

Editorial - Opinion

Our system is rigged so the minority can rule

By Jesse Jackson

The majority does not rule in the United States. The foundation of any democracy — one person, one vote — is mocked by institutionalized impediments that allow the minority to win even when they lose at the ballot box. In this era, even when Democrats win, they lose. And the will of the majority of the people is frustrated by a system rigged to empower the minority.

Consider: Democratic candidates have won the popular vote in seven of the last eight presidential elections but have become president only five times. Trump became president four years ago despite losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes. Presidents who lost the majority of the votes have nominated five of the nine Supreme Court justices. The reason, of course, is the Electoral College, which tallies votes by state, not by voter.

This institution is a legacy of slavery, designed by the founders to ensure that the less populated slave states

would be able to balance the free states that had nearly three times the population. In frustrating the popular vote, the Electoral College puts the democracy at risk. Because of the Electoral College, Trump's margin of defeat wasn't 7 million across the nation, but about 65,000 votes in three states and the 2nd District of Nebraska.

That helped empower him to mislead millions by claiming the election was stolen, despite Biden's landslide popular vote victory. In the Senate, Democrats and Republicans each have 50 senators (with Vice President Kamala Harris the tie-breaking vote). The 50 Democrats represent 41 million more voters than the 50 Republicans. Smaller, more rural states with few people, like Wyoming or Idaho, have as many senators as large populous states like California and New York.

To add insult to injury, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, which have more voters than several states, are denied statehood with no final vote on any legislation. That

means, among other things, that three Supreme Court justices — Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett — were all nominated by a president who lost the popular vote and confirmed by a bloc of senators who represent less than half the country.

In the House, Democrats have a small majority. But to win a majority, it is estimated that they must win 6 percent to 7 percent more votes than Republicans across the country, because Republican gerrymandering — drawing districts to pack Democratic voters in a few districts (usually disproportionately people of color) while giving Republicans an edge in many — has rigged the system against the party that represents the majority.

And worse, Supreme Court judges nominated by minority presidents have ruled that the federal courts will do nothing to protect against grotesquely distorted gerrymandering. The same distortions exist in state legislatures, where gerrymandered districts help the party with the minority of votes gain the majority. That majority then

has the power to redraw the districts to rig the system even more. More than 59 million Americans live under minority rule in a state where the party with fewer votes controls a majority of the legislative seats. In Wisconsin, 44.7% of voters cast ballots for Republican Assembly candidates, but the GOP won 64.6% of the seats. With gerrymandering, voters aren't choosing their representatives; representatives are choosing their voters.

The right-wing Supreme Court majority has ruled that money is speech and that corporations are citizens, so their ability to throw money into elections cannot be limited. The result, not surprisingly, is that American elections get more costly and big money and entrenched interests grow more powerful. The fix is in — and the results are ruinous.

Today, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell is refusing to agree to rules to govern the Senate unless Democrats agree to sustain the filibuster. The filibuster — the requirement that virtually any legislation receive not a ma-

majority of the vote but a supermajority of 60 votes — is the instrument McConnell used to obstruct virtually everything President Obama sought to do, with the stated purpose of making him a one-term president.

The result is a Senate that is frozen in the midst of cumulating crises. Even Joe Biden's pandemic emergency rescue package is stalled. America becomes more and more dysfunctional as it becomes less and less democratic. The Democratic majority in the House has passed legislation — HR 1 in the last session of Congress — that would remedy some of these inequities.

The 51-vote majority in the new Senate wants this to be its first act. But, of course, if the filibuster is sustained the minority will block even these common-sense reforms. The sacking of the Capitol sent a message around the world that America's democracy is literally under siege. The reality is worse: our system is rigged so that the minority can rule. The disconnect — the frustration of the will of the majority — is a clear and present danger.

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A Salute to the 'Real American Patriots'

By Bridge Philanthropic Consulting

On Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, we saw our nation at its worse when a violent mob primarily made up of White males roaring, "Save America," overran law enforcement and staged a stunning assault on the U.S. Capitol. The very next day, juxtaposed against those horrible images, were photos that showed this country at its best: Black American and Asian American Capitol facilities workers, donning white bodysuits and masks, as they went about the painstaking work of cleaning a building ravaged by a feral group of rioters. Contrary to the opinions of some, this was not an iteration of last summer's largely peaceful Black Lives Matter protests against the systemic racism that remains deeply entrenched in the social fabric of America.

The insurrectionists who stormed the Capitol claimed to be patriots, even as they attempted to destroy America's most shining symbol of democracy. We, at Bridge Philanthropic Consulting, submit that the people who mopped urine from the floors, scrubbed feces from the walls, and swept trash from offices and conference rooms, are the real patriots.

We believe those who truly exemplified strength were the people who spent hours cleaning up after rioters and the members of Congress who stayed until the wee hours of Thursday



(Top photo) Representative Andy Kim cleaning the Capitol (Bottom photo) Black Men in white suits cleaning the Capitol (Photo courtesy BPC)

morning to do the critically important job of certifying that Joseph R. Biden Jr. had indeed won the election to become the 46th president. Congressional members like Rep. Andrew (Andy) Kim, (D-NJ), though

shaken by the attack, worked alongside his colleagues until 3 a.m. to ensure the last step in democratic process of electing a U.S. president was completed.

The dichotomy of witnessing African Americans and

Asian Americans repair the damages inflicted by the hands of insurrectionists incited by Trump saddens us but also inspires our work at Bridge Philanthropic Consulting.

We were founded to honor

and support the outstanding social justice work performed everyday by nonprofit volunteers and staff serving communities of color — communities those Capitol facilities workers represent. In a country where racial inequities persist, our more than 70 consultants are committed to BPC's mission to advance social change for communities of color.

Just as hands of color built the White House in 1792, BPC salutes the Black Americans and Asian Americans whose hands and hearts spent hours restoring the U.S. Capitol—real American patriots we all owe our respect and a debt of gratitude.

About Bridge Philanthropic Consulting

Since 2016, Bridge Philanthropic Consulting's (BPC) mission has been to bridge relationships and resources to impact social change. BPC is the nation's largest full-service African-American owned fundraising firm. BPC is one of the most experienced fundraising firms in the country and provides counsel in capital campaigns, annual giving, major gifts programs, special events, corporate and government program development, conference management, organizational development, board training, planned giving, and strategic communications. A member of the Giving Institute, AFP, and other noted organizations in the sector.