

# The End for Court Packing and Defunding the Police

In the wake of last week's election, Republicans currently have 50 Senate seats and Democrats have 48. Depending on the results of two special elections to be held in Georgia on January 5, Democrats could conceivably get to a 50-50 tie, with VP-elect Harris holding the tie-breaking vote. That could mean the passage of radical measures such as defunding the police or packing the federal courts, in particular the Supreme Court. But we now know that, regardless of the outcome of the special elections, those things will not be happening in the upcoming Congress.

The famously moderate Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WVA) put a fork in it yesterday. As reported in Roll Call:

West Virginia Democrat Joe Manchin III wants to make clear that he will not be the 50th vote in favor of eliminating the legislative filibuster or expanding the size of the Supreme Court in a potential 50-50 Senate....

"I commit to you tonight, and I commit to all of your viewers and everyone else that's watching. I want to allay those fears, I want to rest those fears for you right now because when they talk about whether it be packing the courts, or ending the filibuster, I will not vote to do that," Manchin said in the interview. "I will not vote to pack the courts ... and I will not vote to end the filibuster."

Manchin said that in his estimation, efforts to defund the police and advance "Medicare for All" lacked support among members of the Senate Democratic Conference as well.

This is an enormous breakthrough, and a vindication of Mitch McConnell's decision to proceed with the Barrett confirmation notwithstanding a good deal of grumbling that doing so would push (or, alternatively, allow) Chuck Schumer to push ahead with a court packing plan. The conservative bloc on SCOTUS (if it can really be considered a bloc, which I largely doubt) thus stands at 6-3 for the foreseeable future, thereby obtaining the previously absent luxury of still holding a majority even if one of their number wanders off.

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