

send these ballots to all registered voters for the upcoming November election, but officers at the highest levels of our state government have indicated they will continue in their attempts to limit the participation of any legal voter in our community.

Unfortunately as it stands already, just more than half of eligible voters in the United States show up to make themselves heard during Presidential election years. That percentage dips into the thirties in so called “off years.” The last thing we need in America is fewer people voting. With 14 million Americans looking for work, and millions more struggling as a result of a growing wage gap, the problems facing this country are profound and complex, and addressing them will require a broad range of voices.

All of us bear the responsibility for encouraging voter turnout—especially in traditionally disenfranchised areas. Voting is the most effective way to drown out the influence of corporate campaign donations and the unaccountable and unwieldy super political action committees, which can raise unlimited sums of money to pour into our elections. Voting is the most effective way to be heard on the issues impacting our nation. For too many Americans, the right to vote did not come easy and many of us recognize the perilous consequences of not guarding this right aggressively.

In 1964, Chief Justice Earl Warren expressed one of the basic truths of American history, that “the right of suffrage is a fundamental matter in a free and democratic society.” Efforts to suppress the democratic right to vote in pursuit of electoral gain are both misguided and unconstitutional, and I will continue to fight at the federal level to ensure every American, regardless of race, income, or heritage will have the opportunity to participate in the “fundamental matter in a free and democratic society.”

THE SENSIBLE ESTATE TAX OF
2011

HON. JIM McDERMOTT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Sensible Estate Tax Act of

2011. This legislation offers a thoughtful comprehensive approach to reforming our estate tax system that is supported by voters across all income levels. As America comes out of one of the worst recessions in its history, this Congress must carefully consider all sources of revenue that are not only effective, but fair and equitable. This estate tax embodies those values.

The past decade of failed tax policies have killed jobs and resulted in significant income and wealth disparity in this country. The promise and strength of America lies in a system that benefits everyone. These tax policies have steered us away from this promise and crippled the American economy. The middle class continues to shrink as more and more wealth flows to the top—and this country’s current tax system makes this unfairness worse. The current estate tax policy is the poster child for the unfairness we all see.

That is why I am introducing this legislation. This bill will bring the estate tax back to the rates and exemptions from before the Bush tax cuts—a time when this country experienced continued prosperity and budget surpluses.

Specifically, the Sensible Estate Tax Act of 2011 will return the top marginal rate to 55 percent and lower the exemption for individuals to \$1 million. It will also reunify the gift and estate taxes, and provide for permanent portability of any unused exemption. Accountants and taxpayers have been asking Congress for a permanent and fair estate tax so they may properly plan their affairs. This bill does just that. Additional estate tax loopholes are also addressed, including a 10-year minimum on grantor retained annuity trusts, limitations on the generation skipping transfer trust exemption, and rules for consistent basis reporting.

Today’s law allows for up to \$10 million in wealth to be transferred tax-free at death. And some of my colleagues across the aisle say even that is not enough. In a country that cherished the ideal that where you are born should not determine where you end up, it is inherently unfair that the average middle class family pays income tax while the children of rich parents can inherit \$10 million tax-free.

Succeeding financially in life is a wonderful American right and the families of wealthy people should benefit from that good fortune. But no one gets wealthy on their own—financial success for any American is achieved by using the roads, schools, and public services

that all Americans pay for. It is only fair that they reinvest in the country that provided them with so much opportunity.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I would like the record to show that, due to an error, I voted “aye” on H.R. 822, the “National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act,” (rollcall vote No. 852) when I intended to vote “no.” I would also like the record to show that I would have voted “aye” on rollcall No. 849.

Coming from Illinois, a state that does not issue permits to carry concealed weapons, I understand the importance of allowing each state and locality to determine what gun policy is most appropriate for them. From 1999–2006, 9,054 residents of Illinois were killed by gun violence. These numbers are jarring and, when faced with escalating gun violence in the city of Chicago, I simply cannot support efforts to erode and circumvent tough state gun laws.

The “National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act” would preempt state laws by forcing states to accept permits to carry concealed weapons from other states regardless of any differences in safety standards or requirements to obtain the permit. In other words, Indiana, which prohibits individuals with certain dangerous criminal misdemeanor convictions from carrying concealed weapons, would be forced to allow permit holders from states without that requirement to carry concealed weapons within the state. In addition, it would be virtually impossible for a law enforcement officer to determine if an out-of-state permit was validly issued, creating more danger and uncertainty for our officers.

I fear that, if this bill were enacted, it would put law enforcement officers and our communities at great risk while simultaneously eroding the authority of the states to dictate their own rules in the gun permitting process. I am deeply committed to ensuring that our communities are safe from the ravages of gun violence and I will ardently oppose any legislation to further erode strong state and local gun laws.