

me. The arguments in favor, I think, do not hold water.

The Administrative Office of the Courts has pointed out that the U.S. cases are not subject to transfer under this section; and why is that? The Department of Justice coordinates itself, unlike the separate attorneys general.

I do think that the possibility of adverse outcomes is quite possible. Certainly, Mr. NEGUSE's bill to raise fees is something I support. I am a cosponsor of that bill. But if we reject the venue provisions, we will just go back and bring Mr. NEGUSE's bill up later; so that is what I would recommend.

I just want to say something further. This venue rule is not just oriented toward one sector of the economy. Mr. BUCK, the author, mentioned technology yesterday, "Big Tech" was his words.

But this isn't about technology. It is any business that is a defendant in an antitrust case. As I mentioned, the initiation was an electrical equipment company.

But I think we should listen to what people say. Mr. BUCK, in his remarks, said yesterday, Big Tech is crushing conservative speech, and that appears to be his motivation.

Well, he quotes his friend, Senator CRUZ, and he says, the greatest threat to democracy in this country is Big Tech; that Senator CRUZ agrees with that. Well, really? I mean, Senator CRUZ, who voted not to amend the Electoral Count Act that was promoted by ROY BLUNT, the author of this; who tried to overturn the election of 2020; who says that moderating inflammatory or dangerous content is a violation of free speech or may be a violation of antitrust.

I think that is the danger here; and I listened to Mr. BUCK because he said this is about conservative speech. So I think one potential outcome of this is litigation that will be brought in favorable forums to try and prevent content moderation.

If you are Infowars, and you are inciting violence, I am hoping whatever platform you are on takes you down. That is not conservative speech or liberal speech, that is dangerous speech, and I do hope that we will see this for what it is.

Not every AG is a model of probity. The Attorney General in Texas right now is hiding from process servers and has, as we know, some other legal problems.

To suggest that every Attorney General is going to be guided by principles of law, as we would hope the Departments of Justice and many of the AGs are, would be a serious mistake.

I am glad to have had a moment to get into this very arcane issue because there may not be time later today.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I actually have some time left myself and was debating on what to talk

about. I don't really have anything to talk about with successful fantasy football teams this weekend, so I am actually glad that my colleague brought up the Electoral College Act.

What we saw in the Senate were some changes to their legislation that we had requested the House majority do when that bill passed the House last week, so I am excited to see those changes in the Senate.

I am excited that the chairperson mentioned during our rules debate last week that maybe we could have a conference committee. That is a chance for bipartisan agreement on a very important issue, so I look forward to seeing whether that opportunity presents itself.

But as we stand here today, Mr. Speaker, we are trying to put the Government Publishing Office Director in line with every other executive branch appointed legislative branch employee, like the Architect of the Capitol, like the Librarian of Congress.

What is happening at the GPO has garnered bipartisan support today, and we need to continue to see that progress.

Mr. Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1045

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I also urge adoption of Senator BLUNT's bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 4791.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY FOR VOTING ACCESS PROGRAM INCLUSION ACT

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to House Resolution 1396, I call up the bill (S. 3969) to amend the Help America Vote Act of 2002 to explicitly authorize distribution of grant funds to the voting accessibility protection and advocacy system of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the system serving the American Indian consortium, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1396, the bill is considered read.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 3969

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access Program In-

clusion Act" or the "PAVA Program Inclusion Act".

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZING PAYMENTS TO VOTING ACCESSIBILITY PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY SYSTEMS SERVING THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS AND THE AMERICAN INDIAN CONSORTIUM.

(a) RECIPIENTS DEFINED.—Section 291 of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (52 U.S.C. 21061) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (b) the following new subsection:

“(c) ELIGIBLE GRANT RECIPIENTS.—

“(1) DEFINITION OF STATE.—For the purposes of this section, the term ‘State’ shall have the meaning given such term in section 102 of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (42 U.S.C. 15002).

“(2) AMERICAN INDIAN CONSORTIUM ELIGIBLE.—A system serving the American Indian consortium for which funds have been reserved under section 509(c)(1)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794e(c)(1)(B)) shall be eligible for payments under subsection (a) in the same manner as a protection and advocacy system of a State.”

(b) GRANT MINIMUMS FOR AMERICAN INDIAN CONSORTIUM.—Section 291(b) of such Act (52 U.S.C. 21061(b)) is amended—

(1) by inserting “(c)(1)(B),” after “as set forth in subsections”; and

(2) by striking “subsections (c)(3)(B) and (c)(4)(B) of that section shall be not less than \$70,000 and \$35,000, respectively.” and inserting the following: “subsection (c)(3)(B) shall not be less than \$70,000, and the amount of the grants to systems referred to in subsections (c)(1)(B) and (c)(4) shall not be less than \$35,000.”

SEC. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by section 2 shall take effect at the start of the first fiscal year starting after the date of the enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The bill shall be debatable for 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member on the Committee on House Administration or their respective designees.

The gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) and the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN).

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on S. 3969 in the RECORD.

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

There was no objection.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in strong support of S. 3969, the PAVA Program Inclusion Act.

The bill before us today is a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation that makes an important technical correction in the Help America Vote Act's Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access, or PAVA, program to explicitly include the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the

system serving the American Indian consortium as eligible recipients of PAVA funding.

When Congress passed the Help America Vote Act in 2002, it made significant changes to the country's voting process, addressing needed improvements to voting systems and voter access identified in the wake of the 2000 election. Since its enactment, Congress has provided billions of dollars under HAVA to help States improve voters' access to the ballot, including hundreds of millions of dollars in election security funds over fiscal years 2018, 2020, and 2022 and \$400 million under the CARES Act to help voters access the ballot during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Amongst the numerous changes made, HAVA recognized the unique obstacles persons with disabilities face at the polls, authorizing funding for the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access program, otherwise known as PAVA. The PAVA program funds activities aimed at increasing access to the polls and the ballot for voters with disabilities, ensuring they have access to all aspects of the voting process, and awarding funding to eligible protection and advocacy systems across the country.

Since HAVA's enactment, the millions of dollars in funding allocated under the PAVA program allows protection and advocacy systems across the country to conduct activities such as disability training for poll workers, maintaining voting hotlines, examining polling places for accessibility, and even more.

There are 57 protection and advocacy systems across the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the American Indian consortium. The P&A affiliated with the American Indian consortium serves Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region of New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and Utah.

P&As are federally mandated and protect the rights of persons with disabilities through legally based advocacy. Unfortunately, HAVA's definition excluded the protection and advocacy systems serving the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian consortium serving the Four Corners region. I don't think we intended that, and this bill fixes that.

Reintroduced this Congress by our colleague, Representative RUBEN GALLEGU of Arizona, and our former House colleague, Senator BEN RAY LUJÁN of New Mexico, S. 3969 puts the P&As serving the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian consortium on equal footing with all 55 other P&As. It does so without changing the program's overall authorization level or other elements of the program.

Fixing this oversight will help ensure all voters with disabilities, regardless of where they live, can fully participate in the electoral process.

Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter signed by all 57 protection and advocacy systems expressing support for the bill, as well as a letter of support from the National Disability Rights Network and a letter from the designated protection and advocacy systems in California and Illinois, all supporting this bill's package.

JANUARY 28, 2020.

Representative ZOE LOFGREN,
Chairwoman, House Administration Committee,
Washington, DC.

Representative RODNEY DAVIS,
Ranking Member, House Administration Committee,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRWOMAN LOFGREN AND RANKING MEMBER DAVIS: The undersigned 57 Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Systems write today to express our support to amend the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) to explicitly authorize the distribution of Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) program funds to the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian Consortium P&As.

P&A systems are federally mandated, and pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies under all applicable federal and state laws to protect and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. There are a total of 57 P&As operating in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). There is also a P&A affiliated with the American Indian Consortium serving Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

In 2002, Congress passed HAVA acknowledging the unique obstacles people with disabilities face at the polls, and authorized funding for the PAVA program. The PAVA program allows P&As to advocate on behalf of voters with disabilities to ensure that they have access to all aspects of the American voting process. PAVA program funds allow P&As to conduct disability training to poll workers, distribute resources on how to conduct an accessible campaign, maintain voting hotlines, examine polling places for accessibility, and much more throughout the year.

PAVA program funding is currently awarded to "eligible" P&As across the country. Unfortunately, because HAVA includes specific language about "states" only 55 out of the 57 P&As are currently eligible for PAVA program funding. The Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian Consortium P&As do not receive PAVA funding since they are not considered states and therefore have been ineligible for PAVA funding since HAVA passed.

It was always the intent for all 57 P&As to participate in the PAVA program. Thus, we support Congress passing legislation that would provide a long overdue technical fix explicitly authorizing the distribution of grant funds to the Northern Mariana Islands and American Indian Consortium P&As.

Thank you for your work on this important topic and consideration of a technical fix.

Sincerely,

AK, Disability Law Center of Alaska.
AL, Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP).
AR, Disability Rights Arkansas, Inc.
AS, Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.
AZ, Arizona Center for Disability Law.
CA, Disability Rights California.
CO, Center for Legal Advocacy d/b/a Disability Law Colorado.
CT, Disability Rights Connecticut.

DC, University Legal Services/Disability Rights D.C.

DE, Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.
FL, Disability Rights Florida.
GA, Georgia Advocacy Office.
GU, Guam Legal Services Corporation-Disability Law Center.
HI, Hawaii Disability Rights Center.
IA, Disability Rights Iowa.
ID, Disability Rights Idaho.
IL, Equip for Equality.
IN, Indiana Disability Rights/Indiana Protection & Advocacy Services.
KS, Disability Rights Center of Kansas.
KY, Kentucky Protection & Advocacy.
LA, Advocacy Center.
MA, Disability Law Center.
MD, Disability Rights Maryland.
ME, Disability Rights Maine.
MI, Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc.
MN, Minnesota Disability Law Center.
MO, Missouri Protection & Advocacy Services.
MP, Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy System.
MS, Disability Rights Mississippi.
MT, Disability Rights Montana.
NA, Native American Disability Law Center.
NC, Disability Rights North Carolina.
ND, North Dakota Protection & Advocacy Project.
NE, Disability Rights Nebraska (formerly Nebraska Advocacy Services).
NH, Disability Rights Center—NH.
NJ, Disability Rights New Jersey.
NM, Disability Rights New Mexico.
NV, Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center.

NY, Disability Rights New York.
OH, Disability Rights Ohio.
OK, Oklahoma Disability Law Center, Inc.
OR, Disability Rights Oregon.
PA, Disability Rights Pennsylvania.
PR, Executive Office of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
RI, Disability Rights Rhode Island.
SC, Protection & Advocacy for People with Disabilities, Inc.
SD, Disability Rights South Dakota d/b/a South Dakota Advocacy Services.
TN, Disability Rights Tennessee.
TX, Disability Rights Texas.
UT, Disability Law Center.
VA, Disability Law Center of Virginia.
VI, Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands.
VT, Disability Rights Vermont.
WA, Disability Rights Washington
WI, Disability Rights Wisconsin.
WV, Disability Rights of WV.
WY, Wyoming Protection & Advocacy System, Inc.

NATIONAL DISABILITY

RIGHTS NETWORK,

Washington, DC, May 11, 2022.

Hon. ZOE LOFGREN,
Chair, Committee on House Administration,
Washington, DC.

Hon. RODNEY DAVIS,
Ranking Member, Committee on House Administration,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIR LOFGREN AND RANKING MEMBER DAVIS: On behalf of the nationwide network of Protection and Advocacy (P&A) agencies we represent, The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) writes today to strongly urge that the full House swiftly pass S. 3969, the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) Inclusion Act which passed the Senate unanimously on March 30.

P&A systems are federally mandated, and pursue legal, administrative, and other appropriate remedies under all applicable federal and state laws to protect and advocate

for the rights of people with disabilities. There are 57 P&As operating in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands). There is also a P&A affiliated with the American Indian Consortium serving Native Americans with disabilities in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

In 2002, Congress passed HAVA acknowledging the unique obstacles people with disabilities face at the polls, and authorized funding for the PAVA program. The PAVA program allows P&As to advocate on behalf of voters with disabilities to ensure that they have access to all aspects of the American voting process. PAVA program funds allow P&As to conduct disability training to poll workers, distribute resources on how to conduct an accessible campaign, maintain voting hotlines, examine polling places for accessibility, and much more throughout the year.

PAVA program funding is currently awarded to “eligible” P&As across the country. Unfortunately, because HAVA included specific language about “states” only 55 out of the 57 P&As are currently eligible for PAVA funding. The Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian Consortium P&As do not receive PAVA funding since they are not considered states and therefore have been ineligible for PAVA funding since HAVA passed.

NDRN has expressed the crucial need for the enactment of the PAVA Inclusion Act on multiple occasions, including in written and spoken testimony before House committees. Additionally, all 57 P&As signed a 2020 letter of support for this legislation to both the Chair and Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration. Most recently, in a Report of the Interagency Steering Group on Native American Voting was published by the White House, calling on policymakers to “consider revisiting that limitation, to ensure that these entities can also equitably access HAVA funds to serve voters with disabilities in their areas”.

It was always the intent for all 57 P&As to participate in the PAVA program. Thus, we support the House passing S. 3969, which would provide a long overdue technical fix to explicitly authorize the distribution of grant funds to the Northern Mariana Islands and American Indian Consortium P&As.

Thank you for all your work on protecting the rights of people with disabilities to vote privately and independently.

Sincerely,

CURT DECKER, J.D.,
Executive Director.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2022.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Minority Leader, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

Hon. ZOE LOFGREN,
Chair, Committee on House Administration,
Washington, DC.

Hon. RODNEY DAVIS,
Ranking Member, Committee on House Administration,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI, MINORITY LEADER MCCARTHY, CHAIR LOFGREN, AND RANKING MEMBER DAVIS: On behalf of Disability Rights California and Equip for Equality, the designated Protection and Advocacy (P&A) systems in California and Illinois, we write to strongly urge that the full House swiftly pass S. 3969, the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) Inclusion Act which passed the Senate unanimously on March 30.

In 2002, Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) acknowledging the unique

obstacles people with disabilities face at the polls, and authorized funding for the PAVA program. The PAVA program allows P&As to advocate on behalf of voters with disabilities to ensure that they have access to all aspects of the American voting process. PAVA program funds allow P&As to conduct disability training to poll workers, distribute resources on how to conduct an accessible campaign, maintain voting hotlines, examine polling places for accessibility, and much more throughout the year.

PAVA program funding is currently awarded to “eligible” P&As across the country. Unfortunately, because HAVA included specific language about “states” only 55 out of the 57 P&As are currently eligible for PAVA funding. The Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian Consortium P&As do not receive PAVA funding since they are not considered states and therefore have been ineligible for PAVA funding since HAVA passed.

It was always the intent for all 57 P&As to participate in the PAVA program. Thus, we support the House passing S. 3969, which would provide a long overdue technical fix to explicitly authorize the distribution of grant funds to the Northern Mariana Islands and American Indian Consortium P&As.

Thank you for all your work on protecting the rights of people with disabilities to vote privately and independently.

Sincerely,

ANDREW J. IMPARATO,
Executive Director,
Disability Rights California.
CHERYL JANSEN,
Director, Public Policy,
Equip for Equality.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, language making this correction has passed the House twice this Congress in other legislation, and it should be enacted into law.

The Senate passed this bill by unanimous consent in March, and passing it in the House today will ensure that it will go to the President’s desk to become law.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, it is a different day here on the House floor for a debate over a bill with Committee on House Administration jurisdiction. I once again agree with the majority that this is a good piece of legislation, albeit I was a little concerned when my colleague just mentioned that officials in California and Illinois support this bill. I had to take a step back and realize, well, maybe I will talk to my team about who those officials are before I offer my wholehearted support.

But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, as part of the Help America Vote Act created in 2002, Congress authorized funding for the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access program to help ensure every eligible American, regardless of their abilities, can participate in the election process and cast their ballot privately and independently.

Funds for the PAVA program are currently allocated to only 55 of 57 legally established protection and advocacy systems across the country. The

bill today makes an important correction to ensure that both the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian consortium are included as eligible recipients for the first time.

This bill, as mentioned by my colleague, sponsored by my good friend, Senator ROY BLUNT, passed the Senate by unanimous consent, and Republicans on the Committee on House Administration are supportive of these changes and have no issues with the bill.

To be honest, I am somewhat disappointed that my colleagues in the majority on the Committee on House Administration have chosen not to pass this bill under suspension. For months, our staffs have been working together to pair the PAVA Program Inclusion Act with H.R. 8517, the Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act, a noncontroversial bill brought forward by Subcommittee on Elections Ranking Member BRYAN STEIL.

Both bills make nonpartisan, noncontroversial amendments to HAVA. Mr. STEIL’s bill doesn’t change Federal law or practice but simply provides a citation of convenience for existing law that gives the House authority to deploy official observers to watch the conduct of congressional elections in the States and territories.

Both Democrats and Republicans have long deployed House staff as election observers to monitor congressional elections. Sometimes, our observers have had access difficulties, including in a widely publicized event in Maricopa County, Arizona, 2 years ago.

So, we listened when many State and local election officials asked Congress to speak more clearly about this constitutional exercise so they can more readily provide access for our observers, which is why our committee staffs had agreed in principle to move both bills together.

That was until just a few weeks ago when the Democrats’ staff said they had issues. But when my staff reached out, they couldn’t say what those issues were and met my staff with silence.

We gave Democrats another opportunity to bring these bills up together during Rules Committee earlier this week when Mr. STEIL offered an amendment to include his election observer bill, but it was rejected along party lines.

Now, we are here on the House floor talking about a bill that should have passed under suspension alongside Congressman STEIL’s commonsense bill to ensure integrity and faith in our elections.

While I will support the bill before us today, I urge my Democrat colleagues in the majority to quickly bring forward the Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act for a vote, as well.

I was encouraged by comments earlier this week at the Committee on

Rules by my good friend, the chair of the Subcommittee on Elections, Congressman G.K. Butterfield, about Mr. STEIL's good piece of legislation and continue to hope we can work together on a bipartisan basis to make it law.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GALLEGRO), the proponent of this legislation.

Mr. GALLEGRO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on my and Senator LUJÁN's bill, the PAVA Program Inclusion Act.

This bill is based on a simple principle that every American should have equal access to vote, no matter where they are from.

S. 3969 makes a long-overdue fix to the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access program to improve voting access for Native and rural voters with disabilities in Arizona, the Four Corners region, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The PAVA program was first passed 20 years ago to break down barriers that Americans with disabilities face while exercising the most sacred right of all Americans, the right to vote. This program improves ADA compliance at polling locations, voting procedures for blind or deaf Americans, and training for poll workers to help Americans with disabilities cast their votes.

Unfortunately, due to an oversight in the original Help America Vote Act, voters with disabilities in the Northern Mariana Islands and in the rural, largely Tribal Four Corners region of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and Colorado were not included in this critical program.

That means for years, Americans with disabilities living in these regions have not received the investments they need to ensure they can access the ballot.

That is especially hard in northeast Arizona, which is largely Indian Country, where voters already often travel hours to get to the polling location, sometimes to find that it is not accessible to them. That must change.

This bill is a necessary step to bring resources to Native and other rural voters with disabilities who are trying to do their civic duty.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly urge all of my colleagues, Republican and Democrat, to vote "yes" and reaffirm the importance of voting access to everyone in our democracy.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. STEIL), my good friend.

□ 1100

Mr. STEIL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from the great State of Illinois for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access Program Inclusion Act, which makes a simple technical fix. It would now in-

clude, as noted, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian consortium as eligible recipients of funding that would help improve voting access for people with disabilities.

Originally, this bill was to be paired with the Confirmation of Congressional Observer Access Act on the suspension calendar, and I must note that I am pretty disappointed we are not also moving forward with the Congressional Observer Access Act.

I introduced this bill with the support of Ranking Member DAVIS in July, and I believe that it is a missed opportunity to increase Americans' public trust in our elections.

The Congressional Observer Access Act would simply have clarified that designated congressional election observers—that is, individuals who have been designated in writing by Congress—would have the access they need to observe the administration of Federal elections.

This is not a partisan bill. In fact, Congress already has this authorization under the Constitution. This straightforward bill would have provided clarity, which our State and local election officials requested in order to provide observer access more readily.

I am disappointed that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle walked away from doing these bills on suspension, and I encourage them to work with Ranking Member DAVIS and myself to get this passed as soon as possible. We must work together to take commonsense steps that promote election integrity.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), our majority leader.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I would indicate to Chair LOFGREN that perhaps we can yield to the ranking member because he would like to yield me 1 minute, I am sure.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this legislation. I was the sponsor of HAVA. Republicans were in charge, and I worked very closely with my friend Bob Ney on HAVA. It was legislation that was called by The Washington Post as the greatest reform legislation in 25 years since the civil rights bill. That may have been some hyperbole, but it was a good bill.

This bill corrects, essentially, a fault that we made in terms of its inclusiveness. The bill before us concerns two critical objectives that have been central to my work here in the House.

The first is ensuring that those with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities as their fellow Americans. On July 26, we celebrated the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act signed by President George H.W. Bush, a very bipartisan piece of legislation that has made a historical difference.

The second is ensuring that all eligible voters in America have access to the ballot box and can make their

voices heard in our democracy. That is, after all what our democracy is about.

The PAVA Program Inclusion Act helps accomplish both of those goals, and that is why I am proud to bring it to the floor today.

Specifically, this bill would improve access to the ballot for Americans with disabilities who live in the Northern Mariana Islands—clearly, we want those included—and our Native American Tribal lands in the Four Corners region of the southwest, which we also expected we had done.

This bill expands key programs first laid out in the Help America Vote Act, also known as HAVA, that provided funding to regional protection and advocacy systems to assist people with disabilities in the voting process.

Although HAVA intended to provide funding for this important purpose to all protection and advocacy systems across the country, a technical oversight, as has been mentioned, led to the exclusion of these two regions. Today's legislation would correct that error and help us realize HAVA's original vision.

I was proud to serve as the principal House sponsor, as I said, of HAVA back in 2002 along with Bob Ney, who was the Republican chair of the House Administration Committee and a very good friend of mine. We are prepared to celebrate its 20th anniversary later this month. I am glad to see that the groundbreaking law continues to evolve and be strengthened by Congress.

HAVA was based on the principle that the integrity of our democracy depends on the accessibility and accuracy of our electoral system. I brought together a bipartisan coalition to enact that legislation in order to establish a number of commonsense policies that make voting easier and more secure, from reliable voting equipment to expanded provisional ballot access, HAVA and the bipartisan Election Assistance Commission—which I strongly support, and I am glad to see that we are investing in—make our Federal participation more broad and more effective.

Today's bill reminds us, however, that HAVA must continue to adapt to new needs and challenges. I very much appreciate the efforts of Chair ZOE LOFGREN, the gentlewoman from California, who has worked so hard on voting rights issues as head of the House Administration Committee, and I thank the ranking member Mr. DAVIS, as well. I thank Senator LUJÁN, our former House colleague, for authoring this bill and advancing it through the Senate.

We must do everything in our power to ensure that people with disabilities, especially those from historically marginalized groups such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, can participate equally and fully in our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I ask all of my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, could I make a quick point of personal privilege?

Is there any way to get the time of that “magic minute” this time? I want to sign a printout from the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD for my good friend from Maryland.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may consult the majority leader to ask him to look at his watch.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask Majority Leader HOYER about his time.

I have somewhat become used to being the antagonist to some of the majority’s legislation when it comes to election administration, which I think has been so shortsighted on its impact to the American people. But this is one of those opportunities where we see good legislation come from the Senate, and this is an opportunity for us to show the American people that Republicans and Democrats can get along and pass important bills that are going to positively impact those who are disabled, and ensure that every single person who may be dealing with a disability in this country and in our territories has the right to vote, the eligibility to vote, and the opportunity to vote. That is what this bill does.

Really, I have got to thank again my colleague, ROY BLUNT, Senator BLUNT, who used to be in leadership in this institution, as many of us know and remember so well. I thank him for bringing Republicans and Democrats on the House Administration Committee and Leader HOYER and I together on this very important issue.

I wish he would have come in earlier on some other issues, we might have had a little more bipartisan agreement. I will have to talk to him about that and ask him why he didn’t do that.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friends, Leader HOYER and Chairperson LOFGREN, and I thank the staff for pushing this important bill forward.

I am disappointed and optimistic that we did not get the election observer fixes that both parties want and need and election administrators throughout the country have asked us to address. I am disappointed that was not part of a suspension agreement, where this bill should have been. I am cautiously optimistic with the great opportunity for bipartisanship that we are seeing here today that maybe it can continue after today. I won’t hold my breath, but I will continue to remain optimistic and, hopefully, see that moving forward very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Congressman STEIL for his remarks, and I thank Leader HOYER and, also, again, my good friend, Mr. BLUNT, for all their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

We have agreement on this bill from the Senate, and that is a good thing. I should note that we have had discussions, primarily at a staff level, on the election observer measure mentioned by the ranking member and Mr. STEIL. We continue to evaluate the proposal, but we found a few concerns. I will mention them now. It is not arbitrary.

The proposed legislation does provide broad access, statutory access, to observers, but it doesn’t provide the ability of election officials to protect private, personally identifiable information of voters, and we think that needs to be addressed.

The same section prohibits election officials from interfering “with the elections administration process.” The text doesn’t give election officials the ability to remove observers if they are disruptive, and regrettably, we have seen across the country instances where advocates became aggressive, even in some cases—well, I will leave it at that—aggressive towards election officials. There has to be a capacity to deal with that.

We haven’t had a hearing or markup on this. It is possible we will. But I didn’t want to leave this just dangling out there.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. LOFGREN. I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

This is the first time we have heard these concerns, on the House floor today. We have not had any discussion between our staffs. I would have loved to have worked through some of these.

Ms. LOFGREN. Reclaiming my time. My staff indicates that there have been discussions. Obviously, that was at a staff level. But I have outlined what the concerns are, and I would at this point like to close so that we can let the House get to its other business.

To go on suspension, both sides of the aisle need to agree, and I think that is a very important provision of our procedures that will continue, whichever party is in the majority, and that was how this ended up. Because that bill really is not necessarily connected with this PAVA bill. I will talk about another bill that is not connected with the PAVA bill, and that is the venue bill I mentioned earlier this morning.

I forgot to mention, and I put it into the RECORD last night, that the Progressive Policy Institute, as well as the chamber of commerce, opposes that venue provision. I do think the fact that Senator CRUZ, Senator COTTON, Senator HAWLEY, Mr. BUCK and Mr. GAETZ are for it doesn’t persuade me that it is a safe measure to move forward to, even though I very much support the Neguse bill. If this does not pass today, I am sure the Neguse bill will come back because we do need resources to enforce our antitrust laws. I am totally on board with that.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we will pass this bill from the Senate that will pro-

tect disabled voters in the Northern Mariana Islands and the American Indian consortium, that they will have the same access to funding as all the others, and I urge support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SABLON. Mr. Speaker, S. 3969, the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access Program Inclusion Act, will provide federal funding to help my district, the Northern Mariana Islands, lower the accessibility barriers that prevent individuals with disabilities from exercising their right to vote.

The right to vote is the bedrock of our democracy. Yet simply having the right to vote does not ensure that every citizen is able to access the polls to cast their ballot. While the Help America Vote Act of 2002 has been instrumental in improving the accessibility of polling places for voters with disabilities, the Act currently cannot distribute program grants to the Marianas and the American Indian Consortium.

S. 3969 corrects that. The bill adds the Marianas and the American Indian Consortium to entities eligible for grants under the Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access program. PAVA supports training for poll workers, distributing resources on how to conduct an accessible campaign, maintaining voting hotlines, and examining polling places for accessibility.

S. 3969 is the Senate companion to H.R. 7326, which Rep. Ruben Gallego and I introduced in this Congress. I want to thank Senators BEN RAY LUJÁN, ROY BLUNT, AMY KLOBUCHAR, TINA SMITH, and MARTIN HEINRICH for introducing S. 3969 and their work to pass the bill unanimously in the Senate.

I also want to thank Representatives TOM O’HALLERAN, JOHN CURTIS, and TERESA LEGER FERNANDEZ for their cosponsorship of H.R. 7326.

I urged my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of S. 3969, the “Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access Program Inclusion Act” which would remedy a specific situation to ensure that citizens who have the right to vote can do so without having to worry about barriers.

Voting is a fundamental right that belongs to ALL citizens of the United States. In 2002, former President Bush signed into law the Help America Vote Act of 2002, also known as HAVA, to upgrade aspects of states’ election procedures. It amended state plans and reporting, accessibility, and voting system standards.

While the Help America Vote Act of 2002 intended to accomplish voter accessibility and encouraging voting across the nation by addressing the accessibility issues most United States citizens face, it failed to cover the entire population adequately.

Specifically, HAVA did not address the needs of certain nonmainland territories, ultimately resulting in certain communities being unable to participate in the foundational right that our democracy is built on.

The Northern Mariana Islands and American Indian Consortium have limited accessibility in voting, as they are not currently protected by the HAVA.

The Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access Program Inclusion Act, also known as PAVA Inclusion Act, aims to amend the Help

America Vote Act of 2002 by introducing the State Definition initialized in the Development Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 which allows the Help America Vote of 2002 to cover Northern Mariana Islands citizens.

Additionally, this bill seeks to establish a system to serve the American Indian Consortium, granting them protection under the HAVA act in a similar manner to a State as mentioned prior.

With these two communities protected by PAVA, they will now receive the much-requested grants that will enable them to meet the voting needs of their citizens. With these grants, systems will be able to overcome voter obstacles such as any language barriers.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my fellow Congressmembers to vote in support of the PAVA Inclusion Act. Without the PAVA Inclusion Act, eligible voters residing on the Northern Mariana Islands and in the American Indian Consortium are faced with unsurmountable challenges in exercising their rights to vote.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. All time for debate has expired.

Pursuant to House Resolution 1396, the previous question is ordered on the bill.

The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill was ordered to be read a third time, and was read the third time.

The question is on passage of the bill.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1115

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS ACT

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DESAULNIER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on H.R. 7780, the Mental Health Matters Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. JACKSON LEE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 1396 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 7780.

The Chair appoints the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

□ 1118

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 7780) to support the behavioral needs of students and youth, invest in the school-based behavioral health workforce, and

ensure access to mental health and substance use disorder benefits, with Mr. RUSH in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered read the first time.

General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 1 hour equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and Labor or their respective designees.

The gentleman from California (Mr. DESAULNIER) and the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) each will control 30 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Chair, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the mental health crisis among American students, educators, and families.

In 2021, 44 percent of students experienced persistent feelings of hopelessness; almost 20 percent seriously considered suicide; and 9 percent of American kids attempted suicide.

Regrettably, 80 percent of youth in need of mental health services do not have the access to heal in their communities. As a result, educators have been forced to play an outsized role in supporting and responding to students' mental health needs, leading to increased depression and trauma among educators, their students, their families, and the community. However, our schools do not have the specialized staff necessary to respond to the increased prevalence and complexity of students' mental health needs.

According to a 2019 ACLU study, no State met the student-to-social worker ratio of one social worker for every 250 students, as recommended by the National Association of Social Workers. Not one State.

On top of that, the national ratio of school psychologists per students during the 2020-2022 school years was one psychologist per every 1,162 students—more than double the ratio recommended by the National Association of School Psychologists. Clearly, this is unacceptable.

The rise in mental health challenges is not isolated to students and educators. Nearly half of the United States workforce now suffers from mental health issues since the COVID-19 pandemic started. Yet, many workers are denied the mental health and substance use disorder benefits they are legally entitled to receive under their employer-sponsored health plan.

In a recent report to Congress, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Treasury found widespread violations of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act by group health plans. Unfortunately, some of these plans are failing to maintain parity between behavioral health benefits and physical health benefits as required by statute.

The report recommended that Congress enhance the Secretary of Labor's

capacity to enforce the parity law, including providing authority to impose civil monetary penalties for violations.

Notably, the same recommendations were made by former President Trump's Commission on Combating the Opioid Crisis, which was led by then-New Jersey Governor, Chris Christie.

In response to these violations and the national mental health crisis, I introduced the Mental Health Matters Act, which includes proposals championed by several committee members.

This legislation helps Head Start agencies implement evidence-based interventions to improve the behavioral health of children and staff in Head Start programs.

It improves trauma-informed services in schools by developing innovative initiatives to link schools and local educational agencies with local trauma-informed support and mental health systems.

It requires colleges and universities to accept existing documentation of disability and provide reasonable accommodations so disabled students can achieve success in higher education.

It also provides the Department of Labor with enhanced authority to ensure that private, employer-sponsored group health plans and insurers comply with the mental health parity and related laws.

The bill ensures workers who are wrongfully denied health or retirement benefits under their job-based plans have meaningful access to the courts.

And finally, this legislation directs the Department of Education to award grants to build a pipeline of school-based mental health service providers and increase the number of mental health professionals serving in elementary and secondary schools in high-need areas.

Mr. Chairman, simply put, the Mental Health Matters Act delivers the resources students, educators, and families need to improve their well-being.

Mr. Chair, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I thank my good friend from California for yielding time.

Mr. Chairman, H.R. 7780, the Mental Health Matters Act, is a package of bills our country would be better off without. For example, Title VI of the bill, the Strengthening Behavioral Health Benefits Act, contains dangerous policy which would threaten access to critical workplace benefits.

How would this legislation drive employers to drop benefits? H.R. 7780 allows the Department of Labor, DOL, to levy civil monetary penalties against plans and employers for ambiguous mental health parity violations.

Employers who offer mental health benefits under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, ERISA, do so voluntarily. They should not be penalized for violating standards that are unclear and vague. Republicans and