

University Project for Bipartisan Collaboration

Our Team

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The Lugar Center, in association with several universities, has begun a project entitled the “University Project for Bipartisan Collaboration.”

The purposes of the Project are:

- 1) to create opportunities for bipartisan interaction between Members of Congress and between their staffs — especially those representing the same state;
- 2) to establish stronger links between university experts and lawmakers with the goal of enhancing evidence-based policy-making; and
- 3) to promote productive, non-partisan public discourse at the state and local levels

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The Project is motivated by concerns that bipartisan interaction between members of Congress and the quality of public discourse has declined substantially during the last two decades. This is especially true for members of individual state congressional delegations, which meet very infrequently. We believe excessive partisanship encumbers the legislative process and reduces the reserve of goodwill in Congress and beyond that is necessary for governance under our Constitutional system. The Project also is motivated by the decline in evidence-based policy making in Congress, the over-reliance on party talking points, the loss of Congressional staff expertise due to budget cuts within the Legislative Branch, and the hyper-contentiousness of many interactions between the public and their elected representatives. Too often Congress is legislating without reference to available empirical data or a reasonable level of non-partisan research. And too often, public views are not factored into legislation.

Colleges and Universities have deep expertise in a wide variety of disciplines that can help inform Congressional policy-making. The Project seeks to enhance opportunities for university researchers to present their expertise to Congressional policymakers for the benefit of their states and the country. The Lugar Center: 1) partners with universities to devise effective methods of sharing their nonpartisan research and expertise with their Congressional delegation; 2) functions as a clearinghouse for new ideas and best practices related to university outreach to Congress and university initiatives aimed at improving public debate of national issues; and 3) serves as an information source for colleges and universities that want to join the Project.

The Project seeks to bring Members of Congress of different parties together in the interest of collaborative legislative discussion and inquiry, but it does not advocate for particular policies or philosophies. The Project is not involved in any lobbying on university issues. The Project is supported by funding from the Democracy Fund, a non-partisan foundation devoted to good governance.