

Patricia (Tish) Speed Schwartz
Chief Clerk/Administrator, House Committee on the Judiciary

Science Subcommittee Assignments

Detailed description of the mechanics of subcommittee assignments at the beginning of a new Congress.

Interview recorded June 22, 2015

First, whoever was in power, which at that time was the Democratic Members, they would break off and go into a closed session. And they would set up subcommittees. Now, they had kind of *pro forma* done these, and they had them on a big board with the jurisdiction under them, and the chairman had been working with different Members, just making a decision of who would be the best person to be the Ranking Member on that subcommittee. And they would choose the Ranking Member. Say there were five subcommittees, they would choose the Ranking Member on each subcommittee. That would be the first round. They'd put his name up on the board, or her name, and then they would allocate a certain amount of slots broadly. And this is the party in power. And they would go through and depending on—oh, do a roll call, and it would be by seniority. They'd call out a name, "Which subcommittee do you want?" "I would like aviation." "Okay. Mr. So-and-So has aviation. All right, Ms., next person, Mr. Bowler, which would you like?" "I'm going to take energy." And so forth, it would go around, and they'd start all over again. And around, and they'd start all over again until they filled up.

Then, you would hear, we were kind of done, but not really because then the Members would say, "Well, really, does anybody want aviation? I really don't want to be on aviation. I know it was the only slot left, I really want to be on energy because my constituency, could anyone . . ." Now, remember it's closed doors, so there's nobody, and there'd be a swap. So, they'd trade. "Okay, are we all done?" They'd gavel down, they confirm the subcommittee titles, the subcommittee chairmen, and the subcommittee membership, as far as the Democratic Party.

Then they would leave that board on the wall. Then they would go to the Republican staff and say, "We're done our business, your turn." So, the Republicans would then come in, see the board, see the committees, see the jurisdiction, who's chairing, how many slots because the Democratic Members dictate it. You could have 3 people on one subcommittee and 10 on another because that was the hot issue. And that would limit because we could only do, if you only had three, we could only do two. Or if you had 10, you could only do 7. So, it was proportionate to that. And we would do the same process, you'd start by seniority, and the chairman would call out names.