

GOVERNANCE

Project

American Congressional Exchange

Apr 03, 2018

THE BRIEF

Regardless of the deep policy disagreements, our Congress must operate with mutual respect, decency, and civility – all of which are foundational to forging collaborative solutions. Our legislative process and political dialogue must speak to all of America.

While there are disparities and regional differences, there is more that we share as Americans than divides us. As elected officials, Members of Congress all have a responsibility to address challenges confronting their constituents and the nation, as well as strengthen the institution itself.

Weekend or Recess Visit

- About 75% is substantive policy discussions in a variety of forums, visits, and conversations. The activities should be ones that hold interest for both Members participating.
- Social time to get to know one another. Families meet one another.
- Tour developed by ACE staff including major attractions; and economic, social and cultural attributes of the district.
- Meetings with civic, business, religious, education, and other key leaders.

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How can we get to a place where Members of Congress are focused on working together based on a common set of facts, shared respect for one another, and an understanding of where the other person is coming from? How can we have a conversation about policy that doesn't demonize the other person or their views? How can we channel the basic decency of the American people, and their elected officials, so it is reflected in our politics and governance?

American Congressional Exchange Program (ACE)

ACE is a systematic approach to building better relationships and bipartisanship in Congress but away from the crucible of Washington, D.C. Our experience bears out the importance of personal interaction outside of the negotiating rooms of the Capitol. ACE is focused on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and is built upon three precepts:

To develop trust, Members of Congress must listen to one another to understand what it is that motivates them and concerns them.

Once they listen to each other, they often learn they actually have more in common than meets the eye – and if they can see each other in that vein, impactful legislation can be achieved.

A shared experience based on close personal interaction can be what brings Members of Congress together to take action on behalf of the American people.

HOW ACE WORKS

GOALS FOR ACE

PREDICTED OUTCOMES

- Under the ACE Project at the Bipartisan Policy Center, Members of Congress (MOC's) who participate agree to visit, for one weekend, a Member of the opposite party in that Member's district. That member, in turn, reciprocates the following year or when schedules permit.
- The district of choice is ideally removed geographically, culturally, and politically from the travelling Member's own district.
- Leveraging BPC's extensive, existing relationships with Members of Congress, ACE identifies MOC's and secures participation.
- ACE develops customized itineraries and agendas, coordinates all logistics and compliance for travel.
- Time schedule is flexible rather than one designated "weekend."
- Each visit is tailored to meet the participants' individual needs and build a relationship between two MOC's. Spouses/significant others are encouraged to join on the exchange trip.

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Other Resources

[Read the statement](#) from Rep. Stephanie Murphy (D-FL) introducing BATTLE Act that was written as a result of an ACE trip with Rep. Jack Bergman (R-MI).

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