

view on energy. Then Candidate Obama said he wants high-cost energy. Why? Because he wants to force the American people to have to pay the carbon tax that's about to come down the pike. We wouldn't need this terrible carbon tax that will completely damage our economy, especially in this time of recession, if the Obama administration wasn't addicted to spending. Because they are so addicted to these high levels of spending, President Obama, in his State of the Union address, said what he wants to do with that money. He wants socialized medicine. Is that what the American people want? The American people aren't crying out for socialized medicine, but that's what President Obama wants to give to the American people.

Not only that, but in his State of the Union address, he said his vision for America is that government's hand would be in the hospital room of a brand new baby with a brand new mother. He wants, from cradle to career, the Federal Government's hand on the life of that child. I don't know about you, but the people in the Sixth Congressional District of Minnesota, moms and dads want to have one of the parents at home with that baby to be able to love that child, rear that child. They don't want to send that little baby off to a government daycare center from the day that baby is born. That is President Obama's vision for child rearing, that the Federal Government would be involved in the cradle stages of a child's life. Massive spending demands a way of taxation.

This cap and trade isn't going to solve our energy problem. It will add to our energy problem because, again, it's going to take out of the pockets of the middle class of this country to put into the pocket of the Federal Government.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. GOHMERT. I yield to my friend from Iowa.

Mr. KING of Iowa. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would add to this. Again, take it back to a big picture, and that is this is about freedom. It's about preserving the freedom we have, defending the freedom we have, and, in fact, we should be expanding the freedom that we have.

Our freedom has diminished generation by generation since the founders established this country. When you move to the left, it always includes an increase in taxes and an increase in government interference in every aspect of our lives, from raising our families to micro-managing energy to sticking their fingers into education, every aspect of our lives. So when you expand the role of government, you expand also the taxation and you diminish the freedom.

And whether you do it insidiously by saying I'm going to take your child now at age 3 or 2 or 1 as opposed to 5 or 6, as it used to be, or whether you do it in a blatant way by saying we're

going to impose this Draconian regime on everybody in America and we're going to confiscate your income, the point that's been made by this administration and this majority, not in so quite many words is this: You're not really entitled to the money you earn, in their view, but the people that claim they have a need are entitled to the money that you earn.

That's the philosophical divide that's been turned. When you go to the left, you give up freedom and it's diminished. When you move policy to the right, you expand freedom and it's enhanced.

We need to be about expanding everyone's freedom in this country. That's the foundation of America, and that's where our vitality comes from. That's why we are the unchallenged greatest Nation in the world, because our vitality comes from our freedoms. Acts that diminish it diminish our vitality and handicap us.

I thank the gentleman from Texas for his indulgence.

Mr. GOHMERT. I appreciate my friend from Iowa's (Mr. KING) help.

I would be willing to yield for any final comments to my friend from Minnesota.

Mrs. BACHMANN. I thank the gentleman from Texas. I appreciate that.

I would just like to expand on what Mr. KING said. When you look at this body of the House of Representatives and when you look at the United States Senate and when you look at the White House, one thing that we all do when we come in is we take an oath and we pledge our allegiance, not to the American people, not to an issue; we pledge our allegiance to the Constitution of the United States.

Every time this House acts in contravention of the Constitution, we cause a distortion of freedom and we cause a diminution in the freedom of the people. We cause a diminution in the prosperity of this great land. That's the problem. Our founding principles are all contained in the Declaration of Independence. Abraham Lincoln republished and reaffirmed this Nation to a new foundation grounded in the Declaration of Independence.

And, of course, we know what that beauty is. The beauty is that our rights were given to us from a Creator. Those rights are not from government, the rights of man. The rights come from a Creator God. And that Creator gave those rights to every human being on the planet. Among those rights are life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Those are rights that only God can give. Government can't give them; government can't take them away. And our government was instituted for only one reason, and it was to secure those unalienable rights.

None of us in this Chamber with an election certificate has any right to violate those rights because we are here only by the consent of the governed. And when we act in contravention of that, that's how we get into the

soup we're in. And today we are in some kind of soup. So if we return to our Constitution, we're in good shape.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman from Texas has expired.

THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS: D.C. VOTING RIGHTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, as we come in week and week out, the progressive message is up again, as we come back every Thursday in order to make the progressive position clear on the critical issues.

I'm going to be joined tonight by a number of colleagues who are making their way to the House floor, but tonight our topic is going to be the very critical issue of District of Columbia's voting rights, the District of Columbia's voting rights, which is a vital and essential issue which has been dogging our country for many years. We certainly hope that this issue of D.C. voting rights is an issue that the country focuses its attention on. D.C. voting rights is a question of giving rights and conferring rights upon Americans who pay their taxes, Americans who send their children to war, Americans who are equal in every way to Americans who live in the various States. And because of this important role that they play in our country, this equal role, we're looking forward to seeing legislation come out that will allow members of the District of Columbia to be able to have a representative who can cast a vote in our Congress. We are looking forward to this in the near future.

But before we get to that topic, I want to yield to the gentleman from Virginia, who is going to take a moment to make a critical statement.

YEAR OF THE MILITARY FAMILY

Mr. NYE. I want to thank my colleague very much for yielding to me.

I am rising today to express my strong support for a resolution this House passed yesterday by unanimous vote, Mr. Speaker, the resolution urging the President to designate 2009 as the "Year of the Military Family." And while no words or gestures can fully match the service or sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, our airmen and Marines, we must also remember those Americans that do not wear a uniform: our military families.

In my home district of Hampton Roads, we know all too well that the challenges faced by our military families are not just financial. They are emotional and physical too. Men and women in my district wake up every day not knowing if their loved ones are safe, not knowing when they will return, or what scars they might bear when they do.

Dealing with that and explaining it to your children with a smile on your

face is not easy, and it must never be overlooked. These hardships are not limited to our active duty military families. The families of Guard and Reserve members also confront regular absences for training, and in the years since 2001, more and more families have seen their loved ones deployed overseas to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working closely with Chairman SKELTON, who introduced the resolution, and with all the members of this House to support our military families.

I again thank my colleague for yielding.

Mr. ELLISON. Let me thank the gentleman for his quick message. Though not directly related to what we're talking tonight, we are happy to yield to a colleague at any time, particularly in light of his very good message.

But, again, Keith Ellison here coming today with a progressive message. The Congressional Progressive Caucus comes every week to make the point that there is a progressive vision for America, that we have a vision that is inclusive, that brings Americans of all colors, all cultures, all faiths together, and this progressive message is going to be heard and will be heard every week, week in and week out. This is the Progressive Caucus, and we are here with a progressive message.

And what I want to do without any further delay is to ask my good friend from the great State of Missouri to weigh in on this critical issue of D.C. voting rights.

Mr. CLEAVER, Congressman from the great State of Missouri, how do you understand this critical issue of D.C. voting rights?

□ 1615

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Congressman ELLISON.

One of the most significant measures to find its way into the United States Congress is legislation put forth by our colleague, ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, who is the delegate for the District of Columbia.

This legislation would allow the citizens of the United States of America, who live in the District of Columbia, to finally, to finally, after more than 200 years, have the opportunity to cast their vote to place a representative in the United States Congress. This is a city of almost 600,000 people, and many people around the Nation may be surprised to learn that the District of Columbia is the only city in the United States that must submit its municipal budget to the United States Congress.

That, in and of itself, is an injustice. That means that this city, unlike any other city, is subservient to the Congress of the United States and they have no voice whatsoever.

The sad thing goes further. Forty percent of the District of Columbia own their own homes, and coming from those homes are young men and women who have died in the world wars, who have died in Vietnam and who are still dying in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Mr. ELLISON. Let me ask, we know that there is no voting representation for final passage issues for the people of the District of Columbia. Are they exempt from military service, are they exempt from taxes?

Mr. CLEAVER. No, in fact, this is something that most people probably don't know and I hope will become angry over this fact. The District of Columbia, the residents, pay the second highest taxes of any city in the United States, and yet they have no right, given to them by the United States Congress, to vote.

Mr. ELLISON. They have to pay, but when it comes to making decisions in Congress, they don't get to play; is that right?

Mr. CLEAVER. Yes, sir. The people of the District of Columbia work hard every day. They pay their taxes, they do the right thing. But when time comes to vote, the Government of the United States says, "Shut up, you don't have a right to vote. We just want your tax dollars. We want your sons and daughters to go into the sands of Iraq and Afghanistan, but we don't want you to vote."

Now I was elected to Congress because the people of the Fifth Congressional District of Missouri, Kansas City, Independence and the surrounding areas, needed a representative in Congress. I am that representative, but the people of the District of Columbia, in over 200 years, have never been able to say, "This is my representative."

So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that if the people of the United States would like to get something to be angry about, I mean there are a lot of things, fluff issues that people get connected with that really are not significant, but if you want something that is significant then try getting involved in and becoming supportive of the effort to make the District of Columbia, the citizens thereof, an opportunity to be full Americans, full Americans.

They are not asking for anything special, they want what all other Americans have, the right to vote, the right to have their own municipal government that does not have to cower down to the Federal Government.

As I close, I would just like to say that this is a Nation of people who love justice. I mean, of all the nations on the planet, the United States is a Nation that says it is a just nation, and yet we will not act in any way to support the people of the District. And further, all the opinion polls in the United States will reveal that the public, the people of the United States are just and they believe that an injustice is taking place here.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentleman from Missouri made a very eloquent and clear statement.

We are here with the Progressive Caucus message tonight. We are talking about voting representation for the District of Columbia, and we have just

been joined by a gentleman from the great State of Maryland, who has been a very able and strong representative of many, many issues.

I am just curious to know if the gentleman from Maryland, ELIJAH CUMMINGS, former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, leading member on the Committee for Oversight, has a view on this issue of a voting representative for the District of Columbia?

Mr. CUMMINGS. I want to thank the gentleman and I want to thank you and the Progressive Caucus, of which I am a member, for taking up this cause.

I also want to thank Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON. I don't care where she goes, she has made it clear that the people of the District of Columbia deserve a vote. As a matter of fact, if it were up to me, they would have two senators and representatives.

You know, I have often said that we have one life to live. This is no dress rehearsal and this is that life.

But we have people here in the District, as my good friend from Missouri just said, who do it right. They get up every morning, you can see them at the bus stops. They go to work, they raise their children, they do the same things that people do in your district and in mine. They pay their taxes and they are part of the society, building a society and making it the best that it can be.

But then when it comes time for them to have a vote in this body, then suddenly we say "no." It just seems to me that that just smacks democracy in the face.

When we think about our representative government, we think about going to a town hall meeting, for example, as I did just 2 weeks ago, listening to my constituents, and then was able to come to this floor and vote their wishes. That's what representative government is all about. That's the essence of a democracy.

The other piece of that democracy that is so significant is that individual's right to vote, and the ability to take that vote and transform it into power. They all cannot come here and be a part of this process so, therefore, it becomes very significant that they have representation.

As a matter of fact, when you think about it, it's very unfair to the people of the District of Columbia when everybody else has a vote. But then suddenly when it comes to them, they have no votes, and they can express their will, they can express their frustration, but at the same time, when it comes to their representative coming to this floor, no vote.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentleman from Maryland just offered views on this important topic, and that is this, you have made a very clear case that a representative vote for D.C. is fair, it's moral, it's right, and it's the proper thing to do. But how will it benefit people across America for D.C. to have a vote?

Mr. CUMMINGS. If you really think about democracy, I think it goes hand in hand with diversity. We know that I would hate to even think of having this Congress and not having the views of my friends from California or the views from the folks in Utah or the views from the folks in South Carolina.

Although I am from Maryland, I need to understand, I need to have their views, and I have to have their input. Because I have often said that if we are going to make laws for a diverse society, that we must, indeed, be diverse, and we must be representative of that entire society.

Because I think that when you are not totally representative, it really—I don't care how you look at it—taints the process.

Mr. ELLISON. What you are describing to me is kind of like pushing a cart in a grocery store when one of the wheels isn't really running right.

Mr. CUMMINGS. That's right.

Mr. ELLISON. The other three might be, but one of the wheels isn't being represented and holding up, and the cart just doesn't run smoothly. It almost sounds like you are saying that America is a better country, and the values of the people are more accurately reflected when everyone has a vote here.

Is that your opinion?

Mr. CUMMINGS. That's my view, and I think about the little kids that every day do what we did when we were little kids. They stand up to a flag and they say,

"I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God."

I guess they have to ask the question, when they found out that they don't have a vote and everybody else has one well, is this really, am I really a full citizen? If they find out their mother and father can go out there to the town hall meeting, can go and vote in the election, what have you, but yet, and still, when they ask Mom and Dad, "How did our representative vote, Mommy and Daddy?" their mother or dad says, "I am sorry, son, we don't have a vote." There is absolutely something wrong with that picture.

And so all of this is important, and I think it goes to the integrity of the process, the Democratic process, the one, this process that we participate in all the time.

But let me just say one other thing. One of the interesting things that Ms. NORTON will tell you is that when anything comes up controversial like needle exchange or anything of that nature, we have over and over again, folks from all over the country come and try to tell the District of Columbia, by the way, what to do.

Now, they will not dare having us come to their districts, and they wouldn't even think of it and tell them what to do. But yet still they will come and tell this District of Columbia what to do, and then, to add insult to injury,

then not give them an opportunity to have a vote in this body. This there is absolutely unequivocally something wrong with that picture.

Mr. ELLISON. Well, you know, Congressman CUMMINGS, you represent a district very close to the District of Columbia and, therefore, you know people who live in the District and you know people who work in the District and I am sure many of them are your friends, your colleagues, your constituents, you have come to know on a personal basis over time. What is their opinion?

I mean, did the public want this or is this just something that D.C. wants? What do the public opinion polls say? I mean, it looks like the Washington Post might have done some research on this issue.

What, in your view is the public opinion of giving Washington D.C. a representative vote in the Congress?

Mr. CUMMINGS. I can tell you my district in Baltimore, which is only an hour drive away from here, folks feel that the residents of the District of Columbia are being cheated, period. They are being cheated and not treated fairly, and they are overwhelmingly for the District of Columbia having their vote.

And so I just wanted to come on the floor for a moment to be supportive. And I think that, again, we cannot give up this fight.

I get a lot of my energy, to be frank with you, from Congresswoman HOLMES NORTON, because she has never, ever, given up the fight. I also applaud our Progressive Caucus. By the way, this should not just be about the Progressive Caucus, this should be about all of us wanting to make sure that we have a democracy that is truly a democracy.

Mr. ELLISON. I certainly thank the gentleman and do thank him for coming down here, Congressman CUMMINGS, sharing his views about what he knows personally about the people of the District of Columbia and the surrounding area, sharing his views about how children ask their parents about who is sticking up for me, who is speaking up for me. And, unfortunately, in the District of Columbia, parents have to say well, we have a delegate who is really, really good, but she doesn't get to vote on some stuff.

So I have just been joined by other members of the Progressive Caucus, one of whom is Congresswoman BARBARA LEE, who is a Member from the great State of California and is also the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; and we also happen to be graced with the presence of that very special delegate that we have all just been talking about, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON.

I think it's important to say that Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON is not on her own here, she is not fighting the fight by herself. I am all the way from Minnesota, and I feel passionately about the importance of the

District of Columbia having a representative. And I look forward to seeing ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON's vote up there on that board count equally with everybody else.

But this is the position of the Progressive Caucus, that we believe firmly in the idea of equal representation.

□ 1630

Yes, it is true that the Washington Post has done research on this issue and it is the will of the American people for the District of Columbia to have a vote.

With that, I'd like to invite the gentlelady from the great State of California to weigh in on this topic of the District of Columbia having a vote, standing equal with the rest of the country, being able to express an opinion.

I yield to the gentlelady from California.

Ms. LEE of California. I want to thank the gentleman for yielding, but also for your leadership and sounding the clarion call once again on behalf of what is right and what is just. And I can't think of any issue that we need to address here 24-7 than this issue we are talking about today, and that is voting rights for a representative from the District of Columbia.

Mr. ELLISON. Would the gentlelady yield for just a moment?

Ms. LEE California. I would be happy to.

Mr. ELLISON. The gentlelady is all the way from California. It takes you 4½ hours to fly here. Why do you care about whether D.C. has a vote or not?

I yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. LEE of California. I care like the entire country cares, based upon the public opinion polling. This is just basic fairness, it's basic justice. And let me just say, first of all, I raise my kids here in Washington, D.C. They went to Washington, D.C. public schools.

My children and myself have been residents. Even though I live and represent California, we are here 3 or 4 days out of the week. I always say that Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON is my representative 3 or 4 days of the week here in the District. We know the District, we know the residents. Whether we do or not, it's important that we make sure that there is equal representation; the civil rights issue for a vote. One person, one vote. I mean it's unbelievable that here in 2009 the District of Columbia does not have voting rights on this floor.

Let me say that we just went to Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham this past weekend with a great hero, Congressman JOHN LEWIS. We walked across the Edmund Pettis Bridge. We honored those whose lives were given for the right to vote. Bloody Sunday, 44 years ago.

There's no way that I'd be standing here as a Member of Congress if it weren't for the civil rights movement and those martyrs who we honored this

past weekend. In participating in this pilgrimage, I couldn't think about anything but about voting rights for the District of Columbia. This is the unfinished business of this great civil rights movement.

There is no way in the world that the residents of the District of Columbia should continue to be discriminated against and penalized. The District residents pay taxes. Come on, they pay taxes. Our young men and women here go to war. They participate in all aspects of our country's society and all aspects of our work here, and they are citizens of this great country. So why would you deny United States citizens the right to have voting representation on this floor? To me, again, it's a moral issue. It's an issue of fairness and justice.

I have got to say that I am very proud as Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus that we didn't blink when we said this was a top issue for us as the Congressional Black Caucus, to unify and to say that there is no way that we are going to back off of this and allow any type of gun amendments or any type of amendments taint what should be a bill that would celebrate finally the realization of our democracy.

And so this is quite a moment. We have President Obama in the White House. We have major, major breakthroughs in our country. This is a transformative moment. And I would say that those who really want to put their money where their mouth is, they should really step up to the plate and they should say that finally, finally the residents of the District of Columbia's day has come when they can fully participate in this great democracy.

Short of that, there still remains much unfinished business. And I don't think we want to let this moment pass, Mr. ELLISON. I don't think residents in your district want to see the residents of the District of Columbia continue to be discriminated against. We have what, 500,000 people who live in the District—600,000? To me, that's unconscionable. It's unconscionable. The billions of Federal tax dollars that are paid each year and all of the responsibilities of United States citizenship are embraced by the residents of the District of Columbia.

And so on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus, I just want to thank you once again, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, for waging such a noble fight because this is a day and night struggle for you. I want to salute you and I just want to say to you that we are not going to rest until you have this vote here.

I know this vote is not for you personally. This vote is for those 600,000 people who deserve the right to vote in this body.

Thank you, Congressman ELLISON. I thank the Progressive Caucus for your leadership. I hope that the country hears us today and I hope they understand what types of games are being played on a civil rights bill that should never, never, never happen.

And so we have got to move on. We have to pass this. We have to pass the bill as it is written.

Thank you again.

Mr. ELLISON. Thank you for yielding back, gentlelady from California. Let me now recognize the person who we have all been building up to for a moment. Again, Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON is not by herself on this. We are standing shoulder to shoulder with her. But there is also no doubt that she has been quarterbacking this issue, she's been spearheading this issue. No matter what kind of metaphor you want to use, she's been in the leadership of this issue and has offered tireless, unrelenting leadership.

At this time I want to yield to the gentlelady to sort of lay out the issues for us on this critical issue of D.C. having a representative vote in Congress. I yield to the gentlelady.

Ms. NORTON. I thank the gentleman not only for yielding to me, I thank the gentleman for his leadership. When people see me come to the floor, they are used to my coming to the floor for a bill on the District, often a bill I've sponsored.

This is what is known as a Special Order or Special Hour, but it wasn't a Special Hour that I requested. I cannot say enough about how much it meant to me to hear colleagues who could be on a plane now give up that time to come to the floor to speak on this matter.

The chairman of the Progressive Caucus could be halfway—is from halfway across the country in Minnesota; not to mention the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, who has even further to go.

Indeed, it ought to be said that today the Congress let out early. So many hightailed it, of course, to their own districts, who would have otherwise been here.

The gentlelady from California has my thanks for another initiative she took, and that is the meeting that was held yesterday with the Speaker of the House.

The Congressional Black Caucus—of course, this is a largely African American city, but it's also a city where the Black Caucus would be out in front for the vote if anybody was denied the vote. But the Black Caucus has carried this since it was founded. The Speaker, in fact, agreed to a meeting with us in her office. It was a very important and very gratifying meeting, all at the leadership of the Congresswoman from California.

I cannot thank her enough. It's very important to me what Mr. ELLISON and Ms. LEE have done because it is their own initiative. It's very important to say that, unlike with so many issues, they are broadly representative of our House and of our Senate and of our country in believing that we should have the vote.

The poll that I think is duplicated perhaps in what Mr. ELLISON had shows

an unusual majority across all lines; most Democrats and Republicans. And think about it. What red-blooded American would oppose the right to be represented in the national legislature?

How many of us would want to be at the mercy of a group of people, however benevolent, where none of them was accountable to us, even by a single vote. That's been where the residents of the District of Columbia have been for 212 years now because the expectation of the Framers that Congress would in fact make sure that the vote continued after the 10-year transition period has not occurred. Congress dropped the ball.

Those who gave the land from Maryland and Virginia actually got in the first Congress legislation that assured them that the residents of Maryland and Virginia, who now, after 10 years, would be part of the Nation's Capitol, would be left with exactly what they had when they left Virginia and Maryland. They voted for Members of Congress. They voted in the same way all the other Americans did. It is a long, sad story as to why that did not happen.

Understand what my colleagues have been talking about—only the House vote. We are not talking about a vote in the Senate of the United States. Only in the people's House. We are seeking from the House exactly what the House gave us last time.

In an extraordinary vote, this House was the first to pass this bill and send it to the Senate. They fell three votes short because, remember, over there, 51 percent is not a majority. You need 60 percent. That's a new definition of majority that the Senate has created.

I want to thank my colleagues first for the leadership of my colleagues who have come forward as representative, I can truly say, of this House. But I want to thank for all of those who voted for this bill last year.

This bill originated with one of my Republican colleagues who thought of the idea of making it as bipartisan as possible in the hopes that that would draw members of his party as well as my party because the District, like every large city virtually in America, has more Democrats than Republicans.

So he teamed us with Utah, which had barely missed getting a vote because Mormon missionaries, who were out of the State on a religious mission, always had been counted, and they were not counted in the 2000 census.

Utah was only too happy to join. I want to thank the Governor of Utah, its own delegation, who have been with us from the beginning.

Two hundred-nineteen Democrats voted for this bill last time. Only six voted "no." That is very extraordinary. And I am asking each and every one of them to repeat the vote they made last time.

I was in a meeting with a Republican Member who shares my view on the Capitol Visitor Center because there's some things we want to fix about how

staff can conduct their own tours. He came to me afterwards and said, By the way, I'm voting for D.C. voting rights this time.

I do expect that there will be more Republicans voting for the bill than last time. Twenty-two Republicans voted for the bill. They were under some pressure not to. I want to thank Tom Davis, who spearheaded this bill. He has since retired but is helping me even as I speak.

I do want to say that the bill carries a triple bonus. How often is it that we use the word bipartisan and it doesn't quite mean that each side gets exactly what the other side gets?

Look at what happens here. Utah felt cheated, and that is a good word that Mr. CUMMINGS used for how residents who pay taxes and go to war here feel, and they have joined with the District of Columbia, which has never had a vote. If that isn't bipartisan. One for you, one for me. No compromises there. One each. If that is not bipartisan, I haven't heard a real definition of the word.

This vote does something for the House. It increases the House for the first time in 100 years. Every time that a new State has come in, you have the same 435 seats. You're going to have 437 seats now.

□ 1645

In addition to Republicans and Democrats each getting one, now they have one more seat that makes it easier for each to compete. You would think that Republicans would particularly welcome that since they are in the fastest growing areas of the United States. This failure of the House to permanently increase the House in 100 years has been broken if we pass this bill.

Before I ask another question of my good friend who has remained with us for a little while, I do want people to know what it is that moves most Americans by these kinds of margins, almost two-thirds of all adults, for example, being for the bill, almost 60 percent Republicans, almost 70 percent Democrats. What is it that moves them?

Americans would have given us this vote before, I am sure, if we could have gotten the word out. We have an indigent organization called D.C. Vote. We have got a leadership conference on civil rights with its 200 organizations spreading the word for one-half dozen years now. That is the only way that this has become visible enough so that people who didn't even know we didn't have the vote, which is most Americans, now know it and cannot conceive of it.

Who can conceive of somebody in our country paying taxes without getting any payback on that right to vote "yea" or "nay" on whether those taxes should be paid or not? And I know Americans cannot conceive of the experience I have had of going to Arlington Cemetery to bury residents from the

District of Columbia in the Iraq and Afghanistan war, who have now succeeded in getting the vote for the people of those countries who did not have it before, and died without having that vote in their own Nation's capital, the only capital of any nation to deny the vote to its own residents. This is an anomaly. Don't blame it on the framers, and don't blame it on the American people. Now that they know it, they say do it; don't leave us in this way with this message that steps on our message of democracy around the world, a district the average size of congressional districts in the United States and a district that is larger than some States.

This point has been made, but let me drive it home when they say the notion of having everybody who can vote, except you. What Members are referring to is that among the things that the District has to do is to send its budget here before it can spend a dollar of its own tax-raised money; send its laws here, and let them lie over and see if someone wants to overturn them.

So, this House will see the D.C. appropriation come forward this year. That is another way of saying the taxes that the people who live in the District of Columbia alone have raised, they will see that come forward as an appropriation.

Now, my good friend from California is now a member of the Appropriations Committee. I wish you would describe what it means to come forward with this bill, knowing good and well that you are going to have a vote on it, every Member on both sides of the aisle are going to have a vote on it, but that no Member from the District of Columbia will have a vote for it. You are on that committee.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LEE) is recognized for the balance of the time as the designee of the majority leader.

Ms. LEE of California. Let me first thank you for the historical perspective that you have put this in, because I think you are right; had the word gone out, had we sounded the alarm throughout the country much before now many years ago, these numbers would have been readily there many, many years ago, because the American people care about democracy and they care about making sure that every person has a vote on this House floor.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, it is very important that we, one, establish the priorities in terms of funding priorities for our country; we also establish and work on priorities for our own congressional districts. In fact, it is only us who know our districts. We know our districts ourselves, just as you know this district, Congresswoman NORTON. So when the appropriations bills come to this floor, it is incumbent upon us to vote for them, ensuring that, one, the

bills are in the national interest in terms of funding priority, but also in our own constituents' interest.

If a bill comes to the floor that is objectionable to the residents of the District of Columbia, you should be able to vote "no." If an approps bill comes to the floor that you believe is deserving of the support of the residents of the District of Columbia because the funding priorities are such, the types of initiatives that are in that bill are representative of the needs of the District of Columbia, you should be able to vote "yes." The people of the District of Columbia don't have a vote in terms of our national budget, our national priorities.

What if we say we want to support as a national priority health care reform? Which we do. How in the world will the residents of the District of Columbia vote for an appropriations to implement a health care reform initiative?

So, Congresswoman NORTON, it is extremely important from a funding perspective of our national government that you have a vote right here, because the tax dollars that are paid by the residents of the District of Columbia, they are part of this overall national budget. They are part of the U.S. Treasury. So, my goodness, I don't even know how I would feel if I did not have a vote when in fact my district, my constituents, are paying the taxes, I would be very angry, I would be very upset, each and every year.

So I think you have turned this frustration and this anger, which it really should be, the whole country should be enraged about this, into a very positive struggle for civil and for human rights. And that is really, basically, what this is.

Finally, let me just say, this country continues to promote democracy and democratic movements all around the world. We need to start promoting some democratic movements here in our own country, starting right here with providing the vote for the residents of the District of Columbia, and I think that the polling data shows that the American people want that.

So I am optimistic. As I said earlier, I think we have made a quantum leap and there is a new environment. People want change, and I think this is basic change. This is fundamental to our democracy, and I applaud you again for working day and night to make sure the democratic ideals are realized through this vote.

Ms. NORTON. That is why I have been so pleased, that even Members who are far more conservative than I voted for this bill on the Republican side and on the Democratic side. On the Democratic side, we had many Members who come from districts, we are so pleased to have them, because we are the signature of big tent political party ever since FDR, and the unity that we have shown and the many Republicans who voted for me does say to me that people understand

this vote to be just like the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 a couple years ago.

Remember, in our country when in another part of the country almost nobody of color had the vote. We changed all that. So the only people who don't have that kind of representation here are, of all people, the people who live in plain sight of the Congress.

We feel very deeply about our people who have gone to war. We talk about no taxation without representation. That pales beside giving your life for a country that doesn't think enough of you to give you even a vote in the people's House. This time, I dedicated the bill to an unknown soldier and to the first soldier who died in the Iraq war.

The unknown soldier is a soldier who lived in the District of Columbia, who went to war on the war cry of "no taxation without representation." That was the reason that you could get people to take up arms against the mother country, an act of treason. Imagine if they hadn't succeeded what would have happened to them.

The other soldier I dedicated the bill to is one whose name I know very well, Army Specialist Daryl Dent, 21 years old, a graduate of Roosevelt High School, National Guard. When you sign up for the National Guard, especially at the beginning of this war, a kid who I am sure did not envision that he would be overseas, he went the way Guardsmen and reservists and enlisted men and women have always gone, ready to do their duty for the United States of America. I am just asking that we do our duty to these veterans who leave me feeling the same way that all of you feel, only with a deeper hole in my heart.

I could have dedicated this to a lot of other men and women who have died for the District of Columbia. In World War I, this city lost—this is a city, now—lost more than three States. So there were three States that didn't lose as many men at that time as we did. World War II, more than four States from this one place. Korea, more than eight States. Vietnam War, more than 10 States. We have paid our dues. I don't think that can be doubted.

One of my constituents now is a man who owns a business here and lives here, and he was born in Iraq. He stood with me, and I want to quote from him. I don't think Americans know the facts as he told them. His name is Andy Shallal.

He said, "People like me of Iraqi ancestry, and even my son who was born in the United States, are entitled to vote in the Iraqi election due in large part to the service of the citizens of the District of Columbia and other Americans who have fought and died in Iraq." I just think that says it all.

This country was so intent on making sure that Iraqis, all Iraqis, and even Diaspora, and people who could not even be counted in their Diaspora because they were in fact born here and raised here just like the gentlewoman

and I, those people had the right to vote in the Iraqi elections. And that is what we in the District are told we are supposed to swallow. That is why I must give my thanks to Governor John Huntsman of Utah, who continues to support this bill strongly. If I could quote from him.

"The people of Utah have expressed outrage over the loss of one congressional seat since the last census. I share their outrage. I can't imagine," Governor Huntsman wrote, "what it must be like for American citizens to have no representation at all for over 200 years."

I want to say to the gentlelady what I believe most Americans don't know. The schools of the District of Columbia were integrated as a result of Brown versus Board of Education just as I was about to leave high school. The District of Columbia was one of five Brown versus Board of Education States, right along there with South Carolina and the rest of them. Why? Because the Congress of the United States saw to it that all public accommodations, that public schools, were indeed segregated. They went further. The Congress of the United States left these American citizens for 150 years without any mayor or city council. Instead, the President, with the consent of the Congress, appointed three commissioners. These three unelected people ruled the city for more than 150 years.

There can be no doubt that while race has very little to do with this today, it seems to be all about partisanship. I say to my colleagues, my colleague who chairs the congressional black caucus, it was your party and mine that denied the vote to the people of the District of Columbia, denied any kind of self-government.

□ 1700

We were denied any kind of self-government. It was the capture of our party then by southern Democrats who are today gone and forgotten, because there is a new South, white and black, that looks very different because they could not conceive of a denial on race alone. Of course, what particularly hurts this third-generation Washingtonian is that for most of that time, the city was a majority white jurisdiction. The presence of a significant number of black people was enough to rally the anti-civil rights forces to keep all people from getting representation and from getting any right to govern themselves until the civil rights movement broke through in all.

Ms. LEE of California. Would the gentlewoman yield for just 1 minute? I just have to say I am mesmerized listening to this history because I have to remember and recall the fact that when I learned of this, I was actually working for my predecessor, now mayor, former Congressman Ron Delums. And he chaired the Committee on the District of Columbia. And his goal, and we used to talk about this, because we were very active in the

home rule movement, was to, as Chair of the District Committee, I can always remember him saying, we have got to use this committee to turn over the workings of the District of Columbia to the people of the District of Columbia and transfer that power to the residents of the District of Columbia. And so this is another step. This is the next chapter in that effort.

It is a shame and disgrace that in 2009 we are still here talking about full voting rights for the representative from the District.

Ms. NORTON. To show you the shame on us, we were granted, for a brief period, a delegate, we finally got the delegate and home rule, as we call it, at the same time. But Madam Chair, there was a brief period where when in the 19th century we got the delegate and the right and a mayor and a city council. And that was when the Republicans came to power after the Civil War. Again we are talking about a city where they could see the reason for the disempowerment. And this, of course, is why so many African Americans nationally became Lincoln Republicans and why you would expect the Republican party to be right here with me, as Tom Davis and so many Republicans here, have been.

The fact is that during Reconstruction, we had basically the same kind of home rule we have now. It wasn't an African American mayor. But that is not what we were after. We were after self-government for everyone here. Reconstruction ended. And I will say to my good friend and colleague who chairs the Black Caucus that one of the first things that the Democrats did in reclaiming power was not simply to re-segregate the South. What the Democrats did was to wipe out what the Republicans had done with the District of Columbia. They wiped out the delegate. And the Democrats wiped out home rule.

We don't have clean hands. The Democrats got religion, finally, on matters of equal rights long after the Republicans had it and kept African Americans, of course, as a constituency, because they never forgot it until the New Deal came. And our party was still full of segregationists. But the bottom line of survival and the New Deal brought them here.

Madam Chair of our caucus, the thing has for me been a great ride for my constituents. But I tell them the truth that there is also something personal in this for me because I'm a third-generation Washingtonian, and my great-grandfather, Richard Holmes, got here shall we say the hard way. He walked off of a Virginia plantation where he was being held as a slave and got as far as the District of Columbia, and the Holmes roots got planted here. And so on the Holmes side, those who continued to live here have never experienced the same rights that others have seen, including rights that they saw people down South get just a few decades ago.

So Madam Chair of our caucus, this has racial roots. But those roots have been dug up. They are not there anymore. All that is left is a partisanship that exists here in the Congress but not in the country. I think we are close to bringing the two together, the people with the Congress.

I especially am pleased that the gentlelady from California has never ceased to carry this personally when she worked as Chief of Staff for Congressman Ron Dellums, who has gone on, as she said, to be the mayor of another great city, Oakland, and now is Chair of our caucus, I would like to say one word about the constitutional question which is raised. Well, I can't swear that any bill we passed is constitutional. All I know is we are not the ones who decide that question. We decide questions of right and wrong, of whether or not a bill should be passed or not. But I am not worried about the constitutional issue, not when former Court of Appeals judge Kenneth Starr appeared before us and testified in very scholarly testimony that the bill is constitutional. I am really not worried about it when Professor Viet Dinh who spent some years as the constitutional point man in the Justice Department, Attorney General for Legal Policy it is called, has been one of the prime constitutional advocates for the bill. I'm relying not only on people who usually agree with me on constitutional issues, but on scholars who will concede that any bill as unprecedented as this would raise constitutional issues. But in good faith, after more than 200 years, who are we to continue to deny these rights when the very Constitution they cite has ordained an independent institution to make that final judgment? We will be held accountable for this judgment. And so they say you are not a State, so how can you possibly have the rights of States? There is very scholarly testimony from former Assistant Attorney General Dinh about how in each and every instance, more than half a dozen, where the notion of treating the District as a State has been raised, each and every time the Congress and the Supreme Court had said the same thing, when it comes to the Commerce Clause, the fact that it says commerce among the States does not mean, said the Congress first, and then, of course, the court, does not mean it doesn't apply to the District of Columbia. There is not a case which extracts us from that line of reasoning, both congressional reasoning and, of course, the reasoning of the court.

I have to say to the gentlelady, the one that I think makes me smile most is article 1 section 2 clause 3 which provides that representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States. The court said, go away from here. When it comes to paying your income taxes, D.C., that means you. Don't take these words so literally that they are meaningless. You are not outside the United States. You are different from the States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Ms. NORTON. Since the gentleman from Georgia has come in, I hope that he will have a 5-minute period.

HONORING COLD WAR WARRIORS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to yield 5 minutes to my colleague so that he can express his opinion on this important discussion. And then I will reclaim my time, the 55 minutes I have left, after 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Georgia is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JOHNSON of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, this is so very gracious of you. I do appreciate it. This is such an important issue. Home rule is a concept that we take for granted, those who live in cities around this great Nation, those who live in counties, those who live in States as we all do. But all of those levels of government afford to their citizens home rule, which is basically the right to have some self-determination of your governmental affairs.

Unfortunately, however, the citizens of Washington, D.C. have not enjoyed that same liberty. And it was only back in I think 1973 that home rule was conferred by this body, the United States Congress, to the citizens of Washington, D.C., and since that time, they have been able to, as a city council, and as a mayor, school system, they have been able to have control over their governmental issues on the local level. And that was certainly something that was prudent for this body to do.

However, the ability of those same citizens to actually vote for President and Vice President of this great Nation still had not been authorized. And it was 1961 when that occurred. So in other words, citizens of D.C. first were given the right to actually vote for President and Vice President, and then they were given the right to govern themselves.

Now, it is important that we logically extend those rights to the citizens of Washington, D.C. to have a Congressman who has a vote in this great body. We have our illustrious delegate, as she is technically called, but I refer to her always as Congresswoman, a very effective voice in this Congress. And she, on behalf of the citizens of the District of Columbia, deserves to have a vote in this great body. And I'm here in support of that.

I will say that with this fundamental liberty that we are talking about, the right to be represented in this great body, that is a very awesome and fundamental right that should not be bogged down by extraneous matters, particularly when those extraneous matters have to do with tying the

hands of this local government that has been granted home rule. It is just totally different. And it is an insult to link a gun control measure to a people's right to have a representative who can vote in this Congress.

So, let's not compound the tragedy and the injustice any further. I'm asking the public to understand that let's not play politics with the people of Washington, D.C.'s ability to be adequately represented. And certainly they are adequately represented. Congresswoman NORTON deserves a right to cast a vote here to have total equality as all of the rest of us have. And so I don't think that is too much to ask.

□ 1715

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 55 minutes remaining.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. I appreciate the very sincere presentation we have just had about a serious issue. Although my talk tonight will be focused on some other issues, I would like to have a slight commentary.

Those of us who are conservative Republicans share the concern that has been expressed that the American citizens who reside in the District of Columbia have not been permitted to have the voting rights that people who live in other parts of the United States have. That was taken care of in terms of the Presidential elections by specifically permitting the people involved, and right now as we know the people from the District of Columbia participate in Presidential elections and have Presidential electors, et cetera.

I would suggest that people who are listening do understand there is an alternative to what is being presented which I believe is very serious which is not being considered but should be looked at because I believe that the current path that we just heard being advocated has a chance of being declared unconstitutional. Several scholars testified to that in the hearings.

One method that we know would be constitutional would be to permit the people of the District of Columbia to vote for Federal representation as part of the State of Maryland. That would not only permit the people of the District of Columbia to vote for a representative that would then have every right of every other Representative, but also the right to vote for two United States Senators. They would be the Senators as part of the voting population of Maryland. They would be able to vote for the two Senators that come from Maryland.

This alternative has been somewhat ignored by those people who are pushing for the alternative that you have just heard outlined. But I would suggest as we move forward, I would hope in the spirit of compromise and in the spirit of really trying to get this job done, because I agree with the assessment that there is taxation without representation.

One of my colleagues suggested, well, then let's eliminate Federal taxation