

GOP filibuster blocks Democrats' voting rights bill

BY BRIAN SLODYSKO, CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY AND LISA MASCARO
The Associated Press

The Democrats' sweeping attempt to rewrite U.S. election and voting law suffered a major setback Tuesday in the Senate, blocked by a filibuster wall of Republican opposition to what would be the largest overhaul of the electoral system in a generation.

The vote leaves the Democrats with no clear path forward, though President Joe Biden declared, "This fight is far from over."

The bill, known as the For the People Act, would touch on virtually every aspect of how elections are conducted, striking down hurdles to voting that advocates view as the Civil Rights fight of the era, while also curbing the influence of money in politics and limiting partisan influence over the drawing of congressional districts.

But many in the GOP say

the measure represents instead a breathtaking federal infringement on states' authority to conduct their own elections without fraud — and is meant to ultimately benefit Democrats.

It failed on a 50-50 vote after Republicans, some of whom derided the bill as the "Screw the People Act," denied Democrats the 60 votes needed to begin debate under Senate rules.

The rejection forces Democrats to reckon with what comes next for their top legislative priority in a narrowly divided Senate. They've touted the measure as a powerful counterweight to scores of proposals advancing in GOP-controlled statehouses making it more difficult to vote.

Whatever Democrats decide, they will likely be confronted with the same challenge they faced Tuesday when minority Republicans used the filibuster — the same tool that Democrats employed during

Donald Trump's presidency — to block consideration of the bill.

Republicans showed no sign of yielding.

Republican leader Mitch McConnell called the bill a "solution looking for a problem" and vowed to "put an end to it." Texas Sen. Ted Cruz dismissed it as "partisan legislation, written by elected Democrats, designed to keep elected Democrats in office."

Pressure has been mounting on Democrats to change Senate rules or watch their priorities languish. A group of moderate Democratic senators, however, including Sens. Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, have ruled that out, denying the votes needed to make a filibuster change.

Biden has vowed what the White House calls the "fight of his presidency" over ensuring Americans' access to voting. But without changes to Senate rules, key planks of his agenda,



J. Scott Applewhite/AP

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., talks with reporters before a key test vote Tuesday on the For the People Act, a sweeping bill that would overhaul the election system and voting rights.

including the voting bill, appear stalled.

Sen. Raphael Warnock, a Georgia Democrat and senior pastor at the Atlanta church Martin Luther King Jr. once led, called minority Republicans' willingness to prevent debate on the voting bill a "dere-

liction" of duty.

"What could be more hypocritical and cynical than invoking minority rights in the Senate as a pretext for preventing debate about how to preserve minority rights in the society," Warnock said during a floor speech Tuesday.

The changes being enacted in many Republican states are decry by voting rights advocates who argue the restrictions will make it more difficult for people to cast ballots, particularly minority residents who tend to support Democrats. Republicans, cheered on by Trump, talk instead about fighting potential voting fraud and say the Democrats' concerns are wildly overblown.

Months in the making, Tuesday's showdown had taken on fresh urgency as Trump continues to challenge the outcome of the 2020 election and new limits move ahead in Republican-led states.

State officials who certified the results of the 2020 election have dismissed Trump's claims of voter fraud, and judges across the country have thrown out multiple lawsuits filed by Trump and his allies. Trump's own attorney general said there was no evidence of widespread fraud that would change the outcome.

OREGON

Lawmakers pass amendment to 'pause' evictions

BY SARA CLINE

The Associated Press/Report for America

With the state and federal eviction moratorium set to expire at the end of June, Oregon lawmakers passed an added safety net for struggling tenants on Tuesday that will "pause" some evictions.

Under the "Safe Harbor" amendment on Senate Bill 278 tenants who are unable to pay their July or August rent would not be evicted for 60 days if they provide proof to their landlord that they've applied for rental assistance through Oregon Housing and Community Services.

The amended bill, which passed in the House 56-2 and in the Senate 26-3, will head to Gov. Kate Brown's desk next to be signed.

An eviction moratorium has been in place in Oregon since April 2020. In addition, last month Oregon lawmakers voted to extend the grace period for past due rent during

"We know now that rent assistance dollars cannot be processed quickly enough to prevent evictions after the expiration of the moratorium."

— Sybil Hebb, Oregon Law Center director of legislative advocacy

the moratorium, allowing tenants to have until Feb. 28, 2022 to pay back rent.

While the governor announced earlier this month that she was extending the state's mortgage foreclosure moratorium through September, she said that she did not have the authority to extend the eviction moratorium.

"That means, by law, Oregon's eviction moratorium will expire on June 30," Brown said.

Officials have warned that as the moratorium expires the state would likely see a mass wave of evictions.

In May, 53% of Oregon renters who responded to a survey — or more than

27,000 renters — said that it was "very likely" or "somewhat likely" that they would be evicted from their home, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's most recent Household Pulse Survey.

For weeks, state leaders have urged struggling tenants to apply to the state's rental assistance fund, which has \$200 million in federal aid.

Based on data from Oregon Housing and Community Services, as of Tuesday 10,830 households have completed applications for rent assistance with the average request being \$6,921.

While Oregon has hundreds of millions of dollars available to pay past due, and

up to three months current rent for qualified tenants, high demand has created a backlog that will not be cleared before the eviction moratorium ends next week.

"The Legislature's great work on the (eviction moratorium) was designed based on the reasonable assumption that federal rent assistance dollars would be in distribution in communities across the state by now, but that hasn't happened," Sybil Hebb, the director of legislative advocacy at the Oregon Law Center, said during a hearing on the amendment. "We know now that rent assistance dollars cannot be processed quickly enough to prevent evictions after the expiration of the moratorium."

With the "Safe Harbor" amendment, lawmakers say not only will it give the state more time to distribute rental assistance, but that it would also keep tenants housed as they wait for the funds.

Brothers

Continued from A1

The victim was the person who had introduced him to heroin, Spear told the court.

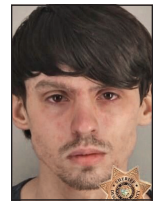
Inside the motel room, the Halls punched and kicked the victim repeatedly, demanding money and heroin, Nelson told the court. The victim told police he was hit in the head with a hammer.

To defend himself, the victim said he grabbed a hatchet from his nightstand, but the Halls took it from him, causing a cut to the victim's arm in the process.

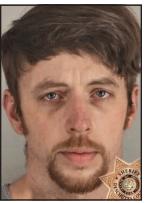
The victim screamed for help. Police were called and officers arrived to find the victim bleeding heavily with wounds to his head, Nelson told the court.

The brothers had taken one of the victim's suitcases. Police located and arrested Damon Hall two days later in Prineville, and Levi Hall, two days after that and also in Prineville.

Damon Hall and Levi Hall both pleaded guilty to second-degree theft, third-degree assault and third-degree robbery.



Damon Cole Hall



Levi Austin Hall

In exchange for their pleas, they were given 30 months in prison and two years post-prison supervision.

Damon Hall opted to address the court, though his brother did not.

"I'm ready to look forward and hopefully get through this, to continue to share my sobriety and hopefully get back with my family and move on with my life," Damon Hall said.

Spear said his client, Levi Hall, maintains a weapon was not used in the attack.

"This is a classic situation where he has decided, based on risk assessment, to accept the offer tendered by the state," Spear said. "Four months ago, (Levi) Hall was introduced to heroin. He rode that roller coaster and is now fully aware of the evils of heroin."

■ Reporter: 541-383-0325, gandreww@bendbulletin.com

Irrigation

Continued from A1

Britton said the water situation soured over the course of the exceptionally dry spring. Water allotments for North Unit users — 1 acre-foot for the Deschutes River and half an acre-foot for the Crooked River — were set in March when the snowpack was over 100% of normal and precipitation around 85% of normal.

"It felt pretty good going into the irrigation season with our allotment," said Britton. "But the melted snow didn't make it down the reservoirs and streams (and) we got no other significant precipitation since early March or April, so that really hurt us with our water supply, which shows in Wickiup."

Usage slow down

While Wickiup has never been this low so early in the irrigation season, Britton said the rapid draining of the reservoir could slow down in the coming weeks as some farmers run out of their water allotment. While all patrons start with the same allotment, water is used differently, and patrons will run out at different times.

"People are going to be running out of water if they haven't already, which means there will be less demand on Wickiup in the system," said Britton. "Some people will fallow fields and move water around, which gives them flexibility. For those who can't do that, they are done for the season."

Farmers who use their water sparingly should have some water until early October, the end of the irrigation season, said Britton.

Britton added that a few good thunderstorms could help, too. When rain falls, farmers shut down their irrigation systems, allowing them

to spread out their water allotment.

Kyle Gorman, district manager for the Oregon Water Resources Department, said Wickiup will also get a little boost of water in July when 10,000 to 15,000 acre-feet of water are released from Crane Prairie Reservoir, upstream from Wickiup.

Gorman added that the extremely low levels of water do not necessarily mean Wickiup will go completely dry as it did a year ago. That's because irrigation districts are considering an option to leave some water in the bottom of Wickiup. The proposal would leave around 2,500 acre-feet in the reservoir to prevent the silty water that occurred after Wickiup ran out of water last year.

In September, brackish water ran out of Wickiup when the Deschutes River picked up silt from the bottom of the reservoir. Gorman expects the reservoir to reach its lowest level by mid-August.

Other irrigation districts are also watching the reservoir lev-

els but aren't necessarily dependent on them. Some districts rely on "live flow" from this area's waterways, including the Deschutes and Crooked rivers, Tumalo Creek and Whychus Creek.

Water rotation

Tumalo Irrigation District, which takes water out of Tumalo Creek, will be implementing a seven-day-on and seven-day-off rotation for its patrons. By doing so, it expects to have water until the end of the irrigation season, said Chris Schull, the district's interim manager.

Colin Wills, head of the Arnold Irrigation District, said his patrons are also in conservation mode and getting water on a rotating basis. Typically 90 cubic feet of water per second flows through the district's canal. Currently, that number is just 55 cubic feet per second.

In the Swalley Irrigation district, farmers have left 200 acres of farmland fallow and out of production this year to conserve water, said Dis-

trict Manager Jeremiah "Jer" Camarata. Piping projects have helped to save water, he said.

"As a result, I don't expect us to use our full water rights this year, nor run into any shortages," said Camarata.

He added that the conservation measures may even allow the district to have a surplus of water, which can be transferred to junior water rights holders or can be left in-stream to improve fish habitat.

"The piping modernization projects are already paying off," he said.

Shifting water

Another district that is better positioned to handle the drought, due to its status as

a senior water rights holder, is Central Oregon Irrigation District. Craig Horrell, head of the district, does not anticipate an early shut-off and has even started a water-sharing program with junior rights holders. The program will shift 100 cubic feet per second away from the Central Oregon district to North Unit, Arnold and Lone Pine districts.

"As a senior water right holder, we have the unique ability to increase water reliability for our neighboring irrigation districts and their irrigation users, while continuing to deliver water to our patrons," said Horrell.

Some Central Oregon Irrigation District patrons are

reaching out to offer their water to farmers in need. Shon Rae, deputy managing director for the district, said 10 patrons with a total of 64 acres have offered to share their water.

One thorny question remains: What is the quickest way to get Wickiup filled again? Gorman believes that the current plan to pipe the canals and implement conservation projects is still the best option.

"We wish we had it done now for this type of year," said Gorman. "But we will just have to carry on through and do the best we can this year and keep working at it."

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OBITUARY

Michael Turner

August 25, 1955 - March 18, 2020



Celebration of Life
Saturday, June 26th,
1pm-4pm
Bend Elks Lodge
#1371 at
63120 Boyd Acres Rd.
Bend, OR 97701

The obituary may be viewed online at
<https://everloved.com/life-of/michael-turner/>

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