

**Franklin Center Hosts a
“Welcome to the 116th Congress”
Reception at the National
Museum of African American
History & Culture**

WASHINGTON, DC – As the New Year begins and Representatives are sworn in again for the next two years, the Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange yesterday hosted a bipartisan “Welcome to the 116th Congress” reception.

Partisanship and political brinkmanship have become frequent fixtures of Capitol Hill. With this in mind, the reception was hosted at the newest Smithsonian museum on the National Mall – the National Museum of African American History and Culture. With this institution as the backdrop, its collection of artifacts and exhibits provided a unique opportunity to reflect on some of the greatest – and some of the most abhorrent – times in our country’s history.

Attending the event was a group of both Republican and Democratic Members of Congress. U.S. Reps. Kathleen Rice (D-NY) and Tom Reed (R-NY), co-chairs of the Franklin Center’s Honorary Board, kicked off the event by welcoming the guests and gave an optimistic prediction for the next couple years.

In their opening remarks they pointed to bipartisanship as the key to the new Congress’s success or failure. Both talked about how, in a time when politics is inundated with charged rhetoric, there is a strong appetite across America for unity and cooperation on the most commonsense solutions. They touched on how the museum’s content illustrates how sometimes there are issues far too important, and far too urgent, to be stymied by hollow rhetoric and division for division’s sake.

“Tonight, the Franklin Center for Global Exchange is honored to host you all in this beautiful venue, on what happens to be a serendipitous date,” Jim Conzelman, President and CEO of the Franklin Center, stated as he addressed the crowd. “On February 25th in 1870, Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi was sworn in as the first African American to serve in the



Reps. Kathleen Rice and Tom Reed give opening remarks and welcome their colleagues to the reception

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“Senator Revels was an orator, minister, and educator across many states before he settled down in Mississippi following the Civil War. At a time when travel was not easy, Revels found his calling as a preacher, and taught across the country—from Indiana to Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, Missouri, Kansas, and Maryland. When another duty called for his service, Revels worked to recruit and organize black regiments of the Union Army in Maryland and Missouri.

“Our country owes reverence to the many pioneers who have steered us towards progress, so it is only right that we keep them in mind as we begin a new Congress—as it becomes our turn to improve the lives of Americans.”

According to Conzelman, this is the first time the Franklin Center has hosted this reception, and he hopes events such as these can help rejuvenate the spirit of bipartisan collaboration and bring back a sense of collegiality amongst the nation’s federal lawmakers.

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**