

time mandatory for criminal offenses such as political targeting.

Mr. Speaker, Americans deserve better.

The bottom line is that the use of the IRS as a political weapon is outrageous and unacceptable. What's worse, this is the same agency that will be enforcing ObamaCare.

As this blatant abuse of power continues to be fully investigated, this commonsense bill sends a loud and clear message to the IRS: if you do the crime, you do the time. No exceptions, no excuses.

The American people want, need and deserve to know the truth and assurance that this never happens again. This bill is a step in that direction.

I urge my colleagues to join my efforts.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this morning a number of members of the CBC, the Congressional Black Caucus, will speak on the emotions, the value and the gift of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

I thank our chairwoman, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, and I'm delighted to lead that moment this morning. I will tell the Members of Congress you will hear us over the next couple of weeks and months as we proceed to do what the Supreme Court has said that Congress must do and has the authority to do, and that is to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

I disagree with the court's decision, for that bill was firm. And just a few years ago, as a member of the House Judiciary Committee, with 15,000 pages, 21 hearings, a vote of 390-33 in the House and 98-0 in the United States Senate, we reaffirmed every American's right to vote. In fact, since that passage, Virginia has had 11 of its jurisdictions opt out. Many other jurisdictions have opted out or taken the bailout provision. But yet, that decision now has left bare the soul of so many voters who will now be unable to vote because of the Voting Rights Act elimination or striking down of section 4.

Mr. Speaker, if the Voting Rights Act is wrong, then Fannie Lou Hamer was wrong, the three civil rights workers were wrong, and Martin Luther King, Jr., was wrong.

Today we stand together to encourage our colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to work with us to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

OFFSHORE ENERGY AND JOBS ACT

(Mr. GIBBS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, as of today, 85 percent of the offshore areas have

been blocked from offshore drilling by the Obama administration. The energy legislation on the floor this week makes significant strides towards increasing our offshore production.

Additional energy production contributes to lowering fuel prices at a time when gas prices are over 100 percent higher than when President Obama took office.

H.R. 2231, the Offshore Energy and Jobs Act, creates 1.2 million American jobs over the long term by removing Federal barriers to offshore energy production. According to the CBO, the legislation would also generate \$1.5 billion in new Federal revenues over the 10-year period, which helps pay down our outrageous national debt.

This important legislation grows the economy and creates American jobs at a time of high unemployment and stagnant economic growth. Furthermore, it puts us on a path to energy independence and security by decreasing our dependence on foreign sources of energy.

We need to stand together to support this legislation that addresses our soaring gas prices and our sinking economy.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call my colleagues to action.

Monday, the Supreme Court handed down its decision regarding the Voting Rights Act, ruling that the current formula for determining covered jurisdictions is outdated. Nearly 2 hours after the SCOTUS ruling, one prominent Texas leader said that they will move immediately to reinstate the State's voter ID laws that were passed in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Justice Department objected to Texas' voter ID law because the State's own data indicated that the law would have a detrimental impact on minority voters, the poor and the elderly. Why in the world would a State as great as Texas want to implement a law that its own data said would hurt the very citizens in its own State?

For this very reason, me and six other plaintiffs have filed suit in Federal court to bar enforcement of Texas' discriminatory voter ID law. The lawsuit in place is to ensure that we do not disenfranchise voters and to protect the constitutional rights of all Americans.

I refuse to allow Texas or any other State to replicate laws that constrict our American values. I firmly stand here as proof that Texans and Americans need a voice. I call upon my colleagues to work together to ensure voter protections remain. The Supreme Court has overreached, and now it's time for us to act to protect the integrity of democracy.

□ 1210

NATIONAL PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in recognition of the National Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month.

Head injuries are the signature and oftentimes invisible wounds of our recent wars. These injuries are not a sign of weakness or a character flaw but, rather, the potential catalyst of more serious illnesses, like traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Nearly one-third of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who received VA health care in the decade after 2001 were diagnosed with PTSD, and the numbers, unfortunately, are only expected to climb.

We must tear down the stigma surrounding head injuries and ensure veterans have timely access to quality care, particularly in situations of TBI and PTSD. As we mark PTSD Awareness Month, let's work together to address these important issues by drawing attention to the real dangers head injuries present and encourage our servicemembers to seek treatment.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATE SET TO DOUBLE

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

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, in 3 short days, the student loan interest rate is set to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent unless Congress takes action. This is unacceptable. College is already too expensive for far too many young people, and doubling the interest rate on student loans will only make things worse. We should be working together to solve this looming crisis.

Regrettably, the only vote we have had on this is a Republican-led bill that would make college more expensive and prevent students from locking in a fixed rate. By the time 2013's freshmen graduate, they will be paying more than double today's current rate for subsidized Stafford loans.

Rather than waging another partisan fight on a bill that will not pass in the Senate and the President is prepared to veto, we should consider legislation that has a chance of becoming law and that will provide real relief to students and their families. I, therefore, strongly urge House Republican leaders to allow a vote on legislation I proudly cosponsored by Congressman COURTNEY of Connecticut to extend the current low rate for an additional 2 years.

It is a moral and economic imperative that we provide a top-notch education to every student in this country regardless of their financial means. Congress must act to fix this problem, and the clock is ticking.

CONGRATULATING DUBOIS AREA MIDDLE SCHOOL

(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 extend my congratulations as DuBois Area Middle School earns redesignation status as a Pennsylvania "School to Watch." This is quite an achievement, and I highly commend the administrators, teachers, and students for their efforts. It is my understanding that DuBois Area Middle School is one of only three middle schools that has been redesignated a second time, after originally earning this designation in 2007 and again in 2010.

These selections by State educational leaders exemplify DuBois Area Middle School's outstanding responsiveness to the needs and interests of its students in helping them achieve their greatest potential.

Furthermore, by working together to improve curriculum and foster continuous academic growth, DuBois Area Middle School leadership has gone the extra mile to ensure success. The example your success has set for other schools is an excellent one, and I hope it will be shared widely.

Also, I encourage all people, students and adults, to continue to learn as it is probably the single most significant ingredient in leading a successful and fulfilling life.

EQUALITY FOR ALL

(Mr. HIGGINS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Speaker, in a historic decision yesterday, the Supreme Court rightly ruled that all married couples, regardless of gender of the spouses, are deserving of equal protections and rights under the law. In doing so, they recognize what 13 States, including my home State of New York, already knows: that a family is a family and that love is love.

Our Nation was founded on the basic principles of freedom and equality, and any law that discriminates against one group of individuals is an unjust law; and injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, the next step is in Congress's hand. We must bring to the floor and pass Congressman JERRY NADLER's Respect for Marriage Act. It is time to get rid of this discriminatory law once and for all and bring us one step closer to full marriage equality.

SUPPORT THE ROMEIKE FAMILY

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Mr. Speaker, one of the most treasured privileges of parents living in the United States is the

freedom to choose the means to best educate their children. For many families, including my own, that choice is home schooling.

Unfortunately, for many parents living in countries where freedom of choice and expression is supposedly valued, home schooling can entail punitive fines, jail time, and even seizure of their children.

The Romeike family fled Germany after facing persecution for home schooling their six children and were granted asylum here in the United States. Now the Romeikes face deportation unless they are granted a hearing before the full Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals and receive a favorable decision.

Mr. Speaker, no parent should be faced with imprisonment, fines, or removal of their children simply for choosing to educate their children at home. I call on the Obama administration to persuade Germany to respect international human rights law that recognizes the authority of parents to direct their children's education. I also call on the administration to grant asylum to the Romeikes so they can be afforded the privilege our country offers to educate their children freely in the manner they choose.

BATTLING CLIMATE CHANGE

(Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York. Mr. Speaker, I agree with President Obama when he said this week that America is uniquely suited to take on the challenge of climate change. Those of us in the Northeast know firsthand what the President meant when he said that Hurricane Sandy's destruction left our mightiest city underwater and dark. Sandy destroyed homes, businesses, and, in some cases, entire neighborhoods. It halted our markets and damaged the infrastructure that the country depends on. These costs are real and they are personal.

Now is the time to improve the world our children and grandchildren will inherit. Now is the time to protect our beautiful natural resources. Now is the time to mitigate future natural disasters, and now is the time to take on the battle against climate change.

We know where to start. We need to reduce carbon pollution, utilize more renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, and oppose the Big Oil subsidies on the floor this week.

OBAMA'S WAR ON COAL

(Mr. MCKINLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCKINLEY. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, President Obama continued his relentless war on coal. He indicated he would circumvent Congress and use unelected bureaucrats to fulfill his

anticoal agenda. He implied he had a moral obligation to do so because Congress is not acting. But Congress has, indeed, acted and simply doesn't agree with the President's ambitions. Congress realized that his agenda will destroy jobs and increase the cost of electricity. Electric bills will go up for everyone who uses power. Everyone will pay more.

The President is basing his call for action on flawed theories about what may happen in the future, but his actions will have an immediate negative impact today.

During his remarks, the President insulted his critics with sophomoric name calling and dismissed the opinions of over 32,000 scientists and physicists who contend that the issue of global warming has not been settled. In the coming months, we will highlight the devastating impact these anticoal policies will have on America's future, its families, and the economy in general. We will point out the flaws in his climate projections.

The President may believe that a war on coal is exactly what's needed, but the thousands who will lose their jobs and the millions who will pay more for electricity beg to differ.

□ 1220

THE SUPREME COURT'S VOTING RIGHTS DECISION

(Mr. PAYNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, a vote at the ballot box transcends gender, race, religion, and socioeconomic status. Knowing that an 80-year-old veteran, a single mom, or an 18-year-old high school senior voting for the first time has an equal vote and, thus, an equal voice as does a millionaire or billionaire, this is what has separated us and made our Nation great.

Unfortunately, the recent Supreme Court decision to strike down section 4 of the Voting Rights Act is not only a major setback for civil rights and voting rights, but it is a major blow to basic fundamental democracy in this country.

Now is the time for Congress to rise above partisanship and create free and unfettered access to the ballot. Access to the ballot on election day may be one of the only times that the most disadvantaged in our communities have an equal voice, regardless of what they look like or where they come from.

And as a Member who represents some of the most disadvantaged, I am undeterred and will continue to fight so my constituents can have an equal access to the ballot box, from the wealthiest towns to the poorest cities; and I urge my colleagues to do the same.