

Efforts to keep minorities from fully exercising that franchise, however, continue. Indeed, in the past thirty years, we have witnessed a pattern of efforts to intimidate and harass minority voters including efforts that were deemed "Ballot Security" programs that include the mailing of threatening notices to African-American voters, the carrying of video cameras to monitor polls, the systematic challenging of minority voters at the polls on unlawful grounds, and the hiring of guards and off-duty police officers to intimidate and frighten voters at the polls.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have a particularly poor track record when it comes to documented acts of voter intimidation. In 1982, a Federal Court in New Jersey provided a consent order that forbids the Republican National Committee from undertaking any ballot security activities in a polling place or election district where race or ethnic composition is a factor in the decision to conduct such activities and where a purpose or significant effect is to deter qualified voters from voting. These reprehensible practices continue to plague our Nation's minority voters.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT HISTORY

August 6, 2011, marked the 46th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act.

Most Americans take the right to vote for granted. We assume that we can register and vote if we are over 18 and are citizens. Most of us learned in school that discrimination based on race, creed or national origin has been barred by the Constitution since the end of the Civil War.

Before the 1965 Voting Rights Act, however, the right to vote did not exist in practice for most African Americans. And, until 1975, most American citizens who were not proficient in English faced significant obstacles to voting, because they could not understand the ballot.

Even though the Indian Citizenship Act gave Native Americans the right to vote in 1924, state law determined who could actually vote, which effectively excluded many Native Americans from political participation for decades.

Asian Americans and Asian immigrants also have suffered systematic exclusion from the political process and it has taken a series of reforms, including repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, and passage of amendments strengthening the Voting Rights Act three decades later, to fully extend the franchise to Asian Americans. It was with this history in mind that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to make the right to vote a reality for all Americans.

And the Voting Rights Act has made giant strides toward that goal. Without exaggeration, it has been one of the most effective civil rights laws passed by Congress.

In 1964, there were only approximately 300 African-Americans in public office, including just three in Congress. Few, if any, black elected officials were elected anywhere in the South. Today there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 members of Congress, the largest number ever. The act has opened the political process for many of the approximately 61,000 Latino public officials that have been elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the state or federal level, 27 of whom serve in Congress. And Native Americans, Asians and others who have historically encountered harsh barriers to full political participation also have benefited greatly.

We must not forget the importance of protecting this hard earned right.

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 nonprofits, 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 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 change often, and the elderly, 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.

□ 1050

TIME TO GET TO WORK

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

Mr. GARCIA. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon a group of 20 freshman Members of Congress will gather to announce that we are putting aside our partisan differences to do the right thing for the American people. For Democrats, this means that 10 of us are willing to compromise on spending so long as we keep our promise to seniors that they can retire with dignity and have access to affordable, quality health care. My Republican colleagues have said that they are willing to compromise on revenues so long as Democrats meet them halfway.

Like most Americans, to those of us who are new to Washington, "compromise" isn't a dirty word. It's what regular, ordinary people do in their daily lives. The American people get it. If you have a problem that arises in your office, you and your coworkers may disagree on how to address it, but your company does not wait until it gets to the last minute to solve it. You simply meet with your colleagues, put differences aside, and find solutions. Not everyone will get what they want, but we move forward. And this is precisely what the American people have sent us to Washington to do. They have sent us here to solve problems on their behalf and not argue all the time.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges before us are serious, and they deserve serious proposals. While our economy is growing, we still have many families that are looking for work or waiting for our economy to grow more quickly. Many parents are working two and three jobs and yet cannot find a way to save money for retirement or send their kids to school. I see this all the time in my community in places like Kendall, Westchester, and Islamorada.

This status quo is unacceptable to me, just as I know it is unacceptable to my Republican colleagues. Yet it seems that when we gather in this Chamber, rather than finding common-sense solutions to our problems, we engage in ideological debates that are designed for political posturing that lead us to nowhere.

At a minimum, if we can't agree on every issue, we should be working hard to solve problems. The American people may not know this, but the fact is that of the 31 days that we met here last month, Members of Congress only gathered six times. And in those 6 days, the only bill of any real significance was the Hurricane Sandy relief—a bill that should have been approved last year. Maybe this is the way Washington works; but in the rest of America, if you show up to your job less than 20 percent of the time—that's about 1 day a week—you probably won't have a job for too long. And yet some of my colleagues find this acceptable. Well, I don't. And I know the

American people won't find this acceptable either.

So I respectfully invite each of my colleagues, Republican and Democrats alike, and even those of you who have been in Washington for a while, to join us for this moment of bipartisanship and work together on behalf of our fellow citizens. Let's remember that it is a privilege to serve the American people. It's time to get to work.

UPHOLDING SECTION 5 OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

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

Mr. VEASEY. As oral arguments are being prepared for the February 27 U.S. Supreme Court hearing in the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, which challenges the constitutionality of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, I stand here today in strong support of upholding section 5 as evidence of its current critical necessity. In my home State of Texas, the need for section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is playing out in a very dramatic fashion.

I'm a plaintiff in the ongoing litigation involving the 2011 Texas redistricting case, *Quesada v. The State of Texas*. I can personally attest and flatly state that overt and deliberate racial discrimination is still used by leaders in Texas today. I wish that statement were untrue or out of date. It would be wonderful to say that we have progressed past the need for protection under section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. Sadly, this is not the case. Section 5 protects minorities from racial discriminatory voter ID laws, voter suppression tactics, and discriminatory redistricting plans. These protections are needed now as much as ever.

In 2011, just 2 years ago, a map was drawn by the Texas Legislature that didn't merely affect the politics of our State. Overt racial discriminatory tactics were used to isolate and suppress hundreds of thousands of minorities for the purpose of political gain by current partisan leaders of my State. Latino and African American citizens in the State of Texas suffered the most aggressive and deliberate discriminatory blows to our constitutional rights to fairly participate in elections.

Cold and heartless tactics were used that should be simply relics of the past—relics like “packing” millions of minority voters together into as few districts as people to dilute the impact of their vote by “cracking” the remaining voters to ensure that their vote has no impact at all. Minorities were packed precinct by precinct and block by block in order to contain the impact of their growing population. And yet here we are today, fighting to uphold section 5.

The right to vote and the right for one's voice to be heard through elected representation is a legally enacted and constitutional right that many have

bled and died for. Yet we are still fighting for this very right. Some say its time to move on. But, my dear friends, we must never move on while these rights are not just at risk but under attack. And when I detail the discrimination contained within the redistricting process, no one should think I'm acting as a partisan Democrat. The three-judge panel in Federal court that heard the evidence, questioned the witnesses, and delivered the opinion of the Texas redistricting case consisted of two judges appointed by Republican Presidents and one judge appointed by a Democratic President. Their finding of intentional discrimination was unanimous. They could not have made their views any clearer, stating:

The parties have provided more evidence of discriminatory intent than we have space or need to address here.

This was not a case heard 30 years ago, or even 10 or 5 years ago. The decision was released just last August, barely 6 months ago.

Lastly, those who tell you that there is no recourse for States that no longer discriminate are, at best, dangerously mistaken. The Voting Rights Act contains provisions for States that have over the years exhibited that they are no longer in need of pre-clearance. States can submit evidence to the Department of Justice or the D.C. District Court that they are no longer using racial discriminatory redistricting tactics and apply for a way out of section 5. As a matter of fact, since 2009, more States than ever before in the history of the Voting Rights Act have been granted the right out.

So why are we challenging the constitutionality of a law that is protecting its citizens from racial discrimination when there is, in fact, recourse? I will tell you the sad truth is because, unfortunately, in States like Texas, where the minority population is growing very rapidly and their voting strength is increasing, rather than work to earn the vote of minority citizens, State leaders would rather suppress voters through racially discriminatory tactics.

My friends, our country is better than this. We are better than this. That's why we are here today in support of upholding section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

□ 1100

EXPANSION OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

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

Mr. DUNCAN of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, one thing that President Obama mentioned in his State of the Union speech the other night, which I hope he follows up on, is his effort to stop the cost of college tuition and fees from going up at such a rapid rate.

I spoke to a class at the University of Tennessee last week—and I've done

that many times—and whenever I speak to classes, it shocks the students when I tell them that in my first year at the University of Tennessee it cost \$90 per quarter in our tuition. In other words, I went to school for \$270. It went up to \$105, and then \$120, and then \$135 a quarter my senior year, so it went up \$405. But this was shortly after the Federal student loan program had come in.

Until that program came in, college tuition and fees went up at just the rate of inflation. It went up very slowly—in fact, sometimes less than inflation. But now, and ever since that program has come in, tuition and fees have gone up at three or four or five times the rate of inflation, so that today colleges and universities cost 300, 400, and 500 percent higher than they would have if we had just left things alone. Anything the Federal Government subsidizes, the costs just explode.

When I went to the University of Tennessee—my senior year in high school I had been a bag boy at the A&P making \$1.10 an hour—I got a big raise. As a freshman at the university, I became a salesman at Sears and worked there my first 2 years, and I made \$1.25 an hour.

Almost everybody who needed to could work part-time and pay all of their expenses and fees in college. Nobody had to borrow money to go to colleges or universities; nobody got out of school with a debt. Then the Federal Government decided to help. And now, what it has resulted in is almost everybody has to borrow money to pay their tuition and fees, and almost everybody gets out of school with some kind of huge debt.

We've seen the same thing happen in medical care. The Federal Government decided to help out. Before the Federal Government got involved in medical care, medical care was cheap and affordable to almost everybody. Doctors even made house calls. We took what was a very minor problem for a very few people and now we've turned it into a massive, major problem for everyone. That seems to be the history of the Federal Government.

I just came from a hearing in the Oversight and the Government Reform Committee, and I will return to that shortly. But in the GAO report on the New York Medicaid program—which is the largest in the country—it tells about a daily payment method resulting in a \$5,000 daily rate for institutional residents in the State of New York—\$5,000 daily payments. The New York program is paying over twice as much as the average around the country.

We sometimes hear that Medicare and Medicaid can't be cut. We certainly don't want to hurt any lower-income people, but there are some people and companies getting ridiculously, fabulously wealthy off of Medicare and Medicaid. And almost every government program ends up being some sort