



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 112th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 158

WASHINGTON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2012

No. 128

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 20, 2012.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JEFF FLAKE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 17, 2012, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

REMEMBERING RICKY WRIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CONAWAY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a good and decent man, a loyal servant of Texas and my friend, Ricky Wright. Ricky Wright passed away Wednesday, August 1, after a tremendous battle with cancer. Words cannot adequately express the sorrow and disbelief that Susan and I feel, along with every member of our team, at these difficult times.

I met Ricky when I first started running for Congress, and since that time,

Ricky has been at my side as a mentor, confidant, and a close friend. While Ricky was employed as my district director, he served the people of District 11.

This service to his neighbors was a task he lived every day. Ricky routinely logged hundreds of miles a week, drove to every corner of District 11. Through his work, he touched the lives of thousands of Texans. There was no problem in our district that was too small for his attention or too big for his talents.

During these travels, Ricky never once met a stranger. With his easy smile and open demeanor, Ricky would make everyone feel like they'd been his friend for a lifetime. But during all these travels and meetings, too many to count, he never forgot that his home was Comanche, Texas.

Comanche is ever much a part of Ricky as his fingers and his toes. It was the community he was raised in, the community that taught him the character and morals that would guide his life. Perhaps that is also where he inherited his stubborn streak. Ricky had a confidence in the possibilities that could be, in spite of the limited vision of those around him. You could see this in him every day as he quietly refused to yield to mediocrity or to compromise his principles.

It was his stubbornness that set Ricky apart from the crowd, and that's where I believe he was most comfortable, just a little further up the path, showing the rest of us the way. Today, Ricky is still just a little further up the path showing us the way as he showed us how he carried himself in the face of those deep difficulties toward the end of his life.

We'll remember Ricky as he would want to be remembered, a faithful friend, a tireless worker whose hopeful, idealistic, daring, and decent way of life inspired us all. To those of us who knew him and worked with him, he was

like family, and his loss will be felt every time we gather together without him. He'll never be replaced or forgotten, and I ask you for your prayers for Ricky and his family and those of us who loved him.

I miss my friend.

STILL FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO VOTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there have been two struggles to make American democracy work. First was who would be eligible to vote. Originally, only those who were white, male, property owners over 21, voted, perhaps a quarter of the population.

More than three-quarters of a century later, having fought the civil war, African Americans were granted the franchise. It would be another two-thirds of a century before voting rights were extended to women.

Finally, in a battle that I was proud to be a part of as a college student, campaigning and testifying before Congress, we adopted the XXVI amendment, extending the voting rights to young people at age 18.

But there's always been another battle: Who amongst the theoretically eligible voters are actually able to cast their ballot and have it counted?

It's no secret the States in the Old South waged a brutal extra-legal war to prevent newly enfranchised African Americans from voting. The discrimination, intimidation and violence are well-chronicled; and it's why, almost a century after African Americans were given the legal right to vote, we still need the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to really give them the vote supposedly guaranteed under the Constitution.

Despite the Voting Rights Act, and two centuries of struggle, there's still

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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a battle today. Part of the Republican game plan for 2012 is to make voting difficult or impossible for some of the same groups who have long suffered discrimination, who are now seriously disadvantaged by new voter suppression laws that have been passed by Republicans in States like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

Because voter fraud is a Federal offense, with serious legal consequences, even jail time, improperly cast ballots are virtually nonexistent in the United States. There are far more votes that are lost due to malfunctioning voting machines, mistakes and sleight-of-hand by local elected officials who are either inept or cheating than are all the cases that have been documented nationwide.

Texas has another effort to pass aggressive voter ID legislation, but they can find only five documented incidents of voter fraud in 13 million ballots cast in the last two elections.

In Pennsylvania, there have been fewer cases than you can count on your fingers, yet up to a million people may be denied the right to vote because of these legal changes.

Millions of poor, elderly, minority and student voters don't have passports or driver's licenses; some don't even have birth certificates. They may face the modern version of a poll tax, and that's unconscionable.

The media and courts are pushing back on some of the more outrageous behaviors, like Ohio's Secretary of State, John Husted, who was called out and forced to back down after he tried to limit early voting in counties with Democrats in the majority, while expanding them in Republican counties.

Come election day, the problems will still persist. There is a solution: pry partisan fingers off the controls of a varied election process. We shouldn't be treating the precious right to vote as a game where partisan advantage comes at the expense of our civil rights.

Oregon has been involved for 25 years with what is no longer an experiment but a display of a better way: vote by mail. Each registered voter in the Oregon is mailed a ballot to their residence 19 days before the election. They are given well over 400 hours to examine the ballot, make their decision on the issues and individuals, and return it by mail or in person.

Oregonians don't worry about people gaming voting machines, closing precincts early, having long lines for working people at the end of the day, or mysteriously running out of ballots at precincts that are likely to vote against you. In Oregon, there's no problem with illegal voting. Everybody has access to the ballot, and results are processed in a timely fashion.

It's shameful that, after more than two centuries of struggle for the right to vote, we're still playing games with people's opportunity to exercise that hard-won privilege upon which our democratic tradition rests.

I will be championing the Oregon solution of vote by mail to make the process simpler, more reliable, most important, fairer, while saving money in the process. I hope these blatant attempts at manipulation and discrimination backfire so that the next Congress and the administration are positioned to do something about it.

A country that prides itself as the oldest democracy deserves for the democratic process to work.

STILL NO FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from South Dakota (Mrs. NOEM) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. NOEM. Mr. Speaker, this is the second-to-the-last day that we'll be here and be in session before we head home to our districts, and we still do not have a farm bill that gives certainty to our producers and our ranchers across the country. In a little over a week, the 2008 farm bill is going to expire.

While many of these programs will continue into the future for months ahead, we have an opportunity to actually save money and give other producers certainty as they begin planning for the coming years.

Last week, I sat down and I visited with Mike and Lori. They're producers from near the town of Huron, South Dakota. They raise corn, soybeans, and beef cattle. And this year was particularly difficult for them in light of the drought situation that producers in South Dakota were facing.

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Thankfully, they had programs such as crop insurance that helped them manage their risk in such a difficult year. They wrote me a letter on the importance of the farm bill, and I want to read a portion of that letter to you:

We are experiencing a severe drought in our area this year. We put up half the hay that we normally do. Dugouts are starting to dry up, and crop yields will be down significantly. Crop insurance will be extremely important to offset lost crop production and lost revenue due to poor crop conditions. Crop insurance is a vital part of providing stability to our income and allowing us to stay a viable family farm dedicated to growing a safe, affordable food supply for a growing world.

They went on in their letter to describe exactly what this means to their family at home:

We have a 6-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter. We tell them daily how important our jobs are as farmers, how we are truly feeding the world. They are taking true pride and ownership of that, and passing a good farm bill only helps stabilize their dreams, their futures—and ours.

A 5-year farm bill gives us the stability to plan ahead for our operation long term. With the limited time Congress has to pass a farm bill before the current one expires, I would encourage lawmakers to look to rural America and realize how much work we can get done in a week. We know that, if the farm bill is made a priority, there is still enough

time to get one passed. Thank you again for your work, and we urge Congress to pass a farm bill now.

This past week, I was traveling through the middle of our State, in an area that has been hit particularly hard by the drought. I stopped at a truck stop and visited with many producers who were there filling up with fuel and getting supplies to head back out to the field. You see, right now in South Dakota, producers are planting a winter wheat crop, and they're having to make the decision: Do they put that crop into dry ground, or do they wait and see if they get a farm bill and crop insurance into the future so that they have the certainty to make sure that their risk is managed?

Many of those producers were electing not to plant. They were waiting to see if they could get rain and get a program that would actually keep their families in business. Some were putting it in the ground, showing that they truly are brave producers who have little faith that the skies will open up and that next year will be different.

I tell you that they and Mike and Lori and other producers across the State of South Dakota and across this country who have been particularly hit in these tough times are looking to us here in Congress to provide them certainty during this drought. The farm bill is one of the reasons that our family farmers are able to stay in business during tough years. Many other programs in the farm bill give them the stability and certainty, which, in turn, gives every American the certainty in having a reliable, affordable food supply.

I ran for Congress to bring more common sense to this place and to be an efficient and effective leader for South Dakota. We have an opportunity to get a farm bill done this year that provides a safety net and real reforms for our producers and cost savings for the taxpayers. While the clock hasn't run out yet, I think it is important that we get our work done on time, and I am disappointed that it hasn't been scheduled for a vote.

SEPT. 11, 2012.

Hon. KRISTI NOEM,
Cannon House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REP. NOEM: Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you during our trip to Washington, D.C., to talk about passing the farm bill. My husband, Mike, and I are both third-generation farmers. We have a diversified crop and beef cattle operation 25 miles southwest of Huron, S.D., where we raise corn, soybeans and 250 head of cattle.

We are experiencing a severe drought in our area this year. We put up half the hay that we normally do, dugouts are starting to dry up and crop yields will be down significantly. Crop insurance will be extremely important to offset lost crop production and lost revenue due to poor crop conditions. Crop insurance is a vital part of providing stability to our income and allowing us to stay a viable family farm dedicated to growing a safe, affordable food supply for a growing world. We were fortunate to have utilized the EQIP Program to install two water