

Eagle Hill Discussion Forum ... Friday, February 12th ... 4:00 PM

Defending the Filibuster: Soul of the US Senate

by **Richard A. Arenberg**

A new administration, a new congress, an evenly split Senate, and an impeachment trial. What rules govern the conduct of our congressional bodies, particularly the Senate, and why are they so important? How do they change over time, and depending on which party is in power? Why is elimination of the Filibuster a “nuclear option?” Are these rules sacred traditions of civilized conduct, or impediments to good governance?

Richard A. Arenberg is Interim Director of the Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy. He is a Senior Fellow at the Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs and Professor of the Practice of Political Science at Brown University. He served more than thirty-four years on Capitol Hill in senior staff positions with Majority Leader Senator George Mitchell (Maine) and Senators Carl Levin (Michigan) and Paul Tsongas (Massachusetts). He served on the Senate Iran-contra Committee in 1987 and helped Senators Mitchell and William Cohen write *Men of Zeal*, analyzing those hearings. He was a principle negotiator of the Alaska Lands Act, which President Carter called “the most important piece of conservation legislation passed in the 20th Century”.

Arenberg authored *Congressional Procedure: A Practical Guide to the Legislative Process in the U.S. Congress* (2018, [TheCapitol.Net](#)). He co-authored *Defending the Filibuster: Soul of the Senate* (2012, Indiana University Press). The authors were awarded a Congressional research award by the Dirksen Congressional Center in 2010. *Defending the Filibuster* was named “Book of the Year in Political Science” by Forewords Reviews in 2012. *Defending the Filibuster, Revised and Updated Edition* was published in 2014. *Richard A. Arenberg: Oral History Interviews* was published by the Senate Historical Office in 2011 and can be read or heard on the U.S. Senate website.

Arenberg has significant experience in intelligence matters, Congressional history, procedure, rules and protocol, and the role and impact of Congress on public policy. Arenberg teaches a number of courses related to Congressional politics and policy, the presidency, and campaigns and elections in Brown’s public policy program and the political science department.

Arenberg has previously taught at Northeastern and Suffolk Universities. He serves on the Board of Directors of Social Security Works and the Board of Directors of Social Security Works Education Fund, and is a Senior Congressional Fellow at the Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership. He is an affiliate at the Taubman Center for American Politics & Policy. His work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Providence Journal*, *Politico*, and *The Boston Globe*. He is a Contributor at Newsmax and *The Hill*.