

homes that followed marked the beginning of Russia's efforts to occupy Georgia's territory. The U.S. State Department reported that:

"The [Abkhaz] separatist forces committed widespread atrocities against the Georgian civilian population, killing many women, children, and elderly, capturing some as hostages and torturing others . . . they also killed large numbers of Georgian civilians who remained behind in Abkhaz-seized territory . . ."

"The separatists launched a reign of terror against the majority Georgian population, although other nationalities also suffered. Chechens and other north Caucasians from the Russian Federation reportedly joined local Abkhaz troops in the commission of atrocities . . . Those fleeing Abkhazia made highly credible claims of atrocities, including the killing of civilians without regard for age or sex. Corpses recovered from Abkhaz-held territory showed signs of extensive torture."

It is in the interest of the American people to support Georgia's long-term stability by promoting its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Georgia's primary foreign policy goal is to attain membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, thereby integrating itself into the Euro-Atlantic community and containing Russia's expansionist efforts in the region.

I urge my colleagues to join me in reaffirming our commitment to the U.S.-Georgia strategic partnership. We must stand with the Georgian people as they continue to pursue free and democratic reforms in the face of Russian hostility.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Georgian people on their 25 years of progress as an independent state, wish them well in the upcoming parliamentary election on October 8, 2016, and offer my support of our continued friendship.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

Ms. DUCKWORTH. Mr. Speaker, on September 26, 2016, on Roll Call Number 557 on the motion to suspend the rules and pass, as amended, H.R. 3537, Dangerous Synthetic Drug Control Act, I am not recorded. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on the motion to suspend the rules and pass, as amended, H.R. 3537.

On September 26, 2016, on Roll Call Number 558 on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 5392, No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act, I am not recorded. Had I been present, I would have voted Yea on the motion to suspend the rules and pass H.R. 5392.

TRIBUTE TO BRET PERRY

HON. DAVID YOUNG

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 27, 2016

Mr. YOUNG of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Staff Sergeant Bret Perry, of Adel, Iowa, for being awarded the Soldier's Medal, the highest honor a soldier

can receive during peace time, for rescuing three people from a burning house.

Staff Sergeant Perry was traveling to work at the U.S. Army Recruiting Station in Urbandale, IA, in August 2015 when he noticed the smoke from a house fire on a nearby hill. Once he arrived at the house, he found the neighbor tapping on a window trying to wake those inside. After no one answered the doorbell, he burst through the front door with his shoulder and rolled down the stairs to the bottom floor of the split-level house. Forced to crawl up the stairs because of the smoke, he checked each room. In one, he found a woman who was only awakened by his kicking open the door. He got her outside to safety. He then entered the house two additional times to rescue two young adults in the house. After his last daring rescue, the local fire department arrived. Bret left the scene and went to work. His co-workers did not believe his incredulous story behind arriving to work late until they smelled the smoke on his uniform.

This was not the only time Staff Sergeant Perry has rushed to the aid of others. A few months after the fire rescue, according to the Army Times, Perry ran to a car which had lost control, rolled over several times, and ended on its side in a ditch. Perry rushed to the vehicle, rescuing the woman and her baby in the back seat as the car began to smoke. He was awarded the U.S. Army Achievement Medal for his actions. Years earlier when he was stationed in Italy, he ran to the aid of two off-duty U.S. soldiers caught up in a vicious fight, successfully driving off the assailants.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Staff Sergeant Perry for the selfless heroism that has earned him the Soldier's Medal. Throughout his life he has chosen to protect and serve others, and it is because of lowans like him that I'm proud to represent our great state. I urge my colleagues in the United States House of Representatives to join me in honoring Staff Sergeant Perry and in wishing him nothing but continued success.

VOTING RIGHTS

SPEECH OF

HON. LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 21, 2016

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, to help my constituents gain a better understanding of the negative impact of the Supreme Court decision *Shelby County v. Holder*, on May 20, 2016, I hosted a forum titled "Protect Your Future: Restore the Vote." My co-chairs were Representative LINDA SÁNCHEZ, Chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus; Representative JUDY CHU, Chair of the Asian Pacific American Caucus; and special guest, Representative KAREN BASS.

Members from our communities heard expert testimony from the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund. For that reason, I include in the RECORD testimony from Tom Saenz of MALDEF.

STATEMENT OF THOMAS A. SAENZ

PRESIDENT AND GENERAL COUNSEL

MALDEF

REGARDING THE EFFECTS OF *SHELBY COUNTY V. HOLDER*

Since 2009, I have had the great honor of serving as President and General Counsel of

MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), a national legal civil rights organization whose mission is to promote the civil rights of all Latinos living in the United States. MALDEF pursues its mission through litigation, policy education and advocacy, community education, and media/communications in the areas of education, employment, immigrant rights, and voting rights. In the area of voting rights, MALDEF is one of a small handful of national non-profit organizations that have been involved in both litigation and advocacy under the federal Voting Rights Act over several decades. MALDEF currently coordinates a consortium of ten voting rights litigation organizations striving to better coordinate activities nationwide in the aftermath of the 2013 United States Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

Our nation and its most precious democratic values have unquestionably suffered from the Supreme Court majority's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* and the subsequent refusal by congressional leadership to consider, much less vote upon and enact, well-crafted proposals to reaffirm and strengthen the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) by implementing new formulas to apply the impactful pre-clearance provisions in section 5 of the VRA.

In *Shelby County*, the Court voted 5-4 to strike down the pre-clearance coverage formula in section 4 of the VRA. The coverage formula had been overwhelmingly approved by bipartisan supermajorities in both houses of Congress in the latest VRA reauthorization in 2006. The coverage formula that the Court majority struck down required those jurisdictions—mainly states, with some counties and other parts of states—with histories of low electoral participation and of efforts to suppress participation by minority voters, to comply with a pre-clearance obligation as to all proposed electoral changes. The effect of the Court's decision was to completely disable the application of the pre-clearance obligation absent a rarely-issued federal court order subjecting a specific jurisdiction to pre-clearance for a limited period of time. Of course, the Congress can, at any time, subject to the requisite constitutional showing of adequate findings, enact a new coverage formula or formulas to subject other jurisdictions to the pre-clearance obligation with respect to specific or all electoral changes.

It is no exaggeration to label, as it has now often been characterized, section 5 of the VRA and its pre-clearance mechanism as one of the most effective civil rights provisions ever enacted in federal law. Before the Court decision in *Shelby County*, pre-clearance had, through almost half a century, blocked the implementation of numerous proposed electoral changes that were intended to suppress minority participation or to limit minority electoral power, and numerous other proposed changes that would have been retrogressive in effect, threatening to reduce acquired minority electoral power.

In addition, however, a full appreciation of the damage the *Shelby County* decision has wrought requires recognizing that section 5 is also one of the first enactments of an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism into federal law. ADR can be powerfully efficient and effective in resolving disputes without requiring resort to litigation in court. Ironically, the same Supreme Court majority that struck down the VRA coverage formula and disabled section 5 has strongly embraced ADR in the form of mandatory arbitration contracts, even where serious concerns have been raised about bias against employees or consumers in arbitration and about unequal power in negotiating arbitration agreements. Indeed, Section 5 actually includes the very kinds of protections