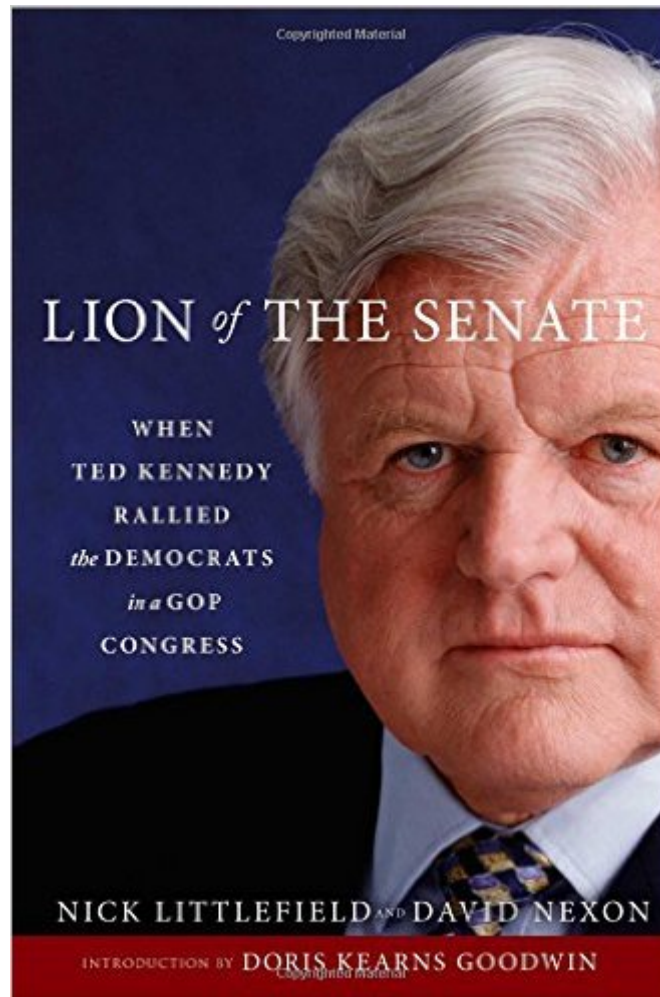


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Lion Of The Senate: When Ted Kennedy Rallied The Democrats In A GOP Congress



Synopsis

“The best book I have read about the inner dynamics of the United States Senate.” —Doris Kearns Goodwin

Two top domestic policy advisors to Senator Edward Kennedy offer an insider’s view of several remarkable years when Kennedy fought to preserve the Democratic mission against Newt Gingrich’s Contract with America and a Republican majority in both houses—a story that has special resonance now as a resurgent Republican right once again controls Congress. In November 1994 the election swept a new breed of Republicans into control of the United States Congress. Led by Speaker Newt Gingrich, the Republicans were determined to enact a conservative agenda that would reshape American government. Had it not been for Ted Kennedy, they would have succeeded. In 1994, after defending his Senate seat against challenger Mitt Romney, Kennedy came back to Washington to find Democrats, including President Clinton, demoralized and leaning toward compromises that would adopt much of the Republican agenda. Undaunted, Kennedy pressed the agenda he would have championed had his party held power. He rallied the Democrats. He reached across the aisle to craft and pass key progressive legislation. And he stopped the Gingrich revolution in its tracks. Nick Littlefield and David Nexon tell this story of a bare-knuckled and sometimes hilarious fight in the United States Senate. It is a political lesson for all time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What a timely book! We Americans still enjoy potable water from our taps, untainted food at grocery

stores, and health insurance in our old age. For these, we must thank Senator Ted Kennedy's principled stand against the Gingrich "revolution" which threatened to take them away. Lion of the Senate describes how Kennedy wrested control of the Senate from the Republican majority elected in '94. However, this is not a dry accounting of vote totals and Senate arcana. Nick Littlefield, the principal author, was Kennedy's chief of staff for nearly a decade, and it shows. He allows us a peek into the collegial atmosphere of the Senate at the time, where the success or failure of a major bill counted on the right show-tune being sung -- literally -- in a staff meeting. Readers will learn about the personal moments and alliances behind the most significant legislation of the '90s. Kennedy's talent for bipartisan maneuvering is instructive for our own time, when gridlock has halted work on the most pressing issues.

This book is both a fascinating look at the inner workings of the Senate--back in the 1990's, when it actually worked--and also the highly personal story of just how Ted Kennedy used his unique combination of personal charm and political shrewdness to advance a socially progressive legislative agenda. The authors, both of whom were key senior legislative aides to the late Sen. Kennedy, give the reader an insider's view of the both the process and the personalities that allowed the Democrats, in the minority in both House and Senate for the first time in 40 years, to thwart the plans of Newt Gingrich and his newly elected majorities to enact his sweeping Conservative "Contract for America." But this is also the very human story of how Ted Kennedy came roaring back from near defeat by Mitt Romney, applying classic grass roots political principles that the Kennedy family had mastered for over fifty years. Reading this book against the background of today's bitterly partisan and dysfunctional national politics makes one realize how much simple decency has been lost in just twenty years. But it also shows how men and women of good will but differing viewpoints could work together for the common good. Who knows? It might happen again.

I served in Washington with Nick during this time and remember him carrying the spiral-bound notebooks containing the notes that are the basis of this book, and while I was there working with the Senate I learned an incredible amount from Lion of the Senate. This may be one of the best books ever written about the American Legislative process, with a first-hand view of the Clinton / Gingrich battles of the 90s, particularly around SCHIP. A great read and well worth your time.

This fine book offers an insider's account of a remarkable series of legislative victories engineered

by Senator Edward Kennedy in the face of the Republican 'revolution' that occurred in the 1994 election. While Newt Gingrich was rallying his troops on the steps of the Capitol and saying rash things to the media, Senator Kennedy was working behind the scenes in his new role as a member of the minority party in Congress to pass the kind of legislation that Gingrich campaigned against. The book has many impressive components--it is a primer on the Congressional legislative process; a portrait of the impressive energy, astuteness and mastery of the legislative process by Senator Kennedy; an analysis of how all the component groups interact as legislation is being formulated and voted upon; and a first hand account of how the staff interact with their Member of Congress to get things done. I served as a Senator's chief of staff during the period covered in this book, and it is right on the mark. Unfortunately, the dysfunctionality, strident partisanship, and legislative paralysis plaguing Congress has gotten only worse since the period covered in this book, and Edward Kennedy is no longer around to make things work.

An absolute must read for either side of the aisle. A reminder of what has happened across party lines and a hope for what still can. Riveting.

Loved this book! Was especially enjoyable, as I worked on his presidential campaign in 1980!

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