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JOAN SHORENSTEIN CENTER
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**Shorenstein Center Paper by Longtime Journalist Charles
Gibson Decries Political Polarization and Proposes Solutions**

CAMBRIDGE, MA. — The Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School has published a paper on political polarization authored by longtime journalist Charles Gibson. The paper, [*Restoring Comity to Congress*](#), is based on a series of extensive interviews with members of Congress Gibson conducted while a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center.

Gibson's research identifies multiple causes for the current national political atmosphere, including constituency changes, reduced voter turnout, media coverage and the diminished importance of committees in Congress.

"The lack of contact and the lack of familiarity between members of Congress, particularly between members of opposite parties, is the most under-reported and under-studied aspect of polarization," Gibson writes.

Senator Mark Udall (D-CO) has urged members of Congress "to cross the aisle and sit together" during President Obama's upcoming State of the Union address. Gibson's paper includes a similar suggestion from former Senator Christopher Dodd (D-CT) to eliminate the center aisle in the Senate. This illustrates one of the many small gestures Gibson believes could be instrumental in transcending the polarization that has characterized politics in Washington for several decades.

Gibson outlines several ideas that could improve congressional relations, such as moving their families to Washington, engaging in bipartisan foreign travel and spending more time getting to know the city of Washington.

Gibson is a television news anchor and journalist with more than 35 years of experience. He covered the White House and Congress, and anchored major ABC News broadcasts through 11 election cycles. He was anchor of *World News with Charles Gibson* from 2006-09 and host of *Good Morning America* from 1987-98 and from 1999-2006. Gibson was the Reidy Fellow at the Shorenstein Center in the Fall of 2010. In addition to researching and writing the paper, he taught a student study group on political polarization for Harvard undergraduates and Harvard Kennedy School students.

Read the full paper on the Shorenstein Center's website:

http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/papers/discussion_papers/d60_gibson.pdf