

Culver City Democratic Club

Active Democrat



www.CulverCityDemocraticClub.com

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Post Office Box 4254 • Culver City, California 90231-4254

General Meeting On Zoom — 7p.m., Wednesday, June 9, 2021

Program: Reports of CDP Convention Delegates

President's Message by Jeff Schwartz

People's parties

Our June meeting program will feature members who were delegates to the California Democratic Party Convention, which was held online April 29 through May 2. They'll report on the convention experience and the CDP's plans.

There are three ways to become a delegate: each Assembly District elects fourteen through the ADEM process, each state-level Democratic elected official is given a number of appointments, and leaders within the party are automatically delegates. Our Club includes all three categories, and we hope to hear from as many of our members who attended the convention as possible.

During my term as an elected delegate, and subsequently as President of this Club, I have often encountered allies who blamed the Democratic Party or the DNC for obstructing progressive politics in general and Bernie Sanders' presidential candidacies in particular. I found myself in the unfamiliar role of defending the system, of arguing that the institutions were not themselves to blame and that the specific people who comprised them could be replaced. We can see this process gradually happening, from the grassroots up, as those of us inspired by the Sanders campaign (sometimes called the Class of 2016) have successfully entered the system.

This is not to say there are not structural obstacles. For example, delegates elect the CDP Chair in an open vote, not a secret ballot. Is the body of the convention more like a legislature or an electorate? Voting on the record keeps delegates accountable to the voters, but since the Chair controls all committee appoint-

ments, anyone who wants to advance in the CDP has a strong motivation to support the establishment's candidate.

Conventions alternate their focus annually between policy and candidates. This year's was on policy, so the Legislation and Resolutions Committees dominated. Our delegates will report on the important state and federal bills discussed and what the CDP chose to support.

Within the Party, the caucuses function much more independently from the chair than committees. Their leadership is elected by their members, and their work is much more issue-oriented than donor-oriented. Leah Pressman has brought caucus leaders including Amar Singh Shergill from the Progressive Caucus, RL Miller from the Environmental Caucus, and Alfred Twu from the Renters Council to speak at meetings of this Club, and the caucus meetings are always a good place to connect with fellow activists from across the state. Other caucuses include Arab American, Asian & Pacific Islander, Black, Business & Professional, Chicano, Children's, Computer & Internet, Disability, Filipino-American, Irish-American, Labor, LGBT, Native American, Rural, Senior, Veterans', and Women's. I found the caucuses by far the most interesting, informative, and moving convention events. Between our score of delegates, I hope we will get to hear about most of this convention's meetings.

The CDP convention connects to two other items this month. First, when I ran for delegate in 2019, I was part of the Forward 54th slate organized by Tom Camarella. We won every spot except

one, which went to a young man named Isaac Bryan. As of May 21, Isaac is our Assembly Member, with over 50% of the vote, no runoff required.

Second, the CDP has institutionalized a commitment to gender parity: each Assembly district elects seven delegates who identify as women and seven who do not. Likewise, the CDP has male and female vice chairs. This newsletter contains an essay by Club member Darrel Men-the, also President of the Downtown Business Association and a member of the City's Finance Advisory Committee, on the need for more women on City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, possibly through a quota.

A few weeks ago I listened to [a podcast interview](#) with Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors. She was asked what advice she had for people who wanted to become more politically active, and she answered that they should find an organization doing what they want to do and join it. This seems basic, but I think many of us from the Class of 2016 joined organizations intending to change them. This year the Forward 54th slate, now organized by Greg Bartlett and Elina Antoniou, swept all fourteen elected delegate seats under the slogan "Because the arc of history isn't going to bend itself." This is our party, if we want it.

Pete Rockwell is sponsoring the June meeting in memory of his brother Commander John Hobart Rockwell III, USN
<https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/D2LNQqt4>
<https://www.facebook.com/pete.rockwell/>

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Club website: www.culvercitydemocraticclub.com

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FRIDAY JUNE 4 AT 7PM

SPECIAL EVENT! Enjoy one of the first virtual performances of a new production by The Actors' Gang
EXCLUSIVE! A post-show talkback with director Tim Robbins is included for our supporters only!

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Workshop Production

Based on HARD TIMES: An Oral History of the Great Depression

by Studs Terkel • Published by The New Press

Directed by Tim Robbins

Written by the people, the cast, and Tim Robbins

Tickets are \$50 per screen and are available **HERE**

For more information on this event
contact CulverCityDemClub@gmail.com.

June 7 — 6 PM

[City Council Special Meeting](#)

June 9 — 7:00 PM

CCDC General Meeting via Zoom

[Here is the Link to Register](#)

June 11 — 6 PM

[Culver City Community Meeting](#)

Redesign of Lucerne/Ince Intersection

June 14 — Flag Day

[Commemorates the adoption of the American Flag in 1777](#)

June 14 — 7 PM

[Culver City Council Meeting](#)

June 17 — 6 PM

[Culver City Council Meeting](#)

June 19 — Juneteenth: Freedom Day

[Celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved](#)

June 22 — 7 PM

Santa Monica Public Library presents

[Eddie Cole on The Campus Color Line](#)

June 28 — 7 PM

[Culver City Council Meeting](#)

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**Culver City
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To join the Culver City Democratic Club or renew your membership, you may go to [ActBlue](#) or call Membership Secretary Diane Rosenberg at (310) 398-5328

Di's Corner:

by Diane Rosenberg

Update on Club member Charlotte Gunter: She is still going for physical therapy for her arm. Her attitude is great and she misses everybody.

Update on me: My left knee is healing and now I am not using the walker when I go out.

The Club congratulates Club member Stephen Dunwoody, who has just completed a Masters in Public Affairs (MPA) and has become UC Berkeley's newest alumnus.

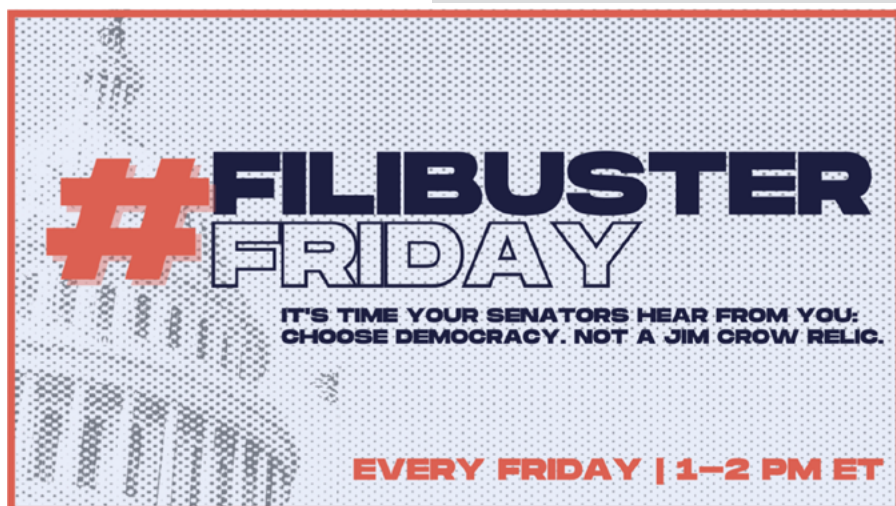


Club T-shirts are available once again!

All cotton, made by union workers in the USA, in sizes S, M, L, and XL. Yours for a donation of \$20 or more via [Act Blue](#).

[Email Jeff Schwartz](#) to arrange pickup or delivery.

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Diversity on City-appointed committees

by *Darrel C. Menthe*

On May 10, 2021, at 11 o'clock at night, an item came up about adding language to Council policies urging achieving and maintaining diversity on City-appointed committees, boards, and commissions. This item came up from the Finance Advisory Committee, of which I am the Vice Chair. Last June, we ended up with nine men and no women on the FAC. To my knowledge, only three women have ever been appointed to the FAC. Many of us recognized something was wrong. We debated and adopted a watered-down amendment to our bylaws about achieving diversity.

I say "watered down" because I wanted to go much farther. A major purpose of this amendment from my point of view is to force a conversation at the Council level. I believe we must mandate gender equity on all city boards, committees, and commissions. Having this come from an all-male committee was important.

The Democratic party already requires

gender equity in representation of self-identified females in delegations. California corporations law now requires that any publicly held corporation with its principal executive office in California must have a minimum number of women on its board of directors. It is time for a rule like that in Culver City for every commission, board, and committee for new appointees.

We still want to reappoint existing members to second terms, but new vacancies should be handled on a gender-equitable basis to reach at least a minimum threshold (E.g., 2 on a 5-member body, 3 on a 7-member body). We need to take responsibility for the fact that gender equity is not happening by itself.

A frequent objection is that not enough women apply or only apply to some committees. That is an excuse we should not accept. Let's figure out the problem and address it. Is there a problem with meeting times on weeknights? Should all committees receive small per diems,

not just select commissions? Should some virtual participation be allowed? Should we be outreaching directly to school committees that have no problem recruiting women? City staff could directly reach out to self-identified female applicants to encourage them to apply to different committees.

To do this right, Council should re-examine the whole appointment process. Gender equity should occur organically in a well-functioning process. because there are so many good female candidates in this City. Tokenism arises when barriers to participation that produce few aspirants. For example, applicants are expected to lobby for themselves with council members and engage in self-promotion during appointment night. These are gendered expectations, and they also favor people who already know the Council members. Many applicants have no idea they are supposed to lobby for themselves and are uncomfortable doing so. The result is that appointments go to regulars and insiders, and to fewer self-identified females. Simply put, our process is often more about old-fashioned patronage than merit. This is a bad model for encouraging civic engagement. I have met many excellent candidates who applied once, were discouraged when they saw "how it really works," and never apply again. The appointment process is a disappointment process. We can do much better. A gender equity mandate will prompt changes to happen.

Council agreed to at least agendize discussion of a gender equity requirement in their policy subcommittee. We have clear evidence that gender equity is not going to happen on its own. I believe the Culver City Democratic Club should adopt a resolution asking Council to mandate a gender equity requirement in the ordinance establishing the committees, boards, and commissions.

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Member of the Assembly

MEMBER OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY, 54th District (Unexpired term ending December 5, 2022)

D

ISAAC BRYAN

50.78%

21,388

“Passing Measure J was a real win for Los Angeles, and for me, but the morning after our win, I learned that one of my siblings had been arrested and charged in San Diego for actions that are now treated with a public health approach here in Los Angeles,” said Bryan, the founding director of the UCLA Black Policy Project.

“That’s when I realized I had to run for state Assembly. The 54th Assembly District has the potential to lead the entire state of California.”

—Isaac Bryan, Assembly Member, 54th Assembly District

UPDATE on SB98: protect journalists and media access to protest sites

by Cynthia Hart

SB98 (as amended) was unanimously voted out of the State Senate Appropriations Committee on May 20, 2021. And I did my happy dance! Then I went back and actually read the amendment.

As amended, the young journalist’s sign should read:

“First the Police commanding officer on the scene withheld authorization from the journalists. We don’t know what happened after that.”



Check it out [here](#)

The commanding officer on the scene has the sole authority to pick and choose which first amendment activities reporters may be authorized to witness and which media outlets may be represented. So the police officer in charge might allow coverage only by Fox News but not by KPCC. Or they might allow no coverage at all, if they believe that their planned protest suppression activities might make uncomfortable reading in the morning papers.

I have heard of bills being “gutted”, but this one has been lobotomized. No doubt the Police Unions are pleased.

The State Democratic Party Convention and the Culver City Democratic Club both voted to support SB98 as originally written.

As a newly elected delegate back in 2018, I was warned that when advocating for legislation “Beware of Amendments”! Lesson learned.

Understanding 'Housing First'

by Mark Lipman

[This is an excerpt from Mark's report: *Housing First: A real solution for ending homelessness in Los Angeles*, published in 2014 by People Organized for Westside Renewal.]

With over twenty years of trial and research behind us, the results are irrefutable. The Housing First approach for ending homelessness has continually proven itself to be the correct method for addressing the issues of homelessness, with success rates ranging from 72% to 98% in field application.

Additionally, Housing First has shown cost savings ranging from \$12,000 up to \$31,500 per person/per year, for those moved off the streets and into permanent supportive housing.

In order to properly implement a Housing First program, it is important to understand what it is. I will quote the National Alliance to End Homelessness:

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that centers on providing homeless people with housing as quickly as possible—and then providing the services needed. This approach has the benefit of being consistent with what most people experiencing homelessness want and seek help to achieve. Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent rental housing as quickly as possible without time limits;
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis;
- A standard lease agreement to housing—as opposed to mandated therapy or service compliance.

While all Housing First programs share these critical elements, program models vary significantly depending on the population served. For people who have experienced chronic homelessness, there is an expectation that intensive (and often specialized) services will be needed indefinitely. For most people experiencing homelessness, however, such intensive services are

not necessary. The vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis that led them to seek help from the homeless assistance system. For these families and individuals, the Housing First approach is ideal, as it provides them with assistance to find permanent housing quickly and without conditions. In turn, such clients of homeless assistance networks need surprisingly little support or assistance to achieve independence, saving the system considerable costs.

What this necessitates is that we reconsider, and actually change, how we have traditionally viewed both the role of homeless services and our homeless population. The majority of those who have fallen into homelessness have done so, not from mental illness or drug abuse, but from economic hardship. As a society, we must look at this as the underlying cause of homelessness. Under a Housing First approach, housing is not a tool of leverage to force compliance for treatment programs.

"There is no quid pro quo for housing. The same rules apply to people in Housing First as they do for the rest of society. What we find though is once people are securely housed their alcohol and drug use drops, as a result of housing stability," said Lloyd Pendleton, director of the Homeless Task Force in the State of Utah.

He continues, "When we started this program, we were looking at New York City's model and thought that it wouldn't work because Salt Lake City is so different from New York, but what we found is that it does work. Right now, from our 2004 levels, homelessness is down 72% at a savings of \$12,000 for each person we help off the streets."

Housing First Program Director Jacob Lile, of the Shelter Network in San Mateo County, offers his 10 best tips for implementing Housing First.

1. Educate your staff and community on the principles of Housing First.

If you take the time to educate those around you about the principles and

proven results of Housing First, you will gain more support for the program. In Housing First, housing is not used as leverage to ensure treatment compliance, but is considered an important individual right. Once individuals are housed, everything possible is done to help people maintain their housing.

2. Visit other programs and seek out mentors.

While Housing First programs may vary, the opportunity to learn from others' experience and kick around ideas with them is invaluable.

3. The transition from the streets to housing can be difficult. Find ways to help people feel comfortable in their new homes.

While someone is homeless, life is all about survival. Much energy is spent meeting basic needs. Once housed, people may have time on their hands that they do not know how to fill. Programs should ensure that services and activities are in place to keep people moving forward as they develop new roles and identities in the community.

4. Meet people where they are and build on supports they already have in place.

Meeting people where they are is a fundamental principle of outreach, and it does not end once the person obtains housing. One of the core principles of Housing First is that services are low-barrier. Many residents may not be ready to engage fully in mainstream services, and we must support them during their transition.

5. Recognize that living in an apartment requires a completely different skill set from living on the streets.

Some problems that new Housing First programs face can be avoided by recognizing the different skill sets that are required to live in housing and on the streets. Staff needs to recognize that behaviors such as doubling up or hoarding are survival skills. Staff should try to think about and address the underlying issues, not just the behavior.

6. Collaborate with neighboring agencies.

(See **Housing First** on page 7)

(Housing First from page 6)

Relationships with local providers allow programs to provide services that their organization may not provide. For example, programs may work with a mental health provider who can give clients a discounted rate, or with a food pantry to help keep residents' kitchens stocked.

7. Blend funding sources and document outcomes.

While it would be wonderful to be able to count on continued support for your program, funding is often a barrier. Most programs need to rely on multiple sources of funds. One way Housing First programs can generate funding is to work with HUD to subsidize housing and Medicaid to cover case management services. It is important to document outcomes so that you can go back to funders and show them how their support has translated into success.

8. If your program doesn't own the housing units, build strong relationships with landlords and potential landlords.

Whether your housing program uses Single Room Occupancy units, or scattered site housing, developing relationships with housing management and landlords is critical to the sustainability of your program. Sometimes it is difficult to find landlords who are willing to work with a program, but once they see that staff can serve as intermediaries if problems arise, landlords often see a mutual benefit.

9. Get training in trauma-informed care.

Anyone who has experienced chronic homelessness has experienced trauma. Make sure you understand the implications of traumatic stress, so that you can respond rather than react to a person's choices or behavior.

10. Have a plan to support your staff and prevent burnout.

Burnout is a real danger for staff working with people who have experienced homelessness and trauma. Make sure your staff are healthy and feel satisfied at work, so they can continue to be supportive and effective.

Implementation:

Looking specifically at the Salt Lake City model as to how it can be implemented in Los Angeles, we immediately find many possible overlaps, which can be

defined as our low-hanging fruit.

The original Salt Lake City pilot program, conducted in 2004/2005, focused on identifying and housing, with supportive services, the 100 most vulnerable homeless individuals. This pilot proved to Salt Lake City that Housing First could be done successfully and it has continually expanded from there.

When looking at the Salt Lake City model, it's important to note the County of Los Angeles' own pilot program, Project 50 (which took place in 2009, with a success rate of 98% and an average cost savings to the county of \$31,500 per person/per year) had in fact a much higher success rate than the model demonstrated by Salt Lake City.

In order to implement the program as quickly as possible, Salt Lake City decided to start with "Scattered Housing," where the city would hold the master lease to the apartments. The city took responsibility for damages, and case managers were also assigned. They could be intermediaries between tenant and landlord if needed, which removed the two most prevalent concerns of the participating landlords.

While the previous step was being implemented, new housing complexes were built with on-site service providers. Additionally, Salt Lake City bought and renovated a Holiday Inn, creating 291 units. Two hundred and one of those were single room occupancy, and fifty-four units had one or two bedrooms.

It is important to note that Salt Lake City also relied on a variety of options when implementing their program. Quoting Lloyd Pendleton, "It is important to be flexible to people's needs. Some people work better in a community setting, while others are better in individual apartments. The key is to respond to the needs of those being served."

As referenced in number 4 above, a core principle of Housing First is to meet people where they are and build on supports they already have in place.

Many of those potentially served by a Housing First program in Los Angeles, due to the sprawling nature of the city, have strong and existing ties to their local communities. They would very likely be resistant to relocation. The logical solution for a dense community, such as Venice,

would be to look at a "Scattered Housing" approach with various landlords in the community, in order to house those with ties to the area.

According to Lloyd Pendleton, transitional and permanent supportive housing saves taxpayers money. In Utah, the Housing First program cost about \$8,000 per person—a savings of about \$12,000 a year compared to the old approach.

People placed in housing must pay rent of thirty percent of their income or fifty dollars, whichever is greater. Most formerly chronic homeless people are unable to hold full-time jobs, due to medical conditions or disabilities.

"Economically, it makes more sense," Pendleton said. "And it's humane. These are our citizens and some are veterans."

According to Libby Boyce, LA County CEO—Homeless Coordinator, the success rate is even greater. "There's no need to look anywhere else, we're already doing it," she says. "Currently, we're housing thousands of formerly homeless people with Housing First with both on-site project-based housing and scattered site housing. Right now, we've got a ninety-nine percent success rate for people accepting housing, which blows the myth right out of the water that 'people are resistant to services'."

Again, with all other models observed, Boyce confirms that "It's housing with no strings. Once people are housed they are much more receptive to other treatment services."

Specifically for Venice (or Culver City), Boyce says, "On-site projects wouldn't work. You'd have to go with Scattered Site housing. Right now, we coordinate that with the Department of Health Services. They are currently partnering with the NGO, Brilliant Corners, who work as intermediaries between the landlords and clients."

When asked about how landlords respond to participating in the program, she says, "We find that landlords are very receptive, as it guarantees their rents."

When asked about cost and savings Boyce says, "We really don't even look at those numbers anymore. We know the program works and saves us a lot of money, so we just focus on implementing the program."

Eliminate the filibuster

[This article is by [Indivisible.com](https://www.indivisible.com/)]

Donald Trump may be out of office, but our work is just beginning. Democrats control both chambers of Congress and the White House, but to pass progressive legislation, including democracy reforms, universal health care, climate change legislation, and immigration reforms, we need to abolish the filibuster. As the Senate's rules exist today, Republicans in the Senate will still have the power to block every single progressive priority using a procedural tool called the filibuster, which requires, at a minimum, 60 votes to advance legislation.

It's simple: none of the progressive issues that Democratic candidates and congressional leaders are discussing today will become law unless we do something about the filibuster. If Mitch McConnell expects to be the [Grim Reaper of progressive policies](#), the scythe he'll use is the Senate filibuster. Unless we change the rules.

The filibuster— a procedural wall in the Senate

It has a funny name, but the filibuster is a simple procedural mechanism that allows the minority party to block legislation from advancing in the Senate. The filibuster is the ability to keep debate open on a legislative item until the Senate votes to close it. Closing debate requires 60 votes, instead of the usual 50, and if you don't have 60 votes, you can't move to final voting. The practical result—in an era when both sides are playing legislative hardball—is that you need to either get 60 votes or bypass the filibuster to accomplish anything. (Not coincidentally, you don't need 60 votes for the things that Republicans want, like tax cuts—just the things that Democrats want. More on that below.)

The filibuster is inherently undemocratic, and not required under the Constitution

For most of the Senate's 230-year history, legislation was passed with simple majorities. Even after the filibuster was created in the early 1800s, its use was rare. That changed in the second half of the 20th century when the filibuster was increasingly used by both parties to block legislation. However, while both parties have used the filibuster, it has been weaponized to a greater extent than ever before by Republicans in order to

kill landmark pieces of legislation, from civil rights to gun violence prevention and beyond.

An important thing to remember is that the filibuster is not required by the Constitution. In fact, the Founding Fathers were well aware of the dangers of minority rule and purposely designed the Senate to be majoritarian—i.e., they envisioned the need for only a simple majority to conduct Senate business. As Rob Goodman and Jimmi Soni wrote in the Atlantic in 2011:

There's a reason, after all, that there's no filibuster written into the Constitution. Our Founders were deeply read in classical history, and they had good reason to fear the consequences of a legislature addicted to minority rule. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in The Federalist No. 22, "[If a pertinacious minority can control the opinion of a majority...\[the government's\] situation must always savor of weakness, sometimes border upon anarchy.](#)"

The filibuster is undemocratic: it empowers the minority to block the will of voters and of the American public, and it will be used by Republicans to block every single progressive priority, even in the best-case scenario where Democrats control of the House, Senate, and White House. Here are just a few examples of how the filibuster has been used to stop the will of voters:

- **The filibuster was used for years to block landmark civil rights legislation.** Southern Democrats used it to kill anti-lynching legislation numerous times over the course of the 20th century—in fact, because of this obstruction the Senate didn't pass an anti-lynching bill for the first time until 2018. Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-SC) holds the record for the longest speaking filibuster in Senate history in opposition to the 1957 Civil Rights Act (he spoke nearly uninterrupted for 24 hours and 18 minutes); and collectively, opponents of civil rights legislation filibustered the 1964 Civil Rights Act for 60 working days, the longest combined filibuster in history. While both of these bills eventually passed, the filibuster was used effectively for several years by Repub-

licans to deny civil rights protections for millions of African Americans and other minorities.

- **The filibuster continues to be used to block gun violence legislation.** In 2013, Senators Manchin (D-WV) and Pat Toomey (R-PA) introduced legislation requiring background checks for private gun purchases, a modest reform with massive popular support. The bill died in the Senate, despite garnering the support of 54 Senators (including members of both parties). This bill is a great example of the lesson we need to learn about the filibuster going forward: even bipartisan bills, however popular they may be, will be blocked by a small number of Republican senators if the filibuster remains in place.

- **The Dream Act would have passed in 2010 if not for the filibuster.** Today, Dreamers and their families continue to fight for their lives under Trump. But the truth is that most of them would be safe today if not for the filibuster. In 2010, Congress and the White House were all controlled by Democrats, so when the House passed the Dream Act and sent it over to the Senate, Dreamers hoped that they would soon obtain permanent relief from deportation. Instead, the Dream Act was blocked because, with a vote of 55-41, it didn't get the necessary 60 votes to advance.

As long as the filibuster remains in place, Mitch McConnell (or his successor) will use it to block democracy reforms, climate change legislation, the Dream Act, Medicare for All, debt-free college, equal pay, gun violence prevention legislation, an increase to the minimum wage, universal pre-k, and any other progressive priority you can name.

There's nothing sacred about the filibuster—it's been amended repeatedly
The filibuster we have today is actually much weaker than the original filibuster. Over the course of the last 100 or so years, the filibuster has been repeatedly weakened to avoid total gridlock and dysfunction. Part of the reason reforming the filibuster is such a no-
(See **Filibuster** on page 9)

(Filibuster from page 8)

brainer is that the filibuster has been reformed a ton already. We'll highlight a few reforms here:

- In 1917, the Senate instituted a means for officially cutting off debate through a supermajority vote. Before this, there was no means of stopping a filibuster at all. With this change, cutting off debate now required two-thirds of all senators (usually 67).
- In 1974, the Senate eliminated the filibuster for budget bills meeting certain requirements (a legislative process called "reconciliation").
- In 1975, the Senate lowered the thresholds for ending a filibuster to 60 Senators.
- In 2013, the Senate eliminated the filibuster entirely for federal executive branch appointees and judicial appointments, other than the Supreme Court.
- In 2017, the Senate eliminated the filibuster for Supreme Court nominees.

Every one of these reforms weakened the filibuster. It's on its last legs now, but it still has the potential to kill progressive legislation—that's why it's got to go.

The filibuster makes the country ungovernable, according to Barack Obama. Reforming the filibuster is not a radical idea held by fringe leftists. In 2018, Barack Obama argued that the filibuster has got to go. Reflecting on his own presidency, Obama said, "Adding the filibuster ... has made it almost impossible for us to effectively govern at a time when you have at least one party that is not willing to compromise on issues." In 2020, Obama again called to eliminate the filibuster, calling it a "Jim Crow relic." Obama is far from alone. A host of liberals, centrists, and even one or two conservatives have noted the incredible political dysfunction fostered by the filibuster.

Eliminating the filibuster is simple. All it takes to eliminate the filibuster is a simple majority vote in the Senate—and this can be done at any time. Senate Democrats can introduce a big package of democracy reforms, like DC statehood and expanding voting rights. Mitch McConnell, the self-proclaimed "[grim reaper](#)" of progressive legislation, then initiates a filibuster. Democrats can then hold a

vote, and with just 50 votes eliminate the filibuster and prevent McConnell from vetoing the legislation.

This is a sample scenario of how it would work:

1. The Democratically-controlled House of Representatives passes and sends to the Senate H.R.1, a landmark pro-democracy bill that puts political power back in the hands of the American public.
2. The Democratically-controlled Senate attempts to pass H.R.1 and send it to the Democratic President for signature. But because Democrats don't have 60 votes in the Senate, their efforts are blocked by Mitch McConnell who has vowed to kill all progressive legislation.
3. Democrats face a choice: either accept congressional gridlock where none of their priorities get done, or do away with the filibuster in order to pass their priorities with a simple majority.
4. Senate Democrats choose democracy and try again to pass H.R.1, but this time vote to eliminate the filibuster to prevent McConnell from blocking it. H.R.1 passes with a simple majority and is sent to the Democratic President for signature.
5. McConnell calls it an undemocratic power grab, but Democracy is saved and Democrats can move on to other priorities, like health care and climate legislation.
6. We get to win on other priorities, like health care and climate legislation.

Then why hasn't Mitch McConnell done away with the filibuster? The truth is that he already has, for the things he cares about. There used to be a 60-vote threshold to confirm Supreme Court justices, which Mitch McConnell eliminated in order to seat conservative justices Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett onto the court. McConnell's priority while leading Republicans in the Senate has been to reshape the judiciary branch by installing conservative federal judges, which he has systematically done using only a simple majority.

The only reason why Mitch McConnell—known for being ruthless about advancing his priorities—hasn't already eliminated

the filibuster for legislation is because he simply doesn't need to. There is a loophole in the Senate called budget reconciliation that allows the majority to advance legislation with only a simple majority. Only legislation that directly impacts government spending or taxes may be included. That may sound like a serious limitation, but in reality Republicans can use it for far-reaching changes like the ones they proposed in their ACA repeal bills or in the Tax Scam. Democrats, on the other hand, probably couldn't use reconciliation for things like Medicare for All or the Green New Deal because those would require non-budgetary policy changes.

In short, Mitch McConnell has changed the rules to advance his priorities and Democrats need to do the same to advance theirs.

How do we get from here to there (saving our democracy)?

Doing what is necessary is often hard, especially when dealing with risk-averse members of Congress who often think it's better to keep the status quo rather than take bold action. In order to get this done, it'll take consistent pressure from constituents, from voters, and from the broader public. Constituents need to demand it from their Democratic Senators; voters need to demand it from presidential and Senate candidates, and get them to commit to eliminating it; and the public and civil society organizations need to call for it. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to enact bold structural reform on every issue we care about. We can't let the filibuster get in our way.

