

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.

□ 1045

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.

The Voting Rights Act does two things: It does not allow jurisdictions to discriminate against any United States citizen that wants to exercise the most sacred of all rights, and that is the right to vote. That gives you some control over your own destiny. But it does something else. It encourages and accommodates all other United States citizens that may have some sort of obstacle to overcome in order to exercise the most precious of all rights. That is what the Voting Rights Act accomplishes.

And I am hoping that tomorrow we will have this wonderful opportunity to follow in the footsteps of those true giants in 1965 that came together on both sides of the aisle to pass the original Voting Rights Act.

PROTECT VOTER RIGHTS BY PASSING THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

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

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, the genesis of the Voting Rights Act lies in that period of American history just after the Civil War when various creative devices were put in place to prevent and dilute the impact of black voters and votes.

The 1965 act did away with many of those devices, many of which were used in my home State, devices such as full-slate voting, where in order for your vote to count, you had to vote for your choice once and against that choice for as many times as there were vacancies on the ballot, numbered posts which set up racially polarized voting, at-large voting which diluted the impact of black votes. All of these creative devices were gotten rid of with the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

But, Mr. Speaker, I used to teach history, and I always told my students that if a thing has happened before, it can happen again. And I do know that if we do not have the protection of the Voting Rights Act, we can see our States revisiting many of those creative devices.

HEAL THE WOUNDS OF RACISM BY PASSING THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

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

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this Voting Rights Act is the most important piece of legislation that has been passed in this modern time in our Congress.

As I stand here, I am reminded of the words that we used so much as we would go through the South, going up against the Bull Connors, going up against the night riders, going up against the Ku Klux Klan with the courage that was taken and that is still needed today because, unfortunately, discrimination still exists throughout this Nation in various places.

And for those who want to say, why punish the South or why punish the State, why is it that you would think of the Voting Rights Act as a punishment? The Voting Rights Act is not a punishment. It is a liberator of those who have been punished, where all they have had was to sing that song: "Sometimes I feel discouraged, feel my work's in vain; but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul. There is a balm in Gilead that makes the wounded whole."

This balm in Gilead for us today is the Voting Rights Act to heal the wounds of racism that have been inflicted on this country and that we still, unfortunately, suffer from.

Let us vote to pass this Voting Rights Act this day and this week and send a resounding message that America is for everybody, black as well as white, rich as well as poor, all of us.

THE TRAGEDY IN INDIA

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have made the case for the extension of the Voting Rights Act, and I echo their sentiments. When this matter comes to the floor, if it comes, and it should today be made in order as a rule, then I will have an opportunity to speak more in that regard.

But today I rise, in addition to asking in the world's oldest democracy that we extend the Voting Rights Act, that we recognize that on yesterday the world's largest democracy was attacked in a significant and condemnatory way.

These events seem to take place on days of the 11th, and yesterday in India, despicable acts took place by those who would take the lives of innocents. In Madrid, in London, in Bali, the same thing happened.

I do acknowledge the fact that hurriedly yesterday the foreign minister of Pakistan condemned those bombings, and I commend him in that regard.

It was said earlier and reported today in one of our newspapers that in Europe it was said after September 11, "We are all Americans now." Today, after yesterday in India, "We are all Indians now."

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 2990, CREDIT RATING AGENCY DUOPOLY RELIEF ACT OF 2006

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 906 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 906

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pur-

suant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 2990) to improve ratings quality by fostering competition, transparency, and accountability in the credit rating agency industry. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommend with or without instructions.

□ 1100

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MATSUI), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Last night, the Rules Committee granted a structured rule for H.R. 2990, the Credit Agency Duopoly Relief Act of 2006. The rule provides 1 hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services; waives all points of order against consideration of the bill. The rule also provides that the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Financial Services now printed in the bill shall be considered as an original bill for the purpose of amendment and shall be considered as read.