

FINAL

**Testimony of Sen. Joe Lieberman
National Co-Chair, No Labels
Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee
“Governing Through Goal Setting: Enhancing the Economic and National Security of America”
June 17, 2015**

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me – and my other colleagues representing No Labels – to discuss “Governing Through Goal Setting.”

At a time when our nation has so many unaddressed and pressing problems, I can’t think of many more important topics.

I see a lot of friends in this room. This is my old committee of course, a place where I worked with many of you to make our government more accountable, more efficient, and more responsive to the needs of the American people. I’m excited to continue that work, even if it is from the other side of the committee room.

(pause)

As people of my age are known to do, I have lately found myself thinking a lot about the past. In particular, about the way Washington once worked and hopefully can again. Getting big things done in Washington has never been easy of course. But not long ago, it was at least possible.

I recall working on the historic update of the Clean Air Act in the early 1990s and seeing our parties come together in a way that just doesn’t seem feasible today.

We had a Republican president in George H.W. Bush and a Democratic Senate leader in George Mitchell who were simply determined to get this done. And they knew the only way to do it was together.

There was a war room right next to George Mitchell’s office in the Capitol that was buzzing for weeks, with members of the Administration, and Senators of both parties cycling through at all hours. Everyone in that room has a sense of mission, and a commitment that we’d keep that room open for as long as it took to reach our goal.

That’s exactly what we did.

I recall a similar spirit after that tragic day in September 2011, when so many Senators from both parties came together with urgency to implement the recommendations of the 9/11 commission and to do what was necessary to keep America safe.

I know many members of this committee are frustrated by the inability of recent Congresses to summon this same spirit of bipartisan problem solving.

It is not for lack of trying. In front of me are Senators who – often without much fanfare – are reaching across the aisle to get important work done.

- To reform our criminal justice system;
- To strengthen veteran’s health care;
- To better prepare students for the workforce;
- To combat human trafficking.

I commend you for this work. It is critically important work. Today, we are here to talk about the urgent work that remains to be done. The work that must be done to address festering problems that threaten the future prosperity and security of our country.

Problems such as:

- An economy that isn’t creating enough good jobs;
- A social safety net that isn’t secure, funded by promises that can’t possibly be kept;
- A budget that bleeds more red ink every year; and
- An energy system that is still dangerously vulnerable to manmade and natural disasters.

You all know the nature of these challenges.

The question of course, is how do we solve them?

Today, my colleagues and I from No Labels will aim to provide an answer.

We believe that it is time for this Congress and our next president to embrace a new *National Strategic Agenda* for the country.

No Labels’ *National Strategic Agenda* concept is based on a simple premise.

To solve a problem – any problem – you need to set goals, get people to buy into those goals and put a process or plan in place to achieve them.

Since last year, No Labels has been working to mobilize members of Congress and citizens across the country around this idea and the response has been astounding.

As of today, we have some members of Congress who have supported a resolution calling for the creation of a *National Strategic Agenda*.

Meanwhile, No Labels is organizing a grass-roots army of citizens in New Hampshire, Iowa and elsewhere to make the *National Strategic Agenda* a priority issue in the 2016 elections.

You may be wondering how No Labels settled on these four *National Strategic Agenda* goals.

Here is the simple answer.

This is what the American people wanted.

No Labels conducted a number of national polls last year to ask where people wanted the government to focus its attention.

These four issues rose to the top and led No Labels to create the four goals of the *National Strategic Agenda*:

- Create 25 million new jobs over the next 10 years
- Balance the federal budget by 2030
- Secure Medicare and Social Security for the next 75 years
- Make America energy secure by 2024

In the next few minutes, Andrew, Andrea and Jon will explain:

- Why we believe it is so important to tackle these challenges now;
- How we believe a new *National Strategic Agenda* can empower Washington to do it;
- How a few tried and true problem solving techniques from the private sector have informed our strategy; and finally,
- What the implementation of a *National Strategic Agenda* can actually look like.

I personally believe a *National Strategic Agenda* is the best way to lift members out of the partisan morass and restore that bipartisan problem-solving spirit that is so badly needed here in Washington.

I'll look forward to answering your questions in a few moments. In the meantime, I will cede the floor to Andrew.