

the overwhelming evidence of grave voting irregularities and voting rights violations in the recent presidential election in what was the closest and most contested presidential election in the history of our great nation.

It is imperative that Congress continues to engage in a serious review and comprehensive reform of our election process in this nation. The disenfranchisement of voters in the federal electoral process remains a chilling threat to the integrity of our democratic system in America.

Mr. Speaker, The right to vote, and to fully exercise that vote, is a vital component of our collective preservation. On November 7th, 2000, only a fraction of Americans were able to exercise their right to vote and have those votes counted, while thousands, and perhaps even millions of voters were denied this constitutional right as guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment.

It is horrifying to me that such systemic mistakes were made in this election. But beyond these mistakes, there have been serious allegations of violations of the Sections 2 and 5 of the Voter Rights Act of 1965, 42 U.S.C. sec. 1973, which mandates the obligation and responsibility of the Congress to provide appropriate implementation of the guarantees of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which states "the fundamental principle that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the States or the Federal Government on account of race or color." Yet we know today, that such violations of fundamental voting rights did occur during the November 7th elections throughout the nation. These irregularities also raise potential violations of several provisions of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, 42 U.S.C. sec. 1973gg-5(a) which affirms the right of every U.S. citizen to cast a ballot and have that ballot be counted. We must address this today.

The need for election reform is the challenge of all Americans. President Bush himself recognized this urgency, telling members of Congress: "This is America. Everyone deserves the right to vote." Congress was reaffirmed of President Bush's commitment to the protection of the right to vote when the President's spokesman later assured members of Congress that the "President wants to make certain that one of the focuses of attention this year is electoral reform." A letter recently sent to President Bush by virtually every House Democrat, called on the administration fulfill this promise by providing "essential guidance and leadership on a national problem", yet today, half a year after the election, we are still without such leadership. So I call on the Attorney General of the United States to begin a full investigation of all alleged voting improprieties. We must clear the air.

So what can be done to remedy these problems for the future? According to a recent Washington Post article by David Broder, since the 2000 presidential election more than 1,500 election reform bills have been introduced in state legislatures around this nation. The American Civil Liberties Union and other organizations have been filing suits in California and in other states demanding that uniform methods of casting and counting ballots be put in place. I applaud these efforts and I believe that outdated technology is a large part of the problem.

We also need a greater awareness of how our voting system works. We need better and

more uniform standards, better enforcement, better education, greater and more convenient access to voting places, and a generally easier and more user-friendly electoral process.

To begin to address these problems, I have introduced several important pieces of legislation. I've recently introduced H.R. 934, a bill that would establish National Election Day on the 2nd Tuesday of November, in presidential election years, as a legal public holiday in order to substantially resolve the serious problem of the lack of time for people to vote or participate in the federal election process, due to employment commitments.

This bill would merely federalize what some states have done with great success so that employees in the private sector will be able to exercise their constitutional right to vote or take part in the electoral process as election volunteers with no restraints.

I've also introduced H.R. 60, the Secure Democracy for All Americans Act, which would establish a five member commission and provide funding necessary to perform a study into federal, state, and local voting procedures in order to produce a report and make recommendations for appropriate legislation and administrative actions. This legislation is greatly needed.

In addition, I've recently founded the bipartisan Congressional Election Reform Caucus, which was established to enable all members of Congress to engage in a serious review and dialogue of the election process in this nation as a recognition of the disenfranchisement of voters because of voter confusion, poor voter machinery and work commitments.

I have also drafted legislation that provides for much needed "provisional ballots" so that people erroneously "purged" or dropped from the voting rolls can register at the polls, vote, and have that vote counted. I am also introducing legislation that would create a uniform voter "purging" requirement, because too many states and localities have confusing and conflicting standards of how long you may remain inactive as a voter before your name is purged from the voting rolls. With my legislation, you would have a single uniform 10 years from the time you last voted until you are purged from the rolls. This makes good sense.

I would also like to commend Congressman CUMMINGS for today introducing electoral reform legislation, and for the commitment to this issue by the Congressional Black Caucus and by the many other members of this Congress who believe in this legislation.

These bills affirm our constitutional right, as citizens of this democracy, to vote and have that vote counted, because if our votes are not counted, our voices are not heard. I hope that in the months to come, our voices will come together in support of common-sense solutions and reform, and bring us closer towards our goal of equal access and equal justice under the law.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my special order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BALLENGER). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

#### A NEW ERA OF DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA IS ON THE HORIZON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I believe that a new era of a defense partnership between the United States and India is on the horizon. I come to the House floor this evening to discuss the potential for stronger defense ties between these two nations.

This relationship between the United States and India makes sense, and it is time that the world's two greatest democracies come together as natural allies. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I would like to see India and the U.S. form a stable defense alliance. Such an alliance would help secure our national security and those of our allies while isolating nations such as China, which pose a threat to India and other Asian democracies.

Assistant Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who called on New Delhi in a visit last weekend, said that he was very pleased with the warm support and cooperation extended by the Indian government on various matters, including defense and military cooperation. Bridging a new defense relationship with India would be remarkable, given the history of this nation's ties with the United States in the past.

During the Cold War, India unofficially joined hands with Russia in the non-alignment movement. This created tense relations between the United States and India, and ultimately the U.S. viewed India negatively. However, the Cold War is over. We have no reason to view India as a threat.

In fact, India and the United States have many similar democratic interests, and as a result, both countries could work together and work together well against the threat from a military buildup in China or from rogue nations in Asia that threaten American interests.

Mr. Speaker, Americans are still reeling from the incident last month when Chinese authorities detained a U.S. plane and military personnel. This incident and others exacerbate the difference between our democratic system and China's Communist regime. It highlights the need to have India, a stable democracy for over 50 years, as an ally in the region.

It was well documented that the Chinese have transferred missile technologies to rogue nations. The Chinese premier has reaffirmed this during a recent visit to Pakistan, during which he disclosed his commitment to helping Pakistan develop its military.

Threats to U.S. security loom large in Asia. Pakistan is politically unstable, is full of terrorism, as is documented in the U.S. annual terrorism