

Such measures, if not enforced, are no better than the paper they are printed on. And that is the reality in Honduras, where people like Juan Lopez have had no one and nothing to protect them.

Instead, it is the victims, the activists, who are arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned, accused of crimes which in reality amount to nothing more than peacefully defending their land and their right to a healthy environment. Some have languished in pre-trial detention for years, for simply protesting a mine that has polluted the water source of thousands of people.

Honduras is currently a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council. Members of the council have a responsibility to uphold human rights standards. That has been a criterion of membership since the council was established in 2006. Yet the human rights of people like Juan Lopez and the other Guapinol water defenders are routinely violated with impunity.

My thoughts and condolences are with Mr. Lopez's family and with the other families in the Bajo Aguan communities. In response to this pattern of violence and the assassination of Mr. Lopez last Saturday, I believe that, at a minimum, three things need to be done, beginning immediately, and I urge the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras to insist on them as well: an international commission of experts to support the Honduran prosecutor's investigation of the murder of Juan Lopez, to ensure the investigation is credible, thorough, and impartial; protection for human rights defenders at risk in the Bajo Aguan region; and investigations of the abuses and corruption denounced by Juan Lopez and the pattern of violence against the Guapinol defenders.

The threats, false arrests, wrongful imprisonment, murder, and impunity in the Bajo Aguan have been tolerated—and in effect tacitly and even actively encouraged—by Honduran officials for far too long. It has also received far too little attention from the United States and other governments that have put the interests of foreign investors above those of the impoverished people who live in that troubled region. I hope that Juan Lopez's death will not only be answered by holding accountable those responsible, but that it will also mark the beginning of real change in the Bajo Aguan. The people of those communities should not have to live in fear that powerful companies and corrupt officials will steal their land, pollute their rivers, and murder them for peacefully defending the natural resources that are rightfully theirs.

TRIBUTE TO GILLIE HOPKINS

Mr. WELCH. Mr. President, today I celebrate Rachel Gilbert Hopkins, a dedicated Vermonter who has worked to improve our State's adoption system and connect children to a loving family.

Vermont's team within the Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division (FSD) is critically important and does life-changing work every day for children in need. Rachel Gilbert Hopkins, or "Gillie" as she is known by all, has made an incredible impact. As codirector of Project Family, a partnership between Lund and DCF, Gillie has overseen the completion of more than 2,260 adoptions, advancing child welfare and permanency in our State and changing the lives of children and families.

For this reason alone, she is an excellent nominee for the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute's Angels in Adoption honor. But it is also Gillie's far-reaching impact beyond adoption and permanency that has inspired this honor, and at the recommendation of her friends and peers who have witnessed her dedication, I submit her name and this honor to the RECORD today.

As her peers say, Gillie has an "unwavering commitment to prioritizing the best interests of every child." She conducts trainings to empower her colleagues with the tools to advocate for children. She also works with the regional offices and the judiciary to address the barriers to permanency, using research to establish procedures that cultivate efficiency and smoother processes. Gillie has created inclusive spaces, groups, and supportive environments for people to live authentically and has worked on actions that enhance adoption competence among FSD staff.

Gillie Hopkins is champion for children, families, and Vermont communities and is well-deserving of the Angels in Adoption honor because of her extraordinary work and dedicated commitment to our State.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO HOPE PORTER AND MARIE RIDDER

• Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise to recognize two champions of Virginia's outdoors, Hope Porter and Marie Ridder, as they both celebrate 100th birthdays in the coming months. I offer these comments with the support of my colleague Senator MARK WARNER.

Hope Porter's activism and advocacy for open space dates back to the 1940s living in Fauquier County, VA. Hope had the foresight to see that the post-war boom in growth and automobile travel would require new safeguards to ensure that growth was sustainable and would not erase what makes Virginia's historic Piedmont region a special place. Through leading a series of campaigns over many years, she helped pioneer land preservation tools that are known across America today, from zoning to comprehensive land-use planning to private conservation easements. Another legacy is an open space advocacy group, the Piedmont Envi-

ronmental Council, which she helped found and which for over 40 years has scrutinized proposed commercial ventures and asked tough questions while protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of Piedmont lands under conservation easement. Hope's love for Virginia's outdoors extends to her own land. She has protected 47 acres of Wildcat Mountain, a 200-acre farm near Marshall, and the farmland where she currently lives. Hope continues to follow Fauquier County government and shares her wisdom with a variety of current and aspiring leaders.

Marie Ridder has been a one-woman force of nature on behalf of the outdoors in Virginia and beyond. She chaired the Virginia State Parks Commission and Virginia Council on Environment and served as vice chair of the Landmarks Commission of the U.S. Department of the Interior. She was instrumental in the growth of organizations like the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Piedmont Environmental Council, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands, and the American Farmland Trust. Her individual investments and land donations have literally shaped the landscape of Virginia, protecting countless farms and viewsheds and historic properties through conservation easements. She has influenced Presidents, Governors, and international leaders. She has given of her own time and resources and spearheaded efforts to mobilize other resources to protect open space. Any person walking or bird flying through the Virginia Piedmont has Marie to thank for the natural landscape they encounter.

I will join Hope and Marie, together with their families and friends, as the Piedmont Environmental Council celebrates their leadership this Saturday, September 21. We will also celebrate that Hope and Marie have been friends for 70 years.

As Senators and Governors, MARK WARNER and I have supported preserving Virginia's open space for future generations to enjoy. Whenever we close the deal on a particularly beautiful parcel, we get to make a speech, cut a ribbon, bask in the applause. But those moments don't happen without years of effort and persistence from people like Hope and Marie—and the organizations they have founded and the dollars and hours they have put in over many decades. I wish Hope Porter and Marie Ridder a very happy birthday and celebrate their life achievements that will be felt in Virginia for 100 more years and beyond.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mrs. Stringer, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages