

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

WHY VOTING MATTERS IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

SPEECH OF

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 14, 2016

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to honor the thousands of brave men and women who, 51 years ago, organized and marched over the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama in support of a fundamental truth: that every American has the right to vote.

The Selma march altered the course of history. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Selma produced the voting rights legislation of 1965." The Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned discriminatory voting requirements that disenfranchised African American voters.

For 51 years, the Voting Rights Act has helped ensure that all Americans have an equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

But nearly three years ago, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act, saying it was outdated and unjustified. Since this decision, we have seen that the Voting Rights Act is needed now more than ever before.

Today, 30 states require voters to show identification in order to vote. And 15 states already require voters to show a photo ID in order to cast a ballot. At the same time, Republican controlled-legislatures continue their efforts to cut early voting.

All of this limits access to the ballot, making it harder for American citizens to have a say in the direction of our country.

Restrictive voting laws disproportionately impact minorities and low-income communities.

Upwards of 25 percent of African Americans lack a photo ID, compared to 8 percent of white Americans. Moreover, 12 percent of those earning less than \$25,000 annually lack a photo ID.

States with strict voter ID laws require voters to have certain government-issued photo IDs, like driver's licenses. However, African Americans and low-income individuals are less likely to have driver's licenses because they are more likely to live in cities and rely on public transportation.

These groups also have a harder time obtaining other valid forms of photo ID because they often lack the time and money to track down necessary documents, like Social Security cards, and because ID offices are not easily accessible to them.

America is a nation built on the democratic process, and when that process is broken for any of us, it impacts all of us.

People want to vote because they care deeply about where our country is headed. They want to create a better life for themselves and their families, and they know that their ability to do so is in many ways tied to the outcomes of elections.

As a country, we should make it as easy as possible for people to exercise this right. Elec-

tion officials should not erode the democratic principles that they have sworn to uphold. They should make sure every American citizen has an equal voice in the democratic process.

Protecting every person's right to vote is essential to a fully functioning democracy. The countless men and women who risked their lives to defend that right knew our system of government only works when it's inclusive and fair—when it enables all voices to have a say in the future of our country.

So it's our responsibility to make it easier for people to cast a ballot. Just as it's the responsibility of those people to vote. When people don't vote, not only do they dishonor those who risked everything for voting rights; they risk perpetuating policies that hurt hard-working Americans. I can tell you with certainty—had we not elected President Obama, we wouldn't have the Affordable Care Act, and 20 million fewer people would have health insurance.

So it's important for every eligible American to vote. Failure to do so can have grave consequences for American families, who deserve public policies that work for them, not special interests.

Voting rights has been historically important to the African American community, which was denied its constitutional right to vote for far too long. That is why this caucus—the Congressional Black Caucus—is doing everything possible to expand voting rights protections and increase citizen participation in elections.

We are calling for an immediate restoration of the Voting Rights Act. Democracy cannot flourish until voting rights are reinstated in this country. We have broken down many barriers to justice and equality since the Selma march and the signing of the Voting Rights Act, but we dishonor those accomplishments and the people who fought for them if we accept the continued weakening of voting rights.

Fifty-one years ago, thousands of Americans marched in Selma against racial discrimination in voting. That march is ours to continue.

HONORING THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF SAINT LOUIS CRISIS NURSERY

HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Saint Louis Crisis Nursery, which will celebrate its 30th Anniversary on April 2, 2016. In 1986, Saint Louis Crisis Nursery opened its doors to provide twenty-four-hour shelter and special care for children whose families have faced an emergency or crisis. Numerous areas are served by Saint Louis Crisis Nursery including St. Louis City, St. Charles, and Wentzville. For over 30 years, Saint Louis Crisis Nursery has provided

protection for more than 98,000 children who were at risk of abuse and neglect. With the month of April being National Child Abuse Prevention Month, this recognition is well deserved for an organization that is working to prevent child abuse.

The mission of Saint Louis Crisis Nursery is to keep Missouri's most vulnerable citizens safe from harm. Supporting and strengthening the fragile and the under-resourced is key to overcoming the cycle of neglect and abuse.

In addition to providing shelter during emergencies, Saint Louis Crisis Nursery offers a variety of programs: parent education groups, home visits, teen parenting groups, art and play therapy, holiday hearts campaign, training institute, school supply drive, community outreach, and family emergency fund. These programs enrich the families in the community, which in turn encourages children to be raised in a healthy environment.

Saint Louis Crisis Nursery started out with one crisis nursery location and has grown to five crisis nursery locations during the past 30 years. They have also established seven community outreach centers and a regional administrative office. The staff has grown from 12 to more than 100, and counseling/support services that started with assisting 435 families now touches over 6,000 lives.

I ask you to join me in recognizing Saint Louis Crisis Nursery on their 30th Anniversary of serving the citizens of their community.

CONGRATULATING MR. JIM BROWN ON BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

HON. BILL SHUSTER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 15, 2016

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Mr. Jim Brown of Hollidaysburg, PA, on being elected 2016 President of the Pennsylvania Builders Association (PBA).

Chartered in 1952, PBA is a statewide non-profit affiliated with the National Association of Home Builders. The guiding voice for the state's home building industry and housing consumers, PBA provides an admirable service to countless people, especially as in one way or another, we all have a fundamental need for shelter. At the core of this herculean task, PBA works to enhance and improve the ability of our state's building professionals to provide the best quality homes at the most affordable prices for all Pennsylvanians. Given these significant responsibilities, it's easy to see why the organization needs strong and experienced leadership. That's why I am proud to highlight Jim's election.

As president of J.R. Brown Construction, Inc., a member of the board of the National Association of Home Builders, and a member of the Blair-Bedford Builders Association, where he has served as president, vice president, builder director, chairman of the Scholarship and Social Committees, and co-chair of

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