**Peter Friedmann’s View from Washington, DC - January, 2018**

The "view" here in DC is decidedly foggy as 2018 begins. The partisanship has become even more debilitating (if that is possible). Legislation no longer appears to be done on the merits on Capitol Hill anymore, votes are cast almost purely on partisan basis - individual members of Congress seem willing to simply turn their votes over to the leaders of their parties. How else to explain votes in which ALL Republicans vote one way, and ALL Democrats vote the other? Aren’t any of them able or willing to vote their own way, even if it’s in support of a bill or position offered by someone from the other party?

Immigration and infrastructure are two major issues that need to be resolved. But that will take compromise. "Compromise"?!?  That has become a dirty word for too many Republicans and Democrats on the Hill, as the extremes of both parties wield more influence than ever before. They actually want to do battle, to demonstrate to their base constituencies just how unyieldingly liberal or conservative they are.  Keeping the fighting raging seems to be very good for fundraising - as most political contributions come in from the more extreme base constituencies. And keeping the money flowing into their campaign coffers is imperative as we approach the 'Mid-term' elections, coming quickly, in November. Those elections will determine if the Republicans retain majorities in the House and Senate, or if the Democrats are able to regain Majority status and power.

Seen in this light (which is exactly how most members of Congress see it - whether they will admit it or not), compromise, to find solutions to tough issues facing the country such as immigration or infrastructure would be inconsistent with their battle for majority control of Capitol Hill. This is really a sorry state of affairs.

Silver linings are hard to find, but here are two:

1. Senator Susan Collins of Maine, a Republican, was joined by about 15 other Senators, Republican and Democrat, to try to hammer out a compromise on extending funding to avoid a Federal government shutdown.  While the deal was ultimately cut between Senator McConnell and Senator Schumer, not this group, we have hopes that this group could expand, take on other issues, with enough votes to become an effective centrist force for solutions.
2. Some health clubs in DC are banning MSNBC, CNN and FOX. They just create    too much tension, anger, arguments.  If this trend would spread nationwide, might be a good thing, wouldn’t it?

This week President Trump delivers his State of the Union address to Congress. Let’s hope it we get this last Session of Congress before the Midterms, off on the right foot.