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## Commentary

### Now, Franken must learn to collaborate

by Lawrence Jacobs

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As Al Franken prepares to pack his bags for Washington, he faces a choice about the kind of U.S. senator he'll be.

He can be an uncompromising trailblazer for the issues and causes he intensely cares about. Or he can be an effective senator who compromises to build the broad coalitions that are necessary to enact legislation.

The Senate is like a club, with norms and rules that make it impossible for any individual to get what he or she wants. There are numerous opportunities for deadlock and delay.

How will Franken respond to the simple word, "no"? Franken has held no elective office and little real world experience in working in a collaborative body that is booby-trapped against the uncompromising advocate.

Indeed, Paul Wellstone began his career in the U.S. Senate with a series of statements and actions that earned him the ire and disrespect of many of the body's members. By the end of his term, Wellstone had learned to pursue his goals effectively by working through the system.

A stunning example of this was Wellstone's relationship with the arch-conservative from North Carolina, Jesse Helms. Wellstone started out with antipathy toward Helms, based on their different political starting points, but eventually came to respect and collaborate with him.

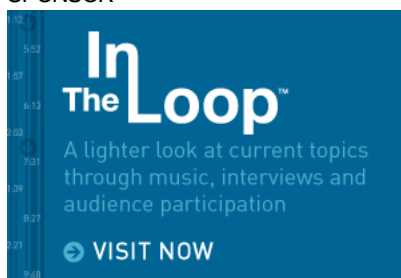
Franken faces a triple challenge:

1. He lacks the training to work collaboratively.
2. He enters the Senate with more than half the state holding unfavorable views of him.
3. He will be under intense scrutiny from the media -- and from Republicans who may be looking to target him as an example of Democratic extremism.

If Franken finds a way to pursue his policy goals while working collaboratively, he can win the respect and admiration of his Senate colleagues, prove effective in passing legislation, and earn the support of a majority of Minnesotans.

Lawrence Jacobs is a professor and director of the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute.

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