

WL Insider: The ‘Great Persuader’ Jon Kyl

Arizona Senator John Kyl discusses the pitfalls of budget sequestration.

By John Arundel



Japan's Amb. Ichiro Fujisaki with Senator Jon Kyl and Frank Fahrenkopf, head of the American Gaming Association.

It is one of the biggest challenges facing the future of American defense: budget sequestration that could be triggered in the coming months unless Congress acts promptly.

By the end of the year, argues Sen. **Jon Kyl** (R-AZ), the U.S. defense community — as well as certain non-defense sectors — could suffer across-the-board cuts as part of the broader budgetary sequestration called for by last year's budget compromise. In all, these massive cuts — if not averted — could constitute about \$110 billion each year for the next 10 years. “These budget cuts would have catastrophic impacts on the future of American defense,” Kyl said.

The Institute for Education (IFE) enhanced its reputation as one of the hottest intellectual salons in Washington when it hosted the Majority Whip for a breakfast in the L.B.J. room of the U.S. Capitol as part of its Public Policy Roundtable series June 11, attended by nine major ambassadors from Embassy Row and other IFE members.



Tom and Julia Patton with Finland's Amb. Ritva Koukuu-Ronde.

IFE's CEO and Founder Kathy Kemper welcomed the attendees, who included ambassadors from Switzerland, Norway, Japan, Luxembourg, Portugal, Indonesia, Philippines, Egypt and Finland. Former CIA Director Gen. Michael Hayden introduced Kyl, whom he called “the great persuader of the United States Congress.”

Kyl shared insights of his diverse and accomplished political career in Congress, where he is now serving his third and final term as senator after previously serving for eight years in the House of Representatives. He then went on to describe how defense sequestration would not only have an impact on U.S. national security by taking resources from the American troops, but could also negatively impact the overall U.S. economy.

He quoted a study that estimated that sequestration, in full effect, could imperil as many as one million U.S. jobs directly or indirectly dependent on the sector. Particularly troublesome, he said, would be the U.S. government's inability to follow through on existing contracts, since "you can't build three-quarters of an aircraft carrier."



IFE's founder Coach Kathy Kemper with Luxembourg's Amb. Jean-Paul Senninger and Belgium's Amb. Jan Matthysen

Kyl clarified, however, that his party's opposition to defense sequestration is principally a matter of national security, rather than the "Keynesian notion" that defense spending can be a form of stimulus.

Later in his remarks, Kyl noted that considerable savings could indeed be found in the defense sector and elsewhere — but in a smarter way.

One Republican suggestion would be to stem the influx and replacement of federal employees, gradually reducing their number by enacting a two-third replacement rate on hires as existing employees retire. He concluded by arguing that the choice between tax increases and defense sequestration proposed by some is a false dichotomy and there are alternative solutions waiting to be explored.

"Defense sequestration is entirely preventable," Kyl concluded. "It could lead to disastrous consequences for the future of American national security" if not checked.



Philippines Amb. Jose Cuisia and Portugal's Dr. Rosa Batoreu.

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