

various other States. In those dark days, the Federal Government rightly stepped in to extend the guarantees of our Constitution to every American, regardless of race.

Georgians have worked together closely for the past 40 years to heal the wounds of the past, and we have progressed tremendously. Black Georgians today are equal partners, not only in access to the voting booth but also to elected positions of power.

In the parts of Georgia that experienced the most oppressive and violent abuses of civil rights, that is in counties and cities where African Americans are a majority, black Georgians are now the leaders of those local communities. African Americans hold a significant portion of the seats in the Georgia legislature, where many have held positions of great influence. Nine of our 34 Statewide elected posts are held by African Americans, a percentage that comes close to mirroring their proportion of the State's population.

Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker is an African American who has twice won Statewide election to that post. Our Statewide elected labor commissioner is black, as are three justices on our State Supreme Court. Four African Americans hold seats in our 13 member House delegation. Two of those black members defeated white candidates in majority white districts.

African Americans have exercised their electoral muscle for decades now in Georgia. Blacks in Georgia have higher levels of voter registration and participation than do whites. In fact, blacks in Georgia have higher registration rates than do most blacks outside the South.

Furthermore, black and white candidates for public office draw comparable support from white voters. In other words, black and white candidates of the same party win or lose at the polls with similar vote percentages. No longer will Georgians vote against a black candidate simply because he or she is black.

With these facts in mind, I call on Congress to let Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act expire. Section 5 was implemented as a temporary statute to correct a specific problem. In the late 1960s, the Supreme Court ruled that Section 5 was constitutional only because it was narrowly tailored and temporary. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to my colleagues here in the House that 40 years is more than temporary.

Now Congress is considering extending Section 5 for another 25 years, to 2030, without giving any consideration to the changes that have occurred since 1965. If there is a need for Section 5 today in Georgia, it must be needed everywhere.

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If it is good for Georgia, it will be good for your State too. But if you do not think your State election laws should be subjected to Federal over-

sight, then I challenge each and every one of you to at least, Mr. Speaker, look at the facts of today's Georgia before casting a vote that does not affect your constituents, but does affect mine.

Georgia has fulfilled the vision of the Voting Rights Act and should be treated the same as every other State.

PASSAGE OF THE PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS PROTECTION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUHLMANN of New York). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. HARRIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. HARRIS. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I was proud to cast a firm vote in support of the Private Property Rights Protection Act. While this measure will not reverse the Supreme Court's mind-boggling 5-4 decision in the *Kelo v. New London* case, it will ensure that American taxpayers will not have their hard-earned dollars used in its support.

No State or locality shall be permitted to employ the power of eminent domain to seize private property in the name of economic development. In addition, the bill will grant appropriate access to State and Federal courts for those who seek justice and remedy for any nonmeritorious seizure of their property.

There is no question that Americans do not wish to shirk their responsibility to take care of their community through support for measures which serve the public good. However, most do not view fulfillment of this obligation as necessitating a forfeiture of their fundamental rights. Few rights are as central to the foundation of our great Nation as is the right of control over one's private property.

As James Madison laid out in the *Federalist Papers*, private property rights lie at the foundation of our Constitution: "Government is instituted no less for the protection of property than of the persons of individuals."

Madison's declaration was echoed by Justice William Paterson in *Vanhorne's Lessee v. Dorrance* (1795) when he asserted: "The right of acquiring and possessing private property and having it protected is one of the most natural, inherent, and inalienable rights of man."

This does not require one to have expertise in constitutional law to conclude from these statements that the Framers did not intend for citizens to cede their "natural, inherent, and inalienable rights" in the name of expanding the local tax base or in the development of one of our favorite Starbucks or Wal-Mart's.

As Justice Clarence Thomas noted in his dissent, the text of the fifth amendment permits the taking of property "only if in the public right to employ it."

In response to the public concern of the *Kelo* decision, the Ohio State legislature recently passed a measure pro-

hibiting cities from seizing unblighted land for economic development in 2006. And Ohio is not alone. Excluding bills prefiled for the 2006 legislative session, the National Council of State Legislatures found that 12 States have already taken legislative steps to prohibit in some form or fashion the use of eminent domain in private property seizure.

Today, we join in the fight on behalf of all Americans who own or aspire to own their small piece of paradise and, more importantly, to own it without fear from unwarranted, unjustified, and unconstitutional seizure.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE WAR IN IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. DRAKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. DRAKE. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to be here tonight, along with fellow colleagues and with the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Duncan Hunter, to talk to you about the war in Iraq.

During my recent visit to Iraq, it was clear to me that our brave military men and women know what they are doing, why they are doing it, the progress they are making, and the threat to our world and our way of life if they fail. They see the big picture: Iraq is a key piece in a region-wide and worldwide struggle.

What they wanted to know was what were the American people saying and thinking, and they wanted to know why their stories are not being told, and why their successes are not being told.

Mr. Speaker, recently there was a New York Times article that included this quote. It says: "I kind of predicted this. A third time just seems like I am pushing my chances." But in reality, Mr. Speaker, that was a much longer quote that I would like for you to see and I would like for you to hear. What that quote said was: "Obviously, if you're reading this, then I have died in Iraq. I kind of predicted this. That is why I am writing this in November. A third time just seemed like I am pushing my chances. I don't regret going. Everybody dies, but few get to do it for something as important as freedom. It may seem confusing why we are in Iraq. It's not to me. I am here helping these people so that they can live the way that we live, not have to worry about tyrants or vicious dictators, to do what they want to do with their lives. To me, that is why I died. Others have died for my freedom. Now this is my mark." Corporal Jeffrey B. Starr.

We would all like to thank Corporal Starr for his service, to tell him and his family that America mourns their very great loss, and to say that he is a true American hero.

We are here tonight to tell his story and to tell the story of the very brave