

# Insiders steer wheel for working Congress

Members of Congress get categorized in all sorts of ways. They're liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, interested in domestic affairs or specialists in foreign policy.

There's one very important category, though, that I never hear discussed: whether a member wants to be an inside player or an outside player. Yet where members fall on the continuum helps to shape the institution of Congress.

First, I should say that the categories are not hard and fast. Some politicians are insiders part of the time and outsiders at other times. Still, most fall on one side of the line or other, especially as they go on in their careers.

Insiders focus on making the institution work. They tend to give fewer speeches on the floor, issue fewer press releases and spend less time considering how to play the public-relations game or how to raise money. Instead, they put in long, tedious hours on the minutiae of developing legislation, attending hearings, listening to experts, exploring policy options and working on building consensus. They're dedicated to finding support for a bill or a set of proposals wherever they can, and they ap-

Lee Hamilton

## GUEST COLUMN

preciate the necessity of bipartisanship.

They're constantly engaged in networking and so tend to be popular within the Congress. They have the respect of their colleagues, because other members know these are the people who make the institution move forward. They're the ones who do the necessary work of legislating.

Outsiders pass through the institution of Congress, but many of them are using Congress -- and especially the House of Representatives -- as a stepping stone to another office: the Senate, a governorship, the presidency.

On Capitol Hill, these people behave very differently from insiders. They raise money aggressively, put a lot of effort into developing a public persona and are consumed with public relations. They travel a lot and take every opportunity they can to meet and address conferences and large organizations. They churn out press releases and speak on the floor on every topic they can find something to deliver an

opinion about.

They miss votes more frequently than insiders and often do not attend committee hearings. They tend not to socialize with other members and so generally are not as popular as insiders. When they do attend a committee hearing, they use it as a platform to help them build a constituency beyond their own district or state. They tend to be more partisan than insiders, because they are seeking to build a political base. They're often impatient with House and Senate traditions and are impatient with the democratic process.

I remember late one night -- actually, it was more like 3 or 4 in the morning -- standing behind the rail of the House talking with a charismatic, charming congressman from the South. He'd been in the House for only a term or two and was chagrined at the parliamentary tangle we were working our way through that night. "Lee," he said, "how can you stand this place? I'm going to go home and run for governor!" And he did.

I want to be clear that I'm not making a judgment here as to which kind of member is

more valuable. I may prefer to spend my time with insiders, but both are needed to make the system work. You have to have members reaching out to the broader public, talking about the big issues and engaging Americans in the issues of the day. And you need people on the inside who are dedicated to resolving those issues by attending to the legislation that will make this possible.

The truth is, Congress wouldn't work if everyone were an outside player. The process is tedious -- especially when you're trying to draft a bill, you get into arcane arguments over language, you have to go line by line over the bill and each amendment. Outsiders have little patience for this process and often don't show up for it.

Yet, if everyone were an insider, the country would be deprived of the dialogue, debate and sheer spectacle that give Americans a sense of stake and participation in the policy-making process.

*Lee Hamilton is director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years.*

# Cutting-edge industry blunted by bad policy

While the American solar industry continues to grow by leaps and bounds across the country, Ohio falls further and further behind its neighboring states in the amount of solar installed. Indeed, Ohio is a cautionary tale of how smart government policy like the federal investment tax credit can help a young, cutting-edge industry like solar grow, attract investment and create jobs while bad government policy can stunt the growth of an industry.

Total U.S. solar capacity is expected to double over the next two years, and more than 30 percent of all electric-generating capacity installed in the United States has been from solar.

In 2010, the federal investment tax credit helped Ohio companies install more than 19 megawatts of solar to make it the 13th biggest solar state, ahead of Indiana, Illinois and even sunny Hawaii at the time. Solar in Ohio continued to grow from 2010 to '13, adding an additional 86 MW.

But in 2014, renewable-energy sources like solar hit a major roadblock in Ohio when the state legislature and Gov. John Kasich enacted legislation to freeze Ohio's renewable portfolio standard for two years. Bad policy decisions have consequences. Over the next two years, Indiana is expected to install 165 MW of solar power and gain all the jobs and economic benefits that come with the build-out, while Ohio won't even install half as much solar, 76 MW, despite a much larger electricity need.

Ohio's drop in the solar rankings is more than a loss of pride -- it's a missed oppor-



Rhone Resch

## GUEST COLUMN

tunity. Building out solar projects translates into good, well-paying jobs for America, but Ohio lawmakers are fighting solar's full economic potential by burying their heads in the sand. It's time to restart the renewable portfolio standard and allow Ohio's renewable-energy market to fully develop.

Ironically, Ohio companies have ramped up operations to support their growing out-of-state business, and the jobs are telling.

According to the Solar Foundation's 2014 state solar jobs census, solar jobs in Ohio have grown 45 percent in the last two years, from 2,900 in 2012 to 4,300 in 2014, with the majority of those jobs in the manufacturing sector. These manufacturers produce a variety of solar components, from wiring, electronics and glass to solar panels and the metal racking that holds them in place.

Ohio's solar paradox thickens as some of the country's largest and most iconic brands find value in going solar in Ohio. This year, General Motors' largest solar installation in the Western Hemisphere became operational in Lordstown. The 6.5-acre structure contains 8,550 panels and provides 2.2 MW of power to GM's Lordstown complex, which is among the highest-volume, single-line vehicle-assembly facilities in the world. GM now has a total of 4 MW of solar energy powering

its Ohio facilities. Meanwhile, Walgreens has more than 2 MW of solar on its Ohio stores, while Walmart has more than 5 MW.

However, the scheduled drop at the end of 2016 in federal investment tax credit from 30 percent to 10 percent for commercial users and to zero for residential users, combined with the freeze of the Ohio renewable portfolio standard, will cause the market for Ohio's solar manufacturers to contract significantly. Any realistic chance for the state's already-beleaguered solar installers and developers to turn the tide in the state will disappear.

The deadline in 2016 to renew the federal investment tax credit for solar energy and lift Ohio's renewable-portfolio-standard freeze

will be here before we know it. As an industry, we strongly urge Ohio lawmakers and the state's congressional delegation to support lifting its renewable-portfolio-standard freeze and extending the investment tax credit for five years. By then, analysts predict solar will reach grid parity in most electricity markets, helping to create a level playing field among energy producers, diversifying our power sources, offering more consumer choices and boosting the state and national economy.

Solar is an economic engine for America, and its future in Ohio should be bright.

*Rhone Resch is president and CEO of the Solar Energy Industries Association.*

*Hey! Let's go check out the band!*  
**Bainbridge Swing Dance**  
 Bainbridge Town Hall (17826 Chillicothe Rd; Chagrin Falls, OH)  
 First Friday of Every Month, 9-11:30pm. Lesson 8pm  
 Admission \$8 Student, \$10 Adult, \$25 Family.  
 Will Craig (216) 316-0068 / willrcraig@gmail.com / Sponsored by KCE

**Lincolns Roofing**  
 An Honest Roofing Company  
  
  
 www.LincolnsRoofing.com  
 Toll Free (844) 340-ROOF  
 Ron Sweigert (440) 278-0305  
 Owner  
 Free Estimate with an Honest Opinion!

**BRINGING THE WORLD TO NORTHEAST OHIO**

 **CHAGRIN Documentary FILM FEST**

Save the date  
**October 7-11, 2015**

At venues all around Chagrin Falls  
**ChagrinFilmFest.org 440.247.1591**