



PANETTA INSTITUTE

update

Lecture Series Examines Checks and Balances

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The twenty-second year of the *Leon Panetta Lecture Series* focused on the health of the United States' democracy with Secretary Panetta hosting several nationally known speakers at four separate forums this spring, examining **Checks and Balances – Will Our Democracy Survive?**

At the four lectures, Secretary Panetta interviewed a variety of experts on how the founders of our country sought to limit power in any one sector of government – particularly the presidency. “Today, that system is being tested,” he said.

The first lecture in the series was on Monday, February 25, and featured a discussion of **The Mueller Investigation, the Law and the Presidency** and included James Clapper, former Director of National Intelligence Agency; Mara Liasson, national political correspondent for NPR and a contributor to Fox News Channel; and Chuck Rosenberg, former Counsel to FBI Director Robert Mueller. The speakers agreed that the very existence of the Mueller Investigation was a sign that the system of checks and balances is working.

The second lecture was on Monday, March 25, and was a discussion of **The Role of the Press and the Congress**, with former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie; television panelist and political advisor Mark McKinnon; and syndicated columnist Mark Shields. The panel discussed new developments in the investigation

by Congress and others of election interference by Russia, and on the importance of a free press.

On Monday, April 15, Secretary Panetta hosted the third lecture in the series, **The Role of Nationalism, Globalism and Patriotism**, featuring R. Nicholas Burns, former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs; General John Kelly, former White House Chief of Staff; and Admiral William McRaven, former Commander of the United States Special Operations. The three speakers discussed the importance of the United States continuing in its role as a world leader, saying that several potential “flashpoints” around the world cannot be ignored.

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Institute Chairman Leon E. Panetta (left) discusses the wisdom of America's founders with historians Annette Gordon-Reed and Douglas Brinkley.

Afternoon Student Program Presents a Unique Opportunity to be Part of our Democracy

An important part of the *Leon Panetta Lecture Series* is the *Afternoon Student Program*. This year, more than 1,300 students from around the Central Coast area participated in discussions with speakers at sessions held prior to the evening event.

After introductory lectures by Panetta Institute professors Sonia Banks and Richard Kezirian, students engaged with Secretary Panetta and the speakers in a town hall format that included a lively question-and-answer period.

“Our speakers have remarked on the high quality of questions asked and the informed level of discussion that results,” said Co-Chair and CEO Sylvia Panetta. “We believe that this program provides students a unique opportunity to engage with national leaders and understand the importance of being an informed part of our democracy.”



Students from around the Central Coast attended the *Afternoon Student Program*.

The student program also featured preliminary mid-week sessions held before the lectures for a special group of interested students from local area high schools. These students met with local community leaders to discuss the upcoming topic as a way to prepare these students for the session with the featured speakers.

Lecture Series Focuses on Checks and Balances

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Finally, on Monday May 27, historians Douglas Brinkley and Annette Gordon-Reed examined **What Was the Hope of our Forefathers? Has it Worked?** They looked back across America’s past for more than 200 years and commented on the wisdom of the nation’s founders and their overarching goal of

limiting power in any one area of government. That effort has largely succeeded, the historians said, also acknowledging that not every group has received fair representation throughout our history. They also compared today’s level of political partisanship to that of an even more conflicted era, the time leading up to the American Civil War.



Speakers: former Director of National Intelligence Agency James Clapper, political analyst Mara Liasson, former FBI counsel Chuck Rosenberg, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, political advisor Mark McKinnon, syndicated columnist Mark Shields, former Under Secretary of State R. Nicholas Burns, former White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, former commander of United States Special Operations Command William McRaven, historian Douglas Brinkley and historian Annette Gordon-Reed.

Panetta Survey Shows College Students Optimistic About Themselves but Skeptical Over Country's Leadership

In its latest nationwide survey of college students, the Panetta Institute has found a striking contrast between students' generally positive impression of the United States economy and a very negative view of the country's direction overall.

By the widest margin since the survey began in 2004, students describe the country as being "off on the wrong track" (64 percent) instead of moving in "the right direction" (36 percent), even though a record 59 percent of them rate the state of the economy as excellent or good and 71 percent express confidence that they'll be able to find an acceptable job upon graduation.

"Clearly, students are looking beyond just their own economic prospects," notes

Secretary Panetta. "Their concerns go to the health of our democracy."

Student satisfaction with "the quality of the country's political leadership" has dropped from 48 percent in the spring of 2016 to 34 percent today, and a majority of students (56 percent) see the high-performing economy as operating unfairly.

The Panetta Institute commissions Hart Research Associates in the spring of each year to examine U.S. college students' attitudes and opinions. The results help guide the Institute's efforts to promote greater civic involvement.

A more extensive summary of the findings is available at PanettaInstitute.org.

"CLEARLY, STUDENTS ARE LOOKING BEYOND JUST THEIR OWN ECONOMIC PROSPECTS"
— Leon Panetta

A Message from the Chairman

Becoming Involved in Our Democracy

By Leon E. Panetta

Our mission here at the Panetta Institute is to encourage young people to engage in public service, and we do so through a variety of programs that range from our *Afternoon Student Program* as part of our *Lecture Series* to our specialized summer programs for student government officers and for congressional interns.

My message to these young people is the same as the one I find myself saying to people of all ages: "Be involved in our democracy."



Our annual survey of college students shows a record number of young people who say that our country is on the wrong path. What I tell the students who come through the Institute is that as frustrated as they might be, they can't stay on the sidelines. I've always believed that if you get involved in our democracy, you can make a difference.

At a time of political attacks on news shows and through social media, it's important not to be drawn in to those kinds of attacks. The students I meet with give me hope in this regard. They do seem to sense the seriousness and complexity of the problems our country faces, and they know these problems will be solved only by their becoming involved in public service.





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University Students Arrive for Institute Programs

Summer is a busy time at the Panetta Institute, as we prepare for two of our core programs for university students: the *Leadership Seminar* and the *Congressional Internship Program*.

This year marks the twentieth season of the *Leadership Seminar*, which convenes for eight days on June 9 with twenty-six student presidents and other elected student leaders from around California participating.

Students attend twenty-four sessions with almost forty speakers, including Secretary Panetta. The course is designed to teach leadership skills and strategies as they apply to campus, community and national issues.

“This four-unit accredited academic course reaches out to young leaders and gives them the tools they need to succeed,” said Co-Chair and CEO Sylvia Panetta.

The program culminates on its last class session when each participant makes a presentation about his or her goals for the upcoming academic year as a campus leader.

On August 4, the Panetta Institute begins its twenty-first annual *Congressional Internship Program* with its two-week training and orientation program onsite here at the Institute. After the training, interns from



Student leaders and Congressional interns attend intensive programs this summer.

twenty-five universities around the state serve for eleven weeks in their assigned congressional offices. In addition, once in Washington, participants attend weekly seminars with national leaders on policy issues and different aspects of government.

The extra training and seminars distinguish the *Congressional Internship Program* from others by giving students an in-depth background on various aspects of congressional life and an understanding of the most important policy challenges facing our nation.

As a staff member from a Congressional office recently stated: “All our interns from the Panetta Institute have joined our office well-prepared and ready to take a leading role among other interns in the office.”

