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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

CONSERVATION, RESEARCH,
AND BIOTECHNOLOGY;
GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES,
RISK MANAGEMENT AND CREDIT;
COMMODITY MARKETS, DIGITAL ASSETS,
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HEALTH

September 11, 2024

Dear New Democrat Coalition Colleagues:

I write to ask for your support for my candidacy for New Democrat Coalition (NDC) Vice Chair for this upcoming Congress.

As the current Freshman Leadership Representative for NDC, it has been a privilege to serve as a voice for the newer members as we navigated an unprecedented first term. I was proud to work alongside NDC Vice Chairs to create opportunities for freshman and frontline members to find their respective policy lanes and create meaningful change, even in the minority.

In my role, I was responsible for convening briefings for staff on growing constituent correspondence programs and preparing for blackout periods, along with how to tee up policy wins while building out an office. I worked to be a consistent resource to members who could bring concerns directly to our Chair and advise the coalition on where more resources were needed.

Since arriving in Congress, NDC quickly became a home for me, both because of the incredible colleagues we share, but also how perfectly situated we are to “make majorities” and find solutions to create lasting change. When I think about the term in front of us, I believe NDC is poised to continue to grow its influence and ability to produce results. It’s why I was particularly drawn to NDC as a candidate, as I’ve worked my entire career to bring groups of stakeholders to the table to find common ground.

As Executive Director of Climate Jobs Illinois, I brought labor groups interested in protecting high paying jobs together with environmentalists focused on decarbonization to pass the nation’s most ambitious statewide climate plan. As a Senior Advisor for Illinois Governor JB Pritzker, I brought industry and stakeholders to the table as Chair of our state’s Broadband Advisory Council to expand internet access to rural and low-income communities. And as Chief of Staff at the Office of Management and Budget in the Biden Administration, I worked to establish the Made in America Office – bringing together large corporations with regulators to grow domestic manufacturing.

When we retake the majority and elect Hakeem Jeffries as Speaker, the 119th Congress will pose a unique opportunity to tackle issues like immigration and permitting reform alongside President Kamala Harris. As Vice Chair, I would bring to the table experience in convening unlikely coalition partners to decide together on real progress – and I believe this is exactly the space where NDC will thrive.

I'm proud that in my first term I was able to put some of this experience into practice. In the House Agriculture Committee, I invited our growers and commodities to work together on how to best incentivize conservation practices following investments from the Inflation Reduction Act. With NDC's assistance, and alongside Angie Craig, I led the ongoing push to reestablish the Affordable Connectivity Program, bringing together cable and industry groups along with non-profits focused on low-income broadband access to introduce the bipartisan Secure and Affordable Broadband Extension Act. This was after leading more than 95 NDC members calling on leadership to act as quickly as possible to restore this program for working families.

This Congress, I've also taken time with the New Dem Action Fund to ensure that our coalition is as strong as possible to move forward with our policy goals. Just like in the policy sphere, where I've bridged relationships, I was able to organize NDC's first labor-specific event in several years. The event brought in significant funds for the Action Fund but also restarted a conversation between New Dems and the labor community. I believe NDC is poised to continue to fully reestablish the relationship and work together on shared goals, something I would hope to contribute to rebuilding as Vice Chair.

Lastly, a quick note on one of my proudest achievements in NDC leadership thus far. During the chaos of New Member Orientation, I can recall feeling hopeful that I found a coalition of members who wanted to do what's best for their district, think critically about the most challenging issues we face and work in a bipartisan fashion to get things done.

However, orientation was often an overwhelming experience that did not meet its goal fully of getting members and their offices up and running. Most recently, I worked with NDC to develop a resource guide and orientation programming for the next Congress. For the very first time, NDC will be hosting its own freshman orientation to supplement the House's orientation and provide practical knowledge and resources for members to establish themselves and their offices. The resource guide and orientation will cover best practices in hiring, franking, scheduling and how to deliver policy wins. I know how useful this would have been coming into Congress and am excited to share this with our new colleagues.

Serving on NDC Leadership has been a highlight of my time in Congress, and it would be an honor to put this experience to work as a Vice Chair next term. I very much appreciate your consideration and hope to earn your support in the coming weeks. If you have any questions about my candidacy, please don't hesitate to reach out to me or my Chief of Staff John Lee at john.lee3@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nikki Budzinski". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nikki Budzinski
Member of Congress
Freshman Leadership Representative, New Democrats Coalition