

Interviewee: James Curry

CHERVENAK: Jim, thanks for joining us.

CURRY: Thanks for having me today.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we start off with your background, where you came from, the arc of your career, and what you're working on now.

CURRY: These days, I'm an associate professor of political science at the University of Utah, and I study and teach about politics, and, in particular, Congress. And I think my path to getting here really started in college, where I really started to develop a strong interest in politics. If you had asked me at 18 or 19, I would have said I was going to be a politician because that political bug bit me at that point in my life, and I did everything I could to be engaged in politics.

I worked with the college Democrats in my local college. I worked with the local party. I got involved wherever I could. And I did a congressional internship when I was in college with Illinois senator Dick Durbin. And that was the most crystallizing moment for me because I got to go to DC. I spent all this time in Congress, a lot of time in the Capitol building, observing what was going on there and participating in it. And that's really made clear to me that the thing that I was most driven by was trying to understand how that place worked and why it worked the way it did.

And that was a very crystallizing moment where I switched in my head from necessarily wanting to spend time working in politics or working on Capitol Hill to doing what I could to understand the place, to research the place, to write about the place and help other people understand it, too. So that led me to seek a PhD in government and politics, ultimately, at the University of Maryland, where I focused on my research on Congress.

I continued working on and off Capitol Hill during that time. So, I spent some time with the House Appropriations Committee while I was in graduate school. Then after graduate school, I spent time as an American Political Science Association Congressional Fellow with Representative Dan Lipinski, who recently left Congress. And eventually found myself coming out to Utah, where I've spent the last several years researching, writing, and teaching about, mainly, the US Congress.

CHERVENAK: Let's start with your time on the Hill. Could you talk a little bit more about that? Were you involved in committee work or was it a personal office? What kinds of activities were you involved in? What were some of the striking things that you saw during that time that shaped your later thinking?

CURRY: Obviously, the internship was formative just because it grew the interest there, but my real understanding of the place really started when I spent time as a member of the House Appropriations Committee staff. I was a really low-level staffer on the subcommittee on the, at

the time, that was called Financial Services and General Government. It doesn't even exist as a subcommittee anymore. It was created, and then it was split back up not long after that, and this was in '07 I believe.

And so this was when the Democrats had first taken the House back after the 2006 midterm elections, and they were doing some reforms to their earmarking procedures. And so they wanted somebody who was willing to spend all day researching background and earmark requests. And all I wanted was to be able to have more time and access to Capitol Hill to help me with my understanding of the place and with my study of it in graduate school. And so also I applied and offered my services. And that's what I did all day.

But, in return, I got to watch everything that happened in the subcommittee. I got to see the process of them putting together their appropriations bill for that year and building support within the subcommittee and then building support within the committee and then going to the floor and then taking it over to the Senate side.

And that experience really had one of the most crystallizing moments for me in terms of what I was going to eventually do my dissertation on and write my first book on, which was, they spent all this time, as we did as a staff, writing this bill draft. And then obviously there's members of the subcommittee, both Democrats and Republicans. And we didn't share the draft with them in the open and straightforward manner that you might suspect happens on Capitol Hill. We didn't finish the draft and then give copies to all the offices and say, Hey, let me just know what you think.

We put copies of the bill in a conference room in one of the Capitol complex office buildings, one copy per member office. And each one had the member's office name at the top. And each office had one hour to send a staffer to come take a look at the bill in the room and then leave. And they couldn't take it with them. And that was the only access that members of the subcommittee had to the actual bill draft before the markup on the committee.

And, at the time, I was like, Why is this happening? Why wouldn't you share the copy of the bill with members of the subcommittee? Even the members of your own party? And what I came to realize is that the best way—if you're a committee, if you're in a leadership position in Congress—to get the outcome you want is to not give people a whole lot of opportunities to find out what they don't like about it. You want to keep it under wraps.

And it wasn't necessarily that they were worried about every single member of the subcommittee digging too much into it. They didn't want leaks. They didn't want the bill draft to get beyond that. They didn't want anybody talking to somebody else about what was in the draft. They didn't want a copy of it to magically appear on the Internet or in some trade group or lobbyist organization's office. They wanted to make sure that people—members of the subcommittee—came in, they saw the bill, they heard about why it was a good draft, and then they would support it. And we could move it along the process without things getting blown up

through somebody's opposition to this piece or that piece. As they always said, it's a carefully crafted balance that we have in this bill, and we shouldn't mess with it.

And that was really interesting to me because that set me off on this path of seeking to understand how who has information and who doesn't affects who has power and who doesn't in the Capitol. And also how different actors in Washington work to try to use information and control information in ways that help them get the outcomes that they want.

CHERVENAK: So, you spent time on this committee. Was any of that time in a personal office, or was it all committee-based?

CURRY: None of that was in a personal office. Later, after graduate school, I went back and worked in the personal office of Representative Dan Lipinski and got a whole new tutorial on the control of information from that side of things. And when, I was a committee staffer, I got to live in the world of denying information to people. And then once I was a personal office staffer and sort of a typical member of Congress's office, I had to live the life of constantly trying to find out information about what was going on so I could make recommendations to my boss about what he should do.

And so between those two experiences, I really got to experience both sides of that equation and see how it really affects what you're able to do and how you have to go about your business on Capitol Hill.

CHERVENAK: I think that leads into the broader question of your research interests. I think you've stated them there, but would you mind just recapping, overall, since you've gone into academia, what is your overall research interest? And then we'll dig more deeply into the congressional specific stuff.

CURRY: The big questions are really just, I mean, at 30,000 feet, I study Congress, and I study its role in national politics and policymaking. And the overriding questions have been now, for some time, Who has influence over decisions made on Capitol Hill? Why do some people have more power than others in this respect? And what are the consequences of those distributions of power among different members, among different offices, among different parts of the Capitol?

CHERVENAK: Let's get into the detail. I know you have a book that specifically looks at this issue as it regards leadership, so can you talk more about your research area there. What are the questions you were asking, and what answers did you find?

CURRY: So the big question for that book—for *Legislating in the Dark*, which was my first book—was, Why do party leaders in Congress appear to have so much power? And to what degree does information and knowledge and expertise play a role in leadership power in Congress?

And, in the book, I actually dig both into party leadership power and committee leadership power—so, the power of committee chairs, which I argue works the same—but what I found is that in today's Congress often leadership power is executed through what I term in-the-dark lawmaking or in-the-dark legislating, which largely has three components.

In recent years, parties and members of the parties in Congress have delegated substantial authority to their party leaders to essentially run the show—to set the agenda, to take the lead in the development of major policymaking efforts behind the scenes, to take a lead on negotiations with the other party or with the Senate or at the White House, and to largely micromanage the consideration of legislation on the House and Senate floor.

As a result of this, party leaders—as well as relevant committee leaders, some relevant committee chairs—typically possess far more information than other members of Congress about the major policymaking efforts that are happening on Capitol Hill. They are the ones that are essentially involved in the discussions about how to draft the legislation. They're the ones that are involved centrally in the negotiations over what will and will not be included in the legislative package that's put together.

And this makes them, this not only gives them tons of influence over what actually is in the laws, but it also makes them an important source of information for backbench or rank and file members of Congress about what is going on, what is being included in the bill, and what is being left out, and why, and what happened in the negotiations with the other party or with the Senate or with the White House.

Few other members are privy to any of that information. They weren't there, they were not in the room, and so they have to turn to these leaders to get that information and to, essentially, get cues in order to figure out, What are they going to support and what are they going to oppose and why?

And so, as a result, party leaders and committee leaders are effectively able to persuade their members, and their party often, to get on board with what the plan is. They're able to essentially also exacerbate the informational disparity between leadership and rank and file, often by keeping negotiations even more secretive and behind closed doors. And then once a deal is cut, moving very quickly to vote on the passive passage of what are often very large legislative packages that include many, many different provisions once an agreement is finally reached.

And this way, this keeps most members of Congress, most rank and file members of Congress, effectively in the dark as to what's going on, what's being negotiated, and what it will ultimately be in the final package. And that consequently makes them more reliant on the information being provided by those same leaders about whether or not they should support the package.

And we see these kinds of legislating-in-the-dark tactics all the time. This is essentially how House Republicans managed their repeal and replace effort with the Affordable Care Act in

2017. I don't know if you recall that there was this moment of Senator Rand Paul going on a scavenger hunt through the Capitol to try to find a copy of the bill, which was largely for publicity, but it's true. There was not a readily available draft copy. That the leadership was keeping that locked up as they negotiated things.

And we're seeing it again this month with the passage of the Recovery Act, where the House Democrats moved very quickly to put together a package and then voted on it. And now the same thing is happening in the Senate, where they're negotiating the final details of this package right up until the second they're going to bring it to the floor, which means that very few members will have a full idea of everything that actually makes it in there and doesn't.

And that's a way to try to ensure that people are on board because you're telling them we got the best deal we could. This is the only package we can put together that can get all 51 Democratic votes in the Senate, and so you better support it because it does all these things that we want.

CHERVENAK: Let's talk a little bit more about the types of information that you're mentioning here because I can imagine lots of different categories of information. Are there specific categories that you're focused on that lead to this power structure?

CURRY: It's largely policy information. Background and basic knowledge and expertise about the policies at hand, which, on any one policy, relatively few members have a depth of understanding of the policymaking dynamics—what has been done, what is possible, what are all the different programs, what can you do.

But then, on top of that, political information. And a lot of that is information about the negotiations.

So, if Nancy Pelosi goes in and negotiates with Mitch McConnell about what kind of legislative package can get through both a Democratic chamber and a Republican chamber, or can get through and be supported by Democrats in the House but also Republicans in the Senate. Nobody else knows what's fully part of those negotiations and what was agreed to and what people said could or couldn't be included except Nancy Pelosi and Mitch McConnell. Such that, they're the only ones who can return to their caucus and say, Look, I've been fighting with Mitch McConnell about this for months. This is the best deal we can get. He won't accept this thing that you want, but he will accept this, and so this is what we have to pass.

Well, that may be true. But obviously leadership is also going to present that in about as stark terms as possible so that members of the party who may not be super happy with the compromise that they were able to strike may realize and accept that it's the best possible compromise. And so they'll go along with the plan.

No one else has that sort of political information about what was possible and what was not possible other than the leadership—and potentially maybe delegated some of these

negotiations to the relevant committee chairs—but it's people who are at the higher echelon of Congress. So the only ones that have that political information. And those are also the same people that often are the only ones that have the kind of deep depth of knowledge and expertise and experience working in a particular policy area on particular programs.

And, by the way, these are the same people that also have all the really expert staff on Capitol Hill at their disposal because committee still has all the expert staff. They work for the chair. The party leadership often has access to them and has their own expert staff. And so all of this together—policy information, policy knowledge, political information, knowledge about what happened in negotiations—are all held by the same set of people over and over again.

CHERVENAK: I understand that the leadership might have this advantage in saying, This bill or this set of options inside a bill are more likely to pass than another, or are the only way that can pass versus another set of options. So, leadership seems to have this advantage in terms of identifying which options can pass and which ones will fail.

On the other hand, you have a different type of information, which is more expertise around the issue itself and whether the bill would work or not as law, whether it is a good idea or a bad idea. What unintended consequences there could be. That seems to be a different kind of information.

How does that work? Is it the same group of people? Because I can imagine an expert in healthcare being outside of that little group who might have a very good idea of what that bill could work or not in reality.

CURRY: In many ways, it's often the same group of people but not entirely. Part of the reason why it tends to be the same group of people is because it's the expert staff who work on the committees who tend to be the ones who know the most about the dynamics of the policies as you just described it. What could work and what couldn't? How should this be structured effectively? And those staff work for the committee chairs or the committee ranking members or sometimes for the party leaders.

Now, they aren't going to be the only ones. There's always going to be individual members of Congress who specialize in particular issue areas, right, who that's what they've developed, that's the legislative portfolio they've developed. They, even though they're not in that sort of leadership position, they're experts on healthcare or an education policy or on trade policy.

That's a way that a member can actually force their way into the table, like, to get a seat at the table. Because they are the ones who are going to be able to credibly claim to their colleagues as well that, I know a lot about this policy, and I have a different view.

Well, then it behooves the leadership and the committee leadership to bring those people to the table and get them to be part of the decision-making and get them to ultimately go along with the final plan. Because they can bring something to the table in terms of ideas, but they

can also have influence over their colleagues because, largely speaking, members of Congress look to the colleagues that they trust and that they see as knowledgeable in these issues when they're deciding whether or not they think they're going to go along with the plan, whether or not they think they're going to support this bill that's on the floor.

CHERVENAK: That's interesting. So, on the one side, we have this idea of which options are possible. And then we have this concept of whether the option at hand is credible or defensible.

CURRY: Yeah.

CHERVENAK: And in order to convey that information, you have to co-opt these experts because they could potentially do an end run around the leadership on those particular issues if they came out against them.

CURRY: Yeah, so I mean, think about this in terms of an issue—. Say you're in the Senate and you're dealing with a bill that deals with financial services or consumer rights. And you're the Democrats. Well, you're probably going to make sure that you get Elizabeth Warren on your team, and she's backing it, and she's out there saying that this is going to do what it should do because she's seen by other members of Congress, by senators, as somebody who has expertise in that space.

And if she says that this is a good bill on financial services, a good bill on consumer rights, it does what we want to accomplish as a party on these things and you should support it, the vast majority of Democrats in the Senate are going to be like, Well, if Warren's for it, then why shouldn't I be for it.

And there's different members on each of those different issues, but the common denominator every time is that Chuck Schumer is going to be there every single time as part of that process. And whoever the committee chairs are on the relevant committee chair—the chair of the Finance Committee, for instance. It's always going to be part of that disconnection, too, because they also have the staff. They also have the clout. They also have the roles of being the people doing the political negotiations of managing that process that's going to make sure that they're at the table, too.

And so that's how you—between the policy knowledge and credibility, and between having the political knowledge and being involved in the political decision-making—that's who you see is actually, these are the actual players on the issue, and they're getting things together and they're able to convince, usually, their colleagues, most more often than not, to go along, though obviously nothing's perfect and it doesn't work out for them every single time.

CHERVENAK: Let's talk about this group that might go along or might not, right, because there's obviously a reason that they're doing so. Typically, it'll be a politically sensitive issue in their district. So how does that type of information play out in these processes?

CURRY: So those are the—if you're a party leader—those are the people you have to worry about, and it can vary from issue to issue. And it can vary depending on whether you need to worry about, maybe, your moderate flank or your more extreme flank or sometimes both.

So on something like the Recovery Act, if you're the Democratic leadership, you need to make sure—you have to strike this balance—where you need to make sure that the Recovery Act is set up well enough such that the most liberal progressive Democrats in the House and the Senate are comfortable with it—they think it does enough—and so they're willing to back it without too much complaining or without being able to threaten to walk away.

But you also need to get the moderates on board, at least enough of them. In the Senate, you need all of them, which means you need Joe Manchin to sign on to it, and you also need Bernie Sanders to sign on to it, which isn't exactly the easiest thing to do.

And, most of the time, it doesn't come down to needing every single member. It's rare that you have a situation like you have in the Senate right now, even within one party, where you need every single one of them to go along. But you do have to worry about losing too many people from any part of the party on any part of the issue. And that's where those people can potentially ensure themselves at least some part of the process. Or if you have a large enough subset of members within the party that might not be totally comfortable with what the party's game plan is, they're going to be able to negotiate with the leadership right away.

So, on something like, if we go back a few years to when the Republicans are trying to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, you had something like the Freedom Caucus, which was about thirty members who were relatively hardline Republicans who wanted to see a repeal and replace measure that was more hardline. Those thirty members, if they were willing to band together, could make the difference between success or failure, but you also had a couple dozen members on the other side—these Tuesday Group, more moderate Republicans—who also didn't want to see something that went too far.

And so, if you're the leadership, you need to find the right balance there. You need to bring in the experts. You need to write a policy that has credibility from the people that are most involved in the Republican side on health policy, but also checks, is able to be credibly explained to someone like Jim Jordan and Mark Meadows and the Freedom Caucus as achieving hardline Republican goals of getting rid of Obamacare while being able to credibly claim to some of these more moderate to Tuesday Group Republicans that, but it's not going to harm people, it's not going to throw people off their healthcare, it's not going to, people are still going to be okay if they have preexisting conditions.

That's very difficult. But if you're able to assemble your team to put together the bill, if you're able to assemble the experts, if you're able to assemble the people with the clout who can signal to these people that this checks all our boxes and you should be happy with it, that that's how you get there. That's how you get these people to go along. But, of course, people who

think that they might be in disagreement with the leadership—if they have the votes necessary to deny the leadership what they want to do—are going to be able to force their way into the room.

CHERVENAK: So, what about this concept of an individual member who is looking at a bill and needs to analyze it on its own merits and read the bill, understand it or understand its impact to his district. So, you have that kind of one end of the extreme. We would call this the independent member. On the other side, you have one that will go along with his own party or experts, their opinions about this bill.

CURRY: Yeah.

CHERVENAK: So, since you've experienced the member side, and you've seen the committee side, are there any members who are more independent-leaning? Are they doing their own independent analysis of a bill and its impact on their district over the long term? And how do they do it?

CURRY: Yeah, I mean, well there are some members who are more interested in that than others. And part of the reason is that these are members who have found in their careers that they are a little bit more out of step with their party than others.

Members who often find themselves always largely in lockstep with what most of their party wants, there's less of a need to really try to dig in on your own because you trust more. So, what the party's telling you, what the committee is telling you. Because, generally, you found over and over again that what they wanted to do lines up with what you're comfortable with.

But if you remember that's a little bit unorthodox in your party, a little bit more out of step, now it behooves you to, like, you're a little less trustworthy of what you're being told by the party because you don't believe that necessarily everything the party wants to do is what you want to do or what you think is going to fly in your district. So you need to try to find a way to dig into what's being proposed to you independently of the leadership.

And how do you do that is one of the most difficult things on Capitol Hill if you're one of those members. Often the answer is that you can't because you just don't have—you're not given the time, you don't have the resources, and you don't necessarily have anybody who's in the know who is necessarily credible to you. Sometimes you do. Sometimes there is somebody involved in the negotiations that you can, whose brain you can pick, and be like, Okay, level with me. Why does this, how does this work for the things that I'm interested in? Or, that you and I know that we're both interested in and lay that out for me and convince me why I should still support this or not, if not I'm going to walk away.

But sometimes you don't even have that.

Working for Representative Lipinski was really telling on this, really informative or educational on this, because he was somebody who was often out of step with his own party. And that's what we spent a lot of time doing in his office, which was trying to find out aside from the selling points and the talking points you were getting from the leadership about why you should support this, Did we think this was something that we should support or that the representative should support given where he wanted to be on the issues and where he thought he needed to be because of his voters?

And sometimes it was just a really hard thing to figure out. And it's been—. There were only so many of us in his office. House members don't have that many staffers. And so it was just a lot of long nights of trying to talk to who we could, trying to get different opinions. But you can't even just go to the other side of the aisle because you don't necessarily trust them either. It's, a lot of times, it's how do you do it. The answer is sometimes you just won't satisfactorily.

And if you ask enough members of Congress and their staff, most of them will tell you that most of the time they don't feel they really had all the information that they could have really hoped or dreamed to have. But, at the end of the day, they made a call based on what limited information that they had to the best degree possible. And, for most members, that's essentially how they have to function day-to-day, except on maybe the couple issues where they have developed real knowledge, real expertise, real experience.

CHERVENAK: What if there was some tool that a member could leverage to get insights about the impact of a bill on their district? I'm assuming there is no such tool. If there were, how would it be used? Would these members then think about, How does it impact my district? Based on your experience, would they think about, How does this measure impact my voters of different types, different geographic locations, different income levels? How would they approach analyzing a bill if they were actually able to do so? And judge on its merits, on its impact to the district?

CURRY: Yeah, I mean, impact on the district would be number one, and they'd want to know kind of exactly what you laid out. They'd want to know, If this policy went into effect, how would it affect voters in my district? How would it affect different types of voters in my district? How would it affect different parts of my district? If they have a relatively geographically or demographically diverse district, they'd want all that information. And it would vary from bill to bill, right.

If it was to build a deal with healthcare, they'd want to know, Okay, how will this affect healthcare costs or healthcare access in my district generally and then potentially in different parts?

But they'd also want to know—that's the thing, reelection is a big part of it—but they also have their own policy preferences, their own things that they want to accomplish. They also all have a sense of what they think is good public policy, at least on a subset of issues. I'm sure there's always issues where some of them just don't care. Probably if you talk to most urban members,

they don't care that much about farm policy, and if you talk to a lot of very rural farm-oriented members, they don't care a whole lot about urban policy because it's just not relevant to them or their lives or their districts.

But at least for the issues they care about, sometimes they have their own internal—or I would say that they almost always have their own internal, This is what I think good policy is. And they also want to know how these provisions that have been laid out relate to what they would prefer to see on this policy or that policy, even independent of just how it affects their district.

So really an ideal situation would be, as a member, you always had that information presented to you as you were given the opportunity to consider a bill. But there's trade-offs, too, right. If you suggest, if you largely support a legislative package that's being put together, even if you're frustrated not to have all the information you want on it, you also might be willing to support keeping that information under wraps if you think that information would be used by the opposition to kill it.

Because at the end of the day, you still want to pass something and even if you'd rather, well, I'd really to know exactly how it's going to affect my district so I can talk about that and I can think about that. I also don't want our political opponents to have that information because they may be able to find ways to make it look bad. And that's not good either.

And so there's always these tensions there between what do you want as a representative, what do you want as you're making your vote, but also what do you want in order to be able to talk positively about this accomplishment that maybe your party who took the lead on backing in the Congress and you don't want it to be blown up, you don't want it to look bad, you don't want there to be a lot of negative press towards you and your party for this effort if you can avoid it.

CHERVENAK: Let's move on to the concept of party. I know you've written about that, especially together with Frances Lee, who we've also talked to. Why don't you give me your perspective? The questions you're trying to answer about party, and what you found so far there.

CURRY: So the big question in particular that Frances and I were going after was, you know, we've seen all this partisan change in our politics over the last couple generations or at least over the last generation. We always say that the parties have polarized more than ever before. There's more party conflict. Each party is also more ideologically cohesive in terms of being more uniformly liberal or more uniformly conservative. And the question we wanted to know is, Has this changed lawmaking at all?

We were struck by how little attention had been paid to that part of the question. We know it has affected all sorts of things in terms of the type of party-line voting we see in Congress. We know it's led to, or it's part of the reason, that Congress has empowered their party leaders and empowered their party organizations. But does it help the parties when they're in power get

more of what they want in the policymaking process? Does the fact that they're so unified help them be able to marshal through legislative programs the way that you see in more parliamentary systems? And so we dug into this, and we found that the answer was, largely, no.

CHERVENAK: I think that's a very interesting outcome. And I was surprised and asked Frances this, and I'll ask you the same, if they're spending so much time working on messaging and there's been a time shift from something like legislating to more time on messaging. Just that fact alone would say that there should be some kind of output change on the legislative side if they're spending less time doing it compared to doing something else. I don't know what you guys think about that or if you've seen anything in the data in terms of volume of legislation or quality of legislation or what.

CURRY: So, what I would say is it can be deceptive. They spend less floor time considering substantive legislation. They spend more floor time considering messaging legislation. But they don't necessarily spend more or less time as an institution, generally, working on substantive things.

Just so much of it is moved behind the scenes and that has freed up the use of the floor to be a place where they largely debate things, use messaging vehicles, and communicate with the public. Instead, they're spending a ton of time still writing policies behind the scenes, negotiating is behind the scenes. And just these things tend to pass quickly, and they tend to pass as part of humongous legislative packages. Such that you're not bringing up bill after bill after bill on the floor to pass these policies, you're bringing them up together as one really big legislative package.

Something like the package we saw in December, which was a combination of a bill that funded the government almost entirely for the coming fiscal year but also included, what, however much it was, a billion or trillion dollars in covid relief—900 billion, I believe was the number in December for the second round of covid relief plan. Plus all these other things that they had been working on in Congress over the last couple years. All these other bills, all these other things about surprise medical billing, or this there was this environmental legislation. Or these other things that they've been working on, they just attached them all together and passed it at once. Which means you're spending less floor time passing substance, but it doesn't mean that you're actually passing less substance.

And, in fact, if you look at how many pages of new law are passed by Congress every year, it's been relatively steady since the 1980s. We often see that, we often perceive that Congress is less productive because we see these charts about how it's passing fewer and fewer laws than ever before, but those laws have gotten bigger and bigger and bigger by orders of magnitude, such that since, really since the 1980s, the amount of law measured in pages that Congress has passed each year is staying relatively even. And it's actually way up from where it was in the 1950s.

CHERVENAK: I wonder what other ways there are to analyze that body of law to see the change over time. That's a whole a whole topic unto itself.

CURRY: Yes.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we move on to this concept of relationships and maybe you can talk about that aspect of things. Obviously people can't compromise—. They can compromise without relationships, but it's certainly probably easier if you have a relationship with someone else to get to a compromise. What is your interest in that area? And what have you seen?

CURRY: So this connects to my broader interest in just trying to understand who has the power and who has the influence and who has what it takes to try to actually get things done in Washington and who doesn't. And so Jason Roberts and I—and Jason's a political science professor at the University of North Carolina—have really just in the last year started digging into this question to try to understand to what degree do the nature, or the quality, or the positive versus negative nature of relationships—both personal and professional among the people who work on Capitol Hill—affect their abilities, again, either positively or negatively to negotiate with each other, to work with each other, to find agreements and pass things that require compromise, which most things do.

And what we've found so far—. It's been a lot of interviewing. We've also been collecting some data on congressional travel, so who travels together and whether members who travel together are more likely to collaborate in the legislative process. That data side of the thing is still ongoing, but preliminarily it looks like it does help.

But what we found conceptually and from the interviews is that the lack of relationships, or maybe the negative nature of some relationships on Capitol Hill today, isn't really the problem. Party conflict is the problem. The gap between the parties is the problem. How much they disagree on the issues, and all the political incentives for them to disagree, is the problem.

But relationships can be a solution to that problem. That if you can get people to start to trust each other on Capitol Hill. If you can get a Democrat and Republican who have the clout to work together and do something. If they trust each other enough to negotiate with each other to go and talk to people on their side of the aisle honestly and come back to them and be honest about what they've heard to not stab each other in the back as they work through the legislative process. They can hold together. And they can find places of compromise. And they can see it through.

But without that trust, it's hard to overcome all the other things that really make it hard to get things done on Capitol Hill. And all the other reasons, especially for Democrats and Republicans, to not work together.

So it seems like these relationships—building good, trusting relationships among members of Congress—can be something that can help us and can help them get over the hill on some of

these really vexing political issues that really, really divide the party and really divide the voters of both parties.

CHERVENAK: I wonder whether this concept of relationships—it greases the wheels of compromise to a certain extent. But you might say the same thing about business from when there was very weak law, right? In that case, you don't have good laws to enforce your contract, so you have to rely on relationships to get things done. And maybe Congress is something of the same thing since you don't have a very clear, you can't trade easily in Congress, right. You can't trade my interest and your interest, and we have a market where it would all be transactional, and relationships weren't needed. But since you don't have that structure, relationships are crucial in order to bundle things together and to pass bills.

CURRY: That's right. And especially on some issues. You know, unlike spending bills. There is literally an easy compromise you can come to, whereas if you want to do ten dollars on this and I want to do twenty, well, let's do fifteen. You can't split the difference in other things. You can't split the difference on, like, abortion. You can't split the difference on moral issues, especially—. Most things you cannot split the difference. It's either one thing or another.

And so that's where you really need something else to help you, and it can't just necessarily be transactional. And more than anything, it's building—. What the people we've interviewed over and over again told us is that working with someone on legislation, compromising with them day-to-day trying to figure out what you can do requires a level of trust.

And these are not necessarily novel social science findings. We're drawing on literature from organizational psychology as background for this, where they find this is what's true in any work environment in any professional environment. People work better together if they trust each other and if they can get along. And they don't work as well together if they are leery of each other, if they don't like somebody that disrupts any kind of professional workplace. And Congress is a professional workplace just like anywhere else. Has its own unique quirks that make it different in other ways, but it's still a workplace where people need to try to find a way to work together.

CHERVENAK: Well, I think one of the big differences between Congress and in a company—maybe with the exception of Bridgewater—is this concept of transparency. So, can you build relationships with people if you have cameras on you during every meeting? And that's a question I've wondered. My background is really exploiting transparency to create products, and I like transparency. And as someone who's a voter and a citizen, I want transparency.

But on the other side, there's a dark side to transparency, which is people can't compromise. Power will move away from those transparent processes maybe to nontransparent processes. So I'm curious about your work in this area and what conclusions you've come to.

CURRY: My conclusions don't line up with what you just said. Transparency is wonderful, and we need transparency in government. And it's not as if any of us would want a government

where you had no idea what it was doing at any point in time. But at the same time it does make compromise harder because when you're trying—. You can't deliberate, you can't compromise, you can't do these things in front of an audience, especially an audience where voters on each side of the aisle are so divided themselves. Because compromise requires giving up on something that you and your supporters really want.

And there's a tendency there where if you give up on something, you're going to get called out on Twitter as a sellout or a shill or something worse, usually something worse. And members of Congress don't want that. And so negotiating in front of the cameras just means everyone's going to stick to their hard lines because that's what wins you accolades in the media, that's what wins you accolades on social media.

But if you can get people away from the cameras. And they want to accomplish something. If there's agreement at the very least that we should do something here, there is a need to take action in this space, and we agree on that much, now we can sit down and figure out what can we all agree to or at least what can we all not be opposed to, to put together.

And there's so many ways you can do that. It can literally mean, Well, I'm willing to compromise on my, well, my strong beliefs on this part if you compromise on that part. Or, You care really a lot about having this piece in the bill, and I care a lot about having this piece in the bill, and neither of us really cares about the other one, so let's put them together.

There's a lot of ways you can do it, but that's hard to do in the open. That's hard to do in front of cameras because the audience is going to react, and the audience is not necessarily going to be as sensitive to the need to compromise as you the legislator are.

CHERVENAK: Right, because you want to get things done.

CURRY: Right. And that's your job. You were sent to Washington to do things. There's pressure to do them, especially when you're in the majority, because now the onus of governance is on you. And everybody in Washington knows that compromise is necessary 99 percent of the time. That the number of things in which you don't have to make compromises and you don't have to enter into negotiations to get done are very small. It's a very few set of things.

So you know from the start, this is what I want to accomplish, but I'm not going to get what I want, and, in fact, I need to get people from the other side of the aisle to go along with this, and so where can we get to that makes me still happy enough with the progress we're making but makes these other folks willing to sign on and willing to support it.

And that means making some of your more hardline voters less than satisfied because it's not going to be exactly what you want. It's not going to be \$2,000 checks. It's going to be \$1400 checks. It's not going to be getting the minimum wage bill in the budget reconciliation package. It's going to be taking it out so you can get all the other things.

And, of course, hardliners don't like that, but it's reality. But it's easier to come to those agreements without the bright lights, without the cameras watching you do it, because it obscures who was the one who actually capitulated on each side. You weren't in the—. Voters weren't in the room to see who capitulated and who didn't and why and what the negotiations were about. On camera, you would get to see exactly who was like, You know what. We should give up on the minimum wage. And that person's going to get slammed.

And so just no one does it. And so it's—. You need that space. They need that space to actually talk with each other openly and honestly in order to get things done.

CHERVENAK: So, in your experience or in your work, where should transparency exist? And where should privacy exist? Obviously, the leadership right now is the private arena, but what about committees? What about debates? Where do you see privacy being important versus transparency?

CURRY: To me, where you want to maximize transparency is spaces where Congress is having debates. That's where they're talking about the issues. They're expressing their different viewpoints. They're telling each other—and they're representing their different groups and their constituencies on—here's what we think, here's what we think is right, here's what we think is wrong.

That's the public facing component of Congress, and that's where you need all the transparency in the world. And where, in fact, you want as much transparency and you want as much broadcasting of that as possible because part of Congress's job is to represent the public and communicate and reflect and project those debates that exist in society so we can see that we as a society are having these conversations.

But deliberations are the opposite. Deliberations are internal. Deliberations are about figuring out what can be done and figuring out where compromises can be made. And that's where you need to sometimes turn the transparency down at least a little bit. You need to give members of Congress quiet places, private places, away from the cameras where they can try to work out what can be agreed to.

Now, of course, once those agreements are made they all need to vote on it and indicate whether they support it or oppose it in as transparent a way as possible. That's why we have roll call votes because then you can see at the end of the day, you put together this legislative package, you've put—. The entire text of the law or of the proposal is available to the entire American public, and in fact to the entire world, which is wonderful. And you can see whether people voted to support it or oppose it. And they can explain why they did or why they didn't through their own communications—through social media, through press releases, through whoever they want.

So you bring the transparency back in once you have a proposal for people to decide, Am I for it? Or am I against it? But I don't think you really want as much transparency as possible when

those deliberations are ongoing because I think the consequence is just that you're not going to get any outcomes. And that's not good either.

But you also wouldn't want to shut off all the lights. You still want to see the people, the debates, playing out. You still want people to go on the record with what they opposed—what they support and what they oppose—because then voters have information to take into account in the next election.

CHERVENAK: So we've jumped the gun a little bit on one of my later questions, but we'll pursue it here anyway. So, this concept of debate versus deliberation, I think it's very useful. So, debate where we're really airing everybody's side of the issue. Should it happen in committee? Should it happen on the floor? Should it happen in some other way? The morning speeches, where everyone can say whatever they want for 60 seconds in the morning?

What's the right forum for that? And what's the right place for deliberations? Is it in the committees? Is it in leadership? Have you thought about where the locations of these things should be?

CURRY: I mean, that's really tough. I think the floor ultimately is, before Congress, I think the floor ends up having to be and probably should be the place of debate, as well as forums outside of Congress, whether it's on television or what have you. But I think the House and the Senate floors can be really nice places for that because there's rules of decorum on the House and the Senate floor. They can't just yell at each other and attack each other with ad hominem attacks—and those don't have really any value whatsoever—but they're, you're allowed to have these really sharply pointed debates about who supports what and why you support this and why you oppose what they want to do that you can have in those venues while keeping it civil.

And so I think this the House and Senate floors are wonderful places for debate. And, as you know, the House and the Senate floor are constantly televised. You can stream them on the Internet. And so it's an easy way for the public to see Congress debating the issues that are important to everyone.

I think committees could be places where you turn more towards the deliberation, but then you need to give committees some opportunities to turn the cameras off. The transparency reforms in the 1970s were wonderful, but it's not a coincidence that once they turn the cameras on everywhere, actual decision-making went behind the scenes. Because when you know you're being watched, you're not as frank and honest about what you're willing to give up and what you're going to push for and you're not—.

These negotiating conversations that used to happen, I think, in literal committee meetings—when they knew they weren't being watched all the time—happened right in those rooms. That would still be great. And it still does happen. It just happens in the ante rooms, usually among smaller groups of members, which probably isn't ideal.

And so I think committees still could and should be the place where these deliberations occur because those are the members that are engaged in these issues, who know things about these issues, have access to staff or experts in these issues. But it's never going to work that way if the cameras are on all the time.

CHERVENAK: So, in fact, you mentioned the staff there, and I'd like to hear your opinion on how the staff interact with this process because a lot of the deliberations could be happening through staff members rather than the members themselves.

CURRY: They are.

CHERVENAK: So how does that work since you've been in the trenches with that?

CURRY: They are because no one member can do everything that they're supposed to do at the same time, which is why you have staff. The staff collect information. They are in contact with other member offices. If you're a staffer for a House member, you usually have some portfolio of issues that you work on. And your boss sets the priorities, Oh, I want to do something in this space. And then you have meetings with the boss about exactly what they want to accomplish and you game out, Well, who are some partners we could reach out to on our side and on the other side to get it done.

And it's the staffer who has to take the lead in doing the day-to-day work of connecting with staffers in the other offices, sharing with them what you want to accomplish, maybe sharing bill drafts, getting their feedback, figuring out what their member needs to be in support of this thing you want to introduce, this idea you want to push forward. And then you need to go and you need to talk to the committee chair or the committee chair staff and try to see, Is this something that we could get as part of the committee's agenda for the coming year or not? And, What do we need to do to make that work?

And all that stuff is done through staff because the member is just one person who's asked to do more than one person's job. But those people work at the behest of the member. They're constantly back in contact with the member. The member is like the CEO of the representative office, and they have these staff who are there to execute the different parts of the game plan. And then the member asserts his or herself as absolutely necessary to get things done on a one-to-one level with their colleagues.

CHERVENAK: Great. Well, we're going to move on now to our standard set of questions we ask everyone who comes on the program. So I'll move on to my next question if you're ready.

CURRY: I'm ready.

CHERVENAK: My question is, What do you think congressional representation should mean?

CURRY: What do I think representation should mean? I think this is a really good question. And, for me, representation, I think, needs to balance two things: it needs to balance both the position-taking of members of Congress on the issues but also the policymaking efforts of members of Congress on the issues.

I think often when we talk about representation—or I think it always strikes me when most people think and talk about representation—they're really thinking about the second half of that. They're thinking about representation as Congress and members of Congress delivering the goods, passing policies that are supported by citizens or by certain groups of citizens, passing legislation that provides benefits to citizens or specific groups of citizens.

And I think that is a big part of representation, but I think representation is also about expressing and reflecting the voices, concerns, opinions of the many different peoples of the United States. That is, representation is also about members of Congress taking sharp positions on the issues, communicating those issues, speaking for the people they represent during political debates.

I think, in some ways, we have less appreciation for that part of representation. We sometimes, we complain that lawmakers talk too much or that there's a lot of hot air in the Capitol because they're all just talk, talk, talk, talk. But talking is important. And a legislature is not just a policymaking institution. It's also a forum for debate and for taking positions on the issues and reflecting the conflict in society. It's also a place, as John Stuart Mill put it, where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause passionately pleaded.

And so I think real representation for a country in a democratic system like ours with a national legislature requires both lawmakers who work to affect policy change on behalf of their constituents but also work to project the voices of their constituents through debate and through messaging and through all the talk that we hear.

CHERVENAK: It's a very interesting distinction on this voicing what are probably more like the beliefs of a district, and then the way that the representative might actually vote might be different based on their own judgments is what I'm hearing from you about the long-term interests potentially of their district.

CURRY: Right. And you can't always even vote for exactly what your district wants because you're presented with a bill and there are two options—to vote for it or vote against it. And your constituents may actually want something else, like a third option or a different combination of things.

But that's what the talking part is for. That's what the expression is for. That representatives can bring through expressing taking positions on the issues and talking about what they support. They can give voice to those people, but then they have to turn to the business of, What policies can we pass to make a difference in the lives of people? To make a difference in

the lives of my constituents in my district or state? And then cast their votes on those things that are always going to be imperfect and not quite exactly what they had in mind.

And I think we need, generally, we need a better recognition that there's a difference between what you would prefer to do if you were king of the world or queen of the world and what you can do through a legislative process. And I think being a good representative requires being able to give voice to what you would do if you had all the power but also being realistic about the fact that making policy requires compromising with the other 534 members of Congress in the Senate who also are trying to give voice to very different constituencies throughout the country.

CHERVENAK: Right, but I guess I want to pin you down a little bit more tightly on this idea of the beliefs of the constituency versus what their interests might be in the long term. Because, obviously, the district could have very set beliefs about something, or they might have no beliefs about something or there may be beliefs about something of which the representative disagrees and has a different opinion. So do you think of the representative as judging according to his own interpretation of the long-term interests of that district? Or is he just recounting beliefs?

CURRY: I mean, I think the nature of the job is such that they have to, when push comes to shove, use their own judgment about what they think is best. And I think they also have to, at the same time, balance what they think is best for their particular corner of the country against also what they think is best for the country as a whole.

I think that's the duality that members of Congress constantly have to live with, which requires them even more so to use their judgment, is [that] they represent just their district but they're making policy that affects the entire country. And so they have to constantly, at least some of the time, balance those two things. Because sometimes what's best for your district may not be what's best for the country and vice versa. And I don't think you can always just go one way or the other there.

I think sometimes you do have to be that advocate for your district when you think what's happening would be really bad for it, but I think sometimes you need to also be willing to do what's right for the country even if your district doesn't like it so much.

CHERVENAK: Next question is, How would your ideal Congress allocate its time?

CURRY: I think this goes back to the last point, in that I think it really needs a constant balancing of its efforts between spending time making policy and spending time communicating lines of debate and disagreement. I mean, in some ways, it already does both of these things. But I think at different times in congressional history, you've had too much of one or too much of the other.

Maybe right now, you might say that Congress is too much messaging, too much position-taking, and not enough of the other. And probably at other times in history, it did not enough messaging and position-taking, where people maybe didn't feel that they were having their voices projected by the Congress.

So I think you have to find a balance there. And I don't know what the exact right balance is, but I think when Congress is doing its business, it needs to constantly be attentive to, We need to make sure there's time for just debate and expression, but we also need to make sure that we're spending enough time on deliberations and making public policy.

CHERVENAK: What about the allocation of time between legislating and oversight? Do you have a position on that?

CURRY: I tend to see those as the two parts of policymaking, but how exactly to balance those two things is a good question. I think you should be trying to do as much—within the policymaking realm—you should be trying to do as much of both as possible, which is really one of the best arguments for continuing to have a robust division of labor among committees and subcommittees. Because if you divide labor, you can always do more oversight.

And I'm one of those people that thinks Congress does a better job on oversight than most people think because I just think so much of it happens in non-public-facing ways, with staff interacting with the executive branch and requesting information. And having these briefings that aren't really hearings, but where you have these engagements between the Hill and between the executive branch.

But that's really where I think, like, that's one of the best efforts that you need to—. Congress should preserve and protect this really fine-grained division of labor from its committees down to its subcommittees. Because if they're all then focusing on overseeing the programs under their jurisdiction, you're going to have enough eyes on what the executive branch is doing, which is, of course, going to develop new policymaking ideas as you see things that aren't working right, which can then feed itself back into the policymaking process.

CHERVENAK: How about time in Washington versus home and fundraising versus other things?

CURRY: That's where you get me to go the farthest in terms of saying things should change, in that I do always think—not that members of Congress shouldn't spend time in their districts, obviously, they need to still be connected with their constituents—but I think anyone would agree that in recent years things have skewed a bit more towards, a bit too much towards, time at home versus time in Washington.

And obviously communications technologies have made that easier because the member may be back in the district but their staff is still in Washington and they can stay in constant contact. But if you talk to a lot of staff, they'll tell you it still helps to have the member there because there are some disagreements that can only be worked out in a member to member level. And

if they're just in their districts, they can't be face-to-face with their colleagues and figure things out.

So I think—. And there's so many proposals on this about how you can at least have longer, more sustained work periods in Washington.

And then on fundraising, one of the best proposals I've heard in years for congressional reform is to bar fundraising while Congress is in session. And not because it would change how much funds they raised or it wouldn't change the relationships that members have with donors, but it would at least let them focus on legislating when they're in Washington.

Whereas now, as you know, they have to do their legislative tasks, and then they have to also have to go run to a fundraiser, or they have to run across the street to the DNC or the RNC to make some donor phone calls. And if that was just not on the table, the member at least would be able to focus more of their attention on the stuff happening in the House and the Senate, on the legislative efforts, on the oversight efforts. They wouldn't be constantly pulled away to do these other things at least while they're in Washington. And then let them fundraise all they want the rest of the time.

CHERVENAK: Next question is the one we addressed slightly earlier, but this will give you a chance to dig into it directly, which is, How should debate, deliberation, or dialogue occur or be structured in Congress?

CURRY: I think it really is what I said before. In that, I think you need to maximize transparency, maximize coverage of Congress when it's debating things of—. Show them having these debates. Show them taking positions on the issues. But then for deliberations, really give them space, give them more space than they have, where the cameras are off to talk with each other and try to figure out where they can come to agreements.

These days the only time they can do that is literally when they get away from the Capitol. If they go on a CODEL, if they go on a trip to a foreign country, or if they go on their retreats, but those most of the retreats at least tend to be partisan. Committees could be a nice place where you naturally have a bipartisan group of members together who care about the same issues. That's why they're on those committees for the most part.

If you just turn the cameras off sometimes, you could get them to at least have a little bit more, like really more, substantial conversations with each other, be willing to really deliberate without having to worry about how it's going to look on Twitter.

CHERVENAK: What fundamental institutional improvement should Congress make within 50 years?

CURRY: I'm one of those rare people that thinks Congress actually runs pretty well, but it is far from perfect obviously. And I also tend to think most of the big problems in our politics are not

so much about Congress but about the broader political environment that Congress has to operate in.

But, that said, there's still things that I think Congress could and should do. I think some of the biggest ones relate to congressional staff. I think Congress could always use more staff and more expertise. It already has a lot. It's not as if Congress has starved for staff, even if individual members sometimes are. But this is the place that writes all of our laws. The more experts you can bring in, the better. And also, the more experts you can keep on Capitol Hill, the better.

Congress should pay its staff better. There are too many talented staffers who leave Capitol Hill because the pay ends up not being worth the long hours and the grueling conditions and the impact it has on their family life. If you can at least to pay them better—you can't do anything about how hard the work is—but you can at least pay them better so that it's not so tempting after a while to go into the private sector and cash in and get twice as much or three times as much money for the same work.

It can also help keep those expert staff around and keep them part of, essentially, the brain of Congress, you know, to just treat them better. Congress has continued to improve how it treats its human resources, but it needs to keep doing so.

The work that's being done by the House Committee on Modernization has already done a lot here, but you can always provide more resources for staff, you can always provide more training for staff, you can always provide better protections for staff and for their livelihoods and for how they're treated by their bosses. All these things would make Congress a better place to work, which would help they continue to recruit some of the best and the brightest Americans into its halls well into the 21st century, which is really what you need to develop the most innovative policy ideas and to have the best people who are the best at getting the stuff done and getting us the best public policies we need as a country.

CHERVENAK: What book or article most shaped your thinking with respect to congressional reform?

CURRY: So this would be kind of a weird answer, and if it's okay, I want to name two books that I think have affected how I think about congressional reform the most.

One is a book called *The Imprint of Congress* by David Mayhew. And this book really digs into the lasting effects, or as he puts it, the imprint that Congress has had on the country. It's in many ways a response to people who complain that Congress is a failing institution or is worse than it's ever been. What Mayhew points out really well is that people have always said this about Congress. That it's always been this much maligned institution, but it's also always had really a big lasting change on Congress. It continues to do so. It's not always as bad as it looks.

And so that one's important because it reminds me that even though Congress isn't perfect, it's probably not as bad as we think it is, which means that it probably doesn't always need this

broad sweep everything out and start from scratch because to some degree people have always thought that about Congress. And it strikes me that there's enough virtues about Congress for it to have lasted as long as it has and to have the kind of imprint that Mayhew has, that we probably shouldn't throw it all out.

But the second book is a book called *Disjointed Pluralism* by Eric Schickler. And this book documents how reforms actually happen on Capitol Hill. It has two big takeaways that I think any people who are interested in reform need to be attentive to. The first is that successful reform, just like successful policymaking, tends to require the building of coalitions among different groups of lawmakers who want very different things out of reform, who are concerned about very different things, maybe their individual power or their reelection hopes or the power of the party or ideological outcomes or what have you.

For instance in the 1970s, Congress reformed a lot of its internal processes because it had—. And it was able to do so because it was able to find things to change about the committee structure or about other internal processes. They made a lot of different people who had a lot of different goals happy.

But this means that reforms, just like policies, are also often awkward, compromised enactments. And so they carry their own limitations and internal contradictions that will have unintended consequences.

And so what this reminds me is that we need always need to be careful about reform. That the reforms that you enact will have consequences you didn't anticipate because they're never going to be as cleanly constructed as you might hope because you wouldn't be able to get them passed.

And so when I put those two things together, it reminds me to be very realistic about reform. On one hand, Congress isn't all bad. There are good things about it and we should try to preserve them. And then we should be extremely cautious about reform because you don't want to inadvertently make things worse.

CHERVENAK: What plans do you have for your research over the long term? What are you going to do next?

CURRY: The things I might be working on probably in the foreseeable future is, one, this project I told you about we're working on relationships in Congress and how those can affect negotiations and success in the legislative process. That's research that's really just getting started. I anticipate working on that for the next several years with Jason.

I also have a lot of research that's really getting underway that's really about the role of minority parties. I did all that work with Frances about majority parties and majority party power, and one of the big takeaways I had from that research is that minority parties have a lot more power than people think. And so I've started turning to trying to understand what gives

minority parties more or less capacity to be involved in different policymaking efforts. When should we understand when the minority is able to get involved and how and why and when can't we?

And the last thing is, I always have this interest and I want to continue to understand the role that committees play in the modern Congress. Because there's a lot of—. Committees these days tend to get viewed as having lost power relative to their heyday. And that's probably true to some degree, but I think they have a lot of influence in ways that people don't appreciate. Because I think a lot of actual policy development, even if it's managed and overseen by party leaders, still happens in committee rooms. It just happens more behind the scenes in committee rooms between a chair and a ranking member and their staff, where they're the ones who start figuring out, What kind of policy proposals can we put together that could eventually get some bipartisan compromise where we can make a difference in the world?

And I think we see it less because more stuff has gone behind the scenes, but I think committees still play an important role, and I want to flesh that out and help understand where committees are still really integral to the process.

CHERVENAK: Great. Well, thank you, Jim, so much for joining us.

CURRY: Thank you so much for having me.