## UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO VOTE BY MAIL ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act of 2005, a bill to allow any eligible voter to vote by mail in a Federal election if he or she chooses to do so.

In my home State of California, voters already have this right. California is one of 25 States that already provides this convenient alternative to voting.

While I personally love the ritual of going to the polls to vote, I know that getting to the polls on Election Day is often difficult. And for some, it is impossible.

That is why I have introduced a bill that builds upon the growing trend of States to bring the polls to the voters. I believe we should try to meet our constituents halfway by increasing access to the electoral process.

What I am proposing is not new or even untested. States ranging from my home State of California to Wisconsin to North Carolina to Maine have already adopted this voter-friendly policy.

Citizens can vote from the convenience of their own homes. They will have more time to mull over their choices and make informed decisions. And they will be able to do so on their own terms, potentially avoiding long lines at the polls.

Not surprisingly, studies have shown that some of the bigger supporters of voting by mail are parents who must schedule time to go to the polls around so many other obligations.

Studies have also indicated that adding the option to vote by mail does not create a partisan advantage for one political party over the other. Republicans and Democrats both benefit from similar increases in voter turnout when voters are given the choice to mail in their ballots.

In fact, overwhelming support for voting by mail is consistent across nearly every demographic, be that age, income level, race, education, employment status, and ideology. It is a win-win for all Americans.

After adopting a universal right to vote by mail system in 1978, California saw a 30 percent increase in the use of mail-in ballots.

In my district of San Diego, 40 percent of voters opted to mail in their votes during the 2004 election. And other States that have implemented this policy have seen the same degree of support from voters, which is why it is hardly surprising that States offering the option of mail-in ballots often experience greater voter participation.

States providing universal access to mail-in ballots during the 2004 election saw a 6.7 percent increase in voter turnout. And again, this increase was uniform across all demographics, including political affiliation.

There is also extremely low incidence of fraud with voting by mail when compared to other methods of voting. The State of Oregon, which runs its elections entirely by mail, has prosecuted only four cases of fraud over the last six elections.

Mr. Speaker, as the former president of the League of Women Voters of San Diego, I care deeply about the integrity of our electoral system. Twenty-five States have already proven this option works and it is safe. It is time to give voters in the remaining States this convenient, secure, and affordable alternative.

While I am proud to be from a State where citizens already have this right, I believe democracy works best when all citizens have an equal opportunity to have their voices heard. Right now, an uneven playing field exists between States that already offer the option of mail-in ballots and States that do not.

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When the same election is more accessible to voters in California than it is to voters in Maryland, the system is unfair.

States that fail to offer this choice stand to compromise their leverage in Federal elections by curbing the greatest level of voter participation. We should follow the lead of half of our Nation's States and ensure a uniformity of rights for all voters.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join me in supporting this effort to strengthen the Democratic process and give American voters the choices they deserve.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCCAUL of Texas). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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## PRESSING ISSUES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this evening I wanted to share my thoughts with my colleagues on some of the pressing issues that I think we have missed, particularly with the schedule that we now have. I think the world is crying out for this Congress to act and to act constructively and productively. There are several issues, both international and domestic, that we simply have failed to address.

I want to associate myself with the remarks of my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from the great State of Washington (Mr. MCDERMOTT) on the progress that India and Pakistan have made. I have congratulated both Ambassadors from Pakistan and India personally for the great leadership shown by the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan, two countries that have been known to be in conflict, sitting down around the table of friendship, talking about energy resources, opening consular offices, solving problems such as Kashmir, working with cultural exchange.

Why should this Nation not applaud them? I hope my colleagues will join me in a resolution that will support and applaud the works of both the President and the Prime Minister of the respective nations. I agree with my good friend from Washington, why should we, with our politics against Iran, eliminate the opportunities for two nuclear giants to begin to solve their energy problems and maybe, by chance, both of them striving towards democracy, having a positive influence on Iran?

So I hope that my resolution offered to the Congress and signed on by a number of my colleagues will be on the floor of the House to emphasize peace.

Today completed the 60-city tour of the President of the United States regarding the issue of Social Security. I am glad, however, that we joined many thousands on Capitol Hill to emphasize that Social Security does not belong to the debate of one single party. In actuality it is an American debate. That debate requires an open mind, but particularly we need to focus the American people on what Social Security is and is not. It is not the private savings account or the bank account for Wall Street. It is not the proof that we are in a capitalist society. It is an insurance program. It provides survivor benefits, disability benefits for those disabled Americans who want to live independently.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to stop going on the road. Come back to Washington, sit down at the table of negotiation with Democrats and Republicans talking about one issue, and that is how to make Social Security solvent. We did it in 1983 with President Reagan and Tip O'Neill, and it was solvent for now 42 years.

There is no reason why we cannot sit down and solve the problem with Social Security without a private savings account that dips into your pocket, takes the money to Wall Street and provides the hugest deficit that you could ever imagine. In fact, to make a private savings account, you need to take $1.7 trillion out of the Social Security account. We are already in terrible straits with the deficit that is spiraling down and creating a burden on our children and grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak very quickly about the work that we need to do on the Committee on the Judiciary. We need to protect our State courts and Federal courts. We had a very informative hearing before our committee today, but we need to work to ensure that there are more U.S. marshals and Federal laws that will protect and prevent violence against State courts and Federal courts; new laws,