



The Floor in Congressional Life (Legislative Politics and Policy Making)

Andrew Taylor

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The House and the Senate floors are the only legislative forums where all members of the U.S. Congress participate and each has a vote. Andrew J. Taylor explores why floor power and floor rights in the House are more restricted than in the Senate and how these restrictions affect the legislative process. After tracing the historical development of floor rules, Taylor assesses how well they facilitate a democratic legislative process—that is, how well they facilitate deliberation, transparency, and widespread participation.

Taylor not only compares floor proceedings between the Senate and the House in recent decades; he also compares recent congressional proceedings with antebellum proceedings. This unique, systematic analysis reveals that the Senate is generally more democratic than the House—a somewhat surprising result, given that the House is usually considered the more representative and responsive of the two. Taylor concludes with recommendations for practical reforms designed to make floor debates more robust and foster representative democracy.

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