

this is a wise plan, why do Washington politicians fight tooth and nail against it? The answer is plain and simple: power. They will try to scare the American people any way they can to avoid losing power over this massive, bloated bureaucracy. They will say today that they must have this power or else they can't keep taking care of people. They will try to scare seniors to continue their unrestrained power to borrow. They say they will manage their borrowing power wisely; they will restrain themselves.

Well, talk is cheap, and I've heard this same line for decades. What matters are results. How have Washington politicians been managing their borrowing power? One number will tell you: \$14.3 trillion—the amount of our debt today.

A balanced budget amendment is essential because the government has shown time and time again that until we restrain its spending with fiscal handcuffs, the problem will continue. President Obama has only made our spending problem worse by adding \$3.7 trillion to the national debt in just 2 years. The President has spent more money in less time than any other leader in American history.

Last week President Obama told Republicans, "Don't call my bluff." Well, I for one think this game has gone on long enough. The power needs to be restrained. As Lord Acton famously said, "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Today we fight back against this corruption of absolute power. Today we stand with the American people. Today we vote to return the power to the people.

We invite President Obama to get on board, oppose this runaway spending, and pass a balanced budget. Five years ago he agreed. On March 16, 2006, then-Senator Barack Obama stood in the well of the Senate and said, "The fact that we are here today to debate raising America's debt limit is a sign of leadership failure." He spoke of the "commonsense budgeting principle of balancing expenses and revenues." But then 5 years down the road, unfortunately, President Obama is singing a different tune. He has demanded more borrowing authority with no strings attached. When his own party voted against that proposal a few weeks ago, he started telling us that we must raise the debt ceiling and called our commonsense budgeting reforms "gimmicks" and "radical."

Well, here's what I'm hearing from people in Missouri, my district. That's here common sense is:

Here's Reggie from Adrian, Missouri: "Raising the debt ceiling is like handing five more credit cards to someone who has already maxed out 50 other credit cards and then sitting back and saying you fixed the problem. How dumb would that be?"

Here's from Michael in Sedalia: "Don't give in. As a veteran receiving a pension, I continue to stand behind you and the House leadership in ex-

pecting meaningful spending cuts before raising the debt ceiling without raising taxes. Taxpayers don't like what's going on, and we aren't going to sit by and watch anymore."

Here's from Margaret from Lake Ozark: "A minimum of \$4 billion over 10 years is a drop in the bucket. We also need a constitutional amendment since our leaders can't seem to stop spending and do the right thing. Do the right thing now."

Here's from Judy from Warsaw, Missouri: "The very idea of increasing the debt limit to get us out of trouble is absurd. You cannot borrow your way out of trouble. Deal with it. Cut the pork."

Mark from Camdenton, Missouri: "We have always had to live within our means, and it is time for the government to do the same. We can't have everything we want. The government needs to be reduced. I do not think my children and grandchildren should pay for our lack of responsibility."

Larry from Conway, Missouri: "This is a turning point in history."

I agree. Let's do the right thing. Today let's pass Cut, Cap, and Balance.

#### VOTER SUPPRESSION AND VOTER ID

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to oppose the epidemic across America of voter suppression and requiring voter ID.

Do you realize that in almost every election in my own State of Texas there has been discrimination, intimidation to voters? Where we used to be able to use a birth certificate, a utility bill, government check, paycheck, and other documents, now we cannot because someone suggests that someone will steal someone's birth certificate to impersonate a voter. I don't think that's right.

What we need now is to eliminate the poll tax of the 21st century. Barbara Jordan recognized that voting is a right, not a privilege, and she stood in the gap to ensure that Texas was covered by the Voting Rights Act. Barbara Jordan would not be here today if we had the voter intimidation that we're seeing growing across America.

Eliminate voter intimidation by elimination of the oppressive voter ID requirement by returning to the standard and acceptable requirements such as birth certificates, current utility bill, government check which provide the protection to protect the vote so that seniors and others will not be stopped from voting.

#### INTRODUCTION

Good morning Members of Congress, Congressional Black Caucus Members. Today, we address an issue that disturbs the very foundation of our Nation; the right of each and every citizen to participate in electing their representatives in government. Enshrined in our Constitution by our Nation's founders, this fun-

damental right is the linchpin of our democracy.

Unfortunately, the right to vote was not recognized for all people in this country at its inception. Indeed, for the several decades after the signing of the Constitution, the right to vote belonged to white men who owned property alone.

Through a long-fought effort by dedicated activists, courageous legislators and judges, and with the gradual evolution of public sentiment, the voting franchise was extended by law to all white men, non-white men, women, native Americans, and then finally, to all citizens over the age of 18.

However, even though the right to vote was legally recognized for all citizens of age, there have always been sinister efforts to suppress the vote of certain citizens who were guaranteed the right to vote by the Constitution.

Through poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, intimidation and outright violence, voter suppression remained an agenda by those who do not believe in the principle of one person, one vote, and who seek to keep certain groups from participating in our democracy.

#### VOTER ID

Voter photo identification legislation a recent phenomenon and the latest tactic of the voter suppression agenda. Only a decade ago, in any of our 50 states, a voter could set out on election Tuesday and be permitted to vote in his or her respective state without being required to present a photo ID to election officials.

Alarming, since that time, 15 states have adopted photo ID requirements for voting. In fact, at least 34 states have introduced legislation requiring voters to produce photo IDs at the voting booth in this year alone. Seven states, including my home state of Texas, have adopted the strictest form of voter photo ID legislation with the fewest exceptions.

This raises the question: what caused these states to, after more than two centuries of holding elections without photo ID requirements, impose such a burden on voters? Proponents of these laws argue that voter identification fraud is an epidemic in America, while there has been little documented evidence. Voter impersonation fraud occurs when one person votes using the identity of another.

In order to obtain a state-issued photo ID valid under these statutes, states often charge fees. Moreover the documents used for proof of identity in order to obtain photo IDs, such as birth certificates and social security cards, also cost money. When added together, along with transportation costs, the amount of money required to obtain an acceptable form of identification can be substantial for a citizen who lacks the financial means to do so.

Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections, a Supreme Court case decided in 1966, outlawed the Jim Crow requirement that a citizen pay a poll tax in order to be allowed to vote in an election. (Majority Opinion by Justice Douglas)

In its decision, the Court said—quote—"We conclude that a State violates the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment whenever it makes the affluence of the voter or payment of any fee an electoral standard."

However, with voter photo ID requirements, those who would suppress the rights of citizens to vote would have vote a way to implement a backdoor poll tax. Voters without valid, non-expired state or federal government

issued identification documents will be burdened with the expenses of obtaining one of those prescribed forms of ID.

Because of the state's so-called "rational basis" for requiring photo identification in order to vote, Indiana's state photo ID law was upheld by the Supreme Court in Crawford in 2008.

The effects of such a ruling are unduly discriminatory and target specific groups of voters: low income voters, racial and ethnic minorities, senior citizens, disabled voters, and college students. I will leave you to guess which party has been behind the concerted and overzealous efforts by state legislatures and governors to push these discriminatory bills.

Eleven percent of the population, or roughly 21 million people, do not have a government-issued photo identification document.

Nationwide, depending on the state, African-Americans are 2 or 3 times as likely as their white counterparts to lack government-issued photo identification. Nearly a fifth of our seniors do not have government-issued photo IDs.

We must remember that voting is a right under our Constitution, not a privilege. We must prevent this effort to turn back the hands of time in order to prevent eligible voters from exercising their Constitutional rights.

#### TEXAS

Now, I am sad to report that my home state of Texas has been the latest victim of the systematic effort to suppress votes all around America. In late May, Governor Rick Perry signed into law the Texas iteration of voter photo identification legislation, which was based upon the extremely restrictive Indiana photo ID law.

The history and current state of discriminatory voter suppression in Texas is so pervasive that any substantive change to its election law must be submitted by preclearance to the Department of Justice under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. This makes Texas one of the 9 states in our country that must submit election law alterations, such as photo ID requirements, to the Department of Justice before the changes are permitted to take effect. The law is set to take effect in January next year.

Currently, Texas election law allows voters to use their birth certificate, a current utility bill, a government check, a paycheck, official mail addressed to them, and other documents in lieu of a driver's license issued by the state or a U.S. passport. These documents have long been sufficient in the state of Texas to prove one's identity for the purposes of voting.

However, once the new law takes effect, those alternative forms of identification will be unavailable to citizens of Texas. In fact, Texan voters will be unable to use their birth certificate, which is issued by the State of Texas, in order to vote.

Now, this fact is particularly revealing, especially in light of the purported reason for passing voter photo identification legislation, which is to combat a "supposed" widespread problem of voter impersonation fraud.

If we are to accept their argument that the voter photo ID laws are for the purpose of preventing voter impersonation fraud, then why not continue to allow people to use birth certificates? By banning citizens from using their state-issued birth certificates, we are required to believe the ridiculous and unfounded notion

of people stealing other people's birth certificates in order to show up at an election to vote! Where is the sense in that? I don't know about you, but I have never heard a single case in which a person stole someone else's birth certificate and then showed up at the polls and voted as that person.

No, the fact that birth certificates were removed from Texas election law as a permissible form of identification reveals that voter impersonation fraud is merely a pretextual argument; a guise under which the real purpose of suppressing the votes of certain people can be achieved. That is something for which we cannot stand.

However, while a birth certificate is no longer good enough to prove your identity for the purpose of voting in the State of Texas, "coincidentally", the new law does allow voters to use concealed handgun licenses in order to be permitted to cast their ballots.

There is no doubt that the Texas Voter ID law was specifically crafted with the intent to impose new obligations on the rights of certain Texans to vote, while attempting to preserve the rights of other citizens they believe to be predisposed to voting a certain way.

This is wrong in the State of Texas, and it is wrong in America.

#### CONCLUSION

In the Harper Supreme Court case, Justice Douglas closed his majority opinion with these words: "Wealth or fee paying has, in our view, no relation to voting qualifications; the right to vote is too precious, too fundamental to be so burdened or conditioned."

Mr. Speaker, may I ask how much time I have remaining, please.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman has 4 minutes remaining.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I would like to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. RYAN).

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Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentlelady, and I would also like to thank Representative FUDGE for her leadership.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlelady may not yield blocks of time.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. I thank the gentlelady. I would also like to thank Representative FUDGE and the Congressional Black Caucus.

This issue of voter identification and voter suppression goes to the heart of our Constitution in this country. Eleven percent of adults would not have a qualified identification to be able to go and vote; 25 percent of African Americans would not have a qualified ID to be able to vote.

And I have one question: Where's the Tea Party on this issue? Where's the Tea Party with all the placards about freedom and liberty and we're losing our country? We have an issue that is fundamental to what it means to be an American, the right to vote. The question I have is: Where's the Tea Party on the voter suppression issue?

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. I thank the gentleman. And I yield now to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. CARSON).

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. I thank Congresswoman JACKSON LEE.

Mr. Speaker, voting is a fundamental right of every American. Yet here we are, decades after the civil rights movement, watching as States across this great Nation pass laws that threaten the ability of citizens to participate in our government. This trend is troubling and one that we must closely monitor. My State, the great Hoosier State of Indiana, was the first to impose a strict law requiring voters to present government-issued identification despite having no evidence of actual voter fraud.

As other States follow suit, we risk broadening the threat to the rights of the poor, the elderly, the young, and minority voters. I do not believe the right to vote should hinge on one's ability to obtain specific identification. As a Nation, we should not allow laws that block the rights of vulnerable groups or discriminate. To do so would be to forfeit the fundamental quality of this right and the purpose behind it.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. JOHNSON).

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, nothing is more fundamental to our democracy than the right to vote. By stoking the fires of fear and anger, aided and abetted by the U.S. Supreme Court with its Citizens United decision opening the door for unlimited corporate spending on elections, the Republicans seized a death grip on this Congress. Now they want to keep control of Congress so they have embarked on an old strategy, voter suppression.

One of their tactics in making it more difficult for citizens to vote is imposing an unnecessary requirement that voters show a State-issued ID to vote. This is a blatant attempt to keep certain populations from voting, thus ensuring that Republicans maintain control of Congress.

Voter suppression is not right. It is not fair, and it is simply un-American.

And that's real, ya'll.

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me thank Congresswoman FUDGE and let me make a commitment to the American people that you can be assured that these Members of Congress, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Tri-Caucus, will stand in the gap to prevent elections from being stolen and your fundamental birthright of voting from being stolen. That is justice, and we will be fighting for justice.

#### CONEY ISLAND CELEBRATES 125TH YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. SCHMIDT) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honor something really wonderful in my district, the 125th birthday of America's sixth-oldest amusement park in Cincinnati, Ohio.

What began as a 20-acre apple orchard on the banks of the Ohio River in