

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

December 20, 2021

Dear Colleague,

As we reflect on the first session of the 117th Congress, a session which began with Republicans in the majority but quickly switched to Democratic control by the slimmest of margins and has become the longest 50-50 Senate in history, we should be proud of our accomplishments. We should also be determined to finish the work that remains undone. We passed the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, historic pieces of legislation signed by President Biden and overwhelmingly supported by the American people. President Biden has nominated and the Senate has confirmed the most diverse class of federal judges in history, at a rate not seen since President Reagan. And the economy is creating jobs and raising wages at levels not seen in years.

But this session has also led to moments of deep discontent and frustration. That frustration was evident in the past week as nearly all of us were disappointed by the decision to delay floor consideration of the Build Back Better Act because Senator Manchin could not come to an agreement with the president. However, neither that delay, nor other recent pronouncements, will deter us from continuing to try to find a way forward. We simply cannot give up. We must and we will keep fighting to deliver for working families. Today, I would ask each of you to consider some of the following facts:

- More than one-in-four American adults did not take a prescribed medication in the past year because of its cost, whether that is life-saving insulin that may cost them hundreds of dollars each month or cancer medications that can be thousands upon thousands of dollars for a course of treatment. Seniors and taxpayers lose billions of dollars per year because Medicare cannot negotiate drug prices.
- The bipartisan Child Tax Credit we expanded in the Rescue Plan, that is preventing millions of children from going hungry or homeless, expired last week.
- Our planet is warming so fast that extreme weather disasters are now commonplace in America and across the world.
- We have lost at least 3 million workers since the COVID-19 pandemic began, many of them women leaving the workforce due to the lack of accessible affordable child care.

These are just some of the major issues the Build Back Better Act would immediately address. We were elected to address these many needs and we will not stop fighting until we do. Therefore, Senators should be aware that the Senate will, in fact, consider the Build Back Better Act, very early in the new year so that every Member of this body has the opportunity to make their position known on the Senate floor, not just on television. We are going to vote on a revised version of the House-passed Build Back Better Act – and we will keep voting on it until we get something done.

Additionally, please be advised that shortly after the 117th Congress resumes in January, the Senate will consider voting rights legislation, as early as the first week back. Previous attempts to simply debate such legislation have been obstructed by Republican filibusters, effectively defending the voter suppression and election nullification laws passed by so many Republican

state legislatures on party lines with simple majorities. We all agree that the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy. With that in mind, I would ask you to consider this question: if the right to vote is the cornerstone of our democracy, then how can we in good conscience allow for a situation in which the Republican Party can debate and pass voter suppression laws at the State level with only a simple majority vote, but not allow the United States Senate to do the same? If Senate Republicans continue to abuse the filibuster and prevent the body from considering this bill, the Senate will then consider changes to any rules which prevent us from debating and reaching final conclusion on important legislation.

Members on both sides have spent years bemoaning Senate gridlock, yearning for the Senate to operate as it once did – with Members participating, legislating, debating, publicly choosing a side. That is how the Senate worked before rules were weaponized to allow a minority of Senators to prevent the body from mere consideration of legislation.

The American people also decry this deadlock. I believe our constituents deserve to know which Senators choose to hide behind ill-conceived and abused rules and which Senators prefer to restore Senate floor procedures to better align with the Founders' intentions. As Former Senator Robert C. Byrd said in 1979, Senate rules that seemed appropriate in the past “must be changed to reflect changed circumstances.” Therefore, as with the BBB, Members will be given the chance to debate on the Senate floor and cast a vote so that their choice on this matter is clear and available for everyone to see.

To further discuss these critical issues, we will hold a virtual Special Caucus on the evening of Tuesday, December 21, the longest night of the year.

Finally, I want to thank you for your patience and dedication over this past session. We have accomplished much but we have much yet to do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator