

## Political Bookworm

STEVEN LEVINGSTON

Excerpts from [washingtonpost.com/blogs/political-bookworm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/political-bookworm)

### A SEAL's perspective

*Don Mann knows how to get things done. As a former trainer of the SEAL Team Six members who got Osama bin Laden, Mann has the lowdown on how to get past almost any obstacle. In his new book, "Inside SEAL Team Six: My Life and Missions with America's Elite Warriors," he shows what it takes to focus on a job no matter how steep the odds and see it through — out of a sense of duty and justice. So who better to give a little advice to our uncallused Congress members who lately have had some trouble following through on their duty to govern? A guest blog post from Mann:*

These days, many of our politicians don't seem able to confront the great challenges facing them — cutting the deficit under deadline, taking action on rescuing the economy, etc. Congress could learn a great deal about leadership and tackling difficult problems from the philosophy used in the SEAL Teams.

We elect our politicians and the U.S. taxpayers pay for our politicians to get a job done. It is unbelievable, unsatisfactory and almost criminal to hear over and over again that the job is not getting done. Our country is paying a heavy toll for the work that is not being done by Congress.

Like our elected representatives, SEALs live day to day confronting "insurmountable challenges." For the SEALs, however, the outcome is often a matter of life or death, not a blip up or down in approval ratings. The SEAL philosophy and work ethic were established by men who, on a daily basis, have risked their lives for their country.

SEAL team members never come home saying, "Sorry but we were unable to complete the job that you paid us to do, the task was

too difficult." The challenges that Congress faces today are not unique. Our country has had to deal with deficit deadlines and economic issues for well over 200 years.

It takes over a year of arduous training, the toughest military training in the world, to become a Navy SEAL and to be able to wear the coveted SEAL trident on your uniform. And that's just the beginning. The SEAL trident has to be earned every day.

In the teams, we do not sit back on our laurels — you go out every day and earn your right to wear that trident. We elect our politicians for what they promise us they are going to accomplish. They need to go out and fulfill these promises. They need to earn their right to be our representatives on a daily basis by fulfilling their promises.

SEALs typically under-promise and over-deliver, in contrast to over-promise and under-deliver. We understand that effective leadership requires making tough decisions and that strategy requires execution. . . .

As SEALs, we focus on developing unique traits and characteristic skill sets that enable us to achieve mission success. We take great pride in being part of an organization where the entire team is mission- and success-oriented.

Failing is never an option!

We are surrounded by teammates fueled by honor, integrity, courage, discipline, accountability, ambition, creativity, flexibility and responsibility.

If the congressional team had this same mind-set, our country would be in a much better situation than it is now.

See Steven Levingston's book selections at [www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/political-bookworm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/political-bookworm).

