

Open Letter to Senators Patrick Leahy and Bernie Sanders

To: The Honorable Patrick Leahy, Vermont U.S. Senator
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Vermont U.S. Senator

From: Indivisible Calais, on behalf of the Vermont Indivisible Network

Date: March 24, 2021

Subject: Zoom Meeting Request Regarding the Senate Filibuster and Democracy Reforms

Dear Senator Leahy and Senator Sanders,

Indivisible Calais requests you meet with us and members of the Vermont Indivisible Network via Zoom at your earliest convenience.

The Vermont Indivisible Network is a statewide coalition of 12+ independent "Indivisible" groups throughout the State of Vermont, representing several thousand Vermonters from all around the state – from the Islands through Brattleboro, Shelburne to Rutland, to the Northeast Kingdom and the Mad River Valley.

Over the past four years, all of us were actively engaged supporting Democratic and Progressive candidates nationwide at the Federal, State and local levels, resisting a Republican agenda intolerant of diversity and destructive to democracy, and working for voter empowerment to secure the 2020 victories. We are now joining forces on our collective strategy to save our American democracy in 2021 and beyond.

With a Democratic trifecta in Washington, DC and control of the White House, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, our joint focus has shifted to protecting our fragile and imperiled democracy.

To that end, a top priority is to meet with each of you via Zoom at your earliest convenience. We want to urge you to eliminate the Senate filibuster. As the archaic Jim Crow filibuster allows parties out of power to thwart the will of the majority, we believe the Senate GOP will use it – in its current form – to block a series of Bills which are desperately needed to secure voting rights and ensure that ours is a truly inclusive democracy, one which embraces and protects the votes of all. Therefore, we wish to discuss our strong commitment to the following federal legislative actions:

- HR-1, S-1: For the People Act
- HR-4, S-4: John Lewis Voting Rights Act
- HR-51, S-51: DC Statehood

We recognize there are many demands on a Senator's time, yet we urge meeting with both of you via Zoom as soon as possible to discuss this urgent, collective agenda agreed on by Indivisible groups across Vermont. This is a priority, and we formally and respectfully request a Zoom meeting or Town Hall as soon as possible.

Our passion runs high. We are in agreement with organizers from Stacey Abrams' Fair Fight Action, who observe, "We are seeing the worst voter suppression since Reconstruction," and termed the current extreme GOP voter suppression efforts, "Jim Crow 2.0."

We are also aware of the astonishing inequity of representation in the Senate where, as historian Heather Cox Richardson has written, "Although each party effectively holds 50 seats, the Democrats represent 41.5 million more Americans than the Republicans do, in a nation that has 328.2 million people." She notes we are teetering on the precipice of minority rule.

We Vermonters are committed to pulling this country back from that very precipice and working toward a strong, fully inclusive democracy. With more than 250 newly introduced voter suppression bills in 43 states, we know that states cannot fight this battle alone. They must have federal protection.

Given the Senate GOP's determination to use the filibuster to block all voter protection legislation, all Democratic and Independent Senators must unite in opposition to the archaic, destructive, minority-rule filibuster. We strongly urge both of Vermont's Senators to stand up for all voters, especially voters of color, by eliminating the filibuster immediately. Please let us know when you will meet with us.

Respectfully,
Indivisible Calais
Member, Vermont Indivisible Network

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