

December 7, 2017

To Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez and the members of the Unity Reform Commission:

As the Unity Reform Commission prepares to recommend reforms to the Democratic Party's presidential nomination process, the undersigned organizations write to express our continued opposition to the undemocratic role of unpledged "superdelegates" in the nomination process. On behalf of our more than 12 million members, we urge the Commission to recommend the full elimination of superdelegates' power to overrule the will of Democratic primary voters in selecting the party's presidential nominee.

We support the elimination of the superdelegate system altogether, such that the effective votes of all delegates are allotted to states, territories, and Democrats Abroad through the rubric that currently governs pledged delegate allotments. If this is not the Commission's final recommendation, the Commission should at the very least follow the mandate from the Democratic National Convention's Rules Committee to reduce the voting power of superdelegates by approximately two-thirds.

We commend the efforts within the Democratic National Committee and by the Unity Commission to move the party toward successfully combating the harmful agenda of Donald Trump and his Republican Party with an inclusive message that speaks to voters in every county and ZIP code in America. Yet, we maintain still more can – and must – be done to build trust with the party's progressive base and persuadable voters alike that the party lives up to its values of fairness, transparency, and inclusivity. That conviction can only be strengthened with a presidential nominating process decided by voters alone, without the potential for that judgment to be overruled by well-connected elites.

Ending the ability of superdelegates to override the will of Democratic voters in selecting the party's nominee is increasingly a consensus position. The call from former DNC Chair Tim Kaine – a superdelegate himself and the party's vice-presidential nominee in 2016 – is just one recent example. Similarly, Chair Perez, you have recently penned a piece expressing your commitment to reforms to strengthen the party, stating "even the perception of impartiality or an unfair advantage undermines our ability to win" and that "the new DNC under my leadership is committed to the task of making sure that our 2020 nominating process will be unquestionably fair."

As Democrats seek to claim the mantle of economic populism from a Republican Party driving historically plutocratic policies, the role of superdelegates in selecting Democratic presidential nominees is a conspicuously elite-driven process undermining that effort. Furthermore, the superdelegate system remains starkly unrepresentative. Its continuation would contradict the purported values of the party and its members, and reduce the party's moral authority.

- The system undermines representative democracy and means that the electorate is not necessarily decisive in determining who will be the Democratic nominees for president and vice president. It also dilutes the voters' say over the party's platform and the rules under which it operates. Astonishingly, these unelected delegates have essentially as much weight as do the pledged delegates from 23 states, the District of Columbia, Democrats Abroad, and four territories *combined*.
- The system undermines the Democratic Party's commitment to gender equity. While the party's charter rightfully mandates that equal numbers of pledged delegates be male and female, a near super-majority of superdelegates are men.
- The Democratic Party prides itself on its commitment to racial justice and the racial diversity of its ranks. Yet the superdelegates system appears to skew the party away from appropriate representation of communities of color. Proportionately, approximately 20% fewer superdelegates in 2016 hailed from communities of color than was true of the 2008 and 2012 pledged delegate cohorts, or of the voters who supported President Obama in those years' general elections.
- In recent cycles America's younger voters have overwhelmingly supported Democrats. Yet while the median Obama voter was 44 years old and the average Democrat is 47 years old, the average superdelegate in 2016 was approximately 60 years old.

Many of the candidates finding success in special and local elections over the past 12 months have been first-time candidates, and the surge in candidate recruitment across the country augurs well for the party's prospects. But giving party insiders an outsize voice in the selection of presidential nominees feeds the perception that only the well connected ought to consider running for office within the Democratic Party.

We urge the members of the Unity Reform Commission to recommend an idea whose time has come: to end the superdelegate system and create a fair, transparent, and inclusive presidential nomination process in which Democratic primary voters can rest assured their voices will not be overruled by well-connected elites. But at a minimum, the Commission should implement the guidelines in its founding directive to dramatically reduce the voting power of superdelegates.

In either event, we urge the Rules and Bylaws Committee and the full membership of the DNC to stand ready to end the superdelegate system and allow the party to move through this critical period confident the process for selecting the party's next standard bearer is true to the party's values, and unified behind an inclusive agenda.

Signed,

Center for Popular Democracy Action

Courage Campaign

CREDO Action

Demand Progress Action

MoveOn.org

National Nurses United

NDN

Other98

Our Revolution

Presente Action

Progressive Change Campaign Committee

Progressive Democrats of America

RootsAction.org

Social Security Works