

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson

“Governing Through Goal Setting: Enhancing the Economic and National Security of America”

<http://1.usa.gov/1G3TDOL>

Good morning and welcome.

I'd like to start off by welcoming back our former committee chairman, Senator Joe Lieberman. I had the privilege of working with Senator Lieberman during his last two years as chairman, and today we welcome him back as a witness.

When I was elected chairman of this committee, I said that our mission would be to enhance the economic and national security of America. In order to solve our nation's problems, it is essential that we first identify, define and prioritize those that threaten the security of the American people. In order to develop a clear vision of success, we must first identify the realities that this country faces.

Creating jobs, securing Social Security and Medicare, balancing the federal budget, and achieving energy security — these goals are common sense. Solving just one of these problems will make a world of difference to millions of Americans.

As someone who spent over 30 years as a manufacturer in the private sector, I understand the challenges of running a business in America. I learned many lessons over my career. One of those lessons is that after identifying a problem, you need to set achievable, realistic goals to make incremental steps toward solving the problem. That is why I am excited to see two witnesses from the private sector with us today to discuss how this works in the real world.

When tackling the challenges of the business world, I can tell you that it is undoubtedly more effective to reach across the table and seek common ground. When you're negotiating in the business world, you do not start out with areas of disagreement. You start with what you agree on. Today I am hoping to hear from our witnesses on what they think Congress can do operate more like people outside of Washington do.

Every American, regardless of voting Democrat or Republican, wants a safe and prosperous country. I believe everyone in this room shares that desire.

When I assumed my role as chairman in January, I made a commitment to reach across the aisle and work with my colleagues, regardless of political beliefs. It is my hope that today's hearing will continue a much needed dialogue about the problems facing the American people, and about how we, as lawmakers, can set aside rhetoric and partisanship for thoughtful discourse and partnership.

We owe it to the American people to roll up our sleeves and work together to identify the key issues that undermine our nation's national and economic security and to develop comprehensive, actionable plans to address them. In order to be effective in our roles, we must set aside our differences and check politics at the door.

Every day my office receives countless phone calls and letters from citizens of all ages who want to know what we're doing to fix our nation's problems. Politicking and gridlock have brought Washington to its knees. It is time for lawmakers to break free from partisanship and infighting. For far too long, it has undermined our ability to govern.

I strongly feel that all members of Congress are interested in addressing the objectives laid out by No Labels. Once we have agreed on those objectives in a bipartisan way, I hope that we can continue to do the hard work of finding bipartisan solutions. The path to progress is not a singular one. Too often, Congress focuses on process and politics, resulting in partisan bickering and few real accomplishments. It is time to stop bickering and start talking about real solutions.

The national strategic agenda set out by No Labels is a step in the right direction, but before we hail it as a remedy to Washington's ills, it is our responsibility to ensure that we develop practical, actionable policy solutions. Though we will differ greatly in how to achieve our main objectives, we must overcome these differences if we are to effect change in America.

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