The Lugar Center and Georgetown University’s McCourt School Unveil New Bipartisan Index Rankings of All U.S. Senators

December 6, 2017

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 updated lifetime Bipartisan Index rankings of U.S. Senators who have served in Congress since 1993. The non-partisan tool indicates the degree to which Senators work across party lines.

“This updated data gives voters and historians, alike, a clearer picture of how the Senate has evolved towards greater partisanship and dysfunction in recent years,” said Lugar Center President Richard G. Lugar, who served for 36 years as a Republican Senator from Indiana. “But the positive scores of many Senators with strong ideological views underscore that individual lawmakers can break through the overall partisan trend to work for the good of the country.”

The rankings, based on bill sponsorship and co-sponsorship data, update the original lifetime Senate scores released in December 2015. The new rankings incorporate results from the 114th Congress (2015-2016) into the lifetime rankings. The list covers 240 Senators who served at least 10 months between 1993 and 2016.

“Our country is facing significant political and policy challenges—challenges that require lawmakers to work together,” said Michael A. Bailey, interim dean of the McCourt School. “We hope the Bipartisan Index encourages them to cross the aisle more often to get things done on behalf of their constituents.”

The new data allow voters to see how willing their Senators have been to work across party lines over time. In the updated rankings, former Sen. Lincoln Chafee (R, R.I.) maintained his status as the most bipartisan Senator of the past 24 years. Sen. Joe Donnelly (D, IN), Sen. Susan Collins (R, ME), former Sen. Olympia Snowe (R, ME), and former Senator Sam Nunn (D, GA) rounded out the top five.

At the bottom of the list, former Sen. Jim DeMint (R, S.C.) continued to occupy the last spot (240th) in the Index. Sen. Ted Cruz (R, TX), former Senator Roland Burris (D, IL), Sen. Mike Lee (R, UT), and Sen. Bernie Sanders (D, VT) rounded out the group of five least bipartisan Senators.
The Bipartisan Index continues to show that the last three Congresses have been the most partisan of the twelve covered by the Index. Seventeen of the 25 most partisan Senators on the index served in the 114th Congress. In contrast, just six of the twenty-five most bipartisan Senators served in that Congress.

The Bipartisan Index measures how often a member of Congress introduces 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 is intended to serve as a critical resource for voters and the media and to encourage lawmakers to be more bipartisan when writing or co-sponsoring legislation.

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