

GDP. There is no set of circumstances where revenue will ever match spending, Mr. Speaker. The President didn't provide that leadership; my friend from Indiana is. That is why I am so proud to be on the floor with you today.

Mr. ROKITA. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE BLUE DOG COALITION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CURBELO of Florida). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, my name is Congressman JIM COSTA from Fresno, California. Since I was first elected over 10 years ago, I have been a member of the Blue Dog caucus. This afternoon, members of the Blue Dog caucus that stretch the width and the breadth of this great country of ours are going to speak about what brings us together, about the passions that they have and the people that they advocate for and why they believe that their efforts at being a constructive and a very positive member of the Blue Dog caucus adds value to their ability to represent their constituencies and to the vision that I think we, as Americans, all share together, which is to make our Congress, to make our representative democracy, a more functioning system. Because clearly today, the American public, in poll after poll after poll, demonstrate their frustration with the inability of the United States Congress to come together and to work on common solutions for our country, solutions that share our common values but also involve the art, the art of the political compromise, too often I believe an art that has become lost here in our Nation's Capital in Washington, D.C.

So among the first of the members of our caucus that will speak is the gentlewoman from Arizona's Ninth District, KYRSTEN SINEMA, a colleague of mine who always is advocating for her constituency in the most positive ways.

Ms. SINEMA. Thank you, Mr. COSTA, and thank you today for organizing this Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important opportunity for us to come together and show how bipartisanship can fix our broken system.

At home in Arizona, I hear from everyone that Washington is broken. There is too much time spent playing political games and too little time spent working together to get things done. Most people are sick and tired of Congress' failing to do its job because of partisan politics. That is why I joined the Blue Dog Coalition, because they prioritize the people they represent more than their party leadership.

Everybody knows that Congress is not working effectively, and the Blue

Dogs are trying to change that. They are focused on ending political polarization, reforming Congress, stopping reckless government spending, and creating economic opportunity for Americans who have been left behind by this recession.

Mr. Speaker, I come to work every single day to get things done for Arizona. I have a proven record of reaching out to members of both political parties to find common ground on issues ranging from jobs and the economy to reducing spending and government waste. As a cofounder of the United Solutions Caucus and a No Labels Problem Solver, I have worked with members of both parties to get things done. At home, Congressman MATT SALMON and I work together to help Arizona veterans get the care they deserve, and I have worked with Congressman MICHAEL McCaul to introduce legislation that puts an end to automatic pay raises for Members of Congress.

Neither party is always right. In fact, both parties are often wrong. It is time for us to listen to each other and work together to grow our economy, help our country's families, and honor our veterans. Recently, we came together to pass bipartisan legislation to prevent veteran suicide and improve access to mental health care and health services for veterans. Just this week, we agreed on legislation to expand college savings plans and make higher education a reality for students and their families. We need more of these kinds of accomplishments in Congress.

In Arizona, the voters established an independent redistricting commission that allows for an open and transparent process and creates competitive districts where neither party has a monopoly. We Blue Dogs have proposed similar reforms to create impartial, fairly drawn districts across the country to cut back on the polarization that cripples our system.

Mr. Speaker, the American people deserve leaders who do whatever it takes to come up with practical, common-sense solutions that help us move forward. It is time for us to focus on areas of common ground and come up with real answers to our country's most pressing problems. So let's put aside the finger pointing and the fighting. Let's roll up our sleeves and get back to work.

Mr. COSTA. I thank the gentlewoman from Arizona.

Mr. Speaker, our next Blue Dog colleague who will speak is a gentleman whom I have served with both in the California State Legislature as well as here in Congress. He and I are good friends. We both represent wonderful parts of California, and he is one of the longer serving members in the Blue Dog caucus, the gentleman from northern California, Congressman MIKE THOMPSON from California's Fifth District.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. I thank the gentleman, and my friend, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, Members, I came down to the floor this afternoon to join my Blue Dog colleagues in calling for all of us in Congress to come together and do the work that we have been asked to do, the work that we have been sent to Washington, sent to Congress to do on behalf of the people that we represent. I came to Congress to get things done, to get things done for the people that I represent, and to get things done for the great country that we are all so privileged to live in and to participate in.

As Mr. COSTA mentioned, he and I served together in the State legislature in California, and I am very proud of the work that we did there. We were able to get a lot of things done. In the time that I was there, the majority of the time, I chaired the Senate Budget Committee. That was one of the reasons why I was so proud to be a Blue Dog, although the common thread that holds all Blue Dogs together is the issue of fiscal responsibility.

In my time in Sacramento chairing the Budget Committee, we always had a balanced budget. Fiscal responsibility was important, and it is equally as important here in Congress. Nobody likes the fact that we have huge deficits or huge debts. We understand that some things are unavoidable, but there has to be an understanding of and an intentional effort on the part of all us to make sure that we are fiscally responsible and that we manage that debt, we manage that deficit, and we bring it down to a level that won't burden our children and our grandchildren in the years to come.

So I was stunned when I came to Congress and found out that it was very, very difficult to get anything done, to get people to work together. As JIM pointed out, I am one of the longer serving Members, so I was stunned a long time ago in what you can probably refer to today as "the good old days," when we were actually able to work together and get things done, but we didn't have a high level of that cooperation even back then.

Last week, I was with the Aspen Institute on a trade conference. Anybody who is familiar with them knows that they are able to bring together a bipartisan and bicameral representation of Congress, Members from the Senate and Members from the House, Democrats and Republicans. They also bring together some of the most famous scholars to talk about whatever the issue of the conference is. I was struck, at this trade conference, when one of the new Members that we serve with, now starting his sophomore term, after the scholars spoke and he was recognized, said: I came to Congress to involve myself in this type of problem solving, when people came together, talked about issues, talked about problems, and talked about solutions. He said: And this is the first time since I have been here that we have been able to engage in that type of dialogue.

That is not right, Members, and we all know that. We are here to work on

the problems that face our great country, and we need to get down and do that work.

Mr. COSTA. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. THOMPSON of California. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. COSTA. I appreciate your explaining your experience in the California Legislature because we not only worked together in a bipartisan fashion, but we also worked together with the lower house and the State senate, because you could never get anything done if you didn't work together with both houses. Of course, that is part of our problem here today.

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman is correct. That is how the legislative process works. You don't just punt something over to the other Chamber and then say, "We have done our job"; because you haven't done your job until the President, in the case of Congress, signs his name on the line making that bill or that job come to fruition, making it the law.

You are right. In the State capitol, we did that. We knew we had to work together because the same piece of legislation had to pass both houses and had to meet there for the Governor's signature in order to become law. The same thing happens here.

I know it can be done. One of the things that I did in some of my earlier years here, Mr. Speaker, is I was successful in getting a wilderness bill passed, a wilderness bill that protected into perpetuity 350,000 acres in my district in California. Wilderness bills have passed before, so that, in itself, was not the biggest thing that has ever happened here. But I am particularly proud because I was in the minority then.

The chair of Natural Resources was Richard Pombo from California, someone whom I consider a friend, although not a political ally. He was not someone who was favorable to approving wilderness legislation. But I worked with him and his committee. He had the bill up in for a markup. We had it on the floor. We passed it. I compromised; he compromised. That bill went through the House. The companion bill went through the Senate, as Mr. COSTA was explaining has to be done, and it went to then-President George W. Bush, who signed it into law.

So it is incongruent with the way we work today. Today you would just start by saying: An unfriendly chairman, an unfriendly President, we can't get anything done. That is just absolutely not true.

If we come together and if we work together, we can find solutions to the problems that we face. There are any number of issues that need to come together and need to be put on this floor for a vote. You can look at immigration reform, tax reform, gun violence prevention, and certainly one that everyone can agree with is an infrastructure bill.

□ 1630

There is not a person that any one of us represents who doesn't know that we need to invest in America's infrastructure—in our roads, in our highways, in our broadband, in our overpasses, in our bridges. And now with the new Panama Canal coming on line and the bigger ships coming into this country, we have huge investments that need to be made in our ports and our harbors. These are investments that not only put Americans to work generating more revenue, but put better jobs and make our economy stronger than it has ever been before.

I submit, Members, that these are things that we can do. As has been said before, the things that bring us together, the things that bring us together as Americans, are far greater than the things that divide us. I will plead, let's get together, let's roll up our sleeves, let's work together on addressing the major issues that face America.

I thank you, Mr. COSTA, for bringing us here today.

Mr. COSTA. I thank the Congressman from California.

Congressman MIKE THOMPSON, I think, expressly indicated why he is a Blue Dog and, over the years, his efforts to bridge the gap, to reach across the aisle, to get something done; because he recognizes, as do all of us Blue Dogs, that the political dysfunction that is occurring here in our Nation's Capital is real. It has measurable costs, and it is preventing our country, sadly, from solving the problems that our constituents send us here to solve, whether it is the economic recovery that could be stronger, whether it is fixing our Nation's deficit, whether it is fixing a broken immigration system, or an array of other issues that are pressing, that are important to the people back home.

The next gentleman who would like to address our Congress is the gentleman from the great State of Illinois, Congressman DAN LIPINSKI, my colleague and classmate from Illinois' Third District.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. COSTA for putting this together today.

The reason I came to Congress, the reason I ran for Congress, was to get things done. I think that is what all our constituents are expecting us to do.

Unfortunately, when I am at home, I am constantly reminded that my constituents are wondering why we don't get more done, what is happening in Washington. When I am shopping at Menards or at Jewel, people come up to me and say: Why can't everyone work together there in Washington?

They know that I have been doing that. That is why I am part of the Blue Dog coalition, because we want to bring people together here in Washington—in the House, the Senate—bring everyone together to work out the many, many problems that our Nation has.

We just had Mr. THOMPSON talking about a transportation bill. Everyone talks about the need to fix our transportation infrastructure. We have roads and bridges that are crumbling. Our public transit also has infrastructure that is crumbling. We all need a good transportation system to get wherever we need to go during the day.

Our Nation, for the sake of having an efficient economy, needs a good transportation system. We can put people to work immediately fixing our transportation system, yet we haven't been able to come together to solve this problem. That is one thing that we need to do, and it is something I think that we can do.

We have just seen all the trouble that we had run into here with the Homeland Security bill, an issue that should be easy. We all want to protect our homeland. We all know the threats that we are facing. And although we may have disagreements on many issues, protecting our Nation is not one of those. Yet, unfortunately, we do run into issues, and we really need to instead focus on what can we work together on and what is possible.

We have a divided government now. It used to be that after an election, everyone would come together, look around and say: Okay. This is who is the majority in the House, the majority in the Senate, who is in the White House. What can we agree upon? How can we work together to solve problems? Where can we find our agreement? Instead, we seem to focus on how our party can get control of everything in the next election. Mr. Speaker, this is not the way that the American people want us to work. They want us to come together.

Now, some of the previous speakers talked about electoral reform and redistricting reform. Those can certainly help. Those are things that we support and that the Blue Dogs are working to get done. But even before we get those things done, we can work together and accomplish great things here. The American people aren't demanding that of us. They are demanding that we change the way that Washington is working right now. That is what the Blue Dogs are doing.

That is the only way we are going to be able to face so many of the problems that we face, including the issue that is really at the heart of the Blue Dogs, has always been, and continues to be: dealing with our fiscal situation. We need to be fiscally responsible. The American people understand this. They know we need to make the tough choices here in Washington to get our fiscal House in order.

The Blue Dogs have always led on that. We continue to lead on that, but it is going to take bipartisan cooperation to get that done because we have a divided government. But we need to do it. We need to take care of these issues. The Blue Dogs continue to work on these things. We really need the support of everyone to come together

here in Washington and across the country to solve these great problems that we have, that we face.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure there are people who may be out there watching this on C-SPAN, and probably a lot of people who are just so happy to finally turn on C-SPAN and hear people talking about working together, not talking about what is wrong with the other side, how I am right and the other side is wrong, but the need to work together. That is what the Blue Dogs are about. That is what it continues to be about, and that is the way that we are going to make America the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth—but a Nation that faces, as we all understand, many issues, many problems, just as our families are facing many issues right now. By working together, we can make our Nation even greater, and only by working together will we get there.

I am very happy to join my Blue Dog colleagues here tonight and every day working to help make America a better place to live. So let us all come together, Mr. Speaker, and work on some of these problems. “Compromise,” I know, sometimes is a dirty word. You don’t have to give up your principles to compromise. Stick to your principles, but compromise. Get done what we can get done, and make this Nation a greater place.

I thank my Blue Dog colleagues very much. Thank you, Mr. COSTA, for this. We are going to continue to bring the message to the American people and get things done.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Illinois, my classmate, for his good words. Clearly, I think he speaks on behalf of not only the Blue Dogs, but the majority of Americans who believe that we need to be working together to solve problems, whether it is our budget, our fiscal deficit, or whether it is our transportation system, as the gentleman from Illinois so succinctly pointed out. It can never be “my way or the highway,” because if that is the case, we will never get anything done, as has been witnessed here for the last couple of months. But when we do work together, as the compromised bipartisan vote that we saw this afternoon on Homeland Security, we can get something done.

My next friend and colleague is the gentleman from Georgia, Congressman SANFORD BISHOP, from the Second District. He has distinguished himself over the years and has been a member of not only the Blue Dog caucus, but he represents some of the best parts of Georgia—Fort Benning and agriculture, like I represent.

SANFORD, we are glad to have you here this afternoon to tell us the thoughts of the people of Georgia’s Second District on the terrific job you do on their behalf.

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for putting together this Special Order, and I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said: “Ultimately a genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus.”

Debate is a natural consequence of representative democracy. Gridlock, on the other hand, is not.

Sitting down with those across the aisle is not just an act of placing faith in political or ideological adversaries, but an act of placing faith in our egalitarian democratic system, a system, as it was, founded on the art of creating consensus in order to move forward.

All of us here speaking from the well this hour believe in working together for better government, working for responsible government, working for transparent government. The moderate Blue Dogs are here not only to find common ground between lawmakers, but to forge an understanding of what it is to truly work together.

The Blue Dog Coalition is dedicated to a core set of beliefs that transcend partisan politics. We represent the center of the House of Representatives and appeal to the mainstream values of the American public. The coalition develops substantive proposals and positions distinct from those advocated by the extremes in both parties. Needless to say, we Blue Dogs are less swayed by the leadership of either party and more persuaded by the needs and the concerns of mainstream Americans.

But this is nothing new. Twenty years ago, the Blue Dog Coalition was formed following the 1994 election. Over the past 20 years, many of our proposals have been praised as fair, responsible, and positive additions to a Congressional environment too often marked as partisan and antagonistic.

Throughout those years, the Blue Dogs have been dedicated to solving problems based on five principles of political leadership: tell the truth; govern for the future; put the country first; be responsible; work together.

My job is to represent the interests and the values of the people in my district in middle and southwest Georgia. As a Blue Dog Democrat, I push for commonsense measures that will make government work better for my constituents.

The people of Georgia’s Second Congressional District, like all Americans, deserve a government that puts their needs ahead of partisan politics. We seek to use the legislative process to create a higher, better quality of life for all of our citizens. Eliminating government waste and inefficiency are crucial to achieving this goal.

We work with our colleagues on the right and the left, on both sides of the aisle, to pass commonsense reforms that will make government work for the people of our great Nation. As Members of Congress, it is our responsibility to ensure that government works for the American people.

I am committed to working together with my colleagues to pass legislation that eliminates Federal waste and inefficiency. If we can do this, it will give

us a better chance at getting things done. That is how we rebuild trust with the American people, by showing them that we are doing the job we were sent here to do.

Today, many folks might suppose that bipartisanship is dead. The Blue Dogs have been here and are still here to say that it is not dead. We are committed to working—not to finger point, not to fight, but to fix. I believe that problem solving together across both sides of the aisle we can make that happen.

So I am delighted that my colleague, Mr. COSTA, and my colleagues from the Blue Dog Coalition have come together with this Special Order so that we can say to each other, say to the American people, that we cry out for a government that will work for the people to get the needs, the common goals, the common hopes, and their common aspirations addressed.

We may have differences, but we have more similarities than we have differences. If we find those common denominators of experience that combine us, we can get the job done for the American people.

I thank you for this time.

□ 1645

Mr. COSTA. Congressman BISHOP, my friend, I could not have said it better: for the people and by the people.

Mr. Speaker, for those who are watching on C-SPAN this afternoon, we welcome your input, and we welcome your comments. For those of you who are interested, please sign onto our Web site, which is www.bluedog.schrader.house.gov, as a way by which you can communicate with us. We all have our Web sites. Obviously, not only our constituents from our respective districts but people from throughout the country, we would urge you to weigh in. Let us know how you feel, which is an appropriate segue for our next speaker.

The Blue Dogs every 2 years select three leaders to represent them and to organize our agenda. We have a policy individual who will be speaking in a moment, Congressman JIM COOPER. We have the communications director, which is the position I serve, and then we have our chairperson. Our chairperson is a gentleman whom I have the honor and privilege to serve with. He is my friend, and he is doing an excellent job, the gentleman from Oregon’s Fifth District, Representative KURT SCHRADER.

Mr. SCHRADER. Thank you very, very much. I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from California, for hosting this particular Special Order.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for America to realize that we all don’t hate one another. We actually get along pretty well on a personal level, and there are those of us on both sides of the aisle who want to work together to solve our country’s problems. You have heard a little bit about that already.

I think, at this time, more than ever, it is important for Congress to come together. The little debate we had last week or a week and a half ago on the Department of Homeland Security, I think, drives that point home. Often-times, within families, there are disagreements. Whether it is a Republican family or a Democratic family, we are not going to agree on all of the issues all of the time. That doesn't make one side wrong and the other side right. What it does mean is there is an honest difference of opinion. In the way our forefathers set the system up, we are supposed to work through that. There are checks and balances. No one party, no one Chamber, no one individual is supposed to have ultimate veto over the rights of everyday, Main Street Americans.

What we in the Blue Dog Coalition try to do is to bridge those differences, to provide a forum to find ways to agree, not to disagree with the other team. As for the Homeland Security bill, whatever you think about some of the attachments to the bill or about some of the actions by the President of the United States, it is important to fund Homeland Security more now than ever. With the stuff that has gone on overseas that could possibly threaten our own shores, it makes it imperative that we work together. I am actually proud, despite the sausage-making look of it in the media and, perhaps, to a lot of Americans, that there were Republicans and Democrats who came together to solve that problem.

We will live to fight another day on immigration reform and on some of the other issues which we have genuine, legitimate differences of opinion on, but it should not be lost on the American people that it was Democrats and Republicans coming together to solve a very basic problem that our Congress and Nation are charged to solve, which is to provide for the security of the American people.

The Blue Dogs have been doing this for years. You heard of our inception after the 1994 elections, when the Blue Dogs felt we were getting choked. We were regular Southern Democrats, if you will, at that time. It has branched out, like Mr. COSTA has indicated, to include the whole country now. Yellow Dog Democrats were getting "choked blue" by their rather liberal leadership that they felt did not respect or, frankly, represent some of their interests, so out of that came the Blue Dogs.

The body has grown and decreased in numbers with every election cycle. There has been a consistent drumbeat, however, for folks like us in moderate districts, not just on the Democratic side, but on the Republican side. We actually have quarterly meetings with a Republican group called the Tuesday Group, where we try and get together and share ideas about things we can work together on—not in opposition to but work together on. Boy, I wish leadership would work in that same vein. We would be a lot better off.

Mr. COSTA. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SCHRADER. I yield to the gentleman from California.

Mr. COSTA. We have talked a lot about this among our fellow Blue Dogs, but I think the point that you raise there is worth repeating because, frankly, I think there are a lot of Members on both sides of the aisle who, if they had the opportunity, would like to figure out how they could work together. I know, as the chair of the Blue Dog Caucus, it is your desire to reach out and continue to make that effort. I just want to applaud you for that.

I also want to ask: Are there other ways in which constituents can make their Congresspeople feel more comfortable about doing that? With this notion of "it is my way or the highway," I think the majority of my constituents wonder what is going on there. I mean, "What are you folks thinking in Washington? because that is not the way we do it at home."

Mr. SCHRADER. In reclaiming my time, I totally agree with the gentleman from California.

I think, sometimes, there is that bubble we operate under here in Washington, D.C., and we forget that the people back home, frankly, are sometimes not watching C-SPAN. They are busy trying to put food on their tables, seeing if their kids can get great educations. Frankly, in recent times, they are just trying to keep their bloody jobs. So I think it is important for us to relate to the people who are paying our salaries. This is their Chamber—this is their building—not a bubble of Washington, D.C., types. It is important for us to sit down and represent what they are talking about.

When I went home in this last election cycle and, frankly, in every election cycle, the big issue for Americans in the Congressional Fifth District in the great State of Oregon—the Willamette Valley-central Oregon coast—is not any one issue. It is: "Will you please work together?" This is complicated stuff—some of these bills are pretty darned complicated—but I think everyday Americans understand. "Okay. That is why I hired you. Work it out. Figure it out." To their credit, they don't give me a lot of room for excuses.

"Well, gee. I am not in the majority. I don't control it."

"Kurt, I elected you. I want you to figure out a way of how to work with folks."

We can do that. The farm bill in the last Congress was a classic example of how we actually worked together, Republicans and Democrats. You could not tell a Democrat or a Republican based on what they were talking about, because they were representing different districts, different geographies around this country, lobbying hard for their farming interests or nutritional programs that they felt passionately about. That is the way Congress is supposed to work. That is what the Blue

Dog Coalition is all about—building those relationships.

If you have noticed in the 114th Congress, in the first 2 months, while DHS, the Affordable Care Act, and sometimes choice or abortion have gotten a lot of the headlines from the media, I would urge you to look at the votes for the big, important bills that have come forward. There are a number of bills that leadership—and I give the Republican leadership credit for this—brought forward that moderate Democrats had voted for in past Congresses or had expressed interest in, and they got overwhelming and sometimes significant Democrat support. That is not talked about by the media, folks.

You have got to realize that there are many opportunities like that that go below the radar screen. It may not be the sexiest topic in the world, but it is stuff like making sure the Affordable Care Act works, making sure that small businesses are able to function properly, making sure that the Dodd-Frank financial reform actually is workable and respects the interests of the different members of the community out there, even the Keystone vote. I mean, we have to be thoughtful about it, and Democrats and Republicans need to work together and find areas they can agree on. We have tried to do that time and again. It is the heartbeat of the Blue Dog Coalition.

Basically, what we are standing for, as you have heard, is fiscal reform and fiscal responsibility. It has been a hallmark of the Blue Dogs over the last 20 years. We are generally a government efficiency organization. We believe government is not evil, but it could sure work a heck of a lot better. Every one of the folks out there in America understands that some government rule is making a problem for them, and it shouldn't have to happen. We as Blue Dogs try and cut through that government regulation.

We are also business friendly. Yes, Democrats can be business friendly, believe it or not. They are called "Blue Dogs." There is another group called New Democrats. There is another group growing outside this that wants to include all Americans, which is called No Labels. Most Blue Dogs are, frankly, members of No Labels. There is another group that works together, Democrats and Republicans. Yes, folks. There are a lot of different people in this Congress who are very interested in trying to work together to make your Congress work and deal with your lunch bucket issues that mean the most to you—job creation, educational reform, infrastructure—as was alluded to. These are values, I think, every American holds dear, and those are the issues we should be working on.

Senator Lieberman said at one point that it is kind of ironic that everyone is interested in bipartisanship, but if you don't agree with somebody 100 percent of the time, you don't agree with them any of the time. The real world is: life is complicated, and you are

going to have times when you agree and times when you disagree. One of the basic axioms of politics is: you don't have enemies or friends; you have allies and adversaries at the end of the day because issues change over time, and you will find that the ebb and flow of interests will conflate with party, geography—all of those issues.

The Blue Dog Coalition is dedicated to trying to bring people together across this country—Republicans and Democrats, business interests, individuals—trying to make your government more responsible and more efficient with electoral reform, congressional reform, getting back in this great, august Chamber to regular order—to where your interests are represented through the committees, through the elected Representatives you have. That is what is important here, and that binds Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives and moderates, like us. That is the hallmark of the Blue Dog Coalition.

I won't belabor the point. I thank the gentleman for bringing us to the floor here. I think it is important for America to be a little inspired that there are people who care about this country, who cut through the partisan politics and even go against our respective leaderships to try and solve the problems you want us to solve. I think, at the end of the day, that is where America is. To get back to a greatness, which was alluded to before, it is going to require more members of the Blue Dog Coalition and of the Tuesday Group on the other side of the aisle to be elected to Congress and hope America gets mad as hell and starts to hold their Members accountable for working together and making America great again.

Mr. COSTA. I want to thank the gentleman from Oregon for his leadership as the chair of the Blue Dog Coalition.

Your efforts to reach out to the Tuesday Group and to the No Labels Caucus and your efforts to take difficult positions and cast hard votes, I think, are all examples of political profiles in courage, and we commend you for your leadership and your efforts.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1029, EPA SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD REFORM ACT OF 2015, AND PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1030, SECRET SCIENCE REFORM ACT OF 2015

Mr. BURGESS, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 114-37) on the resolution (H. Res. 138) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1029) to amend the Environmental Research, Development, and Demonstration Authorization Act of 1978 to provide for Scientific Advisory Board member qualifications, public participation, and for other purposes, and providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1030) to prohibit the Environ-

mental Protection Agency from proposing, finalizing, or disseminating regulations or assessments based upon science that is not transparent or reproducible, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, the next Blue Dog Coalition member who will speak is one of our newest members. He hails from the great State of Nebraska, and we are honored to have him as one of our newest members of the Blue Dog Coalition. He is BRAD ASHFORD from Nebraska's Second District. A lot of agriculture and a lot of good people Congressman BRAD ASHFORD has the opportunity to represent, and we appreciate the fact that he is here.

Mr. ASHFORD. Thank you, Mr. COSTA. I am privileged to have the opportunity to speak today.

Mr. Speaker, you mentioned, just briefly, the concept of "Profiles of Courage." John Kennedy, in writing that book, wrote about a great Nebraskan, George Norris. George Norris was a Senator from Nebraska, and prior to that time, he served in this House. In 1908, he led a bipartisan effort in the House to change the rules of the House in order to make the House more transparent and more accountable to the American people.

□ 1700

In that regard, in John Kennedy's book he wrote about Congressman Norris, and then, subsequently, Senator Norris. In the 1930s, Senator Norris, who had worked to create the Tennessee Valley Authority, worked across the aisle with FDR—he was a Republican—to pass the Rural Electrification Act that electrified the country. He did so working across the aisle.

And in the 1930s—and 1934, specifically—he reached out to the people of Nebraska and said to them: We can do better. We can have a more transparent government. We can have a bipartisan, nonpartisan government that will address the tough issues of Nebraska in the Depression of the 1930s. And he recommended to the voters: Look, let's do this. Let's have a unicameral, nonpartisan legislature.

And the lobbyists and the special interests said: George, you should go back to Washington. This isn't going to work in Nebraska.

Well, the voters of Nebraska, in 1934, voted for a unicameral, nonpartisan legislature, and I am proud to say that we have such a legislature today.

I am so proud and honored to be here. There was a discussion earlier by prior speakers about relationships. And what is so interesting to me and amazing to me—not amazing, really, but gratifying—are those relationships, are the relationships that I have been able to achieve through my association with the Blue Dogs and relationships with Republicans and Democrats alike. It is very, very gratifying that that exists. That is what I am used to in Nebraska.

When I first arrived here, I went to a Democratic Caucus. I served in the Ne-

braska unicameral legislature for 16 years. I never went to a caucus in my life. I didn't really know exactly what a Democrat or Republican really was. I suppose I would have to look, but of the 49 members of the Nebraska Legislature, I would have to think long and hard about what party they belonged to.

And in the 16 years that I served there, we had many tough issues. In fact, one of the toughest issues we had in the State was the pipeline issue, and that was referenced earlier—the Trans-Canada pipeline. Well, it goes through Nebraska. As originally routed, it would have gone through some of the most sensitive areas of our State, the Sandhills area and the Ogallala Aquifer.

We spent a year together, the 49 of us. Not every day. We would kill each other if we spent every day together, but we spent a lot of time. At the end of the day, we came up with a process to reroute the TransCanada pipeline to move it away from the most sensitive parties of the Ogallala Aquifer. We did it with a vote of 49-0, environmentalists and those on the other side of the issue coming together to pass a routing bill.

So the idea that George Norris had was, number one, be transparent. Let the people of Nebraska know exactly what you are doing.

What is interesting about the 16 years that I was there—and, quite frankly, if you do count Republicans and Democrats in the unicameral legislature, you will find that there are a lot more Republicans, traditionally, than there are Democrats, at least during the 16 years I was there, and I don't think that at any time I was there, any year, any legislative session I was there, that there were not an equal number of committee chairs that were Republican and Democrat. There was nothing magic about that. It was just the way we balanced things out in our State. We did it and do it intuitively. We do it intuitively.

I don't suggest that we are going to decide tomorrow or even next year or 10 years from now to have a unicameral, bipartisan, nonpartisan legislature, but the lessons that I learned there are the lessons that I have brought here. And when I had the opportunity, Mr. COSTA, to meet the Blue Dogs, it reminded me of home. It reminded me of the Nebraska Legislature and the idea that Republicans and Democrats make that decision for themselves.

But as my good friend and former Senator from Nebraska Ed Zorinsky used to say, there are no Republican Senators or Democratic Senators. There are only American Senators, U.S. Senators. It is in the water in Nebraska. That is how we think. That is how we are. And what is great about this place is those same relationships, those same committed people are there to make those kinds of relationships work in a bipartisan way. We have heard examples of that today.