

have to have another fight, we can get the amendments in the bill to strengthen the bill, and we can move on, with the two parties together doing something that is right for the Nation. Why don't we do it?

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to my friend, I don't blame her for asking, but why in the world would we change settled law for 39 years in order to accommodate the minority's view on this bill, and to change, as I said, what has been the law of the land?

Since the Senator voted for this very language previously this year in the Judiciary Committee—since she co-sponsored it, I don't really understand it since she voted for the legislation that is referred to here that has that amendment. Does the Senator see this as breaking new ground? Is she trying to expand or eliminate the Hyde amendment?

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I see it for standing up for a principle. I know something about these girls. I know something about the history of abortion in this country. I am old enough to have gone through it and know that I don't want to go back to those days. I don't want young women who take the law now so much for granted to have to return back.

This is just one small step. There is nothing wrong with accommodating the minority on what is a relatively small point. In the House, 435 people over there didn't want it in. So why not accommodate the minority? The Senator just comes out a bigger person.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would say to my friend I appreciate her courtesy and her indulgence in having this conversation. I also feel on principle this limitation on tax dollars is an appropriate one. I understand the Senator disagrees and she would like to eliminate this from this point forward. But I am simply unable on principle to accommodate the Senator in that request.

As I said, I do appreciate her courtesy.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. I appreciate it, too. And I appreciate the discussion. Principle doesn't know minority and majority. Principle is deeply held.

I thank the Senator very much.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LEE). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, I support the Democracy Restoration Act. This important legislation would re-

store a voice in our democracy for millions of Americans who cannot vote simply because they have a criminal conviction. I thank Senator CARDIN for his leadership on this issue. I am honored to be an original cosponsor of this important criminal justice reform legislation.

The right to vote for all is a principle that goes to the very heart of all democracy. Voting is a fundamental right because it is the right from which all other rights derive. Participation in the political process is about giving a voice to the voiceless. It is about who we are as a Nation and whether we want citizens that contribute to our society to have a say in who represents them in the Federal Government.

The road to extend voting rights to all Americans has been long and not without bumps. Our country was founded at a time when African Americans were denied the right to vote. For over a hundred years, we silenced entire populations of Americans and deemed them unworthy of participating in the political process merely because of their race.

During his famous Gettysburg Address, President Lincoln called for the country to have a "new birth of freedom." After the Civil War, the States ratified the Civil War Amendments to the Constitution to honor President Lincoln's promise. One of those amendments, the Fifteenth Amendment, gave African Americans the right to vote. Decades later, the Nineteenth Amendment gave women suffrage.

Despite this progress, many States passed laws during the Jim Crow era to disenfranchise African Americans, including literacy tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses. These States also passed laws that banned people with certain convictions from voting. With the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many of these State disenfranchising laws were outlawed. But the ban on voting for people with certain convictions was not touched and it remains the law in many States.

Today, 35 States restrict voting rights of persons who were formerly incarcerated. In fact, felony disenfranchisement laws prevent 5.85 million Americans from voting. This is a staggering number of Americans that do not have a say in our political process.

Punishment is a legitimate goal of our justice system. But once someone has served their time and been released, we must help our fellow citizens get back on their feet. As President George W. Bush said in his State of the Union Address in 2004, "America is the land of second chance, and when the gates of the prison open, the path ahead should lead to a better life." To further punish people who are back in the community by denying them the right to vote counters the expectation that citizens have rehabilitated themselves after a conviction.

The Democracy Restoration Act would restore voting rights in Federal elections to millions of disenfranchised

Americans who have been released from prison. It would require prisons receiving Federal funds notify people about their right to vote in Federal elections upon leaving prison or being sentenced to probation. It would empower the Department of Justice and former offenders harmed by a violation of this legislation with the right to sue.

This bill corrects a civil rights wrong. It would sweep away the last vestige of Jim Crow laws. It would outlaw State disenfranchisement laws that have a disparate impact on racial minorities. It would provide a uniform standard to govern the restoration of voting rights.

This bill reforms the criminal justice system. Every year, over 600,000 people leave prison. We must find ways to reintegrate them back into the community. Civic participation gives ex-offenders a stake in government, which motivates law-abiding behavior and reduces the likelihood of future crimes. No evidence exists that denying voting rights to people after release from prison reduces crime. To the contrary, it makes sense that people who have paid their debt to society should reclaim their rights.

This bill builds off of the progress in the States. Recently, 8 States have either repealed or amended lifetime disenfranchisement laws. Two states expanded voting rights to persons on probation or parole. Ten States eased the restoration process for people seeking to have their right to vote restored after the completion of their sentence. The Federal Government should follow their lead.

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. This Congress can remedy the barriers to full citizenship faced by millions of formerly incarcerated people in our country, if this bill is enacted into law. Restoring the right to vote is good public policy.

To protect basic public safety and strengthen the core of our democracy, I urge my fellow Senators to support the Democracy Restoration Act and quickly pass this important legislation.

CONGRATULATING NANCIE ATWELL

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I wish to recognize the inspiring accomplishments of Nancie Atwell from Southport, ME, who was awarded the first Global Teacher Prize by the Varkey Foundation. This international, nonprofit organization is committed to improving the quality of education worldwide. Nancie's selection as the foundation's first ever prize recipient is a testament to her outstanding contributions to the teaching profession and her effect on countless students and teachers. The \$1 million prize was awarded at a ceremony in Dubai attended by former President Bill Clinton and Sheikh Mohammed