



Written by [James Murphy](#) on June 1, 2021

Texas Democrats Walk Out of House Chamber Over Election-integrity Legislation

Rather than register a vote for legislation that would strengthen election integrity in the state, Texas Democrats staged a late night walk-out on Sunday in the House of Representatives in order to deny a quorum and delay the bill from being voted on.

The Texas Senate passed [Senate Bill 7](#) earlier on Sunday, which would have tightened rules for voting by mail, banned so-called drive-through voting, and would make it a state felony for public officials to offer mail-in voting applications to voters who did not request them. The bill would have also allowed courts to overturn an election if “the number of votes illegally cast in the election is equal to or greater than the number of votes necessary to change the outcome of an election.”



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The bill is one of the most sweeping election-reform packages in the country, and was meant to address some of the glaring problems seen in the 2020 general election.

“This bill is the product of years of hard work and deliberation by past and current legislators,” said State Senator Bryan Hughes and State Representative Briscoe Cain, both Republicans. “Even as the national media minimizes the importance of election integrity, the Texas Legislature has not bent to headlines or corporate virtue signaling.”

Democrats, up to and including President Joe Biden, have labeled the bill an “assault on democracy.”

“Today, Texas legislators put forth a bill that joins Georgia and Florida in advancing a state law that attacks the sacred right to vote,” Biden told the *Texas Tribune*. “It’s part of an assault on democracy that we’ve seen far too often this year — and often disproportionately targeting Black and Brown Americans.”

The Texas Legislature was facing a midnight deadline to pass the bill as the legislative session was set to end on May 30.

“We decided to come together and say we weren’t going to take it,” State Representative Jessica Gonzalez told the *Washington Post*. “We needed to be part of the process. Cutting us out completely — I mean this law will affect every single voter in Texas.”

Governor Gregg Abbott has declared election integrity and bail reform to be emergency items during the legislative session and is expected to quickly call for a special session so that lawmakers can address them.

“I declared Election Integrity and Bail Reform to be must-pass emergency items for this legislative



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session. It is deeply disappointing and concerning for Texans that neither will reach my desk,” read a tweeted [statement](#) from Abbott. “Ensuring the integrity of our elections and reforming a broken bail system remain emergencies in Texas. They will be added to the special session agenda. Legislators will be expected to have worked out the details when they arrive at the Capitol for the special session.”

While some are quick to place blame solely on the Democrats for the action, it might not have happened had Republicans in both legislative houses simply managed their time a little better.

“I can’t even blame the [Democrats] for walking out. They got an opportunity to walk out because of the deadline,” said Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick (R). Patrick went on to say that the “clock ran out on the House because it was managed poorly.”

No matter who’s to blame, Governor Abbott is set to target the pay of those legislators who didn’t finish their job on Sunday. On Monday, Abbot [tweeted](#), “I will veto Article 10 of the budget passed by the legislature. Article 10 funds the legislative branch. No pay for those who abandon their responsibilities. Stay tuned.”

Democrats were predictably outraged. State Representative Donna Howard tweeted, “This would eliminate the branch of government that represents the people and basically create a monarchy.”

In reality, it means that Democrats will have to show up at a special session in order to finish the job they walked out on before they receive their pay.

State lawmakers in Texas are paid \$600 per month along with an outrageous per diem of \$221 per day for meals while they are in session, which most of those legislators can probably do without. However, Article 10 also funds the legislators’ staff as well as legislative agencies. With a veto of Article 10, funds will run out on September 1 of this year, practically guaranteeing that Democrats will be back in special session sometime this summer.



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