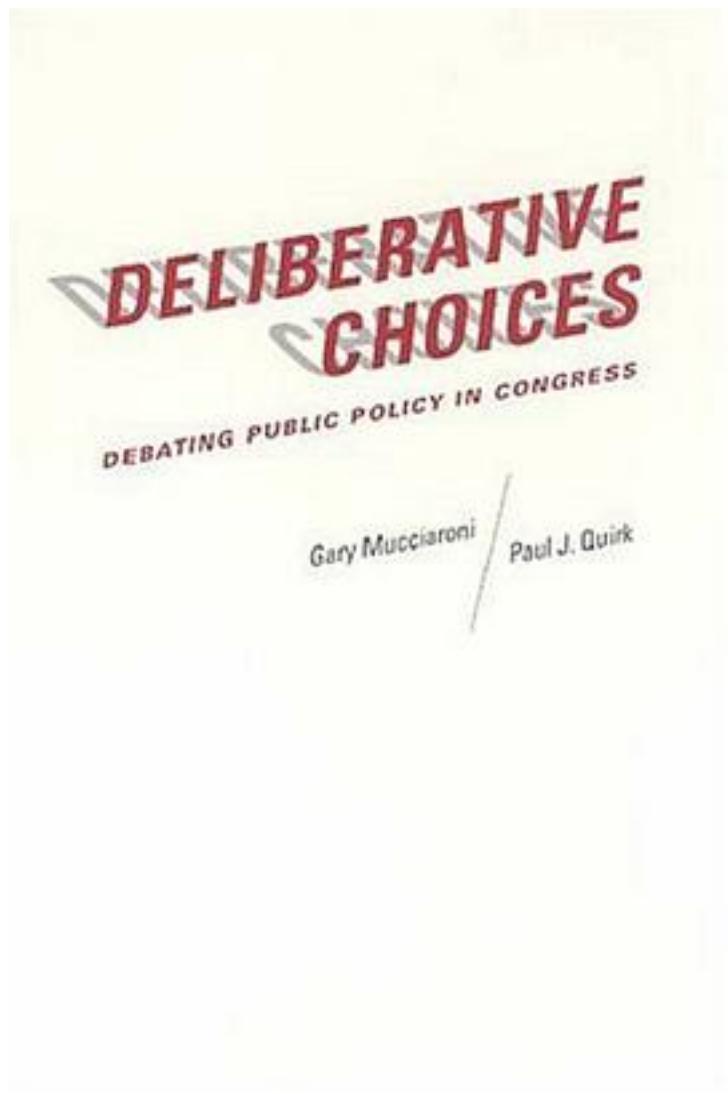


Deliberative Choices



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出版者: Univ of Chicago Pr

出版时间: 2006-6

装帧: HRD

isbn: 9780226544069

The task of deliberating public policy falls preeminently to Congress. But decisions on matters ranging from budget deficits to the war with Iraq, among others, raise serious doubts about its performance. In "Deliberative Choices", Gary Mucciaroni and Paul J. Quirk assess congressional deliberation by analyzing debate on the House and Senate floors. Does debate genuinely inform members of Congress and the public? Or does it mostly mislead and manipulate them? Mucciaroni and Quirk argue that in fashioning the claims they use in debate, legislators make a strategic trade-off between boosting their rhetorical force and ensuring their ability to withstand scrutiny. Using three case studies - welfare reform, repeal of the estate tax, and telecommunications deregulation - the authors show how legislators' varying responses to such a trade-off shape the issues they focus on, the claims they make, and the information they provide in support of those claims. Mucciaroni and Quirk conclude that congressional debate generally is only moderately realistic and informed. It often trades in half-truths, omissions, and sometimes even outright falsehoods. Yet some debates are highly informative. Moreover, the authors believe it's possible to improve congressional deliberation, and they recommend reforms designed to do so.

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目录:

[Deliberative Choices 下载链接1](#)

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