

Discrimination against minority voters may have been pervasive in the 1960s when the law was passed, Chief Justice John Roberts Jr. wrote, but “nearly 50 years later, things have changed dramatically.” In this simplistic account, the law was still punishing states and local governments for sins they supposedly stopped committing years ago.

The chief justice’s destructive cure for this was to throw out the formula Congress devised in 1965 that required all or parts of 16 states with long histories of overt racial discrimination in voting, most in the South, to get approval from the federal government for any proposed change to their voting laws. This process, known as preclearance, stopped hundreds of discriminatory new laws from taking effect, and deterred lawmakers from introducing countless more.

But Chief Justice Roberts, writing for a 5–4 majority, invalidated the formula because “today’s statistics tell an entirely different story.”

Well, do they? A comprehensive new study by a historian of the Voting Rights Act provides a fresh trove of empirical evidence to refute that assertion. The study by J. Morgan Kousser, a professor of history and social science at the California Institute of Technology, examines more than 4,100 voting-rights cases, Justice Department inquiries, settlements and changes to laws in response to the threat of lawsuits around the country where the final result favored minority voters.

It found that from 1957 until 2013, more than 90 percent of these legal “events” occurred in jurisdictions that were required to preclear their voting changes. The study also provides evidence that the number of successful voting-rights suits has gone down in recent years, not because there is less discrimination, but because several Supreme Court decisions have made them harder to win.

Mr. Kousser acknowledges that the law’s formula, created without the benefit of years of data, was a “blunt tool” that focused on voter turnout and clearly discriminatory practices like literacy tests. Still, he says, the statistics show that for almost a half century it “succeeded in accurately homing in on the counties where the vast majority of violations would take place.”

Members of Congress had seen some of this data in 2006 when, by a near-unanimous vote, they reauthorized the Voting Rights Act for 25 years. In fact, the legislative record contained more than 15,000 pages of evidence documenting the continuation of ever-evolving racially discriminatory voting practices, particularly in the areas covered by the preclearance requirement.

But the Roberts opinion showed no interest in actual data. Nor did it seem to matter that the law was already adapting to current conditions: Every one of the more than 200 jurisdictions that asked to be removed from the preclearance list was successful, because each showed it was not discriminating.

Instead, the court said the coverage formula had to be struck down because it failed to target precisely all areas with voting rights violations in the country.

Mr. Kousser’s study does not solve this problem, in part because there is no easy way to compare discrimination in places that are under a federal microscope with those that are not. But the study provides the most wide-ranging empirical evidence yet that Congress was amply justified in finding that voting discrimination remains concentrated in the covered states and regions. In other words, the tactics may have changed, but the story remains largely the same. Voting discrimination no longer takes the form of literacy tests and poll taxes. In-

stead, it is embodied in voter-ID laws, the closing of polling places in minority neighborhoods, the elimination of early-voting days and hours, and much more.

The Supreme Court suggested that Congress could fix the law by updating the coverage formula to more closely reflect where violations are occurring today—and a bipartisan bill introduced in 2014 and reintroduced this year has done just that. So far it has gone nowhere because most Republicans oppose it. Even if it were to pass, there is no guarantee it would survive before a Supreme Court that is highly skeptical of any race-conscious efforts to reduce discrimination.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department and private groups are doing what they can to combat the flood of new discriminatory laws with the surviving provisions of the Voting Rights Act. But without preclearance requirements for places with the worst records on racial discrimination, they will always be a few steps behind.

AMERICAN ANGELS OF MERCY IN SYRIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last year, a National Geographic photographer captured 5,000 desperate people navigating their way through a sandstorm, then eventually breaking through a barbed wire for safety through the border into Turkey. They were among the roughly 11 million Syrians who have now been displaced from their homes over the past 4 years.

The rich, the poor, the elderly, and the children, Christians, Muslims, they all share a new identity: a war refugee. Though they may be alive, many of them have little hope for a better life.

A Syrian mother and a refugee under World Vision’s refugee program said she and her family lived in a small apartment and they were happy before the war; they were never envious of anyone, but after living in a tent with some 25 other families in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon, she now envies even the dead in Syria.

Unable to work because it is illegal, the more than 3.8 million refugees in neighboring countries wonder every day if they will be given aid to feed their kids. Safe places where children can go to learn, laugh, and play don’t exist. Parents worry that their children might also join the ranks of ISIS, become victims of child labor or forced marriage.

A 14-year-old girl who participated in Save the Children’s programs in Jordan had been married off by her father, not because he loved her less, but because it was one less mouth to feed in the family. Young girls like this one are torn within their identity. They wonder whether they should be playing with fellow children or must be a wife.

For the 7 million people internally displaced in Syria—7 million, that is bigger than New York City—those people face a double-edged sword every day because they may be killed by Assad’s monsters or by the rebels. In June 2012, government forces executed

entire families in front of one another and their neighbors.

Ten-year-old Fatima stood bravely before the soldiers with \$2 in her hand, asking to spare the life of her 11-month-old baby brother, Mattessem. They still shot. The bullet went through Mattessem and killed their mother. Out of a family of 25, only Mattessem, Fatima, the father, and the grandfather survived those executions.

Assad kills his people indiscriminately with barrel bombs that are embedded with chlorine and with shrapnel. These attacks bring scores of victims into the already overworked makeshift hospitals in Syria; 175 of these hospitals have been hit by barrel bombs by Assad.

Dr. Sahloul, a Chicago doctor and head of the Syrian American Medical Society, has become one of the dozens of American doctors who have helped the wounded in this war. He has risked being arrested, tortured, and even killed for aiding the opposition. He has treated victims of these barrel bomb attacks and has shared with my committee a young boy’s vivid account of the attack.

Instead of drawing a sun and animals, this child drew people with their legs severed—severed from their bodies—bloody, and tears in the eyes of the victim. These children have had the first years shrouded in war. They have been deprived of a childhood stolen by war.

We are all made the same way, no matter what we look like or where we live, and deep down in our soul, all of us, even these Syrian refugees, just want to be free.

For every day the reign of terror continues, the colossal number of 12.2 million Syrians who are in dire need of humanitarian assistance continues to grow. U.S. Government-funded programming is working to meet this need. U.S.-based nongovernment organizations, both religious and secular, are doing great work inside Syria and the surrounding region to address the many needs of the displaced.

American funding has provided lifesaving food and essential items for several hundred thousand people inside the constantly bombarded city of Aleppo. Dozens of medical facilities throughout Syria are providing trauma and primary health care, as well as much-needed psychological and social support. Child-friendly spaces are set up in a safe place for children to receive support, to learn, and to play.

Mr. Speaker, war is hell, and the non-combatant citizens are the ones who suffer from this hellish violence. Until the war in Syria is over, the lifesaving humanitarian care done by these American angels of mercy give hope to millions of refugees.

We thank these selfless people that help those affected by this war in Syria.

And that is just the way it is.

CORINTHIAN COLLEGES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CLASS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. MAXINE WATERS) for 5 minutes.

Ms. MAXINE WATERS of California. Mr. Speaker, next month, almost 4 million students will graduate from college, but on Monday, more than 16,000 students—students who have sacrificed countless hours and resources—were robbed of the opportunity to achieve this goal.

These students are the victims of Corinthian Colleges, which closed its doors yesterday amidst ongoing State and Federal investigations regarding the school's fraudulent and predatory recruiting tactics. Corinthian's closure marks the end of one of the Nation's largest for-profit colleges, an industry wrought with fraud and deception.

The story of Corinthian starts with the rising cost of college, combined with repeated cuts to other affordable public educational options like community college or HBCUs. The combination of these factors led to the explosive growth of a for-profit college industry that quickly began to prey on low-income, minority, and veteran students by enticing them with the false promise of a quality education and good jobs. These promises were simply untrue.

Corinthian repeatedly misrepresented the quality of its programs and lied about the job placement rates of its graduates. By doing so, Corinthian lured in the country's most vulnerable student populations, whose Federal loan and grant dollars were used to line the pockets of its CEO, investors, and shareholders.

As a result, Corinthian and the for-profit college industry as a whole absorbed one-quarter of all the Federal student aid, more than \$30 billion annually. During the Great Recession, Corinthian alone nearly doubled its revenue due to the enrollment of millions of vulnerable unemployed workers who were even more susceptible to the enticing offer of a quality education and future employment.

Make no mistake, these people preyed on at-risk students and workers. They took advantage of the next generation of America's leaders, and they used the economic distress and uncertainty our young people were dealing with for their own economic gain.

As Corinthian continued its deceptive practices, the school had 162 failing academic programs, more than any other for-profit college in the country.

□ 1215

During this Congress, I have continued my lifetime of work on this subject, which began in the California General Assembly. I have repeatedly called on the Department of Education to close Corinthian and offer full loan forgiveness for all its students. Last month, I was proud to endorse the Co-

rinthian 100 and their efforts to obtain full debt relief.

Today, joined by my Senate colleague, Democratic Whip DICK DURBIN, I am introducing the CLASS Act, a piece of legislation that will help restore students' legal rights against for-profit institutions.

We need this for a key reason. As Corinthian knowingly deceived its students, it also included in its enrollment agreements provisions that limited students' access to courts and shielded Corinthian from liability for its misconduct. These included mandatory arbitration and measures that prohibited students from joining together to form a class action lawsuit.

As a result, even though Corinthian Colleges has closed its doors, students are still suffering because they do not have a legal outlet to address their harms.

If students are to receive any relief, they are at the mercy of the Department of Education and the good faith of Corinthian Colleges itself, the same institution that has already deceived them and saddled them with debt.

The CLASS Act attempts to remedy this problem by prohibiting any school receiving Federal funding from including any restrictions on students' ability to pursue legal claims against it in court.

Essentially, this bill serves as the students' strongest line of defense against any future fraudulent conduct by restoring their rights to have their day in court.

I encourage all of my colleagues to take a stand against the practices of Corinthian Colleges and other predatory for-profit institutions by supporting this legislation and fighting for our students' right to an honest, quality education.

Mr. Speaker and Members, we still have a lot of for-profit colleges out there that are treating our students in the same manner that Corinthian has—deceiving them—and who are guilty of fraud.

We must take responsibility in this Congress to protect our students.

RAISE THE WAGE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is an important and significant week here in the Hall of the people's House because, this week, we are going to be introducing the Raise the Wage Act.

This argument has been going on for quite some time now; yet, frustratingly, despite all the time and energy that has been focused on this issue, the Federal minimum wage still has not been raised in almost a decade.

Depending on what measure of inflation you use, the minimum wage in real dollars is either at its lowest level in 50 years or its lowest level in 70

years. Either way is bad for American workers.

I want to particularly combat the perception some have that all minimum wage workers are teenagers. Actually, the average age of a minimum wage worker is 33 years old.

Any time you go into the local McDonald's or Burger King in my neighborhood, you can see in person that we are dealing with not just teen workers, but many who are in their thirties, forties, fifties, and many seniors who need to work in order to supplement their income.

I also want to highlight this important fact: 18.7 million children—almost 19 million children—are supported by parents who work full time at minimum wage jobs.

We are not talking about a government handout. We are not talking about helping those who aren't attempting to help themselves. We are talking about making sure a fair day's work actually pays. We are talking about rewarding hard-working Americans.

By the way, if you don't work a minimum wage job—you are just an ordinary taxpayer—you, too, would benefit from increasing the minimum wage.

Here is why. We have, right now in America, the highest percentage of minimum wage workers who are currently getting government assistance—food stamps, Medicaid, and other sorts of programs—because, despite working full time, they make so little, they qualify for government assistance.

By raising their wage, we would decrease the poverty rate and decrease the amount of money needed to be spent on public assistance programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is an issue about fairness; it is an issue about justice, but it is also an issue about what kind of an America we believe in, one that rewards hard work, one that rewards those who are going to work every day and working for a living, or one that just says the wealthiest one-tenth of 1 percent can continue to grow at the greatest rate of income in American history, while the other 70 percent of Americans are losing their share of income. That is wrong.

We believe in an America in which those who work hard and play by the rules should benefit. One way of ensuring this will happen is raising the minimum wage now.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 12 o'clock and 21 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MCCARTHY) at 2 p.m.