

Brademas Center report proposes solutions for Congress

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Congress needs to stop procrastinating and find more long term solutions to major U.S. issues, according to one NYU think tank.

After two years of research, the John Brademas Center for the Study of Congress has released a bipartisan report called "Looking to the Future: The Challenge to Congress." The report said Congress needs to start fixing problems like the economic crisis themselves rather than the effects of the crisis. Congress also must start finding solutions for long-term issues like Social Security, health care and the environment, the report said.

According to Rogan Kersh, associate dean for academic affairs, the report lays out the issues Congress will encounter with long-term legislation and suggests solutions.

"The hope is that this triggers a kind of self-examination on Congress' part," Kersh said.

But politics professor Larry Mead does not think the problems lie solely with Congress.

"There is long-term planning going on, but the problem is that we do not have an overall set of priorities, since that can change every four years with the administration," Mead said.

Recommendations to solve this problem include the creation of advisory committees, like a National Foresight Agency to advise the president on future concerns.

The report stated that Congress tends to react to long-term problems only during a crisis, such as the current economic one.

"There is a sense in which a serious economic crisis can focus the legislative mind to respond in creative and innovative ways," Kersh said. "But the danger is that by perceiving the need to act hastily, Congress will exacerbate the problems, creating quick fixes."

Kersh hopes the Brademas Center perceives the intensity of the challenges outlined in the report so that preemptive action can be taken.

"We know we face serious shortfalls in Medicare and Medicaid in the frighteningly near future," Kersh said. "The fundamental mission of the Brademas Center is to diagnose and find ways to improve upon how Congress operates."

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