



GOVERN

Members of the Commission on Political Reform at the first Town Hall in California

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mericans are rightly concerned about the federal government's ability to solve problems. BPC's Governance Program works to understand the true causes of political polarization and to develop proposals to increase government's capacity and competence. BPC works to diminish the partisan intensity that undermines deliberation and collaboration, as well as make recommendations to increase government's functionality, despite the polarization in Congress and across the country. Heartfelt ideological differences and aggressive debate are the engines of a functioning democracy. BPC's Governance Program is focused on creating a political environment that can produce effective and resilient public policy.

COMMISSION ON POLITICAL REFORM

The Commission on Political Reform engages the public in a national campaign to ensure that the United States continues to be a dynamic democracy. Commissioners—such as political leaders, scholars, communications experts, social activists, and religious leaders—connect with the public through national conversations and via social media. The commission launched in 2013 with two main purposes—to understand the causes and

consequences of America's partisan political divide and to advocate for specific reforms to help Americans achieve shared national goals. The commission is considering concrete but achievable reforms to the nation's congressional gridlock and electoral system dysfunction while promoting public service. They are shaping policy recommendations for release in June 2014 with an eye toward making U.S. institutions work better in a polarized world.

DEMOCRACY PROJECT

The Democracy Project conducts research and advocacy on improvements to U.S. democratic institutions. The Democracy Project focused on strengthening civil discourse in government and addressing institutional and structural barriers that make it more difficult for politicians to work together. After all, many of the nation's greatest achievements have resulted from principled compromises between Democrats and Republicans.

GOVERNORS' COUNCIL

In 2013, the Governors' Council key issues include Medicaid and workforce development. Founded in 2011, the Governors' Council enables BPC to better understand the changing landscape outside Washington and to promote policies to improve the federal-state relationship. Many governors believe that this relationship is increasingly falling short of the ideal. Too often, policies adopted at the national level result in federal overreach, impose unfunded mandates, trigger unintended consequences, and stifle state innovation. The council brings together a bipartisan group of former governors to offer practical solutions to public policy challenges critical to the nation.

FINANCE PROGRAM

Leadership



1. Tom Daschle
Former Senate Majority Leader
and BPC Co-Founder



2. Dan Glickman
Former Secretary of Agriculture
and BPC Senior Fellow



3. Dirk Kempthorne
Former Governor of Idaho



4. Trent Lott
Former Senate Majority Leader
and BPC Senior Fellow



5. Olympia Snowe
Former Senator and
BPC Senior Fellow



6. Dr. John C. Fortier
Co-Director of the Commission
on Political Reform



7. Michele Nellenbach
Co-Director of the Commission
on Political Reform

COMMISSION ON POLITICAL REFORM

HIGHLIGHTS

The Commission on Political Reform Launches

The Commission on Political Reform formally launched in March 2013 at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library in Simi Valley, California, where commissioners focused on the effects of increasing polarization among elected officials and the electorate itself. The event included an interactive public town hall hosted by *USA TODAY*'s Susan Page and a series of panels on hyper-partisanship in Congress and obstacles to public service at the state and federal levels. Prior to the event, BPC and *USA TODAY* conducted a national opinion poll on political

polarization and public engagement in politics. That same week, *USA TODAY* ran a front-page story about the poll and the commission.

A Town Hall at the National Constitution Center

A second commission event was held in July 2013 in Philadelphia at the National Constitution Center. The commission focused on barriers to public service and ways to encourage a new generation of Americans to serve their country. The event included a public town hall session that touched on topics such as encouraging greater public service, reforming the presidential



We need to remember that we are still Americans and ought to be working together for this country, not just the parties.”

—Commission Co-Chair and former Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne

Political Partisanship Mirrors Public

“Democrats and Republicans are not just more divided ideologically but also less collaborative in practice than at any time in our careers. Even more troublingly, we suspect that much of America is similarly riven along party lines, goaded to partisanship by increasingly shrill voices in politics, the news media and well-funded interests.”

—Commission Co-Chairs and BPC Senior Fellows Olympia Snowe and Dan Glickman in *USA TODAY*

Election Reform Can Counter Political Dysfunction

“Instead of lamenting gridlock and partisan paralysis, our commission seeks solutions from both sides of the ideological spectrum interested in moving the debate forward.”

—Commission members and former Representatives Henry Bonilla and Charles Gonzalez in *The Hill*

appointments process, and making elective public office more attractive. BPC and *USA TODAY* commissioned their second joint national poll for the event on public service, which led to another front-page story in *USA TODAY*.

Talking Electoral Reform in Ohio

The commission wrapped up the year in October at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The commission discussed challenges in election administration and possible electoral reforms. The commission was joined by Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted, Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, former Ohio Governors Ted

Strickland and Bob Taft, and former Speaker of the Ohio State House Jo Ann Davidson. The co-chairs of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration, Robert Bauer and Ben Ginsberg, joined Husted and Ritchie for a discussion on modernizing voter registration and improving election administration. Participants throughout the day referred to the third BPC and *USA TODAY* national opinion poll, this time focusing on elections and electoral reform, which again was covered in a front-page story in *USA TODAY*.

America the Partisan?

“Americans who blame Washington politicians for the polarization and gridlock of the nation’s politics might want to look in the mirror: Like the elected officials they decry, voters tend to automatically retreat into partisan camps even when they disagree with the party line on policy.

A *USA TODAY*/BPC Poll shows that the officials who have been unable to avert the automatic spending cuts known as sequestration—the current debate centers more on who’s to blame for them—in some ways reflect constituents who view the opposition party as deeply untrustworthy and its positions extreme. Though most Republican and Democratic voters say American politics are more polarized than the American people are, the findings indicate that on that they’re wrong.”

—from “Political Partisanship Mirrors Public” by Susan Page in *USA TODAY*

USA TODAY

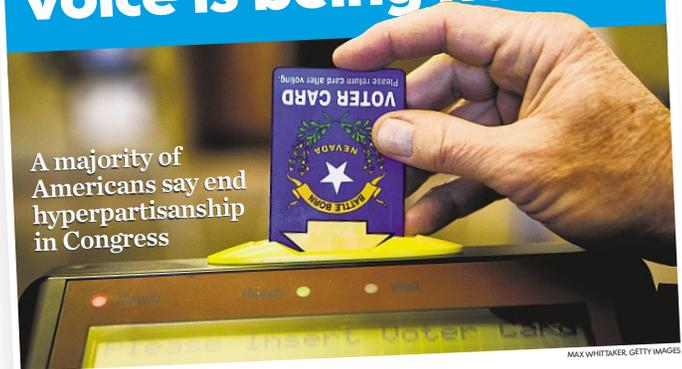
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USA TODAY/BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER POLL

‘I don’t feel like my voice is being heard’

A majority of Americans say end hyperpartisanship in Congress



MAX WHITMER, GETTY IMAGES

WASHINGTON The capital’s shutdowns and showdowns have tested the patience even of the Senate chaplain. “Save us from the madness,” he prayed at the opening of one session last week. But how, exactly?

Which is more important to you?



78% of Democrats
Making sure every individual who has a right to vote is allowed to exercise that right.

The roots of the nation’s polarized and sometimes paralyzed politics, decades in the making, are too complex and far-reaching to be easily reversed or resolved. Even so, some political scientists and politicians argue that making simple changes — expanding who can vote in primary elections, for instance, or rethinking how legislative districts are drawn — could make a difference in the kind of government that follows.

A nationwide USA TODAY/Bipartisan Policy Center poll finds a majority of Americans support a range of proposals aimed at easing hyperpartisanship and building confidence in elections. Some command the sort of broad bipartisan backing rare in national politics.

Allow independents to vote in primaries? Yes. Require photo IDs to

curb voter fraud? Definitely. Find an alternative to having legislatures draw congressional districts? Maybe. Vote over the Internet? Well, no.

Susan Deneen, 42, of Lynchburg, Va., would welcome changes that might address the political impasse. “I feel like our country is getting polarized, and it’s becoming harder and harder to come to any agreement,” the adjunct professor in sociology at Liberty University, who was called in the poll, said in a follow-up interview. “I don’t feel like my voice is being heard.”

The survey of 1,000 adults by Republican pollster Whit Ayres and Democratic pollster Mark Mellman, taken Sept. 19-23, has a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points.

Today, USA TODAY and the Bipartisan Policy Center are sponsoring a

▶ **STORY CONTINUES ON 6A**

Which is more important to you?



54% of Republicans
Making sure no one commits voter fraud and harms the rights of legitimate voters.

Source: USA TODAY/Bipartisan Policy Center Poll of 1,000 adults Sept. 19-23. Margin of error: ±3 percentage points.

Source: *USA TODAY*

6A NEWS
WASHINGTON

Fine-tuning could free D.C. to function

CONTINUED FROM 1A

"town hall" at Ohio State University — the third in a series this year — with a panel of former governors, members of Congress, Cabinet secretaries and others to discuss potential repercussions of electoral changes.

"I'm always a little skeptical when someone gives you the silver bullet, but there are a lot of ways in which election laws shape politics and politics in turn shapes governments," says Heather Gerken, a Yale Law School professor who studies election law. Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted, a Republican, says that if congressional districts had been drawn in a



"I feel like our country is getting polarized."

South Democrat, Lynchburg, Va.

less partisan way, "I don't think there'd be a government shutdown."

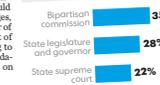
Incumbent lawmakers who benefit from the current system often are reluctant to change it, but California voters passed Proposition 13 in 2008, establishing an independent commission to draw state district lines, and expanded that in 2010 to congressional districts with Prop. 20.

The standoff in Washington could boost prospects for electoral changes, says Rob Richie, executive director of advocacy group FairVote.org. "Out of this crisis, we are inevitably going to have a conversation about fundamental reforms that aren't even on the table now," he predicts.

In the poll, Americans told us:

DISTRICT LINES

Who should draw legislative districts?



Source: USA TODAY/Bipartisan Policy Center. Poll of 1,000 adults Sept. 19-23. Margin of error: ±3 percentage points.

1. Who should draw districts?

Most states leave the job of drawing legislative lines to the state legislature and the governor, who typically try to maximize their party's prospects by devising safely Republican or Democratic districts. That reduces the number of swing seats, where either side has a reasonable chance of winning.

In 1998, the non-partisan Cook Political Report counted 164 swing seats in the 435-member House. For the 2014 elections, that number of potential competitive districts has been nearly halved, to 90.

"If a district is competitive, the question in the primary will be who

can appeal to the independent voters, the middle voters, the center?" says Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie, a Democrat. "If the district is simply a matter of appealing to the voters in the base within their party."

Change that, he says, and "that will change who goes to Washington, for sure."

Those surveys are open to change, but the current method, though they don't choose behind a single alternative. One-third like the idea of a bipartisan commission of state officials. One in five endorse having the state supreme court draw districts. Slightly

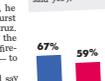
more than one in four want to stick with state legislatures and governors.

"I like the idea of the bipartisan commission," says Deborah Wright, 53, a tax attorney from Atlantic City, who was among those called "It's the Democrats and the Republicans, right? That would seem fair."

While Democrats and independents favor the bipartisan commission most, Republicans are inclined to prefer the current system — to maintain control of the House of Representatives even though Democratic candidates received more total votes last year.

INDEPENDENTS

Should independents be allowed to vote in party primaries? (Those who said 'yes')



Overall
Democrats
Republicans
Independents

should be allowed to vote in party primaries because it will help produce candidates in both parties who are more moderate and more willing to compromise." The alternative: "The members of each party should choose their own nominees so that they are represented by candidates who closely share their views and they can stand for party principles."

Democrats by 56%-36% still endorsed the idea of open primaries after hearing those statements, while Republicans by 50%-45% leaned against them.

"If someone is going to take the time to study a party's beliefs and then vote for that party, they should have the right to decide who is going to represent them," says Deena, a Republican.

TOWN HALL MEETING

USA TODAY and the Bipartisan Policy Center are sponsoring a national "town hall" on electoral policy this afternoon on the campus of Ohio State University. Current and former governors, Cabinet secretaries, members of Congress, secretaries of State and others will discuss proposals to change the way elections are held.

You can watch the conversation online, livestreamed at supportpolicy.org/ or engageUSA.com, and submit questions and comments via e-mail or Twitter. Use the hashtag #EngageUSA.

2. Who should vote in primaries?

Changes in redistricting might not have much impact because Americans increasingly choose to live in communities with people who share their political views. It means even districts that aren't gerrymandered are likely to be dominated by one party.

Still, broadening the group of voters who choose candidates by allowing independents to cast ballots in primaries could boost contenders in the middle of the political spectrum rather than at the extremes.

That's precisely what Bruce Zurbach, 55, an independent from Houston who was among those surveyed, tries to do when he votes in the GOP primary. Texas doesn't have party registration, so voters can cast ballots in either party's primaries. "Here in Texas, it's pretty much a

foregone conclusion that the Republican candidate will be the winner, and I feel my vote is best used in the primary, which is effectively the actual election," he says, usually opting to back the most centrist candidate.

In last year's Senate primary, he voted for Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst over Tea Party favorite Ted Cruz. Cruz, who won the primary and the general election, has become a firing-line leader in the fiscal battles — to Zurbach's dismay.

By nearly 3-1, those surveyed say independents should be allowed to vote in primaries. The idea was backed by solid majorities of Democrats, Republicans and independents.

After listening to a follow-up question that articulated the case for each side, GOP enthusiasm waned.

One argument: "Independents

3. Should voting be harder?

Moves in Texas and elsewhere to require photo IDs for voters have sparked controversy. Democratic investigations. But in the survey, eight in 10 Americans support the idea, including 70% of Democrats.

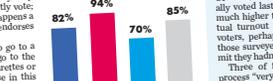
Indeed, the practice often seems common. Seven in 10 voters say they had to show a photo ID before casting a ballot in last year's presidential election.

Democrats warn that "some voters will be disenfranchised." "In this country, you should be able to cast your ballot without a cost, without an obstacle, and it shouldn't be hard," Democratic National Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Florida congresswoman, said in an interview.

Republicans call it a common-sense requirement. "It would build confidence in the integrity of the ballot, and it's supported overwhelmingly by all three partisan groups," Ayres says. The GOP pollster notes the survey found significant concerns about voter fraud. "While it's far from a majority, it's troubling when 20 to 25% of voters think illegal voting occurs frequently."

IDENTIFICATION

Should voters have to show a photo ID? (Those who said 'yes')



Overall
Democrats
Republicans
Independents

and is not going to go away," says John Fortier, director of the BPC's Democracy Project. "So how do you govern with divided government? You have to find a way to work even and reach some agreements that aren't going to be polarized."

Deborah Wright, the lawyer from Atlantic City, agrees. "They've got to get it together," she says.

4. Should voting be easier?

74% back allowing early voting at polling places in the days leading up to Election Day. Although Republican lawmakers in North Carolina, Texas and elsewhere have pushed limits on early voting, two-thirds of Republicans support the idea.

Over 50% support moving Election Day to the weekend instead of Tuesday. Republicans split on the issue.

58% support allowing people to register on Election Day at the polls. Most Republicans oppose the idea.

Joshua Garcia, 27, a line cook who lives in Norwalk, Calif., in slightly longer times than Republicans, perhaps because more densely populated urban areas tend to be Democratic. 44% of Democrats say voting took longer than a half-hour, compared with 5% of Republicans.

Four in 10 say they voted before Election Day, missing in an absentee ballot or taking advantage of early voting.

Most Americans agree. By 57%-40%, they reject the idea of voting online.

USA TODAY and BPC's Commission on Political Reform conducted several polls examining public attitudes about polarization in politics, public service, and voting and the electoral process. The following are just some of the findings as they appeared in USA TODAY:

"Partisanship Mirrors Public"

March 6, 2013

BPC/USA TODAY National Survey on Political Polarization.

"The poll reveals a deeply polarized America, one where voters take cues from political parties. Nevertheless, the poll also shows there are many potential areas for agreement in political discourse. The commission is using these results to engage the public in conversations and to develop policy to improve a polarized political system."

"Public Service Valued; Politics—Not So Much"

July 22, 2013

BPC/USA TODAY National Survey on Public Service.

"Americans are more interested in community service than in running for office. They are also largely in favor of stipends and educational incentives for those involved in full-time public service, like AmeriCorps or Peace Corps. A majority of Americans are even in favor of mandatory national service for young adults. The commission is developing recommendations to improve opportunities for public service."

"American Support Fine-Tuning Election Policy"

October 15, 2013

BPC/USA TODAY National Survey on the Electoral Process.

"The poll showed an expected divide between Republicans and Democrats on electoral reform—with the former prioritizing the integrity of the voting process and the latter focused on minimizing barriers to the polls. Still, some traditionally Republican and Democratic positions did not hold: e.g., a majority of respondents favored requiring people to show ID when voting. This poll helps the commission understand highly charged issues as it examines electoral reform."



USA TODAY's **Susan Page** moderates a discussion about making government work with Co-Founder of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate **Victoria Kennedy**, BPC Senior Fellow and former Secretary of Agriculture **Dan Glickman**, former Ohio Governor **Bob Taft**, former Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives **Jo Ann Davidson**, BPC Governors' Council member and former Ohio Governor **Ted Strickland**, former Representative **Henry Bonilla**, former Secretary of Agriculture **Ann Veneman**, and *National Review Online's* **Reihan Salam**

“I think this Millennial generation ... is showing civic habits on par with the Greatest Generation in terms of their interest in issues, their willingness to volunteer—their willingness to serve is very important for impact.”

—Commission on Political Reform Member John Bridgeland

Social media has played an integral role in the commission's three national town hall events: the commission reached more than 35,000 viewers during live webcasts of its 2013 events.

Coming Up in 2014



Town Hall. The Commission on Political Reform heads to Boston for its final town hall at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in partnership with the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate.



Service and Reform. In June, the commission will release its comprehensive report on encouraging public service and reforms to the U.S. congressional and electoral systems.



Engage the Public. The commission will then take its recommendations across the country and engage the public in an effort to reform and improve U.S. democratic institutions.

Leadership



Dr. John C. Fortier
Director of the Democracy Project

DEMOCRACY PROJECT

HIGHLIGHTS

Money in Politics

The Democracy Project, in conjunction with the Campaign Finance Institute, convened a working group of expert scholars to assess the current campaign finance literature and to develop a roadmap for future research priorities. Several scholars from the group wrote and published papers assessing topics such as independent campaign spending and how new technologies might affect small-donor fund-raising and broader participation in the electoral process. The working group released a report that outlined an agenda and research priorities for future scholarship in the field of money and politics.

Election Administration

Democracy Project staff advised the Presidential Commission on Election Administration—specifically in its work to recommend

improvements to election administration across the country. BPC facilitated several meetings with election administration stakeholders and advocacy groups to help inform the Presidential Commission on Election Administration commissioners. Through meetings of state and local administrators, the project led discussions on election administration challenges and problems encountered during the 2012 elections, such as election capacity and long lines. State and local administrators from Virginia, Maryland, Kansas, Ohio, and Washington, D.C., participated in the meetings. The Democracy Project also hosted a series of meetings in Ohio with the Ohio Secretary of State's office, local election administrators, political scientists, legal scholars, and advocates to discuss changes to the Ohio redistricting process as well as election administration more generally.

Coming Up in 2014



Elections and Redistricting. The Democracy Project, in conjunction with the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, will work on election administration and redistricting reforms currently being debated in the Ohio legislature that may appear before the voters in 2014.



Election Administration. The Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA) presented its report and recommendations on January 22, 2014. BPC staff assisted this effort providing research and strategic advice. In 2014, BPC plans to administer the next phase of this work, disseminating PCEA recommendations to a diverse group of stakeholders and identifying key states where the PCEA recommendations will have the most resonance and impact. BPC will collaborate with other groups and scholars who are working on election administration issues related to PCEA recommendations.

The Great Communicator:

The Democracy Project and Maryland Public Television held a screening of select clips from the American Public Television miniseries, *The Reagan Presidency*. Panelists discussed challenges during the Reagan presidency and highlighted bipartisan lessons to apply to today's hyper-partisan political climate.



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Democracy Project Director **John Fortier** hosts a panel discussion with former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development **Henry Cisneros**, Director of *The Reagan Presidency* **Chip Duncan**, and BPC Senior Fellow and former Senate Majority Leader **Trent Lott**

Leadership



1. Phil Bredesen
Former Governor of Tennessee

2. Jim Douglas
Former Governor of Vermont

3. Brad Henry
Former Governor of Oklahoma

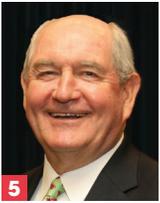
4. Linda Lingle
Former Governor of Hawaii

5. Sonny Perdue
Former Governor of Georgia

6. Mike Rounds
Former Governor of South Dakota

7. Ted Strickland
Former Governor of Ohio

8. Michele Nellenbach
Director of the Governors' Council



GOVERNORS' COUNCIL

HIGHLIGHTS

Medicaid and the States

A 2013 report by the Governors' Council, *Making Federalism Work: The Governors' Council Medicaid Recommendations*, includes a number of substantive reforms to the Medicaid program and calls on the administration and Congress to allow states to enroll dual eligible individuals in coordinated care. "Medicaid is the largest state-federal partnership program and requires intense collaboration between states and the federal government," wrote the governors in the report. "It presents an ongoing source of

budgetary strain for both parties." BPCAN, with the help of the Governors' Council, continues to advocate for the council's recommendations to key elected and appointed officials.

Governing the Nation

Former governors bring a unique perspective to the Senate along with a desire to get things done. The council collaborated with senators to form a Governors' Caucus to provide this pragmatic group with the support to tackle difficult issues, ranging from the budget to emergency relief.



Former CNN Correspondent **Kathleen Koch** moderates a panel with former Governors **Jim Douglas, Ted Strickland, Linda Lingle, Phil Bredesen, and Mike Rounds**



BPC Governors' Council
Member and former Ohio
Governor **Ted Strickland**

Coming Up in 2014



Workforce Development. In early 2014, the council plans to release its report, which will focus on four key areas: aligning and integrating existing programs; strengthening educational programs other than traditional four-year college; decentralizing existing programs to more closely meet local and regional needs; and standardizing the collection of data about jobs, skills, and education.

BPCAN Impact

April 22, 2013

The Governors' Council showed support for the Marketplace Fairness Act, calling on Congress to address the current inability of states to require online retailers to collect sales taxes.

Following up in its recommendations on both the Medicaid waiver process and Medicaid as a whole, the council met with Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. The governors also met with senators, including several of the former governors currently serving in the Senate, to advance their Medicaid reforms.