

## **Huizenga, Peters Talk Bipartisan Fiscal Forum**

WASHINGTON, DC — With the national debt at a record level and the federal deficit nearly tripling in the first nine months of the fiscal year, The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange held a breakfast discussion yesterday morning with U.S. Representatives Bill Huizenga (R-MI-04) and Scott Peters (D-CA-50) who discussed the Bipartisan Fiscal Forum (BFF), a congressional group led by the pair that is made up Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle dedicated to resolving our nation's unsustainable debt trajectory.

"This Bipartisan Fiscal Forum is an offshoot of something that we very inventively called '30 by 30,'" Huizenga remarked. "It was 30 Republicans, 30 Democrats that had come together. I got into this by venting with Jodey Arrington one night. As we were talking about where we are going—Jodey, this has been a very passionate thing for him as well — said, 'We've got to get together a bipartisan group. We need to start doing this.'

"We've got a good core group of folks that are very focused on this. We are serious minded. We're wanting to make sure that we're open and honest, not only with each other, but with our colleagues and more importantly, the American people, because they need to understand what is coming at them."

Huizenga currently serves as Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee on the House Financial Services Committee and Peters serves on the House Budget Committee. The two formally founded the BFF in 2023 after having an informal start in 2020. The group has grown to more than 70 members over the last three years.

Peters then outlined three themes surrounding solutions to tackling our nation's debt that are all best approached on a bipartisan basis.

"Jodey [Arrington] and I worked on this for three Congresses, and we had sort of three themes. One was we wanted to get a sense for the Congress of what the fiscal state of the nation was. Second, we wanted debt ceiling reform. The debt ceiling, in concept, seems like a good idea, but it comes late in the decision-making process. It's used as a political cudgel, not really for any kind of beneficial policy."

Peters discussed his third and final theme — the creation of a bipartisan debt commission in order to avoid wasting taxpayer dollars on crippling interest rates.

"When you think about the amount of money that we're going to have to spend on interest each year, that's money we can't spend on something else. And if you're a Democrat, you may want a child tax credit. You can't get that. If you're



U.S. Reps. Bill Huizenga (left) & Scott Peters (right)

worried about China — I mean, we're all going to have to up our game with respect to competing with China and being ready militarily — that [interest] is going to crowd out that kind of investment, and it's going to really going to hobble our country. I think that a debt commission is the right mechanism and it's the right time."

On the subject of the work the BFF is currently tackling head-on, the Golden State congressman shared the importance of having a bipartisan space in which to have these conversations.

"We have a revenue problem as well as a spending problem. I don't know how we get a real honest discussion about that, how we give Republicans and Democrats any cover to talk about that without a commission with experts in it. So that's what I've been happy to collaborate with Bill on. I mean, he and I will not say out front

we're not going to vote for something that doesn't do this or does do this. We know it's going to have something in it that each of us doesn't like. But if we're arm in arm, we have a shot at getting it done. Under this system, I don't think that's possible. So, I think the commission's really important. I think Democrats should want it and Republicans should want it."

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