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Conference Committees

Michael R. Lemov provides background on conference committees.

Interview recorded February 22, 2012

It was a deal. The bill was reported out of subcommittee, cleared the full committee with almost no change, and it went to conference with the Senate. Now this was a really interesting part of the process. The House often wins out in conference committees, that's the saying around here, and I think there's some truth to it, because the Senate—the conference committees are actually made up of the Members and Senators themselves, so they have to know the substance in order to really be able to discuss an amendment. The staff sits behind them along the wall, in a room in the Capitol, usually. And, you really can't, a Member can't really fake it, or a Senator can't really fake it too much. He knows a couple of lines about his bill, but his staff really knows it, because the Senators have so much more on their plate, there being fewer of them. So, in this case, the House was quite dominant, and the bill came back pretty much again, the National Commission's Bill.