

Support for the Building Civic Bridges Act

“The Building Civic Bridges Act invites us to truly engage with one another as fellow Americans. This is a time to build bridges, not barriers,” **said Eboo Patel, Founder & President of Interfaith America.** “By empowering local leaders to expand trust and deepen relationships within our communities, we can focus on that which unites us, rather than the issues that pull us apart. I commend the co-sponsors for the moral imagination behind this bill and welcome the opportunity to ensure that local bridgebuilding efforts flourish in our country.”

David Eisner, CEO of Convergence Center for Policy Resolution, said, “Thank you and congratulations to Senators Coons and Sasse for bringing needed bipartisan attention to the cause of supporting bridge-building across America’s difficult divides. People of goodwill in cities across America are tired of divisiveness and dysfunction, and this bill offers them a ray of hope that there are pathways for us to come together in our local communities and find solutions to our common challenges.”

“One of the urgent challenges facing our nation is the rise in hyper-partisanship and the political polarization of so many aspects of our lives—a dynamic that is often manipulated and exploited by violent extremists seeking to disrupt our democratic institutions. We are pleased to support the Building Civic Bridges Act, which offers a creative and forward-thinking approach to bridging partisan divides and strengthening civic engagement in local communities across the country,” **said Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and National Director, ADL**

“Whether at protest rallies or on social media, Americans have become adept at criticizing each other, often twisting the truth in the process. But we have allowed our skills of respectful listening and building bridges across differences to atrophy. We urgently need initiatives that bring us together, not around a lowest common denominator, but around the intersection of our deepest convictions,” **said Galen Carey, Vice President of Government Relations for the National Association of Evangelicals**

“The U.S. Chamber of Commerce supports the Building Civic Bridges Act and thanks the co-sponsors for crafting this important bill to help local communities foster civic discourse to address shared challenges. We believe this bill would provide important tools to leaders in America address many challenges. The Chamber supports this legislation,” **said Neil L. Bradley, Executive Vice President, Chief Policy Officer, and Head of Strategic Advocacy for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

“These days it seems nearly impossible to find areas where Americans from both parties can agree. AmeriCorps is that exception. It brings us together as a community and helps us find common ground as a country. So, it is only fitting that an Office of Civic Bridgebuilding should reside within the AmeriCorps agency,” **said AnnMaura Connolly, President of Voices for National Service.** “We’re grateful to the bipartisan House and Senate leaders who have come together around this legislation with a goal of building relationships across lines of difference through service.”

“Recent polling by the Harvard Kennedy School’s Institute of Politics shows that over half of young Americans feel democracy in this country is under threat – and over a third think they may see a civil war within their lifetimes. It should be a wakeup call to all of us,” **John Bridgeland, Vice Chairman, Service Year Alliance & Former Director, White House Domestic Policy Council under President George W. Bush.** “Right now, we must take action to reverse these trends and mend some of the fault lines that have opened in our society. That’s why Congress should pass the Building Civic Bridges Act and help support the civic organizations already working to bridge partisan divides.”

“CCCU institutions stand united in their commitment to advancing faith and intellect for the common good in communities across the nation,” says **Shirley Hoogstra, President of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.** “The Building Civic Bridges Act encourages all Americans to focus on the things that unite us, not the things that divide us – a critical priority in such a polarized time. Our core values call upon us to be positive contributors in the public square even as we maintain our distinctive religious convictions. Opportunities like those supported by the Building Civic Bridges Act invite CCCU institutions to put those values into action and connect American citizens across ideological and cultural divides.”

“The Y has long served as a community convener that brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds and is a leader in youth civic engagement. The programs established by the Building Civic Bridges Act will support those existing efforts and help empower young leaders with the skills and tools to facilitate meaningful discussions between people that have differing perspectives and find common ground that helps strengthen our communities. A focus on civic bridge-building is needed now, more than ever. We are grateful to Senators Coons and Sasse for recognizing the need and taking action,” says **Neal Denton, Senior Vice President and Chief Government Affairs Officer, YMCA of the USA.**

“Polarization is one of the greatest threats to our democracy today. Yet, in communities across America, faith and civic leaders have created a groundswell of momentum to bridge the political, social, and economic divisions between us. American civil society is a silent strength of our democracy,” said **Zeenat Rahman, Executive Director of the University of Chicago Institute of Politics.** “I applaud the co-sponsors of the Building Civic Bridges Act for their work to provide federal support to help bolster these critical efforts.”

“Increasing polarization across lines of partisanship, religion, race, and geography is causing deep rifts in the fabric of American society. National service has long been a critical tool to address toxic social divisions, bringing together young Americans from different communities to solve local problems, build shared understanding, and foster civic renewal,” said **Kristen Bennett, Chief Strategy Officer and interim co-CEO of Service Year Alliance.** “We are grateful to Senators Coons and Sasse for introducing this bipartisan legislation which will build the capacity of national service to support local bridge building efforts, by providing grant funding to support civic resilience programming efforts through AmeriCorps and supporting bridge building training for AmeriCorps members. Service Year Alliance is thrilled to support this effort to knit a stronger and more resilient civic fabric and restore societal trust.”

“Young people believe in the power of inclusivity,” said **Layla Zaidane, President & CEO of the Millennial Action Project (MAP)**. “By investing in the skills and programs which enable more inclusive communities, the Building Civic Bridges Act translates this idea into action. It is a direct solution to the toxic polarization that threatens the future of our country, and builds upon the innovative ways young people have already connected across divides. We look forward to seeing this legislation, introduced in the House by MAP Future Caucus member Rep. Kilmer, have its day in the U.S. Senate.”

“Toxic polarization - the way we demonize each other across differences - is a grave threat to our families, communities and country. The resulting personal pain and national fear is increasing by the day,” said **Pearce Godwin, Founder of Listen First Project and the #ListenFirst Coalition of 400+ organizations bringing Americans together across differences**. “I’m grateful that Senators Coons and Sasse are addressing this urgent crisis with meaningful action as this bill would turbocharge the bridging movement already powered by hundreds of organizations coast to coast who are committed to a future in which we honor difference without disunion.”

"Former generals, national security officials, and historians worry that our nation is on the brink of violence. Their warnings serve as a rallying call to the dozens of organizations and millions of Americans who know our disagreements don't have to end this way. Thank you to Senators Coons and Sasse for supporting the critical infrastructure we need to counteract forces of division in our communities and work toward solutions together,” said **Jillian Youngblood, Executive Director of Civic Genius**.

“In our current polarized political environment, opportunities for compassion and collaboration across ideological spectrums seem to be few and far between,” says **Sundria Twyman, Social Policy & Politics Fellow at Third Way**. “Third Way applauds Senator Coons and Senator Sasse for introducing the Building Civic Bridges Act in the Senate. This bipartisan effort aimed at fostering mutual respect through community engagement is an important step towards focusing less on what divides us, and more on what brings us together.”

The **Building Civic Bridges Act** is endorsed by
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of Universities
American Council on Education
America's Service Commissions
Anti-Defamation League
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities
Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Rhode Island
Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts

Association of Vermont Independent Colleges
Bitwise Industries
Bridge Alliance
Business Roundtable
Citizens League
Community Mediation Minnesota
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
Council of Independent Colleges
Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Independent Colleges of Washington
Issue One
Lead for America
Listen First Project
Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Evangelicals
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU)
New Hampshire College & University Council
Nonprofit Association of Washington
North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities
Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution, Minnesota Department of Administration
Oregon Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities
Partnership for American Democracy
Peace through Action USA
Service Year Alliance
Story Powerhouse
Third Way
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Voices for National Service (group/association)
YMCA Pierce/Kitsap
YMCA of the USA
YouthBuild
Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)
National Association of Counties (NACo)

