Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

The Motion to Recommit in the House

Updated October 16, 2026

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R48566

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

The Motion to Recommit in the House

SUMMARY

R48566

October 16, 2026

Elizabeth Rybicki, Coordinator
Specialist on Congress and the Legislative Process

The motion to recommit in the House of Representatives proposes to send legislation under consideration on the floor back to committee. A Member may move to recommit a measure prior to a vote on final passage of a bill, providing a late-stage opportunity for a vote in relation to the legislation. Priority in recognition to offer the motion is given to an opponent of the measure, and the motion is considered to be a minority party right.

The motion to recommit is one of the most common roll call votes taken on the House floor, as House rules guarantee the opportunity to offer the motion during initial consideration of a bill or joint resolution under the terms of a special rule. Specifically, the Committee on Rules cannot report a special rule that precludes the minority leader or a designee from moving to recommit the underlying legislation.

Historically, a motion to recommit could include "instructions" that proposed to immediately amend a measure on the House floor. Oftentimes, the minority party would use such a motion to obtain a vote in connection to a favored policy. Since the 117th Congress, however, Members may no longer use a recommittal motion to directly propose changes to a legislative text. Nevertheless, minority Members often connect the vote on the motion to recommit to a policy proposal during general debate on the bill. They sometimes present an amendment they would like to have offered, if allowed, or that they would like the committee to consider if the motion to recommit is successful.

Contents

Introduction 1
House Rules Governing the Motion to Recommit 1
Effects of the Motion to Recommit 3
Characterization of the Motion to Recommit by the Minority Party 3
Recent Changes to the Motion to Recommit 3
Connecting the Motion to Recommit to Policy Proposals 4

Figures

Figure 1. Former House Rule: Offering a Motion to Recommit with Instructions 4
Figure 2. Connecting the Motion to Recommit to Policy 5
Figure 3. Inserting the Text of an Amendment into the *Congressional Record* 5
Figure 4. Inserting the Text of a Motion to Recommit into the *Congressional Record* 6

Contacts

Author Information 6

Introduction

The rules and procedures of the House of Representatives are designed to allow a numerical majority to work its will on the floor. Major legislation is considered under *special orders of business*—more often called *rules* or *special rules*—which determine the text that will be brought before the full House for consideration and what changes, if any, may be proposed from the floor.[1] Special rules, if they are approved on the House floor after being reported by the Committee on Rules, allow a voting majority to control the floor agenda, with few limits on the parameters they may set.

Some standing rules of the House, however, protect the ability of members of the minority party to participate in the legislative process. Perhaps most significantly, prior to final passage of a bill, members opposed to the measure have an opportunity to propose that it be sent to committee. They do this by offering a motion to recommit—or, if the measure has not yet been sent to committee, a motion to commit.[2] This motion is permitted whenever the House is considering a measure under the terms of a special rule, even a special rule that precludes all other motions and amendments. In recent Congresses, Members have used the motion in approximately half of the circumstances during which it was available, making the vote on the motion to recommit one of the most common roll call votes taken in the House.

This report describes the rules and precedents governing the motion to recommit, the potential effects of the motion, and the minority Member practice of connecting the motion to recommit to specific policy proposals during debate on the bill.

House Rules Governing the Motion to Recommit

House Rule XIX, clause 2, permits a motion to recommit prior to a vote on final passage or adoption of a measure. More precisely, it allows the motion even if the *previous question* has been ordered or proposed on a measure.[3] The *previous question* is used to bring the House to an immediate vote on the main question under consideration. If the House votes to order the previous question on a measure, it prevents further debate, amendment, and motions—except that clause 2 of Rule XIX allows a single motion to recommit. In current practice, it is almost always the case that during floor consideration when this motion to recommit would be permitted, the House is considering legislation under the terms of a special rule reported by the Rules Committee.[4]

[1] For more information on the use of special rules to facilitate floor action, see CRS Report R48308, *Special Rules in the House of Representatives: Purpose and Content*, by Mark J. Oleszek.

[2] If a motion is made to send a measure to a committee to which the measure was not previously referred, this would be a motion to commit rather than recommit. Under House rules and precedents, the motion to commit is treated the same as the motion to recommit. For simplicity, this report will refer only to the motion to recommit, although the same procedures would apply in the case of a motion to commit.

[3] There are other stages of the legislative process when a proposal to send a measure to committee—in the form of a motion to refer, commit, or recommit—could be offered. This report concerns only the motion made in order by House Rule XIX, clause 2, when the previous question is ordered or is pending on final passage of legislation. This report does not address the motion to recommit a conference report when the previous question is ordered or pending. For more information on the other forms of the motion, see John V. Sullivan et al., *House Practice: A Guide to the Rules, Precedents and Procedures of the House* (GPO, 2024), ch. 13, §35.

[4] Special rules usually provide that the previous question is considered as ordered on the legislation without intervening motion.

Clause 2 of Rule XIX directs the Speaker to give priority in recognition for this form of a motion to recommit to a Member opposed to the measure. Preference in recognition among those opposed is given first to the minority leader or a Member designated by the minority leader, then to minority party members of the committee that reported the measure (in order of seniority), then to other minority party Members, and, finally to majority party Members.[5] In practice, the minority leader arranges in advance of floor consideration which Member of the minority party will offer the motion.[6]

Since the start of the 117th Congress (2021-2022), the motion to recommit offered pursuant to House Rule XIX cannot include "instructions" to the committee and is not subject to debate. As discussed below, previous forms of House Rule XIX allowed for instructions as well as 10 minutes of debate.[7]

House Rule XIII, clause 6(c), prohibits the Rules Committee from reporting a special rule for the consideration of a bill or joint resolution that precludes the minority leader or a designee from offering the motion to recommit permitted by House Rule XIX, clause 2.[8] There is an exception, however, if the House has agreed to an amendment to a Senate-passed bill or joint resolution that substitutes the text of a House-passed measure. In that case, Members would have had a chance to offer the motion to recommit when the House-passed measure was initially considered.

Rule XIII does not protect the motion to recommit during consideration of simple and concurrent resolutions. For example, a special rule precluding a recommittal motion on a congressional budget resolution (concurrent resolution) or a "sense of the House" resolution (simple resolution) would not violate House rules.

Further, House Rule XIII does not protect the motion to recommit during consideration of Senate amendments, as the protection applies only to initial passage.[9] For instance, a special rule may make in order a motion to concur in a Senate amendment with an amendment consisting of language the House has not previously considered. House rules would not require such a special rule to guarantee the minority a motion to recommit, even though the special rule was providing for action on what is effectively a new proposal.[10]

[5] *House Practice*, ch. 48, §11.

[6] If no minority Member seeks recognition to move to recommit, the Speaker may look to members of the majority to offer the motion. Although these instances are rare, the most recent occurred in the 118th Congress when a member of the Republican majority moved to recommit H.R. 8035, the Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2024. All voting members of the minority party supported the bill, but a significant portion of the Republican conference opposed the legislation and voted in favor of recommittal. The House rejected the motion by a record vote of 88-336. All 210 voting Democrats joined 126 Republicans to defeat the motion.

[7] For example, see the adopted House rules for the 116th Congress at https://rules.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-rules.house.gov/files/116-House-Rules-Clerk-V2.pdf.

[8] The vast majority of bills considered on the House floor are considered under the "suspension of the rules procedure," not under the terms of a special rule. Motions to recommit are not permitted when the House is considering a motion to suspend the rules to pass a measure. For more information on suspension, see CRS Report 98-314, *Suspension of the Rules in the House: Principal Features*.

[9] For more information on the consideration of Senate amendments, see CRS Report R41003, *Amendments Between the Houses: Procedural Options and Effects*, by Elizabeth Rybicki.

[10] See *Congressional Record* (daily edition), vol. 142, January 24, 1996, pp H783-784, for a discussion between the chair and ranking member of the Rules Committee regarding the minority's inability to offer a motion to recommit during consideration of House amendments to Senate amendments to "unrelated House bills."

Effects of the Motion to Recommit

Simply stated, the motion to recommit proposes to send the measure under consideration back to committee. Although a successful motion does not preclude future procedural action on the legislation, it may effectively kill a measure or prompt significant modification. Motions to recommit almost always fail, typically along party lines.

Oftentimes, a Member requests that the question of adopting a motion to recommit be decided by roll call vote, wherein Members cast their votes on the floor by electronic device, establishing a record of how each Member voted. In such cases, the Speaker may put the vote to the House immediately but has authority to postpone the vote within two additional legislative days.[11]

House approval of a motion to recommit could send a bill back to the committee from which it was reported for further work on the measure. Members often discuss desired modifications during general debate on the bill, which may provide the committee with a nonbinding understanding of how to improve the legislation if it chooses to take additional action. If the underlying legislation was not reported by a committee—either because it was never referred to committee or because a committee was discharged from further consideration of the bill—the minority might try to use the motion to provide for a markup process. A motion to recommit can also send a measure to a different committee than the one that reported it, perhaps to facilitate the inclusion of provisions outside the original committee's jurisdiction.

Proponents of a measure sometimes argue that a successful motion to recommit effectively disposes of the underlying measure because a committee is not required to take further action on a recommitted measure. In some political contexts, a committee may interpret a vote to remove a bill from the floor as a rejection of the legislation altogether.

Characterization of the Motion to Recommit by the Minority Party

The motion to recommit has existed since the First Congress, although its form and function have evolved.[12] Oftentimes, modifications of procedure have reflected attempts to balance the minority's right to have its positions considered with the majority's need to control floor action.[13] Previous iterations of the motion to recommit shape the manner in which the motion is understood and characterized today, particularly with regard to its effect on policy outcomes.

Recent Changes to the Motion to Recommit

Most notably in recent history, the rules package adopted at the start of the 117th Congress (2021-2022) contained several revisions to House Rule XIX that affected the motion to recommit.[14] The rule prior to the 117th Congress provided for 10 minutes of debate on the motion and the option of

[11] The procedures by which the Speaker may postpone and cluster record votes is provided for in Rule XX. See CRS Report 98-988, *Voting and Quorum Procedures in the House of Representatives*, coordinated by Elizabeth Rybicki.

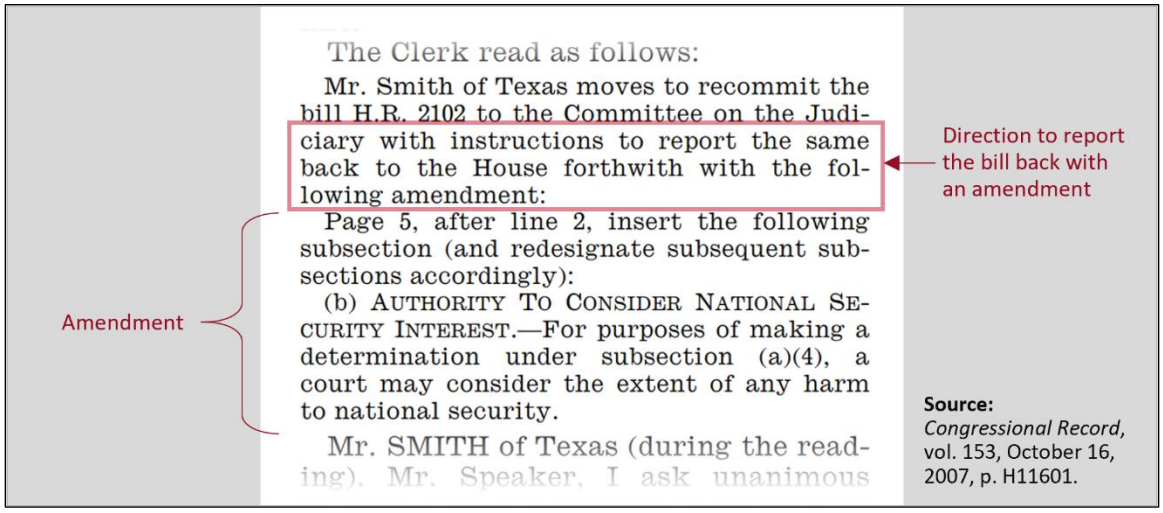
[12] For more information on the history of the motion to recommit prior to the 117th Congress, see CRS Report R44330, *The Motion to Recommit in the House of Representatives*, by Megan S. Lynch.

[13] U.S. Congress, House Committee on Rules, Subcommittee on Rules of the House, *Roundtable Discussion on the Motion to Recommit*, committee print, House of Representatives, 102nd Cong., 2nd sess. (GPO, 1992), p.8.

[14] For more information on changes to House floor procedures in the 117th Congress, see CRS Report R46790, *House Rules Changes Affecting Floor Proceedings in the 117th Congress (2021-2022)*, by Jane A. Hudiburg.

making a motion to recommit with instructions "in the form of a direction to report an amendment or amendments back to the House forthwith."[15] Such a motion would direct the committee of referral to immediately report the bill back to the House with any amendment(s) contained within the instructions. If successful, a motion to recommit with instructions effectively provided the minority an opportunity to offer an amendment before final passage. For instance, the House adopted a motion to recommit H.R. 2102 in the 110th Congress (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Former House Rule: Offering a Motion to Recommit with Instructions



Immediately after the motion's approval, the chair of the Committee on the Judiciary reported the bill back to the House with the specified amendment, and the House agreed to the amendment by voice vote.

Since the 117th Congress, both the 10 minutes of debate on the motion to recommit and the option to include instructions have been eliminated. To date, only one motion to recommit offered after the rules change of the 117th Congress has succeeded.[16]

Connecting the Motion to Recommit to Policy Proposals

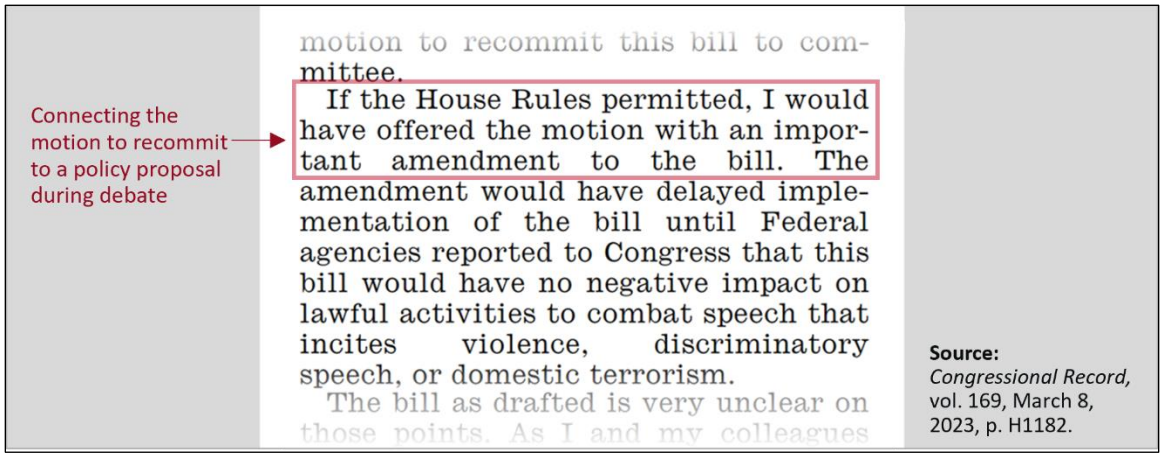
As House rules exist now, the motion to recommit may not include instructions and therefore cannot directly propose modifications to a legislative text. However, since the 117th Congress, and regardless of which political party controls the House, members of the minority party have often characterized the motion to recommit vote as a vote on a policy position.

During general debate, Members may discuss amendments they would have offered using a motion to recommit with instructions to report back "forthwith," if it were allowed. For example, during floor consideration of H.R. 140 in the 118th Congress, a minority party Member made such a statement (see **Figure 2**).

[15] Prior to the 111th Congress (2009-2010), motions to recommit with instructions did not need to contain the term "forthwith." Such instructions did not compel the committee to take any action. For more information, see "Modifications to the Motion to Recommit" in CRS Report R40509, *House Rules Changes in the 111th Congress Affecting Floor Proceedings*, by Megan S. Lynch and Elizabeth Rybicki.

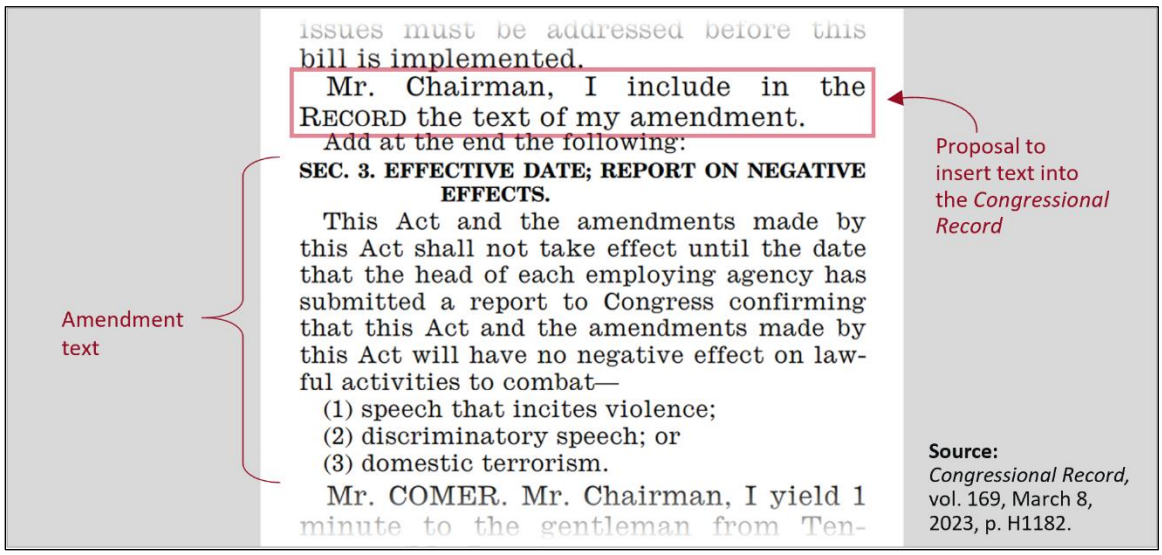
[16] On May 1, 2024, six majority Republicans joined 204 Democrats to approve a recommittal motion on H.R. 2925 by a vote of 210-204. The bill was taken up again on May 8, 2024, and passed by a vote of 216-195. For reporting on the political context surrounding the successful motion to recommit, see David Jordan, "House to Revisit Mining Bill Blocked by GOP Hard-Liners in Protest," *CQ News*, May 8, 2024, https://plus.cq.com/doc/news-8004923?0.

Figure 2. Connecting the Motion to Recommit to Policy



The Member then provided the amendment he would have offered as text inserted in the *Congressional Record* at the conclusion of his remarks (see **Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Inserting the Text of an Amendment into the *Congressional Record*



Minority Members sometimes ask unanimous consent to include the text of an amendment they would like to have offered in the *Congressional Record* immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.[17] Oftentimes, this text will have been drafted as a motion to recommit with instructions.

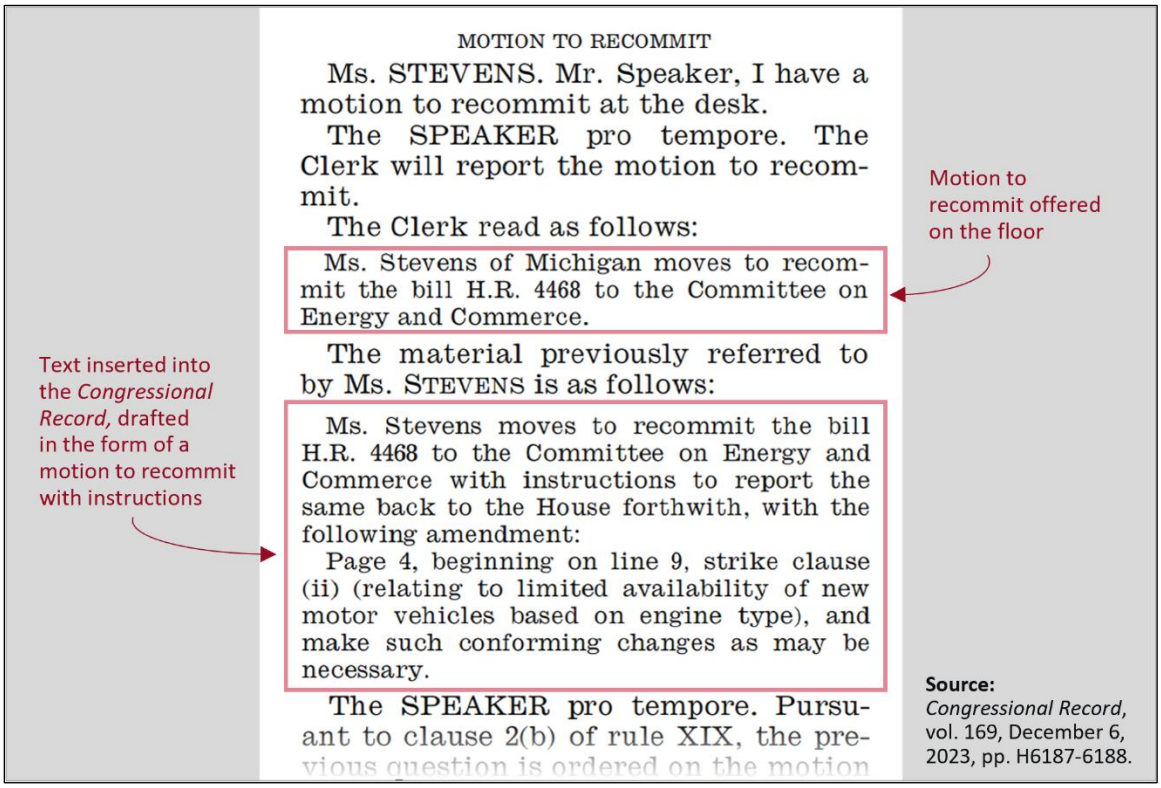
For example, during floor consideration of H.R. 4468 in the 118th Congress, a minority party Member made the following request:

> Ms. STEVENS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert the text of my amendment in the Record immediately prior to the vote on the motion to recommit.

[17] Text may be inserted into the *Congressional Record* under the provisions of a "general leave" unanimous consent agreement propounded prior to consideration of a particular bill. General leave typically allows all Members to revise and extend their remarks as well as include extraneous material in the *Record*.

At the appropriate time, the Member moved to recommit the bill without instructions. Text describing a motion to recommit with instructions was then inserted into *Congressional Record* directly after (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Inserting the Text of a Motion to Recommit into the *Congressional Record*



Although the text inserted into the *Congressional Record* appears in the form of a motion, the Member inserting the text into the *Congressional Record* is not offering a motion to recommit the bill with instructions, as House rules do not permit such a motion. Rather, such insertions highlight a policy change the proponent could have offered under the previous version of Rule XIX. During general debate, the proponents of such motions sometimes indicate they would like the committee to consider the proposed changes if the motion to recommit were successful.

Author Information

Elizabeth Rybicki, Coordinator
Specialist on Congress and the Legislative Process

Acknowledgments

This report was written by Sarah Solomon, former CRS Analyst on Congress and the Legislative Process. The CRS Analysts listed below are available to answer questions on the topic. CRS Visual Information Specialist Amber Wilhelm assisted in creating the graphics in this report.

Key Policy Staff

Area of Expertise	Name
Legislative Procedure	Christopher M. Davis
Legislative Procedure	Michael Greene
Legislative Procedure	Valerie Heitshusen
Legislative Procedure	Jane A. Hudiburg
Legislative Procedure	Mark J. Oleszek
Legislative Procedure	Elizabeth Rybicki

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.