

along the way. I know when a person's integrity has been unfairly questioned, and I had to stand up to defend a decent and honorable man. I was proud to stand with Mr. Barreto last December in the press conference to put some context and additional facts into a very complicated situation.

Just as a side note, it is very interesting to me that the media is not reporting that the SBA thus far has approved a record amount of over \$10 billion in disaster loans to more than 152,000 Gulf States residents, representing an accomplishment 2½ times greater than the Nation's previous largest disaster—and all done at a faster pace. That is something to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this brief opportunity to once again thank Mr. Barreto for his leadership; for his friendship; and for his service to our country. Our Nation's small business community is better for Mr. Barreto's tenure as the second longest serving SBA Administrator in history. The new SBA Administrator, Steve Preston, has some fairly big shoes to fill.

Freda and I wish Hector Barreto and his family all the best in his new endeavor as the new national chairman of the Latino Coalition. I am confident that Mr. Barreto will never forget his small business roots.

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

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 13, 2006

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965:

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Chairman, speaking of the Emancipation Proclamation, Martin Luther King declared that: "This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity." I say to you today that the Voting Rights Act, like the Emancipation Proclamation that preceded it a century before, was also a momentous decree which came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Americans who for decades had been subjected to the withering injustice of racial discrimination and electoral disenfranchisement.

The Gohmert amendment seeks to diminish the light of continued hope offered by the VRA. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is no ordinary piece of legislation. For millions of Americans and myself, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a sacred treasure, earned by the sweat and toil and tears and blood of ordinary yet heroic Americans who showed the world it was possible to transform their society by having the courage to defy entrenched and systematic racial discrimination and disenfranchisement.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, which we MUST vote to reauthorize today was enacted to remedy a history of systemic and

widespread discrimination in certain areas of the country. Presented with a record of systematic defiance by certain States and jurisdictions that could not be overcome by litigation, this Congress—led by President Lyndon Johnson, from my own home state of Texas—took the steps necessary to stop it. It is instructive to recall the words of President Johnson when he proposed the Voting Rights Act to the Congress in 1965:

Rarely are we met with a challenge . . . to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such as an issue . . . the command of the Constitution is plain. It is wrong—deadly wrong—to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 represents our country and this Congress at its best because it matches our words to our deeds, our actions to our values. Martin Luther King said that, "When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. . . . It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. . . . But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt."

Fortunately, this country has come a long way in the past four decades since the assassination of Dr. King. However, as the massive voting irregularities that occurred in 2000 and 2004 clearly illustrate, we have not come far enough. That is why we must defeat the Gohmert Amendment which seeks to reduce the reauthorization period for the VRA from 25 years to 10 years.

The considerable evidence presented in 10 hearings in the Judiciary Committee demonstrate clearly that the level and patterns of discrimination and electoral disenfranchisement present today are extremely unlikely to be eradicated in 10 years. Moreover, if covered jurisdictions want to bail out of provisions of the VRA, they can.

In the past, when Congress reauthorized the VRA for short periods of time, it created an incentive for covered jurisdictions to wait out their obligations rather than comply, thus contributing to the widespread non-compliance with the statute that occurred throughout the 1970s. A 10 year renewal of the VRA would be inadequate. In order for Congress to assess whether a pattern of discriminatory conduct remains, it must be able to review voting changes through multiple redistricting cycles. The three years following the decennial Census are a time of the highest volume of voting changes and the greatest opportunity for discrimination. Accordingly, we must maintain the 25 year renewal period.

Furthermore, if we observe Congressional history, our own experience with the renewal of the VRA demonstrates a pattern of lengthening the period of coverage due to the level of entrenchment and intractability of voting discrimination. Given the extensive investment of Congressional resources expended by the Judiciary Committee in compiling and considering the detailed record necessary for reauthorization, reenacting the VRA for only 10 years is inefficient and unacceptable.

Without exaggeration, the Voting Rights Act has been one of the most effective civil rights laws passed by Congress. In 1964, there were

only approximately 300 African-Americans in public office, including just three in Congress. Few, if any, black elected officials were elected anywhere in the South. Today there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 members of Congress, the largest number ever. The act has opened the political process for many of the approximately 6,000 Latino public officials that have been elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the state or federal level, 27 of whom serve in Congress. Native Americans, Asians and others who have historically encountered harsh barriers to full political participation also have benefited greatly.

I hail from the great State of Texas, the Lone Star State. A state that, sadly, had one of the most egregious records of voting discrimination against racial and language minorities. Texas is one of the Voting Rights Act's "covered jurisdictions." In all of its history, I am only one of three African-American woman from Texas to serve in the Congress of the United States, and one of only two to sit on this famed Committee. I hold the seat once held by the late Barbara Jordan, who won her seat thanks to the Voting Rights Act. From her perch on this committee, Barbara Jordan once said:

I believe hyperbole would not be fictional and would not overstate the solemnness that I feel right now. My faith in the Constitution is whole, it is complete, it is total.

I sit here today an heir of the Civil Rights Movement, a beneficiary of the Voting Rights Act. My faith in the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act too is whole, it is complete, it is total. I would be breaking faith with those who risked all and gave all to secure for my generation the right to vote if I did not do all I can to strengthen the Voting Rights Act so that it will forever keep open doors that shut out so many for so long.

Consequently, we must honor the legacies of those who sacrificed their lives so that we may be able to exercise our constitutionally protected right to vote by renewing the Voting Rights Act for 25 more years.

PAYING TRIBUTE TO KATHY
AUGUSTINE

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 17, 2006

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of Kathy Augustine, a dedicated Nevada leader, who passed away on Tuesday, July 11, 2006.

Kathy was a devoted and passionate public servant, having served in the Nevada State Assembly from 1993 to 1995, and also in the State Senate from 1995 to 1999, where she chaired the Legislative Affairs and Operations Committee and was Vice Chairman of Taxation and the Human Resources and Facilities Committees. In 1999, Kathy became the first woman to be elected as Nevada State Controller. To add to her impressive résumé, Kathy was also a Trustee for the Center for Governmental Financial Management, and the National Association of State Auditors, Comptrollers, and Treasurers' representative on the Electronic Benefits and Services Council, where she served as Chair of the Strategic