

Sen. Merkley makes another push for filibuster reform

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) is making another run to reform filibuster rules. "It's like 'Groundhog Day' in the U.S. Senate. The same thing is happening again and again," Merkley said in an email calling on citizens to sign his petition demanding senators come up with new rules.

In a little over a month, a minority of Republican senators have been able to kill bills via a filibuster that would have raised the federal minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$10.10 an hour, and a Paycheck Fairness Act to close the pay gap between men and women (women make 77 cents for every \$1 that a man earns). Had the bills been allowed to move forward, both would have won majority support.

Incredibly, opposing senators didn't

have to say a word to block the bill (i.e. the classic Jimmy Stewart movie, "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington). That's because a rule change some 40 years ago allows for a single senator to simply announce opposition to a bill, which then requires 60 of the 100 senators to vote to move forward.

Democrats hold a 55-45 edge over Republicans in the U.S. Senate.

"Right-wing Republicans use the power of the filibuster to prevent an up-or-down vote on virtually all of our priorities," Merkley said. "And by abusing the power of the filibuster, the far-right has effectively hijacked the U.S. Senate, bringing all progress to a screeching halt."

Last year, Merkley joined forces with Democratic Sens. Tom Udall of

New Mexico and Tom Harkin of Iowa to score a major victory by reforming the filibuster rules for confirmations of presidential nominees. Up to that point, a minority of Republican senators had blocked virtually every political appointee put forth by President Obama.

In renewing his push for filibuster reform, Merkley wants to restore the traditional filibuster and require an opposing senator to hold the floor and speak.

"Enough is enough," Merkley said. Sign the petition and together we'll tell the Senate it's time for a change."

To sign Sen. Merkley's petition, go to: www.reformthefilibuster.com/2014/04/30/fix-filibuster-2014/

Senate breaks record for number of cloture votes ever taken in a single Congress

Judged by cloture votes taken, this 113th Senate has now taken more votes to try and break filibusters than any previous Senate in American history. Recently, the Senate took three cloture votes, bringing the total number of cloture votes to 115 for this Congress — the highest number ever recorded in a single Congress.

Machinists re-elect Buffenbarger

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In national union election results announced May 9, Machinists International President R. Thomas Buffenbarger and his slate of incumbents defeated a challenge slate led by Connecticut railroad mechanic Jay Cronk.

The tally was 23,545 for Buffenbarger and 11,163 for Cronk. Portland Boeing worker Pat Maloney — one of the five challenge candidates for general vice president — was the Cronk slate's number two vote-getter, with 12,138 votes.

Of about 550,000 eligible members, a little over 6 percent voted. It was the first contested election for the union's national leadership in over 50 years.

The Cronk slate announced it plans

to dispute the election results with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). DOL oversaw this election, which was a re-run of national officer elections held in January 2013 in which a DOL investigation found merit to complaints about election practices. The Cronk slate alleges anomalies in the re-run election voting results, and it accuses the incumbent slate of using union resources to campaign, and threatening local union leaders with termination and trusteeship if they failed to campaign and vote for incumbents. A Buffenbarger spokesperson denied the allegations.

Maloney said the challengers plan to continue, and will run again in 2017 if not sooner.

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