

*The West Wing*—“Five Votes Down”  
Executive Staff & Informal Power

Plot Summary

In this episode, the White House staff is desperately trying to round up votes in the House of Representatives for its controversial plan to limit the sale and distribution of certain kinds of assault weapons. They find out that five House members that they thought would vote in favor of the proposal have “jumped the fence” and now plan to vote against the bill. Most of the episode revolves around the attempts of White House staffers to persuade these congressmen to come back into the fold.

For each of the members of Congress that the White House staff approaches, describe the problem that each has with the bill. In other words, why are they reluctant to vote in its favor? What does the White House staff do to try to persuade them? Did they end up deciding to vote for the bill? Why? Fill in the chart on the back.

Key Characters

Josiah “Jed” Bartlet—President of the United States  
Leo McGarry—Chief of Staff  
Toby Ziegler—Director of Communications  
Josh Lyman—Deputy Chief of Staff  
Sam Seaborn—Deputy Communications Director  
C.J. Cregg—Press Secretary  
Mandy Hampton—White House Media Consultant  
Charlie Young—Personal Aide to the President  
John Hoynes—Vice President of the United States

Discussion Questions

Why is Toby concerned about the President changing the speech?

Why are Toby and Sam concerned about Toby benefiting from the rise in stock?

Why do different congressmen, though all Democrats, have different issues with the bill? Why don't these Democrats all just support the Democratic president when he asks them to?

Why is VP Hoynes the political winner in this situation? How does he benefit from the passage of this law?

Why does Leo say “we got what we deserved?”

How do the challenges faced by President Bartlet mirror the challenges faced by President Obama in trying to get health care passed?

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<b>Congressman</b>	<b>Why was he opposed to the bill?</b>	<b>How did the White House try to persuade him?</b>	<b>Does he vote in favor of the bill? Why?</b>
Katzenmoyer			
Wick			
Richardson			
Tillinghouse			