



Insight

The Corrupt Bargain

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From [The Feehery Theory](#)

In 1824, the House of Representatives awarded the Presidency to John Quincy Adams after Henry Clay, who was then the House Speaker, concluded that he wouldn't be President and cut a deal that landed him the job of Secretary of State.

It seemed like a good deal for Adams and a good deal for Clay. But to supporters of Andrew Jackson, America's first true populist leader, this was a "corrupt bargain", a sign of a decadent and untrustworthy political process, and a rallying cry for a new class of American voters.

The "corrupt bargain" would haunt both Adams and Clay for the rest of their careers. Adams became only the second one-term President (the first was his father), losing easily to Jackson in 1828. Clay, although he would prove to be the most powerful Speaker in history, would never become President.

Congressional Democrats are now embarking on their own version of the "corrupt bargain". House Democrats have dreamed up a parliamentary device to vote on a health care bill that will become the law of the land (for how long, nobody really knows), without actually ever voting on it.

They are using a parliamentary device known as the self-executing rule. This is a rule that allows debate on one piece of legislation while deeming another piece of legislation passed through the House. Pelosi herself has said that she thinks that the Senate bill is so bad that she doesn't want to put her members through a stand-alone vote on it. But this is the legislation that may become the actual law of the land, especially if the Senate decides not

to live up to its promise and pass the companion piece of the legislation, using reconciliation rules.

And the reason the Senate may not keep its word is because it will have to go to uncomfortable lengths in order to pass the companion piece of legislation. In fact, it looks quite likely that the Vice President will be forced to overrule the Senate parliamentarian in order to allow the upper chamber to pass the bill as desired by the House. Over-ruling the Senate parliamentarian is nasty, nasty business. Robert Byrd, the inventor of the Byrd Rule and the keeper of all Senate traditions, cannot be satisfied with this breach of Senate decorum, all to pass legislation that enjoys the support of only about a third of the American people.

These corrupt bargains don't even include the other corrupt bargains that got the Senate to this point in the first place. Those corrupt bargains include the Louisiana Purchase, the Cornhusker Kickback, the Gatoraide and all of the other special deals that drive the taxpayers crazy.

There is a populist revolt going on in the country. We have seen populist revolts in the past. Andrew Jackson used the anger of the "corrupt bargain", to sweep into office and to take power from the Yankee elites. American politics is still feeling the effects of the Age of Jackson.

The irony, of course, is that Jackson is seen today as the father of the Democratic Party. His heirs are doing to the country what Henry Clay and John Adams did to him.