

**LaHood & Panetta
Forge Bipartisan Alliance to
Help America's Hotel &
Restaurant Workers**

WASHINGTON, DC — The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange hosted a breakfast meeting this past Thursday with Republican Congressman Darin LaHood (IL-18) and Democrat Congressman Jimmy Panetta (CA-20), who discussed not only the bipartisan relationship they have forged as members of the Ways & Means Committee, but their work across the aisle to help America's hotel and restaurant workers after a very tough year.

"People like to focus on the division and the partisanship," LaHood stated, kicking off the discussion. "But when I look at the Ways and Means Committee, I look at the membership. It's made up of Republicans and Democrats who represent their districts, but they are still people you can talk and engage with. You can have dialogue with them, and we've had a lot of collaboration. I look at the Secure Act (Secure 2.0) that we passed earlier this year – legislation that really does good work when it comes to retirement.

"I look at the USMCA that we passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support, which came through the Ways and Means Committee ... I also look at other areas like infrastructure. There's a lot of talk today and next week whether that group can put together an infrastructure plan. It's something, frankly, I've talked about since I ran for Congress in 2015. How do we get to 'yes' on infrastructure? There's a lot of optimism on how we get there, and it looks like the Senate is driving the train on that. But I hope we can get that done."

"I think there's a lot of collaboration on China among Republicans and Democrats. I'm proud to serve as the co-chair of the U.S.-China working group with my colleague, Rick Larsen, and I was on the China Task Force last year. You can look at Senator Schumer and Senator Young's bill, which started out as the Endless Frontiers Act. It's kind of transitioned, but it passed in the Senate and now it's coming over to the House. I think there's a lot of opportunity as we focus on China and figure out how we can work together on that."

Panetta agreed.

"Darin and I have a lot of differences," the California Democrat began. "Where we come from, our political parties ... But we have our similarities as well. And obviously, it's Ways and Means. But we're also simpatico because of our families. There's no doubt about that. I think one of the things that creates a bond between Darin and me is the fact that we had fathers who made it easier to be a politician's kid. And we're very fortunate about that."

Panetta also pointed to another area where he and LaHood agreed and that is in making sure that the restaurants, hotels, and other businesses that make up America's hospitality sector receive the help they need as the nation emerges from its battle against COVID-19. To that end, the pair have co-



U.S. Reps. Jimmy Panetta (left) & Darin LaHood (right)

authored and support several pieces of legislation which would provide comprehensive relief for the convention, entertainment, hospitality, and travel industries and their workers by creating new recovery incentives and enhancing the employee retention tax credit until regular travel and tourism safely resumes.

"We had to do something to make sure that the hospitality industry survives," Panetta stated matter-of-factly. "They went through some very, very tough times when it comes to the pandemic and the shutdowns and the slowdowns. Now, with the supply chain and the lack of labor that we're seeing reenter the workforce, it is still difficult for them. That's why it's outstanding that I have a partner like Darin, who also understands how important it is to ensure that that industry is getting help from the U.S. Congress. And that's why we introduced, not just the Hospitality Commerce Job Recovery Act, but we also

support the Healthy Workplaces Act and the Plus Act."

The intent of these measures, Panetta noted, is to make sure this vital sector of America's economy not only survives the pandemic, but thrives in the coming years – which, he added, is why making the effort to find common ground is so important. "It's easy to be here in Washington and just see the differences that we have," he said. "But it takes work to find our similarities. I'm so lucky that I have a partner on the other side of the aisle who understands that and actually follows through with that in Darin LaHood.

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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