



TODAY'S VOTE
IN THE CLASSROOM

VOTING AND ELECTIONS



EDWARD M. KENNEDY INSTITUTE
FOR THE UNITED STATES SENATE

ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

The Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate aims to teach students about the role of the Senate in our representative democracy, introducing important elements of the legislative process to students, and encouraging participation in civic life. The Institute's educational programs frame important legislative debates going on in our nation, and give students the opportunity to practice a number of the processes and skills necessary to craft legislation.

The Today's Vote in the Classroom program is a legislative simulation based on the Today's Vote program that is delivered onsite at the Kennedy Institute. Today's Vote in the Classroom asks students to:

- Take on the role of a lawmaker
- Work together to discuss a bill recently considered by the U.S. Senate
- Conduct a Senate debate that presents arguments in support of or against the legislation
- Cast their vote on the bill

The program encourages students to think about representation in a democracy and examine important legislative issues within the structure of a Senate debate. The use of role play and Senate rules of decorum set the stage for deliberation. The companion bill-building activity will help introduce students to the legislative topic.

In this legislative simulation you will play the role of the Presiding Officer.

Lesson Plan

Use this 2-day lesson plan to explore the issue and prepare to conduct a Senate debate on a related bill.

DAY 1: EXPLORE THE ISSUE

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
10 minutes	Introduce the Issue	<p>Use the Explore the Issue sheet to discuss the issue with the students.</p> <p>Ask the following questions to facilitate the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is this issue about? - Which groups of people or states might be affected by this issue? - Can you predict some positions that people affected by the issue might take?
	<div> MATERIALS Explore the Issue handout. <i>Provide one copy to each student (p. 5-6)</i> </div>	
20 minutes	Conduct a Bill-Building Conversation	<p>Create small groups. Assign 5–6 students to each group.</p> <p>Remind students that lawmakers seek to address national issues through legislation or bills. A bill is a collection of ideas that address an issue. Lawmakers can vote on a bill to make it a law. The various ideas in a bill are called provisions.</p> <p>Inform students that tomorrow they will look at a bill that intends to expand voting rights, make it easier for citizens to vote, and increase penalties for voter intimidation and misinformation.</p> <p>Review the directions on the Bill-Building Conversation worksheet. Give students ten minutes to discuss and select provisions in their groups using the worksheet as a guide.</p> <p>Have groups share about the provisions they selected in their discussion.</p>
	<div> MATERIALS Bill-Building Conversation worksheet (pp. 8–9) </div>	

Lesson Plan (continued)

DAY 1: CREATE A SENATE PROFILE

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
15 minutes	Become a Senator	<p>Have students select a state to represent as a Senator in the bill debate. Ask them to think about how the laws that expand voting rights might affect the interests of their constituents, or the people they represent, as well as their state and our presidential elections.</p> <p>For example, Senators may research the current voting laws in their state, the demographics of their state, their states previous conditions under preclearance, or their state's history of voter suppression.</p> <p>Similarly, students should select a political party or choose to be independent and consider their party's interests as they form their position on the issue. Students may choose to represent the party of the current Senator in their chosen state or may create a fictional profile.</p> <p>Have students fill out their Senator Profile table tents with their name, the state they chose to represent, and a political party. In the Platform section students should briefly describe the position(s) they are representing for their constituents. Students can display these table tents at their seats during the debate.</p> <p>As time allows, or for homework, have students research how the issue affects the people of their chosen state.</p>
5 minutes	Close	<p>Ask students to share their chosen state and party affiliation. Share with students that they will be considering and debating a bill that intends to expand voting rights, change campaign finance laws to reduce the influence of money in politics, ban partisan gerrymandering, and create new ethics rules for federal office holders.</p>
	Homework (Optional)	<p>Assign students to read the full bill or the bill summary and the supporting articles listed under Additional Resources to gain additional context.</p>

MATERIALS

Senator Profile table tent (p. 10)

MATERIALS

List of readings in Additional Resources (p. 26)

EXPLORE THE ISSUE: VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Though it is considered a basic civil right, the right to vote has had a complicated history in the United States. The U.S. Constitution gives citizens the right to vote, but it does not actually say **who** can vote. The Constitution leaves it up to the individual states to decide saying in Article 1 Section 4 that the, “times, places, and manner, of holding elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the the Places of chusing Senators.”

Many different groups have been denied the right to vote throughout United States history because of their race, gender, or age. At our country's inception, the right to vote was almost entirely limited to property owning white males. This changed with several amendments to the constitution including the 15th Amendment (1870) giving African American males and other minority groups the right to vote, the 19th Amendment (1920) giving women the right to vote, and the 26th Amendment (1971) giving 18-20 year olds the right to vote. However, even when these constitutional amendments were implemented, many minority groups were still denied equal access to the ballot box due to state and local laws. Several states throughout the country passed laws specifically designed to prevent African Americans from voting, these laws were known as Jim Crow Laws. A few examples of Jim Crow Laws include poll taxes which required some voters to pay in order to vote, subjective literacy tests which prevented many citizens from voting because of their education, and felon disenfranchisement laws that prevented people convicted of certain crimes from voting.

The United States needed a series of Federal laws to ensure African Americans were not denied their constitutional right to access the ballot box. Under President Lyndon B. Johnson, the federal government passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to ensure African Americans their right to vote. The Voting Rights Act, signed into law 95 years after the 15th Amendment was ratified into the constitution, outlawed most discriminatory voting practices. The Voting Rights Act also created Preclearance, which was a process that required any state that had a history of voter suppression to seek approval from the U.S. Department of Justice before making changes to their voting laws. Preclearance protections held until the 2013 Supreme Court Case *Shelby County v Holder* in which the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that preclearance was no longer necessary because, as Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr wrote, “our country has changed.”

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic various measures were put into place that increased voter turnout in the 2020 Presidential Election immensely. In fact, the 2020 election is estimated to be the highest rate of voter turnout in 120 years, with over 65% of eligible voters participating for the first time since 1900. Recently, a bill was introduced in congress that seeks to build on the high voter turnout during the pandemic and expand access to the vote for the whole country, this bill is called the Freedom to Vote Act. The bill would allow for same day voter registration, allow 16 year olds to pre-register to vote, allow anyone to vote by mail if they choose to do so, and more.

Key Information About the Issue

- The United States has a lengthy history of voter suppression, at the country's inception the right to vote was almost entirely limited to white land owning males.
- After the Civil War, Jim Crow Laws greatly limited African Americans from accessing the right to vote in southern states. Other minority groups have also had their voting access limited in other areas throughout our country's history.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 ensured minority groups had the right to vote. However, these laws have been weakened by recent Supreme Court decisions.
- The 2020 Presidential Election had the highest rate of voter turnout since 1900 (over 65% of Americans participated) largely due to changes in voting access because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Freedom to Vote Act was originally introduced in September of 2021 and aims to increase access to voting throughout the country. If passed, the bill would expand voter registration and voter access, limit removing voters from voter roles, establish election day as a federal holiday, expand voting rights for citizens with disabilities, restore federal voting rights to formerly incarcerated citizens, and much more.

KEY TERMS MEMO

Constitution	The founding legal document that established the structure of the United States government. It also contains several amendments which protect certain rights and liberties of American citizens.
Constitutional Amendment	A change or addition to the Constitution of the United States which must be approved by a two-thirds vote in each house of Congress and ratified by at least 38 state legislatures before taking effect.
Federal Government	The national government of the United States.
State Government	The government that controls a subdivision of a country (example: Massachusetts) and shares power with the federal government.
Local Government	The administration of a particular town, county, or district with representatives that live in that location.
Preclearance	Need for approval from the U.S. Department of Justice for all changes relating to voting laws in a particular state.
Voter Intimidation	The use of threats, coercion, or attempts to intimidate for the purpose of interfering with the right of another person to vote or to vote for the person of their choosing.
Voter Misinformation	False or misleading allegations or statements of fact likely to alter or otherwise impact the outcome of an election, or to incite imminent lawless action in connection with such election.
Redistricting	To divide or organize an area into new political districts.
Partisan Gerrymandering	Redistricting that favors one political party.
Felony	A crime, typically one involving violence, regarded as more serious than a misdemeanor, and usually punishable by imprisonment for more than one year.
Disenfranchisement	The state of being deprived of a right or privilege, especially the right to vote.

BILL-BUILDING CONVERSATION

Each bill, or potential new law, is made up of provisions. Provisions are the building blocks of a bill that attempt to solve a problem or create a new law for our nation. Your assignment is to create a new bill on the topic of voting rights and elections with your classmates. In order to create this bill, discuss the questions and provision options below in your small group and select one provision from each section.

Instructions: Consider each question in your small group. Share your own ideas about the topic and listen to your classmates' thoughts and experiences. As a group, circle the provision you'd most like to add to the bill. As you have the conversation, use the box below to take notes of the groups that will be affected by the bill you create.

1. **How severely should individuals who intimidate or prevent others from voting be punished?** **Consider:* The United States has a lengthy history of voter intimidation and voter suppression, minority and low income communities have consistently faced increased levels of voter suppression.

Provision A: Any person who corruptly hinders, interferes with, or prevents another person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding another person to vote or register to vote in an election shall be fined not more than \$100,000, imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both.

Provision B: Any person who corruptly hinders, interferes with, or prevents another person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding another person to vote or register to vote in an election shall be fined not more than \$50,000, imprisoned for not more than 3 years, or both.

Provision C: The penalty for any person who corruptly hinders, interferes with, or prevents another person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding another person to vote or register to vote in an election shall be decided by the independent states where voter intimidation has occurred.

2. **Should individuals who have been convicted of a felony criminal offense be guaranteed the right to vote upon release from prison?** **Consider:* The use of felony disenfranchisement has historically been used to disproportionately limit the rights of African Americans and other minority groups to vote.

Provision A: Any person convicted of a felony criminal offense shall immediately regain their right to vote in federal elections upon their release.

Provision B: Any person convicted of a felony criminal offense shall regain their right to vote after a 2 year probation period beginning upon their release.

Provision C: Individual states will retain their right to determine when, and if, individuals with a felony criminal conviction will regain their right to vote.

3. **How long should states guarantee access to early voting for citizens in federal elections?**

**Consider:* The 2020 Presidential Election had the highest turnout of any federal election in over 100 years, this was largely due to increased voting access methods used to combat the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Provision A: A national two-week early voting period, which requires that the early voting period include weekends and times outside of regular business hours, as well as that polling places be open for at least 10 hours per day.

Provision B: A national one-week early voting period, which requires that the early voting period include weekends, as well as that polling places be open for at least 8 hours per day.

Provision C: Early voting will be implemented on a state by state basis with individual states deciding the time and manner in which they will hold early voting for federal elections.

IMPACT BOX

Example: Elderly voters, low income voters

What are the challenges my state is currently facing related to today's issue?

Largest state industries

-
-
-

Senator _____
NAME

Party:

State:

Platform:



fold

Lesson Plan

Use this 2-day lesson plan to explore the issue and prepare to conduct a Senate debate on a related bill.

DAY 2: PREVIEW THE BILL

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
10 minutes	<p>Introduce and Preview the Bill</p> <div> <p>MATERIALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senate Oath handout. <i>Provide one copy to each student or project on a screen (p. 13)</i> - Bill Preview handout. <i>Provide one copy to each student (p. 14)</i> </div>	<p>Introduce yourself as the Presiding Officer for this Senate session to consider a bill on voting rights for people with felony convictions. Tell students you will swear them in as new Senators. Have students recite the Senate Oath of Office. Students will take on the role of a Senator from the state they chose and begin to consider, and then vote on, the bill before them.</p> <p>Use the Bill Preview to discuss the bill with students. Ask questions to facilitate the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What problem prompted this bill? - Which groups of people or states will be affected if the bill passes? - Can you predict arguments for and against the bill?
5 minutes	<p>Open the Floor for Prepared Statements on the Bill</p> <div> <p>MATERIALS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senate Decorum handout. <i>Provide one copy to each student or project on screen (p. 15)</i> - Pro Speech. <i>One copy of the A version or B version speech for student speaker (pp. 16-19)</i> - Con Speech. <i>One copy of the A version or B version speech for student speaker (pp. 20-22)</i> </div>	<p>Review the Senate Decorum handout with the students.</p> <p>Select two students to serve as the Senators who will deliver the pro and con speeches. As the Presiding Officer, ask the student Senators to read the prepared speeches.</p> <p>Note: Choose to assign either the A versions of the Pro and Con Speeches or the B versions of the Pro and Con Speeches. The A versions are written at a 10th grade level and are Lexile 1200-1300. The B versions are written at a 7th grade level and are Lexile 1000-1100.</p>

Lesson Plan (continued)

DAY 2: DELIBERATE AND VOTE

TIME	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
10 minutes	Deliberate	<p>Create small groups. Assign 5–6 students to each group. Have each group decide if they can agree to vote together for or against the bill or if their views are varied within the group. Have students discuss some of the facts that support their position on the bill.</p> <p>Alternative: Have students meet in small groups by caucus, or share interests and positions on the bill to discuss how they will speak in favor of or against the proposed legislation.</p>
20 minutes	Debate and Vote on the Bill	<p>Open the floor to a final debate on the bill. Remind students of the state they selected to represent in the vote.</p> <p>Have students participate in a debate on the bill. Begin by asking if any Senators would like to make a statement about the bill and then recognize Senators to speak.</p> <p>Call for a vote on the bill. Announce that the Senate will move to a vote on the bill. Have students raise their hands to vote for or against the bill.</p> <p>Announce the final vote.</p>
5 minutes	Wrap Up	Give students an Exit Ticket to complete after the vote or as homework.

MATERIALS

Reflection Activities (p. 23)

SENATE OATH OF OFFICE



I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

S.2747- FREEDOM TO VOTE ACT

This bill addresses voter registration and voting access, election integrity and security, redistricting, and campaign finance.

BILL SUMMARY: This bill expands voter registration and voter access, establishes election day as a federal holiday. It also limits removing voters from voter rolls. The bill establishes certain federal criminal offenses related to interfering with voting. In particular, the bill establishes a new criminal offense for conduct (or attempted conduct) to corruptly hinder, interfere with, or prevent another person from registering to vote or helping someone register to vote. Additionally, the bill sets forth provisions related to election security, including requiring states to conduct post-election audits for federal elections. The bill addresses campaign finance (including expanding the prohibition on campaign spending by foreign nationals); requires additional disclosure of campaign-related fundraising and spending; requires additional disclaimers regarding certain political advertising; and establishing an alternative campaign funding system for certain federal offices.

SPONSORING Senator(s):

Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Primary Sponsor
Tim Kaine (D-VA), Original Cosponsor
Angus King (I-ME), Original Cosponsor
Joe Manchin (D-WV), Original Cosponsor
Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Original Cosponsor
Alex Padilla (D-CA), Original Cosponsor
Jon Tester (D-MT), Original Cosponsor
Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Original Cosponsor

BILL PROVISIONS:

- Any person who corruptly hinders, interferes with, or prevents another person from voting, registering to vote, or aiding another person to vote or register to vote in an election shall be fined not more than \$100,000, imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both.
- The right of an individual who is a citizen of the United States to vote in any election for Federal office shall not be denied or abridged because that individual has been convicted of a criminal offense unless such individual is serving a felony sentence in a correctional institution or facility at the time of the election.
- Each state must allow individuals to vote in an early voting period; such voting for no less than 10 hours on each day during the period, have uniform hours each day for which such voting occurs; and allow such voting to be held for some period of time prior to 9:00 a.m (local time) and some period of time after 5:00 p.m. (local time).

Supporting Groups

[NAACP](#)
[League of Women Voters](#)
[Brennan Center for Justice](#)

Opposing Groups

[Heritage Foundation](#)
[Wall Street Journal Editorial Board](#)

FIVE RULES OF SENATE DECORUM

Congratulations, Senator! You have been elected by the voters of your state to represent them and their interests in the United States Senate.

The Senate has a set of traditional rules and practices that guides its works as a legislative body. Review these five rules of Senate decorum (civil decorum) that you should employ in order to successfully conduct your Senate session. Senators follow these rules to try to stay focused on legislation.

1. **Seek the Floor.** Before you begin speaking, you have to ask for the floor. Raise your hand and say "I seek the floor," and wait for the presiding officer to call on you before speaking.
2. **Use the Third Person.** You may want to respond to another Senator during your statement. Instead of calling them by name, use the third person. "The Senator from Massachusetts," "My colleague from California," or even "My esteemed and honorable colleague from Vermont."
3. **Speak to the Presiding Officer.** Instead of directing your comments to the Senate, direct them to the Presiding Officer. You can address them as Vice President X or Mr./Madam President.
4. **Yield the Floor.** After you finish your statement on the Senate floor, say "I yield the floor." This will allow the presiding officer to call on another Senator to speak.
5. **Vote.** Your vote will be recorded for the country to see. It represents your position and your voice in Congress. Vote thoughtfully and consider the needs of your state and your political party.

PRO SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MAINE (*Version A*)

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for over 240 years, the story of American democracy has been an inexorable⁽¹⁾ march toward universal suffrage— toward the realization of that sacred principle that all citizens should have a voice in selecting their leaders.

The grand ideal had humble beginnings. At the time of the Constitution's ratification, hardly 1 in 10 Americans would have been even eligible to vote.

If you were not White, not a landowner, not a male, and not a Protestant, chances were that the democracy did not apply to you; chances were that you were cut out of the political process.

It took over two centuries of Americans marching, fighting, and dying for the promise of freedom to expand to our citizens, regardless of race or gender or creed, the right to vote.

But for every two steps forward, sometimes there are those who try to pull us one step back. Unfortunately, we find ourselves today in the midst of such a struggle.

Across the country, the Big Lie--the Big Lie--has spread like a cancer, as many States across the Nation have passed the most draconian restrictions against voting that we have seen in decades. If nothing is done, these laws will make it harder for millions of Americans to participate in their government.

If there is anything worthy of the Senate's attention, if there is any issue that merits debate on this floor, it is protecting our democracy from the forces that are trying to unravel it from the inside out.

That is why this afternoon, the U.S. Senate will vote to begin debate on the Freedom to Vote Act.

The Freedom to Vote Act is a balanced, effective, and commonsense proposal that will fortify our democracy and protect Americans' right to vote. It sets basic standards for all Americans to vote safely and securely, no matter what ZIP Code they live in. It adopts proven reforms that will protect voters from both parties, whether they live in blue States or red States or purple States. It fights back against the power of dark money in politics and ends the toxic practice of partisan gerrymandering. And, all the while, it respects the rightful authority of States to carry out their elections.

At its core, the Freedom to Vote Act rests on a simple principle: Americans must be able to freely choose their leaders, and those leaders must be accountable to the people, not to well-heeled donors.

Now, today's vote is a cloture⁽²⁾ vote simply on a motion to proceed. It presents Senators with a simple question: Should the Senate even debate--debate--voting rights? That is what this is about, simply a debate and an important one to be sure.

No Republican is being asked to sign their name to this or that policy today, but they are being asked to come to the table and have a discussion and allow amendments. I want to be clear. If Republicans join us in proceeding to this bill, I am prepared to hold a full-fledged debate worthy of the U.S. Senate. The minority will have the chance to have their voices heard.

PRO SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MAINE (*Version A continued*)

The Senate has already voted on more amendments than in any year under former-President Trump, and on this legislation, again Republican Senators would be able to offer amendments. But for that to happen, we have to get on the bill today.

What we can't accept is a situation where one side is calling for bipartisan debate and bipartisan cooperation while the other refuses to even engage in a dialogue. If our Republican colleagues don't like our ideas, they have a responsibility to present their own. It is ludicrous for any Republican to assert that the Federal Government has no role to play in safeguarding elections when State laws disenfranchise American citizens.

I invite them to read the Constitution of the United States of America, which precisely empowers Congress to regulate the "times, places, and manners" of holding elections. I invite them to look at modern American history, when the Senate stepped into the breach numerous times when Jim Crow States sought to restrict the right to vote.

There is a long and hallowed tradition of the Senate, often in a bipartisan coalition, working to protect access to the franchise, and today our colleagues should vote to begin debate for how we can add to that legacy. But what Republicans should not do--they must not do--is squelch any chance--any chance--for the Senate to debate something as critical, as sacrosanct(3), as American as the right to vote. The clock is ticking on our chance to take meaningful action.

Our experiment in democracy has been the greatest feat of self-rule in all of modern history. We cannot allow it to backslide here in the 21st century. Today, we have a chance to begin debate on how we can prevent that from happening, but Republicans must join us in the debate and vote to allow debate to proceed. I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

Definitions:

Inexorable: impossible to stop or prevent

Cloture: a proceeding for ending a debate by taking a vote

Sacrosanct: regarded as too important or too valuable to interfere with

Source:

<https://www.congress.gov/117/crec/2021/10/20/167/184/CREC-2021-10-20-senate.pdf>

PRO SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MAINE *(Version B)*

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for over 240 years, the story of American democracy has been a relentless march toward universal suffrage— toward the realization of that sacred principle that all citizens should have a voice in selecting their leaders.

At the time of the Constitution's ratification, hardly 1 in 10 Americans would have been even eligible to vote.

If you were not White, not a landowner, not a male, and not a Protestant, chances were that you were cut out of the political process.

It took over two centuries of Americans marching, fighting, and dying for the promise of freedom to expand to our citizens, regardless of race or gender or creed, the right to vote.

But for every two steps forward, sometimes there are those who try to pull us one step back. Unfortunately, we find ourselves today in the midst of such a struggle.

If there is anything worthy of the Senate's attention, if there is any issue that merits debate on this floor, it is protecting our democracy from the forces that are trying to unravel it from the inside out.

That is why this afternoon, the U.S. Senate will vote to begin debate on the Freedom to Vote Act.

The Freedom to Vote Act is a balanced, effective, and commonsense proposal that will fortify our democracy and protect Americans' right to vote. It sets basic standards for all Americans to vote safely and securely, no matter what ZIP Code they live in. It adopts proven reforms that will protect voters from both parties, whether they live in blue States or red States or purple States.

At its core, the Freedom to Vote Act rests on a simple principle: Americans must be able to freely choose their leaders, and those leaders must be accountable to the people

No Republican is being asked to sign their name to this or that policy today, but they are being asked to come to the table and have a discussion and allow amendments. I want to be clear. If Republicans join us in proceeding to this bill, I am prepared to hold a debate worthy of the U.S. Senate. The minority will have the chance to have their voices heard.

Republican Senators will have the opportunity to offer amendments. But for that to happen, we have to get on the bill today.

If our Republican colleagues don't like our ideas, they have a responsibility to present their own. It is unfair for any Republican to assert that the Federal Government has no role to play in protecting elections when State laws disenfranchise American citizens.

PRO SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MAINE *(Version B continued)*

I invite them to read the Constitution of the United States of America, which gives Congress the power to regulate the “times, places, and manners” of holding elections. I invite them to look at modern American history, when the Senate stepped into the breach multiple times when Jim Crow States sought to restrict the right to vote.

Our experiment in democracy has been the greatest feat of self-rule in all of modern history. We cannot allow it to weaken here in the 21st century. Today, we have a chance to begin debate on how we can prevent that from happening, but Republicans must join us in the debate and vote to allow debate to continue. I urge my colleagues to vote yes.

Source

<https://www.congress.gov/117/crec/2021/10/20/167/184/CREC-2021-10-20-senate.pdf>

CON SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MISSOURI *(Version A)*

On this bill, I think we all know where we're headed. In my view, having watched election legislation for a long time, it seems to me that this is just another version of an election bill introduced by Democrats. There's not much new in this bill. Both the Rules Committee where I serve, and the Senate, have already rejected this federal takeover of elections several times this year. Now many of my friends on the other side said, 'well, why wouldn't Republicans just want to debate this bill?' I don't think anybody said, 'why wouldn't the Republicans want to amend this bill,' because there was no opportunity to do that. I think Republicans, from the very start, sensed that this would be a bill where we'd get a yes or no vote on a bill that really would dramatically change how we pursue elections.

This bill undermines really a lot of state voter laws that are pretty popular with voters, and we've seen that expressed even in recent elections in, like, New York City. Prohibiting voter identification for mail ballots would be one of the things that you wouldn't want to do. If you wanted to have mail-in ballots, you would want to be sure where those came from and, frankly, you would want to have an objective standard like your voter ID number or some other number that was uniquely yours, than a subjective standard like how you signed your name when you were 18 as opposed to how you're signing your name when you're 68.

This bill retains Senate Bill 1's mandate on ballot drop boxes, federalizes rules for redistricting. I think it chills free speech. Requires felon voting. Now, why would anybody want to be against any of those things? There are reasons, frankly, to be against all of those things, but states make that decision for themselves and in some states it may work very well and others it might not. Of the top sweeping election administration changes in this bill, the S.1 policies in this bill disrupt state efforts to maintain accurate voter rolls. Now, accurate voter rolls were seen as one of the great progressive moves forward so you'd have some sense that the people who voted on Election Day were actually people who were supposed to vote and also important to vote in that district.

Since it doesn't have the support to pass under the current Senate rules, the next think we'll do is attempt to really gut the legislative filibuster(1) to force it through. My Republican colleagues have spoken at length about the consequences of doing that, as has Senator Manchin and Senator Sinema just the other day. The justification rests on really a narrow basis that somehow the protection of the minority no longer matters. The danger of overturning 200 years of election administration by the state. I'm going to resist doing any of the quotes this late in the day that you've heard over and over again of our Democrat friends, who just a couple of years ago were saying – or less than a handful of years ago – how critically important it was that those rules never changed.

CON SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MISSOURI *(Version A continued)*

If Democrats eliminate the 60-vote rule for election legislation, there will soon be no filibuster left. The Senate is what has kept the country from wildly going in one direction and back in the other. We don't want to lose that. The disaster for our citizens, the disaster for our economy of not having that sense of having to think about this just a little bit before you head in another direction is what the Senate is all about.

I certainly hope my colleagues today will not pass this federal takeover of election laws and will also resist the temptation to change the rules of the Senate, and I yield the floor.

Definitions:

Filibuster: an action such as a prolonged speech that obstructs progress in a legislative assembly while not technically contravening the required procedures.

Source:

<https://www.blunt.senate.gov/news/videos/blunt-remarks-ahead-of-democrats-failed-push-to-break-senate-rules-force-through-election-takeover>

CON SPEECH—DELIVERED BY THE SENATOR FROM MISSOURI *(Version B)*

On this bill, I think we all know where we're headed. In my view, having watched election legislation for a long time, it seems to me that this is just another version of an election bill introduced by Democrats. There's not much new in this bill. Both the Rules Committee where I serve, and the Senate, have already rejected this federal takeover of elections several times this year. Now many of my friends on the other side said, 'well, why wouldn't Republicans just want to debate this bill?' I don't think anybody said, 'why wouldn't the Republicans want to amend this bill,' because there was no opportunity to do that.

This bill weakens a lot of state voter laws that are pretty popular with voters, we've even seen that in recent elections in, like, New York City. Not allowing voter identification for mail ballots would be one of the things that you wouldn't want to do. If you wanted to have mail-in ballots, you would want to be sure where those came from and, honestly, you would want to have an objective standard like your voter ID number or some other number that was uniquely yours, than a subjective standard like how you signed your name when you were 18 as opposed to how you're signing your name when you're 68.

This bill retains Senate Bill 1's mandate on ballot drop boxes, federalizes rules for redistricting. I think it chills free speech. Requires felon voting. Now, why would anybody want to be against any of those things? There are reasons, honestly, to be against all of those things, but states make that decision for themselves and in some states it may work very well and others it might not. S.1 policies in this bill hurt state efforts to maintain accurate voter rolls. Accurate voter rolls were seen as one of the great progressive moves forward so you'd have some sense that the people who voted on Election Day were actually people who were supposed to vote and also important to vote in that district.

I certainly hope my colleagues today will not pass this federal takeover of election laws and will also resist the temptation to change the rules of the Senate, and I yield the floor.

Source:

<https://www.blunt.senate.gov/news/videos/blunt-remarks-ahead-of-democrats-failed-push-to-break-senate-rules-force-through-election-takeover>

REFLECTION

Assign students one of these activities to help them reflect on the bill, the debate, and outcome of the vote.

Exit Ticket: Write Press Release

Write a short press release (1–2 paragraphs) from your Senate office. Describe the bill and the issue the bill is trying to address. Write about whether you support the bill, want it revised, or reject the bill and why your position is important. Give 2–3 valid reasons for your position including the impact on the country and your constituents. Be sure to include a clear and interesting title, emphasize your main position, and maybe even include a quote from you or one of your senate colleagues.

Exit Ticket: Write an Op-Ed

Write an op-ed, or argumentative essay describing the bill and why you support or do not support it. Describe the issue the bill is trying to address. State whether you support the bill, want it revised, or reject the bill. Research the issue using additional resources to support your position, giving at least three valid reasons. Acknowledge and address the opposing arguments to your position using reason and evidence. Be sure to include a clear and interesting title and emphasize your main position.

Exit Ticket: Constituent Letter Response

You have received a letter from one of your constituents; they are unsure whether to support the Freedom to Vote Act and would like more information. Write a letter to your constituent describing the bill and the issues the bill is trying to address. State whether you support the bill, want it revised, or reject the bill. Include research on the issue using additional resources to support your position, giving at least 2 or more valid reasons. Make sure that your letter considers the specific needs of your state and explains how the Freedom to Vote Act will, or will not, help the citizens of your constituency.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

HISTORY CONTENT STANDARDS (MASSACHUSETTS)

U.S. United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life

HSS.8.T3.02 Examine the relationship between the three branches of government (the checks and balances system).

HSS.8.T3.05 Describe the role of political parties at the state and national levels.

HSS.8.T4.03 Distinguish among civic, political, and private life.

HSS.8.T4.04 Define and provide examples of fundamental principles and values of American political and civic life (e.g. liberty, the common good, justice, equality, tolerance, law and order, due process, rights of individuals, diversity, civic unity, patriotism, constitutionalism, popular sovereignty, and representative democracy.)

HSS.8.T4.05 Describe how a democracy provides opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process through elections, political parties, and interest groups.

HSS.8.T4.07 Apply knowledge of leadership and the qualities of good leaders to evaluate political leaders at the community, the state and the national levels.

HSS.8.T4.08 Explain the importance of individuals working cooperatively with their elected leaders.

HSS.8.T4.10 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality or authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights.

HSS.8.T4.12 Examine the role of political protest in a democracy.

American Government Standards

USG.1.3 Describe the purposes and functions of government.

USG.2.8 Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues concerning foundational ideas and values in tension or conflict.

USG.3.12 Use a variety of sources, including newspapers and internet web sites, to identify current state and local legislative issues and examine the influence on the legislative process of political parties, interest groups, grass roots organizations, lobbyists, public opinion, the news media, and individual voters.

USG.5.10 Practice civic skills and disposition by participating in activities such as simulated public hearings, mock trials, and debates.

High School Elective: United States Government and Politics

GOV.T1.10 Argue and defend positions on issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension or conflict (e.g., *liberty* in conflict with *equality or authority*, *individual rights* in conflict with national or community interests or perceptions of the *common good*, or *majority rule* in conflict with *minority rights*).

GOV.T4.06 Compare the debate over a public policy issue from the past and a contemporary one and evaluate the role of political parties, interest groups and media in influencing public opinion.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Anchor Standards for Reading (see **differentiated Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12 for more grade level detail**)

RH.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source, provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

RH.9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

RH.10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Anchor Standards for Writing (see **differentiated Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12 for more grade level detail**)

WHST.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization and analysis of content.

A. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

(continued)

formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

B. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

C. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

D. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

E. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

F. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

WHST.9-10.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.9-10.5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

B. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making (e.g., informal consensus, taking votes on key issues, presentation of alternate views), clear goals and deadlines, and individual roles as needed.

C. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCR: SL.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCR: SL.3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

CCR: SL.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCR: SL.6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

21ST CENTURY SKILLS (FROM WWW.P21.ORG)

- Use various types of reasoning (inductive, deductive, etc.) as appropriate to the situation.
- Analyze how parts of a whole interact with each other to produce overall outcomes in complex systems.
- Effectively analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, claims and beliefs.
- Analyze and evaluate major alternative points of view.
- Synthesize and make connections between information and arguments.
- Interpret information and draw conclusions based on the best analysis.
- Identify and ask significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions.
- Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Listen effectively to decipher meaning, including knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions.
- Use communication for a range of purposes (e.g., to inform, instruct, motivate and persuade).
- Demonstrate ability to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams.
- Exercise flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal.
- Assume shared responsibility for collaborative work, and value the individual contributions made by each team member.

VOTING RIGHTS LEGISLATION: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/READINGS

Felony Disenfranchisement

[What is Felony Disenfranchisement? PBS](#)

Campaign Finance Reform

[Campaign Finance Lesson Overview: Khan Academy](#)

Voter Misinformation

[Information Gaps and Misinformation in the 2022 Elections: Brennan Center for Justice](#)

Voter Suppression

[Voter Suppression Then and Now: PBS](#)

Voting by Mail

[Young People and Vote by Mail: Lessons for 2020 Tufts University](#)

[Voting by Mail and Absentee Voting: MIT Election Data and Science Lab](#)

Voter Registration

[Becoming a Voter: Center for Civic Education](#)

[Experience the Vote: A Simulation in Registering to Vote National Constitution Center](#)

Voting Rights History

[Voting Rights History: Interactive Timeline KQED Learning](#)

[The True History of Voting Rights: Learning for Justice](#)

Recommended Supplementary Reading for Younger Students (Grades 3-6):

- Voices of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer by Carole Boston Weatherford
- The Voting Rights Act of 1965: An Interactive History Adventure by Michael Burgan
- Votes of Confidence: A Young Person's Guide to American Elections by Jeff Fleisher

Recommended Supplementary Reading for Older Students (Grades 7-12):

- The Fight to Vote by Michael Waldman
- Our Time is Now by Stacey Abrams
- Because They Marched: The People's Campaign for Voting Rights that Changed America by Russel Freedman



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