



Stennis Fellows – 113th Congress

Meeting the Challenge: Bridging Boundaries for the Common Good

Stennis Center for Public Service Leadership

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The John C. Stennis Congressional Staff Fellows of the 113th Congress came together across party lines from both chambers of Congress to work together in roundtables and retreats in 2013 and 2014. Nominated by Members of Congress and chosen by an independent selection committee, 26 staff leaders with over 300 years of combined experience on Capitol Hill began meeting together in July of 2013. The objective of the program is to provide a unique leadership development experience for senior-level Congressional staff through dialogue and relationship building across boundaries of party and chamber, and to focus on the future of Congress as an institution of American democracy. The 113th Congress Stennis Fellows began with the core theme of *Meeting the Challenge: Bridging Boundaries for the Common Good*.

The Learning Agenda

At their inaugural meeting the Stennis Fellows identified three broad questions to pursue together related to the theme and looking ahead to the future of Congress. These broad questions provided the starting point for a series of half-day roundtable dialogues where Stennis Fellows explored these issues with leading experts.

The Fellows conducted four roundtable dialogues with different panels of guest experts, one roundtable on each of their learning agenda topics:

Historical and Societal Implications of Polarization and Bridging Boundaries within Congress

[There were two roundtable dialogues on this topic, each with a different panel of guest experts.]:

- Alan I. Abramowitz, Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science, Emory University
- Ambassador Connie Morella, President, U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress
- Sean Theriault, Associate Professor, Department of Government, University of Texas
- Frances Lee, Professor, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland
- Nolan McCarty, Susan Dod Brown Professor of Politics and Public Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University

Media and Transparency: Implications for Bridging Boundaries

- Lee Rainie, Director, Internet and American Life Project, Pew Research Center
- Norman Ornstein, Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute

Professional Development for Bridging Boundaries

- John McGuire, Senior Fellow and Transformative Practice Leader, Center for Creative Leadership
- Chuck Palus, Senior Faculty Member in Research, Innovation and Product Development, Center for Creative Leadership

Using Dialogue

All of the roundtables and other sessions of the Fellows' program were conducted as dialogues. Dialogue had been recommended by previous classes of Stennis Fellows as a powerful and different way of learning and leading. Perhaps the best way to understand dialogue is by contrasting it with its opposite, debate or advocacy.

A key to using dialogue effectively is to recognize that it does not replace debate, advocacy, negotiation or decision-making; it precedes them. Dialogue provides a way to map areas of common ground before debate or negotiation begins. Participants in a dialogue are usually surprised by the amount of common ground they share, even on the most contentious issues. Once they realize that they agree on perhaps 80 percent of the matters being considered, it becomes easier to deal with the remaining 20 percent in a productive way. Stennis Fellows practiced dialogue during all sessions of the Fellowship. Many Fellows also undertook experiments, trying to apply dialogue on the job and then reporting the results to other Fellows. Generally Stennis Fellows reported that dialogue helped in a wide variety of practical circumstances, especially when it could be applied before the debate or negotiation had been fully engaged. It is a valuable tool that Stennis Fellows plan to use more widely and hope to encourage others to try.

Dialogue: the Opposite of Debate

Debate/Advocacy	Dialogue
Assuming there is one right answer	Assuming others have pieces of the answer
About winning	About finding common ground
Listening for flaws	Listening to understand
Defending assumptions	Exploring assumptions
Seeking your outcome	Discovering new possibilities

1 The discussion of the nature and use of dialogue in this report is based on the Dialogue Essentials workshop provided to the Fellows by Viewpoint Learning (www.ViewpointLearning.com).



Key Insights Stennis Fellows Heard in Roundables

Highlighted here are some of the insights and analysis provided by the Congressional scholars and other experts who met with Stennis Fellows in roundtable discussions. As is evident, polarization and partisanship as they currently exist in Congress and the nation are complex issues. Not only are there no clear and concise answers, but likewise the source and impact is difficult to pinpoint. The viewpoints of the experts who met with the Stennis Fellows are sometimes divergent, and do not necessarily match the viewpoints of the Stennis Fellows, individually or collectively. While it would be fruitless to attempt to reach consensus on such complex issues, it is helpful to compile and share the insights received by the Stennis Fellows as they worked together to better understand challenges facing Congress as an institution of American democracy.

Polarization is not a modern phenomenon.

Partisan polarization has been the norm in U.S. history. The current level of polarization and partisanship is more the norm for American politics than is the bipartisanship of the mid-20th Century. In fact, America has experienced periods of stalemate and polarization, such as the Reconstruction Era after the Civil War, when the two parties were as far apart as they are today. Polarization subsided and by the middle of the 20th Century, bipartisanship was more common.

Societal changes contributed to the increase in bipartisanship experienced in the mid-20th century. Several exceptional factors were responsible for this growing bipartisanship from the 1930s to the 1970s, including the common experience of emerging from the Great Depression, victory in WWII, and a generally more homogeneous electorate – partly due to limited participation of minorities in the political process. Factors similar to those that contributed to the relatively bipartisan era are unlikely and undesirable in the future.

Polarization is not a modern phenomenon. Cont...

Voting patterns began diverging again in the 1970s as states became more polarized. In the 1976 presidential election, the voting results in many states were close, meaning the electoral vote might have gone either way. In fact, 20 states, including many large ones, were decided by less than five percentage points. Contrast that to 2012, when only four states were decided by less than five percentage points, and more states were won by a large margin. Also, far more House Members today represent districts voting by landslide margins for one party or the other.

Is polarization a Washington or national phenomenon? One school of thought is that the polarization in Washington is a result of a disconnect between the political class and the American public; that it is a phenomenon among the elites and that the public is no more divided today than it was in the 1950s or 1960s. In other words, the partisan divide between Representatives and Senators in Congress may not reflect their constituents. If so, the acrimonious tone in Washington could metastasize out to the public. When one starts to see other Americans as the enemy, then sectarianism, a cancer in other countries, could become a bigger problem here.

Major political divisions do exist in the country. Panelists also presented contrary information that political leaders were, in fact, reflecting their diverging constituencies; that polarization is the result of divisions that actually exist in society – economic inequality, demographic changes, ideological realignment, and race/ethnicity. Democratic and Republican voters today are much more divided based on geography, race and ideology than they were in the past. For example, non-whites now account for about 45 percent of the Democratic voters versus about 10 percent of Republican voters.

There is a growing ideological divide. Over the past 40 years, the gap between Republican and Democratic voters is expanding, when they are asked to place themselves on a liberal-conservative scale. Exit polls also reveal a growing gulf between Democratic and Republican voters. Well over 90 percent of voters in 2012 voted straight-line for their own party's candidates for President, House and Senate, representing the lowest rate of ticket splitting since 1970. One result is a decline in the number of moderates in both parties and a shrinking number of competitive House districts. Today voting patterns in Congress reveal that the average Republican in Congress is more conservative and the average Democrat is more liberal than their counterparts were 40 years ago.

Political engagement increases polarization. The more politically active or involved Americans are, the more polarized they become. Thus, the electorate is itself strongly partisan and deeply divided. This may have important consequences in primary elections, where turnout is frequently dominated by fewer but more active, engaged voters.

Partisan polarization coupled with narrow majorities is the single most important factor behind today's perceived dysfunction in Washington. The most obvious consequence of today's polarization is divided government, gridlock, and frustrated voters, especially since 1990. With narrow majorities in the House and Senate and a roughly even balance in the electorate at large, the party in control has every incentive to protect that status. Meanwhile, the minority party goes on the attack to try to become the majority in the next Congress. In every election, everything is at stake. While this competition has its benefits, it also makes it more difficult to reach agreement in Congress. Practical problem solving takes a back seat. The resulting inaction is likely to continue until one party achieves a dominant position and is able to enact its program unhindered. As one panelist put it, "One party just needs to get wiped out once in a while."

This is the longest sustained period of narrow majorities in Congress since the Civil War. Since the 1980s, the majorities in Congress have been narrow and have switched several times. Republicans have held the majorities for eight Congresses and the Democrats for nine. At the presidential level, the two parties have each held the presidency about half the time. The period most similar to today's partisan stalemate was in the late 19th Century, with narrow and switching majorities and vicious, intense partisan conflict. Congressional productivity was also very low then.

Congress is contributing to polarization.

Procedural votes have become a focus for polarization. The number of partisan procedural votes has risen significantly in recent years. In the 1970s, only about five percent of procedural votes in the House were recognized as partisan. Today, the same measure shows about 30 percent of procedural votes are polarized. By contrast, polarization on substantive votes (bills and amendments) has remained about the same. A similar analysis holds true in the Senate.

Senate filibusters contribute to rising tensions. The increasing use of filibusters in the Senate and the emergence of a 60-vote threshold for advancing any legislative or executive initiative have increased tension and exacerbated polarization. So has the practice of a leader ‘filling the amendment tree’ to prevent the offering of amendments by the minority. This tit-for-tat strategy has increased the difficulty of getting from the 51st (majority) vote to the 60th (supermajority) vote, thus making passage of legislation in a chamber divided 55-45 harder to achieve.

“Partisan warriors” exacerbate incivility. The emergence in the 1990s of the “partisan warrior” has increased the strains in Congress. Their divisive actions and acrimonious rhetoric, as well as their campaign contributions often against incumbents and buttressed by outside groups, have helped poison the atmosphere within Congress. Exacerbating the problem is the recent upswing in the amount of money donated by wealthy individuals who often have disdain for the parties and leadership and want to drive the debate in a more ideological direction. The results are increasingly negative, vicious campaigns, which, unfortunately, are often successful.

There is less respect and civility among Members of Congress. Fewer Members know each other or their families today. Thus, it is easier to ignore, shun or demonize one’s opponent. Because states and districts tilt strongly toward one party or the other, there is often little incentive to work with Members of the other party. Indeed, bipartisanship may even be risky since it can create trouble among base voters and organizers with a lot of money to spend. But when bipartisanship does happen, it should be celebrated and publicized. Restoring trust among Members is a key to bipartisanship. But it is not achieved overnight. It takes years of working with one another to gain mutual confidence, something that is more likely to happen in committees, which seem to have lost much of their influence in both chambers.

Members show less respect for the institution of Congress. Declining respect among Members for each other is one factor, but so is the record low esteem for Congress held by Members and the public. Many candidates seek electoral advantage by running against what they see as a flawed institution. Knowledge of and respect for the legislative process is at a low point not just among the voters, but also with the media, which exacerbates the negative view of Congress.

Parties can gain strength more through disagreement than through reaching consensus — ‘message votes.’ Competition motivates politicians, especially those in the minority, to show why they are different. They confront the other side to draw clear distinctions, delegitimize the opposition, and make the case for change. Thus, there is greater attention given to so-called ‘message votes’ – votes which are not attempts at serious legislating, but rather serve to highlight disagreements between the parties. These votes take an enormous amount of time in the Congress. They also heighten the role of party leaders who develop the ‘message,’ and diminish the role of committee chairmen and ranking members as well as regular legislators. At the same time, competition helps parties to reduce internal divisions and coalesce.

Party competition has made the permanent campaign a feature of Congress. The struggle for power between the parties is inherently a zero-sum proposition (I win – you lose). As the effort to gain electoral advantage intensifies, it lengthens the campaign cycle to near permanent status. This all-consuming focus on winning impacts legislative deliberations. Twenty years ago, Members and Congressional staff populated Congressional policy group discussions. Today, they are dominated by Members and pollsters/ campaign consultants, further evidence of the extent to which campaign attitudes have intruded into the governing process.

Congress is contributing to polarization. Cont...

Working with the majority party is seen as diminishing the chances of becoming the next majority. Prior to 1994, with little hope of becoming the majority party, minority Republicans cooperated with the Democrats in order to get something, however small, in return. Such collaboration was made easier by the large ideological overlap between Republicans and conservative Democrats, especially committee chairs. Collective action by the parties also was minimal, and parties rarely met together in caucuses. As the number of centrists in each party started declining, however, and with the narrower margins potentially putting control of a chamber up for grabs in each election, the incentives to cooperate diminished and the cross-party rhetoric became more combative. Today, working across the aisle and risking giving a perceived accomplishment to the other party is seen by many as akin to sleeping with the enemy.

The permanent campaign also encourages tribalism. One goal of the permanent campaign is to delegitimize the other party. This feeds an overall tribal attitude on the part of party members, exemplified by the “If you’re for it, I’m against it (even if I was for it yesterday)” syndrome. (The Gregg-Conrad Commission and the Medicare Part D debate were noted as good examples of this behavior). The result is that even if a party is able to enact something, half of the population will view it as illegitimate. This attitude extends beyond Washington, D.C. and the Congress. It’s more than a structural issue of divided government. It goes to a serious cultural issue of how our society goes about bridging differences.

Congressional negotiations are much different from those conducted in the business world. In business negotiations, the goal is usually a win-win outcome based on financial metrics. In Congress, politics play a major role in shaping the scope of any negotiations. Congressional negotiators must justify any deal to their constituents, who generally hold Members more accountable for the positions they take than for any particular policy outcome. Thus, agreements that appear rational based on the policies involved may not be acceptable politically.

Gridlock in Congress has shifted more policy debate and program experimentation to the states. The legislative efficiency advantages of unified government can be observed in some states. States controlled by one party have the opportunity to implement ideas relatively unfettered. Of course, one party control does not necessarily ensure smooth sailing as internal party rifts can also create gridlock.





There are ways to bridge polarization.

Changing institutional structures is unlikely to fundamentally lessen polarization. The resource persons were divided on whether redistricting is a major cause of polarization. States are just as polarized as Congressional districts, according to the resource persons. Other ideas to reduce polarization by changing the political process, such as altering primary rules, imposing term limits, reforming campaign finance laws, changing filibuster rules, etc., may be good for other reasons, but the panelists thought they would affect polarization only at the margins.

Addressing deeper cultural issues might reduce polarization. Addressing these deeper issues is a multi-step process. If one begins by engaging opponents and treating them with respect, it can help open real dialogue. There is also benefit in having others observe the tone of engagement. This is true of online interactions as well as face-to-face encounters. Enlarging the electorate, especially in light of an expanding, diversifying culture, also can help dilute the more extremist voices.

Congress could benefit from building on common ground. Common ground might be easier to find on issues such as structural unemployment/jobs, the smart electricity grid, and transparency/privacy. A more expedient approach might be to find practical ways to go forward instead of spending time fashioning grand reforms.

Congress has a considerable advantage in negotiating deals. While the obstacles to compromise are considerable, Congress has one big advantage not present in the business world. Congress has universal jurisdiction. This broad authority gives it a considerable range of options to include as part of any agreement. As former Rep. Barney Frank said, “In Congress, the ankle bone is connected to the shoulder bone,” or, in other words, anything can be connected with anything else if it is needed to get a deal.

Bipartisanship still has its advantages. Given the nature of their rules, bipartisanship is far more necessary in the Senate than in the House. Very little can advance in the Senate without some backing from the minority side. But even in the House, bipartisanship can have its advantages. It can help win support elsewhere in the legislative process. It can also confer political legitimacy on the majority party’s effort.

New technologies present both problems and opportunities for bridging boundaries.

Media technology has vastly expanded the playing field of information and engagement. The Fellows spent considerable time discussing the impact of the media and transparency on polarization. Seventy percent of Americans today have broadband access, giving them an unprecedented capacity for two-way interaction and allowing them to tell their own stories to a broad audience. It also is expanding the infrastructure for ‘truthfulness,’ formerly the sole prerogative of the news media but which now exists in many different spaces. Finally, it offers the opportunity to engage one’s opponents through their social networks, at their cultural level, to fashion new forms of engagement, possibly using the Wikipedia model, and to cut across issues, parties, and ideologies.

The Internet has become a major source for political information. The Internet now rivals cable TV as a source of news and information about politics. It is the primary news source for those under 30. Two-thirds of them get information from social networking sites, 59 percent get it from YouTube, and 31 percent from Twitter. This change has transformed the media landscape. But not everybody is on Facebook or Twitter. It is mostly for the activists and people who really care. It is not a reflection of everybody.

Social networks are replacing institutions as a repository of trust. As people engage more with their social networks, their trust follows suit. People are turning to folks in trusted positions within their networks, rather than to institutions, for information they can believe in. In addition, as a platform for building engagement and mobilization, social media is less stratified than society at large. This means that while historically the better off and better educated were more likely to be civically engaged than the less well off and less educated, that is not true of social media.

Access to mobile media changes the way people think about politics, but mobile media is mostly not about politics. Mobile media (smart phones) allows real time access to information and answers and it changes the way people think about getting access to political actors. Three in five of all adults use social media with the majority thinking of themselves as media creators, telling their own stories. About half of them used it in the last election for news, mobilization, recruitment, discussion or just getting involved. But 80 percent of social networkers do not post on politics at all and when they do, they are more likely to ignore posts that disagree with their own views. The vast majority of adults do not organize their networks around politics. Indeed half of them were totally stunned when they learned of some of their friends’ political views.

The media is driven to be more outrageous. To break through today’s multiplicity of news sources, blog posts, tweets, etc., producers resort to the media equivalent of ‘shock and awe’ – jolt the reader or viewer into taking notice and generating on-line ‘clicks’. While it may be effective in the short run, this leads to a coarsening of the culture, a stifling of dialogue and a deepening of the symbiotic relationship between the media and those who peddle half-truths (or untruths).



Echo chambers’ and ‘empty chambers’ are both at work. Technology allows us to filter and organize the information we receive to match our viewpoints (the ‘echo chamber’ effect), thereby making it much easier to hear and see only material we agree with and deal only with those of like minds. On the other hand, with a media environment that is so fractured and with so many alternative sources of news and entertainment vying for our attention, people can tune out politics altogether. Research indicates that this ‘empty chamber’ phenomenon may be more powerful than the echo chamber.

The media business models are hampering dialogue. The business models for today’s media that seem to work best are ones that divide and demonize, or ones that encourage shouting matches by extremists at both ends of the political spectrum. Neither is helpful at bridging differences. Nor do they accurately depict the sentiments of those in the middle. But it does generate readers, viewers, and on-line clicks. When Members are in their home states or districts, activists and their tribal media outlets most often confront them. As technology has enabled the media to broadcast more content in real time, it demands instantaneous reactions, rather than thoughtful deliberation and comment.

There seems to be no common set of facts. Many political arguments take place not just over ideology, but over basic facts. The lack of agreement on the facts adds to the difficulty of building coalitions and reaching agreements. The huge sums of money now available from independent groups and individuals exacerbate the problem. Furthermore, in a ‘you can say anything’ culture, the consequence of someone being caught in a lie is frequently for that person to double-down on their position. There is no more shame. Establishing a common set of facts would help bring disputes back into the realm of possible negotiations. The Congressional Budget Office has become one such source of common facts, at least on fiscal issues.

Most people are tied to their worldview. Most people, when presented with information contrary to their worldview, will double down on it. The two big drivers of change in a position are: 1) an unexpected cataclysmic event that rearranges your worldview or, 2) a former supporter/leader who shares your opinion changing their mind.

Transparency and openness interfere with getting things done. In a divided government, compromise is necessary to achieve results. Yet with the tribal media ready to blast any hint of concessions, and with any deviation from orthodoxy punishable by outside groups and individuals through social media, emails, and contributions to opponents, negotiations cannot be done in public. Two of the biggest accomplishments so far this Congress, the Budget Agreement and the Farm Bill, had to be negotiated in private and only released publicly as a complete package shortly before a final vote. However, the public still believes in transparency, so anyone advocating something less than that is put on the defensive.





Staff Leadership and Professional Development for Bridging Boundaries

The Fellows also engaged in a special dialogue about the challenges of building leadership capacity and improving the professional competence of Congressional staff for bridging boundaries. The resource persons for this session were John McGuire and Chuck Palus of the Center for Creative Leadership.

They discussed how our understanding of leadership is changing in an increasingly interdependent world. Leadership today is seen less as an individual trait and more as a social process by which a group, organization or society achieves direction, alignment and commitment — the process of making sense of what people are doing together so that people will understand and feel committed. Many of the challenges facing staff and Members – the breakdown of regular order, less knowledge of (and concern for) the rules, distrust and resentment among Members and staff, lack of shared institutional values, absence of re-investment in the institution – can be addressed by experimenting on a small scale with changes and not allowing the larger challenges to become overwhelming. Don't wait for the grand strategies; start with building small prototypes.

Congressional staff leaders can determine the kind of culture and practices they want to foster in their office and then put them into practice. They have control over what they do as an individual and perhaps over some part of their immediate office. They also have a broader sphere of influence. Leaders can focus on their own development and also encourage their staff to move along the leadership pathway, from dependence, to independence, to interdependence.

The private sector often thinks about success in negotiations as a process of getting to ‘win-win,’ yet the political environment often defines success as an ‘I win – you lose’ proposition. In today’s Congressional environment, an interdependent, collaborative mindset is needed for dealing with and managing the inherent polarities, ambiguities and complexities.

Motivating senior professionals to stay is one of the larger challenges. It is exacerbated by the lack of resources to build capability and encourage learning in the institution. The resource persons noted that they had never worked with any institution that had so little interest in capacity building and investment in itself as the Congress. Developing such learning mechanisms (including mentorship) within the Congress could be an important step in addressing these challenges.

Institutions can be the way they are for sometimes hundreds of years, and then they can change very quickly – a tipping point. Perhaps Congress is on the verge of such a change. If so, staff needs to be ready for that opportunity when it comes.





Governor Gerald Baliles Perspectives from the Miller Center

by Governor Gerald L. Baliles

The Miller Center, University of Virginia
Friday, March 28, 2014



The Miller Center strives to rise above partisan differences and find a common way forward, for the good of the nation. That is why we are delighted to welcome another class of Stennis Fellows to Faulkner House.

I understand that the theme of your retreat this weekend is “Bridging Boundaries for the Common Good,” and I will share with you some of our own work that illustrates how politicians at the highest levels have worked to bridge that partisan divide.

As you know, strident partisanship is not a new thing. Our Founders reached back into antiquity for insight and lessons from the classical era, and they saw figures such as Caesar and Pompeii as cautionary tales about the separation of powers and the dangers of political alliances. So, citizens and leaders have never been angels.

But there may be something new in today’s political environment. We are in an age of sound bites and slogans, where subjects of national import are too often discussed in an atmosphere that’s marked by a lack of courtesy and respect for people with different points of view. True discourse at the highest levels of government seems all too rare.

Many, if not most, of the great achievements of national governance in American history were built on creating broad, bipartisan consensus. And while political differences and debates make our democracy strong, excessive partisanship and polarization make it harder to build legislative coalitions and that can lead to gridlock. The lack of thoughtfulness coupled with increased resistance to reaching consensus can have dire consequences for our nation.

To help get your conversations started this evening, I wanted to highlight two instances of politicians at the highest level of government working to find areas of common ground.

The first is a recording from the Miller Center's Presidential Recordings Program. It is a very cordial conversation between two confirmed partisans:

President Lyndon Johnson, a Democrat, and then Representative Gerald Ford, a Republican, who had just defeated Representative Charlie Halleck two weeks earlier for the position of House Minority Leader.

In this conversation, Johnson solicits Ford's involvement in discussions about Vietnam largely as a way to create the possibility of support for Johnson's position. And Ford, in turn, had offered his general support for Johnson's approach and the possibility of a working collegial relationship.

(Add hyperlink)

As we know from our other LBJ tapes, Johnson had no reservations about using a heavy hand in dealing with members of Congress. But in that instance, he sought to establish a good working relationship with the new Republican House leader.

You see a similar dynamic at play in this second clip, which comes from the Miller Center's Presidential Oral History Program. This particular clip is an interview with Max Friedersdorf, who served as Reagan's first White House Director of Legislative Affairs. Friedersdorf had a front row seat to Reagan's interactions with Congress.

Upon taking office, Reagan made a special effort to get along with Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill. The relationship between these two old Irishmen is now well documented, but as Friedersdorf notes, no one expected them to hit it off quite as well.

(Add hyperlink.)

It's hard to imagine the same dynamic happening these days.

As you discuss the best ways to pursue a common good, I encourage you to assume the same collegial, informed, and thoughtful manner that you've heard demonstrated in these clips tonight. I truly believe it is that approach has the most transformational potential for the nation moving forward.



Stennis Congressional Staff Fellows

113th Congress

Chris Adamo

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Taunja Berquam

Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
House Committee on Appropriations

Robert Bonner

House Committee on Appropriations

Patrick Carroll

U.S. Representative Kevin Yoder

Jonathan DeWitte

U.S. Representative Bill Huizenga

Austin Durrer

U.S. Representative Jim Moran

Robert Frederick

U.S. Representative Rodney Davis

Adrienne Hallett

Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Terry J. Halstead

American Law Division
Congressional Research Service
Library of Congress

Anne Hazlett

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry

Kim Hildred

Subcommittee on Social Security
House Committee on Ways and Means

Kelly Hitchcock

House Committee on Appropriations

Wallace Hsueh

Senate Committee on Small Business

Tim Hysom

U.S. Representative Alan Lowenthal

Katherine Kaufer

Senate Committee on Appropriations

Jonathan Kraden

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental
Affairs

Maria Meier

Office of the Senate Majority Leader

Brian Potts

Subcommittee on Defense
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Armstrong Robinson

U.S. Representative Keith Rothfus

Tara Shaw

U.S. Senator Mike Enzi

Barvetta Singletary

Office of the Assistant Democratic Leader

Jen Stewart

Office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives

Adam Telle

U.S. Senator Thad Cochran

Jamila Thompson

U.S. Representative John Lewis

Helen Tolar

U.S. Senator John Boozman

Jennifer Van der Heide

U.S. Representative Mike Honda

Looking Ahead

The 113th Congress Stennis Fellows were characterized from the beginning of their time together by a desire to not only study and learn, but to also take tangible actions as a group that will benefit Congress in the years ahead. Acting upon that desire, the Stennis Fellows began developing a set of initiatives during their final retreat at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in May. They met again on Capitol Hill in June to finalize and adopt the initiatives, and have committed to work on implementation in small groups going forward. Action on these initiatives, combined with the personal actions Stennis Fellows will take in their individual work, will form a lasting legacy for the 113th Congress Stennis Fellows.

113th Congress Stennis Fellows Initiatives

Improve Professional Development and Leadership Development Opportunities for Congressional Staff

- Assess current professional development and leadership development opportunities available to congressional staff and identify needs.
- Conduct a survey of staff.
- Compile list of classes and training opportunities currently available in the House and the Senate.
- Convene Senior Stennis Fellows to review survey findings and make recommendations.
- Organize support from Member of Congress for increased opportunities for professional and leadership development.
- Identify potential partners to provide professional and leadership development opportunities.

Elevate Understanding of Value of Congressional Public Service

- Compile and disseminate a list of “tips” from 113th Congress Stennis Fellows to help Congressional staff become more effective in their work.
- Encourage Members and staff to use the Oath of Office every Congressional employee is required to take to instill in staff members a stronger sense of the Constitutional responsibility we all share.

Create Opportunities for Relationship Building among Congressional Staff

- Establish an ongoing series of events open to Stennis Fellows and others featuring renowned speakers.
- Work with other Senior Stennis Fellows to support and strengthen the Emerging Leaders mentoring program linking senior staff to junior staff.





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