

history. This is democracy on trial. Think about how you want to be remembered by your children's children.

If democracy is worth fighting for, even worth dying for, surely a democracy reform bill is worthy of debate in the Senate. Allow the Senate to do its job and debate the For the People Act.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. DUCKWORTH). Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mrs. SHAHEEN and Ms. COLLINS pertaining to the introduction of S. 2146 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

JUNETEENTH

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last week, Congress notched another bipartisan win for the American people.

A bill I reintroduced earlier this year, along with Senator MARKEY from Massachusetts, was signed into law finally establishing Juneteenth as a national holiday. This bill was unanimously supported in the Senate and got an overwhelming vote in the House of Representatives.

I was honored to be with President Biden at the White House when he signed it into law late last week. It was even more special to celebrate with my fellow Texans over the weekend. On Saturday, I was honored to spend the very first Juneteenth National Independence Day in Galveston, where Major General Gordon Granger and his troops declared that all slaves were "forever free."

This happened 2½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed and just a couple of months after hostilities between the North and the South had ended, but communication being what it is across the huge country, particularly at that time, it took 2½ years for the message to get to the former slaves in Galveston, TX, where Juneteenth has been celebrated for many, many years.

In my State alone, we celebrated Juneteenth for 40 years as a State holiday. I could not have been more happy to take a piece of history with me, a copy of the bipartisan bill that helped preserve the legacy of Juneteenth for generations to come.

This is just one item in a significant list of bipartisan accomplishments we have made in an equally divided Senate, which we all know is no small thing. We passed legislation to confront the growing threats of China; to ensure more businesses can grab onto the lifeline of the Paycheck Protection Program, one of the most significant items of economic assistance that we

were able to provide during the COVID-19 virus; we provided States with additional resources to upgrade their drinking water and wastewater infrastructure; and we passed legislation to combat hate crimes against Asian Americans.

So the truth is, notwithstanding what it may look like in the news or on cable TV or on social media, every day, our colleagues here in the Senate continue to work across the aisle to find consensus and to craft legislation with bipartisan support where we can. I tell people that legislation is hard to pass by design, and our current rules require us to do the hard work of actually building consensus on a bipartisan basis before we can pass legislation, particularly in the Senate.

We continue to do our work in other important areas like infrastructure, which has been the subject of so much attention and debate; to do police reform; to deal with the high price of prescription drugs. Republicans and Democrats continue to work together to address some of our most urgent problems.

This week, unfortunately, the majority leader, the Senator from New York, has decided to take another tack. He has chosen to spend the Senate's time on partisan legislation that simply has no chance of becoming law. That is his choice. He gets to set the agenda, and our only role is to show up, debate the bill, and cast our ballot.

Our Democratic colleagues have given the marquee treatment, a bill known as S. 1, with the symbolic numbering of the bill as the first, meaning the most important bill in their agenda. But rather than a bipartisan bill that will be good for the entire country, not just one political party or the other, the majority leader has chosen to tee up this massive Federal election takeover bill.

This legislation first popped in 2019, when the newly elected Democratic majority in the House went on a messaging bill spree. A messaging bill is one that you really know will never become law, but it sends a message. Over the last 2 years, they tried out a range of different marketing strategies. That is really all it is. It is not about passing legislation. It is about sending a message, trying to gain partisan political advantage.

They tried a range of marketing strategies to convince the American people that this overhaul to our election system is necessary. At one point, it was a matter of election security, then of voter confidence, then a way to remove obstacles that prevented people of color from voting.

Well, I have some news for them. In 2020, we saw a record election turnout. Two-thirds of all eligible voters cast a ballot. That was the highest turnout in 120 years. It wasn't confined to any single racial or ethnic group; it was across the board. We saw African-American voter participation at virtually an all-time high—the same with Hispanics

and every other ethnic and racial group.

Notwithstanding the facts that people are turning out to vote in historic numbers, they had to come up with a new sales pitch. They had to attack the efforts in the States to pass their own election laws, which handle the time and manner in which State elections are run. And, to me, the consistent theme was making it easier to vote and harder to cheat. To me, that is the simple message I think we ought to be sending when it comes to our election laws. That is what our colleagues latched onto.

But over the last few months, they twisted and turned and manipulated the facts beyond any recognition. They tried to frame new State voting laws as the impetus or the reason justifying this massive Federal takeover—unconstitutional, in my view—takeover of State voting laws. They painted an alarming picture of the assault on voter access.

But if you actually take time to look at these so-called restrictions in voting, you will find they are more generous than the current law in many Democratic-controlled States. There is no better example than the Georgia law, which came under national scrutiny for enacting reforms that would give Georgia voters more time to vote than voters in a number of blue States.

Here are the facts. In Georgia, the law that people claimed was racist and designed to prevent people of color from casting their ballot during the early voting season before in-day-election-day voting—the new Georgia law provides 17 days for in-person early voting. How about Massachusetts, which is currently represented by two Democratic Senators? Well, Massachusetts provides 11 days. Delaware, represented by two Democrats and the home State of our President, provides 10 days of early voting. New Jersey, also represented by two Democratic Senators, provides 9 days, almost half of what Georgia has provided for in its new election laws.

But what you heard across the news media, cable TVs, social media, and the like was that somehow, some way, Georgia had conspired to restrict the rights of African Americans and other minority voters from casting their ballots.

But the facts prove otherwise. This is the type of hypocrisy that we are seeing in this debate. As I said, New Jersey recently passed a law—just recently passed a law that expanded in-person voting to 9 days. Did anyone claim that this was somehow a Jim Crow relic or a racist act or violating the rights of African Americans and other minority voters? Of course not. Was New Jersey treated the same as Georgia was in the popular media, where it was suggested that somehow this was a racist effort to restrict minority access to voting? Of course not.

But the New Jersey Governor took it a step further. He actually criticized

Georgia for what he called “restricting the rights of Georgians to vote,” but his own State provides half the opportunity that the new Georgia law does to cast your ballot. Obviously, this is a bunch of political talk and an attempt to try to intimidate Congress and the American people into this Federal takeover of the State election laws.

We heard similar attack lines from a number of our Democratic colleagues who will falsely try to brand this law as a form of voter suppression, even though it is more generous than current laws in a number of blue States.

Here are some more facts. You heard a lot of talk about mail-in ballots. The Georgia law sets a deadline of 11 days before the election to request a mail-in ballot, but in the State of the majority leader, Senator SCHUMER—New York—voters only receive a week. So you have 7 days prior to the election to request a mail-in ballot in New York and 11 days in Georgia. And for some reason, our Democratic colleagues focus on Georgia and claim this is some sort of conspiracy to diminish and restrict minority voting, which is clearly false. In New York, you also have to have a reason for voting absentee, but in Georgia no excuse needs to be given. You can do so as a matter of right, even if you are going to be in town, even if you are otherwise able to vote. If you find it more convenient to cast your ballot by mail in Georgia, you can do so—but not in New York.

If any State tries to enact policies that suppress the votes of minority voters, there is a law in place currently, section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, that gives the U.S. Government the right to sue that State or jurisdiction and make sure that minority voters have equal access to the ballot. As a matter of fact, the Voting Rights Act has been one of the most successful laws ever passed by a Federal Congress. And the historic turnout I referred to a few moments ago, I think, is the best evidence of that. Minority voters across the country are voting in historically high numbers, which, to me, is the best evidence that the Voting Rights Act is doing exactly what we had hoped it would do when we passed it and when we reauthorized it just a few short years ago.

So, if this isn’t a solution to efforts to restrict minority voting, what exactly is this bill that we will be voting on tomorrow, S. 1? The truth is it is a partisan solution to a problem that doesn’t exist.

This law, if passed, S. 1, which we will vote on tomorrow, prevents States from requiring identification from voters to vote. In other words, you won’t have to show a driver’s license or some other means of identification in order to cast your ballot. Yet, on the Jimmy Carter, James Baker, III commission—I think it was in 2005—it recommended voter ID as one of the important ways to maintain the integrity of the ballot so that the voting officials would know you are who you say you are, and, in-

deed, you could check your name against the voter rolls to make sure you were legally authorized to cast a ballot.

In Senator SCHUMER’s effort to pass S. 1, which we will vote on tomorrow, it prevents the States from asking for voter identification even when virtually every State provides that identification card for free. If you don’t drive, they will provide you with a free card, and you can use an alternative means of identification, but not if Senator SCHUMER’s S. 1 bill were to pass.

This bill, S. 1, would also tie the States’ hands when it comes to maintaining accurate voter rolls. So, if people have moved out of State or if voters have passed away, this law would tie the hands of the States to make sure those names would be removed from the voter rolls, which would make it more likely that fraudulent efforts to cast those ballots on behalf of voters who either didn’t exist or had moved out of State would be possible.

S. 1 would tie the hands of the States from periodically purging dead voters from the voter rolls. This would also encourage something called ballot harvesting. Now, some States provide for ballot harvesting, but many, thankfully, do not. Ballot harvesting simply makes it possible for a partisan in a political campaign to go around and collect ballots—maybe at nursing homes, maybe at shopping malls, maybe at other places—and then deliver those ballots to the voting clerk at the designated place and time. Yet you can imagine if the chain of custody of those ballots is not traced and tracked and monitored. Just think of the opportunities that could provide for fraud.

This bill would also alter the makeup of the bipartisan Federal Election Commission, so as to give the Democratic Party an advantage. Right now, there are equal numbers of Republicans and Democrats on the Federal Election Commission, and that is the way it should be. Yet this bill, S. 1, would give the Democrats a partisan advantage—a big mistake.

Here is, maybe, the biggest insult to the taxpayer: Whether or not you support a particular political candidate or the platform that candidate runs on, you can be forced to contribute your tax dollars to that political candidate to help him run and win the election. This is the government funding—really, the taxpayer funding—of political campaigns. I believe it is a 2-to-6 ratio, if I am not mistaken. For every \$2 that candidate raises, he gets \$6 in taxpayer funding to run his campaign. That is your hard-earned money that you have paid in taxes that is being used to promote ideas and candidates whom you don’t support.

I could go on and on, as the list of absurdities is a long one, but our friend the senior Senator from California summed it up pretty well earlier this month.

She said:

If democracy were in jeopardy, I would want to protect it. But I don’t see it being in jeopardy right now.

Madam President, there is no voter suppression crisis—certainly not a systemic one. If there is a problem with suppressing minority votes, there is authority available under the Voting Rights Act for the Attorney General, appointed by Joe Biden and confirmed by this Senate, to be able to go after them. There is no widespread effort to stop voters from casting ballots, and there is no desire to hand the States’ constitutional authorities over to the Federal Government.

Our Democratic colleagues are struggling to accept this reality. They have spent the last several days working behind the scenes to negotiate a compromise among themselves. There was never a question of whether or not this would be a bipartisan bill because of the overreach that I have just talked about. The question was whether or not the bipartisan opposition seen in the House would continue in the Senate.

Even if the Democrats were to accept all of the changes that have been proposed by Senator MANCHIN of West Virginia and that have been endorsed by Stacey Abrams, the rotten core of this bill would remain the same. This is a politically motivated, Federal takeover of our elections, and it will not stand. The Constitution doesn’t give the Democratic Party or the Republican Party the power to govern how States run their elections. That is reserved to the States by the Constitution of the United States of America. I will firmly oppose any effort to hand Texas’s constitutional rights to regulate and conduct its elections over to the Federal Government.

The one-size-fits-all Federal mandate won’t improve public confidence in our elections. It will be seen for what it is in a transparent way, that being a partisan, political takeover—a coup d’etat, really—of the way our elections are run. Elections should be run by the folks who are elected and who are accountable to the States—and to my State of Texas—and certainly not by partisan, political actors with an agenda here in Washington, DC.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I move to proceed to legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion.

The motion was agreed to.