

[By Bob Kinzel](#)

Congressman Peter Welch has joined a small, bi-partisan group of Senators and House members who want to change the political dialogue in Washington.

Welch says the change is needed because Congress is currently a "dysfunctional institution" that is unable to reach common ground on many of the key issues facing the country.

The group is known as "the Problem Solvers" and it's comprised of 13 Democrats and 13 Republicans.

Welch says the goal of the group is cut across party lines to deal with a number of critical issues. That's something that he says simply doesn't happen in Washington's current political climate.

"Congress is not working. I mean that is really apparent to the American people and it's certainly apparent to a lot of us in Congress," said Welch. "And one of the reasons is that the way we're set up we spend very little time actually interacting talking about where is the way forward."

And Welch says the group also believes that many people are fed up with the partisan bickering in Washington.

"People know that compromise is not a four letter word, it's not abandoning the principles in fact if you have a principle and you want to actually act on it," said Welch. "You have to find a practical way to do that and the American people are frustrated with the dysfunction of this institution."

While the group might disagree on some major issues, Welch is hoping that they can make

progress on a number of smaller but important bills.

"So instead of a big debate about global warming which is really important to me let's at least do something on efficiency that can create jobs and save money and help the environment."

Retired Middlebury College political science professor Eric Davis thinks the formation of the group is a key development that could produce some important results.

"If one of the things this group can do is simply get members from both parties talking to each other realizing that on some smaller scale issues there might be common ground," said Davis. "And perhaps most importantly recognizing that people on the other side of the aisle are not ogres they're not demons but they're people who on some issues have got ideas that can produce cooperative action."

Davis says Welch was chosen for the group because over the past 6 years, Welch has developed a solid reputation as a Democrat who is willing to work with Republican members on issues of common interest.