



Longest-serving Congressman: Abolish U.S. Senate So Big Cities Can Get Their Way

Calling it “downright dangerous” and “antiquated,” the man who served for the longest stretch in the U.S. House of Representatives is calling for the abolition of the U.S. Senate.

Former congressman John D. Dingell (D-Mich.) penned an opinion piece published in *The Atlantic* wherein he offered many ideas that he believes would “help restore confidence and trust in our precious system of government.”



Among his “suggestions” is the abolition of the U.S. Senate.

“California has almost 40 million people, while the 20 smallest states have a combined population totaling less than that. Yet because of an 18th-century political deal, those 20 states have 40 senators, while California has just two. These sparsely populated, usually conservative states can block legislation supported by a majority of the American people. That’s just plain crazy,” Dingell writes.

Dingell then goes on to bemoan the fact that “good bills” that pass the House of Representatives go on to “die a quiet death in the Senate because of the disproportionate influence of small states.”

What follows is Dingell’s description of the “horror” in the houses of the U.S. legislature to which he has been an eyewitness:

With my own eyes, I’ve watched in horror and increasing anger as that imbalance in power has become the primary cause of our national legislative paralysis. In primaries, the vocal rump of a minority of obnoxious asses can hold the entire country hostage to extremist views. This insanity has sent true public servants fleeing for the exits. The Electoral College has the same structural flaw. Along with 337 of my colleagues, I voted in 1969 to amend the Constitution to abolish it. Twice in the past 18 years, we’ve seen the loser of the popular vote become president through the Electoral College formula, which gives that same disproportionate weight to small states, each of which gets two automatic votes for its two senators.

The legislative logjam lamented by Dingell is the result, he insists, of “the specific constitutional protection granted these small states.”

Well, he got that part right at least.

The U.S. Senate was created by the states in the U.S. Constitution to perform the very function John Dingell thinks is blocking bills from becoming laws, bills that he reminds the reader “make it through the hyper-partisan House.”

On June 26, 1787, James Madison rose to speak at length on the purpose of the U.S. Senate and the role it would play in the making of law and the protection of liberty:

In order to judge of the form to be given to this institution, it will be proper to take a view of the



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ends to be served by it. These were, — first, to protect the people against their rulers, secondly, to protect the people against the transient impressions into which they themselves might be led. A people deliberating in a temperate moment, and with the experience of other nations before them, on the plan of government most likely to secure their happiness, would first be aware, that those charged with the public happiness might betray their trust. An obvious precaution against this danger would be, to divide the trust between different bodies of men, who might watch and check each other. In this they would be governed by the same prudence which has prevailed in organizing the subordinate departments of government, where all business liable to abuses is made to pass through separate hands, the one being a check on the other. It would next occur to such a people, that they themselves were liable to temporary errors, through want of information as to their true interest; and that men chosen for a short term, and employed but a small portion of that in public affairs, might err from the same cause. This reflection would naturally suggest, that the government be so constituted as that one of its branches might have an opportunity of acquiring a competent knowledge of the public interests. Another reflection equally becoming a people on such an occasion, would be, that they themselves, as well as a numerous body of representatives, were liable to err, also, from fickleness and passion. A necessary fence against this danger would be, to select a portion of enlightened citizens, whose limited number, and firmness, might seasonably interpose against impetuous counsels.

Ironically, the very “obstruction” that Dingell derides is the very reason the Senate was created in the first place!

Impressively, Madison not only instructs us that the Senate’s stifling of Dingell’s so-called good bills is one of its chief functions, but that the protection of the rights of the small states and the minority of the population that will live there is one of the Senate’s safeguards and salutary benefits, too!

Madison explained this aspect of the bicameral congressional arrangement in his speech on June 26 as well:

We cannot, however, be regarded, even at this time, as one homogeneous mass, in which every thing that affects a part will affect in the same manner the whole. In framing a system which we wish to last for ages, we should not lose sight of the changes which ages will produce. An increase of population will of necessity increase the proportion of those who will labor under all the hardships of life, and secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of its blessings. These may in time outnumber those who are placed above the feelings of indigence. According to the equal laws of suffrage, the power will slide into the hands of the former. No agrarian attempts have yet been made in this country; but symptoms of a levelling spirit, as we have understood, have sufficiently appeared in a certain quarter, to give notice of the future danger. How is this danger to be guarded against, on the republican principles? How is the danger, in all cases of interested coalitions to oppress the minority, to be guarded against? Among other means, by the establishment of a body, in the government, sufficiently respectable for its wisdom and virtue to aid, on such emergencies, the preponderance of justice, by throwing its weight into that scale.

And there you have it.

Although John Dingell — a self-described “armchair activist” — would prefer a system whereby he and those of his politically Progressive bent could use their numerical advantage in the megalopolises on the East and West coasts to deprive those living in smaller cities and in the remaining rural regions of their liberty, our Constitution places the “weight” of the Senate on the scales of legislative justice for the



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express purpose of preventing such sectional suppression.



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