

## **BIOTech Caucus Leaders Bice & Houlahan Warn China is Leading Critical National Security Race**

WASHINGTON, DC – Congresswomen Stephanie Bice (R-OK-05) and Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA-06), co-chairs of the bipartisan BIOTech Caucus, addressed The Ripon Society and Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange yesterday morning highlighting the urgent need for Congress to prioritize biotechnology as a critical national security issue.

Chairwoman Bice opened with remarks in which she recounted her appointment three years ago to a biotech-focused commission created under the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) examining biotechnology and national security.

“It was a really incredible opportunity to better understand what is happening in the biotech space. First of all, there’s not a whole government strategy to really address biotech, and there’s not a focus on it. On HASC, we’re certainly looking at physical

infrastructure, and cyber has been a very big talking point.

“Genetics is really at the forefront. And if we break the code in some of these areas, it opens up an enormous amount of opportunity but also concern.

“This has not been a focus at all, and there are so many things that people aren’t familiar with. And so, part of my job now as part of the caucus that Chrissy spearheaded is the education piece of this. Our colleagues don’t understand the risks and rewards of biotech in many cases.”

Chairwoman Houlahan—an Air Force veteran, engineer, entrepreneur, and former high school science teacher—reflected on how Congress’s lack of technical expertise creates dangerous blind spots in policymaking.

“I think it’s really a huge gap in our knowledge,” Houlahan said. “What I’ve seen in the eight years that

**“Biology is the key to the future. And if we’re not paying attention, we will be in the past.”**





Rep. Stephanie Bice (R-OK)

I've been in Congress is that we spend a lot of time on technical things with a bunch of people who know almost nothing about it, and we miss a lot of things because of the inertia of the place and also because of the lack of knowledge and appreciation of the spaces that we're in."

She noted that emerging technologies—from cyber and AI to quantum computing—often get sidelined amid procedural gridlock. "Rather than doing the important job of identifying threats and opportunities, we are instead doing other things. And so, biology is one of those places where we have the opportunity not to miss this as it leaves the dock."

The Pennsylvania Congresswoman emphasized that the commission's concrete recommendations provided the foundation for the BIOTech Caucus. "It's not enough to just be a part of a group. It's important that you actually attend and participate, because the stakes are hugely high."

She also reiterated why she believes this issue – and this Caucus – are so critical to the health and security of our nation down the road. "Biology is the key to the future," she observed. "And if we're not paying attention, we will be in the past."

Later on, the co-Chairs fielded a number of questions, including one on the bipartisan, bicameral, Biomanufacturing Excellence Act, which Congresswoman Houlahan introduced earlier this week.

"This piece of legislation is a marker and an opportunity for us to be able to excel in biomanufacturing

for pharmaceuticals because it's important," the Pennsylvania lawmaker answered, "and because it also has implications on all the other aspects of things."

Chairwoman Bice highlighted workforce development opportunities, pointing to new initiatives in Oklahoma that train lab technicians without requiring traditional four-year degrees.

"We also need individuals that can sort of just do the day-to-day work in a lab. I was really excited because in Oklahoma there is a new entity that is training people in lab technology."

When asked about technology sharing with allies while safeguarding innovations from adversaries, Bice delivered a stark warning about America's competitive position.

"We need partners and allies to be able to advance these initiatives quicker because the fact of the matter is we're falling behind," answered Bice.

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.



Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA)