

strengthen security planning in regions with more than one rail or public transportation entity, and to ensure the coordination of their security measures.

In addition, rail and public transportation systems need to train their employees on how to prevent, prepare for and respond to a terrorist attack, and conduct exercises to test the preparedness of the transportation systems.

These initiatives are critical and need to be enacted, but we must provide adequate resources for these programs to avoid forcing yet another unfunded Federal mandate on State and local governments.

I urge my colleagues to consider these important proposals to improve rail and mass transit authority.

We must not wait any longer to enact real rail and mass transit security measures. The safety and security of Americans depend on it.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. MARK GREEN

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I was absent from Washington on Tuesday, July 11, 2006. As a result, I was not recorded for rollcall votes Nos. 360, 361, 362 and 363. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall Nos. 360, 361, 362 and 363.

VOTING RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF EXCLUSION

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 12, 2006

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise again to address the importance of the renewal of the language assistance provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Our Nation's growing Hispanic population is gradually becoming important in the political arena with the increased involvement of second and third generation Latinos. The number of naturalized citizens has also increased over the years. All these Americans, whether native-born or naturalized have an equal right to vote. English-only policies are subtle mechanisms that deny American citizens their constitutional right to vote. America is supposed to be a country of freedom, of democracy.

Naturalized non-English speaking citizens must endure long waiting periods to enroll in English as a Second Language (ESL) literacy centers, whose numbers are scarce due to lack of funding. In New York State, the wait lists were so long, the State decided to establish a lottery system instead. How can we ask for English-only policies when we do not have the requisite infrastructure in place to teach English to our citizens, let alone enable them to comprehend the complex ballots? Why shouldn't we make voting easier for our citizens? Why should we obstruct their ability to exercise their right to vote?

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle are forgetting that English is not an easy language to learn. The Republican Party is alienating a large voting population and running the

risk of aligning ethnic politics for years to come against them. President Bush has always urged his party to engage Hispanic voters to keep Democrats in the minority. He is advocating for inclusionary politics. But his efforts are being severely undermined by the hard-line politics of an overwhelming number of conservative Republicans.

I emphasize again the importance of the language issues in H.R. 9 which must be resolved in favor of greater inclusion and assistance for language minorities in the extension of the Voting Rights Act.

Mr. Speaker, I request that the article titled "House May Chill Bush's Wooing of Latino Voters," by Charles Babington, published on June 30, 2006 in the Washington Post, be entered into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

HOUSE MAY CHILL BUSH'S WOOING OF LATINO VOTERS

(By Charles Babington)

By pushing English-only policies and tough measures against illegal immigrants, House conservatives are endangering President Bush's goal of drawing millions of Latino voters to the Republican Party and helping realign ethnic politics for years to come, according to an array of analysts and officials.

The latest blow to Bush's efforts to woo Hispanics came last week, when a band of House Republicans unexpectedly balked at renewing the 1965 Voting Rights Act, partly because of a 30-year-old requirement that many local governments provide bilingual ballots. The revolt, which forced House GOP leaders to abruptly postpone a vote, came as House Republicans are stiffening their resistance to Bush's bid to allow pathways to legal status for millions of illegal immigrants while also strengthening borders and deportation efforts.

"It's sort of a double whammy," said Sen. Mel Martinez (R-Fla.), a Cuban native who is among the GOP's most visible Hispanic leaders. Under Bush's leadership, he said in an interview, "our party has shown a very welcoming approach to the emerging Hispanic vote." However, he said, "there obviously are those who feel that's not important. . . . I think there could be great political risks to becoming the party of exclusion and not a party of inclusion."

While the stalemate over immigration legislation will be difficult to break, House leaders predict they eventually will quell the conservative rebellion over the Voting Rights Act and reauthorize the law for 25 years.

But the depth of House GOP support for English-only policies was demonstrated Wednesday night, when an overwhelming majority of Republicans voted to end funding for the bilingual ballots provision. The effort, led by Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-Fla.), failed only because 192 Democrats joined 61 Republicans to vote against it.

The actions have embarrassed the White House and inflamed many Latinos.

"It's offensive and insulting," said Cecilia Muñoz, vice president for policy for the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest Latino civil rights and advocacy group. She said the national Republican Party is running "a real risk" of replicating the blunder that began unraveling the California GOP in 1994.

That's when then-Gov. Pete Wilson (R) backed a ballot initiative barring illegal immigrants from attending public schools or receiving social services. The ensuing uproar drove hundreds of thousands of Latino voters into Democrats' arms. The state has backed Democratic presidential and senatorial nominees ever since.

"That is exactly the danger that is facing Republicans today," Munoz said. She praised

Bush, Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman and others who "know that immigrant-bashing is disastrous to the future of their party—and they're right."

Peter Zamora, legislative attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said he believes that House leaders will manage to salvage the Voting Rights Act renewal. However, he said, "it will be a political challenge to explain tabling the Voting Rights Act to the Latino community if action isn't taken very soon."

Both parties are energetically courting the nation's burgeoning Hispanic population, which will become increasingly important as more second- and third-generation Latinos get involved in politics, and as more immigrants attain citizenship and the right to vote.

Most Latino voters lean Democratic, but Republicans have long felt they can chip away at that advantage. Bush—who has advocated social services and pathways to legal status for illegal immigrants since he was governor of Texas—took 40 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2004 after winning 34 percent in 2000, according to exit polls. In league with Mehlman, political adviser Karl Rove and others, Bush has urged his party to pursue Latino voters in numbers that could help keep Democrats in the minority for decades.

But some GOP activists say the drive is being undermined by the Republican-controlled House's tough stance on immigration and the flap over voting rights.

Many Southern House Republicans have long objected to the Voting Rights Act's requirement that their states obtain Justice Department approval for an array of voting activities. Last week, in a closed GOP caucus meeting, they were joined by colleagues from throughout the country who object to a measure added in 1975 that requires ballots or interpreters to be available in a number of foreign languages in places where census reports found a need for language help.

"Multilingual ballots divide our country, increase the risk of voter error and fraud, and burden local taxpayers," said a letter signed by nearly 80 House Republicans and authored by Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa).

The 2000 Census found that nearly 41 percent of all Hispanic persons 5 years and older spoke English less than "very well," and those eligible to vote needed language assistance.

John Bueno, a Republican from Michigan, is president of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, which was meeting in Dallas last week when news of the voting rights flap broke. "My first reaction was, 'My God, here we are, it's 2006, and we're still dealing with this issue,'" Bueno said. "Mainstream Republicans are frustrated right now with what's going on in Congress."

Latino Democrats, meanwhile, can hardly believe how Bush's overtures are being thwarted by his own party. By stressing English-only policies and stumbling on the immigration and Voting Rights Act issues, congressional Republicans "either made the best case for switching the Congress from Republican to Democratic control, or they made the best case for their own incompetence," said Pedro Colon, a Wisconsin legislator who attended the Dallas convention. "As a Democrat, I'm really optimistic about our opportunities."