

Sen. Joe Manchin Says He Won't Vote for 'Build Back Better' Bill in Blow to President Biden

The decision could doom Mr. Biden's top domestic-policy prior

WASHINGTON—Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.) said he would oppose his party's roughly [\\$2 trillion education, healthcare and climate package](#), a decision that likely dooms the centerpiece of President Biden's economic agenda as currently crafted. "This is a 'no' on this legislation," Mr. Manchin said on Fox News Sunday. "I have tried everything."

Democrats have spent months crafting and revising the package to win Mr. Manchin's support, which they need to pass the bill through the 50-50 Senate. Mr. Manchin has maintained his [opposition to its design](#) and many of its provisions, but his comments on Sunday cast the future of the legislation into fresh peril.

In a statement released following his appearance on Fox News Sunday, Mr. Manchin reiterated many of the concerns he has aired publicly about the bill, including its possible impact on inflation and the debt.

Mr. Manchin said on Fox News that Mr. Biden had been "wonderful" to work with, but that he couldn't explain a "yes" vote to the people he represented in West Virginia.

"I've tried everything humanly possible," Mr. Manchin said. "I can't get there."

Mr. Manchin's position is set to derail Democrats' efforts to translate their threadbare congressional majorities and control of the White House into a wide-ranging legislative package before the midterm elections, when Republicans are favored to win control of the House. The \$2 trillion bill that the House passed earlier this year seeks to create a universal prekindergarten program, lower prescription

drug costs and offer tax credits for reducing carbon emissions—all while raising taxes on corporations and very high earners.

It was unclear after Mr. Manchin's comments on Sunday if the party would move to totally overhaul the bill—and likely jettison many of its provisions—to try to accommodate Mr. Manchin's position. It also was unclear if Mr. Manchin, who has previously indicated that he could support spending \$1.75 trillion on the bill, would accept such a reworked bill.

At the center of Mr. Manchin's criticisms of the legislation is Democrats' decision to fund a host of programs on a temporary basis, a choice the party made to make progress on a series of policies while keeping the overall price tag of the bill down. Mr. Manchin has repeatedly criticized that design, calling it a budget gimmick aimed at disguising the cost of the legislation. Many Democrats have hoped to later extend the provisions in future bills.

"They continue to camouflage the real cost of the intent behind this bill," Mr. Manchin said in his statement Sunday.

Mr. Manchin has insisted on funding a smaller number of programs for longer. Democrats may now try to choose those select programs that Mr. Manchin can support.

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent who caucuses with Democrats, said Mr. Manchin "doesn't have the guts to stand up to powerful special interests." He urged Democrats to bring the bill to the Senate floor and force Mr. Manchin to cast a public vote against it.

"We've been dealing with Mr. Manchin for month after month after month," Mr. Sanders said on CNN's State of the Union. "If he doesn't have the courage to do the right thing for the working families of West Virginia—and America—let him vote 'no' in front of the whole world."

The Democrats' Budget Plan

What to know about the Democrats' legislation aimed at expanding the social safety net and combating climate change.

Democrats have faced repeated setbacks on the bill all year, initially eyeing a package as large as \$3.5 trillion that they slimmed over time to win the support of centrists. They abandoned a free community college proposal, a plan for a 12-week paid leave benefit and a program pushing utilities to rely on clean energy to cut the price tag. They dropped a planned increase in top tax rates opposed by Sen. Kyrsten Sinema (D., Ariz.).

Sen. Ben Sasse (R., Neb.), a member of the Senate Budget and Finance committees, said Mr. Manchin's apparent rejection of the Build Back Better plan should be a reality check to progressives that they aren't in the mainstream.

"President Biden's mega-spending bill is dead and Joe Manchin put the nail in the coffin," Mr. Sasse said in a statement. "With a divided country, a 50-50 Senate, and blowout inflation, the American people don't want to upend this country with nakedly partisan legislation."

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