

commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond.

Today Juneteenth commemorates African-American freedom. This special day emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future. Its growing popularity signifies a level of maturity and dignity in America long over due. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are joining hands to truthfully acknowledge a period in our history that shaped and continues to influence our society today. Sensitized to the conditions and experiences of others, only then can we make significant and lasting improvements in our society.

The Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's yielded both positive and negative results for the Juneteenth celebrations. While it pulled many of the African American youth away and into the struggle for racial equality, many linked these struggles to the historical struggles of their ancestors. This was evidenced by student demonstrators involved in the Atlanta civil rights campaign in the early 1960's, whom wore Juneteenth freedom buttons. Again in 1968, Juneteenth received another strong resurgence through Poor Peoples March to Washington D.C.. Rev. Ralph Abernathy's call for people all races, creeds, economic levels and professions to come to Washington to show support for the poor. Many of these attendees returned home and initiated Juneteenth celebrations in areas previously absent of such activity. In fact, two of the largest Juneteenth celebrations founded after this March are now held in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

TEXAS BLAZES THE TRAIL

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday through the efforts Rep. Al Edwards, an African American state legislator. The successful passage of this bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America.

JUNETEENTH IN MODERN TIMES

Throughout the 80's and 90's Juneteenth has continued to enjoy a growing and healthy interest from communities and organizations throughout the country. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Henry Ford Museum and others have begun sponsoring Juneteenth-centered activities. In recent years, a number of National Juneteenth Organizations have arisen to take their place along side older organizations—all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten, for all of the roots tie back to this fertile soil from which a national day of pride is growing. The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states come on board and form local committees and organizations to coordinate the activities.

With the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 coming up on the floor tomorrow, it is important to remember that the VRA is one of the most effective civil rights statute ever enacted, and while its successes has generated increased political power for many at the local, state, and federal levels, there is still much work to be done. Critical provisions of the Act, including the language assistance provisions contained within Section 203, are set to expire next year. The right to vote is only meaningful when the language of the ballot and other election materials is fully comprehensible to the voter.

Recently, a 9-foot bronze statue, created by Eddie Dixon of Lubbock, was erected in the city of Galveston, TX. The Statue depicts a man holding the state law that made Juneteenth a state holiday in 1979. It was at the Ashton Villa where Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger of the U.S. Army is believed to have read a proclamation on June 19, 1865, announcing that slaves were free. The historic emancipation proclamation enacted by President Abraham Lincoln went into effect Jan. 1, 1863. Monday marked the 27th year that people have gathered to celebrate Juneteenth.

ON THE ONGOING DISENFRANCHISEMENT OF BLACK VOTERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms. MCKINNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, I come to the floor to say to that the dream of full participation by all Americans has yet to be fulfilled. And, in fact, even at the dawn of a new century, black voters are still confronted with a concerted effort to deny their right to vote when it is politically necessary and expedient to do so.

We can start with the fiasco that brought the current administration to power, the Florida vote of 2000. First of all, in testimony from African American voters in Florida, outright voter intimidation is documented in dozens of cases.

You know, the passage of time is a wonderful thing. It makes wine taste better; it makes women look better; it makes us long for the days of good music, however we define "good music." The older songs always just seem the best.

So, too, it is with information. But with the passage of time, truth crushed to the Earth, rises. The ashes of the Phoenix rise.

As a result of a town hall meeting that I organized in Georgia, bringing in the vice president of ChoicePoint, the company hired by the Florida Board of Elections under the control of the then Secretary of State KATHERINE HARRIS, we now know that ChoicePoint was asked to provide an incorrect list of supposed convicted felons who would be denied the right to vote in Florida. The only thing is that the list compiled by ChoicePoint imported data from several States; Ohio, New Jersey and Texas.

Now, it just so happens that the Governor of Texas is now our President, and the interesting thing about the list that was given from Texas to KATHERINE HARRIS in Florida is that it was not a list of convicted felons. The Texas list was a list of those convicted of misdemeanors, thereby enlarging the number of entrants on the ChoicePoint list destined for Florida.

Now, why is this important? Because the method of disenfranchisement in Florida was to deny people the right to vote based on fictitious felony conviction records. And since KATHERINE HARRIS had told ChoicePoint that she only wanted an 80 percent match, an example is that John Smythe, who had committed a misdemeanor in Texas, say, for example, became John Smith, a convicted felon in Florida. The list was labeled by race, so that the folks down in Florida knew who would be denied the right to vote before the voting even started.

As a result, ChoicePoint presented a list of about 90,000 so-called convicted felons, whose only crime was being registered to vote in a battleground State whose leaders were willing to commit crimes in order to deny people the right to vote. And I am sorry that the Democrats didn't fight this gross travesty of justice carried out against black voters.

Now, there will be folks who will say that we don't need a Voting Rights Act any more. If you ask George Wallace or George Maddox or, for that matter, even Strom Thurmond back then, I am sure they would have said you didn't need a Voting Rights Act then too. I am sure they would have said no.

But if this gross disenfranchisement scheme could happen in 2000, it means that the right to vote and the right to representation are still precious, so precious that we have to have laws in place to protect those who will not respect the rights of their fellow Americans.

Then in 2002 we learned that cross-over voting can be used as effectively as the all-white primaries were to deny African American voters their right to choose their representatives.

I am glad to know that BENNIE THOMPSON from Mississippi, our colleague, has filed a lawsuit against Mississippi's open primary statute. We need to rid the South of open primaries, because, as in my State, they were enacted in the days when the lips of staunch segregationists dripped with the words of nullification and interposition.

The advent of the electronic voting machines offers another peril to the voting rights of all Americans who use them. In my own district, those machines broke down, burned out, froze screens and cast votes for the candidate not intended by the voter.

In Georgia, our machines are also equipped with a wireless capability. That means that somebody who has got a Treo that is properly outfitted can come in and change the outcome of

an election just by entering the signal space of a voting machine. Since no action has been taken by the Federal Government to prevent any of these abuses, we can expect more of the same.

And speaking of voting machines, the allocation of those machines is also done to manipulate the outcome. Who wants to wait 5 hours in line in the rain to vote? Thousands of voters in Ohio had to do that and it just so happened that they were black. Scholars and researchers have done the math. Voting machines were allocated not by the number of registered voters by precinct, but by some other calculation. How could majority black precincts in Columbus, OH have 3, 4, or 5 machines and have over 1,000 voters in their precincts, and mostly Republican precincts in say, Dublin, OH had the same number of machines for one third the number of voters?

This pattern of devaluing and marginalizing the black vote was seen again in the recent Mayoral election in New Orleans. Here it was not Republicans, but a conservative Democratic Governor who blocked efforts to provide electronic polling stations to enable hundreds of thousands of mostly Black Katrina survivors the chance to vote. It was among the largest instance of African-American voter disfranchisement since the enactment of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Since no action has been taken by the Federal Government to prevent any of these abuses, we can expect more of the same. In addition, in the coming Fall election we will see the introduction of electronic poll-books, which are untested and non-transparent. Governor Ehrlich of Maryland, a Republican, has deemed this new addition to the voting experience to be unreliable.

So, Mr. Speaker, who cares? We care. And that is why we need a Voting Rights Act. Not to tarry in the days of the past, but to protect us from encroachments on the right to vote that occur today and that might be tried tomorrow.

□ 2300

RESTORING ACCOUNTABILITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARCHANT). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROSS. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the 37-Member strong, fiscally conservative, Democratic Blue Dog Coalition, I rise this evening to talk about a very important principle, and that is restoring accountability within our government.

Under the United States Constitution, Congress has an obligation to provide congressional oversight of the executive branch. Congressional oversight prevents waste and fraud, ensures executive compliance with the law, and evaluates executive performance. However, under the current leadership, Congress has abandoned this responsibility by failing to conduct meaningful investigations of allegations of serious waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement of taxpayer dollars.

By failing to serve as a check and balance for overspending, waste, fraud and financial abuse within the executive branch, this Republican-led Congress has failed the American taxpayer.

This President, this administration, and this Republican-led Congress must be held accountable for our massive Federal debt. American taxpayers deserve to know how their money is being spent.

In 2004, \$25 billion of Federal Government spending went absolutely unaccounted for, according to the Treasury Department. The Bush administration was unable to determine where the money had gone, how it was spent, or what the American people got for their tax money. Even worse, the Republican-controlled Congress failed to hold the executive branch accountable for this omission.

Then, in 2005, the Government Accountability Office reported that 19 of 24 Federal agencies were not in compliance with all Federal accounting audit standards and could not fully explain how they had spent taxpayer money appropriated by this Republican-led Congress. Yet, Republican leaders in Congress did not force these agencies to fully account for how the money was being spent before doling out billions more of taxpayer dollars to the same programs.

FEMA continues to store over 9,000 mobile homes, as you can see here, in a pasture in Hope, Arkansas, while victims of Hurricane Katrina remain homeless. FEMA's response has been, well, we will make sure the manufactured homes do not sink; we will spend \$4 million laying gravel in this pasture. It is time FEMA was held accountable. It is time FEMA got these brand new, fully furnished, 14-foot-wide, 60-foot-long mobile homes to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

American taxpayers deserve answers as to why their children and grandchildren have to foot the bill for the fiscal mismanagement of this administration. The time has come that this administration is held accountable for its reckless behavior. Congress must act now to renew its constitutional responsibility to serve as a check and balance for overspending, waste, fraud and financial abuse within the executive branch.

That is why the Blue Dog Coalition is sponsoring legislation that would require Congress to renew its duty to conduct hearings on spending and hold the administration officials accountable.

One of the founders of the Blue Dog Coalition, Mr. TANNER of Tennessee, has introduced H. Res. 841. Among other things, it would require congressional hearings within 60 days of Inspector General reports that identify waste, fraud, abuse or mismanagement of more than \$1 million.

It would require congressional hearings when the Government Accountability Office names an agency "high risk" for mismanagement.

It would require congressional hearings when an agency's auditors issue disclaimers or corrections, indicating accounting information is inaccurate or incomplete.

It would require congressional hearings at least twice a year to review the Office of Management and Budget's performance-based review program.

Mr. Speaker, wasteful government spending must stop, and that is why it is time to restore some commonsense and fiscal discipline to our Nation's government. It is time to restore accountability to our Nation's government.

OUR UNITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, in 2 weeks, we will be observing the 230th anniversary of our Declaration of Independence, and I think it was on June 21, in 1788, that the State of New Hampshire was actually the ninth State to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

When the United States was founded, there was a search for a national motto, and the first motto of our country, *e pluribus unum*, Latin, translates to, out of many, we are one.

The very words, United States, speaks to the unity, not just of colonies and then States, but really speaks to a deeper meaning of human unity. Out of many, we are one. It is not simply unity in this country. It is the unity of people all over the world.

This year, in our 230th year since we declared our independence, we find ourselves gripped by a type of thinking which separates us from the rest of humanity, which causes the United States to be locked into dichotomized thinking of us versus them, whoever they are.

With that comes a very heavy price. It comes a separation which has led us to war. It comes a separation that has separated us from the ambitions of people all over the world who are hoping for a rising standard of living through having guarantees for workers rights, human rights, environmental quality principles, which they had hoped that the United States would stand for.

We separate ourselves from human unity by not participating in a wide range of international agreements, and yet we are the United States. Our very name speaks to unity.

How then can we find ourselves again as a Nation? How can we come to reconnect with the deeper meaning of who we are? How can we step away from this experience which since 9/11 has taken us into a blind alley?

If there was ever a time when this country needed a period of truth and reconciliation, this is it. We find so many of our fellow countrymen and women still believe that Iraq had something to do with 9/11. It did not. But at