

Bingaman

Breakdown

Break down

LESSONS FOR A CONGRESS IN CRISIS

US Senator from
New Mexico, 1983-2013

Jeff
Bingaman



Foreword by Norman J. Ornstein

The Breakdown of Congressional Governing Norms:

- **Shutting Down the Government.**
- **Threatening Default on the Debt.**
- **Abusing the Right to Filibuster.**
- **Refusing to Consider a Supreme Court Nominee.**

If you are going to operate with his [the president's] veto being the ultimate trump, you have to operate within a very narrow range of change.... You had to find a trump to match his trump. And the *right not to pass money bills* is the only trump that is equally strong.

--Speaker Newt Gingrich

Shutting down the government of the United States should never, ever be used as a bargaining chip for any issue, period. It should be to governing as chemical warfare is to real warfare. It should be banned. It should be unthinkable.

▪ -- Senator Lamar Alexander

Five “impediments” to serving the public interest:

- **Ideology.**
- **Pressure from special interests.**
- **Pressure to vote the way the polls dictate.**
- **Pressure to toe the party line.**
- **The media.**

The People's Business: Eight Worthy Efforts

- 1. Support a Strong Economy**
- 2. Control Deficits and Debt**
- 3. Lead in Science and Technology**
- 4. Meet Our Energy and Climate-Change Challenges**
- 5. Improve Health Care**
- 6. Improve Elementary and Secondary Education**
- 7. Manage and Preserve Public Lands**
- 8. Avoid Unnecessary Wars**

Suggestions for Congress:

- **Maintain a functioning Congress and Government.**
- **Eliminate threats to default on the debt.**
- **In the Senate, eliminate the filibuster and grant the majority leader the power to “move the previous question.”**
- **In the Senate, adopt a rule requiring the Judiciary Committee and Senate to act on a president’s nominee for the Supreme Court.**

Suggestions for Members:

- **Focus on worthy goals for the country.**
- **Deliberate.**
- **Overcome the five impediments:**
 - Ideology.
 - Pressure from special interests.
 - Pressure to vote the way the polls dictate.
 - Pressure to toe the party line.
 - The media.
- **Work in committees with members of the other party.**
- **Be open to compromise.**