

insights

TYPES NOT MAPPED YET August 21, 2024 | TTR not mapped yet | Christopher T. Murray, Jack N. Jacobson, James A. Conway

Strike the Last Word

A debate [procedure](#) used in Congress allowing any member five minutes to speak on an amendment under consideration.

On the Waterfront

The rules of both the [House](#) and [Senate](#) permit 10 minutes of debate for any amendment, with five minutes given to the member in support, and another five minutes to a member who wishes to speak in opposition.

Moving to strike the last word, however, [allows](#) other members to speak by proposing a [pro forma amendment](#). This can occur during floor or committee debate. Once both the member in support and in opposition have spoken about a bill or amendment, another member can rise and state, “I move to strike the last word.” They will then be given five minutes to speak. Any number of this type of amendment, which only exists to be recognized to speak and does not make substantive changes to the legislation, may be offered.

Norma Rae

Striking the last word was used by some House Judiciary Republicans during the 2019 committee debate on articles of impeachment against former President Trump. With Democrats controlling the majority at the time, Republicans utilized this tactic to delay and undermine the impeachment. The Committee eventually approved both articles but not before hours of angry disagreements and personal attacks. Google searches for “strike the last word” hit an all-time high that day.

Pride

There is little that can be done to prevent members who wish to speak using this procedure, so long as the request is in order. It’s worth noting that there are special rules that can prevent the offering of a certain number of amendments, limit debate, and expedite passage of legislation. Unanimous consent agreements have also been used to avoid prolonged debate.

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