

I would also like to recognize and commend the Substitute Teacher Institute, which since 1995 has been providing activities and techniques to substitutes and has been providing leadership in its service to districts and substitute teachers nationwide. The Substitute Teacher Institute works to revolutionize the role of substitute teachers into opportunities for educational excellence.

I commend them, and I wish to commend all of those people who are substitutes in our Nation's school systems.

#### THE CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: VOTER PROTECTION

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

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. This evening, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be anchoring the Congressional Black Caucus hour on voter protection.

At the same time that I have the privilege of hosting this very important discussion, let me make note of the fact that our very distinguished Member, Congressman CHARLIE RANGEL, is being toasted and recognized by our Members. I know that many of them will be commemorating Congressman RANGEL, who is a dear friend of mine. He served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and as a Korean War vet, and understands, when soldiers go to battle, they go to battle so that others might have the opportunity for freedom. Certainly embodied in freedom has to be the idea of being able to vote.

So this evening, as I discuss these issues, I am delighted to acknowledge him as well as to acknowledge that this is really a bipartisan concern—and it should be a bipartisan concern, because, in essence, we should not be at this moment speaking about who you vote for as much as we are speaking about allowing you to vote for the person of your choice and to be able to cast your vote unfettered.

Mr. Speaker, that is what my discussion will be about tonight. As I do so, allow me just for a moment to be able to share, if you will, a point that I hope that we all can adhere to.

This is going to be a tough election season. There are many actors, if you will, who will be involved in this process. This is a Presidential year, so it's going to get particularly feisty. But I do believe that there is a certain

collegiality and collaboration as it circles around voting and the idea of voting and of voting with equal opportunity.

□ 1920

Even in our words, we need to try and make sure that we're lifting the voters up.

I heard a comment from someone introducing the intended Republican nominee—though it was tongue in cheek with a little humor—who indicated in his remarks very loudly, “Osama is dead.” And in the midst of it, he indicated, “I mean Osama bin Laden.” I assume he was trying to make a play on words, but I really hope that we can stay above the line of decency as we recognize that we live in difficult times.

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, we just heard publicly about a particular effort to attack our aviation assets, which was just announced today as breaking news, and we realize that we live in challenging times. For that reason, I think this discussion on voter protection is extremely important.

So let me just say to my friends that until now, historically, the voting franchise has only been expanded. This is most evident in the constitutional amendments that have been passed to protect and expand the right to vote. And since the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, it really has been a bipartisan congressional prerogative to ensure access to the ballot.

President Lyndon Baines Johnson, one of the Presidents who has been touted as having the greatest legislative record, had to cobble together Republicans and Democrats from the Deep South—then called the Dixiecrats—and moderate Republicans from the North and Midwest. He successfully passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and successfully passed the 1965 Voting Rights Act. It was a bipartisan effort.

And I might say that many Members who have reflected to have had a chance to encounter—some are still in this House. I remember, most famously, Jack Brooks, after it was all said and done, felt that they had done the right thing.

Today I was at a middle school, and I indicated to them that I would be on the floor of the House discussing voter protection. I was inspired by those young people, middle schoolers, who were attentive to learn what their government did. As I left, telling them not how to vote but that they must vote, there was a great excitement in the room. I'm on this floor today for them and all middle schoolers, high schoolers, college students, senior citizens, new immigrants who have taken the oath with great pride, long-time voters, new voters. Those are voters who have the right to vote. That's what we're talking about.

Unfortunately, a series of laws do not go after those who did not have the right to vote, but these series of voter

ID laws and new rules and regulations to stop people from voting goes after documented, legal voters with legal voting certificates who have done nothing wrong. Shame on those who would do so.

I just read, recently, that the lead person opposing the voter ID law in Pennsylvania, if I am correct—it's my recollection now—would be 93 years old. That's who we're hurting: senior citizens, people who have toiled and worked and paid their taxes, paid into Medicare. And now, because of when they were born, such as my mother Ivalita Jackson, they do not have a birth certificate. We tried, we looked, and we still have an inquiry in. God bless her.

My mother has since passed while we were in the midst of looking for the certificate for a number of reasons, but she had her voting card and she was eligible to vote. But under new voting ID laws, she would not be eligible to vote. And here is a woman who raised her children, paid her taxes, self-educated herself, achieved a status of a vocational nurse in times when education was not gifted to her.

A recent report by the Brennan Center for Justice of NYU Law School concluded that the newly enacted State laws that would affect more than 5 million eligible voters will disproportionately disenfranchise young, low-income, elderly, and minority voters. In 2006, the Brennan Center completed a nationwide survey of voting-age citizens and found that African American voters are more than three times as likely as Caucasians to lack a government-issued ID.

The real nonsense of it all is that voter IDs are to avoid voter impersonation, and voter impersonation is a finite part of any kind of voter fraud. In fact, under the Bush administration, there was less than 20, if you will, that were prosecuted. We're talking about a country of 300 million. And this is by recollection: I think there were some 180 cases that were brought forward, and they only wound up prosecuting a finite number.

The heavy burden on minority voters seems patently unfair, and it seems to be a direct result of the great enthusiasm of all voters in 2008. I want to see that all the time. Sometimes we win and sometimes we lose.

Isn't it interesting, when the wave of Tea Party voters had such an impact in 2010 and many of them were new voters, I didn't fare well in that, meaning my party's particular position, but it was the American way. All of the sudden, even with these new voters and the will of the people being adhered to, all of the sudden these new laws come out of the very people who are new to the voting process—many of them—and were excited about voting in 2010. Now comes a sledgehammer to prevent others from voting.

In Texas, thanks to new voter ID, students may not use their school-

issued IDs to vote, which is part of an effort to restrict student IDs as a valid form of identification to vote. This is the same State that will allow Texans with a concealed weapons permit to use their permits to vote, but a student who is trying to get an education, who has a State-issued ID card is not afforded the same privilege to use their student IDs.

Mind you, the Prairie View A&M case established a Supreme Court case that students could vote where they go to school. I remember that because we marched some 7-plus miles down an interstate to Prairie View A&M, thousands of us, to determine that students have a right at Prairie View A&M, that set a historical Supreme Court decision.

By the way, this was not, in essence, a liberal court. This decision was made under the Bush administration that determined that students can vote, and now the State of Texas is suggesting that they can't use their ID. Shame on them. Frankly, this seems out of whack. A student should be able to use their ID to vote.

Eleven percent of U.S. citizens, or more than 21 million Americans, do not have government-issued photo identification. Also, as many as 25 percent of all African American citizens of voting age do not have government-issued IDs.

Mandating voter IDs has a disproportionate and unfair impact on low-income individuals and racial and ethnic minorities. This also has a heavy burden on Hispanic voters in Texas. We found out that many Hispanic voters live in counties where there is no Department of Public Safety office for them to even go to.

Mr. Speaker, do we get an airplane, a helicopter? What do we tell individuals who have toiled, who have worked and are second- and third-generation Texans that just because of their aging status, maybe because of health reasons, they cannot get a voter ID? Senior citizens, voters with disabilities, and many other individuals do not have government-issued ID or the money to even acquire one.

Yes, under Texas law they can vote by mail, but I tell you, getting information to people is very hard. If you're used to going and voting on a Sunday, if you're used to being taken when your family members have the time to take you—which is weekend voting—and you're used to taking your voter certificate and now the new law says no, what an outrage.

□ 1930

But I have relief. As it relates to Texas, I have just spoken to the Justice Department and have been reissued a letter that indicates that the Texas voter ID law is invalid as it relates to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, a cause for celebration. Our primary will be May 29. That law will be invalid for both the primary and the runoff.

I've asked the State of Texas to not hide that information and to come out

with a clear enunciation—not a negative announcement—that says that the Justice Department has stopped the Texas voter ID law. That doesn't help anybody understand anything. Your duty is to be impartial as a State election officer, and you are to come out and say that the current law stands—not the voter ID law that is invalid under the Voting Rights Act—until a further court determination can be made, which is not until the July 2012 court hearing.

It is important for us to work together, as State officials, to let everyone know your voting certificate is an appropriate document to allow you to vote. That is what government is supposed to do, give fair and impartial information no matter where it falls. And I look forward to working with our State government to ensure that impartial information is now promoted to all people, everyone.

Your voting certificate is a legitimate document. And if you do not have a State-issued voter ID, you can vote in your primary, whether it is Republican, Democratic, or any other primary that is viable in the State of Texas. Why is that so difficult to do? More than 21 million Americans do not have government-issued photo identification, which includes, again, 25 percent of African American voting age citizens, or more than 5.5 million people; 15 percent of those earning less than \$35,000 a year; 18 percent of those age 65 and above—and more than 6 million voters; 20 percent of young voters ages 18 to 29, and it is much higher in the Hispanic community.

The photo ID proposals are not new, with calls for strict voter identification laws emerging out of the 2000 Presidential election, when conservative watchdog groups contended that laws intending to facilitate voting, such as the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, known as "Motor Voter," had opened the doors to illegal voting.

That's impossible, Mr. Speaker. It didn't look like the folks who thought that they were losing suffered too much in the 2000 Presidential election. The candidate of their choice was elected and ascended to the presidency. I can't imagine why they would feel that they had been violated by the 1993 Motor Voter law, which means that you could just register to vote at your various sites around the community, including the motor vehicle department.

The Justice Department, under Attorney General Ashcroft, pledged that cracking down on so-called voter fraud would be a top priority of the Bush administration. Justice Department, though ultimately, the Department's own extensive analysis found little evidence of voting improprieties. Congress passed the Help America Vote Act in 2002, establishing uniform minimum voter identification requirements, prompting calls that States should go further.

Mr. Speaker, this is for everybody. I can't stop or investigate who is coming to the polls and suggest that if you are this party or that party, stay away. Why wouldn't we want to help everyone?

Since 2001, more than 700 voter identification bills have been introduced in 46 States, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. A dozen States have passed new voter ID laws since 2003, but only eight States require a photo ID of voters, and only two have laws as strict as those being proposed this year. That was before. Now we have, in essence, a new day. We have some tough laws that are hurting voters. We're talking about voter protection, but we have to overcome voter suppression.

If you look at this map, you will see that we are being overwhelmed by voter photo ID requirements. I would say almost two-thirds of the States have inappropriately and incorrectly believed that they are going to make voting far more secure.

Let me tell you what an ID does: It stops you from impersonating another person. That has been the lowest level of voter fraud because you are silly to impersonate because you are going into a place that might subject you to an arrest. In the State of Texas, precinct judges have the status of a district judge on election day.

This map will show you how bad it is. Look at the red. It requires voter ID. Big Texas: that's why I need the State to announce that the voter ID law is invalid for the May 29 primary, because it looks as if we have a requirement that does not exist for this primary. Someone hear me. We are obligated to tell the 21 million-plus Texans that they have the right to vote with a voting certificate if they are registered to vote for the May 29 primary. That red is getting pretty strong. Blue, photo ID requested. The red is require photo ID only; nothing else. How absurd.

In essence, we're taking a match and burning the voting certificates that people worked so hard to get, that allow people to vote—that you tell people to register again. It also disallows organizations like the League of Women Voters and puts a very heavy hand on what happens when you register people to vote and how you have to get those registrations in. The big "stop" sign. That's why it's red. It's the "stop people from voting" law.

Then look at the photo ID requested, blue States. Then look at the photo voter ID legislation proposed. It covers 90 percent of America. How absurd. And I would be open to finding a way to ensure that that diminished, limited amount of fraud is taken care of. But this is what it does: It puts up a red stop sign. It stops people from voting. It frightens people from voting. It keeps people from voting.

And then, of course, this is another big, fat, red map which shows the States where voting changes were pursued and the types of changes enacted.

I'll show it in a moment. It includes legislation introduced. Big red photo ID requirements—passed. Proof of citizenship—passed. Restrictions on voter registration—passed. Restrictions on early absentee voting—passed. Executive action, making it harder to restore voting rights. You can see the country is predominantly red with a big “stop” sign, stopping people from voting.

I beg of you, why would we, who have the privilege of having a document that gave citizens due process, gave us the freedoms of speech, petition, assembly, all having to do with petitioning your government, and then we have a movement that literally stops us in our tracks. Then we have Citizens United that dumps money into elections and literally skews who gets to be selected by the people.

I want everyone to see how much we need to overcome voter suppression by, in essence, protecting everyone's right to vote. I want to be very clear on this: Everyone's right to vote.

A dozen States have passed, as I have said, new voter ID laws since 2003. But voter ID proposals have a forceful momentum this year not seen in years passed—this year, meaning 2012, 2011, and going back to 2010. This is part of a broader legislative movement to limit access to the political process for disenfranchised groups at a level not seen since post-Reconstruction Era laws implementing poll taxes and literacy tests.

Now we have to know that there are those of us who come from States where the literacy tests and poll tax have not gone away even for 60 years, meaning that we have not even had that relief for 60 years.

□ 1940

There were lawsuits in the 1940s that ultimately generated an opportunity for constituents not to pay a poll tax. I remember the late Beulah Shepard, who came to Texas. If there ever was a person that talked about voting, it was sister Beulah Shepard out of Acres Homes. She always used to recite a poem about just one vote, and she gave a whole list of what one vote, one person could do. She proudly talked about the fact that she paid a poll tax to vote. And she paid a poll tax, I think she said, for her husband and others who needed to vote.

That wasn't too long in America's history and future, Mr. Speaker. What a shameful turn of events that now the late Beulah Shepard is no longer here, and how she'd be crying, turning over in her resting place, to realize that all the toiling that she did to register people to vote, to empower those who had been disenfranchised, now could not vote.

Susan B. Anthony and the Suffragettes, Sojourner Truth, who suffered because women could not vote. They were not landowners. And they tried and worked and toiled and were ridiculed, and finally women could vote. And to find now some elderly woman

who does not have her voter photo ID—and I say this. Let the listening public hear. You cannot get a voter ID if you don't bring something like a birth certificate. And this is where our seniors either can't get there or they're too elderly to have access to their birth certificate. Maybe they were, in essence, brought into this world by a volunteer or midwife or family members. There's no birth certificate. Maybe it's in the deep country in the dark of night, where mom and baby did not get recognition until days or weeks afterward. Or, living as long as they lived, the birth certificate has been lost. Mr. Speaker, I've heard of veterans whose documents were burned up in a fire. They were still veterans. They still served their country. We see them every day.

And so here we have a situation where you're disenfranchising groups at a level not seen, as I said, since post-Reconstruction era laws implementing a poll tax and a literacy test. Just over the first 2 months of 2011, photo ID proposals have been introduced in 32 States and passed out of one legislative chamber in 12 States. Lawmakers across the Nation have pinpointed photo ID as a top legislative priority. The Governor of Texas designated photo ID as a legislative emergency in order to allow it to be procedurally fast-tracked to the legislature. Photo ID proposals were pre-filed before legislative sessions began in half a dozen States. And secretaries of State in a number of States have listed photo ID as a top priority.

Let me thank Chairman EMANUEL CLEAVER for leading out not only members of the Congressional Black Caucus but collaborating with other organizations, and let me thank my colleagues who have worked so hard on this issue. Let me thank Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN, who is detained at a matter that she had to attend, who's been anchoring these hour-long discussions with the American public.

But we better beware, because what you do to others comes back to you. The idea of limiting a person's access to voting and being able to vote on the cause of how you think they will vote and how you don't want those people to vote comes back to Americans who want to vote in whichever way they do. Stop me from voting, you get stopped from voting.

The idea of a photo ID is not a respecter of race. And if you're elderly and can't get to the Department of Public Safety office or in another State you can't get somewhere, if you're inhibited or prohibited, it is an impact on you no matter what background you come from.

Thank God for the Congressional Black Caucus that is a respecter of the rights of all people. We are fighting for our children. We're fighting for young people, the elderly, the disabled. And no matter who you are, if you're blocked to vote because of the voter ID, this is voter suppression—and we want to have voter protection.

The Governor of Texas designated photo ID as a legislative emergency in order to allow it to be procedurally fast-tracked through the legislature. Photo ID proposals were pre-filed before legislative sessions began in half a dozen States. I don't know why that happened. We're bogged down with the redistricting case.

The secretaries of State in a number of States have listed photo ID as a top priority. Mr. Speaker, it does nothing. The Bush administration showed they couldn't find any fraud worth prosecuting for people who were impersonating a voter. Photo ID proposals have garnered significant momentum in a very mistaken matter—that it's going to do something. It is not.

Let us point out voter fraud. Let us, in essence, carve it out. But you are not going anywhere with voter ID laws who discriminate against the elderly, who discriminate against minorities, who discriminate against those individuals who have lived long enough and served their country long enough that they just might not remember where their birth certificate is—or even their marriage certificate.

Significant momentum is going on this, and it is wrongheaded. Opponents are having difficulty waging effective counterattacks to curb the movement on these bills as majority leaderships, emboldened by their increased numbers following in the 2010 midterm elections, are more committed than they ever have been.

Let me congratulate the State of Ohio and Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, where the people of that State defeated that draconian law and they will not have the burden of their voter ID law in the 2012 Presidential election. Yay for them. A battleground State where the people can vote as they choose. And we're going to all realize that Ohioans will not be encumbered by draconian laws. They will battle it out in the democratic process and they will vote, and no one can block them from voting.

In 1890, the State of Mississippi, although African Americans made up 58 percent of the population, due to the structure of voting laws that year in Mississippi, of the 134 elected delegates, only one was African American, and that was during Reconstruction. It does not take a genius to recognize that the African American vote was diluted.

We cannot allow history to repeat itself. That is why we have the Voting Rights Act and why we are ever vigilant to guard against any encroachments on the right to vote.

And so my argument is, today, that we're going to go across America—and I appreciate my colleagues who have joined in this effort to go across America—and we're going to introduce voting protection seminars to ensure that every voter—minority voters and elderly voters—has a right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad to have spoken to my State officials today. I

will place this letter to Texas State officials in the RECORD.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
Washington, DC, May 7, 2012.

Hon. HOPE ANDRADE,  
Secretary of State,  
Austin, Texas.

DEAR SECRETARY ANDRADE: Thank you for taking my call today Monday, May 07, 2012 regarding the status of election law to be utilized in the 2012 Texas Primary and on a possible run off date. A formal public announcement must be made along with the production of public awareness advertisements outlining that the current law is still in place and operational.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Perez "with regard to Section 9 and 15 of S.B. 14, concerning photographic identification, I cannot conclude that the state has sustained its burden under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Therefore, on behalf of the Attorney General, I must object to Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14." In effect, the currently proposed photographic identification requirements and related changes may not be implemented and are not legally enforceable. The public must be made aware of the current voting requirements.

The trial date is set for Monday, July 9, 2012 and therefore all means currently permissible should be utilized to ensure the public is made aware that there is currently no requirement in the State of Texas for a state issued photographic identification in order to vote in the upcoming elections. Thank you for your cooperation and I look forward to working with you.

Very Truly Yours,

SHEILA JACKSON LEE,  
Member of Congress.

With that in mind, in the name of so many great leaders, from our early Presidents who valued this historic democratic process to the drafters of the Constitution that began to open the words of this great book with the words, We have come together to establish justice, to form a more perfect Union, to ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity to ordain and establish the Constitution of the United States, voter ID laws do not equal to liberty. They do not equal giving our posterity to our children, grandchildren, the grandchildren's children and grandchildren, great-great-grandchildren. The voter ID law is oppressive and it denies the right to vote.

I cry in my heart, Mr. Speaker, for we have fallen victim to a distortion of the right of people to vote and the distortion of the blame game. And so State legislatures have attempted to say they're doing something and, Mr. Speaker, they are not. They are not.

I would like to put into the RECORD a letter from the Department of Justice dated May 4, 2012.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS,  
WASHINGTON, DC, MAY 4, 2012.

Hon. SHEILA JACKSON LEE  
U.S. House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR CONGRESSWOMAN JACKSON LEE: This responds to your recent inquiry to Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Thomas E. Perez, regarding implementation of Texas S.B. 14 (2011).

On March 12, 2012, the Attorney General interposed an objection, pursuant to Section

5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to S.B. 14's photographic identification requirements for in-person voting. The Attorney General's objection letter is enclosed.

The photographic identification requirements and related changes in S.B. 14 therefore may not be implemented, and are legally unenforceable, until either the Attorney General's objection is withdrawn, or until Texas obtains a judgment from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia preclearing these changes under Section 5. Texas has sought such a judgment from the district court in *State of Texas v. Holder*, No. 1:12-cv-00128 (D.D.C. filed Jan. 24, 2012), and that case is currently set for trial beginning July 9, 2012.

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact this office if we may provide additional assistance regarding this or any other matter.

Sincerely,

RONALD WEILCH,  
Assistant Attorney General.

Enclosure.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,  
CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION,  
WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 12, 2012.

Mr. KEITH INGRAM,  
Director of Elections, Elections Division, Office  
of the Texas Secretary of State, Austin,  
Texas.

DEAR MR. INGRAM: This refers to Chapter 123 (S.B. 14) (2011), which amends the Texas Transportation Code relating to the issuance of election identification certificates, and which amends the Texas Election Code relating to the procedures for implementing the photographic identification requirements, including registration procedures, provisional-ballot procedures, notice requirements, and education and training requirements, for the State of Texas, submitted to the Attorney General pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, 42 U.S.C. 1973c. We received your response to our January 9, 2012 follow-up to our September 23, 2011 request for additional information on January 12, 2012; additional information was received through February 17, 2012.

According to the 2010 Census, the State of Texas had a total population of 25,145,561, of whom 9,460,921 (37.6%) were Hispanic, 2,975,739 (11.8%) were black, 1,027,956 (4.1%) were Asian, and 11,397,345 (45.3%) were Anglo. Texas's total voting-age population was 18,279,737, of whom 6,143,144 (33.6%) were Hispanic, 2,102,474 (11.5%) were black, 758,636 (4.2%) were Asian, and 9,074,684 (49.6%) were Anglo. The five-year aggregate American Community Survey (2006-2010) estimates that Texas had a Hispanic citizen voting-age population of 25.5 percent.

We have carefully considered the information you have provided, as well as census data, comments and information from other interested parties, and other information, including the state's previous submissions. Under Section 5, the Attorney General must determine whether the submitting authority has met its burden of showing that the proposed changes have neither the purpose nor the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color or membership in a language minority group. *Georgia v. United States*, 411 U.S. 526 (1973); *Procedures for the Administration of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965*, 28 C.F.R. 51.52(c). With regard to Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14, concerning photographic identification 51.52(c). With regard to Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14, concerning photographic identification requirements for in-person voting and acceptable forms of photographic identification, I cannot conclude that the state has sustained its burden under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Therefore, on behalf of the Attorney General, I must object to Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14.

We start our analysis recognizing the state's legitimate interest in preventing voter fraud and safeguarding voter confidence. *Crawford v. Marion County Election Bd.*, 553 U.S. 181 (2008). In that vein, the state's sole justifications for changing the current practice to require photographic identification to vote in person that appear in the legislative proceedings and are presented in its submission are to ensure electoral integrity and deter ineligible voters from voting. At the same time, we note that the state's submission did not include evidence of significant in-person voter impersonation not already addressed by the state's existing laws.

The voting changes at issue must be measured against the benchmark practice to determine whether they would "lead to a retrogression in the position of racial minorities with respect to their effective exercise of the electoral franchise." *Beer v. United States*, 425 U.S. 130, 141 (1976). In support of its position that this proposed requirement will not have such a prohibited effect, the state provided two sets of registered-voter data, which were matched with two different data sources maintained by the state's Department of Public Safety (DPS). One set was current as of September 16, 2011, and the other as of early January 2012. The September data reported that there were 12,780,841 registered voters, of whom 2,785,227 (21.8%) were Hispanic. The January data reported that there were 12,892,280 registered voters, of whom 2,810,869 (21.8%) were Hispanic.

There is, however, a significant difference between the two data sets with regard to the number and characteristics of those registered voters without a driver's license or personal identification card issued by DPS. The September data indicate that 603,892 (4.7%) of the state's registered voters do not have such identification; this population consists of 174,866 voters (29.0% of the 603,892 voters) who are Hispanic and 429,026 voters (71.0%) who are non-Hispanic. The January data indicate that 795,955 (6.2%) of the state's registered voters do not have such identification; this population consists of 304,389 voters (38.2%) who are Hispanic and 491,566 voters (61.8%) who are non-Hispanic. The state has not provided an explanation for the disparate results. More significantly, it declined to offer an opinion on which of the two data sets is more accurate. Accordingly, we have considered both in reviewing your submission.

Starting our analysis with the September data set, 6.3 percent of Hispanic registered voters do not have the forms of identification described above, but only 4.3 percent of non-Hispanic registered voters are similarly situated. Therefore, a Hispanic voter is 46.5 percent more likely than a non-Hispanic voter to lack these forms of identification. In addition, although Hispanic voters represent only 21.8 percent of the registered voters in the state, Hispanic voters represent fully 29.0 percent of the registered voters without such identification.

Our analysis of the January data indicates that 10.8 percent of Hispanic registered voters do not have a driver's license or personal identification card issued by DPS, but only 4.9 percent of non-Hispanic registered voters do not have such identification. So, Hispanic registered voters are more than twice as likely as non-Hispanic registered voters to lack such identification. Under the data provided in January, Hispanics make up only 21.8 percent of all registered voters, but fully 38.2 percent of the registered voters who lack these forms of identification.

Thus, we conclude that the total number of registered voters who lack a driver's license

or personal identification card issued by DPS could range from 603,892 to 795,955. The disparity between the percentages of Hispanics and non-Hispanics who lack these forms of identification ranges from 46.5 to 120.0 percent. That is, according to the state's own data, a Hispanic registered voter is at least 46.5 percent, and potentially 120.0 percent, more likely than a non-Hispanic registered voter to lack this identification. Even using the data most favorable to the state, Hispanics disproportionately lack either a driver's license or a personal identification card issued by DPS, and that disparity is statistically significant.

The state has provided no data on whether African American or Asian registered voters are also disproportionately affected by S.B. 14.

Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14 would also permit a voter to vote in person using military photographic identification, a United States citizenship certificate that contains the person's photograph, a United States passport, or a license to carry a concealed handgun. The state has produced no data showing what percent of registered voters lack a driver's license or personal identification card issued by DPS, but do possess another allowable form of photographic identification. Nor has the state provided any data on the demographic makeup of such voters. In addition, when the Texas Legislature was considering S.B. 14, there were a number of legislative proposals to expand the forms of identification that could be used by voters to meet this new requirement—including proposals to allow any state-issued or tribal identification with a photograph to be used for regular voting—but those proposals were rejected.

In view of the statistical evidence illustrating the impact of S.B. 14 on Hispanic registered voters, we turn to those steps that the state has identified it will take to mitigate that effect.

You have informed us that the DPS-issued "free" election identification certificate, which is proposed to be implemented by Section 20 of S.B. 14, would protect voters who do not already have another acceptable form of identification. The application process for these certificates will mirror the manner in which a person obtains a driver's license. First-time applicants will be required to furnish various supplemental documents and undergo an application process that includes fingerprinting and traveling to a driver's license office.

An applicant for an election identification certificate will be required to provide two pieces of secondary identification, or one piece of secondary identification and two supporting documents. If a voter does not possess any of these documents, the least expensive option will be to spend \$22 on a copy of the voter's birth certificate. There is a statistically significant correlation between the Hispanic population percentage of a county and the percentage of a county's population that lives below the poverty line. The legislature tabled amendments that would have prohibited state agencies from charging for any underlying documents needed to obtain an acceptable form of photographic identification.

As noted above, an applicant for an election identification certificate will have to travel to a driver's license office. This raises three discrete issues. First, according to the most recent American Community Survey three-year estimates, 7.3 percent of Hispanic or Latino households do not have an available vehicle, as compared with only 3.8 percent of non-Hispanic white households that lack an available vehicle. Statistically significant correlations exist between the Hispanic voting-age population percentage of a county, and the percentage of occupied housing units without a vehicle.

Second, in 81 of the state's 254 counties, there are no operational driver's license offices. The disparity in the rates between Hispanics and non-Hispanics with regard to the possession of either a driver's license or personal identification card issued by DPS is particularly stark in counties without driver's license offices. According to the September 2011 data, 10.0 percent of Hispanics in counties without driver's license offices do not have either form of identification, compared to 5.5 percent of non-Hispanics. According to the January 2012 data, that comparison is 14.6 percent of Hispanics in counties without driver's license offices, as compared to 8.8 percent of non-Hispanics. During the legislative hearings, one senator stated that some voters in his district could have to travel up to 176 miles roundtrip in order to reach a driver's license office. The legislature tabled amendments that would have, for example, provided reimbursement to voters who live below the poverty line for travel expenses incurred in applying for the requisite identification.

The third and final point is the limited hours that such offices are open. Only 49 of the 221 currently open driver's license offices across the state have extended hours. Even Senator Troy Fraser, the primary author of this legislation in the Senate, acknowledged during the legislative hearing that, "You gotta work to make sure that [DPS offices] are open." Despite the apparent recognition of the situation, the legislature tabled an amendment that would have required driver's license offices to be open until 7:00 p.m. or later on at least one weekday and during four or more hours on at least two Saturdays each month.

The legislation mandates a statewide voter-education effort concerning the new identification requirement, but does not provide specific standards for the program. The state, however, has yet to approve a final version of the materials designed to accomplish that goal, either for voters or for election officials. The state has indicated that it will implement a new educational program; but as of this date, our information indicates that the currently proposed plan will incorporate the new identification requirement into a general voter-education program.

The legislation requires that poll-worker training materials reflect the new identification requirements. This is particularly vital because a poll-worker can permit a voter to cast a ballot if the name as listed on the documentation is "substantially similar to but does not match exactly" the name on the voter registration list, and if the voter also submits an affidavit stating that he or she is the person on the list of registered voters. Though the Secretary of State's office has adopted an administrative rule to guide poll-workers in determining when names are substantially similar, the rule gives poll-workers a great deal of discretion. The state has provided no enforcement guidelines to prevent the vagueness of this standard from leading to inconsistency or bias in its application.

Even after submitting data that show over 600,000 registered voters do not have either a driver's license or personal identification card issued by DPS—and that a disproportionate share of those registered voters are Hispanic—the state has failed to propose, much less adopt, any program for individuals who have to travel a significant distance to a DPS office, who have limited access to transportation, or who are unable to get to a DPS office during their hours of operation. This failure is particularly noteworthy given Texas's geography and demographics, which arguably make the necessity for mitigating measures greater than in other states. The state also has not developed any specific pro-

posals to educate either voters about how to comply with the new identification requirement or poll officials about how to enforce the proposed change.

In conclusion, the state has not met its burden of proving that, when compared to the benchmark, the proposed requirement will not have a retrogressive effect, or that any specific features of the proposed law will prevent or mitigate that retrogression. Additionally, the state has failed to demonstrate why it could not meet its stated goals of ensuring electoral integrity and deterring ineligible voters from voting in a manner that would have avoided this retrogressive effect. Because we conclude that the state has failed to meet its burden of demonstrating that the proposed law will not have a retrogressive effect, we do not make any determination as to whether the state has established that the proposed changes were adopted with no discriminatory purpose.

Under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, the submitting authority has the burden of showing that a submitted change has neither a discriminatory purpose nor a discriminatory effect. *Georgia v. United States*, 411 U.S. 526 (1973); 28 C.F.R. 51.52. In light of the considerations discussed above, I cannot conclude that your burden has been sustained in this instance. Therefore, on behalf of the Attorney General, I must object to the changes affecting voting that are occasioned by Sections 9 and 14 of Chapter 123 (S.B. 14) (2011). Sections 1 through 8, 10 through 13, 15, and 17 through 22 of S.B. 14 are directly related to the procedures for implementing the photographic identification requirements, including registration procedures, provisional-ballot procedures, notice requirements, and education and training requirements. Accordingly, no determination by the Attorney General is required or appropriate under Section 5. 28 C.F.R. 51.22 and 51.35.

We note that under Section 5 you have the right to seek a declaratory judgment from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia that these proposed changes neither have the purpose nor will have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race, color, or membership in a language minority group. 28 C.F.R. 51.44. In addition, you may request that the Attorney General reconsider the objection. 28 C.F.R. 51.45. However, until the objection is withdrawn or a judgment from the United States District Court for the District of Columbia is obtained, the submitted changes continue to be legally unenforceable. *Clark v. Roemer*, 500 U.S. 646 (1991); 28 C.F.R. 51.10. To enable us to meet our responsibility to enforce the Voting Rights Act, please inform us of the action that the State of Texas plans to take concerning this matter. If you have any questions, you should contact Robert S. Berman (202/514-8690), a deputy chief in the Voting Section.

Because the Section 5 status of this legislation is presently before the United States District Court for the District of Columbia in *State of Texas v. Holder*, No. 1:12-cv-00128 (D.D.C.), we are providing the Court and counsel of record with a copy of this letter.

Sincerely,

THOMAS E. PEREZ,  
Assistant Attorney General.

□ 1950

Finally, as I said, Mr. Speaker, as I hold this Constitution in my hand, I certainly want to add to my plea an extended hand to ensure that what our Founding Fathers wanted—to ensure domestic tranquility, to establish justice, to secure the blessings of liberty—will be found in the 2012 election, and

that because of one's ethnic or racial background or age or gender or whether you live in the country, meaning in the rural areas of the Nation, that you will not have a stop sign, a red stop sign that will be standing at the door of a courthouse or the place where you vote. You will not have a stop sign that says: Stop, you don't deserve the blessings of liberty. You deserve to be treated in the ways of yesteryear when people were second-class and third-class citizens.

I pray, as I know my Founding Fathers would offer, prayerful prayers for all of America that we take this red map and turn it to a map of brightness with a big sign: The door is open for legal voting, unoppressed. You are protected and you are given the blessings of liberty.

I thank my colleagues of the Congressional Black Caucus. I thank all those who are working on this issue, and I look forward in the State of Texas that we work together that you can vote under the old laws and you can vote on Sunday and you can go out and vote and you can have the blessings of liberty that the Constitution has so given us.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise in the name of justice and to protect the right to vote for all citizens. I am joined by fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus to speak about the need to protect our democracy, to protect the voice of the American people, and to ensure the right to vote continues to be treated as a right under the Constitution rather than a privilege afforded to the chosen few.

Today I join the CBC to bring additional scrutiny to the significant changes being made to voting laws across our country. We must protect the rights for all eligible citizens to vote. The right to vote is a precious and sacred one in our country. Over the past few decades, minorities in this country have witnessed a pattern of efforts to intimidate and harass minority voters through so-called "Voter ID" requirements. I am sad to report that as we head into the 21st century, these efforts continue.

I am well versed in the arguments both for and against Voter IDs. Often the arguments for Voter IDs include the notion that we must protect against fraud, yet there is little to no real evidence that rampant voter fraud exists or that it would be prevented by Voter ID cards. On balance there is significant evidence that minorities would be negatively impacted by voter ID requirements.

As a Senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee, I called for an immediate investigation of these instances. Many of these incidents of voter intimidation were occurring in predominately minority neighborhoods and have been directed at African-Americans and Latinos. It is unconscionable to think that anyone would deliberately employ the use of such forceful and intimidating tactics to undermine the fundamental, Constitutional right to vote. However, such conduct has regrettably occurred in Houston, and I urge you to take appropriate action to ensure that it does not recur.

Instances of voter intimidation are not long ago and far away. Just last year I sent a letter

to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to draw his attention to several disturbing instances of voter intimidation that had taken place in Houston. In a single week there were at least 15 reports of abuse of voter rights throughout the city of Houston.

I am here once more in the name of freedom, patriotism, and democracy. I am here to demand that the long hard fought right to vote continues to be protected.

TEXAS LEGISLATION, SB14

I am a Representative from the State of Texas and as you are all aware, my State has recently adopted a voter identification law that is among the most restrictive in the Nation. This law passed both chambers of the Texas legislature after lengthy floor debates. The Texas House approved the measure 101-48 late in the night after more than eleven hours of debate that included some 40 proposed amendments. Although it was evident that this bill had significant opposition, the bill was fast-tracked as a "legislative emergency." The Voter ID bill was fast-tracked at a time when there were urgent threats to state services due to a \$10 billion budget shortfall.

Under SB14, would require Texas voters to show a non-expired:

Texas driver's license,  
state ID card,  
military ID,  
US passport or  
citizenship ID to vote.

Texas concealed handgun license to the list.

SB14, Banned the following forms of identification:

driver's licenses from other states,  
college IDs,  
birth certificates and other identification documents.

Voters over 70 are not exempted from any of these requirements.

Those without the requisite ID would have to cast provisional ballots that would be counted only if the voter returned with valid ID within six days after the election.

While similar proposals were defeated in past years, Texas Gov. Rick Perry designated the legislation as an emergency to allow it to be procedurally fast-tracked through the legislature to avoid the debates that derailed such efforts in previous years.

As a preclearance state under the Voting Rights Act, Texas had to submit any electoral changes for approval by the U.S. Department of Justice for review under the Voting Rights Act.

I hold in my hand a letter from the Department of Justice and I quote from this letter "with regard to Section 9 and 15 of S.B. 14, concerning photographic identification, I cannot conclude that the state has sustained its burden under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Therefore, on the behalf of the Attorney General, I must object to Sections 9 and 14 of S.B. 14." In effect, the currently proposed photographic identification requirements and related changes may not be implemented and are not legally enforceable. Texans need to be informed about this turn of events. S.B.14 is not legally binding. The public must be made aware that right now in the state of Texas there is no requirement for a Voter ID card in order to vote! May I remind you that no right is more fundamental than the right to vote.

THE CONSTITUTION PROTECTS OUR RIGHT TO VOTE

It is protected by more constitutional amendments—the 1st, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th and

26th—than any other right we enjoy as Americans. Broad political participation ensures the preservation of all our other rights and freedoms. 3 State laws that impose new restrictions on voting, however, undermine our strong democracy by impeding access to the polls and reducing the number of Americans who vote and whose votes are counted.

My State is not the only State undergoing attempts to restrict voting rights. There have been several restrictive voting bills considered and approved by States in the past several years.

VOTER ID LAWS

The most commonly advanced initiatives are laws that require voters to present photo identification when voting in person. Additionally, States have proposed or passed laws to require proof of citizenship when registering to vote; to eliminate the right to register to vote and to submit a change of address within the same State on Election Day; to shorten the time allowed for early voting; to make it more difficult for third-party organizations to conduct voter registration; and even to eliminate a mandate on poll workers to direct voters who go to the wrong precinct.

These recent changes are on top of the disfranchisement laws in 48 States that deprive an estimated 5.3 million people with criminal convictions—disproportionately African Americans and Latinos—of their political voice.

Voter ID laws are becoming increasingly common across the country. Today, 31 States have laws requiring voters to present some form of identification to vote in Federal, State and local elections, although some laws or initiatives passed in 2011 have not yet gone into effect. Some must also be pre-cleared under the Voting Rights Act prior to implementation. In 16 of those 31 States, voters must (or will soon be required to) present a photo ID—that in many States must be government-issued—in order to cast a ballot.

Voter ID laws deny the right to vote to thousands of registered voters who do not have, and, in many instances, cannot obtain the limited identification States accept for voting. Many of these Americans cannot afford to pay for the required documents needed to secure a government issued photo ID. As such, these laws impede access to the polls and are at odds with the fundamental right to vote.

In total, more than 21 million Americans of voting age lack documentation that would satisfy photo ID laws, and a disproportionate number of these Americans are low-income, racial and ethnic minorities, and elderly. As many as 25 percent of African Americans of voting age lack government-issued photo ID, compared to only 8 percent of their white counterparts. Eighteen percent of Americans over the age of 65 do not have government-issued photo ID.

Laws requiring photo identification to vote are a "solution" in search of a problem. There is no credible evidence that in-person impersonation voter fraud—the only type of fraud that photo IDs could prevent—is even a minor problem. Multiple studies have found that almost all cases of alleged in-person impersonation voter "fraud" are actually the result of a voter making an inadvertent mistake about their eligibility to vote, and that even these mistakes are extremely infrequent.

It is important, instead, to focus on both expanding the franchise and ending practices



which actually threaten the integrity of the elections, such as improper purges of voters, voter harassment, and distribution of false information about when and where to vote. None of these issues, however, are addressed or can be resolved with a photo ID requirement.

Furthermore, requiring voters to pay for an ID, as well as the background documents necessary to obtain an ID in order to vote, is tantamount to a poll tax. Although some States issue IDs for free, the birth certificates, passports, or other documents required to secure a government-issued ID cost money, and many Americans simply cannot afford to pay for them. In addition, obtaining a government-issued photo ID is not an easy task for all members of the electorate. Low-income individuals who lack the funds to pay for documentation, people with disabilities with limited access to transportation, and elderly Americans who never had a birth certificate and cannot obtain alternate proof of their birth in the U.S., are among those who face significant or insurmountable obstacles to getting the photo ID needed to exercise their right to vote.

Because of Texas' recently passed voter ID law, an estimated 36,000 people in West Texas's District 19 are 137 miles from the nearest full service Department of Public Safety office, where those without IDs must travel to preserve their right to vote under the state's new law.

In addition, women who have changed their names due to marriage or divorce often experience difficulties with identity documentation, as did Andrea, who recently moved from Massachusetts to South Carolina and who, in the span of a month, spent more than 17 hours online and in person trying without success to get a South Carolina driver's license.

Voter ID laws send not-so-subtle messages about who is and is not encouraged to vote. As States approve laws requiring photo ID to vote, each formulates its own list of acceptable forms of documentation. Another common thread emerging from disparate state approaches is a bias against robust student electoral participation.

Henceforth, students at Wisconsin colleges and universities will not be able to vote using their student ID cards, unless those cards have issuance dates, expiration dates, and signatures.

Currently, only a handful of Wisconsin colleges and universities are issuing compliant IDs. Nor will South Carolina, Texas, or Tennessee accept student identification at the polls.

Policies that limit students' electoral participation are particularly suspect, appearing on the heels of unprecedented youth turnout in the 2008 election.

Voter ID proposals have a forceful momentum this year not seen in years past, part of broader legislative movements to limit access to the political process for disenfranchised groups at a level not seen since post-reconstruction era laws implementing poll taxes and literacy tests. In just over the first two months of 2011, photo ID proposals have been introduced in 32 States and passed out of one legislative chamber in 12 States.

Since 2001, more than 700 voter identification bills have been introduced in 46 States, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. A dozen States have passed

new voter ID laws since 2003, but only 8 States require photo ID of voters and only two have laws as strict as those being proposed this year.

Lawmakers across the Nation have pinpointed photo ID as a top legislative priority. Just remember that the governor of Texas designated photo ID as a legislative emergency in order to allow it to be procedurally fast-tracked through the legislature, photo ID proposals were pre-filed before legislative sessions began in half a dozen States, and secretaries of state in a number of States have listed photo ID as a top priority.

I stand ever ready to fight these attempts to hinder the right to vote for seniors, minorities and low income Americans. I stand ever ready to protect the right to vote and preserve this right for future generations.

#### MAP OF SHAME: VOTE SUPPRESSION LEGISLATION BY STATE

Election Protection: You Have The Right To  
Vote

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under  
Law

(For more information about registration and voting laws in your state, visit [www.mapofshame.com](http://www.mapofshame.com))

States with Proof of Citizenship Laws—AZ, KS, TN, AL, GA.

States with Repressive Election Legislation—OH, FL.

Governor Vetoed Photo Voter ID Law—NH, NC, MO, MN, MT.

TX\*, KS\*, WI\*, IN, TN\*, MS, AL\*, GA, SC\*—Require Photo Voter ID Only.

(\*Law takes effect in 2012 and beyond.)

RI, HI, ID, SD, MI, OK, LA, FL—Photo Voter ID Requested.

WA, CA, NV, AK, MT, CO, NM, NE, MN, IA, MO, IL, AR, OH, NY, PA, WV, VA, NC, ME, NH, MA, CT, NJ, DE, MD—Photo Voter ID Legislation Proposed.

OR, WY, UT, AZ, ND, KY, VT—No Existing Photo Voter ID Law, No Current Legislation.

#### STATES WHERE VOTING CHANGES WERE PURSUED AND TYPES OF CHANGES ENACTED

Legislation introduced—AK, OR, CA, NV, MT, CO, NM, NE, KS, TX, MN, IA, MO, AR, WI, IL, TN, MS, OH, WV, VA, NC, AL, GA, FL, SC, MD, DE, NJ, CT, RI, MA, NH, ME, NY, PA, HI.

Photo ID requirements passed—KS, TX, WI, TN, AL, SC, RI.

Proof of citizenship passed—KS, TN, AL.

Restrictions on voter registration passed—TX, OH, ME, FL.

Restrictions on early/absentee voting passed—TN, GA, FL, WV, OH.

Executive action making it harder to restore voting rights—IA, FL.

### AFGHANISTAN

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have an article that is dated today, Monday, May 7, 2012, from the Associated Press, Congress's Intelligence Heads: Taliban Has Grown Stronger under Obama.

Senator DIANNE FEINSTEIN and Representative MIKE ROGERS, who I just saw outside, a smart guy, former FBI

agent, well respected in the areas of law enforcement and the security of this country, well, as the article points out, and there are other articles as well, I believe Human Events also had one, but this article from the AP says:

The leaders of congressional intelligence committees said Sunday they believed that the Taliban had grown stronger since President Barack Obama sent 33,000 more U.S. troops to Afghanistan in 2010.

The pessimistic report by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., challenges Obama's own assessment last week in his visit to Kabul that the "tide had turned" and that "we broke the Taliban's momentum."

The two recently returned from a fact-finding trip to the region where they met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

"President Karzai believes that the Taliban will not come back. I'm not so sure," Feinstein said. "The Taliban has a shadow system of governors in many provinces."

When asked if the Taliban's capabilities have been degraded since Obama deployed the additional troops two years ago, Feinstein said: "I think we'd both say that what we've found is that the Taliban is stronger."

I was in Afghanistan a couple weeks ago. I was in Afghanistan a couple months before that. And as one of the Afghans pointed out, former ally—well, they are still allies, as far as they are concerned. This administration has thrown them under the bus—but they pointed out, you know, from the Taliban's perspective, they have said we, the Taliban, do not have to win a single battle. All we have to do is be here when the United States leaves.

Now, a couple of weeks ago, of course, the administration, two Cabinet members, were requesting that my dear friend, DANA ROHRBACHER, not go into Afghanistan for one reason—that President Hamid Karzai didn't want him to come in. Now, apparently, Karzai, ignorant of what is actually going on in Washington, had said that my friend, Congressman ROHRBACHER, proposed a bill that would partition or divide up Afghanistan. Well, I worked with Congressman ROHRBACHER on his very good bill, and basically it is a sense of Congress that says we support the Afghans' right to vote for their leaders.

Now, I understand Secretary Clinton inherited a State Department and a situation in Afghanistan that was not of her making. I get that. And, in fact, we sat by and even assisted as Afghanistan created a constitution based on sharia law that has now resulted in the last public Christian church closing. It's a system where the President gets to appoint governors, mayors, chiefs of police, many of the higher-level teachers, slate of legislators. He gets powerful control over so much of the purse strings. So it was amazing to see the President over kind of doing what appeared to be a victory lap around Afghanistan and back home: gee, the Taliban's back is broken, things are looking good, and we now have an agreement going forward with Afghanistan. Great news.