

punishment, states vary widely in the practice of disenfranchisement, demonstrating a critical federal interest for uniform standards.

Clarification of the law on restoration of ex-offender voting rights is a critical next step in criminal justice reform. In 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Second Chance Act into law, signaling a bipartisan awareness of the importance of enacting policies that assist in the reintegration of ex-offenders into their communities. Recent public opinion research has also shown that a significant majority of Americans favor voting rights for people on probation or parole, who are currently supervised in their communities, as well as for individuals who have completed their sentences. This legislation both captures the bipartisan spirit of the Bush administration and is consistent with evolving public opinion on rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

From a constitutional basis, the Democracy Restoration Act is a narrowly crafted effort to expand voting rights for people with felony convictions, while protecting state prerogatives to generally establish voting qualifications. The legislation would only apply to persons who are not in prison, and would only apply to federal elections. As such, our bill is fully consistent with constitutional requirements established by the Supreme Court in a series of decisions upholding federal voting rights laws.

Since the initial introduction of this legislation, the Sentencing Project reports 27 states have amended felony disenfranchisement policies in an effort to reduce their restrictiveness and expand voter eligibility. These reforms have resulted in an estimated more than 800,000 citizens regaining their voting rights. Yet, despite these reforms, the overall rate of ex-offender disenfranchisement has not abated and continues to have a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Many of the state reforms still rely on lengthy waiting periods or clemency and several feature burdensome procedural hurdles that have proven difficult to navigate for persons seeking to restore their voting rights. As a result, approximately 50 percent of the entire disenfranchised population is clustered in 12 states, with Florida alone accounting for 48 percent of the post-sentence population.

Proponents of ex-offender disenfranchisement have offered few justifications for continuing the practice. In fact, the strongest empirical research suggests that prohibitions on the right to vote undermine both our voting system and the fundamental rights of people with felony convictions. A series of studies make clear that civic engagement is pivotal in the transition from incarceration and discouraging repeat offenses. Disenfranchisement laws only serve to isolate and alienate ex-offenders, creating additional obstacles in their attempt to successfully put the past behind them by fully reintegrating into society. Unfortunately that is only half the story.

The current patchwork of state laws has created widespread confusion among election officials throughout the country and served as the justification for flawed voter purges. For example, although people with misdemeanor convictions never lose the right to vote in Ohio, in 2008, 30 percent of election officials in the state responded incorrectly or expressed uncertainty about whether individuals with misdemeanor convictions could vote. A similar survey by the Nebraska ACLU in advance of the 2016 general election determined

that about half of state election officials gave out the wrong information about former felons voting rights. Given the general confusion by election officials on restoration of voting rights, many ex-offenders are hesitant to even attempt registration, depriving eligible voters of their rights. Only federal law can conclusively resolve the ambiguities in this area plaguing our voting system.

In past Congresses, voting restoration legislation has been supported by a broad coalition of groups interested in voting and civil rights, including the NAACP, ACLU, Human Rights Watch, the Brennan Center for Justice, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, among many others. This coalition has expanded to include many law enforcement groups including the American Probation and Parole Association, the Association of Paroling Authorities International, and the National Black Police Association, among others, who recognize that allowing people to vote after release from prison helps rebuild ties to the community that motivate law-abiding behavior.

The denial of voting rights by many states to ex-offenders represents a vestige from a time when suffrage was denied to whole classes of our population based on race, gender, religion, national origin and property. I believe that our nation fails not only people with felony convictions by denying them the right to vote, but the rest of our society that has struggled throughout its history to ensure that its citizenry be part of legitimate and inclusive elections. It is long overdue that these restrictions be relegated to unenlightened history.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF MR. PAUL ELIZONDO

HON. JOAQUIN CASTRO

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Mr. CASTRO of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life and legacy of Mr. Paul Elizondo, who passed away on December 27, 2018. Mr. Elizondo was a fellow San Antonio resident and public servant who dedicated his life to others. He is survived by his wife, Irene, 3 sons and 3 granddaughters. He will be greatly missed.

Mr. Elizondo studied Music Education at St. Mary's University. In 1957, he joined the United States Marine Corps and served 2 years. A skilled saxophone player, he carried an appreciation for music throughout his life. For 14 years, Mr. Elizondo taught music at the San Antonio and Edgewood Independent School Districts. He was Director of the Paul Elizondo Orchestra for 50 years. His orchestra was enjoyed by the community for many years.

Mr. Elizondo was a meaningful force for progress in our community. In 1978, Mr. Elizondo was elected to the Texas House of Representatives where he served two terms and was a member of the House Committee on State Affairs and the House Committee on Public Education. In 1982, he was first elected to the Bexar County Commissioners Court, later being elected to serve an unprecedented 10th term as Commissioner for Precinct 2, making him the longest serving member of the five-person Commissioners Court.

Mr. Elizondo was known as a no-nonsense individual whose commitment to policy was

only matched by his strong sense of humor. He led incremental health care and criminal justice programs. He was strong advocate for mental health services throughout the county. He was instrumental in major infrastructure and safety projects such as the Bexar County flood control program. Mr. Elizondo's presence in the community extended beyond the Court. Notably, he assisted in bringing critical development to the Westside of San Antonio.

To many, Mr. Elizondo was considered a mentor who dedicated over 30 years to public service. His institutional recollection of many county matters will be sorely missed. Bexar County was well served by Commissioner Paul Elizondo.

I am proud to have known this great individual. The passing of Mr. Paul Elizondo has been greatly felt throughout our community. However, I am confident that his impact will last for many years to come.

INTRODUCTION OF THE NEWBORN ACT

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of the Nationally Enhancing the Wellbeing of Babies through Outreach and Research Now (NEWBORN) Act, a bill I introduced today.

In 2016, Tennessee had almost 600 children die before their first birthday, including over 120 in Shelby County. Shelby County's infant mortality rate was 9.3 per 1,000 live births, which was a 13 percent increase over 2015 and significantly higher than both Tennessee's rate of 7.4 percent and the national rate of 5.9 percent.

In the United States, our infant mortality rate is comparable to countries like Bosnia, Chile, and Cuba, and an American child is 76 percent more likely to die before their first birthday in America than in 19 other wealthy nations, including Australia, Canada, France, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Even more concerning is the racial and ethnic infant mortality disparities that continue to exist. In 2016, the rates for infant mortality was nearly double for African American infants compared to white infants in Tennessee.

This is unacceptable. That's why I am introducing the NEWBORN Act.

If enacted, the NEWBORN Act would create infant mortality-focused pilot programs in the highest-risk areas of the country.

The pilot programs would focus on addressing one or more of the top five reasons for infant mortality: birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, maternal pregnancy complications, and injuries to the infant.

The NEWBORN Act would specifically encourage the development of community-specific practices to promote pre-natal care and community outreach and education.

The current infant mortality rates are tragic, but good practices can improve health and save lives.

I urge my colleagues to help pass this bill.

INTRODUCTION OF THE WASHINGTON, D.C. ADMISSION ACT

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Washington, D.C. Admission Act with 156 original cosponsors, a record number. This is the most important bill I introduce each Congress. District of Columbia residents have always been citizens of the United States, ranking number one in federal taxes per capita that support the federal government, but are the only federal income tax-paying Americans who do not have full and equal citizenship rights. The denial of local control of local matters and of equal representation in the Congress can be remedied only by statehood.

Therefore, I am introducing the Washington, D.C. Admission Act to create a state from essentially the eight home-town wards of the District. This 51st state, of course, would have no jurisdiction over the federal enclave that now consists of the Washington that Members of Congress and visitors associate with the capital of our country. The U.S. Capitol Complex, the principal federal monuments, federal buildings and grounds, the National Mall, the White House, and other federal property here would remain under federal jurisdiction. Our bill provides that the State of Washington, D.C. would be equal to the other 50 states in all respects, as is always required, and that the residents of Washington, D.C. would have all the rights of citizenship, including two senators and, initially, one House member. The District recognizes that it can enter the Union only on an equal basis, and is prepared to do so.

A substantially similar version of the Washington, D.C. Admission Act was the first bill I introduced after I was first sworn in as a Member of Congress in the 102nd Congress in 1991. Our first try for statehood received significant support in the House. In 1993, we got the first and only vote on statehood for the District, with nearly 60 percent of Democrats and one Republican voting for the bill. The Senate held a hearing on various approaches to representation, but the committee of jurisdiction did not proceed further. In the 113th Congress, our statehood bill got unprecedented momentum with the Senate's first-ever hearing on statehood, which was the first congressional hearing held on statehood in more than 20 years, since the House held its hearing on statehood in 1993, and obtained a record number of cosponsors in the House and Senate, including then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, as well as the other top three Democratic leaders in the Senate. In addition, then-President Obama endorsed D.C. statehood in a public forum before the statehood hearing was held. In the 115th Congress, not only was there a record number of original cosponsors in the House (116) and Senate (18), but also a record number of cosponsors in the House (181) and Senate (30).

Statehood is the only solution for full and equal citizenship rights for residents of the District. To be content with less than statehood is to concede the equality of citizenship that is the birthright of our residents as citizens of the United States. That is a conces-

sion no American citizen has ever made, and one that D.C. residents will not make as they approach the 218th year in their fight for equal treatment in their country. This bill reaffirms our determination to obtain each and every right enjoyed by citizens of the United States, by becoming the 51st State in the Union.

Since the founding of the nation, District residents have always carried all the obligations of citizenship, including serving in all of the nation's wars and payment of federal taxes, all without voting representation on the floor in either house of Congress or freedom from congressional interference in purely local matters.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

IN MEMORY OF MRS. JOHNNIE LEE BROWN COLLIER

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a dedicated woman of God, great wife, steadfast mother, and friend of longstanding, Mrs. Johnnie Lee Brown Collier. Sadly, Mrs. Collier passed away on December 27, 2018. Her funeral service will be held on Thursday, January 3, 2019 at 11 am at the Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church in Columbus, Georgia.

Mrs. Johnnie Lee Brown Collier was born on October 22, 1926, in Columbus, Georgia to the union of Cleola Daniel Brown and Daniel Brown, Sr. She gave her life to Christ and was baptized at an early age at Rosehill Memorial Baptist Church. From that time on, God continued to be the center of her life until her passing. She served as the Sunday School Superintendent and Church Clerk at Rosehill before moving her membership to the Fourth Street Missionary Baptist Church in 1957. Her first pastor at Fourth Street was the late Reverend Henry Harris. Mrs. Collier paved the way for others as she was the first Church Secretary at Fourth Street. She was a natural and gifted leader as she served in a variety of leadership positions at Fourth Street to include the Deacon's Wives (she served as Chairperson for two terms), Pi Com Community Leader in Zebulon Community, Women's Day Speaker, 1961, Chairperson of Program and Pastoral Relations Committee, and was the Roast and Toast Honoree in 1996.

Mrs. Collier was the epitome of a great wife and mother. She married the late Deacon Samuel Lee Collier on April 26, 1950. God blessed this union for 34 years until Deacon Collier's untimely death on May 27, 1984. Six children were born to this union to include two sets of twins out: Bernice Collier Collins, Bernard Collier (deceased), Agnes Collier Averett, Samuel Lee Collier, Jr., Michelle Collier McLain, and Michael Collier. Fred Rogers once said that, "It's not so much what you have in life that matters, it's what we do with what we have." Mrs. Collier did a lot for others with what she had. In addition to her own children, she served as a mother figure to her siblings and countless others she found in need of guidance and a helping hand.

Former Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm once said that, "Service is the rent that we

pay for the space that we occupy here on this earth." Mrs. Collier paid her rent and she paid it well. She served in a variety of community organizations to include: Electric City Chapter 482 of the Order of the Eastern Stars (Worthy Matron), Spencer High Alumni (Class of 1943), and she was a Muscogee County Board of Elections Voting Precinct Manager and she traveled to various state conventions to further her knowledge of the voting process. She was also an entrepreneur and a photographer. Her professional career took her to the Medical Center, the Area Mental Health Clinic, and the Enrichment Services Program. Her benevolence extended throughout the community and she often used her influence and networking to help others to find gainful employment.

Madam Speaker, my wife Vivian and I, along with the more than 730,000 constituents of the Second Congressional District of Georgia, salute and honor the life of Mrs. Johnnie Lee Brown Collier. I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join us in extending our deepest condolences to Mrs. Collier's family during this time of bereavement. We pray that they will be consoled and comforted by an abiding faith and the Holy Spirit in the days, weeks and months ahead.

INTRODUCTION OF JOHN TANNER FAIRNESS AND INDEPENDENCE IN REDISTRICTING ACT

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 3, 2019

Mr. COHEN. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the John Tanner Fairness and Independence in Redistricting Act, a bill I introduced today.

In most states, districts are drawn by the state legislature, and as a result, whichever party controls the state legislature ends up drawing Congressional districts specifically designed to maximize the number of Congressional seats that party can win.

In other words, the elected officials choose the voters, instead of the voters choosing the elected officials.

If enacted, the John Tanner Fairness and Independence in Redistricting Act would fix this by requiring states to use bipartisan redistricting commissions to draw maps. No single party would get to control the process.

Historically, both parties have engaged in gerrymandering to some extent or another. But that does not make it right.

In a representative democracy, the people need be able to freely and fairly choose their elected representatives.

Unfortunately, that is not always happening. This is not what the Founders envisioned. They designed the House of Representatives to be the Congressional chamber that most accurately reflects the views of the people.

The failure of the House to more accurately reflect the will of the electorate is a formula for the electorate to lose faith in the institution. It makes people cynical and discourages them from participating.

We can do better.

A democracy is supposed to be marketplace of ideas. The playing field is supposed to be fair and competitive, not gerrymandered and monopolized.