

time mandatory for criminal offenses such as political targeting.

Mr. Speaker, Americans deserve better.

The bottom line is that the use of the IRS as a political weapon is outrageous and unacceptable. What's worse, this is the same agency that will be enforcing ObamaCare.

As this blatant abuse of power continues to be fully investigated, this commonsense bill sends a loud and clear message to the IRS: if you do the crime, you do the time. No exceptions, no excuses.

The American people want, need and deserve to know the truth and assurance that this never happens again. This bill is a step in that direction.

I urge my colleagues to join my efforts.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Ms. JACKSON LEE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, this morning a number of members of the CBC, the Congressional Black Caucus, will speak on the emotions, the value and the gift of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

I thank our chairwoman, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE, and I'm delighted to lead that moment this morning. I will tell the Members of Congress you will hear us over the next couple of weeks and months as we proceed to do what the Supreme Court has said that Congress must do and has the authority to do, and that is to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

I disagree with the court's decision, for that bill was firm. And just a few years ago, as a member of the House Judiciary Committee, with 15,000 pages, 21 hearings, a vote of 390-33 in the House and 98-0 in the United States Senate, we reaffirmed every American's right to vote. In fact, since that passage, Virginia has had 11 of its jurisdictions opt out. Many other jurisdictions have opted out or taken the bailout provision. But yet, that decision now has left bare the soul of so many voters who will now be unable to vote because of the Voting Rights Act elimination or striking down of section 4.

Mr. Speaker, if the Voting Rights Act is wrong, then Fannie Lou Hamer was wrong, the three civil rights workers were wrong, and Martin Luther King, Jr., was wrong.

Today we stand together to encourage our colleagues, Republicans and Democrats, to work with us to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

OFFSHORE ENERGY AND JOBS ACT

(Mr. GIBBS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GIBBS. Mr. Speaker, as of today, 85 percent of the offshore areas have

been blocked from offshore drilling by the Obama administration. The energy legislation on the floor this week makes significant strides towards increasing our offshore production.

Additional energy production contributes to lowering fuel prices at a time when gas prices are over 100 percent higher than when President Obama took office.

H.R. 2231, the Offshore Energy and Jobs Act, creates 1.2 million American jobs over the long term by removing Federal barriers to offshore energy production. According to the CBO, the legislation would also generate \$1.5 billion in new Federal revenues over the 10-year period, which helps pay down our outrageous national debt.

This important legislation grows the economy and creates American jobs at a time of high unemployment and stagnant economic growth. Furthermore, it puts us on a path to energy independence and security by decreasing our dependence on foreign sources of energy.

We need to stand together to support this legislation that addresses our soaring gas prices and our sinking economy.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

(Mr. VEASEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. VEASEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call my colleagues to action.

Monday, the Supreme Court handed down its decision regarding the Voting Rights Act, ruling that the current formula for determining covered jurisdictions is outdated. Nearly 2 hours after the SCOTUS ruling, one prominent Texas leader said that they will move immediately to reinstate the State's voter ID laws that were passed in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Justice Department objected to Texas' voter ID law because the State's own data indicated that the law would have a detrimental impact on minority voters, the poor and the elderly. Why in the world would a State as great as Texas want to implement a law that its own data said would hurt the very citizens in its own State?

For this very reason, me and six other plaintiffs have filed suit in Federal court to bar enforcement of Texas' discriminatory voter ID law. The lawsuit in place is to ensure that we do not disenfranchise voters and to protect the constitutional rights of all Americans.

I refuse to allow Texas or any other State to replicate laws that constrict our American values. I firmly stand here as proof that Texans and Americans need a voice. I call upon my colleagues to work together to ensure voter protections remain. The Supreme Court has overreached, and now it's time for us to act to protect the integrity of democracy.

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NATIONAL PTSD AWARENESS MONTH

(Mr. BILIRAKIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in recognition of the National Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Month.

Head injuries are the signature and oftentimes invisible wounds of our recent wars. These injuries are not a sign of weakness or a character flaw but, rather, the potential catalyst of more serious illnesses, like traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Nearly one-third of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who received VA health care in the decade after 2001 were diagnosed with PTSD, and the numbers, unfortunately, are only expected to climb.

We must tear down the stigma surrounding head injuries and ensure veterans have timely access to quality care, particularly in situations of TBI and PTSD. As we mark PTSD Awareness Month, let's work together to address these important issues by drawing attention to the real dangers head injuries present and encourage our servicemembers to seek treatment.

STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATE SET TO DOUBLE

(Mr. LANGEVIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, in 3 short days, the student loan interest rate is set to double from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent unless Congress takes action. This is unacceptable. College is already too expensive for far too many young people, and doubling the interest rate on student loans will only make things worse. We should be working together to solve this looming crisis.

Regrettably, the only vote we have had on this is a Republican-led bill that would make college more expensive and prevent students from locking in a fixed rate. By the time 2013's freshmen graduate, they will be paying more than double today's current rate for subsidized Stafford loans.

Rather than waging another partisan fight on a bill that will not pass in the Senate and the President is prepared to veto, we should consider legislation that has a chance of becoming law and that will provide real relief to students and their families. I, therefore, strongly urge House Republican leaders to allow a vote on legislation I proudly cosponsored by Congressman COURTNEY of Connecticut to extend the current low rate for an additional 2 years.

It is a moral and economic imperative that we provide a top-notch education to every student in this country regardless of their financial means. Congress must act to fix this problem, and the clock is ticking.