

**AREA LECTURE DISCUSSES
CONGRESSIONAL SUCCESSION
UPON TERRORIST ATTACK**

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SEASIDE — Establishing a government that can withstand the aftermath of modern terrorism attacks will force the nation to reconsider its Constitution.

That was part of the discussion Monday at the Leon Panetta Lecture Series at California State University at Monterey Bay. ABC News analyst Cokie Roberts and nationally known scholar and pundit Norman Ornstein were the guest speakers.

What if United Flight 93, which went down in Pennsylvania, instead stayed in the air and struck the Capitol? If it killed or incapacitated a large number of Congressional leaders, who would govern?

Ornstein said he backs a constitutional amendment that broadens the line of succession for presidents now outlined in the Constitution, and also an amendment that allows for appointing members of Congress to temporarily replace injured or dead ones.

The Constitution calls for a quota of live Congress members to carry on with business. But Ornstein said Sept. 11 showed many could potentially be wiped out in one violent act, leaving a handful to make decisions about security and anything else.

"Do you want six members of the House, maybe all from the Texas delegation, to make those decisions?" Ornstein asked.

He backs a system whereby governors could appoint members to the House of Representatives to ensure the government

continues until elections can be held.

Sounds simple? Maybe. But the House of Representatives is one of the few governing bodies in the world that requires an election, unlike vacant Senate seats.

Changing the Constitution is a tall order — and one that allows members of the House to be appointed, even for a short time, alters a proud tradition.

"We are biologically opposed to changing the Constitution unless it broadens freedoms," Roberts said. "We're proud of the fact that you have to be elected to the House of Representatives."

U.S. Rep. Brian Baird, D-Washington, has proposed an amendment that would allow governors to appoint members to the House if more than 25 percent of lawmakers are killed or incapacitated.

High school and college students spent about 90 minutes talking with the panel about the issue and others related to fighting terrorism.

"It's very important we have a government ... what concerns me is that the people chosen to fill those positions are representative of the people," said Harbor High School student Alia Breitwieser.

Other students said the afternoon discussion made them ponder the definition of terrorism.

"The United States has done lots of things and not called it terrorism," said Laura Hagen of Scotts Valley High School. "It just made me think about how many things we have done."