

on the floor, I had to file cloture to ensure he would get a vote. I am pleased that cloture could be withdrawn yesterday, and we will be happy to vote on the confirmation today, just as happened last week on another nomination, but I am sorry these cloture filings and wasted time were needed for these uncontroversial and impressive nominees. I am sorry the case studies of pointless obstruction just keep on piling up.

H.R. 1

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now on another matter, this week Democrats in the House are expected to pass sweeping legislation I call the Democratic politician protection act. It aims to give Washington, DC, vast new control over elections, give tax dollars to political campaigns, and give election lawyers more opportunities to determine the outcome of our elections.

Today I want to discuss how it would open up the bipartisan Federal Election Commission to a hostile partisan takeover.

When Congress passed and amended the Federal Election Campaign Act after Watergate, the FEC was created as a six-member body, with an even number of commissioners and no more than three from the same party. At least four votes—four—would be required to take action—a built-in safeguard against one party seizing control of the FEC.

Well, House Democrats want to get rid of that. Their Democratic politician protection act would cut the FEC to a five-member body with two members from each party and a nominal Independent who, interestingly enough, would be handpicked by whoever the sitting President was.

Now, people on both sides of the aisle used to see right through these kinds of tricks. Back in 1976 Senator Alan Cranston—a California Democrat who was, by the way, the No. 2 Democrat in the Senate—warned about this. He said: “The FEC has such potential for abuse in our democratic society that the President should not be given power over the Commission.”

As recently as 2 years ago, an outgoing Democratic FEC commissioner—one of the most active and liberal regulators in the Commission’s history said: “I don’t have a problem with the 3-3 split at the commission . . . it was established that way in order to ensure that there was not going to be a partisan effort to use investigations against one political party or another.”

But now—now—Democrats want to scrap the neutrality and bring on the partisan takeover. Democrats respond by saying this fifth member would have to be affiliated with neither the Republican nor Democratic Party. They would have to be an Independent.

Give me a break. Give me a break.

One current commissioner is nominally an Independent, except the Wash-

ington Post reports this gentleman “often votes with the Democrats,” and he happens to be a longtime friend of former Majority Leader Harry Reid. He had actually previously worked as an election lawyer for Senator Reid. This is the Independent on the FEC now. He had often worked as an election lawyer for Senator Reid to help ensure he won close elections. In fact, Senator Reid repeatedly slipped and characterized this gentleman as the Democratic nominee several times here on the floor.

This is our current Independent on the FEC?

So I think we all know what kind of Independent fifth commissioner a Democratic President would select—one who would join with other Democrats and champion the campaigns of the left, while bringing waves of investigations, hearings, and subpoenas against their political opponents and punishing groups who dared to disagree.

What is more, the Democratic Politician Protection Act would give the sitting President the chance to name the Chairperson of the FEC, abandoning the current practice of rotating Chairmen, and this person would get broad new powers, like the sole authority to issue subpoenas and to compel testimony and the ability to hire and fire the general counsel with just two more votes from just one party.

So make no mistake, the Democrats are envisioning a hostile takeover of the body that regulates political speech, designed to tilt the playing field in their direction. Democrats claim this is necessary because the current structure is “dysfunctional.”

Well, let’s look at some of the current dysfunction and where it is coming from. Let’s look at the Democrat who currently serves as the FEC Chair. She has been a Commissioner for 16 years. In fact, her term ended 11 years ago, but she has been held over ever since, and now this seasoned veteran of the left’s anti-speech crusade has announced that she will bar the FEC’s attorneys from defending the Commission when liberal watchdogs come after it in court.

By unilaterally withholding her vote, she plans to make the FEC essentially forfeit its legal fights against liberal groups by simply not showing up. So the defendants in these matters would be out of luck unless they happen to have the financial means to keep up their own defense.

This Democrat Commissioner has also indicated that if this trick doesn’t produce the political outcome she is after, she is willing to simply ignore subsequent court orders altogether. This is a current member of the FEC.

So House Democrats are lecturing about dysfunction at the FEC, but it is their ally who is now using her vote to tie the FEC’s hands behind its back.

Democrats and their allies claim Republicans are keeping the FEC from enforcing campaign finance laws. That

is their talking point for all of these radical changes. But let’s take a look at who is really refusing to work within the law. The Democratic Chairwoman says she will keep the FEC from defending itself and is threatening to disobey court orders. That is my definition of dysfunction.

Democrats aren’t after an FEC that enforces the law. They want an FEC that advances their particular ideology. These current words and these current antics prove it, and the Democratic politician protection act would make it much, much worse.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE GREEN NEW DEAL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, for all of the Senate’s vaunted traditions about grand debates, we very rarely practice the actual art—the real back and forth, the exchange of ideas. For weeks now, we have heard our Republican colleagues come to the floor and rail against the Green New Deal, as the leader just did. Democrats have simply been trying to get a few honest answers out of the Republican leadership about their position on climate change so that we might have a real debate.

Yesterday, as Republican after Republican lined up to give speeches against taking bold action on climate change, several Democrats tried to steer the conversation in a more positive direction by asking our Republican colleagues simple questions—and I ask this again of every Republican, particularly of Leader **MCCONNELL**: Do you, Leader **MCCONNELL**, and our Republican friends believe climate change is real? Yes or no? Do you believe that climate change is caused by human activity? Yes or no? Most importantly, do you believe Congress should do something about it? Yes or no?

If our colleagues believe it is a problem and agree to that, what is their plan to deal with climate change? We know they don’t like the Green New Deal. They have made that clear. It doesn’t forward the debate. But what is their plan?

We might have ruffled some feathers on the other side. I think my colleagues just wanted to give speeches on the Green New Deal and then leave the floor. It is a sad state of affairs when even a little debate, even heated debate, is something unsettling here in the Senate. But I have to give credit to the few Republicans who did engage us.

A few said they did believe in climate change and offered some examples of minor legislation where our parties could work together to begin tackling this crisis. I give them credit for that. But here is the problem: When is Leader MCCONNELL going to schedule time for consideration of this and other climate change legislation? We Democrats are ready to work. Will Leader MCCONNELL bring his own Members' clean energy legislation to the floor?

Others have said that climate change is happening, but the free market could take care of it through "innovation." With all due respect, that doesn't mean much. Most of us would agree we live in an incredible time of innovation and technology, yet we continue to pour even more carbon into the atmosphere than in previous years, not less. Left alone, the market has proved incapable of curing climate change for the simple reason of what economists call externalities. You run a coal plant; you make the profits from selling the electricity that the coal plant produces, but you don't pay the price for the carbon you put in the air. So it is not going to happen through the free market alone because of what even Adam Smith recognized: There are externalities that have to be captured, and it is government's job to at least make sure they are captured.

Another block of Republicans took a different tack. A few of our Republican colleagues said yesterday that climate change was real but only because the climate has always been changing and all flora and fauna contribute to it. "What are we to do," they say, as they throw up their hands and look to the sky, "ban volcanoes?"

Unbelievable. What an amazing canard that is. Those who said it—and there were a few right here yesterday—would get an F in middle school Earth science with that kind of reasoning. We all know—at least we all ought to know—that human activity, particularly the burning of fossil fuels, has pushed the amount of carbon in our atmosphere to record levels, trapping more heat than ever before and changing the climate in ways not seen before in our history.

Maybe denying or misleading about climate change is considered acceptable in the modern Republican Party, where it has come to be expected, and we wonder why that is so. Some argue it is because people don't believe in science. Some argue it is because they just are stuck in the status quo. And some argue it is because there is a lot of oil money cascading into the Republican Party, when you read about all these multimillionaire and billionaire new oil magnates who send tons of money there. Some argue that. You can't prove which one is true, but we do know it leads to terrible, terrible inaction.

So I would like to see my colleagues who don't admit the severity of climate change go talk to the farmers in Iowa dealing with drought, the fisher-

men in Alaska and North Carolina, the homeowners in Florida and the Mountain West. See if denying recent climate change works there. It sure doesn't work on the south coast of Long Island, where we had Sandy, which made believers out of many who were skeptical in the past.

Nonetheless, we made some progress yesterday. At the very least, my friends on the other side know they will not be able to execute their standard playbook. Democrats are not going to sit around while Republicans come to the floor and yell about socialism as they have the past two decades. We are going to make Republicans answer core questions about real change. That is what America wants.

One of the reasons all of these scare tactics didn't work in 2018 and the House is now Democratic and we kept most of our seats, even in very red States—I suspect many of my more reasonable colleagues would prefer that—a real debate—over "gotcha" politics that Leader MCCONNELL is so adept at playing and is playing once again with this cynical Green New Deal ploy.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on another matter, voting rights, today marks the 54th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, the protest march in Selma, AL, that led ultimately to the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

It was one of the most noble acts in American history. The courage of those who marched across that bridge, including our colleague, JOHN LEWIS, will be remembered centuries from now. It is a reminder that one thread of the American story is about how, despite our founding, our democratic principles, there has been a long march toward achieving the franchise.

We had democratic principles in the beginning. It was brand new. It was great, but remember, in 1789, in almost every State, the only people who could vote were White, male, Protestant property owners. I would imagine that would probably leave out even a majority in this Chamber who would be able to vote.

We have to keep improving that democracy. No one says we should only have White, male, Protestant property owners vote today because it was true in 1789. We have to move forward. We have to make voting more available and easier because the right to vote, without barriers, is what our soldiers, for centuries, have died for and what the people on that bridge marched for.

The march is still not over. In the wake of the disaster that was the Supreme Court's Shelby decision, 19 States rushed to pass discriminatory voter restrictions.

In North Carolina, the Republican State legislature drew up laws that "targeted African Americans with almost surgical precision." How despicable. How despicable that the Re-

publican legislature did that. Those are not my words; those are the court's words after looking at the evidence.

Fifty million Americans are now not registered to vote. Even though we don't talk about it enough, we have a population larger than two States living here in Washington, DC, without full congressional representation. We Democrats are ready to work.

Again, Leader MCCONNELL gets up, and he talks about all of this negativity, exaggeration, hyping, and scaring just like Donald Trump. Why doesn't Leader MCCONNELL put some legislation on the floor? Today, on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday, I want to mention three things we could do right now to bolster voting rights: one, undo the damage of the Shelby County decision by restoring the formula for preclearance; two, automatic voter registration; three, DC statehood.

Anyone who has been observing the floor of the Senate will have noticed by now just how vociferously our Republican leader opposes H.R. 1, which, among other things, would make election day a Federal holiday and attempt to get Big Money out of politics. Leader MCCONNELL has gone on to call these ideas a power grab, labeling the bill the Democratic politician protection Act.

Leader MCCONNELL, we are proud that we want more people to vote. Why are you ashamed of it? Why do you run away from it?

Leader MCCONNELL, we are proud that we want to get the influence of big, special interest money out of politics. Why do you say that is partisan? It is the wrong thing to do, and 90 percent of all Americans, Democratic and Republican, don't like to see Big Money cascading into politics. Argue the merits, Leader.

When you think doing those things are democratic things, we are proud, and the Republican Party should be ashamed that they are not for them and have to call them names. To say that allowing more Americans to vote and getting Big Money out of politics is bad for Republicans and good for Democrats, that says a lot right there.

It is a dark day—a dark day—for the Republican Party if their leader in the Senate has to argue against more Americans voting because it would hurt their party at the polls. Maybe we should go back to the old days and have fewer people vote, like in 1789, when only White, male, Protestant property owners could vote. Come on. This idea that having more people vote is a Democratic power grab, when it is part of the fundamental root of our democracy—it is an act of desperation by the Republican leader.

I don't think it is a coincidence that the Republican leader has pledged to bring up his version of the Green New Deal for a vote but not H.R. 1. He is happy to twist words against it himself, but he knows voting rights are a hard thing to argue about.

If he wants to try to bring it up on the floor, we welcome it. We welcome a