

workers and shareholders take it on the chin. Their investments and savings, tied to corporate growth and built up over the years, have vanished. Plans of retirement are halted, either permanently or indefinitely; and many workers find themselves forced to work in their golden years.

Today, I have introduced legislation to require an advance disclosure to a company's shareholders upon the creation of or substantial increase in special retirement plans for executives. This will bring desperately needed transparency to the boardroom. Under current law, benefits payable under these plans are not considered reportable compensation, which is why this disclosure is necessary. This would allow shareholders to be proactive in determining whether or not their CEO deserves the millions he or she is getting paid.

I understand that this is a departure from the typical form of disclosure, however I believe the current environment under which Corporate America operates needs to change. We must improve investor confidence, and the advance disclosure of excessive corporate compensation will move us in that direction.

A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the basic fact that, in our hearts, the American people truly love democracy. We love the ability of the people to influence the actions of decision-makers, of lawmakers and presidents to be removed from or elevated to office by the will of voters, and of the community to connect amongst diverse populations through the ballot box. We have passed legislation, protested on streets and waged wars to guarantee that every American has our most basic right, the right to vote, and our defining moments have been about the protection of this individual right.

Despite the struggles and challenges of the past and our passion for voting rights, we still routinely deny the right to vote to millions of ex-offenders, who have paid back their debt to society. In many states, there is no judicial determination of this high penalty. There is no connection to the crime committed and the punishment imposed. The denial of the right to vote is automatic based simply on a conviction, regardless of the nature of the crime or the individual involved. Reversing that decision and retaining one's right to vote in many states is nearly impossible and requires action by the Governor. As a Nation, we have long fought for the right of every citizen to vote; it should not be so easy to take that right away.

This denial erases the very core of our citizenship. It places the released ex-offenders on the outskirts of society and outside the decision making process. Their voice is silenced on the important issues of their community and this great Nation. Their unalienable right is taken away by legislative fiat in the interest of being "tough on crime." They are ostracized from their community and effectively denied the right to choose representatives and voice their opinion in public policy. They are relegated to the status of second-class citizens in terms of politicians, community leaders, and unfortunately themselves.

On the outskirts, many ex-offenders are frustrated and discouraged in their efforts to become contributing members of society. Denied the right to vote and to choose leaders and policymakers, ex-offenders often feel that they are not a part of this democratic system and this society. Their alienation, compounded by the stigma of their criminal record, limits their ability to be fully reintegrated into society.

If we believe in our current penal process, then the penalties imposed by judges and juries should be the only sanctions for one's crime, not the invisible sanctions of the legislature. If we do not believe in that process, then we should work to effectively reform the system and allow it to serve its true criminal, rather than civil, purpose. Regardless of our belief in the criminal justice system, disenfranchisement of ex-offenders is abhorrent to our beliefs. They are citizens. They have paid for their violations of our laws and they must be effectively reintegrated into our communities.

I submit for the RECORD an editorial from today's edition of the New York Times. Congress should heed the advice of the New York Times on this issue and once again protect the right to vote for all Americans. Too many have fought and died for this right to be lost.

[From the New York Times, Jun. 22, 2005]

EXTENDING DEMOCRACY TO EX-OFFENDERS

JUNE 22.—The laws that strip ex-offenders of the right to vote across the United States are the shame of the democratic world. Of an estimated five million Americans who were barred from voting in the last presidential election, a majority would have been able to vote if they had been citizens of countries like Britain, France, Germany, or Australia. Many nations take the franchise so seriously that they arrange for people to cast ballots while being held in prison. In the United States, by contrast, inmates can vote only in two states, Maine and Vermont.

This distinctly American bias—which extends to jobs, housing, and education—keeps even law-abiding ex-offenders confined to the margins of society, where they have a notoriously difficult time building successful lives. A few states, at least, are beginning to grasp this point. Some are reconsidering postprison sanctions, including laws that bar ex-offenders from the polls.

The Nebraska Legislature, for example, recently replaced a lifetime voting ban for convicted felons with a system in which ex-offenders would have their rights automatically returned after a two-year waiting period. Iowa, which also bars former prisoners from voting for life, took a similar step forward last week when Gov. Tom Vilsack announced his intention to sign an executive order that would restore voting rights to felons after they complete their sentence.

Governor Vilsack's decision is particularly important, given that Iowa has some of the most severe postprison sanctions in the country. Governor Vilsack's decision is particularly important, given that Iowa has some of the most severe postprison sanctions in the country. The other four states with similar laws are in the South, where disenfranchisement was created about a century ago, partly to keep black Americans from exercising their right to vote.

The Iowa and Nebraska cases reflect a growing awareness in some of the states that these laws offend the basic principles of democracy. They also stigmatize millions of Americans, many of whom have paid their debts to society and want nothing more than to rejoin the mainstream. The more the United States embraces this view, the healthier we will be as a nation.

RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH LONG BEACH, MISSISSIPPI

HON. GENE TAYLOR

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Mr. TAYLOR of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church located in Long Beach, Mississippi.

In early 1905, Bishop Thomas Heslin of the Natchez Diocese directed the order of St. Vincent de Paul, known as Vincentians, to build a church and religious retreat to fill the needs of the parishioners of Long Beach, Mississippi City, Perkinston and Wiggins. Forty acres of land were acquired on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and the church was consecrated as St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church on July 15, 1905.

As the City of Long Beach grew, so did the mission of the church. In 1915, St. Thomas was designated a parish church by Bishop John Gunn with Father Joseph Hagar serving as the new parish's first pastor. September 3, 1922 marked the first day of school for students of St. Thomas Elementary School, staffed by the Daughters of Charity.

August 17, 1969 marked a tragic day for all of South Mississippi when the Gulf Coast was struck by Hurricane Camille, a category 5 storm and the strongest hurricane to strike the United States in the 20th century. Camille destroyed the original 1905 St. Thomas Church and most other church associated buildings. As the region slowly recovered the church was rebuilt. Bishop Joseph Brunini dedicated the new St. Thomas Church on August 20, 1972.

The Vincentians ceded the parish to the Diocese of Biloxi in the summer of 1993, and Father Louis Lohan was named pastor of the congregation. The church's most recent major addition was the Parish Life Center, which was dedicated in November 2002.

So it is my great honor to congratulate the people of St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church on their 100th anniversary.

TRIBUTE TO VERNON PARKER

HON. TRENT FRANKS

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Mr. FRANKS of Arizona. Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to rise today in support of a statement entered into the RECORD June twenty-first by my friend and colleague, Mrs. MUSGRAVE of Colorado, to pay tribute to an extraordinary man, Vernon Parker, who is the kind of man that represents the backbone of the American way of life.

Vernon is first and foremost a husband to Sylvia, a father to Jim and Joe and a grandfather to Jennifer and Nicholas. He has been a teacher, an elementary and junior high school principal and an outstanding civic leader. But it was as the school superintendent in Briggsdale, Colorado, that our life paths intersected. There were eleven children in my third grade class. The entire school system, kindergarten through twelfth grade, had only one