

Main Street Alliance: Leading small business organizations call on lawmakers to consider rule change to make Senate work better and to pass Voting Rights Legislation

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January 11, 2022 – The country's leading small business organizations [united today](#) to express their opposition to the attack on voting rights and support the United States Senate passing voting rights legislation using filibuster reform to protect the fundamentals of American democracy.

While the Senate continues to debate voting rights legislation, it is critical to note that business owners' voices in many states are being suppressed, particularly those in communities of color. [_](#)

[Polling](#) shows that entrepreneurs, especially those of color, feel disadvantaged within the political system and want equitable access to the lawmakers and votes that impact their lives and livelihoods. There is a direct link between a functioning and truly representative government and a functioning market economy.

Entrepreneurship depends on a democracy in which people know that if they have a good idea to serve a market need and are willing to sacrifice and work diligently, their idea can become a successful, profitable business for themselves, their families, and their communities. The Senate must do its part to protect every eligible American's right to vote and guarantee that election results are respected by passing fair and transparent voting rights legislation.

Failing to pass voting rights legislation that protects our democracy threatens our economy. Allowed to continue, these anti-democracy actions will result in an autocratic government favoring politically-connected special interests that will sap the will of the entrepreneurs who drive our local, state, and national economies.

A [national survey](#) shows small business owners are concerned about the state of our democracy and favor expanding voting rights. Business owners need to know that our leaders' concerns and interests are being addressed and not overshadowed by the desires of wealthy elites that use their exorbitant resources to garner direct access to political figures. Passing voting rights legislation is crucial to ensuring small businesses have an opportunity to impact the political process.

Another [national survey](#) released last week found that businesses with over 250 employees expressed the same concerns about the state of our democracy and the need for a well-functioning democracy to maintain a stable economy. Respondents to this survey also overwhelmingly supported the passage of voting the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act by amending Senate rules if necessary.

Changing Senate rules to expedite important legislation is neither new nor radical. The body already allows more than [160 types](#) of votes and legislation to pass by a simple majority, including just in the last few weeks bypassing the filibuster rules to pass an increase in the debt ceiling.

Our government has no more important job than protecting the health and stability of our democracy. Failing to use this standard tool to protect the one-person, one-vote foundation of our country would be a foolish adherence to a process that would threaten the long-term health of our economy as well as nearly 250 years of self-determination. Failure to act would be the most alarming and radical course of action.

We stand united in support of immediate Senate passage of the *Freedom to Vote Act* and the [John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act](#).

"I am grateful for business leaders and community voices like the American Sustainable Business Network, Main Street Alliance, Small Business Majority, and the Small Business for America's Future, for speaking up and speaking out against the rampant efforts to take away citizens' freedom to vote," **said Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)**. "It shouldn't matter where you live, how much money you have,

or the color of your skin—we all deserve the same chance to cast our ballots and know our vote will count. Our small business owners are a driving force of our economy, and their voices should not be overshadowed by string-pulling wealthy elites. I applaud the strong voices within our small business communities for their concerted fight to protect American citizens' sacred right to vote.”

“As a Black woman growing up in the south, I understand the power of the vote! Small business voices are critical and must be protected,” said **Chanda Causer, Co-Executive Director [Main Street Alliance](#)**. “The Freedom to Vote Act reflects our shared values as Americans, but politics have once again blocked even having a debate on the bill. We need lasting, structural change to reassure small businesses that our democracy is healthy so that we can get to the business of resilient economic recovery. The Senate must do whatever it takes to pass the Freedom to Vote Act.”

“A sustainable and just economy needs a strong democracy in which all Americans are able to participate with their votes and their voices. However, American Democracy is under attack in many states across the country,” said **Thomas Oppel, [American Sustainable Business Network Executive Vice President](#)**. “Congress has a duty under Section 1 of the Constitution to protect every American’s right to vote, but the current Senate filibuster rules clearly stand in the way of Congress protecting our rights. On behalf of the more than 500,000 businesses our collective organizations represent, ASBN has been an outspoken advocate on behalf of the *Freedom to Vote Act*, *For the People Act (S.1)* and the *John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act*. We commend House and Senate leadership on their support for a ‘carve out’ of the filibuster in which the Senate rules would be changed to permit Constitutional issues, such as voting rights, to pass with a simple 51-vote majority. We call on the U.S. Senate to take the needed actions to enable it to be faithful to our Constitution.”

“Protecting the right to vote for all Americans, especially those who have been marginalized, is critical to creating an equitable path to entrepreneurship and an inclusive economy,” said **John Arensmeyer, Founder & CEO of Small Business Majority**. “Congress must do all that it can to ensure a fair and transparent political system that will give all citizens equal access to voting and allow small businesses to impact the political process. This means creating a carve-out to the filibuster rule to advance critical voting rights legislation.”

“It is not a coincidence that the United States has a strong democracy and a

thriving entrepreneurial economy that is second to none. The two go together,” said **Frank Knapp Jr., Co-Chair of [Small Business for America's Future](#)**. “Small business owners understand that when voting rights are stripped from any of us, we all lose our influence over government actions. Economic prosperity is tied directly to a healthy democracy, and small business owners want Congress to protect both.”

On September 8, 2021, small business owners and community organizations participated in a special event with **House Majority Whip James E. Clyburn** to discuss the need to prevent laws suppressing Americans’ voting rights across the country, discuss why voting rights are essential to democracy and entrepreneurship, and learn about the history of the filibuster. To listen to the recording of the September 8 event, visit <https://tinyurl.com/4w86j7xz>.

A recording of today’s event is available here: <https://vimeo.com/664887272>