

But specifically on this amendment, again I'd like to thank the gentleman from Missouri for his work on this. This amendment would ensure that the General Services Administration accounts for the total cost in the design or lease of a building.

Very often GSA makes decisions that bind the taxpayer to significant financial obligations when procuring space. And unfortunately, currently GSA's analyses do not take into account the total life-cycle cost of the taxpayer investment. This amendment would correct this. I support the adoption of this amendment as I've supported other adoptions tonight.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DENHAM. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise in support of Mr. CARNAHAN's amendment, and he ran out of time. First of all, I see a lot of comity and collegiality on the floor tonight. I've known the gentledady from the District of Columbia for a very long time. Mr. CARNAHAN said something that struck my conscience, and that is that we are able to master this legislative process that allows us to negotiate to the moment that we might get this on the floor, which I understand may be tomorrow.

I would encourage whatever it is possible to do, Mr. DENHAM. I've gotten to know you—whatever is possible for a bill as important as this. You mentioned the possibility of language, reconciliation. I cannot speak for the gentledady from the District of Columbia, and I don't intend to do so. But I do know her as a person who keeps her word, who loves this Capitol, which she represents, and has a deep and abiding concern about the homeless and obviously this issue of the use of property.

□ 2010

I only entreat you to see what is possible as you have debated on the floor this evening for Mr. CARNAHAN and my amendment. I would encourage that there be further discussions if you and the gentledady can secure that opportunity. I think both would be able to hopefully have dialogue, but I do want to have on record my high esteem and respect for her leadership on these issues. You are very kind to have yielded to me.

Mr. DENHAM. In reclaiming my time, I support the amendment, and look forward to bipartisan support on the bill tomorrow morning. This is something that taxpayers need. This is something that will help us to reduce our debt in a way in which Republicans and Democrats can come together and work on something on a bipartisan level and actually give something back to the President that he is asking for.

I yield back the balance of my time. The CHAIR. The gentleman from Missouri has 1 minute remaining.

Mr. CARNAHAN. I want to thank the gentleman for his remarks.

The ranking member has asked to speak for the remaining time, so I would yield that 1 minute to our ranking member, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON).

Ms. NORTON. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I support the Carnahan amendment, and I just want to indicate what the agreement was with the chairman.

In the base bill, we would have a bill that Democrats and Republicans would support. What we have here is a bill that somehow Republicans are divided on and that Democrats are expected to somehow carry over the finish line. If, in fact, this bill had come as a base bill, I think you would have had Democrats in larger numbers supporting this bill. Whatever Republicans wanted to do with the fact that the base bill did not always conform exactly to what they would have wanted would have been made up for on our side.

The CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. DENHAM. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. AMODEI) having assumed the chair, Mr. WOODALL, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1734) to decrease the deficit by realigning, consolidating, selling, disposing, and improving the efficiency of federal buildings and other civilian real property, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS: VOTER PROTECTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This evening, the Congressional Black Caucus is pleased to have a few minutes of Special Order time to again come back to the issue of voter protection.

As we know, many States have either passed laws restricting voter participation in elections or are in the process of doing so. These attacks, as we said last week, have taken many forms. They've been expanding the ban that prevents felons from voting, cutting election administration budgets, curtailing early voting, and eliminating same-day registration.

Just in November, two members of the Congressional Black Caucus, KEITH ELLISON and GWEN MOORE, introduced a bill, the Voter Access Protection Act, which would protect those rights and restore same-day voter registration. The bill would reverse both the laws

that curtail early voting and that eliminate same-day registration. Some of these laws allow for the intimidation of voter registration groups. Some States are imposing strict ID requirements, creating barriers in getting the required ID and also putting up barriers to students who vote where they attend school.

Tonight, I am going to be joined by several Members, beginning with Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE from Texas, to again begin to raise the country's awareness of some of the voting restrictions that are being put in place across this country and to let the public know that the Congressional Black Caucus, just as we did last year, will go across the country to raise awareness of the need for jobs. We will have job fairs from which we have actually put people to work in several cities across this country. We've matched people who were out of work with jobs. We're still waiting for this Congress to pass jobs legislation, the American Jobs Act, and many of the other pieces of legislation that the CBC and other Members have put forth, but this time we're going to go across the country and focus on protecting the right of Americans to vote.

At this time, I would yield such time as she might consume to Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE of Texas.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Let me thank Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN for her leadership as well as thank our chairman, EMANUEL CLEAVER. We had the opportunity to host him in Houston this past weekend, and he raised the issue of the challenges of voter protection.

I see that we are joined by our colleague from Ohio. MARCY KAPTUR has been a champion on these issues as well, and, frankly, has seen her State be in the crosshairs of trying to protect all citizens' right to vote.

I just want to follow up and say the Voting Rights Act is an act that dignifies all voters because its premise is one person, one vote. The tenets and the premise of the Voting Rights Act as passed: No matter what your background in this Nation, you have an opportunity to vote. If we keep with the integrity of the Voting Rights Act, the gist of its message is don't block individuals from voting. That's simply what its message is.

This is more than appropriate for which to rise to the floor today because this is the month of the birth of Barbara Jordan, February 21. Last year was her 75th year, and we're still commemorating it in Houston. She was, again, part mother of the Voting Rights Act by adding language minorities. By doing that, she spread the coverage of the Voting Rights Act beyond the Deep South, which was the original core group of States that was signed into law in 1965.

So I say thank you to the Honorable Barbara Jordan, one of our colleagues and a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. I stand here today to reject any undermining of the legislative

intent and the coming together of Republicans and Democrats who voted for that extension at the time she was in the United States Congress.

□ 2020

Now we've come more than 30-some years later. When we reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 2007, there were a lot of rumors and thought that we were extinguishing the Voting Rights Act. In fact, I want to put all of our colleagues on notice that the Voting Rights Act is always, in essence, in the crosshairs or in jeopardy for people who believe wrongly about the Voting Rights Act.

The Voting Rights Act and protecting voters' rights, again, is to make sure that seniors, to make sure that the disabled, to make sure that those who face hardships—as we recall, there were enormous hardships during Hurricane Katrina, when the citizens of New Orleans were literally blocked from voting just because of the infrastructure collapse; and there were terrible conditions in Alabama and Missouri with tornadoes.

I recall the infrastructure of the 2004 election in Ohio when our dear, late colleague Stephanie Tubbs Jones, worked so hard, along with MARCY KAPTUR, to thwart the breakdown of machines. I remember it well. We came to the floor. We took issue with the election because how is it that, all of a sudden, you have a breakdown of voting machines, interestingly enough, in the minority community?

So this issue of voter protection is far-reaching. It is not necessarily as clear-cut as some would like to say, "It's for those people." It's not for "those people." In fact, it is for all Americans.

And right now, we have a dilemma. The dilemma is that we have an epidemic. Some 40 States have passed what we call voter ID. Texas happens to be one of those States. Ohio was one of those States—and I'm not going to give Ms. KAPTUR's comments, but I do want to congratulate Ohio for the work that they did. And she will tell you, it was in the crosshairs. Again, I use that frequently. It was conflicted, but it has been resolved; and she will, I'm sure, address that.

But there are other States who now are subjected to the oppressive, depressive voter ID law. In the instance of the State of Texas, might I say, that State allows you to use your gun license to vote; but a student State-issued ID cannot be used. Elderly people now have to travel miles, many of whom were born with midwives and missing birth certificates, as was my mother who held onto her voting card that she legitimately got until the end of her life. But she could not vote today because, try as we may, for Ivalita Jackson to find her birth certificate—we went halfway around the world and still were not able to secure a certified copy of her birth certificate. I knew she was born because she lived.

And then I have had seniors in my own district in wheelchairs, where they went with their family members to the site where they are to get their voter ID, waiting long hours.

Right now in the State of Texas, we don't have an election date. We don't even know what to tell our constituents about getting a voter ID because—thank goodness, if I might say—we're now presently being reviewed by the Department of Justice whether to preclear or not to preclear this voter ID law. I hope that truth will prevail that it is depressive and oppressive.

So I am very grateful that the Congressional Black Caucus will be traveling to cities in a variety of regions of this Nation, including our Southwest region, to argue vigorously for voter protections and for ensuring the protection of all people's right to vote. I hope, as we experienced in 2010, that the King Street Patriots who plagued our inner city precincts—many of whom I saw—will not intimidate our voters. I hope that when this election comes—for poll watchers and others that come into our voting areas, minority and poor areas, people who have the right to vote—that we will be there protecting everyone's right to vote.

Let me be very clear: Poor is not a respective color. It impacts all. And poor people who have difficulty in going somewhere to get a voter ID, or in some States paying \$40, a new poll tax, or can't get off from work, that's voter protection. You can imagine there are people who work who are afraid to ask their bosses for the allotted time off for them to be able to vote.

The efforts of the Congressional Black Caucus, joining with our colleagues, will stand up for each and every American. I am glad that President Lyndon Baines Johnson, a Texan—I was just marveling at him today; and his daughter, Luci Baines Johnson, joined us when we honored Barbara Jordan's 75th birthday just a few months ago. We will continue that with additional commemoration.

But the key is loving the right to vote, protecting the right to vote; and supporting the Voting Rights Act is not solely with respect to color. We welcome everyone who will accept the fact that it is our birthright, as citizens, to be able to not be thwarted and stopped and blocked from going to a poll and expressing our right to democracy.

Finally, let me say, I had the privilege of working for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and I might say, it wasn't that long ago. It was some years ago, but it wasn't that long ago. And my friends, let me tell you, I traveled throughout Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, the core States, among others, that started out with Dr. King's great march and great efforts to push the Congress and the President toward recognizing how many people were left out of the right to vote. As a worker for the Southern

Christian Leadership Conference in the 1970s and beyond, I would go into places where people of African American descent were frightened to vote, were not registered to vote, were sharecroppers on plantations—and I venture to say that there are crises in communities like that even today. For us to go into those places was almost as if we were creating an overthrow of the government.

I remember very distinctly—and I will say it on this floor—going up to a leaning shanty building which was the place where these sharecroppers and others who lived in the area were supposed to be voting. The voting booth was, if you will, a ragged cloth covering an area that you allegedly were going to vote in. Sitting on the front porch of this tattered general store was a gentleman sitting with a rifle across his lap to suggest no one is welcome here. When I went up with my then rather young self, starry-eyed and trying to ask if this was the voting site, all I could hear my colleagues say is "Run; he has a gun." And the next thing I heard as we were bending down behind cars—something I had never heard that close to me—was shots ringing out. This is not a joke. This is not something we don't take seriously. I'll never forget that day for as long as I live, that someone would block anyone from coming to a sacred and somber place to cast a vote for a person of their choosing.

I want to thank the gentlelady for allowing me to participate, recognizing that this fight is a fight that we should never give up, and we should never categorize that voting rights is something about those minorities. Voting rights are American rights, and they're rights vested in the Declaration of Independence, which starts out by saying, We all are created equal, with certain unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

With that, I yield back to the gentlewoman, closing and saying, the right to vote is part of the pursuit of happiness.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today joined by my fellow Congressional Black Caucus Members to speak about a challenge facing millions of Americans. This challenge skews the Constitutional fabric of our American society. This fabric, woven together by liberty, justice, and equal rights, has endured tremendous odds throughout the history of this great nation.

During Black History Month, we celebrate the vast contributions of African Americans to our nation's history and identity. Throughout America's history, African American men and women have persevered through much hardship and prejudice to enrich our national life in innumerable ways.

There are new landmarks to celebrate as time marches forward. In November 2008, Americans elected the first African American to be President. In October 2011, the new Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on the National Mall was dedicated. On February 22, there will be groundbreaking ceremony, on the National Mall near the Washington Monument, for the National Museum of African American

History and Culture, which Congress authorized in December 2003. It is expected to open in 2015.

The theme of Black History Month this year is “Black Women in American Culture and History.” This gives all Americans the opportunity to pay tribute to the role African American women have played in shaping our nation—with African American women often serving as champions of social and political reforms.

Many African American families are still bearing the brunt of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. In September, President Obama sent to Congress the American Jobs Act, which would strengthen the economy and is estimated to create 1.9 million jobs. Over the last several months, Republican obstruction has been blocking this bill from moving forward.

“Jobs and the economy are the number-one issue for African American families, just as they are for all American families,” commented Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE. “That is why my immediate focus is on fighting for a payroll tax cut for 20 million African American workers and to extend the lifeline of unemployment insurance for those who have lost a job through no fault of their own.

I will also continue to work for the enactment of other provisions of the President’s American Jobs Act, that create jobs by helping small businesses hire and grow, putting construction workers back on the job rebuilding America, and preventing the layoff of teachers, firefighters and police officers. These steps are critical to helping improve the lives of African American families all across the country.”

As we celebrate Black History Month let us pay tribute to the extraordinary contributions of past generations of African Americans and work to reignite the American Dream today and for the next generation. We must continue to work for an America that fully lives up to its ideals and allows all Americans to reach their full potential.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this Body about the need to protect 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.

As we enter into Black History Month, it is important to recognize the legacy that the right to vote has placed upon our nation. Black History Month is a celebration of people who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we stand, of people who stand among us today transfixed on a goal to achieve even more. It is a time to pause and renew our commitment to realize the progress and achievements of our people and to go much further as we write our own chapter; a time to continue the legacy of African American History. Today, African Americans, as other minorities, know that we have not yet overcome the weight of not being treated as full citizens of this great nation.

During Black History Month, we recognize and celebrate the countless contributions of African American pioneers. These honorable men and women faced unimaginable hardships and refused to allow the racial inequalities and injustices of our past to inhibit their destiny. While we recognize these celebrated American heroes, it is important to understand that Black History Month was also designed to highlight the extraordinary lives of ordinary people who have helped build our great na-

tion. Let us celebrate the African Americans who made amazing sacrifices in the name of justice and equality in the past and let us recommit ourselves to continuing to work for an America that fully lives up to its ideals and ensures that every American has the tools and opportunity to pursue the American Dream. In the present era, our African American elected officials and the presidents of the various civil rights, fraternal, business and religious organizations continue to encourage our nation to keep its commitment to freedom and equality.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. Speaker, I am joined by my colleagues here today to call on all Americans to reject and denounce tactics and measures that have absolutely no place in this nation in 2012. We cannot turn the clock back on the progress made by African Americans, and other minorities, throughout the past century. We have made tremendous strides. Recent voter ID legislation in states has attempted to turn back the clock to disenfranchise millions of minorities in today’s America.

During this Black History Month, we recognize the value that voting has placed upon our society. In 1869, Americans voted to elect the first African American to the U.S. Senate—Hiram Revels. Also in 1870, the right to vote allowed Joseph H. Rainey to become the first black member of the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1962, Americans elected Augustus Hawkins, the first African American from California, to this great Body.

American citizens cast their ballots in 1968 to elect Shirley Chisholm as the first African American woman in Congress. In 1972, American citizens exercised their right to vote and elected the distinguished Barbara Jordan, who represented the 18th Congressional District of Texas that I am now privileged to serve. In 2008, Americans cast their ballots for Barack Obama, and elected him to become the first African American President of the United States. President Obama’s historical election has given hope to millions of African Americans across the country. In the face of great odds, the right to vote has given Americans the power to stand fast for justice and fairness, and yield to no one in the matter of defending the Constitution and upholding the most sacred principles of a democratic government.

As a Member of this body, I firmly believe that we must protect the rights of all eligible citizens to vote. Over the past 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 are beginning 2012, these efforts continue.

African Americans have always believed in the principles set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. I call on all Americans to band together to fight for these principles and against efforts to limit the right to vote for our elderly, African-Americans, Hispanic and Latino Americans, as well as Asian-American voters. Let us stand together for the voting rights that are granted to citizens of our nation by our laws and our Constitution.

I call on Americans to stand against any measures that would have the effect of preventing every eligible citizen from being able to vote. Voting ensures active participation in democracy. The most effective way to curb tactics of intimidation and harassment is to vote.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Never in the history of our nation, has the effect of one person, one vote, been more important. Our history has taught us that denying the right to vote based on race, gender or class is a blemish on the democratic principles that we all value. The Voting Rights Act (VRA) was a reaction to the actions of our past and a way to pave the road to a new future.

The VRA was adopted in 1965 and was extended in 1970, 1975, and 1982. This legislation is considered the most successful piece of civil rights legislation ever adopted by the United States Congress. The Act was due for reauthorization in the 2nd session of the 108th Congress. The 108th voted to continue to protect voting rights for all Americans in the future.

Under the VRA, states with a long history of voting discrimination must obtain the approval of the Justice Department or the D.C. District Court to change their voting practices. In 2006, Congress passed legislation that continued to grant all Americans the right to vote. Four states with new voter identification mandates, including my home state of Texas, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Alabama, are required under the Voting Rights Act to have these voting changes pre-cleared by either the Department of Justice (DOJ) or a panel of federal judges. Before they may be implemented, DOJ must certify that these laws do not have the purpose or effect of restricting voting by racial or language minority groups.

No right is more fundamental than the right to vote. It is protected by more constitutional amendments than any other right we enjoy as Americans. Broad political participation ensures the preservation of all our other rights and freedoms. State laws that impose new restrictions on voting, however, undermine our democracy by impeding access to the polls and reducing the number of Americans who vote and whose votes are counted.

CURRENT PRACTICES OF DISENFRANCHISEMENT

There have been several restrictive voting bills considered and approved by states in the past several years. 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.

A new crop of GOP governors and state legislators has passed a series of seemingly disconnected measures that could prevent millions of students, minorities, immigrants, ex-convicts and the elderly from casting ballots. Republicans have long tried to drive Democratic voters away from the polls. In a systematic campaign 38 states introduced legislation this year designed to impede voters at every step of the electoral process.

A dozen states have approved new obstacles to voting. Kansas and Alabama now require would-be voters to provide proof of citizenship before registering. Florida and Texas made it harder for groups like the League of Women Voters to register new voters. Maine repealed Election Day voter registration, which had been on the books since 1973. Florida,

Georgia, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia—cut short their early voting periods. Florida and Iowa barred all ex-felons from the polls, disenfranchising thousands of previously eligible voters. And 6 states controlled by Republican governors and legislatures—Alabama, Kansas, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin—will require voters to produce a government-issued ID before casting ballots.

Furthermore, 6 states have introduced legislation to impose new restrictions on voter registration drives run by groups like Rock the Vote and the League of Women Voters. The Republican-controlled legislature in Florida passed a law requiring anyone who signs up new voters to hand in registration forms to the state board of elections within 48 hours of collecting them, and to comply with a bombardment of burdensome, bureaucratic requirements. Those found to have submitted late forms would face a \$1,000 fine, as well as possible felony prosecution. As a result, the law threatens to turn civic-minded volunteers into unintentional criminals.

Florida and Ohio—which now have conservative Republican governors—have shortened the time for early voting for 2012. Early voting will be cut from 14 to 8 days in Florida and from 35 to 11 days in Ohio, with limited hours on weekends. In addition, both states banned voting on the Sunday before the election—a day when black churches historically mobilize their constituents.

The biggest change in election rules for 2012 is the number of states requiring a government-issued photo ID, the most important tactic in the Republican war on voting. In Texas, under “emergency” legislation passed by the GOP-dominated legislature and signed by Gov. Rick Perry, a concealed-weapon permit is considered an acceptable ID but a student ID is not. Republicans in Wisconsin mandated that students can only vote if their IDs include a current address, birth date, signature and two-year expiration date—requirements that no college or university ID in the state currently meets. As a result, 242,000 students in Wisconsin may lack the documentation required to vote next year.

In South Carolina, the 178,000 South Carolinians who do not have a state-issued ID must pay for a passport or a birth certificate to obtain the free state-issued ID now required to vote. Under the new law, many elderly black residents—who were born at home in the segregated South and never had a birth certificate—must now go to family court to prove their identity.

PROPOSERS

The proponents of voter identification legislation suggest that there is extensive voter fraud when Americans go to the polls. Mr. Speaker, I am here to lay that claim to rest. Laws requiring photo identification to vote are a “solution” in search of a problem. The fact is voter fraud in this United States is rare. 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.

A major probe by the Justice Department between 2002 and 2007 failed to prosecute a

single person for going to the polls and impersonating an eligible voter, which the anti-fraud laws are supposedly designed to stop. Out of the 300 million votes cast in that period, federal prosecutors convicted only 86 people for voter fraud—and many of the cases involved immigrants and former felons who were simply unaware of their ineligibility.

According to Barnard political scientist Lorraine Minnite, most instances of improper voting involve registration and eligibility, such as voters filling out registration forms incorrectly or a person with felony convictions attempting to register. Neither of those issues would be prevented by a state photo ID requirement. According to George Washington University law professor Spencer Overton, a former member of the Commission on Federal Election Reform, “a photo ID requirement would prevent over 1,000 legitimate votes (perhaps over 10,000 legitimate votes) for every single improper vote prevented.”

There are people who believe that voter ID is required because perpetrators of voting fraud do not face serious legal consequences. Both federal and state laws include stiff fines and imprisonment for voter fraud. Under federal law, perpetrators face up to five years in prison and a fine of \$10,000 for each act of fraud. In Alabama, voter fraud is punishable by up to two years in prison and a \$2,000 fine. In Wisconsin, the punishment is up to 3½ years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. Missouri imposes a penalty of up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. And in Texas, the maximum prison sentence is 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, proponents further suggest that requiring ID at the polls impact all voters equally. Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth is State photo ID restrictions disproportionately impact African Americans, Latinos, young voters, people over 65 and people with disabilities. The Advancement Project showed that 11 percent of eligible voters, or about 21 million people, don’t have updated, state-issued photo IDs: 25 percent of which are African Americans, 15 percent of those earning less than \$35,000, 18 percent of citizens age 65 or older and 20 percent of voters age 18 to 29.

Mr. Speaker, those who wish to restrict the right of Americans to vote believe that new voter ID laws are cheap and easy for states and citizens. 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 contrary to the fundamental right to vote.

The Advancement Project’s report “What’s Wrong With This Picture?” shows that taxpayers will bear the costs of these measures—more than \$20 million in North Carolina, for example, to educate voters and provide free IDs to those without them, as the state’s law requires. For voters, even if an ID is free, getting the documents to obtain it can be expensive and difficult.

Many states require at least four original forms of identification to obtain a photo ID—documents such as a certified birth certificate, marriage or divorce record, adoption record, a Social Security card, or naturalization papers. A birth certificate in Texas costs \$22, a U.S. passport costs as much as \$145 and natu-

ralization papers can run up to \$200. People born out of state who lack transportation, work multiple jobs, have disabilities, or are homebound or poor cannot access or afford these documents.

Now that many states have reduced hours and locations of motor vehicle departments and other agencies because of budget cutbacks, getting an ID can be a battle. In Wisconsin, 25 percent of DMV offices are open one day a month or less, and fewer than half are open at least 20 hours a week. What can prospective voters who have to work or care for their children during these limited hours do but go without?

Mr. Speaker, current voter ID laws are based on partisan politics. The push for photo ID laws and other restrictions is largely championed by Republicans and conservative groups. Record rates of voter registration and turnout among young and minority voters in 2008 affected federal races across the nation, as about two-thirds of new voters registered as Democrats in the 29 states that record party affiliation. The 2010 midterms put more conservatives in office who want to combat this trend. The right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council, for example, drafted and promoted photo ID legislation that was introduced in more than 30 states.

IMPACT OF REQUIRING VOTER ID

These recent changes are on top of the disfranchisement laws in states that deprive minorities of their political voice. 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 the elderly. Minority citizens are less likely to possess government-issued photo identification. African-American citizens also disproportionately lack photo identification. Nearly 25% of African-American voting-age citizens have no current government-issued photo ID, compared to 8% of white voting-age citizens. Using 2000 census figures, this amounts to more than 5.5 million adult African-American citizens without photo identification. Further, about 16% of Hispanic voting-age citizens have no current government-issued photo ID.

It is important 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 that are 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.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, citizens with comparatively low incomes are less likely to possess photo identification. Citizens earning less than \$35,000 per year are more than twice as likely to lack current government-issued photo identification as those earning more than \$35,000. At least 15 percent of voting-age American citizens earning

less than \$35,000 per year do not have a valid government-issued photo ID. Low-income individuals who lack the funds to pay for documentation, people with disabilities with limited access to transportation, and elderly citizens are less likely to possess government-issued photo identification. Nearly 18% of American citizens age 65 and above do not have current government-issued photo ID. Using 2005 census estimates, this amounts to more than 6 million senior citizens.

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.

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.

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.

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.

A long, bitter, and bloody struggle was fought for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 so that all Americans could enjoy the right to vote, regardless of race, ethnicity, or national origin. Americans died in that fight so that others could achieve what they had been forcefully deprived of for centuries—the ability to walk freely and without fear into the polling place and cast a voting ballot.

VOTER ID

An election with integrity is one that is open to every eligible voter. Restrictive voter ID requirements degrade the integrity of our elections by systematically excluding large numbers of eligible Americans.

I do not argue with the notion that we must prevent individuals from voting who are not allowed to vote. Yet a hidden argument in this bill is that immigrants may “infiltrate” our voting system. Legal immigrants who have successfully navigated the citizenship maze are unlikely to draw the attention of the authorities by attempting to register incorrectly. Similarly, undocumented immigrants are even less likely to risk deportation just to influence an election.

If for no other reason than after a major disaster be it earth quakes, fires, floods or hurricanes, we must all understand how vulnerable our system is. Families fleeing the hurricanes and fires suffered loss of property that included lost documents. Compounding this was

the devastation of the region, which virtually shut down civil services in the area. For example, New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina were scattered across 44 states. These uprooted citizens had difficulty registering and voting both with absentee ballots and at satellite voting stations. As a result, those elections took place fully 8 months after the disaster, and it required the efforts of non-profits, such as the NAACP, to ensure that voters had the access they are constitutionally guaranteed.

We need to address the election fraud that we know is occurring, such as voting machine integrity and poll volunteer training and competence. After every election that occurs in this country, we have solid documented evidence of voting inconsistencies and errors. In 2004, in New Mexico, malfunctioning machines mysteriously failed to properly register a presidential vote on more than 20,000 ballots. 1 million ballots nationwide were flawed by faulty voting equipment—roughly one for every 100 cast.

Those who face the most significant barriers are not only the poor, minorities, and rural populations. 1.5 million college students, whose addresses often change, will also have difficulty providing documentation.

In fact, newly married individuals face significant barriers to completing a change in surname. For instance, it can take 6- 8 weeks to receive the marriage certificate in the mail, another two weeks (and a full day waiting in line) to get the new Social Security card, and finally three-four weeks to get the new driver's license. There is a significant possibility that this bill will also prohibit newlyweds from voting if they are married within three months of Election Day.

The right to vote is a critical and sacred constitutionally protected civil right. To challenge this is to erode our democracy, challenge justice, and mock our moral standing. I urge my colleagues to join me in dismissing this crippling legislation, and pursue effective solutions to the real problems of election fraud and error. We cannot let the rhetoric of an election year destroy a fundamental right upon which we have established liberty and freedom.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank you for coming and for making that very strong presentation and for sharing that story with us which lets us know that, not so very long ago, people were really blocked from voting and took their lives in their hands just trying to exercise that simple right, the right to vote.

I would like to now yield to our colleague from Ohio, Congresswoman MARCY KAPTUR.

□ 2030

Ms. KAPTUR. I want to thank Dr. CHRISTENSEN for holding this very, very important Special Order as we begin Black History Month here in the United States and say how proud I am to serve with her, her path-breaking work in health care, leading us to coverage for all, to Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE. I had not heard that story, what she personally has lived and helped push America forward to a new day. It is my distinct pleasure and honor to be here with them tonight.

I wanted to participate in this Special Order because of what we are going through in Texas and Ohio and Florida, and around this country with redistricting. It is true that Ohio, because the population hasn't grown, has to lose two seats. But we have seen a redistricting like none other. I wanted to put some of this on the record because I think scholars around the country and young people studying could really take a look at what has happened in this recent redistricting that I think has a subtle and very insidious agenda that isn't immediately apparent to the eye.

I had a woman come up to me yesterday in a church in Ohio. She happened to be an African American woman. She said: I want to ask you a question, Congresswoman. Why is my voting location changed all of the time? Why is my precinct flipped all the time?

I said: You know, ma'am, I know something is going on here that isn't good. Ohio was never technically a voting rights State, but there's something strange. And I thought I would put on the record some of what's strange about what's happening in Ohio.

Individuals like herself constantly have to go to a different precinct. She never moved her house. She lives in the same place. A lot of people maybe don't realize that their precinct has been changed, and some percent of people will not go to the other precinct. It may be a small percent. It may be 0.02 percent; but you add that up around a State that votes 50/50, and you begin to see a fall off in voting.

I can tell you this, and I wish to place this on the Nation's record tonight: for every Republican Congress Member from Ohio who sits here, and they have the majority, 13 out of 18, their home county was kept whole. Every single one. But for every Democrat—there are only five of us out of 18—their home county was crashed and broken up into parts.

Every urban county, if you look around at the five of us who are here: Cuyahoga has been split into four parts in a very strange way; Lucas County is missing its western half now; you go down to Akron, you look at that county, cities like Parma, Parma, Ohio, one of the largest cities in Ohio, sliced in half. What do those places all have in common? They all happen to be urban areas. They have mixed populations. They have diversity. They like people who aren't like themselves. They like the diversity of life. Those communities have been hacked apart in Ohio.

Our colleague, Congresswoman BETTY SUTTON, 42 percent of the precincts in her new district are broken. That means booth workers can make mistakes. More than one Member of Congress is running in that precinct. Sometimes as many as three are running in the same precinct. When that goes on the ballot, do you realize how much confusion, even if everybody has an IQ of a gazillion, somebody is going to go in the booth and put the wrong

vote on the ballot because of the confusion with so many Members running in the same precinct.

Booth workers will make mistakes. And just like the woman I mentioned at the beginning whose precinct keeps changing although she hasn't moved, there is a certain percentage of error involved in that. And it's happening in the Democratic areas, not the Republican.

So I would say this: I would ask those who are listening tonight to think about really peeling apart the layers of this redistricting in places like Texas and Ohio and look at the subtle nature of the type of gerrymandering that's being done around the country. Communities are being hacked apart. Communities of interest are being hacked apart.

Doesn't Parma, Ohio, have the right to be its own city? It's hard enough to get things done across communities where needs are great. We have so many people losing their homes. There's all kinds of problems in this country with the unemployment, but we make it harder for communities to hold together. There seems to be something un-American about that. There seems to be something really ugly, something very insidious when it pulls people apart rather than holds them together.

We have one Congressman, actually a Republican from the other side of the aisle. Ohio has 88 counties. Do you know how many counties they put in his district, 20; 20 out of 88. That means 60 county commissioners. Can you imagine how many mayors? Unbelievable. This makes no sense. But it's what happened. And I am very concerned, as my colleagues are, about what happens to people who are elderly, who can't travel far, who sometimes have trouble seeing.

And as you start switching things around and you make it more difficult, even I notice the way they print the absentee ballots in Ohio—I'm glad to have them early—but you need a magnifying glass to see the letters when we know that the population in many of these urban areas are a high percentage of senior citizens.

There's something very un-American, something very unfriendly about what is going on here. It makes me think about the Voting Rights Act and maybe strengthening it and taking a particular look at urban areas that are being broken up in very, very strange ways. You can't even explain, the lines don't even make any sense where they are putting them in urban areas. It's like they are shattering communities of interest. There's something really wrong about that.

I wanted to say also to Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN, in Ohio we've had a lot of great African Americans. I've had the opportunity to serve with some of them here, and I would like to place in the RECORD tonight the names of some of them in honor of Black History Month.

One of the individuals I would like to talk about is a great writer, Toni Morrison, a woman who was born in Lorain, Ohio, now part of the Ninth Congressional District. We know how important Black History Month is because it's the time of the year to reflect and be thankful for the countless contributions of African Americans like Ms. Morrison who have made enduring contributions to American life and to world history.

This year's Black History Month theme is "Black Women in American Culture and History." And I would say this Caucasian woman is very proud to join my colleagues of color and say that I'm glad it's all women down here tonight for the moment because, really, our voices need to be magnified, and certainly Ms. Morrison did that. In honoring women, we honor her. She is exactly the type of person we should be recognizing, given this Black History Month's theme, for her work in American literature.

She is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and became the first black woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature, making her the 90th Nobel Laureate in literature. She came from Lorain, Ohio. She didn't come from the places that are known as the cultural meccas. She came from a tough place where people work hard for a living. She was born during the Great Depression in that working-class city. Ms. Morrison showed an interest in literature at an early age. Through hard work, she received degrees from Howard University here and Cornell. She subsequently taught at Texas Southern University, Howard University, Yale, and Princeton. Her contributions to American history come from her six novels. During her Nobel Prize ceremony, the Permanent Secretary of the Academy said: "In her depictions of the world of the black people, in life as in legend, Toni Morrison has given the Afro-American people their history back, piece by piece."

Mr. Speaker let us take time to fully recognize the contributions of Toni Morrison and the many others during this year's Black History Month. While the United States is facing many challenges today, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the work of leaders such as Toni Morrison do not go unnoticed.

I just wanted to mention, also, she penned a story about a girl from her childhood who prayed for blue eyes. I happen to have blue eyes. I never thought about that. She said this was the basis for her first novel, "The Bluest Eye," published in 1970. I have to say I admire the African American people because I always wanted curly hair, and I never really had it. So you see, we learn from one another and appreciate from one another.

In concluding tonight, let me say that I wish to place in the RECORD from the Cleveland Plain Dealer a wonderful story honoring the achievements of great African Americans who have come from our part of America. There

are a few whose names I would like to read into the RECORD: Langston Hughes, playwright, poet and writer; our dear beloved colleague, Stephanie Tubbs Jones, the first black woman to be elected to Congress from Ohio. I miss her to this day. I have her picture in my office. Halle Berry, the first black woman to win an Academy Award as best actress. Think about that.

□ 2040

Carl B. Stokes was the first black mayor—first black mayor—of a major American city, and it was Cleveland, Ohio—Cleveland, Ohio. We are so proud of that. And I was proud to serve with his bother, Louis Stokes, who was here for so many years, who preceded me on the Appropriations Committee.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker. There are others who wish to speak tonight. But I have to say, I'm proud to be an Ohioan, one of the States that was always a free State, home of the Underground Railroad as it came through, and people disembarked and escaped for their lives to places like Canada through northern Ohio, through the communities that I am privileged to represent now.

I am very proud to stand with my colleague, Dr. CHRISTENSEN, here tonight, in honoring all Americans, certainly in this Black History Month, and what they have taught us over our centuries about full representation and the decent and fair treatment of people. What a legacy they have given and continue to create for our country. I want to thank the gentlelady for yielding to me this evening.

[From Cleveland.com—The Plain Dealer, Feb. 2, 2012]

TONI MORRISON, AUTHOR, WON PULITZER, NOBEL PRIZES: BLACK HISTORY MONTH
(By Ellen Kleinerman)

As part of Black History Month, we recognize Toni Morrison, a Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and the first black woman to win a Nobel Prize in literature.

Morrison, born Chloe Anthony Wofford in 1931, grew up during the Great Depression in a working-class neighborhood in Lorain, where European immigrants, Mexicans and Southern blacks lived. As a child, Morrison listened intently to the stories her parents, Ramah and George Wofford, told of the traditions and struggles of blacks in the South.

Morrison earned a B.A. at Howard University in 1953 and an M.A. at Cornell University in 1955 in humanities. At Howard, she met Jamaican architect Harold Morrison. They married in 1958, had two sons and divorced six years later. For a temporary escape from her unhappy marriage, Morrison joined a small writer's group, where she penned a story about a girl from her childhood who prayed for blue eyes. This was the basis for her first novel "The Bluest Eye," published in 1970.

Morrison worked for Random House publishing and taught at several universities including Yale and Princeton.

Her novel "Beloved," about a captured slave woman who tried to kill her children rather than see them live as slaves, won the Pulitzer in 1988. She won the Nobel Prize in 1993

[From Cleveland.com—[The Plain Dealer, Feb. 2, 2012]

HONORING ACHIEVEMENTS

As part of Black History Month, The Plain Dealer will recognize accomplishments of the region's black community. The newspaper will profile important people, places and events daily through February.

This is the second year that the paper has published a monthlong series of profiles for Black History Month. Go to cleveland.com/specialreports to see profiles from last year.

Last year's list included:

Langston Hughes, playwright, poet and writer

Larry Doby, the first black player in the American League

Garrett A. Morgan, inventor of the gas mask and traffic signal

St. John's Episcopal Church, one of the stops on the Underground Railroad

Stephanie Tubbs Jones, first black woman elected to Congress in Ohio

Charlie Sifford, first black golfer on the PGA Tour

Frank Robinson, first black manager of a major-league baseball team

Jesse Owens, track gold medalist

The Rev. Otis Moss, Jr., civil rights leader Cleveland Buckeyes, Negro League Baseball team

Thomas Fleming, first black Cleveland councilman

Jim Brown, Cleveland Browns fullback and NFL Hall of Famer

Bertha Josephine Blue, taught Italian immigrants English

John Patterson Green, first black state senator from the North

Halle Berry, first black woman to win an Academy Award as best actress

Harry Edward Davis, second black in the Ohio Senate

John O. Holly, Jr., civil rights leader

Mary B. Martin, the first black woman elected to the Cleveland Board of Education

Eliza Bryant, created first facility for aging blacks

League Park, supported the Negro League during segregation

Carl B. Stokes, first black mayor of a major American city

Arsenio Hall, comedian, actor and late-night talk show host

Jane Edna Hunter, nurse, lawyer and social worker who founded the Phillis Wheatley Association

Harrison Dillard, Olympic gold medalist

President Barack Obama's 2008 rally

Phillis Wheatley Association, helped black women who migrated from the South

Central High School, allowed black students to enroll before the Civil War

Karamu House, the longest-running black arts and theater center in the country

Chester Himes, first black mystery writer

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Well, thank you. We appreciate your joining us and pointing out some of the inconsistencies that are occurring in Ohio and also paying tribute to Toni Morrison.

We do have one of the gentlemen of the Congressional Black Caucus joining us tonight, and that is Congressman AL GREEN of Texas, a leader in his area in the NAACP for many years, and now a leader in the Congress and all the time a leader of our country.

Thank you for joining us, Congressman AL GREEN.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Thank you very much for yielding to me. I greatly appreciate it. And, of course, I want to thank all of the members of the CBC for the stellar work that has been done

in this area of publishing the history of Africans in the Americas, known as African Americans.

I'd like to, tonight, just address a very simple topic that has a lot of meaning, the whole notion that great people will always rise to the occasion. However, it also takes great people to make the occasion; and on occasions such as this, we often mention the great ones: the great Thurgood Marshall, the great litigator that he was, winning more than 29 cases, I believe, before the Supreme Court of the United States of America.

But in talking about the cases that he won, approximately 29 is what I recall, we also should remember that there were other persons who helped to make the occasion for the great Thurgood Marshall who went on to become a Justice on the Supreme Court of the United States of America. One such person would be Charles Hamilton Houston.

A great story about Charles Hamilton Houston, he was the person who produced the strategy that the Honorable Thurgood Marshall followed to help the NAACP litigate the cases that went before the Supreme Court, more specifically, the case of Brown v. Board of Education, which helped us to integrate society by way of desegregation.

There's a story about Thurgood that many people are not aware of. He applied to the University of Maryland Law School and he was denied access because of his color. And I'm not angry with the University of Maryland. As a matter of fact, it was because they rejected him that he went to Howard University, where he met the Honorable Charles Hamilton Houston. And it was there that their friendship blossomed such that Thurgood acquired this intelligence about the strategy to use the Constitution and litigation to bring about a more perfect Union.

The interesting story, however, is not complete unless we go on to talk about how Thurgood, who graduated at the top of his class, went on to practice law, and one of his first cases involved a person who was denied access to the University of Maryland. He won that lawsuit. So history has a way of causing persons who have been rejected to have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of other persons who may be similarly situated.

I am so honored that Thurgood Marshall finished at Howard University and went to become chief litigator for the NAACP; but all of this was predicated upon his having a great relationship with another person who made headway, did not necessarily make the same kind of headlines, the honorable Charles Hamilton Houston.

We talk about the Honorable Rosa Parks and how she took a seat and ignited a spark that started the civil rights movement, but there was another person who took a seat before Rosa who was arrested, handcuffed, and taken to jail. She was a 15-year-old girl. Her name was Claudette Colvin.

She, too, suffered the same fate as the Honorable Rosa Parks, but she didn't make the headlines. She did make headway such that when the Honorable Rosa Parks was arrested, it became more of a story. Of course, Rosa Parks had status in the community, and that was, in no small way, a contribution to her receiving the attention that she did.

And, by the way, Rosa Parks wasn't just tired. She was tired in the sense that she was tired of injustice, and she took a stand against injustice because she was tired of injustice.

The interesting thing about this story is that the bus boycott that took place didn't end because of the boycott alone. I think that had something to do with it because it probably helped to shape public opinion. But there were three other females who filed a lawsuit that made its way to the Supreme Court of the United States of America: Browder, McDonald, and Smith. It was that lawsuit that they won, they made headway. They didn't make the lasting headlines, but they made the difference in the Montgomery bus boycott.

And, of course, we always talk about Dr. King, and we should, because he paid the ultimate price. He made the ultimate sacrifice. But we should not forget that before Dr. King marched from Selma to Montgomery, there were others who set out to march from Selma to Montgomery, and they did not make it across. Well, they made it across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but that was where they met strong resistance from officers who had billy clubs, and they resisted the marchers. They didn't resist them; they actually took them on, and they beat them all the way back to the church where they started.

I enjoy hearing JOHN LEWIS tell the story not because of the suffering, but because he tells it in such a way as to cause me to have some degree of appreciation for what they went through on Bloody Sunday and how they paid a price. There were many people there on Bloody Sunday. The Honorable JOHN LEWIS was among them. They made headway and they made headlines, but their names have not been mentioned. And these are the people who made the occasion such that the Honorable Dr. Martin Luther King would come to Selma and proceed with the march that eventually took them from Selma to Montgomery. They made headway. They didn't always make headlines, but they made a great contribution.

And, of course, we know of the Honorable Barack Obama, the first African American President of the United States of America, who did not get there because of his color. He is President because he is capable, competent, and qualified. But before he ran, there was a woman who ran, the Honorable Shirley Chisholm. She was the first African American to run for President from a major political party. She didn't get the nomination of the party, but she did run from a major political party.

So we should remember that for every James Chaney, there were persons who were in the shadows who made a difference. JOHN LEWIS was one of them. For every Thurgood Marshall, there's a Charles Hamilton Houston who mentored, who made a difference in the life of a Thurgood Marshall such that he could go on to do the great things that he did. For every Rosa Parks, there is a person who is in the shadows, who made a difference, who helped to make the occasion such that Rosa Parks could rise to the occasion by taking a seat and igniting a spark that started the civil rights movement.

Let us remember not only the persons who made the great headlines that we continually recognize, but let's remember that there were other persons who made great headway who don't get the recognition today that they merit, but they were a part of this great movement for liberty and justice for African Americans across the length and breadth of this country.

□ 2050

At some point, I shall talk about persons who were of many hues who also participated in this great movement, because we didn't get here by ourselves. There were many persons of many colors who marched and protested. Many of them gave their lives to this movement as well—John Shillady comes to mind, who was beaten in Austin, Texas, and as a result of that beating lost his life. He was an NAACP'er, he was Anglo. Of course we know about Goodman and Chaney and Schwerner. And two of them, of course, were not African Americans, Schwerner and Goodman.

So I think that on occasions like this we should always celebrate the great and noble African Americans who made great sacrifices, remember those who were in the shadows, and also remember that there were others of many hues, of many ethnicities and many religions who were right there with us to help us arrive at this point in our history.

And I thank you so much for this time to mention some of the great ones, and some of those who were great but did not receive the acclaim that they richly deserve. And I thank you again. God bless you, and God bless America.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Congressman GREEN. And thank you for reminding us of the many, many unsung heroes and heroines on whose shoulders we also stand here today.

This is Black History Month, and on many occasions throughout February the Congressional Black Caucus will be here on the floor to talk about the ones that we know and those that we don't hear much about. There is a lot of our history that of course we're very proud of—the Long March to Freedom, the march for the right to vote, and today, where we now have 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus. But we also have history that we're not going

back to; and SHEILA JACKSON LEE, when she was speaking earlier, reminded us of some of that history.

Going back to the other topic of our Special Order, the right to vote and protecting that right to vote, tomorrow the Congressional Black Caucus, led by our chairman, Reverend Congressman EMANUEL CLEAVER, will be submitting a House resolution condemning the passage of legislation that would unduly burden an American citizen's ability to vote, and opposing any State election law or proposed legislation that would have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities across this country.

When we introduce this, I think this is clearly a resolution that would signify the sense of Congress. It should be a resolution that every Member, Republican and Democrat, should support, supporting the right of every American citizen to vote freely and to have that vote counted. And we would invite all of the Members of the House to join us in that resolution, to become cosponsors, and we would ask the leadership to bring it to the floor for a vote.

Again, it condemns the passage of legislation that would unduly burden an American citizen's ability to vote and opposes any of those State election laws or proposed laws that would have a disproportionate impact, because historically we know that people of color have been barred from voting.

The passage of these restrictive voting laws, the resolution reminds us, is reminiscent of the Jim Crow-era poll taxes and literacy tests that disenfranchised thousands of African Americans. It also reminds us that these laws do more to suppress the right to vote than to protect our electoral system. There's a lot of talk about these laws being passed and proposed because of fraud in the election system, but there's no proof that there is any fraud. So these laws are really about suppressing the right to vote.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. 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 this Special Order.

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

There was no objection.

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

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the significance of February as Black History Month. Black History Month was first observed in 1976, and has become a successful effort to bring a greater understanding of African American history to all people in the U.S. Since the first observance of Black History Month, this country has seen increased recognition of the numerous contributions and sacrifices that African Americans have made throughout the United States.

From the pioneering inventions of Garrett A. Morgan, to the famous writings of Maya

Angelou, African Americans have been responsible for many of the successes and innovations that have defined our Nation. Since Black History Month was first conceived, we recognized these ground-breaking accomplishments and celebrated them together as a country.

However, every great triumph is not without tribulation. Much of what Black History Month is about is the recognition of the suffering that African Americans have had to endure. After slavery was abolished, Black Americans still faced racial intolerance and inequality. We need only to look to history to reflect on a period when African Americans were denied the right to vote.

Even with passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, many still chose to circumvent the law and disenfranchise voters. From literacy tests to poll taxes, these tactics were designed to keep U.S. citizens from exercising their right to vote, and to have a voice in a diverse democratic system. It was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was ultimately enacted that these menacing policies were outlawed.

Mr. Speaker, Black History Month goes further than just the recognition of African Americans and their distinct role in shaping U.S. history. Black History Month is very much about our struggle as a Nation to uphold our democratic principles of fairness and equality for all. The struggle and triumph that is honored during this important time has come to benefit every American—regardless of their gender, race, or creed—by furthering a culture of equality, fairness, and justice. These important lessons from our past are ones that we must never forget as we move triumphantly into the future.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CLYBURN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of attending a funeral.

Mr. ENGEL (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of official business.

Mr. LYNCH (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. REYES (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of medical reasons.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. POE of Texas (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of official business.

Ms. BUERKLE (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of official business.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Karen L. Haas, Clerk of the House reports that on February 6, 2012 she presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bill.

H.R. 588. To redesignate the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge as the Sam D. Hamilton Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.