

provisions of rule XXII, the cloture vote with respect to the motion to proceed to S. 1 occur at 1:45 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M.
TOMORROW

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator MERKLEY.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Oregon.

DEMOCRACY

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, the most important words in our Constitution are the first three: "We the People." With these three simple words, our Founders laid out the mission for our government; that is, a government to produce a form of legislation that reflects the will of the American people or, as Lincoln summarized it, a government of, by, and for the people.

That mission is being corrupted and damaged in a significant and extensive fashion. It is being damaged with a goal of converting this vision of "We the People" to a government by and for the powerful and the privileged. That corruption, that fundamental corruption of our government, comes in many forms, but it certainly includes gerrymandering, voter suppression, voter intimidation, and dark money in our campaigns flooding our system with unidentified resources to serve the powerful and the privileged rather than the people.

We in this Chamber, having taken an oath of allegiance to our Constitution, ought to be defending it, but we are not. The result is, we see many challenges facing our Nation unaddressed: stagnant wages and soaring income inequality, huge wealth inequality; skyrocketing healthcare costs; unaffordable higher education and homeownership; rent so high they drive people to live in tents; catastrophic climate chaos wreaking havoc on our planet with uncontrolled carbon pollution.

We have been paralyzed on these issues because of this corruption of our Constitution, because of the gerrymandering, because of the voter suppression intimidation, because of the dark money. It has allowed the hijacking of our Constitution, and we need to end it. It has been hijacked by corporate and Wall Street executives swimming in recordbreaking profits and trillion-dollar tax breaks, shuttering American factories and shipping jobs overseas. It has been hijacked by fossil fuel barons who exhibit a greed for profits that trumps the direct damage—or concern about the direct damage they are inflicting on our beautiful blue-green planet. It has been hijacked

by cabals of shadowy organizations, using vast sums of dark money, no identified source, to influence and buy elections, undermining our institutions at every level and driving massive cynicism among our youth.

Our youth look at our government, and they see those beautiful words: "We the People," and then they see the corruption, the corruption this body is doing nothing to address—not the gerrymandering, not the voter suppression, not the dark money. It is time to change that.

I have laid out a blueprint for our "we the people" democracy. I unveiled this document last week. I am happy to provide copies to anyone. It is available on the web. It is a blueprint for restoring our democracy that takes on the corrupting influence of dark money, takes on the corrupting influence of gerrymandering, takes on the corruption of voter suppression to ensure equal representation for every American.

Let's start by looking at dark money. We need to pass Senator UDALL's constitutional amendment that overturns Citizens United and thereby end the corruption of the unlimited dark money.

According to one analysis, the top 15 dark money groups in America has spent over \$600 million on campaign-related activities in the last few years. That is just the top 15 groups, writing check after check to drown out the voice of the people. It is kind of like the dark money is a stadium sound system cranked up to the top volume so voices and concerns of millions of ordinary Americans are wiped out, unheard, unlistened to; thus, driving decisions of this body in favor of the powerful instead of the people.

It is why we need to give Congress the ability to set reasonable limits on campaign spending and donations through that constitutional amendment. That is why we need to increase transparency on all money in the campaign system through Senator WHITEHOUSE's DISCLOSE Act. His act calls for robust disclosure for corporate union, PACs, 501(c)(3)s that contribute over \$10,000. It is why we need transparency through Senator KLOBUCHAR's Honest Ads Act, which addresses the transparency of online ads, which are becoming a bigger and bigger part of our dialogue over campaigns in this country, the social media side. It requires those who purchase and publish those online ads to publicly disclose their financing.

Thomas Jefferson laid out how important an equal distribution of power is among the voters. He called it his equal voice principle, and he said this: "[A] government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns"—equal voice. He said in this letter, after he was President, that if we lose this, which he called the mother principle of our democracy, we would not have laws that reflect the will of the people.

So here we are with the mother principle—a distribution of power among voters, a distribution of voice among voters. That, as the securing factor for government, reflects the will of the people.

This is in complete opposition to the concentration of power through Citizens United.

Let us turn to the corruption from gerrymandering. Now, there is a bit of a challenge to define what gerrymandering is, but let's try putting it this way: the drawing of funny-shaped districts in order to unbalance fair representation of voters in a State.

Now, here are some of the warning signs if you want to say it is gerrymandered. First, look to the districts and see if they are of funny shapes like these—like Nebraska, like the Fifth Congressional District in Florida, like the Seventh Congressional District in Pennsylvania, like the Maryland Third Congressional District, like the North Carolina First District, and the Texas Thirty-third District—blue States, red States, all exhibiting varieties of gerrymandering.

Another way to look at gerrymandering is to look at an imbalance in wasted votes. That is, you take the number of votes required to elect someone in a particular congressional district and add up the surplus of those votes, and you add those up on the Democratic side and you add those up on the Republican side, and if there is a huge imbalance in the wasted votes, then probably these districts have been drawn to unbalance fair representation for people in the State.

A third way to look at gerrymandering is to look at whether the congressional representation in the House of Representatives is proportional to the popular vote totals in a State.

So those three things are warning signs.

How should this be addressed? It should be addressed through having national standards for independent redistricting commissions so that the citizens of the United States across the entire United States get fair representation in Congress and for the ridding of gerrymandering in the United States of America.

In 2016, North Carolina Republicans had 53 percent of the State's popular vote in House races but 77 percent of the congressional seats. That is a sign of gerrymandering. The same year, Pennsylvania Democrats won 48 percent of the popular vote in their State but only had 27 percent of the House seats.

So these are signs of a rigged system, and if you want to drive cynicism, keep a rigged system.

The House of Representatives is supposed to stand for equal representation for people, not for a biased, corrupted, rigged system that we get from gerrymandering.

So we need to take the power for redistricting out of the hands of partisan