

Cory Booker Breaks Record for Longest Senate Speech in Trump Protest

New Jersey Democrat tops Strom Thurmond's mark set in 1957 filibuster

By Jasmine Li
Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON—Sen. Cory Booker (D., N.J.) broke the [Senate talkathon](#) record that stood for decades on Tuesday, speaking on the floor for 25 hours and five minutes without rest to protest President Trump's actions in his second term.

"These are not normal times in America, and they should not be treated as such," Booker said as he began at 7 p.m. Monday. Booker pledged to take the floor for as long as he was physically able, pushing through with the help of a rotating cast of Democratic colleagues to set a new mark around 7:20 p.m. Tuesday. Booker remained standing at his desk speaking and answering other senators' questions before he wrapped it up just after 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Booker shattered the record for the [longest Senate speech](#), formerly held by Strom Thurmond, the longtime South Carolina senator who filibustered for 24 hours and 18 minutes to oppose the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

"Over and over, he's breaking promises and doing outrageous things like [disappearing people](#) off American streets," Booker said of Trump as he crossed the 17-hour mark. "Do we see [what's happening?](#)"

More than seven hours later, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) interjected: "Would the senator yield for a question?" Booker shot back: "Chuck Schumer, it's the only time in my life I can tell you no." Schumer laughed and plunged ahead: "I just wanted to tell you a question, Do you know you have just broken the record?"

Dozens of Democratic House and Senate lawmakers in the chamber gave Booker a standing ovation. A Republican lawmaker, Rep. Cynthia Lummis of Wyoming, also stood and clapped.

Booker's Senate speech, which got attention on cable news networks and was sliced and diced on TikTok, comes as many [Democrats are struggling](#) to find a

message and strategy that resonates with voters following losses in the 2024 elections. They have also been fighting among themselves, most recently over whether to confront Trump even if it risked [shutting down the government](#).

Some Democrats, such as California Gov. Gavin Newsom, have [launched podcasts](#) to try to reach younger and more ideologically diverse audiences. Sen. Bernie Sanders (I., Vt.) has drawn [energetic crowds to his rallies](#) with fellow progressive Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D., N.Y.).

Sen. Raphael Warnock (D., Ga.) said Booker's feat provided a much-needed morale boost for the Senate Democratic caucus.

"He inspired us today, and I can tell you as a preacher that inspiration counts for something," Warnock said. "It gets people up, it gets them going, it reminds them of why they got in the fight in the first place."

Booker, the former mayor of Newark, N.J., joined the Senate in 2013. He [ran for president](#) in 2020 on a message centered on unity and political healing, but it failed to catch on with voters. On Capitol Hill, he has played a role in trying to craft criminal justice and [policing legislation](#).

Changes in Senate rules mean senators no longer use "talking filibusters" to block legislation, but some lawmakers have used similar speeches to take a stand on big issues—and to try to raise their political profiles.

Sanders launched an 8½-hour talking speech in 2010 opposing tax cuts, later turning the [speech into a book](#). In 2013, Sen. Ted Cruz (R., Texas) talked for 21 hours calling for [Obamacare to be defunded](#). Cruz read from the children's book "Green Eggs and Ham" at one point. In 2017, Sen. Jeff Merkley (D., Ore.) [spoke for more than 15 hours](#) to protest Justice Neil Gorsuch's nomination to the Supreme Court.

Sanders and Cruz later ran for president.

As Booker entered the final hours of his protest, his voice was noticeably hoarse and cracked during some moments. He periodically stopped to wipe a white handkerchief across his forehead. A stream of House Democrats, including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D., N.Y.), stopped by the Senate floor to watch.

When Democratic colleagues stepped in to ask him a question and let him rest for a moment, he agreed but did so with careful wording. To follow Senate floor rules, he repeatedly read the statement "I will yield for a question while retaining the floor" from a piece of paper he kept on his lectern.

Booker is one of only 14 Black Americans who have served in the Senate in the nation's history, and breaking Thurmond's record carries extra weight. In his 1957 filibuster, Thurmond defended the practice of segregation in the South.

In his remarks, Booker called out heroes of the civil-rights era, referencing the ["good trouble"](#) of the late Rep. John Lewis (D., Ga.). He directly addressed Thurmond's legacy as he closed in on the record.

"There's a room in the Senate named after Strom Thurmond," said Booker. He paused. "To hate him is wrong. Maybe my ego got too caught up and if I stood here, maybe, maybe, just maybe I could break this record of the man who tried to stop the rights upon which I stand. I'm not here though because of his speech. I'm here despite his speech."

Booker stayed standing after yielding the floor, besieged by a receiving line of Democratic well wishers who hugged him and clapped him on the back for about 10 minutes until he finally slipped out of the chamber.