

Most of all, Congressman Oxley was a wonderful colleague working hard with both parties to represent his constituents in the best way possible. He will be greatly missed.

On a personal note, Mike and Pat and Bob and I were personal friends. We got to know each other “back in the day” when members of Congress saw each other socially.

Even though we came from different parties, it didn't make a difference when it came to friendship. At that time I was a Congressional spouse, so Pat and I got to know each other well and participated actively in Congressional spouse activities. Our sons also got to know each other when we took bipartisan trips to places like New York.

In fact, I remember one funny incident when the two families were together on a Congressional Arts Caucus trip to New York City. As we were riding around, touring on a bus, our sons Brian and Elvis, 10 years old at the time and dressed in their blue blazers, hopped off the bus and started walking down the street. Bob and Mike, alarmed, jumped off the bus and ran after them. They finally caught up with them and asked them what they were doing. The boys calmly replied and said that “they were all dressed up and ready to see the town!” We had such a laugh recalling those days in subsequent conversations.

When I think of Mike Oxley, I think of family and the joy he had with Pat and Elvis. We will all miss him.

VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Mr. Speaker, before I start, let me extend my condolences to those who are mourning the death of our former Congressman. That was 60 minutes' worth of very, very nice tribute.

As I am sure all of my colleagues are aware, we are now in primary election season. This year the American people will elect a new President of the United States. Unfortunately, there is a great possibility that hundreds of thousands of Americans will be barred from casting their vote because of this body's failure to act.

In 2012, I watched, horrified, as voters were forced to stand in outrageous lines at their polling places. Meanwhile, States across the country have set up new barriers to voting, cutting back on early voting hours, and adding difficult new identification hurdles that limit young people and communities of color more than anyone else—and this as we call ourselves the model

of democracy for the whole world to follow.

Instead of embracing every possible opportunity to improve and facilitate one of the cornerstones of our democracy, we are allowing it to crumble. There is quite a bit to fix, yet Congress isn't willing to do anything about it.

Mr. Speaker, our States have wildly different voting systems. Early voting is allowed some places but not others, same-day registration is offered in one State but not in the next. I can think of few better tasks for Congress to take on than to set standards for Federal elections, at a minimum, and to provide the biggest possible opportunity for our constituents to pick the people that represent them.

We have Americans that have made mistakes in their pasts but have completed their sentences for nonviolent convictions. They have put in their effort to change and have come back to society as tax-paying, law-abiding citizens. Unfortunately, we ban millions of these Americans from the ballot box despite their rehabilitation. It seems to me that Congress should get involved in offering individuals like those one of the most fundamental rights that we have as Americans—but we are not.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a conversation for this body to have about technology. Smartphones and other mobile devices have fingerprint sensors. I can wave a key fob over a terminal and pay for lunch without swiping a credit card or even signing my name. I acknowledge that there are very real challenges we face in bringing technology to the ballot box, but we should be talking about how we can use digital advances to expand access instead of trying to manufacture excuses to limit access.

Right there alone, there are three steps we could take on voting rights in our Nation.

Unfortunately, we can't even begin these discussions because we seem to have traveled back to a dark place in our Nation's history when it was both legal and common to limit access to polling places. Despite so many opportunities to move forward, we are rolling backward.

Since 2010, 22 States have passed laws that make it more difficult for Americans to vote, most commonly in the form of voter ID laws that disproportionately impact communities of color, women, seniors, students, and low-income individuals.

Unfortunately, the Voting Rights Act, which had previously curtailed these dangerous restrictions, was gutted in 2013 by the Supreme Court. In the so-called first-in-the-nation primary held this week in New Hampshire, voters encountered new ID laws for the first time, a law that allowed poll workers to vouch for voters without approved IDs and gives them the leeway to discriminate against some voters while validating others. Laws like the one in New Hampshire were passed to protect elections from voting

fraud—a specter that Republicans have used time and again to scare Americans into thinking that some dark figure is hijacking their election, a notion that has been discredited and disproved time and again.

Between 2002 and 2005, the Department of Justice made prosecuting voter fraud a top priority. In that timeframe, hundreds of millions of votes were cast; yet only 38 cases were brought to trial, and then only one involved impersonation fraud, which is what photo ID laws protect against.

More recently, a professor at the Loyola University Law School has tracked every allegation of voter fraud since 2000 and has found just 31 cases—just 31 cases—of impersonation. That is 31 ballots out of more than 1 billion that have been cast. The fact of the matter is the kind of intentional shady voter fraud these laws were based on simply did not exist.

Mr. Speaker, of the many tasks this body has, protecting the right to vote, the foundation that built our democracy, the right for which countless Americans have fought over the course of a more than 200-year history, protecting, expanding, and strengthening that right seems like it should be one of our greatest priorities.

I hope that my colleagues can begin to see that also and to join me and many of my colleagues on the Democratic Caucus in taking action that will facilitate, expand, and provide opportunities for every eligible person who can vote to be able to vote.

I yield back the balance of my time.

VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I am delighted to follow the gentlewoman from New Jersey, focusing on the Congressional Progressive Caucus' commitment to ensuring every American can vote.

Might I add that we have worked together with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, we have worked together with the Congressional Black Caucus, and we have worked together with the Democratic Caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to encourage the entire House to be committed to the very values of this Nation. This should not be a Republican or Democratic issue, of which it has become. We stand here as Democrats arguing for the empowerment of voters all over the Nation, yet legislative initiatives have been introduced by members of the Judiciary Committee and others. I have joined a number of those legislative initiatives, and these initiatives cannot be heard and cannot be voted on.

The American people need to know that. There is no other reason than the Republican majority does not want to have empowered voters.

This is unlike what we did in years past. I have had the privilege of being on the House Judiciary Committee for a number of years, and the most powerful and moving experience was—and there have been many experiences on the House Judiciary Committee—when all of us came together to help write the restoration or reauthorization of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

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It was a very emotional and tearful moment. It was a moment of great extensiveness—15,000 pages of testimony; many, many, many witnesses; individuals explaining how precious it is to vote; but, more importantly, how not having protection for the vote can, therefore, disallow them to vote.

I guess the most provocative experience was a Republican President being joined by Republican and Democratic Members on a joyful sunny day signing the legislation that reauthorized the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Mind you, Mr. Speaker, that bill exhibits, if you will, the pain and suffering of so many who marched and marched and marched and marched. Not only did they march, they died, like Jimmie Lee Jackson. Or our own colleague from Georgia, JOHN LEWIS, who reminds us every day of the fear and feeling of being beaten near to death in his march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

He also reminds us how precious the right to vote is. When Dr. Martin Luther King, who refused to give up or give out or give in, marched again, and they made it—with so many people from all backgrounds and all over the Nation—to Montgomery, Alabama, on that fateful trip back, everyone was celebrating that they had marched for the Voting Rights Act, that they had gotten through without violence—attributable, of course, to a Texas President by the name of Lyndon Baines Johnson.

When a wonderful, wonderful lady—whose children I had the privilege of meeting—was driving back some foot soldiers, whom we will honor shortly at the leadership of TERRI SEWELL, when they were driving back and Viola Liuzzo was behind the wheel, lo and behold, somebody violently took a gun and killed her.

Voting has never been easy. Voting rights has never been easy. A lot of blood was shed.

It baffles me why we are faced with a situation where the United States Supreme Court eliminated section 5—not an illegal provision, but a provision that somebody disliked because, I believe, it empowered voters.

What the Congress was tasked to do by the Court, which I think incorrectly and wrongly ignored 15,000 pages of testimony, ignored tens upon tens of witnesses in a meticulous rewriting of the Voting Rights Act to prove that it was still necessary, in a skewed deliberation, the Supreme Court decided to reject it, indicating that it was long passe.

And, of course, some brilliant legislators used the example: because we have eliminated polio because of the vaccination, is it appropriate to get rid of the vaccination?

No, it is not, Mr. Speaker.

So with that skewed and, if I might use the term, weird reasoning, we are left holding the bag and the door is open to the kinds of laws, such as voter ID laws, that spread across America like a contagious disease because we did not have the protection of section 5, which the idea of section 5 was a preclearance for men and women of goodwill to look and determine whether or not a procedure was going to block individuals from voting.

Of course, the voter ID law from Texas sprung up. You will soon hear from the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY), my dear friend and colleague, because he was, in fact, the leader on the lawsuit.

Let me say that that terrible law blocked a lot of people from voting.

I want to remind people that the day of August 6, 1965, in the presence of such luminaries as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Whitney Young of the National Urban League, James Forman of the Congress of Racial Equality, A. Philip Randolph, JOHN LEWIS, Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, and Everett Dirksen—mind you, a lady was missing, but, in the event, many women were foot soldiers.

The point was made on the Voting Rights Act:

The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.

In this instance, I would modify it and say “women.”

When the voting ID law—because of the misgivings of the State of Texas and its legislature—was put in place, there were 80 counties at least in Texas that did not have a Department of Public Safety office for individuals to be able to register or to be able to get an ID. That is a tragedy. Each moment there is something coming out of Texas that wants to, in essence, put down the rights of individuals to vote.

One case that should be brought to our attention is a case before the Supreme Court that indicates a group of petitioners who don't like the fact that you represent a population of people. So they want to characterize and get a definition of what a person means, and they want to make that person be an eligible voter.

So, in essence, a sick person laying in a bed who needs health care and needs to be represented is not an eligible voter. Or a senior citizen that has gotten so old and feeble that they may not have been registered because of their illness and their feebleness, but they need to be represented. Or it may be a child—Hispanic, African American, Anglo, or Asian—who is not at the age of voting and they are not an eligible

voter. Or, as I know they are focusing on, is hardworking individuals who happen to be immigrants and they are not yet eligible to vote.

And this case is brought primarily to make sure that those people who need to be represented to the extent that they are taxpayers but are not yet status, they will not be counted.

This case is not anything to do with voter fraud. These people are not trying to vote. They are just trying to survive. But you are telling me that they are human beings, and this case is suggesting that they cannot be represented.

This is the devastating impact of not having voter protection in section 5.

So I rise today to ensure that it is heard throughout the land: We can pass voter restoration, voter advancement. We can pass fixing the Voting Rights Act and restoring section 5.

There are many people in this Congress who previously were here when we stood with President Bush, a Republican, and Republicans and Democrats 98-1, 98-2 in the Senate, massive support in the House, to restore the Voting Rights Act.

Let me ask the question, Mr. Speaker: Why now? Why are we struggling in this Presidential year not to allow people to vote?

Let me close my remarks because we could go on with—how should I say it—the irony and, as well, the wrongness of not passing legislation. But let me say this in closing:

Redistricting is a result of the Voting Rights Act. Those of us in Texas are still in litigation—for 20 years some of us—on the question of redistricting and making fair districts where all people are represented.

And the gerrymandering that has been done, that disallows and disenfranchises whole chunks of minorities, disallowing them from voting for the person of their choice, do you know what it brings about? It brings about this House in the majority—good friends of mine—having the sheer gall to deny the President's representative of the Office of Management and Budget to present the President's budget. In its 41-year history, that has never happened.

But because we have these districts that are drawn, not representing the vast numbers of people who should be able to hear the President's statement about his budget, by having his representative, the OMB Director, come before Congress and speak about what the President is trying to do: reducing the deficit, providing for education, protecting health care, job creation, economic security, universal access to child care, education for all, year-long Pell Grants, all of that, and a national security for peace—we can't hear from the OMB Director because of the skewed redistricting that allows for the majority to be so overwhelmingly in charge that they would deny the normal processes of government.

The Voting Rights Act and the empowerment of voters is crucial and a

fair redrawing of lines to let all of the people be heard and all of the voters be able to speak. That is why I am on the floor today.

I am looking forward to reasonable people coming together and fostering legislation that answers the constitutional call that we all are created equal with certain unalienable rights—the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—which is embodied in the vote of the American people.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. SHEILA JACKSON LEE. I am pleased to join my colleagues of the Congressional Progressive Caucus in this important Special Order on voting rights protection and expansion for every American.

I would like to thank Congresswoman BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN for convening this evening's Special Order and for her dedicated leadership on critical issues impacting children and families, including this evening's topic of voting rights.

Fifty-one years ago, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and because of that law, I stand before you as Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON LEE, the first African American woman Ranking Member of the U.S. House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations.

We are here today not just to commemorate the landmark achievement of 51 years ago but to redouble and rededicate our efforts to the work that remains to be done to protect the right of all Americans to vote free from discrimination and the injustices that prevent them from exercising this most fundamental right of citizenship.

On August 6, 1965, in the Rotunda of the Capitol and in the presence of such luminaries as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; Roy Wilkins of the NAACP; Whitney Young of the National Urban League; James Foreman of the Congress of Racial Equality; A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; JOHN LEWIS of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee; Senators Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, and Everett Dirksen; President Johnson said before signing the Voting Rights Act, in: "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was critical to preventing brazen voter discrimination violations that historically left millions of African Americans disenfranchised.

In 1940, for example, there were less than 30,000 African Americans registered to vote in Texas and only about 3% of African Americans living in the South were registered to vote.

Poll taxes, literacy tests, and threats of violence were the major causes of these racially discriminatory results.

After passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which prohibited these discriminatory practices, registration and electoral participation steadily increased to the point that by 2012, more than 1.2 million African Americans living in Texas were registered to vote.

In 1964, the year before the Voting Rights Act became law, there were approximately 300 African-Americans in public office, including just three in Congress.

Few, if any, black elected officials were elected anywhere in the South.

Because of the Voting Rights Act, as of 2013 there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 members of Congress, the largest number ever.

The Voting Rights Act opened the political process for many of the approximately 6,000 Latino public officials that have been elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the state or federal level, 27 of whom serve in Congress.

Native Americans, Asians and others who have historically encountered harsh barriers to full political participation also have benefited greatly.

The crown jewel of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is Section 5, which requires that states and localities with a chronic record of discrimination in voting practices secure federal approval before making any changes to voting processes.

Section 5 protects minority voting rights where voter discrimination has historically been the worst.

Since 1982, Section 5 has stopped more than 1,000 discriminatory voting changes in their tracks, including 107 discriminatory changes right here in Texas.

And it is a source of eternal pride to all of us in Houston, that in pursuit of extending the full measure of citizenship to all Americans that in 1975, Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, who also represented this historic 18th Congressional District of Texas, introduced, and the Congress adopted, what are now Sections 4(f)(3) and 4(f)(4) of the Voting Rights Act, which extended the protections of Section 4(a) and Section 5 to language minorities.

Barbara Jordan championed this reform because as she stated during the floor debate on the 1975 reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act: "There are Mexican-American people in the State of Texas who have been denied the right to vote; who have been impeded in their efforts to register and vote; who have not had encouragement from those election officials because they are brown people[.] "So, the state of Texas, if we approve [the Jordan language included in the bill], would be brought within the coverage of this Act for the first time."

We must remain ever vigilant and oppose all schemes that will abridge or dilute the precious right to vote.

And we are here today to remind the nation that the right to vote—that "powerful instrument that can break down the walls of injustice"—is facing grave threats.

The threat stems from the decision issued in June 2013 by the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder*, 570 U.S. 193 (2013), which invalidated Section 4(b) of the VRA, and paralyzed the application of the VRA's Section 5 preclearance requirements.

Earlier this week, the Maryland Senate voted to override Governor Larry Hogan's veto of a bill that allows formerly incarcerated individuals to register to vote after they are released from prison.

Also, the Iowa Supreme Court will also be considering amending laws to grant the right to vote those who have been incarcerated in the past.

Amending this legislation is important for the population because it will help in the reintegration of these individuals, and secure their right to vote.

In light of this, there is still progress in the fight to restore the right to vote.

According to the Supreme Court majority, the reason for striking down Section 4(b): "Times change."

Now, the Court was right; times have changed. But what the Court did not fully appreciate is that the positive changes it cited are due almost entirely to the existence and vigorous enforcement of the Voting Rights Act.

And that is why the Voting Rights Act is still needed.

Let me put it this way: in the same way that the vaccine invented by Dr. Jonas Salk in 1953 eradicated the crippling effects but did not eliminate the cause of polio, the Voting Rights Act succeeded in stymieing the practices that resulted in the wholesale disenfranchisement of African Americans and language minorities but did eliminate them entirely.

The Voting Rights Act is needed as much today to prevent another epidemic of voting disenfranchisement as Dr. Salk's vaccine is still needed to prevent another polio epidemic. However, officials in some states, notably Texas and North Carolina, seemed to regard the *Shelby* decision as a green light and rushed to implement election laws, policies, and practices that could never pass muster under the Section 5 preclearance regime.

We all remember the Voter ID law passed in Texas in 2011, which required every registered voter to present a valid government-issued photo ID on the day of polling in order to vote.

The Justice Department blocked the law in March of 2012, and it was Section 5 that prohibited it from going into effect.

At least it did until the *Shelby* decision because on the very same day that *Shelby County v. Holder* was decided officials in Texas announced they would immediately implement the Photo ID law, and other election laws, policies, and practices that could never pass muster under the Section 5 preclearance regime.

The Texas Photo ID law was challenged in federal court and thankfully, just yesterday, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld the decision of U.S. District Court Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos that Texas' strict voter identification law discriminated against blacks and Hispanics and violated the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

To take another example, last year, Councilwoman Pat Van Houte, who serves on the Pasadena, Texas City Council was forcibly ejected by armed officers at the direction of Pasadena Mayor Johnny Isbell at a council meeting to consider a controversial redistricting plan.

The Pasadena redistricting plan is one of the first to be implemented in the aftermath of the *Shelby v. Holder* decision.

Pushed through by Mayor Isbell and narrowly passed by the voters, the redistricting plan switches two of the city's eight council seats from single member district to at-large.

Thus, the effect of the plan is to dilute the voting power of the poorer, predominantly Hispanic residents of the Pasadena's north side who opposed the change, and to increase the voting power of residents in the wealthier, whiter south side who supported it.

This shameful episode is a reminder that the Voting Rights Act protected not only right to vote in federal elections but also applied to state and local jurisdictions as well.

For example, Section 5 subjected to preclearance and could have blocked the Texas Education Administration (TEA) from closing the North Forest Independent School District (NFISD) and disbanding its locally elected school board comprised of 7 African American members.

Once freed by the Shelby County decision from having to pass muster under Section 5, however, TEA directed the annexation of the NFISD by HISD and dissolved the school board, thus diluting the ability of the African American and Hispanic community residents served by NFISD to influence the decisions affecting the education opportunities of their children.

Protecting voting rights and combating voter suppression schemes are two of the critical challenges facing our great democracy.

Without safeguards to ensure that all citizens have equal access to the polls, more injustices are likely to occur and the voices of millions silenced.

Those of us who cherish the right to vote justifiably are skeptical of Voter ID laws because we understand how these laws, like poll taxes and literacy tests, can be used to impede or negate the ability of seniors, racial and language minorities, and young people to cast their votes.

Consider the demographic groups who lack a government issued ID: African Americans: 25%; Asian Americans: 20%; Hispanic Americans: 19%; Young people, aged 18–24: 18%; Persons with incomes less than \$35,000: 15%.

Voter ID laws are just one of the means that can be used to abridge or suppress the right to vote. Others include:

1. Curtailing or Eliminating Early Voting
2. Ending Same-Day Registration
3. Not counting provisional ballots cast in the wrong precinct on Election Day will not count.
4. Eliminating Teenage Pre-Registration
5. Shortened Poll Hours
6. Lessening the standards governing voter challenges to vigilantes like the King Street Patriots to cause trouble at the polls.

Today, I call upon House Speaker RYAN to bring legislation intended to protect the right to vote of all Americans to the floor for debate and vote.

Specifically, I call for the passage of the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendments Act, (H.R. 3899 and H.R. 885) of which I am an original co-sponsor, which repairs the damage done to the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court decision.

This legislation replaces the old 'static' coverage formula with a new dynamic coverage formula, or 'rolling trigger,' which effectively gives the legislation nationwide reach because any state and any jurisdiction in any state potentially is subject to being covered if the requisite number of violations are found to have been committed.

Alternatively, I call upon the Speaker to let the House debate and vote on the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015 (H.R. 2867), a bill that provides even greater federal oversight of jurisdictions which have a history of voter suppression and protects vulnerable communities from discriminatory voting practices.

Second, I call for the passage of H.R. 12, the Voter Empower Act of 2015, legislation I have co-sponsored that protects voters from

suppression, deception, and other forms of disenfranchisement by modernizing voter registration, promoting access to voting for individuals with disabilities, and protecting the ability of individuals to exercise the right to vote in elections for federal office.

Before concluding there is one other point I would like to stress.

In his address to the nation before signing the Voting Rights Act of 1965, President Johnson said: "Presidents and Congresses, laws and lawsuits can open the doors to the polling places and open the doors to the wondrous rewards which await the wise use of the ballot.

"But only the individual Negro, and all others who have been denied the right to vote, can really walk through those doors, and can use that right, and can transform the vote into an instrument of justice and fulfillment."

In other words, political power—and the justice, opportunity, inclusion, and fulfillment it provides—comes not from the right to vote but in the exercise of that right.

And that means it is the civic obligation of every citizen to both register and vote in every election, state and local as well as federal.

Because if we can register and vote, but fail to do so, we are guilty of voluntary voter suppression, the most effective method of disenfranchisement ever devised.

And in recent years, we have not been doing a very good job of exercising our civic responsibility to register, vote, and make our voices heard.

In the last two mayoral elections in Houston, barely 10 percent of city residents bothered to cast ballots (12% in 2011 and 13% in 2013); in many district-level elections, turnout rates were less than 10 percent.

For millions of Americans, the right to vote protected by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is sacred treasure, earned by the sweat and toil and tears and blood of ordinary Americans who showed the world it was possible to accomplish extraordinary things.

As we are approaching the 51st anniversary of that landmark law, let us rededicate ourselves to honoring those who won for us this precious right by remaining vigilant and fighting against both the efforts of others to abridge or suppress the right to vote and our own apathy in exercising this sacred right.

VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. VEASEY) is recognized for the remainder of the hour as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE), who represents the Houston and Harris County area, who does such a great job of speaking out on these issues.

Representative JACKSON LEE and really the entire delegation down there—Representatives GENE GREEN and AL GREEN, along with Representative JACKSON LEE—do a great job of keeping this on the forefront of Texans' minds and on the United States' mind.

Texas is such a large State that oftentimes, legislation that is passed out of Texas has an impact on the rest of

the Nation. It does seem that much of the discriminatory laws regarding redistricting and regarding voter suppression, like the voter ID bill, sadly, has emanated from our State.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you just how bad it is in our State. This is going to be really hard for some people to believe. But in the State of Texas, if a young person on a college campus were to find themselves their freshman year lost on the campus, or if they were to find themselves in a little bit of trouble on campus, they would be able to show their student ID to the proper law enforcement official, who is a police officer recognized by the State of Texas, on the campus to identify themselves. That ID works for them to be able to legally identify themselves.

In the State of Texas today, that same young person would not be able to show that same student ID at the voting place, at the voting booth, to be able to cast a vote. If you bring your concealed handgun license in, then you can cast a vote. The student will be given a provisional ballot that wouldn't count, and the person with a concealed handgun license would be able to cast a legal ballot.

Who is that really going to hurt? You have so many young people, particularly young people that don't come from wealthy families, whose parents really struggle to send them to college. They don't have cars in college, so they don't have their driver's license. They really rely on their student identification for everything that they do.

In the State of Texas, they absolutely cannot use that ID.

There are many things about the Texas voter ID law, to be honest with you, I really don't like. I became a plaintiff in the suit to try to scale back what I consider a very egregious act against voters in the State of Texas.

I was very delighted that back in July, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit actually upheld a lower court's decision that the Texas voter ID law had a discriminatory effect on minority voters and violated section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

I hope this means that the proper action will be taken to do something to scale back this law and the impact that it is having on people that simply want to exercise their suffrage, people that simply want to be able to vote. We take it for granted that you can simply vote. But this Texas voter ID law, and many laws from my time in the State legislature that were proposed—luckily, some of them advanced—would really roll back the clock on individuals that want to exercise their right to vote.

I will tell you what I have done in the meantime is joined as an original cosponsor of the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015 that restores the right and advances the voting rights that were provided to us in 1965 by providing a modern day coverage test which will protect our communities from these types of discriminatory practices.