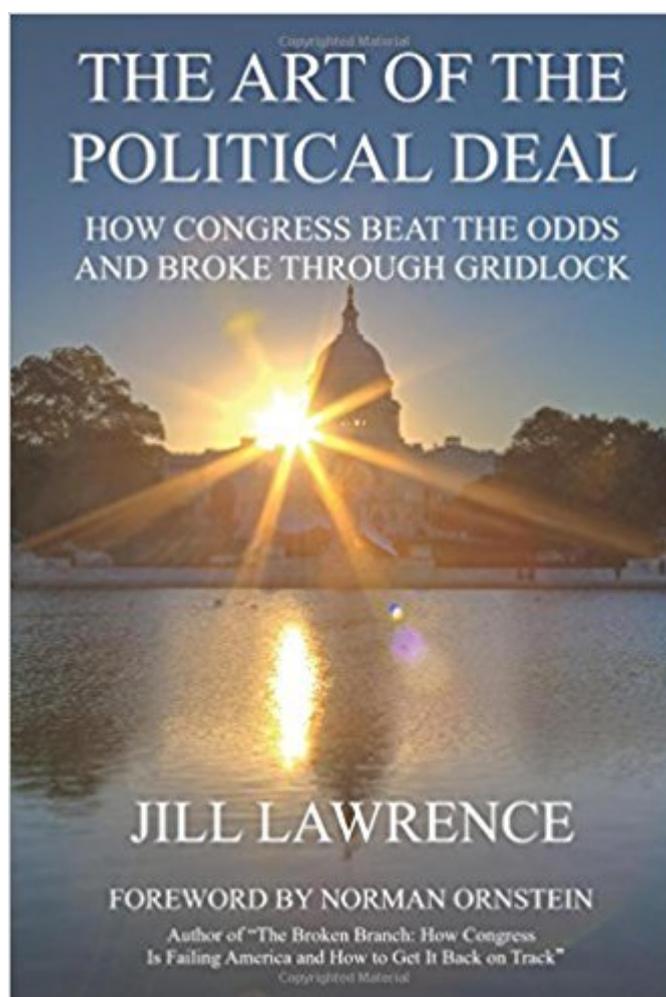


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# The Art Of The Political Deal: How Congress Beat The Odds And Broke Through Gridlock



## Synopsis

Donald Trump presented himself throughout the 2016 presidential campaign as the consummate negotiator and dealmaker. You need flexibility, he said, along with hugs, cajoling and some push and pull. Likewise, Hillary Clinton said one of her goals if she became president would be to create "a nice warm purple space" for compromise in Washington. Such talk may sound unrealistic given the gridlock and polarization that afflicts our government, yet breakthroughs do sometimes happen. "The Art of the Political Deal" tells the stories of four successful negotiations and the tools, techniques and conditions that made them possible—even during an era that's among the most partisan and unproductive in U.S. history. The cast of characters ranges from headliners such as Paul Ryan, Bernie Sanders and John McCain to staff negotiators who reveal what they were thinking and saying as they haggled over painful details. All were grappling with deep-seated conflicts we see in our daily headlines: tax hikes versus entitlement cuts, the federal versus private role in health care, developers versus conservationists, the precarious balance between farming interests and food-stamp recipients. These are examples of four times when our elected officials and their aides defied failure. The agreements did not always live up to their promise. Yet they were bright spots in a dark landscape—snapshots of professional politicians and staff doing their jobs well, for the good of the nation, against the odds. In that respect they present a template for future negotiators on how to achieve that rarity of our political era, a deal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a little gem of a book."--Elaine Kamarck, director of the Center for Effective Public Management at the Brookings Institution."The one book President Trump should probably

read..."--Columnist Patricia Murphy, "Roll Call." "These cases are not only insightful about the dynamics of negotiation in Congress, they are also beautifully readable -- actual page-turners. Highly recommended."--Jane Mansbridge, Adams Professor of Political Leadership and Democratic Values at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and co-editor of "Political Negotiation: A Handbook." "Legislative sausage-making that you do, in fact, want to see. A fascinating behind-the-scenes look."--Former Senator Olympia Snowe, Republican of Maine, a senior fellow at the Bipartisan Policy Center and co-chair of its Commission on Political Reform. "A ray of hope at a time of gloom and doom about poisonous partisanship. When the big players want to work across the aisle to get something done in the national interest, they still can."--Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia Center for Politics and author of "The Kennedy Half-Century: The Presidency, Assassination, and Lasting Legacy of John F. Kennedy."

Jill Lawrence has been commentary editor of USA TODAY since January 2016. A columnist for USA TODAY and a former columnist for Creators Syndicate, U.S. News and World Report and The Associated Press, she has won National Press Club, Sigma Delta Chi and National Headliner awards for her writing. Lawrence is the co-author of *Governors and the Presidency: How They Campaign, How They Govern*, for the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers, and "Phoning It In and Failing to Show: The Story of the 2014 House Primaries," for the Brookings Institution, and a contributor to *The Surge: 2014's Big GOP Win and What It Means for the Next Presidential Race*. She has covered every presidential campaign since 1988, as well as historic events such as the 1998 Clinton impeachment, the 2000 Florida recount and the health reform battles of the Clinton and Obama eras. Her positions have included managing editor for politics at National Journal; senior correspondent at AOL's Politics Daily; national political correspondent at USA TODAY, and national political writer for the AP. Her work has also appeared online in Politico Magazine, The Week, The Daily Beast and The Atlantic. Columbia Journalism Review named Lawrence one of the top 10 campaign reporters in the country in 2004, when she covered Democratic nominee John Kerry for USA TODAY. "Washingtonian" magazine included her on its list of 50 "best and most influential journalists" in 2005. Lawrence has a master's degree in journalism from New York University and a bachelor's degree in music literature from the University of Michigan. She lives in Washington with her husband, John, an editor. They have two sons.

This book is not just an elegant telling of three political success stories, but a highly instructive assessment of the ingredients that make, or fail to make, for positive political outcomes. Sometimes

the bulk of the work can be delegated to staff, sometimes it is for principals only. Sometimes interest groups control, sometimes they can be held off. Sometimes the political pressures of the moment control, sometimes they don't. Sometimes longstanding personal relationships overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, sometimes they count for little. There is a great deal of content in this short book. I hope Ms. Lawrence is at work on a follow-up. Our political system is greatly in need of her counsel.

Just when you thought that Congress was hopelessly bogged down in partisan warfare and unable to produce anything of importance, Jill Lawrence has sprung a surprise on us with three compelling case studies of Congress doing its job. What is especially heartening about this book is the unlikely partners that cooperate in coming up with useful solutions for problems ranging from budget issues to the sad state of veterans' health care. Lawrence's book is a strong rebuttal to the cynics who argue that Congress can't get the job done.

Things are pretty depressing in Congress these days. The conventional wisdom, which seems to have a great deal of truth behind it, is that extreme political polarization has made it impossible to get anything done. Gridlock is the name of the game. Even with Congress now completely controlled by the GOP, passing significant legislation remains difficult. Jill Lawrence would beg to disagree, at least under certain circumstances. This short, but detailed book, lays out four cases where compromise was not just possible, but was actually achieved, and significant legislation was passed. Lawrence applies a journalist's eye to examining what allowed compromise to happen, even when at times it seemed impossible. In each case she looks at the players and the environment in which they operated, and identifies the keys to the compromises that made the difference. In a smart move, Lawrence considers how these results comport or not with an American Political Science Association study on what it takes to reach bargains in complex political contexts. The APSA study doesn't always pan out - some of these bargains came about outside of APSA's recommendations. But the reader will learn a lot about both the approaches to getting results that are recommended, and how in the real world, those approaches sometimes make all the difference. This book will be valuable for anyone who wants to understand what it will take to break through Congressional gridlock in search of compromises that allow governing.

If you are looking for ultra left political tripe written by the uninformed then buy this book. You could save your money and just read the NYT. It's the same thing.

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