



Head of Koch-Tied Group Urges Sinema to 'Stay Strong' as She Opposes Tax Hikes on Rich

"There's no policy argument for it and no political justification," said one progressive group.

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October 15, 2021

The head of a right-wing organization with ties to the Koch network offered words of encouragement to Democratic Sen. Kyrsten Sinema on Thursday amid reports that she's holding up her party's budget reconciliation package over its proposed tax hikes on the rich and big businesses.

"It's wrong that she is helping profitable big corporations avoid taxes."

Citing two unnamed Senate Democratic aides, *Insider* reported Thursday that "a major holdup" on ongoing talks over Democrats' Build Back Better Act "is Sinema's opposition to any tax increases for individuals and large corporations."

"Her position threatens to deprive the package of over \$700 billion in revenue to finance the bulk of President Joe Biden's agenda," *Insider* noted. "Biden has repeatedly promised his plan will be paid for and won't add to the federal deficit."

In response to *Insider's* story, which confirms earlier reporting from the *New York Times*, American Commitment president Phil Kerpen urged Sinema to "stay strong," a sentiment that several Senate Republicans have echoed in recent days.

Kerpen "has been affiliated with a number of organizations founded by or with close links to the Kochs, including Americans for Prosperity, the Cato Institute, and the Club for Growth," according to *SourceWatch*, a project of the Center for Media and Democracy.

"Between 2011 and 2012, American Commitment received grants totaling \$11.3 million from three organizations with close ties to the Koch brothers: Freedom Partners, the Center to Protect Patient Rights, and Americans for Responsible Leadership, *SourceWatch* notes.

The Koch network is part of the massive lobbying blitz that corporate America has launched in an effort to tank the reconciliation package.

As *Rolling Stone* reported last month, "Koch-aligned groups are together spending millions of dollars on advertising, targeting moderate Democratic lawmakers, and pushing their influence in the halls of Congress to whittle down or outright kill the sweeping policy package, which would represent the largest expansion of the social safety net in the past 50 years and the biggest step toward addressing climate change in U.S. history."



Sinema's opposition to the popular reconciliation bill—a centerpiece of Biden's domestic policy agenda—is imperiling its chances of passing the narrowly divided Congress, prompting growing concerns that Democrats are on the verge of missing an opportunity to make historic investments in green energy, child care, Medicare expansion, and other priorities.

"It's wrong that she is helping profitable big corporations avoid taxes," the Green New Deal Network, an environmental coalition, said of Sinema. "There's no policy argument for it and no political justification."

A recent survey conducted by the progressive polling firm Data for Progress found that two-thirds of Arizona voters support raising the corporate tax rate as a way to fund the reconciliation package. An even larger majority—75%—supports higher taxes on wealthy individuals.

Under House Democrats' reconciliation plan, the corporate tax rate would rise to 26.5%—a partial reversal of the GOP's 2017 tax law—while the top marginal rate for individuals would rise to 39.6%, the level that prevailed before former President Donald Trump took office.

Given the enormous stakes of the reconciliation fight, congressional Democrats are reportedly "getting impatient with President Biden's kid-glove approach to negotiating" with Sinema and Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), another major obstacle to the passage of the Build Back Better Act.

Steve Jarding, a Democratic strategist and former Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee aide, told *The Hill* that he believes the inability to get Sinema, Manchin, and other right-wing Democratic holdouts on board is "a failure on the part of the Biden administration."

"You're the president of the United States, you've got all the leverage in the world," said Jarding. "We need this stuff. America needs it and [Manchin and Sinema] are playing politics with it."