

Political Reform

Problem:

As a result of growing partisanship, Congress is not doing the job it was elected to do: passing budgets, responsibly managing the nation's finances, and making the decisions necessary to ensure that government functions at a basic level of efficiency.

- Political dysfunction has real costs: it is preventing policymakers from solving very serious problems. Throughout last year, we have seen policymakers fight over the details of COVID-19 relief packages, while citizens, including small-business owners, awaited critical economic aid.
- Discontent among small-business owners with their elected officials and the overall U.S. political machine remains high, with 86 percent of small-business owners saying politics have become more partisan in the last 10 years.
- The constant drive to raise money for reelection campaigns is a major problem, as the time spent legislating suffers when too much time is spent seeking campaign funds.
- Across-the-aisle member interaction has diminished greatly, inhibiting collaboration and an ability to find commonalities in shared interests.
- Communication between the legislative and executive branches must be open and regular regardless of which party controls the White House, Senate, or House.

Solution:

In today's hyper-partisan era, when citizens are more politically divided and get more of their news and information from ideologically driven sources, we must find ways to work together for the common good. Reducing the partisanship in Congress and transforming it into a higher-performing institution will not happen overnight—but some steps can be taken.

- Political contributions, including those made to outside and independent groups, should be disclosed so that citizens have full information about who is paying for the political messages they see.
- Congress should pass legislation requiring detailed disclosure of spending by congressional leadership PACs and mandating that leadership PAC funds be used solely for political activities and not for personal use.
- States should move to a more open process for redistricting and use neutral line-drawers in their redistricting process with opportunities for public comment.
- Additional opportunities for members to interact, especially with their counterparts across the aisle, will help defuse the increasingly toxic discourse on Capitol Hill.
- A strong committee process is necessary: committees should conduct legislative and oversight hearings, marking-up legislation after receiving input from both sides and issuing committee reports.
- Fair and robust floor debate in the House and Senate must be reinstated to allow for debate, amendments and open discourse, followed by conference committee negotiations and final compromise language on legislation.