

Obernolte, Bera Discuss Future of AI, Bipartisan Task Force

WASHINGTON, DC – As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to change the global landscape for America, its allies, and its adversaries, The Ripon Society and Franklin Center hosted a discussion featuring remarks from the U.S. House of Representatives Bipartisan Task Force on Artificial Intelligence Chair Jay Obernolte (R-CA-23) and fellow task force member Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA-6). Obernolte, who is the only Member of Congress with a graduate degree in Artificial Intelligence, kicked off the discussion by sharing the work he’s led on the task force.

The task force, which met 25 times in 2024 and is made up of 24 Members of Congress – 12 Republicans and 12 Democrats – recently released a report he described as “probably the most detailed policy document on AI that’s been produced by any legislative body in the world up until now.”

“We had over 60 key findings and over 80 recommendations,” he continued, “and we wrote it in such a way that it can serve as a checklist for future congresses, starting with the 119th.

“We wrote it to be a good guidance to the direction that we think the United States should take on AI regulation. We recommend a sectoral approach to regulation, which is very different than what is being done in other places in the world, especially the European Union. We think that that’s the wrong approach.

“What we are recommending is to instead empower our existing sectoral regulators to regulate AI in their sectoral spaces. We’re fighting against a non-informed narrative in this country that AI is unregulated in the United States, and that is very untrue. Our sectoral regulators are already having to regulate AI within their spaces.

“We think what makes the most sense is to empower our sectoral regulators, because the risks of AI are highly contextual. Something that is unacceptably risky in one usage context, like a medical device might be completely benign in another usage context like a video game. So, we think it matters what you’re going to do with it, and our sectoral regulators understand that.”

Bera, who was asked by Minority Leader Hakeem



Reps. Jay Obernolte (left) and Ami Bera (right) discuss their bipartisan approach to Artificial Intelligence.

**“We need to work together.
We need to push in the
same direction. We need
to sit down and have a
combined vision of where
we’re going.”**

Jeffries (D-NY-8) to join the bipartisan task force in the 118th Congress, began his remarks by exploring the new opportunities introduced by AI.

“I look at AI from the perspective of, how does it make our life better? Let’s think about what this looks like. Let’s think about what those guardrails ought to be that protect us, but don’t stifle innovation. How do we get that right?”

“I think the politics will get a little bit difficult. The committees of jurisdiction could get challenging. That said, it’s still the right thing for us to have a regulatory framework at the federal level as opposed to 50 different states.”

Bera, a medical doctor by trade, then touched on the issue of never-ending legislation that would be required to regulate generative AI, and provided a real-life example from his own field of expertise.

“So as these algorithms and these technologies evolve and get better and change, what you might have approved today could be totally different a year from now. What does that look like? Do you allow companies to self-regulate and self-evaluate?”

“The big health systems have the ability to create their own algorithms and test their algorithms on their own patient populations. Some of this is actually reducing readmission times, reducing hospital acquired infections, and saving lives. But if they’ve tested it on the model of patients in San Francisco, is that algorithm going to work the same way on a small rural hospital in Alabama?”

“So right now, most of the healthcare space is pretty benevolent. They’re sharing what they’re learning and so forth. But at some juncture, there’s going to be a competitive advantage for a health system.”

Following their opening remarks, Obernolte and Bera

fielded a number of questions, including one regarding collaboration with the Trump Administration.

“It’s clearly going to take a combination of working with the executive branch and working within the legislative branch to get the things that need to get done,” answered Obernolte. “We need to work together. We need to push in the same direction. We need to sit down and have a combined vision of where we’re going, and then they can get there on the executive side. We can get there on the legislative side.”

The two Californians also discussed their shared hope for the establishment of a select committee on the subject.

“One thing that surprised me that we learned within the task force is just how broadly cross-jurisdictional the topic of AI regulation is,” shared Obernolte. “it’s spread out to nearly every policy committee that touches on what we found in the report, so just about every policy committee is going to have to act together to help us accomplish this. I think we need a nucleus to jumpstart that. I would love to see the task force be reconstituted as a select committee.”

Bera concurred with his colleague.

“To me this is a starting point, not an ending point. Because really what we did is, the more questions we asked, the more questions we had. I think it was our hope in a unanimous way, Democrats and Republicans, that the Speaker and the Leader would turn this into a select subcommittee. I think we’re still on both sides of the aisle trying to push for that.”

Bera then answered a question regarding the race for regulation, privacy, and development of the

groundbreaking technology between the United States and its adversaries – specifically China’s DeepSeek, which is being investigated by the U.S. Department of Commerce for possibly being powered by U.S.-made chips.

“I still think American companies and European companies still have a huge advantage and are still the best position to do this. This is where good government policy is important.

“China had a lot of this stuff already, and they used it, but it also forced them to think about the algorithms. I don’t think we should be scared and panic, but I think we should understand that. We probably will do export controls under this administration. What does that look like? How are we smart about that? How do we certainly protect, you know, working with our allies and, and friends, vital, intellectual property, technology, et cetera, for advantage. But China’s getting better at 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 www.franklincenter.us. **FC**

