

Franklin Center and Ripon Society Hold Inaugural Bipartisan Luncheon for Congressional Chiefs of Staff

WASHINGTON, DC—With partisan rancor and division in Congress at an all-time high, the Franklin Center and Ripon Society hosted a bipartisan group of Congressional Chiefs of Staff on January 25th, inaugurating a series of monthly luncheons intended to establish dialogue between Republican and Democratic staffers and restore an environment of collegiality between these key leaders of Capitol Hill.

Attending the luncheon were 8 Democrat and 13 Republican Chiefs of Staff, who were able to introduce themselves to their counterparts and converse with one another before Ambassador Connie Morella addressed the group, sharing her thoughts on the necessity for – and recent erosion of – Congressional comradery.

Ambassador Morella served in the Maryland General Assembly from 1979-1986, and represented the 8th Congressional district of Maryland from 1987-2003. In 2003, she was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as Ambassador to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, a position she held for four years. Ambassador Morella is the Chairwoman Emeritus of the Franklin Center.

Franklin Center President & CEO Jim Conzelman prefaced Ambassador Morella's comments with his own defense of bipartisan relationships. "When folks of opposing viewpoints spend time with one another, you gain an appreciation of where they come from," Conzelman stated. "Years ago, we got to know one another as friends in this crazy world called Capitol Hill."

"I have come to find that breaking bread is a

good way of breaking the ice," Ambassador Morella explained. "So, with that in mind, I would like to thank the Republican and Democratic Chiefs of Staff who have joined us to discuss how we as a Congress – and a nation – can find a path forward together this year.

"This idea of learning, listening, and then coming to some conclusion is at the true core of bipartisanship. The other main component of bipartisanship is spending time together to understand each other's problem and point of view. That is what we need to do. Spend time with

and get to know people. First of all, show a little respect for them. Whether it's somebody who is your constituent or a member across the aisle, show respect for them and get to know them. Listen to them, learn from them, and then you can lead. I think that's ultimately the key for whatever the profession is that you're in."

According to Conzelman, this is the 2nd event hosted by the Franklin Center and Ripon Society so far in 2019. In February, the honorable Meredith Broadbent of the US Trade Commission will share with the group her thoughts on bipartisanship in the context of international trade.

The Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange, a non-profit, non-partisan public policy organization which has promoted enlightened, balanced, and unbiased international policy discussion on major international issues for over 30 years. The Franklin Center also hosts bipartisan events with Members of Congress on a variety of topics here in Washington, D.C. and across the country.

For more information on the organization, please visit its website at www.franklincenter.us. **FC**

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