

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Steny H. Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor today during a special order hour on protecting voting rights. Below are his remarks.

“I thank Congresswoman Fudge and I am honored to be on the Floor with John Lewis, who came close to losing his life to make sure that Americans could register and could vote.

“Mr. Speaker, we are a year away from an election – one that will shape the course of our nation for several years ahead. The choice we make will be pivotal, and in order to make certain that it reflects the direction our people want to take, we ought to do everything we can to ensure that all who have the right to cast a ballot can do so. Equal access to the ballot is the most fundamental right we all have as Americans. It is what preserves our democracy and instills confidence in our system of government. Some of our greatest national struggles have been over suffrage – from votes for African Americans and women to votes for the young people who risk their lives for us in uniform.

“The right to vote, however, is today under threat from lawmakers in a number of states seeking to place obstacles in front of minorities, low-income families, young people and seniors seeking to exercise that right. They claim we need to crack down on an epidemic of voter fraud that does not exist. There is simply no evidence of any widespread voter fraud.

“As many as a quarter of African Americans do not have the necessary forms of identification now being required by some states. Data from the nonpartisan Brennan Center for Justice shows that African Americans and Latinos make use of early voting at a far higher rate than other groups, especially opportunities to vote on the Sunday before Election Day.

“At the same time, there has been an assault on voter registration. The right to vote does not exist for political expediency. It is a constitutional right – and a moral right – for all citizens. It is the pride of America, this American franchise.

“For that reason, Democrats are vigorously pursuing ways to protect Americans’ right to vote by drawing attention to efforts which attempt to restrict it and calling them out. We will be working closely with the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and voting-rights groups across the country. Throughout our history, Mr. Speaker, Americans have given their lives to protect the right to vote. It is worth fighting for, it is worth our fight.

“I thank Congresswoman Fudge for her leadership and all that have spoke tonight and will be speaking out every day, every week, every month to ensure that every American not only has the right to vote but does in fact have America's willingness to facilitate the casting of that vote.”

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