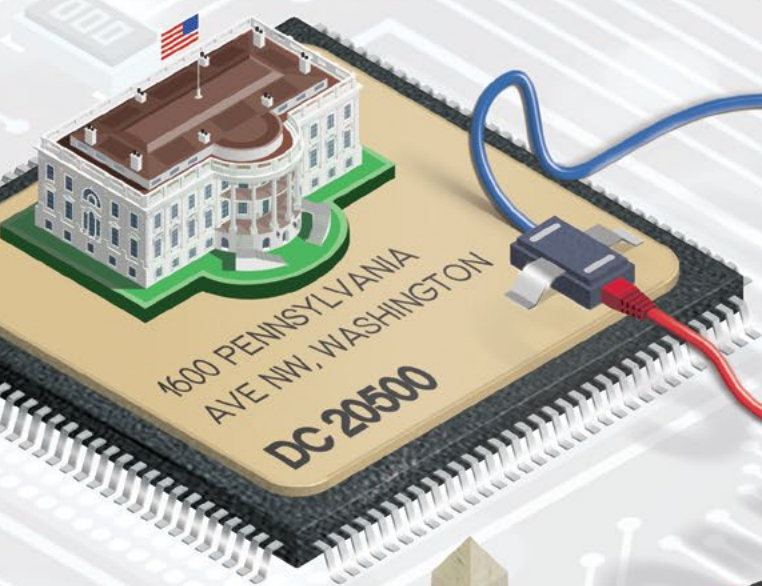
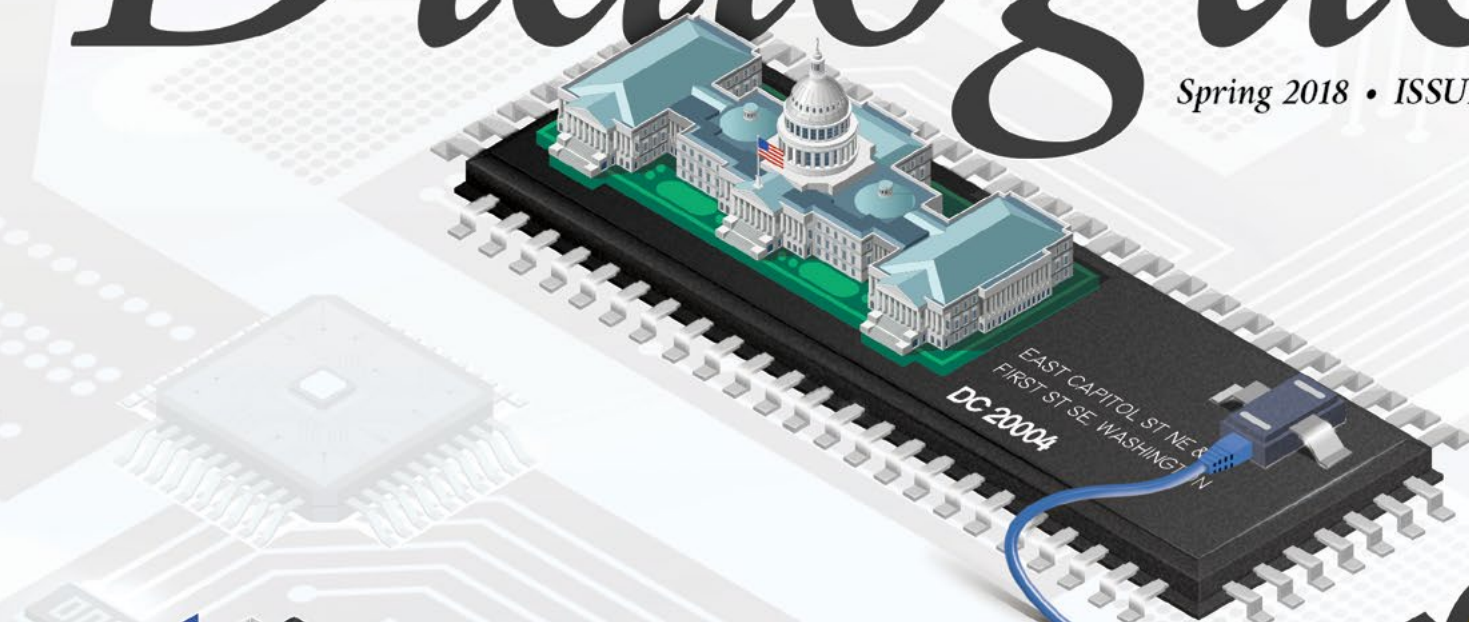




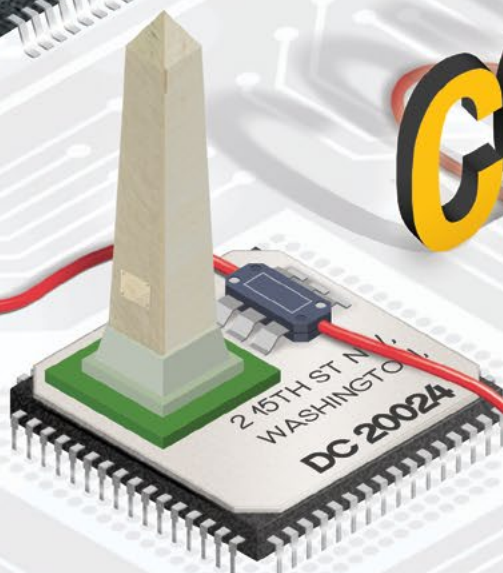
BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

Dialogue

Spring 2018 • ISSUE VIII



**STAYING
CONNECTED**





Congress, It's Time to Heal Thyself. Here's How.

How much lower can Congress' reputation sink before some sense of urgency—fueled by self-preservation or simply self-respect—convinces leaders that “something” has to change?

The comparative yawn that greeted the last government shutdown reveals how shockingly little the public now expects from Congress. The recent Edelman Trust Barometer found that trust in major institutions fell more sharply in the United States than in any of the other 28 countries surveyed. The share of Americans expressing faith in their government fell 14 points in the past year, to an alarming 33 percent.

Is this how the 535 members of Congress want to spend their careers and be remembered?

It doesn't have to be this way. Congress has the power to restore public confidence and self-dignity simply by doing its basic duties: examining the nation's needs and problems and legislating reasonable responses. To succeed, Congress must have the courage to restore some of the tools that any institution needs to work effectively and solve problems.

The Bipartisan Policy Center's Commission on Political Reform has studied these issues and proposed commonsense reforms. While skeptics may claim some of these are politically difficult, they should consider the “political difficulty” of continued dysfunction. Ultimately, there is one, and only one, way for Congress to regain public trust and support: Get Things Done.

Some of these reforms are easy and publicly noncontroversial. For instance, the House and Senate should schedule synchronized five-day workweeks in Washington, with three weeks in session followed by a one-week recess. Lawmakers spend far too much time in (and traveling to and from) their districts, and not enough time in Washington getting to know one another and mastering their key committees' subject areas. It is inconceivable that we seek to govern our diverse and complex nation principally on Wednesdays. As unseemly as the mid-January shutdown was, senators said it forced meaningful private talks between Republicans and Democrats—something that should happen in advance of future crises.

Both chambers should continue the House's recent practice of allowing committees to work every morning without the interruption of floor business and votes. Congressional committees are the engines of our democracy. Empowering them—and, by implication, reducing the power of leadership—would go a long way toward improving the legislative process. Substantive legislation should not reach the House or Senate floor without the benefit of committee deliberations. Legislation with broad committee support should expect to receive floor consideration, and members should have a minimum of three days to study these bills. Finally, full-fledged conference committees should resolve differences between House and Senate versions of important legislation.

OTHER MUCH-NEEDED CHANGES INCLUDE:

Step away from the TV lights:

The recent shutdown was solved in large part by the self-described Common Sense Coalition that met in Sen. Susan Collins' office to hammer out an agreement. The most important difference between the senator's office and the floor of the Senate is "no cameras." Lawmakers must reassert the importance of negotiating in private and presenting their agreements and explanations to the nation.

Guarantee some deliberation:

Last year, the Senate considered far too few committee bills on the floor with a robust amendment process.

Get the budget process back on track:

Congress should adopt a biennial budget process that includes two-year budget

resolutions and appropriations bills. To help with enforcement, it must consider enacting two-year ceilings on discretionary spending.

Article I and Article II of the Constitution should get together:

The president should hold regular, monthly meetings with congressional leaders and be invited to attend joint congressional caucuses twice a year.

Modernize the institution: Lawmakers should convene a Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress. The last time Congress looked in the mirror was 1992. A lot has happened since, domestically and internationally. Congress is not designed for the modern era. It's time for a serious bipartisan effort to modernize the institution.

Stop the one-party rule changes:

Senate policy should call for changing its rules at the start of a new Congress. Rule changes would require a two-thirds vote in the chamber.

Reform and restore earmarks: Enabling Congress to direct up to 1 percent of the budget to address constituent priorities will strengthen its capacity to make hard decisions (e.g., reduce the \$20 trillion deficit). It is possible to design a transparent and deliberative process deserving of public trust.

Congress' shortcomings are painfully obvious, but they're not unsolvable. It is time for our resilient democracy to stand up for itself and reclaim the tools it needs to solve tough problems.

This op-ed was originally published in *Roll Call* on January 29, 2018.

Roll Call

Sincerely,



Jason Grumet

President, Bipartisan Policy Center


 @JasonGrumet

Table of Contents

- 02 President's Letter:** Congress, It's Time to Heal Thyself
- 05 A Shared Experience:** Introducing the American Congressional Exchange
- 08 Reinventing Rural Health Care:** A Case Study of Seven Upper Midwest States
- 10 The Cost of Doing Nothing:** The Need for National Conversation on Early Childhood
- 12 Capacity for Achievement:** The Legislative Action Award
- 14 Celebrating an American Patriot:** Bob Dole

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BPC MAGAZINE STAFF

Editor Rachael Gresson

Deputy Editor Emilee Schroeder

Contributors Shai Akabas, Julie Anderson, Theresa Cardinal Brown, John C. Fortier, Jason Grumet, Katherine Hayes, Nick Hart, G. William Hoagland, David Lapan, Lisel Loy, Janet M. Marchibroda, Blaise Misztal, Elena Muehlenbeck, Michele Nellenbach, Anand Parekh, John Richter, Linda Smith, Michele Stockwell, and Tracy Terry

Copy Chief

dalecurtiscommunications.com

Photography

Greg Gibson Photography
and Shutterstock.com

Magazine Design and Production

milksono.com

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A Shared Experience

To govern a divided country, Democrats and Republicans need to know each other.

The Bipartisan Policy Center is inviting members of Congress to journey together on the American Congressional Exchange, an original approach to building better relationships and bipartisanship in Congress, away from the crucible of Washington, D.C.



Pictured left to right: Reps. Jack Bergman (R-MI) and Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) stop by a local market during the first American Congressional Exchange

The question is, how can we get to a place where members of Congress are focused on working together based on a common set of facts, shared respect for one another, and an understanding of where the other person is coming from?

The Bipartisan Policy Center has introduced the American Congressional Exchange (ACE), to enable members of Congress to spend a weekend together learning about each other's districts and leading discussions on shared interests. Members are paired by choosing districts that are significantly different geographically, culturally, and politically. ACE is chaired by the co-chairs of BPC's Commission on Political Reform: former Senate Majority Leaders Tom Daschle and Trent Lott, former Agriculture Secretary and Representative Dan Glickman, and former Senator Olympia Snowe.

The first exchange was held in January, when **Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI)** visited with **Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL)** in her home district in the Orlando area. Over the weekend, the pair spent time visiting Murphy's constituents, including stopping by a farmer's market, the Lake Nona VA Medical Center, the University of Central Florida, area businesses, and the Naval Support Activity Orlando. Back in Washington, Reps. Bergman and Murphy are now working together on specific ideas to improve opportunities for America's returning service members.

// Sometimes a *shared experience* can be what brings members together to take action on behalf of the *American people*.





// Comparison and contrasting helps us take...435 unique and valid viewpoints and put them in a position where wise decisions can be made for the country.

— Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI)

"The personal interaction time is incredibly valuable," said Murphy. "We discovered that while our districts are very different, we have a common connection back to the Vietnam War even though we are of different generations. I think when you establish those personal connections, it becomes easier to work together."

"In any issue we are dealing with at the congressional level, that comparison and contrasting helps us take...435 unique and valid viewpoints and put them in a position where wise decisions can be made for the country," said Bergman.

BPC plans to facilitate additional exchanges throughout 2018 to provide more regular opportunities for legislators to gain a greater depth of understanding of issues, and forge relationships through shared experience. Developing friendships and bipartisanship fosters collaboration on policy matters and legislation. With improved personal relationships, Congress will operate more effectively.

//

When you establish those personal connections, it becomes easier to work together.

— Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL)

Learn more about the American Congressional Exchange at: bipartisanpolicy.org/american-congressional-exchange





Reinventing Rural Health Care

A Case Study of Seven Upper Midwest States

The Bipartisan Policy Center joined the Center for Outcomes Research and Education (CORE) to speak with more than 90 national thought-leaders and stakeholders about the current state of rural health care in the Upper Midwest region, including Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming. These discussions were used to determine the real-world implications of existing federal policies, to understand ongoing care challenges, and to identify opportunities for improvement in rural health care access and delivery.

At a public event featuring remarks from **Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND)**, and **Mike Rounds (R-SD)**, BPC released a paper, [*Reinventing Rural Health Care: A Case Study of Seven Upper Midwest States*](#), detailing the findings from the outreach efforts.

Rural health issues affect more than just the Upper Midwest region and the seven states included in this effort. Furthermore, these issues do not exist in isolation—they are interdependent and build off each other. The nation cannot just fix one part of rural health care; the

whole system needs be addressed. BPC's work identifies four specific areas for developing recommendations:

01 Rightsize Health Care Services to Fit Community

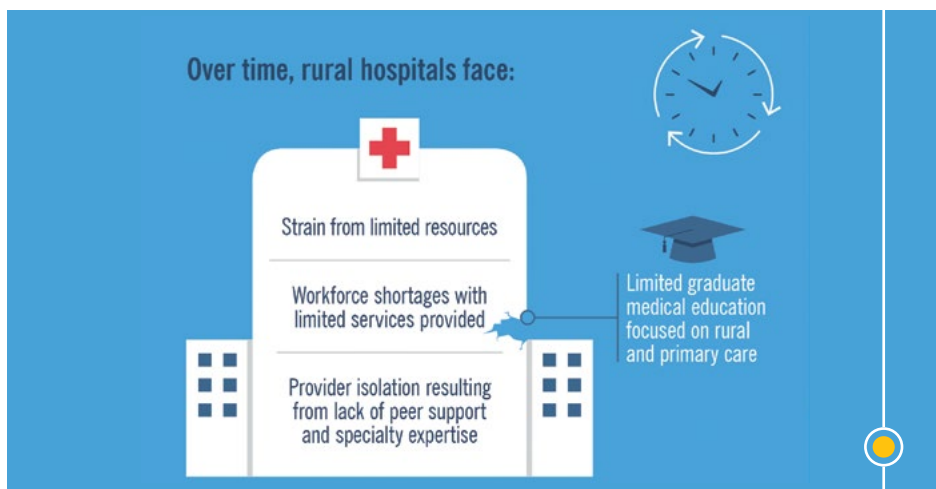
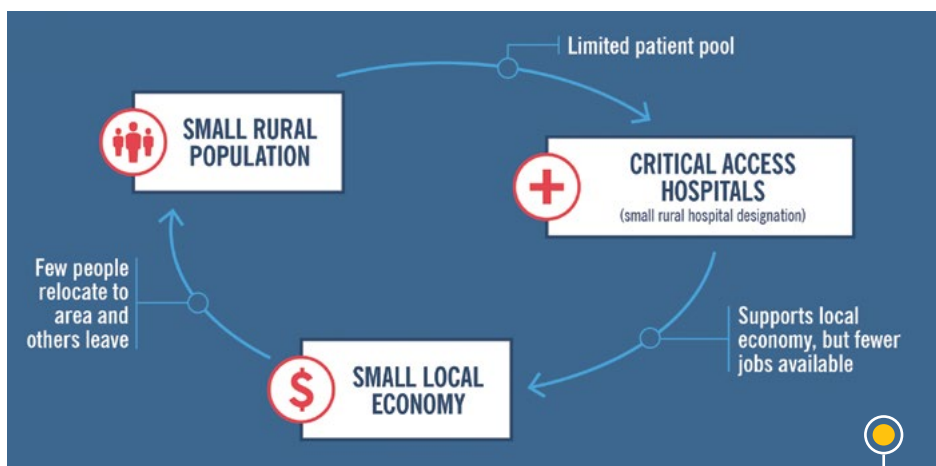
Needs. In order to build tailored delivery services, policies need to be flexible and not just have a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

02 Create Rural Funding Mechanisms.

Policymakers should consider the unique challenges faced in rural areas when developing



Pictured left to right: Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Mike Rounds (R-SD)



Rural health issues are interdependent and build off each other

metrics and funding mechanisms. Rural health systems should work together in order to secure appropriate funding mechanisms and implement innovative models.

03 Build and Support the Primary Care Physician Workforce.

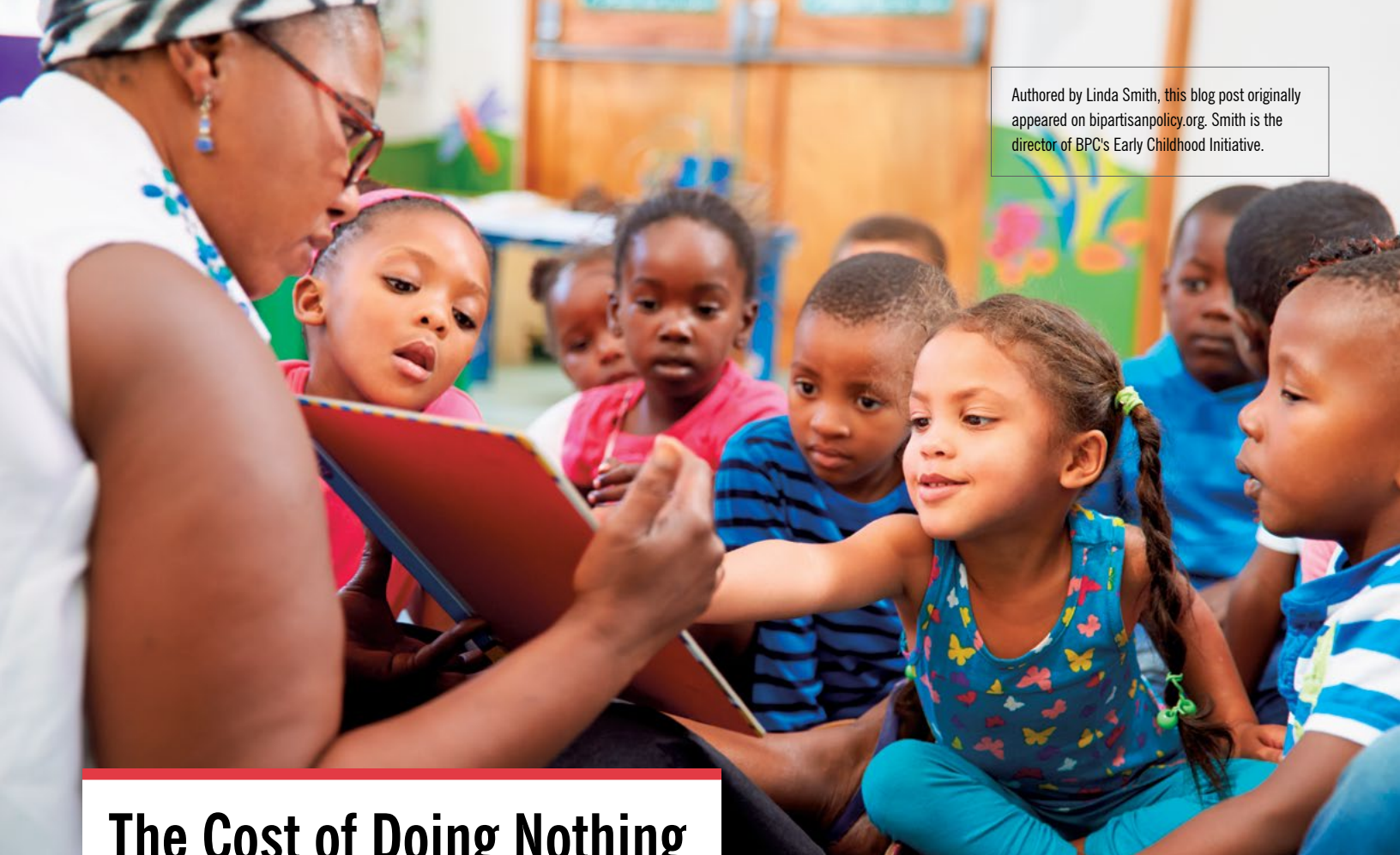
Communities should focus on right-sizing the health care workforce for their needs. Health care administrators are starting to think creatively by employing case managers, community-health workers, and in-home providers to help meet the needs of the community. Policies should support these efforts.

04 Expand Telemedicine Services.

As workforce models change, rural health systems need to equip health professionals with the tools necessary to provide quality care to patients. Telemedicine is a promising way to increase patient access and create a peer network for rural providers.



Read the full report at:
bipartisanpolicy.org/rural-health



The Cost of Doing Nothing

The Need for a National Conversation on Early Childhood

Most Americans agree that children need support to thrive, particularly in the crucial first few years of life. However, despite broad consensus on the importance of this time in a child's life, we continue to debate how to best support parents so they can provide caring and enriching environments for their children. The debate can be healthy but it needs to lead to concrete action. We believe there are several short-term and longer-term steps we can take, in a bipartisan fashion, to improve early childhood care and education in this country.

Today, most families have two parents in the workforce and a critical part of American family life involves some form

of child care. Parents' ability to balance work responsibilities with the needs of their children frequently results in overly stressed parents, which in turn can have negative consequences for everyone—children, parents, and employers alike. Report after report shows that quality child care, if available, is expensive and beyond the reach of many working families. This is particularly true for families living below 200 percent of the poverty level, although low-income families are not the only ones experiencing stress resulting from child care. Child care sits near the top of the list for a young family's expenses. The cost of infant care ranges from \$10,000 up to nearly \$20,000 a year, if you can find it. Ask any new parent who has tried to find child care for an infant lately. Most are in

Child care sits near the top of the list for a young family's expenses. The cost of infant care ranges from

\$10,000 UP TO
\$20,000 NEARLY
a year,



if you can find it.



complete shock; first about how difficult it is to find it and then (if they do find it) about the cost.

this, we estimate that an additional 364,800 families with children under five could be served. While it is far from

These, and many more questions, will need to be answered over the coming months and years but the most important question of all is this—do we agree that our children and families, no matter their circumstances, deserve the best possible start in life? If we do, we can get over the hurdles that will come. We have one thing in common: *children*. Despite differences in *how* we move forward, I know of no one, no matter their party affiliation, who doesn't care about, and want the best for children.

// We have a national conundrum—how can we provide the quality of care our children need, pay those caring for them a livable wage, *and* make the services affordable to all parents?

At the same time, studies also show that those working in child care are among the lowest paid in our country with the average salary of child care workers qualifying them for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in all 50 states. Studies also show that children from low-income families benefit most from high-quality child care and that quality depends on the skills, knowledge, and interactions of those working within the programs. We have a national conundrum—how can we provide the quality of care our children need, pay those caring for them a livable wage, *and* make the services affordable to all parents?

In the near term, Congress can act on our recommendation to double the federal funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant for children ages birth to five. This recommendation was included in our report [*A Bipartisan Case for Early Childhood Development*](#), co-chaired by former Sen. Rick Santorum and former Rep. George Miller. By doing

meeting the real need for American families, it is a solid down payment.

In the longer term, there will need to be a broader conversation about our country's approach to early childhood. The National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine issued a [*report*](#) with recommendations about how to finance early care and education. It is our hope that this report will spur a national dialog on how to provide children and families with the quality of early care and learning they deserve. The dialogue is long overdue as parents cannot afford to pay any more than they already are paying for child care.

As we move forward, there are important questions that need to be answered: What is the cost of doing nothing? What are some children getting that others are not, simply because their parents cannot afford it? Do we really believe “children are our most valuable resource” and if so, how do we provide the best possible beginning for all of them?



Co-Chairs of BPC's Early Childhood Initiative, former Sen. Rick Santorum and former Rep. George Miller, wrote to congressional leaders urging them to double the funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant for children ages birth to five.

Read the full letter at:
bipartisanpolicy.org/early-childhood-initiative



Capacity For Achievement

LEGISLATIVE ACTION AWARD

Our nation and Congress are challenged by a complex array of competing interests, ideologies, and demands. While the nation is divided, it is not ungovernable. The Bipartisan Policy Center works to support and highlight productive partisans who demonstrate that it is not necessary to compromise principle to achieve bipartisan progress.

BPC established the Legislative Achievement Award to acknowledge creative and courageous members who are breathing life into the legislative

process. The award is given to new members who demonstrate the skill, grace, and tenacity to get things done for their constituents and the nation.

The Legislative Action Award is focused on members who have:

- Served six years or less in their current chamber.
- Demonstrated skill and courage in the face of political challenges to confront substantive problems.

- Provided a positive tenor to the legislative process.
- Offered a template for improving the functionality of the institution through their example.

Our Award Selection Committee is comprised of senior BPC leadership, board members, the co-chairs of BPC's Commission on Political Reform, and representatives from businesses and non-profits.



The 2018 Legislative Action Award recipients are each highly productive leaders with proven ability to work across the aisle and to develop and enact significant legislation.

Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO)

Rep. Susan Brooks (R-IN)

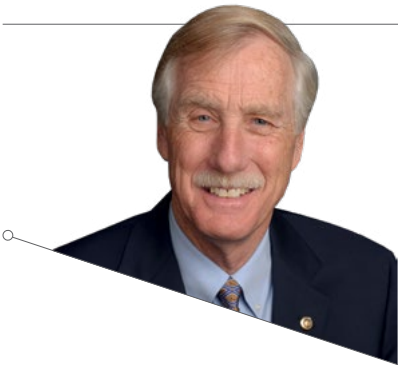
Sen. Angus King (I-ME)

Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA)

//

PUTTING PARTISAN POLITICS ASIDE and focusing on enacting actual policy solutions for my constituents is one of my top priorities in the Senate. I appreciate the Bipartisan Policy Center recognizing my commitment to **WORKING ACROSS THE AISLE EVERY DAY** with people like my Democratic colleague from Colorado, Michael Bennet, and hope that in the coming year there are more legislative achievements we can point to that prove the best way to get meaningful things done is through bipartisanship.

— Sen. Cory Gardner (R-CO)



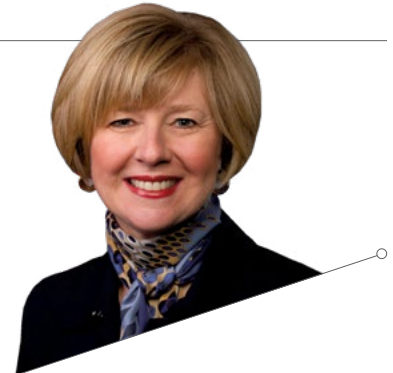
In today's Congress, governing through common sense and compromise has too often become an afterthought to partisan politics. There are many of us on Capitol Hill who have tried to be good partners and colleagues—**WORKING TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO MOVE OUR COUNTRY FORWARD**—and call me an optimist, but I think it may be spreading. This award is a true honor, and I thank the Bipartisan Policy Center for their recognition.

— Sen. Angus King (I-ME)

//

One of the reasons I ran for Congress was to work to restore confidence in the People's House and those who work in it. In order to accomplish that goal, legislators on both sides of the aisle must come together so we can **BUILD UPON OUR SHARED GOALS TO HELP AND SUPPORT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE**. It is an absolute honor to be recognized by the Bipartisan Policy Center for my commitment to working in a bipartisan manner, and I look forward to continuing to foster bipartisan conversations, negotiations, and most importantly solutions to our nation's problems in Congress.

— Rep. Susan Brooks (R-IN)



My life mission is to serve others. As an emergency physician, I am devoted to my patients and now, as a congressman, **I PUT PEOPLE ABOVE PARTISANSHIP AND SOLUTIONS OVER IDEOLOGY**. Since my first day in Congress, I have made it a top priority to work with anyone who has a good idea, Republican or Democrat, to find pragmatic solutions to the challenges facing my constituents and our nation. I am truly humbled that this problem-solving approach has been recognized by the Bipartisan Policy Center and I look forward to **CONTINUING TO SERVE MY PATIENTS AND MY CONSTITUENTS THROUGH THOUGHTFUL, BIPARTISAN SOLUTIONS**.

— Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA)



Bob

Dole

CELEBRATING AN AMERICAN PATRIOT

Former Sen. Bob Dole received a standing ovation in the Capitol Rotunda as he was honored by **President Trump, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI)**, and members of Congress with the Congressional Gold Medal.

Dole was recognized with the highest civilian award for his service to the nation as a soldier, legislator, and statesman. The honor requires bipartisan support from two-thirds of the House and 67 members of the Senate.

Dole has previously received presidential recognition by President Reagan in 1989 and President Clinton in 1997 and was awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for his military service.

Throughout his 35 years in Congress, Dole was known for his ability to work across the aisle and foster practical bipartisanship on issues such as Social Security. Dole has been a life-long advocate for the disabled and was a key figure in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Official White House photo by Shealah Craighead



Pictured left to right: (back row) Former Sens. Bill Frist and Trent Lott, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, (front row) former Sens. Howard Baker and Bob Dole

//

We argued a lot, and sometimes our disagreements got *personal*. But we all shared a **fundamental commitment** to the institution and a basic *respect* for our colleagues, regardless of their affiliation. The bottom line is that we were combatants *and* we were friends.

— Former Sen. Bob Dole reflecting on his time as Senate majority leader

Dole was instrumental in the creation of the Bipartisan Policy Center, joining with three other former Senate majority leaders—Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, and George Mitchell—to establish an organization that advances the ideas that animated his political career.

"We salute one of our nation's finest public servants. A decorated war hero, statesman, and presidential and vice-presidential candidate, Bob Dole has dedicated his life to this country and we are all immeasurably better for his service," said BPC President Jason Grumet.

Dole is a proud partisan who understands that the best policies do not come from one person or one party, but are the product of deliberation and collaboration.

As noted in the official congressional record, throughout his life-long service, "Dole has embodied the American spirit of leadership and determination, and serves as one of the most prolific role models both in and outside of politics."



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Bob Dole has dedicated his life to this country and we are all immeasurably better for his service.

— BPC President Jason Grumet



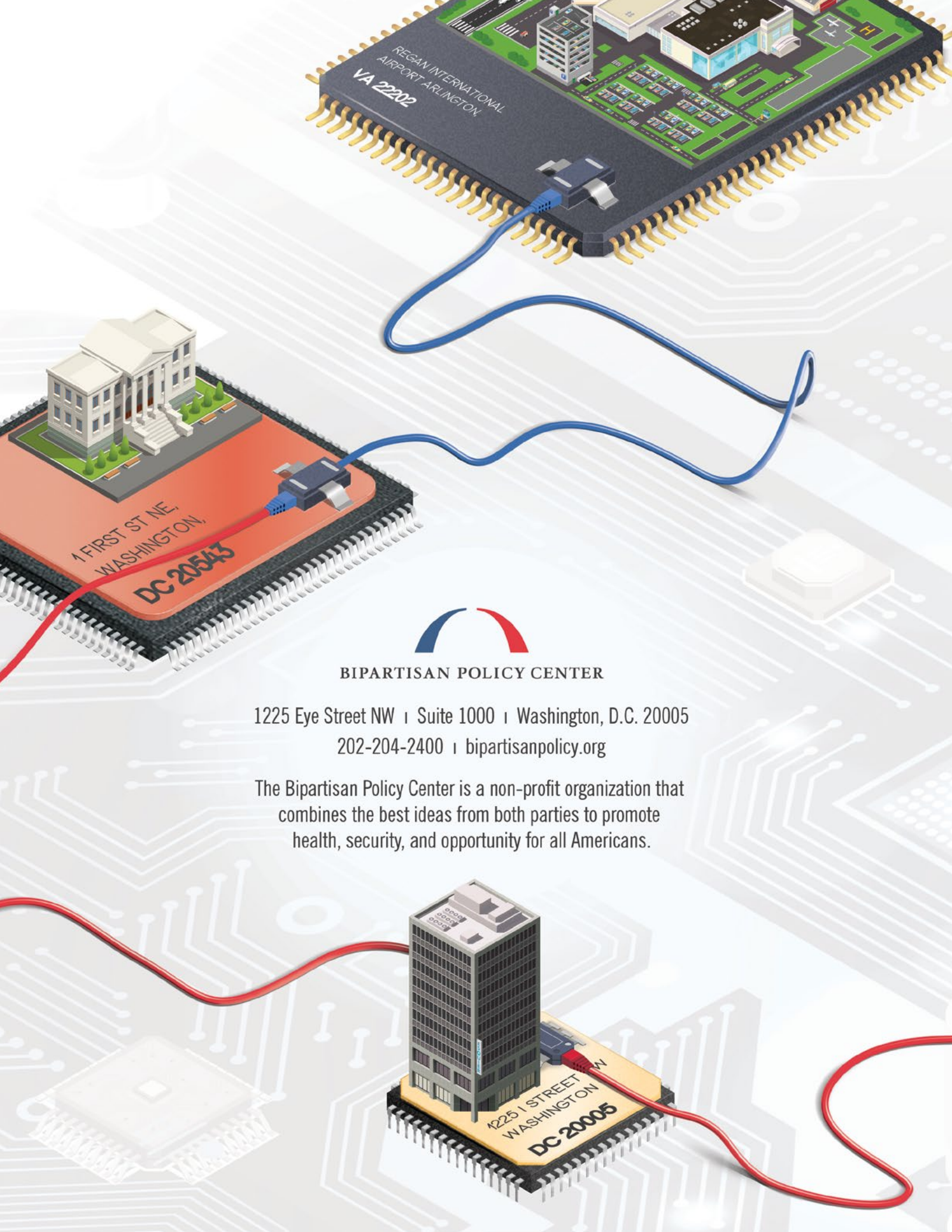
Former Senate Majority Leaders and BPC Co-Founders Bob Dole and Howard Baker

Sen. Bob Dole participates in a roundtable discussion hosted by the National Commission on Energy Policy



Learn more about the extraordinary life of Sen. Bob Dole. Watch the short film *A Century of Service* at bpcdc.org/BobDole





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The Bipartisan Policy Center is a non-profit organization that combines the best ideas from both parties to promote health, security, and opportunity for all Americans.