

**Reforming Congress Project**  
**Sunwater Institute**  
**Interview with Professor Ruth Block Rubin**

**CHERVENAK:** Ruth, thanks so much for joining us.

**RUBIN:** Thank you so much for having me.

**CHERVENAK:** Why don't we start with your background, where you started, the arc of your career so far, and where you are now?

**RUBIN:** Sure, well I'm an assistant professor of political science at the University of Chicago. I trained at the University of California, Berkeley, and then spent some time at Harvard doing a post-doc, but my interest in political science and in Congress in general I started actually as a kid. I grew up right outside of Washington, D.C., where unlike in most of America, what Congress is doing is what everyone is discussing at dinner, and so sort of understanding those institutions as being sort of crucial for most Americans was sort of very intuitive, and I've had the pleasure of being able to study these, the people who work in Congress and other institutions in our federal government and then the institutions themselves in my work.

**CHERVENAK:** And so broadly speaking, I mean you've been at these different institutions over time, you know, what has been the broad theme of your research? Is it Congress specifically, or is it democratic institutions, or what's the general interest that you have that brought you into this area?

**RUBIN:** I study Congress in particular, that's the base of a lot of my research, but I would say what fundamentally I'm interested in is how organization empowers people, and Congress is a great site of political conflict to study that, as it's pretty clear when you study legislative politics even at a glance, it's very uncommon for a single individual to make great changes, and often what is required is coordination and collaboration among a variety of committed members, and so understanding how lawmakers facilitate that kind of collaboration has been a real interest of mine, and it's the subject of my first book as well as continuing research.

**CHERVENAK:** Well, why don't we dig into your book theme, then, which I know relates to groups of people within Congress kind of organizing for some purpose. Can you give us an overview of that kind of research question, you know, what was the real question that you had going into that research and what answers, if any, did you find?

**RUBIN:** Sure, well I think it's helpful to start with sort of how we often think about legislative politics, and I think for many of us, we may emerge from our high school or college education with a sense that politics is specifically, and Congress kind of, works the way like the Schoolhouse Rock vision, where, you know, there's a bill that appears, and it goes through committee and like experts evaluate it, and then it gets to the Senate or House floor, and people discuss it and debate it, and maybe there's, you know, a rousing speech made by a

particular lawmaker and, you know, everyone's persuaded and a vote happens and you know done and dusted, and President signs it into law.

And the truth of the matter is politics is way more complicated, and legislating is way more complicated, and individual action is just really difficult, and members are often at a real disadvantage as compared to party leaders, both in terms of the information they have at their disposal, the resources, the staffing help they have, and so it's really hard as an individual member to do things on behalf of your constituents or to answer some of the pressing problems of the day, and so then the question is, though, when you look across histories, we do see moments where individual members in concert with others manage to come together to pass really important pieces of legislation or to make really important procedural reforms.

So you can think about like the Civil Rights Acts require the concerted effort of a bunch of liberal policy entrepreneurs pushing civil rights legislation, and that was happening in parallel to the grassroots social movements that were happening in many city streets and in communities across America. And so if we think about social movements, you know in Selma, Alabama, or Birmingham, it's helpful to think about those same kinds of movements happening in Congress.

And they don't just happen just like in, you know, meetings that take place among citizens. You actually have to like get together and talk about what you want, and you have to decide like how are we going to decide on what pieces of legislation we offer, what proposals are most important to us, and so thinking about the ways that lawmakers can institutionalize that decision-making process and then bind everyone to a common plan of action, rather than, you know, deciding on something and then having everyone go their own separate ways once they're released back into the wild, that those mechanisms are really important for us as citizens and as social scientists to understand.

And so when we look to Congress, what we see is that frequently, lawmakers invest in formal organizations. So to give you contemporary examples, you might think about the Congressional Progressive Caucus or the House Freedom Caucus as examples of efforts to institutionalize collaboration among rank and file members. So they're better able to compete with party leaders or other powerful interests within Washington to get what they and their constituents or the interests they're representing want.

And so when we want to, as much as we may not like the policies that certain groups are proposing, it's really important to understand why they're being successful at doing so, so regardless of your politics, whether you think of yourself as someone who's a conservative and you look at the Congressional Progressive Caucus and you say, I really don't like what they're doing, it's important to understand the tactics. Likewise, with the House Freedom Caucus, you may or may not agree with their politics, but they're a really good example of a successful effort to foster collaboration among members of Congress who let it be said are not necessarily known for being the most collaborative individuals. They all have their own agendas and political interests, and so getting an infrastructure to allow people to work together is really important.

**CHERVENAK:** So if we take a step back and talk about the types of organizations within the chambers, obviously the House and the Senate, they're the two fundamental units, then you've got the Member at the other end as an individual, now in between, there are the committees, and those are the formal organizations. And then there are these caucuses, which are, I guess it sounds like there are there's a range of types of caucuses, from, hey let's go have a drink together caucus, where there's nothing structural in, you know, together there are no rules other than it's all by choice, to the other end where it sounds like there's more structured, almost committee-like rules and procedures in place. Can you talk just about generally speaking, the different types of organizations within a chamber and how they vary in terms of their formality and their rules?

**RUBIN:** Sure, so I think like as you say it's helpful to start with the kind of formal organizations that we think about, and so in addition to committees we might also want to look at party organizations, so the Republican Conference or the Democratic Caucus, and they have their own operating rules that govern how their members behave, I mean who gets what. And often those sorts of organizations are overlapping, so Democratic rules within the Democratic Caucus help to decide who gets on committees as Democratic members and likewise for Republicans.

So they're competing or overlapping organizational relationships, but those are the sort of two formal ones I think everyone thinks about. There are also a variety of different kinds of factional groupings that we might think of as like caucuses or meetings or clubs, and they can run from everything like the Senate Bean Soup Club, which meets infrequently and they're very passionate about soup, and then groups that have a clear policy focus but might actually be bipartisan.

I think for me, what's particularly interesting is to focus on organizations that are entirely within one party, so inter-party organizations like the Congressional Progressive Caucus or House Freedom Caucus because those are groups that are really crucial in this tug of war between party members and their party leadership, and they organize typically far more elaborately than groups, say, that are passionate about wind sailing or are particularly committed to, say, promoting healthcare legislation for diabetic Americans, and not that those organizations aren't important, but they don't tend to take priority in the same way in legislative politics as, say, the House Freedom Caucus or Congressional Progressive Caucus do today.

And so as a political scientist, it was interesting to understand like why do these groups form, why would you create kind of a competitor institution to a party, but also why are these groups sometimes successful in getting what they want from party leaders, and why sometimes do they fail? So those are sort of the conceptual questions that I think are interesting, but it's important to note that partially because Congress has a large legislative body, members have gravitated to these sort of subgroupings, so you're not just a lone lawmaker in the wind, you have company. And I think in that way, it's helpful to sort of think about all of these organizations as both ways to sort of concentrate members' energy but also to give them something to specialize in, whether that's specializing in a particular policy area but I didn't

have a committee relationship and a committee assignment, or specializing in a particular policy area because of a caucus membership. They're both sort of serving similar purposes in that sense.

**CHERVENAK:** So when you talk about these intraparty organizations, can you describe briefly the rules that they put in place? You know I've talked in the past with Mickey Edwards and some others about the concept of rules imposition on members by these party organizations. And how does that work when you have these organizations? I mean, do they have rules? So, they have penalties if you don't follow the rules? You know, how does that work, and how do they control behavior of their members?

**RUBIN:** Yeah, so that's a great question and I think you know it's helpful to note sort of at the first point that there's a lot of variation, and that even within the same organization over time, different groups may decide that some rules are working for them or that actually a lack of rules is a problem and they need more formal structures, and so it really depends on what time you're talking about. I think there's also some important institutional variation that one could point to, so I think if you think about just how difficult it is to coordinate the activities of a lot of people versus how relatively easy it is to coordinate the activities of a few that there will be chamber differences.

So if you're just getting together with a couple of Senators and right into only being you know several of a hundred, you have sort of inherently more power, you may need less in the way of formal rules to structure your coordination and collaboration than if you're in the House where, with 300 plus members, that's a lot of people to be trying to wrangle, and so you actually need rules, like attendance rules. Are you going to show up to meetings? How are we going to fund staff, if we're going to do that? And so the rules that these organizations adopt run the gamut from everything to, do we meet regularly? How do we vet members? Do we have membership requirements? Do we require people to pay dues? What kind of services do we provide? Are we there just as a forum for members just repair grievances and shoes with each other, or are these opportunities to solicit research from staff, or to coordinate with outside interest groups?

And then I think really crucially for a lot of these organizations and particularly the ones that persist and are most successful are, are we going to require members to vote together? Are we going to insist that if we decide something as a group that we're going to follow through in our negotiations with party leaders? And here I think, this is where the costs of membership run up against the benefits because the commitment to work together and to vote together endows you and your group with a great deal of power if you control the pivotal votes, or the pivotal votes on the floor or within the party, but at the same time promising to vote with your buddies may actually be pretty costly to you as an individual if they decide to go a way that you don't necessarily feel comfortable with, or they're picking a position that is more extreme than you would accept, or not sufficiently extreme.

And so that's where I think membership in these groups becomes so interesting because it's not costless, right, it's not simply an opportunity to signal to voters or constituents that you care

about a particular issue. It's actually a costly thing to participate in, and so it must be providing some real benefits, and I think those benefits come to the floor when you think about how these groups interact with party leaders and how they interact with members of the other party, and I think the thing to recognize is that these organizations give members power that they wouldn't otherwise have as individuals.

**CHERVENAK:** I would think that that power would I guess be its maximum if everyone voted together, right, and then it's at its minimum if you're never guaranteed that anyone can vote in a particular way, so there's probably some range of power there. What's the consequence if a member doesn't vote the way that the group wants? Is it ejection? Is it, slap on the wrist? What happens?

**RUBIN:** It depends on the group. For some they have rules about how frequently you can vote against the group before you get kicked out, for other organizations they may talk a good game about insisting on members collaborating together and holding the line, but at the end of the day they don't have the organizational wherewithal to kick people out. There are also sort of more social sanctions you can imagine. If you are an individual who continues to screw over your colleagues, you may find that those meetings that you attend are not that pleasant to be at, and so you may independently decide to leave. So there are a variety of ways for groups to sanction members. I think the important thing to recognize is those groups that are so powerful to sort of be able to push formal punishments on members are probably groups that have a lot of these organizational mechanisms in place in the first place, which leads to sort of the interesting question of like, are groups that are strong, strong because of these mechanisms or were they strong to begin with and are thus able to impose these sanctioning mechanisms on their members?

And I think it's probably some combination, but it's really important when it comes to as a party leader when you're negotiating with one of these organizations, you want to know, am I dealing with a group that you know really doesn't have much control over its membership but is talking a good game, or am I dealing with a group that I know has a reputation for bargaining and voting as a block and so I better take threats of defection from them quite seriously?

**CHERVENAK:** And when these groups form, are there typically leaders, are they elected leaders, are they self-appointed, and then join up, you know, how do they form? And how are they controlled by their leadership, since it's not formal in the sense that they're voting on the House floor?

**RUBIN:** So I think that's important to recognize is that at least historically most of these organizations have actually been formed by backbenchers, so individuals who lack other ways of accumulating power. That isn't always the case, but it is often the case. And so there are people who aren't getting what they want from party leaders without forming an organization and finding a new way to generate leverage, and so the organization becomes that means for them to do so. Now over time as an organization persists, it's not unusual to have individuals

come from the organization and make their way into party leadership, in part because they have generated power and have influence within the party.

It's also the case that one way for leaders to control these organizations is to give members of those groups leadership positions, and so there's a sort of reciprocal relationship, and it's hard to know in any given case who has, who's sort of the first mover, but there's often more of an affinity between an intraparty organization and a leadership structure than either would be willing to admit. And that's because it serves everyone's benefit if you're, or it often serves everyone's benefit to sort of say you know as a leader, so and so group is causing problems and it's hard to control them, and that you know gives you some political cover, and alternatively as an organization it's easier to run against leadership or to see an anti-establishment or renegade or insurgent or sort of a group filled with new ideas if you're not associated with leadership or the party establishment.

**CHERVENAK:** And what about, you mentioned earlier about resources, so the committees, you know, they have dedicated staff in many cases, there's an elaborate way that that staff is allocated, and it differs among committees. What about for these kinds of organizations, is it all just whoever chips in money? Is it the dues? Or is there some other way that they get resources?

**RUBIN:** So there used to be a legislative program that would allocate clerks, as they were known but are essentially staffers, to these organizations that went away with Newt Gingrich's conservative revolution and budget cuts, but even before these clerk hires were in place, organizations essentially asked their members to either dedicate some of the time with their own staff or to chip in dues to promote sort of the public welfare of that organization by investing in dedicated staffers for that group to do research or to help draft legislation that they were going to be pushing. And so I think as anyone who spent any time on the Hill knows, much of the work that happens in Congress is done by staff, and that's true within organizations as much as it is true among committee members or committees and parties as well.

**CHERVENAK:** What about outside resources? So, if there's a conservative or a liberal caucus of some kind, can they get external support, you know staffers or others? Are those outside groups part of the formation of that group, those outside special interests, or they typically coming later to see there's some correlation between their beliefs?

**RUBIN:** So the groups that I've spent the majority of my time studying, the impetus for organization really comes from within Congress between those lawmakers, but once the organization is established, it's not uncommon to foster ties with outside interest groups or individuals who have access to resources. And that's not necessarily money, sometimes that might be experts, it could be certain connections with constituent groups that are really important, and then in some cases it is money.

One thing that a lot of contemporary inter-party organizations do is, in part because they're often fighting with party leaders, they try and have their own fundraising arm for members so

that if you're doing something that causes you to fall out with party leaders and maybe lose some campaign financing from the party, you can soften the blow by essentially providing that from another resource. And so you know the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the House Freedom Caucus, the Blue Dogs, the New Democrats, these organizations have campaign arms that help to fundraise on behalf of their members as an additional inducement to participate, but also with the recognition that sometimes if you're going to clash with party leaders, that comes at a real financial cost.

**CHERVENAK:** And so for these intraparty groups, how divergent really are they from the party line. Is it something where, you know if we were in Europe it would be a new party, or is it really a minor difference that is it just a pure, is it a single issue? What's the spectrum of these kinds of organizations when it comes to their, like how different really are they from the leadership's position, and is it on one issue or many issues?

**RUBIN:** So I'm going to give you the classic academic answer, which is that it depends. There's a lot of variation. It's also important to think about like how would we know, right. If you're a successful organization, as an outside observer it may actually look like party leaders and you have quite a lot in common because you've successfully pressured leaders to take up positions that come very close to yours, and so if we're not observing those back room deals or negotiations, then we may not be able to accurately parse just how different these groups are from leadership.

It's also the case that you know groups may find it advantageous to make mountains out of molehills that, in fact you know if you're thinking about like an infrastructure plan that a caucus or a sort of intraparty organization and leadership are actually quite close together, in terms of what they want, but that it's advantageous as an individual member or as members of that particular intraparty group to signal that they're pushing leaders for more, or you know pushing leaders for less, and you know are being more fiscally conservative, and so leaders and members have some incentives to draw distinctions that, as you say, aren't all that meaningful. So which world we're living in at any given time can't, is not always so easy to tell, which is one reason why a lot of my work draws on archival material and interviews, where you can sort of get inside those back rooms, or at least get more proximate to those sorts of negotiations, to be able to assess just how influential an organization is, or just how much power leaders are wielding over those groups.

**CHERVENAK:** Yeah, and I wonder as part of that obviously is the careerism by some of the leaders of these of these intraparty groups, and I wonder how many of them ultimately become Speaker, become other leadership posts when they were, and you know how many of the current leaders were heads of such organizations before.

**RUBIN:** Yeah, there's variation. I would say I don't think as far as I recollect that any leader of an intraparty group became the top dog so to speak, so Speaker or Majority Leader in the Senate. However, they do often take on leadership positions, so the former chair of the Republican Study Committee joined speaker John Boehner's leadership team, Jim Jordan who was chair of

the House Freedom Caucus is now in McCarthy's leadership team, so there are a lot of positions within the leadership hierarchy that these members may be finding their way to.

And then the real question is are they being put into those positions by dint of their own hard efforts and political savvy, which is manifested in participating in and helping to lead these organizations and using them essentially as vehicles to elevate their careers, or are leaders putting them in these positions in part because they recognize they have connections to a flank of their party that often causes them problems and so you have them as intermediaries. And probably it's a mixture of both, but it does make it really hard to know who's wagging what tail if you think about it in that kind of metaphor.

**CHERVENAK:** But ultimately for these intraparty types of organizations, if they were issue-oriented, their goal ultimately is to move their issue through to law, right, in some form, and they see that vehicle not in a bipartisan necessarily manner, they see it through their, if they're in the majority, obviously they're going to see it through the chairman, in the House in any case. Is that the case, or are they also working with the other side on issues?

**RUBIN:** I think, well I'd say two things, one of which is that, so the different groups have different levels of specificity for what they're trying to accomplish. So you may be in favor of fiscal conservatism, but that could apply across a range of issues and bills, and so your organization may remain active and deeply involved in legislating from legislative session to legislative session.

You may also be formed or deeply motivated by a particular set of discrete issues that once dealt with, as you say, sort of fade away, and then the organization too often declines if not entirely dissolving. So I think that's an important thing to just recognize that these groups come and go, and sometimes the group will adopt or take on new issues in part just to survive and sort of maintain those relationships and members' investment in organization.

It is interesting to think about how these intraparty groups in particular interact with the other party. As has often been the case, organizations that have been formed by moderates within both parties end up oftentimes forging relationships with moderates in the other party, and so when we have bipartisan lawmaking, those individual's fingerprints are often present in the political negotiations, whether it's working with leadership or whether it's working from member to member across party to sort of build those relationships and forge agreement where it is often hard to do so.

We see less collaboration between organizations that represent the ideological fringes of their party, although there was some interesting reporting on efforts by members of the House Freedom Caucus to reach out to members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus to talk about tactics, as there are, both groups have some shared interests, in particular a concern that party leaders wield too much power and control over legislative proceedings and that there might be common ground there. I don't think those relationships have gone many places, but I

do think the lesson is that even in our current polarized era, strange bedfellow coalitions are at least conceivable.

**CHERVENAK:** Yeah, that's very interesting. So can you talk about the dynamic of these groups in different eras, depending on how strong the Speaker is or how strong leadership is compared to the rank and file? Is this an issue that comes up only when you really have strong leaders and they form a counterbalance to that, or is it something that's pervasive regardless of the status of the dispersion of power from the weakest to the strongest member?

**RUBIN:** Sure, well I think one of the interesting things about these groups is their persistence over time. You might reasonably think that if these organizations in part exist to counterbalance strong leadership that you would primarily see them when there are overly-strong leaders, and that historically has been certainly the case and that you do, when there are periods of strong party control or top-down control, you do see these groups forming, but interestingly enough you also see these organizations forming in other eras where leadership is less powerful, and in fact they form sometimes to endow leaders with greater power because the other interests within the party are too powerful with respect to leaders.

And so to put that in more concrete terms, if we think about the mid-century Congress and the Democratic Party, this was a time where people tend to think that Democratic leaders and leaders in general had more limited procedural authority, certainly than they do today, and that the real power center within the House and Senate were Southern Democrats. And so this actually was a real problem if you were a non-Southern Democrat that wanted progressive policy changes, like for instance the passage of Civil Rights legislation. And so liberals formed the Democratic Study Group in the late 1950s with the aim of helping to empower Democratic Party leaders to put Southern Conservatives back in their place, to sort of say you know, you're part of our party, but you don't get to dictate all of our legislative agenda, and in order to get our legislative priorities we need leaders to be more powerful.

And so I think one of the interesting things about intraparty groups is that they've all often been really critical players in sort of the pendulum swing in legislative politics between centralized and decentralized legislative institutions. When leaders get a power, it's often because they've been working with or there's a group, an intraparty group that is present, and when leaders lose power it is often because there's an organized presence of lawmakers who are collaborating together using one of these organizations.

**CHERVENAK:** What about the relationship between these kinds of groups, whether it's intraparty or not, and the committees, right? I mean, on the one side committees should be some kind of balance on the power of leadership, right, but of course the committees aren't very flexible. It's hard to change them to the issues of the day, where it sounds like these other kinds of organizations are quite flexible. Can you talk about the difference between those?

**RUBIN:** Sure. So I think it's interesting to think about the committee process overlaid with these organizations. So one of the things that's apparent is that the committee system by [ ] breaking

legislative expertise into these different policy jurisdictions or domains, fragments members. And so you may be a member who cares a great deal about, say, health policy, but the legislation that deals with the issue that you particularly care about is winding its way through an Appropriations Committee, or is waiting to be scheduled on the floor for a floor vote by the Rules Committee in the House.

And so one of the challenges if you're an individual lawmaker is, how do you move the legislation that you care about through committees that you're not sitting on? Or if you're a group of lawmakers, what do you do with the fact that the committee system is sort of inherently fragmented? And a lot of the legislation that takes place today has competing jurisdictions, where multiple committees might have a say in how it's put together. That's certainly been the case for the Affordable Care Act and other sort of complex social policies.

And so given that, these organizations offer a coordinating mechanism across committees, so not only can you help keep tabs on what's happening in any given committee, but you can coordinate the efforts of the individual members who sit on those committees who share your political priorities. So to think about Southern Conservatives in the mid-century, one of the advantages they had was that not only were they in charge of many of the substantive committees that shaped legislation that came out of the Democratic Party's legislative agenda, but they also coordinated among themselves. So if you were a Southern Conservative who was in charge of the Appropriations Committee, you knew you had a buddy in the Rules Committee who was going to ensure that legislation you wanted to come to the floor was going to get there, and legislation you didn't want to come up for a vote wasn't going to make it out.

And so I think, if you think about the committee system in some ways is channeling members' energy in a really structured way. It also builds in its own coordination problems, and so these other organizations help to bridge those problems. And in many ways, that's the same thing that political parties do, where parties ensure that members with broadly similar priorities are working together rather than across purposes across the committee system to bring legislation from sort of early drafting stage up to a floor vote.

**CHERVENAK:** What about the role of these intraparty groups in getting into the committee slots based on their actions? Because one thing I'm curious about is how people wind up on various committees, right, either the chairman, the ranking member, the members of the various committees, in this allocation process it doesn't take place in Congress, it takes place within the party groups, and so how does that, how do these kinds of groups play into that process?

**RUBIN:** Yeah, well so I think it's an interesting process, and it's varied over time. I would say if we focus on the contemporary Congress, a couple of dynamics are at play. So one is that as a member of one of these organizations, you may develop a specific policy expertise that makes you a good fit for a particular committee. And if that's the case, leaders may independently, or the party may independently, decide that you belong on that committee. So that we might see is just a sort of informational matching, where you've invested in some expertise and then the committee system productively channels that.

It's also the case that politics enters in and so you may get a seat on a more prestigious committee in part because being a member of a particular inter-party group has sort of elevated you in the eyes of leaders, or at least made you someone that they can't easily ignore, and so you may get a better committee assignment than were you the same member who is not a participant in one of these organizations. At the same time, it's also possible that if you are a pain, and being a member of one of these organizations may put you in that category, either you actually lose out on opportunities to gain a committee seat that you really wanted that would have been good for you and for your constituents, so it's hard to know how that's going to cut in any individual case, but one does see both playing out.

The other thing that's interesting is whether leaders are strategic in appointing members to committees or steering the party to appoint members to committees in ways that sort of productively channel the energy of the individual member as part of a function of the group that they belong to. So again, it's interesting to look at how Republican leaders have allocated committee assignments to House Freedom Caucus members, and what you see is that they actually get pretty prestigious committee assignments, but they're typically assignments to committees where their, the efforts of those members can be productively channeled on the part of the party, so they typically are investigatory committees where the member can spend a lot of time investigating wrongdoing on the part of a President of the opposing party or of the opposing party in Congress. And that's good for the party and it's good for the member and it's good for the organization. And so one of the tricks the leadership is essentially to figure out how can you productively channel the energy of even your most renegade back venture, and the success of doing that I think falls a lot on just how true the leader you have in office.

**CHERVENAK:** Yeah, that's an interesting point, and it makes you wonder like what are the attributes of a member that come into play. You mentioned expertise, you mentioned a kind of loyalty to the to the leader, and then there's this other element that you mentioned, which I haven't really heard talked about much in the past is about, are they better used in an investigative capacity or oversight capacity as opposed to legislative capacity. If there's no hope for any of their work to get through legislation, you're better off putting them on an oversight committee, where they can potentially add value.

**RUBIN:** I think that's right, and I think that the truly exceptional legislative leaders we've seen in Congress are ones that are able to channel the energies of their members productively, and not everyone is equally good at that, and you know particularly given how leaders come to power today versus in prior eras, is not necessarily something that we select on, or that the party selects on. But it I think proves to be really important, and then I think someone like Nancy Pelosi is exceptionally good at figuring out how to productively channel the energies of her quite fractious caucus, and Republicans have I think struggled more so with that and I think that's played out in the kind of party fights and the kind of legislative productivity we see.

**CHERVENAK:** You know, are there other elements of a member's capability list that would factor highly in these decisions that you can think of?

**RUBIN:** I mean I think you can't overstate the extent to which it really helps if you're perceived to be a reasonable person. I think you see a lot of diversity and opinion in Congress, and I think people understand that lawmakers from different states represent different kinds of constituencies and they're not all the same and you have to expect some variation. But I think what is truly valued is someone who is seen as a reasonable and understandable person, someone who's both easy to get along with, whether that's on a, you know, a trip to an elementary school with a colleague for a town hall, or whether that's you know you're working closely with someone to draft some budget bill and you spend a lot of time with them and their staff and you want that person to be a you know a human being. And so I think that also matters quite a bit to sort of who makes it in the long run.

Not to say that you know there aren't people who are difficult individuals who come to power and stay there. Certainly history is replete with those idiosyncratic individuals, but I think in general if you were going to decide what kind of Congress member you wanted to be, being a human being or a reasonable person would be a good way to make your way in the world.

**CHERVENAK:** Well, let's move on to the another subject which is obviously related, which is this concept of leadership. I know you're doing more work on this idea of leadership now. Can you talk about, again what questions are you asking about this leadership concept, and have you found any interesting answers?

**RUBIN:** Sure, so I think the thing that most interests me about leadership and is in quite a lot of dialogue with prior work is sort of understanding how leaders might collaborate productively with these organizations that exist within their party. I think the conventional view among political scientists and probably if you asked your average citizen, you know, are party divisions good or bad, everyone would agree you'd much rather have a very unified party, and that's probably true.

But it doesn't mean that if you are a leader of a party that is ridden by factional difficulties, that you are consigned to having a sort of limited speakership or majority leadership. In fact, party divisions can be productively challenged by leaders, and so the project that I'm working on now sort of explores what it is about the configuration of factions within a party that might actually be advantageous to leaders, and the big idea is that actually the challenge for leaders is when you have a party where there's one really organized wing of the party and everyone else is disorganized.

Now that actually gives you less leeway than if both sides of your party, or the different competing factions within the party, are all equally organized, or not organized, but that actually what you want is to have these groups is balanced against one another and that you're in the trickiest circumstance where you really only have one well-organized group of lawmakers and that, when that happens, those people tend to be able to extract a lot from you as leader, whereas if you have a variety of competing organizations that are competing on relatively equal footing, you have a lot more room to maneuver among them and sort of create different

alignments or set different groups among each other such that you're able to pursue the policy goals that you care most about. So in sort of ways it's thinking a lot about like how do leaders divide and conquer, rather than assuming that divisions are necessarily inherently bad. I mean I think this has real stakes for us as citizens. If we look at our party system today, we see that both parties are quite visibly divided, and so it's easy to walk away with the conventional wisdom and say, well there's nothing we can do. Our leaders are going to just be weak. There's nothing they can do to push their party to legislate on the important issues of the day.

And I think when one recognizes that actually divisions aren't necessarily incapacitating, it leads us as citizens to be able to demand a lot more from our leadership, rather than simply assume that there's nothing that they can do to help us with our problems.

**CHERVENAK:** I can see that in the House if you've got 200 individuals or even if it's 100 individuals all with their own mindset, that it could be very difficult to get them going in one direction, whereas if you have two blocks that are equal in size, that in that case you only have two people to deal with, two entities that control votes instead of hundreds of individual entities. So I can see how it would reduce the transaction costs associated with passing legislation or getting to a decision, and I would guess that could be modeled to a certain extent with how much time a leader has to take to negotiate with how many people to get something through.

**RUBIN:** Yeah, I think that's right. I mean, I think one way to think about this is in the sort of idea of efficiency gains, which is that these organizations are doing work to organize their members or sort of a subgroup within the party that as a leader if you then win over that group, you in a sense have whipped or won over those members, and in that way you know who to talk to. It's not having to meet with every single member in their office and persuade them of the virtues of a particular legislative intervention. You can meet with the organization's leadership, and then they're going to convey the message from leadership to their members, and ideally for you if they're an organization that actually has a good track record of voting together, if you persuade that group to come with you, you can count on those votes, and so you don't have to consistently be worried that you're going to lose votes on the floor because members aren't doing what they said they were going to do.

And so that's like one way to think about this logic that I think is really important to recognize, which is that there are collaborative possibilities for leaders with these organizations.

**CHERVENAK:** And how does the Whip Organization factor into this? You know I talked to Larry Evans on this program long ago, who wrote a whole book about the whips. How does that factor in with these groups? Is it, do they try to co-opt the groups through putting them in the Whip Organization, or is the Whip in opposition, it only can round up those who aren't part of the group? How does it work because the whip typically is going to be a vehicle of the of the leader, right, so how does that happen?

**RUBIN:** Well, so there are a couple ways one could answer this question. The first is simply to note that a lot of these organizations create their own whip structure. They need to know how their members want to vote, and so it's all about counting votes at different levels. And so the interesting question is whether the information that the group gathers is shared with the party whip, or alternatively, how accessible do members make themselves to the party whip when they're counting votes versus their organization whip? And here again there's quite a bit of variation, so there are some organizations that refrain from reporting their internal whip counts to the party whip, either because they don't have their ducks in a row quite yet and they want to project greater unanimity than exists, or because they want to protect their members, they don't want the party yet to know that certain members are going to defect from a party-line vote.

At other times the party organization's whip and the group whip work quite well together, especially if the party leadership are proposing or pushing a policy that's favored by that organization, there's often quite a lot of collaboration in terms of whipping members both within the organization but also in gathering political intelligence for non-members but who are nevertheless part of the party or who might be willing to vote for that piece of legislation. So as in many things there's quite a bit of variation, and it just depends on the political alignment and who's getting what from what relationship.

**CHERVENAK:** What you're talking about brings up a question I have related to transparency. I talked quite a bit about transparency on this on this program, and you know there's talk about power migrating to areas where there's less transparency, right, and that would be of course the leadership office where we can't get the minutes of the discussions happening in leadership office, but we can get them for the committees, so committees have weakened and leadership has gained. What about for these groups, is there any transparency as it relates to these groups, what's happening inside them, as you're implying that if they are not transparent that increases their power [ ] within the within the structure. What can we actually know about what's going on inside them?

**RUBIN:** Well so it again depends. Some organizations, and particularly this is quite common today, have confidentiality rules, so you're not permitted as an individual member to share what is discussed within the organization, so it's sort of the political version of Fight Club. You may not even be able to acknowledge that there is a group or certainly who else is a member. That is sometimes put in place. The good news for social scientists and political scientists in particular is that oftentimes we're able to learn quite a bit about how these groups function after the fact. Many organizations maintain quite careful records that are then available to scholars in later decades. So the Democratic Study Group's papers are in the Library of Congress, and you can go read their whip counts, you can go see what's discussed in individual meetings.

There are a lot more informal organizations where individual members retain notes about what's happening, and so depending on your level of perseverance, you can go find in the personal papers of retired members of Congress the work that is being done in these groups,

but it is generally not made available to citizens or to leadership in real time, which is part of their power, right. If information is currency, you want to hold on to that, you don't want to share it with everybody. And I think if we think about transparency is generally a good thing in theory but sometimes actually you get better results if we don't know exactly what's happening and that, you know, some things are better hashed out behind closed doors. This is another place where that trade-off is apparent between efficiency and sort of transparency.

**CHERVENAK:** Do you think if the committees were less transparent, then they would gain power at the expense of these kinds of groups?

**RUBIN:** It's an interesting question. I mean I think it's clear that transparency laws have not been an unalloyed good in that they've either pushed deliberations that were occurring directly in committees into other places and that's diminished committees or alternatively they've just sort of undermined the power of particular actors who are in privileged committee positions. So that would be unfortunate for those individuals.

I think it's quite possible that reducing transparency in committees would increase the value of using the committee system productively for these organizations. So it's not necessarily the case that you would see these groups' influence diminish or that they would become less important, but rather that their strategies and tactics would just change.

**CHERVENAK:** So let's go back to your leadership research. I'm curious, when I was talking with, it could have been Mickey Edwards, talking about that the Speaker of the House doesn't necessarily have to be a member of the House. In such a situation, what do you think the dynamic would be of these kinds of groups, would it be exactly the same, it's just a block to negotiate with, or is there some special relationship that happens between these intraparty groups and the Speaker, if they're of the same party?

**RUBIN:** So I think one way to think about this is that generally having a relationship with the members eases some of the negotiation challenges, and so the leaders who have worked most productively with these groups have been ones who have forged productive relationships with individual members of those groups, so a classic example would be Speaker Sam Rayburn is the longest serving House Speaker and seen I think as incredibly effective, and part of his efficacy was the result of having cultivated early on long-standing relationships with both liberal members who would go on to form the Democratic Study Group and Southern members who were part of the Southern Delegations in the House.

**CHERVENAK:** And so when you say 'part of,' you mean sort of the rank and file of these groups, or do you mean the leaders of these groups?

**RUBIN:** Both. In some cases you know Sam Rayburn was a was leader for long enough that he started out with buddies who were rank and file members, and they later became chairs of these organizations, so some of it is that the time frame for leaders has changed, and speakers don't get to hold the gavel for quite as long as some of the more storied legislative leaders of

yore, but even then I think having an established track record with these organizations makes quite a bit of difference. If a lot of legislating is about trust and you know forging bargains, then you need to have a reputation and ideally a good reputation, and you forge that reputation through repeat interaction, so bringing in outsiders is not necessarily the answer.

**CHERVENAK:** Great, well let's move on to a final topic on your research, which is on the rules side. Most of what we've been talking about are kind of their [ ] processes that are happening outside the formal rules of the House or Senate, right. These are things going on that are organic or they're within a party rule system. They're not part of the chamber rules. How do you see the, when you look at the institution's functioning and you look at the rules, you know that's another mechanism by which you could affect some kind of change, what have you seen related to rules? What are you interested in and what have you found?

**RUBIN:** Yeah, well one of the things that I think is most interesting is that while the sort of nitty-gritty of legislative procedure is beyond the ken or you know to be honest like interest of most people, the number of lawmakers who participate in the kind of intraparty blocks that I study who care deeply about these rules is not insignificant. And I think that's because they understand that these rules are actually really important to what gets done or what doesn't get done in Congress, and so we talked a little bit earlier about how sort of ideologues in both parties are unhappy with the extent to which party leaders control what is considered on the floor and in particular want to go to a place where there are more open rules, which would allow for easy amendment on the floor, and party leaders are resistant to that because if you have a bunch of individuals who are known for causing problems with the freedom to put amendments onto legislation that you've already sort of like sealed the deal on, that's not a great thing.

And so there's a lot of fighting over these particular otherwise kind of like dry nitty-gritty features of the legislative process. And so I think that's just kind of interesting if you think about who ends up getting elected to Congress and then you know the way that people's interests change. I mean, I could imagine most people probably don't run for Congress saying, and what I really care about you know, my fellow Americans, is closed and open rules, and yet when you show up you start to realize that stuff really matters. And so I think just thinking about sort of procedural entrepreneurship is really interesting, and I think one of the things that's you know really important is that the folks who've often been the most influential in Congress recognize the link between procedure and policy, and so the organizations that I study often have both a policy, a set of policy priorities, but also a set of procedural priorities.

So it's not enough to care about civil rights if it's important to care about how the seniority system functions. It's not enough to be concerned about budgetary policy, it matters how the amendment process works. It's not enough to, say, care about you know in the progressive era tariff policy, it's really important to constrain the power of the Speaker and his ability to appoint members to different committees. And so I think in that sense the organizations that I study bring together the policy and procedural aspects of our politics that often sort of are sorted into different buckets but that are really deeply intertwined.

**CHERVENAK:** It's interesting. In a way that makes sense because if they're going outside of the normal rules to create a group, they must have some problem with the rules, right?

**RUBIN:** Exactly.

**CHERVENAK:** In addition to their policy issue, so in a way it's totally logical. I mean, when you look past, you look at all these rule agendas that they've had over the years, I mean do you think, which ones are reasonable, are they crazy, have you seen any interesting rules that you think have come up over the over the history of this kind of effort and see rules that you think would have a positive impact?

**RUBIN:** I would say you know with as a political scientist we have to operate with quite a bit of humility. I think oftentimes rules that seem totally reasonable and like a great idea at time A they're implemented, and then you start to realize the downsides and that happens a lot in Congress in particular. And I think it's also hard sometimes to separate out the rules change from the policy that's being promoted.

So as an example we can think about efforts by Liberal Democrats to reform the seniority system during much of the 1920s through 1950s, 1960s. Committee seats were allocated in both parties on the basis of seniority, and this was an easy decision rule, it was not controversial in part because if you couldn't decide what your priorities were as a party, this was an easy way to allocate powerful seats to people. But this was really bad for Liberal Democrats who wanted to pass civil rights legislation, and the people in power happen to be Southern Conservatives, and so they modified the seniority system to make it easier for the party to control who could get these important committee posts.

And that makes a lot of sense procedurally and policy-wise given what they were trying to accomplish. The problem is that in dissolving the seniority system, they reduced the incentive for members to stick around in Congress and to gather expertise that would sort of allow them to invest in that particular committee assignment. And so we might wonder whether you know as important as the legislative gains that came about from reducing the power of the seniority norms, we also lost something, which was sort of an incentive to invest in the expertise that law making requires. And I don't know how you judge among those things.

I mean it would be hard to argue that passing civil rights legislation was not the right thing to do. In fact like that clearly seems like democratically the right outcome, but there were unintended or intended consequences that we live with today. And so I imagine that would be the case for many rules. If we think that having more open rules would allow members to better represent their constituents by attaching amendments that are meaningful to their constituency or to particular interests within their district or state, that makes a lot of sense.

But you also then increase the amount of time and energy that it takes to pass legislation, and given that politics is a zero-sum game, we might worry that legislative productivity which is

already you know I think charitably not great, won't get better. So how do we trade off among efficiency and this sort of representational quality? I don't have any of the answers, but I think we would at least have a more honest conversation as individuals interested in congressional reform if we recognize that most of the changes we're envisioning will have sort of good things and bad things being brought to the table and so we just have to then weigh how important we think any of those goals are.

**CHERVENAK:** So I want to follow up on what you said about politics being a zero-sum game. I haven't heard that before. Is that a common wisdom among political scientists? Is that your personal opinion? Is there evidence for or against that point of view?

**RUBIN:** Well I would say two things, one of which is in my sense of the zero-sum game is just time, you can't create infinite amounts of time. And members have a lot on their plates, and so you only get so many windows of opportunity or bites at the apple or whatever metaphor you propose. There are certainly scholars who have thought about ways to sort of embiggen the pie without losing what we have, and so I think there are some places where you know, and this is where like technology might come in, make it more efficient, so that you essentially increase the docket by making it more efficient to do certain things.

If we could all teleport to the office, we'd save a lot of time. For lawmakers who have to fly from Alaska to Washington, D.C., that'd be great. That doesn't seem like it's in the cards any time soon but you know who knows. And that's one way you know you could imagine making, like creating time where none exists, but if we're living in the realms of reality I think it's reasonable to say that there isn't infinite time, and so you're making choices among different priorities.

And so when we're thinking about something like transparency rules or making the legislative agenda more open to members, we have to recognize that in so doing we may also, say, make Congress more secretive in some respects when it comes to transparency, or make it less efficient in other ways when it comes to sort of opening up the legislative process. And different people are entitled to have different views about you know whether they think that's a good thing or a bad thing.

**CHERVENAK:** All right well we're going to move on to the questions that I ask all our guests so that later on we can compare the answers. Are you ready for the for the next one?

**RUBIN:** I'm ready.

**CHERVENAK:** All right, the first one here is, what do you think congressional representation should mean?

**RUBIN:** So I would say when I've thought about this, I think like most political scientists there's the sort of two poles. There's the trustee and delegate model, where you know on the one hand we elect people who are the big brains, who are going to make the right choices on behalf

of all of us who are busy with our own lives and don't have the time or inclination to pay attention, and the idea in a sense is that they know what is best. And then on the other end you have this vision of representation, where lawmakers are supposed to do that which their constituents want, and the way they would know that is interfacing regularly with constituents and sort of going with the flow as opposed to, say, applying their accumulated expertise or knowledge of how politics works from actually being politicians.

And I would put myself somewhere in the middle, which is that I think representation requires forging relationships with constituents and building those sort of gaining constituents' trust and representing them faithfully in the sense of, if your constituents want you to vote for a tax plan and you know polling indicates that and you know the town halls you're having suggest that that's a widespread opinion, that it would be problematic for you from the grounds of sort of democratic legitimacy to ignore that.

I think the challenge becomes, like how do you know what your constituents want, and how do you know who you're hearing from? Is that in fact representative? The people who show up to town halls are not your average citizens, and so in that way it can be really difficult I think for members to accurately translate what their constituents' preferences are into like actual actionable things to do.

**CHERVENAK:** And when you say constituents in this context, I'm assuming you mean the whole district, the whole state, versus a, you know, a majority or a voting group or what have you?

**RUBIN:** I think in the best case that would be the case, and I think there's also interesting questions, as you know a generational question, right, like what responsibility do you have to the people who are a voting age versus people who are your technically your constituents but don't yet even vote, you know party aside? And I think different people interpret that representational charge differently, but I guess as a somewhat younger person with small children, I would like to think that lawmakers are thinking about their future as well as my own, but you know I would hardly presume that that is what everyone is thinking about. And you know reasonable people can disagree. You might well say my job is to represent the people who can vote right now, not you know some individuals in the future.

**CHERVENAK:** Right. This is a personal question for you, so it sounds like what you would like, or the way you conceive of the ideal of representation would be the whole district or the whole state and future generations of that state or district.

**RUBIN:** I mean I think it's important, I would recognize, I recognize that it is difficult to think about what future generations want because you can't know. That's sort of inherently subjective, and so it is very reasonable to say I am only going to pay attention to what I can know today, which is at least it's conceivable to know what my constituents who are voting age and who are reporting to me their preferences want, and that's a safe way to sort of govern. I would like to think that what individual constituents want is in some ways refracting what would be good for future generations. So as a parent, I care about my child, and so when I am

speaking to my member of Congress I'm not only thinking about my short-term interests but also my child's long-term interests, and so I don't think those are always so easy to separate but I also think it is challenging as a lawmaker to know how to think about the needs of a generation or generations that may not exist or may not be able to communicate their needs to you.

**CHERVENAK:** All right, so the next question is, how would your ideal Congress allocate its time, and by this I mean D.C. versus home district, oversight versus legislation, campaigning versus not.

**RUBIN:** Well, I think we probably, most people could agree that lawmakers spend too much time campaigning, although it's not really their fault. But we could imagine designing a system where they would spend less time campaigning and more time doing the work that they probably want to do, which is representing their constituents. I would say it's hard to prescribe a particular balance for any individual member. You know some people may be really good at drafting legislation but really bad at engaging in the kind of hard questioning that makes for a good oversight hearing, and so I think some specialization seems warranted, but I do think as a whole one of the virtues of bringing together a legislative body where you have a bunch of different individuals is that you can capitalize on people's individual capacities.

And so I think lawmakers should be engaging in, as you say, legislating on the important issues of the day, ideally not messaging votes so much as substantive legislation, but that they also do the kind of work that is often less rewarded in sort of soaring tales of legislative exploits but that is really important, like helping members of your district or state get what they need. And I think there's some like civic responsibilities too, like I think someone who spent time on the Hill, it's really the even the things as mundane as like helping give constituents tours of the Capital can create a sense of investment in the institution, and so I think it would be a mistake to glorify drafting legislation over some of the kind of constituent interactions which actually create an investment at the level of the citizen in these institutions, which really depend on people's faith.

If we don't think these institutions are represented, if we don't believe that they have a place in our government, if we feel comfortable you know marching in and destroying things, that's not good for anybody, and so I think we can't forget these sort of smaller things that lawmakers can do. It's not sort of the side job. It's very much a part of the relationship that they're supposed to be forging with us as voters.

**CHERVENAK:** So what about the time between the you know the office in D.C. versus the home district. Right now, they're there you know a couple, few days a week in D.C., and you know there are proposals out there for two weeks on, week off, there's three weeks, one week. Do you fall down anywhere on that spectrum?

**RUBIN:** I mean I wouldn't presume to tell lawmakers how to strike the right balance. I think it probably depends on what stage you are in your career. If you are a new representative you

may need to get to know your constituency, whereas if you've been around for a long time you may know your district like the back of your hand. Although I do think it's notable that you know some very senior members of Congress spend a lot of time in their district even as more senior members. Tip O'Neill famously walked the streets of Cambridge you know as Speaker to sort of talk with folks in barber shops and get a sense of what his people wanted, and that was important to him, and I think that you know is something that we shouldn't forget.

At the same time, I think there are costs to spending a lot of time in one's district and not forging the kind of relationships between members that make legislating possible. And so it's a challenging balance to strike, and it's made easier if you live near D.C. Like let's not kid ourselves. If you are a Virginia representative, it's a lot easier to go home and come back, and so one of the challenges we face in as large a republic as we have is that geography puts a different differential strain on different members, and so you know seniority is going to factor into these issues, geography is going to factor into these issues, political experience, if you were a district representative and now you're a Senator, you may know parts of your state really well, and that may change your calculation, and so I think all of those factors matter. All of this to say that I can't give you a concrete answer.

**CHERVENAK:** All right next one is, how should debate, deliberation, or dialogue occur or be structured in Congress? So you've talked about your intraparty issues. What about, should this debate generally speaking be done in committee, should it be on the floor, where should it happen?

**RUBIN:** Well so as we as we talked about in part, I think there's trade-offs between sort of vibrant debate and efficiency and also sort of what is the debate accomplishing. I would tend to think that more productive conversations happen in committee than on the floor. I think especially today as floor speeches are often included in snippets on MSNBC or Fox News, if you're lucky, more often on C-SPAN, that that's not the venue where members are persuading each other or talking about good and bad policy in a way that's productive. That's maybe more messaging.

But that in committee a lot of those conversations are productive, and so to the extent that debate and deliberation can take place in committee, I think that's really great and important. I think debate and deliberation should happen in a lot of places, not just in committee but in hallways, among parties, within parties, within these organizations. I think often it's the case that members don't know that much about what is in particular pieces of legislation, and so the more conversations you can have to sort of make sure everyone's on the same page and reduce those informational asymmetries, the better power dynamics we'll have.

**CHERVENAK:** All right, the next question you might try to avoid, but I'll ask it anyway, which is what fundamental institutional improvement should Congress make within 50 years?

**RUBIN:** Well, I'll give you a non-controversial one that I think is really hard to do but would be really useful, which is like more office space. I think one of the challenges that we have in

thinking about how to reform Congress is that there's often a desire to help members by giving them more staff or sort of increasing the support staff for Congress, so growing the Congressional Research Service or enhancing the capacities of the Library of Congress, which provides a lot of research support, but there's physical plant limitations, and so if you could wave a magic wand and add some office buildings and some physical space, I actually think that would be a small way to actually improve the day-to-day lives of members but also of the people who dedicate their careers to serving Congress over the long haul, and those are the people that make a really big difference.

**CHERVENAK:** So physical space is one, but in terms of rules, culture, campaign finance, no other areas that you think are critical for our country 50 years on?

**RUBIN:** All of the areas you mentioned are really important. What exactly you would do and whether you could be confident that what you were doing was not going to create a problematic externality later, I'm not sure. Although the environmental folks would probably argue that increasing Congress's physical space would be a problem, I think that to me is the least dangerous of all of the options on the table. Although I realize it's a bit of a cop-out.

**CHERVENAK:** Great, well next question is, what book or article most shaped your thinking with respect to Congressional reform?

**RUBIN:** Well with respect to my colleagues who are political scientists, my favorite book on Congressional reform is actually by a congressional reformer Richard Bolling, who is a member of the House and wrote a book called "Power in the House," which detailed his and his colleagues' fight to reform the committee system in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and one of the things that I love about that book is that you realize just how, A, how hard reform is, but B, the passion that is required to make it happen and that legislative politics, it does not need to be dry and boring but in fact requires like vitality and investment by committed individuals. And so in that way it's really both inspiring and instructive and offers an interesting blueprint as we think about what we can do today. There's a lot of important decisions that are made in conference rooms, and that was true in the 1960s, and it's probably true today.

**CHERVENAK:** Great, well, the last question is an easy one about your plans with your research over the long term. What are your interests and where are you going?

**RUBIN:** I mean I think in all likelihood I continue to be interested in how lawmakers come together in Congress to advance causes they care about, and much of my work is focused on organizations, but I also think it's really important to understand areas of policy making that, as political scientists and as citizens, we may pay less attention to, and so thinking a little bit about how legislative politics looks different across issue domains is I think really interesting rather than generalizing. And at the same time, I think thinking about how different organizations are structured and how those structures matter for our politics are also really important, so we care a lot about rules. Rules are important in the House and the Senate, but they also matter in

these groups, and so thinking about how new innovative rules might be imposed within these organizations to yield impressive political results is I think just fascinating to follow.

**CHERVENAK:** Well Ruth, thank you so much for your time. It's been a pleasure.

**RUBIN:** It's been lovely. Thank you so much for including me.