
NO LABELS AND THE NEW CENTER

The “Center” has become a dirty word in American politics.

But the center has historically been the only place where durable change can actually happen; where people of good faith and strong principles can come together and battle over ideas while understanding that to govern is to compromise.

If the center can't hold in America, then we don't really have a democracy as much as warring factions fighting endlessly to dominate one another.

No Labels is the voice for a vital New Center in American politics.

No Labels has previously articulated four goals for the nation through our *National Strategic Agenda*. That sets a vision for where our nation needs to go. But how we get there must be guided by a series of core values and behaviors that define the New Center.

The values —Opportunity, Security, Accountability, and Ingenuity—can respond to the challenges of the present and chart a path to the future, while providing citizens and political leaders with a framework for evaluating policy.

But the New Center is about more than just what we believe. It's also about how we behave.

America's Founders are often venerated for their rock-ribbed principles. Less discussed, but no less important, was their belief in the virtues of compromise and their refusal to let perfect be the enemy of the good.

Some of the most lasting and noble accomplishments of American government were products of principled compromise. This is a lesson that must be relearned by leaders in our modern era—where the temptation to govern by

executive order or party-line legislating frequently leads to disastrous and unintended consequences.

Adherents of the New Center include liberals, conservatives and everyone in between. But true leaders must be willing to come to the center when that's what it takes to pass bills and make decisions that improve the lives of the American people. This is what No Labels expects from an emerging Problem Solvers Caucus, which features dozens of House Democrats and Republicans, as well as Senators focused on finding areas of bipartisan agreement early next year.

The New Center is one that does not split the difference between Left and Right but offers a principled alternative to both and it is an idea whose time has come, as evidenced by the recent David Brooks [column](#) that announced No Labels as at the vanguard of this New Center.

We do not know what policies a New Center will yield. Nor can we predict what institutional form it will take. But the alternative to a coherent and effective New Center is a degree of public discontent that could end by undermining democratic self-government itself.

For the sake of liberal democracy and republican self-government, we should take Lincoln's words to heart: “The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.”