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Testimony for September 23, 2021 Hearing

Thank you, Chair Kilmer, Vice-Chair Timmons, and committee members, for inviting me here to speak with you today. I have spent the last several years studying collaboration in the House of Representatives, examining why some members are more likely to collaborate, why some issues are more likely to be collaborative, and ultimately, how members benefit from working together.

Contrary to expectations, members routinely look for opportunities to find common ground on policy and seek colleagues to work with, including members of the other party. In my research, I identify collaborative relationships as members signing Dear Colleague letters together. I find that nearly every member collaborates with at least one other member, and the average member has between 15 and 20 colleagues they work with in a given Congress. Members introduce legislation together, coauthor letters to agencies, host briefings, and more.

There is also significant room for growth. I've had many conversations with members and staff on how they decide to reach out to other offices to work together on an issue. A consistent theme throughout those conversations has been that many members want to collaborate more than they do. They want to write bipartisan legislation but believe it will be too difficult to find someone they can agree with on the other side of the aisle. Based on these conversations and my observations of where collaboration already exists, I believe a more collaborative Congress is within reach.

When deciding whether to collaborate, members naturally consider how difficult it will be to work with someone on an issue and if that work will pay off. Of course, this is largely unknown, so you develop your expectations based on past experiences and facilitating more collaboration requires changing this calculus. Members need increased incentives and fewer challenges to work together.

There are already significant incentives of collaboration. First and foremost, collaborative legislation is more likely to succeed at every step of the legislative process. It attracts more cosponsors, is more likely to be reported out of committee and is more likely to pass on the floor, particularly when it is bipartisan. Members and staff know that collaborative legislation is more successful. You're going to have a much easier time getting your bill through if you can get it on the suspension calendar, and you're going to need bipartisan support to get anything through the Senate. I have a collection of quotes from interviews that boil down to, "working together is the only way to get anything done around here."

Collaboration can have significant benefits beyond passing legislation. Members who have formed more relationships with their colleagues, are more successful in other ways as well. Those with larger personal networks bring more federal grant money to their district and do

better in their elections. Having more relationships within Congress increases the likelihood that you will have a connection with the right person when you need it.

That said, there are still ways to increase collaboration incentives, or at least make them more obvious. One of the challenges is that most legislation doesn't pass. Even when a bill is collaborative, it's still hard to get through the process. So members frequently talk about how they've introduced legislation to address an issue, signaling that they're aware of a problem and are putting effort into solving it. But it's harder to get credit for introducing a bill when you aren't the one who sponsored it. You can promote your involvement in your outreach, but it isn't obvious to interest groups and media who look up the bill. Allowing two members to be listed as the sponsors of a bill is one possible way to address this. This change would also encourage members to work together before introducing a bill and it is much easier to collaborate behind closed doors.

Increasing the visibility of the benefits would also facilitate collaboration. Committee chairs could prioritize bipartisan legislation. New members could learn how collaborating makes it easier to get their bills through the process in orientation. The leadership could establish a process for individual members to submit their bills for consideration under suspension if they can demonstrate that they're likely to get the necessary 2/3 support. Scheduling would still be up to the leadership, but this would provide members with an opportunity to promote legislation that might otherwise get lost among the thousands of bills introduced.

The other consideration for increasing collaboration is making it easier for members to work together. There are two main obstacles; members need to be able to find someone to work with and work out an agreement with them. The first element -- finding someone to work with -- requires connections. Collaboration increases significantly once members are in their third term, partly because they have seen the value of working together, but partly because they've built up the necessary relationships by then. When members start thinking about who they could get on a bill or letter from the other party, they naturally go first to their friends and the people they've worked with before. But if they don't know someone who would be good on that issue, or if their staff don't have a connection they can tap, they'll most likely introduce the bill on their own.

It's hard to make new relationships in any context. But making it easier for members to make these connections and find other members to work with would significantly lower the obstacles to collaboration. Members who have been around for a while often talk about how they all knew each other when everyone lived in DC, making it easier to work together. That doesn't mean it's impossible to form relationships now, it just has to be done differently.

One of the most common dynamics in any social network is that mutual friends facilitate connections, which is as true in Congress as in high schools. Members introduce their colleagues to each other all the time. Certainly, a member looking for someone to work with can go to one of their friends and say "hey, do you know anyone I can work with on this idea." But members are busy and bumping into the right person at the right time is far from

guaranteed. Also, this is much easier for more senior members with more connections. But we're looking for ways to make this process easier.

One way to facilitate this sort of connection-making would be through committee staff. If every committee created a designated staff member – ideally non-partisan – whose job it is to be a liaison to the personal offices, they could facilitate these sorts of connections. For example, if you want to find someone in the other party to work with but you don't know who else is interested in an issue, you -- or your staff -- could reach out to the liaison. Ideally, the liaison would connect you with a member on the other side of the aisle who is interested in the issue. Of course, that doesn't guarantee success; the members still have to agree on what the letter would look like but finding someone else who cares about the issue is always a good starting point.

Which brings me to my final point, which is that collaboration breeds collaboration. Members who work together successfully on one issue are more likely to work together on another. Members who have larger personal networks have more opportunities to find someone to work with on a particular issue. They're more likely to know the right person. Collaborating on smaller issues can lead to collaborating on bigger concerns. There are things Congress can do as an institution to make it easier or more rewarding for members to work together, as I've described, but at the end of the day, the easiest thing for an individual member to do is to reach out to someone they might want to work with.