

A Step Toward Bipartisan Spirit

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As they reflected on the political career of former President Gerald Ford this week, commentators and politicians waxed nostalgic for the era when there were across-the-aisle friendships and bipartisan efforts in Congress that sought solutions to our country's challenges. It's difficult to envision such a spirit of cooperation so long passed.

But on Thursday, as the 110th Congress was called into session, there was talk and indeed, some action that indicated an effort to return to the "good old days" in Washington politics. Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives announced that they would "bring civility back to the House by opening up the process and providing the minority a voice." We will hold them accountable to match their words and deeds.

For now, however, the Democratic House leadership's move to allow 5th Congressional District Congressman **Rodney Alexander** to keep his coveted seat on the powerful Appropriations Committee did indeed, signal positive action on their part.

Alexander drew the ire of Democrats who elected him to Congress when he made a switch to the Republican Party two years ago. Yet, it was that move that delivered choice committee assignments to the congressman. This 22-parish district was the beneficiary.

It was expected — and it would have been understandable in the world of partisan politics — that the Democrats would oust Alexander from the Appropriations Committee. That he retained the seat may say as much about the man as it does about the Democratic Party's "bi-partisan" agenda.

This congressman from Quitman possesses an unassuming countenance and a demeanor that welcomes dialogue. Colleagues from the Louisiana legislature, where Alexander served before moving on to Washington, have described him as a man who listens, who quietly gathers information, who respects the views of others but is firm and decisive when decision day arrives. Alexander is viewed as a fair and decent man whose quest for power is neither self-serving nor partisan.

Rodney Alexander's personal qualities can be disarming to opponents. That strength bodes well for him as he serves a district that relies on a congressman who can bring substantial federal dollars home.

A seat on the Appropriations Committee — albeit a minority seat — will provide this poor district a voice at the table. For that, we are grateful. If Alexander's reappointment to the committee is the evidence of the way things will change in Washington, we are heartened.