
Democrats BEND THE KNEE to push police-reform bill, but George Floyd's death may not be enough to convince Republicans

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Nancy Pelosi and a host of Democratic lawmakers took a knee and donned African-American garb to unveil a new police accountability bill. Despite the showmanship, the bill's ambition could be its undoing.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-California) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-New York), along with a collection of Congressional Democrats, symbolically dropped to one knee in the US Capitol's Emancipation Hall on Monday, before unveiling a bill aimed at neutering police powers in the wake of George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis two weeks earlier.

The Justice in Policing Act of 2020, drawn up by the Congressional Black Caucus, would introduce a host of measures aimed at stomping out police brutality and holding rogue officers accountable. Though its full text has yet to be revealed, Democrats say it will end officers' immunity from civil lawsuits, create a federal police misconduct database, deny funding for departments that allow chokeholds, mandate body cameras and racial bias training, and restrict weapons transfers to police departments.

In addition, it would require officers who use force against civilians to fill out detailed reports of every such incident, and lower the bar for prosecuting officers who break the law.

"These are common-sense changes that, frankly, will create a far greater level of accountability for those police officers who violate the law, who violate our rights and who violate our common community standards," Senator Cory Booker (D-New Jersey), one of the bill's sponsors, told NPR on Sunday.

As Pelosi and her colleagues unveiled the bill on Monday, Republican commenters asked to see its full text. In the absence of that, they hammered the venerable Democrat for her Kente-cloth wearing theatrics and *"virtue signaling."*

Yet even though it will likely pass the House when Pelosi introduces it later this month, such an ambitious wishlist may meet resistance in the Republican-held Senate. Police unions will certainly oppose it, as will 'tough on crime' Republican lawmakers, none of whom were consulted to draft the bill.

Even elements of the bill with high bipartisan support – such as a provision to make lynching a federal hate crime – have already proven tricky. The Emmett Till Antilynching Act, named after a black boy tortured and killed in Mississippi in 1955, passed the House with no opposition earlier this year and has the backing of every senator except Kentucky Republican Rand Paul.

Paul held up the bill last week, arguing that its scope was too broad and would *"cheapen the meaning of lynching by defining it so broadly as to include a minor bruise or abrasion."* Its present iteration could see anyone who conspired with another to harm a person in a *"protected group"* jailed for life.

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Its inclusion in the new bill virtually guarantees a fresh showdown in the Senate, while the bill as a whole is so broad that Republicans will likely debate and redebate revision after revision to it. All the while, Floyd's death – the impetus for the bill – will slip out of the news cycle.

Presently, Republicans have moved at a slower pace to introduce their own reforms. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) said last week that he'll be speaking to colleagues to determine *"what, if anything, it's appropriate for us to do."* Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina), an outspoken ally of President Donald Trump, will hold his own hearing on police brutality next week.
