

George W. Andrews

Rules Committee Expansion: Part One

Detailed account of the floor activity and debate during the vote in 1961 to expand the Rules Committee.
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The thing about the Rules Committee vote was that nobody knew how it was going to come out. I mean— you know even the civil rights bill, everybody knew that was going to pass. Most bills— you know they're going to pass. I mean you can add the numbers, but but this bill— the Rules Committee divided delegations, because you had John Kennedy and Speaker Rayburn— Speaker Rayburn, especially, put all of his prestige on the line. This was what he was going to do for the new President. He was going to get rid of the logjam and roadblock that Judge Smith had successfully, for years, had in place on Democratic legislation. When the day of the vote came up, the floor was packed. I mean, normally, the only time you would see the House Floor like you dream about it on TV or see in the photographs of the State of the Union, the only time you would see the floor— it would be rare that the floor would be packed. But on the debate on the Rules Committee, which, it had a limited timeframe. It was all done in one day. Members— the floor was packed. And I think there were a lot of people undecided. And, that is the one piece of legislation that I saw that I think the debates were important.