

Leon E. Panetta Biography



Leon Panetta co-founded The Panetta Institute for Public Policy with his wife Sylvia in 1997 upon completion of his service as White House chief of staff in the Bill Clinton administration. He co-directed it with her until 2009, when he left to serve as CIA director and then secretary of defense under President Obama. He returned to the Institute as chairman in 2013.

A Monterey native and Santa Clara University School of Law graduate, Secretary Panetta began his long and distinguished public service career in 1964 as a U.S. Army intelligence officer, receiving the Army Commendation Medal. Upon discharge he went to work in Washington as a legislative assistant to U.S. Senate minority whip Tom Kuchel of California. In 1969, he was appointed director of the U.S. Office for Civil Rights, where he was responsible for ensuring equal opportunity in public education, and later he served as executive assistant to the mayor of New York City. He then returned to Monterey, where he practiced law until his election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1976.

Serving his Central Coast district in Congress for sixteen years, Secretary Panetta became a respected leader on agriculture, federal budget, ocean and healthcare issues and from 1989 to 1993 he chaired the House Budget Committee. He won passage of the *Hunger Prevention Act of 1988*, Medicare and Medicaid coverage of hospice care for the terminally ill, and numerous measures to protect the California coast, including creation of the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

In 1993, Secretary Panetta left Congress to serve as director of the Office of Management and Budget for the incoming Clinton administration. There, he was instrumental in developing the policies that led to a balanced federal budget and eventual budget surpluses. In 1994, he accepted appointment as the president's chief of staff, and is credited with bringing order and focus to White House operations and policy making.

Upon leaving the Clinton administration in 1997, Secretary Panetta joined with his wife Sylvia to establish and co-direct The Panetta Institute for Public Policy, based at California State University, Monterey Bay. Reflecting the Secretary's ideals and personal example, the nonpartisan, not-for-profit study center seeks to attract thoughtful men and women to lives of public service and prepare them for the policy challenges of the future.

Secretary Panetta returned to public service at the start of the Barack Obama administration as director of the Central Intelligence Agency, where he supervised the operation to find and bring international terrorist Osama bin Laden to justice. Then, as Secretary of Defense, he led efforts to develop a new defense strategy, conduct critical counter terrorism operations, strengthen U.S. alliances, and open military service opportunities to Americans regardless of gender or sexual orientation. He chronicles his life in public service in his best-selling memoir *Worthy Fights*, which was published by Penguin Press in 2014.

Over the years Secretary Panetta has served on numerous boards and commissions. He co-chaired California Forward, the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and Governor Schwarzenegger's Council on Base Support and Retention. In 2006, he served on the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan national commission seeking a new course for the war in Iraq. At

present, he serves on the boards of directors for Oracle and Blue Shield of California. He serves as co-chair of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Defense Personnel Task Force and the Center for Strategic and International Studies Commission on Countering Violent Extremism.

Secretary Panetta is the recipient of hundreds of awards and honors. Recent examples include California Forward's *Forward Thinker Award*; the California Teachers Association's *Friends of Education Award*; the Judicial Council of California's *Stanley Mosk Defender of Justice Award*; *The Harry S. Truman Good Neighbor Award*; the Sons of Italy Foundation's *National Education & Leadership Award*; the *Peter Benchley Ocean Award* for "Excellence in Policy"; the Intelligence and National Security Alliance's *William Oliver Baker Award*; the Italian Community Services' *Distinguished Service Award*; The OSS Society's *William J. Donovan Award*; and the National Defense Industrial Association's *Dwight D. Eisenhower Award*.