He's married, three kids—you now know that one of them died recently—and he has 10 grandkids.

He served in the war, the second war, not the Korean War, but the second one, the Vietnamese War, came back home. Americans didn't treat our war veterans from Vietnam very well. They were treated real bad, in fact. Some of our American troops, when they came back home from serving in Vietnam, they wouldn't wear the uniform because Americans would ridicule them for what the country asked them to do.

America has learned since Vietnam. We treat our warriors a lot better now. We treat them like they ought to be treated when they come back home from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world.

Our warriors from Vietnam didn't get the appropriate welcome back, as already mentioned. Tonight, we welcome back one of them. We welcome back Colonel SAM JOHNSON, United States Air Force, reporting for duty.

After spending 7 years in a prisoner-of-war-camp, 4 years in solitary confinement, as I pointed out, 9 feet by 3 feet for 4 years, 24 hours a day, leg irons at night, taken out in the daytime and beat. Never broke. Diehard. Never gave in. He was never broken.

Remarkable individuals, these Americans who serve and wear the uniform. It's a rare breed, but it's the American breed, and that's what makes us free, those people, those remarkable people who wear the uniform and serve, and serve overseas, and serve in prisoner-of-war camps, if necessary.

So we thank SAM JOHNSON. We thank all who have served and are serving today for their service to our great country. But especially tonight, we welcome home SAM JOHNSON of the United States Air Force. And that's just the way it is.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 40th anniversary of "Operation Homecoming," which made possible the release of hundreds of American heroes held captive in North Vietnam.

One of those courageous POWs is my friend and our distinguished colleague, Congressman SAM JOHNSON of Texas, who didn't see his family for seven years as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese. Forced to endure severe torture, solitary confinement, malnutrition, and attempts by their captors to force confessions for propaganda, SAM JOHNSON and countless other American POWs conducted themselves with uncommon courage and heroic strength of character.

In SAM's book, "Captive Warriors," he writes about a phrase found scribbled onto the walls of his cell: "Freedom has a taste to those who fight and almost die that the protected will never know." Because of men like SAM, I know that my nine-year-old son and my ten-year-old daughter sleep in a freer and a safer America tonight.

President Calvin Collidge once said, "The nation which forgets its defenders will itself be forgotten." I, for one, am committed to ensuring this nation never forgets the sacrifice Congressman SAM JOHNSON and the countless American POWs who have endured such extreme hardship—and in many cases paid with their lives—to protect the freedom we cherish.

Mr. Speaker, as a Texan and as an American, I am proud to salute patriot SAM JOHNSON.

Mr. MARCHANT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in celebration of Congressman SAM JOHNSON'S 40th anniversary of freedom. On February 12, 1973, Congressman JOHNSON and 590 other American POWs were released from captivity in Vietnam. With 29 years in the United States Air Force, nearly seven of those spent imprisoned, and 22 years of service in Congress, Congressman JOHNSON has been selflessly dedicated to the betterment our nation for more than 50 years. As we celebrate his 40 years of freedom today, we must also recognize that his half century of dedicated service has helped to preserve the freedom and prosperity of all Americans. It is a great privilege to represent Texas alongside such an inspiring patriot. I am proud to call SAM JOHNSON a true friend and a personal hero.

CBC HOUR: VOTING RIGHTS ACT, SECTION 5

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Nevada (Mr. HORSFORD) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Nevada?

There was no objection.

Mr. HORSFORD. The Congressional Black Caucus is proud to anchor this hour, and I'm pleased to be here with our chair, the Honorable MARCIA FUDGE, from the 11th Congressional District of Ohio, and to yield her such time as she may consume.

Ms. FUDGE. Thank you so very much. And thank you, as well as Mr. JEFFRIES, for anchoring these CBC hours. It is wonderful to have new Members come to the House floor and do the work that we've been doing for so long. I am so proud of them and appreciative of the work they do, so thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to send a clear message to those who would seek to undermine our constitutional right to vote: You will not win. The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. This is not the first time section 5 of the Voting Rights Act has been challenged, and there is a very good chance that it will not be the last.

□ 2020

The Congressional Black Caucus and many others, even a number of Members from the other side of the aisle, have continually reauthorized and worked to protect section 5. In a matter of days, the Supreme Court will review the constitutionality of section 5. If the Supreme Court does not ultimately decide to protect the uninhibited right to vote for all voters, no matter their race, the Court will not and must not have the last word on this matter.

The 15th Amendment provides that the right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of race, color, or previous servitude. Despite the passage of the 15th Amendment and ratification by the States, Congress has been forced to act in order to protect African American voters from violence and intimidation.

Prior to the Voting Rights Act, the courts' attempts to protect voters proved inadequate. In 1965, at the height of the civil rights movement, when vicious dogs and poll taxes were used to block the ballot, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act. This law was necessary then, and the last two Federal elections have shown, without a shadow of a doubt, that section 5 remains essential today.

The right to vote is among the most important rights we enjoy as Americans. Because of its importance, because of the power behind the vote, it is the one right most often compromised; and for the same reasons, it is a right that we must do everything in our power to protect.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said:

> So long as I do not firmly and irrevocably possess the right to vote, I do not possess myself.

As the Supreme Court prepares to hear arguments in Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder, we must remember the words of Dr. King and the importance of section 5.

Since 1982, approximately 2,400 discriminatory voting changes have been successfully blocked by the section 5 preclearance process. After the 2010 midterm elections, 8 of 11 States that were a part of the former confederacy passed new voting restrictions. These laws require government-issued photo ID to cast a ballot, proof of citizenship to register to vote, many cut back on early voting, and several disenfranchise ex-offenders. These laws are specifically designed to make it more difficult for minorities and other traditionally marginalized eligible voters to participate in the political process.

The recent assault on voters was not restricted to the States with a history of voting discrimination. In my home State of Ohio, and in many other States and jurisdictions not covered by section 5, there were attempts to pass restrictive laws. Leading up to the 2012 election, 22 laws and 2 executive actions restricting voting rights were passed in 17 States, and 176 restrictive bills were filed in 41 States.

The Federal Government should be doubling down on the Voting Rights Act by expanding and strengthening Federal protections. The long lines in Florida and the voting scams in Arizona were no coincidence. Section 5 is as necessary today is it was on the date of its inception in 1965 and should include more States and jurisdictions.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Chairwoman FUDGE. We look forward to your leadership on this issue and other issues under your steady hand of the Congressional Black Caucus in the 113th Congress.

I now yield to the distinguished Member from North Carolina, Representative BUTTERFIELD.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and particularly thank the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus for her leadership in convening this special hour tonight.

As many of our colleagues know, before being elected to Congress 8 years ago, I was a trial judge and an appellate judge in my home State of North Carolina. But what many of you may not know is that, for some 6 years before becoming a judge, I spent considerable time litigating cases under the Voting Rights Act and presenting comments to the Department of Justice in section 5 cases.

Mr. Speaker, so many people do not understand section 5. This preclearance provision does not apply in every jurisdiction in America. It only applies to selected counties where there was evidence of discriminatory voting practices when the Voting Rights Act was first enacted in 1965. These jurisdictions are required to submit to the Department of Justice any changes in election law or procedure for determination of whether the change could have a negative impact on the voting strength of minority groups. If the jurisdiction fails in their proof, the change is not allowed. And I will say for the RECORD today that, in the early days of section 5, many jurisdictions ignored the requirement.

It has been proven, Mr. Speaker, time and time again in courtrooms across America that racially polarized voting has existed at the ballot box since the 15th Amendment was ratified—and it exists today. My congressional district in North Carolina, though it is improving, continues to have voting based on the race of the candidate. Many white voters choose not to vote for a candidate who is clearly the preferred candidate of the African American community. When this happens, the black community is handicapped. We call it vote dilution. And so section 5's preclearance provision simply is a backstop against jurisdictions devising election schemes that will make it more difficult for the African American community to elect a candidate of its choice, taking into consideration the existence of racially polarized voting.

Mr. Speaker, I can cite dozens of instances in North Carolina where discriminatory changes were proposed to election systems and the Department of Justice stepped forward and denied the change. Had it not been for section 5, black electoral success in my congressional district would be considerably less. Many of the cities and counties in my district now have single-member election districts that were ordered by the courts. The courts have required that some of these districts had to be majority African American, which now enable the African American community to elect candidates of their choice. Elimination of section 5 could enable mischievous jurisdictions to eliminate this in favor of at-large elections, where concentrations of black voters would be submerged into at-large systems.

Mr. Speaker, the time has not come when we should eliminate the protection of section 5. The evidence continues to suggest racially polarized voting that discriminates against the African American community. If this protection is struck down, some governing boards at the State and the local level will seize the opportunity to promulgate election rules that disadvantage minority voters, and the only remedy then will be to file an expensive Federal lawsuit and prove intentional discrimination in the district court. And so, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Supreme Court to carefully look at the legislative history that we have provided and decide to maintain the protection of section 5.

Again, I thank the gentleman from Nevada for his friendship and his leadership and for working to make this hour happen tonight.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Mr. BUTTERFIELD. We, again, appreciate your leadership as the vice chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and look forward to working under your leadership, as well as Chairwoman FUDGE.

At this time I now yield to my colleague and friend, the distinguished Member from New Jersey, Representative PAYNE.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friends and colleagues, Congressman HORSFORD of Nevada and Congressman JEFFRIES of New York, for anchoring tonight's CBC Special Order on the Voting Rights Act.

Fair and equal access to the ballot box is an important topic and one of these that has not been fully resolved. One hundred-fifty years ago, President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but it took another 100 years to pass the Civil Rights Act, and eventually the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Since then, our country has made progress in achieving justice and equality, but it is no secret this process has been painfully slow and noticeably deficient.

The Supreme Court will hear the case this week of Shelby v. Holder, which, if ruled in the favor of Shelby County, Alabama, would take us back 50 years and undo protections granted in the Voting Rights Act.

□ 2030

Some argue that we no longer need some of these protections provided in the Voting Rights Act. Some argue that we have achieved equality and justice for all. Some argue that section 5 is outdated because racism has been eviscerated. It is true we've come a long way and times have changed, but the unfortunate fact is that we have not changed enough.

Let's look at the facts. This past November, people across this Nation had to wait in line to vote for hours in places such as Miami, Tampa, Richmond, Charlotte, and Raleigh. Sometimes people waited 6, 7, or 8 hours to exercise their fundamental right to vote.

In the President's State of the Union Address, President Obama had a guest, a woman by the name of Desiline Victor, who waited 6 hours in Florida to vote. She was 102 years old. This is simply unacceptable. And unfortunately, long voting lines have become all too commonplace, particularly in urban and minority-rich areas.

So the big question I get asked from my constituents is: Why wouldn't we want everyone who is eligible to have the opportunity to vote? The answer is simple: When more Americans vote, they tend to vote for Democrats.

Regardless of someone's political persuasions, every eligible American should have the fair opportunity to cast their ballot—whether they be white, black, Asian, Latino, man, woman, gay, straight, Protestant, Catholic, atheist, or agnostic—because of the simple fact that we are all Americans and voting is a fundamental right in this country. This is about preserving democracy, and eliminating section 5 would undermine that right upon which this country was founded.

This past year, 37 State legislatures shamelessly passed laws that oftentimes targeted minorities and attempted to limit their access to the ballot. Strict photo ID laws, limitations on early voting, and stringent voter registration laws all had one purpose: It wasn't about reducing fraud; it was about preventing certain populations from voting.

It is astonishing—and it could not be more evident—that racism and the effort to suppress the right to vote is alive and well in this Nation. Luckily, section 5 rightly ensured that many of these laws never passed preclearance. So it cannot be plainer that now is the time to strengthen, not weaken, section 5, as it still serves as a very real and critical purpose in preserving our democracy and the right to vote for millions.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative PAYNE, Jr. We appreciate your remarks.

I now yield to the distinguished Member from Maryland, Representative CUMMINGS, who is the ranking member on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, the committee that has jurisdiction on voting reform issues.

Mr. CUMMINGS. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I also take this moment to thank the Congressional Black Caucus for making this happen. And I thank Representatives HORSFORD and JEFFRIES

for leading this. It is quite encouraging—and I know that our chairman, MARCIA FUDGE, agrees with me—when we see our new Members come to the forefront and lead. That's why our constituents sent us here. I just want you to know that we are very, very, very proud of you, as we are of our other new Member, Mr. PAYNE, who just spoke. We are certainly glad that you are here and leading.

We all know our Nation's disgraceful history in this area of voting rights. I've often said that if we did not have the Voting Rights Act, these past few years have taught us that we would have to invent it.

For decades and decades, racist and exclusionary voting practices kept minorities from accessing the ballot box. I'm reminded of my great-great-grandfather, Mr. Scipio Rhame. In the South Carolina of 1868, he overcame tremendous hardships and life-threatening dangers just to register to vote, only a few years after he had come out of slavery. Sadly, this country has witnessed very slow progress toward equality in voting. The reality is that in the year 2013, we are still fighting for the right to vote for all Americans.

In election after election, discriminatory voting laws and exclusionary practices still surface. This past election cycle, we saw a new wave of efforts to suppress the vote. We saw racially motivated efforts to cut back on early voting. We saw physical destruction of voter registration forms. Across the country, we saw eligible voters prevented from casting their ballots because of long lines, inaccurate voter records, and poorly trained poll workers.

As the ranking member on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I launched an investigation last year into the actions of True the Vote, a Tea Party organization that claims to promote ''voter integrity'' efforts. In fact, True the Vote sought to make it harder for Americans to vote. They challenged the registration of thousands of legitimate voters across the country before Election Day, and they deployed volunteers across the country to challenge access to the polls for legitimate voters.

Efforts by groups like True the Vote disproportionately affect minority communities, and they are just one small example of the practices that still seek to suppress the vote in our country.

The Voting Rights Act is often cited as the most effective civil rights law in our history. Section 5 has been one of the most powerful tools in the act because it combats discriminatory attempts to marginalize voters before they can take root. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act in 1965, he said this:

> There were those who said smaller and more gradual measures should be tried. But they had been tried. For years and years they had been tried, and tried, and tried, and they had failed, and failed, and failed. And the time for failure is gone.

So, in closing, I hope the Supreme Court Justices remember these words as they consider this most recent challenge to section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

Today, in the year 2013, section 5 remains as critical as ever to protecting the right to vote in the United States of America.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative CUMMINGS. I know under your leadership, as the ranking member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the issue of voting rights will continue to be a top priority in this Congress.

Mr. CUMMINGS. You're absolutely right. Thank you.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Mr. President, I now—excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I now yield to the distinguished Member from Maryland, our whip, Mr. HOYER.

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, STEVE and I were both in the senate, and you have a president in the senate. That's why he was referring to you as Mr. President. I understand that, STEVE.

I am pleased to join MARCIA FUDGE, the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, and my good friend, STEVE HORSFORD, the gentleman from Nevada. And I notice that DON PAYNE is here. His father was a very close friend of mine, active some 45 years ago. So it's good to see you here, DON, and HAKEEM JEFFRIES, two of our really great new Members. I'm pleased to join you.

□ 2040

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Congressional Black Caucus for organizing this Special Order hour. America's greatest strength—and its greatest gift to the world—is our democratic system of government based on an equal voice for every citizen. It is what grants legitimacy to our laws and earns us respect from those in other parts of the world who yearn for the freedoms we enjoy.

For most of our history, our democracy was deeply flawed: excluding women, African Americans, Native Americans and many others. But part of what makes America great is that we are constantly working to perfect our democracy by correcting such flaws. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was a central part of that effort—and an incredibly successful one. Before that legislation was enacted, millions of African Americans were systematically prevented from registering to vote or casting their ballots across much of the South. And I would venture to say that there were other parts of America where they were dissuaded from voting, as well. Poll taxes, ''grandfather clauses,'' literacy tests and other nefarious devices were employed to keep Americans from exercising their most fundamental civil right.

Perhaps the greatest impetus for enacting the Voting Rights Act was the horrific violence and hatred of ''Bloody Sunday,'' when peaceful civil rights marchers were beaten and turned back at the Edmund Pettus Bridge outside Selma, Alabama.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, a number of us here will be traveling to Selma, led by the same man who helped organize those 1965 marches, our friend and colleague, Representative JOHN LEWIS, an extraordinary historic figure, an extraordinary gentle man, but a giant of courage and principle. We are going as part of an annual pilgrimage to remember that day, ''Bloody Sunday,'' March 7, 1965, and the cause for which those brave Americans, black and white, risked their lives: political equality and the perfection of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I've been privileged to walk with JOHN LEWIS across that bridge and others, including at least two Presidents, for 10 out of the 13 times that JOHN LEWIS has reenacted that walk. Walking in their footsteps is one way to honor that cause. But it is far from the best way. The best way to do it is to carry on their work—to defend and promote the protections included in the Voting Rights Act that they fought so hard to bring about.

On Wednesday, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court will hear arguments in Shelby County v. Holder, which challenges the constitutionality of one of the Voting Rights Act's central provisions, and that is pre-clearance, making sure that the Justice Department says, yes, this is fair; yes, this will not exclude; yes, this is a policy that will be consistent with our democracy. Preclearance, established by section 5 of the act, mandates that jurisdictions with a long history of voter suppression and civil rights violations must submit to the Justice Department for approval any plans to change their election practices or district boundaries before doing so. Section 5 has been instrumental in ending discrimination and protecting eligible voters at the polls. Its constitutionality is rooted in article I and has been working as intended for nearly half a century.

At a time when we are hearing about problems voters faced all over the country in last November's election—with long lines, registration errors, voting machines that malfunctioned and deceptive practices—we ought to be working together to make the Voting Rights Act stronger, not weaker.

I will continue, along with my colleagues, to stand up for the Voting Rights Act on this floor and in every forum of debate. Because those who marched at Selma or braved the dangers of the freedom rides did not do so in vain. Their legacy is our responsibility. The more perfect democracy they helped forge is ours to safeguard, not only for our sake, but for the sake of those who will inherit our democracy in generations to come.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to join my colleagues in the Congressional

Black Caucus in strong support of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act—and the rest of it as well—as it faces meritless challenges this week that I am confident will be surmounted.

And, again, in closing my part of this Special Order, I want to congratulate STEVE HORSFORD, Congressman HORSFORD, from Nevada. He's new to this body, but he's not new to legislative representation. He understands the legislative process very, very well; and it is appropriate that in one of his first Special Orders on this floor that it's on behalf of every American—not just black Americans, not just Hispanic Americans and not just disabled Americans—every American. Because if one American's right to vote is compromised, there will be a risk to all Americans that their vote will be compromised. And I thank my friend, Congressman HORSFORD.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative HOYER. As our whip, you have provided a strong and articulate voice on these and other issues, and we look forward to continuing to work with you as we move our country forward and protect the most fundamental of all rights—the right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I now yield to my co-anchor, my colleague as a freshman member in this 113th Congress. I am pleased to be working with him as one of the co-anchors for the Congressional Black Caucus and bringing these important issues to all of our constituents throughout this great country, the distinguished Member from New York, Representative HAKEEM JEFFRIES.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Let me first just thank the distinguished gentleman from the Silver State, my good friend and colleague, Representative STEVEN HORSFORD, for anchoring this CBC Special Order. I also, of course, want to thank Chairwoman MARCIA FUDGE for the tremendous leadership that she has continued to provide and, of course, to our whip, STENY HOYER, for his eloquence and his leadership on this and many other issues on behalf of this great country of ours.

It is my honor and my privilege to co-anchor this CBC Special Order, this ''hour of power,'' so to speak, where members of the Congressional Black Caucus have an opportunity to speak directly to the American people today on an issue of great importance as it relates to the integrity of our democracy. There's no more fundamental issue to preserving the integrity of the great democracy that we have here in America than the right to vote. The right to vote is something that should be cherished, something that should be protected, something that should be respected. But the right to vote has not always been treated in this fashion in this Republic of ours. During the founding of this country, we know, of course, that African Americans were largely excluded from being able to participate in our democracy as a result of the conditions of their enslavement.

In 1869, this Congress came together and sent to the States for ratification the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution, an amendment that was designed to remedy the situation related to the failure to meaningfully include African Americans in our democracy. It was designed to provide constitutional protection to limit the ability of States to disenfranchise individuals on the basis of race, color, or prior conditions of servitude.

Yet we understand that for about 100 years subsequent to the passage and ratification of the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution, it was largely evaded in many parts of America as a result of legislative schemes that were devised to prohibit or limit the ability of African Americans and other communities of color to participate in our democracy. These legislative schemes took many forms. Some have already called their names—poll taxes, ''grandfather clauses'' and literacy tests—legislative schemes devised to limit the ability of African Americans and others to participate in this glorious democracy of ours. A large part of it took place in the Deep South, but there were instances of this all over America.

□ 2050

Mr. Speaker, that is why the Congress came back in the midst of the turbulent era of the 1960s and passed the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which included a section 5 preclearance provision that was designed to require those covered jurisdictions, or jurisdictions of all or parts of 16 States, to get approval from either the Department of Justice or a three-judge Federal Court panel here in Washington, D.C., whenever any of these jurisdictions sought to change a law with respect to voting.

The rationale for this section 5 preclearance requirement was because, in these covered jurisdictions, there was a history of discrimination as it related to the franchise, deliberate schemes designed to limit the ability of American citizens to participate in our democracy; and as a result of this history, the section 5 preclearance requirement was put into place. And it has worked. Over close to five decades that it has been in effect, it is perhaps the most successful piece of civil rights legislation that this Congress has passed.

Now, as a result of its success, there are some who have contended that it is no longer a relevant provision of law, and that when the Congress came together in bipartisan fashion in 2006 to reauthorize this provision, that this body, the House of Representatives and the Senate, which passed the reauthorization 98 to 0, Democrats and Republicans, the contention is that this body exceeded its constitutional authority because section 5 allegedly, according to the defenders of disenfranchisement, is no longer relevant.

Now, in the aftermath of Barack Obama's historic election in 2008, there was a Supreme Court case involving Austin, Texas, I believe, in 2009 that was heard just a few months after his inauguration. And part of the argument that was made in that Supreme Court case by those who sought to invalidate section 5's preclearance requirement was that, as a result of this historic election of Barack Obama, race seems no longer to be an issue in America, and they pointed to the elevation of Barack Obama to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Now, of course, that was an extremely important moment in the history of our Republic. It was a substantial step forward. But the reality is that the election of Barack Obama has also served to illustrate that in America there's still some issues of race that we've got to confront.

It's interesting, because if you look at the election of Presidents since the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, it's unprecedented in the aftermath of President Obama's election to have seen the level of voter suppression laws and efforts that we were forced to confront in this country. These efforts presumably are based on the thin claim that those who are advancing these laws are trying to guard against fraud. No evidence of fraud, but those who are advancing these voter suppression laws are attempting to guard against fraud.

When you look at the record, what's fascinating is that when Richard Nixon was elected in 1968, there was no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. He was reelected in 1972, no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. And then Jimmy Carter is elected in 1976, no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. And then Ronald Reagan is elected in 1980 and reelected in 1984, no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. George H.W. Bush elected in 1988, no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. Bill Clinton elected in 1992, reelected in 1996 and no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. George W. Bush elected, some would argue under questionable circumstances given the dynamics in the great State of Florida, but again, no explosion of concern related for alleged fraud. The same was true in 2004, notwithstanding some concerns in the great State of Ohio, no explosion of concern for alleged fraud. Yet Barack Obama is elected in 2008, and all of a sudden in the aftermath of this historic election there's an outbreak of concern, a pandemic of anxiety as it relates to the fraud that allegedly is taking place in America.

And so, as this chart illustrates—it is a wonderful chart that was prepared by the Brennan Center for Justice in my home State of New York, connected to my alma mater, New York University. It illustrates that since 2001, 41 States introduced 180 restrictive laws. Those States are illustrated by the red on the map. Parenthetically, a curious choice of colors, but those States are illustrated by the red on the map. Forty-one States introduced 180 restrictive laws.

And then you have 34 States introduced photo identification requirements; 17 States introduced proof of citizenship requirements; 16 States introduced bills to limit registration; and nine States introduced bills to limit or reduce early voting periods—unprecedented in the history of our democracy.

I just went through the election of several Presidents who were inaugurated post the 1965 Voting Rights Act, but, for some reason, the American people are smart enough to draw cause and effect when this President was elected. We had an outbreak of concern related to alleged fraud.

Now, thankfully, the Voting Rights Act in section 5 was in place to do something about it. I just talked about the fact that there were 41 States that introduced some form of voter restrictions.

On this map, we see that as of October in 2012 there were 25 laws and two executive actions that were passed in a total of 19 States. A large amount of this activity, as you can see on this map, Mr. Speaker, took place in the Deep South and in Texas, States that are largely covered by the section 5 preclearance requirements.

□ 2100

Let me just pause parenthetically and note that what's also interesting is that there were two States, Iowa and Florida, that in the past had executed through executive order reforms designed to allow those who as a result of the criminal justice system had had their ability to vote taken away from them restored through a process that had been put in place; but in the aftermath of the election of President Obama, what we saw is that in Iowa and in Florida—those two States—through executive order, they repealed those positive steps forward to make it almost impossible for those who had brushes with the law to ever be able to reengage in the ability to participate in American democracy.

These were laws that were passed. Yet, because of the section 5 preclearance requirement, not all of these laws actually were able to take effect. That's an important point as it relates to the continuing relevance of section 5's preclearance requirement. As of October 2012, approximately 12 courts either halted or blunted—they pushed back—some of those laws that States had attempted to enact.

Perhaps the most relevant example of why section 5 continues to be relevant is due to what took place in the Lone Star State, the great State of Texas, when the legislature passed what would have been the most restrictive voter identification law in the country. It would have prohibited potential voters from presenting student college identifications; they were deemed in this law as invalid. It would have prevented voters from presenting State government identification; IDs that were actually issued by the State of Texas would not have been valid under this law.

I find it interesting, particularly in light of the current debate that we're having related to how we deal with gun violence in America, that one of the forms of ID that actually would have been accepted was a license that allowed an individual to carry a concealed handgun permit. This was too much to accept for the Justice Department and for those who in good conscience seek to defend our democracy, and because Texas is a covered jurisdiction, it had to be presented for preclearance by the Department of Justice or a three-judge panel, and it was rejected. So this law, though passed, never took effect. The same thing happened in Alabama. The same thing happened in South Carolina. There is a law that was passed by the State of Florida that is under consideration. So, as a result, even though many objectively believed it was designed to suppress the vote, it did not take effect in advance of the 2012 election because it was under review by the Department of Justice and their preclearance requirement.

Mr. Speaker, in America, certainly we have come a long way, but we still have a long, long way to go. Jim Crow may be dead, but he has still got some nieces and nephews who are alive and well; and until every single descendant of Mr. Jim Crow's is dead and buried, we in the Congressional Black Caucus believe that the section 5 preclearance requirement of the Voting Rights Act remains as relevant today as it was when it was passed in 1965.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative JEFFRIES.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 13 minutes remaining.

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, as the Congressional Black Caucus has discussed this evening, voting rights are an issue that all Americans are entitled to, and we should be helping more voters to participate in our democracy, not creating laws that prevent or discourage anyone from voting.

As my colleague just explained, the coanchor from New York (Mr. JEFFRIES), we have made tremendous progress in recent history in securing the right to vote for many minority communities. A fully free and democratic society is always a work in progress, and with each election we are reminded that we cannot rest. We must always come to the defense of voting rights, and we cannot be caught off guard or pretend that because time has passed that we do not need to continue to fight to safeguard our rights. Now, no successful social justice movement has secured freedom absent vigilance, and that's why we are here tonight—to defend a pillar of justice and democracy.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was approved by Congress to protect fundamental voting rights and to protect minority groups from disenfranchisement. After a series of violent attacks on civil rights leaders who were registering African Americans to vote, former President Lyndon B. Johnson sent draft legislation to Congress to protect voting rights, and it was signed into law soon thereafter.

Since then, the Voting Rights Act has been one of the Nation's most effective civil rights laws and tools to combat discrimination and voting. Over time, the tactics used to stop people from voting have become more sophisticated. Unfair voter ID laws, barriers to voter registration, and narrowed early voting opportunities were all used in an attempt to suppress the vote in 2012. Overall, 2,400 changes in voting laws were stopped because of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, as my colleague Mr. JEFFRIES just outlined.

In January, NAACP President Benjamin Jealous said:

The Nation has been facing some of the ''greatest attacks on voting rights since segregation'' and that the potential to repeal section 5 is the biggest threat yet.

Whether it's attempts to restrict early voting in Ohio or in Florida or whether it's throwing up billboards in minority communities that read ''voter fraud is a felony,'' we know that our work is not done. Intimidation is still a tactic employed by some seeking to scare voters from the polls. Until that threat is extinct, section 5 of the Voting Rights Act still has a very important role to play in making full democratic enfranchisement a reality in our society. We secured the integrity of our electorate in 2012, and it's in part because of the Voting Rights Act.

This is not a partisan issue. There is bipartisan consensus on that point. In 2006, the Voting Rights Act was reauthorized with overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle. In fact, this body, the House of Representatives, has voted four times—with strong bipartisan support every time—to reauthorize section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

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Every reauthorization has been signed into law by a Republican President. The most recent reauthorization vote was 390–33 in the House and 98–0 in the Senate.

As part of the last reauthorization, Congress released over 15,000 pages of committee reports that demonstrated large-scale evidence of voting discrimination. Not only did these findings lead to a bipartisan vote to reauthorize the legislation, but Congress also cited the invaluable role of section 5 in thwarting racial injustice. According to the committee report, without the continuation of the Voting Rights Act's protections, the evidence is clear that ''racial and language minority citizens will be deprived of the opportunity to exercise their right to vote, or will have their votes diluted.''

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the Voting Rights Act is important for many different communities.

The writing is on the wall. Our work is not done. Section 5 must be upheld. And because of that, we stand in strong support of the Voting Rights Act here tonight.

I'd like to now bring my colleague, Mr. JEFFRIES, up so we can highlight some of the provisions of the Voting Rights Act, both from a historical perspective but most importantly how it still applies today.

Mr. JEFFRIES. Thank you, Mr. HORSFORD.

I think you hit on a very important point that should be reemphasized in the context of this debate. Every single reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act section 5 was signed into law by a Republican President. And so in 1970, the reauthorization was signed into law by President Richard Nixon. In 1975, it was President Gerald Ford. In 1982, it was Ronald Reagan. And in 2006, it was George Bush.

It was the current House majority, held in different form, but when Republicans were in charge of the Chamber, they allowed the reauthorization to move forward through the Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan basis. Now this may seem strange in the current poisonous environment of Washington that we exist in right now, but there was significant cooperation, tremendous leadership shown by the then-chairperson and the ranking member, JOHN CONYERS. It passed in the House of Representatives 390–33.

It's also interesting to note historically that prior to this year, every time section 5 and the Voting Rights Act has been used to address alleged concerns with redistricting, which traditionally takes place 2 years after the completion of the census, when it was used by the Justice Department to block or modify redistricting reforms or changes prior to the Obama administration, on every other occasion since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 it was a Republican Justice Department charged with the responsibility of addressing concerns with redistricting and the problem of racial gerrymandering. It was the Nixon Justice Department in 1972. It was the Reagan Justice Department in 1982. It was the George H.W. Bush Justice Department in 1992. It was the George W. Bush Justice Department in 2002.

And so the history of section 5 and the Voting Rights Act is a glorious one, not just as it relates to the preservation of our democracy, addressing the need to make sure that every American, regardless of race or color, has the capacity to participate in a meaningful way, but it's been traditionally viewed and executed through a bipartisan lens. We're hopeful that when the Supreme Court takes up oral argument on this matter in 2 days, that they will evaluate it on the merits and give due deference to Congress, which has consistently reauthorized it pursuant to its power under article I of the Constitution as well as the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America.

There really is no case to be made that it should be declared invalid. I believe we've illustrated time after time how it's been used to protect the integrity of our democracy, and we're hopeful that at some point down the road, it will no longer be necessary. But, Mr. Speaker, that moment has not arrived in America as of today.

Mr. HORSFORD. Thank you, Representative JEFFRIES. As you just indicated, Wednesday's hearing before the Supreme Court is to hear arguments as they pertain to whether to preserve section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. That is why the Congressional Black Caucus has come to the floor this evening, to bring attention to this very important provision of current law and to ensure that, as the legislative branch, we have the ability to preserve and to strengthen the Voting Rights Act as necessary.

We want to continue to push forward. There are those who have come before who have fought, bled, and died for our right to vote. We want to continue to fight and preserve everyone's right to vote.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, in the run-up to the 2012 elections Republican-controlled legislatures passed a wide range of bills designed to restrict, rather than broaden, access to the ballot box. Despite multiple comprehensive reports and findings demonstrating that impersonating another voter is more rare than being struck by lightning, thirty one states now require ID, fifteen require photo ID, for voting, potentially disenfranchising five million voters mostly minorities, especially African Americans, and senior citizens. Other recent oppressive state laws aim at making it more difficult to register to vote and scale back early voting periods. Several states undertook massive (and subsequently proven fraudulent) purges of the voting rolls. Some of the most egregious attempts at suppressing the vote occurred in states which required pre-clearance under the 1965 Voting Rights Act because of their long history of voter suppression. Without Section 5 in place, many of the roughly 2,400 blocked voting changes proposed since 1982 would have had a significant adverse impact on voters.

Following the Civil War Congress recognized the critical central role of voting in our democracy and passed the fifteenth amendment which gives the Federal Government primary authority to prevent discrimination in voting. The amendment was ratified by the states and the Voting Rights Act (VRA) is a direct implementation of that authority to prevent any attempt to limit access to the ballot. The Supreme Court has itself noted that Congress, not the Court, has the special responsibility to protect voting rights. The fact is that, in an overwhelming bipartisan vote in 2006, Congress found that voting discrimination continues to persist, and it undermines our democracy and therefore reauthorized the VRA for twenty-five years.

This year marks the 48th Anniversary of the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery March which led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act and I join in calling for a new generation of Freedom Riders to join with tens of thousands of original Freedom Riders in standing tall for our hard won voting rights.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as the Supreme Court prepares to hear arguments in Shelby County v. Holder this week, it is critical that we recognize the importance of upholding the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in order to preserve the rights of all Americans. To strip the VRA of its most effective provision now would be to turn our backs on millions of Americans who continue to be targeted by discriminatory voting practices.

The 2012 Presidential Election exemplified the persistent threats that work to disenfranchise voters. Long lines at polling places, the purging of voter registration rolls, and blatant efforts to intimidate select groups of voters have mired the electoral process in many localities. In Texas, two harsh voter mandates were passed in 2012 which were designed to create hurdles to voting with restrictive voter ID laws, and to dilute the voting power of the burgeoning minority population. In a testament to the necessity of the VRA, both measures were blocked under Section 5, preventing inequality of voting rights in Texas.

Historically, Congress has always reauthorized Section 5 of the VRA on a bipartisan basis, and as recently as 2006. The U.S. Department of Justice has filed more than 1,000 objections under Section 5 since 1982, protecting millions of voters from discrimination. The Supreme Court has upheld Section 5 of the VRA four times.

Mr. Speaker, voter disenfranchisement still poses a great threat to the electoral process. The Voting Rights Act is an essential tool in our fight to preserve equal voting rights for all Americans. Through the VRA, Congress has exercised its constitutional authority under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to ensure voters have free and fair access to the polls. Until there is sufficient evidence to suggest that efforts to suppress minority voters have been mitigated, the Voting Rights Act must be upheld in its entirety.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today.

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. CANTOR) for today on account of illness.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. HORSFORD. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 18 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, February 26, 2013, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.