

We are a nation defined by our values. Let us start living up to them.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MURPHY). The Senator from Mississippi.

ELECTIONS

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, a few years back, I was watching a television news show and I saw video that struck me as strange. It was a video taken by a security device outside of a residence. Basically, someone is knocking on the door—multiple doors at this particular apartment—and the person knocking on the door basically said this: I am a volunteer for the Democratic Party, and I am here to collect ballots from those who wish to vote Democrat in the next election.

I found that strange until I learned that that practice called ballot harvesting is perfectly legal in the State of California; in other words, it is all right for me as a volunteer for my party to go and knock on the door and say: I am here to collect your absentee ballot but only if you are voting for the candidate I am for.

That is perfectly legal. That is called ballot harvesting. I hope my colleagues can see the opportunity for abuse in this particular practice.

I think most State legislatures that have prohibited this sort of practice see the opportunity for abuse. What is to stop me from saying, “Knock. Knock. Knock. I am a volunteer for party X, and I am here to collect ballots for people who like to vote for candidates of party X,” getting those ballots and then perhaps forgetting to turn them in or perhaps losing them or not turning them in at all?

That sort of practice is rife for abuse, and I think it is the reason that most States prohibit that.

Soon we will be taking up a bill, which I am told, if it comes to us in the form that it is in now, would allow that sort of ballot harvesting. To me, if California wants to try this, that is their right. I think it is rife for abuse, and I wish they wouldn't do it. But to impose these sorts of requirements on the rest of the Nation—our friends on the other side of the aisle propose this week to vote on destroying a provision that has served this Senate and this Republic well for over two centuries, and that is what is known as the filibuster but what I call the consensus-building, 60-vote rule.

This is a time-honored way that this body has been unique, and it has enabled us to craft some of the most long-lasting and widely accepted legislation in the history of this Republic. The Civil Rights Act of 1994 was passed with consensus because this Senate had to have 60 votes or more. In that case, it may have been a 66-vote rule. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed with that consensus-building technique. Medicare, Social Security—time-honored legislation that has served this Republic and its citizens has been passed with this consensus-building tool.

And the leadership of my friends across the aisle would bring a measure to the floor later this week to repeal that and make us just like the House of Representatives, make us just like every Parliament in socialist countries around the world: majority rule, 51 votes—you get it—destroying that one tool that makes us come together and reach compromise.

And it wasn't just bills passed decades ago. In recent years, during your term and mine, Mr. President, we passed major—major—veterans legislation with Johnny Isakson on one side and BERNIE SANDERS on the other side coming together to build more facilities for veterans, to provide more choice for veterans.

Senator MURRAY of Washington and former Senator Alexander of Tennessee came together with a major rewrite of an education bill. And we did it with the filibuster in place. We had to come to an agreement. We had to get over 60 votes, and the bills were better because of that.

For that reason, in April of 2017, when a Republican President—a President I voted for—said we ought to think about abolishing the filibuster, 28 Republicans signed a letter saying, “Let's don't do that.” They were joined by 32 Democrats and by 1 Independent who caucuses with the Democrats. If I might take the time to read the two short paragraphs:

To Majority Leader MCCONNELL and Democratic Leader SCHUMER:

We are writing to urge you to support our efforts to preserve existing rules, practices, and traditions as they pertain to the right of Members to engage in extended debate on legislation before the United States Senate. Senators have expressed a variety of opinions about the appropriateness of limiting debate when we are considering judicial and executive branch nominations. Regardless of our past disagreements on that issue, we are united—

Said these 28 Republicans and 32 Democrats and 1 Independent—

[we are united] in our determination to preserve the ability of Members to engage in extended debate when bills are on the Senate floor.

And now I am told, unless I have been sadly misinformed, that every Senator from across the aisle, save two—save two—are prepared to go against what was specifically said in this letter and, on election laws, say that we are going to make all the decisions in Washington, DC, and take that away from the States.

I heard the distinguished majority leader say earlier today—and I had to ask about it. I heard the distinguished majority leader say Georgia has, of all things, made it a felony to give water to people standing in line to vote. I sat listening to the majority leader in astonishment. How could that possibly be? It turns out that if a charitable group or if a neutral person wants to come and give somebody water in line in Georgia, that is all right. What is against the law in Georgia is for me as candidate X to come up with a bottle of

water that says “Vote for Candidate X” and give it to somebody in line. Apparently, the people in Georgia in a decision-making role had decided, once you get in line to vote, you are no longer fair game. Politicians should leave you alone once you get in line to vote.

It is not a matter of giving somebody water; it is a matter of electioneering: Hi. I am ROGER WICKER, running for Senator. Here is a bottle of water. I hope you will remember me in another 50 feet when you get into the polling place.

The people of Georgia, in their wisdom, have decided that is going too far.

And I am told—and perhaps the distinguished majority leader could come to the floor and correct me and I would stand corrected if he did—I am told that it is against the law in New York to do the same thing. Once you are in line in New York, somebody comes and hands you something that advocates for one candidate or another, that is forbidden not only under Georgia law but under New York law—and I can see the wisdom in that.

Two months ago, there were two amendments to the New York Constitution that were presented before the voters—the November 2 election, 2021, in the State of New York. One would have deleted the current requirements that a citizen be registered to vote for 10 days. In my State, you have to be registered for 30 days. In New York State, it is 10 days. The law is you have to be registered for 10 days or you can't vote. A proposition was put on the ballot to eliminate that, allow same-day registration. Guess what the voters of New York did on that proposal a short 2 months ago. They voted 56.3 percent no against that.

Are we to assume that the voters of the State of New York are Jim Crow on steroids, as the President of the United States would suggest or can we possibly assume they thought a 10-day period before voting was appropriate and that we should keep it that way? I choose to think that we want 30 days in Mississippi. If Maine wants same-day registration and if the voters of New York say 10 days is all right by a double-digit margin, they have the right to do that.

And, again, if the distinguished Democratic leader can prove me wrong, I would accept that and apologize to him for that.

There was another issue on the ballot, and I hope not to take too much more time because I see my distinguished colleague from Louisiana here. The amendment would have deleted the requirement that an absentee voter give an excuse, and these are the excuses you have in New York right now. You have to be able to—unable to appear because of absence from the county or because of illness or physical disability. That is a requirement in New York. Somebody put on the ballot: Delete that requirement. Guess what the voters of New York decided. They decided to keep that requirement by a

vote of, again, double digits—55.03 percent of New Yorkers voted no on that.

I don't condemn them for doing that. I am sure they had a reason for doing that. But I think the leadership of the State of New York and the voters of the State of New York had a right to do that and I don't condemn them for doing it and I would not—I would certainly not break a two-century, consensus-building provision that has withstood the test of time to tell New York they can't do that, to tell all the 50 States that they must conform to an election law that we devise here in Washington, DC.

This is a pivotal week. This is a week that will decide the future not only of the Senate but of the future of our government—our representative government—and the future of our Republic.

I urge my colleagues to think twice about this. Sometimes, I have had to stand up to my party and say: I can't vote with you on that one. I know you want me to. I know I will suffer some reproach for not going with the team, but I am begging Members of both parties to search their hearts and decide in this case we are going to preserve the one consensus-building, compromise-encouraging provision that has withstood the test of time. I hope that happens.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, and, hey, folks, did you hear about the attempt to steal an election? Maybe you heard this about a year ago or so, big attempt to steal an election, just last year. We had Washington insiders colluding to overturn the will of the people in a fair and free election.

Yes, you heard it right, an attempt to steal an election, but it is probably not the election that you are thinking about. Speaker of the House of Representatives NANCY PELOSI attempted to steal a seat in the House. Iowa's Second District Congresswoman won her election in 2020 and was certified by Iowa's secretary of state, 24 county auditors of both parties, and the bipartisan State Board of canvassers.

And she is here with me today, Representative MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS. I thank the Representative for being here today.

In a blatant political power grab, the Speaker of the House spent over \$600,000 of taxpayer money in an attempt to unseat the duly-elected Congresswoman MILLER-MEEKS. Even some reasonable Members of the Democratic Party sounded the alarm bell on this brazen attempt to reverse the election results. Representative DEAN PHILLIPS said at the time: "Losing a House election by six"—yes, by six—"votes is painful for Democrats, but overturning it in the House would be even more painful for America."

Voters in Iowa and across America should choose their representatives without interference from politicians

in Washington. Guaranteeing both the right to vote as well as the integrity of our election system ensures fair and free elections which are the foundation of our Republic.

The attempt to overturn the Iowa election results was the opening salvo in the left's ongoing rush to take over elections. Democrats' proposals are seeking to limit voter ID, legalize ballot harvesting, provide taxpayer money to campaigns, and weaponize the Federal Election Commission. Using fake hysteria, they are trying to blow up the Senate and fundamentally change our country. However, their very effort is unpopular, unnecessary, and unacceptable.

I served as a local county auditor and commissioner of elections. My home State has seen various commonsense election reforms throughout the years. In fact, in 2017, the Iowa Legislature modernized our laws, which also included requiring voter ID.

At the time of its passage, Democrats warned the law was dangerous and an unnecessary hurdle and a significant barrier for anyone who was not a White male. They could not have been further from the truth. Three times since the new Iowa voter law was implemented, the State has seen record high turnout for elections, record high turnout—huge voter participation.

This includes record high absentee voting during the 2020 Presidential election. The 2021 elections also boasted record off-year turnout. My friends on the other side of the aisle will have you believe that voters are being suppressed in red States all over this country.

The irony here is that New York, home of the Democratic leader, and Delaware, home of President Biden, have some of the most restrictive voting laws in the entire country. And Iowa, because it has modernized our elections in the course of the number of past years, has been demonized by Democrats when, oddly enough, Iowa's election laws are much more progressive than Delaware and New York.

Just this past November, New Yorkers overwhelmingly voted down a ballot initiative to allow no-excuse absentee voting. New York voters also rejected a proposition that would have allowed individuals to register to vote and cast a ballot on election day.

By the way, Iowa has same-day voter registration, thank you.

Now, the senior Senator from New York is threatening to destroy the Senate to override the wishes of the residents of his very own State who voted against the policies he is trying to impose on every other State. Does that sound like democracy to you? It is not.

While the media will have you believe that Senate Republicans are blocking the Democratic leader's agenda, it is really the voters of his own State. Liberal States have some of the most restrictive election laws in the country—and don't take my word for it.

An expose recently published in The Atlantic found some States that the Democrats control in the northeast make casting a ballot more difficult than anywhere else and that the voting bill being pushed in Congress would hit some blue States just as hard, if not harder—now, that is The Atlantic—than the red States they claim are limiting the right to vote. And I will remind you Iowa is much more progressive than these States.

Plain and simple, Washington Democrats are gaslighting the American people. There is not a voting crisis in this country. It is manufactured. Their push to blow up the Senate and take over elections isn't about voter access, it is about power, the same power that liberal elites in Washington abused in their rush to steal Iowa's Second Congressional District—now held by Congresswoman MILLER-MEEKS—and silence Iowans' voices.

What was attempted in Iowa should never be allowed to happen anywhere ever again.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

FILIBUSTER

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, my friend Senator SCHUMER, and some of my Democratic friends would like to change one of the enduring institutions of this institution. They want to get rid of the filibuster—and I call it the 60-vote threshold.

And a reasonable person might ask: Well, why not? Institutions change all the time. Change is the law of life. I will tell you why not. I want you to hear these words of wisdom:

We are on the precipice of a crisis, a constitutional crisis—

Getting rid of the filibuster.

the checks and balances which have been at the core of this Republic are about to be evaporated by the nuclear option—

Getting rid of the filibuster.

the checks and balances which say if you get 51 percent of the vote you do not get your way 100 percent of the time—

If you get 51 percent of the vote, you do not get your way 100 percent of the time in the U.S. Senate—

that is what we call abuse of power. There is, unfortunately, a whiff of extremism in the air.

Those are words of wisdom by Senator CHUCK SCHUMER, May 18, 2005.

If we change this institution which is part of the institution of the U.S. Senate, it will gut this body like a fish—like a fish. And everybody in this body knows that if that is accomplished, our institution will look like a scene out of "Mad Max."

America is a—God, what a wonderful place. It is a big, wide, open, diverse, sometimes dysfunctional, oftentimes imperfect, but good country with good people in it. And I want to emphasize the diversity part. What constitutes the good life in my State may not constitute the good life in Connecticut or in California or in Florida or in Maine.