



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 17, 2021

McConnell Vows “Scorched Earth” Senate if Dems End Filibuster, 60-vote Rule to Pass Bills

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell sternly warned his colleagues about the future of the body if Democrats scrap the filibuster to ram through President Joe Biden’s radical agenda.

It would, he said, end in a “scorched earth” Senate, and would come back to haunt the Democrats if the GOP ever regains a majority.

McConnell listed more than a half-dozen hard-line conservative policy goals on everything from abortion to gun rights that Republicans would jam down Democrat throats should the filibuster be scrapped.



AP Images

As a practical matter, scrapping the filibuster doesn’t mean no more all-night speeches that entail reading the phone to block legislation when a senator runs out of objections to a bill. Rather, Democrats want to change the rule that requires 60 votes to pass legislation.

“Entirely New System of Government”

[McConnell opened](#) his remarks on the Senate floor by quoting Democrats on the matter — when they were the minority.

In 2017, then-Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the filibuster is “the most important distinction between the Senate and the House. Without the 60-vote threshold for legislation, the Senate becomes a majoritarian institution like the House, much more subject to the winds of short-term electoral change. No Senator would like to see that happen. So let’s find a way to further protect the 60-vote rule for legislation.”

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Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) said “that would be the end of the Senate as it was originally devised and created going back to our Founding Fathers. We have to acknowledge our respect for the minority, and that is what the Senate tries to do in its composition and in its procedure.”

Yet yesterday, McConnell observed, Durbin reversed course and called the filibuster an “an offhanded clerical suggestion,” which was “quite the flip.”

Indeed, Democrats used the filibuster to block good legislation, [McConnell observed](#), explaining that the filibuster ensures “enduring laws with broad support.”

“Does anyone really believe the American people were voting for an entirely new system of government by electing Joe Biden to the White House and a 50-50 Senate?” McConnell continued:



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That may be what a few liberal activists want. Does anyone believe that's what millions of Americans just thought they were electing?

Of course it's not.

"Scorched Earth" Ahead

McConnell explained that ending the filibuster is no "tidy trade-off" that would mean the Democrats can pass "their entire agenda" because of the "new era of fast-track policymaking."

"Anyone who really knows the Senate knows that is not what would actually happen," [McConnell warned](#), because any senator can block anything the Senate does:

Let me say this very clearly for all 99 of my colleagues: Nobody serving in this chamber can even begin to imagine what a completely scorched-earth Senate would look like.

None of us have served one minute in a Senate that was completely drained of comity and consent.

This is an institution that requires unanimous consent to turn the lights on before noon ...

To proceed with a garden-variety floor speech ...

To dispense with the reading of lengthy legislative text ...

To schedule committee business ...

To move even noncontroversial nominees at anything besides a snail's pace ...

Ending the filibuster, [McConnell said](#), would not usher in a progressive fantasyland.

Rather, the "the most mundane tasks of the Biden presidency, would be harder, not easier, for Democrats in a post-'nuclear' Senate that's 50-50," and "we will use every other rule to make tens of millions of Americans' voices heard.... The Senate would be more like a hundred-car pile-up. Nothing moving."

McConnell also warned that "that majorities are never permanent," and that a GOP majority "wouldn't just erase every liberal change that hurt the country."

Rather, he warned, with "zero input" from the other side, the GOP would push through these proposals:

"Nationwide right-to-work for working Americans. Defunding Planned Parenthood and sanctuary cities on day one.

A whole new era of domestic energy production. Sweeping new protections for conscience and the right to life of the unborn.

Concealed-carry reciprocity in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Massive hardening of security on our southern border.

Message: The Democrats are in power now. They might not be after 2022, when 34 seats [will be](#) contested, or 2024, when [another 33](#) will be elected.

"This pendulum would swing both ways — hard," he said.



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McConnell said he refused President Trump's demand to end the filibuster because "because being a U.S. Senator comes with higher duties than steamrolling any obstacle to short-term power."

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