

people of color from voting, the VRA and its prophylactic preclearance formula put teeth into the 15th Amendment's guarantee that no citizen can be denied the right to vote because of the color of their skin.

H.R. 4 has received vocal and vigorous support from the civil rights community because it responds to the urgent need to stop the abuses by state and local governments in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's infamous 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, when five justices of the Supreme Court invalidated the VRA's preclearance provision. In its decision, the Court stated: "Our country has changed, and while any racial discrimination in voting is too much, Congress must ensure that the legislation it passes to remedy that problem speaks to current conditions."

Since *Shelby County*, discriminatory policies have proliferated nationwide and continued in areas formerly covered by the preclearance requirement. In states, counties, and cities across the country, public officials have pushed through laws and policies designed to make it harder for many communities to vote. While we have celebrated successful legal challenges to discriminatory voter ID laws in Texas and North Carolina, such victories occurred only after elections in those states were tainted by discrimination. Lost votes cannot be reclaimed and discriminatory elections cannot be undone.

But voter suppression is not merely the province of those states with a long history of discrimination. Pernicious practices such as voter purging and restrictive identification requirements—which disproportionately affect voters of color—occur in states throughout the nation. Although progress has been made, some elected leaders in this country are still working to silence people who were historically denied access to the ballot box.

During the 116th Congress, the U.S. House Committee on the Judiciary held extensive hearings and found significant evidence that barriers to voter participation remain for people of color and language-minority voters in African-American, Asian American, Latinx, and Native American communities. The hearings examined the History and Enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (March 12, 2019), Enforcement of the Voting Rights Act in the State of Texas (May 3, 2019), Continuing Challenges to the Voting Rights Act Since *Shelby County v. Holder* (June 25, 2019), Discriminatory Barriers to Voting (September 5, 2019), Evidence of Current and Ongoing Voting Discrimination (September 10, 2019), Congressional Authority to Protect Voting Rights After *Shelby County v. Holder* (September 24, 2019), and Legislative Proposals to Strengthen the Voting Rights Act (October 17, 2019). The Committee on House Administration also conducted numerous hearings and amassed significant evidence of voter suppression during the 116th Congress.

H.R. 4 restores and modernizes the Voting Rights Act by:

Creating a new coverage formula that hinges on a finding of repeated voting rights violations in the preceding 25 years.

Significantly, the 25-year period is measured on a rolling basis to keep up with "current conditions," so only states and political subdivisions that have a recent record of racial discrimination in voting are covered.

States and political subdivisions that qualify for preclearance will be covered for a period of 10 years, but if they establish a clean record during that time period, they can be extracted from coverage.

Establishing "practice-based preclearance," a targeted process for reviewing voting changes in jurisdictions nationwide focused on measures that have historically

been used to discriminate against voters of color. The process for reviewing changes in voting is limited to a set of practices, including:

Changes to the methods of elections (to or from at-large elections) in areas that are racially, ethnically, or linguistically diverse;

Reductions in language assistance; Annexations changing jurisdictional boundaries in areas that are racially, ethnically, or linguistically diverse;

Redistricting in areas that are racially, ethnically, or linguistically diverse;

Reducing, consolidating, or relocating polling locations in areas that are racially, ethnically, or linguistically diverse; and

Changes in documentation or requirements to vote or register.

H.R. 4 also:

Allows a federal court to order states or jurisdictions to be covered for results-based violations, where the effect of a particular voting measure is racial discrimination in voting and denying citizens their right to vote;

Increases transparency by requiring reasonable public notice for voting changes;

Allows the attorney general authority to request the presence of federal observers anywhere in the country where there is a serious threat of racial discrimination in voting; and

Revises and tailors the preliminary injunction standard for voting rights actions to recognize that there will be cases where there is a need for immediate preliminary relief.

For over half a century, protecting citizens from racial discrimination in voting has been bipartisan work. The VRA was passed with leadership from both the Republican and Democratic parties, and the reauthorizations of the enforcement provisions were signed into law each time by Republican presidents: President Nixon in 1970, President Ford in 1975, President Reagan in 1982, and President Bush in 2006.

Voting must transcend partisanship. No matter what policy issues we care most about, we get closer to these goals through the ballot box. The integrity of our democracy depends on ensuring that every eligible voter can participate in the electoral process. Passing H.R. 4 would be a giant step toward restoring the right to vote and undoing the damage done by the Supreme Court's *Shelby County* decision. During the civil rights movement, brave Americans gave their lives for the right to vote, and we cannot allow their legacy and the protections they fought for to unravel. We urge Congress to pass this historic legislation.

Sincerely,

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; Advancement Project; American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations; African American Ministers In Action; American Association of University Women; American Civil Liberties Union; American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME); American Federation of Teachers; Andrew Goodman Foundation; Anti-Defamation League.

Arab American Institute; Asian Americans Advancing Justice—AAJC; Autistic Self Advocacy Network; Bend the Arc; Jewish Action; Blue Future; Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law; Campaign Legal Center; Connecticut Citizen Action Group; Clean Elections Texas; Communications Workers of America (CWA).

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces Democracy; 21; Democracy Initiative; Demos; End Citizens United Action Fund; FairVote Action; Fix Democracy First; Franciscan Action Network; Generation Progress; Greenpeace USA.

Human Rights Campaign; In Our Own Voice; National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda; International Union, United Automobile Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, (UAW); Jewish Council for Public Affairs; Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law; Leadership Conference of Women Religious; League of Conservation Voters Education Fund; League of Women Voters of the United States.

Main Street Alliance; Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.; NALEO Educational Fund; National Action Network; National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; National Council of Jewish Women; National Disability Rights Network (NDRN); National Education Association.

National Urban League; Native American Rights Fund; NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice; New American Leaders Action Fund; People Demanding Action; People For the American Way; Planned Parenthood Federation of America; Progressive Turnout Project; Public Citizen; Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Service Employees International Union (SEIU); Sierra Club; Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund; Stand Up America; Texas Progressive Action Network; UnidosUS; Union for Reform Judaism; United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries; Voices for Progress; YWCA USA.

Ms. JACKSON LEE, Madam Speaker, now we have a recognition, that one vote, one person, we will fight to get this signed by the President because the Constitution allows and declares one vote, one person.

#### TRIBUTE TO MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS

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

Ms. McCOLLUM, Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart today that I rise to pay tribute to three brave soldiers from the Minnesota National Guard who lost their lives yesterday in a helicopter accident.

To the families and friends who have lost loved ones, this is a terrible, terrible tragedy.

Their loved ones answered the call to serve the Minnesota National Guard. Those who answer that call do so because they are committed to making our Nation safer and stronger. They defend our Nation abroad, and they serve their friends and family at home by digging us out of snowstorms and shielding us from rising floodwaters.

We recognize that their loved ones were not just citizen soldiers; they were cherished members of their family.

To the Minnesota National Guard who have lost a fellow servicemember, Governor Walz, the congressional delegation, the whole State of Minnesota, and our Nation stand with them at this time of great sadness.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to keep these citizen soldiers and their families in our thoughts.

□ 1330

## CIVIL RIGHTS

(Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. KENDRA S. HORN of Oklahoma. Madam Speaker, today I rise to mark a historic moment for our democracy as the House passed the Voting Rights Advancement Act.

Today, more than 50 years after the original Voting Rights Act was passed into law, the right to be heard at the ballot box is under threat.

The VRAA defends our right to vote with provisions that increase election oversight, strengthen transparency in voting changes, and ensure that the fundamental principle of one person, one vote is intact.

As an Oklahoman, I am truly honored to stand here today to honor the history of a city as well as individuals with strong civil rights histories.

Just over 61 years ago in Oklahoma City, Clara Luper led a group of 13 children at the first sit-in in the Nation at the Katz Drugstore that integrated the first lunch counter, to be followed by much more.

Without Clara and those 13 children and without all of those who came before us, we wouldn't be here today recognizing the passage of the VRAA.

We have more work to do, but as we celebrate today's legislation, we should give thanks to the foot soldiers and those who came before who have laid the foundation and acknowledged the work we have yet to do.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

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

Mr. LEVIN of California. Madam Speaker, I am honored to represent the University of California at San Diego, which is one of the leading research universities in the Nation.

As I have worked with my friends on the Education and Labor Committee to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, I have kept all the incredible students at UCSD in mind. I am especially proud of our work to improve access for graduate students and ease their financial burden.

Graduate students are the backbone of research universities, teaching and mentoring undergraduates, performing groundbreaking research, and innovating the solutions for 21st century problems. Unfortunately, many of those same students have crippling student loan debt.

That is why I am so glad that the College Affordability Act recreates the Federal Perkins Loan Program and strengthens the Pell Grant Program to better address the needs of our undergraduate and graduate students.

While there is much more that we need to do to support students, I am

proud to cosponsor the College Affordability Act and will continue to work with my colleagues to improve outcomes for our students.

## ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2019, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I have been reminded again this week in conversations with some friends across the aisle that there are some people in here with whom I have extremely different views. But I know them, they have got good hearts, and they want to do the right thing; we just disagree on what that is.

There was a lot said today in the debate over the Voting Rights Act change. Some have tried to say and have just been mistaken—I don't think they were intentionally trying to misrepresent anything—but what we voted on today was not a reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act has been in effect, and it is still in effect.

But going back to the previous reauthorization that came through the Judiciary Committee I am on, it became clear that between the Republican and Democrat leaders in Judiciary, there was an agreement, and they weren't going to allow changes to their agreement. I pointed out to both of them back at the time: You have a provision in here that is reauthorized that will punish States for sins committed by grandparents—in some cases great-grandparents—that happened decades before, in many cases decades before some were born who were there. This is not supposed to be a country where we intentionally punish the children and grandchildren of somebody who committed an offense.

It was wrongdoing in preventing people from voting, and the Voting Rights Act addressed that. But it was reauthorized more than once, continuing to punish the same States that have been found to be lacking, and the data we had at the previous reauthorization showed clearly there were places in some districts, in places like New York, Wisconsin, and California, where the voting disparity and racial disparity was worse than in the States that were still being punished.

I know some say: Well, it is not a punishment for the Federal Government to say you are not trustworthy and so you don't get to be in charge of your elections; we have to approve every single thing you do.

That is an extraordinary and basically unconstitutional action by the Federal Government that has been deemed to be constitutional, but only until such time as the States that were offending have corrected the situation.

I know there was one newspaper in my district that reported I was against

the voting rights reauthorization. When I provided them a copy of my transcript from the reporters, the stenographers here, exactly as it was and they read what I actually said, instead of taking talking points from the left-wing alt-left media, the editor at the time—I know from things she had said, she apparently was a Democrat—but she was an honorable person, and they printed a correction and corrected what they had said.

I was in favor of the voting rights reauthorization, but not to continue to punish States that were not in violation and hadn't been for decades. So, in fact, my amendment would have required the punitive parts of the Voting Rights Act to apply to any State in the Union that was found to be in violation of the constitutional protections on voting.

I pointed out to the Republican leader at the time and the Democratic leader, John Conyers.

And actually, John Conyers was more open to making the change. He said: Well, you made a good point. Let me talk to some of our lawyers about it.

The Republican leader said: Absolutely not. We are not changing anything at all.

I said: But this is going to be struck down. There are some things we don't really know. This is one that is going to be struck down. Why risk the court just striking the whole thing down? If you allow my amendment, it will be constitutional, it won't any of it be struck down.

The Republican leader at the time said: Absolutely not.

Mr. Conyers came back to me later and said: I have talked to our lawyers, and they say you do make a good point, but since we have an agreement on it, it is just easier if we go forward, and if they strike something down, they strike it down.

The Supreme Court came back and did just what I said they would do. They struck down an unconstitutional part that I had tried to amend and make it constitutional.

But that is where we are. This today does not reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

It is interesting hearing comments from folks across the aisle about why this is so important that we don't disenfranchise votes. If you look at what the activity is, and even saying: Oh, there are 17 million people who have been disenfranchised because they are no longer allowed to vote.

Despite what some who make comments online might say, I am not stupid. I have won awards at every school I have been in. But I know that traditionally dead people who vote, vote Democrat. That has just been the way it is. Republicans have had a very difficult time getting dead people to vote Republican.

William F. Buckley talked about an uncle he had had who voted Republican his whole life until the year after he