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bill known as HR 1.



Flanked by other House Democrats, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi speaks about HR 1, Democrats' wide-ranging anti-corruption and pro-democracy reform bill. | Alex Wong/Getty Images

House Democrats officially passed their massive anti-corruption and pro-democracy reform bill known as HR 1 on Friday. The bill passed on a final vote of 234 to 193.

The sweeping bill is aimed at getting money out of politics and increasing transparency around donors, cracking down on lobbying, and expanding voting rights for Americans by implementing provisions like automatic voter registration.

As they passed the bill that was their first priority of the year, Democrats were in a celebratory mood.

“HR 1 restores the people’s faith that government works for the public interest, the people’s interest, not the special interest,” said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. “It is fundamental to our democracy that people believe that actions taken here will be in their interest. That is what this legislation will help to restore.”

But the bill is already dead on arrival in the Senate, where Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has [vowed he won’t bring it up](#).

“This is a terrible proposal; it will not get any floor time in the Senate,” McConnell [told reporters on Wednesday](#). He said he instead wants to focus on banning the practice of “ballot harvesting,” where volunteers collect filled-out ballots and drop them off at polling places to be counted. McConnell referred to the state of California — [where ballot harvesting is legal](#) — suggesting the practice could be why House Republicans lost so badly in the state during the 2018 midterms.

Democrats were under no illusion that HR 1 would get a welcome reception from Senate Republicans or President Donald Trump, but they hope the message they are sending is one the public buys — that money and corruption in politics should be eradicated.

“It is a fight we will not end until we win it,” Pelosi said, adding, “we can save a lot of time by the Senate just agreeing to a vote.”

There’s some evidence to back this up. [Recent polling](#) from the PAC End Citizens United found that 82 percent of all voters and 84 percent of independents said they support a bill of reforms to tackle corruption.

HR 1 is Democrats' attempt to deliver on that promise.

Here's what's in the final bill that Democrats passed

HR 1 covers three main planks: campaign finance reform, strengthening the government's ethics laws, and expanding voting rights. Here's the important part of each section, briefly explained.

Campaign finance

- **Establishing public financing of campaigns, powered by small donations.** Under the vision of the bill's main sponsor, Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), the federal government 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. The most substantial change to HR 1 is this program now won't be funded by taxpayer dollars as originally planned; instead, it will come from adding a 2.75 percent fee on criminal and civil fines, fees, penalties, or settlements with banks and corporations that commit corporate malfeasance (think **Wells Fargo**). Democrats are using this idea to push back on Republican attacks that taxpayers shouldn't be subsidizing campaigns.

"You're saying look, these big industries that lean on our democracy and are also breaking the law — it's very appropriate to take a tiny little piece, put it into a fund and say, 'That's how we'll give more power back to everyday Americans,'" Sarbanes told Vox. "We've got some big corporations out there who are probably going to keep getting in trouble and having to settle cases, so I think it will be an ongoing and sustainable source."

- **Supporting a constitutional amendment to end *Citizens United*.**
- **Passing the **DISCLOSE Act**, pushed by Rep. David Cicilline and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, both Democrats from Rhode Island. This would require Super PACs and "dark money" political organizations to make their donors public.**

- **Passing the [Honest Ads Act](#), championed by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (MN) and Mark Warner (VA) and introduced by Rep. Derek Kilmer (WA) in the House, 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.**
- **Disclosing any political spending by government contractors and slowing the flow of foreign money into the elections by targeting shell companies.**
- **Restructuring the Federal Election Commission to have five commissioners instead of six, in order to break political gridlock at the organization.**
- **Prohibiting any coordination between candidates and Super PACs.**

Ethics

- **Requiring the president and vice president to disclose 10 years of his or her tax returns. Candidates for president and vice president must also do the same.**
- **Stopping members of Congress from using taxpayer money to settle sexual harassment or discrimination cases.**
- **Giving the Office of Government Ethics the power to do more oversight and enforcement and implement stricter lobbying registration requirements. These include more oversight of foreign agents by the Foreign Agents Registration Act.**
- **Creating a new ethical code for the US Supreme Court, ensuring all branches of government are impacted by the new law.**

Voting rights

- **Creating new national automatic voter registration that asks voters to opt out rather than opt in, ensuring more people will be signed up to vote. Early voting, same-day voter registration, and online voter registration would also be promoted.**
- **Making Election Day a holiday for federal employees and encouraging private sector businesses to do the same, requiring poll workers to provide a week's notice if poll sites are changed, and making colleges and**

universities voter registration agencies (in addition to the DMV, etc.), among other updates.

- **Ending partisan gerrymandering in federal elections and prohibiting voter roll purging. The bill would stop the use of non-forwardable mail being used as a way to remove voters from rolls.**
- **Beefing up election security, including requiring the director of national intelligence to do regular checks on foreign threats.**
- **Recruiting and training more poll workers ahead of the 2020 election to cut down on long lines at the polls.**

Republicans are already trashing the bill

The Trump administration and Senate Republicans had made their opposition to HR 1 known well before it was passed. McConnell has attacked the bill in op-eds and floor speeches, and the Trump administration issued an intent to veto the bill on Tuesday.

The White House’s statement characterized HR 1 as federal overreach that would “micromanage elections” and “chill free speech.” As for the bill’s ethical reforms, the Trump administration (itself plagued by numerous ethics scandals and a revolving door of White House officials) said the bill had a number of “well-intentioned but misguided ethics reforms for Government officials.”

Democrats, in turn, have expressed incredulity at Republicans’ arguments, saying the majority leader openly embracing making it harder for people to vote isn’t likely to win his party elections in 2020, especially given the strong backlash toward Trump and Republicans in 2018.

The reason the bill is so comprehensive is that Sarbanes, Pelosi, and other top Democrats know that America’s elections issues go far beyond Trump, and they want to demonstrate they are committed to doing something about it that goes beyond talk.

Sarbanes expressed to Vox a need for Democrats to “walk the walk, and we’ve got to walk it quick. To say to the public, from this point forward, if you give the gavel to lawmakers who are interested in being accountable to you, this is the kind of change you can expect to see. If you like this, give us a gavel in the Senate and give us a pen in the White House.”



The strange and crucially important order of the Democratic primary states, explained

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