

I would remind my good friend from Texas that his fellow Texans George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush proudly supported an extension of the Voting Rights Act. They proudly did that. It was bipartisan until Donald Trump came over and, in my opinion, poisoned the Republican Party on voting rights. We could use a little resistance to Donald Trump. We see it from a good number of Republicans out in the country, and we see it from a good number of Republican commentators, but we don't see it here in the Senate, and that is unfortunate.

I am not going to yield for a further question.

Mr. President, as I begin my remarks, let me begin with the following figure—and we will have a debate later.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, let me begin with the following figure: 55 million people; that is the estimated number of eligible voters who now live within States that have passed legislation restricting the right to vote and potentially undermining the electoral process.

Today, President Biden will travel to one such State, Georgia—home to one of the most egregious voter suppression and election subversion laws we have seen in a long time. I believe the President will give a strong speech and will urge that we in the Senate change the rules so that we can prevent these awful and nasty laws from being implemented. In an address to the Nation, he will use the bully pulpit of the Presidency to make the case that the time has come for the Senate to pass voting rights legislation and take whatever steps necessary to address this Chamber's rules in order to accomplish that goal.

The Senate is going to act as soon as tomorrow. It is my intention to, once again, bring legislation to the floor to fight back against the threats to democracy and protect people's access to the ballot.

Once again, I urge my Republican colleagues to take up the flag of the traditional Republican Party, not only of Lincoln but of Reagan and H. W. Bush and W. Bush and vote yes to move forward so we can have a debate like the debate we just had or the discussion we just had. But if Republicans continue to hijack the rules of the Senate to prevent voting rights from happening, if they continue paralyzing this Chamber to the point where we are helpless to fight back against the Big Lie, we must consider the necessary steps we can take so the Senate can adapt and act.

For the past few months, Senate Democrats have been holding talks within our caucus to discern how we can best move forward to restore the function of the Senate and, more importantly, pass legislation to defend democracy and protect voting rights. Last night, I held another round of

talks with a number of my colleagues about the path forward, and we did so again this morning.

Over the past few days, our Republican colleagues have escalated their attacks against our efforts to pass voting rights legislation.

Listen to this one: Last night, the Republican leader worked to place a number of “gotcha” bills onto the legislative calendar as some sort of payback for pursuing legislation to protect the sacred right to vote. He was basically saying: Here are 18 bills that Democrats don't like. Let's go for 50 votes on those. Well, I proposed to the Republican leader, in a unanimous consent request, that it would be perfectly fine with us taking votes on his bills on a simple majority threshold if, in exchange, he agreed to do the same for the Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Of course, the Republican leader immediately objected—immediately objected—to having all of them done with 50 votes: the 18 bills he proposed and our 2 voting rights bills.

The Republican leader made clear last night that the true worry on the other side isn't about the rules of the Senate—rules they were perfectly happy to change to pursue their own objectives when they were in the majority. Republicans, in truth, are afraid of the possibility that legislation to defend democracy, to fight the power of dark money, and to protect voting rights could move forward in this Chamber.

As I mentioned to my colleague from Texas, that is not all Republicans. That is not Republicans out in the country—a lot of them want to protect voting rights—but it is the Republican Party as now run by, and it is fair to say run by Donald Trump, who has propagated the Big Lie that the election was stolen and that he really won, even though he lost by 7 million votes and even though he has no evidence—nor have the commentators to that effect. Now we have at least Republicans in the Senate and the House and in lots of State legislatures completely going along with this Big Lie.

The danger there is that it jaundices our democracy. If people of color, if young people, if older people, if people in urban areas feel that their right to vote is being diminished compared to other people's—because they are not aiming this at everybody—democracy begins to wither. We have not seen an assault on voting rights since the days of the Old South, since the forties and fifties and sixties and seventies. Why would we want to regress? Why would we want to regress? So we must fight back.

Now, I understand our Republicans are going to continue their opposition through a flurry of speeches, decrying any effort by Democrats to undo these voter suppression laws and make it easier for Americans to vote.

By the way, I would remind my colleagues that this has been the grand

tradition of America. When the Constitution was written, in most States, you had to be a White male Protestant property owner to vote. No one says let's go back to those days. In general, America, with our march to freedom and our march to equality, embodied in our Constitution and in the great minds of the Founding Fathers—the greatest group of geniuses ever assembled—has marched forward. There have been regressions, but we have marched forward. We Democrats want to continue that march. We want to stop these types of laws.

The Republican leader doesn't have much to say so he has latched onto a talking point. He said the Big Lie is actually the warnings of voter suppression that come from Democrats, even though there are so many laws that are, obviously, done to suppress votes, and a lot of these Republican legislators say it openly.

So I would say to the Republican leader that his attempts to misdirect from the danger of Donald Trump's Big Lie and to try to say it is Democrats who are doing it is gaslighting, pure and simple. There is no evidence—no evidence.

The leader did it again yesterday and today on the floor, implying one more time that because the 2020 election was, indeed, successful, somehow voter suppression doesn't exist. Now, I answered my friend from Texas when he held up that chart. The Republican leader cherry-picked examples to distract from the real, unmistakable changes that are taking place in the States.

I would ask the Republican leader and the Republican Senator from Texas and every other Republican, if the 2020 election were as successful and secure and safe as he says it was, then why have Republican State legislators rushed to make it harder for people to vote in the aftermath of the 2020 election? Why can any Republican cling to the view that the election was stolen—Donald Trump's Big Lie—when JOHN CORNYN, my friend from Texas, is up there, with a chart, saying the 2020 election was successful, and the Republican leader said the same thing?

Doesn't that rebut Donald Trump? Doesn't that rebut those who came to the Capitol, motivated by Donald Trump's propagation of the Big Lie? Doesn't it rebut all of the State legislators who want to make it harder to vote if the 2020 election were successful?

Despite the Republican leader's best efforts, I have yet to hear from my Republican colleagues as to why it is OK for States like Georgia to make it a crime to give food and water to people who are waiting on line at the polls when we hear that, in minority areas and in urban areas, the lines are much longer than in rural areas.

I have yet to hear from Republicans why States like Texas and Arizona have made it a felony—a felony—for nonpartisan election workers to send

unsolicited mail ballot applications to voters. What is wrong with sending that? What is wrong with encouraging people to vote? The participation in elections is much higher in many Western countries than in ours.

Again, Texas didn't just prohibit nonpartisan election workers from sending mail ballots out to voters. They made it a felony—a felony. These States have effectively made it a crime—a crime—for election workers to proactively help people to vote. Where is the justification?

Where is the evidence of this massive fraud that Donald Trump talks about? No one gives any. Yet they predicate their policy moves here in the Senate on that.

To date, I have heard no explanation from the other side why States like Texas, Iowa, and Montana have reduced polling locations and hours. In Iowa, early voting of any kind has been cut by 9 days. How does that make the election more secure? Why is that in the grand tradition of making it easier for Americans to vote?

In Georgia, according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the leading newspaper of Atlanta, the number of absentee drop boxes in four large counties in Atlanta, in the Atlanta area, will drop from 111 to 23—111 to 23. One of the justifications is that these boxes are no longer helpful, but this ignores the fact that over 300,000 voters used them in the last election—the last successful election, according to my friend from Texas. Republicans know that most of the people who used those drop boxes, of course, were Democrats. They tend to use them more, and that is why they are cutting them off.

The examples go on and on, unfortunately. This is not just a one-off or in one State or another. This is a massive campaign, which, if we do nothing, will continue and get worse.

States like Texas, Florida, Kansas, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Montana have passed laws making it harder—harder—to register to vote.

States like Alabama, Iowa, and Texas have passed laws that increase the potential for people with disabilities.

And, again, in Georgia, one rural county, Lincoln County, is trying to limit their polling places to just one in the whole county—just one place to vote for an entire county—causing people to potentially drive as many as 23 miles to cast a ballot. This wouldn't make voting easier. It turns it into a burden.

The truth is, our Republicans can't defend these laws. They are not going to mention them here today. Let's hear some Republicans defend these laws and point to evidence of the massive fraud that they say motivates them to do it. It is bunk—bunk.

The policies they have put forward have one purpose—one purpose only: making it harder for younger, poorer, non-White, and typically Democratic voters to access the ballot, to give Republicans a partisan advantage at the

polls by making it harder for democratic-leaning voters to vote.

Again, in a democracy, when you lose an election, you figure out why and try to win over the voters you lost. You don't stop the voters you lost from voting. That is what happens in autocracies, in places like Hungary, where Donald Trump just endorsed Orban, who is whittling away at democracy in Hungary.

It is cynical—cynical—for our Republican colleagues to argue that just because these voter suppression laws don't spell their intentions out in the open, that there is nothing sinister at play. But these laws have real impact, potentially divisive.

In Arizona, Mr. President, your State, the secretary of state has concluded that new laws could purge as many as 200,000 voters from their early voting list. And as you know better than me, Arizona has a long tradition of early and mail-in voting that, I think, was set up by Republicans, if I am not wrong.

In Georgia, over 1.3 million voters used absentee ballots in the last election, which could now be affected by the restriction.

Senate Democrats in Iowa argue that if today's voter suppression laws had been in effect in 2020, over 6,500 absentee ballots would not have been counted in the last election.

This isn't all that difficult to comprehend. When you pass laws that raise barriers to voting, fewer people end up voting. That is a fact. So as the President will say later, we are approaching a decisive moment for the country.

Voting rights, defending democracy have long been bipartisan issues in this Chamber. The Voting Rights Act of 1964 is one of the crowning achievements not only of the civil rights era but of the history of this Chamber. It is in no way a power grab to say the Senate will pass laws that make it easier, simpler, and safer for American citizens to exercise their most fundamental right. That has been part of the grand tradition of this country—usually, as I mentioned several times before, bipartisan.

I will add: As we proceed, we cannot hang our hats on the false hopes of inadequate or sometimes chimerical solutions.

Substituting the Electoral Count Act for the much needed reforms that we have in the Freedom to Vote and John Lewis Voting Rights Act is insufficient, unacceptable. Obviously, it doesn't affect the House and Senate. Obviously, it is not immediately urgent because it affects 2024. But most importantly, scorekeeping matters little if the game is rigged, and the game is in danger of being rigged if State Republicans empower themselves to arbitrate the results of future elections instead of it being arbitrated by what traditionally has happened in America by nonpartisan election workers.

So we need to work in this Chamber to pass real solutions that go to the

heart of the problem. We need to proceed with the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. We need to proceed with the Freedom to Vote Act.

All of us in this Chamber must make a choice about how we will do our part to preserve our democratic Republic. We can't be satisfied in thinking that democracy will win out in the end if we are not willing to put in the work to defend it.

So we need to pass these bills so our democracy can long endure after this present danger. To continue blocking these efforts is to offer an implicit endorsement of Donald Trump's Big Lie, which, unfortunately, is alive and well in 2022.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to complete my remarks before the scheduled recess.

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

FILIBUSTER

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, last year ended with the best Christmas present that this Congress could have given to the American people—the Democrats' failing to pass President Biden's reckless tax-and-spending spree. But, sadly, the Democrats' failure doesn't seem to have made them realize the reality they are operating in: a 50-50 Senate, where they have to actually work with both sides of the aisle to deliver bipartisan wins for the American people.

They have now pivoted from a reckless tax-and-spend spree that would break the piggy banks of Americans to wanting to break the longstanding rules of the U.S. Senate. They have set their sights on changing the very core of this institution by eliminating the legislative filibuster.

Some Americans may not even know what the filibuster is. The Senate follows many rules and procedures to pass legislation, and the filibuster is an important tool that gives the minority party the ability to voice concerns and help shape any bill the majority party may bring up.

The filibuster serves as a check against the majority party wishing to act without input from the minority. Basically, with the filibuster, the majority has to work with the minority. That is the bottom line.

Voting to end debate on a bill is commonly referred to as "ending a filibuster." It simply means that the Senate agrees that there has been enough debate, including amendments, and it is now time to take a vote. And as one of the Senate rules, it requires 60 votes to end debate and move to passing the bill.

Even if you aren't familiar with complicated Senate procedures, just know that the filibuster is important because it protects the deliberative nature of the Senate.

It ensures we function as an institution rooted in compromise, common