The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

PRAYER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Today's prayer will be offered by the Reverend Ed Sears, Grace Baptist Temple, Winston-Salem, NC.

The guest Chaplain offered the following prayer:

Let us pray together.

Our Father and our God, as we assemble today in the Senate Chamber, we do so with a keen sense of awareness of our special need of You. Our Nation has a rich history of Your many blessings, and we ask for those blessings to continue upon us. May Your presence be felt, and may Your hand of divine provision be realized.

In this awesome assembly today, give to each person wisdom and understanding for the times that are at hand. With the rich bounty of our history and the awesome opportunities of this present hour, may we move into this day with a special sense of Your call.

With our confidence in You and our responsibility to each other, we invite Your guidance and direction in the affairs of state this day. In times of debate and difference, may we remember that at the end of the day we are, indeed, "one nation under God."

Protect those who serve the cause of freedom around our world, especially those serving in our Armed Forces.

May the love of God the Father, the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus, and the communion of Thy spirit rest upon the Members of this Senate as they gather to conduct our Nation's business. In Jesus's Name, Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The President pro tempore. The Senator from North Carolina.

REVEREND ED SEARS

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, it is my honor and pleasure to welcome our guest Chaplain this morning, the Reverend Ed Sears of Winston-Salem, NC. Reverend Sears is from my hometown, and it is an honor to have him in Washington today blessing the Senate.

Reverend Sears is the senior pastor at Grace Baptist Temple in Winston-Salem. He has faithfully served Grace Baptist's congregation of over 1,000 members for the past 25 years. Reverend Sears first heard his call to serve in 1971 and has since used his faith to minister and lead. In addition to his service to his church and his community, Reverend Sears holds the distinction of blessing both the House of Representatives and the Senate. In 2003, Reverend Sears was the guest Chaplain in the House and now honors us this morning in the Senate. Grace Baptist Temple, the city of Winston-Salem, and I appreciate his faith and fellowship.

Reverend Sears has been happily married for 39 years. His wife's name is Linda, and they have three daughters, Kelly, Millicent, and Heather. I would also like to congratulate Reverend Sears on the newest addition to his family, his youngest granddaughter, Anna Claire Walker.

Mr. President, it is our privilege to have Reverend Ed Sears lead the Senate in its opening prayer.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The President pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

FANNIE LOU HAMER, ROSA PARKS, AND CORETTA SCOTT KING VOTING RIGHTS ACT REAUTHORIZATION AND AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2006

The President pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 9, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 9) to amend the Voting Rights Act of 1965;

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The President pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, this morning we are proceeding directly to H.R. 9, the voting rights reauthorization bill. We have a unanimous consent order that provides for up to 8 hours of debate today, although I do not expect all that time will be necessary. We will proceed to a vote on passage of H.R. 9 whenever that time is used or yielded back, and therefore that vote will occur sometime this afternoon, and I expect passage of that voting rights reauthorization bill.

There are several circuit and district court judges that will require some debate and votes today. We will have a unanimous consent agreement on those debate times shortly, and we will likely consider those judicial nominations following the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

We have been working on an agreement on the child predator legislation for a short debate and vote, which will occur today, and we hope to have that agreement as well.

Finally, we have an order to proceed to the child custody protection bill today, and we have Senators who would like to speak on this issue later today as well.

Having said that, the schedule will require votes over the course of the day—possibly into the evening—in order to finish. Although there is a lot to do and people have requested time...
to be set aside, I think a lot of that time can be yielded back over the course of the day and we will be able to complete the schedule as I have laid out.

In a few moments, after the chairman’s opening remarks to the Senate, I will return with an opening statement to the Voting Rights Act reauthorization. I will return with an opening statement as well. It has been a process we have expeditious in many ways because the importance and significance of this legislation is very clear. So I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you this morning and that we will be passing it later this afternoon.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Pennsylvania is recognized.

Mr. SPECTER. Are we prepared to proceed at this time with the consideration of the Voting Rights Act?

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. That is correct.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, this is a historic day for the Senate and really a historic day for America as we move forward with Senate action to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. This action, coming from the Judiciary Committee in our executive session yesterday and passed unanimously this morning, moves the Senate towards completion of this reauthorization today and for submission to the President and for the formal signing next week.

In an era where many have challenged the ability of the Congress to function in the public interests and in an era where there is so much partisan disagreement, it is good to see the two parties in the House and the Senate coming together to reauthorize this very important legislation. I thank and congratulate the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee for pulling together and moving ahead at this time, with a prodigious amount of work, to bring this important matter to the floor. The committee has proceeded with 9 hearings. We have had 46 witnesses. We have had 11 leading academics come to testify from such distinguished institutions as the Yale Law School, Stanford University, the University of Pennsylvania Law School, New York University Law School, and others.

The House of Representatives held 12 hearings to gather evidence on voting discrimination, featuring testimony from 46 witnesses.

We have had some of the leading luminaries in the Nation testify, such as Professor Chandler Davidson, coauthor of the landmark book on the Voting Rights Act “Quiet Revolution in the South”; Theodore Shaw, Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; Fred Gray, veteran civil rights attorney who began his career in the midst of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and has represented such civil rights leaders as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mrs. Rosa Parks.

We have been mindful in presenting these witnesses and compiling this record that the Supreme Court has required very extensive records. The Supreme Court struck down parts of the landmark legislation protecting women against violence because the Court disagreed with the congressional “method of reasoning.” It is a little harder to understand what the conclusion, but they have the final word. They have a test on the adequacy of the record; that it be congruent and proportional. It is sometimes hard to understand exactly what that test is, but what we are asking for is an extensive record in order to avoid having the act declared unconstitutional.

The bill which we will vote on today accomplishes many important items. First, it strengthens voting rights protections nationwide by allowing voters who successfully challenge illegal voting practices to recover reasonable expenses of litigation. Second, it extends the protections for voters with limited English skills for 25 years. Those voters will enjoy the protection of bilingual ballots and assistance at the polls. It also extends for 25 years the requirements that the Department of Justice preclear any voting change in certain covered jurisdictions where a history of past discrimination exists. The bill clarifies how the preclearance protections should work, guaranteeing that voting laws enacted with a discriminatory purpose never get enacted into law. So, it moves America in the right direction.

The benefits and effects of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 have been profound, to put it mildly. It is the political power of the minorities for whom the Voting Rights Act was designed who pushed the Congress forward a year in advance of the expiration of the Voting Rights Act, to move ahead and get this important job done early.

If you contrast 1964, before the Voting Rights Act was passed, with what is happening in America today, you see a different America. It is a different political reality. In 1964, there were only approximately 300 African Americans in public office, including just 3 in the Congress. Few, if any, Black elected officials came from the South. Today, there are more than 9,000 Black elected officials, including 43 Members of Congress. This is the largest number ever. Quite a record. The Voting Rights Act has opened the political process for many Black Americans who were engaged in the practice of disfranchising them.

This progress is especially striking in covered jurisdictions where hundreds of minorities hold office. In Georgia, for example, minorities are elected at rates proportionate to or higher than their numbers. In Georgia, the voting-age population is 27 percent African American. Almost 31 percent of its legislators are African American, and 26.5 percent of officials elected statewide are African American. Black candidates in Mississippi have achieved similar success. The State’s voting-age population is 34 percent African American. Almost 30 percent of its representatives in the State House and 25 percent of its delegations in the U.S. House of Representatives are African American.

The Congress of 1965 relied on evidence that Black registration was so dramatically lower than White registration that the differences could only be explained by purposeful efforts at disenfranchisement. Indeed, in some cases, the gap was 50 percentages. In Alabama, Black registration was just at 18 percent, and in Mississippi, a little over 6 percent. Today, in Alabama and Louisiana, Blacks are registered at approximately the same rate as White voters, and in Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Texas, Black registration and turnout in the 2004 election was higher than that of the Whites.

The Congress of 1965 relied on findings of the Federal courts and the Justice Department that the covered States were engaged in the practice of deliberate unconstitutional behavior. For example, the 1965 Senate report noted that Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi had brought over 880 covered jurisdictions where they had lost or were challenged to a suit brought against them, and in the previous 8 years, each State had eight or nine court suits find them guilty of violating the Constitution.

Today, the statistics paint a starkly different picture. Only six cases have ended in court ruling or a consent decree finding that one of the 880 covered jurisdictions had committed unconstitutional discrimination against minority voters. During that time, six cases have found that a noncovered jurisdiction committed unconstitutional discrimination against minority voters. In the data is focused on the last 11 years, the results are even more dramatic. Since 1996, only one case has ended in court suit brought against them, and it shows that discrimination has become more incidental and less systematic.

There is no doubt this improved record is a direct result of the Voting Rights Act. When we take a look at civil rights legislation generally, the Voting Rights Act is the most important part of our effort to give minorities—give all Americans—their full range of constitutional civil rights.

Let’s take a look at the activities of the three distinguished women for whom the Voting Rights Act has been named—Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer—we see the
enormous contribution which they have made. Mrs. King, the widow of pioneering civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., devoted a lifetime to opposing racism, whether the 1960s segregation Alabama or the 1980s apartheid in South Africa. Fortunately, she lived to see the progress America has made. Sadly, her husband, Dr. King, did not see that.

I recall, not too long ago, when Mrs. King came to the Senate, in the adjoining room to the Senate Chambers, and spoke about how much she felt about the issues of civil rights. She was a real heroine in America, to pursue the work of Dr. King.

Every American schoolchild knows the story of Miss Rosa Parks who, on December 1, 1955, refused to give up her seat to a white passenger. She explained her motivation simply:

People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically. I was tired emotionally of giving in.

Fannie Lou Hamer first learned that African Americans had a constitutional right to vote in 1962, when she was 44 years old. Ms. Hamer explained that, despite death threats and violence, she was determined to exercise her constitutional rights and said:

The only thing that they could do to me was to kill me, and it seemed like they had been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember.

So we come to this day in the Senate where we are on the verge of passing the Voting Rights Act, reauthorizing it as the House has done. The President will be speaking within the hour to the Senate. All the members of Congress in presenting him with this bill.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that additional materials be print

firmed that, in view of the proof of racial motivation and continuing racially discriminatory effect, the state law violated the Fourteenth Amendment.


African American plaintiffs in the City of Foley, Alabama, filed suit to require the City to adopt and implement a non-discriminatory annexation policy and to annex Mills Quarters and Beulah Heights. Foley also claimed that it violated section 5 and 2. As a result of negotiations, the parties entered into a consent decree. The decree required “a” prima facie violation of section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the United States Constitution.” Id. at p. 59.


The ACLU represented two voters who had been disenfranchised under a nearly 50-year-old law that had been struck down by the Supreme Court. The plaintiffs filed a complaint to challenge the majority black Second District, which the court then held was unconstitutional for the same reasons it had found the Eleventh Congressional District unconstitutional, and the legislature adjourned without adopting a congressional plan.

The Department of Justice precleared the photo ID bill on August 28, 2005. The ACLU filed a lawsuit in federal district court, charging the law violated the state and federal constitutional requirements, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The district court issued an injunction holding that plaintiffs had a substantial likelihood of succeeding on several grounds, including claims that the photo ID law was a poll tax and violated the Fifteenth Amendment. The court ordered that a seven-member district plan for electing trustees be used immediately because the districts were drawn with race as the predominant factor. The court held that the district court erred in failing to find unconstitutional intentional discrimination.


In 1997, four white plaintiffs filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the majority black county commission districts as racial gerrymanders in violation of the Shaw/Miller line of cases. In January 2001, the district court issued the consent decree. The Eleventh Circuit reversed, holding that the district court erred in failing to find unconstitutional intentional discrimination.

LOUISIANA


White plaintiffs successfully challenged Louisiana’s Fourth Congressional District as unconstitutional “race-conscious” redistricting. Id. at p. 481. The Supreme Court granted cert., but then dismissed the case for lack of standing.

NC


The 12th District of North Carolina was 57% black and was persistently challenged by white voters and its boundaries were considered by the Supreme Court four separate times. The ACLU participated as an amicus in defending the constitutionality of the 12th District. In 1996, the Supreme Court struck down the plan for the 12th District on the grounds that race was the “predominant” factor in drawing the plan and the State had subverted its traditional redistricting principles to race. Id.


While the ACLU did not challenge in 1995 challenging three state senate districts. A year later, another group of white voters filed suit challenging nine house districts. In both cases, the plaintiffs claimed that the districts were drawn with race as the predominant factor in violation of the Shaw/Miller line of decisions. The cases were consolidated for trial, and black voters, represented by the ACLU, intervened to defend the constitutionality of the challenged districts. Following a trial, a court issued an order in September 1996, finding that the challenged state districts and nine of the house districts unconstitutional because they were drawn with race as the predominant factor. Id.


Latino plaintiffs argued that the at-large election system diluted their votes. The parties agreed to a court order that eliminated the election scheme and defendants submitted a plan in which four trustees would be elected from single-member districts and three would be elected at large.

Plaintiffs objected and filed a plan in which all seven trustees would be elected from single-member districts. The court, applying Gingles and the totality-of-circumstances test, held that defendants’ plans violated section 2 and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The court ordered that a seven-member district plan for electing trustees be used immediately and the districts were drawn with race as the predominant factor.


In 1995, several African American plaintiffs challenged the Third Congressional District in federal court as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. In 1997, the district court invalidated the Virginia district, finding that the race had predominated in drawing the district and that the defendants could not adequately justify their use of race as a districting factor.


In July 1994, the ACLU filed suit on behalf of African American voters challenging the at-large method of city elections in the City of Newport News. On October 26, 1994, a consent decree was entered in which the City admitted that it had intentionally drawn section 2 as well as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The consent decree required the City to implement a racially fair election plan.

II. NON-COVERED JURISDICTIONS

DISCRIMINATING AGAINST VOTERS CALIFORNIA


Latino voters alleged that district lines for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors were gerrymandered to dilute their voting strength and create a Latino-majority district. The district court found that the State had not implemented section 2 as well as the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The court held that the City to implement a racially fair election plan.


Black plaintiffs claimed that the at-large election of county commissioners in Escambia County diluted their voting power in violation of section 2 and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The district court found that the State had not implemented the plan with a racially discriminative purpose; it had maintained it with such a purpose.


A group of Hawaiian citizens of various ethnic backgrounds sued the State of Hawaii alleging that the requirement that those appointed to the Hawaiian Affairs Commission be of Native Hawaiian ancestry violated the Fourteenth Amendment, the Fifteenth Amendment, and section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The Ninth Circuit found that the restriction on candidates running for Office of Hawaiian Affairs on the basis of race violated the Fifteenth Amendment as well as the Fourteenth Amendment. The Ninth Circuit vacated the district court’s judgment that the Fourteenth Amendment had also been violated because plaintiffs did not have standing to challenge the appointment procedures.

NEW MEXICO


The United States sued pursuant to sections 2, 12(d), and 203 of the VRA, alleging violations of the VRA and the 14th and 15th Amendments arising from Socorro County’s election practices and procedures as they affected Native American citizens of the county, including those Native American citizens who rely on whole or in part on the Navajo language. In its 1998 consent decree, the defendants did not contest that in past elections the county had failed to comply fully with the minority language requirements of Section 203 (of the VRA).""


The United States sued pursuant to sections 2, 12(d), and 203 of the VRA, alleging violations of the VRA and the 14th and 15th Amendments arising from Bernalillo County’s election practices and procedures as they affected Native American citizens of the county, including those Native American citizens who rely on whole or in part on the Navajo language. In its 1998 consent decree, the defendants did not contest that in past elections the county had failed to comply fully with the minority language requirements of Section 203 (of the VRA)."

NEW YORK


The United States sued pursuant to sections 2, 12(d), and 203 of the VRA, alleging violations of the VRA and the 14th and 15th Amendments arising from Town of Hempstead’s election practices and procedures as they affected Native American citizens of the county. The Town Board of Hempstead was chosen through at-large elections. African American voters alleged that they were unable to elect their preference candidates. The Board held that the at-large elections violated section 2 and ordered the Town to submit a six single-member district remedial plan. The Board preferred was a two-district system, consisting of one single-member district and one multi-member district. The other plan consisted of six single-member districts. The district court held that the two-district plan violated the Fourteenth Amendment, but the six-district plan did not. The Board appealed. The Second Circuit affirmed the election process as the court’s weighing that the Board’s proposed two-district plan violated section 2 and the Fourteenth Amendment because blacks had no access to the Republican Party candidate slateing process.

PENNSYLVANIA


Republican candidate for State Senate, Bruce Marks, the Republican State Committee and other plaintiffs challenged the election of Democrat William Stinson for the Second Senatorial District. Although Marks received approximately 500 more votes than Stinson in absentee voting, Marks and the other plaintiffs contended that Stinson
and his campaign workers encouraged voters to undermine proper absentee voting procedures and requirements, such as falsely claiming that they would be out of the county or wrongly unable to vote at the polls on Election Day. Plaintiffs also contended that Stinson and the other Defendants had focused their efforts to encourage illegal absentee voting on minorities.

The court held: (1) defendants violated plaintiffs' First Amendment rights of association because plaintiffs were denied the freedom to form groups for the advancement of political ideas and to campaign and vote for their chosen candidates; (2) defendants' actions denied plaintiffs' right to Equal Protection because defendants permitted a nonresident who the Chattanooga charter violated the Fourteenth Amendment; (3) Duffey v. Butts County Board of Commissioners: Civ. No. 92-98-COL (M.D. Ga.) (ACLU Report at 256-59).

Suit challenging districting plans for Board of Education and Board of Commissioners of Montgomery County, Alabama. The plaintiffs sought to enjoin the use of at-large elections for failure to comply with Section 5. The court held that the plan was an unconstitutionally malapportioned districting plan based on the principle of one person, one vote, and the one person, one vote requirement and agreed to the redistricting plan which had been created before the vote pooling provision. The plan was precleared by the Justice Department on August 15, 1993.

III. CONSTITUTIONAL VIOLATIONS NOT ADDRESSED BY THE DISTRICT COURT


The court held: (1) the district court erred in finding that the six single member districts contained majority black voting age populations; (2) Board of Trustees of Abbeville County School District No. 69, Civ. No. 492–145 (S.D. Ga.) (ACLU Rep. 235–49).
districts for the county board of commissioners and board of education were constitutionally malapportioned. “After the legislature failed to enact a remedial plan, the ACLU filed suit on behalf of black voters in Newton County in June 1992, seeking constitutionally apportioned districts for the commission and school board. The suit also sought to enjoin upcoming primary elections, scheduled for July 21, 1992, as well as the November 3 general election. The parties settled the case the following month and the court issued an order that ‘the 1984 district plan does not constitutionally reflect the current population.’”


Black constituents of the county, represented by the ACLU, filed suit in 1992 to enjoin upcoming elections under an allegedly constitutionally malapportioned plan. According to the ACLU report, “On October 14, 1992, the district court entered a consent order involving the board of Education, affirming that ‘Defendants do not contest plaintiffs’ allegations that the districts as presently constituted are malapportioned and in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution.’”


According to the ACLU report, “‘On October 5, 1993, black voters, represented by the ACLU, filed suit. They asked the court to enjoin elections for the school board and board of commissioners on the grounds that the districting plan for both bodies was either malapportioned in violation of the Constitution and Section 2, or had not been precleared pursuant to Section 5. Later that month, on October 29, the parties signed a consent order stipulating that the existing county districts were malapportioned, and agreeing on a redistricting plan containing five single member districts with a total deviation of 0.35%. Three of the five districts were majority black.’”


The ACLU brought suit in 1984 on behalf of black county residents charging that the five member board of county commissioners was malapportioned in violation of the Constitution and Section 2 of the VRA. The suit also charged defendants with failing to secure preclearance of a valid reapportionment plan under Section 5. According to the ACLU Report, “‘After plaintiffs moved for a preliminary injunction to block the 1984 board of commissioners election, a consent order was issued acknowledging that the districts were malapportioned, and instructing both parties to submit reapportionment plans to the court. . . . On February 27, 1985, after trial on the merits, the court ruled the challenged plan unconstitutional and directed the defendants to adopt a new plan and seek preclearance under Section 5 within 30 days.’”


After the release of the 1990 census, the ACLU brought suit on behalf of black plaintiffs, alleging that the county’s commission districts were malapportioned in violation of the constitutional principle of one person, one vote. On July 27, 1992, the district court entered a consent order finding “malapportionment in excess of the legally acceptable standard.”


After the 1990 census, the ACLU, on behalf of black residents, sued to enjoin further use of an allegedly constitutionally malapportioned districting plan. According to the ACLU report, “‘On July 7, 1992, the district court, finding that the existing plan was malapportioned, enjoined the July 1992 primary elections for the board of commissioners and board of education until such time as an election could be held under a court ordered or a precleared plan.’”


In September 1986, the ACLU filed suit on behalf of five black voters alleging that the county board of education was malapportioned. According to the ACLU Report, “‘On October 31, 1986, less than a week before the November general election, the court entered a consent order staying the elections, ordering a new apportionment plan, and providing for a special election. The court found that ‘Plaintiffs have established a prima facie case that the current apportionment of the Board of Education in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment,’ and required the defendants to develop and implement a new apportionment for the school board within 60 days.’”


The ACLU sued in August 2002, alleging that the county commission lines were malapportioned in violation of the Constitution and Section 2 of the VRA. According to the ACLU Report, “‘After plaintiffs filed suit, the county stipulated that its commission districts were malapportioned, and that ‘it is possible . . . to draw a five single member district plan with at least one majority black district in Telfair County.’ The plaintiffs then filed for summary judgment and asked the court to hold the existing plan unconstitutional and order a new plan into effect. . . . Ruling that the existing plan was malapportioned and ’violates the one person, one vote standard of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment,’ the court noted that the plan had been submitted for Section 5 preclearance and ruled the motion for summary judgment was ‘largely moot.’”


In June 1992, the ACLU filed suit on behalf of black voters challenging the malapportionment of the county board of commissioners under the Constitution and Section 2 of the VRA. According to the ACLU Report, “‘After the reapportionment suit was brought in 1992, defendants admitted the plan was malapportioned. . . . The parties negotiated a new redistricting plan, corrected the malapportionment, and created two effective majority black districts. Despite this agreement, the county proposed, and had the 1993 Georgia General Assembly adopt, a redistricting plan which plaintiffs did not support. . . . In February 1994, the Department of Justice precleared the county’s redistricting plan over the objections of the black community.’”


According to the ACLU Report, “‘In November 1994, the ACLU again brought suit on behalf of black voters in Soperton, challenging the five member city council as malapportioned in violation of one person, one vote. . . . A consent order was filed August 7, 1995, in which both parties agreed the city election districts were malapportioned, and adopted a districting plan with a total deviation of 6.8% that contained two majority black districts of 73.3% and 72.9% black voting age population, respectively.’”
# CASES FINDING SECTION 2 LIABILITY

Section 2 Cases From 1982 to the Present Published By Westlaw or Lexis or Included in House or Senate Record

<table>
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## SECTION 2 COURT VERDICTS
Section 2 Cases From 1982 to the Present Published By Westlaw or Lexis or Included in House or Senate Record

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### Jurisdictions Covered by § 5

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| Alabama       | 25          | 16                                 | 7 (43.8%)                       | 1) Buskey v. Oliver, 565 F. Supp. 1473 (M.D. Ala. 1983)  
  2) Brown v. Board of School Comm'rs., 706 F.2d 1103 (11th Cir. 1983)  
| Alaska        | 0           | 0                                 | 0 (0%)                           | n/a   |
| Arizona       | 3           | 1                                 | 0 (0%)                           | n/a   |
| Louisiana     | 17          | 9                                 | 5 (55.6%)                        | 1) Major v. Treen, 574 F. Supp. 325 (E.D. La. 1983)  
  2) Citizens for a Better Gretna v. Gretna, 834 F.2d 496 (5th Cir. 1987)  
  4) East Jefferson Coalition For Leadership & Dev. v. Parish of Jefferson, |
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<td>9) Teague v. Attala County, 92 F.3d 283 (5th Cir. 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10) Clark v. Calhoun County, 88 F.3d 1393 (5th Cir. 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1) Jackson v. Edgefield County, 650 F. Supp. 1176 (D.S.C. 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2) United States v. Charleston County, 365 F.3d 341 (4th Cir. 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6 (23.1%)</td>
<td>1) Sierra v. El Paso Ind. Sch. Dist., 591 F. Supp. 802 (W.D. Tex. 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2) Jones v. Lubbock, 727 F.2d 364 (5th Cir. 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Campos v. Baytown, 840 F.2d 1240 (5th Cir. 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1) McDaniels v. Mehlfoud, 702 F. Supp. 588 (E.D. Va. 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Collins v. City of Norfolk, 883 F.2d 1232 (4th Cir. 1989)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Covered Jurisdictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1) Smith v. Clinton, 687 F. Supp. 1310 (E.D. Ark. 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Total Suits (% of total nationwide suits)</td>
<td>Courts Reached Merits on Section 2 (% of total nationwide suits)</td>
<td>Holding State Violated Section 2 (% of cases that reached merits that held against state)</td>
<td>Cases</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>16 (All Non-Covered)</td>
<td>9 (All Non-Covered)</td>
<td>2 (All Non-Covered) (22.2%)</td>
<td>4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>21 (18 Non-Covered, 3 Covered)</td>
<td>16 (15 Non-Covered, 1 Covered)</td>
<td>3 (All Non-Covered) (18.8%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5 (50.0%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (25.0%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>5 (All Non-Covered)</td>
<td>4 (All Non-Covered)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Harvell v. Blytheville Sch. Dist. #5, 71 F.3d 1382 (8th Cir. 1995)
1) Gomez v. Watsonville, 863 F.2d 1407 (9th Cir. 1988)
2) Garza v. County of Los Angeles, 918 F.2d 763 (9th Cir. 1990)
1) Sanchez v. Colorado, 97 F.3d 1303 (10th Cir. 1996)
1) McMillan v. Escambia County, 748 F.2d 1037 (11th Cir. 1984)
3) Meek v. Metro. Dade County, 985 F.2d 1471 (11th Cir. 1993)
1) Arakaki v. Hawaii, 314 F.3d 1091 (9th Cir. 2002)
2) Ketchum v. Byrne, 740 F.2d 1398 (7th Cir. 1984)
2) Cane v. Worcester County, 35 F.3d 921 (4th Cir. 1994)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Total Suits (% of total nationwide suits)</th>
<th>Courts Reached on Merits on Section 2 (% of total nationwide suits)</th>
<th>Holding State Violated Section 2 (% of cases that reached merits that held against state)</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5 (20.0%)</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>1) Corbett v. Sullivan, 202 F. Supp. 2d 972 (E.D. Mo. 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (66.7%)</td>
<td>2 (66.7%)</td>
<td>1) Windy Boy v. County of Big Horn, 647 F. Supp. 1002 (D. Mont. 1986) 2) U.S. v. Blaine County, 363 F.3d 897 (9th Cir. 2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>1) Stabler v. County of Thurston, 129 F.3d 1015 (8th Cir. 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>26 (18 Non-Covered, 8 Covered)</td>
<td>15 (11 Non-Covered, 4 Covered)</td>
<td>1 (Non-Covered) (6.7%)</td>
<td>1) Goosby v. Town Bd. of Town of Hempstead, 180 F.3d 476 (2d Cir. 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6 (16.7%)</td>
<td>1 (16.7%)</td>
<td>1) Armour v. Ohio, 775 F.Supp. 1044 (N.D. Ohio 1991) Liability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road Island</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>3 (2 Non-Covered, 1 Covered)</td>
<td>3 (2 Non-Covered, 1 Covered)</td>
<td>2 (Non-Covered) (66.7%)</td>
<td>1) Bone Shirt v. Hazeltine, 336 F.Supp.2d 976 (D.S.D. 2004) 2) Cottier v. City of Martin, 445 F.3d 1113 (8th Cir. 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Total Suits (1% of total nationwide suits)</td>
<td>Courts Reached on Merits (1% of nationwide suits)</td>
<td>Holding State Violated Section 2 (1% of cases that reached merits that held against state)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECTION 2 SETTLEMENT CHART**

Section 2 Cases From 1982 to the Present Published By Westlaw or Lexis or Included in House or Senate Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Total Suits (% of total nationwide suits)</th>
<th>Parties Settled</th>
<th>Settlement Recognized Section 2 Violation (% of cases that Settled in which a Section 2 violation was recognized)</th>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Settlement Recognized a Constitutional Violation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationwide</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7 out of 25 (28.0%)</td>
<td>See below</td>
<td>See below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdictions Covered by § 5</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3 out of 9 (33.3%)</td>
<td>1. <strong>Alabama</strong>: Dillard v. Chilton Cty. Comm'n, 868 F.2d 1274 (11th Cir. 1989)</td>
<td>1. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Alabama</strong>: White v. Alabama, 74 F.3d 1058 (11th Cir. 1996)</td>
<td>2. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. <strong>North Carolina</strong>: Moore v. Beaufort County, 936 F.2d 159 (4th Cir. 2004) (Beaufort County — Covered Jurisdiction)</td>
<td>3. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Covered Jurisdictions</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4 out of 16 (25.0%)</td>
<td>1. <strong>North Carolina</strong>: N.A.A.C.P. v. City of Statesville, 606 F.Supp. 569 (W.D.N.C. 1985) (Iredell County — Non-Covered Jurisdiction)</td>
<td>1. No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>Ohio</strong>: Mallory v. Eyrich, 922 F.2d 1273 (6th Cir. 1991)</td>
<td>2. No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) The University of Michigan Law School’s Voting Rights Project reviewed every case on Westlaw or Lexis that addressed a Section 2 Claim since June 29, 1982, when Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act was amended. Researchers then located all related decisions and organized them by lawsuit. Within each lawsuit there were often multiple appeals and remands, and researcher determined which opinion provided the final word in a given series of litigation. Most often, the final word case in each lawsuit is the last case that assessed liability on the merits and determined whether Section 2 was violated.

If there was not a liability decision on Section 2, researchers coded the final word as the last published case in the lawsuit that made a determination for or against the plaintiff, including whether to approve a settlement, order a remedy, issue a preliminary injunction, or grant fees.

*Cottier v. City of Martin*, 445 F.3d 1113 (8th Cir. 2006), a case decided after the completion of the University of Michigan Law School’s Report on the Voting Rights Initiative, was entered into the Senate Judiciary Committee record on May 9, 2006, and is included in this chart.

2) On November 8 2005, the House Judiciary Committee held a hearing on “The Voting Rights Act –Section 203 Bilingual Election requirements.” Witness Bradley J. Scholzman attached as an appendix to his testimony copies of complaints, consent decrees and orders of enforcement actions filed by the United States under the language minority provisions of the voting rights act (section 4(e), 4(f)(4) and 203). See appendix at pgs 69-1381.

3) The Civilrights.org Network, a project of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund, produced a number of State Reports offering evidence in favor of an extension of the Voting Rights Act. The State Reports analyzed for this chart are Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, and Virginia. When these reports listed a successful Section 2 case, that case was compared with the list of cases provided in the University of Michigan Law School’s Voting Rights Project.
Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, it is with special thanks that I acknowledge Senator LEAHY’s leadership and cooperation, that I now yield to him.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Vermont is recognized.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, before I begin, I assume you will go back and forth, from side to side of the aisle on this. But as Democrats are recognized, I ask it be in this order: Senator KENNEDY for 20 minutes; Senator DURBIN for 15; Senator FEINSTEIN for up to 20 minutes; Senator SALAZAR for up to 15 minutes, as Democrats, are recognized. I ask unanimous consent to that.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I appreciate what the senior Senator from Pennsylvania said. Senator SPECTER and I have been friends for many years. I think we have accomplished a great deal in the Judiciary Committee. I agree with him this is the most important thing we will do. But I might also note, on a personal note about the Senator from Pennsylvania, much of what was accomplished during that time he was fighting a very serious illness. I compliment the Senator from Pennsylvania for his perseverance during that time.

The Voting Rights Act is the cornerstone of our civil rights laws. We honor those who fought through the years for equality by extending the Voting Rights Act to ensure their struggles are not forsaken and not forgotten, and that the progress we have made not be sacrificed. We honor their legacy by reaffirming our commitment to protect the right to vote for all Americans.

The distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts, who is on the floor, was in the forefront of this battle the first time around. He and his family, his late brothers, the President and brother Senator ROBERT KENNEDY—President Kennedy, Senator ROBERT KENNEDY, and now Senator EDWARD KENNEDY—have been in the forefront of the civil rights battle. This has been a personal thing for them. It has been a commitment that has spoken to the conscience of our Nation, and I applaud my friend from Massachusetts for what he and has family have done.

Reauthorizing and restoring the Voting Rights Act is the right thing to do, not only for those who came before—the brave and visionary people who fought for equality, some at great personal sacrifice, some even giving their lives—but also for those who come after us, our children and our grandchildren. All of our children, all of our grandchildren, should know that their right to vote will not be abridged, suppressed or denied in the United States of America, no matter what their religion, race, or whatever our American children, no matter what part of the country from which they come. I do thank the chairman for following the suggestion to convene the Judiciary Committee yesterday in special session to consider what really is bipartisan, bicameral legislation to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. In fact, our Senate bill, S. 2703, is cosponsored by the distinguished Republican leader and the distinguished Democratic leader, by a bipartisan majority of the Judiciary Committee and by a bipartisan majority of the Senate. In fact, at the end of our committee meeting yesterday, we had a rollcall vote. We voted unanimously to report our bill favorably to the Senate.

I mention that because so many of the things that have to go through the Judiciary Committee tend to be of a divisive nature. This was a unanimous vote. I have commended all those in the Judiciary Committee who worked so hard over the last several months to build a fair and extensive record and bring us to this point today. As I said earlier, I commend Senator KENNEDY for his work. I agree with Senator SPECTER, when he gets passionate about a subject he doesn’t need a microphone.

I commend those who started with doubts—and there were serious doubts; some regional, some for legal matters. But those who had doubts have now come around to supporting our bipartisan bill.

Because the bill we take up today and the bill from the committee to report are so similar, I know the Senate debate will be informed by the extensive record we have built before the Judiciary Committee. Over the last 4 months, we held nine hearings on all
aspects of this matter and on the over-all bill itself. In another indication of bipartisanship, those hearings were chaired by large numbers of members of the committee and chaired by both Republican and Democratic Senators who wanted to send a signal that this is not a partisan fight.

All of those hearings were fairly conducted. Those Senate hearings supplement those held in the House on this matter. Indeed, our first hearing was held in the express purpose of hearing from the lead sponsors from the House and to receive the results of their hearings into our Senate RECORD. In fact, in anticipation of this bill coming to the floor, I have included statements in the Record in the course of this week to help make sure we have a complete record before the Senate before we vote. For example, on Tuesday, my statement focused on the continuing need for Section 5. On Wednesday, my statement focused on the continuing need for Section 306. They reflect my views as the lead Democratic Senate sponsor.

We have fewer than two dozen legislative days left in this session of Congress, so I appreciate the willingness of the Bipartisan Senate Democratic Leadership to take up this important measure without delay. I know the House of Representatives had to delay consideration of the Voting Act for a month due to the recalcitrance of some, recalcitrant Senators, who overwhelmed the House in their vote. Here, I hope we do not suffer the same delay. This is a time for us to debate, consider, and vote on this important legislation. We should pass the bill in the same form as the House so it can be signed into law before the Senate recesses for the remainder of the summer.

There has been speculation about why we are here today. Some tied it to the fact that for the first time in his Presidency, President Bush is going to appear before the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the NAACP. I, for one, applaud him for going before the NAACP. All Presidents should, Republican or Democrat. And in fact, if that had anything to do with the success in getting this bill moved expeditiously through the Senate, I have a number of other organizations I hope will invite him to get other legislation moving.

The House-passed bill and the committee-reported bill is very similar. We introduced them in a bipartisan, bicameral, coordinated effort in May. The only change made to the House-passed bill was the inclusion of a governmental study added in the House Judiciary Committee. I gave the Senate to accept that addition.

The only change made during the Senate Judiciary Committee was to add an Hispanic civil rights leader to the roster of the civil rights leaders for whom the bill is named. We did this at the suggestion of Senator SALAZAR. It is a good suggestion. We did this unani-

As Senator SALAZAR has reminded us, “Cesar Chavez is an American hero. He sacrificed his life to empower the most vulnerable in America. He believed strongly in the democracy of America and saw the right to vote as a cornerstone of our freedoms. I offered the addition of Senator SALAZAR to the Judiciary Committee and it was adopted without dissent.

I told Senator SALAZAR that I recall the dinner with Marcelle and myself, our son Jesse, our wife Carolyn, and our granddaughter Francesca in the small Italian restaurant, Sarduca, in Montpelier, Vermont. A family next to us came over to introduce themselves. It was Cesar Chavez’s son. He apologized for interrupting our dinner. He wanted to say hello. I told him how proud I was to be interrupted and to meet him because his father had been a hero of mine. They were in Vermont because they were going to the Barre Quarry where the memorial to his father was carved.

I have also consulted with Senator SALAZAR. Neither of us wants to complicate final passage of the Voting Rights Act so I urge the Senate to proceed to the House-passed bill and resist amendments so it can be signed into law without having to be reconsidered by the House. With respect to the short title of the bill and the roster of civil rights leaders honored, I have committed to work with Senator SALAZAR to conform the law to include due recognition of the contribution to our civil rights and voting rights by Cesar Chavez in follow up legislation.

The Voting Rights Act reauthorization is named for three very important civil rights leaders, as the Senator from Pennsylvania pointed out.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a courageous advocate for the right to vote. She risked her life to secure the right to vote for all Americans. Coretta Scott King was a tenacious fighter for equality for the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and right up to the time of her passing. Many of us in this Chamber met the late Mrs. King. Everyone in the Senate can remember when less than a year ago the body of Rosa Parks lay in state in the Capitol. She was the first African American woman in our history to be so honored. She was honored because of her dignified refusal to be treated as a second-class citizen. She also sparked mass boycotts that are often cited as the symbolic beginning of the modern civil rights movement.

Everyone in this Chamber would be horrified to think that somebody would be treated differently because of the color of their skin, but in the lifetime of every Senator sitting in this Chamber today, we have seen such discrimination. Let’s make sure we take this step. It will not remove all discrimination, by any means, but it is a major step in which the country can know that all of us are equal as Americans with equal rights, despite the color of our skin.

Last week, after months of work, the House of Representatives, led by Congressmen JOHN CONYERS, MEL WATT, JOHN LEWIS, and Chairman SENSENBRENNER, rejected all efforts to reduce the sweep and effect of the Voting Rights Act. Congressman JOHN LEWIS anunciouncced to the Senate that he is a courageous leader during those transformational struggles only decades ago, a man who was nearly killed trying to retain the rights of African Americans, said during the House debate.

When historians pick up their pens and write about this period, let it be said that those of us in the Congress in 2006, we did the right thing. And our forefathers and our foremothers would be very proud of us. Let us pass a clean bill without any amendments.

That is my friend JOHN LEWIS from the House of Representatives. I want our foremothers and forefathers to be proud of us, but I want our children and our grandchildren to be proud of us, too.

The bill we are considering in the Senate today pass by a margin of 390 votes in favor. In fact, the other body rejected all four amendments offered. They wanted to have a clean bill. They listened to JOHN LEWIS. They listened to the others. I congratulate the House cosponsors, both Republicans and Democrats, for their successful efforts. I hope we can repeat them in the Senate.

On May 2, when our congressional leadership joined together on the steps of the Capitol to announce a bipartisan and bicultural introduction of the Voting Rights Act, it was a historic announcement. I noted in my journal it was one of the proudest moments I had in my years in the Senate, an occasion almost unprecedented during the recent years of partisanship.

Let’s not relent in our fight for the fundamental civil rights of all Americans. Working together, we should pass a clean bipartisan voting rights bill. Congress has reauthorized and revitalized the act four times, each time with overwhelming bipartisan support, pursuant to our constitutional powers. This is not a time for backsliding. This is a time to move forward together.

So let us unite to renew this cornerstone, let us re dedicate ourselves to its noble purpose, and let us commemorate the many who suffered and endured to bring our cherished ideals closer to reality for millions of our fellow Americans. Let us guarantee those rights for millions of our fellow Americans to come.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BURNS). The Senator from Tennessee.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore of the Senate, Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, it was about 3 weeks ago that I joined President Bush on a trip to Memphis, TN, where we were joined by a close personal friend of mine, a man who is legendary in Tennessee and, indeed, throughout the country, the Rev. Dr. Ben Hooks.

Dr. Hooks is a widely recognized, widely acknowledged champion of civil
rights. He presided with great courage and bold vision over the NAACP for 15 years as its executive director. He is in town this week for the NAACP meeting which is going on as I speak.

He guided President Bush and myself, my wife, Barbara, and the First Lady as we walked through the remarkable and inspiring National Civil Rights Museum which has been constructed at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, which was the actual site of Martin Luther King, Jr.,’s assassination. It was an inspiring visit, those of us who are on the conscience modern how we as a Nation pushed through that time, how we as a Nation persevered to correct injustice just as we have at other points in American history.

It reminded me of our ability to change, that when our laws become destructive to our unalienable rights—life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness—it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it. It reminded me of the importance, the absolute necessity, of ensuring the permanence of the changes we make, the permanence of our corrections to injustice.

About 2 years ago, in the spring of 2004, Senator MCCONNELL and I came to the Senate and offered an amendment to extend the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act permanently. However, at the insistence of a number of my colleagues we withdrew our amendment, made clear that we were absolutely committed to renewing this important piece of legislation. Indeed, that day has come.

A few months ago, I stood with Speaker HASTERT, Chairman SPECTER, and Chairman SENSENIBRENNER on the steps of the Capitol where we re-affirmed at that time our commitment to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. Thus, I am pleased this Congress will act to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. Indeed, today, right now, the United States is doing just that.

We expedited it through committee under the leadership of Chairman SPECTER so we could bring it to the Senate as quickly as possible. We will complete that action in a few hours today.

Today, the Senate is standing together to protect the right to vote for all Americans. We stand together, putting aside partisan differences, to ensure discrimination at the voting booth remains a relic of the past. We are working for a day when equality is more than a principle upon which our laws are founded, a day when equality is a reality by which our society is defined. We are working for the day when our equality, our oneness, is reflected not only in our laws but in the hearts and minds of every American.

I hope and pray the day will come when racism and discrimination are only a part of our past and not our present.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 enshrined fair voting practices for all Americans. The act reaffirmed the 15th amendment to the Constitution, which says that:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

The Voting Rights Act ensured that no American citizen and no election law of any State could deny access to the ballot box because of race, ethnicity, or language minority status. It took much courage and sacrifice to make that Enforcement Act into law, the courage and sacrifice of leaders such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., Congressman JOHN LEWIS, to name a few.

They paved the way to end discrimination and open the voting booths for millions of African Americans and other minorities who were previously denied the right to vote.

In the 41 years—yes, it has been 41 years—since then, we have made tremendous progress. Thousands upon thousands of minorities have been registered to vote. Minorities have been elected to hold office at the local level, at the State level, and the Federal level in increasing numbers.

In short, the Voting Rights Act has worked. It has achieved its intended purpose. We need to build upon that progress by extending expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act today. We owe it to the memories of those who fought before us, to those people right now, are reflected in those words of Dr. Hooks that we heard as we traveled through that Civil Rights Museum, and we owe it to our future—a future where equality is a reality, a reality in our hearts and in our minds, not just the law—to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for this critical legislation. I look forward to the President signing it into law.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDENT. The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I rise to speak on the Voting Rights Act, and I thank my colleague from Massachusetts who was here before me for allowing me to now speak briefly on this particular issue.

The right to vote is quite literally the bedrock of the representative democracy we enjoy today. We must enable American citizens to fully participate in the process if we are to truly be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is central, and it is central that everybody is given that right in equal regard.

The importance of the Voting Rights Act cannot be underestimated. It has transformed the face of our Republic and vindicated the noble values of our Nation. America has made tremendous progress in the last four decades, and it is my hope that the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act will help us to continue to extend the promise of democratic participation to every American.

We cannot have racial discrimination in this democracy, a bipartisan majority of Congress passed, and President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The aim of the act generations ago was to fulfill the democratic promise of the Civil War amendments to the Constitution—a promise left unmet for a century after that terrible war had ended.

The civil rights landscape has greatly improved in the country since 1965, thanks in great part to the Voting Rights Act. The act has resulted in a tremendous increase in the ability of millions of citizens and fair and equal, and the right to participate in our political system, both as voters and as candidates. The number of minority legislators has grown substantially.

I am pleased to be a cosponsor of the pending Voting Rights Act reauthorization bill which the Judiciary Committee reported out unanimously yesterday. This bill recognizes the achievements of many and particularly of three champions of the civil rights movement and in the freedom trails of the bus rides and in the protests, about the importance that the VRA was to them, was to getting involved, and is central in getting everybody participating in the democracy and a true opportunity to register and actually vote. It was and is critical. It is critical that we extend it.

I also want to recognize and thank the Senator from Massachusetts for the central role his family has played in voting for this particular language, this legislation. And it is important.

Out of a strong desire to achieve this goal of everybody participating equally in this democracy, a bipartisan majority of Congress passed, and President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The aim of the act generations ago was to fulfill the democratic promise of the Civil War amendments to the Constitution—a promise left unmet for so long after that terrible war had ended.

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Mr. President, I am delighted to be a cosponsor of this bill. I urge my colleagues to pass it. I believe it will pass overwhelmingly.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, this is an historic day. In the quietness of the moment, on the floor of the Senate, we are talking about a major piece of legislation that is basic to the fabric of what America is all about. But the quietness does not belie the fact that this is a momentous piece of legislation that marks the continuation of this Nation as a true democracy.

I want, at the outset, to commend my friends and leaders on the Judiciary Committee, Senator SPECTER and Senator LEAHY. I can remember talking with both of them early on about putting this on the Senate agenda, putting it on the Judiciary Committee agenda, and not two Members of this body who are more committed to this legislation than Chairman SPECTER and Senator LEAHY.

We are here today because of their leadership and their strong commitment to the spirit of making sure that America is going to be America by insisting on the extension of this voting rights legislation. They have both been tireless during the course of the series of hearings that we have held. They have been meticulous in terms of determining the circumstances that we would have and in building the legislative record, which is so important and of such great consequence in terms of maintaining the constitutionality of this legislation, which is, of course, so important. So I thank both of them for their leadership and their generous references earlier during their statements.

Mr. President, the Constitution of the United States is an extraordinary document, the greatest charter that has ever been written in terms of preserving the rights and liberties of the people. Still, slavery was enshrined in the Constitution. And this country has had a challenging time freeing itself from the legacy of slavery. We had a difficult time in fighting the great Civil War. And we have had a challenging time freeing ourselves from discrimination—all forms of discrimination—but particularly racial discrimination. And we have denied a difficult time, particularly in the early 1960s, in passing legislation—legislation which could be enormously valuable in freeing a country from the stains of discrimination. But it takes much more than just legislation to achieve that.

It was fortunate enough to be here at the time we passed the 1964 civil rights bill that dealt with what we call public accommodations. It is difficult to believe that people were denied access to public accommodations—the ability to go to restaurants, bars, other places because of the color of their skin—in the United States of America.

Mr. President, this legislation was debated for 10 months. Not just 1 day, as we all have today on voting rights, but for 10 months, the Senate was in session as we faced a filibuster on that legislation.

Then, finally, Senator Everett Dirkson responded to the very eloquent pleas of President Johnson at that time and indicated that he was prepared to move the legislation forward and make some adjustments in the legislation. We were able to come to an agreement, and the law went into effect.

In 1965, we had hours and hours and hours and hours during the course of the markup of the Voting Rights Act, and hours and hours and hours on the floor of the Senate to pass that legislation, with amendment after amendment after amendment. We were ultimately successful. And just off the Senate Chamber, in the President’s Room—just a few yards from where I am standing today—President Johnson signed that historic bill.

Now, we continue the process. It has not always been easy during the continuation and the reauthorization of the Act. Rarely have we been as fortunate as we are today with the time agreement and the agreement that we are going to finalize this evening, in a way that will avoid a contentious conference with the House of Representatives that could have gone on for weeks and even months, as we’ve seen in the past. This legislation will go to the President’s desk, and he will sign it.

There is no subject matter that brings out emotions like the issue of civil rights. That is, perhaps, understandable. But it is still very true. No issue that we debate—health care, education, increasing the minimum wage, age discrimination, environmental questions—whatever those matters are, nothing brings out the emotions like civil rights’ legislation.

But here we have a very important piece of civil rights legislation that is going to be favorably considered, and I will speak about that in just a few moments. We have to understand, as important as this legislation is, it really is not worth the paper it is printed on unless it is going to be enforced. That is enormously important. As we pass this legislation and we talk about its importance, and the importance of its various provisions, we have to make sure we have an administration and a Justice Department that is going to enforce it. That has not always been the case.

Secondly, it is enormously important that we have judges who interpret the legislation the way we intended for it to be interpreted.

We have, in this situation, a bipartisan interpretation. We have a bicameral interpretation. There should be no reason that any court in this country—particularly a Supreme Court that is looking over its provisions—should not understand very clearly what we intended, the constitutional basis for it. We need judges who are going to interpret this in good faith. That has not always been the case, and I will reference that in terms of my comments.

Then, we have to make sure that we have a Justice Department that, even if we have the legislation, and even if we have a Justice Department correctly interpret it, and even if we have judges correctly interpret it, we have to make sure there are not going to be other interferences with any individuals’ ability to vote. That has been a subject for another time, but enormously important.

We need all of those factors, at least, to make sure that this basic and fundamental right, which is so important, and which we are addressing today, is actually going to be achieved and accomplished for our fellow citizens.

Mr. President, we are, as I mentioned, poised to take another historic step in America’s journey toward being the land we all know, the battle for racial equality in America is far from over. The landmark civil rights laws that we have passed in the past four decades have provided a legal foundation, but the full promise of these laws has yet to be fulfilled.

Literacy tests may no longer block access to the ballot box, but we cannot ignore the fact that discrimination is sometimes as plain as ever, and that new forms of discrimination are plotted in back rooms, to be imposed by manipulating redistricting boundaries to dilute minority voting strength, or by systematic strategies on election day to discourage minority voting.

The persistence of overt and more subtle discrimination makes it mandatory that we reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act. This act is perhaps Congress’s greatest contribution to the march toward equality in our society. As Martin Luther King, Jr., said, voting is “civil right number one.” It is the right in our democracy that preserves all others. So long as the vote is available and freely exercised by our entire citizenry, this Nation will remain strong and our other rights will be protected.

For nearly a century, the 15th amendment guaranteed that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” but it took the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to breathe life into that basic guarantee. And it took the actions of many brave men and women, such as those who gathered at the Edmund Pettis Bridge and faced the shameful violence of those who would deny them the right to vote, before the Nation finally acted.

I’m honored to have fought in the Senate for the Voting Rights Act each time it was before Congress—from its historic passage in 1965 to the votes to extend the act in 1970, 1975, and 1982.
and to strengthen it along the way. I recall watching President Lyndon Baines Johnson sign the 1965 act just off this chamber in the President's Room. We knew that day that we had changed the country forever. And indeed we did. In 1965, there were only three African-American Members of Congress. Today, there are 41 African-American Members in the House of Representatives, one African-American Senator, 22 Latino House Members, and two Latino Senators. That could not have been possible without the Voting Rights Act.

I recall extending the expiring provisions of the act in 1970. I remember extending it again in 1975, and adding protections for citizens who needed language assistance. We recognized that those voters warranted assistance because unequal education resulted in high rates of illiteracy and low rates of voter participation in those populations.

And I recall well extending the act again in 1982. That time, we extended the expiring provisions of the act for 25 years and strengthened it by overturning the Supreme Court's decision in Mobile. That decision weakened the act by imposing an intent standard pursuant to section 2 of the act, but despite the opposition of President Reagan and his Department of Justice, we were able to restore the act's vitality by replacing that standard with a new test that provides greater protection for victims of discriminatory treatment.

Finally, in 1992, we revisited the act to extend and broaden its coverage of individuals whose English language ability is insufficient to allow them to participate fully in our democratic system.

In memory of Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King, and Cesar Chavez, I feel privileged to have the opportunity to extend the act once again for another 25 years.

Some have questioned whether there is still a need for the act's expiring provisions. They even argue that discrimination in voting is a thing of the past, and that we are relying on decades-old discrimination to stigmatize certain areas of the country today.

I have heard the evidence presented over the past few months on many hearings, and I can tell you that they are just plain wrong. Yes, we have made progress that was almost unimaginable in 1965. But the goal of the Voting Rights Act was to have full and equal access for every American regardless of race. We have not achieved that goal.

In considering this bill, the Senate Judiciary Committee has held nine hearings and heard from some 46 witnesses. In addition, we have received numerous written statements and have voted on reports from a variety of groups that have examined the state of voting rights in our Nation. We have explored every aspect of the expiring provisions of the act, and have all come to one inescapable conclusion: continuing discrimination requires that we pass this bill and reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. The evidence demonstrates that far too many Americans still face barriers because of their race, their ethnic background or their language minority status.

Section 5 is the centerpiece of the expiring provisions of the act. It requires that covered jurisdictions preclear voting changes with the Department of Justice or the District Court in the District of Columbia by proving that the changes do not have a retrogressive purpose or effect. The act would reverse the second Bossier Parish decision and restore the section 5 standard to its original meaning by making it clear that a discriminatory purpose will prevent section 5 preclearance. Even under the weaker standard that has governed since the Bossier decision, the Department of Justice has had to object to egregious discriminatory practices.

The act as reauthorized also overturns the Supreme Court's decision in Georgia v. Ashcroft, restoring section 5's protection of voting districts where minority voters have the voting power to elect their preferred candidates. This revision would preclude jurisdictions from replacing districts in which minority voters have the voting power to elect their preferred candidates with districts in which minority voters merely exercise influence.

The number of objections under section 5 has remained large since we last reauthorized the act in 1982. Astonishingly, Professor Anita Earls of the University of North Carolina Law School testified that between 1982 and 2004, the Department of Justice lodged 682 section 5 objections in covered jurisdictions compared with only 481 objections prior to 1982. In Mississippi alone, the Justice Department objected to 120 voting changes since 1982. This number is roughly double the number of objections made before 1982.

Behind these statistics are stories of the voters who were able to participate in the political process because the Voting Rights Act protects their fundamental right to do so. For example, in 2001, the town of Kilmichael, MS, cancelled its elections just three weeks before election day. The Justice Department, in an effort to impose a photo identification requirement for voting. The first time, the district court threw it out as an unconstitutional poll tax. That's right, a poll tax in 2006. In 1965, we fought the poll tax during the debate on the original Voting Rights Act. After the Supreme Court ultimately held it unconstitutional, we thought this shameful practice had ended. But the court found that the Georgia law was just a 21st century version of this old evil.

Georgia reenacted the law without the poll tax, and the Court still found that it unlawfully disadvantaged poor and minority voters, who are less likely to have the required identification.

Recently, the Supreme Court held that the Texas Legislature had violated the Voting Rights Act by drafting 100,000 Latino voters out of a district just as they were about to defeat an incumbent and finally elect a candidate of their choice. Once again, section 5 would have blocked this practice, but the leadership of the Department of Justice overruled career experts who recommended an objection.

The fact that the number of section 5 objections is a small percentage of the total number of submissions shouldn't be surprising. Jurisdictions take section 5 objections seriously. Few jurisdictions contesting voting changes and many day-to-day changes are noncontroversial. What should surprise and concern us is

Consider the Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors in Virginia. It moved a polling place from a club with a large African-American membership to a white church on the other side of town, under the pretext that the church was more centrally located. We saw this three years ago when we signed the act in 1970. We didn't expect to see it again in on the eve of the 21st century, but we did.

Some have argued that there has been a drop in the number of objections in recent years. As the record shows, this decline is explained by a number of reasons. First, of course, the Supreme Court's restrictive interpretation of the purpose standard, which we will correct today. In addition, the numbers do not account for proposed changes that are rejected by the district court or proposed changes that are withdrawn once the Department of Justice asks for more information or litigation begins in the District Court.

Equally as important are the discriminatory changes the act has deterred covered jurisdictions from ever enacting, and the dialog the act promotes between local election officials and minority community leaders to ensure consideration of minority communities' concerns in the legislative process.

And, of course, there are matters that merit objection, but have been precleared by the Bush Department of Justice because the Department's political leadership refused to follow the recommendations of career experts.

The Department twice precleared Georgia's effort to impose a photo identification requirement for voting. The first time, the district court threw it out as an unconstitutional poll tax. That's right, a poll tax in 2006. In 1965, we fought the poll tax during the debate on the original Voting Rights Act. After the Supreme Court ultimately held it unconstitutional, we thought this shameful practice had ended. But the court found that the Georgia law was just a 21st century version of this old evil.

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the fact that there continue to be objections and voting changes like the ones that I have described.

It has also been argued that the section 5 coverage formula is both over and under-inclusive. The act addresses that problem by allowing jurisdictions where Federal oversight is no longer warranted to "bail out" from coverage under section 5. We have letters from two of the jurisdictions that have taken advantage of the bailout process. The act contains a mechanism by which a court may order a non-covered jurisdiction found to have violated the 14th or 15th amendments to obtain section 5 preclearance for its voting changes. As a result, the act’s preclearance requirement applies only to jurisdiction where there is a history of such oversights. The courts will also authorize the provisions of the act that mandate the provision of election assistance in minority languages. In the course of our consideration of this bill, we heard substantial evidence demonstrating that these are still necessary.

The original rationale for enactment of these provisions was twofold. First, there are many Americans who speak languages other than English. and 52 percent of all Hispanic Americans speak from a different perspective than some. I was born in the South in 1944, educated in its public schools in the 1950s and 1960s. I was in the fourth grade when Brown v. Board of Education was the ruling of the Supreme Court. I was in high school when the public schools of Atlanta were integrated. I was a student at the University of Georgia when the first students integrated that institution. I lived through all the changes that many refer to as segregation that institution. I lived through all the changes that many refer to as history about which they have read.

I lived through it, being there and seeing the heroes and the challenges and the transition through which the South has gone. Still, in speeches today we hear very often about the South in historic times, where wrong practices have been righted, but somehow not quite over the past 41 years have made not only the letter of that law but the spirit of that law the spirit of our State. The time has come to renew the Voting Rights Act. This historic piece of legislation renews our commitment to the fundamental values of America. It ensures that all of our citizens will have the right to play an effective role in our democracy.

The act is having an impact. We know that despite the act, racial bloc voting and other forms of discrimination continue to tilt the playing field for minority voters and candidates. We know that jurisdictions know that the act will be in force for a sufficiently long period that they cannot simply wait for its expiration, but must eliminate discrimination root and branch.

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The act will also reauthorize the provisions of the act that mandate the provision of election assistance in minority languages. In the course of our consideration of this bill, we heard substantial evidence demonstrating that these are still necessary. The original rationale for enactment of these provisions was twofold. First, there are many Americans who speak languages other than English, and Hispanic Americans—suffer from inadequate educational opportunities that deny them the opportunity to be full participants in our democracy because of the languages they speak. They know they need to learn English to succeed in this country. That’s why classes to learn English are oversubscribed all over the country.

Additionally, Congress concluded that many Americans—including Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Puerto Ricans. These Americans should not be denied the opportunity to be full participants in our democracy because of the languages they speak. They know they need to learn English to succeed in this country. That’s why classes to learn English are oversubscribed all over the country.

Finally, it is crucial that we extend the guarantees of all the temporary provisions of the act for 25 years. Twenty-five years is not a long time when compared to the centuries of oppression that the law is intended to overcome. While we have made enormous progress, it takes time to overcome the deep-seated patterns of behavior that have denied minorities full access to the ballot. Indeed, the worst thing we could do would be to allow that progress to slip away because we ended the cure too soon. We know that when the act expires we know that it is deterring discrimination. And we know that despite the act, racial bloc voting and other forms of discrimination continue to tilt the playing field for minority voters and candidates.

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I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, the right to vote is the most basic right in any democracy. At the signing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 in this very Capitol Rotunda, the President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, said these words:

The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a critical breakthrough in the struggle for civil rights. However, the Voting Rights Act, which came the next year, 1965, is considered the most important and successful civil rights law of the 20th century, because it finally ensured every citizen of this Nation a voice in his or her own fate.

The passage of the 14th amendment in 1868 and the passage of the 15th amendment in 1870 both prohibited disenfranchisement on the basis of race. But the legislation to protect the right to vote, that right was systematically denied to millions of African Americans for nearly a century. Similarly, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Alaskan Natives were excluded from the ballot box through an assortment of voting tests and intimidation.

We are all here today because of the courage and persistence of the civil rights leaders of the last century, who fought so long and hard to attain the franchise the Constitution had already granted them.

Several of these heroes are remembered in the title of this bill: Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Cesar Chavez. All of us owe them a debt of gratitude.

On this day, I am also mindful of the contributions Californians have made in the civil rights battles. Let me share one story.

On June 10, 1964, the Civil Rights Act was scrapped in the Senate. On this very floor. No filibuster of a civil rights bill in the 20th century had ever been broken. Senator Claire Engle of California, who held the seat I now occupy, asked the President, the right to vote is the most basic right in any democracy. At the signing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 in this very Capitol Rotunda, the President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson, said these words:

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In the last 50 years, California has often been ahead of the curve in guaranteeing voting rights. In 1961, California granted minority voting test day challenges based on literacy.

In 1971, California required that a copy of the election ballot in Spanish be posted in each polling place, where the language minority population was greater than 3 percent.

In 1973, California passed a law allowing the use of languages besides English in polling places and required county clerks to recruit bilingual deputy registrars and precinct board members.

In 1975, California allowed voters to register to vote by mail.

In 2001, California passed the California Voting Rights Act—the first State voter empowerment act in the Nation—to combat racial bloc voting.

Unfortunately, however, the end of the 20th century did not mark the end of efforts to disenfranchise minority voters in my State and the Nation. Several provisions of the Voting Rights Act will expire in August of 2007 if we don’t take this action today.

Two of the provisions set to expire are particularly significant. The first is section 5, which requires jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to clear any changes in voting procedures with the Department of Justice before instituting any change.

The second is section 203, which requires language assistance for bilingual voters in jurisdictions with a large number of citizens for whom English is a second language.

The section 5 so-called “preclearance” provision is critically important. I guess this is the section that has drawn the most comment on this reauthorization. It is important because it stops attempts to disenfranchise voters before they can start, not after they start.

In the last decade, the Department of Justice has repeatedly struck down proposed changes to voting procedures under section 5 preclearance. This section has prevented the redrawing of municipal boundaries designed specifically to disenfranchise minority voters. It has removed minority candidates from the ballot, denied efforts to change methods of elections intended to dilute minority voting strength, kept polling places from being moved to locations that would have reduced minority voter turnout, and it has thrown out redistricting proposals that would have marginalized minority voters. Clearly, this section has served us well.

In California, the rejection of a discriminatory redistricting plan in Monterey County in 2002 led to the first election of a Latino to the Monterey County Boards of Supervisors in more than 100 years.

The most significant impact of section 5, I believe, is not from its enforcement mechanism but from its deterrent effect. Just as the presence of police deters more crime than is stopped by actual police intervention, it is likely that the threat of Government enforcement prevents dozens to disenfranchise voters than the Department of Justice’s review actually does.

Let me speak about section 203. Its requirement of language assistance in jurisdictions with a large number of citizens for whom English is a second language has enabled citizens to vote who otherwise, frankly, could not have.

For example, a study found that in the 1990 general election, bilingual assistance was used by 18 percent of Latino voters in the State of California.

Los Angeles is the largest and most diverse local election jurisdiction in our country. It provides assistance under the Voting Rights Act to voters in languages other than English.

According to a November 2000 exit survey of language minority voters in Los Angeles and Orange County in California, 54 percent of Asian-American voters and 48 percent of Latino voters reported that language assistance made them more likely to vote. That is actual documentation.

In a hearing before the Judiciary Committee on the impact of section 203, the registrar and county clerk for Los Angeles County, testified that written translations are provided in Los Angeles County because of the complex nature of issues facing the voters in our State. I can tell you that California ballots are among the longest and most complicated in our Nation. She explained to our committee that California often presents voters with numerous, complex ballot initiatives and propositions. Such complicated ballots are designed to be read and understood by native speakers of English to understand the language has enabled citizens to vote.

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Often, a high level of English proficiency is needed even by native speakers of English to understand these ballot initiatives and to cast an informed ballot. I myself have trouble sometimes understanding the propositions. I believe the California experience is persuasive that appropriate targeted language assistance makes it much more likely that informed voters vote, and that is important.

My mother was an immigrant from Russia. She came here when she was a small child. She had only a primary school education. Her family was very poor. Her parents never spoke English. She studied English and, as an adult, passed the language exam and became a naturalized citizen. Still, when it came time to vote, I helped her with her ballot. We would go over the propositions. I would read them in English, which led to the discussion, she could never fully understand them because they were complicated and filled with legalese.
As I said, California’s ballots can be long, and despite ballot simplification, which is now a part of the California ballot, they can still be very confusing. Section 203 enables the full comprehension of a ballot, and I believe that is very important.

We are reauthorizing this bill today. I don’t believe we can permit these provisions to expire and leave the next generation of Americans without full protection of their voting rights. That is why I am very proud to be a co-sponsor of the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Cesar E. Chavez Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.

This legislation will reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act for an additional 25 years so that it can continue to be a kind of deterrent to any chicanery, any manipulation, anyone’s ill intent to prevent any group of voters from exercising their right to vote. The Judiciary Committee, has held 10 hearings on reauthorizing this act—10 hearings. As a matter of fact, I can’t remember any reauthorization in the 14 years I have been on the committee that has had 10 separate hearings. The exhaustive testimony from these hearings has confirmed both that these expiring provisions are still needed and that these provisions are constitutional.

In response to this record, yesterday the Judiciary Committee unanimously voted to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. I was also pleased to see the House pass the reauthorization last week with broad, bipartisan support. Today, this full Senate now has the opportunity to offer its own resounding endorsement of this very important bill.

I especially thank Senator LEAHY for offering an amendment on my behalf in the committee that incorporated the name of Cesar E. Chavez, a true American hero, into the title of the Senate’s reauthorization bill.

Like the venerable American leaders who are now associated with this effort, Cesar Chavez sacrificed his life to empower the most vulnerable in America. He fought for all Americans to be included in our great democracy. It is only fitting that his name be a part of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

As we move forward, I believe incorporating the names of these historic American leaders underscores the importance of reflecting on the history of our country and our never-ending—not yet completed—quest to become a more inclusive America.

When one looks back at our history, one learns some very painful lessons from that past. We must keep in mind that for the first 250 years of our history allowed one group of people to own another group of people under a system of slavery simply based on the color of their skin. It took the bloodiest war of our country’s history, even more bloody than World War II—the Civil War, where over half a million people were killed on our soil in America—to bring about an end to the system of slavery and to usher in the 13th and 14th and 15th amendments to our Constitution. In my estimation, judicial and congressional efforts, the bedrock of the proposition that all constitutional liberties are endowed upon all Americans without exception. But it took many long years for the promise of these amendments to be realized in our own Nation.

Notwithstanding the tremendous loss of blood and life during the Civil War, some years later, in 1896, in Plessy v. Ferguson, our own U.S. Supreme Court sanctioned a system of segregation and the doctrine of “separate but equal.” The Court’s decision to uphold an 1890 Louisiana statute mandating racially segregated but equal railroad carriages ushered in another dark period in our country’s history. This law was the law of the land throughout the South. Similar laws applied to other groups. Throughout the Southwest, Mexican Americans in many places were systematically denied access to “White Only” restrooms and other places of public accommodation. Just as there were signs that said “No Blacks Allowed” in the South, there were also signs in many places across our country that read “No Mexicans Allowed.”

In the now infamous Plessy case, Justice Harlan, writing for the dissent in that case, looking ahead at the century to come, made the following observation:

The destinies of the races, in this country, and in the world, are bound together, and the interests of both require that the common government law shall not permit the seeds of race hate to be planted under the sanction of law.

Justice Harlan’s statement was profound in its forecast for America. It is unfortunate that his words of warning were largely ignored for the next half century. It was not until 1920, for example, that our Constitution ever guaranteed the right of women to vote, and it was not until 1954 that the U.S. Supreme Court, under the very able leadership of Chief Justice Warren, struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine as unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment in the Board of Education case. That case was argued by Thurgood Marshall, another American hero who gave his life for equal opportunity for all Americans.

More hard-won change followed that 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court.

While the 15th amendment, which was ratified in 1870, guaranteed all citizens the right to vote regardless of race, in 1965—that wasn’t that long ago—only a very small percentage of African Americans were registered to vote in States such as Mississippi and Alabama. In Mississippi in that year, only 6.7 percent of African Americans were registered to vote, and in Alabama less than 20 percent were registered to vote.

The various tactics that were used back then to impede and discourage people from registering to vote and casting their right in our democracy on election day ranged from literacy tests, poll taxes, and language barriers, to overt intimidation and harassment. The Voting Rights Act went on to attack those discriminatory practices in
people’s exercise of their fundamental right to vote.

On August 6, 1965, when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, America took a critical step forward in fulfilling our constitutional promise of equal rights for all Americans.

Just a year earlier, President Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 proclaiming that in America, as he said:

We believe that all men are created equal, yet many are denied equal treatment. We believe that all have certain unalienable rights, yet many Americans do not enjoy those rights.

President Johnson knew then what we still recognize today on this floor of the Senate:

The enactment of both of these critical pieces of legislation in the 1960s was another major step forward in our country’s journey to become an inclusive America for all citizens—for all citizens—and enjoy the rights and protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

When he recalled the day when the Voting Rights Act was signed by President Johnson, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wisely pointed out that:

The bill that lay on the polished mahogany desk where a stubborn sheriff had stumbled against the future.

Dr. King was, of course, referring to Bloody Sunday, the Selma incident which took place on March 7, 1965, where more than 500 nonviolent civil rights marchers attempting a 54-mile march to the State capital to call for voting rights were confronted by an aggressive and violent assault by the authorities.

In response to the violence in Selma and the death of Jimmy Lee Jackson, who was shot 3 weeks earlier by a State trooper during a civil rights demonstration, President Johnson addressed Congress and the Nation on March 15, 1965, to press for the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Indeed, President Johnson’s speech served as a rallying call to the Nation and to the Congress. In that speech, Lyndon Johnson said to the Nation:

At times history and fate meet at a single time and point in man’s unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama, where a stubborn sheriff had stumbled against the future.

The greatness of this country depends on our learning and not forgetting the painful lessons of our past, including poll taxes and literacy tests that prevented countless of individuals from exercising their right to vote. I believe the United States, the Federal Government must remain vigilant in safeguarding all Americans’ sacred right to vote.

Our work is not yet done. Although significant advances to ensure voting rights for all Americans have been made, the testimony presented before the Senate Judiciary Committee points to still an unfortunate truth: that Americans are still too often being kept from the polls.

Mr. President, I know the distinguished Senator from Virginia is going to be recognized, but I understand the presiding officer will schedule a quick housekeeping issue.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I know the distinguished Senator from Virginia is going to be recognized, but I have a quick housekeeping issue.

The distinguished chairman, the distinguished Senator from Pennsylvania, and I want to make sure we go back and forth, side to side. So following the distinguished Senator from Virginia, we will hear from the distinguished Senator from North Dakota. Following the next Republican, I ask unanimous consent that the distinguished Senator from Illinois, Mr. DURBIN, be recognized for 15 minutes.

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

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I compliment the distinguished Senator from Colorado for his speech. I mentioned him earlier in my speech on the floor and his tremendous contribution to this bill. We can all agree the time to end discrimination is still here, and we can work to do that.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Virginia is recognized.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. President, I rise to commend the Judiciary Committee but most importantly commend to my colleagues on the passage of the Voting Rights Act renewal.

I spoke right before Independence Day last month on June 29 on the importance of certain principles as we celebrated the Declaration of Independence, and I will quote again the importance of this document which is the spirit of America:

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed. . . .

So in our representative democracy, in our Republic, voting is how the owners, the people of our country in exercise, vote. It sends a strong signal to all the citizens to vote. It sends a strong signal to all the citizens to vote.

I spoke on how it was important for the Senate to act on this measure as promptly as possible and I asked the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator SPECTER, and the ranking member, Senator LEAHY, for moving yet another important piece of legislation this session. The enactment of the Voting Rights Act was absolutely necessary 41 years ago during a tumultuous time in our Nation’s history. History has proven, though, that this law was just and clearly appropriate to provide equal opportunities and protections to persons with the desire to express themselves and give their consent at the ballot box. We are all better off—we are so much better off—for the choices made during that time because this strengthened the fabric of our country. It has made our country a more perfect union—and as we strive to be a more perfect union, it has made us stronger as we have faced the challenges of recent years, presently, and in the future.

What this legislation does is help ensure the fundamental right of all eligible citizens to vote. It sends a strong message, a renewal, a reaffirmation that no matter one’s gender, race, ethnicity or religion, you have an opportunity to vote if you are a law-abiding citizen in this country. It is the core— it is absolutely the core of a representative democracy, that we do have the participation of an informed people. Again, the people are the owners of the Government.

Virginia has come a long way. They have come a long way because the Constitution said: You have the right to vote, but we all know that not everyone did have the right to vote. It took many years before African Americans were allowed to vote. But there were all sorts of devices that prevented them from voting. It took many years before women were given the right to vote. Virginia has come a long way.
since the Voting Rights Act was enacted 41 years ago. I think it is important that the Act is reauthorized, not just for Virginia but throughout the United States. It applies everywhere from Florida to Alaska to New York.

Some will argue that our 11 counties and cities in Virginia that have been able to stop the Voting Rights Act by proving that “no racial test or device has been used within such State or political subdivision for the purpose or with the effect of denying or bridging the right to vote on account of race or color.” The counties in Virginia that have been removed from this pre-clearance review are Augusta, Fredericksburg, Shenandoah, and Warren and the cities of Fairfax, Harrisonburg, and Winchester.

The reauthorization of this act does not mean that the reauthorizing States still engage in voter discrimination on the basis of race. Renewal should instead be viewed as a continued unflagging commitment to ensuring the protection of a law-abiding person’s right to vote without undue or guaranteed interference.

Thanks in part to the Voting Rights Act, Virginia was the first State in our Union to popularly elect the first Governor who is an African American. I understand that it is not for the taking. Mr. President, I just this morning spoke to a couple of hundred young people called Junior Statesmen who are gathered in the Capitol. It is an organization that comes to the Capitol and learns about Government. I talked to them about the Voting Rights Act some, and I talked to them about what we take so much for granted in this country, including the right to vote.

I described what happened, at least as I read the history books, on November 15, 1917. That day was the day on which a great number of women were died beaten at the Occoquan Prison. Seven near dozen women were picked up because they demonstrated in front of the White House. They were arrested for demonstrating, because they were in the streets demonstrating, insisting that women ought to have the right to vote in this country. Because they demanded the right to vote, demonstrating in the streets of this country today in I, they were arrested and taken to the Occoquan Prison. Among those women were Lucy Burns and Alice Paul.

The description of what they did to those women includes putting handcuffs on Lucy Burns, tying the handcuffs with a chain, and then putting the chain above a cell door and letting her hang the entire evening, with blood running down her arms. That was the fate of Lucy Burns. Alice Paul had a tube forced down her throat. They tried to force feed Alice Paul and she nearly drowned. The transgression of these women: They were demanding the right of women to vote.

It is interesting what some people have done to demand the right of citizenship and what others so often and so regularly take for granted.

My colleague was talking, I believe, about the struggle that minorities in this country, including especially African Americans, have made to have the right to vote. On that day, in 1965, that day on March 7 in 1965, when State troopers mistreated the marchers, all the power of all the Senate and the House of Representatives, all the power of all the Senators—the power of one person to cast one vote on one day to alter the destiny of this country.

Except we have learned over time that some have been denied that opportunity: African Americans, American Indians, women. It has taken a long time and a bloody struggle, regrettably, to make certain that everyone has the right to exercise the power of one vote to become part of “we the people.”

My guess is that the spirit of Lucy Burns and Alice Paul exists in this debate about voting rights. The spirit of
the civil rights marchers who were beaten brutally—one lost his life on that bloody Sunday—their spirit exists as this Congress turns again to the subject of voting rights and asks the question: Will we do everything possible to ensure that every American is able to exercise the fundamental right that we appreciate and treasure to vote, they don’t have the most basic right that we appreciate and treasure as American citizens.

On the day that President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, he said it was one of the most monumental laws in the history of American freedom. And then he said:

"Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that’s ever been won on any battlefield. It is a major shackle of fierce and ancient bonds."

Those beautiful words were quoted in the autobiography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They are a reminder that what we are about today is not just another piece of legislation. It is only 12 or 13 pages, small by Senate standards—but what it does is make another commitment by our generation to the same basic values and principles that guided this Congress to pass the first Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In August of last year, I was invited to Atlanta, GA, to represent my caucus of the Senate to march with civil rights leaders and ordinary people to celebrate the 40th anniversary of that Voting Rights Act. I was proud to march in the footsteps of civil rights giants, to celebrate a bill that has often been called the most significant civil rights law ever passed by Congress.

It has broad support today. Yesterday, in my Senate Judiciary Committee it passed unanimously, with a bipartisan vote. That is a great tribute to that committee and where America’s thinking is today on Capitol Hill. The bill was signed in 1965. People died for that law. Civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and so many others were murdered simply because they had the courage to step up and say every American has the right to vote.

It has been so long ago, it sounds like ancient history, and you may be puzzled to think: People would give their lives? Ordinary people would die over this, over this battle? The answer is yes. Mr. Chairman, because Americans came forward and said it was worth dying for because it really was the cornerstone of America’s democracy.

Just a few years ago, I made a trip downtown, my first step to Selma, AL. When the civil rights march at Selma took place, I was a student here in Washington. I sat around in my apartment with several other students and we talked about getting in a car and driving down to Selma and being part of that historic march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, but I missed it and regretted it ever since.

Three years ago, Congressman John Lewis, from the State of Georgia, invited me, Senator Brownback of Kansas, and others on a little commemorative pilgrimage to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Early one Sunday morning we got up and drove over to Selma and John Lewis and Sam Brownback and I walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

John Lewis was the perfect person to bring us on that pilgrimage because he had been there on that bloody day when the first march took place. When we went there on that Sunday morning, it was quiet and peaceful. But he marched us down to the very spot where the Alabama State Troopers turned and started beating him—heartbreakingly. He fell to the ground and nearly died. But he survived and that cause survived and today John Lewis is a Congressman.

What does that have to do with this debate? Just last week, Congressman John Lewis spoke in the House about the history of the Voting Rights Act, and how it has led to new voters and psychologically, new people.

Selma is a shining moment in the conscience of man. If the worst in American life lurked in the dark streets of Selma, the best of American democratic instincts arose from across the nation to overcome it.

What powerful and hopeful words.

It is wrong for us to equate racism and prejudice with the South in America. Sadly, it has touched every corner of our great Nation. Every one of us in our towns and communities and villages, North and South, East and West, have struggled with some form of racism in the course of our history.

In the 1960s, Illinois fielded its first African-American candidate, a woman named Fannie Jones from East St. Louis, IL, my hometown, who ran for clerk of the Illinois Supreme Court. She lost. It wasn’t even close. But she was the first to try to run statewide.


Now bring it to the present day, and I am honored that my State, Illinois, the land of Lincoln, can claim that the two biggest vote getters in its history are African Americans: my close friend, Secretary of State Jesse White, and my colleague, in whom I have such great pride, BARACK OBAMA the two biggest vote getters in the history of Illinois. It says a lot about how far we have come just in my short political lifetime. It is good for us to reflect on that and to value what John Lewis and his courage meant to America and so many others and why this bill at this moment is important for America. We honor the legacy of civil rights heroes by extending the Voting Rights Act provisions that would expire in just a short time.

The bill itself is named after three extraordinary civil rights heroes: Coretta Scott King, who continued her husband’s leadership of America’s movement for racial justice and human rights; Rosa Parks, what a brave lady, who ignited the Montgomery Alabama bus boycott; and Fannie Lou Hamer, the sharecropper who became a civil rights champion. She was nearly beaten to death trying to register to vote. And her famous declaration? Fannie Lou Hamer said, ‘I’m sick and tired of giving blood, but some of my colleagues gave their very lives.

It is good for us to reflect on that and to value what John Lewis and his courage meant to America and so many others and why this bill at this moment is important for America. We honor the legacy of civil rights heroes by extending the Voting Rights Act provisions that would expire in just a short time.
Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to reauthorize this bill. Today, the Members of the Senate have an opportunity to make history by passing this strong, bipartisan extension of the Voting Rights Act. A lot of people think this began that it was unnecessary. Voting rights? Where is that a problem in America, they said? I wish it were not a problem.

Listen again to what Congressman JOHN LEWIS of Georgia said last week:

Yes, we have made some progress. We have come a distance. We are no longer met with bullwhips, fire hoses, and violence when we attempted to register and vote. But the sad fact is, the sad truth is, discrimination still exists, and that is why we still need the Voting Rights Act. . . . We cannot separate the debate today from our history and the past we have traveled.

We had hearings before the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, more hearings than I have ever seen on any single piece of legislation: 21 hearings on the Voting Rights Act over the past 9 months, 12 in the House, 9 in the Senate. Over 100 witnesses appeared or submitted statements for the RECORD, thousands of pages of reports and evidence could be no question about the need for this bill.

I attended and listened to some of these hearings. They were contentious. People were debating whether we needed a Voting Rights Act or whether this was some vestige of America’s past which had no relevance today. But the evidence shows that attempts at voter discrimination are not simply a chapter from our history; they continue to threaten us and our democracy today.

A recent example was in the State of Georgia which passed two different voter ID laws over the past year, over the strong objections of the African Americans who live in that State. They argue that new Georgia law would diminish the voting rights of the minorities, the poor, the elderly, and those without formal education. Both of Georgia’s laws were struck down by Federal courts. The first law was determined to constitute a modern day poll tax, an unconstitutional infringement on the fundamental right to vote. The second law, slightly improved, was struck down last week by a Federal judge who ruled it was discriminatory and unconstitutional.

This is what the New York Times said recently about “Georgia’s new poll tax,” as they call it:

In 1966, the Supreme Court held that the poll tax was unconstitutional. Nearly 40 years later, Georgia still is charging people to vote, this time with a new voter ID law that requires many people without driver’s licenses which are disproportionately poor, black, and elderly—to pay $20 or more for a state ID card. Georgia went ahead with this even though there is not a single place in the country where the cards are sold. The law is a national disgrace.

And a reminder that laws which we now look back on with embarrassment, laws that required African Americans to pay a poll tax before they could vote, laws which had literacy tests and constitutional tests before a person can vote, and say: That is the past; thank goodness it is behind us. This Georgia law that we are trying to strike down last week by a Federal court system, a new poll tax.

Unfortunately, it is part of a pattern. Since 1982, the Federal Justice Department has objected to nearly 100 proposed changes to election procedures in Georgia alone on the grounds that the changes would have a discriminatory impact on minority voters. The Justice Department has sent Federal observers to monitor nearly twice the number of elections in Georgia since 1982 as it did between 1965 and 1982.

Let me add again, though I am giving examples from Georgia, I do not stand alone. As I have noted, and as this record of history demonstrates, the south has a problem. We have a problem.

I want to pass, but I don’t want the conversation to end at that point. I hope we will accept the responsibility to challenge any State and to examine ourselves if we are creating unnecessary and unfair obstacles to voters who are trying to exercise the most basic right they have as Americans.

Whether you are Republican, Democrat, or Independent, we need to be united in supporting the Voting Rights Act. This law, above all others, should be above politics and partisanship. We need to make sure that today in the Senate, we are all on the right side of history. The Voting Rights Act has served as a beacon of our democracy for over 40 years. It should not be allowed to expire until voting discrimination has expired.

When it passed in 1965, it was because of the moral and physical courage of people such as Congressman JOHN LEWIS of Georgia, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and so many others. Passing the Voting Rights Act also required the persistence and courage of Members of Congress.

No one in the Senate pushed longer and harder for voting rights for all Americans than a man named Paul Douglas of Illinois. My connection to the Senate began as a college student in 1966, a year after this law passed. I was an intern in the office of Senator Paul Douglas. I had the privilege to work in his office. I guess I was lucky in that he needed me every day. I cannot say that every often for an intern, but he needed me because Senator Douglas was a veteran of the Marine Corps, fought in World War II, and had lost the use of his left arm in combat. He insisted on signing every letter, so they would tell the mail that had been typed by all the people in his office, and Senator Douglas would sit at the long table, starting
at 5 o’clock, signing the letters, making little notes, making corrections. I got to sit next to him and pulled the letters away. I was dazzled. There I was within a foot or two of this great man who had done so much.

He was then fighting the war to fight for the rights of those who were being discriminated against. He gave a lot of political blood in the Senate fighting for civil rights. If you read the LBJ books, stories of Lyndon Baines Johnson, you know that in the early 1950s, when he was in the Senate, he emerged as the great champion of the civil rights that he was in his late career, he was in pitched battle with the likes of Estes Kefauver, Hubert Humphrey, and Paul Douglas over the issue of civil rights, but the day finally came in 1965 when the Voting Rights Act passed. Senator Paul Douglas said it was his proudest achievement as a Senator.

Today, American troops are risking their lives—and many have given their lives—to fight for the right to vote for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. The absolute least we can do is to have the courage to protect the right to vote for all Americans by giving resounding, bipartisan support to the renewal of the Voting Rights Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Graham). The Senator from Kentucky.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act has brought back a lot of memories of my early life and childhood. When I was born in the Deep South, in Alabama, segregation, regrettably, was still very much in vogue. I remember all too well segregated restrooms, segregated entrances into movie theaters, and segregated schools which still existed when I started in the first grade in the late 1940s.

I subsequently lived with my parents in Alabama for a few years. Then we moved to Louisville, KY, about this time Kentucky was integrating its schools in response to the 1954 landmark decision Brown v. Board of Education. Integration in public schools in Kentucky was smoothly accomplished. I think a tribute to our State which is somewhat southern and somewhat a border State. Kentucky accommodated itself to a new reality of integrated schools rather easily with the minimum amount of some of the distress that occurred in other parts further South and actually in some northern cities as well.

In the early 1960s, I had an opportunity to be an intern over on the House side in 1963. I was here that summer when the extraordinary march on Washington occurred. I remember standing on the steps of the Capitol, looking down the Mall to the Lincoln Memorial. It was crowded with people from one side to the other all the way down to the Lincoln Memorial which, of course, our Martin Luther King Jr. made that extraordinary “I Have a Dream” speech. I couldn’t hear it because I was at the opposite end of the Mall, but you sensed that you were in the midst of an extraordinary event that was going to change America.

That night, I had an opportunity to watch the speech on television. You knew it was one of the most memorable speeches of all time in American history.

The next year, I had a chance to be an intern on the Senate side, in Senator John Sherman Cooper’s office. Senator Cooper was probably the only truly successful Kentucky Republican politician in our point in history in our State. He was among the members of the Republican Party leading the charge for the public accommodations bill of 1964, that is, the civil rights bill of 1964 which, interestingly enough, on a percentage basis, was supported by more Republicans in the Senate than by Democrats. I think not many Americans know that, but that was, indeed, the case. A higher percentage of Republicans supported the civil rights bill of 1964 than did Democrats.

I had a wonderful summer observing Senator Cooper at work when he was, in effect, leading the charge on the Republican side, along with Everett Dirksen, to stop the longest filibuster in the history of the Senate—and it is still the longest filibuster—that was employed against the civil rights bill of 1964. That filibuster was broken while I was an intern that summer. It was an exciting time. The bill was passed and President Johnson signed it.

The next summer after I finished my first year of law school, I came back to Washington to visit some of the friends I had made in the two previous summers, for a week or so. I happened to be in Senator Cooper’s office on the day President Johnson was to sign the 1965 Voting Rights Act in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Senator Cooper came out, grabbed my arm in the reception room of his office, and walked me over to the Rotunda where I got an opportunity to watch President Johnson sign the voting rights bill. The Rotunda was full of people. I was not exactly standing beside President Johnson—I was off to the side. I do recall the presence of President Johnson. He was an enormous man. Not only was he very tall, he had a huge head, huge features, and he sort of stood out above this mass of humanity in the Rotunda of the Capitol. And so it was, indeed, a memorable day. I have been there the day the original voting rights bill was signed.

This is a piece of legislation which, obviously, has worked. African-American voters are participating through their elected leaders. The governors and younger people in this group, all of us, whether we are African Americans or not.

Mr. President, obviously, I rise today in support of this bill.

America’s history is a story of ever-increasing freedom, hope, and opportunity for all. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 represents one of this country’s greatest steps forward in that story.

Our most basic founding ideal is that sovereignty flows from the people to their elected leaders. The governors must have the consent of the governed.

In order for that ideal to mean anything, every American must have freedom of political expression—including the free, unfettered right to vote.

But prior to the Voting Rights Act’s passage, for far too many African Americans, America did not live up to its promise that “all men are created equal.” Many African Americans were denied the right to vote.

Thanks to brave men and women who held sit-ins at lunch counters, rode in Freedom Rides, marched in our Nation’s capital, or simply refused to give up a seat on a bus, America was forced to look itself in the mirror, admit its failing, and recommit itself to its founding ideals.

I am especially proud to stand in support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act because, as I said, I was there when President Johnson signed the original Act in 1965. I was overwhelmed when witness such a moment in history, and moved that my hero, Senator Cooper, at the spur of the moment, had brought me to witness it.
It fills me with personal pride that I can today carry on a small part of Senator Cooper’s legacy by voting to reauthorize the bill he worked so hard and so courageously to pass 41 years ago.

The Voting Rights Act has proved to be a landmark law. On March 15, 1965, President Johnson spoke before a joint session of Congress and challenged them to pass this historic legislation.

At that time, he said:

“The time of justice has now come, and I tell you that I believe sincerely that no force can hold it back . . . and when it does, I think that day will brighten the lives of every American.

History has proven President Johnson correct. The Voting Rights Act brought about greater justice for all. And while we celebrate that achievement, we must continue to strive for more.

I know my colleagues will join me in recognizing that our country will and must continue its progress toward a society in which every person, of every background, can realize the American Dream. With the passage of this bill, we advance that Dream.

I believe I am safe in predicting this legislation will be approved overwhelmingly this afternoon, and it is something all Members of the Senate, on both sides of the aisle, can feel deeply proud of having accomplished.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arkansas.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Voting Rights Act. I have in my pocket here a small copy of the U.S. Constitution that Senator Byrd gave me a few months ago. It is something I cherish.

In February of 1870, the Constitution was amended with the 15th amendment. It says, in section 1:

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Section 2 says:

The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

That was passed in 1870. Just a few years after the close of the Civil War, the 15th amendment was added to the Constitution. But it took this Congress really 95 years before it acted, in a meaningful way, to implement that second section which allows Congress to implement this law.

I am reminded that in the last 50 years we have made a lot of progress when it comes to race relations in this country. We have opened doors. We have provided opportunities. We have changed things. It has really been a remarkable change for the better. However, I think every Senator would acknowledge today that there are still miles that need to be traveled. I know that when Lyndon Johnson rallied the Nation to support the passage of the Civil Rights Act back in 1965, he said:

This time, on this issue, there must be no delay, no hesitation and no compromise with our purpose. We cannot, we must not, refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that he may desire to participate in.

Five months after the march in Selma, AL, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law. The Voting Rights Act, in that context, in that time, put an end to literacy tests, poll taxes, and other less direct methods to prohibit or discourage people from voting. They were clearly discriminatory tactics used all over this country but in the South particularly.

In the South, after the Voting Rights Act passed in 1965, African-American registrants went from just 6 percent to a staggering 60 percent within just a few years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

It has been an amazing success. When it was enacted, there were only 300 African-American public officials in this country. Today, there are over 9,000. And the number of Latino elected officials is over 6,000.

So there is no doubt the Voting Rights Act is important, that it has been very effective. I do not doubt that it is one of the most important things Congress has done to equalize and give opportunity to all Americans. It is also—there is no question about it—just as important today as it was four decades ago.

I know the NAACP national convention is being held in Washington this week. I know they are very supportive of this. There are countless civil rights groups and organizations that are supportive of the Senate’s efforts to reauthorize, and restore this act. I appreciate that, and I respect that. But also, in a broader context, this vote today allows us to stand not just with the NAACP, but with civil rights groups but to stand with America. We have made, as I said, significant strides. We have done some great things, provided a lot of opportunity, opened a lot of doors. And we still have a few miles to go.

One thing I have noticed, as former attorney general of the State of Arkansas, is that over the last few years there has developed a new generation of tactics to prevent people from voting, and some of these are very subtle.

Some of these have to do with annexations or even redistricting that could be done for discriminatory purposes or changing the polling place without a lot of notice or making it very difficult for some people to get to. The Voting Rights Act is important today to make sure those practices end as well.

It is hard for some of us to admit today—because we have made so much progress—that we still need this important legislation. I think everybody here wishes we did not. We would love to say we have accomplished the task and that we have equal voting opportunity for every American. We would all love to say that. But in reality, we know we do not, and we know we must continue our efforts.

I am also reminded, in closing, what Woodrow Wilson said about this country. One time he said:

America is the only idealistic nation in the world.

I think he was right about that. We are an idealistic nation. We always strive for the better. In fact, we strive for perfection. We try to reach the ideal. We do not always get there. Certainly, the treatment of African Americans through the history of this Nation is a clear example of that. We do not always get to the ideal. We do not always get to the goal we set for ourselves. But what makes America different from a lot of countries is that we try. We try. And we go the extra mile to try to make opportunities for people in this country and to try to live up to the ideals of our Founding Fathers and those ideals on which this Nation was founded.

The Voting Rights Act is a very important part of that.

I thank my colleagues for listening today, and I thank my colleagues for their votes today.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I, too, rise today to speak in support of the Fannie Lou Hadem, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this bill and to have participated in the hearings held by the Judiciary Committee on this incredibly significant legislation.

The Voting Rights Act may very well be the most important piece of Federal legislation ever passed for without a meaningful chance to vote, there can be no equality before the law, no equal access to justice, no equal opportunity in the workplace or to share in the benefits and burdens of citizenship. Brave Americans risked their very lives in marches and demonstrations across this country to ensure that we have the right to vote.

As a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee and as the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, you can take it from me that the committee has done due diligence in examining this issue. But you do not have to take it from me, of course. The comprehensive record the committee has compiled powerfully demonstrates the importance of the reauthorizing legislation before us today.
Even in recent election cycles, Americans continue to be disenfranchised by discriminatory redistricting plans, through the denial of voting materials they are entitled to under the law, and through changes to election procedures that disadvantage minority candidates and voters, among other things.

It is also worth noting that just a few weeks ago, the Supreme Court recognized that discriminatory redistricting plans are not simply a vestige of the past—finding a purposeful effort to dilute the voting power of over 106,000 Latino Americans. It is clear to me that we have come a long way from the bridge in Selma, AL, but we have not come far enough.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act has been instrumental in bringing about the dramatic improvements in voting rights and representation for minorities in covered areas. Keeping it in place, with a reasonable bailout provision, is the best way to be sure we do not lose the progress that has taken place.

Let me just say in response to some comments that were made during the Judiciary Committee’s hearings that all Members of Congress, regardless of whether they live in a covered or non-covered jurisdiction and regardless of their political affiliation, have an interest in ensuring the continued effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act. As Federal legislators, we have a responsibility to eliminate all forms of discrimination wherever it is found. The integrity of our elections and of our very democracy depends on it.

Let’s not falter now. Let’s not stop or turn back the clock but, rather, build on the extraordinary success of this legislation and reaffirm the promise that all citizens, no matter what the color of their skin, can participate fully and equally in the electoral process. We must reauthorize the expiring provision. We must ensure that section 5 can continue to serve as a powerful deterrent to violations in areas of the country with a history of systemic discrimination at the polls.

We must also reauthorize section 203, which has empowered many voters with limited English proficiency to participate in our democratic process. It is also important that the Senate re-store the original understanding of the act with respect to the opportunity-to-vote standard and to election procedures with discriminatory intent.

There is much more work to do in terms of eradicating discrimination from our elections process, and reauthorizing and strengthening the Voting Rights Act is, of course, a step in the right direction. I would vote in favor of H.R. 9, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Thank you, Mr. President. Before speaking about this very important piece of legislation we are about to pass, I wish to briefly just indicate a thank you to the State Department.

The remarks of Ms. STABENOW are printed in today’s RECORD under “Morning Business.”

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Cesar Chavez Voting Rights Reauthorization Act of 2006. We all know that this reauthorizes existing but currently expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. There are several years. I personally believe that when this was instituted in 1965, there should not have been an expiration date and would prefer that in this bill there not be an expiration date. But I am appreciative of the fact that we have bipartisan support to continue this provision, and hopefully at some point we will be able to take off the ending date.

I think about standing in this very important spot in the Senate. Right behind me is a room we call the President’s Room that President Lyndon Johnson used in 1965 to sign the original legislation because of its significance. We all know this is the bedrock of our democracy, the right to vote, the right to vote without harassment, intimidation, with correct information, knowing your vote in fact will be counted.

I am proud of the fact that one of the folks who this bill is named after is Rosa Parks, who is from Detroit. We are also proud of all she has done, along with the others this bill has been named after. But we are very proud that the mother of the civil rights movement is from our own beloved Detroit.

Before 1965 and the bill’s passage, we had communities with explicit poll taxes and literacy tests to prevent people of color from voting. We have in fact made great progress on civil rights since the original law. But as many of my colleagues have said, there is much more to be done. Now, unfortunately, we have more subtle and sometimes not so subtle forms of voter intimidation and suppression. Voters too many times are being told of the wrong polling place or flyers and phone calls tells people that the election was moved. I know in my State we have struggled with misinformation going out around elections. Why is it that it is predominately in our cities where the lines are the longest. Why are the oldest, and, in fact, there are fewer machines? We need to know we are not done with what this bill represents until those things are fixed, until every voting machine works, until there is enough to make sure everyone can vote, until there is a paper backup so that if we know the votes are being recorded accurately, and until every person or group that attempts to harass anybody in terms of exercising their American right to vote has been stopped.

These practices are a reminder that our laws are only as good as the people who enforce them. That is the commitment we have behind it, to make sure that the principles and ideals of our democracy and of America are upheld.

Passing this bill is a very important step for us. I am pleased this has been placed on the agenda and that we are going to come together overwhelmingly and pass it today. We need to make sure we are willing to take the next steps. We have election reform legislation introduced in the Senate that needs to be passed. For the life of me, I cannot imagine why when I go to the ATM machine, I can get a piece of paper, a receipt that tells me about my transaction, and yet there is resistance to us having a paper backup so we know that in fact the integrity of our vote and the voting process has been maintained. I hope this will be phase one in a series of things we do to make it clear that everyone in America has the right to vote, that we are stronger because of that. We certainly know we are a better country, a stronger country, if we take that responsibility seriously. I urge adoption of the bill and thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise to enthusiastically support the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. I will speak to that issue of permission of the leadership, following these remarks, I ask unanimous consent that Senator WYDEN and I be given a half an hour to speak as in morning business.

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

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, above the dais, our Nation’s motto, e pluribus unum, is chiseled in the marble. That phrase is much more than a motto of America’s greatest ideals. But it is an ideal that we are constantly in an effort to realize as fully as is humanly possible. Our Nation has made great progress on becoming one, and becoming one begins at the ballot box. Our Nation began at a time when even the institution of human slavery was tolerated—tragically for nearly 70 years—leading then to a horrendous Civil War that claimed the lives of nearly a million Americans. I think it is remarkable what that motto means. The institution of slavery was ended—thankfully—too late but ended nevertheless.

In the bitter years that followed, the years of Reconstruction and all the hatred and violence that followed from the Civil War, there was a period of time in part of our country where African Americans were denied access to the ballot box and were disenfranchised by that. But it isn’t just one region of the country where we have to constantly be vigilant about race relations; it is a challenge all over America. The challenge begins in every heart and in
The Voting Rights Act is already a statute, but certain of its provisions will expire if we do not do this. We have the privilege to do so today.

The 19th amendment of the Constitution says: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The 19th amendment was adopted later in 1920, which extended that right to women. But as I said, not until the Voting Rights Act were all the subtle and insidious barriers dropped around the country that prevented African Americans from exercising their franchise.

Lyndon Johnson said, when he signed this act, that he did so so the full blessings of American life can be fully realized. For the full blessing of American life will come at the ballot box. Tactically, not all Americans exercise their right to vote, but those who want to should be able to have access, that their vote be cast and counted and that it be done so without intimidation or without fear of reprisal.

I rise to fully support this. My mother used to always say, treat others as you would want to be treated. I believe the law is a teacher. The 19th amendment was critical to ending over 90 years of constitutional promise which is the language of the jurisprudence of racial minorities, not against electoral advantages sought by either Republicans or Democrats. Moreover, no group is entitled to have its voting rights be given in a district where the candidate of its party will prevail.

This section's abrogation of Bossier Parish does not permit a finding of discriminatory purpose that is based, in whole or in part, on a failure to adopt the optimal or maximum number of compact minority opportunity districts or on a determination that the plan seeks partisan advantage or protects incumbents. With the language of the bill, we are importing the constitutional test in section 5, and nothing else. With this understanding, I support this improvement to section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. CORKY. Mr. President, I add that I share the views of my colleague from Arizona. Like he, I represent a State that is covered by section 5 of the Voting Rights Act which is one of the sections that is being reauthorized today, hopefully. I thus paid close attention to the changes being made in that section.

Like my colleague from Arizona, I support the provision that effectively instructs the Justice Department to refuse to preclear a voting practice that is motivated by a discriminatory, unconstitutional purpose. I also agree this is all this change does. It does not authorize the Justice Department to determine if a provision is a "discriminatory purpose." The Constitution and the courts have already done that, and it is that constitutional
forces the Constitution’s requirements and no more.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, I think the point the distinguished Senator from Utah makes is very important, and I am glad there is agreement on this important matter.

I also wish to discuss one other of the bill’s changes to section 5. That is the new subsection (d) that provides for the Supreme Court’s decision in Georgia v. Ashcroft.

That Supreme Court case held that, when conducting a retrogression analysis of section 5 under the act, a court or the Justice Department should not gauge whether a new electoral map has diminished a minority group’s opportunities to participate in the political process by looking, in part, to whether the new plan creates coalition districts, or influences districts—that is the term any one of the three judges from the original Georgia v. Ashcroft, if a new voting map

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, as one of the original supporters of the Voting Rights Act, and by the courts.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona is recognized.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, let me just say one final thing. I very much agree with Senator HATCH that the bill limits section 5 to protecting those naturally occurring compact majority-minority districts. By limiting non-retrogression requirements to districts in which “such minority citizens” are able with their own vote power to elect “preferred candidates of choice”—not just a candidate of choice settled for when forced to compromise with other groups—the bill limits section 5 to protecting those naturally occurring, compact majority-minority districts with which section 5 was originally concerned, and that nothing in this section of the act should be interpreted to require that the competitive position of the political party favored by minority citizens be maintained or enhanced in any district. This change made by the bill is not intended to preserve or ensure the electability of candidates of any political party, even if that party’s candidates are supported by members of minority groups.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I agree very much, and I am glad that we can put this issue to bed.

By anchoring section 5 in the concept of “preferred candidates of choice”—another term of art whose meaning is
cemented in the Supreme Court's precedents—I think this bill eliminates any risk that section 5 of the Voting Rights Act will be interpreted to protect coalitions and influence districts and other tools of purely partisan gerrymandering. The term “preferred candidates or a chance” has no meaning in the court's precedent. Minority candidates elected by a minority community.

I think the use of this language eliminates the risk that courts will construe section 5 to protect candidates who rely on minority votes for their margin of victory in the general election but are not elected by a majority-minority district. And I agree that it may be good policy for a State to create districts in which different groups will combine to elect a common party candidate, but Federal law should not be used to require that the State permanently preserve such a district.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. VITTER). The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I would simply add to the comments of the assistant majority leader that I, too, am glad to eliminate the naked coalition or influence districts in Georgia v. Ashcroft, and section 5 would be applied to require preservation of anything other than districts that allow naturally occurring minority-group majorities to elect minority candidates. Locking into place so-called coalition or influence districts would wreak havoc with the redistricting process and would stretch the Voting Rights Act beyond the scope of the Congress's authority under the 14th amendment.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I have some additional remarks that I would like to make on this important legislation.

Forty-one years ago, when signing the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law, Lyndon Johnson, the President of the United States, a former member of the Senate whose seat I am privileged to hold, described the act's passage as "a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that has ever been won on any battlefield." President Johnson's words captured the importance of the act's passage. It was a hard-fought victory at a tense time in American history.

It is for this reason why the Voting Rights Act was necessary. It was adopted at the height of the civil rights movement, when numerous jurisdictions throughout the United States had intentionally, systematically disenfranchised Blacks and other minorities from the electoral process.

As a witness before the Senate Judiciary Committee noted, a Senate report from 1965 found that in every voting discrimination suit brought against Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, both the district court and the Court of Appeals found "discriminatory use of tests and devices"—devices such as literacy, knowledge, and moral character tests. The Senate concluded that these were not "isolated deviations from the norm" but, instead, "had been pursuant to a pattern or a practice of racial discrimination." Such practices had driven down to 29.3 percent the average registration rate for Black citizens in these States.

Worse yet, violence and brutality were common. In 1961, a Black voter registration drive worker in McComb, MS was beaten by a cousin of the sheriff; a worker was ordered out of the registration office at gunpoint and then hit with a pistol; a Black sympathizer was murdered by a State representative; another Black who asked for Justice Department protection to testify at the inquest was beaten and killed 3 years later; a White activist's eye was gouged out; and, finally, 12 student nonviolent coordinating committee workers and local supporters were fined and sentenced to substantial terms in jail. And those were just some of the many terrible incidents that occurred.

This type of bigotry and hatred at the polls, coupled with escalating violence and even the murder of activists, is the backdrop against which the Voting Rights Act is perpetually enshrining into law the long-unfulfilled promise of citizenship and democratic participation for all Americans as guaranteed by the 15th amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The permanence of the Voting Rights Act is something that I am afraid is sometimes misunderstood or misstated in the popular press. The act's core provision found that section 2 prohibits the denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen to vote on account of race or color.

That provision is permanent. That provision will never expire, and we are not addressing this permanent provision by the reauthorization that we will vote on today.

Instead, we are addressing what at the time was a temporary, 5-year period where provisions were adopted to subject certain jurisdictions to Federal oversight of the voting laws and procedures until the intent of the Voting Rights Act was accomplished. This provision, section 5, along with later-added provisions designed to protect voters from discrimination based upon limited English proficiency, has been renewed several times. It was originally set to expire in the summer of 2007. Those are the provisions which we are addressing here today and which this vote today will reauthorize.

Today, we are considering the renewal of these provisions at a time when we can look back with some pride as a country and say that the Voting Rights Act has fulfilled its promise. It worked.

Today, we live in a different—albeit still imperfect—world. Today, no one can claim that the kind of systemic, invidious practices that plagued our election systems 40 years ago still exist in America. Today, the voter registration rates among Blacks, for example, in the covered jurisdictions is over 68.1 percent, as this chart indicates, higher than the 62.2 percent found in non-covered jurisdictions.

I repeat that, Mr. President, because I think it is important. Earlier, you heard me say that as a result of the violence and the discrimination against Black voters in three Southern States before the Voting Rights Act was passed, voter registration rates for African Americans was about 29 percent. But today, 40 years later, as a result of the fact that the Voting Rights Act has accomplished its purpose, we now see voting registration rates nationwide at 62.2 percent. Perhaps the most amazing thing is that the rate of voter registration in those areas that were covered by section 5, because they had a history of discrimination and violation of the voting rights of minority voters, is actually higher than the rest of the country—as opposed to 62.2 percent for the non-covered jurisdictions.

A review of the voter registration data since the act's original passage shows that the covered jurisdictions have seen higher voter registration rates among Black voters as noncovered jurisdictions since the mid-1970s.

I realize, though, this is not the only measure of the permanence of the act. Another important indicator of its success is the continual decline—almost to the point of statistically negligible numbers—of objections issued by the Department of Justice to plans submitted under section 5 for preclearance. You can see on this chart that I have demonstrated here, going back to 1982, to 2005—and again, this is for the nine covered jurisdictions—this is what we are focusing on with this reauthorization. In those nine covered jurisdictions that were covered under section 5 to submit their election changes for preclearance, you see that in 1982, for 2,848 submissions, there were 67 objections to those changes or a rate of roughly 2.32 percent. But if you jump down to 2005—let's go to 1995—it shows that this is really a bipartisan success under both Republican and Democrat Presidential administrations. In 1995, you can see that out of 3,999 submissions, requests for pre clearance under section 5, there were only 3 objections as required through the required procedures.

So you see actually the number of objections dropping from 2.32 percent to, in 1995, under one-half of 1 percent. And the good news is, it just keeps getting better. In 2005, there were 3,811 submissions, and only 1 objection for preclearance of a change in voting practices or procedures in the covered jurisdictions. So I would submit that both the voter registration rates for African Americans and in the covered jurisdictions, and the plummeting, really, of objections sustained to submissions requesting preclearance under
The evidence demonstrates the continued improvement of access to office for minorities. The statistics in the House record indicate that hundreds of minorities are now serving—not just getting to vote, they are actually serving in elected office, accomplishing again one of the important purposes of the Voting Rights Act. Indeed, in Georgia, minorities are elected at rates proportionate to or higher than the numbers proportionate to the general population would otherwise indicate. While Georgia’s population is 28.7 percent African American, 30.7 percent of its delegation to the United States House of Representatives, and 26.5 percent of the officials elected statewide are African American, a remarkable accomplishment.

Black candidates in Mississippi have achieved similar success. The State’s population is 36.3 percent African American, and 29.6 percent of its representatives in the State House are percent of its delegation in the United States House of Representatives are African American.

In light of this strong indication that the act has largely achieved the purposes that Congress had intended, of course, the logical question before us is whether these provisions under section 5 should be reauthorized. The Judiciary Committee hearings were enlightening on this point, and I want to congratulate Chairman Specter for readily ceding to requests that were made to have a complete record so that not only Congress but the courts that may later examine this record can see what the facts are. Senator Specter worked hard to get sufficient numbers of his and balanced hearings, but given our busy schedule on the Senate floor, that was not always easy to accomplish. However, I think it might have been beneficial for the long-term viability and success of the Voting Rights Act to engage in serious, reasoned deliberation over some of the suggested possible improvements, some suggested by our witnesses—improvements that would underscore the act’s original purpose. I do not believe it is necessary or required to reflect today’s reality. It would possibly expand the coverage of section 5 to jurisdictions where recent abuses have taken place or, perhaps, have improved the so-called bailout procedures for those jurisdictions that had a successful record of remedying, indeed eliminating, discrimination when it comes to voting rights. One idea that was offered was to update the coverage formula. I don’t know if that is a good idea, but I would like to see an update. An update would gut the act. I, for one, certainly don’t want to see that happen. I don’t want to see the act gutted.

But I am skeptical that this would be the result. The amendment that was voted on in the House, for example, would have updated the coverage trigger to the most recent three Presidential elections from the current point, or trigger, of 1964, 1968, and 1972 elections.

As I understand it, the map, after an update to cover the most recent three Presidential elections, would look something like this. In other words, rather than the nine covered jurisdictions around the country, both at the State and local level—primarily at the local level—that would focus on the places where the problems really do exist and where the record demonstrates with some justification for the assertion of Federal power and intrusion into the local and State electoral processes.

If this is an accurate reflection of the effects of updating the trigger to the most recent three Presidential elections, covers the map. But I suggest, just looking at this, it hardly guts it. It would have also been beneficial for us to have had a full discussion of ways to improve the act to ensure its important provisions were applied in a congruent and proportional way, something the Supreme Court will take into consideration when it considers the renewed act.

Yesterday, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted overwhelmingly to extend the expiring provisions of the act and adopt several substantial revisions included by the House, so I think it is important to comment on the House revisions to the act. In other words, we are not just reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act as it existed previously, there have been changes made. So I think it is important for us to identify those changes and reflect on them for a moment.

There has been some debate about the meaning of these provisions. My understanding is that the purpose of these provisions is fairly straightforward, and I think the House legislative history reflects this; that is, the purpose is to ensure minorities are not prevented from holding elected offices in bodies such as Congress and ensure that no intentional, unconstitutional discrimination is allowed to proceed. It is important that our understanding about these provisions be clear so that the act can be likewise clear. I think the colloquy that we had on the Senate floor just a few moments ago helps to make that as clear as we possibly can.

In short, the Voting Rights Act is simply the most important and most effective civil rights legislation ever passed, bar none. The extension of the expiring provisions is important for the continued protection of voting rights, even though it would have been preferable to have even possibly constitutionally advisable for us to review the application of the act’s preclearance and other provisions.

Unfortunately, the act’s language was a bit of a foregone conclusion, prohibiting the kind of debate and discussion and perhaps amendment process that might have been helpful to protect the act against future legal challenges. But the purposes are as vital to our system of democracy and the promise of equal justice under law as the Voting Rights Act. I support reauthorization of the expiring provisions because the purpose of the Voting Rights Act is unassailable, and its success, as I hope to have demonstrated, is unparalleled.

But I do want to say in conclusion that I share the concerns expressed by Chief Justice Roberts in the most recent redistricting case that has been heard by the U.S. Supreme Court. I hope the day will come when we will no longer, to use his words, be ‘divvying us up by race.’ It is my sincere hope that we will move beyond distinctions based on race in our policymaking, lest we, in the words of Justice Anthony Kennedy, make ‘the offensive and demeaning assumption that voters of a particular race, because of their race, or their ancient history, or their dislike, or their national origin, or their race, or their language, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls.’

The question in the end is, Is this bill that we will vote on today the very best possible product? I would have to say the answer to that is, apparently not. In response to the question, is this the bill that we will vote on today? I would say, yes. I hope so. And I support it for that reason.

I see my distinguished colleague from New York on the Senate floor. I yield the floor to her and anyone else who seeks an opportunity to speak.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized.

Mrs. CLINTON. Mr. President, I am also here to voice my support for the Frank, Lou Ham, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006. It is so fitting that this legislation reauthorizing this landmark Civil Rights Act would be named for three women who are so well known as heroes of the struggle for civil rights in our own country.

Thousands of Americans risked their lives, and some unfortunately lost them, during the civil rights movement to protect their right to vote. I am proud that they prevented millions of our fellow citizens from exercising their constitutional right to vote. After a long struggle by activists and everyday citizens, President Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law.

I vividly remember the day, 41 years ago, when I sat in front of our little black and white television set and watched President Johnson announce the signing into law of the Voting Rights Act. He opened his speech to the Nation that night with these memorable words:
I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy.

That was the culmination of a long struggle which continues even now because we still must work vigilantly to make certain that those who try to vote or vote do so, and that we keep watch to guarantee that every vote is counted.

President Johnson was right all those years ago. When you deny a person his or her right to vote, you strip that individual of dignity and you weaken our democracy. The endurance of our democracy requires constant vigilance, a lesson that has been reinforced by the last two Presidential elections, both of which were affected by widespread allegations of voter disfranchisement. I believe we have a moral as well as a political and historical obligation to ensure the integrity of our voting process. That was our Nation’s obligation in 1965; it remains our obligation today.

As we turn on our news and see the sights of conflict, as we hear the stories of sectarian violence, as we struggle to help nations understand and adopt democracy in their own lands, we must not forget the democratic principles that have shaped America. This is the place where the right to vote is fully and equally available to every citizen.

We still have work to do, to renew protections for the right to vote, to enforce laws that guarantee the right to vote, and strengthen our election laws so that our right to vote is not impeded by accident or abuse. While parts of the Voting Rights Act are permanent, there are three important sections set to expire next year unless they are renewed.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act requires that the Federal Government or a Federal court approve or, in any part of the country. Now it is not impeded by accident or abuse.

Unfortunately, I am worried we may make this part of the growing up in America. You turn 18, you get registered to vote, beginning a lifetime habit of voting.

We also need to make sure every American citizen will be able to count on the fact that their name will not be illegally purged from the voter roles. We have seen that happen. It is still happening. What happens is, someone
in the political position of a State says, we will purge the voter roles to get rid of people who have moved or who may not be eligible to vote. I don’t disagree with that. People who don’t live in a jurisdiction or are not eligible should not be permitted to vote.

Instead of purging on that very limited basis, oftentimes they purge hundreds and thousands of people unfairly, unlawfully. Someone shows up to vote and they are told, we are sorry, you are not registered to vote. The person does not know what has happened, but they are prohibited from voting.

Every American voter who shows up at the polls should be confident they do not have to wait hours to cast ballots. I did a town hall meeting in Cleveland with my friend Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES. We heard testimony from some students from Kenyon College who had to wait for 10 and 12 hours to be able to vote. They were eligible, they were registered, they were anxious to vote because of the importance of the election. The number of voting machines was allocated and the discouragement that was meant to be sent that you would have to wait so long. It was an unfair treatment of these young people and not because of what they did but because of the way that the election was run.

We also need to make sure the system of voting has not been compromised by politics or partisanship. It is flat wrong for someone who runs an election to also be running in the election and thereby be supervising their own election, or for someone to be running for election to some position, get the support of the person running the election as his campaign manager or spokesman. That is a conflict of interest. That ought to be prohibited. People need to feel, and they have every right to feel, confidence in the integrity of our electoral system.

Every American voter should know there are adequate safeguards against abuses or mistakes caused by the new computerized voting machines. There have been so many problems. They have broken down, they have double counted, they have failed to count, tests have been run showing how easy they are to hack into. We do not need that. We need a system people can count on. If we can go to an ATM and withdraw money, if we can have all the other advantages from accessing computers and the Internet, for goodness sakes, we ought to be able to use electronic voting without raising questions about whether it is being truthful, whether it is being accurate, and whether it is even being operated correctly.

This effort to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act is part of a larger struggle about basic rights, basic values, and basic opportunities. It is, at root, a struggle meant to reawaken the promise of democracy in this Nation. We do need to reinstate the decades-old voting rights protections. We need to enforce those voting rights presentations. We need to strengthen those voting rights protections. We need to do that because that is what we as Americans. That is what we expect of ourselves.

I hope after we reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, we can be confident we are doing what we can to encourage people to vote, make it easy for them to vote, and make sure that every vote counts. It is very important to us as Americans. Our principles about who we are, what we believe in, our core values as to what it means to be an American. I hope and trust when it comes to the most important function in a democracy—namely, running elections and giving people the right to make decisions about who governs us—that we will be second to none. We cannot say that now because other countries, frankly, are doing a better job of this than we are. It is a first step to get us back on the track of making sure that the world’s oldest democracy demonstrates clearly we know how to run elections that people have confidence and trust in and that we are willing to change and adapt to deal with the new reality of how to welcome and that we are willing to change and adapt to deal with the new reality of how to deal with the new reality of the way we are going to do, then we turn our attention to making sure we enforce it, that we are doing everything we can to encourage people to vote, make it easy for them to vote, and make sure that every vote counts.

So I urge you to support this bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I rise in support of a bill to extend the expiring provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. While I support this bill, I continue to have some serious concerns with several aspects of it, not the least of which is the extension for an extraordinary 25 years.

The act, originally passed in 1965, was unquestionably needed to bring the promise of the Constitution to many of our citizens who had been shut out of our national political process. The original act, a remedial measure to deal with past discrimination, provided that certain provisions would sunset after 5 years. I have grave concerns that a 25-year extension may well, by itself, doom the act in a future constitutional challenge, given the Supreme Court’s jurisprudence concerning the need for narrowly tailored remedial measures to deal with past discrimination.

Members of the House raised legitimate concerns last week and advanced positive amendments which I believe would have strengthened this bill and updated it to reflect the reality of profoundly improved race relations which exist today in my home State of Georgia.

Let me talk about the positive progress. Today, a higher percentage of Black citizens in Georgia has registered to vote than any 10-year time period in our history. Today, a higher percentage of Black citizens in Georgia turn out the vote than White citizens: 51 percent compared to 48 percent. The number of Black elected officials in Georgia has climbed steadily, from 30 in 1970 to 249 in 1980, a 730-percent increase, to 582 in 2000.

Let me talk about my home county which is in rural Georgia, the very southern part of our State. Our community is a beneficiary of this Voting Rights Act. Over the years, several members of our Black community have been elected to city council, county commission, and school board posts.

Today, 4 of Georgia’s 13 Members of the U.S. House are Black, two of whom represent majority White districts.

One of the continuing concerns about the bill as currently written is it mandates that Georgia continues to be a ‘‘covered jurisdiction.” That designation requires any election law change, no matter how minor, to be precluded by a Federal bureaucracy. Other States with much less impressive minority progress and less impressive minority representation are precluded, while Georgia is. Many of us share the view that this seems both unfair and unwise. Only a short while ago my colleague from Illinois acknowledged that voting discrimination occurs in noncovered States, yet he chose to leave unaddressed the issue of whether the formula adopted in 1964 should be modernized to reflect the reality of 2006, so that appropriate discrimination can be dealt with wherever it exists.

Despite these concerns, I will vote in favor of this bill. It is a symbol of progress to so many of our citizens and it has made a difference in the lives of a generation of Georgians, Black and White.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support.

I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon is recognized.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for up to 20 minutes after the distinguished Senator from Illinois.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I modify my request and ask unanimous consent
that after Senator OBAMA speaks, and after a Republican has spoken after Senator OBAMA, that I could be recognized for up to 20 minutes at that time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the revised unanimous consent request?

Mr. CHAMBILSS. Mr. President, reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia is recognized.

Mr. CHAMBILSS. I will not object, but I will to the Senator from Oregon, if we could have the Senator from Illinois proceed, then the Senator from South Carolina, Mr. GRAHAM, proceed, and then the Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, that is exactly the kind of scenario I envisioned, and I appreciate that from the Senator from Georgia, and renew my unanimous consent request.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. OBAMA. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I rise today both humbled and honored by the opportunity to express my support for renewal of the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I thank the many people inside and outside Congress who have worked so hard over the past year to get an answer—a debt of gratitude on both sides of the aisle. We owe special thanks to Chairmen SENSENBRENNER and SPECTER, Ranking Members CONYNS and LEAHY, and Representative Mel WATT. Without their hard work and dedication, and the support of voting rights advocates across the country, I doubt this bill would have come before us so soon.

I thank both Chambers and both sides of the aisle, as well, for getting this issue with the same broad support that drove the original act 40 years ago. At a time when Americans are frustrated with the partisan bickering that too often stalls our work, the refreshing display of bipartisanship we are seeing today reflects our collective belief in the success of the act and reminds us of how effective we can be when we work together.

Nobody can deny we have come a long way since 1965. Look at the registration numbers. Only 2 years after the passage of the original act, registration numbers for minority voters in some States doubled. Soon after, not a single State covered by the Voting Rights Act had registered less than half of its minority voting-age population. Look at the influence of African-American elected officials at every single level of government. There are African-American Members of Congress. Since 2001, our Nation’s top diplomat has been an African-American. In fact, most of America’s elected African-American officials come from States covered by section 5 of the Voting Rights Act—States such as Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Georgia.

But to me, the most striking evidence of our progress can be found right across this building, in the dear friend Congressman JOHN LEWIS, who has shown us that civil rights movement, risking life and limb for freedom. On March 7, 1965, he led 600 peaceful protesters, demanding the right to vote, across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, AL. I have often thought how we crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge that day, not only JOHN LEWIS and Hosea Williams, who led the march, but the hundreds of everyday Americans who left their homes and their churches to join it—Blacks and Whites, Black children, teachers, bankers, shopkeepers; what Dr. King called a beloved community of God’s children ready to stand for freedom.

I wonder sometimes: Where did they find that kind of courage? When you are facing row after row of State troopers on horseback, armed with billy clubs and tear gas—when they are coming toward you spewing hatred and violence and how do you simply stop, kneel down, and pray to the Lord for salvation? But the most amazing thing of all is that after that day, after JOHN LEWIS was beaten within an inch of his life, after people’s heads were gashed open and their eyes were burned, and they watched their children’s innocence literally beaten out of them—after all that, they went back and marched again. They marched again. They crossed that bridge. They awakened a nation’s conscience, and not 5 months later the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law. It was reauthorized in 1970, in 1975, and in 1982.

Now, in 2006, JOHN LEWIS—the physical scars of those marches still visible—is an original cosponsor of the fourth reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. He was joined last week by 389 of his House colleagues in voting for its passage.

There were some in the House, and there may be some in the Senate, who argue that the act is no longer needed, that the protections of section 5’s ‘preclearance’ requirement—a requirement that ensures certain States are upholding the right to vote—are targeting the wrong States. Unfortunately, the evidence refutes that notion.

Of the 1,100 objections issued by the Department of Justice since 1965, 56 percent occurred since the last reauthorization in 1982. Over half have occurred since 1982. So despite the progress these States have made in upholding the vote, it is clear that problems still exist.

There are others who have argued we should not renew section 203’s protection of language minorities. These arguments have been tied to debates over immigration and they tend to muddle a noncontroversial issue—protecting the right to vote—with one of today’s most contentious debates.

But let’s remember, you cannot request language assistance if you are not a voter. You cannot be a voter if you are not a citizen. And while voters, as citizens, must be proficient in English, many are simply more comfortable, or more confident, or more at ease in their decisions ballots written in their native languages without making errors. It is not an unreasonable assumption.

A representative of the Southwestern Voter Registration Project is quoted as saying:

Citizens who prefer Spanish registration cards do so because they feel more connected to the process; they also feel they trust the process more when they see their native language on their registration materials.

These sentiments—connection to and trust in our democratic process—are exactly what we want from our voting rights legislation.

Our challenges, of course, do not end at reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act. We have to prevent the problems we have seen in recent elections from happening again. We have seen political operatives purge voters from registration rolls for no legitimate reason, prevent eligible voters from casting ballots, distribute polling equipment unequally and deceive voters about the time, location, and rules of elections. Unfortunately, these efforts have been directed primarily at minority voters, the disabled, low-income individuals, and other historically disenfranchised groups.

The Help America Vote Act, or HAVA, was a big step in the right direction. But we have to do more. We need to fully fund HAVA if we are going to move forward in the next stage of securing the right to vote for every citizen. We need to enforce critical requirements such as statewide registration databases. We need to make sure that minority voters are not the subject of some deplorable intimidation tactics when they do go to the polls.

In Wisconsin, a flyer purported to be from the “Milwaukee Black Voters League” was circulated in predominately African-American neighborhoods with the following message:

If you’ve already voted in any election this year, you can’t vote in the presidential election. If you violate any of these laws, you can be in jail for 10 years and your children will get taken away from you.

Now, think about that. We have a lot more work to do. This occasion is a
cause for celebration. But it is also an opportunity to renew our commitment to voting rights.

As Congressman Lewis said last week:

It's clear that we have come a great distance, but we still have a great distance to go.

The memory of Selma still lives on in the spirit of the Voting Rights Act. Since that day, the Voting Rights Act has been a critical tool in ensuring that all Americans not only have the right to vote, but also have the right to have their vote counted.

Those of us concerned about protecting those rights cannot afford to rest on our laurels upon reauthorization of this bill. We need to take advantage of this rare, unified front and continue to fight to ensure unimpeded access to the polls for all Americans. In other words, we need to take the spirit that existed on that bridge, and we have to spread it across this country.

Two weeks after the first march was turned back, Dr. King spoke, and he told a gathering of organizers and activists and community members that they should not despair because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. That is because of the work that each of us does that it bends toward justice. It is because of people such as John Lewis and Fannie Lou Hamer, and Scott King and Rosa Parks—all the giants upon whose shoulders we stand—that we are beneficiaries of that arc bending toward justice.

That is why I stand here today. I would not be in the Senate had it not been for the efforts and courage of so many parents and grandparents and ordinary people who were willing to reach up and bend that arc in the direction of justice. I hope we continue to see that spirit live on not just during this debate but throughout all our work here in the Senate.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

I wish to take a few moments to add my voice to the Senate debate in terms of why I will vote for the Voting Rights Act reauthorization.

No. 1, I am a member of the Judiciary Committee, and I wish to congratulate our chairman, Senator Specter, and our ranking member, Senator Leahy, for getting the bill out of committee. It was an 8-to-0 vote. I have enjoyed that committee in many ways, and one of the highlights of my time on that committee is getting this piece of legislation to the floor for a vote. I anticipate an overwhelming vote for the Voting Rights Act reauthorization.

There are so many ways to say why, and so many approaches to explain the continued need. But the best I can say, in terms of my voice being added to the debate, is that I recognize it is just a voice, that I am in the Senate—I just turned 51 years old, a child of the South. I grew up in the 1950s and 1960s, and I went to segregated schools until, I think, the fifth or sixth grade. My life is another because of the civil rights movement.

It has enriched the country. I have been able to interact with people in ways that would have been impossible if segregation had stood and, as Senator Obama indicated, his career in the Senate is possible. I would argue that most Americans' lives are better because in America you can interact in a meaningful way now. And one of the interactions is to be able to vote.

But it is just a voice I add. To get here, literally, to get the Voting Rights Act passed back in the 1960s, people died. They shed their blood, their sweat. They put their hopes and dreams for their children on the line. They were willing to die for their inalienable right to meaningful voting and the role in American society. And the most meaningful way you can participate is to be able to vote without fear.

Dr. King is a fascinating historical figure now. He was a fascinating man. He was a priest. He was the mili-
tary for quite a while. I have been around a lot of brave people—pilots who take off and fly in harm's way. I sort of have an affinity for military history. I always admired the people and the strength of the overwhelming force or stand with their comrades when it looked as though all hope was lost because that was the right thing to do.

They were willing to sacrifice their life not only for their country but for their fellow service members, the people in their unit. How hard that must have been. Some people rise to the occasion and some don't. Those who rise to the occasion are called heroes, right? So the things that I think the occasion are called human beings.

All human beings included, should celebrate the heroes. The thing that I admire most about Dr. King and his associates is that it is one thing to put your own life at risk. It is another thing to put your family at risk. I would imagine, never having met Dr. King, that one of his biggest fears was not about his personal safety but about what might happen to his family. To defend the thing of bravery, to know that if you do nothing, your family is going to be locked into a system where life is very meaningless. And to do something so heroic and so challenging that you put your family at risk had to be a very hard decision.

So as we reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, we need to remember, all of us who vote, that it is not that big a deal. There is no one in the Senate. Hardly anyone is listening. We have some visitors here in the Capitol. It is going to pass pretty quickly. Everyone knows the outcome. In the 1960s, people did not know the outcome. I argue that the fact we reauthorized this without a whole lot of discussion and rancor is the best testament to its success. All the fears and all the playing on people's prejudices that would come from integration, if it came about, or allowing everyone to vote, if it came about, they were just that—baseless fears.

All froze 2006 over the history of the Voting Rights Act, there is nothing to fear. Allowing Americans to fully participate in a democracy has been a wonderful thing. Allowing people to go to the movies they want to go to the restaurant they want to eat at and play on the same sports teams as every other person in their neighborhood, regardless of race, creed, or color, is a wonderful thing. At the time it was a frightful thing.

That says nothing about this generation being good and the last generation being evil. It speaks to the weakness of humanity. Within all of us there is a fear that can be tapped into. We have gone through that. I do think that we have to be on constant guard not to let the issues of our day play on our fears.

I argue that one of those issues we are dealing with today is on the fears of the past and the weaknesses of the immigration issue. I hope as we move forward on the immigration issue, we can understand that obeying the law is an essential part of America, and people need to be punished when they break it. But we can also work on encouraging the immigration of people from all over the world, from different backgrounds, races, and creeds, and allowing them to share in the American dream. We should do it in an orderly way, not a chaotical way.

To the issue at hand, the Voting Rights Act will be extended. I believe it is for 25 years. Some of the data in the act is based on 1968, 1972 turnout models. The act does not recognize the progress particularly in my region of the country. I think it should have, but it didn't. So we will just move on.

South Carolina has made great strides forward in terms of African American voting participation and minority African American representation at all levels of State government and local government. My State is better for that. I am proud of the progress that has been made. Those who made it happen, those who risked their blood, sweat and tears, I owe you a debt, to everyone of my generation down South. When I can vote today, it will be in your honor and your memory.

I hope 25 years from now it can be said that there will be no need for the Voting Rights Act because things have changed so the better. I can't read the future or predict what the world will be like 25 years from now or what America will be like. But if we keep making the progress we have in the last 25 years, it can happen.

It is important that each Member of this body—regardless of political differences, party affiliation, or personal background—to try to bring out the
Just as those who came before us recognized the spirit that led to the Voting Rights Act—a sense of fair play, fair treatment—and apply it to other areas and other issues facing our Nation, we will be much stronger. It is with that sense of purpose and hope that I will vote to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

To my fellow South Carolinians, you have come a long way. You have much to be proud of. But we, like every other part of this country, still have a long way to go.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today to express my strong support for the reauthorization of the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965.

I was a member of the Indianapolis School Board and mayor of Indianapolis during the civil rights movement, and I witnessed firsthand the critical importance of promoting justice and understanding in our communities. Following the tragic death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., while I was serving as mayor, so many of my friends and neighbors in Indianapolis came together in peace and reconciliation, and I am grateful that our city served as a model to so many other cities that were unfortunately stricken with violence and division.

It is in the spirit of justice, harmony, and compassion that we must join together to enact this important legislation. This is a signal moment for the Senate, and I am pleased that President Bush will sign this bill into law as the 41st anniversary of the signing of the Voting Rights Act approaches on August 6.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. President, I rise to voice my support for reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. H.R. 9, the bill to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, is an important piece of legislation that takes into account the recommendations to express my thoughts on the great progress prompted by the Voting Rights Act in my State, as well as to express a few concerns.

My home State of Alabama—the site of the Selma to Montgomery voting rights march—had a grim history on voting rights. Before 1965, only 19 percent of African Americans in our State were registered to vote, and they were denied the right to vote through any number of tactics and strategies. By way of example, the multiple “tests and devices”—lay a ruthless decision to deny Black citizens the right to vote so that the majority of the White community could maintain political power.

The results of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were some of the best things that ever happened to Alabama. Before the Voting Rights Act, Alabama had fewer than 100 African-American office holders—second only to Mississippi. These elected officials include a U.S. Congressman, 8 State senators, 24 representatives of the State House of Representatives, 46 mayors, 80 members of county commissions, school board members, town council members and the like.

Voter registration rates for Blacks and Whites in Alabama are now virtually identical. In fact, in the last Presidential election, according to the Census Bureau, a larger percentage of African Americans voted than Whites in the State of Alabama. Now, that was the goal of the act—to have this kind of progress over the past 15 years, Alabama has not had a single court find the State guilty of violating the 15th amendment or the very broad protections afforded by section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The same cannot be said in other States: California; Hawaii; Ohio; Maryland; Massachusetts; Missouri; Montana; Nebraska; Wisconsin; Chicago, IL; Hempstead, NY; Los Angeles County, CA; or Dade County, FL—none of which are covered by section 5’s preclearance requirement.

The people of Alabama understand that these changes in our State are good, and they do not want to do anything that would suggest that there is any interest in moving away from the great right to vote. We want to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. How we reauthorize the act is something that is worthy of discussion, however. The witnesses we have heard in the Judiciary Committee over the past couple of months have had many different ideas, and, after hearing from them, I am concerned that we should have listened more carefully to some of their recommendations.

My concerns stem, in part, from the extraordinary nature of some of the temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act particularly the “preclearance” requirement of section 5. Section 5 requires Alabama and other covered jurisdictions to “clear” any change affecting voting or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting. The preclearance requirement applies to “[a]ny change affecting voting, even though it appears to be minor or indirect.” As a representative of the Department of Justice testified in the House of Representatives, “There is no de minimis exception” to the preclearance requirement.

In 1966, the Supreme Court in South Carolina v. Katzenbach upheld section 5’s preclearance requirement as “a necessary and constitutional response to some States’ extraordinary stratagem[s] of contriving new rules of various kinds for the sole purpose of perpetuating voting discrimination in the face of adverse federal court decrees.” The Court acknowledged that suspension of new voting regulations pending preclearance was an extraordinary departure from the traditional “pettifogging” between the States and the Federal Government,” but held it constitutional as a permitted congressional response to the unremittent attempts by some state and local officials to frustrate their citizens’ equal enjoyment of a right to vote.” In other words, the preclearance requirement was an extraordinary response to an extraordinary problem—unrelenting efforts by some State and local officials to contrive new rules for voting and elections after each defeat in Federal court.

During the reauthorization process, we have been presented relatively little present-day evidence of continued “unremittent attempts by some state and local officials to frustrate their citizens’ equal enjoyment of the right to vote” as was the case in 1965—especially the kind of change-the-rules-after-losing-tactics that prompted the section 5 preclearance requirement.

According to Richard L. Hasen, William H. Nannon Distinguished Professor of Law at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles: “In the most recent 1998 to 2002 period, DOJ objected to a meager 0.05 percent of preclearance requests. Updating these data, DOJ interposed just two objections nationwide overall in 2004, and one objection in 2005.” These data suggest relatively isolated attempts to interfere with voting rights not widespread, “extraordinary stratagem[s]” to perpetuate discrimination in voting.

To be sure, there have been examples of misconduct, such as the cancellation of the June 5, 2001, city council and mayoral elections in the town of Kilmichael, MS, and I do not want to minimize those violations in any way. Such misconduct did not appear to be common or widespread, however, and it could have been remedied through ordinary litigation under section 2 of the act and 42 U.S.C. § 1983. In fact, a disturbing aspect of the Kilmichael incident is that the attorney general’s objection to the cancellation of the election came on December 11, 2001 over 7 months after the election had been canceled. This was no doubt due in part to the town’s failure to submit the change in a timely fashion, but it nonetheless appears that minority voters would have received justice more quickly through a lawsuit in Federal court, accompanied by a request for a preliminary injunction and/or a temporary restraining order.

In light of the dearth of present-day preclearance objections or evidence of violations that, due to their nature or number, cannot be remedied through litigation, I am concerned that reauthorizing section 5’s preclearance requirement for 25 years as proposed in
H.R. 9 will not pass constitutional muster in the litigation that is certain to follow its enactment. In City of Boerne v. Flores, the Supreme Court held that when Congress enacts legislation to enforce constitutional guarantees, "[t]here must be a congruence and proportionality between the injury to be prevented or remedied and the means adopted to that end." The Court cited the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as an example of appropriate congressional legislation that it had upheld. The Court observed, however, that "[s]trong measures appropriate to address one harm may be an unwarranted response to another, lesser one." I am worried because, in extending section 5's preclearance requirement for another 25 years, H.R. 9 does little to acknowledge the tremendous progress made over the past 40 years in Alabama and other covered jurisdictions. Today is not 1965, and the situation with respect to voting rights in Alabama and other covered jurisdictions is dramatically different from 1965. This is why Congress must recognize this tremendous progress in covered jurisdictions by modernizing section 5 to reflect present-day progress and remaining problems.

For example, Congress ought to update the coverage trigger in section 4(b) of the act. It is simply illogical—in 2006—to base coverage solely on registration and voter turnout data from the Presidential elections in 1960, 1968, 1972. What about the Presidential elections in 2000 and 2004? What about the 14 noncovered jurisdictions that Federal courts have found guilty of unconstitutional or section 2 violations in recent years? Those years and those jurisdictions could easily be added to the list of covered jurisdictions in section 4(b), but H.R. 9 does not update the coverage formula to include them. Given the dearth of preclearance objections, it seems that some minor or de minimis voting changes ought to be removed from the preclearance requirement, as well.

Congress also needs to make changes to improve the "bailout" process in section 4(a) of the act. According to the Department of Justice, out of 914 covered States and political subdivisions, only 11 covered jurisdictions, all in Virginia, have bailed out of coverage, and thus preclearance, under section 4(a). It is obvious that bailout is not working properly. H.R. 9 will not correct that problem. For example, even if a town in Alabama has a perfect record on voting rights and meets every one of the requirements for bailout, it cannot seek bailout because section 9(c) defines "political subdivision" to mean "any county or parish" but not any city or town. That should be changed, but this bill does not address it. I should have given serious consideration to Professor Hasen's "proactive bailout" proposal to improve the bailout process.

I am also concerned that the Supreme Court will think that a 25-year reauthorization is simply too long to pass constitutional muster. In 1965, Congress only authorized the temporary provisions of the Voting Rights Act to be in effect for 41 years. I am worried that the Supreme Court will conclude that it is not "congruent and proportional" to require some States to preclude every single voting change, no matter how small, until the year 2031 based on data regarding voter turnout and registration from 1964—67 years earlier.

Finally, I am concerned about H.R. 9's language adding new subsections (b), (c), and (d) to section 5 of the Voting Rights Act to alter the Supreme Court's decisions in Georgia v. Ashcroft and Reno v. Bossier Parish School Board, Bossier Parish II. In its decision in Bossier Parish II, in particular, the Court warned that the interpretation of section 5 rejected in that case "would also exacerbate the 'substantial' federalism costs that the preclearance procedure already exacts perhaps to the extent of raising concerns about §5's constitutionality." After these decisions, the risks taken in failing to modernize and modify the provisions of the Voting Rights Act to address the voting rights problems of the 21st century. It is particularly important therefore, that these new provisions be strictly interpreted.

The "ability . . . to elect their preferred candidates of choice" language in new subsections 5(b) and 5(d) prevents the elimination of what the Supreme Court called "majority-minority districts" in Georgia v. Ashcroft, in exchange for the creation of what it called "influence districts." Neither the language of new subsections 5(b) and 5(d) nor the "any discriminatory purpose" language of new subsections 5(c) requires that the States place into "influence" or "coalitional" districts, however. The concept of "influence" or "coalitional" districts is far too amorphous to impose as a requirement of Federal law. Imposing such new restrictions on the redistricting process would prove both unworkable and unconstitutional.

I agree with the comments made earlier this afternoon by Senator McConnell, Senator Hatch, Senator Kyl, and Senator Coburn. It is my sense that we are reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act not creating a "gerrymandering rights act." The bipartisan support for this bill indicates that both Republicans and Democrats do not expect or intend it to be interpreted to advantage one party or the other. Although the Voting Rights Act is now 40 years old, many of my constituents have vivid recollections of discrimination at the ballot box, and they have strong memories of the civil rights movement that led to the most historic changes that were encapsulated in the Voting Rights Act. These are wonderful people. They love America and are proud of the changes in Alabama and our Nation. They have a strong attachment to the Voting Rights Act. All Alabamians want to see the progress continue. In light of the wrongs that have occurred in the past and out of respect for those who placed their very lives at risk for change, I will vote in favor of H.R. 9.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise today in support of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act.

The democratic process of citizens electing those who will govern them is a cornerstone of America. It is this design which has contributed greatly to making our Nation stable, resilient, and a leader in the world. Every citizen over the age of 18 who can legally vote has a constitutional right to do so.

The 15th amendment of the Constitution states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

To enforce the 15th amendment, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965. This legislation prevented States from suppressing or denying African Americans and others the opportunity to participate in the electoral process, and it continues to do so today.

Most of the Voting Rights Act is permanent law. However, certain sections of the law are set to expire in 2007 if not reauthorized by this Congress. These sections, requirements for Federal review of State and local election laws, the placement of Federal election observers, and voting assistance programs for bilingual American citizens, were established so that Congress could reevaluate and amend them if needed.

I stand here today representing a State, portions of which have been classified by this act as having a troubled history, and I support reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

North Carolina is proud of the progress it has made over the last several decades. North Carolinians continue to learn from history and will continue to strive to serve as a model for the rest of the Nation in equality and fairness.

I must emphasize that regardless of the outcome of this reauthorization vote, which I will support and I am confident will pass this Chamber, no member unanimously, no citizen will lose the right to vote in 2007 as a result of any expiring provisions. As Members of Congress, we have the responsibility to preserve the constitutional rights of all individuals but also to make sure that the law of the land is evenly and fairly applied and enforced.

Voting rights for African Americans or any other citizen group are granted by the 15th amendment. Voting rights for American citizens are permanent.

We must ensure public confidence in our electoral system.
As I have said on the floor of the Senate before, "as our country plants the seeds of democracy across the world, we have the essential obligation to continue to operate as the model."

I urge my colleagues to support this reauthorization. The Voting Rights Act is a key tool—in eradicating any remaining vestiges of racial discrimination.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. Let me first commend everyone who has been involved with getting this bill to where we are today, including the chairman of the Judiciary Committee here in the Senate, Chairman SPECTER. Chairmen SPECTER has attempted to ensure that everyone involved in this process received the opportunity to explore the issues about which they had further questions, while still moving the bill through expeditiously. Thanks to all these efforts, we will see final passage of the Voting Rights Act reauthorization today, nearly a year ahead of the expiration of any of the temporary provisions. I have long been a supporter of the Voting Rights Act. I had the opportunity to work with Senators DOLE and KENNEDY and others in 1982 to continue the VRA’s vital protections, to ensure that Americans truly have the right to vote.

As I explained during the reauthorization of the VRA in 1982, the right to vote is fundamental. Only through voting can we guarantee preservation of all our other rights. The right to vote is the very cornerstone of democracy and merits the highest protection of law.

People of all races have been guaranteed the right to vote since passage of the 15th amendment in 1870. For far too long, though, this was a right only in theory. Many minorities were discriminated against in the days before the Voting Rights Act was introduced. Since this Act was passed, we have seen a dramatic increase in voter registration, and a great percentage of American citizens can Americans to fully participate in the American political system, both as voters and candidates. At the time the act was first adopted, only one-third of all African Americans of voting age were on the registration rolls in the specially covered States compared with two-thirds of White voters. Now African Americans’ voter registration rates are approaching parity with that of Whites in many areas, and Hispanic voters in jurisdictions added to the list especially by the Act in 1975 are not far behind. Enforcement of the act has also increased the opportunity of African Americans and Latino voters to elect representatives of their choice. Virtually excluded from all public offices in the South in 1965, African Americans and Hispanic voters are now substantially represented in the State legislatures and local governing bodies throughout the region.

Mr. President, this is a piece of legislation that literally changed the landscape of the American political system, and I am extremely pleased to cast a vote in favor of its extension.

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise today to express my support for the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I support this law and recognize its valuable contributions to our society.

Since its inception in 1965, the Voting Rights Act has helped ensure the right to vote for millions of U.S. citizens. This right, as outlined in the 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution, is fundamental to our
Country’s foundation. It is the life-blood of our democracy. The very legitimacy of our government is dependent on the access all Americans have to the electoral process.

We must ensure that when citizens choose to cast their ballots that they do not face obstacles created to disenfranchise them. Every U.S. citizen, regardless of race or gender, should have opportunity to cast their vote without fear of discrimination.

The history has been the case. Our Nation’s history can provide examples where the person’s right to vote has been impeded whether it be through literacy tests or poll taxes. This is unacceptable and is a powerful reminder of the hardships this Nation has experienced. The Voting Rights Act has provided protection to minority communities that may fall victim to some of those impediments, or even worse, to threats or intimidation during the electoral process.

I believe the Voting Rights Act was a good idea and necessary in 1965. I also believe we have come a long way since 1965 and would like to recognize the many changes and progress made all across the Country. I firmly believe this progress will only continue to grow.

I come from a State that is committed to civil rights, and I believe that our Forefathers said it best that we are one Nation, undivided, with liberty and justice for all. I look forward to seeing this commitment to justice renewed today as we reauthorize the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Mr. President, I am confident that the Voting Rights Act will be reauthorized today and urge my colleagues to support this important piece of legislation.

Mr. DEWINE. Mr. President, I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this very important piece of legislation, the Voting Rights Reauthorization Act of 2006.

As we all know, Congress first passed the Voting Rights Act back in 1965, when many jurisdictions had numerous laws and regulations aimed at denying the right to vote to many of our citizens—in direct violation of the 15th amendment to the Constitution. The Voting Rights Act made it clear that our society would no longer tolerate such abuses. It also made clear that all citizens have the opportunity to exercise this right freely and easily, without harassment, intimidation, or other barriers to voting. Its passage was one of the proudest moments of the civil rights movement.

The Voting Rights Act has been an extraordinary success, and we can see its results in towns, counties, and States across the country, as well as in the House of Representatives and in the U.S. Senate. Minority voters have had their voices heard and their votes counted, and have helped elect a wide range of officials who reflect the diversity of our great Nation. Unfortunately, despite the great advances we have made as a country, we still have more work to do. Both the House and the Senate have investigated this issue thoroughly, and after numerous hearings and thousands of pages of evidence being accepted into the record, it is clear that we need to reauthorize the expiring provisions of the act. More time and effort is needed to completely fulfill the promise of the Voting Rights Act and to assure every citizen that his or her 15th amendment rights are fully available, and this bill will allow us the time we need.

The House of Representatives has already passed the Voting Rights Renewal Act, and I am glad we are going to move it forward today. We can then quickly put this critical legislation in front of the President, who supports the bill and is waiting to sign it into law. I am hopeful that at the end of this 25-year reauthorization, we will all be able to agree that no further legislative action is necessary—that we have already accomplished our goal of assuring every American citizen the equal right to vote.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, the 15th amendment of the United States Constitution provides, ‘‘[t]he right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.’’ In 1965, with the passage of the Voting Rights Act, Congress finally began to enforce the Nation’s promise embodied in the 15th amendment. The Voting Rights Act was designed to ‘‘foster our transformation to a society that is no longer fixated on race,’’ to an ‘‘all-inclusive community, where we would be able to forget about race and color and see people as people, as human beings, just as citizens.’’ The mere mention of this act conjures up profound images of the civil rights movement, a fight by many courageous men and women for equality and justice.

In 1965, Congress wisely decided to make the most significant sections of the bill permanent. The permanent provisions apply to all States equally. One section of the original act suspended all ‘‘tests or devices’’ that States used to disfranchise racial minorities. Section 2, which is also permanent, requires that a jurisdiction, confirming by statute that no political subdivision may deny or abridge voting rights on account of race or color and that all individuals have recourse to discriminatory election procedures in Federal court.

That legislation, Congress passed temporary remedial measures to address voting practices and districting in seven Southern States, where registration rates for Black voters averaged only 29.3 percent. Section 5 was crafted to remedy the low voter registration and turnout among the minority communities caused by discriminatory registration practices and intimidation at the polls. Indeed, the Voting Rights Act has succeeded tremendously. Statistician Keith Gaddie reported that the registration and turnout rate of Black citizens is higher in covered jurisdictions than throughout the rest of the Nation. He additionally revealed that the registration of Black citizens in Alabama during the 2004 elections was 72.9 percent of the voting age population; in Georgia, 64.2 percent; in Louisiana, 71.1 percent; in Mississippi, 76.1 percent; in North Carolina, 75.1 percent; and in Virginia, 57.4 percent of the voting age population. Voter turnout rates were also improved. For example in 2004 Alabama had a 63.9 percent turnout rate of registered Black voters; Georgia had a 54.4 percent turnout rate, Louisiana had a 62.1 percent turnout rate, Mississippi had a 66.8 percent turnout rate, South Carolina had a 59.5 percent turnout rate, and Virginia had a 49.6 percent turnout rate.

If we applied registration and turnout data from our most recent Presidential elections to the trigger formula for coverage, many covered States would no longer remain covered. This is important because the Supreme Court requires that any laws that we write must be ‘‘congruent and proportional’’ to the problems we seek to remedy. While these provisions were necessary because State practices and the prejudices of individuals kept eligible citizens from being able to cast a ballot free from the threat of intimidation or harassment, it is important that we ensure that the correct jurisdictions are covered in order to preserve the constitutionality of the act.

We held nine hearings, and many individuals from diverse backgrounds and different races have both praised and criticized the temporary provisions of the VRA set to expire 1 year from now. At each hearing, multiple witnesses suggested ways to amend and improve this Act. Yet I was the only Senator on the committee prepared to offer substantive amendments to improve the Act so that it addresses the problems it seeks to remedy today.

I was prepared to offer three amendments. The first would define the term ‘‘limited English proficient,’’ the second would reauthorize the amended provisions for 7 years instead of 25 years, and the third would require a photo identification in all Federal elections.

Yet I only offered one amendment in committee yesterday, because it was clear that we should pass the exact bill that the House passed regardless of the merits of certain amendments. In fact, even though the committee did pass a non-substantive amendment to amend the title of the bill, Senate leadership brought the House bill H.R. 9 to the floor without the title change accepted in committee. Political expediency clearly trumped the will of individual Senators.

There are other amendments that should have received consideration. During hearings, some Senators discussed possible amendments that they
appeared to support with witnesses. Yet I believe that political fear and perceived intimidation prevented them from offering any amendments. For example, there was discussion based on the testimony of numerous witnesses that would lead any immigrant to create more reasonable bailout procedure. States and counties wishing to bail out are only permitted to make their case here in Washington rather than at a Federal court closer to their home. Another amendment that received some support among witnesses would have included more recent data to determine coverage of areas with a recent history of discrimination rather than relying on data only from the 1964, 1968, and 1972 elections.

Even if no amendments offered were accepted, this bill is dramatically different from reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act as renewed in 1982. This bill rewrites the Voting Rights Act, section 5 to 204, to require that reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act is about as important as it Gets. Senators of both political parties deserve great credit for bringing this vitally needed legislation to the floor of the Senate today. I have come to salute those inside and outside the Senate for their work to bring this extraordinarily important issue before the country and before the Senate and to make an appeal to Senators and those outside the Chamber to work for more.

In the past three successive elections—2000, 2002, and 2004—there were scores of accusations of voter intimidation, rigged voting machines, conflicts of interest among elected officials, and other serious electoral abuses. Many newspaper articles, State and Federal government studies and scores of lawsuits have described in considerable detail the toll that election abuses now take on our democracy. As much as it is an accomplishment that the Senate will vote to fully consider the testimony and answers submitted by witnesses and still vote to extend the temporary provisions before they expire in the summer of next year. We still have time to do this right. Congress has until the end of 2007 to consider this bill, and yet we are moving ahead without receiving all answers to questions and fully considering the testimony of our witnesses. As a result, none of us can realistically say that we know the full implications of what we are voting on today. And the consequences of our rush, forced by politics, may have unintended consequences for our Nation.

Nonetheless, I am voting for the Voting Rights Act today. The bottom line is that law cannot cure many of the problems that we have seen in the last three election cycles. But there is a proven system that can reduce many of these abuses, and I hope that the current Congress will take steps to promote it. It is known as vote by mail.

My State of Oregon adopted this election system back in 1998, with nearly 70 percent support of our State’s voters. It has been a resounding success any way one looks at it, and it has not been seen in any way as a kind of partisan tool that advantages one particular party or one particular philosophy.

What I want to do this afternoon is describe briefly how the Oregon system works and then talk about why the Senate ought to be taking steps to promote it nationally as a way to deal with some of these problems that have swept across our land over the last three election cycles.

In Oregon the system works in this way. At least 2 weeks before election day, election officials mail ballots to all registered voters. The voters mark their ballots, seal and sign those ballots, and then return them by mail or by placing them in a secure drop box. Election officials count the votes using optical scanning machines that confirm the signature on the return envelope matches the signature of the voter on file. Each county also provides options for those voters who need special accommodations or prefer to vote onsite.

The bottom line is that vote by mail can address many of the problems that plague this country’s elections. For example, with vote by mail, there is no waiting in line in the polls for hours. All through our country over the last election we heard complaints about.
people having to wait in line, often for hours and hours on end. It doesn’t happen with vote by mail. Each voter receives a ballot in the mail. They can complete it at home, at work, or wherever is convenient for them. And you don’t have to get in line of people wait-
ing in line for hours and hours to exer-
cise their franchise.

With vote by mail, no one would get the run-around about which polling place to supposed to vote at. The ballots are mailed to the citizen’s home. If, for some reason, a voter’s ball-
lot does not arrive 2 weeks before the election as it is supposed to, the voter has enough time to correct the prob-
lem, get their ballot, and then cast it. Americans who face the toughest time getting to the polls, such as citizens with disabilities and the elderly, report that they vote more often using vote by mail. Women, younger voters, stay-
at-home parents, and the elderly, report vote more often using vote by mail. Once again, it is an opportunity on a bipartisan basis to deal with a very se-
rious problem that we have seen over the last few election cycles.

Citizens get the run-around at the polling place when they show up on election day to vote and are told: “You really shouldn’t be here; you ought to be there.” “We can’t really tell you where you ought to be.” “We have all these people in line, and we will try to help you later.” All of that is eliminated through vote by mail be-
cause folks get their ballot at their home.

Third, with vote by mail there is less risk of voter intimidation. A 2003 study of voters in my home State showed that the groups that would be most vulnerable to coercion now favor vote by mail. Over the last few elections, we saw at one time up to 70% of the population saying that they feared coercion. They were concerned about intimidation in the exercise of their franchise.

We have documentary proof in our home State, a specific study that I have documented who are most vulnerable to intimidation and coer-
cion feel more comfortable voting by mail.

Next, with vote by mail, malfunc-
tioning voting equipment is a thing of the past. Everyone heard the stories in 2004 of citizens who said they voted for one candidate only to see the elec-
tronic voting machine indicate that the voter had cast a ballot for some-
body else. Situations such as this cannot occur in vote by mail. Each voter marks the ballot, reviews it, and submits it, the ballot is counted, and it becomes a paper record—a paper record that is used in the event of a recount.

I have never had a case where a voter would have a paper trail for every ballot that is cast in our country. It is wrong that there is at present no such paper trail. Every time I have a community meet-
ing, people are saying: why can this not be done? It is just common sense. My home State has led the way to ensure that through our vote-by-mail system there is a paper trail.

With vote by mail, the risk of fraud is minimized. When an Oregon county receives a voter’s marked ballot, the ballot is then sent to elections workers trained in signature verification who compare the signature on each ballot against the person’s signature on their voter registration card. This can be done quickly and easily because each voter’s registration card has been elec-
tronically scanned into the system. No ballot is processed or counted until the county is satisfied that the signature on the ballot matches the voter’s sign-
ature on file. If someone tries to com-
mit fraud, they can be convicted of a Class C felony, spend up to five years in prison, and pay $100,000 in fines.

Vote by mail can help make the prob-
lems of recent elections a thing of the past. In doing so, it will make our elec-
ctions fairer and help reinstate a con-
fi dence in our democracy, which frank-
ly, has been lacking.

There are a number of other reasons why I think our country ought to be doing everything possible to encourage citizens to adopt vote by mail. This ap-
proach increases election participa-
tion. For example, vote by mail helps make voter turnout in Oregon consid-
erably higher than the average na-
tional voter turnout. Oregon experi-
enced a record turnout of more than 70 percent in the 2004 Presidential elec-
tion, compared to 58 percent nation-
ally.

Vote by mail, we find, gets more cit-
zens involved in the issues because folks get their ballots weeks before the final day when their ballot is due, and they have the time to quiz candidates, examine issues that are important to them, and do it in a deliberate fashion that gives them more time.

Next, vote by mail has produced huge savings at the local level for election costs. Vote by mail reduces those elec-
tion costs by eliminating the need to transport equipment to polling sta-
tions and to hire and train poll work-
ers. My home State has reduced its election-related costs by 30 percent since implementing vote by mail. So we have the results. We have the re-
results to show the rest of the country why we ought to be encouraging across the land vote by mail.

In a survey taken 5 years after we implemented this system, more than 8 out of 10 Oregon voters said they pre-
ferred voting by mail to traditional in-
person voting. I am confident that the rest of our country would embrace it the very same way.

What this is all about, and why I have taken time to discuss our ap-
proach, is that I think it is very much in line with both the spirit and the text of the Voting Rights Act. America needs to make sure that no eligible voter, based on color, creed or any other reason, would be disenfran-
chised.

What we are doing in the Senate today by reintroducing the Voting Rights Act is the right thing. It is clearly a step in the right direction for these difficult times. But I do think much more can be done to improve the election pro-
cess. I intend to press at every possible opportunity for a way to encourage an approach that has empowered people in my home State in a manner that has far exceeded the expectations of even those biggest bastards. It has been to-
tally non-partisan.

In Oregon, we were amused in the be-

inning of our discussion about vote by mail. At the beginning of the discus-
sion, it seemed that a fair number of Republicans were for vote by mail, but a number of Democrats were skeptical. Then, after I won the Senate special election in 1996—and Senator SMITH and I have laughed about this often over the years—there was an about face, and it seemed then that Demo-

crats liked vote by mail and Repub-
licans were a little cautious. Our State’s citizens said enough of all this nonsense and overwhelmingly voted, on a bipartisan basis, to say this is just plain good government, and this is the way we want to go.

I think the Oregon story can be cop-
ed across the country, and I am going to do everything I can to encourage it. As Supreme Court declared in the Reynolds v. Sims case.

[i]t has been repeatedly recognized that all qualified voters have a constitutionally pro-
ected right to vote . . . and to have their vote counted.

Promoting vote by mail across our land will help make this constitutional right a reality. I encourage my col-
leagues to look and study the approach we have used in our State, an approach that will advance the spirit of the Voting Rights Act. Support the Voting Rights Act today and work with us to build on its incredible importance in the days ahead.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I ask

unanimous consent that I be permitted to proceed for 10 minutes and, fol-

lowing me, Senator BOXER be per-
mitted to proceed for 15 minutes, and following her, Senator SCHUMER for 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I thank

the Senator from Oregon for his discus-
sion of an important way of having ac-
countability in voting. I must say that I see no problem that we couldn’t work out in Oregon. It works well. It works brilliantly, as a matter of fact. People have a lot of time to be able to vote. They don’t have to struggle with work issues or being sick or other things. They have plenty of time to be able to have the kind of transparency and account-
ability that makes the system work.

There are other States where you are allowed to start voting early—in New Mexico and elsewhere.

It is amazing that in the United States we have this patchwork of the way our citizens work in Federal elec-
tions. It is different almost every-
where. I had the privilege of giving the
graduation address this year at Kenyan College in Ohio, and there the kids at Kenyan College wound up being the last people to vote in America in the Presidential race in 2004 in Gambier, at 4:30 in the morning. We had to go to court to get permission for them to keep the polls open so they could vote at 4:30 in the morning.

Why did it take until 4:30 in the morning for people to be able to vote? They didn’t have enough voting machines in America. These people lined up not just there but in all of Ohio and in other parts of the country. An honest appraisal requires one to point out that where there were Republican secretaries of state, the lines were invariably longer in Democratic precincts, sometimes with as many as one machine only in the Democratic precinct and several in the Republican precinct; so it would take 5 or 10 minutes for someone of the other party to be able to vote, and it would take literally hours for the people in the longer lines. If that is not a form of intimidation and suppression, I don’t know what is.

So I thank the Senator from Oregon for talking about the larger issue here. He is absolutely correct. The manner in which his State is one that the rest of the country ought to take serious and think seriously about embracing.

This is part of a larger issue, obviously, Mr. President. All over the world, democracy has always stood out as the great exporter of democratic values. In the years that I have been privileged to serve in the Senate, I have had some extraordinary opportunities to see that happen in a firsthand way.

Back in 1986, I was part of a delegation that went to the Philippines. We took part in the peaceful revolution that took place at the ballot box when the dictator, President Marcos, was kicked out. We flew across the Pacific to the island of Mindanao and landing where some people have literally not seen a helicopter before, and 5,000 people would surround it as you swooped out of the sky, to go to a polling place where the entire community turned out waiting in the hot sun in long lines to have their thumbs stamped in ink and to walk out having exercised their right to vote.

I could think how much more energy and commitment people were showing for the privilege of voting in this far-off place than a lot of Americans show on too many occasions. The fact is that in South Africa we fought for years—we did—through the boycotts and other efforts, in order to break the back of apartheid and empower all citizens to vote. Most recently, obviously, in Afghanistan and Iraq, notwithstanding the disagreement of many of us about the management of the evidence and other issues that we have all debated here. This has never been debated about the desire for democracy and the thrill that everyone in the Senate felt in watching citizens be able to exercise those rights.

In the Ukraine, the world turned to the United States to monitor elections and ensure that the right to vote was not being compromised by suppressing the ballot. None of us will forget the courage of what President Carter has done in traveling the world to guarantee that fair elections take place. But the truth is, all of our attempts to spread freedom around the world will be hollow and lost on the streets in the future if we don’t deliver at home.

The fact is that we are having this debate today in the Senate about the bedrock right to vote, with the understanding that this is not a right that was afforded to everyone in our country automatically or at the very beginning. For a long time, a century or more, women were not allowed to vote in America. We all know the record with respect to African Americans. The fact is that the right to vote in our country was confined in blood in many cases and in civic sweat in a whole bunch of cases. Courageous citizens literally risked their lives. I remember in the course of the campaign 2 years ago, traveling to Alabama—Montgomery— and the Martin Luther King Center, the memorial to Martin Luther King, and the fountain. There is a round stone fountain with water spilling out over the sides. From the center of the fountain there is a compass rose, and in the fulcrum of the full circle. At the end of every one of those lines is the name of an American with the description, “killed trying to register to vote,” or “murdered trying to register.” Time after time, that entire compass rose is filled with people who lost their lives in order to exercise a fundamental right in our country.

None of us will forget the courage of people who marched and faced Bull Connor’s police dogs and faced the dogs that threatened violence, being dragged out of their homes in the dark of night to be hung. The fact is that we are having this debate today because their work and that effort is not over yet. Too many Americans in too many parts of our country still face serious obstacles when they are trying to vote in our own country.

By reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act, we are taking an important step, but, Mr. President, it is only a step. I would pretend that reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act solves the problems of being able to vote in our own country. It doesn’t. In recent elections, we have seen too many times how outcomes change when votes that have been cast are not counted or when voters themselves are prevented from voting or intimidated from even registering or when they register, as we found in a couple of States, their registration forms are put in the wastebasket instead of into the computers.

The Voting Rights Act has to do exactly every other problem. Voiceless voter in the United States ought to be able to cast his or her ballot without fear, without intimidation, and with the knowledge that their vote will be heard. These are the foundations of our democracy, and we have to pay more attention to it.

For a lot of folks in the Congress, this is a very personal fight. Some of us who were part of the Senate debate in 1965 when this fight first took place or they took part in this fight out in the streets. Without the courage of someone such as Congressman John Lewis who almost lost his life marching across that bridge in Selma, whose name is seared in our minds, who remembers what it was like to march to move a nation to a better place, who knows what it meant to put his life on the line for voting rights, this is personal.

For somebody like my colleague, Senator Ted Kennedy, the senior Senator from Massachusetts, who was here in the great fight on this Senate floor in 1965 when they broke the back of resistance, this is personal. We don’t even have this landmark legislation today if it weren’t for their efforts to try to make certain that it passed.

But despite the great strides we have taken since this bill was originally enacted, we have a lot of work to do.

Mr. President, I ask for an additional 5 minutes.

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

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, on this particular component of the bill, there is agreement. Republicans and Democrats can agree. I was really pleased that every attempt in the House of Representatives to weaken the Voting Rights Act was rejected.

We need to reauthorize these three critical components especially: The section 5 preclearance provisions that get the Justice Department to oversee an area that has a historical pattern of discrimination that they can’t change have help people vote without clearance. That seems reasonable.

There are bilingual assistance requirements. Why? Because people need it and it makes sense. They are American citizens, but they still may have difficulties in understanding the ballot, and we ought to provide that assistance so they have a fully informed vote. This is supposed to be an informed democracy, a democracy based on the real consent of the American people.

And finally, authorization for poll watching. Regrettably, we have seen in place after place in America why we need to have poll watching.

A simple question could be asked: Where would the citizens of Georgia be, particularly low-income and minority citizens, if they were required to produce a government-issued identification or pay $20 every 5 years in order to vote? That is what would have happened without section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. It is clear they have successfully imposed what the judge in the case called “a Jim Crow-era like poll tax.” I don’t think anybody here
wants to go back and flirt with the possibility of returning to a time when States charged people money to exercise their right to vote. That is not our America.

This morning, President Bush addressed the Annual Convention of the NAACP after a 5-year absence. I am pleased that the President, as we all are, ended his boycott of the NAACP and announced his intention to sign the Voting Rights Act into law.

But we must complete the job. There are too many stories all across this country of people who say they registered duly, they reported to vote, and they were made to stand in one line or another line and get an excuse why, when they get to the end of the line, they can’t vote. So they take out a provisional ballot, and then there are fights over provisional ballots.

There are ways for us to avoid that. Some States allow same-day registration. In some parts of America, you can just show up on the day of an election, register, and vote, as long as you can prove your residence.

We have this incredible patchwork of laws and rules, and in the process, it is even more confusing for Americans. We need to pass the Help America Vote Act so that we have the machines in place, so that people are informed, so that there is no one in America who waits an undue amount of time in order to be able to cast a vote.

We have to pass the Count Every Vote Act that Senator CLINTON, Senator BOXER, and I have introduced which ensures exactly what the Senator from Oregon was talking about: that every voter in America has a verifiable paper trail for their vote. How can we have a system where you can touch a screen and even after you touch the name of one candidate on the screen, the other candidate’s name comes up, and if you are not attentive to what you have done and you just go in, touch the screen, push “select,” you voted for someone else and didn’t intend to? How can we have a system like that?

How can we have a system where the voting machines are proprietary to a private business so that the public sector has no way of verifying what the computer code is and whether or not it is accountable and fair? Just accounting for it.

Congress has to ensure that every vote cast in America is counted, that every precinct in America has a fair vote cast in America is counted, that in the United States of America, every American, regardless of political party, color, age, gender or age, can vote with the very important voting rights in this country.

And I thank my colleague for her for- ness to help bring an end to apartheid in South Africa. I often quote Martin Luther King, almost in every speech I give, because he is one of my heroes. One of the lines he said, which isn’t really one that gets quoted all the time, is that “Our lives begin to end when we stop talking about things that matter.” “Our lives begin to end when we stop talking about things that matter.” That touched me and reached me. I think his words, of course, reached every American, regardless of political party. Don’t stop talking about things that matter, even though it might be easier to do so, even though it might be easier when you are at a friend’s house and somebody says something that is bigoted toward somebody else. It is sometimes easier for us to make believe we didn’t hear it. No, that matters, you matter, your view matters, your values matter. Speak up.

That is what we are doing, and I am proud to be in the Senate today because we are doing something good today. It is a privilege and an honor to vote for this reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

I had a number of people visit me from my State yesterday—old and young, children, grandchildren, great grandmothers, granddads, lawyers, workers, doctors. They just jammed into my conference room and they said: Senator BOXER, we know you are with us. We know you have been on this bill. We know where you are. We have listened to you all these years. We wanted to be here and make it an honor to vote for this reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.

I said: You don’t need to thank me. What you need to do is join with me so that after this vote, we truly get equal voting rights in this country.
That was touched on by Senator KERRY, and it was touched on by Senator Wyden. The right to vote—without it we are nothing. Without it, we are not standing up for the principles upon which this Nation was founded: a government of, by, and for the people.

How do you have a government of, by, and for the people, if the people turn away from the voting booth? I hear every excuse in the world: Oh, you are all the same. What is the difference? I can’t make a difference. It is just false. It is just an excuse.

Show me two candidates running against each other at a local level, at a State level, at a Federal level, and I will show you the difference. If you pay attention, you will find out the differences, and you will cast your vote for the candidate that most represents you. You are not going to agree with them 100 percent of the time. That is an equal: Oh, I used to agree with him, but he did three things, and I don’t agree with him anymore. Look at the totality. Look at the totality of the voting record. Look at the totality of the record to make a decision. Don’t just walk away. Don’t pull the covers over your head with excuses: They are all alike. I can’t make a difference. What is one vote?

We all know the election of John Kennedy prevailed by a couple of votes per precinct. It could have been one vote per precinct. That is how close that election was.

In the voting booth, we are all equal. In the voting booth, we are all equal. Your vote, whether you are 18 years old or you are my age and a Senator, we are all equal in the voting booth. We have one vote. We should cherish it. The CEO of a giant company who earns multimillions of dollars a year is equal to a minimum wage worker. And if that minimum wage worker thinks it is time he got a raise or she got a raise after almost 10 years of not getting a raise, he or she ought to vote, and vote for the candidate who supports your right to join the middle class.

Every citizen of this country who is eligible to vote should be guaranteed that their vote is counted and that their vote matters. That is why it is so important that we maintain the protections of this historic Voting Rights Act, such as requiring certain localities with a history of discrimination to get approval from the Federal Government before they make changes to voting procedures. Why is this important? It is important because it is a check and balance on an area that has in the past not shown—not shown—the willingness to fight for every voter. And, with limited jurisdictions to provide language assistance to voters with limited English proficiency, and authorizing the Federal Government to send election monitors to jurisdictions where there is a history of attempts to intimidate voters at the polls, we just want to make sure these elections are fair, wherever they are held.

The Federal Government must work hard to guarantee that the inequities we have seen in the past never resurface again. And won’t that be the day, when we have a system that we believe we can be proud of again.

I am here today with an opportunity to cast a vote to reauthorize provisions of the Voting Rights Act. But today didn’t come without struggle. Why did my people have to come all the way from California, spend their hard-earned dollars to get on a plane? I will tell you why: Because this was a hard bill to get before this body. People objected. People complained. It was a hard bill to get before the House. But many people worked hard, and House Members listened to the people, and Senators listened to the people.

I want to thank my friends at the NAACP who were finally able to convince enough that, yes, this was something we had to do. We have to be honest. There was a vote to weaken this bill, but we succeeded in not allowing that to happen.

In my closing moments, I want to say that our work does not stop today, as Senator KERRY said and as Senator Wyden said. I believe all of us have introduced the Count Every Vote Act, a comprehensive voting reform bill that will ensure that every American indeed can vote, and every vote is counted.

Congresswoman STEPHANIE TURSH JONES, who lived through a harrowing experience during the last election, with her constituents being given the runaround and standing in line for 6 and 7 hours. Is that the right to vote, standing in line for 6 and 7 hours, people who have to work, people who had health problems, people who couldn’t stand up, people whose legs were weakening beneath them? Is that the right to vote? I say it is not the right to vote. I say it is harassment.

Senators CLINTON, KERRY, LAUTENBERG, MIKULSKI, and I have introduced the Count Every Vote Act, and I want to highlight the two key provisions that are in this bill. The first is the bill would require electronic voting machines provide a paper record which will allow voters to verify their votes, and it will serve as a record if a manual recount is needed. We go to a restaurant, we get a receipt. We go to the store, we get a receipt. We set it in case there is a problem. When we vote, we should get a receipt. We should look at it, we should check it, just as we add up the bill from the restaurant. We should give it back and then it is stored. In case there is a problem, we have a paper trail.

The second provision: We say election day should be a Federal holiday. We all give speeches. We stand up and we stand behind the red, white, and blue. What a great, free country this is, and indeed it is. Why shouldn’t we want to make election day a holiday so that we can celebrate on every election day our freedoms, our history, our rights, our protections as citizens to choose our own leaders?

Let me say, we cannot even get to page 1 in terms of moving this bill forward. There is resistance to this bill. There are those in this body who don’t support the paper trail. They don’t want to make it easier to vote, and let’s call it what it is. That resistance exists, and that is wrong. So I call on the leadership of this body: Let’s do something for people. Let’s not have another situation where a Senator has to go over and protest a vote count because people said they had to stand in line for hours.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator’s time has expired.

Mrs. BOXER. Then when we have the people of Washington, DC. They are not represented with a vote. That is wrong. Over 500,000 people live in this great city. Is the heart and soul of America and they are not represented with a vote. They can’t cast their ballots in national elections for congressional representatives. They don’t have Senators or Representatives here. That is why I have joined Senator Joe Lieberman on his bill that calls for full voting rights for DC residents.

So, again, I say what a privilege and honor it is for me to be here, to stand here thinking back as a child when African Americans had to go to the back of the bus in some parts of the South, feeling the pain of that myself for those who had to live in that way. So this bill is a fitting tribute to Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer and Coretta Scott King.

I thank the Presiding Officer for his indulgence. This is a starting place for a lot of us, and we are going to make sure that we call it what it is, in fact, that it’s just a reality for every single one of our citizens.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I salute my colleague on her wonderful and heart-felt words.

Mr. President, this is a hallowed moment on the floor of this Senate. We don’t have too many of these hallowed moments these days, but passing, working for, voting for the renewal of the Voting Rights Act is just one of those. I rise in proud and full-hearted support of H.R. 9, which is a bicameral and bipartisan bill, thank God, to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

The bottom line. Mr. President, is this: Without the right to vote, as a democracy, people have no power. And while I do believe that race and racism have been a poison that has afflicted America for a long time, and there are many ways to solve that, probably the best, most surefire way is let people have the right to vote. For so long, that power was denied to people of color: Blacks, Hispanics, and others. Now it is not being...
I can tell by my own history, even here in the Congress, the progress we have made. When I got to the Congress in 1980, there were only 17 African Americans in the House. Today, there are 42. That is very close to the percentage of African Americans in American society. This shows how much the progress we have made. Without the Voting Rights Act, it clearly would not have happened.

However, we sit in the Senate, and only get your bill and we again have an African American come to the Senate. There is only one. So while we see the progress in the House of Representatives, we also look in the Senate and see how much longer we have to go. I am glad that final passage is now imminent, as leaders from both parties are supporting this bill. Let me say this act has been hailed as the single most effective piece of civil rights legislation we have ever passed. The reason is it does not just simply guarantee the vote, but it also ensures the effective exercise of that fundamental right.

Today, when we see the Governor of Georgia and the legislators of Georgia impeding the right to vote, we know that the best way to encourage and full-throated Voting Rights Act. And, thank God, the attempts to dilute it—mainly, I am sorry to say—coming from the other body, did not succeed.

Our Founding Fathers said it best when they penned these words in the Declaration of Independence: Government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. Simply put, in our Nation there can be no consent without unfettered access to the voting booth. A renewed and reenergized Voting Rights Act is exactly the right formula to ensuring equality in the political process for all Americans.

In 1965, when President Johnson signed the bill into law, there were only 300,000 minorities elected to State, local, or Federal office. North, South, East, and West, people of color were not represented. Today, four decades later, in large part because of this Voting Rights Act, 10,000 minorities serve as elected officials.

I have seen the Voting Rights Act have an effect on my city. New York is one of the most diverse cities in the country. And in our city, the Voting Rights Act has been extremely effective in helping to make sure all our citizens are able to participate equally in the political process. However, many of the act’s successes in New York—we think we are a modern country and, of course, a modern city—but they have only come since the last time we renewed its provisions. The first and only African-American mayor of New York wasn’t elected until May of 1989. The first and only African American wasn’t elected to statewide office until 1994. In 2002, the first and only Asian American was elected to the city council. Normally, just last year, a mayoral candidate became the first and only Latino to win his party’s nomination.

So while these strides are important, they are too few and too recent to declare that the promise of the Voting Rights Act has been realized. The bottom line is that the Voting Rights Act has worked to remove barriers from countless men and women from all walks of life, to give them access to the political process, to run for office, to enter and thrive in the political process, but there is still a lot of work to do. We cannot and thankfully will not let the act expire.

Mr. President, I look forward to casting my vote in favor of H.R. 9 later today, and urge all of my colleagues to do so. I am hopeful that we can have a unanimous vote on the floor of this Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. Coleman). The Senator from New Jersey is recognized.

Mr. Menendez. Mr. President, I rise as an original cosponsor and strong supporter of the Voting Rights Act reauthorization.

One of the most fundamental of American values is the right to cast a meaningful vote in a free and fair election. This right was established in 1964. “Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined.”

However, just over 40 years ago, in many parts of the American South, it was almost impossible for people of color to even register to vote. People were turned away from the courthouse when they attempted to register, while others were jailed. We sometimes talk romantically about the Civil Rights era, as if it were 200 or even 100 years ago. But the flagrant injustices that we see captured in black and white video reels were during a time not too long ago.

On March 7, 1965, about 600 people attempted to peacefully march from Selma, AL, to Montgomery, the State capital, to dramatize to the world their desire to register to vote. And the world watched in horror as these peaceful demonstrators, including my good friend and former colleague, Representative John Lewis, were beaten bloody. That day marked a sad, sad chapter in the history of our Nation.

For some, the tragedy in Selma is simply a footnote in a speech or a title of a History Month. But we must not lose sight of what those brave Americans were fighting for. And we must never forget the price they—and others—paid for their successes: Americans—Black, White, young, old, northern and southern—shed blood and, in some cases, gave the ultimate sacrifice so all Americans could enjoy the basic right to vote.

Five months after what is now known as “Bloody Sunday,” the Voting Rights Act was signed into law. It granted all American citizens the right to vote in any Federal, State, or local election and in doing so ensured that they had access to the American political process and a voice in determining their future.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act helped expand and open our democracy to let in millions of our citizens.

The Voting Rights Act empowers our communities to elect candidates of their choice and has ensured that a full spectrum of voices is heard in our national dialogue.

In stark contrast to the days prior to the Voting Rights Act, today it is the Voting Rights Act that ensures that the elections of people like Senators Barack Obama, Dan Inouye, Mel Martinez, Daniel Akaka, and Ken Salazar are no longer electoral anomalies, but reflections of the will of the communities and States they represent.

Today, there are 81 Members of Congress of African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American descent, a vast number of candidates of their choice.

If it were not for the Voting Rights Act and its provisions, I very well may not be standing before you today.

In the 21st century, at a time when we areophealing democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, we must ensure that democracy is protected here at home in every circumstance. One citizen unfairly discouraged from voting is too one too many. When people are denied the right to vote, they are denied a say in their Government, they are denied a say in the laws they are required to obey, and they are denied a say in the policies their tax dollars support.

It has been said that those who fail to understand history are doomed to repeat it. That is why the annual walk that Congressman Lewis leads across the Edmund Pettus Bridge has been the most important.

I was fortunate to visit Selma with him and the Faith and Politics Institute. Nothing brings one closer to a sense of what those young men and women experienced—the hatred and bigotry—than standing on and walking across the Pettus Bridge with Representative Lewis and learning what happened that day over 41 years ago.

As I listened to John Lewis and the other heroes of the movement, I was reminded how average citizens committed to an ideal can effect change. I was reminded through this pilgrimage that the journey is still not finished and that our goal must be social justice—not simply social service. I was also touched by those who suffered so much having so much love in their heart. It is a lesson still timely for us today and tomorrow.

The need for the Voting Rights Act has not gone away. In my State of New Jersey, the Voting Rights Act has been invoked after violations of the Voting Rights Act by the Republican National Committee and the New Jersey Republican
State Committee that deterred minorities from voting occurred during the 1981 gubernatorial election. This just illustrates voting rights violations can happen anywhere and at anytime, and are unfortunately a part of the historic fabric of our election process. Such violations were widespread in the 2000 elections that Congress enacted the Help America Vote Act. If anything, need to strengthen and update the Voting Rights Act is demonstrated in new ways every year.

The Voting Rights Act has been effective in eliminating barriers to the ballot box. Yet, several key provisions of the act regarding preclearance, observers, and language assistance are scheduled to expire in 2007. H.R. 9 will reauthorize these important and temporary provisions for an additional 25 years. Personally, I support making these provisions permanent.

H.R. 9 is the product of a thoughtful, thorough, bipartisan, and bicameral effort to weigh competing concerns and considerations that have been a part of the Voting Rights Act debate since its original passage. As my colleagues well know, the act has been extended on four other occasions, and it is likely making it the most carefully reviewed civil rights measure in our Nation’s long history.

This legislation we have before us today would renew the Voting Rights Act’s temporary provisions for 25 years to restore the ability of the Attorney General, under section 5 of the act, to block implementation of voting changes motivated by a discriminatory purpose; clarify that section 5 is intended to protect the ability of minority citizens to elect their candidates of choice; and authorize recovery of expert witness fees in lawsuits brought to enforce the Voting Rights Act.

The right to vote is so fundamental to our citizenship, so vital, that we as Members of Congress must make every effort to ensure that this right is a reality across the length and breadth of this great Nation. The Voting Rights Act ensures that all American citizens have access to both the ballot box and the American political process, and a voice in determining their future. That is why the Voting Rights Act remains so desperately needed and why Congress must reauthorize the special provisions that are set to expire.

In a joint session of Congress on the very legislation we are debating today, President Lyndon Baines Johnson said:

Mr. Johnson said:

In our time we have come to live with the moments of great crisis. Our lives have been touched by the most carefully reviewed civil rights legislation and in doing so protect the voting rights of all Americans.

Today, as I cast a vote in favor of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act, I hope and pray that 25 years from now, at the end of the authorization of this act, our country will have progressed so that we do not have to continue this peculiar debate.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll. The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, I join my colleagues today to speak in support of reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act of 1965. No act has done more to change the course of our Nation, where everyone, regardless of race, regardless of religion, regardless of economic status, and regardless of gender, has an equal opportunity to succeed. We are not there yet.

Some members of the House recently argued that the Voting Rights Act is somehow outdated, has outlived its intended usefulness, and that it unfairly punishes those covered jurisdictions for past actions and sins. I have nothing but respect for my colleagues and look fondly upon my years of service in that Chamber; but, I wholeheartedly disagree with some of my former colleagues.

In enacting the original Voting Rights Act and its four reauthorizations, past Congresses have declared to the world that America stands for freedom and democracy. But our rhetoric of equality and freedom must be ratiﬁed by an authentic pursuit of true freedom, true equality, and true democratic ideals. If we are to be a beacon of democracy and freedom to Baghdad, Beirut and Beijing—then we must ﬁrst be a beacon of freedom and democracy to Bloomﬁeld, Buffalo, and Birmingham.

Over 40 years ago, Senators stood on the ﬂoor of this Chamber to right a monumental wrong inflicted upon millions of Americans. Inspired by the quiet strength and principled courage of John Lewis and others like him, this body acted out of courage, conviction, and conscience.

I don’t know what senators will say 40 years from now. But, if nothing else, it is my prayer that they will say this Senator voted with the highest ideals and promises of this great Nation. And that Senators from all corners of America, and of all political stripes, stood up in defense of democracy and freedom here at home.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to strongly support this legislation and in doing so protect the voting rights of all Americans.

I yield the floor.
This act protects and preserves our democracy by ensuring that every citizen is given the same opportunity to participate in the political process. The strength of our democracy, as well as its existence, depends on the fact that the Government is created to perform for the benefit and advantage of those who are governed and to be used by those who are governed participate in it. Without this assurance, this opportunity to participate in that political process, our democracy could not exist. Without the right to participate freely in elections the Government is not able to effect change in his or her community is highly limited.

We are given, each of us, many God-given gifts, but our responsibility with those gifts is to give of those gifts to those around us, to our community and to our country, to our fellow man. Without being able to participate in this community, we are not able to fully give back.

I think it is important to remember what it was like voting for today. Men and women not much older than I am made great sacrifices to be able to perform that most basic right of free men and free women—the right to vote. It is easy to take for granted. We often do. But we must never forget that this right represents the hope and pain of millions of Americans. It represents their efforts and their prayers.

The things that we do without giving them much thought, were not so for millions of Americans. When we go to eat lunch, we sit wherever we would like. When we go to the movies, we sit wherever we would like as well. When we ride the bus, we sit wherever we like, and when we get to the polls, we take our ballot and we cast it without thinking about it.

It is easy for us to forget that it has not always been so. By way of example, the mother of one of my staff members became deeply involved in voter registration efforts while she was a college student in the early 1960s. She was determined to ensure that the right to vote was respected. She and her fellow students were told if they tried to encourage African Americans in the community to register, that they would be killed. They had every reason to take that threat seriously, but it didn’t matter to them. They knew that this right, the right to vote, was worth the cost, and they continued to encourage people to vote. And to vote. The Grace of God, no one was killed, but we know that others around the Nation were not so lucky.

These are the stories we must remember. We must remember that every citizen of this country who participates in elections is a citizen of the United States and is a citizen of the world. We must remember that every vote counts.

The Voting Rights Act has played an enormous role in making sure that happens. Since becoming law in 1965, the number of African Americans and other minority voters who are registered and able to vote has increased dramatically. As an example, my home State of Arkansas saw an increase of more than 33,000 African-American registered voters as a result of the Act. Extending the provisions of this legislation will ensure that we continue to build on the gains we have made since it first passed.

We have men and women spread across the country working for democracy and freedom. They are fighting for the right of citizens to hold free elections in which all, regardless of race, gender or creed, can participate. In many cases, this cannot be achieved without violence, unfortunately. Truth be told, we are not so far removed from our own violent past.

But by the mercy of God, we today will extend the blessings of liberty to all Americans with the recording of a vote as a pen. That is a miracle that we dare not forget. Because of what we do tomorrow, the men and women who marched and stood still and down and stood up and rejoiced and cried and ultimately overcame, we must be assured that their legacy will be carried on.

I suggest the absence of a quorum. The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, briefly, I want to propound a unanimous consent request which has been agreed to by the leadership on the other side. And then we will have the scheduling for today and tonight. And we will then move to the John Walsh child predator bill, have debate on that, and have debate on the judges, and then we will have stacked rollcall votes beginning at approximately 7:15 or 7:30 tonight.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut is recognized.

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it is with a great sense of pride and privilege that I rise today in strong, strong support of this important legislation. It is for this reason that we must once again reaffirm and reaffirm this fundamental principle by expeditiously reauthorizing this fundamental voting rights legislation. It is for this reason that I will vote in favor of the Voting Rights Act Extension Act. America must overcome its legacy of discrimination in voting.

Let me, first of all, applaud our colleagues, if I may, the leaders of the Judiciary Committee, Senator SPECTER, Senator LEAHY, and Senator KENNEDY for their extraordinary efforts to develop a truly bipartisan piece of legislation that has been brought to the floor here today. I feel very strongly about the need to reauthorize this law, and I commend our colleagues for the leader shown in marking up a bill that I gathered passed unanimously out of the Judiciary Committee and is before us today.
It was about 40 years ago when I was sitting up in these Galleries, watching the U.S. Senate as it engaged in an impassioned debate among our predecessors in this Chamber about whether to extend to all Americans equal rights at the polling place. I was a college student at the time. I listened to one U.S. Senator say:

Freedom and the right to vote are indivisible.

That U.S. Senator was my father, Thomas Dodd of Connecticut, speaking about the Voting Rights Act in that year. As I watched my father and his colleagues engage in a very heated debate, I was proud of how many Members of this body, on both sides of the aisle, worked to end discriminatory voting practices, Republicans and Democrats alike coming together.

It was following this debate, in 1965, that Congress took up and passed the Voting Rights Act—the first being the Civil Rights Act—as a response to the pervasive and explicit evidence of disenfranchisement of African-American and other voters in several States in our country.

The Voting Rights Act was designed, of course, as we all know, to protect and preserve the voting rights of all Americans. Since 1965, this act has been the cornerstone of voting rights in our country, and its success is a tribute to those who have labored to create it. I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to those that this act is named for: Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King. Many may recall, it was Fannie Lou Hamer who once commented that she was “sick and tired of being sick and tired.” In 1962, Mrs. Hamer, the youngest of 19 children, daughter of sharecroppers, and granddaughter of slaves, attended a voting registration drive held by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. There she learned that African Americans indeed had the constitutional right to vote.

She was the first to volunteer for a dangerous mission to the Indianola, MS, courthouse to register to vote. Courageously, she declared:

Tes the only thing they could do to me was to kill me, and it seemed like they’d been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember.

When Mrs. Hamer reached the courthouse, her companions were beaten and jailed. But she was not deterred. She went on to travel the country to encourage others to vote and later founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to challenge the all-white Mississippi delegation at the Democratic Convention—not in the 19th century, not in the early part of the 20th century—but in 1964.

The Voting Rights Act was signed into law a year later. In my view, if Mrs. Hamer had not risked her life and limbs to help those who were the plight of minority voters shut out of their own democracy may have continued, unfortunately.

Rosa Parks was another pioneer of the civil rights movement. As a seamstress in Montgomery, AL, she famously challenged the Jim Crow laws of segregation in 1955. Mrs. Parks once recalled that as a young child:

I’d see the bus pass every day. . . . But to me, that was a way of life: we had no choice but to accept what was the custom. The bus was among the first ways I realized there was a black world and a white world.

Her historic refusal to give up her bus seat to a white passenger led to her arrest, and sparked a citywide boycott of the bus system, which triggered two Supreme Court decisions outlawing segregation on city buses. In my view, her seat and protest touched the modern civil rights movement. And we owe her a great deal of debt for her courage.

In describing this incident, Mrs. Parks later recalled:

People always say that I didn’t give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn’t true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.

For more than four decades, Mrs. Parks dedicated herself to the fight for racial equality. I strongly believe that if Mrs. Parks had not refused to give up her seat and had gone to the back of the bus that day we would not be here today considering this historic legislation.

Let me mention the third individual for whom this act is being named today.

Coretta Scott King, of course, the wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, joined her husband and thousands of others to march from Selma to Montgomery, AL, on Sunday, March 7, 1965. That march, of course, galvanized the core political will behind the civil rights movement and served as a catalyst for the Voting Rights Act.

These three women worked for a better life and an inclusive society for not only themselves and their children, but also for future generations of Americans.

They selflessly and nonviolently challenged the laws and customs they believed were wrong. And they were right. Their ability to speak “truth to power” became their legacy. All three are iconic in the fight for the right to vote and a better life for all Americans.

Let me go on to point out here—I will not mention all sections of this bill. I know others have talked about that, why these sections are necessary to be continued for another 25 years. Let me, if I can, address some of the concerns that were raised in the other body in objections to the Voting Rights Act—and those who question why divisions of a 41-year-old law deserve to be reauthorized. And while I agree, progress has certainly been made—and we are all grateful for that—we still have many obstacles to overcome in the conduct of our elections.

Progress cannot be left to just serendipity. It must be guided by the rule of law. A little more than 5 years ago, we had an election in this country that forced us to confront the harsh reality that millions of Americans continue to be systematically denied their constitutional right to vote.

Every citizen deserves, of course, to have his or her vote counted as well. There are legal barriers, administratively irregularities, and access impediments to the right to vote which adversely and disproportionately impact voters according to their color, economic class, age, gender, disability, language, party, and precinct. That is wrong. It is unacceptable. It is un-American. And it needs to be changed.

It was unacceptable in 1965 and it is reprehensible in the year 2006. Congress must now reauthorize the expiring portions of the Voting Rights Act to continue to protect and preserve the voting rights of all Americans.

I have been closely following the reauthorization process in both Chambers. I was apprehensive when House Republicans attempted to amend the Voting Rights Act to undermine some of our very key tools for structurally weakening this very important and fundamental law. They tried to repeal the current formula of section 5 in order to exempt States with historically discriminatory voting practices from continued coverage. They wanted to expedite the “bailout” process overriding the sensible framework for jurisdictions to demonstrate that they should not be subject to continued section 5 coverage. To require us to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act in only 10 short years. Finally, in what I think is the most alarming attempt to weaken this vital law, House Republicans wanted to strike section 203 which ensures that all American citizens, regardless of language ability, are able to participate on a fair and equal basis in elections.

I believe all Americans who are voting should learn the English language. It should be our goal that all American citizens who vote should be able to understand an English language ballot. That is something we are wrestling with all the time. But we also recognize there are many here who are in the process of transition. Many of our citizens speak only one language as they are learning English. That makes them no less deserving. If they are citizens, of the basic rights and liberties that all Americans and are entitled to. Section 203 must be retained or its unique ability to remove barriers to this fundamental right to vote and to help promote meaningful participation among all segments of our society will be lost.

I am grateful that the civil rights groups, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, the NAACP, the National Council of La Raza, the AFL-CIO and others, have worked so closely with the Democratic Members of the House of Representatives to prevail over this adversity and were able to defeat every single one of these amendments.
Central to the foundation of our democratic form of government is, of course, the right to vote. The Voting Rights Act today facilitates and ensures that right. In a representative democracy, voting is the best avenue, of course, by which voters can gain access and influence lawmakers in Federal, State, and local governments. Voting gives the people a voice. We must protect their ability to be heard and to speak.

Yesterday, I had the great privilege of meeting with 40 representatives from the Connecticut chapter of the NAACP about this important reauthorization.

Their message was clear: the critical protections offered by the Voting Rights Act must be extended. We are not on the floor today to reauthorize the right to vote. That right is guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. Instead, we are here to provide tools to enforce that right for all Americans.

While it is critical that the Senate act to reauthorize these expiring sections of the Voting Rights Act today, it is important to recognize that this action alone will not secure the franchise for all Americans. Much more is needed to be done to ensure that every eligible American voter has an equal opportunity to vote and have their vote counted.

In addition to the obstacles that the Voting Rights Act is designed to address, too many Americans still face impediments to voting. The Presidential elections of 2000 and 2004 are replete with examples of such obstacles, including: too few polling places or too few voting machines to serve the turn-out; eligible voters’ names not on the registration list; errors in the registration lists; and machines that produce no audit trail; eligible voters turned away at the polls; disabled voters unable to cast a secret ballot; voters unable to correct mistakes on ballots or even receive a new ballot if the ballot was spoiled, to name only a few.

Congress addressed some of these impediments in the landmark legislation enacted following the debacle of the presidential election in 2002 in the Help America Vote Act, or HAVA, which I was pleased to author in the Senate. That legislation established Federal minimum requirements that all States must have in place by the Federal elections. These requirements include allowing any voter who is challenged at the polls to cast a provisional ballot, which is set aside and counted after eligibility, is confirmed. States must also meet new Federal minimum standards for voting systems, including providing second-chance voting, ensuring disability access, and providing for a permanent paper record for auditing purposes. And States must implement a statewide, computerized registration list to serve as the official registration list for Federal elections.

Congress has not fully funded HAVA. The States are $724 million short in the promised Federal funds for requirements grants and an additional $74 million short in disability access grants. It is my intent to offer an amendment to the Treasury-Transportation-HUD Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2007 to fully fund the requirements grants to all States under HAVA, when that bill comes to the Senate floor for debate. But even the HAVA minimum requirements are only a first step to addressing the continuing impediments faced by voters.

To address additional election administration deficiencies, I introduced legislation in January of last year, S. 17, the Voting Opportunity and Technology Enhancement Rights Act of 2005, or the VOTER Act. The Voting Opportunity and Technology Enhancement Rights Act of 2005, or the VOTER Act, builds on the reforms begun by HAVA, and adds to those reforms, by including the following: providing every eligible American, regardless of where they live in the world or where they find themselves on election day, the right to cast a National Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot in Federal elections: requiring States to provide for election day registration; requiring States to maintain a permanent paper record of any registration list purges not later than 45 days before a Federal election; providing additional Federal funds to States to implement forms; and providing additional Federal funds to States under HAVA, when that bill comes to the Senate floor for debate. But even the HAVA minimum requirements are only a first step to addressing the continuing impediments faced by voters.

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Congress has not fully funded HAVA. The States are $724 million short in the
that ballfield," remembers Congressman Lewis, "had come straight from church. They were still wearing their summer outfits. Some of the women had on high heels." Some 600 marchers set out, two abreast. All were prepared, quite literally, to die for the right to vote. And a result that followed, many of them, including Congressman Lewis, nearly did.

President Johnson’s response the following Saturday was very clear. He said:

"The events of last Sunday cannot and will not be repeated, but the demonstrations in Selma have a much larger meaning. They are a protest against a deep and very unjust flaw in American democracy itself. Ninety-five years ago our Constitution was amended to require that no American be denied the right to vote because of race or color. Almost a century later, many Americans are kept from voting simply because they are Negroes.

Therefore, this Monday I will send to the Congress a request for legislation to carry out the amendment of the Constitution."

In signing the Voting Rights Act, President Johnson said:

"The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and oppression anywhere in the world. Those who believe that democracy is something more than words, as I do, must unite and make it great."

Regrettably for much of our history, our Nation failed to live up to its most cherished principles. Our great challenge—our one legacy—has always been "to live up to the ideals of the American Creed or face a deterioration of the values and visions that unite and make it great."

Myrdal’s study was, in effect, the 20th century equivalent of Thomas Jefferson’s “fire bell in the night.” Yet more than a generation passed between the publication of Myrdal’s study and the passage of the Voting Rights Act. As we debate this legislation and recall the sacrifices of the Selma marchers in 1965, but that are no less insidious in undermining the constitutional principles by which we aspire to live. As our able colleague, the distinguished Senator from Vermont, Mr. Leahy, the ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, has noted, in reauthorizing and extending the Voting Rights Act, we are, in fact, revitalizing it. We do so not only to honor the courageous men and women who, such as Congressman Lewis and Fannie Lou Hamer and Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King and so many others, risked and in some cases sacrificed their lives to uphold American principles, but to build a stronger foundation for the Nation we will leave to our children and grandchildren.

The committee brought this bill to the Senate in a manner that reflect the members’ attention the riveting autobiography of our House colleague Congressman John Lewis who for 20 years has represented Georgia’s 5th district with such great distinction.

On March 7, 1965, John Lewis was in Selma, AL, his home State, preparing with hundreds of others to march from Selma to Montgomery to assert the right to vote which at that time was granted or denied solely at the discretion of the State governments. "Many of the men and women gathered on the right. Ensuring that all citizens can vote and that every vote counts is surely one of our highest national priorities, and the passage of time has not diminished the need for such protections. Hearings held in the Senate and in the House in 2005 and 2006 revealed a new generation of tactics, including at-large elections, annexations, last-minute poll place changes, and redistricting, which have had a discriminatory impact on voters, especially racial and ethnic minority American voters. Most provisions in the Voting Rights Act, and specifically the portions that guarantee that no one may be denied the right to vote because of his or her race or color, are permanent. There are, however, three enforcement-related provisions of the act that will expire in August 2007. The first is section 5, which requires certain jurisdictions to obtain approval or “preclearance” from the U.S. Department of Justice or the U.S. District Court in Washington, DC, before they can make any changes to voting practices or procedures. The second provision that will expire is section 203, which requires certain jurisdictions to provide bilingual language assistance to voters in jurisdictions where a “language minority” is a concentration of citizens who are limited to English proficient. The third are those provisions in sections 6 to 9 which authorize the Federal Government to send Federal election examiners and observers to certain jurisdictions covered by section 5 where there is evidence of attempts to intimidate minority voters at the polls. The legislation before the Senate today authorizes the portions of the Voting Rights Act that will expire next year to remain in effect until the Federal Government to address new challenges.

Today we are mindful of the fact that nearly 41 years ago, thousands of individuals risked their lives and some died in the challenge of systems that prevented millions of Americans from exercising their right to vote. For a hundred years after the Civil War, millions of African Americans were denied this most fundamental right, despite the 15th amendment to the Constitution that prohibited the denial of the right to vote on the basis of race. Poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses—as well as violence—were used to deny African-American citizens the right to vote in many Southern States. During the 1960s, to secure this most basic right, the cost was high: church burnings, bombings, shootings, and beatings. It required the ultimate sacrifice of ordinary Americans; James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, who simply sought to register African American voters in Mississippi; Viola Liuzzo, a White Detroit resident voters in Mississippi; Jimmie Lee Jackson, whose death precipitated the famous march from Selma to Montgomery; Viola Liuzzo, a White Detroit
homemaker and mother of five who was killed by a Ku Klux Klansmen’s bullet after she participated in the Selma to Montgomery march; and the four little Black girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing—Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, Addie Mae Collins, and Cynthia Wesley—Medgar Evers, who had organized voter registration in Mississippi for the NAACP and was gunned down in his driveway; the horrible beatings of John Lewis and of Fannie Lou Hamer and Aaron Henry; the Mississippi Like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Rosa Parks, their names are forever etched in this Nation’s history.

The impact of these tragic revelations and the subsequent enactment of the Voting Rights Act is stark. In Alabama, Black voter registration increased from 0.4 percent in 1940 to 23 percent in 1964 and more than doubled from 1954 to 1968, to 56.7 percent. Mississippi’s Black voter registration went from 0.4 percent in 1964 to 54 percent in 1968. And the increase was reflected in many other cities and States nationwide.

Let us do what we must do. Our democracy depends on protecting the right of every American citizen to vote in every election. Let us resoundingly reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to give my strong support of the Voting Rights Reauthorization Act. I am a proud cosponsor of this important and needed legislation.

In 2006, there are still places in America where voters are intimidated and turned away from the polls. Americans are being denied the most basic and fundamental right as an American the right to vote. That is why this bill is needed more than ever.

I am proud to be here to speak as the Senator from Maryland. From the dark days of slavery to the civil rights movement, Marylanders have led the way to end discrimination. The brilliant Frederick Douglass, who was the voice of the voiceless in the struggle against slavery; the courageous Harriet Tubman, who delivered 300 slaves to freedom on her Underground Railroad; and the great Thurgood Marshall, from arguing Brown v. Board of Education to serving as a Supreme Court Justice—all were Marylanders.

Not just Marylanders but civil rights leaders and activists from all over this country have had the courage to get the right to vote. Over 600 people marched from Selma to Montgomery they were stopped, beaten, but not defeated. These brave men and women continued to march, continued to fight until they got the right to vote.

They had to challenge the establishment and to say “now” when others told them to “wait.” Holding dear to their hearts the words of Frederick Douglass:

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who protest for freedom, yet deprecate agitation are men who don’t want crops without plowing the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. The struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did, and it never will.

Their fight, their struggle resulted in the Voting Rights Act being passed. This legislation guarantees one of the most important civil rights that every citizen may vote. It is the very foundation of our democracy. It has eliminated discriminatory practices such as poll taxes and literacy tests. It has made it possible for African Americans to vote and hold elective office.

We have come a long way since the original Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. Yet we have a long way to go.

As recent as 2004, we have seen voters disenfranchised, broken election machines, and problems with people casting their ballots on election day. We saw this in the 2000 Presidential elections, too.

In 2000, we all learned that many ballots, many peoples’ votes, were thrown out, lost, misplaced or miscounted. We saw election officials who did not know the rules and some who appeared to ignore the rules. And where did much of this happen—neighboring communities, in cities, economically distressed areas across the Nation. I ask myself, is this just a coincidence? Those communities don’t think so. It is critical that we let them know we take their concerns seriously.

This legislation recognizes that election reform is still needed. Voters are scared to come forward and cast their vote in some parts of this country. There are places where voters are not getting assistance at the polls whether it is language access or access to accurate information. This is unacceptable. It is un-American.

Reauthorizing the Voting Rights Act will help guarantee the right to vote for all Americans. It serves four important things. First, it requires States with a history of racial discrimination to have their voting laws precleared by the Department of Justice. This extra layer of oversight is still necessary to protect minority voters.

Second, it prohibits all States from denying a U.S. citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. It is un-American.

Third, it requires language assistance at the polls if a U.S. citizen has difficulty speaking or reading English. Finally, it authorizes the Federal Government to send Federal election monitors to minority voter districts to prevent voter intimidation.

This is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. Ensuring that every registered voter who wants to vote can vote is not a partisan issue. It is what America stands for.

We must stand up for what America stands for: opportunity, equality, and empowerment. We must make sure that the Voting Rights Act continues to protect minority voters from all forms of discrimination. It is un-American.

As an Asian American, this bill is of personal importance to me. I know of many Asian Americans who have experienced difficulty in the polls over the years, particularly due to language barriers. According to the 2000 Census, 77 percent of Asian Americans speak a language other than English in their homes. Asian Americans who came as refugees are the most likely to face language barriers. For example, 67 percent of Vietnamese Americans over 18 are limited English proficient. They follow the news closely, but often by accessing newspapers and other media in their native languages. Section 5 of the VRA will help provide Asian Americans with equal access to the polls, ensuring that they are able to participate in the political process and empowering them to make a difference in their communities.

Over the years, our country has come a long way. But unfortunately, barriers to equal political participation remain. Some minority voters still face obstacles to making their political voice heard. There is evidence of attempts to undermine minority voters via unfair redistricting. Further, the lack of bilingual ballots prevents some voters from even casting their vote. This type of ongoing discrimination proves why we still need the VRA.

Over the years, Congress has reauthorized the VRA four times. The bill before us today would reauthorize three key enforcement provisions of the VRA which would otherwise expire in 2007: Section 5, which requires jurisdictions with a history of discrimination to obtain Federal approval before introducing new voting practices or procedures; Section 203, which requires communities with large populations of
non-English speakers to provide language assistance; and Section 8, which authorizes the Attorney General to ap-
point Federal election observers to en-
sure that minority citizens will have full access to the ballot box.

There is no question that all of these provisions are significant and neces-
sary, and I commend the members of the Judiciary Committee for their
strong bipartisan work on this issue. I hope my colleagues will join me in sup-
porting this critical piece of legisla-
tion.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, as a co-
sponsor of the Senate bill, I am pleased
the Senate is considering the Fannie
Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta
Scott King Voting Rights Reauthori-
ization and Amendments Act, H. R. 9.

The Voting Rights Act was signed
into law 41 years ago as a direct reac-
tion to the vicious attacks against
civil rights demonstrators crossing the
Edmon Alabama Bridge in Selma, 
Alabama. After these attacks, President Johnson
was able to end a long deadlock with
certain Members of Congress attempt-
ing to weaken the legislation. The act
passed in August 1965 and successfully
prohibited that localities had
developed to disenfranchise racial and
ethnic minorities, such as literacy
tests, “grandfather clauses,” character
assessments, poll taxes, and intimid-
tion techniques, often violent. It was
also designed to prevent the racial gerr-
ymandering, at-large election sys-
tems, staggered terms, and runoff re-
quirements certain jurisdictions were
using to dilute the effect of the minor-
ity vote.

Since then, sections 2 and 4 of the
law, prohibiting the use of tests and de-
vices intended to dissuade minority
voting, have made obvious attempts to
disenfranchise minorities a thing of the
past. By requiring district court or at-
torney general determination of wheth-
er a proposed election change would
abridge voting rights, section 5 has de-
terred measures frequently used before
1965 to weaken minority votes.

Thanks to the original law and the
reauthorizations that followed, an in-
creasing number of African Americans,
Latinos, and Native Americans have been voting, decreasing the gap be-
tween white and minority turnout. Mi-
norities report fewer attempts to cur-
tail their rights and minority districts
have a larger number of Afri-
can Americans, Asian Americans, and
Hispanic Americans to be elected to of-
foxe. The Voting Rights Act, then, has
been successful in helping to carry out
the promise of the 15th amendment.

Since 1965, Congress has responded to
continuing or new evidence of dis-
enfranchisement and vote dilution
through the Voting Rights Act reau-
 thorization process. And this reau-
 thorization is no different.

The nonpartisan Lawyer’s Com-
mittee for Civil Rights, which Presi-
dent John F. Kennedy created to pro-
mote voting equality, established a
commission to conduct an investiga-
tion into vote discrimination in prepa-
ration for this most recent reauthor-
ization proposal. The conclusions of
the Commission, echoed in the many
congressional hearings held on the law,
was that, while the Voting Rights Act
has succeeded in eliminating systematic
efforts to disenfranchise voters, re-
strictions to ballot access and weak-
ening of the minority vote are still oc-
curring. In fact, the Commission re-
ported that attempts to repress the mi-
nority vote, “are still encountered in
every election cycle across the coun-
try.” citing deterrents against English-
language minorities, unduly burden-
some requirements for registration and
voting, and election laws that result in
vote dilution. Unfortunately, the 41
years this law has been in effect have
not yet overcome centuries of discrimi-
nancy practice.

Since the last reauthorizaton, the
Supreme Court, in Reno v. Bossier Par-
ish II and Georgia v. Ashcroft, has also
curtailed the intent of section 5 of the
Voting Rights Act, deciding that the
act does not prohibit redistricting with
the purpose or effect of weakening mi-
nority votes. Many of the changes in
the bill before us were drafted as a di-
rect response to these cases. This act
not only renews the expiring provi-
sions, it restores the original intent of
section 5 by prohibiting the approval of
any proposed election law change hav-
ing the effect of diluting a minority
vote population.

As my courageous colleague, John
Lewis, has said, “The sad truth is dis-
crimination still exists. We must not
go back to the dark past.

This reauthorization will provide the
tools we need to honor our constitu-
tional commitment to allow all of our
citizens to vote. It reinvigorates the
promise that is the foundation of our
citizens to vote. It reinvigorates the
American democratic tradition.

I am honored to support this bill and
would like to thank my colleagues,
Senators SPECTER and LEAHY, for
their work and leadership in bringing it to
the floor.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, today the
Senate will debate and consider the
Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and
Amendments Act of 2006. We can
all agree that the Voting Rights Act was
one of the most significant civil rights
laws ever enacted in this country. Yer-
sday, the Judiciary Committee
unanimously supported this bill, and
today we hope the full Senate will pass it
as soon as possible.

This landmark law reversed nearly
100 years of African-American dis-
enfranchisement. It took years for Con-
gress to devise a law that could not be
circumvented or ignored through long-
lengthy litigation or creative inter-
pretation. After numerous failures, a
stronger remedy free of litigation was
needed to break the 95-year-old obsta-
cle to Black voter participation.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 pro-
vided the solution. That law was and
remains unique by enforcing the law
before a new State voting statute goes
effect rather than waiting out
after the fact for years in court. The
section 5 “pre-clearance” procedure—
along with the banning of literacy
laws, poll taxes, and the like—finally
worked. Soon, African-American voters
did not face an unequal burden to sim-
ply exercise their constitutional right to
vote.

Yet the hard-fought rights will remain in
clear. As we all know, key provisions of
the Voting Rights Act are set to expire
next year. We have made enormous
gains for voting rights since 1965, but
we cannot, as a nation, assume that the
vigorous protections of the act have out-
lived their use. To the contrary, ex-
tending the act for another 25 years
will ensure that these hard-fought
rights will remain in place.

Evidence supports this sentiment
when one considers that the Depart-
ment of Justice deemed 626 proposed
election law changes discriminatory
since the last extension of the act in
1992. Past experience teach us that we
cannot rely upon the courts alone to
protect the constitutional right to vote.
Quite simply, the Voting Rights Act,
and specifically section 5, has worked.
The record demonstrates that it con-
tinues to be needed to enforce the
guarantees of the 14th and 15th Amend-
ments.

We commend Chairman SPECTER for
holding this series of hearings on the
Voting Rights Act. Furthermore, we
note that the House passed its reau-
thorization of the Voting Rights Act last
week without amendment, and I trust we
can and will do the same here in the Sen-
ate. Most of us believe the record dem-
strates that the act should remain in
place. I urge my colleagues to support
extension.

MS. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, the
Voting Rights Act of 1965 was written
to prevent both direct and indirect as-
saults on the right to vote. It outlawed
the poll taxes and literacy tests and es-
tablished a system of Federal marshals
to help African Americans in the South
vote. It also required covered jurisdic-
tions to get Federal preapproval before
changing their election laws or any
other voting procedure.

These changes have made our poli-
cultural system more representative and
more just. The Voting Rights Act protects basic constitutional rights. Millions of African Americans have been added to the voting rolls since the act was passed. In 1965, there were only 300 African American elected officials in our country, but today, there are more than 9,100 African Americans who serve in elected public offices and nearly 6,000 Latino elected officials.

There are those who say that, while this act may have once been needed, it is no longer needed today. I understand their argument but do not agree with it. I do believe, however, that their argument is entitled to an answer.

My answer is this: Renewing, expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act will ensure that the battle for fairness in our political system is carried on with the full force of law behind it. We certainly still need these protections today. While many of the more obvious and well-remembered cases of disfranchisement have been eliminated, isolated cases of voting discrimination and intimidation remain. They may be subtle, but they are nonetheless unfair and intolerable, and they extend to not only African Americans but to others as well. A recent court case in the state of California highlighted two decades of voting rights abuses against Native Americans in South Dakota. We have heard about people videotaping the license plates of Mexican Americans as they went to vote in Dona Ana County, NM, in 2001. Last year, as recently as 2001, local officials in Kilmichael, MS, canceled elections out of fear that an African-American mayor might be elected. The Voting Rights Act allowed the Justice Department to intervene, ensuring that the right to vote was protected, and 2 years later Kilmichael elected its first African-American mayor.

Mr. President, history tells us that the justification for the continuation of this law is compelling. It also tells us that enforcement of this law is essential, too. That is why I cast my vote for justice. That is why I cast my vote for the Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Reauthorization Act.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, during the 41st anniversary of the act, perhaps it is important to assess whether the act is necessary today as it has ever been. As long as the law continues to be violated, we still need that law.

In my meeting, one woman asked, "Why does Congress even have to extend the Voting Rights Act? Why is the law not permanent?‖

I explained that Congress passes legislation that automatically expires because it is important to assess whether a law is working as intended, whether it needs changing to address new concerns, or whether it is needed at all. Thanks to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, every American now has the opportunity to vote and any American can come to Washington to meet with his or her Senators, and I am grateful for so many people do. Across the country, the number of African-American elected officials has increased from just 300 in 1964 to more than 9,000 today, including 43 Members of Congress.

But with some regret, we must conclude that the Voting Rights Act is as necessary today as it has ever been. As long as the law continues to be violated, we still need that law.

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43 Members of Congress, the largest number ever.

The act helped open the way for the 6,000 Latino public officials elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the State or Federal level, 27 of whom serve Congress.

One of the leaders of the civil rights movement, Congressman JOHN LEWIS, has characterized the impact of the Voting Rights Act this way: “It not only transformed Southern politics, it transformed the nation.” I couldn’t agree more.

But we shouldn’t just rest on the successes of the recent past. We must remain vigilant. For hundreds of years, our country struggled with slavery and the fact that nothing more than a person’s skin color could determine his or her prospects in life. Even after we enacted the 15th amendment, our country struggled with Jim Crow laws and persistent discrimination.

We have now had the Voting Rights Act for 40 years, which may seem like a long time, but compared against our long and shameful history of race discrimination, 40 years seems pretty short.

Thankfully, we have come a long way since signs emblazoned windows read: “colored need not apply” and “Whites only.” But let’s not be lulled into a false sense of security: racism—though much more subtle—still exists. African Americans can apply for a job all right but they might not get it because they aren’t the right type, or they just wouldn’t fit in.” New words for old sins.

Our recent history still finds sophisticated discrimination occurring when it comes to voting; and we must be especially vigilant here because voting is such a cornerstone of our democracy. We must continue to ensure diversity in our democracy and protect the rights of all Americans irrespective of race, gender or national origin.

That is why I strongly support this reaffirmation of the Voting Rights Act and am a cosponsor.

Authorizing the Voting Rights Act will be one of the most important things we can do this year; and I look forward to helping in any way that I can.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I grew up in Danville, VA. The town of Danville, a town of about 30,000 people right on the North Carolina border, was famous for three things when I was growing up there. It was the home of the Dan River cotton mills, it was famous for being the world’s biggest tobacco market, and it was famous for being the last capital of the Confederacy. I remember as a child riding back and forth to Danville, VA from our house outside of town and riding in the front seat of our car knowing that other people of color would ride in the back of the bus. I remember visiting downtown and going to restaurants, knowing if you were white you could eat there, and if you were not white, you could not. I remember seeing the water fountains, whites only, colored only.

I remember going to the Rialto theatre with my sister, watching three movies on a Saturday afternoon for 25 cents. If you were white, you got to sit on the first floor. If you were not, you sat up in the balcony. I remember going to catch the bus across the street from my house and going about 10 miles on a bus to high school and knowing that the kids of color, about 100 yards further away from us, would get on their bus and head out to go to their school, driving by mine and going another 10 miles to their own school.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the order that was agreed to by unanimous consent, the Democratic leader has the floor at 4 o’clock.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator from Delaware indicate how much more time he needs?

Mr. CARPER. If I could have 3 minutes.

Mr. REID. I yield the Senator 3 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. In addition to not being allowed to use public fountains with us, eat in the same restaurants, go to movies, ride on the bus or go to school with the rest of us, the other thing that folks of color couldn’t do in my hometown was vote. They couldn’t vote because they didn’t pay a poll tax. They couldn’t vote because they weren’t smart enough allegedly to pass the test they had to take in order to become voters.

I came here in 1965, barely out of high school, 18 years old. I went to the Rayburn Building and happened to walk into a hearing in 1965 by the House Judiciary Committee on this legislation, the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The enactment of that legislation did more to change things in my town of Danville, VA, and a lot of towns in this country, especially in the South, than any one thing I can think of.

Yesterday, as several of us in the Senate rolled out something we called the Restoring the American Dream Initiative, we started off by trying to make sure that everybody who wanted to go to college had the ability to get to college. If we are going to be successful as a nation in the 21st century, we need a world class workforce. We can’t have that unless we have well-educated, college-educated people. In order to have those kinds of opportunities, before we ever get to college we have to make sure kids have a decent chance to go to elementary, middle, and high schools. And in order for anybody to have the American dream, it is important to have a chance to get a decent job, have a chance to be a home owner, raise a family, work hard, and live in a community and practice your faith.

The one best way to ensure that people of all walks of life have those opportunities is to make sure that they have the opportunity every November, or whenever, to go into the voting booth, be registered to vote, and exercise their constitutional right. By the passage of this legislation today, we reaffirm our commitment to that sacred right.

As one who came here 41 years ago, when my very first experience in the Capitol as an 18-year-old teenager was the debate on this legislation, to be back here today as a Member of the Senate, something is possible, is an uplifting experience for me. I hope it serves as an inspiration to young men and women of whatever race or background they might be. I thank the leader. I yield back my time.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, how much time did the Senator from Delaware use?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Three minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I yield to the Senator from Vermont, Mr. LEAHY.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, earlier this afternoon when I was not on the Senate floor, a few Republican Senators gave statements that reflected their individual views of what the legislation we are considering today will do to address the Supreme Court’s interpretation of legislative intent in the Georgia v. Ashcroft and Reno v. Bossier Parish cases. While I am not fully informed of their positions, I certainly disagree with what I heard.

In the Senate Judiciary Committee we received extensive testimony about these two provisions over the course of several hearings that informed our Committee vote yesterday. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a full explanation of the testimony we received that informed our vote yesterday and my understanding of the purpose and scope of these two provisions as an original and lead sponsor.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

GEORGIA V. ASHCROFT FIX

The first of these provisions is commonly referred to as the “Georgia vs. Ashcroft fix.” In the Judiciary Committee we received evidence that the Voting Rights Act had been significantly weakened by the Supreme Court’s decision in Georgia v. Ashcroft be-
decision by re-establishing that Section 5 requires that there be no retrogression of minority voters' ability to elect the candidate of their choice—the standard described in Beer v. United Soap & Sanitary Council, Inc., which governs most redistricting 5 preclearance decisions prior to the Supreme Court's decision in Ashcroft.

The majority further concluded that "ability to elect" was the proper standard because it preserves the gains made in minority voting power and provides a more manageable procedural guide covering federal agencies, the Department of Justice, and the federal courts as they review voting changes pursuant to Section 5.

The section under consideration today re-establishes the 'ability to elect' standard because the "totality of the circumstances" test articulated in the Ashcroft decision undermines the ability to protect against discrimination and maintain the progress made in minority political participation, and it creates an amorphous standard that will be difficult for covered jurisdictions to follow and for the Justice Department to administer.

In Congress who are supporting this bill determination, we must address this standard for the same reasons as the dissent in Ashcroft noted, that is because the "totality of the circumstances" test articulated in the Ashcroft decision undermined the results of the Supreme Court majority "unnos a form from any practical and administrable conception of minority influence" by abandoning the "ancillary responsibility to electing a candidate of choice" that had previously guided Section 5 preclearance.

In the Judiciary Committee, we received extensive testimony that the harm that the Ashcroft decision has had on the power of Section 5 to protect minority voters. Political science professor Theodore Arrington, who has served as an expert witness in over 30 voting rights cases, testified at the Committee's hearings that the Ashcroft case created an "unworkable standard" because there is "no way to know how to comply with the Court's mandate." The legislation we are considering today would add needed clarity.

The difficulty of measuring minority "influence" was well-illustrated by the results in Georgia v. Ashcroft itself, as was pointed out in the Committee by Professor Pamela Karlan, the author of the book on the districts in which African-Americans make up more than 20% of the electorate are majority-Democrat, which the Court concluded makes likely a matter of fact that African-American voters will constitute an effective voting bloc, even if they cannot always elect the candidate of their choice. However, in the three districts where African-American voters supposedly retained an "influence" on their elected representatives, elected white representatives switched from the Democratic to the Republican party in the two-week period between their election and the inauguration, which, according to Karlan, "gives Democratic legislature control of the Georgia State Senate. This result undermined the Supreme Court's view that representatives elected in a minority "influence district" would listen and respond to the sizable minority constituents despite not being these voters' preferred candidates.

The aftermath of Georgia's elections supports the dissenting justices' view that it is impossible for a court to measure minority influence, and thus a state should not be granted preclearance for redistricting plans that benefit districts in which voters have the ability to elect their preferred candidates for ones in which they might have the ability to influence candidates. As demonstrated, the appearance of influence might far exceed the reality.

The impact of "influence districts" is particularly ephemeral where the existence of racially polarized voting means that elected officials do not have minority voters to re-elect. As Ashcroft himself said in ULC's Voting Rights Project testified, racially polarized voting means that African-Americans may have little or no influence on the political process. In the 1970s and 1980s, only about 1% of majority white districts in the South elected an African-American to a state legislature. As late as 1990, no African-Americans had been elected from a majority white district in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, or South Carolina. Voting Rights Project Report described the pervasiveness of racial bloc voting in covered jurisdictions.

For example, in Smith v. Beasley, decided in March 2002, "[i]n South Carolina, voting has been, and still is, polarized by race. This voting pattern is general throughout the state." Ten years later, in 2002, another three-judge court made a similar finding: "Voting in South Carolina continues to be racially polarized to a very high degree in all regions of the state and in both primary elections and general elections." As recently as 2004, the Fourth Circuit affirmed the findings of a South Carolina district court that voting in Charleston County was racially polarized and characterized by racial racial lines."

After Ashcroft, states can redistrict in ways that undermine voters' political power. As Professor Nathaniel Persily testified, the "danger that Ashcroft seemed to invite and that this legislation intends to fix is the possibility that under the cloak of 'influence districts' a jurisdiction might dilute the minority vote by splitting large minority communities among several districts in which it has no influence at all." Professor Persily explained that under the Ashcroft precedent, the Department of Justice could preclear a state redistricting plan that split a 60% minority district into two 30% minority influence districts, even though such a plan would severely diminish minority voters' ability to elect their preferred candidates. Moreover, combined with the Supreme Court's holding in Bossier II, a state legislature could enact such a plan for the express purpose of diluting minority influence and yet not have it deemed retrogressive because it nonetheless might be precleared under Section 5.

The Voter Rights Act of 1982 restores Section 5 to its original intended meaning so that it prohibits voting changes that undermine racial minorities' ability to elect candidates of their choice. The VRARA provides that "[t]he purpose of subsection (b) of this section is to protect the ability of such [minority] citizens to elect their preferred candidates of their choice. The VRARA makes clear that Congress rejects the Supreme Court's Ashcroft decision and reestablishes that a covered state's redistricting plan cannot be submitted for preclearance if the plan is found to be retrogressive and replace them with "influence districts." The amendment to Section 5 does not, however, freeze into place the current minority voter percentages in any given district. As stated by the dissenters in Georgia v. Ashcroft, as well as by Professor Arrington and Professor Persily at the Committee hearings, reducing the number of minorities in a district is perfectly consistent with the pre-Ashcroft understanding of Section 5 as long as other factors demonstrate that minorities and their interests are protected by their preferred candidates. The amendment is intended to make clear that the addition of districts in which minorities might have an influence is not retrogression. As Ashcroft noted, "we cannot substitute for the elimination of districts in which minorities have the ability to elect a preferred candidate. But there is no "magic number" that every district must maintain to satisfy the "ability to elect" standard; the percentages will vary depending on such factors as the extent of racially polarized voting and white crossover voting, registration rates, citizenship variables, and the demographic characteristics of the district.

The "ability to elect" standard does not lock in districts that are at a particular threshold. Determinations about whether a district provides the minority community the ability to elect its preferred candidate case-by-case basis. Indeed, prior to Georgia v. Ashcroft, the Department of Justice utilized case-by-case analysis to determine whether a voting change impacted the minority community's "ability to elect." Specifically, DOJ performed an intensely jurisdiction-specific review of election results, demographic data, maps and other information in order to compare the minority community's ability to elect under benchmark and proposed plans. In other information, DOJ outlined in the Procedures for the Administration of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, 28 C.F.R., Part 51, the extent to which the affirmative action account for the extent to which the jurisdiction afforded members of racial and language minority groups an opportunity to make the change, and the extent to which the jurisdiction took into account the members of groups and language minority groups in making that determination. This analysis allows jurisdictions a degree of flexibility in the adoption of their voting changes.

In sum, to avoid violating Section 5's non-retrogression standard, a covered state's redistricting must ensure that it has not diminished minority voters' ability to elect their preferred candidates. The "ability to elect" standard that is being reestablished through the VRARA prevents all types of retrogressive changes that come from the dispersion of a minority community among too many districts (cracking) or the overconcentration of minorities among too few (packing).

Bosshier Fix

The second of these provisions is usually referred to as the "Bosshier Fix." We have acted in this reauthorization to restore the VRA's original standing and effectiveness. After hearing extensive testimony and carefully reviewing the record created during the Senate's reauthorization of the VRA, we concluded that the Supreme Court's holding in a case called Reno v. Bossie Parish ("Bosshier II"), went against both the intent of Congress and the established Department of Justice and judicial precedent. Section 5 of the VRA requires that all changes in covered jurisdictions "not have the purpose and effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color." According to the Bosshier II decision, a retrogression change consists of two prongs. First, it consists of an inquiry as to the purpose of the change in question. Then, it requires a separate examination of the effect of the change. A state or political subdivision may not receive preclearance without satisfying these two prongs. Traditionally, the purpose prong has been a component of the Department of Justice objections to plans submitted by covered jurisdictions. However, since Bosshier II the scope
and effectiveness of the purpose prong has been dramatically limited.

That is why we are amending the VRA to make clear that a covered jurisdiction does not have to disprove the existence of a Section 2 violation to obtain Section 5 preclearance. Rather, contrary to the suggestions of a handful of my colleagues who wish to undermine what we adopted today, this bill amends the VRA to make clear that it prohibits all voting changes enacted with a discriminatory purpose.

The controversy in Bossier II arose when the school board ("the Board") of Bossier Parish, Louisiana sought to redraw the districts that elected its members. At the time of the 1980 Census, African-American voters had made up approximately 20% of the parish's population. They did not, however, comprise a majority in any of the twelve school board districts in the parish. In 1990, the Board adopted a new redistricting plan that did not create any new majority-African-American districts, rejecting an alternate plan that would have created two majority-African-American districts.

In January of the following year, the Board submitted its redistricting plan for preclearance to the Department of Justice. Upon objection by the Attorney General, the Board filed suit for a declaratory judgment in the federal district court to obtain preclearance. The Attorney General argued that the plan should not be approved under Section 5 for two reasons. First, the plan diluted the voting strength of African-American voters, in violation of a separate provision of the VRA, Section 2. Second, the plan was enacted with a discriminatory purpose.

At trial, DOJ presented extensive evidence that the plan was, in fact, enacted with a discriminatory motive. The Board's refusal to draw a single African-American-majority district stood in stark contrast to its own admission that creation of a majority-African-American district was clearly feasible, and in contrast to expert testimony that African-Americans would only be able to elect their chosen candidate in such a district. Moreover, the manner in which the districts were drawn suggested—by the cartographer's own opinion—that traditionally African-American populations were purposefully divided into adjoining white districts, a process known as "micromanipulation." Most astonishing, however, was testimony suggesting that certain Board members were openly hostile to African-American representation or African-American districts.

In spite of this evidence, the trial court precleared the plan. The case twice reached the Supreme Court on separate appeals. The first time, the Court agreed with the trial court that a voting change cannot be denied preclearance under Section 5 solely because the change violated Section 2. The second time, the Court addressed a more contentious question: whether Section 5 prohibited all voting changes enacted with a discriminatory purpose. The Court answered this question in the negative, holding that Section 5 does not bar electoral changes enacted with a discriminatory purpose if those changes were designed only to maintain, and not to increase, the represented electoral strength of a protected minority group.

Bossier II was premised on the holding in an earlier Section 5 case, Beer v. United States, in which the Supreme Court interpreted the effects prong to prohibit only those changes that had a "retrogressive" impact on the voting strength of minorities in a covered jurisdiction. The question was whether or not a proposed plan decreased voting strength as compared to the previous plan—thus became the critical measure of success or failure under the effects prong. In Bossier II, Justice Scalia argued that since "purpose" and "effect" both have relevance under the same provision of the statute—"denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race or color"—they must prohibit the same activity. If Beer held that the effects prong was the "retrogressive," the Court's majority reasoned that Section 5 would only prohibit retrogressive intent. The end result of this argument was an almost untenably simplistic one. The Court asserted that creation of a majority-African-American district was clearly feasible, and consequently, the plan diluted the voting strength of African-Americans; this is what Professor Anita Earls aptly summarized by Debo Adegbile, who testified: "Since [Bossier II], non-retrogressive voting changes motivated by racial animus, no matter how clearly demonstrated are absolute protection under the purpose prong." Justice Souter, dissenting from the majority opinion, came to the same conclusion: "Now executive and legislative officers of the United States will be forced to preclear illegal and unconstitutional voting schemes patently intended to perpetuate discrimination."

PROBLEMS WITH THE PURPOSE PRONG UNDER BOSSIER II

The holding in Bossier II is at odds with congressional intent and established judicial and Department of Justice precedent. It effectively eviscerates the purpose prong of Section 5 and compromises the overall ability of Section 5 to combat innovative discriminatory practices, which it was origi-

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The holding in Bossier II is at odds with congressional intent and established judicial and Department of Justice precedent. It effectively eviscerates the purpose prong of Section 5 and compromises the overall ability of Section 5 to combat innovative discriminatory practices, which it was origi-
Bossier II UNDERMINES THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SECTION 5

Bossier II has had a striking impact on the Section 5 threshold, minuscule number of purpose-based objections and undermining the overall ability of Section 5 to block discriminatory electoral practices. The record of preclearance objections after Bossier II suggests that the purpose prong under Bossier II has become inconsequential and has no meaningful effect on preclearance decisions. After Bossier II, there was a steep drop in the number of Department of Justice objections based on purpose-alone. In the 1980s, 25%-28% of DOJ objections to redistricting plans filed by covered jurisdictions were based on purpose-alone. In total—were based on intent alone; in the 1990s, this number increased to 43%, with 151 objections solely based on discriminatory intent. In the five years following Bossier II, only two out of a total of forty-three objections (4%) have been interposed because of retrogressive intent, the only purpose prohibited by Bossier II. In the words of one House Judiciary Committee witness, Mark Posner, the purpose prong “has effectively been read across entirely out of Section 5. According to Posner’s testimony the impact of Bossier II on Section 5 enforcement is evident from the recent history of docket. After the 1990 Census, the Department of Justice objected to 7% of redistricting plans filed by covered jurisdictions; this rate increased to 8% after the 1990 Census. In contrast, DOJ objected to only 1% of redistricting plans filed after the 2000 Census. There is strong evidence that the drop is significantly attributable to The inability of Section 5 to block changes enacted with a discriminatory intent is highly troubling. At its core, the Voting Rights Act was designed to fight discrimination in American politics; the VRA is a vehicle to enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments, which themselves prohibit intentional discrimination in various settings. Section 5 was the centerpiece of this effort, effectively shifting the burden of fighting racial discrimination from the victims to the state. Allowed discriminatory practices to attain preclearance solely because the voting strength of a minority group is too weak to be further undermined the original intent of Section 5 as a whole, and undermined the effectiveness of Section 5 in particular. Furthermore, it shifts the burden of fighting voting discrimination back to its victims.

RESTRICTING SECTION 5 PURPOSE INQUIRY

For the reasons I have described, we find it necessary to amend Section 5 to restore the purpose prong to its original scope, enabling the Act to operate as the national and the District Court of the District of Columbia to object to any voting changes enacted with a discriminatory intent. The VRA accomplishes this by adding subsections (b) and (c) to Section 5, which state that “any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting other than those described in subsection (a) of this section, and ‘electoral practices’ in subsection (a) and (b) of this section shall include any discriminatory purpose.”

These sections reject the holding in Bossier II and the congressional original intent that Section 5 prohibit all voting changes enacted with a discriminatory purpose. This would also realign the purpose prong with constitutional standards, allowing Section 5 to prohibit intentional discrimination that would otherwise be unconstitutional under the 15th Amendment. Arguably, the original purpose prong in Section 5 that would allow explicitly discriminatory voting changes to be precleared, solely because the voting strength of the minority group is diminished. I believe that the VRA accomplishes this and restores the purpose prong of Section 5 to prevent purposeful discrimination.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, as the Senate stands poised to conclude this debate and reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, I recall the words of Martin Luther King, Jr. in his famous “I have a Dream” speech, where he noted: “When architects of the republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” The Voting Rights Act is one of the most important methods of enforcing this promise and upholding the Constitution’s guarantees of equal protection of the law. We owe it those who struggled so long and hard to transform the landscape and make America a place of political inclusion to reauthorize this important Act. We all enjoy these protections and take them for granted. No Senator would ever be denied the right to vote, but the same cannot be said about millions of others. We act so that all Americans can enjoy America’s bounty, its blessings and its promise.

On May 2, our congressional leadership stood together on the steps of the Capitol—an historic announcement in an era of intense partisanship. We came together in recognition that this effort to ensure equal protection of the law. We owe it those who struggled so long and hard to transform the landscape and make America a place of political inclusion to reauthorize this important Act. We all enjoy these protections and take them for granted. No Senator would ever be denied the right to vote, but the same cannot be said about millions of others. We act so that all Americans can enjoy America’s bounty, its blessings and its promise.

As Congressman JOHNNIE O’DONNELL said, “When historians pick up our pens and write about this period, let it be said that those of us in the Congress in 2006, we did the right thing. And our forefathers and our foremothers would be very proud of us. Let us pass a clean bill without any amendments.” I am encouraged by the effort so close to accomplishing this today.

The path that my good friend John Lewis has taken from Selma, AL, to Congress, from “Bloody Sunday” in 1965 on the Edmund Pettis Bridge to leading the fight in 2006 to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act, is a lesson to us all. The events of Bloody Sunday, were caught on television cameras, and those powerful images laid bare for all Americans the violence frequently experienced by many African Americans trying to exercise their civil rights. It was a crucial turning point in securing the right to vote. A few days after the violence of Bloody Sunday, President Lyndon John Johnson outlined the proposed Voting Rights Act of 1965, before a joint session of Congress. Later that year, Congress passed it so that the Constitution’s guarantees of equal access to the electoral process, regardless of race, would not be undermined by discriminatory practices.

Like the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment, the right to vote is foundational because it secures the effective exercise of all other rights. As we are poised to register, vote, and elect candidates of their choice, their interests and rights get attention. The very legitimacy of our democratic Government is dependent on the access all Americans have to the electoral process.

Today we are poised to reaffirm a cornerstone of our civil rights laws. As we do, we recall the great historic struggle for civil rights led by American heroes of vision and strength, such as John Lewis, Lou Henry Johnson, and Coretta Scott King, who passed away just months ago. We honor their legacy by reaffirming our commitment to protect the right to vote for all Americans.

The pervasive discriminatory tactics that led to the original Voting Rights Act were deeply rooted. As a Nation, this effort to ensure equal protection dates back more than 135 years to the ratification of the 15th Amendment in 1870, the last of the Reconstruction amendments. It took the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 for people of all races in many parts of our country to begin the effective exercise of rights granted 95 years earlier by the 15th Amendment. Despite the additional gains we have made in enabling racial minorities to participate in the political life of the Nation, the work of the Voting Rights Act is not yet done.

In the recent LULAC decision, the Supreme Court—finding that 100,000 Latino Americans were illegally disenfranchised in Texas—affirmed that racial discrimination against our Nation’s minorities persists today. It proves that the protections of the Voting Rights Act are still needed. We have this year undertaken an extensive process of congressional fact-finding. What it establishes is that we are right to extend the protections of the Voting Rights Act.

As the Senate Judiciary Committee, we held nine hearings on the Voting Rights Act. We received thousands of pages of testimony, reports, articles,
letters, statistics, and other relevant material from a wide variety of sources to inform our consideration. The evidence gathered, together with the record developed in a dozen hearings in the House provide us with an adequate basis for Congress to determine that the protections of the Voting Rights Act are still needed both to maintain the gains already achieved and to continue to enforce the guarantees of equality enshrined in the 14th and 15th Amendments.

Much of the testimony we received focused on the continuing need for Sections 5 and 203 of the Voting Rights Act as essential safeguards to the rights and interests of Americans of all races and our language minorities. The record we have assembled and consider justifies the renewal of Section 5. This section requires certain jurisdictions, after the Justice Department or the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. In doing so, Section 5 combats the practice of those jurisdictions engaging in deliberately validated discriminatory tactic to another, which had undermined earlier efforts to enforce the 15th Amendment. After “enduring nearly a century of systematic resistance to the Fifteenth Amendment,” Congress found, it was imperative to “shift the advantage of time and inertia from the perpetrators of the evil to its victims.”

Section 5 continues to be a tremendous tool for protecting minority voting rights and a necessary one. For example, in 1992, the Attorney General used Section 5 to stop Wrightsville, GA, from relocating its polling place from the county courthouse to a private all-white club with a history of re-fusing membership to black applicants and a then-current practice of hosting functions to which blacks were not welcome. Even more recently, in 2001, Kilmichael, Mississippi’s white mayor and a member of his town council abruptly cancelled an election after Census data revealed that African Americans had become the majority in the town and an unprecedented number of African-American candidates were running for office. The Justice Department objected under Section 5. Only after the Justice Department forced Kilmichael to hold an election in 2003 did it elect its first African-American mayor, along with three African-American aldermen.

These are just a couple of examples that are representative of the barriers to political participation that all too many American citizens still face today, in 2006. In addition to finding extensive evidence that covered jurisdictions have continued to engage in discriminatory tactics, we also found that the Section 5 preclearance requirement has served a vital prophylactic purpose in preventing against discriminatory practices before they go into place and securing the gains made in minority political participation.

The record also supports renewal of Sections 203 and 4(f)(4), which require bilingual voting assistance for certain language minority groups, to ensure that all Americans are able to exercise their fundamental right as citizens to vote in American elections. Information from the Census, more than 70 percent of citizens who use language assistance are native born, including Native Americans, Alaska natives and Puerto Ricans. Many of those who benefit from Section 203 and 4(f)(4) suffer from inadequate educational opportunities to learn English.

These Americans are trying to vote but many of them are struggling with the English language due to disparities in education and the incremental process of learning. We can and we must reauthorize these provisions to make sure there is no literacy test at the polling place. We endured a time in our Nation’s history when such tests disenfranchised many voters. Renewing these provisions will also enable us to help enable all Americans to participate fully in our Nation’s democracy.

The record also supports the need to amend the VRA to restore its original purpose in response to two Supreme Court decisions that have limited its effectiveness. The bill remedies the Supreme Court’s holding in Reno v. Bossier Parish, by making clear that a voting rule change motivated by any discriminatory purpose violates Section 5. Under the holding in Reno v. Bossier Parish, certain voting rule changes passed with the intent to discriminate against minorities could pass Section 5 muster. Because such an interpretation is inconsistent with congressional intent and the purpose of the Voting Rights Act to eliminate discriminatory tactics that undermine the guarantees of the 15th Amendment, our bill fixes this inconsistency by clarifying that a voting rule change motivated by any discriminatory purpose also cannot be pre-cleared.

The bill also remedies the Supreme Court’s holding in Georgia v. Ashcroft. In this case, the Supreme Court provided an unclear and unworkable test for assessing a jurisdiction’s challenge to denial of Section 5 preclearance. Congressional intent was to protect the ability of a minority community to elect a candidate of its choice. This legislation clarifies our congressional intent and codifies factors to restore the original understanding of the Voting Rights Act to protect the minority community’s ability to elect their preferred candidates of choice.

It has often been said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. We must make certain that the significant gains in voting rights after the past four decades do not suffer the same fate as the voting rights provided during Reconstruction. After the Civil War, the Reconstruction legislation that the guarantees of the 15th Amendment would be realized. Between 1870 and 1900, 22 African-Americans served in the United States Congress. In 1868, Louisiana elected an African-American Lieutenant Governor, Oscar Dunn, and 87 African-Americans held seats in the South Carolina legislature. However, these Reconstruction-era gains in African-American representation proved to be short-lived. Following the end of Reconstruction, the rights of African-Americans to vote and to hold office were virtually eliminated in many areas through discriminatory legal barriers, violence, and intimidation. The changes were swift, systematic and severe. By 1896, Representative George White of North Carolina was the only African American remaining in the U.S. Congress, and it would take 72 years after Representative White left Congress for African-American voters in the South to elect another candidate of their choice to Congress.

In Mississippi, the percentage of African-American voting-age men registered to vote rose from 130,000 to a mere 5,000. Unlike the short-lived gains during the Reconstruction period to less than 6 percent in 1892. Between 1896 and 1900, the number of African-American voters in Louisiana was reduced from 130,000 to a mere 5,000. Unlikely, short-lived gains during 1892.

The passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1957 was a turning point. We have made progress toward a more inclusive democracy since then but I fear that if we fail to reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act, we are likely to backslide. In his testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, civil rights lawyer Robert Moses declared:

"No place more than Mississippi has been torn by slavery, by the lost promise of emancipation after the Reconstruction period, by the resurgence of racist power in the latter part of the 19th century and most of the 20th, and by the legacy of poverty and racial segregation that still exists. While people’s behavior and people’s hearts can change over time, vigilance is required to ensure that the gains and structures remain in place to prevent us as a society from turning back to the worst impulses of the past.

Important changes have come to pass in Mississippi in the last 40 years—changes due in large part to the mechanisms of the Voting Rights Act and the preclearance provision of Section 5. But, like the gains that were washed away after the nation abandoned the goals of Reconstruction in 1876, the progress of the last 40 years is not assured for the future.

When we have such legal protections that are proven effective when enforced, we should not abandon them prematurely simply in the hope equality will come. Reauthorizing and restoring the Voting Rights Act is the right thing to do, not only for those who came before—the brave people who
fought for equality—but also for those who come after us, our children and our grandchildren. No one’s right to vote should be abridged, suppressed or denied in the United States of America.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is one of the most important laws Congress has ever passed. It helped to usher the country out of a history of discrimination into the greater inclusion of more Americans in the decisions about our Nation’s future. Our democracy and our Nation are better and richer for it. We cannot allow our fundamental civil rights of all Americans. Congress has reauthorized and revitalized the Act four times pursuant to its constitutional powers. This is no time for backsliding, this is the time to move forward together.

As the Senate completes consideration of this important legislation—the culmination of many months of legislative activity to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act—I welcome the President’s statement of support today. It was a long time in coming, and the long way round, but he got there. The President is right to have spoken of racial discrimination as a wound not fully healed. We all want our revitalization of the Voting Rights Act we consider today to help in that healing process and in guaranteeing the fundamental right to vote.

I was reminded today of when the President spoke dramatically last September. In Orleans, New Orleans, Jackson Square and pledged to confront poverty with bold action. I look forward to that bold action. He spoke then of helping our people overcome what he called “deep, persistent poverty,” “poverty with roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America.” I agree with him. We must, as the President said that night, “rise above the legacy of inequality.” That is a shameful legacy that still exists and still needs our help. The President is right that “the wounds” of racial discrimination need to be fully healed.

In my judgment, based on the record before this Senate, the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act is needed to ensure that healing.

We heard so often during the civil rights movement “we shall overcome.” But it is not just a case of we shall overcome, it is “we must overcome.”

I also have the support of others who have come recently to this cause and struggle. I welcome our Senate bill cosponsors who joined us after the companion House bill had already won 390 votes and even those who joined after the Senate bill was successfully voted out of our Committee, 18-0. It is never too late to join a good cause, and protecting the fundamental right to vote and have Americans’ votes count is just such a cause.

Some people were not late to the struggle but who has been at its forefront since his election to the Senate in 1962 is the senior Senator from Massachusetts. He worked to pass the original landmark Voting Rights Act in 1965. On this issue he is the Senate’s leader. It has been an honor to work beside him in this important effort. And work he did. To assemble the record required work. He came to our hearings, helped organize them, helped assure that even Senators from the majority were unavailable, he and I proceeded with the permission of our chairman to chair those hearings. We would not be passing this bill without the overwhelming support of the President that it did in fact if it had not been for Senator Kennedy.

Of course, we also honor the senior Senator from Hawaii who likewise voted for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and each of its reauthorizations. His leadership in these matters is greatly appreciated by this Senator and, I believe, by the Senate.

I also thank the Democratic leader for his help. Senator Reid stayed focused on making sure this essential legislation is done right. He worked with us and the Republican leader throughout. He is a lead sponsor of the legislation and was a key participant at our bicameral announcement on the steps of the Capitol on May 2. kể, and in the process of developing the bill, developing the legislative record and considering the bill, he has never failed to go the extra mile to ensure the success of this effort.

I thank our Chairman and lead Senate sponsors, José Serrano, Ted Kennedy and, of course, the Senator from New York, as a participant at our bicameral announcement on the steps of the Capitol on May 2. The bipartisan leadership in these matters is greatly appreciated by all 100 Senators. This is for us, this is for our children, and on a personal level, this is also for our grandchildren.

I yield the floor.

Mr. Feingold. Mr. President, Section 5 of the bill, which deals with Georgia v. Ashcroft and the Bossier II case, is extremely important. As ranking member of the Judiciary Committee’s Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Property Rights, I concur with the discussion of this provision by the Senator from Vermont.

Mr. Reid. Mr. President, how much time remains?

The Presiding Officer. Six-and-a-half minutes.

Mr. Reid. Does the Senator from Massachusetts need time?

Mr. Kennedy. Just 2 minutes.

Mr. Reid. Mr. President, I yield 2 minutes to the Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. Kennedy. Mr. President, I thank our leader, Senator Reid, for his constancy in support of this legislative effort and for his encouragement to all of us on the Judiciary Committee. I thank my friend from Vermont for his kind words.

Earlier today, there have been comments by my friend—and he is my friend—in the Judiciary Committee, Senator Cornyn, and also with regard to particular provisions in section 5, and later there were comments from Senator Cornyn and Senator Kyl about an amendment offered by Congressman Norwood over in the House of Representatives. I think it is important that the Record reflect the results of the extensive hearings that we had on these different issues because it is extensive, exhaustive, and it is presented by the floor managers, Senators Specter and Leahy.

Senator Cornyn suggested in his remarks that he wishes he had taken more time to debate fully some of the issues raised by the reauthorization. In particular, he said he wished more time had been taken to consider the trigger found in section 5. As an initial matter, the Senate began its consideration of renewing the Voting Rights Act with the very substantial record that has been assembled by the House, which contained over 10,000 pages that were the result of 6 months of House Judiciary Committee hearings.

From our very first Senate hearing, Chairman Specter stressed the need to...
build a strong record in anticipation of challenges to the act’s constitutionality. That’s exactly what we did.

We heard from legal scholars and voting rights practitioners. We held 9 hearings, heard from 41 witnesses, and received well over 1,000 pages of documentary evidence. The evidence showed, unequivocally that discrimination, including intentional discrimination, persists in the covered jurisdictions, and that the trigger is effective in identifying jurisdictions for section 5. Senator CORNYN joined a unanimous committee in voting for the committee bill, which retains the act’s trigger formula.

Senator CORNYN also held up a map of the United States depicting jurisdictions that would be covered if the amendment offered last week in the House by Representative NORWOOD had been adopted, which would base coverage on voter registration and turnout during the last three Presidential elections. Representative NORWOOD made a full airing of his proposal and many rose in opposition, including Chairman SENSENBRENNER. The opponents of the amendment overwhelmingly carried the day.

Senator CORNYN said that the Norwood trigger would not appear to gut section 5. However, under The Norwood formula, the State of Louisiana essentially wouldn’t be covered. Yet, there is substantial evidence in our record of ongoing voting discrimination in Louisiana. Yet the so-called updated trigger formula would exclude this sort of jurisdiction from coverage.

Finally, Senator CORNYN and Senator KYL discussed the provision of the bill known as the Georgia v. Ashcroft fix, which clarifies the retrogression standard in the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in Georgia v. Ashcroft. The bill restores section 5’s “ability-to-elect standard,” which was set forth in the 1975 amendments. The new language to overturn the lesser trigger formula would exclude “ability-to-elect” districts where minority voters demonstrate an ability to elect the candidates of their choice. Contrary to the suggestions of Senator CORNYN and Senator KYL on the floor, while the standard reflects the notion that “ability-to-elect” districts can be traded for “influence” districts, it also recognizes that minority voters may be able to elect candidates of their choice with reliable crossover support and, thus, Congress could add the creation and maintenance of majority-minority districts in all circumstances. The test is fact-specific, and turns on the particular circumstances of each case. As both Senator CORNYN and Senator KYL noted, the Voting Rights Act is not about electing candidates of particular parties. It’s about enabling minority voters to participate effectively and equally in the political process.

I thank the Senator and yield back whatever time remains.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to elaborate upon views expressed earlier today by several of my colleagues. Senators MCCONNELL, HATCH, KYL, and CORNYN engaged in a colloquy regarding the meaning of section 5 of the Voting Rights Act reauthorization bill presently before this body. I wish to express my agreement with those comments and add a few thoughts of my own.

Section 5 of the proposed bill overturns two Supreme Court cases: Reno v. Bossier Parish, or Bossier Parish II, and Georgia v. Ashcroft. The goal of the bill is to protect districts that contain a majority of minority voters. We are well aware of efforts in the past to disenfranchise minority voters. As a consequence, this language prohibits legislators from acting purposely, with the intention of harming minority voters, to “unpack” majority-minority districts and to disperse those minority voters to other districts.

First, the bill overturns Bossier Parish II by prohibiting voting changes enacted with “any discriminatory purpose.” The language bars a government official from discriminating against minority voters. If a government official could create a district that would benefit minorities, but purposefully chooses not to do so because it will be more difficult for that government official will have violated this bill.

Although this is an important requirement, I have heard concerns that the Justice Department may abuse the discretion in Louisiana. Yet the so-called updated trigger formula would exclude this sort of jurisdiction from coverage.

Second, the bill overturns Georgia v. Ashcroft by protecting the ability of minorities to “elect their preferred candidates of choice.” Some commentators have read Georgia v. Ashcroft as allowing States to break up naturally occurring majority-minority districts to create other districts where minorities have less voting power but still exercise important influence in elections. The bill’s new language protects districts in which minority citizens select their “preferred candidate of choice” with their own voting power. In short, it provides additional protection for naturally occurring majority-minority districts. The bill does not demand that such districts be disbanded to create influence districts.

I hope this language is now clear. I also thank my colleagues—Senators MCCONNELL, HATCH, KYL, and CORNYN—for their lucid explanations earlier.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. There is a definitive set of books written about this time period by Taylor Branch. When I read the first volume, I went over to the office of Congressman JOHN LEWIS because his name was mentioned in that book so often that a number of years ago when the book was published, I talked to JOHN LEWIS about his valiant efforts to allow us to be in the place we are today. I mention that because after having read the third volume of Taylor Branch’s book, “At Canaan’s Edge,” which I completed a week ago, I was stunned by many references to Senator TED KENNEDY.

One full page talks about a time that Senator KENNEDY made his first trip to Mississippi. His brother had been assassinated. He went with Dr. King to Mississippi for the first time. There were 150 pounds of nails, an inch and three-quarters long, dumped in the pathway, three police cars with tires and were unable to continue. There were threats made on Senator KENNEDY’s life. I was so stunned by reading that that I called Senator KENNEDY and read that to him and asked if this brought back memories of his first trip to Mississippi.

I mention JOHN LEWIS and Senator KENNEDY because they are only two of the many who made significant sacrifices to get us to the point where we are today. On March 15, 1965, Lyndon Johnson came to the Capitol to address a joint session of Congress. He spoke to a House, a Senate, and a nation that had been rocked by recent violence, especially in Selma. President John-son’s purpose that night was to spur Congress to finally move forward on the Voting Rights Act, the legislation whose authorization we are going to vote on today. That Congress, in 1965, like this Congress in 2006, was slow to pass voting rights law. President Johnson came to the Hill to remind everybody what was at stake. Here is what he said:

This time, on this issue, there must be no delay, no hesitation, and no compromise with our purpose. We cannot and we must not refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that he may desire to participate in. And we ought not to wait another 8 months before we get a bill. We have already waited a hundred years or more, and the time for waiting is gone. The Senate cannot and we must not go another day without sending the Voting Rights Act to the
President. We have already waited too long. I, like many others, expected this legislation to be passed months ago. I remember months ago standing on the Capitol steps with Senator Frist, House leaders, chairmen and ranking members of the Judiciary Committees from both sides, and civil rights leaders, to announce the bipartisan-bicameral introduction of this bill. It seemed that this act would move forward in swift bipartisan fashion. But it has not.

How long must we wait? How wrong that perception proved to be. In the House, consideration was delayed for weeks and weeks. It was only recently passed over the objections of conservative opponents. In the Senate, we saw similar delay. In fact, as recently as last week, the majority leader was not sure he would even bring this bill to the floor before the August recess.

In the House, consideration was delayed for weeks. It recently passed over the objections of conservative opponents. Thankfully, he listened to Democrats. Thankfully, everyone listened to what we had to say, including our distinguished majority leader. Obviously, from today’s day to day vote, he had a change of heart and brought this bill before the Senate.

The Voting Rights Act is too important to fail by the wayside like so many other issues that have fallen by the wayside. It is one of the cornerstones of this Republican Senate. Remember, the Voting Rights Act isn’t just another bill. It is paramount to the preservation of our democracy, literally. As we have seen in recent elections, we remain a nation far from perfect. The fact is, we still have a lot of work to do, but in the last 40 years, thanks to the Voting Rights Act, we have come a long way.

Before this Voting Rights Act became the law of the land, African-Americans who tried to register to vote were subject to beatings, literacy tests, poll taxes, and death. Before the Voting Rights Act, over 90 percent of eligible African-American voters in Mississippi didn’t and couldn’t register to vote, not because they didn’t want to, they simply were unable to, they were not permitted to.

Before the Voting Rights Act, it would have been unheard of to have 43 African-American Members of Congress as we have today.

In the Senate, we cast a lot of votes, but not all of them are for causes for which Americans just a few decades ago were willing to risk their lives. It is a sad fact of American history that blood was spilled and violence erupted before the Nation opened its eyes to justice and the need to guarantee in law everyone’s right to vote.

It is important that all of us remember the sacrifice of those Americans, and to make sure we do, after this bill becomes law, I will seek to add the name of John Lewis to this bill. I already talked about his being one of my personal heroes. I understand Senators Leahy and Salazar are doing something similar with Cesar Chavez. I support that. Heroic actions of men such as John Lewis and Cesar Chavez are shining examples of the heroic actions of so many during the fight for equal rights.

Congressman Lewis is a civil rights icon. He has given his entire life to the causes of justice and liberty. As I have said, he was a key organizer of so many things, not the least of which was the 1965 march on Washington. I was here. I saw it. He was in Selma when the billy clubs, police dogs, and fire hoses were used on that bloody Sunday, and he had his body beaten on many occasions. But he hasn’t given up the fight, even to this day.

Similarly, during his life, Cesar Chavez was a champion of the American principles of justice, equality, and freedom. He fearlessly fought to right the wrongs literally of those injustices inflicted on American farm workers and brought national attention to the causes of labor and injustice.

America is a better place because of John Lewis and Cesar Chavez. By placing their names on this landmark legislation, we can be sure Americans will always remember the sacrifices made in the name of equality.

I began by quoting Lyndon Johnson’s speech in 1965. There is another excerpt from that speech which I will read, and it is as follows:

In our time we have come to live with moments of great crisis. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues; issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation.

This same challenge— a challenge to the values and the purposes and the meaning of the Voting Act of 2006. It is a challenge which this body has met. We have done it purposefully and rightfully, and history books will indicate that we have made a significant step forward. There is more to do, but this is a big step forward.

I yield the floor.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, have the yeas and nays been ordered?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. (Mr. Chafee). They have not.

Mr. LEAHY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, the majority leader should be here momentarily. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, if the Senator will withhold.

Mr. REID. I withhold, of course.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to make sure—I was not trying to force it to a vote. I know the distinguished Republican leader will speak next, but many of us spent a lot of time on this, and we want to make sure it will be as one of the managers of the bill—we want to make sure there will be a roll call vote.

If nobody is seeking recognition, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

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

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, 41 years—that is how long it has been since the Voting Rights Act was first enacted in 1965, and we have come a long way in those 41 years. That much was made clear to me on a recent visit to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, TN, just about 3 weeks ago with President Bush and Dr. Ben Hooks, a renowned civil rights leader, a former executive director of the NAACP, or 15 years a personal friend of myself and my distinguished colleague from Tennessee who is with me on the floor, Lamar Alexander.

Together we visited the site of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., at the Lorraine Motel, which over the past several decades has developed into a wonderful, inspiring civil rights museum. As we walked through that museum with Dr. Hooks, in his voice one could capture that sensitivity, that inspiration, some sadness as we walked through, and he recounted the events surrounding that time, but history came alive.

It was an ugly moment in our collective history and certainly not America’s finest hour, but the museum reinforced the impressions I had. It strikes your conscience. It reminds you of the lessons learned. Lessons I saw once again on a pilgrimage I took with Congressman John Lewis and about 10 of our colleagues a little over 2 years ago when we visited the civil rights sites in Tennessee and Alabama, and together we crossed Selma’s Edmund Pettus Bridge where, over four decades ago now, Congressman Lewis led those peaceful marchers in the name of voting rights for all.

What struck me most during that pilgrimage a couple of years ago and then 3 weeks ago during that museum visit with Dr. Hooks is how we as a nation pushed through that time, as we persevered to correct injustice, just as we have at other points in America’s history. It reminded me of our ability to change; that when our laws become destructive to our unalienable rights, such as liberty and pursuit of happiness, it is the people to alter or abolish them. And it reminded me of the importance, the absolute necessity of ensuring the permanence of
the changes we made, the permanence of correction to injustice.

So I am very pleased that in just a few minutes, we will act as a body to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act. We owe it to the memories of those who fought before us—and we owe it to our future, a future in which every person enjoys an equal, a reality in our hearts and minds and not just the law—to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act.

I hope my colleagues will join me in voting for this critical legislation because in the 50 years since its enactment, we have seen tremendous progress, and now it is time to ensure that the progress continues, that we protect the civil liberties of each and every American.

Mr. President, I yield back all our time.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, is there still time available on this side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

Mr. LEAHY. The yeas and nays have been ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on the third reading of the bill.

The bill (H.R. 9) was ordered to a third reading and was read the third time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The bill having been read the third time, the question is, Shall the bill pass? On this question, the yeas and nays have been ordered. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. The following Senators were necessarily absent: the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. ENZI).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) would have voted "yea."

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 212 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Akaka
Arkin
Alexander
Allard
Allen
Baucus
Bayh
Bennett
Biden
Bingaman
Bond
Boxer
Brownback
Bunning
Burns
Burr
Byrd
Cantwell
Carper
Chafee
Chambliss
Clinton
Colburn
Cooper
Conrad
Conyn
Craig
Dayton

Stabenow
Stevens
Saxby
Dole
Durbin
Domenici
Dorgan
Durst
Ensign
Feingold
Kirk
Kennedy
Jeffords
Johnson
Jones
Kerry
King
Klobuchar
Rockefeller
Russ
Sarbanes
Schumer
Sessions
Shelby
Smith
Snowe

NOT VOTING—2

Crapo
Enzi

The bill (H.R. 9) was passed. Mr. FRIST, I move to reconsider the vote.

Mr. REID. I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. FRIST. For the information of our colleagues, the Democratic leader and I have been in discussion. Let me briefly outline what the plans for tonight will be and tomorrow. Most importantly for my colleagues, there will be no more rollcall votes tonight or tomorrow. We will probably see a lot of Members leave the room.

We will turn within a couple of minutes to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, a very important bill that we will spend approximately 2 hours on tonight. Following that, we will have debate on two circuit judges and two district judges. We will be voting on the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act tonight by voice vote and all four of those judges by voice tonight.

We will be in tomorrow. We will have no rollcall votes tomorrow. I will have an announcement later tonight or possibly tomorrow on what the schedule will be on Monday in terms of votes on Monday, if we will have a vote or not. Debate tomorrow will be, in all likelihood, on the Child Custody Protection Act, plus we will have a period of morning business for other matters.

With that, we will be able to turn to the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act which we will be passing in about 2 hours.

CHILDREN’S SAFETY AND VIOLENT CRIME REDUCTION ACT OF 2006

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4472, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4472) to protect children, to secure the safety of judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officers, and their family members, to reduce and prevent gang violence, and for other purposes.

[AMENDMENT NO. 4686]

(Purpose: In the Nature of a substitute)

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CORNYN). Under the previous order, the Hatch amendment at the desk is agreed to.

The amendment (No. 4686) was agreed to, as follows:

[The amendment is printed in today’s RECORD under “Text of Amendments”]

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I thank my colleagues for granting unanimous consent to pass the most comprehensive child crimes and protection bill in our Nation’s history—H.R. 4472, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006.

This bill started in the House of Representatives by a courageous and ambitious Congressman from Florida, Mark Foley. Mark Foley is with us in the Senate Chamber today, and I want to thank him, again, for getting this bill rolling and fighting like a champion on behalf of our children. I appreciate his tenacity and enthusiasm—we would not be here without his devotion and hard work.

I also thank Senator Biden, who joined me in sponsoring the original Senate version of this bill. Senator Biden and I have worked together on so many bills, none more important than what we are accomplishing today for our children. Senators Frist, Specter, and many others are thanked for this bill priority and for getting this bill through.

The bill we are about to pass, the Adam Walsh Child Safety and Protection Act, represents a collaboration between the House and Senate to include the strong provisions of S. 1086, the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act, and H.R. 4472, The Child Safety Act. It creates a National Sex Offender Registry with uniform standards for the registration of sex offenders, including a lifetime registration requirement for the most serious offenders. This is critical to sew together the patchwork quilt of 50 different State attempts to identity and keep track of sex offenders.

The Adam Walsh Act establishes strong Federal penalties for sex offenders who fail to register, or fail to update their information, including up to 10 years in prison for non-compliance.

The Adam Walsh Act imposes tough penalties for the most serious crimes against children, including a 30 year mandatory penalty for raping a child and no less than 10 years in prison for a sex trafficking offense. In fact, this bill creates a series of assured penalties for crimes of violence against children, including penalties for murder, kidnapping, maiming, and using a dangerous weapon against a child. And the bill allows for the death penalty in the most serious case of child abuse, including the murder of a child in sexual exploitation and kidnapping offenses.

The bottom line here is that sex offenders have run rampant in this country and now Congress and the people are ready to respond with legislation that will curtail the ability of sex offenders to operate freely. It is our hope that programs like NBC Dateline’s “To Catch a Predator” series will no longer have enough material to fill an hour or even a minute. Anyhow, we can go to any city in this country and catch dozens of predators willing to go on-line to hunt children.

Mr. President, I again thank all the people across the country who have thought of children as the most important people in this country, who have worked hard to pass this bill, and whom I am pleased to announce is with us as the Sergeant at Arms today. Thank you very much, Mr. President.