

a very tough business, and the low road is often taken by political adversaries in an effort to gain power.

But the video released by the Democratic Campaign Committee hit a new low. This cynical attempt to raise campaign cash actually uses photographs of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It shows photos of coffins draped with the American flag. Those coffins, of course, are occupied by American soldiers.

Mr. Speaker, our incredibly brave men and women in uniform did not make the ultimate sacrifice so that the DCCC could raise campaign cash. They made that sacrifice in defense of freedom and liberty and democracy. The Democratic leadership should be ashamed, and every Democratic Member of this House should be ashamed and call upon their leadership to remove this video which is an affront to our fallen soldiers and to their families.

It is appalling that the Democrats have sunk to such a new low as to employ doctored photos and tasteless videos in their pursuit of power. The American people and our fallen heroes deserve more.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2872. An act to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of Louis Braille.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed concurrent resolutions of the following titles in which concurrence of the House is requested:

S. Con. Res. 96. Concurrent resolution to commemorate, celebrate, and reaffirm the national motto of the United States on the 50th anniversary of its formal adoption.

S. Con. Res. 108. Concurrent resolution authorizing the printing of a revised edition of a pocket version of the United States Constitution, and other publications.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 9, FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 910 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 910

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the

bill are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 90 minutes equally divided and controlled by the Majority Leader and the Minority Leader or their designees. After general debate the bill shall be considered for amendment under the five-minute rule. It shall be in order to consider as an original bill for the purpose of amendment under the five-minute rule the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on the Judiciary now printed in the bill. The committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be considered as read. Notwithstanding clause 11 of rule XVIII, no amendment to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute shall be in order except those printed in the report of the Committee on Rules accompanying this resolution. Each such amendment may be offered only in the order printed in the report, may be offered only by a Member designated in the report, shall be considered as read, shall be debatable for the time specified in the report equally divided and controlled by the proponent and an opponent, shall not be subject to amendment, and shall not be subject to a demand for division of the question in the House or in the Committee of the Whole. All points of order against such amendments are waived. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. Any Member may demand a separate vote in the House on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole to the bill or to the committee amendment in the nature of a substitute. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the rule provides 90 minutes of general debate, evenly divided and controlled by the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary, and it also provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate to begin by quoting the 15th amendment to the United States Constitution: "The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude."

As enshrined by the 15th amendment, there really is no more fundamental right in our democratic system than the right to vote. However, the history of the United States is marked with occasions where minorities were in multiple ways, and by multiple ways,

blocked from having their voices heard at the ballot box.

One of the great advancements in our American democracy was and is the Voting Rights Act. This historic legislation was the first comprehensive Federal statute to enforce minorities' constitutional right to vote. The provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act provided swift relief to those citizens who were victims of discriminatory voting tactics and provided them access in a concrete and effective way to the voting booth.

Since it was enacted, the Voting Rights Act has enfranchised millions of racial, ethnic, and language minority citizens to have access to that sacred right that is voting by breaking down barriers and permitting increased minority participation in elections for candidates at all levels of government.

After 41 years of breaking down walls, walls to participation in our democratic process, the Voting Rights Act would soon expire if not reauthorized. With this in mind, the Committee on the Judiciary began hearings to determine whether the legislation is still needed. The committee held 12 hearings on the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, listening to testimony from State and local elected officials, scholars, lawyers, representatives from the voting and civil rights communities. The testimony and evidence presented before the committee brought to light the fact that even though we have made great strides to stop the discriminatory practices of the past, there still is ample evidence that minorities today face discriminatory practices at the ballot box.

Mr. Speaker, in my community for decades we saw the voting power of minorities diluted to the point that they were for many years unable to elect the representatives of their preference. The Voting Rights Act helped correct that wrong, helped enfranchise countless citizens into our democratic political system. The underlying legislation will reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act for 25 years.

I would like to point out one provision which I think is very important, especially to my community, as well as communities throughout the country. The bill extends section 203, the existing language assistance requirements that provide that election materials be provided in select languages in covered jurisdictions. These provisions of the Voting Rights Act require that non-English voting materials be made available in jurisdictions where 5 percent of the citizen voting age population consists of a single language, limited English proficient minority and in which there is a literacy rate below the national average, or more than 10,000 citizens who meet those criteria reside. These provisions, brought out in the hearings, cover approximately 12 percent of the counties in the United States. It certainly has benefited the counties that I am honored to represent.

The bilingual language assistance provisions play a critical role in assisting both native-born and naturalized citizens to fully participate in our democratic form of government. Older residents, Mr. Speaker, who have been legal residents of the United States for many years when they apply for citizenship, they are exempt when they take their citizenship exam to become United States citizens. They are exempt under our law from the English requirements. In other words, they take those elderly legal residents of the United States who have been here for many, many years, they are allowed to take, if they so wish, the naturalization exam to become a United States citizen in the language of their origin.

In addition, many native-born citizens have limited English skills because they primarily speak other languages and they require assistance. These citizens should be given the opportunity to understand the ballot. Whether it is a simple, but critically important, choice between two or among candidates or a complicated ballot initiative, those citizens of the United States should have the opportunity to fully participate, fully understand what they are voting on and that way be active participants in our democratic system. That is what the legislation does.

Mr. Speaker, H.R. 9 was introduced by Chairman SENSENBRENNER, Speaker HASTERT, Minority Leader PELOSI, and reported out of the Committee on the Judiciary by an overwhelming vote of 33-1. It is good legislation, and I am very proud to be bringing it to the floor today.

I hope and expect that we are going to see a very significant bipartisan show of support for this legislation today. I think it is fair and appropriate to commend Chairman SENSENBRENNER for his determination and his leadership and strength of character in moving forward this legislation. And also the ranking member, Mr. CONYERS, for his hard work, diligence, and leadership as well on this legislation. I know they put long hours into this process with determination, perseverance, and extraordinary good faith.

I urge my colleagues to support both the rule and the underlying legislation.

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 8 minutes, and I thank my friend from Florida for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, before going into the substance of what we are doing today, I would like to make note that a few weeks ago in the Rules Committee when we were originally contemplating this bill, I offered an amendment to the rule that would have extended general debate to 4 hours, ensuring that all Members, Republican and Democrat, were afforded the opportunity to have their voices heard on the House's actions today. My amendment, however,

was defeated along a straight party line, and I did not offer it again yesterday.

However, the majority provided 2 hours of general debate in the last rule on their other circumstances, and they also provided 2 hours of general debate on their politically driven flag-burning amendment.

□ 1030

If the flag is the symbol of democracy, then the Voting Rights Act is the very foundation on which that flag flies. It is both troubling and telling that the majority is unwilling to extend today's debate beyond 90 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, as debate on this historic bill commences, I am reminded of President Kennedy's words delivered to Congress in 1962 with the first draft of what would later become both the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts. President Kennedy wrote, and I quote, "In this year of the emancipation centennial, justice requires us to ensure the blessing of liberty for all Americans and their posterity, not merely for reasons of economic efficiency, world diplomacy and domestic tranquility, but above all, because it is right."

For African Americans, there exists a no more seminal piece of law, other than the Civil Rights Act, than the Voting Rights Act. Today, more than 40 years after its initial passage, Congress is again faced with an historic decision to reauthorize this mandate.

Americans have come together over the years to denounce systematic segregation and racism. Indeed, we have come a long way. But we cannot become complacent and take for granted the liberties and rights which this law provides and affords.

Today's discussion cannot only be about preserving the right to vote for those of us who already enjoy it. It has to be about ensuring that Americans from all walks of life and countries of origin are provided with these very same rights.

There are some in this body who may argue or imply that the Voting Rights Act is no longer needed. They may call for an end to the act's preclearance and bilingual ballot requirements. Others may go so far as to suggest that English proficiency be a precondition to voting.

For them, this is not a debate about fairness. It is about ideology. With all due respect, Mr. Speaker, ideology has no place in today's debate.

The Voting Rights Act was enacted to break down the walls built by Jim Crow, not build them back up. There is no difference between a poll tax, a literacy test or an English proficiency requirement as a precondition to voting. All are draconian and targeted efforts to block a specific group of people from voting and, I might add, people who are registered voters and citizens of the United States.

Each attempt by a Republican Member to precondition minimum language requirements with the right to vote, in

my judgment, breathes new life into a form of Jim Crow. Each attempt by a Republican Member to dilute the influence of minority voters mocks longstanding legislative and judicial precedent and mandates. When this happens, we are reminded why this law still today is so critically needed.

We will hopefully extend the Voting Rights Act by 25 years today. We should extend it beyond 100 years because some of the problems will probably continue to exist that long.

The harsh reality remains that the suppression and disenfranchisement of minority voters is still tolerated today. We saw it in Florida in 2000. We saw it in Ohio in 2004, and we will probably see it again in 2006 in November and in 2008 in some other State where people require a victory regardless of the means to their end.

We should fear those who dismiss concerns, deny such problems exist, and claim ignorance and naivete as reasons for the years of neglect. These are the answers given by those who have sat idly by throughout history when the rights and privileges of the weak and poor have been trampled on by the powerful. These were the very answers given by those who opposed the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts more than 40 years ago. We will hear from their 21st century ideological soulmates later today when we debate mean-spirited and morally dubious amendments.

I stand before you as a victim of decades of injustice rooted in racial segregation. Through these eyes, I bore witness to the absolute tyranny of those who stop at nothing to stop blacks from achieving statutory equality and the right to vote. Through these eyes, I have also seen hate and racism give way to tolerance and fairness.

When history judges our actions today, it will question whether or not we met the expectations levied by those who have come before us. Did we break down barriers or did we build up walls?

Did we start a chapter in American history aimed at addressing the challenging of multiculturalism, prejudicial discrimination, and blatant xenophobia, or permit the continued manifestation of these sad realities in our country?

For years, Mr. Speaker, many of us have fought tirelessly to honor the memories of civil rights advocates who came before us. It is their shoulders on which I stand and my colleagues stand today, the shoulders of Fannie Lou Hamer and Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King and Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass and Nat Turner and so many courageous others, white and black. It is their successes which we seek to emulate; their words through which we attempt to tie the past with the present and inspire for the future.

Colleagues, do not use today as an opportunity to congratulate ourselves.

Today is not a day of jubilation. New faces have been added to the struggle, and that struggle continues. Any attack on their right to vote is an attack on ours.

I urge my colleagues to support the underlying legislation and reject any attempt to amend it. We should do this not for the partisan benefit, but because, as John Kennedy said, "It is right." Voting rights is right.

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

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my colleague and good friend on the Rules Committee, Dr. GINGREY of Georgia.

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the distinguished vice chairman of Rules for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the rule, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in supporting it.

I am pleased that our committee allowed the opportunity to consider four very important amendments that will fine tune the underlying legislation, ensuring that it is equally applied to all States and addresses the world as it is in 2006, rather than 1964.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my support for the amendment offered by my colleagues from Georgia, Representatives NORWOOD and WESTMORELAND. These amendments would ensure the constitutionality of the underlying bill. And I would also like to encourage everyone to support two very good amendments offered by Representative KING of Iowa and Representative GOHMERT of Texas.

The underlying bill, as drafted now, aims to address voting patterns and the world in 1964. Mr. Speaker, a lot has changed in 40-plus years. Every State has seen changes in population and voter participation, and we should have a law that fits the world of 2006.

In 1964, my home State of Georgia not only was behind other States in voter participation, but also employed discriminatory tactics to suppress minority voting rights. And therefore, Georgia was justifiably subject to Voting Rights Act, section 5. However, in 2006, the landscape of voter participation and the number of minority individuals holding elective office is dramatically different.

In 1970, Mr. Speaker, there were 30 black elected officials in Georgia. In 2000, there were 582 black elected officials. With respect to types of elective office, African Americans have held and continue to hold some of the highest leadership positions in the Georgia legislature, county governments and municipal governments.

Today, Georgia's attorney general and labor commissioner, both State-wide elected offices, are currently held by African Americans. Georgia has four African Americans in our congressional delegation, tied with California, New York and, yes, Mr. Speaker, Illinois, for the highest number. Three of seven seats on the Georgia supreme court, in-

cluding the position of chief justice, are held by African Americans.

In fact, in Georgia the percentage of registered voters and voter turnout are higher, let me repeat, higher among blacks than whites. So, Mr. Speaker, I would put Georgia's record up against any, and I believe that Georgia, like every other State in this Union, must be treated equally with a Voting Rights Act that addresses the problems of 2006, not 1966. And the Voting Rights Act must apply the same standards to each and every State.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage my colleagues to support this fair and equitable rule. I also ask my colleagues to keep an open mind as we debate four fair, commonsense amendments after today's general debate. I believe we need to support these amendments and send to the Senate a Voting Rights Act for the 21st century.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 2¾ minutes to the distinguished minority whip from Maryland, my good friend, STENY HOYER.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill and in opposition to the four amendments which I perceive to be weakening. In particular, I want to commend Congressman WATT, Congressman SENSENBRENNER, the chairman of the committee and, of course, the ranking member, Mr. CONYERS, for the extraordinary work that they have done to come together on a bipartisan piece of legislation, reauthorizing key provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Let me add, too, the Members of the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanic Caucus and the Pacific Caucus deserve our thanks for their instrumental work on this bill and on these issues.

This legislation is a recognition that our democratic system is not perfect. While our Nation has made tremendous strides in its ongoing quest to guarantee the ideals of our Constitution, the specter of discrimination still haunts us and our people.

And thus, we, the Members of this Congress, have a special responsibility today to be vigilant in perfecting and protecting the most fundamental expression of equality in any democracy, the right to vote.

We must never forget our rights, though God-given, have been hard won. Brave American citizens have been subjected to intimidation, violence and, yes, even death, to secure the rights that are theirs under the Constitution.

Our colleague, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, is a living testament to that bravery. Forty-one years ago, JOHN and his fellow marchers were brutally attacked when they simply tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, on their way to Montgomery to register to do what every American believes is a birthright, to vote.

The Declaration of Independence says that "We hold these truths to be self-

evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." That is what it says. This legislation is about making it so.

The people who walked across the Edmund Pettus bridge and in millions of places and had the courage to challenge rank injustice in their peaceful actions still inspire us today.

Our Nation did the right thing 41 years ago. It is important for us to do the right thing today.

I urge my colleagues, vote for the underlying bipartisan bill and against those amendments which were offered, which will weaken our commitment.

We must keep faith with the promise and requirements of our Constitution. We must reauthorize these key provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my good friend, the distinguished gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FITZPATRICK).

Mr. FITZPATRICK of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 stands as one of the most important pieces of legislation ever passed by this Chamber in its distinguished history. Today, the House has a distinctive opportunity to reauthorize the expiring portions of this landmark legislation for another 25 years.

The Voting Rights Act ensures that every American, regardless of race or ethnicity, has the franchise to take part in our democracy, and it is a direct response to new allegations of discrimination in our Nation.

Over the course of this year the House Judiciary Committee conducted 12 hearings on claims of discrimination in our democratic process.

□ 1045

The committee compiled over 8,000 pages of testimony and heard stories of disenfranchisement from across the Nation. Mr. Speaker, although our Nation continues to stand as the beacon of freedom and democracy in the world, we can never lose sight of the need to protect the rights of our citizens to take part in the democratic process that has guided our Nation throughout our history.

The provisions of H.R. 9 will reaffirm our Nation's commitment to protecting the rights of all Americans to elect their candidates of choice so that every American is equally represented under the law. This is a good bill, Mr. Speaker. It is a bipartisan bill. And I call on all my colleagues to support this rule and final passage of the legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to my colleague on the Rules Committee and my good friend from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN).

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, the gentleman from Florida, for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act is a historic piece of legislation, one

that seeks to ensure that all our citizens can participate in this democracy. And I want to commend Chairman SENSENBRENNER and Ranking Member CONYERS for their work in crafting a bipartisan agreement to reauthorize this act.

As Senator KENNEDY often says, civil rights remains the unfinished business of America. Today, Mr. Speaker, should be a day for us to come together to celebrate the accomplishments of the Voting Rights Act, to affirm the fact that it works, and to remind ourselves that our work is not yet complete.

Instead, what the Republican leadership has done is to guarantee that much of this debate will be divisive and ugly. They have decided that it is more important to placate a small faction of their base than to embrace a thoughtful, bipartisan agreement. And that is shameful. This House should be doing everything possible to prevent discrimination and to promote voting equality.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, I hope we will pass this bill without any of the poison pill amendments allowed by this rule. These amendments will only weaken the Voting Rights Act in spirit and in practice.

It has been just a few decades since many States and localities had discriminatory regulations on the books, things like poll taxes, literacy tests, and others. And, sadly, discrimination still exists in America. It is essential that today we not turn back the clock, that we not lose our focus, that we not declare "mission accomplished."

Mr. Speaker, it says a lot about the Republican leadership in this House and their priorities that a carefully considered, thoughtful bipartisan agreement was not good enough. It did not have to be this way, and I urge my colleagues to reject any attempt to weaken the basic civil rights of the American people.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to my good friend, a champion for human rights wherever it is threatened in the world and here in the United States as well, Mr. CHABOT of Ohio.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his kind words. I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to talk about the importance of passing this rule today to consider H.R. 9, the renewal of the Voting Rights Act.

I have the honor of serving as the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Constitution; and since October of 2005, our subcommittee has held 12 hearings, heard from 47 witnesses, and compiled over 12,000 pages on the Voting Rights Act. Obviously this is an important issue, and our committee has devoted more time to this legislation than on any other matter since I became the chairman of the Constitution Subcommittee 6 years ago.

The right to vote is one of the most fundamental and essential rights we

have as citizens. And the passage and renewal of the Voting Rights Act, in my opinion, is absolutely vital.

H.R. 9 is a good bill, and I commend Chairman SENSENBRENNER and the other members of the full Judiciary Committee, and especially the members of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, for their work on the drafting of this legislation. I am also confident that the bill will withstand constitutional scrutiny. The Supreme Court always looks very closely at the record created by Congress when reviewing Voting Rights Act claims.

Because of this analysis, we took the time to carefully review and draft the bill. In addition to reviewing the temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act for another 25 years, it will also address two detrimental Supreme Court cases that are inconsistent with the congressional intent and purpose of the Voting Rights Act: the Bossier Parish and Georgia v. Ashcroft cases. The bill will prevent discriminatory voting laws from being passed and will ensure that minority voters continue to elect the preferred candidate of their choice. The bill will extend the Federal observer program but retire the outdated Federal examiner program.

I also wanted to talk about the bipartisanship of H.R. 9. I have been a member of the Judiciary Committee for 12 years now, and I will be honest, there is not a lot that is agreed upon in that committee by Republicans and Democrats, by conservatives and liberals. That is just the nature of most of the issues we take up in that committee. But we do agree on the importance of voting rights, and because of that commitment, H.R. 9 passed the committee by a vote of 33-1. Thirty-three to one.

I look forward to hearing from my fellow supporters of this legislation and would personally like to thank Mr. NADLER for his dedication and his commitment and sitting through the extensive hearings that we had to create this particular bill. And I want to also thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER, Mr. WATT, and Mr. CONYERS and urge my colleagues to vote for passage of this rule and ultimately passage of the bill.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 3 minutes to my colleague on the Rules Committee, the distinguished gentleman from California (Ms. MATSUI), my friend.

Ms. MATSUI. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, the idea of one person, one vote, regardless of race, background, or gender, is a fundamental principle of this Nation. The practical application, however, is another matter. American history is a testament to this fact. Despite the 15th amendment to the Constitution, our history is filled with efforts to prevent people from voting. Literacy tests, poll taxes, threats, and even violence, as my colleague and dear friend Congressman JOHN LEWIS can attest.

The hundreds of thousands of men and women of the civil rights movement also bear witness to the fact that through effort and sheer determination, we can close the gap between the principle as enshrined in the Constitution and the reality: the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

As President Johnson once said: "The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men."

Now we are here for the renewal of the Voting Rights Act. Democrats and Republicans crafted a bipartisan bill. Supporters were prepared to pass it weeks ago. But the majority leadership was thwarted by opposition within their own party. Regrettably, the Voting Rights Act, despite its storied history, apparently remains controversial among a faction of the majority party.

The members of my caucus support full consideration of issues and amendments. But it is disheartening that to permit a floor debate on the Voting Rights Act reauthorization, a number of my Republican colleagues demanded consideration of extremely inflammatory amendments, ones which would essentially eviscerate the Voting Rights Act.

Most Members of this Chamber, Democrats and Republicans alike, believe the Voting Rights Act long ago proved itself to be a force for good in this country. It is disappointing that some still need convincing.

I am particularly troubled by the amendment on the need for bilingual ballots, especially on the heels of the divisive House and Senate debates over immigration. That is why it is important to focus on one salient fact: three quarters of those who use the language assistance provision are native-born Americans and the rest are legally naturalized citizens. So this amendment aims to restrict the rights of fully law-abiding citizens of the United States.

Since being signed into law four decades ago, this landmark legislation has successfully been used to confront discrimination at the voting booth. But we still need the tools and resources of the Voting Rights Act. It bridges the gap between the principle of one man, one vote and the reality and will relegate that gap to the history books.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the distinguished gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS).

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

The reauthorization of one of our country's seminal laws, the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act, ensures that we continue to protect the voice of our Nation's minorities.

The unprovoked attacked on March 7, 1965, by State troopers on peaceful marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, en route to

the State capital in Montgomery, provided a vivid demonstration of the need for Federal legislation. Despite the existence of the 15th amendment, sadly, many Southern States simply ignored the amendment by passing egregious laws such as the poll tax, literacy tests, and blatantly discriminatory redistricting.

The Voting Rights Act passed due to the leadership of President Lyndon Johnson and Republicans and Democrats in Congress who overcame these efforts to deny minorities the right to vote.

My wife and I had the distinct privilege of marching last year in the 40th anniversary march in Selma. It was an extraordinary experience for us and a reminder of how far our country has come in the last 40 years and how far we still have to go in our civil rights movement. The march even included many figures in the civil rights movement, including Congressman JOHN LEWIS of Georgia, who was beaten and almost left for dead when he attempted to cross the bridge leading the original Selma march.

Today, the party of Abraham Lincoln has a unique opportunity to contribute to the progress that has been made in advancing civil rights and narrowing the gap in minority voting rights.

Before relinquishing the floor, I want to address one controversial provision in this legislation, section 203, which provides voting assistance in other languages. While I am a strong supporter of making English our country's official language, we need to recognize that when it comes to voting, particularly for ballot initiatives, some citizens can speak English but not read it. These are American citizens who own the right to vote, but may need the assistance provided in section 203.

I applaud the leadership of Chairman SENSENBRENNER and Congressman WATT, and all the Members on both sides of the aisle who have brought this landmark bill to the floor and urge support of this rule.

We need to defeat all amendments and pass this historic legislation.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my good friend, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT).

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, while young Americans die abroad in the name of democracy, some in this Congress scheme to undermine democracy at home by not renewing key provisions in the Voting Rights Act. They even seek a voter literacy test.

Blind to abuses here, one Congressman recently declared that "I don't think we have racial bias in Texas anymore." This shows not only insensitivity and indifference, it shows why we need to renew completely, without weakening amendments, the Voting Rights Act.

President Lyndon B. Johnson had the will and the courage to secure passage

of this fundamental guarantee even though he understood the price that he and the Democratic Party would pay. Now it is not only the law but the Administration's will to enforce that law that is at stake. Overruling professionals at the U.S. Department of Justice, political appointees disregarded obvious Voting Rights Act violations in both the DeLay gerrymandering of Texas and the Georgia voter identification law. The professional employees were vindicated by the courts, but a third of the lawyers in the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division have left.

Renewing democracy abroad begins with renewing democracy at home.

The Washington Post published a series of articles that document the politicization of the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice under the Bush Administration: November 27, 2005, December 2, 2005, December 10, 2005, and January 23, 2006.

[From the Washington Post, Dec. 2, 2005]

JUSTICE STAFF SAW TEXAS DISTRICTING AS ILLEGAL

(By Dan Eggen)

Justice Department lawyers concluded that the landmark Texas congressional redistricting plan spearheaded by Rep. Tom DeLay (R) violated the Voting Rights Act, according to a previously undisclosed memo obtained by The Washington Post. But senior officials overruled them and approved the plan.

The memo, unanimously endorsed by six lawyers and two analysts in the department's voting section, said the redistricting plan illegally diluted black and Hispanic voting power in two congressional districts. It also said the plan eliminated several other districts in which minorities had a substantial, though not necessarily decisive, influence in elections.

"The State of Texas has not met its burden in showing that the proposed congressional redistricting plan does not have a discriminatory effect," the memo concluded. The memo also found that Republican lawmakers and state officials who helped craft the proposal were aware it posed a high risk of being ruled discriminatory compared with other options.

But the Texas legislature proceeded with the new map anyway because it would maximize the number of Republican federal lawmakers in the state, the memo said. The redistricting was approved in 2003, and Texas Republicans gained five seats in the U.S. House in the 2004 elections, solidifying GOP control of Congress.

J. Gerald "Gerry" Hebert, one of the lawyers representing Texas Democrats who are challenging the redistricting in court, said of the Justice Department's action: "We always felt that the process . . . wouldn't be corrupt, but it was. . . . The staff didn't see this as a close call or a mixed bag or anything like that. This should have been a very clear-cut case."

But Justice Department spokesman Eric W. Holland said the decision to approve the Texas plan was vindicated by a three-judge panel that rejected the Democratic challenge. The case is on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"The court ruled that, in fact, the new congressional plan created a sufficient number of safe minority districts given the demographics of the state and the requirements of the law," Holland said. He added that Texas now has three African Americans serving in

Congress, up from two before the redistricting.

Texas Republicans also have maintained that the plan did not dilute minority votes and that the number of congressional districts with a majority of racial minorities remained unchanged at 11. The total number of congressional districts, however, grew from 30 to 32.

The 73-page memo, dated Dec. 12, 2003, has been kept under tight wraps for two years. Lawyers who worked on the case were subjected to an unusual gag rule. The memo was provided to The Post by a person connected to the case who is critical of the adopted redistricting map. Such recommendation memos, while not binding, historically carry great weight within the Justice Department.

Under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Texas and other states with a history of discriminatory elections are required to submit changes in their voting systems or election maps for approval by the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

The Texas case provides another example of conflict between political appointees and many of the division's career employees. In a separate case, The Post reported last month that a team was overruled when it recommended rejecting a controversial Georgia voter-identification program that was later struck down as unconstitutional by a court.

Mark Posner, a longtime Justice Department lawyer who now teaches law at American University, said it was "highly unusual" for political appointees to overrule a unanimous finding such as the one in the Texas case.

"In this kind of situation, where everybody agrees at least on the staff level . . . that is a very, very strong case," Posner said. "The fact that everybody agreed that there were reductions in minority voting strength, and that they were significant, raises a lot of questions as to why it was" approved, he said.

The Texas memo also provides new insight into the highly politicized environment surrounding that state's redistricting fight, which prompted Democratic state lawmakers to flee the state in hopes of derailing the plan. DeLay and his allies participated intensively as they pushed to redraw Texas's congressional boundaries and strengthen GOP control of the U.S. House.

DeLay, the former House majority leader, is fighting state felony counts of money laundering and conspiracy—crimes he is charged with committing by unlawfully injecting corporate money into state elections. His campaign efforts were made in preparation for the new congressional map that was the focus of the Justice Department memo.

One of two DeLay aides also under indictment in the case, James W. Ellis, is cited in the Justice Department memo as pushing for the plan despite the risk that it would not receive "preclearance," or approval, from the department. Ellis and other DeLay aides successfully forced the adoption of their plan over two other versions passed by Texas legislators that would not have raised as many concerns about voting rights discrimination, the memo said.

"We need our map, which has been researched and vetted for months," Ellis wrote in an October 2003 document, according to the Justice Department memo. "The pre-clearance and political risks are the delegation's and we are willing to assume those risks, but only with our map."

Hebert said the Justice Department's approval of the redistricting plan, signed by Sheldon T. Bradshaw, principal deputy assistant attorney general, was valuable to Texas officials when they defended it in court. He called the internal Justice Department memo, which did not come out during

the court case, "yet another indictment of Tom DeLay, because this memo shows conclusively that the map he produced violated the law."

DeLay spokesman Kevin Madden called Hebert's characterization "nonsensical political babble" and echoed the Justice Department in pointing to court rulings that have found no discriminatory impact on minority voters.

"Fair and reasonable arguments can be made in favor of the map's merits that also refute any notion that the plan is unfair or doesn't meet legal standards," Madden said. "Ultimately the court will decide whether the criticisms have any weight or validity."

Testimony in the civil lawsuit demonstrated that DeLay and Ellis insisted on last-minute changes during the Texas legislature's final deliberations. Ellis said DeLay traveled to Texas to attend many of the meetings that produced the final map, and Ellis himself worked through the state's lieutenant governor and a state senator to shape the outcome.

In their analysis, the Justice Department lawyers emphasized that the last-minute changes—made in a legislative conference committee, out of public view—fundamentally altered legally acceptable redistricting proposals approved separately by the Texas House and Senate. "It was not necessary" for these plans to be altered, except to advance partisan political goals, the department lawyers concluded.

Jerry Strickland, a spokesman for Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, said he did not have any immediate comment.

The Justice Department memo recommending rejection of the Texas plan was written by two analysts and five lawyers. In addition, the head of the voting section at the time, Joseph Rich, wrote a concurring opinion. Rich has since left the department and declined to comment on the memo yesterday.

The complexity of the arguments surrounding the Voting Rights Act is evident in the Justice Department memo, which focused particular attention on seats held in 2003 by a white Democrat, Martin Frost, and a Hispanic Republican, Henry Bonilla.

Voting data showed that Frost commanded great support from minority constituents, while Bonilla had relatively little support from Hispanics. The question to be considered by Justice Department lawyers was whether the new map was "retrogressive," because it diluted the power of minority voters to elect their candidate of choice. Under the adopted Texas plan, Frost's congressional district was dismantled, while the proportion of Hispanics in Bonilla's district dropped significantly. Those losses to black and Hispanic voters were not offset by other gains, the memo said.

"This result quite plainly indicates a reduction in minority voting strength," Rich wrote in his concurring opinion. "The state's argument that it has increased minority voting strength . . . simply does not stand up under careful analysis."

[From the Washington Post, Jan. 23, 2006]

POLITICS ALLEGED IN VOTING CASES

(By Dan Eggen)

The Justice Department's voting section, a small and usually obscure unit that enforces the Voting Rights Act and other federal election laws, has been thrust into the center of a growing debate over recent departures and controversial decisions in the Civil Rights Division as a whole.

Many current and former lawyers in the section charge that senior officials have exerted undue political influence in many of the sensitive voting-rights cases the unit

handles. Most of the department's major voting-related actions over the past five years have been beneficial to the GOP, they say, including two in Georgia, one in Mississippi and a Texas redistricting plan orchestrated by Rep. Tom DeLay (R) in 2003.

The section also has lost about a third of its three dozen lawyers over the past nine months. Those who remain have been barred from offering recommendations in major voting-rights cases and have little input in the section's decisions on hiring and policy.

"If the Department of Justice and the Civil Rights Division is viewed as political, there is no doubt that credibility is lost," former voting-section chief Joe Rich said at a recent panel discussion in Washington. He added: "The voting section is always subject to political pressure and tension. But I never thought it would come to this."

Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and his aides dispute such criticism and defend the department's actions in voting cases. "We're not going to politicize decisions within the department," he told reporters last month after The Washington Post had disclosed staff memoranda recommending objections to a Georgia voter-identification plan and to the Texas redistricting.

The 2005 Georgia case has been particularly controversial within the section. Staff members complain that higher-ranking Justice officials ignored serious problems with data supplied by the state in approving the plan, which would have required voters to carry photo identification.

Georgia provided Justice with information on Aug. 26 suggesting that tens of thousands of voters may not have driver's licenses or other identification required to vote, according to officials and records. That added to the concerns of a team of voting-section employees who had concluded that the Georgia plan would hurt black voters.

But higher-ranking officials disagreed, and approved the plan later that day. They said that as many as 200,000 of those without ID cards were felons and illegal immigrants and that they would not be eligible to vote anyway.

One of the officials involved in the decision was Hans von Spakovsky, a former head of the Fulton County GOP in Atlanta, who had long advocated a voter-identification law for the state and oversaw many voting issues at Justice. Justice spokesman Eric W. Holland said von Spakovsky's previous activities did not require a recusal and had no impact on his actions in the Georgia case.

Holland denied a request to interview von Spakovsky, saying that department policy "does not authorize the media to conduct interviews with staff attorneys." Von Spakovsky has since been named to the Federal Election Commission in a recess appointment by President Bush.

In written answers to questions from The Post, Holland called allegations of partisanship in the voting section "categorically untrue." He said the Bush administration has approved the vast majority of the approximately 3,000 redistricting plans it has reviewed, including many drawn up by Democrats.

Holland and other Justice officials also emphasize the Bush administration's aggressive enforcement of laws requiring foreign-language ballot information in districts where minorities make up a significant portion of the population. Since 2001, the division has filed 14 lawsuits to provide comprehensive language programs for minorities, including the first aimed at Filipino and Vietnamese voters, he said.

"We have undertaken the most vigorous enforcement of the language minority provisions of the Voting Rights Act in its history," Holland said.

Some lawyers who have recently left the Civil Rights Division, such as Rich at the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and William Yeomans at the American Constitution Society, have taken the unusual step of publicly criticizing the way voting matters have been handled. Other former and current employees have discussed the controversy on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

These critics say that the total number of redistricting cases approved under Bush means little because the section has always cleared the vast majority of the hundreds of plans it reviews every year.

The Bush administration has also initiated relatively few cases under Section 2, the main anti-discrimination provision of the Voting Rights Act, filing seven lawsuits over the past five years—including the department's first reverse-discrimination complaint on behalf of white voters. The only case involving black voters was begun under the previous administration and formally filed by transitional leadership in early 2001.

By comparison, department records show, 14 Section 2 lawsuits were filed during the last two years of Bill Clinton's presidency alone.

Conflicts in the voting-rights arena at Justice are not new, particularly during Republican administrations, when liberal-leaning career lawyers often clash with more conservative political appointees, experts say. The conflicts have been further exacerbated by recent court rulings that have made it more difficult for Justice to challenge redistricting plans.

William Bradford Reynolds, the civil rights chief during the Reagan administration, opposed affirmative-action remedies and court-ordered busing—and regularly battled with career lawyers in the division as a result. During the administration of George H.W. Bush, the division aggressively pushed for the creation of districts that were more than 60 percent black in a strategy designed to produce more solidly white and Republican districts in the South.

These districts were widely credited with boosting the GOP in the region during the 1994 elections.

Rich, who worked in the Civil Rights Division for 37 years, said the conflicts in the current administration are more severe than in earlier years. "I was there in the Reagan years, and this is worse," he said.

But Michael A. Carvin, a civil rights deputy under Reagan, said such allegations amount to "revisionist history." He contended that the voting section has long tilted to the left politically.

Carvin and other conservatives also say the opinions of career lawyers in the section frequently have been at odds with the courts, including a special panel in Texas that rejected challenges to the Republican-sponsored redistricting plan there. The Supreme Court has since agreed to hear the case.

"The notion that they are somehow neutral or somehow ideologically impartial is simply not supported by the evidence," Carvin said. "It hasn't been the politicians that were departing from the law or normal practice, but the voting-rights section."

In Mississippi in 2002, Justice political appointees rejected a recommendation from career lawyers to approve a redistricting plan favorable to Democrats. While Justice delayed issuing a final decision, a panel of three GOP federal judges approved a plan favorable to a Republican congressman.

The division has also issued unusually detailed legal opinions favoring Republicans in at least two states, contrary to what former staff members describe as a dictum to avoid unnecessary involvement in partisan disputes. The practice ended up embarrassing

the department in Arizona in 2005, when Justice officials had to rescind a letter that wrongly endorsed the legality of a GOP bill limiting provisional ballots.

In Georgia, a federal judge eventually ruled against the voter identification plan on constitutional grounds, likening it to a poll tax from the Jim Crow era. The measure would have required voters to pay \$20 for a special card if they did not have photo identification; Georgia Republicans are pushing ahead this year with a bill that does not charge a fee for the card.

Holland called the data in the case "very straightforward," and said it showed statistically that 100 percent of Georgians had identification and that no racial disparities were evident.

But an Aug. 25 staff memo that recommended opposing the plan disparaged the quality of the state's information and said that only limited conclusions could be drawn from it.

"They took all that data and willfully misread it," one source familiar with the case said. "They were only looking for statistics that would back their view."

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to my good friend and distinguished leader from Minnesota (Mr. KENNEDY).

Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support for reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

Before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, thousands of citizens were denied their constitutional right to vote on the basis of race. While the system has vastly improved, the need for the Voting Rights Act remains.

A sacred right possessed by Americans is the right to choose their government. That is why it is so important to pass the bill today, to preserve the rights for all citizens. We have a moral obligation to ensure that no citizen is ever denied their right to vote based on race, creed, or color.

I am grateful for the strong leadership of Chairman SENSENBRENNER, who has never wavered in his commitment to the Voting Rights Act over his entire career.

I thank the gentleman for yielding me this time.

□ 1100

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS), who will be leaving us, but will leave us with wonderful words, my friend.

(Mr. OWENS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act is just one great step forward toward the movement of our Nation toward a more perfect Union. This is a creation of Lyndon Johnson, a politician, a President of unparalleled practical genius, who fashioned this to bring to the table those people who had serious grievances.

We gave the world constitutional democracy. It is a great leap forward for civilization. We can continue to lead civilization by improving on this model.

Half the democracies of the world, by the way, right now, do have provisions in their constitutions for representation of minorities. We have spent \$9 billion, at least \$9 billion, some of you can correct me if it is more, \$9 billion in Kosovo, and Kosovo is still struggling under a mandate to provide a constitution which guarantees representation to the minority Serbs. Albanians are the majority there now, and the Serbs need to be represented.

In Iran, they have a provision which allows for the representation of Armenians and Jews. In Burundi, the Tutsi minority is guaranteed 40 percent of the seats in parliament. Across the world, these provisions are made because they are practical provisions. They bring people to the table and involve them in the process.

The only way we are going to solve the problem in Iraq is to make certain we have something similar to a Voting Rights Act to guarantee representation for all the minorities in Iraq.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from south Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART), someone whom I love like a brother.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am excited to be here supporting the reimplementation of the Voting Rights Act.

Let me give a little bit of recent history. You have heard a lot about past history. In the State where I am from, in Florida, redistricting was always a way that was used to discriminate against minorities and to stop minorities from the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

We all know that there is a substantial African American population in Florida and a substantial Hispanic American population in Florida, and yet, and I do not want to sound partisan, but the reality is that one party controlled the State legislature for 122 years. During that entire time, not once did they deem it necessary or important to create one African American congressional district, one district for African Americans so they could elect a candidate of their choice.

Finally, in redistricting before the 1992 elections, after a lot of haggling, and I was involved in that redistricting and other Members who were then in the State legislature who are now in Congress were also involved, finally the then-majority party, the Democratic Party, finally saw the wisdom to create one district where African Americans could elect a candidate of their choice for Congress and one district only where Hispanic Americans could elect a candidate of their choice.

We had to sue the State of Florida. We had to go to Federal court to get more districts where Hispanics and African Americans could elect candidates of their choice, and because of the Voting Rights Act and because some of us sued the majority party in those days, which was the Democrats, the courts agreed and created districts where

three African American Members of Congress were elected, serving in this wonderful body. One of them is leading the effort on that side of the aisle for the implementation of this Voting Rights Act again, and two districts where Hispanic Americans could elect candidates of their choice.

We are not talking ancient history. We are talking the need is still there today. It is there. The need is still there today in Florida, as a matter of fact.

We saw recently a group, mostly from outside of Florida, spending millions of dollars, hundreds of thousands of dollars in Florida trying to get something on the ballot. A group that supports multimember districts for the State of Florida, which have been proven to be discriminatory. The threat is still there. The need is still there.

That is why I am so grateful to Chairman SENSENBRENNER for his leadership on this issue not only now, but also in the past. I thank Mr. SENSENBRENNER.

It is a privilege to be here. I think it is an historic day because we have the opportunity to extend this important act for many, many years. It is right for the country, not only for minorities, but for democracy and for the entire country.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that my colleague took cognizance of the fact that Florida still needs help; and I would remind him that it is a Republican majority there now.

Mr. Speaker, how much time remains for each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS) has 12¼ minutes remaining. The gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) has 8 minutes remaining.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD), a former voting rights attorney.

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the leadership on both sides of the aisle for their bipartisan work on this great, historic legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation was enacted weeks after I finished high school in eastern North Carolina. At that time, there were no black elected officials and no prospect of electing minorities to office.

There was the literacy test and at-large elections and staggered terms and numbered seats. These were all devices that were used to disenfranchise the African American community. The Voting Rights Act has made a difference.

Section 2 has enabled minority communities to require significant changes in election procedure through legal action.

Section 5 has been the safety valve that has prevented jurisdictions from

changing their procedures to further dilute the minority vote.

In my congressional district, in 1965, there were no black elected officials. Today, Mr. Speaker, I count 302. It was the Voting Rights Act that made it happen.

I support the rule, Mr. Speaker, and I support the underlying legislation. I urge my colleagues to defeat the amendments and pass this legislation into law.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to my good friend from Georgia (Mr. NORWOOD).

(Mr. NORWOOD asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for the time.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank Chairman DREIER for making my amendment in order under this rule. I rise today in support of this rule, in support of the VRA, and against H.R. 9 as it presently is written.

We should all understand that in 1965, 40 years ago, when the VRA was written, part of it was intended to be permanent law and part of that bill was meant to be temporary.

The Voting Rights Act was needed in 1965, and it was a good bill. It enabled all citizens to be able to vote unencumbered. I strongly believe in that.

Now, 40 years later, we are not trying to remove the temporary part of this bill, meaning 4, 5 and on, but later this morning we are going to try to amend section 4 of the Voting Rights Act so that it may be updated, modernized and actually brought into the 21st century.

Only section 4 of the temporary part of the Voting Rights Act are we trying to amend. Section 4 of the VRA is the formula or the trigger mechanism that determines which jurisdiction, whether it be city, county or State, that has broken the rules and, therefore, is to be put in the penalty box of section 5. This is the section that puts jurisdictions under the heavy hand of the Justice Department, the preclearance section of the bill.

The trigger section occurs when less than 50 percent of citizens of voting age do not vote in Presidential elections. To determine if you will be under section 5 of the VRA, the elections used are 1964, 1968 and 1972, elections 40 years ago, presidential elections between Goldwater and Johnson. Only those who violated section 4 during those 8 years are under preclearance today. H.R. 9 wants to extend that 25 more years, using 40-year-old data, applied to the same jurisdictions, no matter how good their voting record is today.

H.R. 9, it does not seem to matter that many other jurisdictions around the country have also violated section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, even in this century. Those violations are not looked at generally by anyone.

My amendment, that we will have later today, changes that and updates section 4 to use the election years of

1996, 2000 and 2004. It will be incumbent upon the Attorney General, and he is so instructed, or she, to look at all jurisdictions in all States, and this information is to be reviewed after each Presidential election, using the latest three Presidential elections.

If you violate section 4, you are and you should go to the penalty box, which is the preclearance section. If you are in the penalty box and have not violated section 4 in the last three Presidential elections, you get to come out of the penalty box. It is that fair, it is that just, and it is just that simple.

Listen carefully now. The authors of H.R. 9 are going to give you many reasons why my lovely State of Georgia should stay in the penalty box, even though we have one of the absolute best voting records in the country of electing black Georgians and black voting and black registration, but I bet we do not hear them talk about that.

The truth is that under my amendment all Georgia jurisdictions stay under preclearance. Under my amendment all Georgia jurisdictions, meaning counties, stay under preclearance, except 10 counties out of 159, even though all of Georgia will be treated as if we are still under section 5.

They are not going to mention that 837 jurisdictions today in 16 States are under preclearance, but if my amendment were to pass, over 1,000 jurisdictions in this country will be under preclearance in at least 39 States.

I think that black Georgians who have protections under the law should give those same protections to black Tennesseans.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to talk about this all day. I appreciate the time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Michigan (Ms. KILPATRICK), my good friend.

Ms. KILPATRICK of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman SENSENBRENNER and Ranking Member CONYERS, from my great State of Michigan, for your leadership, sir, thank you very much, and to thank the Speaker and NANCY PELOSI for bringing this legislation to the floor.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, 41 years ago, has made America a stronger nation. Today, I rise in support of the rule that brings it to the floor and allows us to have this debate.

The preclearance portion of the amendments that we will be debating today allows the courts to go into jurisdictions that have a history of discrimination of voter irregularity, of violations. We must preserve that preclearance portion of the Voting Rights Act.

It is important today, it was important 41 years ago, and it allows our voting systems and all Americans to have access to clean, fair voting procedures so that the process and America's greatness can continue.

So I rise in support of the Voting Rights Act itself. It must be renewed, the provisions that we will be talking

about today; and I ask that all America call your congressman or congresswoman and tell them today to vote "yes" in reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my good friend the distinguished gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS).

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in strong support of H.R. 9, the Voting Rights Act, as passed by the Judiciary Committee, and in strong opposition to any amendments which would attack Americans' right to vote.

The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy. The Voting Rights Act has advanced the rights of all Americans. Latinos and other minority voters have greater voice today because of the Voting Rights Act.

In 2004, a record number of 7.5 million Latinos cast a ballot for President, compared to 2 million in 1976.

We must continue protecting the rights, including section 203, which provides tax-paying U.S. citizens with limited English proficiency with needed language assistance. Section 203 ensures that all citizens have a right to cast an informed ballot and integrates non-English-proficient citizens into a system of democracy. It protects voters from discrimination and ensures a fair and equal voting process for all voters.

I urge all of my colleagues to support the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, as passed by the Judiciary Committee, and I oppose any amendments.

□ 1115

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would inquire as to the remaining time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 3 minutes.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. How much time do I have, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 9¼ minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON).

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, the passing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act is a crowning achievement of Congress and the civil rights movement. Some say that we no longer need a Voting Rights Act, that 41 years is enough.

Others want to water down key expiring provisions in order to weaken the act. Yes, we have made considerable progress in the last 41 years. However, much work needs to be done. The sad fact is that in every national election since Reconstruction, in every election since the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, American voters have faced calculated and determined efforts by persons and groups whose goal is to deny

them the most fundamental right, and that is the right to vote.

Gone are the days of poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, however, intimidation, threats, innuendo and deception are still used to discourage voter turnout. The list of strategies used to deny Americans their right to vote is long and varied. Please vote for this bill, attack and reject the amendments.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. RUPPERSBERGER).

Mr. RUPPERSBERGER. Mr. Speaker, I stand in support of H.R. 9, the Voting Rights Act. August 7, 2006, will mark the 41st anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act has been one of the most effective civil rights laws in granting access to the ballot boxes for all Americans.

Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act in response to persistent and purposeful discrimination through literacy tests, poll taxes, intimidation, threats and violence.

The Voting Rights Act has enfranchised millions of racial, ethnic, and language minority citizens by eliminating discriminatory practices and removing other barriers to their political participation.

I want to make one point. I have been to Iraq and Afghanistan on many occasions in my capacity on the intelligence committee. U.S. soldiers of all races, religions are fighting every day in harsh climates to risk their own lives to bring basic freedoms to other people, and they are being told that they are doing what is right: fighting for freedom, justice, and liberty.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to my classmate and good friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. BECERRA).

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, we should be proud, because in this country we look back at our history so that we may move forward wisely into the future. The Voting Rights Act is proof positive that America learns from its history.

Today, more Americans from every corner of our Nation, whatever their race, creed, or color may exercise their right to vote. But, Mr. Speaker, I said more, not all, Americans can exercise that right. Just 2 weeks ago, the United States Supreme Court confirmed that fact when it rejected Texas's redistricting map because it disenfranchised thousands of Latino voters.

Mr. Speaker, we know why we have the Voting Rights Act. We know what history has taught us. We believe that we must look to the future, and we must not only reaffirm our belief in the Voting Rights Act, but reaffirm it completely and absolutely. We must reject the amendments which would undermine what has been a tremendous accomplishment in America's history of moving all people in America forward to exercise their right to vote.

Support this bill. Defeat the amendments. Let's move forward with the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES), a former judge.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the death of my oldest sister a week ago Sunday took me back to Clanton, Alabama, the roots of my family. Clanton is about 40 miles from Selma, Alabama, and it made me remember all of the things that my family had been through not having the opportunity to vote.

I stand here today saying to you that the Voting Rights Act must be reauthorized. And I will say to those of you who want to use 2000 and 2004 as cites for why we should do reclearance on voting, should not use those years, because we all know what happened in 2000 and 2004.

Mr. Speaker, I bring to the attention of my colleague from Georgia that only recently a Federal court and a State court found that the identification requirements set forth by the State of Georgia are just like having a poll tax, and that we cannot let Georgia out of preclearance.

Vote in support of the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. SCOTT).

Mr. SCOTT of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we understand, and I want to direct my remarks to the remarks of my distinguished colleague from Georgia, Congressman NORWOOD, who is a very good friend.

But, unfortunately, Congressman NORWOOD is dead wrong in his amendment and his approach. When he talks about Georgia's record, he is dead wrong with that record.

While, yes, we have made some progress in Georgia, I am a living testimony to that, the fundamental question of the Voting Rights Act is not if there has been progress made. The question is will that progress be in risk of being undone if we do not have the Voting Rights Act?

And no State gives clearer evidence that progress will be undone than my own State of Georgia. Georgia leads this Nation in the violations of the Voting Rights Act in the last 25 years. No more glaring example than what is currently now whistling through the newspapers and whistling through this Nation, and that is the voter ID bill that has been passed in Georgia. Twice it has come up and twice it has been ruled as discriminatory.

Yes, we have made progress. But my dear friend from Georgia, we have a much longer progress to go, and we desperately need to keep section 5 covered.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) who has been a leader in this fight for a substantial number of years.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, Members, today this country will witness a debate on the floor of Congress that will remind America of the continuing struggle of African Americans and minorities to seek justice in our country.

I have a hard time explaining to my constituents and African Americans all over this country why we must reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. They say to me, well, we thought we had done away with poll taxes; we thought we had done away with intimidation. Well, let me just say, we have all kinds of obstacles being placed in our way. It is the same game with a different name.

So we stand here today to protect the fight and the struggle of our ancestors who insisted that we take part in this democracy and we have the right to vote. And despite the new tricks and the new laws and the new procedures, we must say to those who continue to try, you must go before the Justice Department and get preclearance before you can initiate laws and practices that would place obstacles in our way.

This is a good debate for America today. I stand in the struggle to protect our right to vote.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 3¼ minutes.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1¼ minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. CORRINE BROWN), who is also my classmate and one of the three African Americans that was elected as a result of the Voting Rights Act, the first in 129 years in our State of Florida.

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of a clean voting rights bill. Let me say that those people that question whether we need a voting rights bill or not, I have to remind you of Florida 2000, where in my district 27,000 votes in my precinct were thrown out. 27,000. And you know they say the President won by 535.

But we have a long list of voting rights violations, and it goes on and on. But there is one that stands out in my mind. Florida Governor Jeb Bush spent \$4 million of taxpayer money to purge a list of 40,000 suspect felons from the rolls across the State, with zero consideration of accuracy. Later we found out that these people were eligible to vote; but when they went to vote, they were turned away.

Another reason, as my colleague said, I was one of the first African Americans elected to Congress in 129 years. Let us pass the Voting Rights Act and not have another Supreme Court coup d'etat in America.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the remaining time.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier today, this is not a period for jubilation. We do not have to come here and congratulate ourselves for the reason that suggests that history is our best judge.

I also said that through these eyes I have seen the tyranny of racism. And through these eyes I have seen this great Nation change and become more tolerant. But to suggest that we have arrived at a point where we no longer would need the Voting Rights Act and measures that protect minorities would be foolhardy.

The harsh reality remains that the suppression and disenfranchisement of minority voters is still tolerated. We saw it, as Ms. BROWN just said, in 2000. We saw it, as Ms. TUBBS JONES just said, in 2004 in Ohio. And the likelihood is that we will see it in 2006 and 2008 in some other State where it seems that those in the majority require a victory regardless of the means to their end.

We should fear those who dismiss concerns, deny such problems exist, and claim ignorance and naivete as to the reasons for years of neglect. These are the answers given by those who sat idly by throughout history when the rights and privileges of the weak and poor have been trampled on by the power.

When history judges our actions today, it will question whether or not we met the expectations levied by those who have come before us: Did we break down barriers or build up walls? Did we adhere to the Biblical admonition that we are our brother's keeper?

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on H. Res. 910 and insert extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of our time.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to have brought forth this legislation today. It is historic legislation. The Voting Rights Act was one of the great advancements of American democracy, something that we all should, and I think we do, feel very proud about. And we are bringing it forth today, we are extending it for 25 more years, because more work needs to be done, even though there has been extraordinary progress in the last 40 years in this country.

I want to thank again Chairman SENSENBRENNER. I admire him. I think he has done an extraordinary job facing great pressures. Of course he is such a man of character, the pressure does not even get to him.

□ 1130

I admire him for that and many other qualities. Again, I thank Ranking Member CONYERS and all those who have worked hard to bring this legislation forward. I think we are all cognizant of the historic nature of what we as the House of Representatives are doing today.

And so I would urge support for this rule, which is fair. It makes in order some amendments that I oppose, but I think it is appropriate that the House be able to debate even items that many of us in the Rules Committee don't agree with. But we are going to have a fair debate today.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, last week, we celebrated the 230th anniversary of the revolutionary declaration that gave birth to our country. All of us here, and Americans from coast to coast, fan recite the first "self-evident truth" proclaimed in that historic document. That "all men are created equal."

Mr. Speaker, given this truth, it is one of our Nation's great tragedies that a struggle for equality had to take place at all. And more tragic still that it led to so much suffering and bloodshed.

The United States fought a civil war to abolish the heinous system of slavery. The United States ratified the 15th Amendment in 1870 to prohibit denying the right to vote on the basis of race or color. Yet, inequality persisted. Jim Crow laws perpetuated the most unequal treatment of blacks, and disenfranchisement of blacks at the voting booth was commonplace. Without mercy, subjugation by race continued in many parts of the country.

Out of tremendous hardship and unjustness rose a powerful and peaceful force for civil rights in the 1960s. These American heroes included Martin Luther King Jr. and our colleague from Georgia, JOHN LEWIS. Their cause—forcing our Nation to live up to its founding ideals—moved millions and gained strength despite racism, threats and murder.

Mr. Speaker, on March 7, 1965, Mr. LEWIS led 600 people in a peaceful protest in Selma, Alabama. Their plan was to march to Montgomery. As many of us can recall with disgust and shame, they didn't make it. And in their blood and courage was borne the national call for the 1965 Voting Rights Act—to once and for all correct 95 years of failure to uphold the 15th Amendment.

Today, we will honor the civil rights movement, we will honor our God-given right to be treated equally and we will protect the most basic exercise of our democracy by extending the Voting Rights Act.

This is a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation that received nearly unanimous support at the Committee level. I want to thank the leadership, both Republican and Democrat, and Chairman SENSENBRENNER for their work to ring this to the floor.

While there would be every reason to hope and expect that this extension would not be required 41 years after the original, the Judiciary Committee, in their hours of hearings, found that the bill was needed—and needed to be updated.

To protect minority voters, H.R. 9 upholds and strengthens the "pre-clearance" provisions for districts to change their voting rules. And it allows jurisdictions that have demonstrated lawful and fair voting practices to become "uncovered" by the VRA.

Today we will also have the opportunity to vote on an amendment that would support our common language by printing ballots in English. This is a worthwhile debate to have. It is in no way contradictory to the intent of the bill.

Basic comprehension of English is a requirement of citizenship for immigrants and

essential to reach for and achieve the American dream—whether someone was born here or not.

I am proud to represent Americans of many, many national origins in my home state of California. But we are all united by our freedoms, our government and our language. It only serves to reinforce our unity and our common bonds to have our ballots printed in our national language.

I want to make very clear that for anyone who might need help in the voting booth, it is lawful and encouraged to have someone assist you.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that today's proceedings on the floor will not devolve into members casting aspersions on the motives of one party or the other.

The progress we have made on civil rights over the last four decades has been significant. If we are to confront inequalities that lie before us—and if we are to confront the inequalities that lie ahead of us—we must remain united and we must remain bipartisan.

I can assure members who might harbor any doubts, there is nothing less than a total commitment on behalf of the leadership on this side of the House to pass H.R. 9—to ensure voting rights for every single American, from Maine to California. To suggest otherwise is offensive and divisive.

While we labor to share the right of voting with millions around the globe so they can know a life of liberty and equality, it is our duty to protect the voting rights of our own citizens.

President Lyndon Johnson, in his moving and powerful address to Congress just 8-days after the brutality at Selma, said: "Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right."

Mr. Speaker, we will uphold that duty today. I urge support of the rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H. Res. 910, the rule for the Voting Rights Reauthorization.

I rise in opposition to this rule because it allows the Voting Rights Act to be weakened by amendments that would strip important provisions from the bill.

Democrats and Republicans passed a Voting Rights Act Reauthorization that strengthens and extends the Act's legacy for our future generations out of the Judiciary committee.

Democrats and Republicans recognize that this Act is relevant to the situations of millions of Americans.

In my district, the Inland Empire, a third of the residents don't speak English as their primary language.

In my personal experience, my father, who was born, raised, worked and raised a family in America, did not speak English well—yet he deserved, as all Americans do, the right to vote.

We must renew the Voting Rights Act—we must not allow these provisions to expire and thus disenfranchise hard-working Americans who want to do their civic duty.

If America is to remain the democracy that has made it strong, all voters must have the opportunity to cast a ballot they can understand.

But the King amendment allowed under this rule strikes the sections re-authorizing the Section 203 bilingual ballot requirements.

Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act has made our Nation's democratic ideals a reality by ensuring that eligible voters, regardless of language ability, may participate on a fair and equal basis in elections.

Three-quarters of those who are covered by the language assistance provision are native-born United States citizens. The rest are naturalized U.S. citizens.

It is well documented that language assistance is needed and used by voters.

For instance, the U.S. Department of Justice has reported that in one year, registration rates among Spanish- and Filipino-speaking American citizens grew by 21 percent and registration among Vietnamese-speaking American citizens increased over 37 percent after San Diego County started providing language assistance.

In Apache County, Arizona, the Department's enforcement activities have resulted in a 26-percent increase in Native American turnout in 4 years, allowing Navajo Code talkers, veterans, and the elderly to participate in elections for the first time.

This amendment would effectively disenfranchise language minority voters through the appropriation process.

Section 203 has always received bipartisan support from both Democrats and Republicans in Congress and the White House.

Section 203 of the VRA requires that U.S. minority citizens who have been subjected to a history of discrimination be provided language assistance to ensure that they can make informed choices at the polls.

It does not offer voting assistance to illegal or non-naturalized immigrants.

I urge my colleagues to oppose this rule and pass the strong and relevant Voting Rights Act that America needs.

Mr. Speaker, cognizant of the historic nature of what we are doing and strongly supportive of the legislation that we are bringing to the floor today, I yield back the balance of my time and move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill (H.R. 9) to be considered shortly.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 910 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. 9.

□ 1132

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. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965, with Mr. LAHOOD in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

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

The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 45 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support of H.R. 9, the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.

H.R. 9 amends and reauthorizes the Voting Rights Act for an additional 25 years, several provisions of which will expire on August 6, 2007, unless Congress acts to renew them.

I was proud to lead Republican efforts to renew expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act in 1982, and I am pleased to have authored this important legislation to do the same thing a quarter century later.

The Voting Rights Act was enacted in 1965 to address our country's ignoble history of racial discrimination and to ensure that the rights enunciated in our Constitution become a practical reality for all.

Since its 1965 enactment, the VRA has been reauthorized in 1970, 1975, 1982, and 1992, each time with strong bipartisan support. The right to vote is fundamental in our system of government, and the importance of voting rights is reflected by the fact that they are protected by five separate amendments to the Constitution, including the 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th amendment.

However, history reveals that certain States and localities have not always been faithful to the rights and protections guaranteed by the Constitution, and some have tried to disenfranchise African American and other minority voters through means ranging from violence and intimidation to subtle changes in voting rules. As a result, many minorities were unable to fully participate in the political process for nearly a century after the end of the Civil War.

The VRA has dramatically reduced these discriminatory practices and transformed our Nation's electoral process and makeup of our Federal, State, and local governments. Since its enactment, the VRA has been instrumental in remedying past injustices by ensuring that States and jurisdictions with a history of discrimination ad-

dress and correct those abuses, and, in some instances, stopping them from happening in the first place.

Section 5 prohibits States with documented histories of racial discrimination in voting from changing election practices and processes without first submitting the changes to the Department of Justice or the District Court for the District of Columbia. Section 5 has helped ensure minority citizens in these covered jurisdictions to have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process.

As a result of section 5 and other provisions of the Voting Rights Act, minority participation and elections as well as the number of minorities serving in elected positions has increased significantly, and many of our colleagues who are here today are personal embodiments of those changes.

Last summer, I along with Judiciary Committee Ranking Member CONYERS and Congressional Black Caucus Chairman WATT pledged to have the VRA's temporary provisions reauthorized for an additional 25 years. Over the last 7 months, the Judiciary Committee on the Constitution examined the VRA in great detail, focusing on those provisions set to expire in 2007.

In addition to gathering evidence of ongoing discriminatory conduct, the subcommittee examined the impact that two Supreme Court decisions, the *Bossier II* and *Georgia v. Ashcroft* decisions, have had on section 5's ability to protect minorities from discriminatory voting changes particularly in State and congressional redistricting initiatives.

Based upon the committee's record, and let me put the books of the hearings of this committee's record on the table, it is one of the most extensive considerations of any piece of legislation that the United States Congress has dealt with in the 27½ years that I have been honored to serve as a Member of this body. All of this is a part of the record that the Committee on the Constitution headed by Mr. CHABOT of Ohio has assembled to show the need for the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

H.R. 9 includes language that makes it clear that a voting change motivated by any discriminatory purpose cannot be precleared, and clarifies that the purpose of the preclearance requirements is to protect the ability of minority citizens to elect their preferred candidates of choice. These changes restore section 5 to its original purpose, enabling it to better protect minority voters.

In addition, H.R. 9 reauthorizes section 203 for an additional 25 years, ensuring that legal, taxpaying, language-impaired citizens are assisted in exercising their right to vote. And, in my opinion, this is particularly important in elections where ballot questions are submitted to the voters. The committee record that formed the basis for this legislation demonstrates that, while the VRA has been successful in