

January 11, 1995

Rules Committee, since at this point there were only five, changing it to six and having the sixth person be a voting member would effectively give the second caucus, though I'm sure they didn't think of it in these terms, would have had three votes of the six. So any...if that caucus were able to get the people that they would like on Rules, then effectively could stop any rule change that they wanted. They couldn't pass anything possibly, but they could stop anything from passing. That's the reason I made the change to make sure that it's an ex officio member, so that type of concentration of power would not exist. Actually, it probably should be eight as far as regular committee, because the rules can be so important. So we do have, if we continue the rule, notwithstanding this amendment, this amendment makes, I think, a bad rule a little better. But the rule itself will give tremendous power to a Rules Committee, and at a time where our country is saying we want to decentralize power in government, we want to bring government more open, it does not seem to me to be good policy to say only rules that come out of the Rules Committee can be discussed on the floor. I, personally, disagree with Senator Witek's rule change that she might want to do sometime of eliminating the secret ballot. But I don't disagree with her right or any senators right to bring a rule to the floor for discussion of the whole body when in fact a committee has said no. We do that on bills, we do that on constitutional issues, rules should be no different than that. So I agree with the amendment, but it still does not satisfy, I think, the total concerns I have on the rule change. It does make what I consider to be a well-intended but bad rule written a little bit better, so that's why I'm supporting the amendment.

PRESIDENT ROBAK: Thank you, Senator Bernard-Stevens. Senator Will.

SENATOR WILL: Thank you, Madam President, members of the body. I think a little too much is being made of this rule change. The slow intent behind this was to guarantee that any rules that are proposed, in a timely fashion, are to be given a public hearing. They are referred to the Rules Committee, that the Rules Committee is allowed to do its job. I don't think this would have nearly the impact that Senator Bernard-Stevens indicates. I don't think it centralizes power, especially with this amendment which says that nothing in this section precludes individual members from bringing amendments to the permanent rules at this point, regardless of whether they have been