

We can find common ground. Something has to be done, whether it is a disturbed person or not, whether it's a terrorist act. And for me, this issue was a terrorist condition because of what happened.

But I want us to come together as one. We can do so, and we can come together to do what is good for the American people, respect the Second Amendment, but find ways to protect the American people, whoever they are, wherever they live, from these dangers.

May God bless the people who have now fallen, and those who suffer, and God bless the United States of America.

RECOGNIZING CENTRE COUNTY WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the dedication and hard work of the staff and volunteers of the Centre County Women's Resource Center, which has addressed the harms of domestic violence while promoting community safety in Centre County, Pennsylvania, since 1975.

The Women's Resource Center provides vital services to women, children, and men who have been victims of sexual assault and/or domestic violence. The continuum of services includes prevention, crisis intervention, education, and advocacy.

In 2010 and 2011 CCWRC served more than 1,000 victims with 24-hour confidential and free services for those victims of sexual assault, stalking, and domestic violence. The emergency shelter also provides counseling, legal and medical advocacy, and prevention programs.

Much of the Federal support the CCWRC receives has been through the Violence Against Women Act and the Victims of Crime Act, both of which I am proud to support.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence is a national epidemic. The professional and caring staff of the Centre County Women's Resource Center is doing their part to raise awareness, assist victims, and make positive strides towards further prevention. Their efforts have not gone unnoticed or underappreciated, and set an example for how other communities can address domestic violence.

□ 1920

CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS HOUR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GIBSON). 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.

Again, it is my pleasure to lead this Special Order this evening, and I thank again our Democratic leadership for giving us this time.

Before I yield to the minority whip, I want to also add my condolences to the families who lost loved ones in the shooting in Aurora, Colorado, and to those who are recovering from their injuries, both physical and emotional. I want to add the condolences of the people of the Virgin Islands to all of them. They are all in our prayers. It happened that I had taken my granddaughter, Nia, to a preview of the movie the night before, and I really shudder to think of what everyone in that theater went through that night. It could have been us, and it still could be any one of us anywhere unless we do something to ban assault weapons and to turn back some of what the Republican Congresses have passed.

One of the weapons used by Holmes was an AR-15 rifle, which is a semi-automatic weapon. If the assault weapon ban of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 had not been allowed to expire, it might be that 12 people, including a little girl, might still be alive. Our colleague, Gabby Giffords, would not be home, making what is, thankfully, a remarkable recovery, but the six people who died that day might be alive. A young man in St. Croix, who lost his life yesterday—and many others in the U.S. Virgin Islands and across this country—might still be alive if that ban were in place.

So, again, on behalf of me and my family and of the people of the Virgin Islands, I offer condolences to the families of those who were lost and to the families of those who are recovering. They are in our prayers.

At this time, I would like to yield such time as he may consume to our Democratic whip, a true leader for all Americans, leading us in many issues. Tonight, I believe, he is going to talk about voter protection, but he also has been working very hard to make sure that we Make It in America and that everyone is able to Make It in America.

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentle lady for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friends in the Congressional Black Caucus for organizing today's Special Order, but as my colleague Mr. ENGEL and as my colleague on the Republican side and as Dr. CHRISTENSEN have pointed out, our hearts and thoughts go out to and with those people who by happenstance of going to a movie have lost their lives, have been injured badly, have lost family members, have had the confidence of going out and about in this country put at risk. How we lament that loss of life, that loss of confidence, that loss of a sense of safety in their community.

We need to address that issue—to instill confidence, to restore safety, to ensure that America continues to be a land in which people feel safe.

Mr. Speaker, today, I want to talk about an issue that is central to America, and that is the right to vote. This is an issue that affects millions of Americans from every walk of life, but it will certainly have a disproportional effect on African Americans, Hispanic Americans, seniors, and youth.

In 2008, we saw a record turnout from minority communities and younger voters as more Americans were energized to take part in our democracy. That democracy is our greatest strength, and the principle of "one person, one vote" has always been a vehicle for Americans to hold their government accountable and ensure it is responsive to the challenges we face as a Nation. We ought to be building on that progress we made in 2008 by encouraging more Americans to register to vote and cast their ballots. Indeed, in my view, the Nation—States, counties, communities, municipalities—need to be reaching out to people to make sure they know how to vote and to facilitate their votes, not to put stumbling blocks in the way.

It continues to be deeply disturbing to witness a campaign of raising barriers to voting and voter registration by Republican-controlled legislatures in States across this country. My dear friend and colleague, a hero in American history, JOHN LEWIS, is a veteran of the fight for voting rights in the fifties and sixties. He carries the scars, both physical and in his memory, of the great effort to secure not just the right to vote but the freedom to exercise that right. That's why he is helping to lead this effort in 2012 to prevent voter suppression and to make certain our elections are open to all who are eligible to participate.

He can attest that today's effort is a continuation of the work he began as a young man. Since the beginning of last year, 22 laws and two executive actions in 17 States have restricted our citizens' right to vote. Civil rights heroes like JOHN LEWIS refused to accept barriers to voting in the middle of the 20th century, and all of us—each and every one of us—is here today because we refuse to accept these new restrictions in the 21st century.

That's why many of us introduced the Voter Empowerment Act in May. Our bill strengthens America's democracy by improving our voting system in three key areas: access, integrity, and accountability. It will reauthorize the Election Assistance Commission, create a national voter hotline for reporting problems, allow same-day and online registration, remove obstacles to voting for military personnel, and prohibit deceptive practices that discourage Americans from casting their votes.

Each one of us in this House is opposed to voter fraud. Each one of us is opposed to any voter voting who is not

eligible to vote. But very frankly, the good news in America is that is a very, very, very small problem. In fact, when proponents of restrictions are asked to cite examples, they are hard put to do so.

Democrats, Mr. Speaker, are making the issue of voter access a major priority this year, because we believe that all Americans deserve to participate in this year's election and to have their votes counted accurately. We will continue to monitor our voting system and call attention to those who seek to undermine it.

□ 1930

Again, I want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus for its work on this critical issue, as well as the ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. CONYERS, who has been such a hero on voting rights throughout his congressional career; the ranking member of the House Administration Committee, Mr. BRADY; and the assistant Democratic leader, Mr. CLYBURN.

I'm proud that the fight for voter access has attracted a broad coalition of civil rights organizations, as well as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and that senior citizen organizations and, yes, representatives of young people are very concerned about the fact that eligible voters are being discouraged and, in some cases, suppressed from exercising their precious American right to vote. Let us never forget that generations have held it to be a moral duty to preserve the most powerful guarantor of our liberty: the right of every American to vote. We continue to stand up for it today, and hopefully each day as we proceed.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a couple of times about what Democrats are doing. Let me refer now to an article that appeared in *The Washington Post* today, written by Charlie Crist, the former Republican Governor of Florida. He says:

As a result of insidious political maneuvers and a lack of respect for voters, we in Florida have been entangled in litigation. The courts and the Justice Department have been required to step in this summer to protect the integrity of the voting process against a sweeping voter purge that the Florida Department of State undertook under the guise of removing non-U.S. citizens from voter rolls.

He goes on to observe:

Among those caught up in this shameless purging and notified that he was not a U.S. citizen eligible to vote: a 91-year-old World War II veteran, Bill Internicola, who fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and has proudly exercised his right to vote for many years.

Governor Crist, the former Republican Governor of Florida, concludes:

The right to choose our leaders is at the heart of what it means to be an American. Our history books are full of examples to the contrary. When we send independent observers to monitor for voter fraud in banana republics, we derive authority from our self-regard as the ideal. When we hear of corrupt voting practices in foreign countries, where

the ideal of democracy is nothing more than lip service, we feel good about ourselves.

He then went on to say, Mr. Speaker:

It's time to look right under our noses. It's happening here at home. And it's our responsibility to honestly assess the root of the problem, which requires doing so with as little partisan bias as we believe belongs in the administration of our elections.

He concluded with this statement:

We can't be surprised every time it turns out that politics are involved in politics, but neither can we be silent when our democracy is threatened in its name.

There are lines that should not be crossed; meddling with voting rights is one of them. It is un-American, and it is beneath us.

I thank my friends in the Congressional Black Caucus for their leadership on this issue to make sure that the most precious right that every American has as a birthright is the right to vote. Let us not allow any steps to be taken by the Federal Government, by the State government, by county governments, or, yes, by municipal and local governments from impeding the rights of citizens to speak out in the most powerful way they can: voting.

[From the *Washington Post*, July 20, 2012]

THE VOTER ID MESS SUBVERTS AN AMERICAN BIRTHRIGHT

(By Charlie Crist)

For better or worse, the central principle behind the unlimited contributions to super PACs that will dominate this election cycle is simple: Money is speech, and we cannot limit speech. Yet many who hold this freedom as an article of faith are all too willing to limit an equally precious form of speech: voting.

If we don't speak out against these abuses, we may soon learn the hard way the danger of that double standard. And a dozen years after the 2000 recount that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, my state of Florida threatens to be ground zero one more time.

As Florida's attorney general from 2003 to 2007, I strongly enforced the laws against illegal voting. When swift action was necessary, I took it without hesitation. I did so out of respect for our democracy—voting is a precious right reserved only for U.S. citizens—but I'm concerned that zealots overreacting to contrived threats of voter fraud by significantly narrowing the voting pool are doing so with brazen disrespect and disregard for our greatest traditions.

As a result of insidious political maneuvers and a lack of respect for voters, we in Florida have been entangled in litigation. The courts and the Justice Department have been required to step in this summer to protect the integrity of the voting process against a sweeping voter purge that the Florida Department of State undertook under the guise of removing non-U.S. citizens from the voter rolls. Among those caught up in this shameless purging and notified that he was not a U.S. citizen eligible to vote: a 91-year-old World War II veteran, Bill Internicola, who fought in the Battle of the Bulge and has proudly exercised his right to vote for many years.

This is just the most recent example of a mean-spirited and all-too-partisan attempt to restrict access to the rolls and to the polls. A federal court also recently struck down provisions of a law Florida's legislature passed in 2011, which put heavy burdens on organizations seeking to help voters: burdens that the court described as "harsh and

impractical," serving no purpose other than to make it harder for Americans to participate in the electoral process.

These machinations make a mockery of the democracy we put on display every Election Day. The right to vote is the key to that democracy, giving value to the freedom of speech and making the freedom of religion and the right to assemble possible. When one takes away another's right to vote, he is taking dead aim at democracy and undermining the very virtue that makes us the envy of the world.

Including as many Americans as possible in our electoral process is the spirit of our country. It is why we have expanded rights to women and minorities but never legislated them away, and why we have lowered the voting age but never raised it. Cynical efforts at voter suppression are driven by an un-American desire to exclude as many people and silence as many voices as possible.

Our country has never solved anything with less democracy, and we're far better off when more citizens can access the polls—no matter which party mobilizes the most voters to them. As governor of Florida, I extended voting hours and increased the number of days people could vote. I also restored registration rights for felons, years after starting that effort in the state Senate with a member of the opposite party.

I was a Republican at the time of those decisions, which didn't make me many friends on my side. But when you do the right thing for the people, a political party's concerns roll off your back quite easily.

The right to choose our leaders is at the heart of what it means to be an American. Our history books are full of examples to the contrary. When we send independent observers to monitor for voter fraud in banana republics, we derive authority from our self-regard as the ideal. When we hear of corrupt voting practices in foreign countries, where the ideal of democracy is nothing more than lip service, we feel good about ourselves.

It's time to look right under our noses. It's happening here at home. And it's our responsibility to honestly assess the root of the problem—which requires doing so with as little partisan bias as we believe belongs in the administration of our elections.

We can't be surprised every time it turns out that politics are involved in our politics. But neither can we be silent when our democracy is threatened in its name.

There are lines that should not be crossed; meddling with voting rights is one of them. It is un-American and it is beneath us.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. We thank you for joining us again, as you've done many times before, and for those strong words and for your strong leadership. We look forward to working with you, Mr. Whip, to make sure that voting rights are preserved for all Americans.

I would like to now yield such time as she might consume to the Congresswoman from Cleveland, Ohio, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you so very much, and thank you as always for anchoring this CBC hour week in and week out. Thank you, Mr. Whip, for supporting this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is America. This is the land of the free and the home of the brave. I, too, sing America, land of the free and home of the brave, Mr. Speaker. America, the light on the hill, the standard, the example, a country built on democracy and inclusion. America,

a country of men and women willing to give their lives to ensure the rights of all people to elect their leadership. But some right here in America are now doing all they can to restrict the ability for us to do the same. They're chipping away at the very foundation upon which all of our rights rest, and that is the right to vote. Yet 31 American States have begun limiting the rights of their citizens to participate in our democracy's most important function, and that is voting.

If things remain as they are today, Mr. Speaker, by the 2012 election, 11 percent, or 21 million American voters, may not be allowed to cast their ballot. Twenty-five percent of them will be African American and 18 percent of them will be our Nation's elderly. This is a national shame. The fact that this was a coordinated effort is a national scandal.

Recently, the Pennsylvania House Majority Leader Mike Turzai told the State's Republican committee, "Voter ID, which is going to allow Governor Romney to win the State of Pennsylvania—done."

They can't win without cheating? Have they no shame? Mr. Turzai and others are blatantly and boldly attempting to encumber the rights of the American people. They do not want a level playing field.

A trend that began in just a few States like Pennsylvania has now sparked a wildfire. In Texas, you can face prosecution for registering voters. Five States—Alabama, South Carolina, Texas, Kansas, and Wisconsin—all have passed laws requiring voters to produce a government-issued ID before casting a ballot. In Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and West Virginia, early voting and absentee voting have been cut short. Even in my home State of Ohio, we're still fighting. We are fighting restrictive actions taken by our State legislature.

Time and time again, Ohio Republicans have tried everything in the book to keep voters away from the polls. Ohio's current legislation will keep as many as 54,000 legitimate voters in my district alone from voting. It could restrict 4 percent of all voters in our county from voting, the county with the highest percentage of minorities.

I'm quite a sports fan. In sports, if somebody wants to change the outcome of a game, they do something that they call "point-shaving." What this is is point-shaving. If we can shave off enough points in every State, even if it is one or two points, this election can be up in the air. It's point-shaving.

Sometimes I think it is time for America to be angry. Sometimes someone needs to know we won't lay down without a fight, that we won't just throw in the towel in defeat. If we fail to act, if we ignore the vicious attack on the right to vote, if we don't do what we need to do to educate voters and fight these suppressive laws, it will have an effect in November and many years beyond.

If we stand idly by, how many voters will be disenfranchised due to changes in voting rules? If we sit on the sidelines, how many people will come to the polls with a utility bill and be turned away because they need a government-issued ID? If we say nothing, how many people will be erroneously purged from the county voter rolls? In my county, that's many people. If we do nothing, how many people will be denied the opportunity to register to vote because community and religious groups can no longer hold voter registration drives?

In the past year, more States have passed more laws punishing more voters out of the ballot box than any time since the rise of Jim Crow.

Join my colleagues and me. Get angry, America. The time for action is now.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank you for joining us and making it plain, Congresswoman FUDGE: The time for making this right is now.

We are also joined again by our colleague, SHEILA JACKSON LEE, the gentlelady from Texas. I yield her such time as she may consume.

□ 1940

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands for, again, leading us on a very important topic, one of which that I have worked on, Mr. Speaker, for the time that I have had the privilege of serving in this House. And I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that if I look to this side of the House and this side, we would all hold to the view that it is important to have one vote, one person.

And then we hold to the view that I have been saying, regardless of our ups and downs in the economy, that we do live in the greatest nation in the world. I say it all over, everywhere. There are too many great things that are happening in America. There are too many great men and women in the United States military. There are too many great individual personal stories of survival and small businesses and family farms.

I live in a great State. And I get to see urban America. I get to see family farms, small businesses. I get to see ranchers and people who are struggling against droughts but are still hanging in there. We have, in Texas, a potpourri of the Nation. So I know that we live in a great Nation.

I happen to have had the privilege of serving in a district that the Honorable Barbara Jordan first served in. This district was not created before Barbara Jordan served. And Barbara Jordan, who was an honorable Member of this House, ran many times in a segregated and southern Texas. Many of the times that she ran, she lost. But it was only after the 1965 Voting Rights Act, when they created the opportunity for districts, that Barbara Jordan was able to win a seat in the State Senate. Her picture now is in the State Senate as the

only African American woman who served as a Governor for the day. So this is the great news, what the Voting Rights Act of 1965 generated.

She went on to become the first African American elected out of the deep South with Andy Young. And out of that great leadership, she was able to add language to the Voting Rights Act, to create language for minorities which, in essence, provided extra protection for those who had been discriminated against.

Let me remind my colleagues that all I speak of is one vote, one person. That's what redistricting is about. That's what we stand here today and speak of.

We in the Congressional Black Caucus believe it is important, along with the Democratic Caucus—and again, I extend my hand of friendship, I believe, to all Americans—that we fight for one vote, one person; that we fight for extending open, if you will, the doors of opportunity through voting.

Let me make note of this one point: Sixty years after the American Revolution, Americans were fighting to expand the right to vote. In 1842, Thomas Dorr, a white male legislator from Rhode Island, led a huge crowd of citizens, workers, and artisans, white men who were being denied the right to vote because they did not own property. The working man who had no property fought for the right to choose his Nation's leaders and did not win until 1850.

If we just put ourselves in each other's shoes—nonproperty owners, women who did not get the right to vote until the 20th century—we would understand what it means now when voter ID laws are being passed across America. And voters who are vulnerable, voters who are Americans—Americans such as the 95-year-old woman in Pennsylvania who, in essence, is not covered by the Voting Rights Act because of a voter ID law. She cannot vote because she does not have her birth certificate.

We looked for my mother, Ivaleta Jackson's birth certificate until her death. We made all kinds of efforts. We moved and moved and moved and moved to the place of her birth, which was the State of Florida, and could not find that birth certificate. But she had a voter registration card. And I can tell you, by God, that was a citizen, a proud citizen of this Nation who had seen her brother go to World War II, her relatives be in the war. She was someone who loved America, who worked as a laborer but provided, along with my father, for our family.

Would I deny her the right to vote in a State that would have a voter ID law? This is not about a picture, about someone impersonating a voter. It really is a larger question of the Constitution that provides us with due process. Taking away your voting rights is not due process.

So I join my colleagues in supporting the Voter Empowerment Act, same-day registration, protecting voters, having

the right to sign up online. And there is one sentence that says, "No provision passed by any State can intimidate or prohibit a person from voting."

Why would we not want to vote, Mr. Speaker? The argument that I would make is, when I have had the privilege to travel on behalf of this great Nation—I remember one of my distinctive trips was as an early and new Member of Congress going into Sarajevo, landing before the Dayton Peace Agreement had ever been signed. Joining me was our former majority leader Dick Armey. We went into Bosnia, the former Yugoslavia, and Croatia after our brave Americans had worked to bring peace to that region. We wanted to see what was going on.

When we went to a city like Sarajevo, my eyes could not believe what I was seeing. People were walking the streets in destitute conditions. Books from the library were all thrown out on the street. Buildings look like they had their heads shaved off, just cut off—maybe by, if you will, a chainsaw, because it was from the bombing. And as we walked the streets, because there was no transportation, we were going to meet with the president, then, of that country. We landed, as I indicated, under a French flag. I had a flak jacket on to get off the plane.

When we went in, they told us that they just had a city election. A city election? In the meantime, I will tell you, as I was walking, a mother came up to me in all black, an elderly woman, and she said, Have you seen my son? He went off to the war. I haven't seen him.

This is the destitution of the people. And they told me that that city election had 98 percent of the people in that city voting. What is happening to America? There is so much intimidation at the voting polls. There are so many headlines about who cannot vote, that people don't vote. That is not the great country that we love.

We're purging people off of rolls instead of sending them a notice and saying, Are you registered to vote? Or do you want to stay on the roll? They're not. A million people in Florida, 1.5 million in the State of Texas, a voter ID law that the courts are now reviewing because there is merit to the fact that these are prohibitors of people voting.

In the State of Texas, they have a voter ID law that's tracked to the Department of Public Safety, a great organization that does not have offices in every county in that State. We have 254 counties, and we've got 80 or 90 of them without Department of Public Safety offices.

So I think it is important, as we look to the 2012 November election, that we be reminded that this is not about party politics. It's not about who gets the upper hand. For Americans, it is about one person, one vote. And it is to remind us of days past that, yes, those of us who came out of a history of slavery could not vote. But also, white men

who were not property owners could not vote; women could not vote; white men could not vote who were not property owners. And certainly Asians at one time could not vote. Latinos at one time could not vote. But America has grown up, and we recognize the value of that.

So I think it is enormously important that we join together to support the Voter Empowerment Act that we have worked on, and that we recognize the issue of voter protection. This is crucial.

And I do want to close by, again, expressing my sympathy to those in Colorado. But we have had a litany of these tragic issues. I remember how much we mourned the tragedy in Arizona. And now we come full circle, where there are families in such pain.

I think part of the pain is that when you send someone to a place of innocence, to a town hall meeting on the square, to the movie theater, which is really America's part-time pastime. Everyone knows those Friday night movies and Saturday movies, families, children, one couple with a baby. And they said, We didn't have a babysitter. I understand that. I was a young mother with my spouse in an area where we moved away from our families. It was hard to find babysitters. So you take a sleeping baby to the movie. There is no sin in that.

□ 1950

But it is an innocent place. It is a place where you can have joy, and enjoy the genius of America in producing these films. And what happened? Someone who was intent on evil came and destroyed lives. Someone who didn't want their mark to be only in the theater, but they wanted it to be on the innocent neighbors who might by chance do what every neighbor does when you're too loud in your place and it is next door to their place, to ask you to please turn the music down. Just think, Mr. Speaker, if someone had asked to turn the music down or had asked by either knocking loud or entering that apartment, that door was cracked, maybe it was the kind of apartment where neighbors felt comfortable to do that, and if they just entered, the enormous disaster and havoc and carnage and bloodshed that would have been added to the bloodshed.

I made a plea earlier today on the floor of the House, I am, in fact, going to do that. I am going to invite the National Rifle Association to one of my meetings. I want to sit down and talk to them about how we can work together because I want an explanation on why someone can buy 6,000 rounds of ammunition on the Internet without any oversight whatsoever. Why is there no basis of giving notice? If they had given notice to the local police, maybe someone would have knocked on the door and found out what was going on, not last Thursday but a week back, last month.

We can find a way to come together. This is not rocket science to determine

why you're getting 6,000 rounds. And you know what pains me, Mr. Speaker, you know what causes me to bleed? It causes me to bleed that active duty troops lost their lives, as the story tells. Sitting in their own Nation, unarmed, along with innocent civilians. We know that those troops, if they could have stopped it, if they were in their armor, they would have been on the front lines protecting the homeland.

I am saddened by the condition of this individual, saddened by what is represented to be this individual's circumstance. Those of us who deal with terrorism and sit on the Homeland Security Committee, have to raise a question about this incident.

I close by simply giving my deepest sympathy to the people of Colorado, the congressional delegation of Colorado, and again our dear friend Congressman PERLMUTTER and all of the delegation for those whose districts overlap those areas, and to say that the American people will continue to pray, to lift them up because as I started out, this is the greatest Nation in the world. I know that we can find a solution to the opportunities of democracy, and we can find a solution to a peaceful way of coexisting so that people are protected as they walk the highways and byways, and law enforcement officers, United States military, babies, young people, and others similarly situated who come out for a simple opportunity of friendship and fellowship and fun. America is better than what happened last Thursday, and we are certainly better than denying individuals their right to democracy.

I thank the gentlelady for yielding to me, and I look forward to working with you and the Congressional Black Caucus and the entire Congress and the Democratic Caucus on standing tall for that constitutional right, precious right to vote, and standing tall for the protection of America, for people, and the homeland.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I thank you, and I thank you again for joining us and offering your views and your vision for what we could be and what we should be, and for your strong words in defense of Americans' right to vote.

As I said this is the America that goes around the world to monitor and ensure that people in other countries exercise their right to vote. So we know that the right to vote is sacred. It is a sacred right. Many sacrificed and some died for that right. As our Democratic whip said, it is the most powerful guarantor of our liberty, and we must protect the right to vote, and we need to support the Voter Empowerment Act.

I want to go back to the issue of guns and violence. One might ask what do guns, what does the gun issue have to do with the right to vote. But, unfortunately, it has been used to deny voting rights in the District of Columbia, the place in which we meet. The District of Columbia has been the victim of the

gun lobby and overzealous gun support in the Senate. Instead of passing a bill to extend the voting rights that the residents of the District of Columbia deserve, the Senate attached amendments that would overturn some of the local laws that are meant to stem the tide of gun violence in the city, meant to restore peace and safety to its streets and neighborhoods.

So in addition to the violence that could follow from allowing concealed weapons, as their amendment would do in just about every venue, against the wishes and rights of the District of Columbia to decide, doing what they did would allow another sort of violence. It did untold violence to the District by holding its voting rights, the voting rights that it should have in this body hostage. That is unfair, and it is just plain wrong.

But in addition, it is some of the poorer neighborhoods in this country where poverty and other ills breed violence. It is in those neighborhoods that we see the voter restrictive policies are being placed. Their ability to vote for individuals who would help them to quell the violence in their neighborhoods and keep their families safe, it is their ability to vote that is being interfered with most by these laws that are being passed by Republican legislatures, and promoted and signed by Republican governors.

I hope that this Congress, and if not this one the next, will have the courage to pass strong and sensible gun control laws. Yes, we are very concerned, as has been said—and which is the subject of our Special Order this evening—about voter protection in the face of many States that are passing laws to restrict voting in ways that do particular harm to the rights of young people, seniors, people of color, and the poor to vote.

As we were reminded, it was made abundantly clear a few weeks ago by that Republican Pennsylvania legislator what the intent of these new restrictive voter so-called poll tax laws are all about: they are being passed to try to defeat President Obama. Well, I have news for them. Those very groups that they are trying to keep from voting, the good people of this country are not going to let that happen. That brings us right back to the need for gun control legislation. The communities that need it most are also the ones that most need us to protect their right to vote. Although everyone in this country must have their right to vote protected, these are the communities where there is violence, where there is poverty, that we must work very hard to protect their right to vote.

In too many communities, violent crime is rising. It is due to the flow of guns, the increase in assault weapons, and it has to be stopped. It is time for us to come together to save our young people, and really to save ourselves. Gabby's shooting shows that none of us are safe unless all of us are safe. My

and many other communities are calling out for help. This is a crisis in many parts of our country, and we who are elected to provide for the welfare of our communities and our country have an obligation to do just that. So let's come together. Let's all support the legislation that is before us, the Voter Empowerment Act. Let's also pass gun control legislation. And in the end, though, it is in the voters' hands to decide in November whether we are going to have safe streets and neighborhoods, whether this assault on voting rights will stop. And if we just protect their right to vote, I know that they will do the right thing.

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

GOP FRESHMEN HOUR

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

Mr. GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to address the House tonight. I appreciate the time and consideration that we will have, the opportunity to visit with the American people about some of the biggest issues we are facing as a Nation.

I thought I would start with highlighting an article that appeared July 18 in Politico. The headline of this bill is: "President Obama's job's panel, missing in action."

□ 2000

The first paragraph of this Politico article says:

President Barack Obama's Jobs Council hasn't met publicly for 6 months, even as the issue of job creation dominates the 2012 election.

So we know that the economy is suffering. We know that unemployment continues to burden this country. But the fact is even the President and his Jobs Council isn't taking the issue seriously enough to make sure they're meeting regularly to talk about what's important for the American people.

Tonight as we talk about those issues that are important to the American people, I want to talk about the issue of regulations and how the issue of regulations, whether it's a large business or small business, are affecting the ability of businesses to hire around this country to get people back to work because we are indeed becoming a regulation nation.

The effort continues this week for House Republicans to ensure that government doesn't stand in the way of America's job creators. Washington doesn't need more regulations, we need smarter regulations.

Tomorrow, we will be considering H.R. 4078, the Red Tape Reduction and Small Business Job Creation Act, which is a package of proposals aimed at providing regulatory relief from the

red tape that continues to burden our small businesses. This package imposes a moratorium on any new regulation until unemployment drops below 6 percent nationally. It's been over 3 years since our unemployment has actually dropped below 8 percent. This is the 41st month in a row where unemployment in this country has been at or exceeded 8 percent. This bill aims to curtail the practice of midnight regulations, regulations that are promulgated from the day after the November election through January 20, the day of the presidential inauguration, and highlights the increasing concern of "sue and settle" agreements.

As a Member of Congress, I try to vote the right way and push forward the right Federal policies and practices so that businesses can operate more effectively without the hand of government guiding it. I wanted to break down some of the barriers throughout the night that are truly affecting job creators and their ability to hire to make this country work. I thought I would just talk a little about current events across the Nation. Some of these are State regulations, and some of these are local regulations. There is a Forbes article printed last year on August 3, 2011, "The Inexplicable War on Lemonade Stands" about regulations that required a child's lemonade stand to cost \$400 in permitting alone, bake sale busts across the country because regulations don't allow for children to have bake sales, and Big Gulp attacks in New York as the mayor attempts to regulate the size of pop that people can buy.

Some of these are Federal regulations, and some of these are State regulations. But the fact of the matter is this Nation faces a greater and greater challenge in becoming a regulation nation that hurts job creators and our ability to pull ourselves out of this economic slump.

Tonight I'll be joined by Members of Congress from across the United States, from Indiana to Alabama to Arizona and beyond, to focus on those issues that are important to our Nation's small businesses and job creators.

With that, I would like to yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlelady from Alabama who has been working tirelessly to make sure that her constituents have the opportunity they need to get back on their feet again when it comes to our economy.

Mrs. ROBY. I thank the gentleman from Colorado and the other Members that are here tonight to talk about the Red Tape Reduction and Small Business Job Creation Act that we will be voting on here in the House this week.

Earlier this month, President Obama commented in a speech:

If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen.

President Obama has even talked about how excessive regulation hurts job creation saying that: