

simply reflect on President Johnson's words. In a country that has come so far—so far—Americans who struggle financially deserve better than that. They deserve better than to have their elected officials tell them that their worth in this world is tied to their ability to afford health insurance.

#### ISRAEL HAS THE RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BROOKS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROOKS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak strongly and unequivocally in support of Israel's right to self-defense, the same right to self-defense we would assert if America were attacked and Americans killed by rockets and other weaponry.

Israel launched Operation Protective Edge in response to relentless and unprovoked rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, a brutally ruthless terrorist organization. In just the last 3 weeks, more than 2,500 rockets have rained down on Israel, and the targets of these rockets are not military but civilian.

2,500 rockets fired at any country is a lot. It is an act of war that triggers self-defense military responses. But 2,500 rockets fired at a country as small as Israel is even worse. To put the size of Israel in perspective, Israel is smaller than the Tennessee Valley of north Alabama that I represent. If anyone dared to fire even a single rocket at the people of the Fifth District of Alabama, much less if 2,500 rockets rained down on the Tennessee Valley, you can be darn sure that we would demand an overwhelming military response.

In Israel, Hamas fires at communities, at schools, at daycare centers, all with the same goal: to invoke terror by injuring and killing as many innocent Israeli citizens as possible.

Fully 80 percent of the Israeli population is living under the constant threat of missile attacks, having to run into the shelters constantly at a moment's notice, in the middle of the night, at all times of the day with mere seconds of warning. No country on Earth would tolerate such a situation.

So that we are clear, Hamas consistently places and fires its rockets within heavily populated areas, including schools and hospitals. Hamas does this to use their own civilian population as human shields. This means that every time they fire a rocket, they are committing not one, but two, war crimes: targeting civilians in Israel while using human shields in Gaza.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it very well in describing the juxtaposition of Hamas firing from civilian areas in the hope of drawing fire and the use by Israel of the Iron Dome missile defense system: "We use missiles to protect our people. Hamas uses their civilians to protect their missiles."

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not emphasize how truly miraculous the Iron Dome missile and mortar defense system is. It is like hitting a bullet with a bullet.

I thank the Tennessee Valley's incomparable defense workers who, working hand-in-hand with very bright Israeli engineers and scientists, made hitting a bullet with a bullet possible. Untold Israeli citizens' lives have been saved as a result of the Tennessee Valley's technological contributions to Israel and the Iron Dome defense system.

Since the beginning of Operation Protective Edge, Israel has discovered more than 30 offensive Hamas terrorist tunnels dug from Gaza under the border and into Israel. These tunnels have 60 different access points, and the entrances have been found in houses and mosques.

The purpose of the tunnels is to allow armed Hamas terrorists to emerge in Israeli communities to murder and kidnap civilians—defenseless mothers, fathers, and children, it makes no difference to Hamas. Hamas kidnaps, tortures, and murders, and seemingly enjoys it.

Israel's only solution, the only path to peace in the face of those who kill in the name of religion, is Israel's disarming of Hamas and the demilitarization of Gaza.

Israel is the only democracy in the tumultuous and dangerous Middle East. Israel is unquestionably America's most reliable ally in the Middle East. The people of Israel are engaged in a fight to protect their home, a fight for survival, and America must stand with Israel without hesitation.

#### THE RIGHT TO VOTE IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, the right to vote is the most fundamental right in any democracy since it is the right from which all others meaningfully derive.

Deny someone the right to vote, and you may deny them the right to speak, to associate with whom they choose, or to freely exercise their faith. For if these other rights are infringed, how may we seek redress but at the ballot box?

Not even the courts can secure our rights in the absence of an effective franchise. Congress established the inferior courts, and Congress may abolish them. The right to vote alone is foundation to all of the others.

So it is deeply disturbing to see the right to vote being diminished in many States. These new State laws restrict voter registration drives, eliminate same-day voter registration, reduce the early voting period, and require photo identification and proof of citizenship to vote.

In total, 34 States have passed laws now requiring voters to show some

kind of identification at the polls. For many Americans who already are registered to vote and can provide this documentation, these new requirements may not sound burdensome. But although these new laws apply to all Americans, they disproportionately impact young, elderly, minority, low-income, and disabled voters.

Eleven percent of American citizens do not have a photo ID; 7 percent do not have citizenship documents. That means a significant number of eligible voters have been disenfranchised by these new laws.

It has been argued that it is appropriate to put a significant burden on people who simply want to cast their vote because voter fraud is widespread, but it is not. It is true that in jurisdictions which allow people to pay a bounty for new voter registration cards that voter registration fraud exists. But voter registration fraud is not the same as voter fraud, since these false registrations do not result in non-existent people voting.

The fraud artists should be prosecuted for violating the law and cluttering up the voter registration rolls, but legitimate voters should not be disenfranchised. Rather, we should crack down on the bounty system that incentivizes this kind of misconduct.

These new and stringent voter ID laws will not stop voter registration fraud, but they will prevent legitimate voters from casting their ballots. Indeed, in many places, this is their very intention. They are the worst form of voter suppression, not voter protection.

The backward movement on voting rights is not confined to the States. The Supreme Court has also made it more difficult to ensure adequate protection from disenfranchisement.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act required that nine States and many other counties and municipalities around the country with histories of voter discrimination obtain Federal preclearance before changing voter laws. However, the Supreme Court, in *Shelby County v. Holder*, ruled that the formula to determine which jurisdictions must get preclearance is out-of-date.

Immediately thereafter, Texas announced that a previously blocked voter identification law would go into effect and that redistricting maps would no longer need Federal approval, actions that could severely undermine minority voting rights in that State.

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In January, the Voting Rights Amendment Act was introduced to restore and strengthen the protections of the VRA that were dismantled by the Supreme Court. This bill was introduced by Congressman JOHN CONYERS and Congressman JIM SENSENBRENNER, demonstrating the bipartisan support for restoring a crowning achievement of the civil rights movement. I am a strong supporter of the Voting Rights