

**Walden, Reed & Rice Discuss
Effort to Find Common Ground
on the Challenges Facing the
American People in 2020**

WASHINGTON, DC — The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange hosted a bipartisan breakfast discussion yesterday morning with three Members of Congress who are leading the effort on Capitol Hill to break partisan gridlock and find common ground on some of the key challenges facing the American people.

The leaders were: U.S. Reps. Greg Walden, a Republican who represents the 2nd District of Oregon; U.S. Rep. Tom Reed, a Republican who represents the 23rd District of New York; and, Kathleen Rice, a Democrat who represents the 4th District of New York and who opened the discussion by talking about the need for both political parties to come together and why that is often so difficult these days.

“We’re supposed to be talking today about bipartisanship,” Rice stated. “It seems like that is a four letter word here in Washington of late. But I am happy to say that I spend most of my time trying to find Republicans like my two wonderful colleagues here to get things done with. And there is a lot getting done here in Washington. It might not be the big ticket items that we have to address – that’s going to take a heavier lift in a hyper-partisan time like now. But one of the things that we really need to do here in Washington is restore the public’s faith in their public servants.”

“Tom and I worked on getting into the rules package of this Congress a prohibition against anyone in our position serving on a public board. You would have thought that would have been something that you couldn’t do. It was not – it was overlooked in the House. They had that rule in the Senate. Because of the arrest of one of our colleagues, that came to light as something that was not a rule in the House. When that happened, I called Tom and asked him, ‘Will you partner with me on this?’ He said, ‘Absolutely.’ It was not even a question.”

Rice pointed to two other initiatives she is working on that have garnered support from both sides of the aisle.

“Steve Stivers and I are trying to address the need of veterans to get service dogs,” she stated. “Lee Zeldin, Peter King, Tom Suozzi, Greg Meeks and I are also talking about the need to address the rise in anti-Semitism. Obviously,



U.S. Reps. Greg Walden (left), Tom Reed (center), and Kathleen Rice (right)

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we have had a lot of incidents in New York over the past couple of weeks. But it’s happening all across the country, and there was no question when I called all of them. They said ‘When and where do you want me to be?’ And they were there.”

Despite these bright spots of bipartisanship, Rice did express concern about one development in Congress over the past year – namely, the number of solutions-oriented leaders who are choosing to step away from public life.

“No offense to Greg Walden,” she said, “but I’m very upset that he is going to be leaving us.

Because if you want to know what the biggest threat to bipartisanship is in Washington, it’s good people like him leaving. We have good people on the Democratic side, too, who are leaving. And my fear is that we’re going to be left with the most extreme Members in both of our parties.”

Reed agreed.

“We work together because I think there’s a common bond between many of us,” the New York lawmaker declared. “Hopefully, we’ve demonstrated that we came here to Washington to get something done. We’re proud Republicans and we’re proud Democrats. But we will stay in the room and hash out those differences and find that common ground. Kathleen Rice is one of those individuals, and I so appreciate her tenacity. I so appreciate her independent streak. And that’s not readily seen here in Washington. So I just applaud you, Kathleen, for what you do on your side.

“As we deal with 2020 and going forward, I would echo also what Kathleen said. We first have to recognize the successes. We had some great wins at the end of the year. If you really look at it – if you put all the partisan

stuff aside and take impeachment out of the equation – at the end of the year we landed a plane with a tremendous amount of successes in the bank, not just in that year-end package, but throughout the year.”

Reed continued, elaborating on what he would like to see coming out of Congress in the next 12 months, and explaining that building consensus and legislating is a slow and steady process.

“I think 2020 is going to be about trying to find those common-ground wins,” he said. “They may be singles and doubles, but they do improve American lives. And that’s what we’re here for, and that’s what we’re going to continue to work for as we deal with these turbulent times.”

Walden concurred, and opened his remarks by reflecting on his time – and his approach – as Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

“We tried to work in a bipartisan way,” he recalled. “We passed 148 bills. Ninety three percent of them had bipartisan votes on the House floor, and about half became law. One of those contained some 50 opioids bills we packaged up that also passed the House. The long and short of it is a big body of our work became law, so this institution still works. You probably didn’t know all those stats, and you probably don’t know all the bills we passed that the President signed into law, because when we get along, it doesn’t have the same newsworthiness. I’m not picking on the media here, but it’s not the same story as when we’re fighting. And that’s unfortunate, because I think too often our constituents only hear about the fights and not about the wins.”

Providing some examples of recent bipartisan victories, Walden spoke about the work his committee has done to address the opioid crisis facing the country.

“The bipartisan work we did in the prior Congress [on opioids] is now beginning to play out on the ground,” the

veteran Republican said. “There’s bipartisan work we can move forward on following up on the conclusions of our investigations into what went wrong, looking at additional help for people with substance abuse disorder, and continuing the progress. I think there’s an opportunity this session of Congress to pick up where we left off with opioids. I’ve always believed that after you pass a major body of legislation, you have an obligation to go back and say, did it work or not? And what do we need to do, what did we miss, what did we leave behind, and what could we not get done?”

“I’ll conclude with a couple other big ones. I still believe there is ability to find common ground on drug pricing. It doesn’t chase innovation out of our laboratories and from our scientists, and I believe surprise medical billing is really important to get done too. One out of five visitors to an emergency room gets stuck with a surprise bill. We didn’t ask for this problem, but we have it and we’re going to fix it. Chairman Pallone has been terrific side by side with us and Lamar Alexander and Senator Murray. There’s more to be done.”

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