

July 30, 2024

MEACHAM DISCUSSES LEGACY OF GEORGE H.W. BUSH IN KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

WASHINGTON, DC – A crowd of over 130 came together in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress last night for a special reception and dinner hosted by The Ripon Society and the Franklin Center for Global Policy Exchange.

The dinner featured a keynote address by Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Jon Meacham, who discussed his latest book, *The Call to Serve: The Life of an American President*, George Herbert Walker Bush, and how the life and career of America's 41st President should serve as an example for policymakers in Washington today.

Policymakers attending last night's event included: U.S. Sens. Marsha Blackburn (TN), Bill Cassidy (LA), and Peter Welch (VT); and, U.S. Reps. Larry Bucshon (IN-08) and Randy Feenstra (IA-04). Also attending was U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (WV), who introduced Meacham.

"If you're here with us tonight," stated Ripon/Franklin President & CEO Jim Conzelman in remarks to open the dinner, "it's likely because you believe what we believe — that politics is a noble calling, that public service is an honorable pursuit, and that honesty, decency, and respect are not only virtues every American should strive for, but qualities that our leaders should embrace."

"A little later on this evening, we'll hear more about one of those leaders — veteran, statesman, and diplomat, the 41st President of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush. We are honored to be joined this evening by Pulitzer Prize winning author Jon Meacham. As you may remember, Mr. Meacham eulogized President Bush at his funeral in 2018. As you likely also know,

he has a new book out about the President. Titled *The Call to Serve*, it's a visual biography of President Bush, one that was published to coincide with the 100th anniversary of his birth — and one that you will all receive at the end of tonight. I'll leave it to his biographer to tell you more about the life of this American Giant and what he meant to our country and the world. But I did want to take a moment to tell you a little more about what he meant to our group.



Pulitzer Prize winning historian Jon Meacham delivered keynote remarks at the Library of Congress.

"If you're here with us tonight, it's likely because you believe what we believe — that politics is a noble calling, that public service is an honorable pursuit, and that honesty, decency, and respect are not only virtues every American should strive for, but qualities that our leaders should embrace."

"Thirty-nine years ago tomorrow — on July 30, 1985 — The Ripon Society hosted a dinner here in Washington where we honored then-Vice President George Bush as our Republican of the Year. Over 400 people turned out that night to pay tribute to his lifetime of service and commitment to the ideals and principles that made our country great. President Bush talked about some of these ideals and principles five years later when he sat down in the Oval Office for an interview with our magazine, *The Ripon Forum*. It was August of 1990. Later that night, the President would address the nation informing the American people of his decision to send troops to the Persian Gulf in response to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. He touched on this decision in his interview with the *Forum*, saying simply that: 'The United States needs to remain engaged in the search for peace. The West needs to defend its interests and values against aggression. It needs to stand by its friends.'

"I don't know about you, but those words still ring true to me today. Truth be told, they also sum up the common bond that unites our two organizations. Like President Bush, both

The Ripon Society and Franklin Center believe America must remain engaged around the world. The other bond that unites our two organizations is that we believe — like President Bush did — in the importance of having and cultivating friendships. This is especially true in politically divided times. We believe relationships matter, and the best way to find common ground is by getting to know others who are also involved in the debate — whether it’s a debate across the aisle, or across the globe.

“Tonight, of course, is not a night for debate. It’s a night for enjoyment. To that end, I hope you enjoy your meal. I hope you enjoy each other’s company. And I hope you enjoy having the opportunity to dine together in one of the most magnificent buildings in town.”

The Ripon Society is a public policy organization that was founded in 1962 and takes its name from the town where the Republican Party was born in 1854 – Ripon, Wisconsin. One

of the main goals of The Ripon Society is to promote the ideas and principles that have made America great and contributed to the GOP’s success. These ideas include keeping our nation secure, keeping taxes low and having a federal government that is smaller, smarter and more accountable to the people.

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.



U.S. Sen. Shelley Moore Capito introduces the keynote speaker for the night.



Jim Conzelman delivers welcoming remarks to open the dinner.



A crowd of over 130 attended the dinner in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress.