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SPEAKERS: DEMOCRACY IS NOT BROKEN

By MARY SCHLEY

‘IT’S ALWAYS good to be here on the Central Coast rather than in Washington,’ U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta said at the Carmel Chamber of Commerce’s annual membership luncheon at Spanish Bay in Pebble Beach Friday. “Because the last thing we want to talk about is what’s happening in Congress.”

Of course, that topic was also irresistible, with Panetta — who spoke on a panel alongside Mayor Dave Potter and city administrator Chip Rerig — likening it to his years at Carmel Middle School, with “members of Congress who pull fire alarms, members of Congress who bully each other, and members of Congress who grope their dates.”

Panetta lamented the fact that TV coverage has focused so much on the

lack of productivity in the House and the Senate, which have been distracted by two impeachments, two government shut-downs, a pandemic, inflation and numerous changes in the speaker post.

“If that’s all that you see, then we lose,” he said. “Despite the dysfunction you see

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PHOTO/MICHAEL TROUTMAN/DMT IMAGING

Carmel Mayor Dave Potter and Congressman Jimmy Panetta talked politics during the chamber’s annual luncheon.

on TV, we’ve got a job to do.”

Panetta highlighted a bipartisan bill that would double the capital gains tax exemption for home sellers and said he’s working on legislation to encourage more workforce housing. He also supports a middle-income tax credit and resurrecting the tax credit for first-time home buyers.

“Those are the big issues that we’re working on right now,” he said.

Local politics

Potter observed that politics are less brutal at city hall. “We have a council that works together well,” he said, highlighting the adoption of the housing element — a major document detailing how the city will accommodate 349 new housing units through 2030 — last month.

“We’re one of only three cities in the county that got it done,” he said.

Potter also mentioned the chamber collaborating with the Carmel Residents Association, which in the past was at odds with the business group.

“One of the things I’m proud of is this is a community that doesn’t always get along, but we disagree with dignity and respect,” Potter said.

“Good governing is good politics,” Panetta agreed. “You’ve got to be able to work with anybody.”

Rerig applauded the city’s active volunteer groups.

“We’ve got a deep bench of public servants in this community,” agreed Panetta, who lives in Carmel Valley with wife Carrie Panetta, a Monterey County Superior Court judge. “It’s about showing up. We have a sense of knowing what it takes to be a public servant. It’s about being accessible, being present and getting stuff done at the local level.”

He also pleaded with people to vote in local, state and national elections. “It really is about all of you and whether or not people vote — I cannot stress that enough.”