

How a Minority can and does Control Legislation

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The recent special session was called by the governor to correct errors in the drafting of Senate Bill SB17-267. The result is a classic example of how a small group of legislators can use ideology to prevent governance. This was done by one party, (but both parties at times use the same tactics). The two bills the governor wanted passed were never voted on by all the senators. Instead three senators in a committee hearing voted to prevent the bills from being voted on by the entire senate.

How do they do this?

The senate has 35 members. In 2017, one party has 18 members. This gives them control to elect the senate leadership. The senators of the majority party meet to select the senate leaders. For the current senate: It takes only 10 members of the party to elect leadership. In practice: once a party selects its leaders all members of the party support the choice. These 10 {or more} members (35% {or more} of senate membership) now have control of all legislation being considered.

Bills are sent to a committee for review and evaluation before being referred to the senate as a whole for consideration. The leadership of each party selects which senators will be on each committee. The majority party always has more members on each committee.

One committee is always, unofficially, designated the "kill" committee. This committee is always assigned legislators whose vote can always be counted on by leadership.

When leadership, supported by 10 {or more} senators, decides a bill should not be voted on by the senate as a whole, the bill is assigned to the "kill" committee. There three senators can and will block the bill from a vote by the entire senate. Too often this action is taken based on ideology instead of governance.

Sometimes a no vote by the senators of the majority party would not be popular in their districts. So the "kill" committee will act to prevent the bill from a vote by the entire senate.

Frequently, the most important bills are those that never made it out of committee. ***The question: is ideology preventing good governance? Each voter needs to evaluate this when determining whether to support their legislators.***



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