

- What is H.R.1?<sup>1</sup>
  - The entire HR1 bill can be [read here](#).<sup>2</sup>
  - The For the People Act (Also known as H.R.1) is a bill first introduced and passed in the US House of Representatives in 2019. It was originally introduced by Democrat John Sarbanes on Jan. 3, 2019 as the first official legislation of the newly Democratic majority 116th US Congress.
    - The House passed the bill on March 8, 2019, by a party-line vote of 234-193.
    - The House Democrats reintroduced the act in the 117th Congress on Jan. 4, 2021.
  - According to the [summary](#) of H.R.1:<sup>34</sup>
    - This bill addresses voter access, election integrity and security, campaign finance, and ethics for the three branches of government.
    - Specifically, the bill expands voter registration (e.g., automatic and same-day voter registration) and voting access (e.g., vote-by-mail and early voting). It also limits removing voters from voter rolls.
      - It would create a new national automatic voter registration that asks voters to opt out rather than opt in. Requires chief state election officials to automatically register eligible unregistered citizens.
      - Requires each state to put online options for voter registration, correction, cancellation, or designating party affiliation.
      - Requires at least 15 consecutive days of early voting for federal elections; early voting sites would be open for at least 10 hours per day.
      - The bill also prohibits states from restricting a person's ability to vote by mail, and requires states to prepay postage on return envelopes for mail-in voting.
      - Prohibits voter roll purging and bans the use of non-forwardable mail being used as a way to remove voters from rolls.
      - Restores voting rights to people convicted of felonies who have completed their sentences.
    - The bill requires states to establish independent redistricting commissions to carry out congressional redistricting.
    - Additionally, the bill sets forth provisions related to election security, including sharing intelligence information with state election officials, supporting states in securing their election systems, developing a national

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<sup>1</sup> For the People Act - Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For\\_the\\_People\\_Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_the_People_Act)

<sup>2</sup> HR1 - 117th Congress  
<https://www.congress.gov/117/bills/hr1/BILLS-117hr1ih.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Summary: H.R.1 - 117th Congress (2021-2022) - congress.gov  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/1>

<sup>4</sup> House Democrats passed HR1, their massive voting rights bill - Vox  
<https://www.vox.com/2021/3/3/22309123/house-democrats-pass-voting-rights-bill-hr1>

strategy to protect US democratic institutions, establishing in the legislative branch the National Commission to Protect United States Democratic Institutions, and other provisions to improve the cybersecurity of election systems.

- Further, the bill addresses campaign finance, including by expanding the prohibition on campaign spending by foreign nationals, requiring additional disclosure of campaign-related fundraising and spending, requiring additional disclaimers regarding certain political advertising, and establishing an alternative campaign funding system for certain offices.
  - Establishes public financing of campaigns, powered by small donations.
    - The bill would provide a voluntary 6-1 match for candidates for president and Congress, which means for every dollar a candidate raises from small donations, the federal government would match it six times over.
    - The maximum small donation that could be matched would be capped at \$200. For example, a \$200 donation to a House candidate would garner a \$1,200 match in public funds for a total contribution of \$1,400.
    - The money would come from adding a 4.75% fee on criminal and civil fines, fees, penalties, or settlements with banks and corporations that commit corporate malfeasance.
    - The Congressional Budget Office estimated this week the new revenue stream would generate about \$3.2 billion over 10 years.<sup>5</sup>
      - The CBO estimated that the small-dollar match program for congressional candidates would cost \$1.6 billion over 10 years, the presidential candidate match program would cost \$905 million, and the new \$25 pilot voucher program would cost \$60 million,
      - Overall the legislation would not deepen the national debt, but rather reduce the deficit by nearly \$1 billion over a decade, the CBO found.
    - The proceeds from these additional corporate settlement assessments would be deposited into a new “Freedom From Influence Fund” created under the legislation. This fund would bankroll the new small-dollar match program for congressional candidates, an enhanced 6:1 campaign finance match program for presidential candidates, and a

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<sup>5</sup> HR1, as published by the Committee on Rules on Feb. 25, 2021, Estimated Effects on Direct Spending and Revenues - Congressional Budget Office  
<https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2021-03/hr1.pdf>

new pilot program that would incentivize voters to make campaign donations.

- The latter program, dubbed the “My Voice Voucher Pilot Program”, would be set up in three states and give voters vouchers worth \$25 to donate to congressional candidates of their choice to encourage civic engagement.
- States would be reimbursed up to \$10 million from the federal government for the voucher program.
- The Senate version of the bill, known as S1, would add Senate candidates as well to the 6:1 small-donor matching program.
- The bill would support a constitutional amendment to end Citizens United.
- It would pass the DISCLOSE Act which would require super PACs and “dark money” political organizations to make their donors public.
- It would pass the Honest Ads Act which would require Facebook and Twitter to disclose the source of money for political ads on their platforms and share how much money was spent.
- Discloses any political spending by government contractors and targets shell companies.
- Restructures the Federal Election Commission to have five commissioners instead of six.
  - This would reduce the chance of a tie vote and it would require no more than two can be members of the same political party.
- Prohibits any coordination between candidates and super PACs
- The bill addresses ethics in all three branches of government, including by requiring a code of conduct for Supreme Court Justices, prohibiting Members of the House from serving on the board of a for-profit entity, and establishing additional conflict-of-interest and ethics provisions for federal employees and the White House.
  - Stops members of Congress from using taxpayer money to settle sexual harassment or discrimination cases.
  - Gives the Office of Government Ethics the power to do more oversight and enforcement and implement stricter lobbying registration requirements.
- The bill requires the President, the Vice President, and certain candidates for those offices to disclose 10 years of tax returns.
- H.R.1 Fact Sheet from the website of Rep. John Sarbanes, sponsor and first introduced H.R.1<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> H.R.1, the For the People Act - John Sarbanes  
<https://sarbhanes.house.gov/issues/hr-1-the-for-the-people-act>

- Clean and Fair Elections:
  - **Improve Access** - H.R.1 expands access to the ballot box by taking aim at institutional barriers to voting, including cumbersome voter registration systems, disenfranchisement and limited voting hours. H.R.1 will create automatic voter registration across the country, ensure that individuals who have completed felony sentences have their full voting rights restored, expand early voting and enhance absentee voting, simplifying voting by mail, reduce long lines and wait times for voters and modernize America's voting system.
  - **Promote Integrity** - H.R.1 commits Congress to build the record necessary to restore the Voting Rights Act, as embodied by the House-passed H.R.4. It also commits Congress to deliver full congressional voting rights and self-government for the residents of the District of Columbia, which only statehood can provide, prohibits voter roll purges like those seen in Ohio, Georgia and elsewhere and ends partisan gerrymandering to prevent politicians from picking their voters.
  - **Ensure Security** - H.R.1 ensures that American elections are decided by American voters, without interference, by enhancing federal support for voting system security, particularly with paper ballots and also by increasing oversight of election system vendors and by requiring the development of a national strategy to protect US democratic institutions.
- End the Dominance of Big Money in our Politics:
  - **Guarantee Disclosure** - H.R.1 shines a light on dark money in politics by upgrading online political ad disclosure and requiring all organizations involved in political activity to disclose their large donors. H.R.1 also breaks the so-called 'nesting-doll' sham that allows big-money contributors and special interests to hide the true source of their political spending.
  - **Empower Citizens** - H.R.1 strengthens the political power of hardworking Americans by creating a multiple matching system for small donations. This innovative, 21st-century system of citizen-owned elections will break the stranglehold of special interests on Congress and lay the groundwork for an agenda that meets the needs of the American people. The voluntary multiple matching system will be completely paid for by a new surcharge on corporate law breakers and wealthy tax cheats. That way, the individuals and corporations who break the public trust - like Wells Fargo, which created fake bank accounts for unwitting customers, or Volkswagen, which lied about harmful carbon emissions from its vehicles, or Facebook, which violates Americans' privacy, or Purdue Pharama, which field the opioid crisis - bear the costs of

building a more just and equitable democracy. H.R.1 also reaffirms Congress' authority to regulate money in politics, pushing back on the Supreme Court's wrong-headed Citizens United decision.

- **Strengthen Oversight** - H.R.1 ensures that there are cops on the campaign finance beat that will enforce the laws on the books. H.R.1 tightens rules on super PACs and restructures the Federal Election Commission to break the gridlock and enhance its enforcement mechanisms. It also repeals Mitch McConnell's riders that prevent government agencies from requiring common sense disclosure of political spending.
- Ensure Public Servants Work for the Public Interest:
  - **Fortify Ethics Law** - H.R.1 breaks the influence economy in Washington and increases accountability by expanding conflict of interest law and divestment requirements, slowing the revolving door, preventing Members of Congress from serving on corporate boards and requiring presidents to disclose their tax returns.
  - **Impose Greater Ethics Enforcement** - H.R.1 gives teeth to federal ethics oversight by overhauling the Office of Government Ethics, closing loopholes for lobbyists and foreign agents, ensuring watchdogs have sufficient resources to enforce the law and creating a code of ethics for the Supreme Court.
- Other things in the bill<sup>7</sup>
  - Contains a nonbinding provision that expresses Democrats' support for D.C. statehood
    - "District of Columbia residents deserve full congressional voting rights and self-government, which only statehood can provide," the bill says, adding that "there are no constitutional, historical, financial, or economic reasons why the 700,000 Americans who live in the District of Columbia should not be granted statehood."
  - The bill would establish new rules and prohibitions on presidential transition teams and inaugural committees.
    - It would require presidential inaugural committees to disclose expenditures and would put a \$50,000-per-person cap on donations to such committees with a requirement for public disclosure within 24 hours of any donations over \$1,000.
    - It would also make it illegal for inaugural committees to solicit, accept or receive donations from "a person that is not an individual," banning corporations and unions from giving.
    - It would also prohibit any person with "personal financial conflicts of interest" from working on presidential transition teams and

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<sup>7</sup> 10 things you might not know about HR1 - Roll Call  
<https://www.rollcall.com/2019/03/06/10-things-you-might-not-know-about-hr-1/>

would require each transition team member to sign a “Code of Ethical Conduct.”

- The bill would allow certain expenses like personal health insurance, and childcare to be considered campaign expenditures.
- It would allow states to start pre-registering minors 16 and over to vote.
- The bill would make it a crime for people, who within 60 days of an election, provide false information to voters with the intention of misleading them or preventing them from voting.
  - For example, the provision would make it illegal to intentionally lie to people about the time and place a polling location is open or about their eligibility to vote.
  - The bill says the crime would carry a penalty of up to five years in prison, a maximum fine of \$100,000, or both.
- The bill would impose new limits on the political spending of companies with at least a 5% foreign government owner or companies with at least 20% foreign national owners.
- On Wednesday (3/3) the House approved of HR1 on a 220-210 vote.
  - HR1 passed the House during the last Congress after Democrats won back the majority, but it failed to advance in the Republican-controlled Senate.
    - The bill is likely to hit a roadblock in the Senate, where it is not clear there would be rough Republican support to overcome a filibuster.
    - Rep. John Sarbanes, the author of the bill told reporters, “If Mitch McConnell is not willing to provide 10 Republicans to support this landmark reform, I think Democrats are going to step back and reevaluate the situation. There’s all manner of ways you could redesign the filibuster so the bill would have a path forward.”
      - One path that is being discussed is partially amending the Senate filibuster rules to allow democracy reform like HR1 to advance on a simple majority vote and therefore potentially be able to pass on a party-line vote.
      - This would be different from fully blowing up the filibuster, but it still could get pushback from Senate institutionalists even in the Democratic Party like Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), a staunch advocate of keeping the filibuster in place.
  - Sen Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), the chair of the Senate Rules Committee, which will mark up the bill and move it forward, said she wants to bring the bill to the floor and see what the support for it is before she moves on to potential filibuster reform.
    - “We’ll go to the floor; that’s when we see where we are.”
    - Klobuchar is, however, in favor of ending the filibuster.
      - She told Mother Jones, “I would get rid of the filibuster. I have favored filibuster reform for a long time and now especially for this critical election bill.”

- “We have a raw exercise of political power going on where people are making it harder to vote and you just can’t let that happen in a democracy because of some old rules in the Senate” she said.
    - “WE had an insurrection at the Capitol with rioters who were trying to literally dismantle our democracy. The fundamental issue is do we get to vote or not and are we going to make it easy for them to vote or are we going to put up barriers to make it impossible?” she also said.
  - Senate Democrats aren’t ready to blow up the Senate filibuster yet, but are finding ways around it.
    - This week, Democrats are using budget reconciliation to pass Biden’s current COVID-19 stimulus bill through the Senate with just 51 votes and there is a good chance they’ll do the same thing for Biden’s infrastructure plan.
    - Democrats can only use budget reconciliation twice, and it can only be used for things that directly impact the federal budget. Voting rights and anti-corruption measures don’t fall into that category.
    - When asked by reporters again this week if there was a point where he’d change his mind about the filibuster, Manchin yelled, “Never!” according to the Hill’s Jordain Carney. “Jesus Christ! What don’t you understand about never? Manchin added.<sup>8</sup>
  - Democrats have a few options at their disposal.<sup>9</sup>
    - They could end the filibuster outright with a simple majority vote (with Vice President Kamala Harris casting a tie-breaking vote)
    - They could abolish the filibuster only for election-related bills that are “critical for democracy”
    - They could also force Republicans to speak continuously on the Senate floor to sustain a filibuster.
    - Another option is to lower the threshold for passing filibustered bills from 60 votes to 55 votes.
- Support for the bill<sup>10</sup>
  - A January 2021 poll by Data for Progress and Equal Citizens found 67% of American voters support the bill.<sup>11</sup>
    - According to the poll, 77% of Democratic voters, 68% of Independent voters, and 56% of Republican voters support the bill.

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<sup>8</sup> Jordain Carney - twitter

<https://twitter.com/jordainc/status/1366523273916411908?s=20>

<sup>9</sup> The House Is Poised to Pass a Major Voting Rights Bill - Mother Jones

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/03/the-house-is-poised-to-pass-a-major-voting-rights-bill-and-create-a-helluva-battle-in-the-senate/>

<sup>10</sup> House passes sweeping election bill that would counter GOP efforts to restrict voter access - CNN

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/03/politics/house-democrats-hr1-vote/index.html>

<sup>11</sup> HR1 poll - Data for Progress

<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2021/1/22/majority-support-hr1-democracy-reforms>

- Organizations such as the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (which includes the AFL-CIO, Common Cause, NAACP, Sierra Club, Center for Constitutional Rights), the League of Women Voters, the Brennan Center for Justice, and the League of Conservation Voters, have come out in support of the bill.
- “The president remains committed to protecting the fundamental right to vote and making it easy for all eligible Americans to vote. That is why we need to pass reforms like HR1 and restore the Voting Rights Act. It’s a priority for the president, something he’ll be working with members of Congress to move forward.” White House press secretary Jen Psaki told reporters.
  - On Thursday, Biden released a statement commending House Democrats for passing the bill, and promising to sign it into law.
- “Much of what HR1 is trying to do is restore majority rule in America” says Rep. John Sarbanes.
  - “We’ve seen an effort to narrow participation in the political arena through voter suppression, partisan gerrymandering, the use of dark money. You put that together and that creates minority rule in America, which produces a lot of anger and frustration. That makes it easier for extreme elements to access the political space without accountability.” says Sarbanes.
- Adam Jentleson, one time staffer to former-Sen. Harry Reid wrote, “In the 87 years between the end of Reconstruction and 1964, the only bills that were stopped by filibuster were civil rights bills. Abolishing the filibuster to pass HR1 would be poetic justice, you would be ending the filibuster on an issue of civil rights.”
- Backers of the bill say the 6:1 small-dollar match program is the anecdote to getting big money and corporate interests out of elections and to allow candidates to focus on garnering support from their neighbors rather than catering to high-dollar donor fundraisers and special interests.
  - “I’m very fond of saying if we reduce the role of money in politics and increase the level of decency and civility, we will be able to elect many more women, many more people of color, many more young people into elective office,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Tuesday.
- Opposition to the bill<sup>12</sup>
  - The legislation is opposed by Republican officials, conservative organizations like the Heritage Foundation, and conservative political commentators.
  - In 2019, then-Senate Majority leader Mitch McConnell issued a statement criticizing the bill as a “one-sided power grab” by the Democratic Party.
    - McConnell further criticized it for giving the federal government more power over elections, saying it would, “give Washington DC politicians even more control over who gets to come here [Congress] in the first place.”

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<sup>12</sup> For the People Act - Wikipedia  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For\\_the\\_People\\_Act](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_the_People_Act)

- The Donald Trump White House issued a statement arguing that the bill would “micromanage” elections that are run largely by states and would establish “costly and unnecessary program to finance political campaigns”.
- The Wall Street Journal editorial board opposes the bill, contending that it was “designed to auto-enroll likely Democratic voters, enhance Democratic turnout, with no concern for ballot integrity.”
- On Wednesday, the lone Democratic “no” vote came from Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson, a co-sponsor of the legislation.<sup>13</sup>
  - But Thompson said Thursday his constituents weren’t supportive of the election overhaul, so he stood with them rather than his colleagues.
  - “My constituents opposed the redistricting portion of the bill as well as the section on public finances,” Thompson said in a statement to Fox News. “I always listen and vote in the interest of my constituents.”
- On Thursday, [Eric Peterson](#) of Reason criticized the bill for its attack on free speech. He wrote:<sup>14</sup>
  - The legislation tackles a host of questions involving campaign finance, political speech, and online speech, and its effects would all but silence citizens’ abilities to speak about and criticize politicians and their policies. In fact, the 40 pages of the bill borrowed from the “Honest Ads Act” would censor more online political speech than anything those working in Big Tech have dreamed up.
  - Among the host of new requirements contained in the legislation is government-compelled speech on paid political content or content created by employees.
    - Essentially, traditional online ads, or even memes, would require lengthy text disclosing what organization created the ad. These disclosures would have to include the sponsor’s name and give a means for the viewer to find the sponsor’s street address, telephone number, and website URL, and say that the ad is not authorized by any candidate or candidate’s committee.
  - The legislation would require a “public file,” which is a database of all ads costing over \$500 that are run by a particular digital ad provider.
    - While such systems have been implemented privately by Google and Facebook, companies with fewer resources would be unable to create systems that comply with the law. Look no further than when state versions of the bill were passed and digital advertisers like newspapers attempted to meet the onerous requirements.
      - When Maryland passed a state version of the “Honest Ads Act,” newspapers filed a lawsuit explaining that these

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<sup>13</sup> Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson explains why he was only Dem to vote against massive HR1 election bill - Fox News

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/bennie-thompson-only-dem-vote-against-hr1-election-bill>

<sup>14</sup> Government, Not Big Tech, Is the Biggest Threat to Free Speech - Reason

<https://reason.com/2021/03/04/government-not-big-tech-is-the-biggest-threat-to-free-speech/>

- requirements were not only impossible to comply with, but were unconstitutional as well. The courts agreed.
- Washington state’s own version of the act was so onerous that Google stopped running political ads within the state altogether. Even after creating an online database, the company was sued by the Washington attorney general for noncompliance.
  - “Beyond the technical obligations and constitutional issues, the requirement that citizens hand over a large amount of personal information in order to speak their politics could have a chilling effect on free speech. Requiring this information impedes the ability of an individual or group to speak anonymously.”
  - Twenty Republican state attorneys general signed a letter denouncing HR1.<sup>15</sup>
  - The full letter can be [read here](#).<sup>16</sup>
    - The letter was led by Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita.
      - Rokita said in a statement to Fox News, “This monstrosity of a bill betrays the Constitution, dangerously federalizes state elections, and undermines the integrity of the ballot box. As a former chief election officer, and now an Attorney General, I know this would be a disaster for election integrity and confidence in the processes that have been developed over time to instill confidence in the idea of ‘one person, one vote.’”
      - “The Act would invert that constitutional structure, commandeer state resources, confuse and muddle election procedures, and erode faith in our elections and systems of governance,” they wrote.
      - The twenty attorneys general also said in their letter that the bill “implicates the Electors Clause” of the Constitution, which guarantees each state legislature the right to “direct allotment of presidential electors, and separately affords Congress only the more limited power to ‘determine the time of choosing the electors.’”
        - The attorneys general argued that this “exclusive division of power” outlined in the Constitution “differs markedly” from the Election Clause in Article I of the Constitution, “which says that both States and Congress have the power to regulate the ‘time, place, and manner’ of congressional elections.”
        - They also wrote, “That distinction is not an accident of drafting. After extensive debate, the Constitution’s Framers

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<sup>15</sup> 20 state AGs denounce Democrats’ HR1 as unconstitutional - Fox News

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/hr-1-for-the-people-act-attorneys-general-say-unconstitutional>

<sup>16</sup> Attorneys General Letter

[https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/INAG/2021/03/03/file\\_attachments/1712412/HR1%20Letter%20332021.pdf](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/INAG/2021/03/03/file_attachments/1712412/HR1%20Letter%20332021.pdf)

deliberately excluded Congress from deciding how presidential electors would be chosen in order to avoid presidential dependence on Congress for position and authority.”

- The ACLU has criticized HR1 for its implications on free speech.<sup>17</sup>
  - The ACLU told lawmakers in 2019 that it opposed the bill. The group said it supported provisions to expand voting rights, but opposed campaign finance provisions that it said would limit free speech.
    - The ACLU believed the bill contained “provisions that unconstitutionally impinge on the free speech rights of American citizens and public interest organizations”, particularly those that require organizations that engage in campaign-related disbursements to disclose the names and addresses of donors who give \$10,000 or more.
  - In 2021, the ACLU didn’t use the word “oppose” in their letter to lawmakers, but the group still had multiple criticisms of the bill. An attorney for the organization said it strongly supports many provisions.
- House Republicans have panned the HR1 legislation as a massive expansion of the federal government’s role in elections designed to pad politicians’ campaign coffers.<sup>18</sup>
  - In debate on the House floor, Republicans alleged the legislation would create a new taxpayer-funded system of election financing, though the funding stream for the “Freedom From Influence Fund” is not general taxpayer dollars.
  - “This bill isn’t for the people it’s for the politicians,” said Rep. Rodney Davis
  - Rep. August Pfluger said the legislation would “fully cement the swamp.”

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<sup>17</sup> Yes, the ACLU has criticized HR1. Here’s why - polotofact  
<https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2021/mar/01/ronna-mcdaniel/yes-aclu-has-criticized-hr-1-heres-why/>

<sup>18</sup> House Democrats’ HR1 would create new public financing of congressional campaigns  
<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/house-democrats-h-r-1-would-create-new-public-financing-of-congressional-campaigns>