



Britain's Prince William and Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge and their children, Prince Louis (left), Princess Charlotte and Prince George arrive for a special pantomime performance at London's Palladium Theatre, Dec 11, 2020, hosted by The National Lottery, to thank key workers and their families for their efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Duchess of Cambridge, who turned 40 on Sunday Jan 9, 2022, has emerged as Britain's reliable royal. (AP)

Riot

Civil rights activists frustrated

Democrats invoke Jan 6 in fight for 'voting legislation'

WASHINGTON, Jan 10, (AP): Democrats are mounting an impassioned bid to overhaul Senate rules that stand in the way of their sweeping voting legislation, arguing dark forces unleashed by Donald Trump's falsehoods about the 2020 election demand an extraordinary response.

In fiery speeches and interviews, President Joe Biden and top congressional Democrats have seized on the one-year anniversary of the Jan. 6 insurrection as a reason to advance their long-stalled voting, ethics and elections package. Senate Republicans, who have repeatedly blocked the legislation, excoriate the measures as a "partisan power grab" and warn that any rule changes will haunt Democrats someday under a GOP majority.



Trump

Trump's false claims of a stolen election not only incited the mob that stormed the Capitol, Democrats say. His unrelenting campaign of disinformation also sparked a GOP effort to pass new state laws that have made it more difficult to vote, while in some cases rendering the administration of elections more susceptible to political influence.

Democrats' voting legislation would usher in the biggest overhaul of U.S. elections in a generation, striking down hurdles to voting enacted in the name of election security, reducing the influence of big money in politics and limiting partisan influence over the drawing of congressional districts. The package would create national election standards that would trump the state-level GOP laws. It would also restore the ability of the Justice Department to police election laws in states with a history of discrimination.

Decisively

Many Democrats say the moment has come to act decisively in what they view as the civil rights fight of the era. Changing Senate rules early in 2022 offers perhaps the last best chance to counteract Republicans' state-level push before the midterm elections, when Democrats' House majority and slim hold in the 50-50 Senate could be wiped out.

"If Republicans continue to hijack the rules of the chamber to prevent us from protecting our democracy, then the Senate will debate and consider changes to the rules," Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Friday.

Yet what action they will take remains highly uncertain, depending on the often elusive support of Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va. Key Democrats have been meeting

with Manchin for weeks, brainstorming options while also enlisting outside allies to lobby his support.

Manchin has made no firm commitments. He has repeatedly said he will not support lowering the filibuster's 60-vote threshold for passing most legislation, a stance shared by fellow centrist Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz. Until the threshold is lowered, enacting election legislation could prove difficult, if not impossible.

But Democrats say they are focused on what's achievable now, amid escalating pressure from allies for action. Even modest changes to Senate rules, they say, would be a significant step forward.

Leaning into the fight, Biden is set to deliver a speech in Atlanta on Tuesday focused on voting rights. And Schumer has added to the civil rights symbolism by setting the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, on Jan. 17, as the deadline to either pass the voting legislation or consider revising the rules. The Senate is likely to hold a series of test votes this week intended to underscore Republican opposition.

Supported

"I'm not going to say 'yes' or 'no,' because I don't know what votes will come to the floor," Manchin said last week, noting that he has supported some changes to Senate rules in the past. One proposal Democrats are discussing would eliminate the filibuster on the so-called "motion to proceed" that is needed before a bill can be debated on the Senate floor.

Republicans say invoking the Jan. 6 insurrection is offensive. The voting bills, they say, were largely written before the attack and include a liberal wish list of priorities that will do little to combat vulnerabilities in the law exposed by Trump's attempts to overturn the election.

"It is beyond distasteful for some of our colleagues to ham-fistedly invoke the Jan. 6 anniversary to advance these aims," said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky. "The fact that violent criminals broke the law does not entitle Senate Democrats to break the Senate."

The renewed focus on voting rights comes as much of Biden's agenda has stalled out in Congress. Before Christmas, Manchin singlehandedly halted work on Biden's roughly \$2 trillion package of social and environmental initiatives, delaying the bill indefinitely.

Civil rights activists are deeply frustrated by the turn of events, saying precious months have been wasted. They view the GOP-backed changes in voting laws as a subtler form of ballot restrictions like literacy tests and poll taxes once used to disenfranchise Black voters, a key Democratic constituency.

Britain

UK to honor Queen's 70 yrs: The United Kingdom will celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's 70 years on the throne with a military parade, neighborhood parties and a competition to create a new dessert for the Platinum Jubilee, Buckingham Palace said Monday.

Elizabeth will become on Feb. 6 the first British monarch to reign for seven decades, and festivities marking the anniversary will culminate in a four-day weekend of events June 2-5. It wasn't immediately clear which events the queen, 95, would take part in after doctors recently advised her to get more rest.

The weekend, which includes an extra public holiday in honor of the queen, will begin on Thursday June 2, with Trooping the Colour -- the annual military parade that marks the queen's official birthday.

That will be followed on June 3 by a service of thanksgiving honoring the queen's service to the U.K., her other realms and the Commonwealth.

In a nod to coronation chicken -- the concoction of cold chicken, curry powder, mayonnaise and other ingredients served at garden parties marking the queen's formal ascent to the throne -- the palace will sponsor the Platinum Pudding competition to create a new dessert dedicated to the monarch.

The competition will be open to U.K. residents as young as 8 and will be judged by television cooking personalities Mary Berry and Monica Galetti, together with Buckingham Palace head chef Mark Flanagan. The winning recipe will be published ahead of Jubilee weekend so it can be part of the celebrations. (AP)

Police apply 'no-fly' zone: British police have applied for a "no-fly" zone over Windsor Castle as it reviews security arrangements at the landmark where Queen Elizabeth II has spent much of the pandemic.

If granted, a restricted airspace order would prevent aircraft from flying up to 2,500 feet (762 meters) above and 1.5 nautical miles (around three kilometers) around the castle.

"This was not brought about in response to any specific threat or intelligence, but was intended to further enhance the security at what is an iconic location and keep the community living nearby safe," police said Sunday.

On Christmas Day, police arrested a 19-year-old man who allegedly was in possession of a crossbow at the castle. The Metropolitan Police said he had been kept in a hospital under the Mental Health Act. (AP)

'Foot bill for unsafe cladding': The British government on Monday told property developers they must bear the cost of removing dangerous cladding that has left scores of apartment buildings at risk of fire, and thousands of residents facing steep bills to make their homes safe.

The risk posed by some kinds of aluminum composite cladding was exposed when fire engulfed London high-rise Grenfell Tower in June 2017, killing 72 people in Britain's deadliest domestic blaze since World War II.

Investigators found that the flammable cladding helped the fire, which started in an apartment kitchen, race out of control. Safety regulations brought in since then require similar dangerous cladding to be removed, but the work hasn't been carried out on some apartment buildings because of wrangling over who should pay.

While high-rise buildings have been able to get government funding to remove the cladding, low-rise dwellings haven't.

Housing and Communities Secretary Michael Gove said that by early March developers must come up with a plan to pay the estimated 4 billion-pound (\$5.4 billion) cost of fixing the cladding on low-rise buildings, or face legal action and potentially a new tax to raise the money. (AP)

Fire

NY City's deadliest blaze in three decades

Bronx apartment fire kills 19

NEW YORK, Jan 10, (AP): A malfunctioning space heater sparked a fire that filled a high-rise Bronx apartment building with thick smoke Sunday morning, killing 19 people including nine children in New York City's deadliest blaze in three decades.

Trapped residents broke windows for air and stuffed wet towels under doors as smoke rose from a lower-floor apartment where the fire started. Survivors told of fleeing in panic down darkened hallways and stairs, barely able to breathe.

Multiple limp children were seen being given oxygen after they were carried out. Evacuees had faces covered in soot.

Firefighters found victims on every floor, many in cardiac and respiratory arrest, said Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro. Some could not escape because of the volume of smoke, he said.

Some residents said they initially ignored wailing smoke alarms because false alarms were so common in the 120-unit building, built in the early 1970s as affordable housing.

More than five dozen people were hurt and 13 were hospitalized in critical condition. Nigro said most of the victims had severe smoke inhalation.

Firefighters continued making rescues even after their air supplies ran out, Mayor Eric Adams said. "Their oxygen tanks were empty

and they still pushed through the smoke," Adams said.

Investigators said the fire, triggered by the electric heater, started in a duplex apartment on the second and third floors of the 19-story building.

The flames didn't spread far -- only charring the one unit and an adjacent hallway. But the door to the apartment and a door to a stairwell had been left open, letting smoke quickly spread throughout the building, Nigro said.

New York City fire codes generally require apartment doors to be spring-loaded and slam shut automatically, but it was not clear whether this building was covered by those rules.

Aleid Foods signs a new agreement with IFA Food Company:

«Aleid Foods» launches the first location of «The Happiest Bakery» at Onecost Shuwaikh



"Aleid Foods" announced its new agreement with "IFA Food Company" to launch the first shop in shop model of "The Happiest Bakery" brand and offering its freshly baked products and sweets to the customers of Onecost central market in Shuwaikh.

«The Happiest Bakery» is the first brand of "Aleid Foods" Central Bakery set to provide quality value products with a unique taste at the best prices. The brand offers a wide selection of daily fresh bakes, sweets and specialty cakes as well as occasional desserts made of the best ingredients, and aligning with the modern and changing consumer demands of new bakes trends hence meeting broad market requirements of various sector categories.

This new venture comes as part of the ambitious operational strategy to develop the central bakery at "Aleid Foods" and support the company's market expansion plans, in-line with the commitment to continuous growth by providing innovative ideas and diverse products to reach wider base of consumer segments in the food sector.