

PENNSYLVANIA CONGRESSMAN BRIAN FITZPATRICK

Brian Fitzpatrick, U.S. Representative for Pennsylvania's first congressional district, spoke with [Kenneth M. Jarin](#), Practice Leader of Ballard Spahr's [Government Relations and Public Policy Group](#), about the road that lies ahead—for him, for the [Problem-Solvers Caucus](#), and for President-Elect Joe Biden.

First, congratulations on your re-election. What is a top priority for you moving in to 2021?

“So much of what we’ve done so far hasn’t been stimulus. It’s been relief. We’re not even keeping up with people’s needs, let alone helping them stay on top of things. I think infrastructure spending could solve a lot of problems. Infrastructure isn’t an expense. It’s an investment. Every dollar that goes into it creates multiple dollars going forward, and that’s not even touching on how badly we need it. It’s the perfect job creator at the perfect time. The timing couldn’t be better to pass a wide-ranging, comprehensive infrastructure bill. That means roads and bridges. It means new facilities for schools. It means broadband access for rural areas. We should really be thinking about infrastructure as the means to solve a lot of problems facing us right now.”

I understand you know President-Elect Biden. What can you tell us about him?

“The first time I actually met President-Elect Biden was through the Beau Biden Foundation. Beau and I worked together at the U.S. Attorney’s office in Philadelphia, when I was an intern. We got to know each other through that group. [President-Elect Biden] was very generous and kind, and wrote a very thoughtful note when my brother [former Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick] passed away. So, I can tell you that he’s a very kind person.”

You’ve said you believe legal challenges to President-Elect Biden’s campaign should be allowed to run their course. How are you feeling about that now?

“I take the same perspective that I took in 2000. In 2000, it was one state at issue, not four. I believe we have a President-Elect. We have a winner. The transition is under way. We also have someone who is accessing the courts, as he has a right to. As long as that process isn’t being abused, as long as the lawsuits aren’t frivolous, I think it’s okay to let it run its course.

If there’s something wrong, something that needs to be fixed, with our voting process, we need to know about it. And if there’s no merit to these lawsuits, then they will be dismissed.”

“I have yet to see any evidence of systematic fraud. Are there isolated situations? Yes, and there always have been. Voter fraud happens. The issue is, is it pervasive? No. Do I believe [President Trump] has the right to air his grievances in a court of law, just like any other citizen in this country? Yes. I’m a big believer in openness, honesty, and transparency. The healthiest way to move forward, so our country can heal and come together, is to let the process play out.”

You’re a member of the Problem-Solvers Caucus [an independent member-driven group in Congress comprised of representatives from across the country and equally divided between Democrats and Republicans]. With a new administration, what do you see as the top priorities for that group?

“There are a lot of caucuses in Congress, and they run the continuum from far right to far left. There’s only one that’s bipartisan, and that’s the Problem-Solvers. Basically, what we believe is that government should function the same as

any kind of relationship in our lives. You listen more than you lecture. You don't allow the perfect to be the enemy of the good. You look for consensus and build from the middle. You'd rather have 80 percent of something than 100 percent of nothing."

"I think it's going to be very interesting. We have diminished margins both in the House and Senate, regardless of how Georgia pans out. That's going to expand our role. We'll be able to influence a lot of negotiations. Also, with the new administration, President-Elect Biden has indicated he really wants to work in a bipartisan matter with legislators on both sides of the aisle, so I think that will expand our influence and expand our ability to get things done."

The Problem-Solvers has assembled a stimulus bill that seems to be gaining a lot of support. From your perspective, what's likely to happen there?

"[The proposed stimulus bill] is only designed to get us to the end of the year. The constant bickering leading up to and in the aftermath of the election has really prevented people from getting the help they need. I hear it every single day when I am back home in my district. People are in really dire circumstances from a health care standpoint. People are in really dire circumstances from a financial standpoint. It's devastating people who are in recovery, and it's absolutely devastating working parents, who are trying to educate their children at home and can't afford child care. We just want to create a bridge and provide short-term relief until there's a new congress and a new administration."

You're also involved in the Access to Justice Caucus. What role do you see that group playing in the near future?

"Myself and Mary Gay Scanlon, who is my former colleague at Ballard Spahr, are going to be the bi-partisan co-chairs of this caucus. It expands access to the courts and access to justice for people

who have been left out for a number of reasons. We want to make sure that people who have trouble getting access get that. [[Legal Services Corporation](#), an independent nonprofit established by Congress to support civil legal aid to people in need of legal services] plays a critically important role, not just in the legal sector, but in just about everything. A big part of what we need to do is get them adequate funding."

Any final thoughts you'd like to share on what we have talked about today?

"I think the big thing we're all hoping for is that we can get through 2020 together. It's been a rough year for a lot of people for a host of reasons, not the least of which was the pandemic. I think we're all hopeful that the new year will bring a lot of positive change. I think we're all hoping that the vaccine will start bringing us back to something close to normal, and that our economy and country can start to heal. I'm hopeful for those things, too."



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We frequently update our [Presidential Transition Center](#) with timely insights on the formation of President-elect Biden's administration. We look forward to working with clients of all sizes as they prepare for a new era.

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