

those things in the summertime, and it still was the best-paying part-time job I could find anywhere in the State of Texas, or even better, in Europe.

So the point being that there is a domino effect when there is a big project like this, or the lumber industry you were describing in your State, or the shipping industry on the Great Lakes. It's not just ships that are involved in the shipping industry. It's hundreds of other professions that are involved in the shipping industry.

And when we start thinking about that concept, when you go out and hit the big guy—people around this country have got this idea that big guys, big things are bad, and they don't realize that it takes hundreds and sometimes thousands of little guys to keep the big guy's project going. They're all making a living and they're all raising their families and having their homes based upon that project. This is the concept of what capitalism does and free enterprise does for our country.

And when the regulators stop something like that pipeline, or when they put a moratorium on it until after the election so you don't have to talk about it during election time, that hurts little guys as well as big guys. And it's a wrong concept. We've got to make this country once again prosper, and it takes a lot of things to make it prosper. So we're just asking for the government not to be one of the hindrances. And I think that's what makes this a great bill.

We're just about out of time. I want to thank you for joining me and explaining the bill and allowing me to be an original cosponsor with you on this bill so we can work this together. I will do everything within my power to assist you in getting this bill to this floor and passed through this House; and hopefully Senator JOHNSON will get it done over in the Senate, and we'll help him where we can. And it will be good for America to say time out, time out on these regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

RIGHT TO VOTE UNDER ATTACK

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order tonight.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Mr. Speaker, thank you for recognizing me, and I thank the Democratic leader, Ms. PELOSI, for giving me this time. I thank my col-

leagues for listening and for joining me in a few minutes. But I am also very sorry to be here in a certain respect. I'm sorry because I stand here tonight to talk about threats to the right of American citizens in States across this great country to go to the polls and cast a ballot in our elections.

The single most fundamental aspect of our democracy—or any democracy—is the right to vote, and that right is under attack. Mr. Speaker, there is no right mentioned more often in the Constitution than the right to vote. In the past 207 years we have amended the Constitution 15 times. Seven of those amendments—almost half of the amendments—over the last two centuries are about protecting, in the words of the 14th Amendment, the right to vote.

Minorities, women, adults over 18 years of age, poor citizens, and of course citizens of our Nation's Capital—at least if only for the Presidential election—all of these groups' right to vote has been enshrined in our Constitution. That's why it is so troubling to see dozens of States passing laws that will make it harder for citizens of the United States to vote. Whether by denying them the opportunity to vote after church on Sunday before the election day—perhaps because they cannot take time off work on election Day—or requiring them to spend time and money to procure a birth certificate and a photo ID, the only thing that these laws will do is to weaken our democracy. They are just plain wrong.

Hopefully, I will be joined by some of my colleagues. But I do want to spend a little bit of time explaining to the American public and to my colleagues what this is all about. And I'm going to start off by the photo ID voter requirement which is being passed obviously out of the legislature in the State of Texas and to be enacted for the 2012 election.

What is it exactly? Well, people will say, you mean, you just have to have a photo ID? It is not just any photo ID; it has to be one that meets all the requirements of a particular State's laws. So you would say, well, how onerous could that possibly be? As I've said, it is not just any government-issued photo ID that will be accepted on election day. It has certain requirements. So, much to my surprise, I recently found out that basically my identification and my voting card that all Members of Congress use would not be sufficient, would not meet the requirements in the great State of Texas. But it should not come as any surprise, because if you are a veteran and you have a photo ID that allows you to go to the Audie Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital in San Antonio, Texas, in my district, that photo ID will not suffice under Texas law. If you're a student in one of our State-supported institutions that has your photo on there, has your name, all that information, that is not going to meet the requirements in the State of Texas.

So you would ask, why would we pass these laws? What is the need? What is the requirement? Because we all know, whether you're in the State legislature or in this great House of Representatives at the Federal level, we don't pass unnecessary laws. So there must be a purpose behind these photo ID laws as well as other laws that are restricting the rights of individuals to exercise the right to vote.

It is to stop fraud. The photo ID, its whole purpose is to stop people from impersonating an eligible voter.

□ 1900

Now, you would say, so that must be happening across this great country and that's why we need this law. People are impersonating other people. People that shouldn't be voting might be impersonating an eligible voter. So let's discuss that, the reason for the photo ID in these many States.

I'm going to give you the example of the State of Kansas. The secretary of state pushed an ID law on the basis of a list of 221 reported instances of voter fraud. This all was supposed to have occurred in Kansas since the year 1997. So from 1997, for about 13 years, there were 221 reported instances of voter fraud. When the newspaper, the Wichita Eagle, looked into the local cases cited by the secretary of state, they found almost all of them were honest mistakes. None were attempted to be perpetrated by someone impersonating someone who they were not.

A great example of that, and I have to read you the excerpt from the Wichita Eagle of October 29, 2010:

Republican Kris Kobach, who has built his campaign for secretary of state around the issue of voter fraud, raised the specter of the dead voting in Kansas.

Kobach said in a news conference Thursday that 1,966 deceased people were registered to vote in Kansas.

"Every one of those 1,966 identities is an opportunity for voter fraud waiting to happen," he said. Furthermore, he said, some were still casting ballots. He gave an example of one person—Alfred K. Brewer, a Republican, registered in Sedgwick County with a birth date listed of January 1, 1900. Brewer, according to the comparison of Social Security records and Kansas voter rolls, had died in 1996 yet had voted in the August primary, Kobach said.

Reached Thursday at his home where he was raking leaves, Brewer, 78, was surprised some people thought he was dead.

"I don't think this is heaven, not when I'm raking leaves," he said.

Those are example after example. No one can give you a specific example of voter fraud based on someone impersonating someone who they should not be on Election Day.

Now, between the years 2002 and 2007, a major Department of Justice, at the Federal level of course, had a probe into voter fraud. The result was failure to prosecute a single person for going to the polls and impersonating an eligible voter. Zero prosecutions. After tremendous amounts of manpower, time, energy, and money, nothing happened.

Now, the Brandon Center for Justice, the cases for voter fraud, what is it? So

if you have a law that is addressing a particular offensive-type behavior that obviously hurts this great Republic of ours, such as voter fraud, surely we must have demonstrated, tangible, verifiable cases out there.

The Washington Post, in an editorial, was looking at the number of alleged voter fraud. And these are not all predicated on voter ID. It could be some other type of fraud that's being perpetrated. But if you took all of the cases that have ever been alleged, this is the percentage of the total votes cast of those that might be suspect; because you've got to remember, there's going to be a price we're going to pay for this law, and that is it's going to disenfranchise the eligible voter in pursuit of the phantom illegal voter.

In Missouri, if you took all of their complaints, it would amount to, when compared to the total voter turnout, 0.0003 percent. In New York, it would amount to 0.000009 percent. In New Jersey, it would be 0.0002 percent.

So where is the voter fraud? What are we trying to address in passing these laws by the different State legislatures?

We had a recent occurrence, and this was not even a voter ID case, but this is where the secretary of state in Colorado, Mr. Gessler, was dropping voters from the voting list and not forwarding ballots for voting based on that particular voter not having voted in 2010. It didn't matter if they voted previously to that. If they did not vote in 2010, then they were dropped from the rolls.

And what was the reason for that? Well, there's potential voter fraud, potential of fraud. But they could not—that secretary of state, when they finally went to court, could not address, could not demonstrate, could not offer into evidence one case of voter fraud, not one. Based on his suspicions or conjecture.

In 2006, in the great State of Texas, my home State, the Texas attorney general had a press release, and it was entitled, "Let's Stamp Out Voter Fraud in Texas." Sounds good. Sounds like a good thing to do. He could not name one, not one single case of fraud that would have been stopped by a voter ID law in the State of Texas.

I would yield at this time to my colleague, the great Representative from the great State of New Jersey, RUSH HOLT, for such time as he may consume.

Mr. HOLT. I thank my friend from Texas, and I thank him very much for setting aside some time for this important issue.

You know, more than a century ago, the Supreme Court described the right to vote as the most fundamental right in our government because it is the preservative of all other rights. Indeed, that's true. And many years later, half a century ago, President Lyndon Johnson said that "the vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice."

The vote is the lifeblood of self-government, and it's one of the most powerful ways that citizens can affect change. The integrity of the electoral process is fundamental to ensuring that the voice of the people is heard.

I often say that a self-governing country such as ours works only if you believe it does. And we must make sure that every American knows that every vote counts, that every vote will be counted and that, you know, recognizing how complicated—it's not as simple as we would all like to believe—how complicated it is, that we, at the Federal level and at the State level, are doing everything we can to protect the franchise, to protect the franchise of each citizen to cast his vote. And it's not just that we want to protect this as a right; it's something we should desire for the sake of our country, that we get the diversity of opinion.

Well, what's happening right now is in State after State there's legislation that's intended to exclude some opinions, exclude some individuals, exclude some groups. Of course, this is something this country has seen in the past and worked diligently—yes, through Federal law—to correct. It was known as a poll tax. There were also literacy tests, quite clearly intended to exclude African Americans from not just their right to vote, but from their obligation and their privilege of voting.

What happens if laws are enacted to diminish the integrity and the accessibility of the ballot box for particular sectors of society? What happens if those disenfranchised voters typically vote for candidates representing one party?

Well, I came of age in the throes of the civil rights movement, when our colleague Representative JOHN LEWIS, then a young man who had been tapped by Martin Luther King, Jr. to become a leader in the movement, was beaten. I often say he's the only Member of this Chamber who had his skull cracked, literally, to try to earn the right for everyone, every citizen to vote.

In the aftermath of those bloody confrontations, Congress said there is a role for the Federal Government. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed, and it's made an enormous difference.

But we can't sit back. We can't rest because right now, in State after State, there is effort to exclude some people. If you require people to jump through a lot of hoops, maybe not a lot of money, but spend some money, to me, that's a poll tax.

□ 1910

That is illegal, unconstitutional. We thought we had gotten away from it. We thought we had gotten away from so-called literacy tests where people had to jump through some truly unreasonable hurdles in order to vote, where prospective voters were quizzed to ask how many bubbles there are in a bar of soap. Hurdles that could not be crossed.

Well, you know, it sounds reasonable when you say you don't want anyone who's not eligible to be showing up to vote. But where are those people? In State after State, these ID requirements are put in place to deal with a problem that doesn't exist, and millions of Americans are being excluded from voting in order to deal ostensibly with this problem of fraud at the polling place.

Now, I don't doubt that in some ways, subtle or otherwise, there is some fraud. But I have not heard of a single immigrant coming across the border, walking through the desert of our southern States so that they could sneak in and cast a ballot some place.

There are tough laws and severe penalties for people who vote fraudulently in the name or address that is intended to deceive. But very few people have been caught doing that. There are very few examples of prosecutions or apprehensions or, for that matter, even suspicions of this happening. And yet all of these laws that are being passed are ostensibly to deal with that problem. It's a problem that doesn't exist in nearly 5 million Americans by estimates from such people as the Brennan Center of the law school at NYU. Five million people might be excluded from this.

So I thank my friend from Texas for engaging in this discussion tonight. Indeed, this is the right that preserves all other rights. What could be more important? It is cynical, it is disingenuous, it is un-American what people are doing in a very systematic way to exclude large groups of people from voting to solve a problem, an imaginary problem that's been trumped up. I believe it's been trumped up just so that they could exclude large numbers of people from voting.

I thank my friend for raising this critically important question.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I thank my colleague from New Jersey, and I appreciate his words of encouragement here to address what is going on in this country as we speak. As a matter of fact, there are other laws that are awaiting legislative action in different States.

I return still because I think people have a legitimate and good faith question about what are these laws supposed to address. And it's supposed to be about fraud. Mr. Speaker, let me address the claim of fraud once more.

There is no voter fraud that is going to be stopped by denying a 96-year-old woman in Tennessee her voter ID card because her last name doesn't match the name on her birth certificate, and she doesn't have a copy of her marriage certificate showing the change. There is no voter fraud that will be stopped by denying Floridians the right to vote after church on Sunday before election day.

Is that because there is no fraud? Not really. Fraud isn't about voters going to polls when they're not eligible. It's about the two individuals in the State

of Maryland who were indicted earlier this year for organizing deceptive robocalls to keep voters from the polls. It's about the robocalls last month in the State of Ohio telling people that the election was on a Wednesday. This is about the group in Houston, Texas, that just hosted a man who said that registering the poor to vote is un-American and "like handing out burglary tools to criminals." That's the fraud that's really perpetrated on Americans today.

It's an old story of keeping people away from the polls when we should be encouraging them to vote. These new voter ID laws and law curtailing early voting or election day registration won't stop this kind of fraud, and the kind of fraud that would stop simply does not exist.

The previous administration, as I noted earlier, nearly broke the civil rights division of the Department of Justice in its quest to find this kind of voter fraud that voter ID would stop. They couldn't find any because it does not happen. But these laws will have a powerful effect. They will deny millions of Americans the right to participate in this democracy.

So we know what the law is. We know what it is intended to address, but doesn't really exist which is that kind of fraud. But what is the cost?

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this Chamber understand that when we pass legislation, we always look at the cost-benefit aspect of it. In other words, does the good really outweigh the bad? Is it worth the investment because there's going to be some consequence. In this case, it would not pass any kind of scrutiny if we really look at what it's going to cost Americans and how it's going to benefit Americans.

Now, the NAACP in a brief from November 1 of this year cited the following information: 11 percent of eligible voters in this country, 11 percent of eligible American citizen voters, 21 million strong, don't have updated State-issued photo IDs. So who's going to be impacted? Potentially 21 million eligible American citizen voters.

But of that 21 million, 25 percent will be African Americans, 14 percent are families or individuals that earn less than \$35,000 a year, 18 percent will be seniors over the age of 65. But even 20 percent will be individuals between the ages of 18 and 29.

So I was asking a colleague, why do we do the analysis? What is the benefit and what is the cost? And many times we'll say, well, the cost is beneficial because it's worth that kind of investment if we get any kind of return.

Let me point out the fallacy of these laws when we actually apply the test because when we talk about numbers, they are mere numbers in the abstract; but these are real American voters that will be denied their right to vote when they go to that polling place and are informed that they need a State-issued photo ID.

There is no more fundamental right than that of voting, and a barrier that

stops 1 percent of the people from voting is not acceptable merely because 99 percent of the people are still able to vote. Think of that proposition.

□ 1920

You simply are saying, well, if we just deny 1 percent, 2 percent, 3 percent, or 5 percent, you still have 90-something percent of the population, of the registered and eligible voters, who are still going to be able to vote. But think in terms if that were your vote or if that were a family member's vote. Every vote is precious in this country, and there is no evidence to support that what you're addressing is a widespread problem that will disenfranchise many, many thousands—hundreds of thousands and even millions—of American voters. That's what we're facing here today. That's what the analysis shows.

So, even if the lies of any scrutiny would show that this is ill-conceived, it will not produce the result that you're seeking because the problem that you're trying to remedy does not exist. There is a price that will be paid, and the price will be paid by many disproportionately—by seniors and minorities and by those who may not be in the upper economic scales of this country.

It is now my honor to yield such time as he may consume to my colleague from the great State of Florida, who can tell us many things about the Florida experience, Congressman TED DEUTCH.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank my friend for yielding, and I thank him for the opportunity to come and join with him tonight to address an issue of great concern to many Americans.

We're here tonight because Republican State legislatures across the Nation are passing laws to make it harder for people to exercise their right to vote. The story they tell is one of rampant voter fraud that threatens the integrity of our elections and the very foundation of our democracy. It's a scary story. Imagine—just imagine—mobs of illegally registered voters entering our poll booths and hijacking our elections.

However, there is something far scarier than the story that's being told—and that's the reality. It's the reality that our electoral system is not under siege by voter fraud but, instead, by an historically deliberate and ongoing effort to suppress the votes of America's minorities, seniors, students, and other traditionally Democratic voters.

Now, while this is a nationwide trend, there is no question that the recent voting law passed in Florida takes the cake for radically infringing on voting rights. Ask any Floridian. Florida doesn't have a history of voter fraud. Florida has a history of voter suppression. This is a State that didn't ratify the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, until 1969. This is the State where, in 2000, Secretary of State Katherine Harris

eliminated 57,000 votes, mostly of minorities, simply because their names resembled those of persons convicted of crimes. They were wiped from the voting rolls. Now, our current Governor, Governor Scott, wasn't in Florida in 2000 when George Bush's legal team fought to stop counting the votes, when Katherine Harris certified election results without including the recount from my own Palm Beach County, and when the Supreme Court stopped a manual recount of votes. Florida is the State where thousands of seniors, whom I am so privileged to represent today, headed to the polls on election day in 2000 and never had their voices heard.

That was hard work. It was hard work silencing the voices of the voters. HB 1355, the Florida election law, the voter suppression law, makes it child's play.

Florida is the State where, in 2008, when Governor Charlie Crist extended early voting hours, Republican officials decried the fact that better access to voting would likely cost them the election. Now Florida is the State that is serving as a model for Republican legislatures across the country that are looking for ways to suppress turnout at the polls.

HB 1355 eliminates the ability of voters to update their addresses or names at the polls due to marriage, divorce, or even military base relocation. Those voters now have to cast provisional ballots, which will likely go uncounted.

HB 1355 also cuts early voting from 14 days to 8 because of the fact that the United States of America is one of the few democracies in the world where not declaring election day a national holiday is simply not restrictive enough.

HB 1355 also allows absentee ballots to be arbitrarily tossed out of elections because of poor handwriting. The men and women I represent who may suffer from Parkinson's disease or arthritis or from the aftereffects of a stroke will have their votes thrown out because their quivering hands make their signatures look sloppy.

Perhaps most disturbing is how HB 1355 cripples the ability of third-party groups, like the Boy Scouts and the League of Women Voters and the NAACP, to run voter registration drives. In fact, any third party, including high school civics teachers, that offers to help students register to vote must turn in the registration forms within 48 hours or face fines.

By passing HB 1355, Florida has provided States across the country with a blueprint for the voter suppression of minorities, seniors, students, and other Democratic voters.

The voter fraud bogeyman may be a scary story, but it cannot compare to the very real and very blatant voter suppression efforts of Republican legislatures across America. Perhaps, because they know they can't win fairly, they need to suppress voters, not because of imaginary voter fraud, but because of real Americans—real Americans who have seen the true colors of a

Republican agenda that ends Medicare, that slashes education, that eliminates jobs, and that limits economic opportunity for working families. Real Americans have had enough, and they have the right to express themselves by exercising the most basic, the most fundamental right in our Nation—the right to vote.

I thank you for organizing this opportunity tonight for us to make very clear to all who are watching that we won't let them take that right away.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I thank my colleague from Florida.

At this time, I yield to a dear friend and colleague who is also from the great State of Florida, Congresswoman DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, for such time as she may consume.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

It's really wonderful that the gentleman from Texas has organized this opportunity to have Members come to the floor and highlight our concerns and our commitment to protect the fundamental right and the very bedrock of our Democratic principles—the right to vote.

I am pleased to stand with so many of my colleagues who all share my deep concern over the organized, insidious effort now underway in many States to disenfranchise millions of Americans and to silence their voices in our democracy. These efforts are purported to combat so-called rampant voter fraud; yet no investigative effort to date has found voter fraud to be a major problem in our Nation, so no one should fall for this ruse. As my colleague from Florida just outlined, every American should understand and be concerned about the political disenfranchisement that is going on in many States, including in my home State of Florida. State legislatures are attempting to impose voting restrictions that are the modern day equivalent of poll taxes and literacy tests.

Now, let me be clear. The foundation of our participatory democracy, of our democratic society, is rooted in the right to vote, in the right to choose our elected leaders, to have representation in government, to have input on the major policies of the day—the right to have our voices heard. That's why more than 250 years ago we threw off the shackles of the British Empire that denied American colonists representation in Parliament.

The fight toward universal suffrage has been long and arduous, but it is a fight worth fighting. As May Wright Sewall, a leader of the women's suffrage movement in 19th century America, said:

Universal suffrage is the only guarantee against despotism. Just as those who came before us have fought to gain and retain the right to vote, we, too, must stand vigilantly against those who seek to limit it. Each time I cast a ballot, I am reminded that it is a right not to be ignored. Less than a century ago, the women who came before us were denied the right to have their voices heard. Women during that

time were confronted by a wealth of arguments against our right to suffrage. Women did not want the vote or women were already represented by their husbands or—one of my favorites—a woman's place is in the house.

□ 1930

Well, I would agree with that last statement, if we're talking about the House of Representatives, with the note that a woman's place is also in the Senate, the Governor's office, and in all seats of government. The women who fought for my right to vote were beaten, jailed, ostracized, and tormented. But still, they kept on and persevered because they knew that the women of our great Nation should not be deprived this fundamental right. So, no, we will not stand by and allow anyone's voting rights to be threatened, not on our watch. And many of our colleagues also know this fight too well.

Despite the passage of the 14th and 15th Amendments, giving citizens equal protection under the law and the right to vote regardless of their race, African Americans still faced more than a century of overt voter suppression. And while we made huge gains with the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a seminal moment in our Nation's history where we declared that truly no election law can deny or abridge voting rights because of race or color, we cannot afford to sit back and just declare the fight over.

The struggle for universal suffrage is not over. We cannot allow State legislatures to drag our Nation backwards in what is nothing more than a political quest to protect their governing majority's interests.

A little more than 10 years ago, Florida experienced election day turmoil that reminded us all how important it is to remain on guard against disenfranchisement. The many irregularities that occurred in my home State during the 2000 elections were a painful reminder of how rights can be denied.

The Commission on Civil Rights report on the 2000 election in Florida found “widespread voter disenfranchisement.” As Commissioner Chairperson Mary Frances Berry stated at the time, “It is not a question of a recount or even an accurate count, but more pointedly the issue is those whose exclusion from the right to vote amounted to a ‘no count.’”

In the last year, scores of States, including Florida, have passed laws restricting access to the polls. A recent Brennan Center report found that these changes in State voting laws will likely suppress the vote of more than 5 million voters nationwide. We need look no further than my own home State of Florida to see the threat against universal suffrage. The Florida law passed last spring restricts both voter registration and voting opportunities. It was championed by Governor Rick Scott and passed by the Republican-led legislature which has overwhelming majorities in both the House and the Senate.

First, it restricts the ability of non-partisan organizations or individuals

from helping citizens register to vote. It fines people in groups up to \$1,000 per voter if registration isn't turned in within 48 hours. Just the other day, a teacher was sanctioned and is now being prosecuted because she didn't turn in her students' voter registrations within the new amended time frame that voter registration cards have to be turned in. And now she is being subjected to a significant fine per vote.

As a result of this law, the League of Women Voters, a champion of non-partisan voting rights for over seven decades, has suspended its voter registration operations in Florida because they can't take the risk to think that they would be bankrupted by this absolutely unfair, terrible law.

Second, the Florida law rolls back early voting opportunities, including the Sunday before an election. It eliminates voting on the Sunday before an election. And I can tell you firsthand how important weekend early voting is for the thousands of seniors who live in my district and for millions all across the State.

Also in 2008, African Americans and Hispanics, who together make up roughly one-quarter of Florida voters, accounted for more than half of all voters on the final Sunday of early voting. So do we think it's a coincidence that that group of voters, which voted overwhelmingly for Democratic candidates, now suddenly has their right to vote on that particular Sunday removed from them?

As far as we have come in our society in broadening the scope of civil rights, we cannot afford to revert to a time when it was acceptable to limit the rights of a select few. We are not meant to have a government of some people, by some people, for some people. I hope my colleagues will join me in ensuring that we uphold President Abraham Lincoln's democratic ideal of government for all the people, elected by all the people.

I thank the gentleman from Texas for the opportunity to speak tonight.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I thank my colleague from Florida.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to enter into colloquy with my colleagues from Florida and New Jersey. I guess I'm just going to pose the question: So what if just a few people are denied access to the ballot box? It's just a few. And after all, we're trying to see if there's any kind of provable, tangible fraud going on. Now, they haven't been able to prove any fraud based on identification, of course. But you pointed out in your remarks what happened in Florida in 2000.

How many votes in Florida actually determined who was going to be President of the United States of America?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. 537.

Mr. GONZALEZ. And we've already touched on estimates of how millions

of eligible American citizen voters don't have a current State-issued ID. The number is in the millions. And in Florida, it was less than 600 votes.

I don't know the experience in New Jersey. But it would seem—and I went over this earlier, and I don't know if my colleagues were here—we passed laws in this Chamber, and we always try to demonstrate that we're trying to remedy a situation that is true in existence. And the manner in which we do it—we look at cost benefits. We can't prove fraud; but I can assure you, we can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that people will be denied access to the polls.

Mr. HOLT. I thank my friend from Texas.

The history of America has been a history of expanding the franchise, the opportunity, the right to vote. And it's based on this principle that we often talk about in this Chamber but maybe don't pay enough attention to, which is the principle of equality under the law. We're not just saying that, Yes, everybody can vote—well, unless you are disabled, and you can't get into the polling place. Or everybody can vote except, well, if you're 75 years old, 85 years old, you are no longer driving, and you have let your driver's license expire, and, no, you haven't gotten down to the Department of Motor Vehicles to get another one. Or we'll let everybody vote—well, as long as you pay a tax or if your grandfather voted or if you can cross these hurdles.

Our history has been a history of saying everybody is equal under the law. And we don't put artificial hurdles in place. The 15th Amendment said you can't deny African Americans the right to vote. In 1915, the Supreme Court said, The grandfather clauses are unconstitutional, which would outlaw exemptions from literacy requirements for voters whose grandfathers had been eligible to vote at the time of the Civil War.

The 19th Amendment said women can vote. The 23rd Amendment said citizens of the District of Columbia could vote in Presidential elections. The 24th Amendment outlawed poll taxes. And in 1965, as I referred to earlier, in the aftermath of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, the Voting Rights Act was passed, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or language-minority status. It prohibits the use of suppressive tactics in various poll tests.

I could go on. The 18-year-old vote, the Americans with Disabilities Act, which requires equal access to voting places, the National Voter Registration Act, the "Motor Voter Act," these are all based on the principle of equality under the law.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HOLT. I would be happy to yield.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you.

In answer to the gentleman from Texas' question, what's wrong with it,

is this is supposed to be a country that affords everyone—regardless of any category that you fall into—the opportunity to vote. The voter suppression laws that have been passed by Republican legislatures, championed by Republican Governors across the country, have systematically targeted specific groups of individuals based on their propensity to vote differently than the legislators who support those laws would like to see them vote.

In other words, they are essentially blocking access to the polls for people who vote against their interests, against Republican interests. Blocking anyone's access to the polls is unacceptable to begin with, but insidiously trying to influence the outcome of an election through systematically changing the law to prevent people who are likely to go to the polls to vote for your opponent is the most heinous form of antidemocratic policy. I mean, it's the kind of policy that you would see in countries that we abhor, countries that we criticize.

□ 1940

For example, let's take the photo ID laws, and we have a photo ID law in Florida. There are photo ID laws across the country. You may have told the story about the 96-year-old woman from Tennessee. I'm sure you've already talked about that this evening. If you look at the statistics, which you may have gone over as well, 11 percent of Americans don't have a photo ID—11 percent. Twenty-five percent of African Americans don't have a photo ID, and I don't know the number, I was looking for the statistic for Hispanics.

It is unacceptable to say that the only way you can identify somebody is by requiring them to carry a photo identification in order to vote. That's just ridiculous. Modern technology today allows for signature matches. All of our supervisors of elections have the signatures on file either in the old-fashioned way, written on a piece of paper, or scanned into a computer where they can match the signatures. That's how they have done it for many years in Florida until they imposed the photo ID law. All photo ID laws are an obstacle in the path of an individual who is more likely to go and vote for someone who is not a Republican. I'm sorry, elections should be won fair and square.

Mr. HOLT. And continuing to answer the gentleman's question: Who cares? Why does it matter? My friend from Florida has talked about how millions can be disenfranchised, excluded by the photo ID laws. Additionally, State after State has made it more difficult to conduct voter registration drives. So people who are eligible, who should be voting, are prevented from or hindered in their registration. And hundreds of thousands, we expect, would be excluded because of registration drives. And there are other restrictions, too, that I will talk about in a moment.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I just want to tell a story on that very spe-

cific restriction. We had the Republican secretary of state in Florida recently ask the attorney general to start assessing \$50 fines for each of the 76 voter registration applications that were submitted by a high school teacher in Santa Rosa County. There was no indication of foul play. The applications were of individuals who appeared to be eligible Florida voters. They were high school kids who were 18 and were eligible to vote. But because Florida has changed the law under the Republican voter suppression law that requires registration to be turned in within 48 hours, and it used to be 10 days, this teacher got fined because she was trying to help her students register to vote and didn't get them in under the new time limit.

Mr. HOLT. So I ask the gentlelady, how many other patriotic Americans are going to be deterred from asking their friends, their neighbors—in this case, maybe students—from registering for fear that they'll be prosecuted if they don't dot the I's just right?

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Exactly. The League of Women Voters in my State, Mr. HOLT, has registered voters in Florida for seven decades and suspended their voter registration activity after this law passed because they can't take the risk. The organization would become bankrupt. Can you imagine, the League of Women Voters no longer registers people to vote in the State of Florida.

Mr. HOLT. And then in other States—who cares, my friend asks—in other States, they're making it harder to cast absentee ballots. So that's going to exclude people.

You know, you don't have to be a conspiracy theorist to see behind this a purpose of exclusion. This is not, Oh, we're just trying to clean up the procedures here to make sure that it's all neat and tidy. No, this is deliberate exclusion.

Mr. GONZALEZ. Well, the curious thing, and I know the gentlelady from Florida has already pointed it out, there is no doubt that certain segments of voters are being targeted. This isn't an even application whose consequences will be felt across equally all sectors or segments of the voting population. We know what is really going on, and it is an asserted, directed effort. And some people may find it exceedingly hard to believe that that's what these laws will actually accomplish rather than the lofty goal of somehow eliminating, addressing voter fraud when we've already stated that you don't have any demonstrable evidence that the fraud is occurring.

Now, I do want to say in Texas, we just had this new photo ID law passed, and so I went to the Secretary of State's Office and I went to the Department of Public Safety which is charged and tasked with the duty of providing this election ID, photo ID. Now, this is the amazing thing. The Department of Public Safety in the State of Texas has not been appropriated one extra dollar

for this added burden. They are not going to have extended hours. They are going to have the regular hours. They're not going to have any mobile units of any type. They will continue using their existing facilities which are already taxed to the limit by individuals who are going in there just for regular business.

Now, this is the State of Texas. You may not believe this, but I think Florida is a pretty big State. New Jersey, not as big. But you can have a distance of 100 miles from some of our towns to the nearest DPS office. Now, why would that be important? You don't have a Texas driver's license, so that tells you you're going to have to get someone to drive you to the DPS station. And then you're going to be in the same line. Maybe they'll queue it a little differently, whatever it is, but I'll tell you now, the Texas experience is no different than most other States where you stand in line for inordinate amounts of time. If we're talking about the elderly, if we're talking about those who have some sort of a physical handicap, they can still go out and vote because they're so proud of the right to vote that they've been exercising for 60-plus years.

I would yield to the gentlelady from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Thank you.

Because in some States it's equally as bad. It is certainly bad enough in Texas they're not putting more funding in to make sure those people have more access to get those photo IDs. But in some States, because of the budget cuts, they're systematically, in communities that have large African American populations and large Hispanic populations, shutting down driver's license offices, so it's even harder for those communities to go and get a photo ID.

This has been insidious. The disturbing thing about this is that it's clear that these Republican legislatures, led by Republican Governors, just don't think that they can win an election on the merits. And so they need an insurance policy because, in the event voters actually decide that no, Republicans aren't interested in creating jobs, no, they're not interested in getting the economy turned around, and, gee, maybe I'd like to actually go to the polls and vote for the candidate of my choice, they are using the insurance policy of voter suppression laws to make sure that people who are likely to go to the polls and vote for someone other than them can't do it. It's un-American. It's unacceptable.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I believe we still have at least 5 minutes, and I surely wanted to reference an article that was written by our colleague from Georgia, JOHN LEWIS. Mr. HOLT, I think, has already referred to Mr. LEWIS' illustrative career in the civil rights movement and such, but I would like to read the last couple of paragraphs because coming from JOHN LEWIS it is special

because he's lived the worst of times and he knows that it's been a progression, a slow one, and we're not there yet. To somehow return to those old days under the guise of some sort of voter fraud, which again has not been demonstrated, we know the cost is going to far exceed the benefits.

This is what he said:

These restrictions purportedly apply to all citizens equally. In reality, we know that they will disproportionately burden African Americans and other racial minorities, yet again. They are poll taxes by another name.

The King Memorial reminds us that out of a mountain of despair we may hew a stone of hope. Forty-eight years after the March on Washington, we must continue our work with hope that all citizens will have an unfettered right to vote. Second-class citizenship is not citizenship at all.

We've come some distance and have made great progress, but Dr. King's dream has not been realized in full. New restraints on the right to vote do not merely slow us down. They turn us backward, setting us in the wrong direction on a course where we have already traveled too far and sacrificed too much.

□ 1950

Mr. Speaker, how much time remains?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio). The gentleman has approximately 5½ minutes remaining.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I'd like to yield time to each of my colleagues as we close out the Special Order.

I would first recognize the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

Mr. HOLT. I thank the gentleman.

So, as efforts are made to put hurdles in the way to require proof that is difficult or expensive to get, that is, if offices are closed, and open periods for absentee ballots are shrunk, and early voting is discontinued as it has been in some States—in fact, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia have succeeded enacting bills that reduce early voting—all of this serves only to reduce the dignity of Americans by saying the principle of equality applies except for some people, some people as I said, who might have physical disabilities or might be elderly or might be low income.

But, more than that, it deprives us of a working democracy. The reason, the history of America has been a history of expanding the franchise so that we could have a more stable, productive democracy. We want everyone to vote. It makes this a richer country in every way.

I thank the gentleman for setting aside this time. I can't think of a more important topic to be debated in this great Chamber.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I thank my colleague for his participation and his words.

I would yield to my colleague from Florida.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and thank you for the opportunity for calling us together on this very important topic. I just want to close out my time

very briefly by saying to the gentlemen from Texas and New Jersey that we are not going to lay down and just allow these laws to stand, that there are civil rights organizations, as we speak, pursuing these laws because we know that they are violations of people's, of individuals' constitutional rights.

We know they are violations of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We know that the Justice Department is reviewing many of these laws because they have to be precleared under the Voting Rights Act of 1965. So people should know that while we are here expressing grave concern, we are certainly not only using our voices to fight these insidious laws; we are standing up for the franchise, standing up for the right to vote and making sure that, as Democrats, we go to bat to make sure every eligible voter has an opportunity to cast their vote for the person that is the individual that they want to represent them in this representative democracy. We are standing against individuals who try to fix the outcome of elections by blocking people's access to the polls.

Mr. GONZALEZ. I thank my colleague from Florida, I thank the Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BACA. I want to recognize my colleagues, Mr. HOYER and Mr. GONZALEZ, for organizing this special order hour.

The United States is the land of opportunity, and it functions on the premise that every American citizen has natural given rights outlined in our Constitution.

Maybe the most important of these rights is the right to make our voices heard in the voting booth.

Unfortunately, some states in our great nation have passed laws that actively work to suppress this sacred right.

The Republican leadership in Wisconsin, Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas have all passed measures that drastically change Voter-ID requirements.

In Wisconsin—elderly and disabled voters will no longer be able to use their Social Security identification to vote.

In Texas—student IDs will no longer be recognized at the polls.

These types of measures have the potential to impact 5 million voters in the United States.

Those impacted are most likely to be the youth, minority, elderly, disabled, and low-income voters.

Some claim that the reason for such measures is to combat "voter fraud." But there is absolutely no evidence to prove this theory true.

Since October 2002—86 individuals have been convicted of federal crimes relating to election fraud, while over 196 million ballots have been cast in federal general elections.

Voter fraud is exceedingly rare, and when it does happen, it doesn't occur at the polls through impersonation.

It happens through misinformation about polling locations, voter roll purges, or even ballot stuffing and electronic voting system manipulation.

There are 21 million Americans who do not have government-issued photo identification. They do not deserve to have their rights stripped away from them.

This number includes 18 percent of the elderly, 16 percent of Latinos, 25 percent of African American, 20 percent of young people, and 15 percent of people who earn under \$35,000 yearly.

These misguided laws clearly create a disproportionate burden on racial minorities, seniors, young people, and low-wage workers.

The fees to obtain an ID can range from \$20 to \$100, and the costs of getting the required paperwork such as birth certificates, passports or naturalization papers can be costlier.

Many foreign-born Americans—who are legally allowed to vote—lack papers such as birth certificates required to obtain a driver's license or state ID.

These laws go against the fundamental foundations of our democracy.

They are unconstitutional and violate a citizen's right to voice their opinion through the form of a ballot.

Every citizen should easily be able to have their say in an election.

These laws are voter suppression—plain and simple—and we will no longer stand for it.

Many compare these laws to the poll taxes adopted by Southern states to discourage African-Americans from voting after the Civil War.

Have we really reverted back to this mentality?

We've made so much progress as a nation of equality for all, but these laws are making us take a step backwards.

Simply put, this is a threat to our democratic process.

Our right to vote should not be determined by any political agenda.

Many countries around the world do not have the universal right to vote as we have here.

Americans are able to speak freely, and write about their issues or concerns without fear of being reprimanded.

Politically, they voice their opinions through the vote, and stripping or limiting that natural born right is in complete violation of how I can be here today.

It is an infringement on our democracy.

I know that if we come together—we can and will do better than this.

Again—I thank Whip HOYER and CHC Chairman GONZALEZ for organizing this special order.

INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is always my privilege to be recognized to address you here on the floor of the House of Representatives. And I find it a bit ironic that I'm watching the Representatives from Florida, New York and Texas speak to the Speaker pro tem just previous to you about the election situation. I'm thinking about the 2000 election when it was reported—not substantiated to my satisfaction—but reported that as many as 25,000 people from New York voted both in New York and in Florida either for a President from Texas or one from Tennessee where the Speaker pro tem momentarily ago was from. That's a

bit of an irony as I listen to this discussion that's going on about the election process here in the United States.

And I think there's too little concern on the part of my colleagues whom I do respect and appreciate and count as friends in many respects. I think there's too much focus on how you get more warm bodies to the polls as many times as possible and not enough on the legitimate vote.

Now as I listened, the gentleman from Texas said there's no demonstrable evidence that fraud is occurring. I would disagree. I think convictions are demonstrable evidence, and the convictions particularly in Troy, New York, of election fraud. I have seen it in the State of Iowa in a fashion that didn't result in convictions, but I have conviction that it happened. We have paid too little attention to election fraud in the case that I mentioned of people voting in the State of New York and in the State of Florida. If they do both, they surely can't be lawfully voting in each of the States. They may not be lawfully able to vote in either State, but voting in both States.

And how does that happen, Mr. Speaker? This is an unexamined subject matter on the part of my colleagues from the other side of the aisle. How does it happen that people can vote someplace where they don't reside? How does it happen that people can vote when they're not citizens? How does it happen that they can vote when they're not qualified to vote? How does it happen that they can vote in more than one jurisdiction for the same election, not necessarily simultaneously, but possibly simultaneously?

And I can answer those questions to some degree how that is, Mr. Speaker. It works this way: the voter registration lists within the States are not integrated among the States. And so if an individual is registered to vote in New York, they can also be registered to vote in Florida, or any adjoining State for that matter, New Jersey, Connecticut, you name it. All we have to do is go in and register in one State and go register in the other State.

In fact, in my own State, it was the case—and probably is not still the case—that the voter registration list does not integrate itself county to county in a definitive way. If John Doe registers to vote in Washington County and goes over to register to vote as John M. Doe in Jefferson County, there's two registrations there, and John Doe can vote in both counties, both by absentee.

In fact, in my State where there's 99 counties, it's possible to vote in 99 counties simultaneously by absentee. If you just simply register yourself to vote, put up an address that is perhaps a false address, but an address of someone else, and if the voter registration is unique in any way—the initial could change, it could be "John," it could be "Jonathan," the middle name can change, and that's all it would take. The same person could vote multiple

times in a State. Now think how many times that can happen when they're crossing the State lines.

No one has yet calculated how many times an individual could vote in the United States if they really wanted to game the system. And we do hear credible stories of buses taking people across the State lines and buses taking people from precinct to precinct to vote multiple times. And who have been the advocates for same-day registration? Who have been the advocates for lowering the integrity of the vote itself? It's been the people on the other side of the aisle. It's been the Democrats.

The things that Republicans bring to establish credibility and integrity in the vote are undermined by the Democrats on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker. And why? Because they say that people are disenfranchised from their vote. And I would argue that legitimate voters, American citizens who respect the law and vote one time, one place in their legal residence, are watching their vote be canceled out by illegitimate votes. That happens in this country. Because we don't have convictions for people voting in multiple locations for the same election isn't an indication that it doesn't happen. We do have some convictions.

We don't have large numbers of convictions as the gentleman from Texas may have implied but not specifically said. And the reason for that is because our voting laws are so open, so lax, and so insecure that it's nearly impossible to get a conviction.

For example, in the State of New Mexico, if I were working the voting booths as an election worker in New Mexico, and I opened the polls up at, say, 8 o'clock in the morning, and I'm sitting there for the list of people that come in, and they say, I'm John Doe, I'm Jane Doe, I'm Jim Smith, if one of them walks in and says, I'm STEVE KING and I live at the address where I live, and I have not yet voted, I am compelled, even as an election worker, to let that false and fraudulent individual vote under my name. It's against the law in New Mexico and other States to challenge an illegitimate voter even when you know that they are illegitimate, even to the extent that they allege they are the person who is checking them off the list. They still have to let them vote, and they can't challenge them.

□ 2000

That's how open these laws are. That's the kind of thing that you have promoted, the kind of thing that you won't defend, the kind of thing that I will yield to if you've got a defense for opening up and eroding the integrity of the vote in the United States.

And many of these are State laws, I recognize that, but we give direction and leadership. We have the HAVA Act, the Help America Vote Act, that opened it up even more. And I think the gentleman from New York, who