

ESSENCE OF NO LABELS



No Labels is a national movement of Democrats, Republicans and independents dedicated to a new politics of problem solving.

What exactly is this new politics of problem solving?

It's about an attitude more than anything else.

It's about a willingness to sit down with anyone – conservative, liberal and in between – so long as they are willing to work with you to find solutions. And it's about recognizing that having principled and deeply held political beliefs doesn't require an all-or-nothing approach to governance.

When No Labels began in 2010, we didn't have a definitive idea of what the organization and the movement would become.

We knew there were millions of people across the country who were frustrated by the dysfunction in our government and who felt they did not have a voice in our political process. And we knew somehow we had to organize this feeling into a coherent national movement that could start to fix our government and secure a stronger future for America.

But we'd have to figure out how as we went along – talking to people on Capitol Hill, leaders in state and local government and members of the business and nonprofit communities; and poring through polling data and historical research – to identify the root causes of our government's problems and what No Labels could do about them.

This led us to develop reform plans to fix the dysfunction in our Congress and throughout the federal government and to build a first-of-its-kind bipartisan group of problem solvers on Capitol Hill.

When No Labels started talking to members of Congress, we were shocked to find that many members hardly knew their colleagues from the other party. They barely talked with one another, let alone worked together. So No Labels began building a new problem-solvers group, which eventually featured more than 90 members – including roughly equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans – meeting regularly to build trust across the aisle.

These early trust-building sessions eventually helped to facilitate the writing and bipartisan co-sponsorship of 17 different bills in Congress.

In August 2014, two early members of No Labels problem-solvers group – Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader and Republican Rep. Reid Ribble – deepened member commitment to what No Labels began by starting and co-chairing the official Problem Solvers Caucus, which is a first-of-its-kind congressional member organization.

In 2013, No Labels also saw No Budget, No Pay – the signature reform idea from our *Make Congress Work!* plan – become law.

No Labels has been working for three years to build the infrastructure for bringing people together from across the political spectrum. Now, we have launched our most ambitious undertaking yet with our campaign for a *National Strategic Agenda*.

This will be an unprecedented effort – one that is essential for the near- and long-term future of our country. We always hear our leaders say they want to unite the country, but no one ever tells us how.

The *National Strategic Agenda* is the how.

No Labels is calling for America's leaders to support a new governing process and build a *National Strategic Agenda* centered on four goals. These goals – chosen with input from a nationwide survey that No Labels conducted last fall – are:

- Create 25 million new jobs over the next 10 years
- Secure Medicare and Social Security for another 75 years
- Balance the federal budget by 2030
- Make America energy secure by 2024

The *National Strategic Agenda* will be created with input from members of Congress, state and local leaders and regular citizens at No Labels sponsored Ideas Meetings in Washington D.C., New Hampshire, Iowa and elsewhere. These meetings will enable No Labels to take the pulse of people nationwide and to ultimately forge agreement on a full policy plan to achieve the goals of the *National Strategic Agenda*.

The completed *National Strategic Agenda* will be unveiled in New Hampshire and Iowa on October 5, 2015 just as the presidential election campaign season is ramping up.

No Labels will work to inject the agenda into the presidential debate by activating its network of citizens, members of Congress, and state and local leaders across America. No Labels' ultimate goal is for the next president and the next Congress to use the *National Strategic Agenda* as a framework for bipartisan action.

When you look at Washington today, it's hard to escape the conclusion that it is defined by all tactics, and no strategy.

Everything is about winning the next news cycle or the next election. What about winning the future for the country?

There needs to be a new paradigm for decision-making in our government. One that begins with agreement on big goals and progresses to agreement on key facts and the principles and policies that will be part of the solution.

That's what the *National Strategic Agenda* is all about.

Although the *National Strategic Agenda* process is certainly a new approach to governance in contemporary Washington, it is a tried-and-true approach to problem solving.

The process of uniting around big goals, and progressing to agreement on key principles and policies worked for leaders like Republican President Ronald Reagan and Democratic House Speaker Tip O'Neill when they brought their parties together to fix the tax code, Social Security and foreign trade issues. And it worked for Democratic President Bill Clinton and Republican House Speaker Newt Gingrich when they did the same to balance the budget.

The same process can work for the next president and the next Congress, if they embrace the *National Strategic Agenda*.

It's up to us – the American people – to show our elected leaders the way and to ensure that they hear this call for a *National Strategic Agenda* loud and clear.

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