The Democracy Initiative is a diverse, intersectional coalition, representing a broad spectrum of civil society: labor unions, environmental advocates, civil rights organizations and civic groups.

From our diverse viewpoints, we all agree that the status quo is unacceptable. We are facing an intersecting set of severe crises:

- an ongoing assault on our right to vote;
- climate change is causing wildfires, severe drought and other life-threatening dangers;
- racial bias is taking the lives of Black and Brown people;
- income inequality is stealing the future of our communities;
- gun violence is so pervasive that mass shootings have become routine.

- **Instead of acting, the government that is supposed to protect us and meet our urgent needs is paralyzed:** Outside of budget and tax bills, majorities in the U.S. Senate and House are blocked from taking action due to a partisan, undemocratic abuse of Senate rules.

- **Congress is so paralyzed, it cannot defend itself, much less the rest of us.** A bill to investigate the violent Jan. 6 riots on Capitol Hill was blocked by just 35 GOP senators – despite support from bipartisan majorities in both the U.S. House and Senate.

- **As recently as the 1960s and 1970s, there were a few dozen filibusters a year. Now there are hundreds.**

- **Mitch McConnell and the Senate GOP have abused rules** to give their wealthy patrons what they want – tax cuts and judges who will block basic consumer, worker and environmental safety regulations.

- **But action is blocked for the rest of us** -- on health care, worker’s rights, climate, racial injustice, gun violence, voting rights and other crises that can’t wait.

- **Our government has to work for the people, not politicians and their wealthy patrons** who benefit from the policy paralysis while tax cuts sail through on a simple majority vote.

- **The American people understand the problem and want reform:** 62% say the filibuster is causing gridlock in Congress; 70% want the filibuster changed or eliminated.
On June 22, every Senate Republican voted to block the voting rights and fair elections bill, the For The People Act, from even getting a debate and the bill was withdrawn. Every Democrat voted to proceed to debating this important issue and Majority Leader Schumer has vowed to bring it back to the floor.

- The Senate majority put in place by 2020 voters has the power to change the rules and strengthen the Senate’s ability to govern – to debate, deliberate and VOTE on policy.
- Under current Senate rules, a single senator can block the entire body from taking action on urgent legislation with a single email. No debate, no transparency, no accountability.
- One option under discussion is requiring a “talking filibuster.” This would raise the costs of what it takes to filibuster by forcing a senator to actually hold the floor for the American people to see who is obstructing the majority from acting.
- President Biden supports the talking filibuster as a path forward.
- Senators are elected to debate, deliberate and vote on important policies. It’s the job we hired them to do.
- A talking filibuster would require senators to stand up and be counted, letting voters know where they stand on urgent issues. It would create the conditions for discussion, consensus and compromise. Contrary to what some say, the filibuster as currently configured does not lead to compromise, it creates gridlock.
- Any meaningful solution must include an eventual up-or-down vote, with decision by majority rule. This is a basic principle of any functioning democracy, and is also how legislatures work in all 50 states.
- We’ll continue to work with elected officials, partners and allies to explore this and other creative ideas.
- The status quo is unacceptable. It’s time to fix or nix the filibuster so Congress can pass policies that will improve people’s lives.

The For the People Act protects the very basis of our democracy: Our right to vote.

- Voting options have been steadily expanded and by 2020, 39 states plus DC offered voters three ways to vote: Early Voting, and in-person voting on Election Day.
- The result: The most diverse, inclusive election in American history. When more people vote, everyone wins.
- But in 2021, we’re moving backward, not forward. Fourteen states have passed 24 laws restricting voting access.
- This attack on our right to vote is not a bipartisan process. The Brennan Center reports that the most restrictive policies to limit voting rights were passed on strict party-line or near party-line votes.
- The For the People Act is the only legislative vehicle to address these new suppressive laws that restrict our constitutional right to vote.
○ The John Lewis Voting Rights Act, another must-pass bill, will address future violations of our rights, not the ones that have already taken place on a partisan basis in 14 states.

○ DC residents deserve voting representation in Congress and passing the DC Statehood bill is fundamental to realizing the promise of democracy for all.

- This is just the beginning of the fight. Many important reforms – like the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Affordable Care Act – were declared dead on arrival, dead in the House, dead in the Senate. But through sustained citizen organizing and grassroots pressure, they all went on to become the law of the land.

- We fight on for democracy and we won’t let up.