

## Learning about Legislation #20 – Motion to Recommit

In past months, this MoCTrack report has highlighted the habit of some legislators, like Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-08), of voting against their party on a final bill, but with their party on amendments and other motions before the final vote. I had used the generic term “amendment” to cover all of the maneuvering that happens before the final vote, but that is not really precise. The last step that a dissenting party can take before the final vote is a motion to recommit, to send a bill back to committee.

In a 2016 [white paper](#) on the Motion to Recommit process, the Congressional Research Service explains:

“The motion to recommit is often referred to as ‘the minority’s motion,’ because preference in recognition for offering a motion to recommit is given to a member of the minority party who is opposed to the bill. The stated purpose of giving the minority party this right was to allow them to ‘have a vote upon its position upon great public questions.’ House rules protect this minority right...

“Motions to recommit are of two types: ‘straight’ motions and motions that include instructions. A Member offering a ‘straight’ motion to recommit seeks to send the measure to committee with no requirement for further consideration by the House. A Member offering a motion to recommit with instructions seeks to immediately amend the underlying bill on the House floor.

“A motion to recommit may have various procedural effects, including amending an underlying measure, sending it to one or more committees, providing additional time for its consideration, or potentially disposing of the legislation. Due to its inclusion of policy language, the motion to recommit might also have political effects, such as allowing Members to go on record as supporting or opposing a specific policy and creating a comprehensive public record to emphasize the minority party’s differences from the platform of the majority.”

This is clearly a different process than offering a basic change to a bill, which is how one would describe an amendment. Regardless, a motion to recommit is still a vote taken where a legislator has the opportunity to express his or her adherence to a principle or to the will of his or her party. Such motions are rarely, if ever, reported on in the press, so our local legislators usually make motions to recommit straight party line votes.