

## IFE INFO hosts Secretary Ray LaHood, Department of Transportation



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On December 13, the Institute for Education was pleased to hold its last INFO Public Policy Roundtable of 2012 at the Belgian Ambassador's Residence, which was beautifully decorated for the holiday season, credit to Mrs. Agnes Matthysen. The Institute for Education and Belgian Ambassador and IFE Steward Jan Matthysen were pleased to host the Honorable Ray LaHood, Secretary of Transportation. IFE Founder and CEO Coach Kathy Kemper delivered a warm welcome to the Secretary, followed by an introduction from H.E. Jan Matthysen, who noted his personal connection to Illinois, Secretary LaHood's home state, and remarked on his admiration for Secretary LaHood's swift and effective response to Hurricane Sandy.



Secretary LaHood began by praising Coach Kemper for IFE's fellow and intern programs. He noted that IFE's impact on the younger generation will help create a bipartisan future in the United States. Expanding on the issue of bipartisanship in Washington, Secretary LaHood, a Republican, spoke of his respect for and friendship with President Barack Obama. On the eve of a looming fiscal cliff, he also emphasized the necessity of bipartisanship in our nation's capital. "Our country has the means to solve problems when we work together," he told the diverse gathering of diplomats, media, political appointees, and those in the private sector.

Secretary LaHood pointed out some of the most important transportation issues that the country faces and outlined what he hopes will be President Obama's transportation legacy. Of great importance to Secretary LaHood are his extensive efforts to end distracted driving, particularly in connection with texting while driving. Taking out his own BlackBerry to demonstrate, he explained how dangerous it can be to text and drive: in the few seconds it takes to look down at a cell phone, one's car may travel the length of a football field. With deaths related to texting while driving on the rise, Secretary LaHood hopes that his campaign in this regard will have a positive influence.

Secretary LaHood also spoke excitedly of a future in which the United States will be highly connected by high-speed rail; the ten billion dollars invested in the project will eventually see eighty percent of America connected. Secretary LaHood told the gathering that there is currently a plan to connect most of California by rail in addition to a system running from Detroit to other parts of the Midwest. Secretary LaHood said projects such as these are not completely funded by the government, and called on the private sector to enable great achievements with its support. He also mentioned Amtrak's success and growing popularity. According to Secretary LaHood, connecting the country through high-speed rail will be one of President Obama's greatest legacies.

Secretary LaHood opened the floor to guests and accepted questions including from IFE Steward Craig Helsing, BMW Group; Tom Patton, Philips NA; Rev. Dr. Cecile Strommen, Embassy of Norway; H.E. Sergey I. Kislyak, Embassy of the Russian Federation; IFE Fellow Joanne Ke; and IFE Intern Nicholas Roberts. Other notables and world leaders in attendance included H.E. Dr. Mohammed Alsharif, League of Arab States; H.E. Ritva Koukku-Ronde, Embassy of Finland; IFE Steward Ina Ginsburg; H.E. Elena Poptodorova, Embassy of Bulgaria; H.E. Dr. Hans Peter Manz, Embassy of Austria; and H.E. Manuel Sager, Embassy of Switzerland.

*Written by IFE Interns: Jenny Shore NextGen Founder; and Jordan D'Eri*

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