

Fitzpatrick and Gottheimer Discuss Bipartisan Agenda for the Coming Year

WASHINGTON, DC — The Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange and The Ripon Society and held a virtual discussion this past Thursday with the two Co-Chairs of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus, U.S. Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-1) and Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ-5). The two legislators discussed their caucus' agenda for the coming year and why bipartisan cooperation in the House of Representatives is important now more than ever.

“We believe that government should be no different than our personal relationships,” Fitzpatrick stated, “where you meet in the middle and build consensus. You don't focus on that which you disagree on, you focus on what you agree on and come to the center to move forward. Any functional relationship in our lives works that way.

“In an ideal world, there wouldn't be a need for the Problem Solvers Caucus. That would just be the way everybody operated and conducted themselves. Josh and I, by virtue of our leadership of the Caucus, believe that no one party has a monopoly on good ideas. No one party has a monopoly on being good human beings.

“A recent example of our efforts, which Josh and I are both very proud of, is the bipartisan infrastructure legislation that passed squarely because of our Caucus. There were not enough single-party votes to get it across the finish line. It was only going to pass with votes coming from both parties.

“Along with a number of colleagues from the Senate, we all met at Governor Hogan's residence in Annapolis back in April and agreed infrastructure is a critical need in this country and that China is eating our lunch when it comes to infrastructure investments. We agreed that, without opening the tax code at all, we needed to come up with creative ways to finance needed investments in roads and bridges and ports and water infrastructure and 5G broadband, all the things that are needed. And we got it across the finish line.”

Gottheimer agreed with his Republican counterpart, adding that many politicians come to Washington to serve their egos instead of serving their country.

“The Problem Solvers Caucus is the most important thing I do in Washington, and I know Brian feels the same



Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick (left) & Josh Gottheimer (right).

way. We are trying to find common ground to get things done—to govern—instead of just tweeting nasty things or yelling and screaming on cable news trying to be some sort of entertainer.

“We understand that the reason you go to Washington and people elect you is to fight for your district and put the country over party. As Brian said, he's a proud Republican, I'm a proud Democrat. But when we get in a room together, we're really just proud problem solvers.”

The two lawmakers then took a couple questions from the virtual audience. The first was in regard to the chip shortage and the work being done in Congress to address it.

“This is an issue where you have a lot of members pressing our leadership right now to act,” Gottheimer explained. “Obviously, we've made it pretty clear publicly where we are on this and how important it is, but we are also stressing how urgent this issue is privately. We know how aggressive China is and how much we have become dependent on other countries. We can't afford to be in this position.

“We have to act now. I think the pressure is real. I think movement will be made on this in the next couple months when we deal with our appropriations packages.”

Fitzpatrick, a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, agreed on the need for quick and effective action to boost U.S.-based production.

“There is nothing more important to any of us right now than semiconductors and the CHIPS Act. On the Intel Committee, we are reminded every second of every day how urgent this need is. It's a matter of convincing House leadership. Josh and I are certainly pushing every day to get this on the floor.”

Finally, Fitzpatrick and Gottheimer were asked to address the evolving issue regarding Russia's recent military build-up at the Ukrainian border. Fitzpatrick, who serves as Co-Chair of the Congressional Ukraine Caucus, answered first.

"The situation is not good there—at all. It's something that we've been raising the flag on for months now, ever since we were initially briefed. It was about five months ago when the Intel Community came to us and said that this is a problem and that it is not like previous build-ups that were more for show. Vladimir Putin senses weakness and he's proceeding on it, just like any schoolyard bully does.

"There's a transition going on in Germany. President Macron is up for reelection in France. They see, at least in their estimation, a weakened EU and a weakened NATO and they're trying to take advantage of that. The demands that they made were all non-starters; they don't want Ukraine to ever be considered for NATO membership. That is off the table.

"I personally would go much further than President Biden is going. I think when you're dealing with adversaries like this, there are certain things you can do to stave off aggression. To

wait for the invasion to respond is not the right posture."

Gottheimer concurred.

"I'm deeply concerned about how this is escalating, and I agree that the only way we should ever lead is through strength. Based on the briefings I've received, I share the alarming concern of many of my colleagues on this issue. I think this is going to rightly take a lot of our attention in the coming weeks and months and we have to be on top of this."

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. **FC**