

Americans, we shall all have a say in the decisions that affect our lives.

But as you know, this Nation has not always lived up to that promise. Indeed, the story of American democracy is a story of ordinary Americans daring to make extraordinary sacrifices in order for the promise to become a reality for all Americans, regardless of their race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or class.

Madam Speaker, today is a day of great significance and great consequence. We, in the House, passed the John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Act, as well as the Freedom to Vote Act. Now, today, the Senate will take up and debate both bills and vote on the future of our democracy.

What is at stake is clear. The current state of voting rights is very clear. Old battles have become new again, as State legislatures across this Nation have erected deliberate barriers to the ballot box in an all-out assault on the right to vote.

Though we no longer have a poll tax, nor do we have to count how many jelly beans are in a jar, we do know that the modern-day restrictions are no less pernicious: Long lines, closed polling stations, purged voter rolls, bans on early voting, and the list goes on and on. In Georgia it is now a crime to hand out food and water to a voter in line. And so I ask you, What are we afraid of?

Madam Speaker, the significance of this moment is not lost on me for, you see, representing Alabama's 7th Congressional District, voting rights are very personal. People in my district fought, marched, prayed, and, yes, some died for the equal right of all Americans to vote.

I know that this body reveres our late, great Congressman John Lewis. It was John who said that the struggle for voting rights is not a struggle for one day or one year, it is a struggle for a lifetime.

So we have to fight—every generation does—to protect the progress of the past and to advance it. And that is exactly what the John Robert Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act does.

I ask our Senators; how will they be remembered? Years from now, when our children and grandchildren look back on this moment and ask, What did you do to fight for voting rights? How will you be remembered?

Now, we are not asking our Senators to march. We are not asking them to sacrifice. We are not asking them to bleed on a bridge.

We are asking them to do their jobs. To do their jobs.

We are asking them to have the courage of their convictions, to use their position of great power to save our democracy in this critical moment.

Madam Speaker, to my colleagues, voting rights advocates, and stakeholders, I say, no matter what the outcome is today, we cannot be deterred. John Lewis and those brave foot soldiers did not give up. Think of where

our country would be if John and Hosea Williams and those that were bludgeoned on that bridge hadn't picked themselves up 2 days later and marched again.

Voting rights is a struggle of a lifetime, and we have to be in that fight. We cannot be tired. We can be frustrated. We can be downright mad. But we cannot give up. We have so many more miles to go before we declare victory. And victory we must have because our democracy depends on it.

Our colleague, JIM CLYBURN, this past weekend invoked the Bible. He said, it is darkest before the dawn. Indeed, by not taking this moment to protect the right to vote, we are allowing extremists to strip away the power of the people.

We all celebrated Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday on Monday. Dr. King said that "... the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." But it only bends if we Americans decide to challenge it, decide to make sure that this Constitution lives up to its ideals. It is time for the Senate to do their part.

In remembrance of the sacrifices of others, the Senate must reform its rules. We all have a role to play. And I say to the activists and to the Senators, the time to act is always now.

King said it is always time to do what is right. We must get into some good trouble. We must keep our eyes on the prize, and the prize is our democracy and restoring the right to vote.

FEDERAL TAKEOVER OF ELECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Madam Speaker, Washington Democrats have become desperate to shield their slim majorities in the House and Senate; so desperate, in fact, that they are willing to silence millions of Americans by orchestrating a Federal takeover of elections.

Look no further than H.R. 1 and H.R. 4. These pieces of legislation are the ones Americans should be concerned about.

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Madam Speaker, all Washington Democrats have done is operate off their own manufactured hysteria.

Thanks to ranking member RODNEY DAVIS of the Committee on House Administration, we have the facts on why the Democrats' narrative is wrong.

2020 saw the highest voter turnout in 120 years, and according to Pew, 94 percent said it is easy to vote. There is clearly no widespread "voter suppression" issue in this country.

Georgia's new "voter suppression law" has more days of early in-person voting than New York.

Texas' "voter suppression law" ends pandemic exceptions like universal

drive-thru voting and 24-hour voting. Neither existed in Texas before 2020. Neither widely exists even in blue States.

When it comes to abolishing the filibuster, there are even more facts.

The filibuster prevents Federal laws swinging wildly with every election.

If the filibuster is taken away, millions of citizens and entire States would be silenced.

Senator SCHUMER's push is not a response to the 2020 election or new State laws.

As early as 2019 and August 2020, Senator SCHUMER was already discussing abolishing the filibuster, but only if he won control.

If the filibuster is wiped clean off the map, imagine what will be done next: Packing the Supreme Court; ramming through the Green New Deal; defunding the police, and every other misguided item that Washington Democrats have in their political playbook.

The consequences would be disastrous for America.

Madam Speaker, Americans do not want the one-party rule agenda of Washington Democrats, the anniversary of which is tomorrow.

They do not want to see their own country become even more bankrupted by the failed policies under this administration and razor-thin majority.

Republicans will continue to stand firm against this far-left agenda, and we will not sit on the sidelines.

It is vital that Americans know what these election bills will do and the consequences that will affect this great country if they are passed.

Thank you again to Ranking Member RODNEY DAVIS and his staff for their continued hard work and diligence on this issue.

CONGRESS IS SERVING OUR VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Nevada (Mrs. LEE) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE of Nevada. Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak about news that many people don't hear too much about coming out of Washington.

Too often they only hear one side of the story about divisiveness, gridlock, and a general unwillingness to put results over politics.

And don't get me wrong, it is a problem, but there are a whole lot of us in this body that are fighting every day to put an end to that and break the cycle in Washington, especially when it comes to our veterans.

In the past 2 months alone we have seen legislative breakthroughs that had the support of both Democrats and Republicans to help make sure that our country continues to serve our Nation's veterans.

I introduced bipartisan, bicameral legislation with Representatives ANTHONY GONZALEZ, TONY GONZALES, and COLIN ALLRED to invest in the Zero Suicide initiative and bring accountability into the VA.

Last week, this House passed legislation that will end a GI Bill disparity between the National Guard and Reserve members so that every single servicemember can access the benefits their sacrifices have earned.

And last month, President Biden signed the REMOTE Act into law to extend legislation to protect student benefits for veterans.

In southern Nevada alone, 200 veterans were facing cuts in their benefits, but with our votes in the House and Senate and President Biden's signature, those benefits were extended, and it was just that easy.

These are just a few examples of the bipartisan wins this Congress has been able to accomplish for veterans.

You see, a lot of legislation before us, especially bills that serve our veterans, are common sense. And I encourage Washington to not lose sight of those two words: Common sense.

HONORING SURVIVORS AND FAMILIES OF FORMER HOSTAGES OF THE IRAN HOSTAGE CRISIS

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

Mr. BACON. Madam Speaker, I rise today to call upon my fellow Members of Congress to support H.R. 1179, which will award the Congressional Gold Medal to the survivors of the Iran hostage crisis and to the families of the former hostages who are, sadly, no longer with us.

Over 40 years ago, in November of 1979, protests in the Iranian capital of Tehran led to crowds storming the United States Embassy and taking the staff inside as hostages. Fifty-two Americans, made up of both civilian and military personnel, were made prisoners in our own embassy and became victims of a terrorist attack upon international law.

For over a year, the hostages were denied their basic human dignity with their captors inflicting upon them increasing physical and psychological torture, to include simulated executions. Madam Speaker, they would take these hostages and go through the motions of being executed, often pulling the trigger of an empty gun to instill fear. It was wrong. These brave Americans held strong throughout their harrowing ordeal, never once losing faith in each other or that they may return home to their families again. Their courage and patriotism are an inspiration to all of us today, just as it was to our Nation 40 years ago.

Through diplomatic success, all 52 of the hostages were released in January of 1981, free to return home to their loved ones and their country, with this January 20 marking the 41st anniversary of their freedom. Despite that, many of them have not recovered from their trauma; to this day still haunted by what they had to endure. Alongside having to carry these burdens for over

40 years, these 52 heroes never received proper recognition from their government for the sacrifices they were forced to make in captivity. They are true American heroes, and it is time that Congress acknowledges them as such, which is why I call upon my colleagues to support H.R. 1179. The awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the survivors and the families of the deceased will not only bring justice to these patriots, but also demonstrate this Nation's commitment to protect those whose human rights would be violated.

This bipartisan bill is a symbol of our Nation's ability to come together to honor our heroes; currently there are 145 cosponsors of this bill with a near even split between Democrats and Republicans.

Additionally, I would like to thank the tremendous efforts of Commission 52 for helping to spread awareness of this bill and gathering support for it. Their commitment to righting the wrongs of over 40 years ago is an inspiration to all.

HONORING WANDA YOUNG

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. TLAIB) for 5 minutes.

Ms. TLAIB. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the late Wanda Young, former singer of the renowned Motown Marvelettes and resident of the Inkster community in Michigan's 13th District Strong.

Ms. Young made her mark on Motown when she was asked to join the local singing group comprised of many of the Inkster High School students and alumni.

The group, now known as the Marvelettes, was quickly signed to the Tamla record label, later known as Motown Records.

They earned Motown one of its biggest hits with "Please, Mr. Postman."

Wanda Young sang lead on many of the recordings including the hit, "Don't Mess Around with Bill."

Ms. Young was an integral part of the Motown music scene and defining sound of the 1960s.

Ms. Young's example has inspired countless women and African American performers across our country.

Please join me in recognizing Wanda Young's contributions to our Nation and Michigan's 13th District Strong as we honor her legacy at home and across the globe.

RECOGNIZING MICHELLE MARTINEZ

Ms. TLAIB. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Michelle Martinez, Detroit resident and environmental justice warrior from Michigan's 13th District Strong as she departs as executive director from the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition.

For many years, Michelle has been a pillar of our community, advocating for clean air and water, and fighting against environmental racism that hurts our neighbors' quality of life.

Michelle has worked tirelessly, and I firsthand saw this myself, for various organizations over the last 15 years and has never wavered in seeking justice for the people who live with the effects of pollution.

I worked closely with Michelle on a number of initiatives when I served in the Michigan State legislature, and she has been an amazing person to watch grow as an advocate and leader in our State.

Michelle has always taken a bold approach to making transformative change for our communities that is meaningful and has never shied away from a challenge.

So please join me in recognizing Michelle Martinez' outstanding contributions to the communities of Michigan's 13th Congressional District as we wish her well on her next venture.

CONGRESS HAS A CLEAR MANDATE TO PROTECT, RESTORE, AND EXPAND VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA

Ms. TLAIB. Madam Speaker, I rise today to make clear that we, as Representatives of the people, have a clear mandate to protect, restore, and expand voting rights in our Nation.

In my hometown of Detroit, election workers and community members were intimidated, shouted at, and disrespected for simply counting the votes of our community, a majority Black community, in November of 2020.

People banged on the windows, Madam Speaker, on the counting room just because they didn't want Black and Brown votes to be counted.

Our community was treated like we were unworthy of making our voices heard at the ballot box.

This should not be so complicated.

If our colleagues in the Senate fail to pass the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act, their inaction will send a clear message to folks that voter suppression is okay. Voter suppression is not okay. It simply is not. Intimidating our election workers is not okay. Inaction is not an option, and we must deliver for the people.

AN ATTACK ON ELECTION INTEGRITY

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

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, House Democrats this past week passed a bill to nationalize elections. On a party-line vote Democrats, led by Speaker PELOSI, passed a bill nationalizing elections in an attempt to maintain power.

If ultimately enacted, this would consolidate power and control of all elections in the hands of Speaker PELOSI and the Democratic Party.

This bill is an attack on election integrity.

Their claims of voter suppression could not be further from the truth. The 2020 election had the highest turnout in 120 years.