

Learning about Legislation #43 - the Motion to Table

This week we saw the GOP try to bring up a resolution to make a criminal referral on Michael Cohen for lying to Congress, and the Democrats in the majority “tabled” the motion. “Tabling” is language from [Robert’s Rules of Order](#), a collection of parliamentary procedures that dictate how business is done in our legislature.

The [Senate Glossary](#) defines a motion to table as “Used in both the Senate and House, if adopted a motion to table permanently kills a pending matter and ends any further debate on the matter.”

The Congressional Legal Service white paper titled “[Commonly Used Motions and Requests in the House of Representatives](#)” has a more robust explanation:

If agreed to, a motion to table disposes of the pending matter adversely and without a direct vote on its substance. The motion is not debatable and is adopted by majority vote or without objection. If adopted, the tabling motion is the same as defeating the underlying proposition. If the tabling motion is defeated, the situation reverts to where it was when the motion to table was made. The House does not allow the tabling motion against the motion to recommit, but it is in order against some other motions, such as the motion to reconsider a vote or appeal the ruling of the chair. A motion to table an amendment, if successful, would also table the underlying proposition to which the amendment was proposed.