

The VRA gave dignity, pride and hope to many who have been historically shut out of the democratic process and oppressed by the Jim Crow legacy.

I can remember my dad, a U.S. citizen, born here in the United States, when he first cast his first vote and told us the importance of voting. It was during that period of time that we knew the importance of voting and that every person, regardless of the limited English that they had, and my dad spoke very little English, but voted.

I encourage all of us to vote for the Voting Rights Act on a bipartisan basis, and both Republicans and Democrats are here to support a strong Voting Rights Act that extends the protection for the future generations.

RENEW THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. PRICE of North Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act reauthorization appropriately carries the names of civil rights pioneers Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King.

Along with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act was the major legislative expression of that great movement that inspired and challenged so many of us, whites and blacks alike, and that brought the liberty and justice that our Nation professes closer to realization.

Now, many Republicans say the Voting Rights Act is too burdensome or that pre-clearance is no longer needed. But listen to the testimony of North Carolina election officials.

"I would hate to operate without it," says one.

"Pre-clearance requirements are routine, and do not occupy exorbitant amounts of time, energy or resources," adds another.

"The history of X County causes our operations to be scrutinized and rightfully so," says a third official.

And a fourth adds, "The Voting Rights Act allows us an opportunity to assure the public that minority rights are being protected and that someone is independently validating those decisions."

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act works, and we must pass it at full strength.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. LEWIS of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, the right to vote is precious, almost sacred. During the 1960s, working to get a Voting Rights Act, many of us were arrested, jailed and beaten. I was arrested and jailed more than 40 times during the sixties. We stood in

unmovable lines on the courthouse steps in Selma, Alabama. We were beaten with nightsticks, bull whips and trampled by horses trying to register to vote or to get others to register to vote.

But many of my friends, many of my colleagues died. I will never forget Andy Goodman, James Chaney and Mickey Schwerner, who were beaten, shot and killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Jimmie Lee Jackson was killed in Alabama. Viola Liuzzo was killed on Highway 80 between Selma and Montgomery.

Because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, we don't have to risk our lives anymore. We don't have to pass a so-called literacy test. On one occasion a man in Alabama was asked to count the number of bubbles in a bar of soap. On another occasion a man was asked to count the number of jelly beans in a jar. On one occasion there was a man in Tuskegee, Alabama who had a Ph.D. degree and he was told that he could not read or write well enough. He failed the so-called literacy test.

The Voting Rights Act was good in 1965. It is still good today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. CLAY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CLAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the reauthorization of one of the most critical pieces of legislation that this House has ever produced, the Voting Rights Act.

Today we have heard firsthand accounts of how this act changed America, and recent research confirms that the Voting Rights Act is as essential today as it was in 1965.

The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law concluded that there is still a shocking continuing reality of racial discrimination in voting that is pervasive, and these problems are nationwide.

Their three key findings were especially disturbing. First, records from the U.S. Department of Justice confirm that the actual number of documented complaints to Federal officials have increased between 1982 and 2004.

Second, polling places and voting hours in minority neighborhoods were routinely changed shortly before elections.

And finally, election officials were found to have illegally purged voters from registration lists and to have refused to translate election materials.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that people in power stop playing with that basic essential right to vote in this country.

JUST DO IT

(Mr. RUSH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RUSH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the spirit of "Just Do It." Congress must

reauthorize the Voting Rights Act this week. No more delays, no more excuses. Just do it. Do it now. I say this with no degree of exaggeration. The Voting Rights Act is the essence of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, many of us, including myself, would not be here on the floor of the House of Representatives if it were not for the original Voting Rights Act of 1965. It is, quite simply, one of the most important laws in the history of our Nation. Accordingly, previous Congresses have consistently reauthorized and renewed the Voting Rights Act in a deliberative, bipartisan manner. We must do the same. Don't empathize. Just reauthorize. Just do it.

Mr. Speaker, as much progress as we made since the 1960s, we still must be vigilant. We still must strive for universal enfranchisement. For all of our successes, too many Americans face barriers to the basic right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, don't apologize. Just reauthorize. Just do it. No more delay. Let's get this work done and get it done today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Mr. BISHOP of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Voting Rights Act and the legislation before us this week which extends the Voting Rights Act for 25 years. It has been reauthorized and upheld for more than four decades. But several key provisions are set to expire next year if not reauthorized by Congress.

The Voting Rights Act is one of the most important civil rights initiatives ever enacted, protecting minority voters from discrimination and ensuring for all Americans the right to vote in a fair and equal voting process. We must protect this right. It is sacred. It stops practices such as those that allowed every African American to be expelled from the Georgia legislature between 1866 and 1900. It stops poll taxes, racial gerrymanders that dilute minority voting power. It stops moving polling places without notice. It stops hanging chads. It is the reason, after 100 years, that I was finally able to follow Jefferson Long as the first African American to represent my area of Georgia in Congress. It has empowered descendants of slaves like me to participate fully in America's political process. We should not, we must not, we cannot go back. We must renew the Voting Rights Act today.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. JOHN LEWIS, you bring tears to my eyes.

Fannie Lou Hamer, Coretta Scott King and Rosa Parks, all who have made the ultimate sacrifice and yes, exhibited enormous courage. And today I ask this House to exhibit courage, to vote for a bill that gives credence to America's dream. We all are created equal.

The Voting Rights Act is not an act of color. It is an act of reputation and integrity of America to allow all Americans to vote. The honorable Barbara Jordan, whose words were "we the people," would not have been elected to the United States Congress as the first holder of this seat had it not been for the 1965 Voter Rights Act.

And Lyndon Baines Johnson, a southern Democrat President, called upon all of his colleagues, all of the Members of Congress, whether they were from the South, from the North, stand up for what is right.

And so today, we will be on the steps of the United States Congress, on the East steps, to join us for a vigil of petitioning to say to this Congress, be of good courage.

JOHN LEWIS, you bring tears to our eyes, for "Bloody Sunday" will be always in our minds, the sacrifices that have been made for the Voter Rights Act. Don't give up on us now. Pass the Voter Rights Act. Show us courage. Have a shining moment of history today. Yes, America can do it.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. HONDA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with all the comments that have been shared with this country on this floor this morning.

My mother is a U.S. citizen. She was born in 1916. My father was born in 1914. Both U.S. citizens. My father was a linguist, so English, Japanese, Cantonese, Filipino were not a difficult thing for him.

My mother was born in a family of farmers who believed that women should stay home and raise families, did not have the opportunity for the education that my father had. Her experiences are not much different from those who come to this country and choose to be U.S. citizens and would like to use their primary language as a way to understand and comprehend fully that which is before them.

Prior to 1964, poll taxes, intelligence, literacy and property tests were used to sabotage the rights of voting citizens and circumvent the Constitution. Voting franchise came haltingly and very, very piecemeal to Asian Americans.

Reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act will continue the franchise and the guarantee of votes for all people and all citizens of this country.

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THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi asked and was given permission to address

the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in 2001 one of the most shameful and shocking reminders of voting rights discrimination occurred in Kilmichael, Mississippi, my congressional district.

An all-white city council cancelled city elections 3 weeks before they were to be held because it appeared that African Americans would control the majority of the council's seats. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires covered jurisdiction, like my home State of Mississippi, to obtain preclearance from the Justice Department before they can change voting practices or procedures, protected the voting rights of the people of Kilmichael. When elections were finally held, three African Americans were elected to the board of aldermen and the town elected its first African American mayor.

As elected leaders, it is our obligation to look beyond what is good for any one of us to what is good for the whole country and its future.

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act is reverent, relevant, and must be renewed.

PROTECT AGAINST INTIMIDATION AND VOTER FRAUD BY PASSING THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. MCKINNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act was passed to put an end to intimidation of poor and black voters.

Sadly, acts of intimidation and voter fraud directed at black and Latino voters are not just a thing of the past. In 2000, Florida's blacks were intimidated and illegally removed from the voter rolls. In 2002, in my district in Georgia, we learned that crossover voting can be used as effectively as the all-white primaries once were. In 2004, Ohio's black voters faced intimidation and fabricated long lines by misallocating the voting machines. Tom DeLay's Texas redistricting was ruled by this Supreme Court to violate Latino voting rights. And just last week, the Georgia legislature's second Voter ID bill got smacked down by the courts a second time.

The Voting Rights Act is relevant and necessary to protect our precious right to vote.

CONGRESS MUST PASS THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, let me just say, Mr. Speaker and Members of the House, if there is any question as to whether or not we still need the Voting Rights

Act, remember the Florida 2000 election and the coup d'etat where 27,000 ballots were disregarded, simply thrown out right in my congressional district, precincts 7, 8, 9 and 10, that vote 98 percent Democratic. Yes, it is still clear that the Voting Rights Act today is needed just as much as it was 40 years ago.

Another reason: When I was elected to Congress in 1992, it had been 129 years since an African American was elected in Florida to the United States Congress. Let me repeat, 129 years. If it was not for the Voting Rights Act, the State of Florida would still likely be without an African American Representative.

We still have a ways to go, and Congress must pass the Voting Rights Act, and not some watered-down version of it, to guarantee that millions of minorities' votes around the Nation and 3 million minorities in the State of Florida will have their voices heard and have their votes counted.

Remember the coup d'etat 2000 election.

IN SUPPORT OF THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. FATTAH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FATTAH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. I believe that this is a high-stakes test for the world's democracy that is the focus of efforts all around the globe to promote democracy. Right here at home, we still need to move towards a more perfect Union.

In my home city of Philadelphia, where the Constitution was written, we, some 150 years after that, saw the death of a young African American male, Octavius Catto, who was just going to go vote and was beaten to death by a white mob that was upset about his exercising his franchise.

The question of the Voting Rights Act is not just a question for the South; it is a question across our Nation. And the benefits and the protections of the Voting Rights Act, as we seek its reauthorization, and we seek it today, suggests to the world whether this is a democracy truly that the world should seek to emulate.

URGING PASSAGE OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. GONZALEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was first passed, Martin Luther King said, "This represents a shining moment in the conscience of man."

What a wonderful opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to come together and reignite that shining light in the conscience of man.