

RETHINKING CONGRESSIONAL CULTURE: LESSONS
FROM THE FIELDS OF ORGANIZATIONAL PSY-
CHOLOGY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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RETHINKING CONGRESSIONAL CULTURE: LESSONS FROM THE FIELDS OF ORGANIZA- TIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND CONFLICT RESO- LUTION

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
MODERNIZATION OF CONGRESS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 11:00 a.m., in Room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Derek Kilmer [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Kilmer, Cleaver, Perlmutter, Phillips, Williams of Georgia, Timmons, Rodney Davis of Illinois, Latta, Reschenthaler, Van Duyne, and Joyce.

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time, and I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

So over the past several months, I have been grappling with the question of how to effectively chair a bipartisan committee in an environment that incentivizes partisanship. As we all know, partisanship isn't new. And when we have engaged in constructive conflict, it is not necessarily bad, but, today, a lot of what happens in Congress doesn't feel very constructive. It feels frustrating at best and maddening at worst. And that feeling, by the way, is bipartisan. I haven't met anyone who actually enjoys working in a dysfunctional environment.

So rather than just accept this as the way things are, I have been thinking a lot about what it would take to make things better, and spending a lot of time talking to people who know far more about this stuff than I do. I have talked to experts in organizational psychology and conflict resolution and strategic negotiations and cultural change. I have talked to trauma therapists and marriage counselors and sports coaches who were tasked with turning losing teams into winning ones. And my goal has been to learn from people with deep expertise in working through various forms of dysfunction.

Many of them don't know the inside baseball of Congress, and, frankly, that has been refreshing too. There has been an optimism to these conversations that gives me hope.

I went into these discussions looking for solutions and encountered a common theme in the advice that I was given. First, define

the problem. That is what we tried to do with our hearing last week. The committee heard from experts who explained how society has become more polarized and more distrustful of institutions over the past several decades. In many ways, Congress reflects these trends, and we talked about what that means for the institution. The bottom line is that Members today are often rewarded for hostile rather than productive behaviors and actions.

All this is to say I don't know that we are dealing with broken rules and procedures so much as we are dealing with broken norms. And this is really tricky, because we can't legislate behavioral change or pass rules saying that Members have to be nice to each other. So the question, then, becomes how does Congress change its incentive structure to one that encourages and maybe even rewards civility and consensus building.

I want it to be clear that this isn't about trying to reclaim some version of bipartisanship that supposedly existed in the past. Congress needs to approach this challenge with a very clear understanding of the current environment and give thoughtful consideration to what norms make sense today, because unless society deems a particular norm desirable, the pressure to adhere to that norm does not exist.

So, today, we are going to hear from experts who have dedicated their professional lives to understanding conflict and to helping people find motivation and meaning in their careers and personal lives. We know that a lot of Members feel frustrated in trying to do the jobs they were elected to do. We also know that the internal mechanisms we have previously relied upon to help us solve institutional problems aren't working, so maybe it is time to consider new ideas and fresh approaches.

Maybe Congress can learn from the techniques used by experts who work closely with opposing factions on corporate boards or in foreign governments or in rival gangs and even within families. So I am really looking forward to this discussion and to hearing what our witnesses today recommend.

As with our hearing last week, the Select Committee will once again make use of the committee rules we adopted earlier this year that give us the flexibility to experiment with how we structure our hearings. Our goal is to encourage thoughtful discussion and the civil exchange of ideas and opinions.

So in accordance with clause 2(j) of House rule XI, we will allow up to 30 minutes of extended questioning per witness and, without objection, these 2 hours will not be strictly segregated between the witnesses, which we will allow for up to 2 hours of back and forth exchanges between members and the witnesses. That is the most formal part of this.

Vice Chair Timmons and I will manage the time to ensure that every member has equal opportunity to participate. Any member who wishes to speak should signal their request to me or Vice Chair Timmons. Additionally, members who wish to claim their individual 5 minutes to question each witness pursuant to clause 2(j)(2) of rule XI will be permitted to do so following the 2 hours of extended questioning.

So, with that, I would like to now invite Vice Chair Timmons to share some opening remarks.

Mr. TIMMONS. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to first thank you each for taking the time to come and meet with us and discuss this very important topic. I believe that this is probably the most important work that this committee is going to undertake this Congress. We are very fortunate that we are even here. Obviously, this was originally a 1-year and then we got an extra year. Now we have got 2 whole years, and it is great. We are going to make a lot of progress, and I think this is the area that has the potential for the greatest impact to fix this dysfunctional institution.

We have talked about it a lot. I have thought about it a lot over the last 2.5 years, and currently, in my mind, I have kind of put this conversation of civility into three categories, and that is incentive structure, time, and relationship building.

So incentive structure. We have got to facilitate the right objective, collaboration, policymaking. Right now, the loudest voice is the one that is heard and it is rewarded, and the loudest voice is never going to be the one that solves the problem. So whether that is budget reform, committee structure, Member empowerment, that is the incentive structure, and that is an important area.

And then time is another one. In 2019, we were here for 65 full working days, 66 fly in, fly out days. We are never going to get anything done if we are only here 65 days a year. So that is another important one.

We have talked about the calendar and the schedule, deconflicting our days when we are here because, as you can see, we have 12 members on this committee, and they all want to be here, but they are all in other subcommittees or full committees, and we are just constantly pulled in so many directions. So I think that is an important area. And then predictability for floor votes. Honestly, just the chaos surrounding random votes being called and the challenges on the floor. So that is an area.

And then the last one is building on the first two, relationship building, bipartisan meeting space. We have got to facilitate collaboration. So these are the things that we are thinking about right now, and I would love for you all to build on that, to add to it, to suggest something totally new. But I just really appreciate you all taking the time to be here. This is very important work.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Here we go. So I am now going to invite each witness to give 5 minutes of oral testimony. Witnesses are reminded that your written statements will be made part of the record.

Our first witness today is Kristina Miler. Dr. Miler is an associate professor in the Department of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. Her work focuses on political representation in the U.S. Congress, especially the extent to which the interests of unorganized citizens and organized interests are represented in the lawmaking process. Her current research examines cooperation and conflict in the U.S. House through the lens of organizational psychology. She is the author of "Poor Representation: Congress and the Politics of Poverty in the United States," and of "Constituency Representation in Congress: The View from Capitol Hill."

STATEMENTS OF DR. KRISTINA MILER, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND; DR. ADAM GRANT, THE SAUL P. STEINBERG PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA; DR. BILL DOHERTY, PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA; AND MS. AMANDA RIPLEY, JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

STATEMENT OF KRISTINA MILER

Dr. Miler, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. MILER. All right. Thank you.

Good morning, Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chairman Timmons, and members of the Select Committee. My name is Kris Miler, and I am an associate professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Although I am a political scientist, I believe there are many important aspects of Congress that benefit from an interdisciplinary approach, and congressional culture is one such topic. My testimony will draw upon research I conducted with colleagues in political science and organizational psychology where we spoke with 60 Members and staff across both parties to better understand Congress as a workplace.

Scholars of organizational climate and culture highlight two key approaches to cooperation and conflict. The first is called the collaborative conflict culture, where individuals are encouraged to use dialogue, negotiation, joint problem solving, and this type of cooperative behavior is rewarded. The second is called dominating conflict culture, where conflict is promoted and the merits of winning are publicly emphasized and rewarded.

In the case of Congress, there is evidence of both cultures coexisting. When looking at the climate within the parties, there is an expectation that Members will express their preferences and differences. There are established norms of how this is to be done, and there is also a shared commitment to get to yes. However, when looking at the climate across the two parties, there is a widespread perception that cooperation is not valued, and, in fact, on prominent legislation, it is strongly discouraged.

When party leaders believe an issue has electoral implications, especially for which party controls the majority, it is going to be very challenging to change the us versus them win-or-lose culture. This is not to discourage efforts to make it less combative but to recognize the political realities.

There is, however, a lot else that Congress does that is neither internal to parties nor high stakes party votes, and this is where I think efforts to improve congressional culture may see the biggest returns. In particular, there are three areas that warrant further consideration: personal relationships, shared interests, and committees.

First, to think about the importance of personal relationships. As the witnesses last week spoke about, there are numerous reasons why nostalgia and calls to make Congress more like it used to be are neither realistic nor necessarily desirable. However, the key is that personal relationships can reveal common experiences and in-

terests, and that then those can generate policy conversations and lead to collaborative proposals.

Recommendations made by this committee have already taken important steps to promote personal relationship building among Members, including through bipartisan retreats. Congress can further ensure that existing events for Members and staff ranging from codels to orientation and training sessions are designed to be bipartisan.

Additionally, efforts can be made to increase the groups of legislators that are brought together in ways to find other than party. For instance, we might think about holding a monthly State delegation meeting, or the recommended cybersecurity training sessions could be arranged by cohort. Party leaders could also take steps to be more supportive of collaboration in those smaller and less visible issues. For instance, the creation of a bipartisan outreach chair within each party's leadership structure would signal to Members that even party leaders expect Members to work across the aisle sometimes.

Shared interests are the second point here. Shared interests already serve as an important foundation for a lot of the bipartisan outreach that occurs between Members of Congress. Sometimes those are personal interests. Sometimes those are rooted in constituencies.

So, today, I would like to call attention to the existing framework of congressional Member organizations or caucuses as an underused venue for promoting a more cooperative climate across the aisle.

My own research, as well as that of other scholars, shows more than 400 CMOs in the House, with the vast majority of those focused by policy issue. Additionally, there are a growing number of caucuses defined by a moderate approach and deliberately bipartisan in nature. These groups are an important tool for identifying who to work with from the other party.

I encourage Congress to consider not only publicizing caucuses to the membership as they are notoriously hard to find a record of, but also increase support in terms of staff and meeting space.

Another suggestion is simply to give caucuses official House websites. One might also consider legislative incentives to promote collaboration, such as giving each caucus one bill per Congress that would be guaranteed floor consideration.

Finally, I want to talk about the important role of committees as combining both personal relationships and shared interests. Committees are where bipartisan relationships often begin, and legislative collaboration is most frequent with committee colleagues. However, committees vary in the degree to which they foster cooperation across the aisle. Some of this variation is due to policy issue area, but a second important factor are the committee leaders. Some committee leaders are seen as setting the tone for bipartisan cooperation. Where leaders model cooperative behavior, Members are more likely to perceive that collaboration, and civility are valued by their leadership.

This committee has already made and put into action a number of important recommendations. Given the importance of committee leaders in setting the tone, it may be fruitful to institute a leader-

ship training session for each pair of committee leaders at the start of a new Congress to give them the tools they need to create a cooperative climate in their committee.

Another suggestion is for committee leaders to more formally incentivize collaborative behavior among committee members by considering cooperative behavior when determining subcommittee positions, the scheduling of hearings, or other committee decisions. If Members see that collaborative legislative work gets a leg up, that is indeed a valuable reward.

In closing, I want to reiterate my appreciation to this committee for all of the work that you have done and for continuing to advance this important conversation. Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Miler follows:]

Testimony before the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress
United States House of Representatives

Kristina C. Miler
Associate Professor, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland

“Rethinking Congressional Culture:
Lessons from the Fields of Organizational Psychology and Conflict Resolution”
June 24, 2021

Chairman Kilmer, Vice-Chairman Timmons, and Members of the Select Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify before the committee. My name is Kris Miler and I’m an associate professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland. In this role, I teach and study Congress, often with particular attention to constituency representation, congressional capacity, and the challenges of how members manage the many competing demands for their attention and efforts.

Today I would like to talk about the culture and norms in Congress, especially the organizational climate for cooperation and conflict both within parties and across parties. Although I am a political scientist, I believe there are many important aspects of Congress that benefit from an interdisciplinary approach, and congressional culture is one such topic. Towards this goal, I will offer a perspective that builds on political science and organizational psychology in order to better understand Congress as a unique workplace with institutional cultures and norms that are critical to the success of the important work that is conducted here.¹ Organizations operate not only according to the strategies pursued by their leaders, but also according to the ingrained institutional norms, expectations, and patterns of behavior as understood by rank-and-file members. Therefore, I will focus on these organizational climates, or the “shared perceptions among employees concerning the procedures, practices and kinds of behaviors that get rewarded and supported” within an organization.²

As has been cataloged by numerous scholars and journalists, there has been an erosion of civility and cooperation in Congress. To many, Congress seems less able to work together, more combative in tone, and more defined by partisanship. Yet the work of Congress still requires dialogue and negotiation between members in order to find policies that benefit the American people. The question, then, is how to foster and incentivize the types of behavior that will help Congress to fulfill its legislative and representative roles? This is not entirely dissimilar from the

¹ This testimony draws on research that I conducted with Dr. Paul Hanges (Department of Psychology, University of Maryland), Dr. Frances Lee (Department of Politics, Princeton University) and Dr. Jennifer Wessel (Department of Psychology, University of Maryland) and our “Report on the Organizational Climates of Congress” (2020), which was conducted with funding from the Democracy Fund and the Hewlett Foundation’s Madison Initiative. The views expressed are my own, however, and do not necessarily reflect those of my coauthors, funders, or the University of Maryland.

² Benjamin Schneider, “The Psychological Life of Organizations,” in *Handbook of Organizational Culture and Climate*, eds. Neal M. Ashkanasy, Celeste P. M. Wilderom, and Mark F. Peterson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000). Mark G. Ehrhart, Benjamin Schneider, and William H. Macey, *Organizational Climate and Culture: An Introduction to Theory, Research, and Practice*. (New York: Routledge, 2014).

challenge other organizations face in determining how to motivate their employees to act in keeping with the values of the company and work towards the organization's goals.

I first will discuss what we know about climates for cooperation and conflict in workplaces generally, and the current climates of Congress within and across parties. I doing so, I will draw heavily on research I conducted with my colleagues, Dr. Paul Hanges (Department of Psychology, University of Maryland), Dr. Frances Lee (Department of Politics, Princeton University) and Dr. Jennifer Wessel (Department of Psychology, University of Maryland), where we interviewed sixty current and former members of Congress and staff from both parties to understand the organizational climate of Congress. Overall, there are not notable differences between the Democratic and Republican parties in terms of the climates for intraparty dissent. However, there are clearly different approaches to conflict and cooperation within parties than in Congress as a whole. The party subclimates in Congress allow for dissent to be expressed privately and are oriented toward building consensus. By contrast, Congress as a whole is much less collaborative. The prevalent congressional climate permits – but does not actively encourage – collaboration for smaller, non-controversial issues, and adopts a “winner-takes-all” mentality for more prominent issues.

Second, I will focus on three levels – member, committee, and leadership – and how the climates in Congress reflect the rewards and incentives perceived by members. Within organizations, people come to understand the reward structures through their own experiences and they observe the organization's policies, practices and procedures to understand which behaviors are rewarded and expected.³ At each of these levels, then, it is important to understand what the current climate for cooperation and conflict is before discussing possible strategies for promoting a more collaborative conflict culture in Congress.

Workplace Climate

I begin with the simple observation that Congress is a workplace. It is, admittedly, a most unusual workplace, but in our attention to the unique features of the institution and the singularly important tasks it performs, it is easy to think of Congress as a unicorn where lessons can only be drawn from the institution's own past. Today, I want to highlight the ways in which studies of workplaces (and organizational psychology more generally) can shed new light on how we think about Congress.

My testimony draws upon research conducted together with colleagues in political science and organizational psychology, where we spoke with sixty members and staff to gain a better understanding of the unique nature of Congress, as well as how the institution fits into broader typologies of organizations. One key feature mentioned as making Congress a unique workplace is that it is an extremely open system that is strongly influenced by environmental forces outside of the institution itself, including constituents, media, and other political forces.⁴ Congress also differs from other organizations on account of the unique mission and purpose of the institution.

³ Benjamin Schneider, Mark G. Ehrhart, and William H. Macey, “Organizational Climate and Culture,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (2012): 361-388.

⁴ Daniel Katz, and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, (New York, NY: Wiley Co: 1966).

Congressional service is more than a job, and is widely seen as a calling with deeper personal meaning. Similarly, the work itself is seen as significant in its ability to influence public policy and affect constituents' lives through constituency service. As one former member noted, working in Congress is distinguished by "the gratification that a true public servant gets accomplishing something for the good of the people to move the country forward."

Other distinguishing features of Congress as a workplace are the high levels of autonomy⁵, and ambiguity.⁶ Organizations with a high degree of autonomy give the position holder a great deal of discretion over how the work is carried out.⁷ In such organizations, outcomes are highly dependent on individuals' own self-directed behaviors, rather than a supervising entity. Autonomous jobs and workplaces allow for substantial amounts of "job crafting," in which employees are able to change what the job means to them in terms of both the tasks they undertake and with whom they chose to work.⁸ Consistent with these characteristics, members describe a work environment in which "there's no right way and there's no wrong way... there are an infinite number of possibilities to an infinite number of problems" and there are "so many different agendas" for any given member.

Congress as a workplace is also characterized by the importance of developing strong, positive relationships. This is due, at least in part, to the lack of clear structure and hierarchy in Congress as compared to more traditional workplaces in which one's position and promotion are determined within the organization, and the chain of command and authority is clear to all. In contrast, Congress is described as "nobody works for anybody," which means "you cannot be demoted," but also means that "you cannot accomplish anything on your own," "the process is based upon trying to build consensus." Consequently, relationships are seen as key to the job of serving in Congress to an extent unlike other workplaces. Specifically, members and staff perceive the importance of developing relationships with a large number of colleagues over a long period of time. As one member said, "the stamina required and the persistence required, and the openness to relationships with a wide variety of personalities and competing interest are just unlike anything that I experienced" in other workplaces.

Nevertheless, many elements of Congress as a workplace have parallels in other organizations. Organizational climate scholars begin from the recognition that an organization's formal rules and policies can differ from actual practices and internal perceptions. Along these lines, climate scholars often talk about organizational climates "for" particular activities. Here, we are interested in the congressional climate *for cooperation* and the climate *for conflict*. Put differently, to what extent do members and staff inside of Congress perceive that cooperation is valued, and how do they see conflict being handled and expressed?⁹

⁵ J. Richard Hackman, and Greg R. Oldham, "Motivation Through the Design of Work: Test of a Theory," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 16: 2 (1976): 250-279.

⁶ John R. Rizzo, Robert J. House, and Sidney I. Lirtzman, "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (1970): 150-163

⁷ Hackman and Oldham, 1976.

⁸ Amy Wrzesniewski, and Jane E. Dutton, "Crafting a Job: Re-visioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work," *Academy of Management Review* 26: 2 (2001): 179-201.

⁹ Michele J. Gelfand, Lisa M. Leslie, and Kirsten M. Keller, "On the Etiology of Conflict Cultures," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 28 (2008): 137-166.

Organizational climates focused on conflict do not deny or attempt to reduce the conflict, but rather to manage it successfully. Two prevalent types of climates for congress are a “collaborative conflict culture” where individuals within the workplace are encouraged to use dialogue, negotiation and joint problem-solving, and a “dominating conflict culture” where conflict is promoted and the merits of winning are publicly emphasized.¹⁰ In a collaborative conflict culture, members of the organization are “empowered to actively manage conflicts” but “cooperative behavior and solving conflicts to serve the interests of the group is rewarded.”¹¹ In contrast, a dominating conflict culture is marked by disagreeable, aggressive confrontation that is common, public and rewarded.

In the case of Congress, there is evidence of both cultures co-existing. When looking at the climate *within* parties, there is an expectation that members will express differences, there are established norms of how this is done, and a shared commitment to “get to yes.” However, when looking at the climate *across* the two parties, there is widespread perception within Congress that cooperation across the aisle is not valued, and in fact, on prominent legislation, it is strongly discouraged. In the following sections, I will detail the evidence of both collaborative and dominating conflict cultures as well as consider possible strategies for promoting a more collaborative climate in Congress.

Member-level

Personal relationships can contribute to a more cooperative climate in Congress by building norms that can serve as a foundation for legislative work to be done in a more collaborative way. As one member told my coauthors and I, “I don’t think there’s any substitute for personal contact and relationships.... If you get to know somebody and not just what they believe politically, but to know something about them personally...then you’re more likely to listen and not to dismiss whatever they’re saying off the top of your head.”

An emphasis on personal relationships is an important foundation for building a more cooperative climate in Congress, but it does not require any one specific reform, such as calls for members to bring their families back to Washington. As your witnesses spoke about at last week’s hearing, there are numerous reasons why nostalgia and efforts to make Congress more like it used to be are neither realistic nor necessarily desirable. But the underlying logic is sound – seeing other members as people, not a party label, is fundamental to dialogue and creating a civil and productive workplace.

The reasons to encourage personal relationships among members of Congress and staff members are numerous. Personal relationships help to humanize members of the other party and build trust, which is critical for collaborative work. Psychologists ground this dynamic in the intergroup contact theory, which argues that contact helps to reduce prejudice by seeing

¹⁰ Michele J. Gelfand, Kirsten M. Keller, Lisa M. Leslie, and Carsten de Dreu, “Conflict Cultures in Organizations: How Leaders Shape Conflict Culture and Their Organizational-Level Consequences,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 97: 6 (2012): 1131-1147.

¹¹ Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller 2008.

members of the other group as individuals.¹² Notably, more personal contact allows us to better understand the perspective of others, which we would expect to promote a more collaborative conflict climate where differences can be voiced and heard civilly. Personal relationships can reveal common experiences and interests between legislators that can generate policy conversations and lead to collaborative proposals. In our research, members frequently described a shared experience that brought them together with a colleague, and that trust was built in that relationship. For example, one member noted that “we knew each other, and that military service was another very important shared experience.... We trusted each other and that gave you a starting place.”

Additionally, intergroup contact has been found to be more impactful when it is coupled with the creation of a superordinate categorization, or a common group identity. In the case of Congress, this could occur through a common identity as members of Congress, or as subset of members such as freshmen legislators, or as women in Congress, that is emphasized rather than partisanship. It is important to note, however, that intergroup contact theory is not a panacea, and scholars have shown that under some conditions, intergroup contact can heighten the prevalent “us vs. them” dynamics.

When thinking about the climate within each party, a member’s influence is seen as tied to their success in building relationships with colleagues and developing a reputation as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and a “team player.”¹³ Given the complexity of issues before Congress, members with expertise in policy or procedure and who are available to be consulted by their colleagues, are seen as making positive contributions to the workplace, as well as gaining influence in the process. Another key element of relationships is trust; and specifically, that conversations intended to be private are kept private. In fact, in order to create a cooperative workplace where members can disagree, brainstorm, and negotiate, it is essential that those conversations remain private. We sometimes think of this in terms of creating private spaces away from the cameras where members can have candid conversations, but another requirement for a real back-and-forth between members is trust. As one member succinctly said, “If people don’t trust you, they won’t work with you.”

The notion of being a “team player” came up repeatedly in talking about the culture within the party. At first glance, this underscores the notion of parties as teams, whereby partisanship is critical to members’ identity and the electoral competition to control the chamber is analogous to two sports teams fighting on the field.¹⁴ But a closer look reveals a more nuanced set of norms and expectations about what it means to be a team player, which reveals the value placed on disagreement and negotiation within parties. Members who are inflexible in their opinions and

¹² Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1954). For a meta review of research on intergroup contact theory, see Thomas F. Pettigrew and Linda R. Tropp, “A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90(5, 2006), 751-783. It is important to note that intergroup contact theory is not a panacea and scholars have shown that under some conditions, intergroup contact can heighten the prevalent “us vs. them” dynamics.

¹³ Influence is also heightened by conventional congressional explanations such as seniority, experience in leadership positions, and fundraising skills.

¹⁴ On these points, see Frances E. Lee, *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), and Lilianna Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Become Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

unwilling to compromise are not seen as team players, nor as contributing to a collaborative conflict culture within the party. “Mavericks within the party, as you might expect, have a very difficult time of it because the legislature itself is an animal that really operates best when the whole herd is moving in the same direction.” Equally notable but less expected is that members who never disagree with their party, or who compromise too quickly are not seen more favorably than contrarian members. Rather, there is an expectation that within party conflict should be expressed strategically, and that members should be well-informed when they disagree and have clear objectives. Overall, the climate within parties has developed strong norms and expectations around how conflict is to be expressed, and the skill of consensus-building is valued within the party.

In contrast, the expectations and incentives that members face when working with members of the other party generally do not promote cooperation and consensus-building, but instead place value on winning conflicts. This is particularly true on high visibility issues that are important to the party brand or that party leaders anticipate being electorally salient. In these situations, personal relationships between members of different parties are unlikely to be enough to bridge the political differences. Here, dominating conflict culture prevails as members understand that their role is to disagree strongly and openly with the other party, and that confrontation whether through media appearances, social media, or fiery rhetoric on the House floor are all rewarded. As one member said, “It’s not about getting along. It’s not about trying to resolve disputes for the other party. It’s about beating the other party.”

The overall climate of Congress, however, also has a second side that falls somewhere between collaborative and dominating conflict cultures. Although Congress is highly polarized today, there also is a lot of legislation that passes Congress in a bipartisan fashion using expedited procedures like suspension of the rules.¹⁵ In a recent statement accompanying their bipartisanship index, the Lugar Center noted that, “individual members of Congress worked on legislation with their opposing party counterparts with surprising frequency.... usually below the radar of the national news cycle.”¹⁶ When members work across the aisle, then, where does that cross-party cooperation begin? It most frequently is rooted in personal relationships, shared policy interests, and committee membership.

Recommendations made by this committee and others have already taken important steps in promoting personal relationships among members, including through bipartisan retreats. Congress can ensure that existing events for members and staff ranging from congressional delegation travel (CODELS) to orientation and training sessions are designed as bipartisan events. Additionally, deliberate efforts to bring together groups of legislators defined by features other than partisanship (e.g., cohort, state delegation) can also be a valuable tool for building personal relationships and heightening legislators’ networks beyond party.

¹⁵ James M. Curry and Frances E. Lee, *The Limits of Party: Congress and Lawmaking in a Polarized Era*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020). Laurel Harbridge-Yong, *Is Bipartisanship Dead?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ The Lugar Center, “House Democrats Outscore their Republican Counterparts, while Republicans Prevail in the Senate; Overall Cooperation Between Rank and File Members Remains above Historical Average Despite Extreme Partisanship on National Issues.” May 3, 2021.

Having discussed personal relationships, let me focus for a moment on shared policy interests. Shared district or regional interests serve as the foundation for a lot of the bipartisan outreach between members of Congress.¹⁷ They are an important pathway to collaboration in the legislative process, and so I want to call attention to the existing framework of congressional member organizations (CMOs), or caucuses, as a potential venue for promoting a more cooperative climate in Congress across the aisle.

My own research as well as that of other scholars has shown that there are more than 400 CMOs in the House, and the overwhelming majority are focused on an issue.¹⁸ Additionally, an increasing number of caucuses are defined by their moderate approach and highlight their deliberately bipartisan nature. These working groups serve as a tool for identifying whom to work with from the other party. Legislators described these caucuses as “institutions that historically encouraged working across the aisle” and explained that “just through that mechanism of regular meetings, you pick up opportunities for bipartisan cosponsorship on legislation.” Notably, “they are places [where] you’ve got staff, but there’s no press, they’re not recorded, there’s no spotlight – members can just talk.” Since members generally join caucuses that reflect the interests of their district, or their own personal interest in an issue, they are a promising setting for building relationships, generating bipartisan ideas, and fostering cooperative conflict climate on a smaller scale than the full chamber.

Committee-level

Committees can provide an important path to a more cooperative conflict culture, especially their role in facilitating working across the aisle and promoting bipartisan collaboration. One way that committees play this role for the chamber at large is that legislators who are not on the committee of jurisdiction may seek out partners from across the aisle who were on the committee, thus giving their proposals greater credibility. More common, however, is that the starting place for developing relationships across the aisle and collaborating on legislation is with committee colleagues. As one member noted, “Where you would go typically to build that bipartisan collaboration is to other people in the committee who know these issues. . . . You know these people, you’ve worked on these issues with these people and you can figure out how to do that.” Indeed, committees bring together two important factors discussed above – personal relationships and shared interests – so it is logical that they would plan an important role in establishing norms of behavior, especially across the aisle.

Committees, however, vary in the degree to which they foster cooperation among members of opposing parties. One important source of this variation according to our research are committee leaders, who are perceived as setting the tone for bipartisan cooperation among committee members. Committees where the chair and ranking minority member had a cooperative relationship themselves were seen as creating an expectation for individual members to resolve

¹⁷ On the enduring importance of state delegations in congressional collaboration, see Sarah A. Truel, *Agenda Crossover* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹⁸ See Kristina C. Miller, “The Constituency Motivations of Caucus Membership,” *American Politics Research* 39 (2011): 859-884; Susan Webb Hammond, *Congressional Caucuses in National Policy Making*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

conflicts cooperatively. This was heard both from the rank and file, as well as from legislators who were committee leaders themselves: “When I was the chairman of the subcommittee, the full committee, we were able to get a lot of things done because I really did try to work with everyone on both sides. ... So I would tell my ranking member, we’re the majority so we set the agenda, but there are certain bills we’ll be working on and you have an interest in it – you were elected, you represent as many people as I do, and my feeling was, why would you cut the other party out?” “I sat down at the beginning of every session of Congress with my [ranking minority member] Republican colleague and we developed the agenda and then we work in a bipartisan fashion through that process. ... It was a bipartisan effort from the beginning to the end.”

As one might expect, members and staff who serve on committees where leaders model collaborative behavior are more likely to perceive that such collaboration and civility across the aisle is valued. By contrast, committees where leaders themselves interact in a combative and aggressive way create a norm that confrontation is normal, and outcomes within the committee are zero-sum. In my current research, I find that these patterns are supported by early empirical evidence of just this type of variation - some committees are more bipartisan in their composition and leadership than others.

I hope that this committee will continue to make recommendations that promote a collaborative conflict culture within committees. As your committee has noted, experimenting with new formats and incentives is often easier done at the committee level, and the possibilities for innovations are many. One such experiment might focus on committee leaders by instituting a leadership training session for each pair of committee leaders at the start of the new congress to promote collaborative climates from the top. Additionally, committee leaders may seek to incentivize collaborative behavior among committee members more formally by considering the extent of cooperative behavior when determining subcommittee positions, scheduling of hearings, or other committee decisions.

Leadership-level

Against the backdrop of the centralization of power in Congress and the important role of party leaders in creating incentives and rewards for members, it is important to discuss the role of party leaders in determining the climates of Congress. When it comes to cooperation and conflict resolution, party leaders can be thought of as both part of the problem and part of the solution.

When looking at the climate for conflict within party dynamics in Congress, party leaders are skilled at building cooperative conflict cultures. They are active managers of conflict, they seek input from rank and file members, they accommodate members when possible, and they use pressure tactics sparingly. Members of Congress generally feel free to speak up when they disagree with their party leaders, “Members feel that they are able to let leaders know what they can and can’t do, and that’s just how it falls out.” Caucus meetings provide a formal outlet for venting concerns with party colleagues and leaders, and are seen as a safe setting for airing out the proverbial dirty laundry. In order to successfully resolve conflicts, conversations are expected to happen in private – whether beyond caucus doors or directly between members.

Although members affirm their freedom to voice disagreement, the members and staff we interviewed also made it clear that there are clear norms that govern the way that parties manage internal conflict. First, members should not surprise their leaders, and advance notice is expected if a member is going to oppose leadership. This norm is reinforced by leaders both allowing leeway to members who adhere to it, and sanctioning members who violate it.

A second norm is that members should not go public with their criticisms of their leaders. This does not always happen, but it remains an important expectation within the party and there is widespread understanding that the place to criticize is within caucus meetings, not on cable TV. “Disagreement is inevitable, but leaders prefer not to have those conversations in public and rather ‘keep it in the family.’” One member summarized their understanding of this norm as “praise publicly, challenge people privately.”

The third prevalent norm is that members who oppose their party leaders are expected to explain their objections and seek resolution of their issues if possible. This last point is notable as it calls attention to the expectation within parties that conflict is not just for conflict’s sake, but rather an expression of genuine disagreement rooted in policy or constituency considerations. This is a hallmark of collaborative conflict culture as applied to Congress because it distinguishes that conflict is part of the legislative and representative process, but conflict is not valued in itself.

The story, however, is quite different when we move to the role of party leaders in the overall climate of Congress. Here, party leaders’ role in addressing cooperation and conflict depends on the issue and especially the electoral context. On high salience issues, party leaders create a climate in which conflict is accentuated and rewarded, but they do not actively discourage bipartisan cooperation on minor or localized issues, where members have some discretion to work across the aisle.

Leaders contribute to a dominating conflict climate in the chamber overall because the conflicts here are between the parties, and on prominent issues, they create winners and losers in terms of policy outcomes and electoral consequences. Due to the increasing uncertainty about which party will hold the majority, leaders of both parties – and their members – are concerned about the electoral consequences of major legislative debates and want to avoid helping the other party, especially vulnerable members of the other party.¹⁹ As a result, party leaders adopt an “us vs. them” framework and the culture rewards conflict.

When party leaders do allow their members to work across the aisle, most of the time this takes the form of looking the other way rather than active encouragement of such cooperation. Illustrative of this point, many legislators and staff told us that party leaders “do not discourage” working across the aisle, while only a few said explicitly that it was “encouraged.”

What accounts for why leaders would allow for such cooperation? First, when the issue is relatively small and not on the party’s agenda, leaders are much less likely to sanction working across the aisle. One illustrative quote from a legislator notes: “I don’t think they really care. ... It never rises to the point of being part of the leadership agenda. ... They just let this go unless it presents a problem for a larger issue.” Additionally, on issues that are uniquely important to a

¹⁹ See Lee 2018.

legislator's district, party leaders generally defer to the member's electoral needs. In this way, leaders understand that members need to do what it takes to win reelection, and indeed, this is also in the party leaders' interest. "They didn't typically discourage me from working with someone [in the other party] because ... they knew it was good politics for me."

Conclusion

I have focused on how treating Congress as a workplace can help us to better understand how collaboration and conflict currently are handled in the House, and how to create a cooperative conflict climate where working together is constructive rather than combative. Cooperative climates are marked by the ability to express positions and disagree with colleagues and leadership. Thus, an important implication of efforts to improve the climate of Congress is likely to be a more participatory process where more legislators are more engaged with one another. This would significantly improve both legislative deliberation and congressional representation. Scholars have noted that participation in Congress is far from universal, with some legislators engaging in the daily work of legislating and others doing less of this.²⁰ Yet there are myriad issues before Congress that need a policy solution. One consequence of this overload is that there can be a shortage of new ideas, and debates often fall back on ideas familiar from previous iterations of policy debates.²¹ A more cooperative congressional climate, in tandem with an increasingly diverse Congress has the potential to bring new ideas and partnerships to existing policy debates by establishing norms and practices that value and reward engagement in the legislative process, rather than partisan warfare. In this way, the hard work being done by this committee and others in Congress to cultivate a more collaborative workplace culture could indirectly generate "outside the box" ideas, and meaningful new proposals to address the policy challenges we face.

²⁰ Richard L. Hall, *Participation in Congress* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1996).

²¹ For instance, see Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones, *The Politics of Inattention* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2015), and Bryan Jones, Sean Theriault, and Michelle Whyman, *The Great Broadening* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019).

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Miler.

Our next witness is Adam Grant. Dr. Grant is an organizational psychologist and a leading expert on how we can find motivation and meaning and live more generous and creative lives. He has been recognized as one of the world's 10 most influential management thinkers and one of Fortune's 40 under 40. Dr. Grant is the author of five books that have been translated into 35 languages, and also hosts WorkLife, a chart-topping original podcast which I listen to when I walk to the Capitol. He has received awards for distinguished scholarly achievement from the Academy of Management, the American Psychological Association, and the National Science Foundation, and has been recognized as one of the world's most cited, most prolific, and most influential researchers in business and economics. I believe he also scored a 10 out of 10 from Room Rater.

So, Dr. Grant, you are now recognized for 5 minutes to present your testimony.

STATEMENT OF ADAM GRANT

Mr. GRANT. Thank you, Chair Kilmer and Vice Chair Timmons, members of the committee, and staff.

It is a great honor and also a daunting challenge to figure out how to improve the culture of Congress, and I just want to start with three points. None of these are going to have anything to do with incentives, in part because that is not my expertise as a psychologist, and in part because I think there are lots of others who can speak to those dynamics.

I want to talk about the norms and the values that Chair Kilmer referenced earlier. The place I might start as an outsider to Congress is with onboarding. I know that every great culture has an onboarding program, and one of the things that happens during onboarding is stories are told. Culture is communicated through the stories we tell, but it is also created through the stories we tell.

There was an experiment done a few years ago where new hires are given a chance to engage with stories about things that have happened that make up the culture of the organization. And if you hear a story about a junior person doing something that is above and beyond to uphold the values, that is more likely to prompt you to collaborate and to go above and beyond to try to support the organization's mission. And if you hear that same story coming from a senior leader, it is the people at low levels who don't necessarily have a lot of power or status living the culture that actually inspires new members to follow suit.

On the flip side, senior people violating the culture do the most harm. If I am a brandnew hire to an organization and I learn about people at the very top who are engaging in behaviors that in some way conflict with our core values and our norms, then I am more likely to go and deviate.

So I think it would be interesting to spend some time pondering, what stories do we tell as people join Congress about what really happens here, and how do we find the junior Members who are upholding the values, and make sure that we don't put too much emphasis on the values violating the senior people when we set the tone for the culture.

Then I guess the second thing I would think about is building trust. I believe we get it wrong when we think about what it takes to build trust. We assume that trust comes from frequent interaction. My experience and my data tell me that trust depends more on the intensity of interaction between people.

If you interact every week for an hour, you can stay at the surface level. If you spend a whole day together, you end up going much deeper. You are more likely to become vulnerable. You are more likely to open up. And that experience of being vulnerable leads you to decide, okay, I must trust these people. Otherwise, why in the world did I just share that. And that is how bonds begin to develop.

A couple of examples. One is there is a camp called Seeds of Peace, where Israeli and Palestinian teenagers gather together for the summer. Psychologists have studied what happens when you get randomly assigned to a bunk or a discussion group with somebody from the opposite country. And it turns out that just sharing that deep interaction together for a short period of time is enough to increase your likelihood of developing a friendship across that aisle by 11 to 15 times.

Another place where I have seen this intensity dynamic at play is with astronauts building trust. This is going to sound like a joke. It is not. I was studying a group of astronauts. They were an American, an Italian, and a Russian that were supposed to put their lives in each other's hands on the space station. And the American and the Russian had grown up in their respective militaries trained to shoot each other. Not an easy context to build trust. Might sound a little familiar to some of you.

One of the ways that NASA prepared them for this experience was they sent them to get lost for 11 days in the wilderness together. They had to navigate unexpected turns. They had to figure out how to survive. And in that process, they suffered adversity together. They learned that they could count on each other. And those kinds of deep experiences together are pretty critical for discovering that you do, in fact, have something in common.

I don't think all commonalities are created equal. It is not enough to just know that we are fellow Americans. We actually need uncommon commonalities. In the case of astronauts, it was sitting down to tell their origin stories and talk about the day that they decided they wanted to go to outer space. After sharing those stories, they realized, I now have something in common that only a few hundred people in all of human history can truly understand.

So I think we need that intense interaction to experience the vulnerability and the rare similarities that allow us to feel that we can trust each other.

And then the last point I want to make has to do with how we solve problems. Psychologists have recently documented a pattern called solution aversion, where if somebody brings you a solution and you don't like it, your first impulse is to dismiss or deny the existence of the problem altogether.

My understanding of Congress is that agendas are driven by solutions, but I think conversations should be guided by problems. If we start by defining the problem we are trying to solve, whether or not we agree on how to tackle it, we can begin building con-

sensus around diagnosing what the critical issues are that need to be fixed, and so a little bit more likely that we are on the same page. We also then gain some practice-building consensus, because we may not always agree on policies or bills, but we can agree that some of the problems we are trying to solve are critical and dire for our Nation.

With that, I will cede the floor.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Dr. Grant.

Our next witness is William Doherty, a co-founder of Braver Angels, and the creator of the Braver Angels' workshop approach to bridging political divides. He is a professor and director of the Marriage and Family Therapy Program in the Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Doherty's areas of interest include democratic community building with families, citizen healthcare, marriage, fatherhood, families dealing with chronic illness, and marriage and couples therapy. He is an academic leader in his field, author of 12 books, past president of the National Council on Family Relations, and recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Family Therapy Academy.

Dr. Doherty, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM DOHERTY

Mr. DOHERTY. Thank you.

I am honored to speak with you. I wear two hats today, one as the University of Minnesota professor who teaches and practices marriage and family therapy, and one as co-founder of the non-profit Braver Angels, which has done over a thousand workshops around the country since 2016 to help depolarize reds and blues, conservatives and liberals, and others.

I have been asked to focus on what we have learned in Braver Angels that could be helpful to Congress.

We have learned that carefully designed structures for group process and one-to-one conversations can lower rancor and produce more understanding across partisan differences. For example, in our red/blue workshop, we use what is called a fishbowl activity, where people on one side, reds or blues, sit in a circle with the other group sitting in an outer circle. Those in the outer circle just listen and observe. Those in the middle answer two questions: Why are your side's values and policies good for the country? And what reservation—what are your reservations or concerns about your own side? I will repeat those questions. Why are your side's values and policies good for the country? And what are your reservations or concerns about your own side?

Then the two groups shift positions. The outer group moves to the inner, and the inner to the out. They answer the same questions.

This is followed by one-to-one and whole group conversation around these two questions: What did you learn about how the other side sees themselves? And did you see anything in common? I will repeat those questions. What did you learn about how the other side sees themselves? And did you see anything in common?

Activities such as this, which require structured sharing and encourage careful listening, including showing humility about one's own side, do yield measurable changes in attitudes and behaviors,

according to an outside academic research study that followed participants for 6 months.

We have extended this group process to structured one-to-one conversations between reds and blues, White people and people of color, rural and urban people, and young and old.

So what are the implications for Congress? Fortunately, we gained some experience with the elected officials in Minnesota, Maryland, and New Jersey. In terms of Congress, we did a red/blue workshop with the Minnesota staff members of Representative Dean Phillips and Representative Pete Stauber. And we are piloting new ways to do congressional townhalls and other conversations with constituents.

Based on this work, I have three recommendations to the Select Committee for how Congress can foster depolarization. First, promote Braver Angels red/blue workshops for congressional staffs and committee staffs. I suggest beginning with the staffs of members of this Select Committee.

Second, invite Members of Congress to do Braver Angels one-to-one red/blue conversations. These are private, structured, two 1-hour self-facilitated conversations where people talk about things such as what life experiences have influenced their attitudes and beliefs about public policy and the public good. We found that question, what life experiences tell us a story about what you have experienced in your life that have led you to believe what you believe and to choose what you have chosen. I was thinking about the astronauts and how many people in the world who are sitting where you are sitting, and there are life stories that you can tell one another about how you got there. Perhaps members of this committee could go first with these one-to-one conversations.

Third, encourage Members of Congress to adopt new methods for townhalls and other conversations with groups of constituents in order to model depolarization back in their districts. Representative Phillips and I will be piloting one of these constituent conversations in August with cross-sections of conservative and liberal constituents in Minnesota, with the goal of finding common ground on local concerns that they would like Congress to know about.

If I may be blunt, current congressional townhalls and similar events are using 19th century designs. It is time for modernization.

For all of these action steps, Braver Angels has trained, committed volunteers all over the country to help make them possible. When we did our first skills workshop with members of the Minnesota legislature, I asked them why they decided to participate. The main reason, based on the door knocking they had done—which, you know, as you know, in local legislatures, they knock on doors—what they were hearing from constituents was this: Please stop fighting all the time and get things done.

And as a citizen participant in one of our red/blue workshops said, neither side is going to finally vanquish the other, so we better figure out how to get along and run the country together.

I will end with my marriage therapy hat on. Like a couple who remain responsible for their children no matter what happens to their own relationship, reds and blues cannot simply walk away from each other. Neither side can divorce and move to a different

country. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, it is our republic, if we can keep it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Doherty follows:]

**TESTIMONY TO SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MODERNIZATION OF
CONGRESS**

June 24, 2021

WILLIAM J. DOHERTY, PHD.

bdoherty@umn.edu

University of Minnesota and Braver Angels

I am honored to speak with you. I wear two hats today: one as a University of Minnesota professor who teaches and practices marriage and family therapy, and one as co-founder of the nonprofit “[Braver Angels](#),” which has done over a thousand workshops around the country since 2016 to help depolarize reds and blues, conservatives and liberals and others. I’ve been asked to focus on what we’ve learned that could be helpful to Congress.

We’ve learned that carefully designed structures for group process and one-to-one conversations can lower rancor and produce more understanding across partisan differences. For example, in our red/blue workshop we use what’s called a “fishbowl” activity where people on one side, reds or blues, sit in a middle circle, with the other group sitting in an outside circle. Those in the outer circle just listen and observe, with no interaction. Those in the middle answer two questions: Why are your side’s values and policies good for the country, and what are your reservations or concerns about your own side. Then the two groups shift positions and the other group answers the same questions. This is followed by 1:1 and whole group conversation around these questions: What did you learn about how the other side sees themselves, and did you find anything in common?

Activities such as this, which require structured sharing and encourage careful listening—including showing humility about one’s own side—do yield measurable changes in attitudes and behaviors, according to an outside academic research study that followed participants for six months. We’ve extended the group process to structured one-to-one conversations between reds and blues, White people and People of Color, rural and urban people, and young and old.

What are some implications for Congress? Fortunately, we’ve gained some experience with elected officials in Minnesota, Maryland, and New Jersey. In terms of Congress, we did a red/blue workshop with the Minnesota staff members of Rep. Dean Phillips and Rep. Pete Stauber. And we are piloting new ways to do Congressional Town Halls and other conversations with constituents.

Based on this work, I have three recommendations to the Select Committee for how Congress can foster depolarization.

- 1) Promote Braver Angels red/blue workshops for Congressional staffs and for Committee staffs. I suggest beginning with the staffs of members of this Select Committee.

- 2) Invite Members of Congress to do Braver Angels 1:1 red/blue conversations. These are private, structured, one-hour, self-facilitated conversations where people talk about things such as what life experiences influenced their attitudes and beliefs about public policy and the public good. Perhaps members of this Committee could go first with these 1:1 conversations.
- 3) Encourage Members of Congress to adopt Braver Angels methods for Town Halls and other conversations with groups of constituents, in order to model depolarization back in their districts. Rep. Phillips will be piloting one of these constituent conversations in August with cross sections of conservative and liberal constituents, with the goal of finding common ground on local concerns they would like Congress to know about. If I may be blunt, current Congressional town halls and similar events are using 19th century designs. It's time for modernization.

For all of these action steps, Braver Angels has trained, committed volunteers all over the country to help make them possible. When we did our first Braver Angels skills workshop with members of the Minnesota legislature, I asked them why they decided to participate. The main reason was what they were hearing from constituents: please stop fighting all the time and get things done. As a citizen participant in one of our red/blue workshops said in his final comments, "Neither side is going to finally vanquish the others. So we'd better figure out how to get along and run the country together."

I'll end with my marriage therapy hat on. Like a couple who remain responsible for their children no matter what happens to their own relationship, reds and blues cannot simply walk away from each other. Neither side can "divorce" and move to a different country. To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, it's our Republic, if we can keep it.

The CHAIRMAN. Sorry. I keep turning off my microphone when I mean to turn it on.

Thank you, Dr. Doherty.

Our final witness is Amanda Ripley. Ms. Ripley is an investigative journalist and a best-selling author. Her most recent book is "High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out." I read it on my plane flight here, and it is terrific. I told her I would be her hype man. In her books and magazine writing, Ms. Ripley combines storytelling with data to help illuminate hard problems and solutions. She has also written about how journalists could do a better job covering controversy in an age of outrage. Ms. Ripley has spoken at the Pentagon, the U.S. Senate, the State Department, and the Department of Homeland Security, as well as conferences on leadership, conflict resolution, and education.

Ms. Ripley, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF AMANDA RIPLEY

Ms. RIPLEY. Chair Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for holding this hearing at all.

There is a lot about Congress, I should say, that I don't understand, but I think I may understand the predicament that you are in, albeit from a slightly different vantage point.

I have been a journalist for two decades, starting at Congressional Quarterly and moving to Time Magazine, The Atlantic, and other places. But in recent years, I have had to admit that something is broken in my profession. The conventions of journalism are not functioning the way they are supposed to. Unfortunately, my profession, like yours, is distrusted by many millions of Americans.

What I have learned is that journalists, like politicians, are trapped in a special category of conflict called high conflict. High conflict operates differently from normal conflict. Arguing the facts doesn't work in high conflict. Our brains behave differently. We make more mistakes. The us versus them dynamic takes over, and the conflict takes on a life of its own.

All of us are susceptible to high conflict. It is very hard to resist, and any intuitive thing we do to try to end the high conflict usually makes it worse.

So what does work? For my last book, I spent 4 years following people who have gotten out of other high conflicts, in local politics, street gangs, even civil wars, and I am now convinced that it can be done. I have seen it happen again and again.

First, before anything else, it helps to just recognize this distinction. High conflict is the problem, not simply conflict. We don't need unity or even bipartisanship nearly as much as we need what might be called good conflict.

In homage to what your late colleague John Lewis called good trouble, good conflict is necessary. It is stressful and heated. Anger flares up, but so does curiosity. More questions get asked. People disagree profoundly without dehumanizing one another. There is movement that you can actually see in the data that conflict is going somewhere. And everyone I know who has experienced good conflict finds it strangely exhilarating. You feel open, able to be surprised, even as you continue to fight for what you hold dear.

Second, institutions can cultivate good conflict systematically. In global conflict zones, one of the most proven ways to do this is to intentionally spotlight, light up other group identities outside of the conflict. Often this means reviving people's identities as citizens or parents or even sports fans.

In Colombia's civil war, one of the most effective interventions was a simple public service announcement that aired during national team soccer games, inviting rebel fighters to come home and watch the next game with their families. In the 9 years those ads ran, the messaging led to 10 times the normal number of desertions the day after the game.

So I would urge you to experiment with anything that blurs the lines between you, including rank choice voting, bipartisan retreats with family members, other things you have discussed. High conflict is fueled by conflict entrepreneurs, people who exploit conflict for their own ends. Good conflict is fueled by relationships and curiosity.

Another proven way to interrupt high conflict is through non-aggression pacts, which are sort of like starter peace treaties. In Chicago today, most gang violence starts on social media with incendiary posts that lead to acts of revenge. So organizations like Chicago CRED help rival gang members negotiate social media rules of engagement, vowing they will not disrespect or humiliate one another on Facebook, for example. When those pacts get violated, and they always do, then there is a process in place to complain and rectify the situation without escalating the conflict.

Of course, political parties are not gangs, and the metaphor has its limits, but given that so much political conflict escalates through social media today, it is worth considering whether simple rules of engagement could help slow down high conflict here as well and incentivize good conflict.

Finally, be on the lookout for saturation points. These are interruptions in high conflict when the losses start to seem heavier than the gains. Usually it happens after a shock or some unexpected shift in the dynamics.

With a couple in a custody dispute, a saturation point might happen if a child gets sick. The priorities can realign. The identities can shift. With gang members, it might happen during a snowstorm, which creates a sudden peace. In politics, it can happen after an electoral loss or a riot. But the saturation point must be recognized and seized or it will pass. So prepare now for those moments. It is possible to shift out of high conflict and into good conflict. Humans have managed this in much more dangerous conditions than we are currently in today, but the longer we wait, the harder it will get.

I thank you and the members and staff of the committee for leaning into these hard conversations and for inviting me to contribute.

[The statement of Ms. Ripley follows:]

Statement before the House Select Committee on the Modernization of
Congress

**Rethinking Congressional Culture:
Lessons from the Fields of Organizational Psychology
and Conflict Resolution**

Amanda Ripley
Journalist & Author of *High Conflict*

June 24, 2021

Chair Kilmer, Vice-Chair Timmons and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today—and for holding this hearing. I cannot think of anything more important to be discussing right now.

On one level, I should say, I know very little about this particular place. Congress is a vast, intricate body, and you and the other experts you've invited understand the specific mechanisms for reform far better.

On a deeper level, though, I understand your predicament. I understand it viscerally. Because I have been stuck in a neighboring quagmire for quite some time.

I've been a journalist for two decades, starting out at *Congressional Quarterly* and moving to *Time Magazine*, *The Atlantic*, *Politico* and other places. But over the past five years, I've had to admit that something is broken in my profession. The traditions of journalism are not functioning the way they are supposed to. Our work is distrusted by many millions of Americans—and actively avoided by even more.

What I've come to understand is that journalists—like politicians—are trapped. We have been captured by a very specific kind of conflict, sometimes called “high conflict.”¹ This kind of conflict operates differently from normal conflict. The original facts that led to the dispute fade into the background. The us-versus-them dynamic takes over, and the conflict becomes its own reality.

Like gravity, high conflict exerts a pull on everything else. Our brains behave differently. We make a lot of mistakes. High conflict incentivizes journalists (like politicians) to act as conflict entrepreneurs, to exploit conflict for power, meaning or profit. And any common-sense thing we do to try to end high conflict...usually makes it worse.

I am trying to get myself and my colleagues out of this quagmire, and like you, I understand that doubling down on the usual strategies will not work.²

So I've spent the past four years following people who have gotten out of other high conflicts—in politics, street gangs, even civil wars—and I have identified a few surprising patterns that might be useful to you. Because it turns out that the way people behave in conflict is not that different—whether it's in divorce court or a picket line or in the halls of Congress. So there's a lot we can learn from the research and stories of high conflict.

¹ Traditionally, in family therapy, the phrase “high conflict” has been used as an adjective, to describe particularly difficult people or divorces. Here, I'm referring to any system in which conflict becomes self-perpetuating and paralyzing. In academia, many high conflicts (but not all) can fall under the category of “intractable conflict.”

² For more on what I've learned to do differently as a journalist covering conflict, see [Complicating the Narratives](#), a 2018 essay published with support from the Solutions Journalism Network.

First, before anything else, learn to recognize this distinction. *High conflict* is the problem; not conflict. We don't need unity or even bipartisanship as much as we need what might be called *good conflict*.

Good conflict is an homage to what your late colleague John Lewis called "good trouble." Good conflict is necessary. It can be stressful and heated. Anger does flare up. But so does curiosity.

Questions get asked. People defend themselves and their beliefs without dehumanizing their adversaries, without corrupting what they hold dear. There is movement. The conflict is going somewhere interesting.

Most remarkably, everyone I know who has experienced good conflict finds it strangely exhilarating. You feel open, alive, able to be surprised. It is the kind of feeling you want to experience more, once you've tried it.

In high conflict, by contrast, the feud is stuck on rotation. High conflict *is* the destination. There is a kind of misery that sets in, and most people feel a deep, internal hunger for something else.

Second, cultivate good conflict in your reforms, on purpose, to help shift out of high conflict. There are people and communities who have done this. I have seen it happen up close—in schools, synagogues, churches, town councils, all kinds of places, all over the world.

Here are a few examples of practices and rituals that tend to lead to "good conflict" and to high conflict, generally speaking.

Good Conflict	High Conflict
Nonaggression Pacts	Humiliation
Collaboration	Competition
Trusted Third-Party Mediators	Conflict Entrepreneurs
Cross-Cutting Group Identities	Binary Group Identities
Complexity	Zero-Sum Thinking

In global conflict zones, one of the most proven ways to interrupt high conflict is to **revive other group identities**, the ones that transcend the conflict. Often, this means reviving people's identities as citizens of a state or country, as parents—or as sports fans or athletes. These three identities are powerful ways to pull us out of high conflict.

In post-ISIS Iraq, Christians assigned to compete on a soccer team alongside Muslim teammates were more tolerant towards the other side up to six months later, according to a study published last year.³ In Colombia, one of the most effective interventions in that country's civil war was a simple public-service announcement that aired during major national-team soccer games, inviting rebel fighters to come home and watch the next game with their families.⁴ (In that case, the messaging managed to invoke all three non-conflict identities—as citizens, family members and sports fans—which may have been why it was so effective.)

Viewed in light of this research, having members of Congress play softball or basketball on mixed, bipartisan teams—and inviting family members to bipartisan retreats—is more than just a nicety. It is an evidence-based intervention that should reduce intergroup anxiety and boost the odds of good conflict. It is low-hanging fruit, relatively speaking.

Some of the other proposals you've already discussed could also cultivate good conflict, including nonpartisan gathering spaces, round table conversations like this one, and meeting spaces without cameras. Anything that scrambles up the groups (including ranked-choice voting and other electoral reforms), blurring the oversimplified lines between us, can help provoke human instincts for good conflict.

Another proven way to reduce high conflict is through **nonaggression pacts**. In Chicago, one of the most effective ways to reduce gang violence today is through establishing social-media rules of engagement. Gang violence interrupters like Chicago CRED nudge rival gang members to agree to nonaggression pacts, vowing that they will not disrespect or humiliate one another's groups on social media, for example. When those pacts get violated (and they always do, like most peace treaties in history), there is a process in place to attempt to rectify the violation—without escalating the conflict through revenge. Usually, this means quite literally removing a demeaning YouTube or Facebook post before anyone gets shot. It is a way to slow down high conflict, and it can work wonders.

Humans need to have a “**magic ratio**” of positive to negative encounters with one another in order to keep conflict healthy, generally speaking. For strangers who disagree profoundly, that ratio seems to be about 3:1 (positive to negative);⁵ for married couples, it's more like 5:1.⁶ What

³ For more details on this research, see Salma Mousa's *Science* article [“Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq.”](#)

⁴ This finding comes from forthcoming research by Juan Pablo Aparicio, Michael Jetter and Christopher Parsons, shared with me in 2020.

⁵ This finding on the magic ratio in conflict conversations between strangers comes from my interviews with Columbia University researcher and conflict expert Peter T. Coleman.

⁶ The magic ratio in marital research comes from psychologists John and Julie Gottman. For more details, see *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail* by John Gottman with Nan Silver.

do you think is the average ratio now for members of Congress? What are the easiest ways to boost that ratio in everyday spaces and interactions?

Third, always be on the lookout for **saturation points**. These are moments in a high conflict when the losses start to seem heavier than the gains. Usually, saturation points happen after a shock—or some unexpected shift in the dynamics.⁷

The great weakness of high conflict is that it makes the people involved kind of miserable. Most of us want it to stop, on some level. But we can't figure out how.

This misery creates opportunities. Sort of like hitting bottom for an alcoholic. And a saturation point can be a golden opening to interrupt the conflict. To turn it upside down.

With a couple in a bitter custody dispute, a saturation point might happen if a child gets sick, all of a sudden. The priorities can realign, the identities can shift. With gang members, it might happen during a snowstorm. Or in the hospital, after someone's been shot—especially if none of the other gang members come to visit. In politics, it can happen after a loss—or a riot.

But the saturation point must be recognized and seized, or it will pass. Prepare now for these moments. Build relationships across the aisle, collect ideas for nonaggression pacts, identify trusted, third-party mediators who could facilitate deeper conversations across your divides--and then, when the moment is ripe, you will be ready.

People in high conflict often feel like they have no options. It feels like the other side or person is so insane and dangerous and malicious that there is just no way forward, no way to co-exist. This is the same feeling people have had in South Africa, in Northern Ireland, in Rwanda, in Colombia. This is part of the universal human struggle to figure out: How do we co-exist?

I've mentioned a few examples of changes that gang members in Chicago and combatants in Colombia voluntarily made to get themselves out of high conflict. These ideas would of course have to be adapted to work in Congress. But if we can ask warring factions to take such courageous, risky leaps of faith, then surely we can ask it of our members of Congress.

It may feel hard to imagine doing any of these things right now. But based on everything I've seen in other high conflicts, it can get much, much harder, the longer we wait.

⁷ This discussion of saturation points is an abbreviated version of a case made in my recent book *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped—and How We Get Out*.

I thank you, and the members and staff of the committee, for daring to have these hard conversations and for giving me this opportunity to contribute to your deliberations. We have to get better at fighting. Our future, something all Americans still share, depends on good conflict.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Ripley.

We are now going to move into Q&A. And for those who weren't here for our last hearing, the rules of our committee allow us to be a little flexible about how we approach this, rather than having each member kind of take 5 minutes and speechifying.

Our hope was just to pull some of the threads that we heard today. Vice Chair Timmons and I and the staff identified a few at least, and there are probably some others that we want to pull, this notion of how do you change up incentivizes to move from high conflict to good conflict.

Another thread being sort of a lot of the institution is designed for conflict. I mean, we are literally separated by an aisle. Our committees sit, you know, with Democrats on one side and Republicans on the other. So pulling on that thread. Issues related to how we have difficult conversations, which I think came up in a number of your testimonies. And then also, just figuring out how as an institution we start from a place of objectivity, right, so that we are engaging more on fact and on identifying a problem and trying to move forward in finding solutions, to Dr. Grant's point.

So, with that, I will start by just recognizing myself and Vice Chair Timmons to begin 2 hours of extended questioning of the witnesses. Any member who wishes to speak should just signal their request to either me or Vice Chair Timmons. You can raise a hand. I think we have a member on remotely as well, so feel free to use the raise hand function.

I want to just kick things off by trying to get at how we change up the incentives. So I fully embrace this notion of there is a difference between good conflict and bad conflict. And, Ms. Ripley, you mentioned in your book getting stuck in the tar pits or the tar sands, and I feel like as an institution, that often happens here.

So how do we instill an approach in Congress that is more geared towards good conflict when so much of the institution seems dedicated to high conflict? And how do you change up the rewards for Members of Congress and for staffs and for committees? Give us some thoughts about how to change things up.

And I don't direct this to anyone in particular. Feel free to chime in if you have got a thought here.

Ms. RIPLEY. I am just very quickly going to start with the most—maybe the most obvious reward, which is nonviolence. Nobody in this institution wants to get hurt or wants their family to get hurt, I am pretty sure. That is the same incentive that drives all kinds of people, including gang members, to take the risk to step out of high conflict. So that, to me, is a fundamental one that should be fairly obvious but maybe is worth repeating.

We know from the research that when Members of Congress, and actually anyone, condemns violence publicly, it reduces people's support for violence. So your words really matter. And that would be something to consider if you did so perhaps have a rules of engagement that you negotiated for social media, right. So that would be a sort of baseline goal. And reward, I think, is peace.

The CHAIRMAN. You touched in your testimony on this notion of conflict entrepreneurs, though, right? In this institution—you know, there are ways to go more viral on social media. There are ways to get more press attention, and it usually is not having a col-

laborative bipartisan conversation. So I am just trying to think through how to change incentives.

Ms. MILER. I feel like eyes are on me.

So I don't have all the answers on a platter, but I do think there are perhaps ways. You know, some of this, as has been talked about before, is bigger than Congress, and that is really hard, and it may feel like a cop-out to say it. But, obviously, all of you as Representatives as well as legislators go back to your constituents and to your districts and feel incentives and rewards, and, you know, called upon by your constituents to respond or not respond in certain ways.

And so that is part of the equation that, at least for me, is beyond my area of expertise as somebody who focuses more on Congress rather than the national public. But I think it has to be acknowledged, because that electoral connection, as we call it in political science, that accountability, that fact that you are here as the voice of the people who sent you here is fundamental to all of your relationships, to your job, and to this workplace.

And so some of what perhaps needs to be talked about perhaps by others is that dynamic. And I think Dr. Doherty's comments and his experiences working with citizens and constituents perhaps is a very important place. Not that I am shifting the answer to you, but I think you could certainly speak to that part of it.

In terms of the institution itself, you know, some of it may be very simple things. You know, I mentioned things like giving bipartisan caucuses official websites, right. Right now, it is really hard for your constituents to find out when you are doing this stuff. There is not an active Twitter account for all of those situations. Yet individual Members, some of them with louder voices than others, do have active social media and websites and so forth.

So some of it may be a series of small steps, none of which feels like it is going to change the world. But if there are constituents out there who want to be able to know about this, when you get positive feedback in your districts about this type of work that you are doing here, that needs to be amplified, right. And so how can the institution support you in amplifying that message? And some of that comes about in technology, some of it comes in staff or in interns that are particularly devoted to making this part of the congressional voice louder than some of the others.

Mr. DOHERTY. I will take that cue and say that when constituents want cooperation and not—or want good conflict and not high conflict, they will ask for it, and many of them do.

I mentioned in my testimony that when members of the legislature of Minnesota were door knocking, a number of them said more than any other issue they heard, and more than taxes and more than crime, more than anything else they heard was gridlock, paralysis. And that encouraged them to come to, you know, a workshop. And then when I returned later—there is a civility caucus in the Minnesota legislature—a number of members of the legislature said they had heard from constituents that they were pleased. Thank you for going to something. Thank you for being on the Civility Caucus.

So the incentives have to change in lots of directions, and we have to hold up that larger goal that we are not sending you to

Congress to be a gladiator for a partisan group, that is a piece of it, but to be a legislator or be a policymaker for representing all of us. And so that has to change at the grassroots. We can't just expect you all to do it and then sacrifice yourselves at the next election.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Grant, did you want to weigh in on this before I kick it over to Vice Chair Timmons?

Mr. GRANT. I would love to. Thank you, Chair Kilmer.

I wonder about a structural incentive that could be put in place, which—

The CHAIRMAN. Sorry, we lost your audio there for a second.

Mr. GRANT. Do you have me now?

The CHAIRMAN. We have you now.

Mr. GRANT. Okay. Good. Like a bad cell phone commercial. Here we go.

I think it might be interesting to think about incentives to seek help. I think we have all had the experience of being better at resolving other people's conflicts than our own, and there is a whole psychology to explain why that is. When you are solving your own problems, you are often stuck in the weeds and entrenched in your own position. When you look at other people's problems, you zoom out from a distance, and you are more likely to see the big picture.

There are professional conflict mediators who could add a lot of value in Congress. There are independent organizations, like Crisis Management Initiative, that come in to try to resolve conflicts between warring factions. And I would say it would be great to find out more about what kinds of incentives that you could bring to the table that would encourage people to pause and say, you know what, we are not qualified or at least capable right now of stepping out of our own problems to solve them. We need a third-party mediator to facilitate this conversation.

The CHAIRMAN. Vice Chair Timmons, and then I have got Mr. Davis on the list.

Mr. TIMMONS. Sure.

Thank you. That was wonderful testimony. I really appreciate it.

You know, I keep thinking about this whole concept around, you know, incentives and relationship building. We have talked a lot about that through each of your testimony. I really like Dr. Miler's concept surrounding maybe floor time or hearings for either a caucus or a bill that has a certain number of bipartisan sponsors. That is a really good incentive. I don't know what that number would be, maybe if you get 50 Rs and 50 Ds for a hearing and then, you know, 100 or 130 Rs and 130 Ds for a guaranteed floor vote, something like that could kind of push it in the right direction.

And I also really like the idea of—I guess, would you call them depolarizing exercises? Is that what—that is the actual title of—what do you call it? Is that it, depolarizing exercises?

Anything we can do to get people to kind of sit down and understand what motivates them and build that relationship so they can have the conversation based off of mutual respect based on policy, you know, and you agree on the problem. And I think the biggest challenge is we don't often agree on the problem, or we talk past each other on the solution, at the very least.

I am going to have more thoughts later, but I know that some of the members may have to come and go, so I am going to stop there and turn it over to other members. But I really appreciate it. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead, Mr. Davis.

Mr. DAVIS. Typical. Oh, it is working now. Okay. I just thought Derek wanted to shut me up, which is the epitome of bipartisanship, obviously.

Look, this committee, I like to think it is like the conscience of how do we get to that point of bipartisanship. How do we get people talking again? And, unfortunately, Congress isn't made up of the members of this committee. We have just been selected outside of a small group, and I would like to think we were probably selected because we are more bipartisan, because we can understand our differences in our districts and understand how we can come together.

And I have got to—actually, it pains me sometimes to do this, but Chairman Kilmer and Vice Chair Timmons, previous Vice Chair Graves, have done a great job in moving this process along. But my biggest fear is, as we keep going, that even this committee will probably become more partisan. And I hope we strive to make sure that that does not happen. But no one can control Perlmutter, so, I mean, that is what happens.

I really enjoyed your comments, Ms. Ripley. And, you know, I look at your opening statement, and everything you mentioned in high conflict is this institution. But I am thankful too you recognize it in your profession. You talk about nonaggression pacts. As somebody who has, you know, won a district that has been very competitive in every election, I like to think I represent my constituents, so I believe they want people who are bipartisan.

But there just seems to be a lot of talk when you get to Congress about nonaggression pacts, but, you know, politics decides to get in the way as you are here longer, and then ambition gets in the way. So those nonaggression pacts seem to go away, maybe similar to what gang warfare or gang battles are like and gang nonaggression pacts.

You know, there is a lot of talk about social media too. And this is why I want to start with you, Ms. Ripley. It was recently this week I saw a study about Twitter that went and looked at all of the Twitter users and put it into a political perspective, and said that Twitter users would make up the second most Democratic district in the Nation if you put them together as constituencies.

So I can tell you as somebody who gets asked a lot of questions by journalists back home especially, I think they put an overreliance on social media and the five people who may be on social media all the time criticizing any one Member of Congress so that we then have to answer those questions. What can we do to help educate your profession on how partisan some of the techniques the journalists use may be damaging the fabric of this institution?

Ms. RIPLEY. I am glad that you asked, because I do think part of creating new incentives has to involve the news media, right. Like, that is part of what is driving these incentives. I often think that there should be a warning that pops up when journalists open Twitter that says 8 out of 10 Americans do not use this service,

just as a reminder. It is like cigarettes, you know, and just because it does really work.

And just basic human psychology is you—it is not designed for us to calibrate those messages. The ones that are negative are searing, right, and so you get very sensitive to being attacked on Twitter. And there are—you know, there are conservatives on Twitter as well.

Mr. DAVIS. Oh, absolutely.

Ms. RIPLEY. But, in any case, there is only—like, very active is left and very active is right is like 20 percent of the country, but they are more than twice as likely to post about politics on social media, so you get this really distorted view. And, again, it is just not human-sized. Like, we can't calibrate it.

So I think there are some people working on sort of overlays for Twitter, which I am—I have beta tested a couple and I am very excited about, but I would encourage more of that to help us see. Like, there is one that puts a little—just a label. And, again, you opt into it. It is not Twitter doing it. It is like a label that says, you know, this is probably a bot, or it says, this person posts extreme content that is not representative of—whatever you want. You can come up with any algorithm you want. It is not going to be perfect, but it helps us—I found when I used it, I immediately was able to let things roll that I might not have otherwise.

So there are some—you know, Dr. Grant can maybe speak more to this, right, but there are some basic ways we know that are—the way we process information has almost nothing to do with the way it is displayed to us as journalists and also politicians. So there are better ways to collect feedback than Twitter for sure, and I think that the news media needs to get more creative. And it is hard to generalize about the news media, but get more creative about covering political conflict.

Mr. DAVIS. I have opened this up. I am not going to ask another question, so if anybody else wants to answer or respond to this.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Grant, go ahead.

Mr. GRANT. I will just build on Ms. Ripley's comments. I think the Duke Polarization Lab has done particularly interesting work here, where they will offer you a Twitter filter that tells you how partisan and ideological your posts are. They give you a probability that you are being trolled. They show you a bipartisanship leader board. They give you the bot signal as well. And I think maybe most important for Congress, they give you feedback about whether you are in an echo chamber, based on who you follow and who you tend to engage with.

And I think we need that kind of calibration to figure out, am I listening to a representative group of people or am I falling victim to what most of us are, which is empirically, 10 percent of Twitter users drive 97 percent of the tweets that reference national politics. And so I think we need to balance that out.

Mr. DAVIS. Speaking of balance, I mean, I think there is some concern on how that balance on social media across all platforms is. And I certainly hope we can continue to work together, because I think what discussion all of you bring up is very important to us in fixing this place, and that is all of us around this table. That is our goal.

And, thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I will yield back.

Mr. DOHERTY. Could I add something, Congressman Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. Go ahead.

Mr. DOHERTY. One of my themes here is going to be it has got to also be at the grassroots, and so we as a people are just learning how to use social media to try to——

The CHAIRMAN. Is your mike on?

Mr. DOHERTY. Pardon me?

The CHAIRMAN. Is your mike on?

Mr. DOHERTY. Yeah.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

Mr. DOHERTY. Yeah. As a people, we are just learning to use this tool. And so not just the vertical stuff of people to you, but we need to learn together. And I will just mention that the newest workshop Braver Angels is coming out with soon is on depolarizing our social media relationships with one another. Because you know the people that are going after you are going after their family members and their friends, so it is got to be at that level as well.

Thank you.

Ms. MILER. May I add one last bit?

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah, go ahead.

Ms. MILER. Is the mike—we are okay?

I think one—two points that I just wanted to build upon the comments that the other panelists have mentioned. So one is that these facts about the distortion on Twitter, those should be part of freshmen orientation, right, in sessions about how to handle social media in your office and training your staff. Let's bring in some of that information perhaps, because when we all sit here and hear that, if we are not the ones familiar with the statistics, you go, whoa, really, 90 percent and 10 percent, huh, that is striking. And maybe those are just small pieces of information along the way to have a 20-minute session as part of orientation that talks about this distorting view that can occur.

And, again, I do recognize I am stepping outside of my expertise by speaking to social media, but perhaps that is one thing.

I think the only other comment that I would make is that Members of Congress are incentivized through elections, not through social media. And so the reason that social media becomes so large is because of the belief that it affects representation and it affects elections. And so I think keeping that as part of the conversation as we talk about social media, obviously, it is not going away, and so it continues to be an important part of communication both for you out to your constituents and for constituents to you. But I think there would be fairly widespread consensus that it is not the ideal relationship to have with your constituents, right, is talking through social media.

And so to think about how to balance that and to the extent that it matters, it is because it matters in some ways going back to incentives, as the chair and the vice chair have both mentioned, right. It is the electoral incentives that occurs there, and to think about other ways to maybe buttress social media so that it doesn't feel so much bigger than everything else.

The CHAIRMAN. Anyone else want to pull on this thread before we——

Go ahead. It is just really hard to see whether the microphones are on or off, so apologies.

Ms. VAN DUYNE. I appreciate what you are saying, bringing into the conversation elections and campaigns. I think that does tend to prioritize a lot of the agendas and conversations while we are here, because while it is great to have conversations about how to deescalate and work together, the fact is, is that every 2 years, it is very tribal, and it is one side against another side, and it is very—it is a team.

You know, Mayor Cleaver, you know, we were both mayors. And I don't know, but in my case, it was nonpartisan. You know, you didn't have an R or a D next to your name. And the discussions that we had had to do—they focused purely on the policy decisions that you were making. They tended to be much more clear, much more thoughtful. Not that we didn't have disagreements, but once you put an R or a D next to your name, good Lord.

I mean, the people who were following me on social media, never met before, never had I represented, never really had even seen me in a meeting. But all of a sudden, they had these very strong ideas of what I stood for and what I didn't do, and that plays into it.

And I don't know how you overcome the every 2-year fight, because, you know, look, I am a freshman. I am completely novice at this. I have done it on a local basis. But there was a good friend of mine who was mayor of St. Louis, and he had said, the longer you are in politics, the harder it is because, you know, supporters come and go, enemies accumulate. And I would say the same thing. When I decided to run in a partisan seat, I got all of the Republicans' enemies, not just, you know, mine.

How do you see us being able to overcome and have conversations at policy levels where you are keeping the campaigns where the parties get so intricately involved? How do you keep that out and separate? And if you can answer this question, you know, I will be the first to pay.

Ms. MILER. I feel an obligation that somebody has to turn on the mike here.

So I wish I had the perfect answer and we could make this, you know, barter here, but I think you have really hit on something. It is really difficult. And I think in part it goes to a larger challenge in that all of you have multiple aspects of your jobs. You are legislators, which is what we are trying to, in large part, talk about here. How do we engage in better policy conversation and legislating. You are Representatives. You have to go back. You are campaigners all the time. And, you know, short of turning 2 years into a longer term, which I am not necessarily sure, A, will ever happen, or, B, would really solve the problems that you are talking about, there is a real challenge in that distinction between your legislative hat and your electoral hats. And I think that does have to be recognized in the role of the parties, and the national parties have good and bad to them.

You know, there is a lot of ways in which scholars find that they mobilize voters, they bring people into politics and good things, but what you describe is the other hand of that.

And so I am going to a little bit punt here and say, again, right, the issue of the constituency and how to shape how voters see and

perceive the information they get through the media, the way that they are able to process it, you know, the parties are going to be involved in elections. And the challenge is are there elements that can be made attractive or the ways in which cooperation, compromise, bipartisanship, reasonableness can be brought to the front in an election.

And so when we hear, as we have here, that constituents want bipartisanship, that they want things to be done, how do we elevate that above the partisan rhetoric that occurs in the election. And I will also pay for anybody who has the answer.

The CHAIRMAN. I saw Mr. Latta and then Mr. Cleaver. At some point, I do want us to dive into that topic, right, so this whole question of—you know, even the work that Braver Angels does, I am not surprised that Dean Phillips participated in that. He is someone deeply invested in fostering those sorts of bipartisan relationships.

I think the trickier question for us is, as an institution, how do we encourage those difficult conversations? How do we encourage that sort of trust building? And I think that may be a thread that Mr. Latta was going to pull on, but—

[Inaudible.]

The CHAIRMAN. That is all right. We are just talking. Go ahead. And then Mr. Cleaver and then Mr. Perlmutter.

There we go.

Mr. LATTA. All right. There we go.

I serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee. I am the ranker on telecommunications, and a lot of times our mikes don't work.

But, first, thanks for being with us today. I appreciate all your comments and the discussion today.

And, you know, we are in a very interesting time in this country, and I think that we have heard from the members about, especially what you have also brought up about social media. You know, it is interesting, you are back home, and people will bring up a topic, and I will say, just out of curiosity, did you get that off the internet? And they will say yes. And I will say, you know, every so often, everything that is on the internet is not true. And they say, yes, it is because you can't put anything on the internet that is not true. And you see members shaking their heads here because we hear that.

So a lot of things are out there, but, you know—and I know in my years, not only here but also in the Ohio legislature, in the senate and the house, I live kind in life of C's, from civility, collegiality, collaboration, cooperation, camaraderie out there. And it is also difficult because, again, you know, it has been brought up about how people back home, when we hear this, that they would like, you know, bipartisanship and things like that, and I will start asking questions as to what, and they say, I don't agree with any of that. I say, well, what—tell me—when you want me to start agreeing, just start saying it, and you will go through it.

So it is difficult, because, again, we have changed in how people are getting their news and everything else in this country. Pardon me.

So, you know, it puts us in an interesting time. But, you know, one of the things I know that we were talking about too is about

what do we do with our staffs and it is time. You know, we were in an 8.5 hour markup yesterday, so pretty much I sat across the hallway in the Energy and Commerce Committee markup, and to get us to be in the same spot at the same time is very, very difficult. I will tell people, if you are going to get members in, you better get it done in 15 minutes because we are going to start losing people.

But, you know, how do we—you know, again, with our staffs too looking at having, you know, the depolarizing workshops and one-on-one facilitated, how do we get people there? Because, again, time around here is our biggest enemy. I mean, you know, a lot of us, short days are what we consider maybe a 12-hour, and a natural day might be 13, 14, 15 hours when you are here, and then you go back to your districts, and you are in the car.

So, you know, how do we get folks together? And my first question is, you know, just on how do we get people, from Members to staff, to be able to get to these and to see the significance in what we need to do. You know, it is when it is mandated, we have certain things we have to do that are mandated. It is like, if you don't get it done, then you are in trouble, if you don't take this one thing once or twice a year, and our staff says you have got to do this. But, you know, maybe this across to all of you, but I just ask that question.

Mr. DOHERTY. Well, what I would say, Congressman, is some of the things that I am talking about could be done between sessions. You know, you are not here all the time. We can also use Zoom. When we did Congressman Stauber and Congressman Phillips' staffs, we did it between sessions when they had a day. As Dr. Grant said, when they have a day, then you can do a deep dive.

So I wouldn't try to do it—I can see what you are all doing now. I see you are running around, and that would be—I don't see that perhaps as workable. But there are perhaps other times in the year when you have a little more downtime. Just a thought.

And the thing about the one-to-ones that I suggested that Members of Congress do, it is two one-hours. Your staffs can schedule two one-hours at some point. And if you can't do it now, you could do it on Zoom in between sessions. My advice.

Mr. LATTA. Anybody else like to answer on that?

Mr. GRANT. Well, I will just add something that might be interesting for the in-between time, which is—I know that this is a swear word in some parts of government, but performance management. Where is that for Congress? Who sits you down twice a year and lets you know, these are the things that you did well that made Congress work better, and here are the ways that you undermined our collective mission and hurt our country.

I wonder if you could take some of the time when you are not in session and identify a group of ideally bipartisans who are respected across parties who could be tasked with doing that independent feedback and trying to hold people accountable a little bit for the contributions they make as well as for what they subtract.

The CHAIRMAN. Can you say more? What would that look like? Can you put a little bit more meat on that bone?

Mr. GRANT. Yeah, so I guess the starting point for me would be to say, let's take a group—let's do a survey of all 435 Members of

Congress, and let's find out who are the most respected Members across parties. Ideally, we find out who is trusted by the opposite party. Then we get a group of, let's say, five to seven of those people. And they are tasked with doing a review of each Member of Congress. Their performance, their behavior on social media, and trying to evaluate whether the behavior either lives up to or violates the values and norms that you have set forth.

And I don't think that that feedback is always as powerful as an incentive. But we do have pretty extensive evidence that when you are given feedback by people who are in positions of power who you trust, respect, or look up to, that does move your behavior. It is something that you pay attention to. And I think it is at least an experiment I would be very curious to run.

The CHAIRMAN. So I want to kick it over to Mr. Cleaver, but I will mention, I shared that I have also been talking to sports coaches and, you know, all starts of folks just trying to get my head around this. Interestingly enough, one of the sports coaches I talked to, he was talking about how he turned around his team. One, Dr. Grant, you said it was all about on-boarding the freshman. That was how they set culture and changed the culture of the team. But, two, he said we had—well, you just described was how he described the players council. He said we had rules. Right? But we had team rules. Rules are what governed us when we are at our worst, right, to keep us from running afoul of the rules. And then he said, we have norms. We have culture that was governed by a player's council, which was the most respected players. Who wouldn't send you to the corner office to get yelled at, but who would pull you aside and say, you have kind of run afoul of, you know, kind of the team culture that we are trying to build.

So I just—I mention that because it so coincides with the feedback you just gave. So.

Mr. GRANT. Can I add to that briefly?

The CHAIRMAN. Yes. Please. And then Mr. Cleaver. Go ahead.

Mr. GRANT. Thanks, Chair Kilmer. I spent sometime with Norwegian Olympics Ski Team. These are the best skiers in the world. They are fiercely competitive. They call themselves the attacking Vikings. But one of the norms is when you finish a race, you give a course report radioing up to the person who got to ski after you to try to prepare them as best as you can. And there is a strong distance set up to do that, which is if you do that in the Olympics, you might give away your Gold Medal. But they do it because they want Norwegians to beat Austrians. All the other countries that they are performing against. When they socialize you into that team, if you don't live by those collaborative norms, the most decorated skier on the team pulls you aside and says, this is not who they are, this is not how we do things. And then if that behavior is repeated, you are banned from the lunch table. They will build a coalition to exclude you. And what they are trying to do is use peer accountability mechanisms to get people to move in line. And most of the athletes ultimately decide it is easier to work with the team than against them.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Cleaver and then Mr. Perlmutter.

Mr. CLEAVER. Yes, I want to follow up a little on what you said. I have a question for you. I would like for you to consider something I am going to say.

I played football, and my teammates elected me captain the senior year. And before the vote, the coach, Irving Garnett, said—before we vote, Cleaver come to the office. And I went into his office. And he said, I just want to let you know that if they vote, yes, which they are going to do, if you get put out of a single game for fighting, I am removing you from captain. I will still let you play, but you will never be the captain of this team again.

I spoke at a banquet in Fort Worth, Texas, and looked out and there he was sitting. And I said, this is the most significant man other than my father in my life, my coach. I say that not to—for any athletic purposes, I can barely walk—but I think for my coach, top person, the most powerful person said, if you do this, you are out had a great influence on me. I never had—I grew up in public housing. So if you don't learn to fight, I got a muscle because Chancey Bogan hit me on the mouth with a brick where it cut through it. So you got to fight. And I did.

But from the top person who was in charge of what I really wanted to do, what I loved almost as much as I loved the world said, you do this, and you are out. I guess the point I am making is that if that happened around here, maybe, maybe, just maybe. But that is just one little thing, I will say this, and I am done—I am through talking for today.

I think some of my colleagues have said me heard me before. There are agencies, organizations that score us on everything we do. You know, many people would say I have a thousand, 1,000 percent NRA vote. And, you know, they give the organized labor—children's labor—the Children Defense Fund, I mean, everybody. Except there is not a single organization that monitors and scores us for decency and for civility. And so, it is easy to come to the conclusion that that is not important, because everything else was scored. Yeah, you can go on the computer and find out what organization scored all of us, any time, except on civility. I am finished.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead.

Ms. RIPLEY. I am so excited that you have said that. And I have been talking to editors of mine about this exact thing. And can we score Members of Congress? There is different words for it, right? But, like, basically, just decency. I like that word. I think that is a good one. And then we get into the weeds about what—how do we do that, would it be machine learning, and would it be fair? And you can really—these are like actually really important and hard questions. So I don't mean to suggest they are not.

But I would love to hear from you all about what those metrics would be. You know? Because, again, part of this has to come from interest groups and news media incentivizing different things. And we thought about what we can easily rank conflict entrepreneurs in Congress. Right? But would we be regarding that in a perverse way, right? And would it not be surprising.

You know, but there has got to be a way, I agree with you, to at least surface people who are doing something differently and amplify that work. So I am—you know, I would love to hear any ideas you all have.

Mr. CLEAVER. Well, that which we praise inspires us to do more of that which was praised. I—you know.

Go ahead.

Ms. MILER. I also think as somebody who uses a lot of various scores and is familiar with some of these metrics, I think you point out something really important, which is that recently there are some scores about effectiveness, we have scores for bipartisanship even, but not for stability. And so really you right to call our attention to the absence of that type of metric.

And, immediately, I launch into social science brain, and I start thinking about, oh, what goes into that metric? Right? How do we measure that? How do we measure that fairly in a way that everybody, not just on this committee, but all of your colleagues in the full chamber would accept as being, accurate as being fair, as you noted, and honest.

And I think the difficulty of the task doesn't mean that it is not worth pursuing. And it is exciting to hear that you are actively in conversation about it, and this is something that could be developed.

But I do think that those details are critically important because developing a civility index that might be perceived by one party or the other as being bias would undue the benefit to which you call our attention. And so, hopefully, bringing it up, we will get some, you know, sharp minds both on this committee, in journalism, perhaps, in political science and other disciplines as well to think about that.

And maybe having a lot of different metrics together, you know, they will be stronger as a web of measures than any one single measure. So, thank you.

Mr. DOHERTY. Thank you. I would like to follow up on that by saying that what we have learned in this work is that any decision has to be shared by reds and blues. So our leadership is half red, half blue. So who is the "we"? If the "we" is journalist, blue. If the "we" is political scientist, blue. Okay.

If it is one caucus versus—so it has got the "we" who would develop this, which is very exciting, has to be people who are half and half on each side. There may be some in the middle and some others. And so I think you are bringing up something really important. It has to be done carefully, but who does it is key?

Can I say one other thing about sports, because that is one of our themes here is we are in the midst of the NBA playoffs.

Ms. WILLIAMS. Go Hawks.

Mr. DOHERTY. I saw that last night. For Milwaukee—okay. That is an aside. But they are fierce competitors, but when the season is over, they care about the sport, about the game. They care about whether we want to watch these teams, whether we trust them. And so there is a way in which—going back to this issue of you compete—you have to compete hard. But there is another way in which if people don't trust Congress, what are you running for, right?

And so the sports analogy makes sense to me because the leaders—the people I admire most in those sports are the ones who represent all of the players, who represent the legacy, who care about the sport, not just about their own particular winning. So.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Perlmutter. And then I have got Mr. Phillips and then Ms. Williams.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. All of that is a lot heavier than where I was going. But let me, I want to try to piece together our hearing from a few days ago and today, and I think it works. You know, we have been talking about, in our last hearing, about empowering individual Members so that we feel more worthwhile. That what we are doing is worthwhile. And to incent dialogue, conversation, good conflict.

And, you know—I tell you—and your gladiator legislator thing, that really hit home because that is talking about sort of the gladiator side of this thing—the duking it out, the competition, the rough stuff we got to go through. But we are here to legislate in a perfect world. And it is fun when you actually can legislate.

And so we were talking about open rules or not. And we brought it up—I am on the Rules Committee. And you may have seen over time, you know, us not do open rules as much, not allow for as many amendments.

Joe Morelle suggested—and I am just throwing this out there to everybody, that in the New York legislature, they allowed the sponsor to agree or disagree with amendments. And if the sponsor did not agree with the amendment, it didn't get put on.

Now, you might not get enough votes to pass the thing, but it gives—it just reminded me—it gives each of us a little more power as to what we are doing, and it would—William would say, look, I—you know, within the context of germaneness, you know, I would like to add X amendment. Now, he and I are talking. And it isn't only leadership saying what is allowed, what is not allowed. I don't know.

I want to try to come with a structural approach that empowers individuals and incense conversation in a good conflict kind of sense. Because if you are having these kinds of conversations, everybody is buying into it here.

I don't know. I don't mean to do a filibuster, but I am just curious if you have any comments on that?

Ms. MILER. I think what you describe is exactly the types of innovation that we need to think about, right? Similarly, as we were discussing earlier, the possibility of providing a pathway to bills that demonstrate bipartisan support or guaranteeing active caucuses, because I know there are many, with some more active than others.

You know, one bill, they can have one priority of Congress that will get us basically a fast track in the procedures. I think—I mean, some of these are going to be more workable than others, but they all need to be discussed.

I think one of the challenges that we face as we put us all in the same group together to use the “we,” trying to think about solutions is, as was talked about last week, is the rise of omnibus legislation. So when we don't have the sponsor of the bill as you just described, it doesn't really control it. It is unlikely that they have a freestanding bill coming to the House floor on which then they can give their yay or nay on a particular amendment.

And so that kind of builds into that broader challenge of whether we try to revise and move away from this dependence on omnibus

legislation. Or as whether the panelists last week were talking about, there is also an approach which is to say omnibus is here to stay. This where we currently work. We can't go back to the Congress of the 1970s, and so let's make the omnibus process, you know, improve it.

And so I think as we come up with particular ideas and reforms, some of that is going to come down to how do we see the omnibus? Is this a permanent feature of our modern Congress? In which case that type of proposal is going to be more limited in its application. Or if we roll back the omnibus, then something like that is something that can leapfrog to the top of ideas, because, you know, that might be something that a lot of Members would be really pleased to support.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Well, one of the reasons I brought it up, and then I will leave this is that we are trying to avoid sort of the gotcha amendments, the gladiator piece of this thing where it is a constructive—you know, look, if he comes up with an amendment, I may not love it, but I can deal with it, and I get his vote? I don't care if I have gotten his vote versus his vote or her vote, I have got a vote. And that is kind of how our legislature in Colorado worked. You know, we—35 of us. And you don't care where you get the votes, you just want the votes to get your bill done. And it is very different than this place.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, so, I want to invite others to take a swing at that pitch because I think the issue that Mr. Perlmutter is raising is one of the clearest examples of broken culture. Right? So both of us came out of State—and I mentioned this to Dr. Grant when I first talked to him about this problem. Both of us came out of State legislature. Every bill that was brought up in my State legislature was brought up under an open rule. There has been a few amendment that was all germane to the subject. You could offer it, it would be debated, it would be voted on. And I could think of 8 years in Olympia, maybe five, maybe six times where I was politicized. When someone said, I am going to play gotcha with this, so I can bludgeon you during a campaign.

But other than that, people—if they wanted to constructively change a bill, they would offer an amendment to try to constructively change the bill. You mentioned that in this town, and that seems like I am joking, right? That it is laughable that that would happen here. And, unfortunately, and this is without regard to party, both sides do this.

You know, what ends up happening is we have a very closed process. So the minority feels like they have been sidelined. And as I have shared in this committee before, like legislator sideline is not dissimilar to the Kilmer family puppy when we don't keep it constructively engaged. It chews the furniture. Right? Like, that is what happens. And so there is a lot of furniture chewing that happens in the U.S. Capitol.

So does anyone else want to take a swing at Mr. Perlmutter's question of how—you know, are there ways—you know, if we recommend open rule right now—that is basically saying, I invite you to put your head into the mouth of the lion as the culture currently exists. So do you have thoughts on how we might more constructively engage Members so that, you know, on the floor, for amend-

ments, those sorts of things, the idea that Mr. Perlmutter had or, I guess, Mr. Morelle had from New York, or you got any other ideas? And then I will take it over to Mr. Phillips.

Ms. RIPLEY. Again, I don't know the specifics of Congress, like you do, or like my colleagues here do. But I can say that there is a—it is a chicken and egg situation. So in high conflict, everyone is some various level of miserable. And everybody—it pulls you in, but you also want out.

So there is a paradox in high conflict. So everybody wants something else on some level. So the more you experience agency and effectiveness and getting little things done, the more you want of that. Right? So is there a way given institution the institution and the rules you have to sort of start small and get people at experience? It also comes with encounters that are well-managed.

We are like Braver Angels where—and especially good when you have a common problem you are working on across the divide. So I actually think it would have this positive feedback loop of not only do you feel more agency, not only do you feel more efficacy so you are getting incentivized to do more, but it also breaks down some of the prejudices between groups when you are in encounters with a common problem.

So there is a lot—there is a lot to that that makes sense. And it is the kind of thing where the more—this is the most misunderstood thing, I think, about—at least there was a big surprise for me. All over the world, when people finally experience good conflict, even in war zones, they want more. It is like almost addictive.

Would you agree with that? Once you experience it, especially when you have been so deprived of it, like you just are like, wow. There is a euphoria that comes from actually—even as you continue to deeply disagree. So.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Phillips, do you want to take it?

Mr. PHILLIPS. I do, Mr. Chair. First, let me start by saying, I love this, this hearing, and this construct with my colleagues and these witness and this subject re-inspire my faith in this institution and the opportunity we can do better.

I want to respond to a couple of notions that have been thrown about, first of which, is a sports metaphor. As a Minnesotan, I have to inject hockey, of course, into the conversation. One of the most beautiful elements of hockey is that after the N—or the third party period of a battle between two sides, both teams line up and they shake hands. That is the tradition. It is a beautiful, important part of the sport. I did it since before I could talk. And I could just envision when we open a new Congress and when we close, can you imagine 200 or so Members on each side of the aisle, getting in line and simply shaking hands to begin a Congress and to end it. You know, symbolism matters, and visuals matter, and I think that would be a beautiful thing for us to consider.

Scoring civility, I love that notion. I think one of the great ways to do so is to simply ask the other side to score the other side. Right? Ask Members on the left side of the aisle to score those on the right and vice versa. It gives us an incentive to be decent to one another. If you want to score high in the civility scoreboard, if you will, maybe rank 1 through 5, and it gives us a small incentive, but a meaningful one to score each other.

Last, and perhaps equally importantly, you know, we are not going to put an end to conflict entrepreneurs, we are not going to end anger-tainment, we are not going to change all the perverse incentives that exist in this institution, and we probably sure as heck can affect the political duopoly of Republicans and Democrats, and the political industrial conflicts that survive—not just survive, thrives by dividing us.

So my question—and, Mr. Grant, you talk about trust. And what we can affect, I think, is trust quite easily, actually. So, you know, Dr. Doherty, I would love it if you would share with my colleagues what you heard, Braver Angels heard, after you did that retreat with Representative Stauber's staff and my staff. I think better coming from you than from me. If you could start with that.

Mr. DOHERTY. Yes. Thank you. What really came out of that was this awareness of many more commonalities than they had realized. So I will give you an example. When we did the life experiences exercise—

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yeah.

Mr. DOHERTY [continuing]. What life experiences have influenced your approach to public policy and the public good. What they discovered was that how many of them on each side had religious roots to their interest and passion for making—for social change. And that those who work—who came out of college with those ideals, those were more conservative, moved in one direction and took up issues of abortion and pro life, for example. Those who were more liberal moved into social justice and poverty area. But the roots system was similar. The root system was similar. That was something that was not expected.

The second thing is in all of the workshops we do, we do a humility part. Okay? So one of the things that we did was have each group separately come up with two issues that their Member of Congress cares a lot about, and then to ask these questions, how is this stereotype misunderstood, demagogued by others? So mining was one. Immigration was another. Okay? And then—so that was the first question.

The second question was, well, fix—respond to those stereotypes. Respond. What do you really think.

And then the third one was how could this policy run aground? Or what are some downsides? Well, what are some possible unintended consequences? How might it end up in 10 years not working as well as you would like? And then they all nailed the third one. Then all nailed the third one. Everybody who would say behind closed doors, yeah, you know, we don't know how—what it is going to cost eventually. We don't know 10 years how it is going to look. This is our best shot at it.

So my point is that when they were able to articulate both what they love and also what their concerns are, humility, there was a powerful connection. There was a “we” that formed there.

I hope you have heard that from them. That is what I observed.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I sure did. But like I said, I think it is stronger coming from you than from me. I just want to reenforce that, because having seen the effect that this had on our staffs, recognizing how we could embed that into the culture here is really powerful stuff.

And we all know, we can't work with people we don't trust, and we can't trust people we don't know. And sadly this institution very much focuses on separation on day one. It really does. The efforts to get us to know each other and tell our life—by the way, telling a life story is so illuminating and so informative because it expresses why we might see things a little bit differently. And when we do that, we always find something that unifies us.

So I just continue to implore that we bake that into day one here, and not just with new Members, but with staff. Because we all know how powerful staffs that know each other and respect each other and trust one another can get things done here too.

So to the extent that we might consider that and embedding this into our orientation program, I think would be one of the most extraordinary, fundamental, prospective changes we could possibly make for the country. So thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you want to chime in again? Go ahead, Dr. Miler. And then I got you, Ms. Ripley.

Ms. MILER. I apologize. I want to add one small point about staff, which is that in other research on congressional capacity, I have looked a lot at staff and staff knowledge and staff satisfaction and retention. And I think one little perk to set here—it is more than a little perk really—is that this would also improve staff-Member satisfaction, and it would help retain staff. And that is something that will serve the institution better if we can reduce some of the turnover and kind of build that institutional knowledge in productive and cooperative ways, I think everybody will really benefit from that. So just a thumbs-up for that one.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Here, here. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead. Ms. Williams.

Ms. WILLIAMS. First, I couldn't agree more with a lot of the conversations that is being held. We all view life through our lived experiences, and that is what—that will give us a problem when we start looking at the ratings, because civility is also going to mean something very different to different people based on their lived experiences.

And Ms. Ripley, I did not have the good fortune of reading the book before I came to this hearing. But now I feel like I need to buy it because I want to explore more of this notion of the good conflict versus the work that we have that has come to mean something completely different now on bipartisanship. Because bipartisanship now to me has come to how do we really not get much done at all, and we are not moving the needle. So I feel like my people are still being left out and left behind, because if we are working in a bipartisan fashion, then that means that we are not—that we are not able to do some of the things that are actually making progress. Because all of the bipartisan conversations get so watered down that nothing is actually happening.

So I want to explore more of the notion of continuing to get into this good trouble, because we all have an obligation to speak up and to serve our people that we are here to represent, but in this notion of good conflict. And I guess the—where the dividing line is and how do we get into this good trouble, because we should be having robust conversations and debates in Congress.

But we should also be listening to each other and learning from that, because these robust debates shouldn't be gotcha moments and shouldn't be cheap political hits, but actually trying to get to this commonality so that we are advancing policies that serve all the people.

And I would just love to hear more about how are you all going to help us get there, besides telling everybody to read this book.

Ms. RIPLEY. Other than reading my book, of course. No, I think, yeah, this is the thing is what is the distinction? I have found it is actually not hard to tell the difference between good conflict and high conflict. So some of the things that characterize good conflict are that we may not expect with like bipartisanship or unity. You can have good conflict and have a lot of anger. Right? You can have sadness. You can have fear. All of that is good.

Like in the research on emotions and conflict, we can work with those. Anger is actually really important because it suggests that you want the other person to be better.

Where you get into high conflict, you see things like humiliation. Humiliation is probably the key most under-appreciated accelerant for high conflict, anything that makes someone feel like they have been brought low, especially publicly. So that is one to avoid, because you are basically handing a weapon to your opponent when you humiliate them.

And contempt, disgust, right? Dehumanization, those things are high conflict. And there are other things, but those are some of the—so, again, to your point, we have to get out of this trap of thinking it is what we are doing or unity. Those are not—

And, again, to the point of rankings, right? I am sort of less interested at this point in which—when I make my own—cast my own votes which Members are bipartisan, and which are this, and which are that. I am more interested in which ones are decent to each other and are not conflict entrepreneurs. And it is hard to know that unless you are really a student of politics in Congress.

So, yeah, I think there are ways to tell the difference, and there are ways to cultivate. You need to create guardrails in your institution so that you don't fall into high conflict, especially when your institution is designed to create it like this one. Right? So there is a lot guardrails that have that—and one of them is relationships.

Very quickly, I will just end with, I had the privilege of following a group of very progressive New Yorkers from a synagogue on the Upper West Side called B'nai Jeshurun who were very frustrated after Trump won his election and very distraught and didn't know any Trump supporters. And they ended up through a series of strange events going to spend three nights in the homes of conservative Christian corrections officers in rural Michigan, because there was someone who knew both groups and was trusted.

So they go—and, by the way, there was a lot of trepidation on both sides, as you might imagine. People couldn't sleep the night before. Both sides thought this was crazy. You know, conservators in Michigan thought there was—what if it is Antifa coming into their homes, you know? And never mind it is mostly like older Jewish women, and then they are Jewish. But the New Yorkers felt like, what are we doing? It is crazy. We are, you know, literally

putting our heads into the mouths of lions. And they went—and I got to sort of watch, do a ride-along on this.

And they went to a firing range, and they went to dinner, and they had really hard conversations across big divides with some ground rules, right? And it was almost like—a couple of things happened that might be relevant.

First of all, all the things we disagree about—let's say it is a big pie, like we have a big cherry pie here, right? And there is some percentage of it that is like deep. Profound real disagreement. I don't know what that is. Maybe it is 50 percent.

And then there is this percentage that we think we disagree about, but we actually are totally misunderstanding each other. That is a mysterious and intriguing percentage. I guarantee you it is bigger than we think. It is not everything, but that would come up, right? Like the conservatives would be like, wait, you actually are okay with having a border for the country? And the liberals would be like we are okay with that, you know, and vice versa. There were these moments of like—because they have been fed totally different news diets and stereotypes about each right?

And then there is a percentage of things that they actually would agree on if they had the same set of facts. Right? That is another slice of pie. We don't know how big it is, but I am curious. And the last piece of pie that is intriguing to me is the percentage of things neither of them actually knows what to think about, has a lot of internal conflict about, and is torn about because these are hard problems, you know. And once you are in a safe space, you are able—with relationships, you are able to surface that complexity and contradiction.

So one of the conservative corrections officers came over to me at some point about 2 days in and she pulled me aside and she said, you know what is really weird? I am starting to actually like these people. And it is—it is a feeling that comes over you before you even articulate it. Like a feeling like, wow, I do not agree with many things these people are saying, and I am kind of enjoying this.

So, anyway, that was an example of good conflict that was created on purpose across a big divide.

Ms. WILLIAMS. Thank you. And I think something that I would welcome all of my colleagues and the panelists today, cheering on my Atlanta Hawks would be a good way for us to come together. And, you know.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I will second that point.

Ms. MILER. May I add one comment on this? I think one of the things that this conversation really got me thinking about is the difference between compromise and common ground. And I think that those get muddled, even amongst congressional scholars, and probably in your own conversations with yourselves and your staff. And I think this notion of the false dichotomy of unity or high conflict, right—perhaps sometimes we are not looking for everybody to agree. Right? That is common ground.

And as you noted, there are things that just isn't going to occur, but that doesn't mean we can't find compromise, which is a very different concept, right? And so I would also—it reminds me of your story about kind of a moment, right? Those are compromises.

That is not necessarily common ground. It is a, "Could I get this thing on there, too, and you will get my vote?" Right? And that is about maybe not getting your pure dream bill, but getting most of what you want and letting some other people get some of what they want.

And so it might be helpful to be mindful about that difference when we talk about things and when we set up our goals for the incentives that we have, because those lead us sometimes on the same path and perhaps sometimes on different paths.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Grant, did you want to chime in on this topic too?

Mr. GRANT. Yeah, I just—I wanted to add that I went through conflict mediation training about two decades ago, and I think it is something that every Member of Congress should be required to do. One of the most useful skills that I was taught that I find myself applying all the time was just to defuse and neutralize, an attempt to drag me into high conflict. So if somebody were to try to humiliate me, and the perceived wisdom is that I could actually step out and talk about the rules of the game a little bit, and say, "Hey, it seems like you might be trying to humiliate me right now. Is that what you are trying to accomplish? Because I thought you were above that, but I am not sure, let me know."

And we see this when we study expert negotiators that they will very gently label the behavior of the other side and then test and summarize their understanding and give them a chance to disown it. And the moment that you signal that you know what the person is up to is the moment that you pull them out of the fray a little bit, and you are able to have a conversation about the conversation. Right? What are the rules of engagement? What kind of norms of civility do we want to follow? And I think those kind of interpersonal skills might come in handy for some Members of Congress, but you all would know better than I do.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I think one of the things each of you, in one way or another, has highlighted is the opportunity for Members of Congress to get training, right, on what you should know about social media, on what you should—you know, how to negotiate. You know, our committee has made some recommendation—this is the first place I have ever worked where as an employee of this institution, other than freshman orientation, there is not any structured professional development, at all. Which I think is bonkers. Right?

So I think this is—you have given us some, I think, good material here—

Mr. DOHERTY. Could I add one thing here.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Yes. And then I got you, Mr. Joyce.

Mr. DOHERTY. I got this really important question about having sharp, a good conflict that isn't just watered down. I am really glad you raised that. Because people can think, well, I will just sort of find the mushy middle and sort of—what we have learned in Braver Angels is that you can have sharp, well-defined disagreement. We have a whole debate series, and the key thing is the guardrails.

So if you and I are in a debate, you speak your views, I speak my views, I try to listen to yours and vice versa. People ask us questions. But I don't try to characterize your views. Particularly,

I don't try to characterize your motives. If there is one key thing that I have learned in all of this is stick to the issues, stick to the values, don't characterize the motives of the other person, and don't use my terms to describe their position.

Now, maybe in an election, I would, okay, if I am competing, okay, because we have to draw sharp differences. But if we are legislating, don't use my terms for what you are doing. Use your terms. Use my terms and don't attack your motives.

So we have had debates on questions like resolve, the election was stolen. A recent one that sort of took my breath away was resolve, that sometimes violence could be necessary to bring about a larger good. Oh, my goodness. And then you have people on either side who rationally discuss that and don't attack the other person's motives and don't characterize the other person's position.

And out of 2 hours, people find some—I love what you said because they find, well, we are not even close, but oh, actually, we are close here, and on that one I misunderstood your views.

But if you set the guardrails of the process, the container, and somebody has to hold that, somebody has to hold that, then you can have sharp differences. At the end of it, we both have influenced each other, even if we don't agree.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to bring Mr. Joyce in on this. I will say, just in response to what you just said, Mr. Cleaver has often raised the fact that the rules of the House, if we enforce them—like, the rules say you are not allowed to impugn the motives of your colleagues. And, yet, watch floor debate and see how often someone says, you know—

Mr. DOHERTY. And somebody should be empowered to say “out of line.”

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. The chair or the Speaker is supposed to do that.

The CHAIRMAN. Yeah. Mr. Joyce

Mr. JOYCE. Thank you. First, Dr. Doherty, in getting prepared for this hearing, it was interesting to find that I actually have a chapter in northeastern Ohio for—and I appreciate that you—what your organization is doing about bringing—reminding folks of the commonalities we have. And I think if people would take the time to listen in this town—and unfortunately, we have got a lot of talkers, not so many listeners. But when you listen, you are able to get to those commonalities.

But the one thing that I found in my ninth year now is, unfortunately, we say remember driven, but most of the big things that have gone through are coming—are more, start in the Speaker's office and will come down. And with that being the case, what do you think it would take to incentivize leadership to start being more partisan or bipartisan? We are partisan. We know that. But being more bipartisan and get to that buy it folks.

I am a guy who got here in November of 2012 who is already on the D triple C hit list, number one, and I already had my opponent for 14. And, you know, it became an us-against-them thing. And it is not supposed to be. You know, I don't—you know, having been a lawyer—a recovering lawyer now—but having been a lawyer, you

are used to the negotiation of going back and forth, and things don't just necessarily happen.

You have to listen to folks, and we would take the offers back and forth and work through those problems. And I have never seen leadership take the time to incentivize that, just throw it out there as an ending one, since we have talked about the individuals coming forward. If we are going to be tap-down driven, how do we get buy-in from leadership, other than changing leadership completely, I get that.

The CHAIRMAN. Anyone want to take a swing at that pitch?

Mr. DOHERTY. Well, it is outside of my expertise. But if I am a leader and of an organization that the public does not trust, maybe I should try something different.

Mr. JOYCE. Fine with me.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Joyce, you want to—any other terms you want to pull there?

Mr. JOYCE. We talked about it.

Ms. MILER. I am tempted to leave it on that note because I think you nailed it. But at the risk of overstaying, I think one of the things that is interesting in the research that I did with both political scientists and organizational psychologists what had emerged was that party leaders are actually very good at actively managing conflict within their party. They demonstrate a lot of the things that organizational psychologists look for in letting dissent be voiced in these norms or guardrails that, you know, when you are in your own party caucus, it stays in the caucus room, you give your leadership a heads-up.

But there is an expectation that there will be dissent. And leaders have certain tools and techniques that they use to get you on board and to let you know when it is okay to not be on board. And so there is a skill set there that everybody, both the leadership, and Members of both parties have honed when they are within their own party.

And so that is the really B side of it. But the challenge really comes when we start looking across the parties on high salience issues. On low salience issues, what we found what Members and staff told us is that leadership neither encourage nor discourage. They just kind of—they were too busy deal with the small issues. But that was a gift to Members, because that gave Members this space to cooperate on the things that mattered to their district.

And maybe a Member of the other party has a district with needs like yours, and that is the place. Or maybe it is common personal experience or life stories, and that brings you to a place. And then their leadership is just kind of hands off. The challenge is the slice of the pie, the desire the pie analogy that there is a high salience issue across the party, right?

And I think there we come back to the challenge of elections, and the leader's role in those places and in really discouraging and actively working against colleagues across the aisle, like putting folks on a hit list right off the bat, or what have you.

It is a function of what one of my colleagues, Dr. Frances Lee, who has spoken with you before has talked about is this constant competition to win the majority. And competition is good. I mean, we seek it many ways in political life. But one of the challenges is

that when that really—as we get more competitive, winning the competition becomes focal to both sides more at the time. And so when one party dominates or the other, of course, one side likes it and one doesn't, but everybody kind of knows how it is going to play out.

When you have always every 2 years, something could change. This could be our year to win or to lose. I think it really makes that electoral context for party leaders very salient. And as I said in my opening remarks, I think that that slice of the pie is the toughest one to figure out, right? It is going to be really hard to change the us versus them, the win-lose. Because at least as our elections are structured, there is win and lose. And so that to me is the toughest challenge, not to say that we shouldn't tackle it, but, hopefully, maybe we can build up to that challenge by, you know, addressing some of the other areas, first, that might give us a better handle on that. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Timmons.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to get back how we disincentivize conflict entrepreneurs. So we have talked about a number of different ways. I liked the idea of civility scoring—Mr. Cleaver talked about that—more bipartisanship scoring, more methods of making people proud to be collaborative to solve problems and to facilitate hard discussions.

What other thoughts do you all have in this area? I think it has got to be intra-party policing. And there is mentorship. There is leadership. There is all these different ways to try to help address conflict entrepreneurs. And I think orientation is an important part, training is an important part. So do you have any additional thoughts on the subject of disincentivizing conflict entrepreneurs?

Ms. MILER. I have one thought that I think brings together your question and Ms. Williams' question as well about—and the notion of humiliation that Ms. Ripley mentioned, and that is there may be instances, for example, on committees and bringing in trust where this is always tricky because we want transparency, but sometimes that encourages the gotcha moments. It encourages those humiliation moments that can go out, whether social media or not.

And so maybe, you know, there might be instances where committees could opt for attendance only. Right? So they are showing accountability of you knowing up to do the work, and you can still tell your constituents you were there, but maybe not everything is on the record in certain moments.

So there can be moments to have some of those frank conversations where there is not the gotcha dynamic or posturing. Right? There may be opportunities to try and find a new balance between that accountability that is so important to Americans' trust in our congressional institution.

So I don't want to lose sight of that. But to also acknowledge what I am hearing from you and from others that, you know, sometimes everything having the spotlight on, it makes it really hard to have these conversations. And from what I am hearing from my colleagues on the panel, that creating those spaces can be valuable. So maybe there is small moments like that that could help defuse and build some of that dynamic.

Ms. RIPLEY. I was just going to add to that. I mean it pains me as a reporter to endorse the idea of more confidential meetings with politicians, but I think that is just true. It is just human psychology. It needs to be in places where no one is performing. Right? And many more of those places.

So then the other thing is the opposite of that, like the storytelling point of view, part of how we got here was through national media and politicians modeling high conflict as entertainment.

But there are other ways you can tell stories. There is a show in Canada called Political Blind Date. Has anyone heard of this show? So it is actually pretty successful. And there is one like it in the U.K. where they take politicians across the aisle and they would spend the day together. They don't know who it is going to be until they get there.

And they do something together that is relevant. Like if one is against legalizing marijuana and the other is for it, they visit like a marijuana, you know, processing factory, and they go on a bike ride. I mean, they do things. It is a little cheesy, but, actually, because one on one, it is harder to be really demeaning, you know. And even though there are cameras there, right, it is a one-on-one encounter, and there are these moments that are kind of good television, believe it or not. It is the opposite of what we expect. So I am sure you are all eager to sign up for this show. I am trying to get an option in the U.S. So.

The CHAIRMAN. We are just happy this hearing is on C-SPAN, honestly. The fact that they are covering—thank you, C-SPAN. Thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. I am going to follow up on one quick example. So I was invited on a commission delegation trip with a number of Senators about 6 months into my first term. I actually barely knew the Members of the House Republican parties. So I didn't know anybody in the Senate.

And I was on this plane for 6 or 7 hours, and I got to speaking with one of them at length. We had a lot in common. And we really developed a relationship. And I actually didn't know he was a Democrat. And we talked about it. And then I got off the plane, and I Googled him, and I was like, oh, he is a Democrat, wow.

So I mean, you know, don't get me wrong, it is a very challenging thing to recreate, but it is just a perfect example of how, I mean, we have so much in common, we agreed on a lot. And we built a relationship without the whims of politics.

So I just think that is a focus that we have to make, because you are not going to be mean to somebody that you have a mutual respect relationship from, and I think that is really what is missing in Congress. Because I don't know a lot of my colleagues across the aisle. And there is just so many people here. I mean, you know, it is very challenging. So it is something I think we need to—

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Grant, can I bring you in on this too?

Mr. GRANT. Sure. I was speaking a little bit about the research that psychologists and sociologists are doing on moral reframing which is the idea of learning to speak the language of other people as opposed to just your own. I think there is, you know, there is so much divide. For example, when we talk about climate change, I hear liberals constantly trying to advance it in terms of protecting

the planet for future generations. Why not reframe that as the data shows this works better if you are speaking to somebody who is conservative and say, we are here to protect God's Earth, or we need to maintain the purity of our planet?

And this is a skill set that I think all of us could learn. I think it is a lot easier to appeal the values people already hold than it is to change them.

And let me just tell you a quick story that I think illustrates this. There was a college student named Paul Butler who went to St. Lucia a couple decades ago, long before the environmental movement. And he found out that there was a parrot there that was in danger of extinction. And he decided he wanted to save it. He started a very simple campaign that said, Save the St. Lucia Parrot. Now there is only one problem with this campaign. He made it up. There is no such thing as a St. Lucia parrot. This is just a parrot that happens to live in St. Lucia. But the moment he called it the St. Lucia parrot, people started saying, this is our bird, and he activated their national pride.

I think his strategy has now been applied in a couple hundred places to save dozens and dozens of animals. And the formula is very simple, it saved the blank, blank. The first blank is the name of the place. The second blank is the name of the animal.

And I think that that skill set, right, of just understanding what the audience already values and then connecting it to your idea, it helps you move toward common ground, and the conflict entrepreneurs then don't have a lot to work with.

Mr. DOHERTY. One thing to add, I am sure on your trip, Mr. Timmons, you broke bread a lot. In every religious tradition that I know of, a common meal is part of the connector. And that would be one—this is one way to humanize each other.

Mr. TIMMONS. Alcohol does that.

Mr. DOHERTY. Potato chips. Okay. And so that would be a simple way. Because it is hard to demonize somebody you break bread with regularly. It is hard to demonize them.

Mr. CLEAVER. Dr. King did that magnificently. I mean, the day before he was assassinated, he had gotten in a big argument with Jesse Jackson. And if you go to the Lorraine Motel, one of the things you see is that the lunch that Dr. King had ordered on the table petrified. And—but he always did it, if he had an argument with Shuttlesworth, he said, let's have lunch the next day.

So I do think that it is power, there is power in breaking bread together. I don't know we—we rarely ever, ever do that unless maybe it is a codel. And that is because this place is messed up.

And so everywhere in America they had lunch except here. I mean, you know—you know, you might have two hearings from 11:00 to 1:00 that run from—so we don't—I mean we do—a lot of this, the things we do I think we practiced to do it on ourselves—do it to ourselves. I mean we—you know, I have said enough about it.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead.

Ms. RIPLEY. There is so much low-hanging fruit here. I mean, the fact that you all don't eat together, ever, is astounding to me. Like that seems like a fixable problem. And, yeah, it is one of the conditions that leads to good conflict, having food together is very basic.

Music. Starting a meeting with music. Right, like, there is some basic things that are just like low-hanging fruit. Right?

And maybe there can be meals that are influenced by a certain region of the country or State. Right? Or ways that you are again blurring the lines between Democrat and Republican based on something that is real and resonate for people.

And I would just add that it is not only that it is harder to—there is so many benefits. It is not only harder to demonize or be mean to someone you have a relationship with, that is true. And you know more deeply what is actually—what is actually driving them, right?

So the St. Lucia parrot example, like, you are able to figure out what are the words and perspectives that are going to resonate with this person because you understand what you actually disagree about, which is a huge deal.

You know, most conflicts are not about the thing we say they are about. There is an understory to conflict. So, you know, when married couples, right, fight about money, it is about a hundred other things, right?

And there is a million examples of this from people who work with couples. But it is never about the thing we fight about. So we figure what is it about? And it may take 6 hours on flight, but you can get there. So you are able to get more done because you know what is actually going on with them, really, not just what they are saying.

And the third benefit of these relationships that is very tangible is that you can help when the crises happen, you can call them and find out what is actually going on. So the way you prevent political violence all over the world, and the U.S. has spent a lot of money on this trying to help other countries do this, is to have relationships across divide so you can snuff out rumors and fake news and false information, and disinformation so that things do not escalate very quickly. So there is like lots of really—beyond, you know, it is just nice. Lots of really good benefits.

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead, Dr. Grant.

Mr. GRANT. If I could just make one more point before I have to exit for my next meeting. I think one of the virtues of having a large organization of 435 people is you have lots of subcultures. You have lots of different kinds of relationships and collaborations represented across Congress.

And one of the things we often study in psychology is the idea that you don't necessarily have to start with the problems. In some cases, you can look for the bright spots. The pockets of excellence where people are actually trying to make progress and advance toward meaningful solutions, I think this committee might be an example of that.

But I would love to see a poll done of Congress of what are some of the proudest moments that you have experienced during your time here where people actually thought about what was good for the country as opposed to their own base, or their agenda, or their own party.

And then as you identify the people that are responsible for those moments, some of the practices and habits that have driven them, you can begin to crystalize those into values and norms, and then

spread them into orientation, into training, and ideally give the people responsible as well leadership roles because they are culture carriers.

And I think if you find those pockets of excellence, you are in a better position then to make sure that they scale across the organization. Thank you for having me.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

I feel like that is a good place to stick the landing on this hearing.

With that, I want to thank all of our witnesses for their testimony.

And I would like to thank our committee members for their participation.

I also want to thank our staff for pulling together such great witnesses and for securing the Armed Services room. And C-SPAN, thanks again.

Without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response. I ask our witnesses to please respond as promptly as you are able.

And without objection, all members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit extraneous materials to the chair for inclusion in the record. Phew. With that, we are adjourned. Thanks, everybody.

[Whereupon, at 1:01 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

