



**SUNRISE
MOVEMENT**

**new deal
strategies**

To: Interested Parties
Fr: Justice Democrats, Sunrise Movement, New Deal Strategies
Dt: January 18, 2021
Re: **What To Do When Republicans Block Biden**

We are glad President-elect Biden is ready to start addressing the desperate needs of the American people and put forth a Covid aid proposal which begins to address the many issues we face. We hope ten Senate Republicans will support it, but are not holding our breath. The big question is, what happens when Republicans block Biden? Biden has chosen to reject austerity politics. We hope that he will continue to stick to that approach, and **go big always**.

When Republicans deny Biden the ten GOP votes he will need to advance his Covid aid package, Biden will have three options:

1. Dramatically weaken the aid package and deliver worse results for the American people
2. Seek to pass the entire package through budget reconciliation
3. Reform Senate rules to get rid of the supermajority threshold, and pass the package through regular order.

Do not water down. We hope Biden rejects the first option out of hand. Watering down the proposals in a hunt for Republican support is a bad idea on both substance and politics. The package Biden has proposed is a start to the aid America needs and it is popular. We should not play into Republicans' hands by delivering less aid while making the bill less popular. When the Obama administration decided to deliver a smaller ARRA package in exchange for paltry Republican support, it was a bad trade. Democrats got no credit politically for a bipartisan deal, and Americans judged Democrats harshly in the 2010 midterms in large part because they did not see enough improvement in their own economic situation. The same is true now: Democrats will be judged in the 2022 midterms on whether they deliver tangible results that improve Americans' lives. Their guiding principle should be to always go big. As former Obama strategist David Plouffe [said](#), "If you do small things and you do the bare minimum, you're probably going to pay a price for that. It's bad for the country and bad politics."

Do not waste precious time. President Obama recently admitted that he and Democratic Party leadership wasted precious time negotiating with moderate Republicans like Chuck Grassley and

Olympia Snowe in order to provide the Affordable Care Act bipartisan cover. Biden and Democratic Party leadership have essentially nine months to act before the 2022 election cycle kicks into gear. There's nothing that would please Mitch McConnell more than to allow Republicans to run out the legislative clock on key Democratic priorities.

Reconciliation relegates critical issues to second-class status. Reconciliation is a tempting option but it is ultimately a path to creating two classes of issues, with civil rights, DC statehood and many other critical issues relegated to second-class status. If Biden uses reconciliation, which we hope he does not, he must do so aggressively, with the intent of using it as a backdoor to eliminating the supermajority threshold for all issues. While much of this bill might be able to be achieved through reconciliation, a package of this size is likely to run afoul of the rules. If Biden does use reconciliation, he should apply the principle of going big always, and be prepared to go nuclear to change reconciliation rules if and when the Senate Parliamentarian strikes down key provisions, rather than abandoning them.

The larger problem with reconciliation is that if we only use reconciliation and do not reform the filibuster, certain kinds of legislation will be allowed to avoid the filibuster while other critical issues like civil rights and statehood are left to die by the filibuster. This creates a first- and second-class status for progressive issues, with civil rights, statehood and many climate change solutions relegated to second-class status.

If reconciliation is pursued, it must be with a mind to either limbering up Senate Democrats for a full-blown nuclear strike on the filibuster, or expanding the use of reconciliation so extensively that it can be used for all issues (which is, in effect, going nuclear).

Get rid of the filibuster. It would be far healthier, cleaner, and easier to explain politically to simply reform or get rid of the filibuster immediately, and proceed to pass Biden's agenda through regular order - including must-pass civil rights bills, climate solutions and statehood. A quick strike against the filibuster in January will set Biden up to shepherd his entire agenda through regular order, with full committee involvement and proper levels of oversight and transparency. Biden has the credibility and the political capital to bring along the small number of wavering senators. Every other path leads to needless complications and worse results for the American people. Biden was elected with a mandate to break gridlock and deliver results. He should use it. Just do it - reform the filibuster and deliver results to the American people.