

**Kelly & Larson Headline  
Bipartisan Discussion About  
Strengthening Social Security**

WASHINGTON, DC — With a recent report showing that the Social Security Trust Fund will run out of money by 2035, The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange hosted a breakfast discussion yesterday morning about the importance of strengthening retirement security in the United States.

The discussion was led by U.S. Reps. Mike Kelly and John Larson. Kelly is a Republican who represents the 16th District of Pennsylvania, while Larson is a Democrat who represents the 1st District of Connecticut. Both are members of the Ways & Means Committee, where they are leading efforts on both sides of the political aisle to shore up the Society Security system and make sure the retirement years of all Americans are secure.

“When we talk about people who pay into Social Security,” Kelly stated, “we’re talking about workers and what they’ve done. I’m on both sides of it. I’m a Chevrolet, Cadillac, Hyundai, Kia and Toyota dealer that signs paychecks twice a month for over 200 people. That’s a 6.2% match from not only the person who is working with you, but also the person who owns that entity. That’s 12.4%.”

“So when people ask, ‘What are you guys going to do about Social Security?’ My question to them is, ‘Do you know where the source of all the funding is?’ And they say, ‘Yeah, the government.’ And I say, ‘No, the government has nothing to do with where the money comes from. It is businesses that pay that tax — whether they’re profitable or not.’ ... The government collects, then distributes it and develops policy on it. But the real funding of Social Security is the business community.”

Kelly was elected to Congress in 2010 after serving as a member of the Butler City Council and on the boards of several local civic organizations. A successful small businessman, he is the owner of several auto dealerships that currently employ more than 200 people in the Western



U.S. Reps. John Larson (left) and Mike Kelly (right)

Pennsylvania region.

He is also the co-author of The Secure Act, a bill to strengthen retirement security which was approved unanimously by the Ways & Means Committee on April 2. Among other things, the bill would allowing multiple employer pension plans as a way of helping small business owners offer retirement plans to their employees. The measure would also provide premium relief for rural co-ops and charities to dedicate more of their scarce resources to their core missions.

Larson, who cosponsored the legislation, kicked off his remarks by talking about the importance of Social Security and the efforts by both political parties to strengthen the program over the years.

“This is the government’s number one insurance program — and its most effective,” the Connecticut lawmaker said. But it’s also the greatest antipoverty program that we have. In fact Dwight David Eisenhower expanded Social Security because he knew what that GI was going to go through when he came back after the Second World War, and they produced the baby boomer generation. I don’t think it will come as a surprise to anyone that 10,000 baby boomers a day — 10,000 a day — become eligible for Social Security.

“So what do we do? The last time that we fixed Social Security in any significant manner was 1983. Who was president? Ronald Reagan. Everybody on the Democratic side remembers that Tip O’Neill was the Speaker, but very few people will recall that Howard Baker was

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the Senate Majority Leader. And so Republicans controlling two branches of government joined together with Democrats to save Social Security... It was supposed to be sustainably solvent for 75 years. They didn't succeed at that, but what they did succeed at was enhancing the program and moving the ball forward, and it was legendary in terms of its results. Every Congress at some point has to step up and take responsibility. As Mike said, this is the people's program, and it is funded by business and the people."

Larson was elected to Congress in 1998 after serving as a high school history teacher and as the owner of a small insurance business. He also served on the East Hartford Board of Education and the East Hartford Town Council, before winning election to the Connecticut State Senate, where he served for 12 years.

He currently serves as Chairman of the Ways & Means Subcommittee on Social Security. He is also the author of The Social Security 2100 Act, a bill which would increase Social Security benefits and keep the program financially solvent through the 21st century. The legislation currently has over 200 cosponsors.

Following their remarks, the two Ways & Means leaders were asked a number of questions, including one to Larson about the possible timetable of his legislation.

"We've had four hearings," Larson said of the Social Security 2100 Act. "We expect to have a couple of more

hearings and other briefings. And then we think before the summer recess we'll have it on the floor."

Kelly was also asked his thoughts on The Secure Act and possible next steps for that piece of legislation, as well.

"I think it's ready to go right now," he said of the measure. "But there's always that little hurdle that you face with that 100 strong over in the Senate ... Can we get it done? We have to get it done. There's such an overwhelming agreement that we should do it. I know Mr. Neal was on board with it and John's on board with it, and I think that right now we're very close to seeing that come to fruition."

Founded in 1978, The Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization committed to enhancing global understanding of important international issues. The Franklin Center brings together Members of the U.S. Congress and their international parliamentary counterparts as well as experts from the Diplomatic corps, foreign officials, senior private sector representatives, scholars, and other public policy experts. Through regular conferences and events where leading international opinion leaders share ideas, the Franklin Center promotes enlightened, balanced, and unbiased international policy discussion on major international issues.

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