



Ranking Member Blunt's Opening Statement Full Committee Hearing on S.1

Good morning. Before I begin my comments on today's hearing, I would like to congratulate Chairwoman Klobuchar on becoming the head of our committee. Senator Klobuchar and I have a long history of working together to ensure the smooth running of the Senate as an institution. As you all know, we have also begun bipartisan hearings on the events of January 6th. I look forward to continuing the committee's work with her for the remainder of this congress.

We have also gained four new members, whom I would like to formally welcome: Senators Merkley, Hagerty, Padilla, and Ossoff.

It has been 21 years since the first bill of a congress has been referred to the Rules Committee. The first bill, the S. 1 bill, is symbolically important. It is intended to demonstrate the highest priorities of the Senate's majority party. As the Rules Committee begins its review of the majority's highest priority, we should note that Democrats defended the last elections as secure and without meaningful election fraud. They point to the high level of voter participation and the ability of states to make pandemic-driven changes.

They point to 253 bills filed in 43 state legislatures to make it harder to vote. Of those 253 the Brennan Center views as restricting voter access only 2 have become law. One bill in Arkansas further defines the implementation of photo identification requirements and the other bill in Utah requires the lieutenant governor to send the Social Security numbers of deceased recipients to county clerks so they may remove the names of dead people from the voter rolls. The Brennan Center lists that removal as voter suppression.

Over 700 bills have been filed by Democrats in state legislatures and more than 100 of them have become law. One in Illinois requires the establishment of a polling place in some county jails so prisoners can vote.

One of the results of S.1 would be a federal takeover of the election process. That would be an unmitigated disaster for our democracy. Today's hearing will shed light on some of the destructive elements contained in this legislation. As a former election administrator—first

as the Greene County Clerk and later as Missouri's Secretary of State, I am greatly concerned by the one-size-fits-all federal takeover of our elections. Since the beginning of this country, states have been responsible for elections. The diversity of our election system is one of the great strengths of our election system.

S. 1 would force a single, partisan view of elections on more than 10,000 jurisdictions across the country.

State and local election administrators would be forced to change how they register voters and which voting systems they use; how they handle early voting and absentee ballots; and how they maintain voter lists.

The bill would require states to make ballot drop boxes available for 45 days prior to a federal election. It even designates the location of drop boxes and tells states how ballots from the boxes will be processed.

It would mandate unlimited ballot harvesting—a process where one person collects and submits an unlimited number of ballots, a system ripe for abuse, as the House of Representatives determined when they refused the election of a Republican from North Carolina because of ballot harvesting.

This bill would also require states to allow felons to vote in federal elections. States that don't otherwise permit felons to vote will need to start keeping two voter registration lists—one for federal elections and one for all other elections.

What's more, this bill would require all of these changes to be made very quickly—so quickly that should this legislation be enacted, chaos will reign in the next election and voters will have even less faith in the integrity of their elections than they currently do.

S.1's path of destruction doesn't stop at election administration. It would also result in a partisan Federal Elections Commission and federal monies flowing to campaign coffers at the rate of \$6 federal dollars for every dollar raised up to \$200. \$1200 from the Treasury for \$200 raised would be particularly helpful when candidates can pay themselves a salary to run as this bill would also allow.

These are only a few of the things that people need to be aware of as this bill is considered. There are 1st amendment issues, 10th amendment issues, and a federal takeover on congressional redistricting—just to name a few.

Finally, I respectfully request that as this committee considers legislation in the future, there be a commitment to "fair play." The first time my staff saw draft text of this 818-page bill was on March 12th. After agreeing to the number of witnesses on the 16th, we were informed at 6:18 p.m. on Thursday the 18th that they had decided to have six witnesses, not three, giving us the weekend to secure additional witnesses. This committee has a long tradition of respect for the minority party; I hope that custom will be quickly restored.