



Rules Committee S.1 Markup Ranking Member Roy Blunt Opening Statement

Good morning. I welcome my colleagues to today's markup of S. 1.

As we prepared for this markup, my staff reviewed transcripts of previous Rules Committee business meetings. As most of you have experienced, this committee works primarily through consultation, courtesy, and accommodation—resulting in many decisions via unanimous consent.

Lengthy and spirited markups are not a regular part of this committee's history, but they do happen from time to time. The most recent example occurred on April 27, 2005, when Senator Lott of Mississippi was the chairman and the committee was considering legislation clarifying the status of 527 organizations.

During that markup, members raised questions about the committee's procedures and we found that many of the questions remained, but no record existed to answer them. Because legislative markups of this nature are less frequent occurrences, I will ask Chairwoman Klobuchar, who was notified of this last week, a few questions about the process and procedures of this business meeting at the end of my statement to build the record for future Rules Committee Chairmen and Ranking Members.

Today's markup of the Democrats' top legislative priority raises fundamental questions about the nature of our elections:

- Should political campaigns be federally funded?
- Who should handle voters' ballots? Should armies of paid campaign staff—ballot harvesters—be allowed to collect the ballots of those in nursing homes, retirement communities, or frankly, of anyone?
- Should the lists of eligible voters used on Election Day be accurate?
- Who do you trust more to run the elections in your community? Should your neighbors and fellow residents run elections in your community or should federal officials in Washington, DC make the rules?

Most Americans agree that voting is already pretty easy, yet we find ourselves here being asked to support a federal takeover of elections that would force a Washington, DC one-size-fits-all approach on every voting precinct in every state for elections that begin less than one year from now—an approach that would cause chaos on Election Day and erode trust in our election system.

This is a bad bill, full of bad policies that create problems not solutions. We should be focused on making it easier to vote and harder to cheat. Regrettably, the bill before us makes it easier to cheat and harder to detect. Except for Senator Manchin, every Democratic Senator has unfortunately sponsored this federal takeover of our elections.

S.1 prevents states from asking voters for identification even if your state currently allows for it. It allows paid campaign operatives to fan out across a community and collect ballots. They can collect ballots from you and your neighbors and more vulnerable voters like seniors in nursing homes.

Ballot harvesting is ripe for exploitation, as we saw in a recent North Carolina congressional election where ballots were altered and mishandled, requiring a new election to be held.

In addition to undermining voter identification and allowing complete strangers to take your ballot, S.1 prevents your state from maintaining an accurate list of eligible voters.

Voter rolls are the foundation of election administration. Accurate lists mean that eligible voters are able to cast a ballot, that election officials know who has voted and who hasn't, and that the voter check-in process at polling places is more efficient and faster.

Think about this for one moment, especially in our current environment. As our country comes out of the pandemic, people are selling their current homes and buying new homes—with record high prices and the fewest average number of days on market ever. Americans are moving, sometimes across town, sometimes to a new city or state.

Should the voter rolls reflect who can legally vote in your state, in your county or in your precinct? The Democratic Party thinks it is wrong to allow states to verify who is still eligible to vote and who is no longer eligible to vote, resulting in the potential for voting by ineligible voters, double voting, or a state representative being elected by a handful of votes to only find out later that a dozen people voted who weren't legal voters in that district.

How is anyone served by this federal mandate? How does this make our elections more secure or bolster voter confidence in election outcomes?

We will likely hear from supporters of this bill that there is no widespread fraud in elections, but that begs the question of what level of cheating and fraud is acceptable to the cosponsors? Is one federal election altered by cheating and fraud acceptable? Two? Ten?

This bill prohibits states from putting in place reasonable election security measures that have been upheld by the courts, and takes away the guardrails that prevent fraud from happening and ensure that fraud is detected. If this bill becomes law we may never know how much fraud is acceptable for my Democratic friends, because S.1, as I said earlier, makes it easier to cheat and harder to detect.

If those flaws weren't enough, imagine the federal government spending \$1.8 billion so all the members of the Senate could run for reelection. Depending on the state, a sitting United States Senator would be entitled to as much as \$80 million in public funds to run campaign ads—\$80 million. I suspect most Americans could think of a better use of \$80 million in federal funds. I have filed amendments to right this wrong and look forward to debating them.

Because this legislation was developed without the input of Republicans, my colleagues and I have filed amendments to address our concerns. I look forward to a robust, thorough, and substantive discussion about S.1.

As I mentioned earlier, I will now ask Chairwoman Klobuchar four questions about the process that the Rules Committee will follow today.

- Will our colleagues have the opportunity to offer all amendments that comply with this committee's rules?
- Will our colleagues be allowed to fully debate amendments until no one seeks recognition to speak?
- Does the Chairwoman agree that, should one of our colleagues appeal a decision of the Chair, the proper question to put to a vote is: "Shall the decision of the Chair stand as the judgment of the Committee?" This phrasing is based off of current Senate floor practice as written in Riddick's Senate Procedure.
- Does the Chairwoman agree that Rule 15 of our committee rules permits the casting of votes by proxy for amendments and all other matters, except for the motion to report legislation?

I thank the Chairwoman and look forward to today's markup.