

July 15, 2021

Dear Senator Coons,

We write to you as a coalition of Delaware organizations, many of which are affiliated with national organizations representing millions of members. We are greatly concerned for the future of our democracy and request a meeting with you and a small group of advocates as soon as possible to discuss our fears.

Right now, as you know, democracy is under attack. Anti-voter extremists and insurrectionists all over the country are chipping away at our freedom to vote, in a desperate attempt to silence the voices of many voters, particularly Black and Brown Americans. We strongly support the For the People Act because it would establish national standards, so that no matter what we look like, where we live, or what we believe, our votes will be counted on election day. It would also break the grip of big money in politics and crackdown on corruption. We urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to do whatever it takes to get the For the People Act to President Biden's desk for a signature, even if that means the elimination of the filibuster.

As Delawareans we are alarmed to see that anti-voter extremism has come to the First State. More specifically, despite months of advocacy by voters all over the state, the General Assembly has been unable to pass an amendment to the state constitution that would allow for no-excuse absentee voting, due to the rise of toxic partisanship in Dover. Consequently, come 2022, Delawareans may not have the choice to vote from home. Moreover, the anti-voter contingent has also introduced a number of bills designed to create additional barriers to voting.

The bipartisan For the People Act would provide a solution at the national level that would eliminate the need to fight the same battle for democracy in all 50 states. We call the For the People Act "bipartisan" because it has support of voters in both parties.

But while the For the People Act has bipartisan support across the country, that is not the case in the US Senate. Last month, we were very chagrined to observe all the Republican senators band together to block the bill from even being debated, especially after Democratic Sen. Manchin reached across the aisle and offered concessions that specifically addressed Republican concerns. Sadly, one person – Senator Mitch McConnell – has fueled hyper-partisanship in order to prevent passage of this bipartisan voter-supported bill. As Senate minority leader, he seeks to torpedo the For the People Act – and most likely many other bills that the American people support.

We cannot allow the Minority Leader to call the shots, and the only way to stop him is to fix the filibuster. President Biden was correct when he agreed with President Obama that the filibuster is "a relic of the Jim Crow era." For example, frequently used by pro-slavery senators before the Civil War, the filibuster prevented the passage of over 200 anti-lynching bills over the years. In fact, until 1964, civil rights bills were the only category of bills routinely stopped by the filibuster. Even the Civil Rights Act of 1964, one of the most important pieces of civil rights legislation in American history, was blocked for more than two months before the filibuster was finally broken. Given this history, why should the filibuster be preserved?

We believe, simply put, that protecting the freedom of the American people – all of us – is much more important than preserving a Senate rule, favored by supporters of Jim Crow, that isn't even in the Constitution. In fact, the Framers considered, and rejected, supermajority requirements to pass legislation. Thus, we ask that you take the lead in moving the Senate beyond obstructionism by working with your colleagues to fix the filibuster, so that it cannot be the barrier it is now. It must be modified, so we can pass the For the People Act and make the United States the great democracy it claims to be.

We greatly appreciate your sponsorship of the For the People Act and your votes for cloture on the motion to proceed last month. And we would like to meet with you in the near future to learn what steps you are planning to take to address the filibuster, so we can move the bill forward.

Sincerely,

American Promise Delaware
Building People Power Campaign
Common Cause Delaware
Delaware Democratic Socialists of America
Delaware Get Money Out
Delaware Hispanic Commission
Delaware Interfaith Power and Light
Delaware Poor People's Campaign
Delaware Public Employees, AFSCME, Council 81
Delaware United
Delaware Women for Inclusion
Equality Delaware
Indivisible Highlands and Beyond
League of Women Voters of Delaware
Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
Network Delaware
Planned Parenthood of Delaware
Progressive Democrats for Delaware
Sierra Club Delaware Chapter
Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice
Stand Indivisible
Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware
Unitarian Universalists Delaware Advocacy Network
Wilmington (DE) Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
Women's March Sussex
Working Families Party Delaware