

I've heard the argument that because Turkey lives in a dangerous neighborhood, it must take bold actions to preserve its own security. There is no doubt that Turkey faces threats from an array of terrorist groups, a murderous Syrian regime headed by Bashar al-Assad, and other destabilizing influences across the region. But the best way for Turkey to meet these challenges is in partnership with the United States and other NATO allies.

This is why I am supremely alarmed that Turkey is considering purchasing a Russian air-defense system rather than a NATO air-defense system. The operation of a non-NATO system puts the security of NATO members at serious risk and is inconsistent with the spirit of the alliance, not to mention interoperability among NATO member states. The Alliance understands Turkey's desire for air defense and wants to help, but Ankara's continued stated intention to acquire the S-400 is an obstacle to NATO's ability to assist and sends a signal that Ankara wants to break away on core defense issues.

In the time left before Turkey potentially makes a serious miscalculation, there is a key fact to highlight: the United States has offered Turkey two air and missile defense systems, including the Patriot PAC-3 system, which would fulfill Turkey's defense needs, but ultimate receipt and delivery of the Patriot is contingent on Turkey cancelling the S-400 deal. For these reasons, I, like many of my colleagues, remain willing to work with Turkey in order to support its purchase of a NATO air defense system.

But, I want to be clear: Turkey must demonstrate its commitment to its relationship with the United States and NATO. It can do so by taking the steps I previously noted, including releasing Mr. Brunson, Mr. Golge, and others; enhancing Turkish personal freedoms and promoting the rule of law; and acquiring a NATO, rather than Russian, air-defense system. No doubt, the United States has other important differences with Ankara, including its difficult relations with Israel, its occupation of Cyprus, and its improving ties with Moscow. But, should Turkey pursue the course I've outlined, it would represent an important step toward patching up some of our key differences.

Like many of my colleagues, I wish that our relationship with Turkey were on better footing. Turkey has been a strong NATO partner for decades. For the good of both the United States and Turkey, NATO, and the region, we must work to improve this relationship.

HONORING THE CITY OF SOUTH EL MONTE, CALIFORNIA ON ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2018

Ms. SÁNCHEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the City of South El Monte, California, which I have the privilege of representing in California's 38th Congressional District. On July 30th, 2018, South El Monte will celebrate its 60th Anniversary. Located in the heart of the San Gabriel Valley, South El Monte is a colorful, diverse, and thriving community.

Known to many as the "City of Achievement", South El Monte has come a long way

since it was incorporated as a city with 3,000 residents in 1958. The city is now home to over 20,000 Californians and a robust business community. With easy access to major Southern California freeways, South El Monte hosts more than 2,400 businesses and serves as an important manufacturing base for the Los Angeles region, including in the space and aerospace industries.

Beyond its prosperous business sector, South El Monte is a tight-knit community. Since its inception, the city's mission has been to improve the quality of life of its residents. The Whittier Narrows Recreation Area and Legg Lake on the city's border, as well as the city's commitment to those who serve in our armed forces through its Active Military Banner Program, unite a diverse population with a rich history.

I am honored to represent this city and its residents, and look forward to what the next 60 years have in store.

INTRODUCTION OF THE DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT OF 2018

HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2018

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce the Democracy Restoration Act of 2018. This legislation will serve to clarify and, in some cases, expand the voting rights of people with felony convictions, the next logical step in restoring their full participation in civic life.

The United States remains one of the world's strictest nations when it comes to denying the right to vote to citizens convicted of crimes. An estimated 6.1 million citizens are ineligible to vote in federal elections due to their status as ex-offenders. More than four and a half million of these disqualified voters are not in prison, but are on probation, parole, or have completed their sentence. Due to differences in state laws and rates of criminal punishment, states vary widely in the practice of disenfranchisement, demonstrating a critical federal interest for uniform standards.

Clarification of the law on restoration of ex-offender voting rights is a critical next step in criminal justice reform. In 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Second Chance Act into law, signaling a bipartisan awareness of the importance of enacting policies that assist in the reintegration of ex-offenders into their communities. Recent public opinion research has also shown that a significant majority of Americans favor voting rights for people on probation or parole, who are currently supervised in their communities, as well as for individuals who have completed their sentences. This legislation both captures the bipartisan spirit of the Bush administration and is consistent with evolving public opinion on rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

From a constitutional basis, the Democracy Restoration Act is a narrowly crafted effort to expand voting rights for people with felony convictions, while protecting state prerogatives to generally establish voting qualifications. The legislation would only apply to persons who are not in prison, and would only apply to federal elections. As such, our bill is fully consistent with constitutional requirements estab-

lished by the Supreme Court in a series of decisions upholding federal voting rights laws.

Since this legislation was first introduced in 2008, the Sentencing Project reports 27 states have amended felony disenfranchisement policies in an effort to reduce their restrictiveness and expand voter eligibility. These reforms have resulted in an estimated more than 800,000 citizens regaining their voting rights. Yet, despite these reforms, the overall rate of ex-offender disenfranchisement has not abated and continues to have a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Many of the state reforms still rely on lengthy waiting periods or clemency and several feature burdensome procedural hurdles that have proven difficult to navigate for persons seeking to restore their voting rights. As a result, approximately 50 percent of the entire disenfranchised population is clustered in 12 states, with Florida alone accounting for 48 percent of the post-sentence population.

Proponents of ex-offender disenfranchisement have offered few justifications for continuing the practice. In fact, the strongest empirical research suggests that prohibitions on the right to vote undermine both our voting system and the fundamental rights of people with felony convictions. A series of studies make clear that civic engagement is pivotal in the transition from incarceration and discouraging repeat offenses. Disenfranchisement laws only serve to isolate and alienate ex-offenders, creating additional obstacles in their attempt to successfully put the past behind them by fully reintegrating into society. But that is only half the story.

The current patchwork of state laws has created widespread confusion among election officials throughout the country and has served as the justification for flawed voter purges. For example, although people with misdemeanor convictions never lose the right to vote in Ohio, in 2008, 30 percent of election officials in the state responded incorrectly or expressed uncertainty about whether individuals with misdemeanor convictions could vote. A similar survey by the Nebraska ACLU in advance of the 2016 general election determined that about half of state election officials gave out the wrong information about former felons' voting rights. Given the general confusion by election officials on restoration of voting rights, many ex-offenders are hesitant to even attempt registration, depriving eligible voters of their rights. Only federal law can conclusively resolve the ambiguities in this area plaguing our voting system.

For many years, voting restoration legislation has been supported by a broad coalition of groups interested in voting and civil rights, including the NAACP, ACLU, Human Rights Watch, the Brennan Center for Justice, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, among many others. This coalition has expanded to include many law enforcement groups including the American Probation and Parole Association, the Association of Paroling Authorities International, and the National Black Police Association, among others, who recognize that allowing people to vote after release from prison helps rebuild ties to the community that motivate law-abiding behavior.

The denial of voting rights by many states to ex-offenders represents a vestige from a time when suffrage was denied to whole classes of our population based on race, gender, religion, national origin and property. I believe that our