

independent press, while others, including Mexico and Honduras, fail to protect journalists from threats and attacks by gangs or violence related to drug trafficking.

Yet a shortage of funding and the failure of some member States to comply with the decisions of the Commission and the rulings of the Court undermine their effectiveness. Some governments have actively sought to weaken these key institutions by withholding financial support and proposing to limit the legal authority of the Commission and the Court. They and the Special Rapporteur for Freedom and Expression need sufficient resources to do their jobs, and it is time to establish a mechanism for sanctioning noncompliance.

The United States is not blameless, having signed but not yet ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. This provides a convenient excuse for other governments to accuse us of hypocrisy as we urge their adherence to human rights norms. It is time for the Congress to act on this piece of unfinished business.

I would add, however, that the United States is part of the Inter-American Commission, as are all OAS member States, regardless of whether or not they have ratified the Convention. In fact, the United States has more cases at the Commission than any other country, and we strive to implement its decisions.

The OAS needs to strengthen its election monitoring capability—including insisting on timely and equal participation by opposition political parties, freedom of the press and association—to ensure a level playing field when some Latin governments refuse to allow early access by the OAS. Many Latin Americans are becoming cynical about the ability of democratic governments to deliver basic services in a manner that is transparent and accountable. Elected governments which are corrupt and neglect, or are unable to protect their people, erode support for democracy.

Similarly, the OAS and the Secretary General in particular need to respond swiftly to political crises, and exercise stronger leadership in defense of democratic institutions and human rights when they are under assault, consistent with the OAS Charter and the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

There is also the issue of hemispheric security. During the Cold War there was a single-minded, concerted effort to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining another foothold in Latin America. Countless innocent people were threatened, disappeared, tortured, or killed in the name of fighting communism by Central and South American security forces, many of them encouraged, trained and equipped by the United States, and only a token number of the individuals responsible have been punished.

Today the hemisphere faces new threats, such as drug cartels, gang vio-

lence, transnational crime, money laundering, and natural disasters. But the plans to address them like the Merida Initiative and the Alliance for Prosperity, while identifying such priorities as police and judicial reform, poverty, fiscal transparency, and corruption, tend to be long on goals and short on specifics of how to achieve them. Cooperation on multi-dimensional security threats is not a matter of ideology. Cuba and the United States are already cooperating against drug-traffickers, as we are with other countries. But there is a lot more that can and should be done to identify the causes and develop and implement more effective regional strategies to address these problems.

Several Latin countries have made notable strides in the past decade and are providing greater opportunities for their people. The OAS can play a role in convening a debate, identifying solutions, and facilitating an alliance of key development organizations, including the Inter-American Development Bank and the Pan American Health Organization, to address areas of shared interest such as achieving sustained, equitable economic growth, strengthening public education and health, and protecting natural resources.

The OAS has an important, underutilized role to play in interfacing with the wide range of civil society organizations which are essential to any democracy and are often under-appreciated, under-funded, and persecuted. With OAS offices throughout the hemisphere, its under-utilized employees could engage far more actively with academia, civil society, and the media. This should include any such entities that reject violence, not just those that are “registered” by local governments which sometimes use the registration process to silence legitimate voices whose views the government disagrees with.

Finally, the OAS needs to decide how to interact with other hemispheric multilateral organizations in a manner that strengthens the OAS and encourages cooperation. Cuba’s suspension, and then refusal to return, provided an impetus for the creation of new entities like CELAC, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, that are anti-OAS and anti-United States and have sowed division within the hemisphere.

The next Secretary General of the OAS, who will be selected on March 18, has his work cut out for him. I say “him” because there is only one candidate, which says volumes about how the job is perceived. The Secretary General plays a crucial role as the strategic leader, but not the day-to-day manager, of the organization. The next Secretary General needs an Assistant Secretary General with the managerial expertise and mandate to right this sinking ship.

It will mean tough budgetary decisions, including the ability to say no to new programs and mandates and to

focus instead on doing better at what it does best.

As soon as possible after they assume their positions I urge them to review Public Law 113-41, the “Organization of American States Revitalization and Reform Act of 2013.” That Act, which received bipartisan support, identifies key issues that need to be addressed—many of which I have touched on here—and provides recommendations for how to address them.

I wish them both well because the people of every country in the hemisphere, including those whose governments have sought to harm the OAS, need the OAS. But absent significant and rapid reforms beginning with the quota issue, the OAS’s decline may be irreversible.

CONTINUING AMERICA’S LEADERSHIP IN MEDICAL INNOVATION FOR PATIENTS

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a copy of my remarks at the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee hearing this week.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONTINUING AMERICA’S LEADERSHIP IN MEDICAL INNOVATION FOR PATIENTS

We’ve got three major objectives in this committee: Fixing No Child Left Behind, Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, and third—one we’re all looking forward to without exception—improving biomedical innovation, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Today is the first hearing Ranking Member Murray and I are holding on our bipartisan initiative to examine how we get drugs, devices and treatments from the discovery process through the regulatory process into our medicine cabinets and doctors’ offices.

Today discoveries supported by NIH often do not come to FDA’s door for six, eight, ten, or even twelve years. And the average cost to get a single drug from the laboratory through the approval process to the medicine cabinet is, according to some estimates, about \$1 billion. Other estimates say it’s double that or even more.

This initiative builds on work the committee has done—legislation was passed in 1997 and as recently as 2012—to try to get at the same goal of speeding up review and approval of drugs and devices while still ensuring they are safe.

This is a subject that has a lot of interest. President Obama this year announced his new Precision Medicine Initiative, saying: “21st century businesses will rely on American science, technology, research and development. I want the country that eliminated polio and mapped the human genome to lead a new era of medicine—one that delivers the right treatment at the right time. In some patients with cystic fibrosis, this approach has reversed a disease once thought unstoppable.”

In the House, Energy and Commerce Chairman Fred Upton and Representative Diana DeGette have been working on parallel tracks on their 21st Century Cures initiative to accelerate the pace of cures in America.

In late January, Sen. Burr and I released a report titled “Innovation for Healthier

Americans” that examined the process we have in place today for drug and device development.

We have received over 80 comments already, and have shared those with the staff of all members on the committee.

Our committee also has a bipartisan staff working group that has been meeting for around a month now, learning more about the key agencies involved in biomedical research and development.

We have with us today Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health, which funds and enables much of the early stage research that leads to medical breakthroughs. And Dr. Margaret Hamburg, the head of the Food and Drug Administration, which regulates all the medical products we come in contact with.

Dr. Collins wrote in 2013 that: “Drugs exist for only about 250 of the more than 4,400 conditions with defined molecular causes. And it takes far too long and far too much money to get a new drug into our medicine cabinets. This is an old problem that cries out for new and creative solutions.”

Since Dr. Collins wrote that, the number of conditions with defined molecular causes has increased to more than 5,400, yet the number of new drugs approved has not kept pace with these discoveries.

Dr. Hamburg has said that “we are left relying on the 20th century approaches for the review, approval and oversight of the treatments and cures of the 21st century.”

So today’s hearing is a perfect place for us to start—with the heads of these two critical agencies, both of whom have sounded the alarm on our existing process for drug and device development.

This work will affect every single American—from a very ill patient who has run out of treatment options and is counting on the most cutting-edge drug, to an active child with asthma who’s hoping to run faster and farther with the aid of a new drug.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses more about their thoughts on these five issues that Senator Burr and I identified in our report: First, it costs too much to bring medical products through the pipeline to patients. Second, as science and technology advance, the discovery and development process takes too long for medical products to make their way to patients. Third, FDA’s responsibilities have grown to include many activities unrelated to the core function of regulating medical products to advance the public health. Fourth, the disparity in scientific knowledge at FDA and the fast pace of biomedical innovation are slowing, and in some cases, stifling innovation in American medicine. Fifth, a working FDA is essential to continuing biomedical innovation in the United States and maintaining America’s global leadership in medical innovation.

In the words of Andrew Eschenbach, the former Commissioner of the FDA and Director of the National Cancer Institute: “We stand on the cusp of a revolution in health care. Advances in molecular medicine will allow us to develop powerful new treatments that can cure or even prevent diseases like Alzheimer’s and cancer. Tomorrow’s high-tech cures can also slash health-care costs and eliminate ineffective treatments.”

I look forward to taking the first step toward addressing these important issues. If we do it right, our work here will help improve the lives of every single American.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION

• Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, this week marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of legislation to create the Appalachian Regional Commission, ARC.

In the decade of the 1960s, intense poverty and economic struggle characterized the existence for many people and towns running down the spine of the Appalachian Mountains. At the time, more than 19 million Americans were living in the Appalachian region and struggling to achieve the American dream.

The magnitude and vastness of the challenges in Appalachia, which spread across many States, led the region’s Governors in 1960 to form the Conference of Appalachian Governors to develop a regional approach for resolving these complex issues.

In 1961, they took their case to newly elected President John F. Kennedy, who had been deeply moved by the poverty he saw during campaign trips to West Virginia. Their efforts led to the creation of the Appalachian Regional Commission and a broad bipartisan coalition in Congress passed the Appalachian Regional Development Act, ARDA, early in 1965. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law on March 9, 1965. It is a unique agency to this day, made up of one Federal co-chair and 13 Governors who serve as State co-chairs. It also receives local input on allocation of resources from the local development districts.

Over the last 50 years, it has been able to inject Federal funds and leverage State and private resources to address the deep needs of this region. Much success has been achieved, but yet much remains to be done.

Poverty has been cut in half in Appalachia from nearly 31 percent of the region’s people in 1960 to about 16 percent today.

In 1960, only 32 percent of the Appalachian population completed high school and 5 percent had a college degree. Since then, the number of college graduates had increased four-fold to 21 percent.

One of the most critical challenges facing the Appalachian region in 1964 was its relative isolation. With the aid of the Appalachian Regional Commission, nearly 2,700 miles of highway development routes have been built.

Since 1965, ARC has financed nearly 25,000 separate strategic investments in non-highway activities in the region, which includes \$3.8 billion in Federal funds. The positive result has been that nearly three times that amount, \$9 billion has been forthcoming in matching funds from other Federal, State and local funding sources. Better yet, ARC-financed investments in Appalachia have also leveraged nearly \$16 billion in added private investment.

I want to congratulate the Appalachian Regional Commission on its

50th Anniversary. I look forward to working with and supporting the future efforts of ARC and the local development districts as they continue to work with the States, localities and the private sector to build the economy of the Appalachian region. •

CELEBRATING KEMP MILL SYNAGOGUE’S 25TH ANNIVERSARY AND THE SERVICE OF RABBI YAAKOV “JACK” BIELER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this Saturday, I will have the privilege and pleasure of visiting Kemp Mill Synagogue, KMS, for a Melava Malka on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. KMS held its first service on March 17, 1990, attended by a group of 50 worshippers in a Kemp Mill home, and held its first services in its current location on Kemp Mill Road on Shabbat of September 19, 1998. The Modern Orthodox Synagogue is a vibrant and loving community where members of the congregation gather to daven, learn, celebrate, and observe lifecycle events, smachot, and rituals together.

In 1994, Rabbi Yaakov (Jack) Bieler officially became the first rabbi of KMS. As the leader of the KMS community, Rabbi Bieler has led and inspired the development of an ambitious program of shiurim, study groups, scholars-in-residence and educational programs. Weekly Divrei Tora by men and women enlighten the congregation by offering a diversity of perspectives. Youth groups and social activities contribute to creating a warm and engaged community.

Rabbi Bieler is a great friend and true leader in Maryland’s faith-based community. While he has been at KMS for over 20 years, his commitment to his faith and community has been a lifelong passion. Rabbi Bieler was raised in Bayside, Queens, and attended local public schools. In 1969, he graduated from the James Striar School of Jewish Studies in New York, where he honed his mastery of Jewish texts. He spent the years of 1969 to 1971 studying at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh in Israel.

When Rabbi Bieler returned to New York, he studied at Yeshiva University, where he was ordained by the Rabbi Isaac Eichanan Theological Seminary. This prestigious program, which dates back to 1886, challenges and trains leaders of Judaism to hold fast to the ways of the Torah while responding to the questions and demands of modern society. During this time, he also pursued a master of arts in Jewish Education from the Ferkauf Graduate School of Education, completing his studies in 1974.

While Rabbi Bieler’s studies prepared him to be a Jewish religious leader, he always sought new ways to share his knowledge with others. To this end, Rabbi Bieler has spent much of his life in the classroom. He served on the faculty and was a chairman of the Talmud Department of the Joseph H. Lookstein Upper School of Ramaz from 1974 to