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LEON PANETTA, FORMER WHITE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF, CIA DIRECTOR, AND SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, CALLS FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY TO CONFRONT COVID-19

Leon Panetta, one of the most respected government leaders in recent American history, told the Paul Simon Public Policy Institute this week the United States urgently needs a comprehensive strategy to deal with the crisis caused by COVID-19.

“We need a national strategy to confront a national problem,” Panetta said. “I don’t think it’s ever too late,” he said, but added that it will probably require a new president to assemble and implement this strategy. “This is a national crisis,” he said.

Panetta is a former White House chief of staff, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and Secretary of Defense. He now serves as the chairman of the Panetta Institute for Public Policy at California State University, Monterey Bay.

He participated Wednesday in the Institute’s Understanding Our New World series of virtual conversations with policy experts, political analysts, and government and private sector leaders.

During the conversation, Panetta called on American political, business, and civic leaders to join forces in responding to the nation’s serious public health, economic, political, and social challenges. “This country is at its best when we are all working together,” he said.

Panetta also urged students to consider careers in public affairs. “I always thought public service was a higher calling,” he said.