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OPINION

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The Senate Stakes on the Filibuster

Chuck Schumer says he'll kill the 60-vote rule if Democrats control the Senate, and Kamala Harris implies that she's on board.

By [The Editorial Board](#) [Follow](#)

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Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer speaks on the second night of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) at the United Center in Chicago. PHOTO: CAROLINE BREHMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

As Kamala Harris soared over the messy details of policy this week, the gritty truth was delivered by Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer. If Democrats run the election table this year, he said, the 60-vote Senate filibuster rule is a goner.

Democrats tried to make “exceptions” to the filibuster after they won control of a 50-50 Senate in the 2021 Georgia runoffs. Mr. Schumer’s attempt fell two votes short, the

holdouts being Sens. Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema.

“We got it up to 48,” the Democratic leader said this week, according to NBC. “Sinema and Manchin voted no; that’s why we couldn’t change the rules. Well, they’re both gone.”

That’s for sure. The pair were run out of the Senate and the Democratic Party for their apostasy in supporting the filibuster as a barrier against runaway majorities. Mr. Schumer says that won’t happen again, and looking at Democratic candidates he’s probably right.

The Democratic majority went up to 51 after the 2022 elections. Mr. Manchin’s seat in West Virginia is likely to go Republican this year. But Ms. Sinema’s Arizona is leaning Democratic, and the party’s Senate candidate there, Rep. Ruben Gallego, favors filibuster “reform.” In other words, Mr. Schumer said, “even losing Manchin, we still have 50.”

This should put a chill into Republicans, independents, moderates, and swing voters. Democrats claim they merely want to bend the filibuster to protect abortion and voting rights. Yet that would break it for good. The pressure would be immense to add other exceptions, such as to restructure the Supreme Court, make Washington, D.C., a state with two Democratic Senators, or ban state right-to-work laws.

Ms. Harris gave a hint of where she stands in her Thursday speech when she said that “with this election, we finally have the opportunity to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and the Freedom to Vote Act.” The only way those can pass next year is if Democrats break the filibuster. This is the agenda that Democrats don’t want voters to notice.

All of this raises the stakes for the Senate races this year. West Virginia aside, Democrats are leading now in every tossup race except for Montana. And there the incumbent, Jon Tester, is barely trailing his GOP challenger, businessman Tim Sheehy. Mr. Tester is refusing to endorse Ms. Harris to cover his progressive voting record, and Mr. Schumer will spend hundreds of millions of dollars to keep that seat.

With Mr. Trump now trailing in the presidential race, Senate control may determine how radical a Harris Presidency would be. GOP candidates can sound the alarm.