

Republicans block vote on Democrats' voting reform bill

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Senate Republicans blocked a vote on the Democratic Party-sponsored "Freedom to Vote Act" on Wednesday. The motion to move the bill to a floor debate was defeated by a margin of 51 to 49, with Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer voting "no," a maneuver designed to allow the bill to be brought back for a vote later this year.

As expected, no Republicans voted for the measure, which required 60 votes to end the filibuster.

The defeat of the "Freedom to Vote Act" marks the third time congressional Democrats have failed to pass a voting rights reform bill this year.

The bill was doomed to fail. Senate Republicans have remained resolute in blocking a vote on all Democratic voting bills. This Republican resistance in Congress comes at the same time that Republican-controlled state legislatures around the country are passing laws making it more difficult for Americans to vote, and in some cases strengthening the authority of the state government to impose partisan control over local voting procedures.

The latest legislative defeat is a striking exposure of the political bankruptcy of the Democratic Party. Faced with the biggest assault on voting rights since Jim Crow, the Democrats have refused to mount any serious attempt to defend the most basic of democratic rights.

The "Freedom to Vote Act" itself is a pared-back version of the "For the People Act," the Democrats' more expansive voting reform bill, which was defeated twice over the summer. Senate Democrats and the Biden administration have made no serious effort to amend or eliminate the filibuster, thereby allowing the Democrats to pass legislation to protect the right to vote by a simple majority. As on virtually all policy issues, they have bowed to right-wing Senator Joe Manchin of

West Virginia, who vehemently defends the filibuster.

In fact, Manchin is carrying out in full the logic of the endless appeals of Biden and the Democratic leadership for "unity" and "bipartisanship" with their Republican "colleagues," the vast majority of whom continue to support Donald Trump, promote the lie of a "stolen election" and oppose any investigation of the attempted coup of January 6.

The feckless and duplicitous stance of the Democratic Party has only encouraged the Republicans to intensify their attack on voting rights at the state and local level.

At the same time, the Democratic leadership has capitulated to the demands of Manchin that any voting rights bill be designed to appeal to Republican lawmakers. The resulting "Freedom to Vote Act" removed many provisions that were included in the earlier bill regarding campaign finance and electoral redistricting. It also caved in to the Republicans on the enactment of state voter ID measures, which are designed to block working-class and minority voters from going to the polls.

Despite Manchin's claims that he could win 10 Republican votes for the "Freedom to Vote Act," not a single Republican voted to end the filibuster and bring the measure up for a floor vote.

After Wednesday's vote, Schumer said, "Let there be no mistake, Senate Republicans blocking debate today is an implicit endorsement of the horrid new voter suppression and election subversion laws pushed in conservative states across the country." As though the increasingly fascist Republican Party is susceptible to moral appeals!

Nor is there anything "implicit" about congressional Republican support for the assault on voting rights.

Schumer continued: "This is supposed to be the world's greatest deliberative body, where we debate,

forge compromise, amend and pass legislation to help the American people. That is the legacy of this great chamber. The Senate needs to be restored to its rightful status as the world's greatest deliberative body.”

Known as the “senator from Wall Street,” Schumer dispensed these bromides to a gang of politicians on the take from various corporate interests, of whom Mark Twain famously wrote: “It could probably be shown by facts and figures that there is no distinctly native American criminal class except Congress.”

In attempting to court Republican support for voting reform, the Democratic Party demonstrates that it has nothing to offer to the defense of democratic rights. Throughout the year, the Democrats have sought to channel opposition to restrictions on voting behind phony corporate campaigns, ineffectual political stunts and appeals for electoral support in 2022.

Schumer concluded by announcing that he planned to bring a different voting rights bill, the “John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act,” to the floor as soon as next week. That bill seeks to restore the enforcement powers of the federal government that were stripped from the 1965 Voting Rights Act by the US Supreme Court in 2013.

This is yet one more empty gesture that will meet with the same fate as the Democrats’ previous voting rights bills.

It is a fact that the Obama administration made no serious effort to move legislation through Congress restoring the enforcement powers. The absence of any genuine commitment within the Democratic Party—or the ruling class as a whole—to the defense of democratic rights was definitively demonstrated in 2000, when the Democrats and their presidential candidate Al Gore accepted without a fight the theft of the presidential election through the decision of the Supreme Court to halt the vote recount in Florida and hand the White House to George W. Bush, the loser in the national popular vote.



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