

## **The Republican Party is laying the foundation for minority rule**

by Egberto Willies

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The paradigm has changed. Political decorum is dead. When Democrats win big in 2020, they must be as methodically calculating as Republicans were in their attempt to establish minority rule.

Former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid [published an op-ed in \*The New York Times\*](#) on Aug. 12 in which he explained the purpose of the filibuster: to create conversations that allowed for decisions made deliberatively. Reid wrote,

I am not an expert on all of government, but I do know something about the United States Senate. As the former majority leader, I know how tough it is to get anything through the chamber, which was designed to serve as the slower, more deliberative body of the United States Congress.

But what is happening today is a far cry from what the framers intended. They created the Senate as a majority-rule body, where both sides could have their say at length — but at the end of the day, bills would pass or fail on a simple majority vote. In their vision, debate was supposed to inform and enrich the process, not be exploited as a mechanism to grind it to a halt.

Reid further pointed out that the Senate has become an unworkable legislative graveyard. He reminded readers that the ideas of the Republican Party are not all that popular. He said the future of the country is sacrificed at the altar of the filibuster. And then the former leader of the Senate called for it:

I am now calling on the Senate to abolish the filibuster in all its forms. And I am calling on candidates seeking the Democratic nomination for president to do the same.

If a Democratic president wants to tackle the most important issues facing our country, then he or she must have the ability to do so — and that means curtailing Republicans' ability to stifle the will of the American people. It's time to allow a simple majority vote instead of the 60-vote threshold now required for legislation. When the American people demand change and elect a new Senate, a new majority leader must be able to respond to that call and pass legislation.

The list of issues stalled by the Senate filibuster is enormous — and still growing.

The senator reminded us that Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell crippled the Obama agenda.

If not for abuse of the filibuster, we would have passed major legislation addressing some of our country's most pressing issues under President Obama: Millions of undocumented immigrants brought to this country as children would have a pathway to citizenship through the Dream Act; millions of Americans would have a government-run public option as part of health care reform; and the American Jobs Act and the "Buffet Rule" requiring the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes would be law, further strengthening the economy and helping to address the issue of income inequality. ... As I said in 2013, the Senate is a living thing, and to survive, it must change — just as it has throughout the history of our country.

Senator Michael Bennet appeared on *Morning Joe* a day or so after Harry Reid's op-ed was published. Sam Stein [asked](#) Bennet if he would abolish the filibuster. Bennet, one of the candidates on an eternal search for the [mythical center](#), gave an answer that shows he has learned nothing from the reality of Republican Party leadership.

I believe that we need an agenda that the middle of the country geographically is going to support. That's what we have to do. I don't think there's a shortcut to that. Every single person, including Harry, and I love Harry, who are calling for the end to the filibuster doesn't remember that Mitch McConnell is majority leader of the Senate. He could end the filibuster tomorrow. If he wanted to add congressional seats in Utah or wherever else, he could end the filibuster tomorrow.

This is a clear indication that candidates such as Mr. Bennet are unready to lead the country in a new direction. They never miss an opportunity, [on cue, to dis Medicare for All](#). Bennet implied that campaigning on it would leave the Senate with just 30 Democrats. It is clear that there is more to his obsession. It is as if his purpose in running is to be onstage to cast doubt, even as it is clear he has no chance of winning.

We've shown ad nauseam that the polls clearly prove that progressive democratic ideas are where the public is. It is incumbent on good politicians to lead. Sometimes that involves doing the difficult work of educating a cross section of the citizenry about policies they may not be all in on yet.

Mitch McConnell and the rest of the Republican leadership know exactly what they are doing. They blocked President Obama at every turn because that was their plan and they had the filibuster. And when necessary, they change the rules to get their way. Democrats not recognizing that this is their modus operandi has already cost the poor and middle class dearly.

The Republican Party has [successfully ensured minority rule](#) by its installation of judges who will likely make many progressive programs dead on arrival when challenged in court. Only a supermajority that presents an impeachment threat to those lifetime appointees can ensure that they are not solely tools of the plutocracy.