



# Collins, Manchin to serve as No Labels co-chairs

BY VICKI NEEDHAM - 11/06/17 09:00 AM EST

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Congressional efforts to broker bipartisan legislation are getting a boost from a pair of senators with a proven willingness to work across the aisle.

Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) will serve as honorary co-chairs of No Labels, a bipartisan group trying to bring lawmakers together to build consensus on critical issues.

The senators will work closely with the House Problem Solvers Caucus, a group of 47 lawmakers split almost evenly between Democrats and Republicans, focusing on bipartisan solutions on major legislative matters facing Congress.

“Given how divided our country has become, I feel a special obligation to continue my efforts to find a path forward on the many critical issues facing our country,” Collins said in a No Labels statement provided to The Hill.

“Congress produces the best legislation when it is considered through regular order and receives input from both Republicans and Democrats,” she said.

“We must work together to develop responsible solutions and get things

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done for the American people.”

An official announcement from No Labels is set for Tuesday.

Collins, who recently announced her intention to stay in the Senate after considering a bid for governor, has been ranked the most bipartisan senator for the past four years by the Lugar Center and Georgetown University.

Manchin, a Democrat from a deep-red state, said he is eager to take on the new role.

“I have worked across the aisle since the day I arrived in the Senate, and that approach has never been more important than it is now,” Manchin said in the No Labels statement.

“When we understand each other, we can work together. And when we work together, we can help people,” he said.

Rep. Tom Reed (R-N.Y.), co-chairman of the House Problem Solvers Caucus, told The Hill that Collins and Manchin will play important roles in bridging the two chambers on key issues.

“Having two partners like Sen. Collins and Sen. Manchin in the Senate working with us and being a face for this effort is very helpful,” Reed said.

“Obviously what we’re interested in is governing. To govern you’ve got to pass legislation. That means it’s got to pass the House, it’s got to pass the Senate to get to the president’s desk,” he said.

“So having true partners who are willing to pick up and lead in the Senate is nothing but a positive in my opinion.”

No Labels, which formed in 2010, inspired the Problem Solvers Caucus last year. House members of the group took a more aggressive tack, approving bylaws and implementing rules requiring lawmakers to vote together on issues where there is consensus.



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The bipartisan caucus has several major legislative efforts in the works, including an expected compromise on the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, as part of a months-long effort.

Work is also ongoing on tax-reform principles and another hot topic, the stabilization of the individual marketplace under ObamaCare, via a proposal from Sens. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) to continue key payments to insurers in exchange for more

flexibility on health-care plans.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.), a co-chairman of the Problem Solvers Caucus, said the addition of Manchin and Collins is “essential” and “hopefully together we can solve some of these problems where we really can find bipartisan solutions.”

“This is a big deal, this is a big breakthrough for us, I couldn’t say more positive things about Manchin and Collins,” he said.

Andy Bursky, a co-founder of No Labels, said it is “really unfortunate we’re having this conversation” about hyperpartisanship but that his group, the House caucus and the new senator chairs are poised to make strides and “serve as catalyst for moving Congress forward” on major legislation.

Bursky said he can “sense the possibilities that haven’t existed” in the past and the addition of Manchin and Collins can help drive the effort and bring other senators to the table.

“It’s unfortunate that we celebrate the fact that a minority, a relatively modest group of congressmen, have actually signed up to work in a bipartisan fashion and that’s news,” he said.

“But that’s where we live today so the fact is this is a big deal.”

Manchin and Collins joining the effort also is part of the transformation of No Labels into a legislative force where “important matters are being discussed and we can demonstrate the effectiveness of the process.”

Former Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-Conn.), a national co-chairman of No Labels and former Democratic vice presidential nominee, said the overall goal as part of the “motivated middle” is to “meet rising political extremism with an aggressive bipartisan push to solve problems.”

He said Collins and Manchin are coming forward “to raise a flag” for No Labels while committing themselves to work within the Senate and with the House caucus on tough issues.

“This is a really important development for No Labels and I would say also for everyone who would like to see members of Congress working across party lines to solve problems, to get things done,” Lieberman said.

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