they want to get in on it, even though that was such a bad idea, as Bill Clinton and as the Congressional Budget Office have said, in response to Dr. Frist's request back in 2004, that allowing the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate prices would not save any money. The program is working so well.

Every one of these bills that have been brought up this week under this special rule of no rule, no opportunity to meet in the Rules Committee and no amendments, all these issues, minimum wage and completing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission and stem cell expansion, poll really high. Yet this particular issue is just the reverse of the information they have got. It is an 80 percent positive issue for us. So I can only presume that they still want a little skin in the game. They want to get on the bandwagon.

Well, I am going to tell you, what is going to happen is our seniors are going to get skinned because they are about to ruin a good program. A program that is working well, that 80 percent of our seniors are in favor of. It has brought down prices of prescription drugs. It has come in now at $22 a month average monthly premium and this is great satisfaction. And they want to try to improve on that by letting the government negotiate prices. It is going to be a disaster for them. And I hope some of their Members, if they are smart, from these districts that they won from our Members in these elections in November, in these marginal districts, they had better talk to their folks back home before they follow the lead of their leadership and vote for this atrocious piece of legislation.

I railed at the outset, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that the new minority has been given no opportunity for amendments on any of these first four bills that are brought up during their 100 hours, and I do think it is an atrocity. But they may be doing us a favor inadvertently by not allowing us to amend this piece of legislation, which can't be amended. It needs to be killed. We need to kill this sucker dead. And I think every Member on our side of the aisle will vote against it, and the smart ones on their side of the aisle will vote against it.

□ 1900

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order today.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PERLMUTTER). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia?

There was no objection.

VOTING RIGHTS FOR DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I have initiated this Special Order on behalf of the people of the District of Columbia who are second per capita in the Federal taxes they pay to support our Federal Government; yes, including this House and Senate and all the Armed Forces and our exquisite government throughout the United States, and who have fought and died in every war since the establishment of the Republic. In their name, I come forward.

I came forward Tuesday in a 5-minute Special Order simply to inform the House that I had just filed my vote, my bill, that is to say, refiled the bill that Representative TOM DAVIS and I had filed and hoped to pass in the 109th Congress, the Fair and Equal D.C. House Voting Rights Act. I came in gratitude to my own party. I came also in some frustration. It is impossible to hide that frustration.

I represent people who have been frustrated for 200 years and don't want one single moment more of frustration by having a second-class Member of the House of Representatives while paying first-class taxes and dying and fighting in every war that our country has ever fought, including this war where lives continue to be lost in such large numbers and for what cause. They do not ask, they simply fight like other Americans.

I had hoped to be able to vote on the very bills that have been in discussion here this week, particularly the bills on which Democrats ran and perhaps were responsible for our capture of the House. And my deepest regret was that my Committee of the Whole vote that was taken from me when the Democrats came to power was not automatically put back into the rules.

To his great credit, the majority leader indicates that he intends to introduce a provision to that effect. And I know I speak for myself and all of the delegates when I thank him about thinking about us and about how deeply we feel about that vote. For myself, I have come to the floor to say that I have had to pass that vote. I won't get to vote on the six items. I have been pleased to be able to speak on them as usual.

I am at this point moving forward to where I have been instructed by the people of the United States. They don't even want the Committee of the Whole vote confused with what they are entitled to, and that is the full House vote.

Mr. Speaker, before I go further, I have a number of people I must thank. The bill I introduced today was not a bill that I authored. It was originated by my good friend who also lives in the region, Representative TOM DAVIS of Virginia, who has grown up in the region and has seen the District of Columbia without a vote and believed that at least a vote on the House floor was virtually mandated by any Congress controlled by either party. He was in the majority and he initiated this idea because it came to his attention that the most Republican State in the Union had missed getting full voting rights, were chafing at that because they believed they were entitled and they had gone all the way to the Supreme Court to get them, and believed that this provided out what turns out to be the case, probably the only opportunity the District of Columbia will have to get its full voting rights in a very long time.

I want to thank the majority leader who lives in the region who has been one of the most steadfast proponents of D.C. voting rights and never gives up and who always stands with us and to whom we will be eternally grateful.

I have special thanks to HENRY WAXMAN, the Chair of the Government Reform Committee, who has been the Democratic leader of the bill that I bring forward today for all 4 years which we have worked on it. He is always a strong supporter of District home rule and for District of Columbia voting rights. He was here years before I came to Congress, and I am second only to him in supporting these issues. He is one of the great problem-solvers of the Congress, and he has been instrumental in bringing this bill forward. It is impossible to believe it could have happened without HENRY WAXMAN.

I want to thank the Democratic and Republican members of the Government Reform Committee, who in the 109th Congress literally gave us virtually a tie vote of Republicans and Democrats favoring this bill: 15 Democrats, 14 Republicans.

I want to thank Representative JOHN CONYERS, a founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, the dean of the caucus, who has carried this idea again long before I ever thought of coming to Congress.

At the same time, I want to thank my colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus who since the founding days of the caucus have given D.C. voting rights a priority, who believe with me that it is an issue of discrimination based on race, and for that matter on location. I say that and will explain it later because of the origins of our voteless condition.

I want to thank Senator JOE LIEBERMAN, who with many other Democratic Senators in the Congress have carried my bill for full voting rights for the residents of the District of Columbia, the No Taxation Without Representation Act. We have reluctantly but with great realism embraced the House-only act because we understand the spirit of the Congress, that it has virtually never acted all at once to do what it is supposed to do. So we know that we have to proceed in an incremental fashion.

I must thank my good colleagues from the State of Utah who have

worked hand in glove with me every step of the way: JIM MATHESON, the only Democrat in that delegation; ROB BISHOP and CHRIS CANNON who have thrown aside party lines and thrust themselves into this bill from the beginning.

I want to thank the two Senators from Utah, ORRIN HATCH and BOB BENNETT, who sent word to their leadership that they were prepared to have this bill come to the floor at the end of the 109th Congress for unanimous passage.

That would have happened, in my view, because the traditions of the Senate are that if a bill affects only one State, as a matter of Senatorial courtesy, the Senate defers to those Senators. It is heartbreaking that the 109th Congress punted the bill and robbed us of the opportunity to have that Senate vote in December.

I have to thank the Governor of Utah, who came here to testify for the bill and has worked valiantly with the Democratic minority in Utah as well as with his own party.

I do want to read from the letter that the Senators sent asking for the bill to be considered right away because, you see, the bipartisanship we must preserve in this bill. They said in their letter to their leaders, Leader Frist and Leader Reid, a letter signed by Senator BENNETT, Senator HATCH and Senator LIEBERMAN: ''It is urgent that Congress fulfill its obligation to provide the voting representation that Utah is entitled to as a result of changes to its population. Likewise, we recognize that the 600,000-plus Americans who live in the District of Columbia are without a voting Member of Congress. No doubt the citizens of Utah and the District face different challenges in greatly differing parts of the country and with greatly differing lifestyles, but they share a commonality: the right to be represented in our country's legislature.''

If ever there was a win/win piece of legislation, I think most Members would agree this is it. Certainly the American people agree: 82 percent of Americans support equal voting rights for the District of Columbia in Congress. That is 82 percent, up 10 percentage points in just 5 years.

This professional poll shows some astounding results because then you want to look and see, is this piled up all on one side of the country or one grouping or one race, and you see the same thing throughout. Once people realize you pay Federal income taxes, and if you go to war the way we do, if the blood of the United States runs in your veins, you give up on the question of whether there should be voting representation in the Congress of the United States.

All of the figures are in the high seventies or eighties. Northeast, Midwest. The South is the highest, 84 percent. Or if you look, at have a member of the military, they are 82 percent. These are people who believe in voting rights for the District of Columbia. Regularly attend religious services, 82 percent.

Ages 55-plus, 82 percent; 18 to 34, 87 percent ages. We can find no variation in these figures, and I don't think you will find any variation anywhere in the world.

This is the only country in the world where the residents of the capital do not have the right to vote in their national legislature. You can imagine why there is such great impatience in the District of Columbia. Imagine not having voting rights. Putting aside the taxes for a moment, when in the Vietnam War you had more casualties than 10 States, when in World War II you had more casualties than four States, and in World War I you had more casualties than three States, and in the Korean War you had more casualties than eight States.

Let me finally say a word about the bill, and I am so pleased to see other Members of Congress come to join me in this Special Order.

My thanks again to the originator, the author of this bill. As it turns out, he has given us the only chance we will ever have. The Congress of the United States in House and Senate has never increased its number except on a nonpartisan basis. Democrats have never got it by themselves, Republicans have never gotten it by themselves.

Everybody remembers Alaska and Hawaii. You want to know how deep this goes, slave States couldn't get in unless a free State could. That is the history of our country. I regret that there has to be that kind of equivalence, but I want everybody to know: Utah somehow disjoined from this bill kills it. So I thank Utah for giving us the only chance we will ever have, particularly since I am not sure that we will have another State ever that missed it by the skin of their teeth and would be willing to take this risk with us.

This bill was 4 years in the making after Mr. DAVIS introduced it. My thanks to him will be eternal because he was gracious in working with me when I wanted matters added to the bill. For example, I said to him, I could not even sponsor the bill unless it also went to the Committee on the Judiciary because that is the committee of jurisdiction. And it was Mr. DAVIS who convinced Mr. SENSENBRENNER to allow us a markup.

I said that there had to be an increase of two seats so no Member would think that they would lose a seat because we were gaining a seat. And I asked for something that was purely symbolic but important to the residents of the District of Columbia: I asked Mr. DAVIS who was then chairman of the committee if there could be a vote on my bill, the No Taxation Without Representation Act, so my people will know that I will never give up until they have full citizenship even if Congress requires us to do it step by step.

But that is how we got home rule. Indeed, now we have the atrocious situation where my budget and laws have to sit here before we can spend our own money. So everything happens in this House incrementally.

Mr. Speaker, Members on the floor who have been particularly gracious to me, always with me when I needed help, and I have needed help a lot as a Member from the District of Columbia with no delegation and no Senators, and some of them have come down in order to indicate their concern about our denial of voting rights and to say their piece. I could not be more grateful to them.

I am told that the first to arrive was the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands, who is in perhaps not a comparable position because I am sure that the people of the Virgin Islands are glad not to have to pay taxes to the Government of the United States, but who indeed represents American citizens as free and full as any others in the House; and I am pleased she has come down this evening, Mrs. CHRISTENSEN of the Virgin Islands.

□ 1915

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support my colleague and friend, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, in her hard and long-fought efforts to secure full voting rights in this body for herself and her constituents, and I applaud her strong and persistent advocacy and leadership on this issue that is so important to the people of the District of Columbia.

Democrats have long been committed to providing full voting rights to the residents of the District, and I am proud to stand here as a Democrat speaking out for this right as well. But there has also been, as you have heard, support across the aisle.

When he was the chairman of the Government Reform Committee, Representative TOM DAVIS worked with Congresswoman NORTON to get bipartisan agreement on legislation to give one voting representative to the mainly Democratic District of Columbia, and another to the largely Republican State of Utah.

This effort led to the introduction of the District of Columbia Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act, 2006, last year, and this week, ranking member Davis kept his promise and joined Congresswoman NORTON in reintroducing this bill into the 110th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, as a Delegate in the House also without a vote, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge also the fact that my constituents, and indeed the constituents of our colleagues from Guam, America Samoa and Puerto Rico, also would want their representative to have a full vote in the House as well. We recognize, however, that our time for this has not yet come. But certainly the time of our brothers and sisters in the District of Columbia has come and is very long overdue.

The residents of the District have been laboring under this undemocratic status for more than 200 years. That is

200 years of justice delayed and justice denied.

Presidents as far back as Andrew Jackson have advocated for full representation in Congress for the District, and much later, President Richard Nixon in a special message to the Congress on the District of Columbia in 1969 said, ''It should offend the democratic sense of the Nation that the 850,000 residents of its capital, comprising a population larger than 11 of its States, have no voice in Congress.''

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when all citizens under the American flag will enjoy the democratic right of full representation in their national assembly as well as vote for our President and Commander-in-Chief. Until that day comes, I look forward to witnessing soon the day when residents of the District of Columbia, residents of the capital of our Nation, finally receive fair and equal voting rights in the House, the day that they will finally have justice.

I urge my colleagues to support the District of Columbia Equal House Voting Rights Act and end taxation without representation for our fellow citizens in the District of Columbia.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlelady for coming forward.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) who represents the district where my own mother was born and raised.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, first let me thank the delegate from the District of Columbia for giving me this time this evening to speak on this most important subject. I have watched ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON since I have been in the Congress, and she has worked so tirelessly on behalf of the people of the District of Columbia to get full voting rights, and I want to thank her for her passion and thank her for her work in this body.

Mr. Speaker, many people who now call the District of Columbia home have established themselves here by way of my home State of North Carolina and by way of our neighboring State of South Carolina. As the delegate said a few minutes ago, even her family originated in Halifax County, North Carolina, which is in my Congressional District.

Many DC residents are my schoolmates from eastern North Carolina. In coming to Washington, DC, they left parents, and they left grandparents behind who had endured blatant discrimination in public accommodations and discrimination at the ballot box. Many of them could not vote because of the literacy test, and others refused to register to vote because of voter intimidation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the descendants of these individuals living in Washington, DC, are again denied the right to vote and the right to have voting representation in Congress.

What a disgrace. Voting is one of our most fundamental rights, but it is one that has been systematically denied for as long as it has been assured. Until 1919, women did not have the right to vote. African Americans gained the right to vote for the first time in 1868, and then lost that right in 1900. It was the Voting Rights Act that restored the effective right to vote in 1965.

Mr. Speaker, each time the right to vote has been oppressed, good people, good people, have stood up and stood strong to ensure that right, because it forms the foundation of our ideals of governance.

Today, we again have the opportunity to expand the right to vote and to ensure that the people being governed in the District of Columbia, who pay taxes and who fight in our wars, have a voice in their government.

Rarely does an issue come before this body which goes right to the heart of our values as Americans. The right to vote is a simple and straightforward idea that embodies some of our most beloved founding principles, the idea that all men, all people, are created equal, and that we establish our government by the consent of the governed. When we fail to address inequalities such as these, we fail ourselves as a people and as a nation and we fail to honor the sacrifices of the many people before us who wanted to ensure basic rights to all Americans.

As the Delegate so ably said a few moments ago, this is not a Democratic issue nor a Republican issue. This is an American problem that must be resolved and resolved in this session of the Congress.

The strength of our great Nation lies within its citizens, and the power of its citizens relies upon the equal access to the franchise. These opportunities include our many freedoms, especially the right to have a strong and clear voice in choosing elected leaders. As the Constitution commands, we must extend the rights of citizenship to every, every, citizen of this land, including the citizens of Washington, DC.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the legislation that has been introduced by the Delegate, and I urge its passage.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. BUTTERFIELD, the gentleman from North Carolina, in memory of my mother, Vela Lynch Holmes, who came to the District of Columbia and died at 90 here, while her daughter was still trying, in the name of my father's side of the family, the native Washingtonians, to make us all first class citizens, the way finally you are in North Carolina. Thank you, sir.

I would like to yield now to my good friend who came in my class with me, the gentlelady from California, who 16 years ago came. I think we tripled or quadrupled the number of African American women in the Congress then. I know that the gentlewoman from California won't let this House have any peace until there is justice for the District of Columbia.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker and Members, I wanted very much to be on this floor this evening with ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON first because I want to show my strong support for her, her work, her love for the District of Columbia and for the way she has used every bit of her time and efforts to fight for voting rights for Washington, DC.

I admire her spirit, I admire her commitment and I admire the way she has educated the entire Congress of the United States on this issue and forged a relationship with people on the other side of the aisle to get us to the point where we are.

I know that it is disappointing sometimes to feel you have come so close, and it still hasn't happened, but I am convinced it will happen, because of you, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. It will happen because you will not allow it not to happen.

So I wanted to be here this evening more than to simply talk about the unfairness of not having voting rights. We all know that. I wanted to be here tonight to say to you, sister, I am with you. I have marched, and I will march again. I have sat in, and I will sit in again.

I started on this issue when I was in the California State legislature, and sometimes I feel a little guilty because I don't think I demonstrated long enough and hard enough to show how much I care about this.

I come from a time and place in St. Louis, MO, where I was educated in an elementary school called the James Weldon Johnson elementary school, with strong teachers who taught us the Constitution. We learned the Declaration of Independence. We learned what happened with the British and about the Boston Tea Party, and we learned about Patrick Henry, who declared, ''Give me liberty or give me death.''

So, whether or not it was intended, it was instilled in us that in this America, despite the fact that we had witnessed discrimination, we had been marginalized, that we have a right in this democracy to participate fully.

I really believed that, and if it was not intended, then they shouldn't have taught it to us, because we didn't think they were talking about somebody else. We truly believed they were talking about all of us.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a day that passes as I look around this Capitol that I am not reminded of the slaves that happened to build these marvelous buildings. I am reminded on a daily basis of the people who work right here in the Capitol, in these buildings, who live in the District of Columbia, who hear us wax eloquently day in and day out about democracy and participation and the Voting Rights Act.

These are the people who serve us day in and day out, and serve us well. You come into this Capitol late in the evening and you see who is working and how hard they work and what they do for all of us. And yet we walk past

them every day, and we don't stop to say, ''I'm so sorry. You should have the right to have the representation in the Congress of the United States that you deserve and we thought would have been guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.''

So, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, thank you. Thank you for the love that you have for the District. I know that your constituents know this. You don't have to prove anything to anybody, because your daily work proves who you are and what your values are and what you care about.

I want you to know, November 7th gave us a new opportunity here. The people have voted, and the people have said to us they want to see change. The people are angry about what happened with Katrina. They are angry about Iraq. They are angry basically about injustice. And even those folks who oftentimes have been silent on the issue, they know injustice when they see it and feel it very deeply.

So I am hopeful that we will be able to use this time that we have to provide the leadership, to give you the support, to make sure we do justice by the District of Columbia and ensure that you get your voting rights.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, this was classic MAXINE WATERS. The gentlelady is as gracious as she has always been militant in the pursuit of justice. Ms. WATERS one session was on the floor with me for 10 hours on the DC Appropriations as people came forward to try to attach things to our appropriation. So she has been a stalwart friend that has been by my side when I most needed her. I particularly appreciate those remarks from a classmate who came with me to the Congress.

The next to arrive was my good friend from Illinois, Mr. DAVIS, a very good friend who serves with me on the Government Reform Committee, who I believe is going to chair the subcommittee on which I serve. He certainly has been a leader on issues on that committee and one of the greatly admired Members of the House, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. DAVIS.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to thank the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia for not only organizing this special order, but for her tremendous devotion over the years.

Many of us, long before we came to Washington, DC, long before we became Members of the House of Representatives, knew of the work of ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. As a matter of fact, I was talking to a gentleman the other day, ELEANOR, who suggested that he went to elementary school with you, and that you were the smartest person in the class, and that he was always intimidated when he came to class because he knew that you were there.

□ 1930

And I don't know whether you intended to intimidate him or not, but I do know that the passion, the intellect, the energy that you display is something for all of America to be proud of; and I know that the people in the District of Columbia are indeed proud of the representation that you have given them.

The issue that we deal with, I take the position, is one of the most fundamental of all rights, one of the most fundamental of all desires, and that is the desire that people have to be represented; the notion that their thoughts, ideas, hopes, and aspirations will get the same consideration as those of anybody else. So when we look at voting rights in this country historically, it has been a privilege that people have had to fight and struggle to get.

Initially, of course, the only people who could vote were landowners, who were white in America. Those were the only individuals who had the right to vote. Then we went through this long period of time, and ultimately a Civil War, where thousands of people actually lost their lives, and finally African Americans, who had been slaves, were granted at least the right, although in many instances denied the opportunity, to vote. Women, who had to wage their own war, their own struggles, ultimately won their right to vote.

Only after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did hundreds of thousands of citizens all over the country, especially African Americans and Latinos, actually have the right to vote. Yet now we still have thousands of people who are denied the right to vote because they live in States where if you have a felony conviction you can never, ever vote, unless you can obtain a waiver. So, yes, one can imagine how people in the District of Columbia have felt as we talk about expanding democracy, as we talk about guaranteeing democracy for people in Iraq, guaranteeing democracy there; and yet the people who live in our own District of Columbia have not been able to have that experience.

So, ELEANOR, I know that we are going to make sure this happens before this session of Congress ends as a tribute to you and a tribute to the longstanding work that you have done. One of my pleasures is to serve with you on the Committee on Government Reform and to listen and to learn and to be motivated, to be inspired, and to see the kind of wisdom that you express on a regular and ongoing basis.

So I thank you for the opportunity to join you, I thank you for organizing this Special Order, and we will be standing right here with you when enough ''yeas'' are said that the people in the District of Columbia will have their right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend a thank you to Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON for this special order and her hard work and dedication to get the District of Columbia the right to vote with full representation. It is strange to me where our government by money and blood sought to assist Iraq to become a democratic state where each person will have one vote under their newly formed constitution to determine their nation's destiny. However, the residents in the District of Columbia for over 200 years have been denied by the United States government the right to vote with full representation. Moreover, DC presidents also are denied the right to full self-government—a fundamental right that should be possessed by all Americans.

In 1950 with just under a million, the District of Columbia had more residents than New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Alaska and Hawaii, respectively. All of these states from the beginning had U.S. Senators and U.S. Representatives representing their interests in Congress. Today, the District of Columbia has a duly elected Delegate that is not allowed to vote for legislative measures on the house floor. This is ''taxation without representation.''

The government has a history of denying its citizens the right to vote. We have seen it before the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Since its passage and signing into law by President Johnson it gave way to an enormous and positive impact to our Nation. The importance and necessity of the Voting Rights Act cannot be overemphasized. We have learned through experience what a difference the vote makes to us.

The right to vote is the most basic constitutive act of citizenship. The right to vote should not be abridged by the United States or any State on account of race, color, gender, or previous condition of servitude. Fundamental fairness requires that all members of society who have reached voting age, including rehabilitated ex-felons, be given a right to the ballot in State and Federal elections.

The lack of a nationwide uniform standard regarding ex-felons and eligibility to vote has led to a crazy quilt of laws, where in some States ex-felons are barred from voting for life. Currently, it is estimated that 3.9 million United States citizens are disenfranchised, including over one million who have completed their sentences. State disenfranchisement laws have had an adverse affect on African Americans. Thirteen percent of African American men, or 1.4 million, are currently disenfranchised because of such laws. We need to expand the right to vote to all citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all my colleagues to support the District of Columbia Fair and Equal Housing Voting Rights Act of 2007.

Ms. NORTON. I just want to thank the gentleman for the kindness and graciousness of his remarks. This is his signature in this House. Every time he opens his mouth, he takes command of an issue and captures our attention. That he has given his attention to us in the District of Columbia is a matter for which we are deeply grateful.

I would like to yield now to the gentlewoman from Houston, Texas, whose energy and intelligence and zeal for justice is known by every Member of this House. I am pleased now to yield to the gentlewoman from Texas, Representative SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, many might wonder why we

come to the floor of the House and begin to either cite the Bible or begin to associate Congresswoman NORTON with the angels flying above, but I love the statistics that she cited, because she mentioned the statistics of churchgoing people in Washington, D.C. So I begin by saying the prayers of the righteous avail us much. Not only has she been praying but she has been working.

I would cast the reintroduction of H.R. 328 as the morality of Sojourner Truth that ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON exhibits, and the integrity of Harriet Tubman, for this has been a long journey. But I believe in this new Congress, with this new direction, this simple bill, this premise of equality and justice can finally say our time has come.

And if you don't mind, allow me to emulate your eloquence in the simplicity of this bill. H.R. 328 couldn't be more fair. You made it very clear that this is a bill that could not move without bipartisan support. You made the historical pronouncement that when we began to admit States during the era of slavery we admitted a free State and a slave State.

Now, we know that there are Democrats and Republicans all across America, but we might imagine that under this bill, H.R. 328, that the State of Utah might elect someone from a different party than myself. Then we might just envision that Washington, D.C. would select and elect someone of my party. How fair could you be?

We know that the delegate, who I call Congresswoman, appropriately titled, certainly is valued in the Democratic Party, but this legislation will be fair and balanced because it draws disparate populations that have been denied their birthright from the far ranges of the east coast of America to the far ranges of the western United States.

Let me just briefly speak to the issue of birthright. We have spoken so much about citizenship. We have had such outrageous debates on the question of immigration; yet we have left out, for more than 200 years or more, citizens who have shed their blood through the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and conflicts in between, the Vietnam War, and the present conflict that we now have. What do you say to parents and relatives, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers of a fallen soldier who happen to have an address in the District of Columbia, someone who offered themselves to stand up for this Nation's flag? I pledge allegiance to the concept of freedom and justice for all.

So as we prepare to leave this weekend, Congresswoman, let me thank you for allowing us just a moment to come to the floor as we go into the weekend commemorating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, who had the opportunity to be called by President Lyndon Baines Johnson to come to the Oval Office to witness the signing of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. I know full well that Dr. King would have wanted to have an amended initiative. I know Dr. King, if living, would be standing by your side and applauding you.

Lastly, let me tell you an anecdotal story that I was going to try to ask you to remember, because I could not, but I really thought I was a champion of civil rights when your predecessor, Walter Fauntroy, who as you know would sing us all into marching wherever he wanted us to go, but he told us there was a man called McFarland that was chairman of the District of Columbia, wasn't it?

Ms. NORTON. McMillan.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. McMillan, thank you. That's why I should have whispered to you before I came down.

He would tell us that we needed to get on a bus and go to South Carolina to defeat, and I can say this on the floor, I know Mr. McMillan has gone on and is resting in peace, because this gentleman was an obstacle to the freedom, the dignity, and respect. All I knew was to get on this bus and go down to, I would like to say Florence, South Carolina, and go to a place where I was truly unwanted. We all were. In fact, the campaign office, they drove by in a pickup truck and shot at. But I had a sense of purpose and joy for the people of this great District, these patriots. These Americans deserved the equality of a vote.

I will go to my seat by simply saying, out of their commitment comes Ms. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, who I hope will claim the victory of the passage of H.R. 328, and that we will together, with you and your leadership, do the right thing for the patriots of this District.

I thank Delegate NORTON for organizing this special order on the "District of Columbia Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act," bipartisan legislation that she and Congressman TOM DAVIS of Virginia have reintroduced as H.R. 328 in the ll0th Congress. The reintroduction of this legislation provides a second chance for Congress to complete one of the great unfinished tasks of the Civil Rights Movement. This is an opportunity that we should not squander.

As Section 2 of H.R. 328 finds, over half a million people living in the District of Columbia lack direct voting representation in the House of Representatives and Senate. Residents of the District of Columbia serve in the military, pay billions of dollars in federal taxes each year, and assume other responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. For over 200 years, the District has been denied voting representation in Congress—the entity that has ultimate authority over all aspects of the city's legislative, executive, and judicial functions.

H.R. 328 would permanently expand the U.S. House of Representatives from 435 to 437 seats, providing a vote to the District of Columbia and a new, at-large seat to Utah. Based on the 2000 Census, Utah is the state next in line to enlarge its Congressional delegation. This bill does not give the District statehood, nor does it give the District representation in the Senate. Rather, H.R. 328 treats the District as a Congressional district for the purposes of granting full House representation.

Previous Congressional efforts to secure voting representation for the District of Columbia include a proposed 1978 Constitutional amendment, a 1993 statehood bill, and a 2002 voting representation bill. On August 22, 1978, a two-thirds majority in each Chamber of Congress passed the DC Voting Rights Constitutional Amendment, which would have provided District residents voting representation in the House and Senate. The required 38 states did not ratify the amendment within the seven-year time limit. On November 21, 1993, the New Columbia Admission Act, H.R. 51, a statehood bill for the District of Columbia, was defeated in the House by a vote of 277–153.

Most recently, on October 9, 2002, then Senate Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman, JOSEPH LIEBERMAN, marked-up his legislation providing Senate and House representation for the District. The Committee reported the bill favorably with a vote of 9–0. However, the Senate did not take up this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the key provision of H.R. 328 is section 4, which permanently increases the Membership of the House of Representatives from 435 to 437. One seat would be designated for the District of Columbia and the other seat would go to Utah, the state next in line under the 2000 Census apportionment formula. Section 4 also provides that the new seat established in Utah shall be an at-large seat. This at-large seat shall exist until all congressional seats are reapportioned for the 2012 election.

Mr. Speaker, passage of the DC Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act and would be a simple act of justice. After all, the legislation is vote-neutral in that it does not advantage any political party over another; the bill commands wide bipartisan support; and most important, the bill is constitutional.

THE BILL IS VOTE-NEUTRAL

The DC Voting Rights Act provides Americans living in our nation's capital with voting representation in the House of Representatives for the first time ever. The DC VRA balances a seat for DC with an additional seat for Utah. Utah missed getting a fourth vote in the House by less than 1,000 people following the 2000 U.S. Census.

Utah is a historically Republican state. The District of Columbia has traditionally voted Democratic. Thus, the bill is viewed as vote-neutral, not favoring one political party over another. This balance has led to a nonpartisan consensus, which is critical to enacting this bill.

THE BILL IS BIPARTISAN

Throughout history, Democrats and Republicans have gone on record in strong support of DC voting rights. Presidents, presidential candidates, senators, members of Congress and prominent legal experts from both sides of the aisle have declared support for granting the residents of Washington, DC, a vote in Congress. From Supreme Court Justice William Rehnquist and Senator Bob Dole to President Jimmy Carter and Senator EDWARD KENNEDY, political leaders are on record for democracy in DC.

In 2006, Representative TOM DAVIS and Delegate ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON were joined by now House Speaker NANCY PELOSI and Representatives CHRIS CANNON, JOHN CONYERS, HENRY WAXMAN, DAN BURTON, ROB

BISHOP and others in support of the DC Voting Rights Act. Off the Hill, former elected officials Jack Kemp, John Breaux, J.C. Watts and others support the bill.

Secretary Kemp put it well at the Martin Luther King Memorial groundbreaking when he said: "Dr. King like Mr. Lincoln believed that 'democracy is the ultimate destiny of all mankind'. Thus it becomes strikingly ironic and indeed actually hypocritical for our nation to send young men and women to fight in foreign wars in the cause of freedom and democracy but continue to deny the people of this great city the opportunity to vote for their representative in the U.S. Congress."

THE BILL IS CONSTITUTIONAL

In a letter to the House Judiciary Committee this summer, the American Bar Association stated: "Enactment of the proposed [bill) would be an exercise of this constitutional authority conferred by the 'District Clause.'"

Former federal appeals court judge and Solicitor General, Judge Kenneth Starr, during congressional testimony in 2004, stated that Congress clearly has the constitutional power under the Constitution's District Clause (Art. I, Sec. 8, Clause 17) to confer voting representation: "The use of the word 'state' [in the Constitution) cannot bar Congress from exercising its plenary authority [under the District Clause) to extend the franchise to District residents."

Other constitutional law experts, including Professor Viet Dinh and Judge Patricia M. Wald, formerly of the D.C. Circuit, agree that Congress has the constitutional authority to grant congressional voting representation to the residents of the District of Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, Americans living in our nation's capital pay taxes, serve on juries, and defend our nation during times of war, but do not have voting representation in either chamber of Congress. The United States is the only democratic country in the world that denies voting representation to citizen of the nation's capital. A national poll conducted in January 2005 showed that 82 percent of Americans believe that Washingtonians deserve voting representation in the House and Senate. While we are attempting to export democracy abroad, it is time we provide American rights for people living in America's capital.

In conclusion, let me express my thanks again to the Delegate from the District of Columbia for organizing this special order. I look forward to working with her and my colleagues on the Judiciary Committee and in the House to win passage of this important legislation, which will treat the hundreds of thousands of citizens in the District of Columbia fairly and equally when it comes to voting representation in the House of Representatives.

Ms. NORTON. I want to thank the gentlewoman. The selfless spirit of her remarks, the intelligence of her remarks is nothing new in this body. Indeed, it reminds me of the same spirit she has shown when our own citizens from New Orleans came in huge numbers to her great city and they took them in, because they were Americans.

I also want to thank her for citing and reminding us that Martin Luther King's birthday is coming up and we are all going to be somewhere celebrating. Well, Martin Luther King would be here saying to this House, particularly to the Democratic majority who has spearheaded this issue for decades now, that now is the moment. Do it now. That is what he said when he was on the Mall. Do it now. Freedom now.

Indeed, the new Mayor of the District of Columbia, Adrian Fenty, who has been particularly active on voting rights, has indicated to me that he will be dedicating January 15 here in the District to DC voting rights and kicking off a campaign on January 15 that he calls Give DC The Vote Now Day in memory of Martin Luther King, who would not want his day used in such trivialities as simple ceremonies.

I also want to thank the gentlewoman for her reference to Mr. McMillan. Because the fact is the reason the District hadn't gotten home rule had to do with race and only with race. Mr. McMillan was a Southern Democrat who stood in the way, because beginning in the late 1950s the majority population of the District of Columbia was African Americans. So race has always stood in the way of our full empowerment. Today, it is as likely to be party. That is why we are grateful to the State of Utah for stepping forward.

I don't mean to say that race is gone from this issue. Residents of the District of Columbia, two-thirds of them African American, see this issue as an up-and-down civil rights issue. They are the only African Americans in the United States that don't have their full civic rights, and they know it, and they treat this issue this way.

I treat race as a simple proxy for party, because we are a big city, recognizing as I do that I know full well what second-class citizenship means. And you have to understand that the reason this is important for the District is not only was it a majority black city beginning in the late 1950s, but it was a segregated city for most of its existence. The schools were segregated. Even when I went to the schools in the District of Columbia. Downtown was segregated. And that was all at a time when Democrats in particular ran this House.

That is why this issue knows no party and why it has huge racial connotations in our country and in the District, and that is why this is a major issue and has been for decades for the NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and civil rights organizations across the United States.

□ 1945

They indicate that voting rights for the District of Columbia is second only on their agenda to what this House and Senate achieved on a bipartisan basis last year, and that is the reauthorization of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

I want to say that, just by point of clarity, I introduced the same bill, essentially, that I had introduced before. That bill had a map in it that had been approved by Democrats and Republicans because Mr. SENSENBRENNER, then the Chair of the Judiciary Committee, at the last minute said that he would not accept a compromise that we had all fashioned, that Utah, that our leadership, on both sides agreed to, and that was that there be an at-large seat so there would be no redistricting. The redistricting issue had been a very thorny issue because there is only one Democrat in Utah. He has been the target of gerrymandering. Nobody wanted that on the table any longer. And therefore, we came forward with a compromise of an at-large seat. Mr. SENSENBRENNER insisted upon redistricting.

Let me say, the people of the District of Columbia don't care one way or the other, whether it is at-large or redistricting the at-large. The redistricted seat there apparently is perfectly satisfactory to both sides. Whatever is easy, whatever gets me to sit in this seat as something other than the way I sit today, as a second class citizen, is acceptable to us. What we want is the vote, and we want our voting rights in the 110th Congress.

I do want to say that we haven't given up on full citizenship, and we never intend to. But we recognize the way in which the House has always operated, and that is incrementally.

It was not until 1967 that we incrementally began to give this, move this District toward having self government, would you believe. It had no mayor. It had no city council because it had been governed since the 19th century by three commissioners appointed by the President of the United States; 800,000 people then living as a straight out colony in their own Nation's Capital.

Lyndon Johnson abolished the commission and appointed a council. Then, in 1968, they gave the District the right to vote for their own board of education. Then, in 1970, the District got the right to vote for a delegate. And my good predecessor, a man who fought valiantly for our full rights, Walter Fauntroy, became the first Delegate. And then, finally, in 1973, the Home Rule Act itself was enacted, and the District got the right to elect its own city council and its own mayor. And notice, that is 32 years ago only that your Capital has even had the right to self government.

All of this is a real scar on our democracy. The scar has to be taken off of this House and can be this year; and we ask that that be exactly what the House does.

We remind the House that change for the District of Columbia only came at the Civil War, a true indication of the way race has decided matters in the District of Columbia.

My own people came to this city through my great grandfather, a runaway slave. He was in Washington in 1862 when Congress abolished slavery here.

But it is very interesting to note, when you see where the parties stand, that in 1848, when this House was controlled by the Democrats, the Democrats did give the District some home

rule. But it gave it the right to have its own Board of Assessors, this is like a council, and voting rights to all white male voters.

It took the radical Republicans, the abolitionist Republicans, to grant black males the right to vote, and that was in 1867. That was the proud history of the Republican Party. And we will never forget the roots of that party, Abraham Lincoln, the first Republican President, the President that abolished slavery, first in the District of Columbia, then of course, led our country to the abolition of slavery nationwide.

It was in 1878 that this notion of government, not by this self government that had been set up for white males by the Democrats, that the Republicans had converted so that everybody who could vote in the United States could then vote.

By the way, you notice women were not given the right to vote then, but they didn't have the right to vote anywhere.

But what happened in 1878, when Reconstruction came forward, when the reaction to the Civil War came forward, then we had the Congress, obviously, in the hands of Democrats again, providing that the District of Columbia be governed, not by a self government, as had been allowed, but by these Presidentially appointed commissioners who were, in fact, the government of the District of Columbia until 1974.

Mr. Speaker, occasionally you will hear some opposition to our bill based on the Constitution. Every other day somebody raises a constitutional issue about some bill that comes to the floor. And we concede that there is some division of opinion on whether or not Congress can give the District the right to vote through the Constitution, or whether it would take a constitutional amendment, as has been tried in the past, but the requisite number of States did not also ratify.

On the basis of very respectable constitutional opinion, and we are certain that the bill is constitutional under Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, Congress has full plenary power over all matters relating to the District of Columbia. We are certain that Congress can have the right because we are certain that that is what the framers intended.

When the Constitution was ratified in 1789, it clearly contemplated that the vote would, in fact, be enjoyed by the people of the District of Columbia. Everybody lived in a state then, including the people of the District of Columbia. But notably, the citizens living on the land designated by the Constitution, in the Constitution itself, as the District, continued to have voting rights until 1801, because that land had been given to the Federal Government by Maryland and Virginia.

When 1801 occurred, and the land came under the total control of the Congress, only Congress could step forward and say, now that you are under our jurisdiction, we just want to assure that you still, you have not lost your voting rights by becoming the Nation's Capital. And the people of the District of Columbia so petitioned, and Congress failed to act. Therein lies the fatal flaw. Congress did not act. But you certainly can't blame that on the Framers.

Imagine, would Maryland and Virginia have conceded the land to create the District of Columbia if they thought they were disenfranchising their own citizens? Impossible. And the Framers themselves indicated that everybody in the United States would have their rights. So we are quite confident that the bill is constitutional, although you will hear words to the contrary from time to time.

We are also confident that if we were to decide to use the at-large seat, as opposed to the map that is agreeable now, that that would be constitutional because every voter in the State of Utah, only for a very short time, because it then could revert, as the State desires, to the present system from an at-large system; but every voter in Utah would have the same equal right with no dilution of that right to elect this at-large member for such period as the State chose to have it.

These issues have been thoroughly vetted, and we have constitutional authority that I think the House would find persuasive. And I ask to be able to enter into the RECORD the testimony of Kenneth Starr, who testified to the constitutionality of the bill. This constitutional lawyer, respected by all for his constitutional background, even as he is regarded as controversial, perhaps that controversial side of his career helps to explain that this bill must be constitutional. And I thank Mr. Starr, and will submit that for the RECORD.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 17, 2006]

CONGRESS HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DO RIGHT BY D.C.

(By Kenneth Starr and Patricia M. Wald)

More than 40 years ago, the Supreme Court declared that ''no right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live.'' And yet, for more than 200 years the citizens of the District have been denied this right because they have no voting representation in Congress. To its credit, Congress is taking steps to begin correcting this longstanding injustice.

Specifically, the House Government Reform Committee has approved, and the House Judiciary Committee is considering, a bill that would give D.C. residents the right to full voting representation in the House. While conferring this right is surely the right thing to do, a legitimate question has been raised concerning Congress's authority to confer the right by simple legislation, rather than through constitutional amendment. We have carefully considered this question and believe for three reasons the bill is within Congress's authority: It is consistent with fundamental constitutional principles; it is consistent with the language of Congress's constitutional power; and it is consistent with the governing legal precedents.

First, interpretation of Congress's Article I legislative authority should always be guided by the fundamental principles upon which the nation and the Constitution were founded. Those principles include a commitment to a republican form of government and to the proposition that the laws enacted by the legislature should be based on the consent of the governed. There is nothing in our Constitution's history or its fundamental principles suggesting that the Framers intended to deny the precious right to vote to those who live in the capital of the great democracy they founded.

Second, Congress's specific power over the District of Columbia is one of the broadest of all its powers. In the words of the Constitution, ''Congress shall have power . . . to exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever'' over the District. In a 1984 case decided by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, on which we both sat, Judge Abner Mikva noted that through this constitutional provision, the Framers gave Congress ''a unique and sovereign power'' over the District. In that same case, Judge (now Justice) Antonin Scalia wrote that the broad language of the power gave Congress ''extraordinary and plenary'' power over our nation's capital. And in another case, that same court held that this broad power gave Congress authority to ''provide for the general welfare of citizens within the District of Columbia by any and every act of legislation which it may deem conducive to that end.'' It is hard to imagine a broader, more comprehensive congressional power than this; and it is also hard to imagine that the power could not be used to advance a fundamental principle of our Constitution—that the right to vote should be extended to all citizens.

Finally, and equally important, the most analogous legal precedent addressing Congress's authority over the District confirms that Congress can act now to give the vote to D.C. residents. That precedent concerned the fact that Article III of the Constitution confers on federal courts jurisdiction to hear suits brought by citizens of different states against each other. But the Constitution did not give any such express jurisdiction over suits brought by or against citizens of the District of Columbia. As a result, Congress, relying on its broad Article I power over the District of Columbia, remedied that unfairness through legislation that extended the right to District residents. In a 1949 case called *National Mutual Insurance Co. v. Tidewater*, the Supreme Court upheld that extension and also said that Congress was entitled to great deference in its determination that it had power to address this inequity. The logic of this case applies here, and supports Congress's determination to give the right to vote for a representative to citizens of the District of Columbia, even though the Constitution itself gives that right only to citizens of states.

It is not a surprise that our Constitution, ratified in 1789, contemplated that the right to vote would be enjoyed only by ''the people of the several states.'' After all, in 1789, all U.S. citizens lived in a state. It was not until 1801, when the process Congress authorized by statute in 1791 to create the District out of lands ceded by Virginia and Maryland was completed, that District residents lost their federal voting rights. There is no reason to believe the Framers intended for this to happen. And in any case they gave Congress power to address the problem. Congress has initiated a process to do so, and we urge it to quickly complete the task. As George Washington said in his first inaugural address, the American people are entrusted with ''the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty and the destiny of the republican model of government.'' It is time to extend that model to the citizens of the nation's capital.

Ms. NORTON. There might be some opposition based on the notion that

Utah gets one more electoral vote if they get a vote. Now, mind you, Utah is going to get that at some point anyway, probably in the near future. But there is some concern that Utah might get that vote now. And we have the kind of situation that people most fear ever since the 2000 election, that there would be some kind of tie or some kind of dispute; we would have no longer a tied number of electors from Democratic and Republican States; and then you would have Utah with one more vote.

Well, this is an issue that we asked a nonpartisan group about that doesn't think, that has a different view of how the present system operates in any case. The nonpartisan group is called Fair Vote, the Center For Voting and Democracy. It is not affiliated with the District of Columbia or with any party.

Apparently, it believes that the national popular vote plan for President is how we should proceed. So they certainly are not making a case for us in any particular way.

But it is important to note what they say about our bill and whether our bill could, in fact, result in a crisis based on the fact that Utah got one new electoral vote. And I am quoting: ''Our estimation of the odds of the District of Columbia Fair and Equal Voting Rights Act directly contributing to a Republican victory in the 2008 Presidential race is,'' they say the odds are, ''approximately 400–1,'' or, in other words, one chance in 1,600 presidential elections.

I want the Member to stand up who would, on this scintilla of a chance, prefer to see us go without the only chance we have to get a vote now or in the foreseeable future.

I want to thank the House for affording me this time, and the time of the Members who have been gracious enough to come and speak on this issue this evening. It is time that, for us, has been invaluable, simply to let the Members of the House know how deeply we feel that the time is on overtime to grant the people of the District of Columbia their House vote now, in this Congress, the 110th Congress.

Mr. JONES of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act of 2007, bipartisan compromise legislation to finally allow the District of Columbia voting representation in the U.S. House of Representatives. This balanced legislation, introduced by my honorable colleague from the District of Columbia, would give her constituents a vote in this chamber while adding a House seat for the state of Utah.

Among the capitals of democratic nations around the world, the U.S. is the only country where its capital district citizens cannot vote in the national legislature. Washington, DC, while serving as the Nation's capital, also has many of the functions of a county or state. DC operates its own police force, school system, legal code, occupational licensure and vehicle inspections.

Today, the District of Columbia is home to 120 neighborhoods and a population of 572,000. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the population of Washington, DC is greater than that of the state of Wyoming (494,000) and is comparable to the states of Vermont (609,000), Alaska (627,000), and North Dakota (642,000).

Proximity no longer means influence in the District of Columbia. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports its unemployment rate is 6 percent, above the national average of 4.5 percent. DC's poverty rate is 17.5 percent, five points above the national average.

According to DC Vote, DC citizens pay higher per capita federal income taxes than any other state. DC citizens are subject to all our laws, serve on juries, fight our wars and pay taxes, yet have no voting representation in the U.S. Congress.

Not only does DC have no say in the governance of our Nation, they have diminished voices in the governance of their own city. The very Congress which holds the power of the purse regarding DC's budget, also has the power to repeal any DC law enacted by its city council.

It's time for fairness for the citizens of Washington, DC. As the representative of another great city, I am proud to support voting rights for the great city of Washington, DC, am proud to support the Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act of 2007 and call for its swift passage.

□ 2000

THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Iowa (Mr. KING) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, it is always a profound honor to come to the floor of the people's House and vent what is on my mind. I would point out that your organization and timing is impeccable. I thank the gentlelady from the District for ending exactly on the hour, so it is easy to keep track of the time as we unfold the next 60 minutes.

I also appreciate her remarks with regard to Abraham Lincoln. He is a hero for America, for all people of all kinds, of all colors, of all places, and a man that demonstrated profound and tremendous leadership. As I listened to the gentlelady speak about Abraham Lincoln's leadership, I reflect upon a great example of leadership that I would like to share here this evening to start out this discussion.

I will say that I have been assured that this is a matter of historical fact by a Washington D.C. historian, and that is as far as I verified it, but I liked the story so much, that I would just as soon not know if it shouldn't happen to be true. But I believe it to be true, and at least its consistent with the leadership in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln.

That is, in 1863, as Abraham Lincoln was considering whether to sign the Emancipation Proclamation, it was not an issue that was totally in favor with the Republican Party at the time. But as he deliberated on this issue, he called his Cabinet in, and said, I want to hear from each of you on this Emancipation Proclamation that is here, and that I am considering signing.

So he started his Cabinet on his left, and all around the table, and they were all men at that time, as we know, and the ones that had the right to vote back then. The first one, the Cabinet member said, Mr. President, my advice to you is, no, don't sign the Emancipation Proclamation, because after all, the blacks that are north of the Mason-Dixon line are free today, and it doesn't help them.

So the next Cabinet member chimed in, and he said, Those south of the Mason-Dixon line, you can't free them because they are in the Confederacy, so your jurisdiction doesn't reach there today. It is a gesture and a gesture only.

The third Cabinet Member said, But it is, it is an empty gesture, because on the north side of the line and on the south side of line there isn't anybody that you can free with the Emancipation Proclamation. It is simply a symbolic act. As this went around the table, around the Cabinet room table, and each Cabinet member said to President Lincoln, Mr. President, my advice to you is, no, don't sign it, because among other things, you will alienate some of the people in the north that are pro-slavery that are still fighting under the blue uniform, or the Union.

There was reason after reason why President Lincoln shouldn't sign the Emancipation Proclamation and not a single reason given by any member of the Cabinet as to why he should sign the Emancipation Proclamation. So it was nay, nay, nay, nay, Mr. President, all the way around that table, his best advisors.

President Lincoln took ahold of his lapels, and he said, Well, gentleman, the aye has it. That story is a story of leadership, and it is a story that I hope goes down in history for a long time. So I appreciate the remarks of the gentlelady from the District and the spirit with which you deliver them. I appreciate you being here tonight.

I would like to take up the issue that we had a discussion on yesterday, and that would be the discussion of the minimum wage.

Now, on January 11, which was yesterday, the House passed H.R. 2, the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007, Mr. Speaker. This bill would raise the Federal minimum wage from $5.15 an hour to $7.25 an hour, over about two or three increments in a period of 2 years and would arrive at $7.25 an hour. This bill specifically applies the minimum wage rate and hike to the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

I bring this to the floor, because as I spoke here earlier on the embryonic stem cell research mandate that was passed out of this Congress this afternoon, there was a question and an inquiry, I was asked to yield by the gentleman from Florida, who asked if I knew if there were any geographical carveouts or any special political subdivision carveouts or any, perhaps, university or laboratory carveouts that