

# 'Filling the void on public policy issues'

INTERVIEW WITH FORMER SENATOR TOM DASCHLE



**Former Senator Tom Daschle**

*is the founder and CEO of The Daschle Group, a public policy advisory of Baker Donelson.*

*The Daschle Group is a full-service strategic advisory firm that advises clients on a broad array of economic, policy and political issues.*

*Daschle was one of the longest-serving Senate Democratic leaders in history and one of only two to serve twice as both majority and minority leader.*

**SEBASTIAN MEIS: How has the US political landscape changed over the last year under President Trump? In what direction is the country heading?**

TOM DASCHLE: The state of US politics has been negatively and significantly changed in a number of ways since the last election. Many norms have been broken. The president's tweets have been his primary vehicle for communicating with the country. Political polarization is at an all-time high. Dysfunction in government has increased. And people's perception of the Office of President as well as of Congress has become far more negative.

**Can Congress actually address the most critical issues facing the country?**

Congress can address the most critical issues. The primary question remains whether they will. This has been the most dysfunctional Congress in modern times. Virtually nothing has been accomplished. The budget deficit is likely to increase by more than \$2 trillion in this fiscal year alone if the Republican tax bill is enacted. Infrastructure, immigration, meaningful health-care reform and trade matters all deserve urgent attention.

**In terms of the US health-care system, what has to be done now?**

The US still has significant problems with the cost, quality and access to health care. We need to reconstruct our health-care sector in a way that addresses all three problems with an emphasis on high performance and value. In the short term, we must address the urgent need to fix the individual

market. That will require a reinsurance program, subsidies for income beneficiaries and some requirement for participation. Above all, a restoration of bipartisanship is essential here.

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**So many issues emerged with the 2016 presidential elections. Is the US electoral system modern enough? Should the US shorten its election season to a few of months like it is in Germany?**

The election system in the US is broken in many ways. The season should be shortened. The amount of money spent should be reduced. The nominating process should be reformed significantly. And the need for greater voter participation should be emphasized and made simpler.

**How can organizations like AmCham Germany help strengthen transatlantic ties?**

AmCham Germany can play an important role. The more dysfunctional the government, the more the private sector's role becomes increasingly consequential. Transatlantic relationships involving businesses can help fill the void on many public policy issues, including trade, climate change, tax policy and immigration. Four factors will determine the quality of the effort: resiliency, innovation, collaboration and engagement.



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