



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Panetta Institute Honors Four Leaders for Putting Country Ahead of Partisanship

With only twelve months to go before the next presidential election, almost 400 Panetta Institute supporters gathered at The Inn at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach on the evening of November 9 to see four political leaders honored for their work in reaching across the partisan divide in order to find solutions to national problems.

The annual **Evening to Honor Lives of Public Service** singled out four public servants with the coveted *Jefferson-Lincoln Award*: United States Senator Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee), University of California President Janet Napolitano, United States Representative Joshua S. Gottheimer (D-New Jersey) and United States Representative Thomas W. Reed II (R-New York). Because Senator Alexander was unable to attend, former United States Senator Alan Simpson (R-Wyoming) accepted the award on his behalf.

Institute chairman Leon Panetta praised Alexander, a Republican, as one of the stalwart pragmatic dealmakers left on Capitol Hill. Speaking via video, Senator Alexander said that despite growing polarization, Congress has been able to collaborate, and pointed to legislation in education, medical research and the fight against opioid addiction.

Secretary Panetta also lauded President Napolitano for taking on the challenges of presiding over the University of California.

President Napolitano said her time at the University has given her “great hope,” that students today are interested in social justice and should be supported in translating that interest into actively pursuing a career in public service.

The remaining honorees, Representative Reed, a Republican, and Representative Gottheimer, a Democrat, are members of the *Congressional Problem Solvers Caucus* – a group of twenty-four Republicans and twenty-four Democrats who meet weekly to solve some of the most contentious issues facing our country today. Representative Reed

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Institute chairman Leon and Sylvia Panetta with, from left, Thomas W. Reed, Alan Simpson, Janet Napolitano and Joshua S. Gottheimer.

National Leaders Honored

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pledged to “stay in the room” and said his goal is for the caucus “to be replaced by a ‘Problem Solvers Congress.’”

Representative Gottheimer commented, “America will always be greater when we remember how America was built – with bipartisan cooperation and a focus on the key challenges of the time.”

The Institute also honored Tim White, the chancellor of California State University for the 20 years of support and partnership with the Panetta Institute. Garrett Ashley, president of the California State University

Foundation, accepted the award on his behalf.

The Panetta Institute established the annual *Jefferson-Lincoln Awards* nineteen years ago to recognize elected and appointed officials who have shown an exceptional devotion to public service and a bipartisan approach to difficult issues. In some years the honor has also been bestowed on political journalists who have demonstrated an exemplary commitment to unbiased, factbased reporting.



Lamar Alexander spoke to attendees via video.

A Message from the Chairman

Our Democracy is at a Crossroads

By **Leon E. Panetta**

Our country is at a crossroads as we enter the presidential election year of 2020, and our country’s leaders could take us in one of two directions – America in renaissance or an America in decline.



These are unprecedented times and they’re dangerous times, but I absolutely believe in the ability of the American people to fight for that American renaissance, for that American dream, and in particular, for a government of, by and for all people.

There is a risk, however, that we could be an America in decline. Such a fate could result if we as Americans get caught up in partisanship and division. If during this election year we witness only partisan wrangling and unfounded

accusations, we will end up only in further crisis because of the failure of our leadership to govern. The story of failed empires in history is the story of failed leadership.

We at the Panetta Institute are devoted to creating a climate of leadership, from the leaders of today and those of tomorrow – as well as each of us as individuals. Our programs are devoted to the ideal of our leaders and the citizenry working together to achieve a safe and secure America.

The health of our democracy depends on those that get involved, who are concerned about the direction of our country, and are willing to take the risks essential to leadership. Our forefathers designed a system of government dependent on checks and balances but also dependent on consensus. The choice of leadership or crisis will determine the future of our democracy.



Congressional Internship Program Demonstrates How Leadership Works

The Panetta Institute sponsored twenty-six students from around California in its twenty-first annual *Congressional Internship Program* in 2019, encouraging students to become part of the national political process.

“The challenge for the *Congressional Internship Program* as the year 2020 approaches is to address concerns by young people about the direction of the country,” said Secretary Leon Panetta.

Secretary Panetta cites the results of the most recent Panetta Institute survey of college students in which respondents expressed deep concern over the quality of the nation’s governance.

“Student satisfaction with the quality of the country’s political leadership stands at only 31 percent – the lowest ranking in the history of our survey,” Secretary Panetta said. “Student concerns go deep, to the health of our democracy and the quality of our leaders.”

The *Congressional Internship Program* targets that concern. “Our program gives these young men and women the training and resources they need to work in Washington and participate in our democracy,” said Secretary Panetta.

Indeed, the Panetta Institute’s internship goes far beyond most college internship programs, where the experience often doesn’t go much beyond subbing for the office’s receptionist or running errands.

Panetta interns get an in-depth education in the legislative process, starting with a two-week orientation course at the Institute’s Monterey Bay headquarters, where they interact with members of Congress, congressional staff, political journalists and other Washington veterans.



2019 Congressional interns with Secretary Panetta at the U.S. Capitol.

The opportunities continue when the interns travel to Washington, D.C. Once there, their internships involve not only serving in Congressional offices for a period of eleven weeks, but also doing continued research and attending further seminars with some of the nation’s top policy thinkers and decision makers.

“These are tomorrow’s leaders,” said Institute Co-Chair and CEO Sylvia Panetta. “We are proud of our record of giving young people the education they need to go into the field of public service.”

“THE CHALLENGE IS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS BY YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY.”

— Leon Panetta



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Student Volunteers Do Their Part to Make Monterey County Reads Successful

The Panetta Institute’s longest-running program, *Monterey County Reads*, continues to innovate by increasing the number of high-school students who participate as volunteers. The program is now in its twenty-third year.

“These students have been a welcome addition to our growing list of volunteers who read one-to-one with first- second- and third-grade students who need help the most,” said Co-Chair and CEO Sylvia Panetta.

The idea of reaching out to high-school volunteers began several years ago with students enrolled in the Naval Junior ROTC program at Monterey High. The effort proved so successful that the program has expanded to four other high schools: Soledad High School, JROTC students at Seaside High School, and students at Central Bay High School in Prunedale and Palma High School in Salinas.

Like all *Monterey County Reads* volunteers, these students receive training from the Institute’s team of literary specialists, who also are in charge of student assessments to ensure an accurate assessment of program results.

Study after study has shown that a child’s ability to read is crucial to help him or her achieve a happy and productive life. Conversely, these studies show that the lack of literacy skills

often means poverty, unemployment and even a greater chance of incarceration.

Figures from our most recent school years show that 165 volunteers contributed their time in nine school districts and thirty elementary schools. In the same time period, the number of hours read to students exceeded 4,000 hours, and 650 students were served.

“Our research data seems to show that our program has scored significant gains in quality and effectiveness,” said Mrs. Panetta.

In addition to the expanding student volunteer program, *Monterey County Reads* recruits its volunteers from area colleges, businesses, military installations, faith groups and community organizations. Additional volunteers and organizations are encouraged to get involved.



Reading with a student one-to-one is the key to success.

