadership, the bill nonetheless remains stalled. Perhaps it is because the House Republican leadership would rather pass a much narrower bill. I trust that the Senate will stand up for all victims who deserve justice, just as we did when the Senate passed an inclusive Violence Against Women Act reauthorization last year.

Our bipartisan Senate legislation strengthens the Kirk Bloodsworth Post-Conviction DNA Testing Grant Program, one of the key programs created in the Innocence Protection Act. Kirk Bloodsworth was a young man just out of the Marines when he was sentenced to death for a heinous crime that he did not commit. He was the first death row inmate in the United States to be exonerated through the use of DNA evidence.

Since the Justice for All Act was first enacted in 2004, we continue to see cases in which people are found to be innocent after spending years in jail.

Thomas Haynesworth was exonerated in 2011 after spending 27 years in prison for crimes he did not commit, thanks to a grant provided by the Justice for All Act. He was accused of rape in 1984 and wrongfully convicted, and the real perpetrator in this case went on to rape more than a dozen women.

It is an outrage when an innocent person is punished, and this injustice is compounded when the true perpetrator remains on the streets, able to commit more crimes. We are all less safe when the system gets it wrong.

This bill also provides funding for the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Grant Program, which assists laboratories in performing the many forensic tests that are essential to solving crimes and prosecuting offenders.

I cannot imagine why is there an objection to supporting scientific testing and improving the reliability of criminal convictions. Every American, including crime victims, is better served when our justice system has the resources it needs to operate effectively. If there is a person in the Senate who objects, I ask them to come forward and explain that to me and to the American people. I would welcome that debate.

The hotline on this bipartisan Justice for All Act reauthorization has been running on the Republican side since March 31, and I have not heard one substantive argument against the merits of this bill. Police officers, pros-

ecutors, and crime victims agree on the necessity of this bill. Why can't we?

The Justice for All Act takes important steps to ensure that all criminal defendants, including those who cannot afford a lawyer, receive effective representation. Our justice system, including successful prosecution, depends upon effective representation on both sides.

This is not a time for delay. This is a time for leadership. The stakes are too high and crime victims are depending on us to do the right thing. I urge all Senators, and particularly those in the Republican caucus, to clear this bill today.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, on April 4, 2014, I was unavoidably absent from the following votes as a result of memorial events related to the tragic deaths of Lieutenant Eddie Walsh and Firefighter Mike Kennedy in Boston on March 26, 2014—rollcall votes No. 97 and 98. Had I been present, I would have voted “no” on vote No. 97, on the motion to table Reid Amendment No. 2878 to H.R. 3979; and “yes” on vote No. 98, on the motion to table the appeal of the appeal of the ruling of the chair that a third degree amendment was not in order.

WAR CRIMES IN SYRIA

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to discuss the ongoing crisis in Syria. Last month marked the 3-year anniversary since the brutal conflict began. According to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139, which was unanimously accepted in February of this year, the conflict has resulted in the death of over 140,000 people in Syria, including at least 10,000 children. UNICEF reports that Syria is among the most dangerous places on Earth to be a child, pointing to high child casualty rates, brutalizing and traumatic violence, deteriorating access to education, and health concerns. The number of children suffering in Syria more than doubled in the third year of the conflict.

The crisis is only getting worse. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilians are under fire by government and opposition forces in violation of internationally accepted Laws of Armed Conflict. These war crimes are truly devastating, and to escape the violence, millions of refugees have flooded into neighboring Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, while thousands more remain internally displaced inside Syria. Last year I visited the Kilis refugee camp in Turkey which is currently sheltering more than 14,000 Syrian refugees. I witnessed first-hand the remarkable bravery of the Syrian refugee population. Many of these families relocated several times within Syria before ultimately making the heart-wrenching decision to leave their country in order to seek food, medical attention, and safety outside of Syria.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered more than 2.6 million Syrian refugees with women and children making up more than 80 percent of the refugee population. By the end of this year, the United Nations estimates that the number of refugees could increase to 4 million.

That is why I am a cosponsor of the Syria Humanitarian Resolution of 2014, which urges all parties in Syria to allow for and facilitate immediate, unfettered access to humanitarian aid throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. This legislation calls for the safety, security, independence, and impartiality of humanitarian workers and demands freedom of movement to deliver aid.

I remain deeply concerned by the instability of the entire region, as violence spills over into neighboring countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper has testified that, “In Syria, the ongoing civil war will probably heighten regional and sectarian tensions.” The influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq is putting a strain on those countries’ resources.

The United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic reports that pro-government forces have murdered, tortured, assaulted, and raped civilians in Syria. Anti-government groups have also engaged in murder, execution without due process, torture, hostage-taking, and shelling of civilian neighborhoods.

But nowhere is the brutality of this war more evident than in the events of August 21, 2013, when the Syrian Army, under the direction of President Assad, launched a chemical weapons attack in the Damascus suburbs. This attack left over 1,400 innocent Syrian civilians dead—many of whom were children.

Assad’s criminal use of chemical weapons against his own people is morally reprehensible and violates internationally accepted rules of war. The international community cannot stand by and allow the murder of innocent men, women, and children to go unchallenged. We must bring Assad and all other perpetrators of gross human rights violations in the Syrian conflict to justice.

It is clear that we must take action. Last week I introduced, the Syrian War Crimes Accountability Act of 2014, S. 2209 along with Senators RUBIO and KAINE.

My bill strongly condemns the ongoing violence, the use of chemical weapons, the targeting of civilian populations, and the systematic gross human rights violations carried out by both the Syrian government and opposition forces.

My legislation requires the Secretary of State to provide Congress with a description of violations of internationally recognized human rights abuses