

San Antonio

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Exception to Senate rule was a bad GOP maneuver

Republicans still control the Texas Senate, but demographic trends could change that in coming elections.

In part, that's why this week's move to circumvent the traditional two-thirds rule for legislation requiring voters to have a government photo identification was such a bad move.

If one party feels comfortable bending the rule designed to produce consensus policies while it has a majority, the other party will when it gets the upper hand.

Voter ID legislation has spawned a nasty partisan battle in the Senate.

But that one piece of legislation is not worth throwing out the wise tradition that requires two-thirds support to bring a bill to the Senate floor.

Republicans rewrote the rules last week at the legislative session's beginning to make an exception in the two-thirds rule to allow voter ID legislation on the floor with a simple majority.

The two-thirds rule protects the minority faction the Senate and has long ensured that it takes more than the partisan whim of the moment to move legislation through the Legislature's upper body.

The rule has been bent before, but it is bad policy.

Dallas Republican Sen. John Carona, who broke away from his GOP colleagues on the issue, told the Hearst Austin bureau that the move "sent a terrible message."

Carona was correct in assessing that the move would damage relations between the two parties.

The saddest part is that the action will give Democrats ammunition when they have the majority and want to break the tradition for some pet bill sometime down the road and so on.

Senate rules were designed to suppress partisanship and Texas has been well served by that bipartisan approach.