

# Mean Streak: Members of Congress Spend 27% of Time Taunting Each Other

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**By: Henry J. Reske**

The hallowed halls of Congress sometimes must seem more like the shallow halls of a middle school at recess break, according to a Harvard University professor's study of legislators' behavior.

Indeed, the nation's top lawmakers spend 27 percent of their time taunting those on the other side of the aisle, Gary King concluded after examining more than 64,000 news releases sent from 2005 to 2007, *The Washington Post* reported.

King, who is an expert on using computers to find patterns in data, called the findings "jarring and surprising." "The entire government may go bankrupt, I guess. This week, right? We probably want our representatives to be listening to each other rather than calling each other names," he told the Post.

King, with the help of two graduate students, found taunting was most common in members whose districts were "safe." The Post asked the professor to analyze 48 recent releases from three top Democrats and three top Republicans. King concluded that 20 percent were designed to taunt opponents, the Post said.

In a release on Social Security changes, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said, "Republicans have shown they couldn't care less about those who have the least." On the anniversary of the federal healthcare law, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., said, "Democrats have not displayed the same interest in listening to the American people," the Post said.

"I think most people would say that this is not a good thing," King told the Post.