

COMMEMORATING WORLD AIDS DAY

(Ms. BASS of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BASS of California. Mr. Speaker, every 9 minutes and 30 seconds someone is infected with HIV in the United States. Today, 34 million people worldwide live with HIV, and of those infected, 60 percent do not know they are positive. These staggering facts demand that we strengthen our efforts to prevent the spread of this life-threatening disease.

Tomorrow, December 1, we will recognize World AIDS Day. World AIDS Day is an opportunity to take action and invigorate the global movement to ultimately halt the spread of HIV. Emphasizing the importance of ending this three-decade fight, this year's World AIDS Day theme is "Getting to Zero." Zero new infections, zero discrimination, zero AIDS-related deaths.

In observance, starting at midnight, I will hold a 24-hour "tweet-blast" where every hour I will tweet facts about HIV/AIDS and ways everyone can get involved to help end this disease. I invite all of you to join me in this conversation on Twitter at Rep KAREN BASS.

THE HIGH COST OF THE AMERICAN ENERGY POLICY

(Mr. FLEMING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLEMING. Mr. Speaker, as the price of crude oil again moves past \$100 a barrel, it is another reminder of the high cost of our energy policy that increases our dependence on foreign countries, kills jobs, and raises energy costs. Every time the Federal Government imposes a moratorium or new regulations, as it did on drilling in the gulf and now the Keystone pipeline, it hurts the American people.

Despite 60 years of a spotless safety record, excellent State regulation and monitoring, approval for safety by the EPA and creation of inexpensive energy sources, hydrofracking for oil and natural gas is under attack by the Department of the Interior.

What is the expected outcome?

Look at what the administration has done to coal, offshore drilling and the Keystone pipeline, not to mention the fact that we have not built a nuclear energy plant or a new refinery for decades due to over-regulation.

Hydrofracking of oil and natural gas will inevitably be pushed into red tape, higher cost of production and lower yield, again, hurting America through high energy costs and fewer jobs.

PENN STATE PRIDE

(Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, the hardship of all those involved in the recent tragic developments at Penn State University is heavy on our hearts as this community moves forward and these individuals and their families continue to cope with the horrific adversity and pain.

Despite these tragic events, I rise today for a different reason, something my community, the Penn State community, can be most proud of. The Chronicle of Higher Education recently reported that Penn State leads the Nation in outgoing faculty Fulbright grants for the 2011–2012 academic year. Penn State has received a total of 16 grants, 14 of which were awarded at the University Park Campus in State College.

The Fulbright Program, a program of competitive, merit-based grants for students, teachers and other professionals, is the U.S. government's premier international educational exchange program. These individuals will go on to expand our Nation's educational endeavors by strengthening partnerships with other leading institutions around the world.

These success stories also serve as an encouraging example that every individual can achieve their potential through hard work and dedication. These talented individuals have much to be proud of. Congratulations to each recipient on this esteemed award.

THIRD ANNUAL NATIONWIDE DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY

(Mr. FITZPATRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the combined efforts of government at all levels, law enforcement personnel, nonprofit groups, local businesses, and community volunteers as part of the third nationwide Drug Take-Back Day on October 29.

My home of Bucks County has emerged as a regional leader in the prior Take-Back events, so it came as no surprise that despite the unusual fall storm, we led the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in collecting nearly 2 tons of unwanted prescription drugs. Due to the efforts of all involved, these drugs have been removed from our community and no longer pose a threat to public safety or to the environment.

I applaud the successful cooperation of government and members of the community in keeping these drugs off our streets and out of the hands of those who may seek to abuse them, and encourage continued efforts.

STANDING AGAINST VOTER OPPRESSION

(Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to join my colleague, Congressman CLAY. And before I do that, let me rise as well to express my support for the Gabe Zimmerman legislation that we will address today and pay tribute to his bravery and certainly his loss.

We come to the floor today as partners with many in this Congress against voter intimidation and to speak on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, to collaborate with our many friends across the caucuses and across the interests in the Democratic Caucus, and certainly we hope to include our friends on the other side of the aisle.

Since the 2010 election, over 40 States have implemented voter ID, voter suppression laws. Madam Speaker, we are not against knowing who is voting, but we are against turning back the clock of what the Voting Rights Act attempted to do some 40-plus years ago when before that time a poll tax was utilized, or asking those from the African American community how many jelly beans were in a jar.

Just recently, I sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney's Office regarding voter intimidation and voter oppression. We rise today to say that we will stand against such oppression and ask the Justice Department to not clear voter ID laws.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the need to protect democracy, to protect the voice of the American people, and to ensure the right to vote continues to be treated as a right under the Constitution rather than being treated as privilege.

I am joined by my colleagues here today to call on all Americans of good faith to reject and denounce tactics that have absolutely no place in our democracy. We call on African-Americans, Hispanic and Latin Americans, and Asian-American voters to stand strong and learn their voting rights granted by law and the Constitution. We call on these citizens to stand against harassment and intimidation, to vote in the face of such adversity. The most effective way to curb tactics of intimidation and harassment is to vote. Is to stand together to fight against any measures that would have the effect of preventing every eligible citizen from being able to vote. Voting ensures active participation in democracy.

Instances of voter intimidation are not long ago and far away. Just last year I sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder to draw his attention to several disturbing instances of voter intimidation that had taken place in Houston. In a single week there were at least 15 reports of abuse of voter rights throughout the city of Houston.

As a Senior Member of the House Judiciary Committee, I called for an immediate investigation of these instances. Many of these incidents of voter intimidation were occurring in predominately minority neighborhoods and have been directed at African-Americans and Latinos. It is unconscionable to think that anyone would deliberately employ the use of such forceful and intimidating tactics to undermine the fundamental, Constitutional right to vote.

However, such conduct has regrettably occurred in Houston, and I urge you to take appropriate action to ensure that it does not recur.

I am here today in the name of freedom, patriotism, and democracy. I am here to demand that the long hard-fought right to vote continues to be protected.

A long, bitter, and bloody struggle was fought for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 so that all Americans could enjoy the right to vote, regardless of race, ethnicity, or national origin. Americans died in that fight so that others could achieve what they had been forcefully deprived of for centuries—the ability to walk freely and without fear into the polling place and cast a voting ballot.

Efforts to keep minorities from fully exercising that franchise, however, continue. Indeed, in the past thirty years, we have witnessed a pattern of efforts to intimidate and harass minority voters including efforts that were deemed “Ballot Security” programs that include the mailing of threatening notices to African-American voters, the carrying of video cameras to monitor polls, the systematic challenging of minority voters at the polls on unlawful grounds, and the hiring of guards and off-duty police officers to intimidate and frighten voters at the polls.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have a particularly poor track record when it comes to documented acts of voter intimidation. In 1982, a Federal Court in New Jersey provided a consent order that forbids the Republican National Committee from undertaking any ballot security activities in a polling place or election district where race or ethnic composition is a factor in the decision to conduct such activities and where a purpose or significant effect is to deter qualified voters from voting. These reprehensible practices continue to plague our Nation’s minority voters.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT HISTORY

August 6, 2011, marked the 46th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act.

Most Americans take the right to vote for granted. We assume that we can register and vote if we are over 18 and are citizens. Most of us learned in school that discrimination based on race, creed or national origin has been barred by the Constitution since the end of the Civil War.

Before the 1965 Voting Rights Act, however, the right to vote did not exist in practice for most African Americans. And, until 1975, most American citizens who were not proficient in English faced significant obstacles to voting, because they could not understand the ballot.

Even though the Indian Citizenship Act gave Native Americans the right to vote in 1924, state law determined who could actually vote, which effectively excluded many Native Americans from political participation for decades.

Asian Americans and Asian immigrants also have suffered systematic exclusion from the political process and it has taken a series of reforms, including repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, and passage of amendments strengthening the Voting Rights Act three decades later, to fully extend the franchise to Asian Americans. It was with this history in mind that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to make the right to vote a reality for all Americans.

And the Voting Rights Act has made giant strides toward that goal. Without exaggeration, it has been one of the most effective civil rights laws passed by Congress.

In 1964, there were only approximately 300 African-Americans in public office, including just three in Congress. Few, if any, black elected officials were elected anywhere in the South. Today there are more than 9,100 black elected officials, including 43 members of Congress, the largest number ever. The act has opened the political process for many of the approximately 6,000 Latino public officials that have been elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the state or federal level, 27 of whom serve in Congress. And Native Americans, Asians and others who have historically encountered harsh barriers to full political participation also have benefited greatly.

We must not forget the importance of protecting this hard earned right.

VOTER ID

An election with integrity is one that is open to every eligible voter. Restrictive voter ID requirements degrade the integrity of our elections by systematically excluding large numbers of eligible Americans.

I do not argue with the notion that we must prevent individuals from voting who are not allowed to vote. Yet a hidden argument in this bill is that immigrants may “infiltrate” our voting system. Legal immigrants who have successfully navigated the citizenship maze are unlikely to draw the attention of the authorities by attempting to register incorrectly. Similarly, undocumented immigrants are even less likely to risk deportation just to influence an election.

If for no other reason than after a major disaster be it earthquakes, fires, floods or hurricanes, we must all understand how vulnerable our system is. Families fleeing the hurricanes and fires suffered loss of property that included lost documents. Compounding this was the devastation of the region, which virtually shut down civil services in the area. For example, New Orleans residents after Hurricane Katrina were scattered across 44 states. These uprooted citizens had difficulty registering and voting both with absentee ballots and at satellite voting stations. As a result, those elections took place fully 8 months after the disaster, and it required the efforts of non-profits, such as the NAACP, to ensure that voters had the access they are constitutionally guaranteed.

We need to address the election fraud that we know occurring, such as voting machine integrity and poll volunteer training and competence. After every election that occurs in this country, we have solid documented evidence of voting inconsistencies and errors. In 2004, in New Mexico, malfunctioning machines mysteriously failed to properly register a presidential vote on more than 20,000 ballots. 1 million ballots nationwide were flawed by faulty voting equipment—roughly one for every 100 cast.

Those who face the most significant barriers are not only the poor, minorities, and rural populations. 1.5 million college students, whose addresses change often, and the elderly, will also have difficulty providing documentation.

In fact, newly married individuals face significant barriers to completing a change in surname. For instance, it can take 6–8 weeks to receive the marriage certificate in the mail, another two weeks (and a full day waiting in line) to get the new Social Security card, and finally three–four weeks to get the new driver’s license. There is a significant possibility that

this bill will also prohibit newlyweds from voting if they are married within three months of Election Day.

The right to vote is a critical and sacred constitutionally protected civil right. To challenge this is to erode our democracy, challenge justice, and mock our moral standing. I urge my colleagues to join me in dismissing this crippling legislation, and pursue effective solutions to the real problems of election fraud and error. We cannot let the rhetoric of an election year destroy a fundamental right upon which we have established liberty and freedom.

□ 1830

GOP FRESHMEN HOUR: THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL BUSINESS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARINO). Under the Speaker’s announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. ELLMERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

Mrs. ELLMERS. Mr. Speaker, I am here tonight with my colleagues to discuss the importance of small business in America.

Small businesses are our job creators in America, and we here in Congress must do everything that we can to help them to be doing exactly that in creating jobs in our country.

We’re here to talk about these issues. We’re here to talk about the burdens that are on small business that remain intact that we can help with. We must do everything we can because right now our small business hands are tied. They are telling us over and over again that regulations and the threat of taxation uncertainty continue to hold them back from creating jobs, innovating, and investing in their own companies.

With that, I yield to my colleague from Washington.

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER. I thank the gentlelady for allowing me the time to join her here today to talk about what this government can and should be doing to help the private sector grow jobs. That’s what we’re about. We want to help small businesses grow jobs.

This is a statistic most of us are familiar with. Close to two-thirds of all new jobs come from small businesses. They are truly the backbone of our economy. So what if this government started by saying, What can we do to help you, not hurt you or impede your success?