

## **Reed and Murphy Lead Effort in Congress to Bridge Political Divide**

WASHINGTON, DC — Though many Americans across the country stand divided after a tumultuous month, some leaders in Washington are standing together – Republican and Democrat – as they see an opportunity to unite on the issues affecting every American regardless of ideological tilt.

The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange held a virtual event this past Friday with two of those leaders: U.S. Reps. Tom Reed (R-NY-23) and Stephanie Murphy (D-FL-7). Murphy, who Co-Chairs the 18-member Blue Dog Coalition, kicked things off by underscoring just how important it is to be results-oriented in Washington.

“I’m someone who believes that the entire point of public service is to get things done,” Murphy stated. “In Congress that means writing good bills and getting them through the House and through the Senate and getting them signed into law by the President. I don’t think messaging bills or partisan bills that can’t make it through the legislative crucible are worth the energy and time because they don’t help my constituents or my country.

“I think what’s uplifting to me is that we have a Democrat President in Joe Biden who knows how to work with Congress and who, despite false claims to the contrary, is a principal pragmatist at heart. This situation presents obvious challenges, but really important opportunities. From my perspective, results oriented groups in the House, like my 18-member Blue Dog Coalition, or the Problem Solvers Caucus that Tom and Josh Gottheimer (NJ-5) lead, are going to be particularly empowered to defeat partisan legislation and advance good bipartisan legislation.”

Reed, who Co-Chairs the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, began his remarks by touching on the insurrection at the Capitol earlier this month, emphasizing his support for the Constitution and the peaceful transfer of power.

“We have this transfer of power at the ballot box, we do not take it to the streets. And we get through this transfer of power in a peaceful, orderly fashion. I was glad to go to the inauguration the other day – as a proud American – to stand there and show support for our President.”



U.S. Reps. Tom Reed (left) and Stephanie Murphy (right).

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Reed says the Problem Solvers Caucus has built a relationship with Biden over the years and hopes this will continue into his presidency. One area Reed hopes to collaborate on with the White House is the fight against COVID-19, and, more specifically, the vaccine rollout.

“I think there’s bipartisan opportunity with COVID. We should be united in our support for vaccination. The President’s goal is a hundred million doses in a hundred days – but I think we could easily deliver two-hundred million doses in a hundred days, and I’m going to challenge the President and I’ll do everything in my power to work with him to get that done. Getting the vaccine into people’s arms is the ultimate solution to COVID-19 and getting this terrible, terrible disease into the history books.”

Following their opening remarks, they were asked a number of questions as members of the Ways and Means Committee, including what the tax agenda looks like now that the Democrats control the House, Senate, and White House. Murphy addressed this first.

“My hope is that we use regular order as opposed to a reconciliation process, especially when it comes to taxes. I think with taxes, if you can’t pass taxes in a bipartisan way, the only thing you really introduced to the business world is uncertainty, because when you have a large bill – be it healthcare or taxes – pass the House with just one party’s vote, the only certainty is uncertainty. That’s because the next time the political pendulum swings, there’s going to be a desire to dismantle what the other side did. I think there will obviously be a thorough look at the 2017 tax bill

because it was passed on a party line basis.

“I do think any changes are going to be within the context of understanding that we’re trying to pull out of an economic recession. And so that will be the guard rails on any major changes. But I do know that our party, the Democratic Party, wants a fairer tax code for the middle class and that some of these benefits should be helpful to middle-class working families.

“Changes will probably be more incremental than they are sweeping and also given the narrow majorities. That puts Tom in a great place with Problem Solvers to help build that kind of bipartisan support for legislation.”

“Our Caucus votes as a block,” Reed said of the 56-member Problem Solvers Caucus. “So we’re going to have some influence over this agenda if it becomes extreme. We’re going to come together and block that to be perfectly honest with you.

“On tax policy in particular, you’re seeing this call for tax increases. And obviously there are a lot of us that don’t like that policy that just see the negative consequences of that in regard to small business growth, economic growth, the investments that we need coming out of COVID-19. We’re going to push back on that, but I think there needs to be a recognition that on the left, there is a call for a fair tax code, whatever you want to call it, but that’s going to come with revenue increases, tax increases.

Reed continued.

“I don’t think you can contain that voice. I think it would be next to impossible to say that the platform President Biden won upon – that there has to be a fair share paid by folks with tax increases – can be somehow stopped by Republican coalitions standing in the way.

“We need to recognize that they are going to have to satisfy this need for revenue increases. And it will be done with tax increases only with none of the tradeoffs and more uncertainty in the tax code if Republicans refuse to sit at the table and negotiate.”

Finally, both Members were asked to discuss the Affordable Care Act and possible fixes being talked about among their colleagues in Congress.

“The pandemic highlighted for us areas in which our health care system still needs some assistance,” Murphy explained. “There are some areas of weakness

that we can try to address.

“First and foremost, I think we have to pass legislation and focus on addressing COVID. That means having a coordinated federal policy towards vaccine distribution. In Florida, it’s going in the wrong direction. The number of vaccines we’re getting is on a decline instead of on an increase. It’s going to be hard for us to get vaccines into arms unless we were able to address that at the federal level. And then beyond that, people here in Washington have spent ten years trying to dismantle the health care system. I think it is well past time for that and we should just step away from this idea that the current health care system belongs to any particular president.”

The New York Republican concurred.

“We’re at the point now that the whole ‘battle of repealing Obamacare’ has to be a thing of history. We have to move forward, and we have to fix this health care system in America. “There’s been a tremendous loss with COVID-19, but this pandemic has given us an opportunity to improve our operations in America through telemedicine and being able to connect to patients in a way that we haven’t seen before. I think there are things that we learned through COVID-19 that we’re going to be able to transition health care from some of those antiquated, built-up bureaucracies and maybe we are in a position to look forward and do some things in the health care arena that will make things more effective and efficient.”

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