



OREGON'S SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY

The For the People Act (S. 1): Myths and Truths

The deadly insurrection attempt at the United States Capitol on January 6 wasn't the only attack on our democracy. For decades, voter suppression, extreme partisan gerrymandering, and massive sums of dark money contributions have rigged our politics in favor of the powerful and the privileged at the expense of the integrity of our democracy and the interests of the American people.

Since the attack on our Capitol, Republicans have continued to double down on their stolen election conspiracy theories, and are peddling dangerous falsehoods about voting rights and the *For the People Act*. Here are four common lies—and the truth behind them.

1. The Lie: Mail-in ballots are a less secure method of voting.

THE TRUTH: Data and extensive research prove that mail-in voting is secure and existing measures already prevent voter fraud. Since 2000, there have been [1,130 criminal convictions of voter fraud in the United States, 213 of which involved the fraudulent use of an absentee ballot](#). Because over 250 million absentee ballots have been cast in that time period, the rate of fraud in absentee ballot use is .00000085 percent.

Every state in America currently allows some groups of people to vote by mail—[a method of voting that is supported by over 70 percent of all Americans](#). In 2020, due to the coronavirus pandemic, [24 states with Democratic governors and 22 states with Republican governors](#) opened up mail-in voting to larger segments of state populations.

2. The Lie: Eliminating voter ID laws will lead to more voter impersonation fraud.

THE TRUTH: Like fraudulent use of an absentee ballot fraud, voter impersonation fraud is extremely rare—[with incident rates between 0.0003 percent and 0.0025 percent](#). Therefore, the “problem” cited by conservatives in state legislatures who push voter ID laws doesn't actually exist.

The truth is that voter ID laws are onerous and even costly for voters who don't already have IDs. These laws disproportionately impact Black and Brown voters, students, seniors, and low-income voters, and have hurt voter participation in states where they've been implemented.

We've seen time and time again that these laws have nothing to do with any real voter fraud, and everything to do with Republicans' desire to win elections, [even if that means choosing who can and can't vote](#).

3. The Lie: The *For the People Act* is an unconstitutional federal overreach into elections, which are overseen by states.

THE TRUTH: This argument was wrong when segregationists tried to stop the *Voting Rights Act of 1965* and it's wrong today. The U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to determine the time, place, and manner of federal elections and, as Justice Scalia noted in a 2013 decision, the Supreme Court has repeatedly found that power to be broad and to allow Congress to “provide a complete code for congressional elections.” It's the job of the federal government to ensure the integrity of federal elections, [including protecting Americans' right to vote and collecting information from federal political campaigns about the money they raise, spend, have on hand, and owe](#). Just like the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, the *For the People Act* outlines critical provisions to

strengthen American elections and ensure that every American can cast a ballot, and is in keeping with federal election responsibilities.

4. The Lie: The *For the People Act* is a direct affront to freedom of speech.

THE TRUTH: The *For the People Act* wouldn't prohibit political spending or individuals' support for any given candidate. It would simply bring much needed transparency to American politics—in order to allow voters to draw their own conclusions about a candidate or campaign—by requiring shadowy dark money groups to disclose their donors; campaigns to disclose donations from lobbyists; and lobbyists making independent campaign expenditures to disclose those donations in their Federal Election Commission (FEC) filings.

The Bottom Line: the GOP is trying to win by suppressing votes instead of by winning policy debates.

Republicans defend the current corrupt system where billionaires bankroll their campaigns, politicians choose their voters instead of the other way around, and gaping holes in ethics laws let the rich and powerful feather their nests while working families work harder for less. This is politics working for politicians, not for voters.

The premise of the *For the People Act* is simple: the American people—no matter where they live or what they look like—should be the ones to decide elections. Whether it's Jim Crow-era poll taxes, hours-long election day lines in urban precincts, or a violent mob trying to prevent the election from being certified, there has always been people who believe voting is only for SOME Americans. We believe whether Democrats win or lose any given election, democracy is for ALL Americans. **Let's get back to an America where the best ideas—not those with the most money—win. Let's embrace the vision of America where all Americans—not just a handpicked few—come together to determine the future of our nation.**

Let's pass the *For the People Act* and restore our democracy.