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Monique Smith (moderator)

The Honorable James J. Blanchard

The Honorable Charlie Dent

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PANEL DISCUSSION – THE 117TH CONGRESS

Moderator: Monique Smith

Speakers: The Honorable James J. Blanchard & The Honorable Charlie Dent

DR. SANDS: And now, we turn to a panel discussing the 117th Congress. And moderating this panel is a great friend of the Canada-U.S. Law Institute and the Canada Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center, Monique Smith.

Many of you know, born in North Bay, Ontario, Monique ran for provincial parliament, she was in the 2003 election. She served in the Parliament, not only as an MPP [Member of Provincial Parliament], but she also served as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—a hot topic in the time of COVID. She was also Minister of Revenue, and Government House Leader, and Minister of Tourism. So, a lot of experience in the Ontario government.

She went on to become Ontario's first representative in Washington, housed at the Canadian embassy here, where she was a force to be reckoned with across Washington. Frequently on panels, outspoken, but also very direct about the importance of Canada-U.S. relations and the importance of Congress in shaping some of those relations. A diplomat, an educator, and now a senior advisor at Global Public Affairs—a terrific public relations and public affairs strategy company, that also supports the Canada Institute. Let me turn it over now, to Monique Smith.

MS. MONIQUE SMITH: Thank you, Chris. Very excited to moderate this panel. We're calling it the grand finale, the third act, and we think that, you know, we've saved the best for last.

(Laughter.)

I am delighted to be wrangling two former or, as we call ourselves, recovering politicians. First off, we've got Ambassador Blanchard. I am never sure if you're supposed to call them ambassador or governor when they retain all their former titles, but we'll go with ambassador. Jim Blanchard was born and raised in Michigan. He commenced his career as a lawyer. He was a congressman from 1975 to 1983. He was the governor of Michigan from 1983 to 1991, and then he became the ambassador to Canada from 1993 to '96. I think I got those dates right. He continues to be a good friend of Canada, and always one with a quick quip on the Canada-U.S. relations, so we're delighted to have him.

And we also have with us Congressman Charlie Dent, who is a former congressman. Was first elected in the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1991 to '94, and then was elected to Congress in 2004 to 2018. Born and raised in Pennsylvania, we've got two states here that have been at top of mind to many Canadians and many, many Americans over the last few weeks and months—Pennsylvania and Michigan.

And so, I'm going to let them both give us some brief remarks and then we'll get into some questions. Please throw out any questions you have in the Chat, and we're happy to take them.

First, I'll start with Ambassador Blanchard, for your five-minute opening remarks, Ambassador.

THE HONORABLE JAMES J. BLANCHARD: Alright, thank you. Thank you for helping us out, Monique. And Chris Sands, the Woodrow Wilson Institute, thank you, Jane Harman, and of course with our Canada-U.S. Law Institute, Steve Petras. Also, I want to acknowledge my co-chair, Minister Jim Peterson, who I've worked with for thirty years at this point. Anyway, we're just happy about this collaboration. And my partner, really, in our law firm, a Republican, Charlie Dent—who, I might add, did endorse Joe Biden.

(Laughter.)

So, you're looking at two guys who are happy about the new president and the states, the role our states played with his decisive election. It wasn't really close.

I want to start out by saying that I thought the previous discussions were all really good. The questions were really good. I want to try to figure out where I could add something of value, and I would start with this. The Congress will need to pass not only a new stimulus, and a COVID relief plan, but it really has to include substantial revenue for states and local governments.

We keep forgetting that, because of COVID, they not only had an increase in health care costs and expenditures, but more substantially, took a complete drop in revenue—income taxes, sales taxes, business taxes, gas taxes. Their budgets have been totally decimated. And if they don't get federal relief from Congress soon, they will be laying off teachers, police, fire, healthcare workers. It will act as a counter to any federal stimulus. So, we're not going to have a national recovery in the United States, with or without a vaccine, without strong states and their role. We cannot have them cutting spending right and left to balance their budgets, which are required under their constitutions. If they think we're going to have economic recovery, we won't, and that's really, really important.

And without recovery, Canada is not going to have a recovery. The impact—you know, both living in Michigan and also serving in Ottawa—the impact of the U.S. economy on Canada is enormously substantial. And so, Canadians should be hoping for decisive relief from Congress.

The next thing I want to say is, in December of 2016—four years ago, after Donald Trump was elected—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had a dinner honoring departing Vice President Joe Biden. And it was an exciting night. I was there, several of our former ambassadors were there, I think there were four prime ministers there. It was a glorious night in Ottawa, on a cold, early December evening. And it was just a total love-in between Prime Minister Trudeau and Vice President Biden. They both gave wonderful speeches—and, I might add, they weren't too long, so I was quite happy about that.

So, that's where Joe Biden's recent contact with Canada ended, up until his election and the phone call with Prime Minister Trudeau. So, I expect relations to be incredibly warm and good.

I don't know any member of Congress that views Canada as a problem for us. Every once in a while, somebody from the lumber district or dairy district. But really, I don't know anyone in Congress or any governor that thinks that aluminum or steel from Canada is a threat to our national security, not at all.

And the kind of rhetoric that we had to put up with these last few years, which probably delayed the modernization of NAFTA about a year, because of all this foolish rhetoric and name-calling—all on our side, I might add. So, I don't care whether it's the energy relationship, the environmental relationship, infrastructure. Hey, the Gordie Howe Bridge is proceeding. All these issues.

We're going to have a wonderful partnership that works. We won't agree on everything, it's a partnership that works. And we do need to deal with COVID and our economies, but the cooperation and partnership, I think, will be a hallmark of the Joe Biden administration.

MS. SMITH: Jim, you kept it in the timelines. I'm very proud of you.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

MS. SMITH: Okay, we're gonna go over to the view from Pennsylvania now, Charlie Dent.

THE HONORABLE CHARLIE DENT: Yeah. Well thank you, everybody. Thank you, Monique. And good to be with my good friend and colleague, Jim Blanchard. Thank you to Chris and Jane Harman from the Wilson Center for allowing us to participate in this important bilateral conversation.

On the previous panel, I was chuckling a little bit when I heard about this trilateral agreement, trade agreement, between the U.S., the U.K., and Canada, because I had actually suggested such a thing back when the British were Brexitting. And I had actually assembled a resolution of support for a trilateral agreement, until my staff tackled me and said, "You know, this is going to complicate NAFTA. Just might as well keep it to the U.S. and U.K."

(Laughter.)

Not sure how to figure out to put Canada in without excluding Mexico. So, bottom line is a lot of us been thinking about this for some time. But let me just say a couple of things about where we are now in the upcoming Congress.

I thought the message that was received from this election in 2020 was this: that President Trump was rejected, I would say pretty resoundingly. As Jim Blanchard said, it was a pretty solid, or decisive victory—seven million votes in the popular vote advantage, our margin.

And I would also argue . . . So, the people were in many cases voting against Donald Trump or for Joe Biden. But there were an impactful number of, I'll say, swing voting Republicans and independents, who voted for Joe Biden and then voted either largely or straight Republican down ballot.

That was the message that I've taken out of this election. We've seen it in a number of states. And probably no better example than Pennsylvania, where the expectations were that Democrats were going to pick up seats in the U.S. House, probably take the state House back, diminish the margins in the state Senate. But what happened is, Republican statewide row offices, two of the three, they went for Republicans for the first time in for a very long time. And the state House

Republicans picked up seats, and so did the state Senate, you know, held onto a very strong majority. And what happened in Pennsylvania happened around the country.

So, I look at this as a bit of a repudiation, both of Donald Trump and, I would argue, the left wing of the Democratic Party. So, I think that many people, they tired of Trump, but they were not comfortable with that far left wing. They felt Joe Biden represented kind of a center-left perspective, and that he was acceptable. But they wanted to place a little bit of a check on him too. And I think that is what happened—that many people decided to protect their interests with some kind of a divided government.

And so how does that translate into this coming Congress? Well, a few things. I think in many respects the political center of Congress is empowered. Look at the U.S. Senate. People like Susan Collins and Joe Manchin will play an outsized role in the Senate. What I learned in the Congress—having served there for fourteen years—that, you know, there are a lot of folks on the far right and the far left who are really good at telling you all the things they can never do. That is, they cannot get to “Yes” very easily. And so, for those who have the capacity to get the “Yes,” those who have the ability to be pragmatic, and reach agreements and compromises, they are going to play an enormous role—as you’re seeing playing out right now on the COVID-19 bills, where in many respects, these are backbenchers who are writing these bills and putting these agreements together. The way it’s supposed to work is the leaders are supposed to hammer out these kinds of agreements.

But that’s not happening now because a lot of the leaders, in my view, are afraid of some of their members, you know, on the fringes, you know, who really don’t want or, you know, don’t like compromise very much. So, keep a close eye on that.

And the U.S. House too. Of course, the U.S. House Democrats underperformed, and the Republicans exceeded expectations. And Democrats are going to have a very narrow margin, and now with two members, Marcia Fudge and Cedric Richmond, moving into the administration—Fudge at HUD, Housing and Urban Development, and Richmond going to be an advisor to the President. So, their margin is even gonna be a little slimmer, I think down to 220. Of course, 218 is what gives your majority in the House—so, 220. Now, they’ll get those two seats back but that’ll take a few months.

(Laughter.)

It’ll take a few months. So, they’re gonna be operating on a thin margin for a period of time no matter what.

So, again, the political center is empowered. And in the U.S. House, you have this group called the Problem Solvers Caucus—I was part of it when I was there, I was one of the founding members. But Josh Gottheimer, the Democrat from New Jersey, and Tom Reed, the Republican from New York, are the two co-chairs and they were two of the folks who really hammered out this \$908 billion COVID deal.

And I think you’re going to see groups like that. And that group has about fifty members, evenly split Republican and Democrat. The Senate has their own groups.

So, I think these folks are empowered. Now, from my perspective, that's a great thing—when you have the center in power.

Now, the bad news is when you have these types of elections where, you know, in this case the Democrats, you know, took a little bit of a beating, you know, who loses on the Democratic side? Well, they tend to be the more pragmatic members who represent more competitive districts. So, in some respects, while the center feels a bit more empowered, a few more centrist members have been defeated in this election.

That's the way it usually works, you know. These folks in these very safe seats, you know, tend to be the more ideological ones, the hard-chargers, and they really only have to worry about a primary contest to be taken out. You know, general election is really never an issue for them.

So, while on the one hand the center is empowered, I worried about dwindling number of centrist members in the Congress. So, I hope that's clear.

I know for our Canadian friends in a parliamentary system this might be a little bit foreign to them, in terms of how we operate here.

(Laughter.)

This system of separation of powers, separate, you know, we have, you know, separate branches of government, separate executive from the legislative branch, and of course the bicameral system. These are the things you kind of have to really pay close attention to in terms of the governing and operating dynamics of both the House and the Senate.

And so, what else does this mean for the Senate? And I'll stop in a moment. Final thing I'll say, you know, there was a lot of talk before the election that there were going to be issues out there like packing the U.S. Supreme Court, the Green New Deal, Washington D.C. statehood. Well, you know what? None of that's gonna happen now. Even if the Democrats were to run the tables in Georgia and pick up those two seats, you'd have a fifty-fifty split, and I just don't see any of that happening.

They're not going to eliminate the Senate filibuster which, whatever its faults, in my estimation is the last mechanism left in Washington that forces some level of bipartisan cooperation and collaboration. It's the last thing there. If the Senate were to eliminate that filibuster, then the Senate would look a lot more like the House.

Having said that, you know, that doesn't mean filibuster doesn't need to be reformed, because it does. But eliminating it is now, I believe, off the table. And the Senate will play its usual role in, really, at the end of the day, reaching agreements on all the major issues that will actually become law. That's how it usually works in Washington, the Senate does provide that balance. So, I'll stop there.

MS. SMITH: Thanks, Charlie. That's a great place to stop, because it's where I want to start. So, I want to talk about the Senate, and I want to talk about Georgia. It seems to be a topic of conversation among everyone, including my mother, so—who actually watched the Georgia senatorial debate on CNN the other day from North Bay, Ontario. So, it's getting broad viewership. And wondering what you think, where do you think this is going?

Charlie, you talked about the fact that people voted one way at the top of the ticket and the other way down ticket—some people. Do you think that's going to hold on the Senate race in Georgia? And then we'll go to the Ambassador. So, Charlie?

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Sure. Ordinarily . . . And by the way I should, full disclaimer, Jim Blanchard and I work with Saxby Chambliss, who's part of our firm, who was a U.S. senator from Georgia, and I believe was the last U.S. senator to win in a runoff in 2009, January of 2009.

But ordinarily, a runoff in Georgia would typically benefit the Republican candidate, or candidates in this case. Now, again, but 2020 is different than 2009, when it's a different world in Georgia. I give a slight lean Republican, but—with a big “but” here. You know, the fact that President Trump continues to say that the election is rigged, that the vote was stolen in Georgia. You know, in many respects he's having the effect of depressing the Republican vote in Georgia for these runoffs. It's hard to argue that the system is rigged, and fixed, and then tell people to show up to vote in January in an election that many people now believe that there's a predetermined outcome. So, I mean, that could have a very negative effect on the Republican candidates.

I still think there's a slight advantage. I think that certainly [David] Perdue is probably in a slightly stronger position than [Kelly] Loeffler. And I think [Raphael] Warnock is perhaps a slightly stronger candidate than [Jon] Ossoff on the Democratic side. So, I think, right now, I still give a slight lean Republican. But because of this unusual dynamic of the President—on the one hand now encouraging people to come out and vote in Georgia, while at the same time saying the last election there was rigged and fixed. I mean this is an incoherent message, is what I'm saying.

And, you know, how do Georgia Republicans respond? Do some just sit it out? Or do they, some of them just wake up and say, “Hey, you know, I actually better show up.” So, we just don't know. This is a very unusual and odd time. I yield to my colleague.

MS. SMITH: Sadly, not the first or last incoherent message, but yes. We will move over to Jim, and your comments on Georgia?

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Well, let me just say, you know, during the election, one of my successors, Gordon Giffin—who I usually defer to for Georgia politics—said in a meeting I was in, a Zoom meeting, that actually Georgia was in play in the presidential race. I said, “What, wow.” He said “Jim, really. We're in play. I never thought I'd say that. I thought we'd be in play ten years from now. We are in play. This is gonna be close.” And election night he said, “It's not only gonna be close, but we might win a whisker,” meaning the Democrats. And by gosh, they did.

But, I also agree with . . . And so, I'm optimistic about Georgia. I'm optimistic about the organization that Stacey Abrams put together, which took her about a decade to do. I think our candidates are stronger. I think that both Republicans are viewed—of course, here's my bias—but they are viewed as rather sleazy, uninspiring. Whereas Ossoff is really sharp—I watched his debate with Perdue—and Warnock is very inspiring. So, I think we have stronger candidates.

But all things equal, as Charlie said, in a special election, generally, the Republican in Georgia would prevail. All things are never always equal. But it is true, in Michigan and Pennsylvania, a lot of people voted for Biden and then voted down ballot Republican. It was big turnout for the reasons I think Charlie mentioned.

I also want to backtrack a little and say, in 2018, we kind of peaked, we Democrats, in the House. Remember, the apportionment of the seats heavily favors Republicans. So, based on the current apportionment—which is going to change—I think we maxed out, in our seats in the House, in 2018.

So, in retrospect I'm not shocked that we lost a few this time. I think it's regrettable, but I do think it's true, and I know a lot of them. And there's at least 155,000 in Michigan, or more, who voted for Joe Biden. But down the ballot, yeah, they had time for Gary Peters—65,000 fewer, but after that they were voting for state legislators who are Republican.

So, this Georgia thing will tell us how many Republicans think it's no use voting, it's rigged, or how many of them know that it's really an act by Trump. It's really all an act, and it's a lot of BS, and they need to go out and vote. We'll find out.

My guess is most Republicans in Georgia know that Trump's antics are all an act, they would've liked if he'd won, they know it's a lot of BS, they know it's grandstanding, they may even know it's a fundraising gimmick. But my guess is they also know the vote was not rigged in Georgia. They may not admit it, but I think . . . I think that's going on everywhere. I don't know any sane person that thinks the vote was rigged in Michigan, for example. Nobody.

MS. SMITH: Well, I think it'll make for good entertainment at the beginning of January, in this time of COVID, for all political junkies. So, that'll be fun to watch.

And fun fact, Gordon Giffin, in my very first week in Washington took me out for lunch and introduced me to Saxby Chambliss. So, there you go, it's like it all comes full circle.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Monique, can I just follow up on something Jim said about overperformance?

MS. SMITH: Yes.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Jim is right that Democrats certainly overperformed in 2018, had a very good election, a wave election. Just as the Republicans did in 2010 where they overperformed.

And the way I often . . . the analogy I use, when you have a big wave election like that, you know, the wave throws up a lot of driftwood on to the beach. And then, you know, when that riptide comes, you know, a few of those loose logs along the shoreline they get dragged back out to sea. And that's kind of what happens.

And that's what happened. You look at where Republicans picked up seats this time, it was in seats that they should have never lost in the first place. In Utah, in South Carolina, Oklahoma, even a seat in New Mexico, even one in New York, for example. These are seats that should have never been lost. And then the two in South Florida—a little different dynamic, although those were Republican seats

for a long time, and so they just came back. So, Republicans really did win in areas that, for the most part, they should have never lost in the first place. And so, it's a little bit of a correction.

MS. SMITH: Thanks for that.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Yeah. I want to mention, Monique, Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin, Congresswoman Haley Stevens—they got elected in 2018 in districts that were written to be safe Republican. They won because we had a wave, anti-Trump wave, and they were extraordinary candidates. In our case, this year, they survived only because they were extraordinary candidates with great campaigns. But normally, they might have lost, so.

The one thing I want to add about all this, that Charlie mentioned, he talked about the center and the moderates. It's no accident that you have the moderates in the Senate, Democrats and Republicans—I think eight of them—will come up with a recovery plan, a \$908 billion recovery plan. But I think it's interesting that three or four of them are former governors. So, they realize the reality of the economy, and the need for states and local governments not to be laying off people and cutting spending, but really holding the line and being able to use their employees to help rebuild the economy.

MS. SMITH: So, I want to take you back to the Congress and how tight it's going to be in Congress in the new administration. Particularly, as Charlie mentioned, with two members of Congress going into the administration bringing that number, at least for short time, that much tighter. How do you both see Congress working together to get things done?

I know you both talked a little bit about the center and the center having more power, and particularly in the Senate. But, how do you see that playing out at the congressional level? And in particular with respect to maybe some Canadian issues, issues of concern to Canada, like "Buy America" or like an infrastructure bill. Where do you see Congress going, and how is the slim margin going to play into that? Jim?

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: I'm gonna let Charlie take that initially . . .

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Sure. Sure.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Because he's more current in Congress—he was on the Appropriations Committee, he's talking to more of the members. I've talked to the Michigan people and I have some views. I think it's really going to be tough. Gonna be really hard on Nancy Pelosi, who I completely admire. She's gonna have a tougher job, in some respects, than Joe Biden. But Charlie is really current on this, so I kind of listen to him.

MS. SMITH: Great.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Well, thank you, Governor—and I should say Ambassador today, since there are our Canadian friends.

Well look, a few issues where I think there could be some areas of agreement. You know, we talked about infrastructure for a long time, it feels like the great white whale of public policy. But I think we can actually get somewhere on infrastructure. Of course, the question is how does one pay for it? I thought Republicans missed an opportunity during tax reform, I thought they should have

done something on the fuel tax or barrel of oil to help finances. But, that said, infrastructure is an area of likely agreement—maybe rural broadband.

Another area where I think you could see some bipartisan cooperation, on big tech issues. You know, you're hearing all that. It seems that both sides are concerned about the role that the big tech companies are playing in all of our lives, and so that's an area of potential agreement.

China. Yes, I don't like the way President Trump carried on on China, but I think everybody recognizes the problem with China in terms of intellectual property theft, and coercive technology transfers, and dumping of metals. But I think there, the approach . . . I think if Congress could actually maybe work with the Biden administration in a bipartisan way to come to some agreements on what a coherent policy towards China should look like, particularly as it relates to trade and investment. So, I would watch that.

You know, with respect to Canada, obviously infrastructure I think would be of enormous significance and importance to our friends across the border.

You know, "Buy America"—I would agree . . . you know, it's a nice bumper sticker, everybody knows that. But it presents problems. And I would talk about that with some of my constituents. I said, "Well, how do you deal with our friends in Canada, for example, or companies in our districts, or in our states, that might be foreign-owned but have significant presence here? Should we disadvantage them because of where their headquartered, even though they may be employing significant numbers of Americans?"

And so, you know, I think there I'm hoping that the Biden administration will develop some nuance here. And for a variety of reasons, I do think that, you know, that the Biden administration will behave in a much more multilateral manner—that they will not, you know, embrace what was the "America First" agenda which, I never liked the term, you know, the historical baggage is pretty significant over here.

And so, I think that Biden—even though he's talked, you know, strongly about "Buy America"—I'm hoping he does recognize the need for certain waivers and exceptions and, kind of, weaken it a little bit. I mean, politically, it's very hard to vote against "Buy America" if you're a congressman or a congresswoman, very hard. But at the same time, you know, we have to be reasonable with our friends.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Yeah. Monique, I agree with that. You know, also remember Joe Biden is very close to the building trades. So, it isn't just the industrial unions. You know, the building trades. You know, I have my favorite infrastructure project, it's the Gordie Howe International Bridge, for those of you who don't know that. It's the new modern bridge between Detroit and Windsor, which is the busiest trade corridor in North America, so . . .

MS. SMITH: And who paid for that, Jim?

(Laughter.)

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Well, it's going to be paid for by both Canada and the U.S., so don't give me your Canadian grievance now. We're going to pay for it through tolls, ultimately.

But Canada has really helped us. And I was part of putting that together, I might add. So, I thank the Canadian officials. At that time, actually, John Baird,

really—the Minister, at that time, of [Transport]—was extremely helpful. But anyway, it's a wonderful project. It will be the largest employer in the northern part of the U.S. and building trades.

But I think this infrastructure issue, to go back with what Charlie said, I think President Trump made a huge mistake not leading out with a major infrastructure bill. He could've got Democratic and union support and without losing any Republican support. And that has really been needed for so long.

So, I hope Joe—and I think he might—will come out with one of those fairly early. Some expansion of health care, infrastructure. How you handle political reform will be difficult, but infrastructure.

How we handle the energy relationship with Canada is going to be critical too. I can't see Joe backing off of the Obama cancelling of Keystone, I can't see that. But there are other areas, there are other pipelines. There are other areas where Joe and the members of Congress are going to be careful about how they handle energy. Because Canada is our largest provider of energy. It has been forever. And, you know, we now have this wonderful benefit of being energy self-sufficient, which is incredible. And I think most people now agree that a carbon-neutral 2050 is a good call, too. So, we could work on these things with Canada.

MS. SMITH: And that's a great segue into talking a little bit about climate change and green energy. How do you feel that Congress is going to respond? I mean, John Kerry has been out already starting to talk about the Biden administration's view on climate, on reenergizing Paris, going Paris 2.0. Where do you think Congress will be on that, and will there be a lot of heavy lifting on the part of the administration to try and push that through? Maybe again, we'll start with Charlie and come back to Jim. Charlie?

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Sure. On climate, look, Joe Biden will re-enter the Paris climate agreement. You know, obviously the United States is an outlier here—I think we're about one of the few countries in the world that is not in, so we'll get back in.

Although, I think that there are many members—probably in both parties—who recognize that much of the goals and objectives of Paris are rather aspirational, particularly as it relates to the developing world—China and India. So, I do think that you'll find many Republicans will say, “Hey, we're probably better in than out,” but they're not great, necessarily, fans of the agreement—that they think that it's, you know, it's going to have an enormous impact. But, by and large, I do think climate is becoming a bigger issue.

And for the Republicans in Congress, I think it's imperative for them to come up with an answer on climate. Complaining about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and the Green New Deal, well that's not a policy. We can argue, and I happen to agree that the Green New Deal is very misguided on a lot of levels. But, at the end of the day, they need a new policy that's affirmative.

And so, watch what happens, too, with these two new members from, say, South Florida, where climate change is very real. Watch for members like that. Some of these newer members who are in maybe some of the more marginal districts, are likely to play a larger role in helping shape a Republican climate agenda. And whether or not they can come to agreements with the Biden

administration, the Democrats, I don't know. But, I think there will be a consensus, though, that reentering Paris is probably an easy step.

MS. SMITH: Great. Jim?

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Yeah. I think, yes, definitely we'll reenter Paris. I think it'll be interesting to watch John Kerry—who I also admire and work for, for president—as he hopscotches the globe trying to convince people to do more on climate change, and explain why the previous administration wouldn't, didn't. And explain whether, you know, America is really back, rejoining the world in cooperation, or whether we could snap back to another Trump-like era. So, there's a lot of concern around there. So, it will be interesting. Climate will be one of those issues where we work on.

I think Congress will definitely support Joe Biden in strengthening NATO, and supporting NATO, and supporting our traditional allies. I think it's really going to be important, and that's part of Tony Blinken's background. And strengthening our alliances, and not cozying up to dictators, and standing up for democracy and freedom around the world and in the U.S. So, that's going to be really important.

But on the . . . earlier, what Charlie mentioned on “Buy America.” It was really interesting, when we had the stimulus with President Obama, there were “Buy America” provisions. And a lot of people thought Canada was exempt because of procurement agreements. It turned out they weren't entirely, it had to be worked out. But it was really ironic, because you had an embargo, like on steel, and yet the [United] Steelworkers are an international union whose president is from Toronto. It's like the steel tariffs and aluminum tariffs—we have a totally integrated market. So, I would hope they'll find a way to work Canada in, in a reasonable way, on the “Buy America” stuff because of the integrated nature of our economy, and also the integrated nature of a lot of our unions, including the trades, and others. So, we need to be careful about how we do, this and Charlie put his finger on it, I think.

MS. SMITH: Perfect. Great segue into my next question, which is from the audience. But I do want to do a shoutout to Leo Gerard, former International President of the Steelworkers, who is from Sudbury. Northern Ontario boy—whoop whoop!

HON. CHARLIE DENT: That's the moon, right?

(Laughter.)

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: It's a suburb of Toronto.

MS. SMITH: Suburb of Toronto. Well, it's a pretty broad suburb, then.

(Laughter.)

I'm just going to ask you a question on trade and our international position. So, we had a question saying that the Trump administration had really done a disservice to . . . I'm just trying to see it on my screen, which I'm having a little technical difficulty. Basically saying that, you know, the Trump administration had thrown into disarray the WTO representation, as well as our representation in other trade organizations. Do you think the Biden administration will restore quickly respect for the terms of the international agreements and the functionality of what is now Chapter 10?

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Well, I guess I will start on that one. I do think that the Biden administration will, again, you know, reengage with the WTO in a more constructive manner than, say, President Trump has.

And as a Republican, you know, I have to tell you that I was very concerned about the way Donald Trump pursued trade policy. And for Republicans generally, you know—I think the United States has about fourteen bilateral or multilateral trade agreements with about twenty countries. Now, that's it. It's not many. And what's interesting, too, I believe the United States runs a net trade surplus with those countries—not every one individually, but overall. So, where the U.S. actually has trade agreements, we tend to do better than where we don't.

And, I guess, more troubling is that I think the Republican Party has to, kind of, figure out where it now is on trade. These types of tariffs that we witnessed—and I represented one of the largest steel-producing areas in the world in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, so. And by the way, I've been to Sudbury, Ontario—it looks like the moon, right? That's where the astronauts would go to train.

(Laughter.)

MS. SMITH: It does.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: I remember visiting, took a good look.

And well, to make a long story short, you know, a lot of us were deeply offended when there were those [Trade Expansion Act section] 232 tariffs in the name of national security on Canadian steel and aluminum. And I think it was mortifying to many of us when we recognized there are trade problems in this world—particularly with China, and the issues that I mentioned earlier. And that our friends and allies in Canada, and Europe, and in Asia, and Japan, and Korea, Australia, elsewhere, they're all dealing with the same issues on China that we are. And the idea was to take the Chinese to the WTO, and we need a strong organization to help us in that regard. But we needed to develop friends and partners in the battles on trade with what everybody recognizes are abuses by the Chinese.

For the United States to go it alone and pick fights with the Canadians, and the Koreans, and the Japanese, and the Australians, and the Germans—you know, what did BMW ever do to the United States, other than invest too much money in? You know, I mean, biggest exporter of cars and we're fighting with German car companies.

I mean, the point I'm making is, we needed to be enlisting our friends and allies. Everybody knew that up front, because I don't think, on our own, that we could in a bilateral way, really change the dynamic with China. And it's going to be hard to do it in a multilateral manner too, because the Chinese are smart—they're going to try and pick off our friends and allies as best they can.

So, I think on trade, you know, I think Biden . . . And for Democrats this is unusual because the Democratic Party in the United States has historically been much more protectionist than the Republicans. You know, in Congress, those trade agreements usually were overwhelmingly—in the House, anyway—passed with Republican votes, and you get a small number of Democrats. In the Senate it's a little more bipartisan on trade, the Democrats are a little bit more open to a freer trade there than in the House.

So, I think the issue with trade is changing in the U.S. in terms of how the parties are oriented. I'm not saying the Democrats are going to become free traders tomorrow, and all the Republicans are going to become protectionist. But now that Trump is gone, will we get back to something closer to where we were? Or do both parties come to a more sensible or more sustainable position?

MS. SMITH: Jim, quickly on this? And then we're going to go to a lightning round and wind it up. So, comments on the WTO?

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Well, let me just, on trade . . . I don't really have a strong handle on the WTO issue right now. But, what I want to reflect is to react to what Charlie said about the parties.

It's true that Democrats in Congress, in recent years, have been more suspicious of trade deals than Republicans. But, both the Left and the Right have been more, you know, suspicious of trade deals. But Democratic presidents—all of them, in recent history—have been pro-trade expansion. They really have—whether it was FDR, or Truman, or Carter, or Clinton, or Obama.

One issue is going to be . . . Look, if we want to stand with our allies and compete with—in this case China—our competitors, then if we want to deal with China in a serious way, then there's every reason to find a way that Democrats can support, as well as Republicans, to find a way to join the TPP. And Canada can be a helpful liaison in doing that.

Something would have to get reworked to satisfy President Biden and the Democrats. I don't know what that is. But it doesn't make sense to look at China—as our major economic competitor, without a doubt, and I think in terms of national security, also our major competitor—and not figure out a way to work with our allies in Asia on trade. It doesn't make any sense. There's got to be a way—and I speak as a Michigan Democrat, appointed to the Chrysler [Group LLC] Board of Directors by the United Auto Workers—there's got to be a way to do that as we move ahead.

The reality is that Joe Biden believes in multilateral cooperation, so does Canada. We're back with that. The real issue around the world is whether, as the leaders around the world who are friends of ours celebrate Biden's victory, will they believe that Joe Biden, and Kamala Harris, and Tony Blinken—will they be able to make sure our arrangements hold, or will another administration backtrack again because of underlying political problems in the U.S. That's a big question. I think they will hold. But . . .

MS. SMITH: That is a good question. I'm going to just give you two rapid fire questions. I can see Chris Sands looking uncomfortable. I will bring it in on time Chris, don't you worry.

Okay, here's the rapid round. Stimulus package—before Christmas through Congress, or after? Or never? You got three options.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Before.

MS. SMITH: Before?

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Before. But I have my doubts.

(Laughter.)

MS. SMITH: I like that. Okay. Next U.S. Ambassador to Canada? Jim?

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Somebody really good.

(Laughter.)

They don't have to be a "professional diplomat." Politicians do really well if they love and know Canada.

MS. SMITH: Agreed. Charlie?

HON. CHARLIE DENT: At this moment, I can't say I know. But I hope it's a hockey player.

(Laughter.)

MS. SMITH: We've already named the bridge after a hockey player, it can't all be hockey!

Alright, I thank you both for those insights. That was a really great discussion. I appreciate you keeping your answers short and pithy. And Chris, I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this. And thank you, and the Institute, and CUSLI for having us. Over to you.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Thank you.

DR. SANDS: Yeah. Thank you, Monique. And may I also thank Governor Blanchard, who was one of my first bosses. And the Honorable Charlie Dent—former Congressman, clearly recovering well.

(Laughter.)

Holding up the side for me, in that now I'm not the only guy here with a tie. So, that was a great comfort to me.

(Laughter.)

HON. CHARLIE DENT: I'm going on CNN at 2:15 actually, so.

(Laughter.)

I was just going to go without the tie, but that's why I put it on before the next one.

DR. SANDS: Well, we'll pretend you put it on for us. That would be fine.

(Laughter.)

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Can I say . . .

DR. SANDS: Jim.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Again, Monique, thank you for helping us out.

I want to mention something about Charlie, though. He's the only member of Congress, or former member of Congress, I've ever met who's been to all ten Canadian provinces. A lot of Canadians never have been to all ten. So, he really knows Canada, and respects Canada. And so, it's nice to have him as a partner at our law firm. It's great.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Well, I have to give credit to my father, who loved Canada. And when I was a kid we drove across Canada, the Trans-Canadian highway, we'd go to the maritime provinces. But he didn't have the stomach or the wherewithal to go up to the territories, though. But he loved Canada, every bit of it. And so, he made sure he dragged me everywhere with him. And I loved it too, every last bit of it. Saskatoon, Medicine Hat, all the great places.

(Laughter.)

DR. SANDS: Now we're all officially jealous because we can't go to Canada now, thanks to the border situation. So, you've given us something to hope for the New Year—a happier 2021 when we can all get back up to see Canada.

I also want to thank our first panel, Diane Francis, Alex Panetta, Lauren Gardner. And Ambassador Hillman. As well as my boss, Jane Harman. This has been a tremendous panel.

There's also an additional great support that we have, and that's been in the Canada Institute staff. Mariana Sánchez Ramírez behind the scenes, Jackie Orr also helping to pull all of this together, and, of course, Tracy Fitzgerald, John Tyler, and Tran Burgess—all of whom have been behind the scenes, but keeping us as on track as is humanly possible.

And, finally, let me thank the Canada-U.S. Law Institute—a great organization that sparks great conversations on how rule of law can be part of good Canada-U.S. relations. Been around since 1971, they're a great partner for us. And special shout out to Governor Blanchard who co-chairs this with the Honorable Jim Peterson, former Canadian MP and Minister of Trade—two great guys who set the tone for this organization.

Moreover, Dean Michael Scharf, who's dean of the law school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, which is half of our partnership. And then Dean Erika Chamberlain at the University of Western Ontario's law school. And, finally, Steve Petras and Ted Parran, who are the staffers at the Canada-U.S. Law Institute who have worked amazingly hard to pull this group together, and get this message out to the whole Canada-U.S. world that we were having this event. I hope we can do this again next year. Thank you very much for your time. And let's hope for a happier 2021, and better Canada-U.S. relations.

HON. JAMES BLANCHARD: Thank you.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Thank you.

MS. SMITH: Happy holidays. Thanks, Chris.

HON. CHARLIE DENT: Thank you.