

## **Davis and Panetta Discuss the Importance of Teamwork ahead of Congressional Football Game**

WASHINGTON, DC — With the biennial Congressional Football Game for Charity less than a week away, The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange hosted a breakfast discussion with Republican U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis (IL-13) and Democrat U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta (CA-20) along with former NFL stars John Booty and Ken Harvey to discuss the importance of the game to both the community and to those who participate.

The highly competitive game pits Republican and Democratic Members of Congress (with the assistance of a few former NFL players) against those tasked with protecting them—officers of the Capitol Police Department. First held in 2004 to honor the lives of two Capitol police officers killed in the line of duty, the game seeks to give back to the community with proceeds going to the Capitol Police Memorial Fund, Our Military Kids, and Advantage 4 Kids.

Davis moderated the discussion and kicked off the event by introducing the guest panelists before handing it off to his colleague from California.

“There are no better folks leading this cause than the three guys we have up here. John Booty –we’ve become good friends over the years and I’m used to him yelling at me, telling me that I should have looser hamstrings during calisthenics. And Ken Harvey – I can’t catch the ball, so they put me on defense, and he reminds me every day that I really shouldn’t be there either.

“These guys take their time to come out for a good cause, and I couldn’t ask for a better partner than Jimmy Panetta. This is somebody who I’ve gotten to know since he got here to Congress and you hear a lot about bipartisanship in DC, but you know what? He lives it.”

Panetta opened his remarks by underscoring the importance of the game to the community around Washington, DC.

“Thanks Rodney for that introduction,” the two-term Congressman began. “We appreciate the Ripon Society, we appreciate our supporters of the Congressional Football Game, because the donations are actually going to worthy causes here in Washington DC.”

“We were talking earlier about back when I was living with my father as a 21 year old and he was in the House of Representatives. You saw them take the time at four o’clock in the afternoon. You knew where those members were: the House Gym and the pickup basketball game. And then every night, they weren’t tied to their cell phones. They weren’t tied to going out to other receptions. They were going to dinner together.”

Panetta continued.

“But I admit, now it takes a little bit of work. Now it actually takes getting up in the morning and going to baseball practice or



Rep. Rodney Davis, John Booty, Rep. Jimmy Panetta, and Ken Harvey

**“The relationships that we have built from this football team are everlasting.”**

going to football practice or basically making the efforts to go to each other’s district, like Rodney and I have. We traveled to each other’s districts so that we can experience what the other has to do when they go home, but also why we have to vote a certain way and finding those areas that we can come together on. And let me tell you, the relationships that we have built from this football team are everlasting relationships that we can use as we go forward in Washington, DC.”

Harvey echoed this sentiment of fostering collegiality and praised Davis, Panetta, and the other Members for their dedication to the cause and the game.

“I’m hoping I’m speaking for John also when I say that we have an opportunity through sports to work with Congress members and for them to take the time to be out here to do something with charity,” stated the four-time Pro-Bowl linebacker. “So many times in life we judge things in a flash. You look at a person and you judge them. You look at a situation and you judge it. And when you get a chance to really meet somebody – when you get a chance to talk to people – you realize they’re not all that you thought they were. That’s the beauty of sports.”

According to Davis, the game this year has raised over \$300,000 for charity, surpassing the \$187,000 raised in 2017 and exceeding their initial goal for 2019. Davis asked Booty, who played 8 years in the NFL as a defensive back, what this game means for local youth in this community.

“As young kids are able to see grown men and women out on the football field being active, that’s encouragement for them to stay active. We use America’s game to play a game as a team. The youth will see that and say, ‘If Congressman Davis can run around the field at his age, I can do that too.’ Or if they see Congressman Panetta, a shut down cornerback, they might think, ‘I can do that too.’ That team effort and encouragement that they see is what will encourage them.”

Harvey agreed.

“I’m on the belief now that you use what’s in your hands, and if we teach kids that they have power within themselves, that whatever ability you have, you can do.”

“If there’s a message for any little kid, it’s that whatever you have that’s your skill, your gift, your blessing, use it to its full potential. Here we are – and I say this with great admiration – with Members of Congress. As a kid growing up you say, ‘Man these are Members of Congress’ and they seemed so far away, but here we are playing with them because of a sport we played and we enjoyed.”

Also in attendance were U.S. Reps. Jack Bergman (MI-1), Mike Bost (IL-12), Chuck Fleischmann (TN-3), Bruce Westerman (AR-4), Steve Stivers (OH-15) and Don Bacon (NE-2). Bacon and Stivers arrived shortly after the breakfast started and, in perhaps a sign of how seriously they all are approaching the game, were informed by one of their coaches that they would be penalized for their infraction. “When you show up late,” coach John Booty declared, “you have to do push-ups!”

And, being the good teammates that they are, the gentleman from Nebraska and gentleman from Ohio proceeded to hit the floor and do five push-ups.

After returning to his seat, Stivers asked about how the football game helps build bipartisanship among the players.

“A lot of my friendships here on Capitol Hill, especially with Republicans stem from my time in 2017 going out there on the field,” Panetta explained. “Then it carried over into our daily job here and then with this team in 2019. So it’s like I said, it’s something that takes time to build but it’s damn well worth it.

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.

For more information on the organization, please visit its website at [www.franklincenter.us](http://www.franklincenter.us). **FC**



U.S. Rep. Rodaney Davis (IL-13)



U.S. Rep Jimmy Panetta (CA-20)



John Booty, former NFL defensive back.



Ken Harvey, four-time Pro-Bowl linebacker.