



Institute  
for  
Education

## IFE INFO hosts Senator Mark Warner (D-VA), U.S. Senate

On January 16, the Institute for Education (IFE) kicked off its 22<sup>nd</sup> INFO season at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia with distinguished speaker U.S. Senator Mark Warner (D-VA). Hosted by H.E. Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, this event embodied the spirit of bipartisanship and collaboration that is so central to IFE's mission.

IFE's many supporters were in attendance, including Stewards Eleanor Clift, Ed Henry, H.E. Jan Matthysen, Norm Ornstein, and Marci Robinson; IFE members Chris Caine of Mercator XXI, Matt Chase of NACO, Greg Farmer of Qualcomm, John P. Farmer, David Fenstermaker of Raymond James, Craig Helsing of BMW NA, Tom Patton of Phillips NA, and Steve Taylor of United Way Worldwide; and IFE Fellows R. David Edelman, Laura Gerhardt, Joanne Ke, Mark Schulte, Paul Selker, and Zaahira Wyne. Ambassadors from Europe and Asia also participated, in addition to senior journalists, academic and cultural leaders.



After welcoming IFE to the Indonesian Embassy, Ambassador Djalal presented Senator Warner with a gift—a large Indonesian gong honoring the state of Virginia's personal significance to the ambassador's family and many Indonesian businesses.

Coach Kathy Kemper then welcomed the audience. She mentioned that Senator Warner spoke at INFO in 2002 when IFE facilitated the first Regional Leaders Summit with the Senator (then Governor of Virginia), Maryland Governor Bob Ehrlich, and Mayor Anthony Williams of the District of Columbia. It was the first time in 26 years that such a meeting had taken place; today, the summit continues quarterly. All three leaders attended tonight's salon to highlight collaboration, civility, and common ground—the pillars of IFE's mission. Mayor Williams noted that the Regional Leaders Summit is a prime example of how IFE brings people together across the aisle and organizes forums that have become real assets to the city and the region.

Next, Coach Kemper and Senator Warner awarded IFE intern Jenny Shore IFE's inaugural Global Compass Leadership Award. Jenny is the founder of NextGen, a spinoff of INFO for young leaders. Coach and Senator Warner applauded Jenny's risk-taking, initiative, and game-changer attitude. We're all very excited to send this brilliant risk-taker off to Harvard next year and wish her the best.

IFE Steward and Founder of USAgainstAlzheimer's George Vradenburg introduced Senator Warner by noting that his background in telecommunications demonstrates his ability to solve old problems in completely new and different ways—a dynamism he brings to Washington.

Senator Warner's presentation focused on the need for bipartisanship in Washington and the importance of solving America's budget and deficit problems. He explained that the country's leadership will not be able to address a range of pressing domestic issues if they continue to kick the fiscal can down the road—a challenge for which both parties share responsibility.

Senator Warner explained that the U.S. has run a deficit in all but four of the past 75 years. From a business standpoint, the deficit has gotten much worse over the last 12 years. "This is about trying to make the math work," Warner argued. He expounded that the fiscal problem could have been avoided if the government had cut spending at the same time that it cut revenues by over \$4.5 trillion over a 10-year period. But the U.S. instead increased spending—a decision that Warner emphasized both parties signed off on.



First, after 9/11, defense spending was doubled on a year-to-year basis. Second, an entirely new spending category was created for homeland security ("It's expensive to take your shoes off at the airport!" the senator quipped.) Third, two wars were "placed on the credit card"—a stark contrast to the financing for every previous war, including the Vietnam War, which Nixon introduced an income tax surcharge to pay for. Fourth, the government created a new prescription drug entitlement—Medicare Part D. Finally, Senator Warner pointed out, "We're living a lot longer!" Otto von Bismarck of Germany was the first to set the retirement age at 65. This made financial sense in the 1870s, when the average life expectancy was only in the high 50s. But it doesn't make sense today when many Americans are living well into their 80s and 90s.

Senator Warner argued that he absolutely believes there is support among the American people and sufficient votes in the Senate to solve the fiscal problem. He stated that the solution will likely require additional spending cuts and taking on entitlement programs. This will not be easy politically. But, the senator noted, our founders set up a slightly dysfunctional government on purpose, so that the three branches would have little choice but to work together in order to govern.

A lively Q-and-A followed the senator's remarks.

Closing out the evening, Coach Kemper and Senator Warner presented IFE's Fall Tennis Awards: Best Backhand: Rosa Batoreu, DCM, Embassy of Portugal; Best Attitude: Ed Henry, White House/CNN; Best Footwork: Christine Sager, Embassy of Switzerland; Best Overhead: Rev. Dr. Cecilie Strommen, Norway; and Best Serve: H.E. Dr. Dino Patti Djalal, Indonesia.

*Written by Leah Bannon and Zaahira Wyne, IFE Fellows*

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