The Lugar Center and Georgetown University’s McCourt School Unveil 2016 Bipartisan Index Rankings for All Members of Congress

Sen. Collins and Rep. King top Index; Bipartisanship has improved
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WASHINGTON, DC — The Lugar Center, led by former U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, and the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University today jointly released their new Bipartisan Index rankings of all members of Congress, completing the picture of the 114th Congress (2015-2016). The non-partisan tool indicates the degree to which Senators and Representatives work across party lines.

“Despite the highly charged political environment of the past several years, Congressional bipartisanship did improve in the 114th Congress as compared to the 113th Congress,” said Lugar Center President Richard G. Lugar, who served for 36 years as a Republican senator from Indiana. “The Index shows that many senators and representatives raised their scores in the 114th Congress, so we are encouraged to see that even many lawmakers with strong ideological positions have found more common ground with their colleagues across the aisle. Cooperative efforts to address real challenges is what the American people want to see from their leaders, and we are hopeful it will be a growing trend during the 115th Congress.”

The rankings of the 114th Congress are based on bill sponsorship and co-sponsorship. They are directly comparable to the data for the 113th Congress (2013-14), which was one of the most partisan of the past 20 years, and provide historical context for the increased partisanship in Congress over the past two decades. According to the new figures, 61 senators improved their Index scores, while 23 fared worse. In the House, 212 members had higher scores for the 114th Congress than the 113th, while 139 had lower ones.
“Good policy requires effective politics,” said Edward Montgomery, dean of the McCourt School. “We are never going to solve the policy challenges we face without cooperation between our political parties. We are encouraged to see more members of Congress reaching out to work with those across the aisle.”

The new data allows voters to see over time how willing their senators and representatives have been to work across party lines. Based on the scores, Senator Susan Collins (R, Me.) was the most bipartisan senator and Rep. Pete King (R, NY) was the most bipartisan representative. This is the second Congress in a row in which Senator Collins finished with the top Senate score. Rep. King was second among all House members in the previous Congress.

For the Senate in the 114th, 45 senators were above zero, and therefore judged to be “bipartisan,” meaning they scored better than the average senator in their circumstances during the 20-year baseline period (1993-2013). Fifty-three senators scored below zero. This is an improvement from the 113th when 36 senators scored above 0.00 and 62 scored below it.

The House also improved, though not by as much. In the House in the 114th, 152 members were above 0.00, and 275 were below 0.00. This compares to 142 above 0.00 and 280 below 0.00 in the 113th.

The Bipartisan Index measures how often a member of Congress introduced bills that succeed in attracting co-sponsors from members of the other party, and how often they in turn co-sponsor a bill introduced from across the aisle. The Index is based on a formula applied uniformly to all members. No subjective judgments are made about individual members or bills. The Index serves as a critical resource for voters and the media and, its sponsors hope, encourages lawmakers to be more bipartisan when writing or co-sponsoring legislation.

The scores released today update interim scores released last year for the calendar year 2015, the first session of the 114th Congress. Bipartisan Index scores tend to rise modestly during the second year of a Congress due to Index components that benefit from the accumulation of bipartisan bills and co-sponsorships. Therefore, the scores for the entire 114th Congress will tend to beat those of the first session.

To see current and previous Bipartisan Index rankings, click here.

About the Lugar Center:

Under the leadership of former U.S. Senator Richard Lugar, the non-profit Lugar Center is a platform for informed debate and analysis of global issues, including nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, global food security, foreign assistance effectiveness and global development, energy security, and enhancing bipartisan governance. http://www.thelugarcenter.org
About the McCourt School of Public Policy:

Founded in 1996 as the Georgetown Public Policy Institute, the McCourt School of Public Policy at Georgetown University is a top-ranked graduate school located at the center of the policy world in Washington, D.C. Our mission is to give our students the rigorous quantitative and analytic skills needed to design, implement and evaluate smart policies and to conduct policy research and recommend effective solutions on today’s most critical topics. http://mccourt.georgetown.edu