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Institute for Education

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soft diplomacy in the global community.

IFE hosts dinner on Digital Transformation & Trust in Government

On January 21st, **Coach Kathy Kemper** welcomed the Ambassador of Estonia, **H.E. Kristjan Prikk**, to her gracious Washington home for a gathering of preeminent digital leaders from public and private enterprises. As a world-renowned pacesetter in the governmental use of digital technologies, the Ambassador is uniquely qualified on the subject. His incisive and astute remarks led to an evening of lively conversation. The engaging and intellectually rigorous discussion ranged from data, customer experience ("CX"), digital identity, use of the cloud (or lack thereof by some U.S. agencies), operational excellence, legacy systems, and interoperability.

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Estonia aimed to become a digital nation, spearheading the use of blockchains even before the term entered the vernacular. Ambassador Prikk shared that in 2002, Estonia created a digital identification system based on a mandatory I.D. card. It was noted by the assembled guests that not all countries would be prepared to structure such a mandate. As a result of Estonia's move, the small Baltic nation's entire public services system is accessible through a straightforward online portal. With data sharing being controlled by the individual resident and appropriate mechanisms for accountability, trust in the digital system among Estonia's people remains high. Upon recounting his native country's established digital success, his audience of leaders from Belgium, Capitol Hill, the District of Columbia, New York City, the U.S. government, and the private sector shared their frustrations and optimism regarding digital transformation in their own backyards. They concurred that longstanding reluctance to change could sometimes be disheartening. However, guests agreed that the diligent work towards a digital future and its benefits must continue. The consensus was held that sharing approaches - starting with the principles underpinning Estonia's highly successful strategy - is a valuable practice.

To the delight of the guests, their physical and intellectual appetites were well met with a scrumptious repast of beet salad, salmon with mushroom risotto, assorted cheeses, and, best of all, hot fudge sundaes.

At the end of the evening, **Coach Kemper**, the Ambassador, former IFE Diplomatic Steward **Dirk Wouters**, and **Professor Dr. Jan Wouters** announced an exciting partnership with IFE and the American European Fund (America Europe KI Leuven).

SPOTTED: John Paul Farmer, President of WeLink Cities; former NYC CTO, IFE Steward; Peter Fatelnig, Minister-Counsellor for Digital Economy Policy at the Delegation of the European Union to the United States; Coach Kathy Kemper, CEO & Founder, Institute for Education, and Co-founder of CSeSC coding camp; Krista Kinnard, Chief, Emerging Technology at U.S. Department of Labor OClO; Kathryn Neal | Senior Director for International Policy at Microsoft; Ajit Pai, Partner at Searchlight Capital Partners; former FCC Chairman; ACA Lindsey Parker, Chief Technology Officer and Assistant City Administration, DC Government; Ili Press, Economic Affairs Counselor, Embassy of Estonia; H.E. Kristjan Prikk, Ambassador of Estonia to the United States; and Geo Saba, Chief Of Staff at U.S. House of Representatives (Office of Rep Ro Khanna).

