

TEACHING POLITICAL SCIENCE

Politics in Perspective

Volume 12
Number 3
Spring 1985

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A Legislative Simulation for Congressional Staff

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Among the more remarkable developments in Congress in recent years has been the turnover in membership among both Representatives and Senators. When the 98th Congress convened, fully a majority of the members of each chamber had served continuously for six years or less. This development almost certainly has made members more dependent on both personal and committee staff, but the turnover rate among staff has been far greater. According to one recent estimate, roughly forty percent of all congressional staff now either leave Capitol Hill or change positions on the Hill each year.

Such turnover among members and staff has produced a situation in which many relatively inexperienced Representatives and Senators must rely on even more inexperienced assistants. In response to the needs of congressional staff, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) of the Library of Congress has been engaged for the past six years in a series of legislative staff training programs that have focused primarily on congressional procedures, both in committee and on the floor. A three-tiered program has evolved: the first two tiers are quarterly lecture programs of one day and two-and-a-half days; the third tier is an intensive legislative simulation, conducted twice a year, that consumes more than four days of formal sessions and many more hours of informal and individual activity.

The simulation begins with a series of briefings and hearings that take place in Washington over the course of a week. The participants then are taken to a location outside of Washington for the core of the program, which usually runs from Thursday morning through Sunday afternoon. During this period, the participants take mock legislation through all the major stages of consideration: bills are marked up in committee, special rules and unanimous consent agreements are developed for considering the bills on the House and Senate floors, bills are debated, amended, and passed by the House and Senate, a conference committee meets to resolve the differences between the two chambers, and the House and Senate reconvene to complete the legislative process. Several days after the participants return to Washington, there is a post mortem at which the participants and the program staff discuss what occurred and what lessons might be drawn from the experience.

This simulation has been designed with the abilities, knowledge, and needs of congressional staff in mind.

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Participants generally have had at least one to two years of experience in legislative staff positions in Congress; most also have attended both of the preliminary CRS lecture programs. Consequently, the participants are generally familiar with both the formal procedures and the political dynamics of Congress.

The simulation has been conducted eight times over the past four years. Although the program has

legislative responsibilities, professional backgrounds, or personal interests. Chairmen and ranking minority members of each committee are designated, and members are given seniority rankings on each of their committees. In addition, four participants are selected to be the majority and minority leaders of the House and Senate. It is particularly important to have experienced participants in the

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become relatively predictable, each experience has differed from the others, and small modifications have been made each time to resolve problems that, of course, never have recurred—at least not in the same form. Virtually all participants have responded to the experience enthusiastically. As a program designed for a specific and specialized audience, this simulation would not be appropriate for all groups. A description of the program may suggest, however, ways in which it could be simplified or adapted for participants with different levels of maturity, legislative experience, and political sophistication.

THE SETTING

Each simulation involves forty to fifty participants who have received a description of the program and who have decided that this type of experience would be useful professionally, and perhaps personally as well. Throughout the course of the simulation, the participants become “members of the CRS Congress”; each Congress has had thirty to thirty-five Representatives and fifteen to twenty Senators. Each member selects the congressional district or state he or she will represent. Generally these selections reflect the participants' job assignments or personal backgrounds. Members are also free to identify themselves as Democrats or Republicans, so long as the party ratios for Representatives and for Senators are reasonably close to reality.

Each participant is also assigned to one or more of four House committees or to one or both of two Senate committees. These assignments take into account, to the extent possible, the participants'

leadership roles—for example, the roles of the Senate Majority Leader and the Chairman of the House Rules Committee. Some participants are given more than one committee assignment, both to reflect reality and to permit necessary adjustments in party ratios on the committees.

The simulation is a labor intensive enterprise. Each House and Senate committee has four CRS staff members assigned to it: an advisor on the issues to be considered, an advisor on congressional procedure, a legal counsel, and a clerk to keep track of time, votes, and amendments. During the House and Senate floor sessions, the staff advise the majority and minority on policy and procedure and play the roles of reading, tally clerks, and timekeepers. The presiding officers of the House and Senate are recruited from among senior experts on congressional procedure, including the House and Senate Parliamentarians. The role of legal counsel is assumed by attorneys from the House and Senate Offices of Legislative Counsel and the legal analysis division of CRS, who assist the participants in drafting amendments or alternative legislation. The Administration is represented by a CRS analyst; other CRS analysts assume roles as lobbyists whose legislative goals conflict with each other. On occasion, a former participant also has attended as a journalist. A CRS seminar director has overall responsibility for management of the program.

The participants are presented with House and Senate “bills” that are drafted by policy and legal experts at CRS. Each bill addresses a series of related issues and usually is divided into numerous titles. The subjects of the two bills are not identical, but they do overlap. The bills also take somewhat different, or even radically different, approaches to

the same issue. The subjects selected for the bills are real; they are matters that Congress might consider in the foreseeable future. But a deliberate effort has been made to avoid subjects that might provoke intensely emotional reactions. The bills also usually avoid issues that Congress has just debated or is about to debate.

The goal that is sought in drafting the bills is to create vehicles for the simulation that will engage and hold the participants' interest but that will not dominate the program. During the course of the simulation, the participants learn a significant amount about policy matters with which many of them had been unfamiliar. But congressional procedure remains the focus of the program. It is for this reason that the bills avoid issues being considered on the House or Senate floor, so that no confusion arises between the participants' simulated roles and their actual staff responsibilities.

For this reason also, the provisions of the bills are deliberately oversimplified, incomplete, confusing, and ambiguous. Some of the deficiencies of the bills are glaring, others are more subtle. The participants must identify these problems and decide how to remedy them; no participant has ever been seriously tempted to support either bill without amendment. Some provisions raise fairly technical questions for participants who already are familiar with the sub-

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ject of their bill or who are prepared to invest considerable time in preparatory study. Other provisions involve more obvious policy choices that the more reticent or less experienced participants can be encouraged to make their own.

The bills normally are drafted without regard to current law. Instead of amending existing laws, the bills frequently will state that the federal government

should undertake some program "notwithstanding any other provision of law." This approach minimizes the prior knowledge that members must have, or the studying that they must do, in order to participate actively. It also helps to preserve a clear separation between the simulation and events on Capitol Hill.

An additional element of realism recently has been added to the program in the form of a congressional budget resolution. The resolution subjects the participants to fiscal constraints, encourages them to become more familiar with the requirements and prohibitions of the Congressional Budget Act, and makes it more difficult for them to resolve policy disagreements by accepting all spending proposals, rather than making more difficult choices among them. A CRS analyst has adopted the role of the Congressional Budget Agency, preparing cost estimates for the bills as well as for amendments and other proposals that are developed during the course of the simulation.

Before the simulation begins, the participants receive a briefing book that contains a list of members, identified by party and by state or district, and their committee and leadership assignments, as well as copies of the bills and the budget resolution, and a selection of articles and reports on the subjects of the legislation. The briefing book also includes a summary agenda of the program, a more elaborate description of the order of business that will take place, and a description of the facility at which the simulation is to be conducted. Through the briefing book, participants are encouraged to become familiar with the bills and issues and with the program itself, so that as many uncertainties as possible are resolved before the first meeting of the program.

The program begins in Washington with briefings conducted by CRS legal and policy advisors for each of the committees. At that time, the committee members meet each other and their committee staff, and are introduced to some of the complexities and deficiencies of the legislation they will consider. These briefings, which are held for several hours during the morning, also encourage participants to study their briefing books so that they will be as well prepared as possible when the program begins in earnest.

The formal sessions begins several days after the briefings when the participants meet in their committees to hold hearings on their bill. Before the hearings begin, the participants and staff gather together and are asked to introduce themselves in their roles—identifying their party and state or district and describing their constituency and their particular interests in the legislation. At the same time, a booklet is distributed that describes in some detail the composition and political character of each district and state. These introductions serve to encourage participants to begin thinking in terms of

their roles and to remain sensitive to the interests of their constituents.

Each committee then meets to hear testimony from four witnesses over a two-hour period. The witnesses are either CRS analysts adopting fictitious roles or they are governmental or private representatives taking the positions their organizations probably would take if presented with the mock legisla-

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tion. Witnesses testify and are questioned by the committee members in accordance with the rules of each committee, such as those governing the order in which members are recognized and the time allotted to each member. The committee rooms are arranged to resemble congressional hearing rooms, members are provided with name plaques, and all participants are encouraged to begin assuming their assigned roles.

Before or after the hearings, the participants themselves frequently have arranged for informal meetings among committee members, party members, or party leaders to begin developing party or committee positions and strategies. Party leaders may appoint one or more whips, and partisan working groups, bipartisan subcommittees, and special interest caucuses may be created. Such developments, which have occurred without any prompting from the program staff, help to build the level of interest and commitment among the participants and indicate to them that there is considerable room for their own initiative within the structure and constraints of the program.

By the time the participants assemble to leave Washington on the Thursday morning following the hearings, they have begun to become comfortable with the bills and the issues they raise, as well as with their own roles and the agenda for the next four days. In addition, they have begun to become familiar with their colleagues and to develop their individual, committee, group, and party positions on the legislation.

Upon arrival at a site within two hours of Washington, the participants and staff are given a brief tour of the "Capitol" and the "House and Senate office buildings." A sign identifies each committee's hearing room, which is arranged in semicircular fashion with name plaques at each member's seat. Of equal importance are the working areas, equipped with banks of typewriters and a photocopy machine, and the "Control Desk"—the center of operations where participants can receive information and supplies, locate staff, schedule meetings and meeting rooms, leave and receive messages, consult House and Senate manuals on rules and procedures, obtain bill and amendment forms, and file amendments that CRS staff will reproduce in preparation for the committee and floor sessions.

THE PLAY OF THE GAME

After a briefing by CRS staff on House and Senate committee procedures, all of the committees (except the House Rules Committee) convene on Thursday afternoon to begin consideration of their bill. The committee markup sessions are not expected to begin until the following morning, so each committee is free to decide how best to proceed on Thursday. The committees may remain in session throughout the afternoon, discussing the bill informally and perhaps receiving additional testimony from the CRS issue advisors. Or the committees may adjourn so that individual members and groups of members can begin to prepare amendments and supporting statements.

No formal activities are scheduled for the remainder of Thursday afternoon and evening, so

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members are free to prepare for the committee markup sessions. More often than not, the pace of activity on Thursday builds slowly, as members gradually confront the necessity of transforming general attitudes into specific legislative proposals and then translating their proposals into amendments that accurately reflect their intentions and that address the questions raised by colleagues and by the legislative draftsmen. As the evening pro-

gresses, all of the typewriters begin to clatter, the photocopying machines threaten to overheat from overuse, and the piles of scrap paper grow. Even members who recognize the importance of pacing themselves find, to their surprise and dismay, that midnight has long passed and their amendments still need to be redrafted once more before they can write the "Dear Colleague" letter they plan to distribute at breakfast on Friday.

As the afternoon and evening progress, members also begin to encounter the conflicting time pressures that will frustrate them throughout the simulation. A meeting of the Women's Caucus happens to be scheduled at the same time as a caucus among the Democratic members of the House Energy and Commerce Committee. An intense discussion with a legislative draftsman about the precise language of an amendment may be interrupted by a colleague seeking support on an unrelated matter. A Senator is frustrated by the need to type his own amendment and wishes he had a legislative assistant so that he could meet with the Majority Leader and his committee chairman to discuss their strategy for tomorrow's markup. Party caucuses help members to agree on what they will propose but consume time they desperately need to refine their proposals and draft them in proper form in light of the parliamentary situations that are likely to arise. Sleep becomes expendable as the members become more and more caught up in the challenge and the demands of the simulation.

As the members arrive for breakfast on Friday morning, they are handed "Dear Colleague" letters from their colleagues, mock telegrams from their constituents, or a letter from the Administration, threatening that the President will veto the House bill in its present form. Lobbyists' newsletters also give the participants valuable information about the actions and plans of other members and committees. Members are torn between the urgent need for more coffee and an even more urgent need to consult with their committee chairman about the markup that is to begin at 9:00 that morning. The party leaders continue to move from member to member and from group to group, trying to reassure themselves that they are leading, rather than just trying desperately to keep track of what their followers are doing.

From nine o'clock until half past one on Friday, the committees meet to mark up either the House or Senate bill. At this stage of the program, the rules of the simulation impose two artificial conditions. First, the House bill is considered to have been referred in its entirety to three House committees; similarly, the Senate bill is referred in its entirety to both Senate committees. Second, each committee is required to report on certain designated titles of its bill—normally titles that are within the jurisdiction of the committee's Washington counterpart—although it is free

to act on the remaining titles as well. Most titles are designated for action by more than one committee. These conditions do some violence to committee jurisdictions and to the committees' freedom of action, but they are intended to generate intercommittee conflict and to make it more difficult for the party leaders and committee chairmen to divide the labor among or between the committees.

The markup sessions are conducted according to the rules of each committee's Washington counterpart. Most amendments had been typed and reproduced on Thursday night or earlier on Friday morning, but others are drafted during the course of the markup and members often insist that these amendments be read. Proxy forms are available for members with a second committee assignment, and the committee clerk keeps track of time if debate is limited by the five minute rule. Issue advisors are available to respond to questions, and the procedural

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advisor assists the chairman and ranking minority member and consults with individual members at their request. The procedural advisor reminds members of the proper forms of address and the proper forms of motions and amendments, but usually only intervenes when serious errors occur or when there is general uncertainty as to whether, for example, an amendment may be perfected before the committee votes on a substitute for the amendment.

At half past one, the rules of the game require that the committee vote on all pending questions and then on ordering the bill reported, however it may have been amended. Each committee also must decide whether to report a clean bill, or to report the bill it marked up with amendments. At this stage and throughout the program, the schedule and deadlines are enforced strictly. Otherwise, the time pressures would create powerful temptations to delay and postpone, in turn creating even more severe time and scheduling problems at later stages of the program.

Immediately after the markups, the CRS staff begins to prepare each committee's bill or set of

amendments for distribution, and the members begin to turn their attention toward the floor sessions on Saturday morning. There are briefings on floor procedures in the House and Senate, which frequently are followed by party caucuses or leadership meetings at which leaders and members compare notes, describe the decisions made in each committee, and begin to decide what they will support and

When the Rules Committee meets, each committee chairman, ranking minority member, and many of the other House members present hastily prepared statements about the provisions they would like to have included in the special rule, and they respond to questions from the Rules Committee members about House rules and provisions of the Congressional Budget Act that should be waived.

As the sessions proceed, however, the members become more comfortable and confident; carefully drafted scripts are set aside as members respond extemporaneously to criticisms of their amendments.

what they will oppose. Individual members think once again about the amendments they offered unsuccessfully in committee and decide whether they wish to offer the same, or modified, proposals on the floor. Party leaders consult their committee leaders to learn which of their members defected on what issues, and which members of the opposing party might be enticed into winning bipartisan coalitions. Strategies ebb and flow rapidly as the Northeast Caucus or the Boll Weevils announce that they would have to oppose the Majority Leader's plan, or as a CRS advisor happens to mention that a planned minority amendment would be ruled out of order as not being germane. The best of intentions to consult with party colleagues in "the other body" become lost in the flurry of activity.

There is not much time for such calculations and consultations, because more formal preparations for the floor sessions must begin within hours after the committee markups end. By late afternoon on Friday, Senators start to meet in shifting groups as the Majority Leader begins the laborious and painful quest for a unanimous consent agreement that will limit floor debate on the bill and all amendments to it, and thereby avoid a filibuster. Committee and party leaders try, but only with limited success, to convince their colleagues not to insist on their right to offer nongermane amendments on subjects the Senate committees had not considered.

Meanwhile, the members of the House Rules Committee are meeting with their party and committee leaders and reminding all House members that the Committee will convene at 4:30 to hear testimony on the bill and the special rule for considering it on the House floor.

The Majority Leader may emerge from a last-minute meeting with his committee chairmen and propose that the Rules Committee grant a rule for a new bill that is a majority party compromise among the other three committees' recommendations. In turn, the Minority Leader may insist on the right to offer a substitute, even though the substitute may not yet have been drafted and may require a waiver of the germaneness rule. Less informed members may listen to the Rules Committee hearing, wonder exactly what is being proposed, and ask themselves why they have not been consulted.

As most members meet at dinner to continue their negotiations and seek out allies for their floor amendments, the Rules Committee continues drafting its special rule, deciding how the time for general debate should be divided and whether there should be restrictions on Members' rights to offer amendments. The temptation to prohibit amendments that might pass is weighed against the desire to allow all members to participate actively during the floor session. The majority party members may ask themselves whether the Public Works Committee proposals should be offered as amendments to the Energy and Commerce Committee's position, or vice versa; and the minority party members may consult with their procedural advisor about their right to move to recommit "with or without instructions."

During the early hours of Friday evening, or later if complications arise, both the unanimous consent agreement and the special rule are available for distribution. Members now know what amendments probably will be in order, and they begin to plan their floor strategies accordingly. New amendments are prepared, and amendments that had been drafted on

Thursday for the committee markups are revised in the hope of attracting more widespread support.

As midnight again approaches and passes, members react with frustration as their legal advisors raise unforeseen questions about the wording and implications of their amendments. Party leaders move from circle to circle, trying to coordinate their members' efforts, and frequently discovering that, instead of imposing a party position, the best they can hope to do is to discover a position that most of their party members will support. Committee chairmen seek quiet corners to meet with procedural advisors to be reminded of their floor responsibilities and to rehearse the parliamentary terms and phrases they are to use under various circumstances. The Congressional Budget Agency is asked to "cost out" complicated amendments at a moment's notice, and the lobbyists and the President's representative circulate from member to member—cajoling, encouraging, and transmitting information and rumors.

Before the House and Senate convene at 9:00 on Saturday morning, the planning has resumed. The Republican members of the Rules Committee may finally decide whether to try to amend the special rule on the House floor. The Senate's Majority Leader may be worried that a carefully constructed unanimous consent agreement may fall apart at the last minute. Committee chairmen decide how they will allocate the time available for general debate. And a Representative drafts a one-minute speech in support of a resolution for the President to declare National Brick Week.

When the House and Senate convene to begin their six-hour floor sessions, the level of tension is palpable. The formal rules and informal practices of the House and Senate are enforced. At first, members stumble over parliamentary language and protocol that had become routine to them as observers of the House and Senate in Washington. The presiding officers intervene to remind participants that they should not address members by name, that Representatives may not speak from the rear of the chamber, and that Senators must be recognized before they can offer amendments. As the sessions proceed, however, the members become more comfortable and confident; carefully drafted scripts are set aside as members respond extemporaneously to criticisms of their amendments. Attention to debate sometimes gives way to whispered consultations with colleagues about whether an amendment will or should be offered, and with staff about when the amendment would be in order.

Within the first hour of the floor sessions, the House and Senate floors take on an uncanny resemblance to the House and Senate in Washington. Senate proceedings assume an unpredictable, but sometimes stately, quality. Procedural arrangements are negotiated on the floor by

unanimous consent, amendments are withdrawn or modified to accommodate objections of fellow Senators, and staff meet with Senators on the floor and in the cloakroom to discuss policy and procedural options. Long quorum calls sometimes interrupt Senate debate as groups of Senators gather around the Majority Leader or a committee chairman to discuss how to resolve an entanglement they had created.

The atmosphere in the House chamber can be radically different. The room is more cramped and seems more disorderly. There usually is more commotion, and members in the rear of the chamber may find it difficult to hear. Some members are eager to exercise their procedural knowledge, and seek out opportunities to offer motions or make points of order. Other members become preoccupied with policy arguments and are disconcerted when they are reminded about the procedures they must follow. To the surprise of the program managers, some Representatives who had been active in committee and during the evening negotiations become uncertain or unexpectedly quiet on the floor. Others respond enthusiastically to the pressure and the audience.

For many of the participants, the meeting of the conference committee is the first time they have talked at any length with members of the other chamber and the first opportunity they have had to discover what happened during its committee and floor sessions.

The intensity of the floor sessions makes the six hours move rapidly. Soon the time pressures begin to build as members realize that, under the rules of the game, the House and Senate must begin to vote at 3:00 on all pending amendments and motions and then on passing their bill. As that hour approaches, the proceedings generally become more fluid and sometimes frantic. Members decide that the bill is almost certain to pass and become more concerned about having the opportunity to offer the amendments on which they had labored the night before.

The remaining hours of Saturday afternoon are left free for most members to relax, as the CRS staff prepares the bills in the form they passed the House and Senate. The party and committee leaders, however, soon must begin to look ahead to the con-

ference committee, which convenes later that same evening. House and Senate bills must be compared, conferees must be selected, and party and chamber positions must be developed. The program managers are prepared to remind the leaders, if necessary, about the major differences between the House and Senate positions and the problems that will arise in seeking acceptable compromises.

The reactions of the participants and the observations of the program managers and staff consistently indicate that the simulation is a productive, educational, and human experience.

Early on Saturday evening, the participants receive their final staff briefing on conference committee procedures, after which the names of the conferees are announced. Each chamber's conference delegation is limited by the rules of the simulation to one less than a majority of its members. This limitation requires conferees to bear in mind that any agreement they conclude with their counterparts from the "other body" must be acceptable to a majority of their own colleagues, most of whom are not on the conference committee. The selection of conferees is left to the party and committee leaders.

The conference committee is scheduled to convene at 8:00 on Saturday evening and to meet again, if necessary, from 9:00 to 11:30 on Sunday morning. Before the House and Senate conferees gather together, there may be separate party caucuses or meetings among the conferees of each chamber to discuss their bills, the cost estimates prepared by the Congressional Budget Agency, and their negotiating strategies. After they do begin to meet formally, the conferees sometimes decide that it would be useful to establish informal subconferences to discuss separate issues. If consulted, CRS staff may suggest this or other approaches to the bargaining, but, as during the committee and floor sessions, the CRS advisors keep unsolicited interventions to a minimum.

For many of the participants, the meeting of the conference committee is the first time they have talked at any length with members of the other chamber and the first opportunity they have had to discover what happened during its committee and floor sessions. This situation, coupled with the toll taken by the long hours of intense activity over the

past three days, can make conference negotiations difficult and more time consuming than had been anticipated. After the pressures of the floor session, the arduous task of the conferees can come as an unwelcome realization. Positions are defended vigorously, to the point that a conference agreement sometimes appears unlikely on Sunday morning. But there also develops a strong, if unspoken and perhaps even unconscious, pressure to reach agreement. "Winning the game" comes to mean not only defending a position in conference but also reaching some agreement so that all the effort of the past days will achieve a legislative result.

The tension created by these conflicting pressures continues to drive the floor sessions when the House and Senate reconvene at 1:00 on Sunday afternoon to debate and vote on the conference report. The rules of the simulation stipulate that the program is to end by no later than half past three on Sunday afternoon, or earlier if the House and Senate reach agreement or if either chamber votes to adjourn. The ground rules of the game also prohibit either chamber from recommitting the conference report or defeating it and then requesting a new conference. In general, therefore, the participants have few choices other than to accept or reject the conference report.

In this respect, as in others, the simulation is comparable to the situation confronting the House and Senate in Washington during the closing days of a congress, when legislation either is enacted or it dies. Confusion may reign on the floor, last-minute accommodations may be made, and procedures may be strained, but agreement always has been reached, even if only at the very minute of adjournment. At that hour on Sunday afternoon, both the participants and the staff are too exhausted and too exhilarated to evaluate their experience and their reactions to it. Only after several days have passed is a postmortem meeting called at which the participants are asked to share with each other the lessons they learned about the difficulties and challenges of service in Congress as well as the intricacies of the legislative process.

EVALUATION

The reactions of the participants and the observations of the program managers and staff consistently indicate that the simulation is a productive, educational, and human experience. The success of the program is attributable both to the management and organization of the program and to the nature and contributions of the participants.

The on-site component of the program is an intense experience. Time and personal pressures escalate steadily; there are few opportunities for

relaxation and reflection. The length of the formal sessions and the longer hours of preparation leave little time for the participants to ask themselves what they are learning and how effectively they are acting during the play of the game. Only after the simulation ends is there time to raise and discuss such questions. However, the intensity of the program is essential to its success. It makes it possible for the program to become reality, not just a simulation of reality. By isolating the participants in a setting outside of Washington—without newspapers, television, or telephones—there are no distractions and few reminders that there is a world outside of the world created by the program.

Some members may observe more than participate, but very few opt out of the game. The continuing flurry of activity is contagious and peer pressures exert a powerful centripetal force. The program managers and staff help to build and maintain an aura of reality by preserving a good-natured but serious attitude toward the participants. The elaborate briefing books and meetings, the intricate arrangement of the program, the expertise and demeanor of the advisors, the efficiency of the seminar staff, the specially arranged facilities, and even the committee signs, name plaques, and facsimile amendment forms all contribute to an atmosphere that encourages the participants to invest their own best efforts.

Ultimately, however, it is the participants themselves who make the simulation work. Collectively, they are intelligent, energetic, and competitive.

Participants have commented on the value of the simulation for their understanding of leadership, bargaining, coalition building, and group dynamics.

Through their observations and activities on Capitol Hill, they have absorbed a sense of the dynamics of the legislative process and a general familiarity with congressional procedures. They are accustomed to coping with time pressures and making choices on the basis of limited knowledge and information. In Washington, they rarely are independent actors; they support and advise, and they adjust to a lack of public recognition for their efforts. In the "CRS Congress," by contrast, they make the choices and the speeches and they face the consequences; they

can test themselves as political actors, as policy makers, and as legislative strategists. Most participants relish the opportunity. The program depends on their willingness to accept the challenge and their ability to meet it well.

The simulation has proven to be an excellent supplement to more traditional lectures on congressional procedures. The need to select procedures wisely and use them correctly before a group of peers increases attention to and appreciation of forms and rules that otherwise might seem arcane and lifeless. Most participants become more sensitive to the impact that the effective use of procedure may have on congressional policy making. In fact, the program has become a simulation of the legislative process, in which considerations of procedure become inextricably mixed with considerations of policy, politics, and personality.

The lessons drawn from the experience mirror this mix of elements. Participants have commented on the value of the simulation for their understanding of leadership, bargaining, coalition building, and group dynamics. Some have observed that they became more sensitive and sympathetic to the time pressures facing their Representatives and Senators in Washington, as well as to the support that members need and the information that is most useful to them at various stages of the legislative process. Others have returned with a greater appreciation for the complexity of political choices and the importance of their own supporting roles. Thus, there is reason to conclude that the value of the simulation has extended beyond a greater familiarity with the meaning, use, and importance of Congress' formal rules and informal practices.

Would this simulation program be appropriate for other groups of participants and adaptable to other settings? The preparation, organization, and management of the program require the mobilization of resources within and by CRS that are available to few if any other organizations, academic or otherwise. In addition to experienced program managers, the simulation requires the participation in staff roles of experts in policy, procedure, and law. Other groups of participants may be comparable to congressional staff in maturity, energy, and intelligence, but they are most unlikely to bring to such a program the same degree of political experience and the same knowledge of the ways of Congress.

Yet the record of the "CRS Congress" demonstrates that simulation can be an effective device for illuminating many aspects—official and customary, policy and political, personal and institutional—of the legislative process in Congress. The program sponsored by CRS may be simplified to emphasize only certain of these aspects, and adapted to suit the resources available as well as the backgrounds and qualifications of the prospective participants.