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PARTICIPANTS:

Introductions:

IAN DUBIN
Associate Director
Brookings Executive Education

Discussion:

MODERATOR: JOHN HUDAK
Senior Fellow and Deputy Director, Center for Effective Public Management
The Brookings Institution

TREVOR CORNING
Project Manager
CHIEF

REEMA DODIN
Congressional Veteran

KYLE NEVINS
Co-Founder and Partner, Harbinger Strategies
Former Senior Staff, House of Representatives

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DUBIN: Good morning and welcome. The last week of government fiscal year. It's an interesting time. Conveniently, we're primed to talk about Article I as you think about funding. The Congress is the branch that is responsible for the dollars among many other powers. Brookings Executive Education has run programs on how the government works, for a long time. Multiple day seminars such as, Inside Congress, where we give people and understanding of how this place works and its institutions operate. This book which we'll talk about, “Inside Congress,” is an opportunity for every American and others to really understand how the Congress operates on the floor. Not in a technical, how a bill becomes a law format, but the totality. It is something I would encourage everybody to read, share with your friends and utilize in those holiday conversations you have with your families. You can actually know when somebody says something that is wrong, how to correct them appropriately.

The Congress is the preeminent power no matter what you may read or see in the news, but how does it operate. These fine folks will have a nice conversation and explore the Congress with you. It is going to moderated by Brookings Senior Fellow from Governance Studies, John Hudak, so enjoy. On your way out, please purchase a copy.

MR. HUDAK: Thank you, Ian, for the introduction. Thank you all for coming, welcome to the Brookings Institution. My name is John Hudak, I'm a senior fellow in Governance Studies. I'm the deputy director for the Center for Effective Public Management. I'm pleased to be joined today by three distinguished authors, three distinguished experts of the Congress who wrote a book that was obviously available outside, what we'll be talking about today, “Inside Congress: A Guide for Navigating the Politics of the House and Senate Floors.” If you made the terrible life choice of not purchasing it on your way in, I strongly suggest that you purchase it on your way out. It is a quick read, it's very informative. As someone who is a classically trained political scientist, I read about House and Senate procedure in graduate school in much more brutalist ways than this book offered. I'm just sorry that this was not available years ago when I was taking a legislative process class.

Before I talk a little bit about the book and then jump into some questions, I'm going to

introduce our panelists. All the way to my furthest right is, Trevor Corning. Trevor is a Brookings alum and he is currently a project manager at CHIEF where he helps organization reach their true potential. To his left is, Reema Dodin. Reema serves as floor director to the Democratic whip, Senator Richard Durbin of Illinois, where she runs the whip operation for the Senate Democratic leadership team. Certainly, just a really easy task, especially these days. Immediately to my right is, Kyle Nevins. Kyle is a seasoned former top House aide to House leadership with extensive experience in the process and politics of the U.S. Congress which obviously comes through in this book.

This book very nicely walks through first, the House of Representatives and then the Senate, talking about procedure. That can be a dry topic, that's probably not news to any of you. But in the time we're living, we are seeing every day, how complicated legislative procedure and legislative process is. Right now, in the Senate, we have a healthcare that is being seemingly changed every day. But what we're seeing from this process is how difficult it is to understand what is going on day to day. It is not something unique to healthcare, it is something that is true of a lot of legislation moving through the U.S. Congress. That is, looking from the outside, it is very difficult to understand, frankly, how a bill becomes a law.

This book helps anyone, whether you are seasoned in understanding legislative procedure, whether you are new to the topic, whether you are a high school student, a college student or you're 100 years old and everyone in between. This book will help you read the news more acutely, understand C-SPAN a whole lot better. I learned a lot from this book. I've been studying this topic and ones related to it for a while. Every page was something a little bit new, a little bit more clarity, a whole lot of information and I think what its greatest strength is, is that it is apolitical. We have authors who have supported staff, who have supported elected officials of both political parties and you'd never know it reading this book. That is a real strength, it is something we don't see in our politics right now. It's something we don't see even in a lot of academic writing right now. They were able to strip away their party labels, their bosses' party labels and just talk about procedure in a way that is easy to understand and digest.

And so, enough about me, let me get to the experts on what this book is about. So, the

way I'm going to run the ship today, I'm going to have Trevor start off by talking a little bit about what the goals of this book were and how those goals were achieved. And then I'm going to have our other two panelists, Reema and Kyle talk each about their respective chambers that they have worked in and what they learned while writing this book and what they hope you learn while reading this book. Trevor.

MR. CORNING: Thanks John, and thanks so much for being here today and all of you for being here. It is a huge privilege to be here with Reema and Kyle and John and all of you to talk about our book. I couldn't have asked John to actually set me up better. He pointed out what he learned from the book and how he feels it is simply procedure stripped away politics here. That's exactly what I'm going to go over is what we felt we wanted to get out of this book and what we wanted to present to all of our readers here. So, he's asked that I start with a couple objective and I've pulled out the highlights to introduce the other two authors here.

First and foremost, as we note within the first few pages, it was a huge goal and sort of the focus of this book, that we wrote something that is succinct and in plain language. So, that anybody that is a high school student, a college student, maybe a constituent who is being brought in for a fly in to meet with their member, can learn something from this book. But it is also informative enough for a senior level, private sector manager, who is being asked to contribute to government affairs for the first time. And this was just of the utmost importance for us because there are so many incredible books on the nuance of Congress and we didn't feel that any of them really offered a clear, accessible and short description that anybody could really pick up and read really quickly. As John mentioned, this is a couple hundred page book, takes a couple of hours to read and we're very, very happy about that. So, the decisions we made about what to include here and how to describe them, were with that in mind. Some things are so nuanced that we could have written entire books about them and, as I said, others have done just that.

Second to that point is that we really wanted to dissuade people of the notion that what they were taught in school as a high schooler or maybe a middle schooler or what they watch on TV is as simple as it looks. I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news here but Mr. Bill does not dance his way from hearts and minds down the capitol steps and into the president's desk. It is just not that simple. It's a

great start to describing that process but we wanted to offer more detail to bring to light more complexity within all of that.

Third, it was critical that this was a non-partisan and non-judgmental effort. While we individually all have opinions and backgrounds, we really wanted to make sure that those didn't come through and result in any sort of uncertainty from our readers about the facts we were providing. You've probably noticed that procedures like these are used as talking points in election campaigns but there is never really context or history offered for them in those campaigns. We want to help shape that context by explaining the rules committee, or multiple referrals, hot lining, cloture votes, committee of the whole, reconciliation. Words that you sort of here as buzz terms on the news but aren't given any context of what they really mean.

We also really wanted to make clear the unique challenges and value of each chamber. It is important to not only tell the story of each independently but also as a narrative to highlight the structure of our two chamber system. They're very different in their proceedings and as such their complementary and contrasting nature is really fundamental to the end goal of having an informed reader here.

So, with these foundations in mind, we really hope to advance basically a more common understanding of Congress and empower anybody who is interested to engage at any level that they desire. Whether you're a watcher, an advocate, a staffer or maybe you're an aspiring politician. As we state within the first few pages of the book and Ian so gracefully pointed out, Congress is Article I. In my opinion, understanding it should be step one for every citizen. Our laws and everyday lives are impacted by this institution and so, even on the most basic level, I hope that we've encouraged just normal people to have an interest in Congress.

MR. HUDAK: Great, Trevor, thanks for that. Before I turn it over to Reema and Kyle, I just want to remind everyone that everyone here is here on their own capacity, not representing the institutions from which they hail, including me. So, some sensitivity about that and just so we're all on the same page, these are the views of each individual on this stage and not necessarily the places that they work. I'll jump next to Reema, if you want to talk a little bit about what you wanted your readers to better

understand about the Senate and what the process of writing this book was like.

MS. DODIN: Thank you. First, I just want to say good morning and thank you to Ian for finding us and John, for being here and our cowriters. I just want to say as someone who is always late to events, to the latecomers there are chairs here if you would like to come and sit. Make yourselves comfortable, please. I'm a congressional romantic and I first came to D.C. at 16 and was immediately taken in by how open Congress was. That you walk around you could see, at the time, it was Phil Graham's office and this was the late '90s. I saw Senator Feinstein and I got to see Congressman Christopher Cox my Orange County Congressman at the time. I was taken in by how open it is and how I think so many people don't feel that Congress is that open for them. That it is sort of this mysterious black box where fancy things happen and then you read about it in the news and that's it. Or there is a certain alignment of folks who do feel it is open for them and everyone else is sort of there. Of all the actual structures and all the places, it is truly meant for everyone.

I think going into this, to echo Trevor, part of it was to try to make it feel more accessible. We looked around and even when I'm talking to people that are looking to come to the Hill or getting started or people that are new to the Hill being in the press corps or others that are just new to following politics. Maybe they have an issue they care about. Their cat got sick from cat food and now they're mad and they want regulation. Across the board, a lot of the questions I was getting was very similar and people asked, how do you learn all this. I think other than spending a lot of years doing it, there were a lot of beautiful sources that write about the House and Senate in these philosophical ways or the deep game theory evaluation. Or there are amazing resources that cover individual sections like going to conference or what is a cloture motion. We had a hard time finding something that was kind of just the basic flow of what we do 90 percent of the time in one space. I think all of us were really excited about the opportunity to put something like that out there just to make it come alive for folks and for anyone who wants to engage at any level to be able to turn on C-SPAN at any time of the week and say, I see why this happened or maybe this is why this bill failed and to empower the individual in that way.

I think one of the most interesting things about writing this was getting a sense for the I will call the genius of the founders, and it sounds really cheesy but it's true, in that the two chambers flow

very differently and it even came out in the editorial process. I think for the House majoritarian body rules committee, there is a structure and there is points of light in the way that the debate comes to the floor and then flows on and off the floor if you can hold your coalitions together. And then when it came to writing about the Senate, it was a tough process. To keep it compact and to choose kind of on the 80-20 rule, what are going to pull in for our 80 percent of the big terms that we use all the time. The Senate has a very different flow and even in choosing how are we going to order it section by section, was difficult. You almost have to read the whole thing, get a sense of the terminology and come back and read it again. You'll be astonished at how different you experience the second reading of the Senate section just having seen all the pieces come together. It is more of a dance and it is meant to be that amongst the 100 members. So, even in the writing of it, it was almost a crucible for how the two chambers were structured so differently and then our design to be this sort of bicameral legislative body. It was fascinating.

MR. HUDAK: Great. Kyle.

MR. NEVINS: Yeah well first of all, are there any authors in the audience, raise your hand. Yeah, at least a few. You have my admiration because this book is about 100 pages. The process to write this is as old as my oldest son, so three years old from start to this point. Things like this are very tough to do especially when you have other jobs to do in your life. I was happy to do it with both Reema and Trevor.

I would say on the House side, what I wanted, my like Reema, I've always been an admirer of Congress. I've always had a fascination with Congress. So, when I was in college, I set out to pursue that. I took one political science class, I hated it. I then took one public policy class and I hated it. The material was just not approachable for me. It was very academic, it was very hard to understand, it wasn't tangible. I became a history major. I found that much more engaging than trying to understand something like politics from a text book. Often when I talk to younger folks who are coming to D.C. when they're asking, how do you get that congressional experience, government experience, you have to be there to learn it, in my opinion and, at least, in my case. So, that was very important for me. Going to the Hill, I spent ten years on the Hill working with Republican leadership on the House side six years for Roy

Blunt and then four years for Eric Cantor. It was that experience, that was more like my graduate degree in civics. You understand so much more by experience, especially when it comes to the Congress. You can read Jefferson's manual and if you don't have the context for it, you're not going to get very far through it or it is not going to understand very much. That was the point of this was to bring that to life for folks who may not have that Hill experience where they can get this same sort of layman's read on what the Hill is like.

The House, Reema touched on this. There is conflict between the two bodies and we really wanted to drill down on that and hopefully it was apparent in reading the book. The House side, my wife who is actually here in the front row and I'm glad to have her here, she knows how OCD I am. The House is a very OCD organization so it fit me very well. We have structure and order on the House side and a lot of that is driven by the fact that it is a majoritarian body. Less so recently since about 2010 to today it has become a little bit more freewheeling. Our calendar system drives a lot of the flow, the daily flow, the weekly flow and the legislation itself is driven by the calendar. On the House side, we are very structured and order in that regard. Part of that is the majoritarian side, part of that is having 435 members and you need to bring some order to them. They almost seek it. They love the order. They want to know when first votes are, when last votes are, when they're leaving for the week. The sooner you can give that to them the better. So, you always see, in fact, that the House puts out a calendar for the coming year, usually by the end of October of the following year, so next year's calendar should come out by the end of October.

The Senate is a little bit more, I'm not the Senate expert here, I won't opine on that and why they do it the way they do it, but the House loves structure. So that, I hope, came through in the House section. I'm glad to be here and I look forward to the conversation. Thank you.

MR. DUBIN: Great. So, I'm going to spend about 30 minutes or so asking our authors a few questions and then we'll turn it over for about a half hour of Q&A from the audience. Kyle, the way I'm going to structure this is go back and forth a little bit. A few questions for everyone, a few questions specifically on the House, some particularly on the Senate. But the last point you were making, Kyle, I think, is a good one about the calendar and the schedule. That's where I'd like to start. I think for a lot of

people not working within Congress, it sometimes seems like there is absolutely no rhyme or reason about what is going on, what a day is like, what a week is like. This book very nicely talks about what a week in the House and a week in the Senate looks like and what it is structured like. It is actually highly structured. There is some deviation. Can you guys talk a little bit about a week in the life of.

MR. NEVINS: Sure, sure. And the main point there, again, is someone flipping on C-SPAN in May versus someone flipping on C-SPAN or being in the House gallery or the Senate gallery in November, to have a decent sense before they turn on that channel or before they walk into the gallery, what it is that Congress is going to be doing that day of the week or that time of the year. And it is pretty predictable. Even as crazy as this last year has been with everything else going on, it is still fairly predictable what they're going to do and when they're going to do it.

On the House side, and this is a change when I was still there that we implemented at the end of 2010. The Republicans won back the majority in the House. It was a large new incoming class, Democrats had controlled the House for the four years, two before Obama and then the first two years of the Obama administration. We put in place, a number of changes. One of the changes that we put in place was the House calendar which really hadn't changed since about the 70s, in terms of the structure of it. What we wanted to do was maximize the time that members were here but still give them good flexibility. One of the things that has happened over years is members now basically live in their district. There are a few members who do live here in D.C. but, by enlarge, members live back home. Part of that is just air travel, it is super easy to do. We weren't going to change that and yes maybe that's led to some of the break down and collegiality. Members don't know each as other as well but you're not going to change that. They're going to go home if they have 24 hours between votes. It's just the way it is. So, we tried to accommodate that and what you'll see on the House side is a schedule that is usually Monday through Thursday followed by Tuesday through Friday or something like that. The reason is you're trying to give them a little bit longer of a weekend there to make that travel easier.

On the front half of a week, the House is almost always doing non-controversial business, what is called suspensions. Suspending the rules to pass non-controversial bills. It's an expedited procedure to consider something like a post office renaming or something very minor that has the support

of both the majority and the minority, clear to committee, very easily can pass with a two-thirds vote on the House floor. That's what they spend, usually a Monday and Tuesday doing. The other thing that we did and we changed, at the end of 2010 going into 2011, is protecting the morning for committees. We wanted the committee process to be rebuilt, it has kind deteriorated a little bit since but we wanted to protect time for them in the morning so that they weren't interrupted by votes. The House votes much more often than the Senate does and we didn't want to interrupt committee time and create a protective pocket for them. So, usually in the mornings on the House side, you'll see some speeches on the floor but that is just proforma type speeches. The real legislative activity is taking place from noon until about 7 p.m.

The latter half of the week is when they consider measures under what are called, structured rules or special rules. Those are the more consequential pieces of legislation. Like I said, those are currently afternoon and usually have the most important bill of the week, whatever the messaging item is or whatever, that's going to be on that last day before they leave town.

MS. DODIN: So, on schedule, we follow somewhat of a similar pattern. I think this plays out a little bit in the book that the calendar has to drive us because it also drives pressure points on the floor. You may have seen that in the Senate, we basically consider three types of things. One is the deadline driven items, so like the big stuff that we have to do and then the other ones are boutique items, things that are specific topics like defense authorization and then the third are, I call the message bills. Bills that are born to fail but in their failing are part of a dialogue between the parties. The Senate leaders have some flexibility or different calculation in the way they structure their floor time for a couple of reasons. One is, beyond the deadline driven items, we move a little more slowly.

We're supposed to be a chamber of infinite debate so when things arrive, it is possible, it could take a whole week for a bill to not make it let alone for a bill to make it which could take even longer. So, if you're a leader and you're looking at your calendar, you're trying to figure out how you're going to cut up your weeks, our week flow is similar. We bring our guys back Monday night. We try and ease them in with a pretty non-controversial vote because they probably haven't had a chance to talk to their staff until they land and get settled and get briefed up for the week. We try to recognize committee meetings. For

us, they occur usually at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the way that we structure our vote times throughout the week. But for us, it is very fluid. We're sort of like hunter gatherers in the Senate. Every morning we're like, well what will the day bring or what is possible.

Part of what we're doing is amongst each side, the Republicans and the Democrats, we all have to talk to our members and see, what is your pain gain threshold for what we'd be training on the floor. What are you trying to achieve that week. Is the coalition for it ripe and ready and healthy, is this something that has enough to go or not. Or if you pair it with something will it become sweet enough to move. A hallmark of the Senate, especially in modern times and this is where I'll echo Kyle that, I think for us, post 2010 and even starting in the early ought's a shift to the increased use of the cloture rule. This is a forced mechanism to end debate if you have basically 60 votes. That is defacto made it that if you want to move large scale legislation in the Senate, you have to calculate for 60. Counting to a majority usually won't cut it for you in the regular legislative process.

So, what that means is you are always in conversation. You are always figuring out amongst the 100. What do people want and what is that trade off. So, when you get to the day you say, okay let's have some votes. The question is, are we going to vote on amendments, what will they be, will they be germane to the bill, will they not be. It is very open and there is no way to read the rules without looking at the context of what else is happening. I think that's one of the key things we were trying to emphasize here. So, for our guys, the pressure points, we ease them in Monday, we call it bed check vote. Tuesday is the caucus lunches where they get to talk amongst themselves and figure out what do they want the week to look like. If you have only ten minutes you want to give a week, watch Twitter or the news Tuesday afternoon after 2:15 when both leaderships come out of their caucus luncheons and talk about how they want the week to flow. That's where they're usually putting out their tacit asks and the dance between all of us. There is the set and the unset and that is where you're going to get a lot of that meat on Tuesday afternoon.

And then you get a feel for how the week is going to go. Is Wednesday going to be really hefty and are we going to do a lot. Are we going to finish a bill Thursday before we can get them on their planes home or are we going to have to have some delays and drama, maybe a failure and a

resurrection. It is very unstructured where the House is structured. It often depends on these kinds of factors all coming together. We do try to get them out on Thursday for the same reason. Members are really busy. We ask a lot of our elected officials these days in terms of the demands here, meeting with constituents and committees and caucus and everything else and floor and then beyond when they're back in their home states.

I'll just say more broadly, I think one thing that I hope came out in both sections is we were trying to give an appreciation for the idea that still waters run deep. I think sometimes there is a little sense that if the Senate floor is in quorum call or if you're not seeing a lot of votes there is not a lot of activity. There is a daily hefty amount of activity happening at all levels, I think, in both chambers that often goes unseen or takes a while to come to fruition. Between committee reports and oversight and letters and the constituent case work happening in the district offices and the district offices are super important. No one ever talks about them but they are, for most constituents, they are probably the main office they'll ever encounter for their Senators or Congressman which I think is really extraordinary. Those inputs fall back into D.C. too or that we track all our phone calls. If you write to your member they'll read it. It is all accounted for. All of this flows. It is amazing still, members will still wonder as they're figuring out how to vote, what do my constituents think.

All those pressure points kind of come into the Senate floor. That's our week structure, Monday through Thursday with that Tuesday pressure point and then that Thursday end point. The traffic you see on the actually floor being debated is probably fiver percent of what is actually happening in the Senate. We do the rest of it in a sort of behind the scenes dance called the hotline system which is the way that we process things by unanimous consent. So, if you have had a bill passed or your idea has ridden, it probably has come through the consent system or has ridden as part of a larger package that then came to the floor to help build a coalition. So, this is another way that we, I think, differ is that, I think, on the House you'll see in the suspensions, you'll see like 20 things listed and they're passing. For us, all of the sudden you'll see at the end of the night, very quietly, ten bills have passed. That has all happened in a behind the scenes negotiation called the hotline system where committees have cleared it, every office has taken a look at it, everyone has signed off on it and moved it along to help build

consensus.

MR. NEVINS: And right there are three things that are vastly different between two bodies that sit and are located right next to each other but function so differently. The fact that they're always having this conversation amongst themselves on the Senate side, the 100 to see what the traffic can bear, the House does not do that. The House is trying to have a conversation of what 218 is going to look like. That's an internal conversation amongst the majority party.

MS. DODIN: And it is amazing just how much the numbers make a difference. The idea of 100, they all, even with the travel, you have a sense for each other. It is like a rural high school size. So, everyone knows everyone's business in a way. You have six years and so your word matters, reputation matters and that's the way it was designed. In six years, there is time for me to say like to Kyle, help me today and like three years from now you're going to need something and he knows I'll probably be around to be able to enforce that. That changes the medal of conversation and that impacts the flow of our calendar.

MR. CORNING: And I think that's an important point also to zoom the lens out a little bit. Because we talked about the timing of not only elections but also it is important to take context into what the whole calendar year looks like. Whether there was an election that year. You have to consider when the president has his budget, you have to consider when the government fiscal year starts and ends. And so, all of those pressures also create a structured system around the weeks and the day to day.

MS. DODIN: And the deadlines are definitely the starting point and the great dance.

MS. HUDAK: So, Reema I'm going to pick up on a point that you made during that answer and you talked about the consent system in the Senate. This is something you write about very well in the book and explain in rigorous detail. It is an interesting part of Senate rules and Senate procedure because the consent system really demands cooperation and for people to get along and agree with each other. I think if you turn on cable news and you look at the sample of U.S. Senators who are speaking on any given cable show, you would never know that Senate procedure was designed to enhance cooperation.

MS. DODIN: Don't tell anyone.

MR. HUDAK: Can you talk a little bit about the consent system and how even it is doesn't seem like it from the outside there actually is a lot of cooperation going on in the Senate from day to day, issue to issue.

MS. DODIN: Yeah sure at many levels. For starters, it is a very big country. It started off smaller but the premise being that you're going to pass something that's going to apply to California and Alabama and New York and Wisconsin and everywhere else. It should take some amount of consensus of some discourse attached to it. In the Senate, because of the endless debate structure, it was just not going to be feasible to move everything by large scale debate on the floor. It just wasn't, like our resolution honoring, there are seven days in the week, we can't debate it for a week, we can't. We have to fund the government and have other great debates. So, almost as a necessity, the second system came into being with just the uptick of action. It still operates under the same political principle which is if you want to get something done in the Senate, you want to think long game. So, the way you start, you assume that's probably not the way you're going to end. So, you introduce what you want, introduce your dream language of if it is going to be bipartisan, find your counterpart and do it that way. Build your coalition.

Most of these go through the regular process. They go through a committee, the committee marks it up, it gets reported to the Senate calendar and then from there you say, okay can we just ask, and it is literally through an email, can we ask 100 offices if they are okay to pass this bill or this resolution or whatever it may be. If it is something expedited or if it is something urgent we try and maybe skip the committee but the committee staff are looking at it. All these parts are still intact in a way. And then everyone gets to look at. If someone doesn't like it, any one person can stop it and say no, I don't want it to go through this next process, you need to find another way to move it.

And then, it being the Senate, you have a chance to talk. You have a chance to engage in conversation. So, a lot of hotlines run and take four or five months to clear. Some will never clear and that's the prerogative of each Senator to block things. The ones that do, often you will see that language has been changed, there have been negotiations, there have been additions and it has come to this consensus plate where all 100 say it's fine. For tweaks and boutique items and things that are well

studied, things that are well measured, there is usually a way to try and move it through. I think there are going to be times where even that process is halted so I don't want to say that this is like always. There are times where we have rising contention and things are more flowing more. It is sort of, I'll call it like a mini version of what you see happen on the Senate floor. If you were going to see that plate on the Senate floor, it'd be the 100 Senators themselves debating and deciding and coming to a consensus on something that can move this as sort of like a behind the scenes staff and email less sexy version of that process. It happens all the time on a myriad of topics. It is crucial to the functioning of the Senate.

MR. HUDAK: Great. Kyle, let me ask a little bit about one of the powerhouses in the House and that is the committee system. The committee system in the House is complex and legislation moves through it or more often dies within it in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. One of the interesting items in the House is multiple referrals. That is, a bill comes in, it's complex. It could be true of healthcare, it has been true of Homeland Security, it's true for a variety of topics where you have a lot of committee chairman who want a grab at that. Can you talk a little bit about the multiple referral process in committees and how that can help or hurt the process for legislation and how leadership has ways around it.

MR. NEVINS: Sure. First of all, it is all provided for in the House rules. So, the rules package that passes at the beginning of each Congress, lays out the jurisdictions of each of the House's standing committees. It generally is the job of the House parliamentarian to interpret those jurisdictions as legislation is introduced and then to go about referring it to various committees. Often times, as you might imagine, someone is not fitting one idea into the exact jurisdiction of one committee, it is bleeding over into lots of different areas. Healthcare, as John mentioned, is a perfect example that involved the Energy and Commerce Committee, it involves the Ways and Means Committee, it involves the Education and Workforce Committee. It is a lot of moving parts so for something that big, it is super complicated and it takes a long time to sort out. There can be sequential referrals where something is going to one primary committee and then going to secondary tertiary committees and there could be referrals where it is going all in tandem to committees across the board.

Part of that, and that's where leadership comes in, can be managed by the leadership.

So, the speaker and the speaker's office, speaker's staff is working hand in hand, every day, not just on this issue but lots of other issues, with the House parliamentarian. And they are interpreting with the House parliamentarian, sometimes giving direction to the House parliamentarian on how these referrals should be made. What committee should have it first, what committee should have it second, third, so on, how long committees should have it for. A lot of times there is one committee that is amped up, ready to go on a piece of legislation. They get it marked that they have hearings on it. They get it marked up and reported out of the committee within a month. Then there is another committee not on board with the legislation and sits on it. So, the speaker has the ability to give committees referrals for certain periods of time where there is a shot clock that is developed and if that committee doesn't mark that in time they've lost their chance to have a markup on the legislation.

With all of that, it's the leadership that is trying to guide that process, give the committees as much distance as possible to go about creating legislation and perfecting legislation. The issue experts really are there at the committees. Some of the unsung heroes in Congress are committee staff who are highly professionalized, they are issue experts, they are writing this legislation with a great deal of experience. Of course, as you go into a rank and file office, and this is not to knock on rank and file office, but you're going to find a lot of young people there, folks fresh out of college like myself when I first got to the Hill. The committees have lots of institutional knowledge. So, the leadership primarily is trying to get the committees to perfect legislation after it has been introduced but they always have to have a mind towards moving a legislative agenda. That's what they're elected to do by their colleagues and to make sure that it doesn't go on and on and on for too long a period of time.

MR. HUDAK: So, in media reporting and, I think, in conversations among politically minded people, you hear a lot about the intel committee or judiciary or approps or ways and means. But one committee you hear a lot less about is rules. Despite that, it's one of the most powerful mechanisms in the House of Representatives. Can you talk a little bit about how the internal politics of the Rules Committee both ways and shapes legislation and the role of the Rules Committee relative to the majority leadership in the House.

MR. NEVINS: Yeah. Well, the Rules Committee really is leadership, personified on the

House floor. The Rules Committee chairman is a member of the leadership. He or she is appointed by the Speaker of the House. The deck in terms of the member ratio, majority to minority, is so skewed in favor of the majority that there is no way that the minority would ever be able to influence that process. It is really how you're tying up legislation at the Verret. The committees have had their say, they've perfected but it is now time to come in and the leadership to make the final decisions. Let's say there is still a dispute between the Homeland Security Committee and the Judiciary Committee over who had primacy over an issue or how Judiciary treated it versus how Homeland treated it. The Rules Committee is going to make that decision for them and that is leadership making that decision. So again, the House leadership was elected by their colleagues to move a legislative agenda and they are the ones who are making the final decisions at the end of the day. The Rules Committee is actually effectuating those decisions.

And then, back to the OCD of the House, is then providing a highly structured process on the House floor where things hopefully, although sometimes things do go wrong on the House floor, things are going to go according -- unlike the Senate where it is a conversation, things have been predetermined in the House. This debate is going to take Tuesday through Thursday. It's going to finish by noon on Thursday. It's going to result into 218 votes passing this legislation and these ten amendments are going to have been debated. Three of them were okay passing and those three are the ones that passed, and there, you've got your legislative product at the end of the day. That Rules Committee is the leadership imposing its will hopefully to the approval of their members but it is them imposing their will on the end of the process and making decisions.

MR. HUDAK: So Kyle, that sets up something that I thought was done really nicely in this book. That is, while you're writing about the House separately and you're writing about the Senate separately, this is really a book about contrast and not just differences in the way districts are or differences between the number of members in the House versus the Senate. But internal procedure being a series of contrasts, how differently the Senate works compared to the House. So Reema, I want to jump over to you. Kyle talked a lot in his previous response and in the writing on the House and book about the power of leadership in the House, the power of the majority in the House and that's the key.

The Senate part of this book focuses on the power of the individual Senator. Whether it's a Democrat in a Republican controlled Senate or a Republican in a Republican controlled Senate. So, can you talk a little bit about that individual power dynamic and reflect on one of the items that I thought was really eloquent in the book in talking about individual powers, individual's abilities of Senators to use rules to their advantage. You say that while some efforts may be procedurally feasible, they may not be politically advisable. I thought that was a really nice way to talk about a Senator needing not just to maximize what he can do which leadership might do on a daily basis in the House, but has to think in the long run about what that might mean individually for his or her caucus and for the institution as a whole.

MS. DODIN: Thank you. So, we keep having this overarching theme of there are the rules and then the political context. I think I'll use a straw man example. So, all 100 have the ability to say no at any point to what we're doing. So, we're making deals every day and in that deal making we're building pressure. So, you'll see sometimes, we'll do a big midnight tax deal or a midnight spending deal and it will come over and the question is, can we pass this quickly and maybe some members are unhappy. If we tell them you get X amount of hours to debate and you have a chance to vote no, will you at least let us set up the timing so that the timing works out right. They have a choice. They can keep all of their colleagues there waiting and drag it out for days and experience the consequences of that or they can show some cooperation and express their protest in other formats. Or if they are mad at a particular thing they can articulate that to the proper committee chairman or to their leadership and try to get something future wise for that. So, it is sort of this constant exchange.

And in that calculation for them has to be going forward not just reputational-ly but are they serving the overall purpose they came for. The hope is that we're all here as sort of a vision of how to try and solve problems for the nation and move it forward. And inputting into all that are these kind of everyday micro decisions. So, an example is when we lay down a bill on the floor it's born with a little amendment tree. There are some sample trees in the book. What does that bill represent? That bill represents maybe years, months, hours of committee hard work. So, you have a chairman and a ranking member that have brought this bill to the floor. If it is on the floor, it means that leadership has said it's okay to be on the floor. So, already say you are an unhappy Senator and you're like, I don't like this stuff

happening on the floor. If you know nothing else you already know two things. Leadership likes it and the chairman likes it. And now you arrive on the floor and you say, I'm really unhappy and I want to offer a poison pill amendment that I know will derail this bill and will make it an enactma and they can't get 60 votes if this thing is adopted. If you can get an x to the tree, you have the right. You may be offer that amendment and maybe you'll be able to jam up the process but what will it mean if you do that. You will have derailed the bill that maybe if you were of the majority party that maybe your leadership wanted or that was important or maybe it was a bill that was important to a large coalition of members from both parties. You will upset a chairman. You may have other business to transact before the committee in the future. There is a question of today but then there is also the question of your entire experience in the Senate.

Often what happens is, everyone is aware that everyone has those options. So, it is the reservoir dog stand off. So, and from there we can have a conversation. Just say, okay I know you can do that, I know you can derail this bill, how can we talk to you about not derailing it. These are your options. And you'll find sometimes new arrivals, sometimes people just read the rule book and be very earnest. Well, I see on the tree there is a slot and forget to factor in all of these other realties other than this is here, we can do it, let's go do it. You'll often see them, there is an educational process that occurs afterwards. If you're into like C-SPAN archives, there are some great moments and quick quorum call history where someone has been able to take the floor, offer an amendment that was a surprise to the managers and you'll see the Senate go into quorum call and kind of everyone scatter as there is an attempt to then have that conversation. When the political reality is, you can have that conversation without necessarily making the maneuver. Run everything through the double process. Always know your procedural options in general even for a watcher and then figure out, okay what is the best way to actually get to your end point. It might not be through the super aggressive move.

MR. HUDAK: So, I'm going to ask just a couple of more questions before I turn it over to all of you. These will be for all of our authors. The first is about one of the more fascinating times in Congress, at least fascinating for me, I assume it's hair pulling out for you guys and that is, when a new Congress begins. So, a new Congress will begin and there are two types of new Congresses. There's

an off year new Congress and there's a presidential year new Congress. So, during that time especially the new Congress we just had sworn in, gets sworn in with a new president. You have a lot of freshman who don't know what they're getting into. You have also a lot of legislation or nominations or items that need to be advanced very quickly or at least as efficiently as is possible. So, can you both talk a little bit about the challenges and the frustrations that exist in the early days of a new Congress and how leadership in both chambers deals with this balance between tremendous demand and lower than normal capacity because you do have so many new members. Also, do you want this to be required reading for any freshman class?

MR. NEVINS: Well, I'll start. Two things come to mind, two experiences of beginning of Congress's come to mind. You realize the last two administrations we've had, the start of their administration has come, for both of them, with unified government. So, both at the beginning of the Obama administration and at the beginning of the Trump administration, they've had unified majority control of Congress. That's a big deal because it creates, in that first 100 days or so that is used quite a bit, it creates this huge opportunity for them to get legislation done. Now, when of those administrations did it pretty effectively the other one is still working their way through it. You had the benefit of the doubt with the freshman, as John was talking about, who are new, they don't know the process, often that can act as a hindrance. When you have unified government like that, you've got so much momentum behind you, you've got wind at your sails. So, even though this administration has faltered what did you see. In January, you saw the Congress come together and pass and FY17 budget to set up this process for reconciliation for healthcare. That's something you wouldn't have been able to see Republicans do but for the fact that you had this new administration.

Take a different example. A midterm election, and I'm thinking about the 2010 election where you've just had two years of unified control for the Democrats and now the House is flipped and it is flipped in dramatic fashion. You have 79 House Republican freshmen in that class. That is over one-third of the Republican conference for that coming Congress. Just in the House as a whole when you add the Democrats in there, it was significant. I can't remember the ratio but it was significant. So, you had a large change over in the makeup of the Congress on the House side. And that acted as a deterrent for

legislation. So, immediately that Congress was bogged down in government funding. We had fights over government funding in February, March, April, finally passing a deal for the previous year's appropriation and then that bled right in to the debt limit negotiations and the standoff that went into nearly August of that year. That then begot the super committee and sequestration which we'll living under now.

So, it all depends on what the makeup is of the Congress and if the party sinks with the incoming administration. If it does, you have lots of momentum and the lack of experience for the new members is less of an issue. If you don't then the lack of experience for the new members is hugely challenging.

MS. DODIN: So, I think to start of Congress is really exciting. It's new, everything is new. The advantage also in the Senate is only a third of the Senate is up every two years so the upheaval for us is a little bit different. Even the shift of parties for us is a little less dramatic in these really detailed ways. Our budgets shift less dramatically, the staff shift less dramatically. In the House, it is much more British.

MR. NEVINS: People get kicked out of their offices.

MS. DODIN: Yeah terrible. In the Senate, it's a slower process. I also think it's an interesting time to ask this question because all of us are living through a generational shift in the legislative branch. Which is that if you look at the Senate, and I think the House, just ten years ago, it looks dramatically different than it does now. You had this wave of the post-Watergate babies and the Reagan babies. You have these waves of historic epic members that have been here for huge deals, starting to cycle out and the new folks coming in. These new folks come from a very different world, a world of the internet and the cellphone and post citizens united and all kinds of new things. On both sides, the crucible that is creating these new classes is a little bit different than what created a member in 1982, for example. I think in the Senate, there was either in 2010 or 2012 even just for a one-third. If you looked at the Republican caucus, it was almost two-thirds were still in their first term which his wild. If you look at the committee slates now on the Republican side and you see who is up for chairman position, it used to be a Senator who had 30 years of relationships was ascending to a chairmanship and the bunches are much younger now. We're definitely in a time of transition and retraining. When it comes to

just the two year, the start of a Congress, they are always interesting that everyone is reconfiguring so it is new personalities. It often means you have new ranking members, new chairman different places. These are all spokes that influencing how conversations go throughout a Congress. I think for us, it's getting the first few months are waiting to see what the majority agenda is going to be, whichever the majority party is and then getting people settled into kind of how are they going to address that. Beyond that there is just basic training like where is your office, who is going to be your apropos staffer, who's who, making some of these mistakes and learning from your mistakes in the full legislative process. I think being part of this larger shift so it varies by member. Again, I think the Senate experience is different because they are individualized. The broader shift is what has made the bigger difference for us, not the individualized every two year shift.

MR. CORNING: On a broader note and a procedural note is all new members do actually go through a formal training so they sit for a week or two with tons of experts. They meet with leadership, they meet with their new colleagues so they get a sense, very quickly, how complicated their institution is and what is expected of them to go to different committee meetings, meet with their constituents and to answer calls and emails and messages. Also, what a hotline is and what the behavior on the floor is from you. So, there is a procedural education for them as well.

MS. DODIN: A lift off is kind of -- you can take the first two years and really learn and then go from there. You're not immediately thrown into your reelection which, I imagine, is brutal.

MR. NEVINS: I'll say, you have the election in early November and then that process for the new Congress really starts in mid-November and carries through in December. The Congress doesn't officially start until January 3rd but there has already been a month and a half of prep work for that new Congress. Then it takes another two months just to get everything fully transitioned, committees, reconstituted, rules passed, et cetera, so it is really, March 1st, even Congress officially begins January 3rd, it is March 1st where you feel like the Congress is now up and running.

MR. HUDAK: All right we have about a half hour left. I could ask Trevor, Reema and Kyle questions all day but that would be boring for you guys. When I call on you, please wait for a microphone. Please ask a brief question and do not filibuster because I will cut you off.

MR. WEINTRAUB: Thank you. I'm Leon Weintraub. I'm retired from the State Department Foreign Service so I have some familiarity with State Department and other agencies of National Security. I'd like to ask you about the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security. The conventional wisdom seems to be that this is a horrible aggregation of agencies that cover immigration, airline security and who knows how many other things. I wonder if you could discuss the procedures and processes that led to the creation of this department and if you feel that this was adequate or if it was hurried, perhaps under a pressure, in order to do something in response to 9/11.

MR. NEVINS: Well, on the House side, the complicating factor was propping up the authorizing committee to oversee the department. Reema's hometown Congressman, Chris Cox, was at the forefront of that. You can imagine that standing committees in the House, it took members longer to become chairman at that time. But you've gone 20, 30 years to finally take over this grand committee, whether it is the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of the Judiciary Committee and they've had a storied history and storied jurisdiction. And now this guy, Chris Cox, I wouldn't say is using 9/11 but because of 9/11 there is this urgency to create this new department that has new powers and how you're propping up a standing committee to oversee it and to authorize it and you've got all of these folks on the Hill who are pushing back on that.

So, on the House end, this was towards the beginning of my congressional career, it was pretty ugly. The behind closed doors, the knock down drag out fights between the committee chairman and Chris Cox specifically because he was becoming the new chairman of the Homeland Security Committee. Over these jurisdictional questions that you're raising that are highly complicated, you've got lots of different entities rolled into one.

MS. DODIN: In the Senate, there was a similar experience in that it evolved the restructuring of GA to currently it is known as HSGA, Homeland Security and Government Affairs. I think born from the study of how to recentralize some communication in government to prevent further tragedy. I have not done a deep dive into that moment in time in Congress. I'm happy to converse with you after or to put you in touch with folks who are heavily involved in the oversight process of DHS if you want to talk to them more. I would not be able to go beyond what Kyle said.

MR. HUDAK: This young lady right here.

MS. FILBORN: Dianne Filborn, a clinical psychologist. For both of you but primarily the Congress, I understand that fundraising is one of the biggest things and they're asked to do four hours a day of fundraising outside the building. Can you comment on that and tell us a little more about that?

MR. NEVINS: Well, it is a challenge in managing, again the schedule of the House which is highly structured. We never factored in to how we were coming up with the weak schedule for the house or the monthly schedule. It was just known that members, I guess in some ways, we always protected lunches and dinners. So, I'll correct myself here. I'll revise and extend. There is a reason you are protecting lunches and dinners. Why is that? When members are in town, what are they primarily doing for their lunches and their dinners? They are holding fundraisers and that has been set up long in advance. They are going to some restaurant on Capitol Hill to meet with folks who are going to write them a check and talk about legislation. So, almost every lunch and dinner is accounted for. We do build that into the schedule. Otherwise, how they go about fundraising, doing phone calls across the street, that is done on their own time. They have to figure out a way to fit it in to their schedule.

I think that does get to Reema's point about how busy these folks are. Often, take whether you believe in money and politics out of it for a second. I think members of Congress, we view them as having pretty light schedules, as going on vacation in August and going on recess and that sort of thing. They are very, very busy and it starts early in the morning and goes late at night and it goes beyond them being in D.C. too. Yes, fundraising is a part of that and it is a growing part of that, it is not the only part of it. So, I think there is a nod to it in the schedule but it is not explicit.

MS. DODIN: There could be a five day forum on fundraising and politics. I'd be curious after discussing with you as to which node you're approaching at. If you are planning for members schedules, there is no realistic way to plan for a member without putting in fundraising time. That's divided between meals, other convenings and what is called call time. It's all under very structured rules on our side it all has to happen outside of the buildings. It is separate and there is firewalls so that there is a disassociation between what is happening amongst the policy staff and then who members are seeing on the outside world. It is a very interesting legal structure. It is something worthy of greater

study. For the Shakespeare reading, I think in Henry V, there is a line about the theater is raging in court. It is representing the battlefield raging outside the theater, is represented on the stage.

There are multiple inputs for all these members and I think fundraising is just one of the things they have to factor in as they are building out their careers and figuring out just how to explain themselves. If you take a vote, you have to go home and explain what did I do. All of that takes money. Part of the ways that these battles that we're taking on these two floors, the way that they're raging outside, the fundraising was one more of those spokes and it is one of the ways that they get inputs. It is one of the ways they hear from different constituencies as well but then there is also this whole other side of it. It is definitely worthy of consideration but I would just consider it in the great spoke and the great dialogue that is raging outside the walls of the Capitol. It has its place in that cannon.

MR. NEVINS: One slight irony to fundraising is, those who need to raise more money are those who are generally the more moderate members. Because they are coming from competitive districts so it is a district that breaks 50/50 between Republican and Democrat. Those who are more on the ideological far ends of the spectrum, do not have to do a whole lot of fundraising.

MS. HOWARD: Thank you for your time today. Kate Howard. I've got a question on interactions. I wondered if you could please speak to the interactions between the Senate and House at the committee level and the leadership level. Also, given the seismic changeover of the leadership, just the membership in general of both bodies, when do out of ordinary processes simply become what is expected in the norm, i.e. a continuing resolution.

MS. DODIN: First, I want to say as people are trickling, thank you for spending your morning with us talking about Congress before noon, it's a lot. Especially to my friends thank you, it meant a lot. A couple of things. One of the CR's and an abnormal -- it's going to sound super D.C. insider to say it this way. I think it is difficult to peg things as normal. If you see an election year coming, you tend to know that, okay it will be really choppy political waters so they'll have to do a CR to get themselves past the Election Day and then they can come back and sort out what the full process will look like. Until maybe 2006, there was a process where we could do all 12 appropriations bills, we fund the government through 12 appropriations bills, where you could do them more individually and then get

them moving.

But there are definitely years where that was not the case. I think in some ways, the debate that would have happened and those 12 individual bills on the floor has just shifted to different locations. What happens in committee now is a lot more important in the committee markup providing the base text for what will end up being an omnibus. We can have another day's seminar on earmarks and you talk about riders as kind a new earmark.

All the pressures that have always existed in the ways these bills are created are similar, they have just shifted different parts of the process. I think it is an open question as to how much you can peel back or how much is just going to be part of what we call the new modern American politics. It will look different probably in ten years from now. These are living, breathing institutions that change. So, I think, in some sense the CR example is probably one of the best examples in extended use. I try to be wary of looking back too much haziness. There has always been some difficulty and it is just it was maybe different spokes of the process where you saw those pressures. Now we're just seeing them at the very last step where it used to be there was a little more control.

As for the relationships, I think there are very different answers. In the Senate, I think the way the Senate is structured, we keep going back to the 100 and the power of the 100. Power comes from the caucuses up. At a certain point, yes two leaderships have to make decisions for how is the week going to look, what is going to happen and start to enforce those strategies. It all comes from upward conversation. Partly because these members are all over. They are in their states, they are hearing other inputs and that's all flowing back in. So, the contact is constant and it is constant across all spokes. So, there is constant contact between the rank and file members and their staff and the leadership staffs. When issues are ripe, then you'll have an uptick of conversations between rank and file staffs and committee staffs. There is at least weekly if not more contact between leadership and committee staffs. If the committee is on the floor, there is a 24/7 contact level. There is frequent contact across leaderships between the two parties just to figure out what is going to happen. So, there is a constant interface. You cannot take the people out of the process just because there is no way to figure out how everything is going to go.

MR. NEVINS: I do think there is a surprisingly lack of communication though across the two chambers. That, you do have constant communication between rank and file and committees and leadership and committees inside each chamber. The back and forth between the two is very light. It is done pretty much at the top level. The speakers on the House side is really the only one designated on the House side to deal with the Senate in constant communication. They are also the only one deputized to deal with the White House. So, I think it would probably surprise you how little, there is still communication between the committees on each side, especially the appropriators. They are always in the know, everyone else is on the outside. At the leadership levels, it is pretty light. At the rank and file level, unless they are in your state delegation, unless you're talking to your home state Senator, there is not a lot of interaction there. It's again, one of those big differences on how these are two very separate entities.

MS. DODIN: It's usually a question of what will the other one bear.

MR. NEVINS: Right, right. You're taking a guess. The House will send over a budget maybe next week to the Senate. I was just talking to a House staffer and I said, well what happens when the Senate sends you back a skinny budget and he's like, I don't know what the Senate is going to send us back.

MS. DODIN: And we don't know yet either.

QUESTIONER: Citizens are always curious to know more about their governing institutions, especially to keep them open and transparent and also accountable. The Freedom of Information Act is a tool in the hands of the citizens to keep these institutions very open and transparent. In some countries, the Act doesn't apply to legislative bodies. I'm from Canada so I work in that area. It's called Access to Information Act. I work at the Prime Minister's office. My question to you is to know how the Freedom of Information Act can help citizens to keep the legislative bodies like the Congress, the Senate, more open, more accountable and more transparent. Thank you.

MR. CORNING: I would actually say I'm not sure it needs to go to the Freedom of Information Act necessarily. Congress is pretty open body. You can walk into the offices, talk to the staff, talk to your congress people. It's actually a quite public forum. Obviously, there is strength in

numbers when you come with a coalition, whether that's a coalition of your peers in the neighborhood you live with which are voters or if it is a coalition of industry. You can usually get a Congress person to at least listen to you. They may not agree and they have a bigger constituency of the other side of an issue but generally they'll listen as long as you're being honest and fair about your opinion.

MR. NEVINS: Yeah I think it is less needed in the Congress. It is used more often in the administration and then the Congress will take that information and they will inform their oversight responsibilities. When you see it pop up on the congressional side is often when you're in the heat of legislating and things are going on behind closed doors and the public doesn't have access to that. I think that's a natural process throughout life that negotiations have to be done in small venues and away from the limelight in order to get a deal made. There has been more debate about that recently.

MR. HUDAK: So, if you buy one book today, make sure it is Inside Congress. If you buy a second book, it's from our colleague in the back, Molly Reynolds, who just published a great book specifically on the reconciliation process. So, let's get a question from her.

MS. REYNOLDS: Thank you, John. My name is Molly Reynolds, I work here at Brookings. My question for you guys is, so I think most Congress watchers would say that we're living in an era of centralized leadership control, particularly in the House where it is structural but even in the Senate. So, if you were trying to convince a new congressional staffer that they should really invest time in understanding the procedures, why in a world where so much gets decided centrally and just sort of flows from there, why is it worth the time of a rank and file staffer to really master the kind of stuff that you guys write so well about in your book.

MR. NEVINS: Well, I'll give you one example just on the House side. Almost as a push back to that motion to vacate the chair. Does anyone know what that is? That's the reason that John Boehner is no longer Speaker of the House. Is because there was a group of members, they've named themselves the House Freedom Caucus, who threatened to use a procedural motion against him to force another vote on the speakership so you vote on the speaker at the beginning of each Congress. Unlike the other leadership positions in the House which are voted on internally by the conferences and the caucuses and just need majority vote in those separate entities, the speaker has to face a vote on the

House floor and be elected by the entire House which means he or she needs to get to 218 votes on the House floor to become speaker. After about a year or so of John Boehner's most recent run as speaker, this rival arousing body inside the House decided that they were going to threaten to reopen that vote again basically.

So, yes leadership is very centralized. I think it is very important to understand leadership. That is often where decisions are made but we are at this new point, this new normal that Reema was talking about and was asked about earlier where it is almost a post 2010 world where these caucuses can band together and be quite powerful by manipulating the process of the House in particular and using the rules to their advantage to kind of run circles around leadership and make leaderships life really difficult.

MS. DODIN: I'd say, congrats on writing about reconciliation, very timely. For a couple of reasons, one is just that if you're going to do something you should do it while, you know, I think being a staffer, being paid by a taxpayer is a holy thing. People work until like May to pay their taxes. To show and try to be the best staffer you can be.

I think, too to be as empowered as possible. This goes to staffers and beyond. There is this issue of leadership of not, in the Senate in particular an empowered member, a member that is always very aware of their rights. Very aware of where they are in the reservoir dog's scenario will typically make out better than someone who is not aware of their rights. So, if your staffer shows up to like the big meeting or the conference or whatever and they don't even know their own powers then they're going to get a shorter end of a bargain then they possibly could have. That's a starting point.

The second is, if you don't understand the flow of the chamber then it is much harder to identify at what point you need to be pushing and pulling and on which levers. If you don't understand the dynamic about the hotlines or the best way to get certain things done. Say you're a staffer and you're dealing with a question and you're trying to strategize, how are we going to answer this. Is the best way a letter, do we need a hearing, do we want an amendment, can we ride with a big package, is this a ten year plan or can we do this in two weeks. What is the legislative calendar? Is there something that will apply to this in the next six months? Leadership may be making kind of the large scale decisions for how that stuff is going to ultimately move through but all the input is on the way there can typically be seen

much earlier. If someone is aware of those pressures and understands where to plug in, it is amazing the difference it can make for that member in terms of their member's accomplishments. Or if their member seeks to be someone who slows things down, it is also very important as well.

In the Senate, 100 and yes there is the two leaderships, anyone of them fully equipped with the procedure book can really cause some shifts and changes in the direction of things. I think like Kyle said, there is a new normal. We keep saying it but I think just because it cannot be overemphasized, the directional, it comes up. If you can't hold your votes, if you can't your coalition in either place, then you have to change your plan. So, I think in that sense, having an awareness too of, okay so you changed the plan, where are you going? You need to know the rules and you need to understand the structure to be able to have good answers those questions, to be a relevant staffer.

MR. CORNING: I would add two quick things. First is to expand on what you both said. For your member, if you're not at the table, you're on the menu. From a professional point of view, a rank and file staffer is probably hoping to one day be a leadership staffer. It's going to give you a huge advantage to understand what you're getting into, A, to decide whether you want to do it but B, to be a part of those conversations for the leadership staff and for the leadership staff to know that there are other informed, empowered staffers on their side is a big deal.

MR. HUDAK: All right, we have about three minutes left so let's take two rapid fire questions.

MR. CHENKO: Thank you very much. Larry Chenko. I've got a million questions for you but I'm going to stick with just one. Something like the Hastert Rule, is it a real rule or is it something that he just made up? He just made it up, okay.

MR. NEVINS: He didn't make it up but there are other people who coined the term.

MR. CHENKO: Who coined the term, so what does that do to the dynamic of legislation? In other words, prior to him enforcing it, did people bring bills to the floor prior to knowing whether they could pass or not or is that something that has become institutionalized now.

MR. NEVINS: Well, getting to pass and the Hastert Rule, for those who don’t know, is to get a majority of the majority. Before you bring something to the floor if you're the Republican conference

and you have 240 members, you need to get 50 plus 1 percent of your members to approve of that legislation before bringing it to the floor. It was more of a guiding principle than it ever was a hard and fast rule. It has come into play a lot since again, 2010, this new class that came in. At the end of that year where just the ordinary business has been put into question. Things like raising the debt limit. So, the Gephardt Rule, which was actually a rule in House rules where if you passed a budget resolution, the debt limit would be raised automatically. That was taken out of the rule book and so now you had to pass a debt limit and you had a Republican controlled House but a Democrat controlled Senate and a Democrat in the White House and spending was a big deal. Now all of the sudden, the debt limit is a big deal and continues to be a big deal but it is impossible to get a majority of House Republicans to ever vote for a debt limit increase. So, you're having to violate that principle much more frequently now because the regular business that prevents things from going boom, like a debt limit breech or a government shutdown, require these new types of coalitions. Where Democrats have a seat at the table and the House when the minority party traditionally has not had a seat at the table. The Hastert Rule, yes it is still alive but it's on life support.

MR. HUDAK: Last question.

MS. LAUREN: Hi, my name is Lauren. I'm a student at American University. I have a more general question about someone that is either a young professional or a student looking to help solve the nation's most pressing problems. We often get images of corruption and inefficiency in the Congress. I was wondering if you all could shed some light on the most effective and efficient way to enter into the world of public policy and actually make effective change.

MS. CORNING: My very simple, obvious answer is spend time either interning or trying to get a job on the Hill or an organization that advocates for an issue you care about. If you want to do research look at institutions like the Brookings Institution who are going to allow you to spend a lot of time taking a deep dive into those issues. If you're looking at the Hill in particular, it's really about mostly likely where you're from and those ties to the district or the member and how you can contribute for them.

MS. DODIN: Thank you for the question. It is, I think it depends on the individual and where you want to be. There is a sense that people have to be in Washington to try and address some of

this when, I think, we're like the goalie at the end of the game. There is all this amazing stuff happening in the states, governors and mayors and sheriffs. What is happening around the country is extraordinary. I think people have to decide, do I want to be here or do I want to be somewhere else and what do you want to focus on and go from there. Outside of government, be an amazing advocate, be an amazing whatever spoke you want to come into, be amazing at it. For here, I think it's just the same things that apply almost everywhere else. Show some good judgement, show some good teamwork ability and be a good writer if you can and in a general sense, show some initiative. It's amazing. American politics is so open. Volunteer on a campaign, take an internship. We've actually had these conversations about paying interns so we can hopefully expand the scope of who can be an intern as well.

Just on a practical level, who can afford to live in Washington? If it is something someone is interested in and they're willing to put in the time then it is open to everyone. And in terms of the inefficiency or the corruption, it's no more or less inefficient or corrupt than all other human endeavors, I think. The extraordinary staff that crafted the Affordable Care Act, many of them began their work in the early 90s and waited 20 years for a historic mathematical compellation in 2009 to be able to have a lot of these ideas come to fruition. Federal level work is supposed to be a slower burn but a really extraordinarily burn in a good way in that it changes lives and changes the country. I think this goes into that other decision. If you want to see more immediate action than the city level is an amazing place to start and you get to see things a lot faster. The federal level, you might have an idea and keep working on it, build, build, build and in ten years it might move forward.

The stimulus had very few new things in it. The stimulus was actually a package of ideas that people had been studying and cheering on and like their moment had come to ride. So, if you have that patience and you're willing to kind of deal with some of the sort of unsexy bureaucracy of it then here the spokes are all open.

MR. NEVINS: I will always be an advocate of the Hill. I think it's a great place to work. At a young age, you can be exposed to so many issues and have an impact on those issues. As a 24 year old, you can work on writing legislation. It's not uncommon to walk into a congressional office, especially on the House side, and find a 25 year old chief of staff for a member of Congress. It really is a

meritocracy. You move up quite quickly on the Hill. There is tons of change over. The House side, you have these members coming in and out every two years and staff is turning over. I just think it is a very exciting place to work. I've never had a more rewarding job than the jobs that I had on the Hill. It is some of the most exciting, professional times of my life and I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to be involved in politics but just civics. Learning civics in this country, I don't think there's a better way to do it than to go experience it. Whether that's at the local level or it's at the federal level, if you choose to do it at the federal level, I think the Hill is a fantastic place to start.

MR. HUDAK: I encourage all of you to go outside and buy a copy of Inside Congress. I'd like to thank the Brookings Executive Education Program and Brookings Institution Press as well as our authors today.

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