

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 12, 2024

Colleagues,

Each of us comes to the Senate with different backgrounds and experiences. As we speak with many of our colleagues who have either served in state legislatures or have served in our federal government for some time, we hear an oft-repeated refrain: the current legislative process is broken.

Often, the senatorial prerogatives of each member—to debate and to amend—are non-existent. As United States Senators, we are required to take up-or-down votes on omnibus packages, in which very few have had any input. We have no ability to amend these packages, effectively ensuring that we are unable to advocate for our principles and for the concerns that matter to our constituents.

We all know the duty we share as United States Senators to represent our state's culture, virtue, and perspective on a national level. Working for this perspective—and getting legislative outcomes that forward it—blends our diverse perspectives into national outcomes and makes all our states richer for it. At its best, our deliberative body has balanced deliberation and action into laws that make our Nation more prosperous.

But as of recent, our deliberative body has resisted both deliberation and action. Our Congress is set to become one of the least productive sessions in American history. Since October 30 of last year, a member of this body has not been able to successfully amend another member's bill on the floor—over seven months ago. The Senate only votes on an amendment if it is sure to fail.

The most basic tool each legislator has to forward their state's interest has been taken away. There is now a backlog of bills, amendments, and other matters without a lever to release them in sight. Instead of fixing this issue, the Democratic leadership wastes time and money to have members fly into DC to take political show votes.

Fortunately, our Conference is not sitting idly by, but proposing ideas and discussing what our Conference should do to address these problems next Congress. Our Conference's strength is in proposing ideas, vigorously debating them, and then coalescing around a solution to better our great Nation.

With these factors in mind, we hope to offer some ideas for the next Congress that should steer our thinking toward a more productive end:

- 1) Each Senator who wants an amendment on a given piece of legislation can make one pending. Let our body deliberate and debate on ideas. Let the cards fall where they may. We all come to the Senate expecting to take tough votes, and it is antithetical to this body to have Senators vote on something they had no opportunity to effect on the floor.

- 2) The Conference should adopt a new rule that supports the right of Senators to amend legislation on the floor. As a result, this rule would have our Conference block cloture if Senators are unable to offer amendments.
- 3) The Conference should commit itself to avoiding procedures that inhibit these rights. Clearly, this entails ensuring that the amendment tree is not filled when we reclaim the majority. Further, this means committing each of us to also not reflexively objecting to amendments from our colleagues.

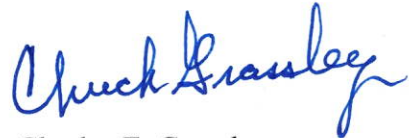
By allowing more amendments on the floor, we believe that Senators will be further engaged in the legislative process. As a result, we believe this body will face fewer government shutdown threats. As members will propose their priorities on various bills, members will not be forced to tie these priorities to must-pass legislation.

We hope to continue discussing these ideas and working as a team as we get closer to the next Congress.

Sincerely,



Eric S. Schmitt  
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley  
United States Senator