

# OPINION

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## Voting Rights Act Brought Justice

Full equality needs more work

BY U.S. REP. JOHN LEWIS, D-GA.

Aug. 6 was the 40th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. It has been called one of the most influential pieces of legislation passed by Congress in the last 50 years and hailed as the crowning success of the Civil Rights Movement.



and fired from their jobs just for talking about registering to vote. People were beaten, arrested, taken to jail, and even killed trying to register to vote.

Before the Voting Rights Act, there were only a few hundred black elected officials in the whole United States. Today, just 40 years later, there are literally thousands of local, state, and federal officials all

I almost died trying to make sure that my parents, grandparents, you and your children would have the right to vote.

We have come a long way in America, but we still have a great

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across the country, including black mayors, judges, sheriffs, school board members, city council members and members of Congress.

The Voting Rights Act has changed America. It has made this country a better place.

We must never forget the role that our community played in bringing greater justice to this country.

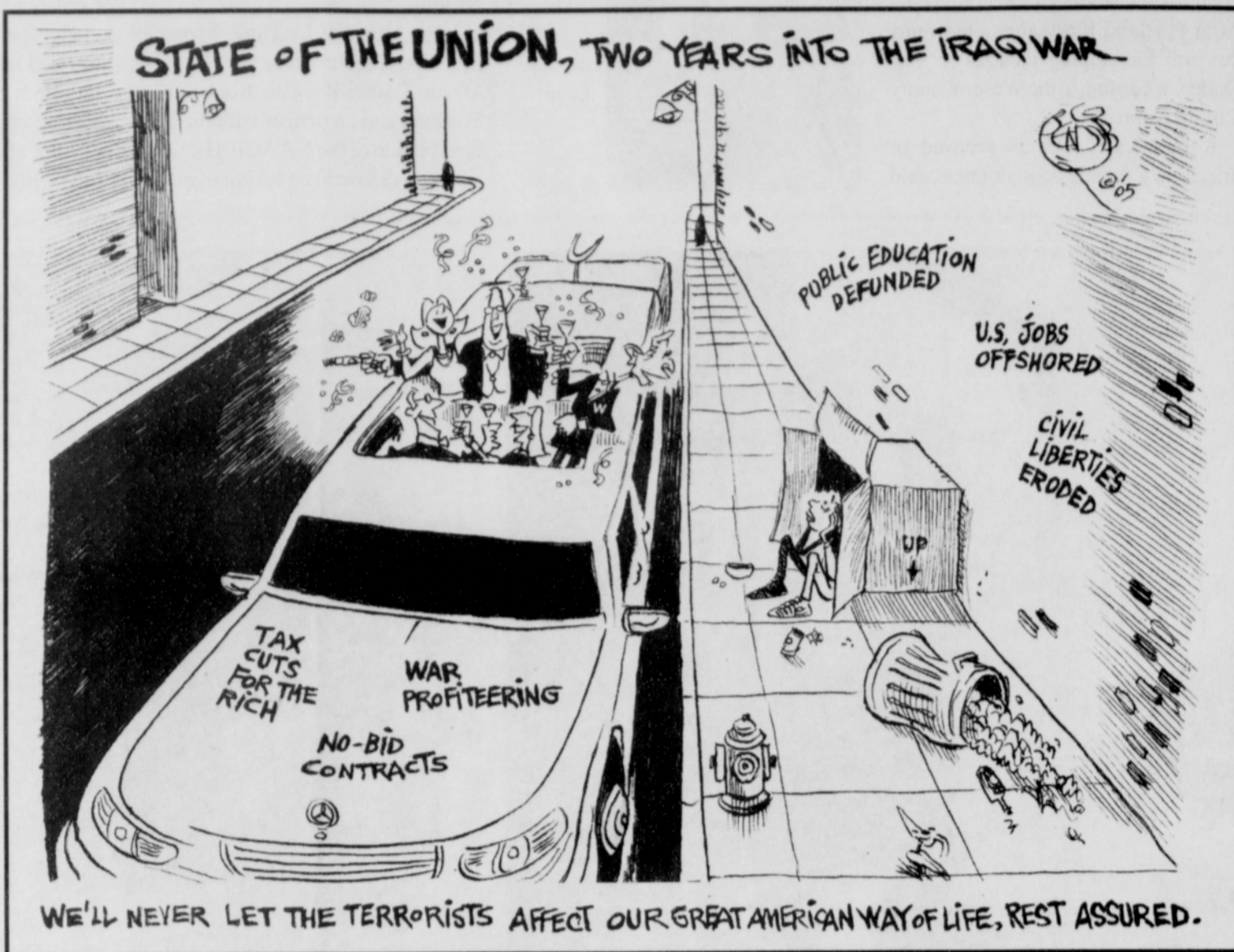
It is true that Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And, yes, President Lyndon Johnson signed it into law, but it was the brave and courageous souls of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia-men, women, and children—all across the South who wrote that act.

People stood in unmovable lines. People were evicted from their farms

distance to go before we achieve equal justice in America. We have work to do and we have to get busy. We must remember that the vote is the most powerful, non-violent tool we have in a democracy. We cannot take it for granted.

We must get educated about the issues and vote according to our conscience. And, then, we need to get involved. Whatever it is you care about, you need to choose your ground and make a difference. This nation needs you. It needs your creativity and your ideas to meet its democratic destiny.

*Congressman John Lewis is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.*



## Missed Opportunity on Fixing Schools

Lawmakers fail on several counts

BY SUSAN CASTILLO

In my role as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I'd like to discuss a few missed opportunities during the recent Legislative session.



In the end, neither plan went anywhere, and our schools ended up in same position they've been in for years — poorly funded and still dependent on the unstable income

tax. I appreciated the efforts to approach the problem from a different angle, but both the Speaker and the Governor missed the opportunity to address head-on the dual issues of stability and adequacy.

The second missed opportunity was the chance to make progress in containing education costs. I joined with the Governor in supporting a statewide health insurance pool for school districts. The potential savings under a statewide pool were unknown, but even the idea to do a study to identify possible savings went down in defeat.

A bill to direct and fund the Secretary of State's office to conduct financial and performance audits of Oregon's school districts, which the Governor and I also supported, was killed in committee. In addition, a bill to streamline services to students and consolidate Oregon's 20 Education Service Districts, with the result being significant cost savings, was amended to remove

consolidation. Finally, the Governor's excellent idea of requiring group purchasing agreements for Oregon's 198 school districts never even got drafted into a bill.

A third missed opportunity was the failure to take a constructive look at the Education Act for the 21st Century, especially the CIM and CAM. Instead, a serious effort was made to simply eliminate sections of the law, and the many Legislators joined me in opposing that extreme approach.

In all these cases, a combination of politics, turf, and the preservation of the status quo won out over what was best for students, schools and taxpayers in Oregon.

Even though we missed these opportunities during the session, I am going to continue to work for school funding, cost containment, and school improvement in the year to come. Between now and 2007, I will work closely with the Governor, the State Board of

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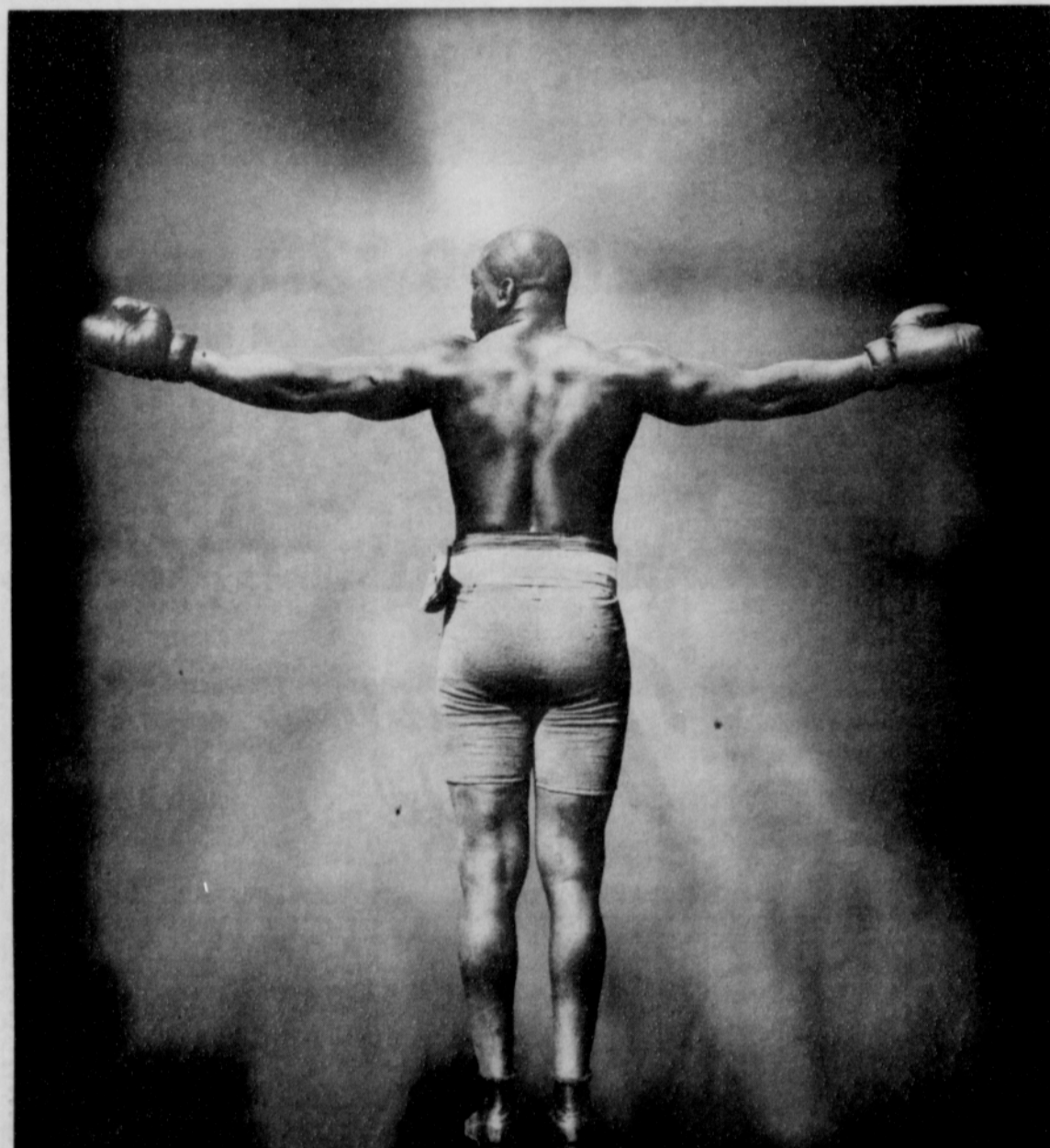
Education, and the many other education leaders and partners who care deeply about Oregon students.

We can make progress by planning to fund schools under the framework of the Quality Education Model, containing costs through improved audits of school districts and ESDs, and using cooperative purchasing agreements, ESD consolidation, and a statewide health insurance pool.

A comprehensive review and revision of graduation requirements and the CIM/CAM to make the changes is also needed in order to move us to the next level.

As Thomas Jefferson said, "I like the dreams of the future more than the history of the past." The time is now to look toward building the schools Oregon needs for the skills of the 21st century. Together, we can work toward that goal.

*Susan Castillo is the Oregon superintendent of public instruction.*



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