and recreation management. There is real bipartisan support for getting something done on this issue and I am confident a growing number of our colleagues will join us as we push forward this fall.●

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

● Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which we will celebrate today, August 6. I want to spend a few minutes talking about Freedom Summer, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the civil rights challenges we still face today, and how Senators can work together to make this a more perfect union and guarantee equal justice under the law to all Americans, as promised by our Constitution.

On January 23, 1964, the States ratified the 24th Amendment to the Constitution, which provides that ''the rights of citizens of the United States to vote in any primary or other [Federal] election . . . shall not be denied or abridged . . . by any State by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax.''

Freedom Summer was a campaign in Mississippi to register Black voters during the summer of 1964. In 1964, most Black voters were disenfranchised by law or practice in Mississippi, notwithstanding the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which was ratified in 1870. The 15th Amendment provides that ''the rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by . . . any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.''

The national uproar in response to the deaths of three civil rights workers—James Earl Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael ''Mickey'' Schwerner—helped lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Southern States, however, continued to impose barriers on African-American citizens' right to vote even after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The following summer, Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders led a series of voter registration marches from Selma to Montgomery, AL. Ultimately, the marchers were met with force on March 7, 1965, known as Bloody Sunday, at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Montgomery, AL. Television news reports shocked the conscience of Americans, who could not believe that their fellow citizens were ruthlessly beaten by the police while exercising their First Amendment right to peaceably assemble and petition their government for redress of grievances.

A few days later, President Lyndon B. Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress and called for the enactment of the Voting Rights Act, ended his speech with the old refrain from the civil rights movement: we shall overcome. Congress did act and pass the Voting Rights Act, as this week we celebrate the 50th anniversary.

So as we celebrate the anniversaries of these landmark pieces of civil rights legislation, we are reminded that there is more work to be done. Today I must urge my colleagues to address the recent pernicious efforts to restrict the franchise and limit access to the fundamental right to vote. This past weekend, The New York Times Magazine ran an article entitled ''Overcome,'' about a systematic effort by a small group of activists to dismantle the protections in the Voting Rights Act. I commend this article for review by my colleagues.

Two summers ago, the Supreme Court issued its decision in Shelby County v. Holder, which struck down section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, invalidating the coverage formula that determines which jurisdictions are subject to the preclearance provisions of the act.

Congress must act to reverse the decision by the Supreme Court which overturned several important precedents. As much as we wish it wasn't so, racism has not disappeared from America and there continue to be individuals and groups who would use our voting system to deliberately minimize the rights of minority voters. Congress overwhelmingly reauthorized the Voting Rights Act in 2006 after building an extensive record that made a compelling case for the continued need to protect minority voters from discrimination.

I strongly agree with Justice Ginsburg's dissent that ''in truth, the evolution of voting discrimination into more subtle second-generation barriers is powerful evidence that a remedy as effective as preclearance remains vital to protect minority voting rights and prevent backsliding.'' I am deeply disappointed that the Court put voting rights in jeopardy by ignoring reality and disregarding the power of Congress to enforce the 15th Amendment of the Constitution by appropriate legislation.

I am a proud co-sponsor of Senator LEAHY's legislation, S. 1659, the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015. The Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015 responds to current conditions in voting today by restoring the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was last reauthorized on a bipartisan vote by Congress in 2006, but significantly weakened by the Supreme Court in 2013.

Following the Shelby County decision 2 years ago, several States passed sweeping voter suppression laws that disproportionately prevent minorities, the elderly, and the youth from voting. The Leahy bill provides the tools to address these discriminatory practices and seeks to protect all Americans' right to vote.

The Leahy bill establishes a targeted process for reviewing voting changes in jurisdictions nationwide, focused on measures that have historically been used to discriminate against voters. The process for reviewing changes in voting is limited to a set of measures, such as voter IDs, that have historically been found to have the greatest discriminatory impact.

Congress should also take up and pass the Democracy Restoration Act, DRA, S. 772, which I have introduced. The Democracy Restoration Act would restore voting rights in Federal elections to approximately 5.8 million citizens who have been released from prison and are back living in their communities.

Notwithstanding the 15th Amendment, many States passed laws during the Jim Crow period after the Civil War to make it more difficult for newly-freed slaves to vote in elections. Such laws included poll taxes, literacy tests, and disenfranchisement measures.

Some disenfranchisement measures applied to misdemeanor convictions and in practice could result in lifetime disenfranchisement, even for individuals that successfully reintegrated into their communities as law-abiding citizens.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 did sweep away numerous State laws and procedures that had denied African Americans and other minorities their constitutional right to vote. For example, the act outlawed the use of literacy or history tests that voters had to pass before registering to vote or casting their ballot.

The act specifically prohibits States from imposing any ''voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure . . . to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.''

In 2015, I am concerned that there are still several areas where the legacy of Jim Crow laws and State disenfranchisement statutes lead to unfairness in Federal elections.

First, State laws governing the restoration of voting rights vary widely throughout the country, such that persons in some States can easily regain their voting rights, while in other States persons effectively lose their right to vote permanently.

Second, these State disenfranchisement laws have a disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities.

Third, this patchwork of State laws results in the lack of a uniform standard for eligibility to vote in Federal elections, and leads to an unfair disparity and unequal participation in Federal elections based solely on residence.

Finally, studies indicate that former prisoners who have voting rights restored are less likely to reoffend, and disenfranchisement hinders their rehabilitation and reintegration into their community.

The legislation would restore voting rights to prisoners after their release from incarceration. It requires that prisons receiving Federal funds notify

people about their right to vote in Federal elections when they are leaving prison, sentenced to probation, or convicted of a misdemeanor.

The legislation is crafted to apply to Federal elections, and retains the States' authorities to generally establish voting qualifications. This legislation is consistent with congressional authority under the Constitution and voting rights statutes.

I am pleased that this legislation has been endorsed by a large coalition of public interest organizations, including: civil rights and reform organizations; religious and faith-based organizations; and law enforcement and criminal justice organizations. In particular I want to thank the Brennan Center for Justice, the ACLU, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and the NAACP for their work here.

I also urge Congress to take up legislation that I have introduced in the past with Senator SCHUMER, the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act. Voter suppression and intimidation are still very much alive in our Nation.

From misleading and fraudulent information about elections to voter intimidation and robocalls designed to suppress the vote, deceptive voting practices are often aimed at depriving minority communities of their voice in our democracy. The U.S. Constitution guarantees and protects the right of every American citizen to vote, and we have a duty to protect and ensure that right.

Unfortunately, we have seen a resurgence of deceptive voter practices in recent years. In 2006, during my own election to the Senate, thousands of minority voters in Maryland were targeted for misleading information designed to suppress their vote. Nationwide, there have been numerous reports of efforts to suppress the minority vote by putting out wrong information about election dates and location of polling places, along with suggestions that voters who had outstanding parking tickets would be arrested if they tried to vote.

This legislation is designed to protect voters across the Nation from election fraud and voter intimidation by creating criminal penalties for deceptive voting practices and by giving individual voters the right to take action. If deceptive practices are found to have occurred before election day, the U.S. Attorney General can take corrective action to halt distribution of such information and to set the record straight. After Federal elections, the Attorney General also would be required to report to Congress on the allegations of deceptive practices and the actions taken to correct such practices.

Let me also mention another issue relating to civil rights, which is the right to serve on a Federal jury. My view is that after release from prison, ex-offenders should be given both rights and responsibilities. So in addition to restoring the right to vote as we seek to reduce recidivism and successfully integrate ex-offenders back into the community, I would also permit ex-offenders to perform the civic duty of serving on a jury of their peers.

This legislative change is a part of my BALTIMORE Act, S. 1610, the Building and Lifting Trust In Order to Multiply Opportunities and Racial Equality. I introduced this legislation after the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore while in police custody. It also includes my End Racial Profiling Act, ERPA.

Next month the NAACP, which is headquartered in Baltimore, and other civil rights groups will conclude its Journey for Justice march at the U.S. Capitol as part of their Justice Summer campaign. This historic 860-mile march from Selma, AL to Washington, DC, will mobilize activists and advance a focused national policy agenda.

This policy agenda seeks to protect the right of every American to a fair criminal justice system and uncorrupted and unfettered access to the ballot box.

In particular, the march will call for the enactment of the Voting Rights Advancement Act and the End Racial Profiling Act. Congress should take up and pass these two critically important pieces of legislation.

It would be the appropriate way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.●

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

● Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss one of the great moral challenges of our time—human trafficking. The term human trafficking involves crimes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, debt bondage, forced marriage, and the sale and exploitation of children. Trafficking in persons destroys people and corrodes communities. It distorts labor markets and undermines stability and the rule of law. It is fueled by greed, violence, and corruption.

There are at least 21 million victims of human trafficking in the world—and over 5 million of them are children, according to the International Labor Organization, ILO. Forced labor alone generates more than $150 billion in profits annually, making it one of the largest income sources for international criminals, second only to drug trafficking. Trafficking victims range from women enslaved as domestic workers in countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia and Singapore to Nepali construction workers building stadiums for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. It also ensnares Rohingya and Cambodian men and boys on Thai fishing boats working to put fish in European and American grocery stores. It includes countless Venezuelan women and girls, some lured from poor towns in the interior to urban centers, who are then subjected to sex trafficking. Even in our own country, cases of human trafficking have been reported in all 50 States.

Traffickers take advantage of conflict, the collapse of state institutions, and even natural disasters—like the recent earthquake in Nepal—to prey on vulnerable civilians. We are witnessing terrorist groups like ISIL and Boko Haram that proudly build their ''states'' on the trade in and enslavement of women and children.

There has been some progress. This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. The TVPA, and the annual Trafficking In Persons, TIP, Report it mandates, have played a major role in raising global awareness of human trafficking and galvanizing both civil society and governments to address both labor and sex trafficking crimes. The report analyzes the efforts of foreign governments, and our own, to comply with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking in persons, as set out by the TVPA.

The TIP Report has been widely regarded as the ''gold standard'' for trafficking information, and as an essential tool for ensuring continued progress against the scourge of human trafficking. The value of the TIP Report, and the United States' credibility on this critical issue, relies heavily on the integrity of that report.

On Monday, July 27, the Department of State released the 2015 TIP Report. I have great respect for the small, dedicated staff at the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, as well as our numerous embassies around the world that help collect credible information for the report. Nevertheless, I was struck by the strong response to the 2015 report by outside country experts and frontline advocates who have worked in the trenches on human trafficking for years. They raised significant questions about the integrity and neutrality of the 2015 TIP Report and the decision to upgrade Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, and Malaysia, among others. We need to listen carefully to their views.

Of particular concern is the upgrade of Malaysia, which I want to discuss briefly. Malaysia has a serious human trafficking problem, which is why the State Department downgraded Malaysia last year to a Tier 3 country in the TIP Report, a level that includes the worst human trafficking offenders in the world. In Malaysia, the use of forced labor is pervasive in agriculture, construction, electronics, and textile industries, and the sex trade industry.

This year, the State Department upgraded Malaysia to the Tier 2 Watch List on the grounds that the government had made significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards to combat human trafficking. Those efforts by the government included beginning to reform its flawed victim protection regime, along with its legal framework, and consultations with