



Reclaiming the Politics of the Possible

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Note: this Op-Ed will be featured in the October 15 edition of The Fulcrum.

Washington is stuck in a cycle of performative conflict. The incentives seem to reward outrage, not outcomes; purity tests, not problem-solving. So it's no surprise that after three shutdowns in less than a year, public approval of Congress collapsed to a record-low of 10 percent this spring. (Gallup, April 2026.) But the country we live in — where middle-income families are experiencing persistent financial strain and businesses are navigating unprecedented technological upheaval — cannot be governed by theatrics. Breaking free of Kabuki politics requires moderation, consensus-building, and a cooperative approach to governance.

This is not a call for centrism as an ideology. Instead, this is a call for transformative leaders to embrace moderation as their governing strategy, recognizing that in a pluralistic country of nearly 350 million people durable solutions require broad and stable alliances. Ultimately, this is a call for the 240 million of us who are eligible to vote in November to elect consensus-builders instead of bomb-throwers. Please let us not squander this opportunity.

The Cost of Governing by Extremes

The consequences of zero-sum politics are no longer abstract. They show up in the daily dysfunction of our federal government.

When Congress is locked in partisan trench warfare, even routine responsibilities become crises. Budgeting devolves into brinkmanship. Oversight becomes a weapon, not a safeguard. States are left guessing (or suing) about how to implement federal programs. And businesses and households face policy whiplash every two years.

This is not sustainable, nor is it what voters want. Nine in ten Americans say compromise is crucial to getting anything done; only fifteen percent think fighting for their values matters more than actually finding a solution. (Walton Family Fdn., Nov. 2023.)

Moderation Is a Method

Moderation is often caricatured as mushy centrism — a bland midpoint between two poles. But in governance, moderation is something else entirely. It is a pragmatic operating system for our politically diverse republic.

Moderation means building coalitions broad enough to survive changes in political power. It means crafting federal policies that states with different political cultures can actually implement. It means acknowledging that no party has a monopoly on good ideas — and that the best solutions frequently emerge from negotiation rather than unilateral action.

In poll after poll Americans prefer practical, incremental, cross-partisan solutions. (Gallup, March 2026; Morning Consult/Next American Era, July 2026.) We want leaders who can disagree without dismantling institutions, and who can legislate without turning every issue into a referendum on national identity.

But there is a catch, and it helps explain why gridlock persists: most voters want *the other side* to bend more than their own. In one recent Pew Research Center survey, roughly three-quarters of both Democrats and Republicans said it was very important for the *opposing* party's leaders to compromise. However, fewer than half said the same about their own party's leaders. (Pew, Oct. 2025.) Genuine moderation asks something harder: holding one's own side to the same standard expected of the other.

Consensus-Building Is Not Naïve — It's Necessary

In other sectors, structured cooperation is recognized as essential. Corporations and universities depend on interdepartmental teams. Local governments (which provide the vast majority of government services in the US) necessarily coordinate across their various agencies and with neighboring jurisdictions. These systems work because they are built on defined roles, transparent processes, mutual respect, and accountability.

Congress, by design, requires even more collaboration. The framers created a system that forces negotiation through federalism, bicameralism, and checks and balances. So when certain lawmakers denounce compromise as “weakness” they are actually disparaging one of the overarching objectives of our nation's Constitution.

The House's Problem Solvers Caucus is proof that (thankfully) there are still some consensus-builders in Congress: several dozen Democrats and Republicans, in equal numbers, are bound by a promise requiring broad support from both parties before the group will endorse any bill. The Problem Solvers played a pivotal role in negotiating and passing the bipartisan infrastructure law, the CHIPS and Science Act, and the 2023 debt-ceiling deal.

The Politics of the Possible

The challenges ahead — like economic shifts, energy security, climate resilience, Social Security solvency, and our ballooning national debt — cannot be solved by one party alone. They require political leaders who are willing to work across fault lines, resist the gravitational pull of extremes, and restore both houses of Congress to their intended roles as deliberative bodies that thrive on collegiality and efficacy.

If we want a government capable of solving real problems, we must select leaders who recognize the need for cooperation as a feature – not a bug – in the operating system the founders crafted 250 years ago; who understand that principles actually get translated to policy through coordination, not combat. This is the politics of the possible. The founders built a sophisticated and “future-proof” operating system – now it's up to us to run it.