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Dean Logan's Blog: Politics, Gambling, the Focus of First Santoro Business Law Lecture

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RWU Law recently hosted the inaugural Santoro Business Law Lecture http://law.rwu.edu/story/presidential-debates-politics-gambling and the RWU law community, as well as leading lawyers in RI, were treated to a day with a true American original, Frank Fahrenkopf. Mr. Fahrenkopf has been deeply involved in politics at the highest level, beginning as the very successful head of the Republican National Committee during the Reagan presidency, and he has founded and still Co-chairs the Commission on Presidential Debates, while holding down his day job as head of the American Gaming Association (the national trade group representing casino operators).

His formal lecture, co-sponsored by the leading law firm Hinckley, Allen & Snyder, was titled “Business & Legal Issues for Gaming in the Internet Era,” and Fahrenkopf reviewed nearly 20 years of unsuccessful congressional attempts to outlaw, or at least regulate, online gambling. One by one, all efforts became mired in attempts to include or exclude such diverse type of gambling as Indian casinos, state lotteries, dog tracks, horse tracks, and online gambling’s principle staple, poker. “This is not a Republican or a Democratic issue,” Fahrenkopf said of those who advocate outright bans on online gambling. “Among Republicans, it tends to be the hard right who believes gambling is a sin, and it’s their moral duty to stop it. Among Democrats, it’s the far left saying government has to paternalistically step in and protect people from themselves. It’s a strange union of people who usually disagree on everything.” He also discussed the rapidly developing counter-trend of states moving to legalize a range of on-line gaming. Fahrenkopf ended his formal talk with a discussion of the “Internet Gambling Prohibition, Poker Consumer Protection, and Strengthening UIGEA Act of 2012,” sponsored by Sens. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) and Jon Kyl (R-Ariz), which was leaked to the press in mid-September and is widely considered unlikely to pass. If it doesn’t, Fahrenkopf said, the result will be “the biggest expansion of gambling in 50 years.”

But his “inside the Beltway” expertise was, if anything, more intriguing. From stories on how the Kennedys fooled Nixon into not wearing make-up for their 1960 debate (where Nixon displayed a “5-o’clock shadow”), to a current dispute between the Obama and Romney camps over whether the candidates would debate seated or standing, Fahrenkopf was full of juicy anecdotes. Among the characters who at some point appeared in his wonderful stories were gambling czars Steve Wynn and Sheldon Adelson,
billionaire investor Warren Buffet, and of course Ronald Regan, both President Bushs, Bill and Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, Bob Dole, Mike Dukakis, John and Elizabeth Edwards, Dan Quayle, and Sarah Palin. He also (rightly, it turns out) predicted that a strong showing in the first debate would thrust the Romney campaign into a horserace.

The most amazing parts of the day to me though were two smaller events, that showed The Frank Fahrenkopf out of the glare of the spotlight: he found time to sit for an interview with Bridget Bernardo, the RI writer for teen version of Time magazine, and how he offered to introduce one of our 2Ls to leading lawyers practicing in gaming law in her home state. He also shared with a small group of students a quote from Richard Cardinal Cushing that he carries in his wallet: “A great deal of talent is lost in the world for want of a little courage. Every day sends to their graves obscure men whom timidity prevented from making a first effort; who, if they could have been induced to begin, would in all probability have gone great lengths in the career of fame. The fact is, that to do anything in the world worth doing we must not stand back shivering and thinking of the cold and danger but jump in and scramble through as well as we can.” Great advice from two remarkable men.

Here is Bridget’s story [http://www.timeforkids.com/news/time-debate/50541](http://www.timeforkids.com/news/time-debate/50541) and below are some pics from that fun day.