

Reforming Congress Project
Sunwater Institute
Interview with Senator Christopher Dodd

CHERVENAK: Senator Dodd, thank you so much for joining us.

SENATOR DODD: Thank you, Matt, delighted to be with you.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we start with Connecticut? That's where it started for you. As a politician who represented Connecticut, what's unique about Connecticut, and how did it change while you were serving it?

SENATOR DODD: Well, we're sort of like—I often say Connecticut's like sort of Alsace-Lorraine, stuck between Boston and New York. We have to export all of our sports allegiances. It causes great division in the state, and depending on where you live in the state, if you're west of the Connecticut River, you're probably a Yankees and Mets fan or a Rangers fan, or the New York Knicks, where east of the river, the Celtics, the Bruins, the Patriots, so it's a state of—

Connecticut was sort of the Silicon Valley of the 18th century, 19th century. Hartford, Connecticut, in many ways the manufacturing sort of Silicon Valley with a lot of technology, interchangeable parts in manufacturing going back a long time. Became, of course, the insurance capital early on in the 20th century with Travelers and Aetna and Connecticut General and alike over the years. Have major corporations.

Connecticut's small, not as small as Rhode Island or Delaware, but small, and yet you have incredible academic institutions: the University of Connecticut, the flagship university, a whole state system, a number of community colleges, but then we also have a Trinity and a Wesleyan, a Yale, the Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College, Fairfield University, the list goes on. For a small state, a strong connection with academic institutions designed in many ways to serve a very diverse population, not just to the state but elsewhere as well.

It's an affluent state. Everyone always talks about how affluent Connecticut is, which is true on a per capita income basis. One of the highest, if not the highest, in the country largely due to one area. What we also don't talk about as easily is that Hartford and New Haven and Waterbury are three of some of the poorest cities in the country in the midst of great affluence in many, many ways. It's been through a rough time, in many ways, but as lately and in fact timely for doing this interview, in the midst of the pandemic we've had great leadership by Governor Ned Lamont, who was elected three years ago.

Came in and of course the first thing he was hit with, this dreadful pandemic that has taken such a cost both in terms of people's health and lives as well as our economic well-being, and he's done a terrific job. He did something that not enough people do, is he came from a business management background. Never held any public office before and when faced with this problem he attracted the best people he could find in the health-related areas, economic

areas, and relied on them to a large extent about how the state would conduct itself during all of this. And early on we had one of the highest rates of people getting vaccinated. Steps that were being taken, the state legislature gave him incredible power. Did again just the other day, and the even though we seem to be hopefully coming out of a lot of this, although that the delta variant is worrying everyone, so he did a great job.

He's really improved the quality of the state tremendously. We're now ranked—we used to be ranked near the bottom on business environment, even though we had this great previous history, but just in the last three or four years we've risen now to around 20th in the country out of 50 states and doing better every single day. Property values, I think there are five markets in the country, but property values have been moving up dramatically. It's places like Austin, Texas; Orem, Utah; I think it was Boise, Idaho was one as well; and Connecticut. Fairfield, Connecticut as well, so a lot is changing. There's a lot of sudden change rather dramatically in the midst of this dark period we've been through.

Kind of a long answer for you, but a state that has great political leadership over the years. The existence of the United States Senate was solely responsible because of Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, two members of the Continental Congress who offered the Connecticut Compromise, which created the United States Senate as a way to protect small states and also to protect against what can be a tyranny of the majority from time to time. So, a long history, political history, and fascinating people have come out of it over the years, both in business leadership as well as politics. So not big, not large, not populated tremendously, but played a significant role in the country.

CHERVENAK: Let's move on to yourself, then, as a product of Connecticut. So, in terms of your career, it's been incredibly quite a journey for you, crossing lots of different areas of the U.S. political spectrum. Can you just walk us through your own career as you see it, from the beginning until where you are now?

SENATOR DODD: Well, it's with the Georgetown Prep, let's start there. I grew up in Connecticut. My father was elected to the Congress, House, in 1952 and '54, and then elected to the Senate in 1958, and so in 1959 the family moved to Washington. We didn't when he was in the House, but we did when he was elected to the Senate for the six-year term, and so I started as Jay, our mutual friend, may have told you, midway in my freshman year in high school at Georgetown Prep.

I went to Providence College in Providence, Rhode Island. When I left Providence, I joined the Peace Corps, which was a very exciting. I made that decision in the fall of my senior year. I was sent to the Dominican Republic on the border with Haiti, where I spent the next two years, two years plus. I traveled all through South America, came back, wrote for a newspaper, went to basic training in the Army, went to law school, and came back practicing law in New London, Connecticut, and a seat opened up in the Congress, and a group of people came and asked if I'd like to take a run at it.

And 1974 became the Watergate year, of course, so the trials of Richard Nixon, and I was elected with one of the largest classes ever elected to the Congress in the fall of 1974, and served for six years in the House. Abe Ribicoff, a former governor, United States Senator from Connecticut, announced his retirement, 1979, and again went through a process of making a decision whether or not to leave the House or end a career in politics, I suppose, but decided to take a run at the Senate seat. Was elected.

In a tough year, 1980, there were only two of us elected. 16 Democrats lost their seats in 1980 across the country, and then served the next 30 years—five different elections to the Senate. Retired in the end of 2010, January of 2011.

And then I became the CEO and the chairman of the board of the Motion Picture Association of the six largest studios, Hollywood studios. Represented them for seven years, domestically as well as internationally. Traveled all over the world. We talked about our different experiences in China. I spent a lot of time in China. As we more than doubled our volume, we moved into China and increased the revenue sources for the companies producing the films and being widely viewed in China.

When I left that, I joined a law firm in Washington, Arnold & Porter. Some strong ties in Connecticut—was founded by Abe Fortas and two professors from Yale University. My father and Abe Fortas were classmates at Yale Law School, 1933, and when I joined here, Abe Ribicoff, when he left the Senate, joined the firm of Kaye Scholer in New York, so I had not much choice, I guess, between my father and Abe Ribicoff, joining Arnold & Porter became sort of a natural move.

I've been here about four years, enjoy it very, very much, the work. I have two teenage daughters. One's going off to college in a few weeks, and the other will be a junior in high school. A late bloomer in the father business but enjoy my family immensely, and we made it through the pandemic without any health issues in our immediate family, so we're in good shape and hoping the country will get back on its feet again.

So that's probably a long-winded—I guess Senators can't stop filibustering once they get talking, so I apologize.

CHERVENAK: We have a question about rules later that we'll get to, but fantastic. So, why don't we talk a little bit about your time in the Senate. Particularly, my first question is really around which bills you decide to sponsor and why. Which other legislation do you decide to support and why? Is it coming from constituents? Is it from your personal experience? I'd like to understand the mentality of the bill creation process, since that's really the beginning of the way Congress works.

SENATOR DODD: Well, it's a good question, Matt. I mean, it's a collaborative body, obviously the Senate is, and yet made up of a hundred people very individualistic in many ways. Most of them, to quote a line from I think it was Gene McCarthy once said, that the Senate ought to be

a place where people of reputation come, not where you come to make a reputation. And for the most part, that's true. Former governors, mayors, members of the House, obviously from the business community, all sorts of military. So there's no specific path, I think, that people always wonder, what should I be doing if someday I'd like to be doing that? I think there isn't any sort of plan I could identify for you that would necessarily lead you to that result, and it's a dangerous ambition to have.

I think there's only been about 1,100 of us that ever served in the United States Senate after 240 years, so it's not a question necessarily of how brilliant, talented, and gifted you are, it's being in the right place at the right time under the right circumstances, and then many talented, talented people who would have been great Senators in my view—members of the House or governors—where the opportunities just never came along. Things didn't line up right, unlike other things: you could aspire to be a doctor, a lawyer, an accountant, or whatever. You can study and probably end up in those professions if you have the basic talents to do so.

Getting elected to public life depends upon so many variables over which you have no control. You can decide when to get out of it if you're in it, but deciding whether or not to get in it is really left up to an awful lot of factors you have little or nothing to say about. So having said that to you, the model that I chose early on—in fact after being elected as to how would I—if you're casting yourself, I'll pick up on my MPAA days like motion picture business—and the Senators historically that impressed me not because of the views they had necessarily but how they conducted themselves as a member, and that is they chose areas that would make sense to the one, first of all something you know something about, it's always a good place to start.

And secondly, it's nothing wrong with them also deciding something you'd like to learn about and become active in if you could. And thirdly, and not necessarily in this particular order, but your constituency, you're on a national legislature, but obviously you serve at the will and the support of your state, and so to make sure there are areas in which you're paying attention to their needs to a larger extent in a macro sense. Obviously, the day-to-day things, but what industries, what businesses and so forth. Ones that are going to require some attention on your part, along with the other members of the delegation.

So I did that, and I was chosen to be on, or I wanted to be on, the Foreign Relations Committee. I thought my experience in Latin America would be helpful, and I'll come back to that in a minute. Secondly, I enjoyed the education labor issues. Again, I'll get back to that in a minute, why that that committee worked out beautifully. The third one, banking, wasn't what I would have necessarily chosen, but it was a perfect fit for Connecticut, many ways, with the insurance industry a substantial part of my constituency. Particularly in Fairfield and Litchfield County have strong ties to the financial markets in New York as well, and so not a bad idea to end up there.

One of the first things I did is form a Children's Caucus in the Senate, again going to the beginning on shortly after arriving the Senate on the Labor Committee. I stayed on all three of those committees for 30 years in the Senate. I never left them, and I made them as tough as a

mistake—I teasingly say. So someone teasingly told me afterwards, not only should you connect the—but do your research to determine how likely is it you're going to move up the ladder on those committee seats, and by checking how old are your colleagues particularly on your side of the aisle or how perilous are their pull up politics in their state. I sat next to, for 30 years, Ted Kennedy, Paul Sarbanes, and Joe Biden on all three of those committees, and it wasn't until 28 years after I served in the Senate that I got the chair of full committees. Ted Kennedy unfortunately got sick and passed away, Joe Biden became Vice President, and Paul Sarbanes retired.

But I enjoyed the committee assignments, and I mention the Children's Caucus because I also decided to look around: what areas were not—there was not a lot of work being done. It may have been historically at different times, but not the time that I was there, and there was obviously a great deal of interest still coming off and defense issues on foreign policy issues, mostly Europe, mostly Asia, labor committee. But one out of four Americans are under the age of 18. They don't vote, they don't make campaign contributions, and they had very little representation, so I started an ad hoc committee. I had no authority, I was in the minority, with people like Pat Moynihan and Bob Dole, bipartisan, committees that had specific jurisdiction over matters that would affect children.

In Latin America, I was at that point the only member, I think the only member, of the Senate that spoke a second language. There were no women in the Senate the day I arrived. Barbara Mikulski came a few years later. Obviously very different today. But the idea of Latin America, I quickly became sort of a go-to person on Latin America. Latin America has always been sort of an orphan in foreign policy. They get excited about it when there's a threat of some revolution in the place, going back, but on a day-to-day basis, Europe and Asia historically receive much more attention for economic reasons than others, but Latin America is always an afterthought in many ways.

But then obviously in the 1980s, the mission of the issues of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras exploded, became sort of a major foreign policy debate and discussion, and I found myself very quickly being involved on a major set of issues involving our foreign relations in this hemisphere.

And then the banking stuff kept me busy. Chaired the committees, the subcommittees, on the securities industry and other matters. I became the chairman of that committee, not until 2007, and the Democrats won control of the Senate in 2006, and of course I ended up right in the middle of the largest financial crisis since the Great Depression.

I could have chaired the Foreign Relations Committee. I could have chaired the Labor Committee, at that moment. Banking was not the most exciting committee. I mean, would you rather spend an hour maybe talking about derivatives, or would you like to hear about the social injustice or something? Which one would attract more of an audience? But I really felt it was going to be the biggest issue we have to grapple with economically, and so as we may get to at some point here, I offered an awful lot of legislation in the areas I just described to you on

children's issues and on Latin America, dealing with those problems. But I guess because the bill by statute is called the Dodd-Frank Bill and then that'll be a bill that people will pay a lot of attention to for years to come. But ironically, it was a committee I paid attention to—I was on the committee and obviously important questions. But the ones that had a more personal interest for me were the Labor Committee, the children's issues, and the Foreign Relations Committee.

CHERVENAK: So when you looked at legislation, or sponsored it, would you calculate the impact to your state through any formal means, or is it more of a general feeling about how it would have a long-term impact on the state? What kind of analyses would you go through, or would you like to have gone through, for any particular legislation that you either brought forth or someone else did?

SENATOR DODD: Well, it's the old Edmund Burke test. I remember once—I addressed so many public schools in Connecticut over my career. I spoke at every public high school in Connecticut at least once over those years. They stopped doing town hall meetings. When I had one, one night on Wednesday night, I'll never forget. I think about ten people showed up, Wednesday night at eight o'clock at some school auditorium. They weren't exactly go-to events, for sure, and two guys got into a fist fight, one dressed by Abraham Lincoln, another a World Federalist. And their picture was on the front page of the paper the next day, and I said, I think I'm through providing forums for people to show up.

So, I started doing schools, juniors and seniors in high school all across the state, and even in some cases at the request of a teacher a middle school here and there, but I remember being in middle school particularly since we raised this issue, and I was asked the question, how do you make up your mind how are you going to vote, Senator? Do you do you follow your own conscience and your own judgments, or do you listen to your constituencies, or how do you do it?

And I said, well, it's a great question. Never forget her, young lady, bright red hair I never forget, and I said, well, it's a great question. Let me quote Edmund Burke. Edmund Burke was a scholar in England, and he was asked that question one time, and he answered it very well, I thought, and I sort of followed the Edmund Burke policy.

He obviously was sent to be a representative of the people of a state, and even a small state like Connecticut, this is no easy task. We try and discern where the majority of four and a half million people might be on an issue, but you try to make sure you listen to people, you understand their point of view to the extent you can, and then you're responsible with your staff and others to read the material, do your homework, and come to what you believe to be the best answer. That was the Edmund Burke approach to it. That's why you got sent there, that's your job, pay attention to the home folks, but ultimately you have to make up your own mind. I thought, a pretty good answer.

She raised her hand again, and I said, what would you like to say? She said, did you know that Edmund Burke lost his next election after he made that statement? Which I did not know. So, a middle schooler quickly told me Burke was a brilliant guy, but he apparently didn't do a very good job selling his own constituency on his theory.

So, you obviously pay attention to those things, but you are elected to the national legislature, and we may get to this, Matt, but it's one of my major complaints about reforms in the institution. It wasn't long ago, it's not ancient history, that you were given one round-trip train ticket, maybe more lately on a plane ticket, when you got when you were sworn into Congress, and when your two-year term was over to go back home again. That was a practical matter not many years ago. That was obviously the only thing you could do because you weren't going to go home every weekend to Oregon. You could possibly get home to Connecticut, barely, but you could, get back.

But then we changed that, not long ago. And you can go home at any time, at any point, for any public purpose, and public purpose is about as broadly defined as you can imagine. Doing an interview with you could fall into a public purpose. Having lunch with a teacher, or a cop. So, you have people now that just stay in Washington for whatever few hours they can, and get back to their states as quickly as they can. Complete reversal of what I think the founders intended, obviously under the practicalities of the day, but certainly we've paid a price for it that deviates from going back to the bills I was talking about.

CHERVENAK: We'll get back to the time allocation question because I think that's a very important one, but in terms of the representational aspects you just brought up, I think you're a little bit different than some of the other individuals I've talked to on the program, who are—even if they're Burkeans and they're making judgments about what they think is in the best interests of their constituency, so that's the Burkean ideal—I'm also struck by your focus on younger generations, since they're in fact not voters at all. They don't even technically fall into the constituency for some people. Future generations which don't vote yet—

SENATOR DODD: Well, I'll tell you what. Aside from a good conversation with them, when you're dealing with— and I said juniors and seniors—I didn't do the whole high school. In a lot of communities, that age of 17 to 18 they're juniors and seniors in high school. I found that to be a great—first of all, it was great politics because they're still reflecting. What happens at the kitchen table in the morning before they go to school, whatever the mom and dad are complaining about more than likely it's a local issue, but nonetheless based on what's occurring. They have their views, and so it's a pretty good reflection of how that community may feel about matters generally because they'll ask all the questions.

Remember, they know I'm coming. I don't just show up, so there's several days before I get there: the guy's coming, what are the questions we're going to ask him? What committees is he on?, and so forth. I'm there for that hour, an hour and a half whatever it is, in school, and then after I leave, What did he say? What did you agree with? What did you disagree with? So it leaves a much broader imprint in the community than you might otherwise imagine.

And lastly, they're only a year, or months, or weeks away from maybe registering to vote, and so they're starting to get their own views on things, not just their parents' views. So you're getting not just a quick snapshot of where things may be in that town, but also where they're likely to be going. Is there some great deviation on how they think about gun control or the legalization of marijuana than their parents might?

So, I found it to be enjoyable—first, a lot of fun, because kids are great, and they say honest things, and they question in a very direct way, and I found it far better than that 10 people who showed up, got into a fist fight, when one was dressed as Abraham Lincoln and the other as the World Federalist, whatever that is.

CHERVENAK: So, representation for you is not just about the current voting population, it's also thinking ahead towards the future generation.

SENATOR DODD: Yeah.

CHERVENAK: Great. Let's go back to the time question, since you brought that up. There's obviously the back and forth, there's proposals at the two weeks on, one week off or three weeks on, one week off. Where do you fall in how Congress should allocate its time between the D.C. and in the local—on the constituency, and then also between legislation and oversight activities?

SENATOR DODD: Well again, I'm a great believer that the issues are so difficult and complex today, and they're not obviously just local issues. Whether we like it or not, we are the indispensable country in many, many ways, at least we are up to now. And so this is not a job—I mean, I respect the fact that people like to get home for the politics, but that's not what the national legislature, that's not what you're elected to do.

Now you can do a good job, listen to your constituency, answer things today with technology. What is that old expression that necessity is the mother of invention, and I doubt you and I would be doing this interview this way had there not been a pandemic. I suspect you would have come down here, I would have met you someplace, and you would have had a camera crew and the like. We're doing this. Technology's here to stay. It might have been 20 years before we might have gotten to this, or maybe 10 less, but nonetheless it wouldn't have happened naturally but for the pandemic in this space and the time it did.

And I think that's changing. So, this idea I have to get home every day to meet people and see people is baloney. It's basically allowing and subsidizing—the American taxpayers subsidizing your political campaigns to get back. You're picking and choosing where to go, you're not making yourself necessarily available to the people who'd like to talk to you because they disagree with you at all, so you're picking your own audiences along the way. And again I—certainly I went home and I campaigned and did those things. But ever since 1994, Newt Gingrich made it very clear. He changed the whole game when he said for the first time and

there was an arrogance among the Democrats after 40 years, and so the change was going to come, and it came under his leadership.

And his message to his member was, get your backsides home as fast as you can. Come down here on Monday nights or Tuesdays, and get out of here on Thursday nights or Friday. You've still got about 70 or 80 members who live in their offices, change in the gym in the morning, and don't bring their families here. All of the things that combine to creating that that collaborative environment that are essential in many ways in any institution, whether it's a public one like this or you're a school building or a corporation headquarters. People need to be together. They need to know a lot more about each other than what party you belong to or what your view is on gun control. And with your kids who go to the school together, when you practice your religion out of the synagogue or church of your choice, or whatever else it may be, you're all of a sudden discovering because you spend time with them. You hate the Yankees and love the Red Sox, so you like to play tennis or golf, whatever else it is.

All of that unspoken stuff contributed very significantly to that environment that creates at least the opportunity for compromise. And so I think it's been a great tragedy in many ways that we allow it to become that, and I think it's one of the reasons why the nation has become so polarized. We blame it on our constituents, but we have an awful lot to do with basically fanning those flames, in my deal, resulting in what we see today.

CHERVENAK: So what would be your ideal time allocation, then? Sounds like full time in D.C., then?

SENATOR DODD: Well, make your choices. This idea of a month on, month off, what the hell is that all about? Who else gets a job like that? When I live to practice law month on, month off. I don't mean virtually a month, and a month in the office. I mean go do what you want to do for a month, you know? Raise your money, go knock on doors in the neighborhood you'd like to, all that stuff. And by the way, when you get through that come on down here for a month and we'll maybe talk about people's taxes or their educational system or the environment or anything else. It's ridiculous in my view.

CHERVENAK: All right, let's move on to the next question, which is around the Senate and rules in the Senate. One, a dream is held by some that if you get a better set of rules in the Senate, you get a better Senate, or you get a better set of rules in in the Congress and you get a more capable, more responsible Congress that can work better for the American people. So, in the Senate, and maybe we'll start with committees because you ran very important committees, you participated in important committees for long periods of time. Are there, and obviously the Senate's different than the House in terms of the way that it runs its committees and its business, but when you think about committees where a lot of the work is supposed to be done, can you talk about what you think a good set—what learnings did you have about what rules work in committees, how committees should be run to maximize their capabilities, their capacities?

SENATOR DODD: Well, it's, again, it may depend upon where you are in your career. If you're a new member in the Senate, you probably want the rotations to occur a lot more frequently so you have a chance to move up the food chain here and acquire the necessarily clout to have more of an impact on the committee products. The more senior you get, the less inclined you are to make those changes because you are moving up the food chain.

I always sort of liked—the Republicans did it, and again I like the committees I was on, and I think there's a value in staying on a committee long enough to actually develop not so much the longevity but the expertise to be familiar with the issues and so forth, and a lot of them are particularly—the banking committee issues. We talk about financial literacy of the general population. I say this respectfully, but the financial literacy of members of Congress would also help on this matter, and you don't get to understand— When I was dealing with the bill, that huge bill on the reform stuff we were talking about, it's a very complicated subject matters to get people all of a sudden up to speed on talking about things, even dealing with credit cards and banks and so forth. I mean what might be a relatively simple matter because people deal with them all the time, it was very difficult.

So I find myself going back and forth, but generally I like the idea of requiring certainly chairs of committees that would allow them to be the ranking member or the chairman for a period of time and then you have to rotate off. Now, you can stay on the committee, but it changes leadership. It's not a bad idea. I think the idea of having some diversity of participation. Again, I don't think you're going to see the careers last as long as they did in the post-World War II period, coming forward. I think the practicalities of it and the exhaustive nature of the job.

By providing for people to go home every week and say—they do, and that increases the fatigue that you do. The easier time is down here. You can manage your time. You don't have to do a damn thing at night unless you want to. Bring your family here. You're going to spend a lot more time with your family in Washington than you are back in Connecticut or someplace, where on Friday night and Saturday and Saturday night and Sunday, you're at parades and picnics and dinners, and then you're back on a plane again on Monday. How often have you seen your family, you know?

Whereas if they're here with you, that changes, so again going back, I think I think changes that require rotating out to some degree. I still like that idea. It probably ought to be said to some degree of staff as well. I know that's where a tremendous amount of knowledge is accumulated, but along with the knowledge that gets accumulated, the power does as well, and one of the reasons I've always been resistant to term limits is because no one suggested term limits for staff, and if you want to lose the control of an institution and then require that people rotate out of it automatically, regardless of their talents and abilities to add to the betterment of the country, you leave that entirely to unelected people who have agendas that could be vastly different than what an elected person would face.

Term limits arrive every two years, and we're seeing a greater turnover occurring with some regularity in the last seven or eight elections, then change elections. I don't see anything coming down the road that's going to change that necessarily.

CHERVENAK: What about the rules as it relates to the members of a committee versus the chairman, in terms of discharge? Have you any thoughts about those kinds of balances?

SENATOR DODD: Let me tell you how I did—I wanted my committees to be active. I wanted my membership to be active, and I wanted them to—so I managed my subcommittee chairs. I always gave them staff. I retained veto power on it. Someone was just an idiot, going to be nothing but a problem, you know, I put my foot down, but I didn't—that was rare, if ever, I think of it now. But nonetheless, I wanted them to feel as though they had the ability to do some things as well.

I'll give an example of what I did in the financial reform package because it was a major bill, and I did this without telling even my own staff what I was about to do. I did it on an evening around seven o'clock after some later votes in the afternoon, and I used the Foreign Relations Committee committee room, which is in the Capitol itself, and I invited the membership, both Republicans and Democrats, to come to this meeting, and the staff. I held my breath and then I announced pairings between senators, a Democrat and Republican. So I announced that Jack Reed of Rhode Island would pair up with Judd Gregg of New Hampshire and work on the derivative section. Chuck Schumer would be working with, I think, Mike Crapo on corporate governance. I had Mark Warner working with Bob Corker, I'm too big to fail. I worked with Dick Shelby on consumer protection. And so I spread the work out, and I waited for someone to say, who the hell are you to be announcing what the Republican senator was going to work on?, but no one did.

And it was smart because I got then, everybody gets—not everyone solved every problem, but they came with a lot of really great ideas, much of it which became part of the bill. So even though they didn't vote for the bill in the end, it wasn't me deciding what was going to be every dotted i and crossed t, and one other person I might have negotiated with on that front. Everybody had a role to play, and on important subject matters as far as the whole bill was concerned. And that was always my approach, in a sense, that this committee's your asset, it's your ally, it's not your opponent.

If you can get that kind of harmony working together to a large extent, you go to the floor of the Senate. It was a cakewalk. It's only when you went with a highly divided committee, and everyone getting very partisan about their views, or personal about their views, made it difficult. So we went to the—two examples I described in having tried to do this, when I was chairing two committees at the same time, chairing the Banking Committee, and I was chairing, because Ted Kennedy died, and got sick earlier, so I became the de facto or the named, unnamed chairman of the Labor Committee during all the Affordable Care debate, a good part of it, anyway. And the markup of the Affordable Care bill in July of 2009 was the longest markup of any bill since 1868 on that committee. That went on for weeks and into the

nights, and around the clock on occasions, and I just made everyone sit there and plow along. And I would take amendments over the weekend, we'd work them out. I remember one Monday I came back and I announced that we had willing to accept about 75 Republican amendments. I remember my Republican colleagues didn't want to vote. How the hell were they going to make the case of voting against a bill if the chairman took 75 of our amendments on the thing? But we got the bill done.

At the end of the bill, I'll never forget it, I have it here in the office. Everyone wanted to be in a picture of the committee and the work we had done— every Democrat and every Republican. No one stormed out, another thing. I listened to everybody, gave everybody a chance on this critically important bill that was creating so much attention to news. I wasn't responsible for the finance committee part of the bill, arguably more difficult part, but the labor committee part worked well, even though it was a partisan vote in the end.

The banking bill. When I did the banking bill, it was a year later, and I'll never forget because we always have these little in-house contests, how many amendments will get filed before the markup starts, and so on a Friday before the markup the following week, all the amendments had to be filed by 5 p.m., and so everyone who was there asked, how many amendments you think got filed? I predicted 401, and I won the pool. It was exactly 401 amendments got filed.

Over the weekend I got a call from Dick Shelby. I was in New York City and the call came in. I took Dick's call. We're good friends. He said I want to tell you on Tuesday, we're not going to offer any amendments at all. So we sat down on Tuesday morning. I told my side, look if they're not going to be amendments, this is a bill we've largely put together because we haven't been able to get a lot of comity on this, but I don't believe we should offer any amendments necessarily either at this point, if they're not going to have any offered on the other side. That committee, on the largest financial reform package since the Great Depression, took 19 minutes from beginning to end. The Dodd-Frank Bill, which became the bill because that was the bill that was adopted in conference.

Two examples, and again I tried. I had Bob Corker. I went five deep among Republicans to get a co-sponsor of the bill, and it was just so charged for people, the idea of reform, and of course the outside interest groups were vehement in their opposition to it. I can't resist to tell you about that a few weeks ago, the Senate—the House Financial Services Committee had a hearing on where things stood after in the pandemic, and one member of Congress said to the first guy, the seven largest banks in the country, how did Dodd-Frank work during all of this? And he was Wells Fargo, and he said, it's been fantastic. We never would have had the resources to make loans during the pandemic, went down the list, and she turned to the rest of them, she said, raise your hand if you agree with the guy from Wells Fargo. All seven hands went up.

Well, I got to tell you, for a moment forgive me, but I enjoyed that moment immensely, knowing how much grief I took from these banks. They thought I was you know going to ruin their lives somehow, and it actually turned out with capital, liquidity, the FSOC, the oversight,

the height and supervision, all of that stuff has worked very well, I don't mind saying, so taking advantage of the interview.

CHERVENAK: So, it sounds like your successes in the committees and what you think has worked in terms of rules when you were the chairman, when you controlled the rules, basically, to committee, was to make sure that everyone's voice was heard, more or less—

SENATOR DODD: Absolutely.

CHERVENAK: Not necessarily agreed, but the voice was aired, and that you made sure that the two sides worked together even if they were not—

SENATOR DODD: And maybe different committees have a rationale for doing it, typically. In the House, of course, the committees are huge, and so you're dealing with an extraordinary number of people, and so trying to maintain order requires probably a more frequent use of the gavel and much more discipline in the process. Senate committees are smaller, for obvious reasons, and your ability to give everyone sort of an opportunity there is important.

But you know, Rosa DeLauro, who's the new chairperson of the House Appropriations Committee, arguably the second most powerful person in Congress, she was my chief of staff for eight years, my campaign manager through two campaigns, and Rose and I talk almost daily. And she's got I don't know how many members the House Appropriation—it's huge—but she's getting great marks from everyone because she's reaching out to everyone. Her first calls were to Dick Shelby and her Republican ranking member. She made sure that they were happy and things were going well for them, how could she be supportive.

It's just, this is human nature. I don't know why people struggle with this stuff. The institutions are different, but human—they're just still the same human beings. They show up, most of them want to do good things. They have a different point of what is a good thing, but nonetheless they come with that in mind, I believe, is my experience, anyway. Most of them care deeply about the country, highly patriotic, want America to succeed, and a delightful good people.

Yeah, we all read about the ones that go south on us for one reason or another, but my experience has been good people. We don't celebrate that enough. This is a tough job to put yourself through this, and we ought to be celebrating people who want to stick their necks out and try it and do it to make a difference.

And so it bothers me when I hear other members talk about their colleagues in ways that contribute to the public's attitude about the institution. What was surprised that people think the place is a hell hole and can't get day of the week straight, in a sense, because that's what they sell to people back home. And everyone does it. No one gets up and talks about what's working, always what's not working.

Part 2

CHERVENAK: So, it sounds like another important element of your rules on the committee, at least, and the success of the legislation we're discussing is that you forced them to work on it for a long period of time, so time also comes back into it, where you need a critical mass of time together in order to get the result.

SENATOR DODD: Well, it is, and these things, that's the hearing process and who you have common—and again. Ted Kennedy was a great teacher in all of this. He used to have a dinner at his home in January every year, and just the members of his committee. No spouses, no children, no staff, nothing else, and it would be a fun evening, a relaxing evening, started a great mood, in a sense. We're about to start particularly a new Congress, and he would start to his right around that dining room table, or left depending on where people are seated, to the ranking member if he was the chairman.

And normally these dinners were when he was the chair, but what would turn to an Orrin Hatch or go to a Nancy Kassebaum or Arlen Specter, whoever was the ranking member in those days, but started, what would you like to do these next two years? You know, what what's your agenda? And he'd go to each person and ask their agendas. And he would make a point over the next two years, one way or another, to make sure that at least one, maybe two, of those ambitions of those Republican members, that he would try and help get it done for them. One way or another, maybe not exactly what they wanted. And then he'd turn around, and he had his agenda, too. And he'd have to compromise a bit on it, but it's awfully hard to turn down a guy who's wanted to make sure that you can get your things done, to a large extent. It was a great lesson. I remember watching him do it, learning you don't get everything you want.

I was at a meeting one time with Bob Dole. I passed the first child care legislation since World War II, the Act for Better Child Care. And Bob Dole was going to give me five dollars, I wanted ten, whatever the number was, I forgot. Ted Kennedy went with me. I was sitting in Dole's office and talking about it, and Dole was making the points, the 10 was too much, wasn't going to accept that number, and I'm kind of banging the table. New in the place, relatively new, and Ted Kennedy goes to me says, can we take a time out? And, time out? What the hell is that about?

So I went out in the hallway, and he goes, listen, you're not going to get the 10. Bob Dole is offering you half of what we wanted to get. You take the five. We'll come back next year and we'll get another two or three or four. That's how this works. And I remember the moment was, yeah, that makes sense. And I watched more people blow something up and I asked him one time, what was your biggest legislative mistake in your 42 years in that body? Ah, so I could answer that question in two seconds. In 1969, Richard Nixon called me, new President, and said, how would you like to do a health care bill, a universal health care bill? And Kennedy said, let me see what, let me look at it.

And the benefits were dreadful, they were terrible, and Kennedy said, no, I'm not going to do that. He said to this day I think about it. We could have had a universal health care plan 50 years ago and then you build on the benefits, or you argue about them. You add some, you may reduce some.

He said, I learned then, you start with what you can. Every major piece of legislation we talk about today began with a much smaller idea, in many ways, and they grow. If they work, they grow, if they don't they go away, in a sense. And so that was to me, being around people who've been through this themselves, and on a personal level how to make it work, because they—after all, these are nothing more than just wearing different political labels, and all the same problems.

I remember I said the day I left, a Republican senator who'd just been elected came up to me on the floor of the Senate. And everyone's being sworn in, a lot of milling around on the floor of the Senate, and he came up and he kind of threw an elbow in my ribs and he said, all right what's your big advice? You're leaving, I'm just arriving. And I said, look over here on the Democratic side. Look at those wild-eyed liberals you're looking at over there. Let me give you some advice. You're a freshman in the minority. You're not going to have a hell of a lot to do in the first year or two around here, other than learn as much as you can about the place. I promise you the following: if you take each one of those wild liberal Democrats you're looking at out for breakfast, lunch, or dinner over the next year or so, three things will happen.

One, I don't want to frighten you, but you're actually going to like each other. You'd be surprised you probably followed very similar paths to get here, one a Republican, one a Democrat. The fights, the primaries, all the other garbage you had to put up with. Secondly, and this will really scare you, you're going to agree with each other a lot more than you can imagine here. The things that we disagree about, everyone talks about. The things we agree about, no one talks about. And if you do the first two, you will have the best time at this job imaginable. Then you're actually making a contribution and you've got relationships, and the way the place works, it's those relationships that produce results. It's not you talking to everyone who agrees with you on your side. It's finding people on the other side who agree with you, and you're only going to find out they agree with you by getting to know them. You don't get to know them, you're never going to find out, unless by accident, in a sense, or maybe on a committee.

And again, I can't say whether or not he did all those things I suggested, but I believed it so strongly that that's how any institution functions. It's how you're functioning your own family, for God's sake, let alone let alone the Senate or the House of Representatives.

CHERVENAK: So, let's move on to the floor, then. We've talked about committees. What rules do you think could improve the functioning of the Senate on the floor? We could talk all day long with the filibuster, but maybe start with something else first and then ultimately head to that one.

SENATOR DODD: I think we ought to reduce tremendously the number of Senate confirmations of jobs. You know, you could do a thorough vetting process and then you have the option of someone because if they're going to go ahead with someone anyway, the obvious choice, someone had a criminal background, you know, you don't want to just let that one go along. So there's some way to measure that instead of sending everybody up through this, people holding people up. I mean I rarely, if ever, voted against any President's cabinet, certainly least of all over policy divisions. You get elected, it ought to mean something, and ought to be able to have your family, your official family, to function.

That has become passé. I mean, one person can hold up a nominee on a committee, even in a committee setting they can hold it up, and we didn't talk about that, but that can happen, and I think that's we spent too much time on that garbage, and the personality cults and so forth. So that'd be one thing I would do. I mentioned earlier about being in more often. I think that's important, and doing the people's business. I think it's reassuring to people, knowing you're fighting, at least you're working, on their behalf, and I don't think it helps us by just sending you home. May be good for you, I'm not sure it's good for the people you're talking to along the way. There are probably other, these kind of dilatory rules and so forth.

I mean, what I always try to make sure people understand is look, Ben Franklin said to that woman, we didn't give you a total democracy, we've given you a Republic if you can keep it, and hence the bicameral system, in a way. Because they were wise enough and knowledgeable enough about how people can, if it was assuming simple majorities, you can actually, can become, you know, cause havoc in a sense, with tyrannies of those.

So the one that let's—because it's the big one under discussion today—is the filibuster. I gave my farewell address, which if you're sleepless some night you go on YouTube and you can watch it, Matt.

CHERVENAK: Already did.

SENATOR DODD: I spent a good part of my time talking about the filibuster. I would, the filibuster clearly needs to be reformed, what it is, but I say with this the same degree of energy, it should not be abandoned. People say, well, it was not in the Constitution. No, it wasn't, but the Senate was. And the Senate was in fact the filibuster, as it institutionally was ingrained in the very creation of the institution. The founders didn't create two chambers in a unicameral system, they created very different systems in the system. And the Senate has evolved over the years from what they had in mind originally, but as it evolved and it became more of a populist institution, not unlike balance with different rules, then the emergence of something like the filibuster because that was the place where things were supposed to cool down, so to think twice about what you're doing, in a six year term appointed by the state legislature.

We're changing a lot of that, but we need to have something in its place to make sure that you're just not a reflection of what the House is. Why have it, for God's sakes, you're going to end up with just, otherwise you end up with different results, and then what? Or you end up

with the same result and minority voices and others don't get hurt in the process, so I believed it had value, but changes were made back around 50 years ago.

One is we decided that you could conduct other business of the Senate. While a filibuster was pending. Huge mistake to do that. I understood the thinking behind it at the time, and maybe people assumed it would still put pressure on the institution to resolve the matter. It did just the opposite. And secondly, they changed the language. It used to say that President and voting, the membership, and now it's basically the Senate.

So what happens is you still make it as difficult for the individual to conduct a filibuster, you got to do the same things you had to do 120 years ago, stand up and not move and not eat and any other bodily function for as long as you could withstand it. But after that, someone else could pick it up and continue going, and it was sort of an unspoken, unlegislated proposition. There's a filibuster going on. We're going to conduct other business in the meantime, and by the way, next Thursday at 5 p.m. we'll have a vote to invoke cloture, so everyone go do everything else you want to do. It's routine, and it should be extraordinary. You've got to feel that passionately about something that you're willing to stand there and abuse yourself for how many hours you can tolerate it, and you had to ask people to support you to prepare to sleep on cots, not go home, not go on a vacation, or not go back to your state, because I'm going to need the other 39 of you here to support me when that cloture comes at any time.

So you know, I went through a few of those sleepless nights on a cot in the Marble Room off the floor of the Senate. We don't have to do that anymore. Make the institution, its members, realize how serious this is, and you've got to be there. How many nights are you going to want to sleep on a cot? What point do you maybe get to the point, let's resolve the matter or stop it. So, until it becomes painful, as it was intended in a sense to be, and as long as it's routine, it's going to be used endlessly. Now to Democrats, I said you know you don't ever want to bring up the Civil Rights debate. Forget the Civil Rights debate. Dirksen did that without the filibuster because he—I mean, Johnson did, because he got Dirksen to go along, he got others to do it. In fact, there were six floor leaders, three Republicans, three Democrats. My father was one of the three Democrats, in the Voting Rights Act and the Civil Rights Act back in the 60s.

In this time, he didn't need it, but I said the Democrats—it was 36 months ago that one President filled one third of the Supreme Court because all it takes is 50 votes here, and the reason we've had relatively moderate judges at the District Appellate and Supreme Court level for the last 200 and some odd years is because you didn't nominate someone if it was going to be, and those kind of things, it's a lifetime appointment. That gets pretty serious. You better send up someone that can enjoy a pretty broad-based support, even if they don't agree with them in a sense, this is a highly competent individual who's going to do their best to defend people's rights in the Constitution of the United States.

All of a sudden, 50 votes will do it, and all of a sudden you get—for Democrats, what more do you need to know? You ended up with one third of the Supreme Court for the next 40 years.

That was a great result for you, you know. No filibuster. So reform it, don't abolish it. Make it painful, so that it becomes once again the extraordinary event.

The reason it wasn't used much before 1975 was because people were nice guys and they liked each other. It was because it was painful, that's why it wasn't used much, you know. Sorry about that, I get a little wound up about the subject.

CHERVENAK: It's an important one that is a central focus for so many and a central focus of research, so it makes sense that so much intentions—

SENATOR DODD: Beyond just the immediate problem, but I don't disagree. Look, because right now pending is this whole issue of voting rights, the HR1. It is a huge issue, and for me it's a terribly important issue. It also is a reflection of what Democrats used to do and we don't do anymore. It used to be that we worried about, at the granular level of politics, that town clerk's job that was voted in or the registrar of voters and so forth, and we all got preoccupied with the Congress and the Senate the presidency. And it's a lot less costly to support, financially, races for the State Legislature than it is Congressional races. And we almost walked away from a lot of those races and worried about Congress when State Legislatures draw the lines and the boundaries of these things and decide what the laws are going to be and the elections, until we change the law on that.

I appreciate the importance of the issue, and it is true it's going to pose some huge threats, in my view, because I think a lot of the proposed provisions are outrageous, what are being suggested, but the idea that we're going to be able to filibuster, you've got to get 60 votes. You don't have 60 votes for this, in my view. I wish you did, in some ways, but if you don't, so you're going to try and change the law, change the rules, because you've got a bill. There's always some bill that will preoccupy the attention of an individual Congress more than anything else that comes along. But we've had the wisdom over the years, by and large, not to abandon the rules of the place because we couldn't figure out how to solve the problem in front of us.

So, I worry that we're getting so caught up in the momentary appetites to satisfy one problem by abandoning a set of rules that have allowed us in a pluralistic democracy, where we require our ability to come together as a people, and it's hard. I've never seen a single President, I've served with seven of them, that ever got everything they wanted. You don't. And the worst word in American politics today is "moderation." And yet that's what the system was designed to do as a pluralistic country, if you want to retain democracy.

CHERVENAK: So, let's dig just a couple minutes into this concept of debate, dialogue, however you want to call it. We touched about it a little bit in the committee, where it sounds like a lot of it in your mind has to happen, and then there's something on the floor. Where do you see, really, the things getting done? Is it the committee level? Is it the floor? Is it back room? Is it that dining room table, Ted Kennedy's table? Where, if we had to allocate time to one of those locations for things to get done, where would we put it?

SENATOR DODD: Well, you know you're dealing with human nature, Matt. I mean, it is structure, but you know, personalities are absolutely critical, and so and I'm not going to get into my views of leadership, but it really can set the tone on how things happen. And so it makes it difficult to be a leader if in fact you strip the leadership of its ability to lead, but then you're depending upon the qualities of the leader to be able to guide you through things. And I've always, I like to have people be strong leaders. I think that's the best way to get things done. I've seen all sorts of different ways, but my view has been when someone was a good leader, the place generally functioned better because they set the tone, they set the mood, they speak in ways that reflect the party, what they care about, the caucuses of the conference you belong to.

So, I mentioned some of the rules I think could be done away with to make the plays work better, but I'm not in great favor of turning the power over to 435 House members, 434 of them and leaving the speaker to have to function in an environment where everybody's got their own individual power, or small factions of them can. I'm cautious about wanting to adopt a lot of rules that limit the ability, no matter how disappointed I may be about Mitch McConnell's leadership and the things he's done, and there are any number of examples where I can cite that, and go around and adopt a rule, I suppose, if we get 67 votes because that's how many votes it takes to change a Senate rule, that to modify his behaviors.

So if you've got a year left on your term as president, you get to nominate a president. You don't get to guarantee they get confirmed, but you can do that, in a sense, because certainly that was an outrageous abuse of power in my view. I'd like to shut down that from ever happening again. But you know, I've been around long enough to watch someone else will come up with some new creative idea some different way. Water has a way of finding its way in a sense and those things, too.

So, I think it's a combination of things. One is money. I mean, I will tell you this, and I know you'll say, well that's typical Democratic chatter. It used to be you had to be a land owner that owned property and white male to vote, and we've abandoned all of those rules, but de facto, not de jure, we're back at it again, basically. Spending 25 million on a Senate race in a relatively small state is not uncommon today. I didn't spend anything like that in five Senate races combined, today. And so you want that institution to become an available institution to a broad spectrum of our country, if possible, or at least ought not to limit the people who can even think about doing this.

Unless we get back to it, it used to be the parties were basically the strong entities. Today parties are almost non-existent to a large extent, and there's outside interest groups that really control the agenda more than a political party does. And the one way you limit that to some degree is you limit the ability to basically finance these operations. You now have members up here, and I know they all complain about it every day, that have call time every day. That's part of the agenda, that's why they're going home every week for three days or four days and spending an hour or two every day as a member of Congress on the phone raising money from the moment you're reelected or elected until the next election.

And until something's done about that, we limit the people who could even think about doing this, and if they want to do it and they don't have the resources themselves, they have to commit to various organizations and groups that have very rigid agendas, and you're either for them or against them. And so you end up just, I was rewarded politically because I was good at putting things together, passed a lot of bills, several of them, many of them, landmark pieces of legislation. Today I would be penalized for doing that to a large extent. It's exactly the reverse in 10 years, what it was. And until we make it possible for people to come, I'm not suggesting eliminating raising money altogether, I don't think, I'm not quite leaning from federally subsidizing all of these things at all, but we've got to do something about it.

So if I can fix any one thing, I'd like people to come at least with the mindset, I'm going to try and get things right, fix things. And if I fool around once you get there with the rules of the place to make it happen, it's not a bad idea, but if you really want to make a difference, figure out a different way that people can finance these operations without having to fall into either to have the personal fortune yourself to do it or the reliance on organizations and groups that will demand accountability for it. And I wish I had a more sophisticated answer for you, but my experience has been, and that's where a lot of it rides, right there.

CHERVENAK: One of my questions is, what institutional improvement would you make within 50 years?

SENATOR DODD: That's one, we just talked about. I worry, the default position for democracy is not more democracy, as you see. Less than 40 percent of the world's population live in something that could be called a free system, whether it's a socialistic system or a capitalistic system, the number is shrinking pretty rapidly. And what we're seeing in Washington, or worrying about here, you go to Poland, you go to Hungary, you go to Brazil, you go to the Philippines, you can go down the world not to mention the Russias and the Cubas and the Chinas and so forth. It's getting, and understandably people gravitate to it.

Civics. There's only one state in the union that has a high school graduation requirement that you have a year of civics, that you understand what your rights are, what the structures are. How do you love something you don't have the basic understanding of? It used to be that was pretty routine, and most states do something, but only Colorado does the requirement. I don't know how rigid they are about it, but that's at least on paper. That's something I would get back to very quickly. We can't waste time over the next 50 years. That ought to be done immediately in my view, and you can start in grade schools. You don't have to wait until high school or middle school.

I won't bore you with a great story with a grandmother who taught me that lesson in Connecticut. I said, well how do you begin with elementary school children? She said I'll show you. She brought out her two grandchildren, one seven, one eight, and she said children, I'm going to ask you a question. If you don't eat your peas at dinner tonight and I send you to bed without your dinner and I don't give you any breakfast in the morning or any lunch tomorrow,

require you to stay in your room, what is that? That's the Eighth Amendment, cruel and unusual punishment. These children knew the whole ten amendments, but in the context of their own experiences, and so their point was, if you try to teach it as a PhD course, no, of course they're not, but if you relate it to their world, they can understand these concepts along the way.

So, I'm a great believer that we need to do more of this because of that simple question. So, money, civics. We need to find ways to celebrate this more. That's more of individual choices. What I told you about doing schools turned out to be, I think, a smart decision politically, and I think it is smart, but also it's a great experience. I always tell businesses, what should we be doing? That congressman doesn't seem to understand what we do, God they don't listen, and blah blah.

I said, you know I can't predict what everyone is out to do, but I'd say if you invite the Congressman to come to your business in your home state, one of those weeks he's home or she's home, and you say we'd like you to come. We've got about 50 employees here, we'd like you to meet them. We don't want a speech. We'd like you if you could for maybe 45 minutes now if you just listen to what we do. We would like you to leave and say, well I know what that XYZ plant does for a living. You'll be amazed at the response you'll get, how willing people are, actually. They rarely get invited to do that, to go on that floor at nine o'clock in the morning, and listen to guys with a cup of coffee in their hand talk about what they do for a living. You'll appreciate the hard work, you'll appreciate the creativity, they'll appreciate the fact that you come to listen to them, even if they don't agree with, you agree with them.

I would do more of that. I'm not sure people do those things. They don't extend the invitations. So the people that members of Congress listen to are the people who invite them. If you invite the Congress, you have a better chance they're going to listen to you. In a campaign, you talk to everybody because you want their votes. Once you get elected, you respond to the invitations that come in, and so the people who invite you become the ones that get you in a sense. So if you don't broaden that agenda, and both the members should do that, but it's always easier to accept an invitation than to try and get one.

So, the more people invite people to come to the school, come to the business, whatever it may be, you increase—because then that trip home I'm less hostile about because you're setting the agenda to a large extent, not they are, and you start to develop those relationships. And those don't require a PhD in political science to figure out. Those are two or three things, Matt, I suggest.

So, a lot of it is at the root before it gets to the institution. The tendency is to focus on how can we make the institution function better. It's such a human institution that getting the humans to come to the institution with a commitment to make it work, I think, is if I had to choose one way or the other to figure it out, I'd have a lot more faith that ultimately we might get something out of that process.

And it's more opaque than specific rules changes, but I think in the long term, it's really what—I think we'd like to think how this institutions function, but if we send them to town and all they've heard is the nastiness, the bitterness, vote this way, or don't even talk to those people, and they arrive in town, pretty much the game's over before it even begins.

CHERVENAK: To understand that, and it's echoed by a lot of others who have talked on the program about the ways to think about the long term, it's developing the relationships, it's understanding the constituency, not just the ones who have voted in the primary, but the whole—

SENATOR DODD: John Warner was a great friend of mine from Virginia many years ago. He was the chairman of the Armed Services Committee and former Secretary of the Navy, represented Newport News in in Virginia, major ship builder including many submarines. I represented Groton, Connecticut, for 36 years as a Congressman and as a Senator, and we did one thing. We made submarines and had been making them for years, and the issue came up on which company would get the contract for the largest submarine ever built at the time, the Sea Wolf submarine. Let me just say, I'm not on the Armed Services Committee, I'm in the minority, I'm not on a committee, even. And this is a battle between myself and the guy who's the chair of that Armed Services Committee. Needless to say, we did a lot of work to try and win.

I'll never forget I always believed you had to show up when you might win or you might lose, to be there, not just showing up when you win. I'm in the car driving down to Groton. We're going to get the news that afternoon who won. Halfway down in the car I get a call, Groton, Connecticut, won the contract. Incredible. Down there 28,000 people, I was I was the hero of the hour having fought for them and so forth. I get back to Washington that night and I'm in my apartment and I'm walking down the hall of my apartment building, and I can see it, it's late, it's about midnight, and I can see there's a package leaning against my door going to the apartment.

I pick it up and open it up, and there is a first edition jacketed copy of Jack London's "The Sea Wolf," a great bottle of red wine, and a note, "you did a hell of a job, your friend John Warner." Now it sounds quaint today, but that's the way, that happened all the time and things. It was a rough battle, we both fought hard in a sense, but that was yesterday, this is today. No one's a permanent enemy. This isn't a fraternity you've joined or social club. Your job is to try and make things happen for people, and you do the best you can, and you don't destroy relationships over a vote or a position on something.

I often tell students that story to get the idea, it wasn't that long ago, and I gather, still they tell me by the members now that I know, tell me actually they get along better than you'd think, but obviously no one ever reports about planes that fly, and so the fact that there are problems we know about, but they actually do get along better than some things, so I find that encouraging when I hear that.

CHERVENAK: So last question is really just about your plans. Obviously you've got a lot of energy and ideas still for what the U.S. should do, Congress—

SENATOR DODD: Well, I'm meeting today after I finish with you on this interview, Matt. I do a lot of work with the, it's called the, what is it called, the Bipartisan Caucus. It's a group in town that Tom Daschle and Trent Lott sort of started some years ago, and I've done work with them. They've called me and asked me again to help out. I work a lot with Jack Danforth, the Republican, Chuck Hagel, myself, and Paul Kirk, who replaced Ted Kennedy in the Senate, was a former DNC chair.

And the four of us have done a lot of work. We've written letters, done different things, rounded up 75 former members, Democrats and Republicans, calling for some—we'll help out on rules changes and ideas they may have. No one's taking us up on the offers yet, and I suspect we may end up sounding like, I walked barefoot to school in the snow when I was a boy, and so we've got to be careful about the egos and trying to.

But we're at least offering to help, and knowing that there's a lot of us out there that care about this stuff. So after this afternoon we've got a group of us meeting to talk about the filibuster, and can we come up with some ideas that make some sense that would reform it, not completely. If you were in the place long enough, you began to understand the value of it at critical moments, and so there is a value to it.

As I say, the Senate was a filibuster as envisioned 240 years ago, but obviously as it became more democratized as an institution, then there had to be something to replace the structural nature of the center that was a filibuster, in effect, or at least have the opportunity to do. So I think trying to get the institution to understand that and figure out ways in which it could become a viable option, but only an extraordinary circumstances, where extraordinary people are willing to make extraordinary efforts to make a point that they care about on a bill or something else.

CHERVENAK: Well Senator Dodd, thank you so much for your service, and it was great talking to you today. Appreciate your insights, and good luck with the coming years.

SENATOR DODD: Well thank you, and I—good luck to you, good luck with your program.