

**Reforming Congress Project
Sunwater Institute
Interview with John Lawrence**

CHERVENAK: Professor Lawrence, thank you so much for joining us.

LAWRENCE: Nice to be with you.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we start with your background? Where'd you sort of start out, you know, the arc of your career, and then what you're doing now.

LAWRENCE: I got my undergraduate degree at Oberlin College in American history and went from there directly to the University of California, Berkeley, where I received a PhD in history. While I was there, I started volunteering both in a local congressional office and then a congressional campaign in 1974, and when that candidate, a young guy named George Miller, was elected, he asked me if I wanted to come back to DC. That sounded like a pretty good option contrasting to being on the market for a junior historian's position [at] some university somewhere, so I thought I'd try that for a while, and I ended up on Capitol Hill for 38 years, most of that time with Miller, both in his personal offices as chief of staff and ledge director as the, then as the staff director.

Two committees that he chaired or was the ranking member of the Committee on Natural Resources and then the Committee on Education in the workforce, and then in 2005 I was traded to his very, very close friend Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi to be her chief of staff and served in that role for two years in the minority, then in 2006 the Democrats won the majority. She became Speaker. I was her chief of staff during that period of time and for another two years after going into the minority, and since I left The Hill in 2013 after eight years as Speaker Pelosi's chief of staff, I've been teaching since then at the University of California's Washington Center, which offers academic courses for students who come from all the UC campuses to do internships in Washington, DC.

And I've written two books. One, *The Class of '74: Congress After Watergate* and then *The Roots of Partisanship*, which looks at the reformers who came to Washington in the aftermath of the Watergate crisis and joined with other reformers to institute some significant congressional reforms but then also at the impact of the institution on them and how some of the changes that were made to open the institution inadvertently may have contributed to the rise in the partisanship that's become so characteristic of American politics.

And then a new book that'll be coming out in November of 2022, which is called *Ack of Power: Inside Pelosi's Speakership*, and that covers the period of 2005 to 2010, really looks at that effort of winning, exercising, and then ultimately losing power and how personalities and institutions impact the nature of the political process.

So that's my academic work. I also write short stories, Sherlock Holmes pastiches and have had a number of them and a volume of those stories published, but that may be a little more peripheral to this conversation.

CHERVENAK: Fantastic. Well before we get into the later aspects of your work, why did you decide to move from a, you know, the concept of thinking and writing about history to trying to make it in Congress itself? What made you make that choice other than the job market?

LAWRENCE: Well, I had always been active in politics. When I was a little kid our family's closest friend was elected to Congress in 1969. That was very influential. It was also, of course, the Kennedy election, and if you were young and had a heartbeat, you sort of had an interest in politics. I got very involved particularly in anti-war politics during my years in college, and as was the case, I think with a lot of people, that led to a diminution of interest in electoral politics, but once in Berkeley somewhere incongruously I drifted back into interest in electoral politics, so it was sort of a normal progression. I also felt that, frankly, I could have a greater impact by working in Congress, where the work product could impact hundreds of thousands and millions of people, and I was offered the opportunity to do that with a young member of Congress who, with whom I shared many outlooks and policy objectives, and who gave me an enormous amount of latitude to select topics and pursue issues that I thought were important, some of which had strong historical antecedents to them. And so I had a sense of applying the history in a way and having an impact that, at least at that stage of my career, I felt that an academic career did not offer.

Subsequently, I think going into an academic career has actually been good for me and good for my students in that it's allowed me to synthesize both the academic and the practical sides of what I know and also apply that to students who are looking for that kind of connection to what really happens in politics, as opposed to what they study in history or political science classes.

CHERVENAK: Why don't we start with, you know, in terms of the Congress work with some of your later jobs, and then we'll go to the earlier ones. So, you know, when you were running the speaker's office, can you tell us about that job? How many people are [there] and how many people are you overseeing, and what actually happens on a day-to-day basis, like what is the speaker's office and what happens inside it?

LAWRENCE: Of course each Speaker decides their own organization, their own structure, and that, a lot of that changed incidentally between the time you're in the minority and then the time you enter into the majority. When you're in the minority in the House of Representatives, which is of course a majoritarian-run institution, your main job is to get into the majority because the speaker, and then the House majority, really make every determination with respect to the schedule both at the committee levels, what issues are taken up and are transformed into policy. Once you're in the majority, however, it's a very, very different job.

You simultaneously have a political component to your job and also a managerial component. You have about seventy-five or eighty people were on the staff at that point. It's much different

than a personal staff or a committee staff because you are, of course, working at the pinnacle of the congressional power structure, and in the House the Speaker at this stage of our history as a very dominant person is, has the responsibility of both orchestrating activities within the House but then also serving as the major liaison to the Senate and to the administration and executive agencies. As the chief of staff, I played all I played in all those sandboxes and would represent her in negotiations and staff level discussions with the White House, with the Senate, but then also within the Congress itself, with the minority.

And I was very lucky, I should point out, that the Republican leader for most of the time that I was in the Speaker's office, was the was the former chairman of the Education in the Workforce Committee, John Boehner. And so I had had a very close working relationship with him for five years before we, he ended up in his position, I ended up in mine. And that ended up serving I think our interests and the interests of the House very well because we knew each other and we could develop a level of trust with each other. But the Speaker also has the responsibility, particularly a Democratic Speaker, a particular challenge of melding together a very diverse and sometimes contentious caucus.

I think a lot of people assume that the Speaker or any congressional leader has greater power to demand loyalty and to demand votes from their members, let alone the other party. That is really the case, and that takes an enormous amount of work, whether you have a large majority as Mrs. Pelosi had in the 2009 and 2010 period, or where you have a very narrow majority as she has in the 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 period. There are many factions within your party, and power is disseminated not only within the formal structures of the committees but also within the various sub-caucuses that are both ideological and issue-driven caucuses, the Hispanic Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, the Blue Dog Caucus, and the others.

And in order to gather the votes that you need, assuming in a hyper-partisan, highly-divided Congress you're not going to get those votes from the other party, you have a lot of work to do to put together the votes you need to pass legislation. Many people don't remember that even in the earlier period, the part, period I write about in this book *The Arc of Power*, when Mrs. Pelosi had a majority of thirty-five seats in the House of Representatives, many of the major bills were passed by only two or three votes because you still had this problem of putting together that coalition, and you would lose votes from the right you would lose votes from the left knowing full well to you were not going to get any Republican votes to help you do that.

So a lot of the work of the Speaker's office and necessarily the work of the staff is working with your members, building that trust, figuring out what trade-offs need to be given in order to secure the support you need, and then in addition to that you have to manage your own staff. You have a very large press staff, you have a large legislative staff, you have her security needs, you have her scheduling in advance needs, so it's a, this chief of staff has to wear all those hats simultaneously.

CHERVENAK: So for the, you mentioned that at that time it was about eighty people in the organization, so how would it be broken down in terms of those different kinds of functions?

LAWRENCE: The largest the largest components would be the legislative areas, which would, we would break it down largely along the committee lines and the press and communications operations because that ladder would include not only her press people but people who were managing such things as her online presence, which was emerging at that point. It wasn't quite as robust as it is in the 2020 era, but it would also include speech writing, it would also include other types of communications and outreach, the writing of materials that would go out to members. So those are, those were probably the largest sections.

But again, there are people in a lot of roles that the individual member office does not have, for example security and management of the building, interaction with the police and the architect of the capital, the superintendent of the capital, and then a very large advance staff for her because she travels, and everything that the Speaker does, much more so than the average member, has got to be done in advance, in coordination with security, local officials, international officials. So it's a big pretty big operation.

CHERVENAK: And so for the legislative aspect of it, you mentioned it's almost a mirror of the committee system. How does that really work in the process. You know, today they talk about it being, you know, a lot of the legislations generated inside the speaker's office, you know, how does that actually happen? You know, is there a person who mirrors the committee and they're working with the committee, or they're working independently to come up with a bill? You know, how does that actually happen? How does that legislative function actually take place inside the Speaker's office?

LAWRENCE: So, I think there's a little bit of a misunderstanding that many people have that the Speaker's officer, that the leadership offices are usurping the roles of the committee, and they're just going off into some little room somewhere and writing a bill and then telling everybody, you've got to vote for it. That's a good way to make sure your bill doesn't pass, and that's not really what happens.

When we talk about the leadership developing legislation, it's developing that legislation in conjunction with committee people, subcommittee people, other interested people in the caucus, but it's playing more of a developmental role as the legislation is being put together, and the reason for that is that in many areas of policy, whether it's energy or environment or economic policy or social policy, health policy, you have multiple committees that are working on legislation, and you don't necessarily want to, I don't want to get too wonky here, even for the SunWater Institute, and talk about, you know, multi-committee jurisdictions and sequencing of legislation, but you also face an institutional problem where a committee may have a very different perspective on a matter than the caucus in general, and if you just leave legislation up to the people who have been appointed to, and serve on, that committee and interact with the interests, whether they're consumer interests or environmental interests or energy company or finance, whatever, who deal with that committee, the product that they produce may not be a product that's marketable in the broader caucus, and so it's much better to be involved in the process early on and develop a bill so that when it comes to the Rules

Committee and comes to the floor, has the support of the caucus more broadly than it is to, what you may have done in the past, where you had a greater propensity for bipartisanship, for building coalitions across the party lines, that you have a piece of legislation that is saleable. And that incidentally is also why you see so many pieces of legislation, both under the Democrats and under the Republicans, coming to the floor under closed rules, or very, very limited rules, because you've carefully constructed these bills, particularly significant large complicated spending bills or policy bills, and if you allow the kind of open amendment process that we used to see back in the 70s and the 80s when the reforms that I wrote about in *The Class of '74* were instituted, you end up with a bill that's either unworkable because it's been amended by a legislation that people have promoted for ideological reasons but without really much of a focus on whether or not the resulting product actually works or is operative, or is extremely expensive or is not paid for.

And so that is led over time both by Democrats and Republicans, and of course they criticize each other when this happens because the minority gets locked out of the process to say, we're gonna have to, we're gonna have to work that legislation out before it gets to the floor. It's why we always used to say the bills that we were producing, they were bipartisan bills, it's just they were bipartisan within the Democratic. We had to put them together with all the different factions that we faced because we knew, and this was very explicitly said in some of the bills that we did particularly during the Obama administration, that no matter how you changed the bill, the minority was not going to vote for the bill because for their own partisan reasons, for their own policy reasons and political considerations, they were not going to embrace and endorse the work product of our majority.

And so that was just the political reality. You have to do it that way in order to end up with a product that that moves forward, and similarly it very often takes an extended period of time to get to that point. And we're not even dealing with having to negotiate with the Senate or dealing with the president, who may have a very different point of view. That becomes another complication when you bring a bill back to the House to have it passed as to whether or not it resembles the original products efficiently you can, that you can you can pass it again.

So that all speaks for a strong leadership involvement on the takeoff as well as the landing. It also speaks to the importance of having diversity within your leadership so that you make sure you're not just taking care of the loudest voices or the people who happen to agree with one particular faction or the other, recognizing you need to blend them all together to put together a work product that has some chance of success.

CHERVENAK: So the legislative activities, then, within the Speaker's office, sounds like it's mostly focused on the whichever party it happens to be, rather than reaching across to try to get votes to get something passed. So they're calculating whether it can pass, it's like the Hastert Rule. Can they pass through their own ranks in order to get it on the floor, or does it have enough to even pass altogether if they're in a tight majority situation?

LAWRENCE: Well I think that depends on certain key circumstances. So I think that certainly the best example I would always point to would be the TARP legislation in 2008, where to remind everyone, you have a Republican president, you have a Democratic congress, so that's usually a formula for stalemate or for at least very long, protracted legislation, but we were told by the secretary of the treasury that we didn't have a lot of time and in fact this was on a Thursday afternoon, September 18, 2008, and if we didn't solve the problem within the few days that we wouldn't have an economy anymore.

So that's the kind of message that tends to focus the attention of Congress, and in that particular case, although it didn't work out perfectly or exactly as we'd like, that was something where we entered bipartisan negotiations from the outset, and there was an understanding that as with big, complex, controversial legislation, when you're changing the tax code, when you're changing Social Security or Medicaid or other entitlement programs, everybody's going to have to hold his hand and jump off the cliff together because this is not, nobody wants to take complete ownership. And of course in the case of TARP, you're providing eight hundred billion dollars to the most unpopular human beings in the world, and nobody wanted to say that was ours.

So in that particular case you would make an effort to bring in the minority, and actually Mrs. Pelosi is quite explicit that if you didn't bring in the minority, the Democrats would not pass this on their own, so it was up to the Bush Administration to ensure that Congressman Boehner and the Republicans in the Senate were engaged in this process. I think you saw a little bit of that in 2022 as well with the passage of the infrastructure, in the 2021 with the passage of the infrastructure bill. A little different there. It wasn't so much a crisis as it was an opportunity for everybody to get a little piece of the pie. Even there you had a very small number of Republicans, but at least you had something bipartisan.

There aren't that many bills like that anymore, and in part that's because in the case of infrastructure a lot of the Republicans whose districts stand to benefit from the infrastructure bill knew they didn't have to bother voting for it. They could, they were going to get the benefits anyway, and therefore they could vote against the bill, criticize the Democrats for a big spending bill and increasing the deficit, whether that was true or not was irrelevant. That was their, the talking point and still get the benefits from the legislation. So there are times when you try to engage the other party, but I think to a very large extent people have found whether it's with the Democrats in control or the Republicans in control, the minority party is not terribly interested in being part of the solution, and that as I say is because you have narrow divisions between the parties and you're in a state of constant campaigning, where you're trying to throw out the current majority and replace them. There's very little motivation for most people to make the existing majority look like it's effective and can govern if your goal is to convince the public that they can't govern and you should be, you should replace them as the majority. So I mean to some extent that's the outcome of levels of hyper partisanship, rough parity between the parties and close majorities and frequent elections that I think have become sort of the institutionalized part of the crisis that's affecting the operations of American politics.

CHERVENAK: So what about the sources of the legislation that's going through this group? So you mentioned that, you know, there's a collaboration of sorts between the Speaker's office and the committee chairs, etc. And it sounds like the main goal is to get something passed, right, and in order to get that done, you have to work, the Speaker has to think about the caucus and whether that's going to carry the legislation through, right, so that would imply that legislation that can pass the caucus is going to be the priority. What about in terms of personal interests of the Speaker, and I'm not just talking about Speaker Pelosi, but even in history. In your historical work, you know, how much does the individual Speaker's personal preference on what should be passed or what should be brought up, how much does that factor into the agenda, and what ultimately actually does get passed? Do they have their personal interests and they usually get them through first or later or sneak them in somehow, or do they never get what they want? They're subject to all the same pressures as everybody else and trying to get their bills through?

LAWRENCE: Clearly the Speaker has a lot of influence, and if there is an issue that she particularly cares about, she'll work closely with the committee chair to figure out how to either incorporate it into some legislation that is, has a broader appeal, or to move it. So in the case of Mrs. Pelosi she, back in 2007, when she first became Speaker, she said her highest priority was climate change. That was not the highest priority of the Bush Administration, and it certainly wasn't the highest priority of many Democrats in Congress. She forced legislation to move forward both in 2007 and 2010 that did not ultimately end up passing the Senate. It did pass the House, but she was able to establish that priority. In the case of the health care legislation, the Speaker was very adamant about including certain provisions, particularly the public option, and while she had the ability to incorporate that into the House bill, ultimately she did not have the ability to get that back in the bill that the Senate.

And that raises, I think, a really a key point in this, Matthew, and that is that the Speaker has the ability to do things in the House because of the nature of the majoritarian role of the House that is much harder to translate into legislation on the part of the Senate. And so a lot of times, and you've seen this, for example, with the passage of the both the infrastructure and the Build Back Better legislation under President Biden, the House is able to pass, albeit by very narrow margins, legislation that the Speaker wants, and in this particular case that the president favors. That's an entirely different problem in the Senate, to some extent it's because of the filibuster, but there are other institutional problems that separate the two, and one that I like to point to a great deal is the is the disproportionate influence of minority voters in the House who are able to influence the process, particularly if Democrats are in control because the vast majority of minority members are in the Democratic Party, and when the Democratic Party is in control and you have forty-nine or so African-American members and maybe forty Hispanic members and ten or so Asian American members, issues like voting rights, issues like jobs legislation that are very important to certain groups within that Democratic caucus, have a lot of momentum coming out of the House, and they're going to be heavily represented in legislation.

And they were heavily represented, for example, in legislation like Build Back Better. When you move to the Senate, even under Democratic control because of the structure of the Senate, where you have very, very few minorities elected even in states that have minority members in House delegations, but there are none of those reflected in the Senate delegations. You can just think in terms of many of the southern and border states, where there are thirty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five percent African Americans, but none of those states have African-American senators or even senators who are supportive of what the African-American members want.

You run into a stone wall. And so one of these big institutional problems that you face with not only with the filibuster but just the structure of the Senate itself is this ill fit between the kind of legislation that's produced out of the House, which can be problematic because you've got to touch base with all these different interest groups to get their interests incorporated into the bill, but what ends up coming over to the Senate has much more limited appeal over there, and part of that is the 60-vote margin, but part of it is also just a very different structure in the Senate, and that that is, you know, by design, not majoritarian. It does not take into account the kinds of diverse representation that you see in the House.

CHERVENAK: So let's move on a little bit to the concept of the schedule. So you mentioned a few different aspects of the of the Speaker's office, and one of the ones I'm always fascinated by is the control of the schedule. So can you talk through that a little bit, you know, what group is doing that? How are they going about it? You know, are they using any tools? You know, how does that whole scheduling thing happen, whether it's the floor or whether it's, you know, where they, when they identify committee time, whether it's, when they're back in their home districts or whether they're supposed to be in DC?

LAWRENCE: Well so that is, scheduling is one of those things that is very carefully coordinated within the leadership. The majority leader, at least within the Democratic leadership, has the authority of managing the floor's schedule and does that obviously in conjunction with the Speaker. There are usual[ly], there are weekly meetings with the chairs, who will set their own demands or their own requests in terms of floor time, but there are also overriding issues. Some of those are, you know going in. The budget resolution has to be done with a certain time frame. The appropriations cycle has to be handled in a certain time frame since the appropriations process doesn't work particularly efficiently anymore, you know that periodically you're going to have continuing resolutions, and these have deadlines to them, these are must-pass legislation.

But then of course you have the unpredictability of things that happen, the outbreak of war in Ukraine means that we're suddenly considering legislation that is going to demand floor time. There are bills that are on a schedule because of periodic reauthorization that you know are going to take up certain times in the schedule, there are then your high-priority legislation that the Speaker and the leadership will sit down with the committee chairs, sometimes it's multiple, sometimes it's one, and give them a time frame for producing a bill because getting a bill through the House obviously is only one step. You're going to have to back that up. How long is it going to take to get through the Senate and whatever, either a conference or a ping-

pong arrangement, so this kind of structuring is something that is done heavily with consultation with the chairs and the other leadership. In our particular case, we would always have meetings both with the president or the president's staff and with us regularly with the Senate majority leader on the, Senator Reid, so that we could coordinate how those how those bills would roll out. Some of those bills would have higher priority than in the House or in the Senate, and then the Senate would always have other issues that would complicate this time schedule. They would have to confirm judges or treaties or ambassadors, those sorts of things, particularly at the beginning of administration.

And so getting that schedule coordinated so that you didn't end up either producing a bill that couldn't pass in the other, in the Senate, a bill that would hang out too long in the Senate and become a target for all sorts of special interest obstruction or criticism, those are those are the sorts of planning that at least in the case of Speaker Pelosi we did on a on a weekly basis in collaboration with our chairs, Senator Reid, and the White House, and taking into account must-pass legislation and priority legislation that the Speaker and the chairs wanted to see passed.

CHERVENAK: So could the Speaker if they wanted to just say, hey look, we're working nine to five Monday to Friday every day of the year, right, one week off for Christmas? Could they do that, or are they constrained by some other factor?

LAWRENCE: Well yeah, no, they're constrained by a lot of factors. One of them is that you have to deal with the members as people. And the members in most cases now, people do not move their families to Washington, and so I think a lot of people out there in the world don't take into account that members of Congress have mortgages, they send their kids to school, the kids have baseball games and plays, and families have issues, spouses are working, and so there's time with the family that is really critical.

So there has been an effort on both the Democratic and Republican sides, this is obviously a bigger issue in the House because you have a two-year term and as opposed to the Senate, where it's only a six-year, where it's a six-year term, is a little greater flexibility in terms of balance of your time personally and professionally. You've got to build in time for people to go home and, for those personal reasons. There also are compelling political reasons. You know, people are now in races even if they are considered to be relatively safe. People are concerned about primaries, people are concerned about fundraising. If anything, the changes in technology have made it more important for people to be visible in their districts, and people need to be going home on a regular basis.

And so the way to try to deal with that is to create a heavy concentration of work in a limited number of days and then give people more time to go home. When I first started working in Congress, typically we would send members home on a Thursday night, sometimes on a Friday night. In my case, the guy I was working for, George Miller, would go home virtually every weekend and did that for 40 years. Go home on a on a maybe on a Thursday night, have a full

day of schedule Friday, Saturday, Sunday, take a red eye back and start working on Monday morning and do the whole thing over again.

The members have pressed to try to get out on a Thursday, come back on a Monday night, maybe have light votes on Monday night, and then do Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. That becomes problematical if you have a heavy floor schedule that cuts into your time with committees. Most people are on multiple committees, they have multiple committee meetings simultaneously, at the same time you have a heavy floor schedule, so I think ideally, you know, everybody would like to have a Monday-Friday work schedule and then, you know, you have these larger breaks that are built in where people can go home. As a practical matter, members telling their families, I'm going to be here for four or five weeks and then I'll see you for a week, doesn't work out very well. And I really, you know, think no speaker can do that.

I will say this, when Mrs. Pelosi first took over the speakership, she had run in that 2006 campaign and said, we are going to we're going to pass a whole series of legislation in the first hundred hours. Not the first hundred days, the first hundred hours. And we were in session round the clock, and it nearly killed a lot of people. You know, these are high-stress situations and in some cases having tired, frustrated, aggravated members of Congress, you know, forcing them to sit and deal with each other may not have been the best situation.

So scheduling, if anything, has become much more difficult in part because of this politic, because of the political calendar and in part because people expect to see their members at home. And if you're not at home, then whoever it is who's thinking of running against you is at home, and members are very aware of that. So that that kind of scheduling problem is an ever-present concern for people in both parties.

CHERVENAK: So the Speaker obviously has to respond to those kinds of pressures, but ultimately is the Speaker's decision on when they're in and when they're out?

LAWRENCE: Well it is, of course, but you know when you have a two- or three-seat majority, or a ten-seat majority, people say, you know what, I can't come back, and then that ends the discussion. I know Senator Schumer tried that in the Senate and said we're going to be staying here over the weekend to do certain key votes, and a couple of senators said, well you may be staying here, but I'm not staying here because I've promised my wife for my husband or my kids or, you know, I have something that wouldn't, wedding, and you know, if you're down to fifty-vote margin, one or two people don't show up, the circus has to fold the tent and leave town. So those narrow margins make it a lot more difficult.

The House has tried to deal with some of this problem during the during the COVID period by having absentee voting, proxy voting, or voting from a distance, and it will be interesting to see if there's pressure to sustain that kind of a process after we move out of the COVID period. The Senate has never done that, the House has been able to act, you know, with some rapidity because of the fact that they haven't assessed today having everybody here. Having said that, I think most people who've served in the House would agree that that however efficient that is

for counting votes and casting votes, not having people here in person, being able to interact with each other, being able to have the sort of informal conversations and meetings, whether that's on the floor or in the gym or wherever that's taking place, really fundamentally changes the kind of interaction that is so vital to passing legislation. So I don't think I think there's going to be a lot of resistance to institutionalizing that kind of absentee voting.

CHERVENAK: And if a member doesn't show up on the schedule repeatedly, is there any kind of consequence to them other than maybe you're, maybe you have a party kind of discipline where you removed from a committee or, you know, what tools does the chairman have to make somebody do their job?

LAWRENCE: Well there aren't a lot of tools. I mean the, John Boehner at one point when he had some people vote against him for Speaker decided it would be a good idea to remove people from committees, and what he discovered is as soon as you remove people from committees, you have people who no longer have any reason to be loyal to you, and those people became fairly chronic problems for him.

You know, a lot of politics is persuasion. It's not using the heavy cudgel, and certainly it's not my experience that most people don't want to come to work. I mean they've, in most cases they've spent an awful lot of time, energy, money to become a member of Congress, and they're not there to be absent. Also, being absent is something that very often can have political consequences if you're missing important votes.

In terms of how do one disciplines, though, you know if you're not there a lot, you may find out that when you want to have a bill taken up, you know, you need something done to benefit you, you need to raise money and you're looking for the campaign committee or some committee chairman to help you out, you want to go on an international trip, you know all these sorts of things that are discretionary on the part of leadership, whether it's chairman to offer an amendment or the Speaker to, or the minority leader for that matter to clear, you want to CODEL overseas, those things may not happen quite as often. So although it's not my experience that people avoid coming to votes, there are those more subtle ways that you can persuade people would be in your best interest.

CHERVENAK: So having you know run the Office of the Speaker and also being a historian looking, I'm sure, back at many Speakers over the years, you know, what do you think success means for a Speaker? How would you define it? Like this Speaker has been more successful than that one? You know, what would the measures by which you would kind of look at a Speaker and say, they did a good job or a bad job?

LAWRENCE: Well, you know, it's important to note that the nature of the speakership has changed. People look at past Speakers, people like Tip O'Neill or even a Sam Rayburn, and think of them as being these all-powerful people, and partly that's because most people know so little about Congress, and particularly about the House of Representatives, that it's only the most prominent name that they're aware of at all. But really, most of those people, including

people like Rayburn and O'Neill, served as Speaker during what we call, historians call, the committee system, a period that that began in 1910 in response to a very strong Speaker system, and broke down a lot of the Speaker's powers and disseminated them to the committee chairs. And being a successful speaker in that period of time really meant figuring out how to work collaboratively with these powerful chairmen who were granted an enormous amount of discretion in designing legislation and where there was an expectation that the more junior members, and the leadership, would concede to what the chair wanted to do.

That starts changing pretty dramatically in the 1990s, particularly with Newt Gingrich, and Gingrich is uniquely able to do that because having gained the speakership for the first time in forty years by the Republicans and being largely credited with developing the strategy for doing that, there was a lot of deferring to him in how the Congress would be organized. For example, he wrote a series of rules that effectuated changes that no Democrat would have been able to have done, for example, eliminating committees and significantly changing jurisdictions on committees, the latter being probably the most difficult thing that you can possibly do.

But Gingrich also needed to do that because he had launched this highly-divisive, accusatorial type of politics, which meant that in combination with the way in which he had vilified Democrats and committed the unpardonable sin of removing Democrats as the majority, had very little support from a lot of Democrats, although there was still a significant cohort of conservative Democrats, so-called Blue Dogs, that he could lure over on policy grounds. But he needed that discipline within the Republican Caucus, and you know at that point there was no Republican who had ever served in the majority. There was no Republican had ever been a committee chairman or a subcommittee chairman, and so there was a more compliant willingness to accede to Gingrich's leadership, and Gingrich used that to really fashion a much more strong, much stronger role for the Speaker.

Many people thought that when Pelosi took over as Speaker that the power would revert back to the chairs because she among others had been very critical of the kind of authority in the, that Republicans, both under Gingrich and then to a lesser extent with Hastert, but Hastert was a little camouflaged because the power was really with Tom DeLay, who was the majority leader, but that leadership, that really strong leadership control of the system. But in fact that didn't happen. Mrs. Pelosi retained that power, and Speakers since then have retained that power in a way that was not common during the committee system, and that is exercised through such things as appointments to committees and control of leadership PACs and deciding the floor schedule and control of rules, so you determine what, how the basis under which the committee has, the legislation goes to the floor. That has remained pretty consistent under Mrs. Pelosi, Boehner, Ryan, and now Pelosi again, and to some extent, that is, that kind of leadership is necessitated by the strict partisan lines between the parties, these close margins that necessitate that kind of leadership negotiation of legislation to make sure that it can pass, keeping the House unified is against the interests of the Senate or the White House, and I don't expect to see that kind of breakdown to a more dispersed leadership reoccur again.

Now how do you do that? The biggest mistake any Speaker could make is to think that therefore they get to make all the decisions. That's not how the House of Representatives work. This is a very big, very complex group of individuals, and I know that when we did, when we were working to try to win the majority, for example in 2004 and 2006, and we would bring in messaging experts, non-political messaging experts, and they would say, well here's the message, now you guys tell everybody this is the message, and of course, you know, that was very, very difficult. And I would have to explain to them that this is not a corporation where the leadership makes the decision, you know, and tells everybody this is the message.

You know, people listen. They say, no I don't think that's going to work in my district, and by the way I'm the one who won my district, not you, so don't tell me what messages to use. So Speakers are very aware of that, and they're very aware, you know, of the Gingrich example, where in 1998 with notwithstanding the fact that he had brought them out of the wilderness to the majority, had forged these bipartisan victories with President Clinton, balanced the budget and done all these things, they still threw him out as Speaker in 1998 because he had gotten a little bit ahead of the caucus. They didn't get rid of the strong leadership system, but they got rid of a Speaker who started to believe his own press releases and forgot rule number one, which is, you weren't divined by God to be the Speaker, you were chosen by us, and pay attention to us. A good rule for any politician. Know your constituents and make sure you pay attention to them.

CHERVENAK: So understand that the role of Speaker is totally different when you have these really strong committee chairs versus today, where it's more centralized. So, you know, when you have a strong centralized Speaker, how would you define success, then? Is it getting legislation through? Is it maintaining the majority? Is it, you know, how it, when, you know, when any Speaker kind of starts the year out and says, I'm going to, here's my plan, right, and if I reach x, I'll have been a successful Speaker, what's in that list?

LAWRENCE: Well of course no Speaker, nobody in politics goes into any legislative session or into any campaign saying I, whether I win or I lose the majority, I'm equally happy. Rule number one is I want to try to hang on to the majority. But I think what you do realize, and again this is very much what this this book Arc of Power talks about is that in American politics, in the 21st century, you no longer have the guarantee of power that you, that particularly the Democratic Party enjoyed from 1932 to 1994, a period of sixty-two years. The Democrats were the majority for fifty-eight out of sixty-two years. There was no expectation of power flipping from one party to the other, as opposed to seven or eight flips since 1994, and so you win the majority, you hope to retain the majority, but I think that both parties recognize that the exercise of power necessarily exposes vulnerabilities because you're taking votes on issues which the minority is defining many of those issues in the most negative way so as to give themselves opportunities for doing what they wanted to do, which is to become the majority.

You know, certainly every majority, however, also has policy objectives, and some of those are larger than others. Sometimes those that are in concert with the White House, sometimes those are not. The Republican Policy objective in 2010, when they won control, was to repeal

the Affordable Care Act and to pass an additional series of tax cuts as part of the fiscal cliff that we were all facing in 2011. And then in 2012 when Democrats won the majority in 2006 and 2008, it was to pass economic recovery legislation, health care legislation, banking reform legislation, and those take priority, and those take a lot of the energy, but you also realize that in doing each of those big-ticket items, you're teeing up the opposition. The reason that that policy is important to you in most cases is because it's not important to the other party, so when you establish your priority, whether it's climate change or tax cuts or whatever it is, you are promoting something that energizes your base, that maximizes your voting support within your caucus, but you're also motivating the fundraising and grassroots base of the other party. You are providing them opportunities with the votes that your members are casting.

And so, I think this comes down to a philosophy of how you govern. Do you govern cautiously so as not to provide those opportunities but also not to inspire your own voters to come out and support you, or contributors to support you, or do you take what I think is the more common approach, and that is to say I've been given power, I recognize that under the current historical formulation the chances of me holding that power for more than four or six years is probably not very good, just because of the nature of the electoral cycles, and so I'm going to exercise that power to the best of my ability and hope that I can persuade people that what we've done has been in their interest and that they can see the benefits of what we've done.

But in any event, I'm going to put that in place and, you know, I'll fight the best I can, but if we lose, then hopefully whatever we've done has been institutionalized and can't be unraveled. And I think you've seen that in the Democrats' case in the in so far as, for example, the Affordable Care Act is concerned and in the Republicans' case in the form that the Trump tax cuts have endured notwithstanding Democratic control. So in in both cases, you know, those kinds of bills tee up the political opposition, but, you know, the exercises power comes with risks. So does the failure to exercise power. And I think most politicians, certainly most leaders, have come to the determination, they got power. They have it for a limited period of time. They're going to exercise it.

I'm not suggesting they do it altruistically. They obviously are always keeping in mind, how do I spin this thing so that, you know, the villagers don't besiege the capital with the pitchforks again, but you know, you try to do it in a way that accomplishes your policy goals. But I think there's a recognition you do so at some risk to your electoral, your electoral longevity.

CHERVENAK: So you've been chief in a variety of different positions, right? You know, committee, you know, leadership, personal office, even, in the early days, right, before you were in the legislative aid or director or whatever it was called at that time. What's your perspective on all these positions? How are they the same? How are they different? Is it a totally different job from one to the next, or do they have a sort of common thread or continuum between them?

LAWRENCE: Well the common thread is, you always need to remember who you're working for, okay? So it's a good idea to remember you're not the member, somebody else is. And part

of your job, no matter how driven by the policy you are or by ideology or whatever it is that that you're gone into the political world to serve, your job is to maximize the interests of the person you're working for. And that's true whether you're in the, in a personal office or you're in a committee or you're in leadership.

But the jobs are really very, very different and become increasingly more complex. I remember after several years in the Speaker's office thinking, you know, I've spent thirty years on Capitol Hill before I ever set foot into a leadership office, and if I had left Capitol Hill at that, before I had, which was already a pretty lengthy career on Capitol Hill, I would have absolutely no idea what happens at that level of politics. And so, you know, you learn that along the way. In an individual office, your job primarily is going to be to try to effectuate the success politically, electorally, legislatively, of the individual that you're working for, and that necessarily involves working with committee staffs and forming coalitions with other people from your district, or other people from your region, maybe reaching across the aisle, certainly in an earlier period that was the case.

When you move to a committee you're still loyal to your boss, the chairman of the committee, the ranking member of the committee, but you also have to then be working collaboratively with other people whose districts are very different and who may not share the policy objectives and priorities of the chairman. You have to also work with the leadership to make sure that what you're doing at the committee level is consistent with their objectives and priorities, and then when you're at the leadership level, of course, you have all of those concerns. You have to be sure that you're not doing something that's going to jeopardize the leadership's own political success, but you have to take into account not only the formal committees, you have to take into account all these sub caucuses and interests that are run through the caucus. You have to be constantly attuned to your relationship with the Senate and with the administration to ensure that what you're doing is consistent with what will provide for success down the road.

And so it's constantly, you you're always a juggler. You just, you got more plates in the air, and there's more consequence to dropping one of them as you move up that that role of leadership in the Congress.

CHERVENAK: And what about the management aspect? I mean obviously in each of these cases for the most part you have staff, right? You have staff working for you, and in some cases quite a large—

LAWRENCE: Working for the member, never for me.

CHERVENAK: Well that's right, but you're probably in charge of all the dirty work of hiring and firing, right? So, and probably doing performance reviews, I would guess, of some, however that's done in the Congress. So can you talk about that, like what would make another good staff member that you would say, this person's doing a great job or this one's, you know, not

performing to my expectation? You know, how would that management piece go? Did it change among the different levels that you were involved in?

LAWRENCE: Well, certainly. I mean, as you move into the committee and the leadership level you're dealing with more and more senior level staff, so you have people who not only may know a particular subject because they're, in its individual office they're working on that committee's work for that individual member, but increasingly people who understand the institutional aspects of what they're doing.

And so it's very important that, at the committee level, and then at the leadership level, you have people who are not only advocates for a particular point of view or a particular policy, but also are able to integrate into that the institutional challenges that you face. So you may, as an individual staff member working a committee, be an advocate for something that's good for your members district, or ideologically it satisfies that member. In the leadership, that's interesting, but you've also got other people who are diametrically opposed. You're not interested, or more likely have their own interests that they want to crank into the process, and so you've got to be able to, you've got to be able to balance that. And what you take to the leader is your knowledgeable, distillation, and best recommendations for how to promote not simply one policy, not even necessarily the policy that the Speaker or the leader favors, because in some cases as the chief of staff you've got the bad news to say you know, that isn't going to fly, and here's a different way that we're going to have to proceed.

You know, I've always said that one of the most crucial things, and I tell this to members of Congress when I've been asked to come in and talk particularly to freshmen, is always have somebody on your staff who can tell you that you're wrong because the Congress, I've become much more attuned to this after I left The Hill. Even though you know it, I mean intrinsically you know it when you're on The Hill, that you're in the you're in the midst of the hurricane, you know and an echo chamber, and you're interacting with people who know what markups and motions to recommit and sequestration is, but when you leave, having that familiarity with The Hill and with the intricacies of issues and process, you're so much more aware of the fact that five miles outside the beltway, nobody cares about most of that stuff.

What they care about is government working for me, is it delivering to me what I need, what I think I've voted to get them to do? You can message all day long, you can put out the greatest press releases, and have the best speeches, but if people don't feel they're getting that, then you haven't succeeded. And so that to me is, you know, having staff that are sensitive to that and not simply rating success as, have I satisfied this particular group or that particular group or my own particular interest?, that becomes more complicated at the higher levels, but it becomes very essential at the higher levels, knowing what constitutes victory and what constitutes a defeat, what's, what I can live with, and where's the red line where I can't go? Those are the kinds of judgments that you really need more seasoned experience on The Hill, not just policy expertise, but experience of working with the personalities and the structures and the institutional interests that comprise the Congress. And that's what you look for at the senior staff levels.

CHERVENAK: Well let's move on to the book that you've written, and, you know, can you talk about, it's this concept of partisanship '74, etcetera, you know, what questions did you have going into that book? Why did you write it, and what did you find in the process?

LAWRENCE: What I was interested in looking at when I started this book on the Class of '74 was what impact this group of young people, largely young, largely liberal, but not exclusively, had when they came into the Congress in 1974, a group of seventy-five new Democratic members, over ninety new members all together in the immediate wake of Watergate, and there were a lot of misconceptions about that group of people, and there were a lot of aspects of what they did that I think weren't fully appreciated.

I think the notion was that they came in and they were, they had a very anti-institutional orientation that manifested itself by throwing out committee chairmen and just generally throwing the chairs around, and as a result they were derisively known as the Watergate Babies. And that was sort of the reputation that stuck, and, you know, there was an aspect of that, there was a brashness to some of them, and there was an arrogance. I remember Toby Moffett, one of those members of the class from Connecticut, said, you know, we were young we, you know, we had this really long hair, we looked weird, I can't even believe we got elected.

And you know, a lot of them came out of non-traditional roles, campus politics and anti-war politics, consumer movement, civil rights movement. They had a notion of government activism that clashed with much of the political leadership. But what people didn't appreciate was that their strength came because they joined an existing group of congressional reformers who had not had enough votes in the pre-1974 period to effectuate a change but were very much there, people like Dave Obey and Pat Schroeder and Bob Kastenmeir and Abner Mikva, who had been in Congress, and Mickva actually came back in '74, having left. Phillip Burton, people from the Democratic Study Group who had been trying from the late 50s through the 60s into the early 70s to break down the seniority system which disproportionately favored the old bulls from the South who had been able to gain and control power, even though their politics was grossly out of step with the changing nature of the Democratic caucus.

So they joined with, it's not that they created issues. In fact, as I talked to them, many of them said, you know I didn't come to Congress to reform Congress. I didn't know anything about reforming Congress. I came to Congress to end the War in Vietnam, that's why I ran for Congress. And it wasn't until I got here that I, that people like Phil Burton came up to me and said, Don Fraser, and said, hey, you're not going to get anything you want unless we institute these liberal reforms, and that's really where those reforms came from. So that was one misconception.

The other was that they were anti-institutional. They were not anti-institutional. In fact, within a few years, because of the turnover, many of them have become sub-committee chairmen and moved into more senior positions. They were not, they did not view the institutions as a

problem, they did view their leadership as a problem. They viewed Carl Albert as too deferential to the chairman, and they viewed the chairman as obstructive because they weren't reflecting the caucus, and there they did extract a price, and they forced Albert out, they forced out three chairmen, and then another seven or eight chairmen actually quit because they didn't like the new rules. And, but what they also did, and this is where I think it had some longer term impact, was that this general idea of empowering the younger members, the newer members, the more junior members. When I stay junior, some of them have been there ten or twelve years and still were serving under chairman who wouldn't let them ask questions at hearings or didn't allow them to offer amendments on the floor. They opened up the process. They allowed far more amendments to be offered. They were able to chair subcommittees because they changed the selection process for subcommittees, and so issues that had been buried, issues of energy reform or consumer protection or women's rights, now bubbled up from the subcommittees and had to be taken up in the full committees and on the floor.

And part of that was allowing people to bring forth legislation and offer amendments that had not been offered previously. And what happened there was that issues forced lots and lots of votes that opened opportunities for more partisan issues to float to the surface. And in conjunction with other trends that are occurring, that foment the rise of greater partisanship, the renewed growth of a Republican Party in in the South in the wake of the Civil Rights era, growing ideological realignment among the parties, a greater contentiousness between the parties, there emerged in this more open environment greater opportunities for political mischief and political warfare, and combined with this growing ideological alignment of the parties to provide mechanisms for the expression of the partisanship that really had not existed previously.

So I think it wasn't that they caused the partisanship, but certainly some of the reforms by opening the institution and loosening the ability of the of the leadership to guide the process, whether that was committee leadership or the House leadership, they provided a more fertile environment for the growth of this polarized atmosphere that's exacerbated enormously in the '80s, particularly in the mid to late '80s, when some of the newer Republicans were coming in from this more energized Republican Party of the south. Gingrich, being among them, has, is able to take advantage of some of the of the more liberalized, and that [is] liberalized rules to accentuate the differences between the party. And that's why in the late '80s you see the Democrats starting to shut down some of these reforms and restrict the numbers of amendments and really restrict the role that the minority plays, which gives rise to even greater authenticity to the criticisms from that more conservative Southern-based Republican leadership as opposed to what had traditionally been running the party, that you need a harder line, you need to villainize the Democrats for their tyranny in in running the House. And that's the language that's used successfully in 1994 to take over control.

CHERVENAK: Got it. So in terms of the polarization and all of these issues related to party, I'm curious about if we just kind of think blue sky for a second, you know, I'm always skeptical of the notion of party at all, right, because in the founding era, you know there's no concept of party in the Constitution, so whenever—

LAWRENCE: Actually, it was very bad. It wasn't that they didn't even think of it, they thought of it and they said that would be the terrible thing if you have established parties.

CHERVENAK: Well exactly. And so, you know, I'm always, whenever you talk to people who are involved in Congress in the last however, past anyone's memory now, there's party dominated, right? And even in the Congress itself, there are positions that I would think would be artificial constructions based on party, right, so for instance the majority leader, the minority leader, you know. That's not a, in my mind that's kind of surprising that that position can exist in the Congress itself. It's almost like ensconcing this notion of party into the rules of the House itself, which should in theory be alien to it. So I'm curious about your perspective on a little bit of these things. I'll start with just the notion of the of the Speaker, right, so the Speaker as you mentioned is in part a partisan position today. You can imagine a non-partisan Speaker, right, and you can imagine a non-member Speaker. What are your thoughts on something like that? You know, I've had Mickey Edwards on the program before. He's an advocate of a non-member chairman, non-member Speaker, excuse me. So what are your thoughts? Is that, do you think it's crazy? Do you think it makes sense? Do you think it's important to have the strong parties and have the majority party be, you know, manifest in this Speaker role?

LAWRENCE: Well I think that if you were to go to a some sort of a nonpartisan Speaker, which is what a lot of parliamentary systems have. When you become Speaker in the United Kingdom, for example, you actually leave the party, and you're, you serve more of a parliamentarian role. If you did that, then that partisan role that the Speaker plays, that party leadership would just devolve down to the majority leader. And you know the Speaker, it's not when the Speaker is presiding over the House that the Speaker is partisan because there the Speaker has to follow the precedence and the rules of the House and does so on the recommendations of the parliamentarian. It's on determining the design of legislation, this scheduling of legislation and the rules of engagement in terms of floor activity. That role is just as vigorously played in legislatures where there is a non-nonpartisan speaker, it's just played by somebody else, and that would be the majority leader's role as opposed to the Speaker's role.

I think we have to be really careful about trying to superimpose nonpartisanship on what is inherently a partisan political operation. And if you're going to take, try to take partisanship out of politics. First of all, I'm not sure you can. George Miller used to say, you can't take politics out of politics, and you know, there was a New York congressman in the early 1900s named Jacob Fassett, who said you know we're all partisans. We were elected by partisans and you know, we serve as partisans. It's, changing the titles, changing the roles is not going to change the underlying political dynamic, which is that for a multiplicity of reasons, the country has evolved into two fairly distinct and almost evenly separated ideological camps. That is reflected in the Congress. I don't think that ideological, I don't think that bipartisanship, I don't think that ideology is going to come from the Congress. I think it's going to have to come from institutions outside the Congress that insist upon it. Politicians are going to do what serve the interests of politicians, which is getting themselves reelected so that they can do the job that they want to do.

And I like to say, it's analogous to me to training a puppy. If you reward a puppy for sitting, then the puppy is going to sit when you tell it to sit. If politicians get rewarded for acting in a partisan manner, they're going to respond in a partisan manner. And we've seen people who were less partisan become more partisan because they have to in order to either win nominations or secure nominations or win elections. The fact of the matter is, Margaret Thatcher once said that the most dangerous place to be in politics is in the middle of the road because you get hit by traffic going in both directions. And that is, that's sort of the problem we have today.

If you're in the middle of the road in America. If you act in the way people think or say they would like politicians to act, you're not a hero, you're a target. You're the problem. You become the subject of money, of media, of Twitter, of the internet. You become a target, and so politicians necessarily, you know, instinctively want to avoid that. If you just tell them, act in a certain way and they translate that to mean, well then I'm going to get a primary opponent, I'm going to get millions of dollars dumped into me by independent PACs, why would I do that?

So that's why I'm saying. I think going to them and saying, act in a way which is contrary to your own interest is probably not successful. I think we really have to think in terms of, what do we do to the interests of money in politics, what do we do to build civic society with organizations that are not just single-issue, purity-driven organizations that reward the kind of behavior that we say we want our politics to reflect? In the past, you got that reward because there was an opportunity to win both your party and then also to win support from other people, either independents or people in the other party.

But that's not the world we're living in now, and that's not necessarily only because of Congress or of elected politicians. It's because of the society. And so I look more to those aspects of civil society and say, how do you reward the kind of conduct that you say you want from your elected officials? Don't elect them under a series of conditions that promotes exactly what you say you dislike and then expect them to behave differently, because I don't think that's a strategy for success.

CHERVENAK: What about the notion within the Congress of certain rules, like for instance the carrots or sticks that can be used from, on a party basis, you know, whether it's chairmanships of committees or whatever, any of those types of things? Do you think they would have any impact, or do you, again, do you put it all back to the electorate and say, you know, it's the process by which they're coming to Congress is the challenge and the people who arrive there and their incentive structures? Do you think there's any of the rules or processes within Congress that could be changed to alter some of those kinds of incentives?

LAWRENCE: Again, I mean I'll give you an example. I mean, we used to, as I say, we used to, when you put bills on the floor you'd have open rules or structured, limited open rules where you would have ten, fifteen, I remember the days we had hundreds of amendments offered. If you did that today you'd be hit with amendment after amendment after amendment that's designed to ideologically reverse the course of the bill, or poison pill amendments, to cripple

the bill so it couldn't pass. And so you need to, you would need to have a structure in place that assures a good faith effort to actually work collaboratively. Now interestingly, where you see that happen more commonly is in committees than you do on the floor, and partly that's because members work together in committees, they have greater personal relationships in committee, and they're working on a specified number of topics. Today, of course, because of the nature of the floor, you don't have a lot of bills coming out of committees anymore. Most legislation is being done either through reconciliation, which circumvents the filibuster problem, which the House is obviously inclined to want to see so you don't get things held up because of the sixty-vote margin, or through the appropriations process.

On the floor, a good example of the problem I'm talking about is the motion to recommit, where there was a notion that, well at least at one point in the in the legislative process, you would have, the minority would have the right to offer an amendment unrestricted by the Rules Committee as long as it was germane to the bill. And what that deteriorated into, both on the Democratic and Republican side, and I can say it because I was part of the group that did this, was to devising the most horrific amendment you could possibly come up with in order to force the majority to vote against it, and then you had a campaign issue that you would begin to market, you know, within seconds after the vote had been cast.

So again if you just superimpose rules changes without some understanding that this is being done in a way to be constructive, it gets very, very difficult very quickly. If you have these bills that must pass, they're negotiated before they get to the floor, and then everybody agrees we're not going to allow, which is what you're seeing, you know, today when we're recording this, with an omnibus spending bill, where people are just going to agree, this is what we're going to do and then we're going move forward.

I mean I think that even though this is, you know, and I recognize I've been away from Congress, I've been away from my job on The Hill for a decade, and it may well not be as true as it was, but you know most of the legislation I worked on for thirty-eight years, and including the time when I was in the Speaker's office, was bipartisan legislation, and it was legislation that very often was developed with people we had fundamental disagreements with, but that was understood to be the nature of the process, and you didn't get everything you wanted, but you knew that the legislation was better legislation if it passed on a collaborative basis. It was more enduring, it had more buy-in.

Now the problem is that you've had such an exponential growth in partisanship, and that partisanship is reflected between the two parties, that that has become less and less possible on almost any topic you talk about, whether it's tax policy or health policy or business regulation environment energy, and so the priority has been to pass legislation just using one party. But, you know, given their given their choices I think most chairmen would rather try to figure out how to pass legislation because if it's important to them to pass, knowing that they're not going to be chairman forever and that their committee is not going to be the majority and their party's not going to be the majority forever, they want it to be durable.

And I think most, not all, but I think most people in Congress recognize that if you're, when you're passing legislation, whether it affects a family or it affects a small business or it affects a multi-billion-dollar industry, people want to know that it's going to be in effect for a period of time that's not going to be changing year to year. You can't decide where you're going to send your kid to college or whether you're going to go and get a job because your kid will have childcare. You can't decide if you're going to buy a drill rig or if you're going to lease on public lands for oil and gas development. You can't take out a small business loan if the world is going to change eighteen months down the road.

And that's unfortunately when you legislate through appropriation bills and these kinds of emergency measures. It's the kind of policy that you make because it's all you can get agreement for in part because everybody knows control may change or the, even if control doesn't change the ratios within the leadership may change, within the party might change, and one faction might have more power than the other, and it's just a terrible way of legislating. And I think chairmen recognize, I think chairmen of both parties recognize. They don't know how to get out of it. That's the problem. They don't know how to get out of it.

And again when you reach across the aisle very often you just find people who say, and they say it, and they say it privately, I don't have any problem with it, I think you're doing the right thing, but I cannot vote for it. And they can't vote because of these broader issues, which are, I'm running against you in six months or eight months or eighteen months, and I can't make you look successful. My leadership is telling me I can't make you look successful.

You know there's, as I say, you know the great example that is this new infrastructure bill. Nobody seriously thinks that, you know, virtually every Republican in the Congress thought it was a terrible idea, and President Trump was talking about an infrastructure bill for the entire time that he was he was president, but people knew that they didn't want to vote for it and make Democrats look like they were successful where they had not been successful in the Republican leadership, and so they voted against because they knew ultimately they'd get the benefit anyway. You know, given their druthers, I don't think I know a single chairman who would say, yeah, of course I'd rather have some people, you know, in, you know, involved.

I had that experience when John Boehner was the chairman of the committee. I had that situation when George Miller was chairman. We would work with Don Young, who we didn't agree, you know, what day the sun was going to rise or fall with Don Young, but we knew we could cut a deal with him. So many of the variables of politics have changed. You just are not able to get there very often anymore, and that's the tragedy.

CHERVENAK: The good news about that is that if something passes with a razor thin majority, if you're correct and it's more bipartisan than you would think it is, right, so maybe there's a bigger majority for the bills that are passing than one would expect. It's just a hidden majority, you know, that, you know, they're just not expressing their preferences in reality, but that would also imply that, you know, some bills aren't getting passed that should because the minority isn't voting with a bill that they actually support.

LAWRENCE: Well, I think that's the case with infrastructure, for example, you know Nancy Pelosi was talking about the need for an infrastructure bill in 2006. It gets enacted in 2021. Not as subst[antial], the only thing that changed was that thousands and thousands of more bridges and hundreds of thousands of miles of highway got worse, and we fell further behind in terms of our infrastructure needs in the country. I mean, ultimately, the, you know, we reached a critical mass, and partly that was, you know, that we were willing to pass something of a very large size without necessarily paying for it, and that was, pay for it was always the problem. If it was just, you know, how would you like more highways and bridges in your district?, very few members would say, uh no, but if you say, how'd you like to raise the federal gas tax in order to pay for it?, they you know they went running for the door.

So you know I think there's hope for certain issues, potentially. I think that maybe around energy and climate there may be some opportunities, but you know, here's the problem. I used to say that if you look at periods of great legislative successes in the United States going back to the New Deal and certainly through World War II, through the Great Society era, through the bush Obama periods of 2006, 2007, [200]8, nine, ten, the great push steps forward are always taken when there are crises. I mean crises is a great way to focus the American mind and convince members that the risks of inaction are even greater than the risks of action.

CHERVENAK: So it sounds like that you know there's actually more bipartisan support for some bills than would be reflected in the roll call votes, but at the other hand, on the other hand, based upon what you're saying is that there's some bipartisan support for bills that ultimately won't get passed because the minority won't express its true preferences for the bill.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, I think that's true. I think if you look at the infrastructure bill, for example, there are a lot of reasons why people would support that bill, and a small number of Republicans in both the House and the Senate did, but many others would not do that and because a, they knew they'd get the benefit their projects from the bill anyway, sometimes senators have taken care of that, sometimes the project is just a meritorious project, but they were discouraged from doing so because they did not want to create a legislative victory at the time where they're trying to put together a campaign against Democrats.

But, so there's larger support than one might think. But I think you're right. I think that there is, there's certainly, there is recognition that there are problems out there, whether it's child care, affordable child care, or climate change or fixing aspects of the tax system that people recognize could be the subject of agreement, if not by large numbers then at least a sufficient number to call genuinely bipartisan, but that very difficult to put together particularly in a highly political environment like we're going to be in here for the next seven or eight months in an election year.

But at the same time I think it's important to say that most members I think recognize that that it's better to have bipartisan legislation, that it endures longer, that it's something other than simply becomes the target for the minority party to promise to repeal as soon as it gets power,

and people would prefer to have that, it's just very difficult in the current political arrangements to secure that kind of support. The minority would rather let the majority write the bill the way they want it and then make a target for political opposition in the next cycle.

CHERVENAK: Yeah, I think that's really the problem with the system is that, you know, there's a, there may be majority support for something, but it won't move through the Congress either because of not revealing true preferences by the minority or whether it's cajoling by the majority and people voting for it if they don't really support it, so there's problems on both ends of that, which unfortunately the system doesn't seem to accommodate right now, and if we could come up with the right set of rules or the right set of processes to try to get those true preferences to come through, then maybe the Congress would be a better place.

LAWRENCE: Well, I think you need to have greater breathing room for members so that they don't feel that as soon as they take any kind of risk they immediately become the subject of political retribution. You know, this is one of the problems of the two-year House term. When the founding fathers are writing the Constitution, they have very firm idea that each term longer than one year was dangerous. The further you were from an election, particularly an election that involved the direct election by the people, who they sort of had mixed feelings about entrusting with power, the more dangerous. So we ended up with a two-year term. The two-year term may have made some sense in the 1780s, but in the current context, particularly with all the financial, media, political interest group pressures that we live with, what it effectively means is you have a perpetual campaign, and people cannot make determinations.

And I don't think instituting term limits in society would have any impact. The next person will be just as concerned about it. Nobody's going to run for Congress and just say, I don't care if I win or lose. Okay, that's, those people don't run for Congress, or they don't win. The, you know, you need a little breathing room so that you have some plausibility. You have the opportunity, for example, to vote for perhaps a controversial piece of legislation and see the benefits of that legislation actually impact people before you're immediately back defending what might have been very complicated or very controversial or very expensive piece of legislation. You don't have that anymore, and I know people say, well, you know there are only thirty or forty swing seats, so for most people they have that latitude.

But that's not really true because they have primary problems and they have the obligation of going home and raising money and making sure they don't find themselves in that kind of political peril. And so if, you know, if you could sort of wave a magic wand, you know, getting a little longer time, there's no other legislative body that I'm aware of in the world that has a two-year term. And to expect that you can both address complex issues, write the legislation, do the hearings, do the investigations, write the complex legislation, get it passed, get it enacted and into effect and the benefits registered within, you know, what is not really a two-year period, it's maybe a year because then you're into the election cycle again, is unrealistic.

So you know, you would ideally, you would have a system where you had a little more breadth in the person's term, where they could take some greater risk, write a piece of legislation, and

give the time to be enacted, and give the time to see the benefits flow, than you have today. And you could still have the kind of frequent input that the founders wanted by, you know, having four-year terms, for example, but half the Congress every two years, so you get that turnover that you're looking for, but at least you would get, give people the ability to learn their jobs, learn the issue, write the legislation, and see the benefits before they were stuck having to defend some, you know, caricature of that legislation that had been cooked up, you know, for partisan political purposes.

CHERVENAK: Well, I think it's time for us to move on to our common questions we ask all our guests so that someday we can compare the answers, if you're ready for the second phase.

LAWRENCE: Sure.

CHERVENAK: First question here is, you know, what do you think congressional representation should mean? This is your personal opinion about who the constituents are, number one, then how they should be represented, number two. So in terms of is it just the primary voters, is it everybody, is it this, the citizens, is it the majority party, is it, what have you? And then also, should they vote their preferences, should they vote their best judgment about the policy impact, et cetera? So what's your perspective on that?

LAWRENCE: So I think that this is one of these, this topic is one where some historical perspective is really valuable because when we move to the current mechanism for selecting most members of Congress, which is the partisan primary system in the early 1900s as part of the Progressive Era reforms, we didn't really take into account what we have in contemporary view, which is relatively low participation in primaries, high participation by the most ideologically and politically active people in most parties. And in very few cases do we have runoffs. And so what you end up with is primaries selecting candidates in most districts in most states with a relatively small proportion of the overall voters even within their own parties. They then become the major party candidates, and when they win the election in most cases, they don't even need a majority of those votes. And so you have people who are holding office to represent either a congressional district or state, which is in most cases fairly diverse, but their political calculus is distilled down to, what do I need to do to be able to retain the support of people who are going to be ultimately responsible for giving me my nomination and making me the major party nominee in that district?

And I certainly would not recommend going back to the, you know, the smokey back rooms and let the political bosses make those decisions, but I do think we need to think in terms of a new mechanism, and there are ideas out there. The top two winners, that doesn't necessarily work well because in a lot of areas there aren't enough people in the other party, so you don't really get into having to make the kinds of, less partisan appeals because you're still appealing only to Republicans or only appealing to Democrats.

But get to the point where in order to win either top two or run-offs you have to reach across and do something, get something more than the support of the most fanatical, most loyal, most partisan people who also happen to be the people who engage in political activity, political grassroots activity, contribute to campaigns. I think that's really, really an important thing to do. I'm not against the idea of keeping primaries within parties. I think parties have to stand for something. People don't know what they're voting for. But I do think removing restrictions, and I think we're going in the wrong direction here electorally in the country in terms of making it more difficult to vote, facilitating people's ability to vote, but setting up structures that require you to demonstrate breadth of support before you get to Congress would be extremely helpful in terms of producing a membership that is not just looking to eighteen or nineteen percent of the people that they happen to win and who they have to satisfy in order to be able to hang on to their jobs in the future.

CHERVENAK: So you're describing the process by which they get in there. I'm asking my question about your personal feeling, right, about a member in Congress, when they say they represent their district, who should they be representing?

LAWRENCE: Well, I think that that answer is going to, who should they represent? They should be representing what is good for their district, but of course that's difficult to say because what's good for some people in your district isn't necessarily good for other people in the district. Building, you know, an eighteen-lane highway is good for the people in the building trades, but it's not so good for the fishermen and the backpackers. So, you know, the second half of your question takes you back to the old Burkean argument of, are you electing people to do whatever the public wants you to do, or are you electing people because you trust their judgment?

And I, you know, I tend to favor the latter. I think that you've got to give people who are in an elected office the latitude to do the work you're electing them to do. Look, people can be very opinionated about topics and about specific subjects, but you know they haven't looked into the complexities of it. They haven't sat through the hearings. They haven't read the expert testimony. They haven't read the budgetary implications. They have—you know, those are all the details of serious legislating that most people don't do, and they shouldn't do. They, they're, they've got other things. They've got their real lives that they've got to deal with, but they also have to, should recognize that the people who do spend their time doing that are going to understand that the easy answer isn't necessarily the right answer, and so provide some greater latitude to people you have entrusted to take those steps and to utilize that expertise to represent you.

But then, you know, ultimately, whether they have behaved frivolously or substantively, you're going to have an election to hold them accountable and they're going to have to explain why they did what they did. So I think the election is the way of holding people accountable when they use their judgment, but members, and I think they'll feel better doing this if they're elected by a more diverse range of the electorate, need to be able to say, you know, I've weighed the evidence, I've weighed what's in the interest of my district versus what's in the

interest of the country, I've weighed the competing interest even with my own district, this is where I come down, and I can explain that to you, but I don't expect you to sit through three weeks of hearings and testimony and markups and conference committee negotiations and all that stuff. That's what you elected me to do. That's why you're paying me the salary.

CHERVENAK: Right, so next question is, how would your ideal Congress allocate its time? This kind of goes back to our previous discussion of the calendar. If you were, I mean I guess you had it, but now I'm giving you a magic wand to do whatever you want with the time of the members. How often would you have them in DC, and what would you have them do while they're here?

LAWRENCE: Well I think you're much better, from my experience, you're much better to have people here for blocks of time than you are to, say, fly in on Tuesday morning or Monday night, bleary-eyed from the West Coast, we'll cram all sorts of activities, fundraising committee activities, subcommittee activity, caucus activity, floor activity. We'll keep you here until eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and then on Thursday night, you're bleary-eyed, you get back, and you go home to your district, where your kids are angry with you for having been away, and your constituents scream at you in town hall meetings, then you get on the plane, you do it all over again for three days.

I think you're far better to let the process gel. And you know Congress, I think a lot of people who don't work there don't understand how personal an institution it is and how much personal relationships and personalities play a role in the process. You don't have that now. You don't have people going on trips together, you don't have people hanging out at basketball games down at the, in the House gym. That was integral to making the place work.

You know, when George Bush was president, the first George Bush, he would come up and play handball in the House gym regularly, and you know because he's a former member, so he had lifetime rights, and you know, those are the sorts of things where you just get to know. That's why I was saying earlier, you know committees, you sit next to somebody for twenty years on committee, you're going to find something, you know, that you say I'll do that for you, but you've got to do this for me. That personal aspect is broken down, and I think it can be helped if you were there for a bigger block of time.

What I don't have a good answer for it is, you know, families now are less able to just pick up and move than they were, in, you know, the 1950s, 1960s, before you had jet airplanes, before you had internet and expectations, that you would see members all the time, before you had somebody at home running against you any day that you weren't in the district, when you didn't have spouses working. You know, families could just move back and forth a lot more easily. Today spouses have their own jobs in their district. They're not likely to pick up and move. And so telling people you're going to be here for four or five weeks at a time is not really terribly practical, I'm afraid.

But nevertheless, I think you have to agree that there are going to be substantive work periods, and it's not going to be, you know, three weeks here and two weeks away []. Things don't get done in that period of time, and what that does is to relegate decision making to a smaller and smaller group of people who are here all the time, and it doesn't allow for the flowering of the kind of interpersonal relationships, which you can't impose. You can't say, we're going to be here only three weeks at a time but then you're going to have to go to a summer camp together and learn that everybody you know has the same you know kid with dyslexia and so now I'm sympathetic to special education so I'm going to be more blah, blah, blah.

That doesn't work. You can't superimpose that stuff. You've got to let it distill and gel over time, and that, there's really not a substitute that I know of for that. Zoom isn't a substitute. Three weeks sessions is not a substitute. I would create a system where you're here for a period, a block of time. That block of time is allocated to specific legislative policies, and, you know, you're expected to be here Monday through Friday. If you want to go home you can go home, but you know maybe we have to do something where people who are coming from really long distances can vote absentees for some period of time so they can go home and see their families for a weekend. But I really think you have to reset that kind of environment in The Hill.

CHERVENAK: So are you a two week, one week? A three week, two week? You know, what, do you come down specifically on a set number? I know there's different proposals out there.

LAWRENCE: I think it, you know, it changes in terms of some urgency, but I certainly think that you want to get away from this notion of Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then you're gone again for four days or five days. And so, I would, you know, at a minimum certainly two weeks. But, you know, ideally during certain key periods, again, if you know it's coming, you know, you can plan, your family can plan around, obviously there's some things you can't plan around.

Then you know that there's appropriation season. You're going to have to be here for that period of time, you know, that major legislation is going to be coming into the floor or coming through your committees a certain period of time. That's a block of time. I think giving people that advanced notice, which you try. I mean, it's not that people haven't thought of this stuff. It's just very hard to effectuate.

CHERVENAK: So one question I'm very curious about your perspective on is how debate, deliberation, or dialogue should occur or be structured in Congress, because you've seen this debate dialogue happen at the leadership level, where it's really kind of opaque, right? You've seen it at a committee level, where there's a mix of kind of transparent and a private discussion, and then in a member's office, where people might be just meeting up for, you know, either in the office or out in a bar or whatever. So I'm curious, given all of your experience, where do you think this debate dialogue, how it should happen, where should it structure, how is it best?

LAWRENCE: Well there's always a role for that dialogue to take place behind closed doors. I think you have to, you know, members are, have to be free, staff have to be free to explore

ideas in a place where there's not an immediate penalty associated with it. When we used to, Miller and I would meet with John Boehner or with Don Young, again, people we both ideologically and on policy specific policies had, you know, very strong disagreements, we would always meet privately, and we'd say, you know, okay, so what is it that you can actually do? You know, is there somewhere we can get, and then we'd say, you know, we'll go out there and we'll, you know, kick the hell out of each other, but, you know, I got to know where we're going here, you know.

And again, I think that is a tougher thing to do now because the environment has deteriorated to a great extent, but you know, there's been a lot of literature written around the notion that when Congress moved to a greater level of openness, that we lost some of the ability to do what worked best. And transparency, while it is, it's thought to somehow purify the process, it also stealthifies the process. Certainly we saw that when we, when the proposals were made in the mid-70s to put television into the chamber. I think most people don't, and certainly younger people don't understand it. As recently as the late 1960s committee meetings were closed, there weren't transcripts that were kept, the floor in the House wasn't televised until I think [19]77, in the Senate for another five or six years.

And when that was under consideration, I remember Tip O'Neill literally said, you know if you televise, first of all a lot of us aren't that smart, and he said second of all you're going to have people sitting around picking your noses, and it's not going to do much to elevate people's regard for Congress. There were warnings from Republicans as well that, I think David Dennis, who was a member from Indiana, if I remember correctly, warned that people will start playing to the cameras and not to serious legislation.

I think it's one of the reasons that people do better in committees. You know, committees are recorded and there are press there, but nobody pays any attention. I mean you really have to be desperate to be watching a committee hearing or a committee markup, and—

CHERVENAK: Unless you're very interested as a special interest.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, but I mean, the average person with all due respect to C-SPAN, I mean I, but that's not what most people will do. But once you get onto the House floor or the Senate floor, you know that members are, in fact the whole floor is designed at this point for just that kind of purpose. So, you know, I often think that the connection that's made between closed discussions, closed negotiations, and something, you know, disreputable that's going on misses the point. It gives people, you got to give people a chance to feel things out and test them out without there being an immediate consequence, and that's not what you have.

What you have now is anytime that sort of feeling out goes on, there are people monitoring every subcommittee meeting, every committee meeting. As soon as somebody says something that has any kind of marketability, gets [] to the campaign committee, gets turned into a commercial or to a fundraising call, and you know it stifles the kind of intellectual and interchange that you need to have a constructive process.

CHERVENAK: So it sounds like you're a fan of committees and having some closed, you know, some kind of private sessions there where people can collaborate and work together, and that's a good place for some of that kind of debate dialogue.

LAWRENCE: With the qualification that that is not going to make partisanship go away. Again, we need to do other things and a lot of things outside the Congress so that those discussions are being held among people who have some greater interests in collaboration than they have today. But you can have honest conversations all you want, if the only goal is to demonize the other person and exploit their electoral and political vulnerabilities, having it, you know, you can have it in a hot tub. It's not going to make any difference if that's all that's at stake when you have those conversations.

CHERVENAK: Right. So next question is what fundamental improvements should Congress make within a fifty-year time frame?

LAWRENCE: Well, I think, you know, I personally think that if we want Congress to operate better, we've got to change the way we pick the people who are in Congress, and that means expanding voting rights to ensure that everybody has a fair opportunity to participate, but then also modify the ways in which candidates are selected so that we make sure that the people who arrive there reflect diverse points of view rather than increasingly selective and extreme points of view and therefore have interests in finding common ground.

I think we have to do very tough work in looking into issues like campaign financing reform. I realize there are constitutional issues involved, and maybe there is a way to deal with that by passing a constitutional amendment that at least gives Congress the capacity for addressing these issues in a way that that is not, but if you look at the trajectory of special interest money since the Citizens United and the McCutcheon decision, other decisions, it overwhelms the process. And things like public financing or campaign limits, that has no impact if you don't also affect the outside sources of money that are not restricted at this point.

I think we similarly have to look about introducing a greater level of accountability into the media, and that includes social media so that there is, you know, we may not be able to go back to the Fairness Doctrine that was that was eliminated in 1987, but the, you know, Daniel Moynihan used to say, you have the right to your own opinion, but you don't have the right to your own facts, and unfortunately today people do have the right to their own facts, and we, you know, I'm not one of those who thinks that the media necessarily changes people's views, but it hardens people's views. And in fact even, there have been some studies that show that even when you force people to watch the other side's views, it makes them reinforce their own views even more. So I think, you know, looking at telecommunication policy and maybe encouraging, I'm not an expert in this area, I'm not sure how you would do it, and it obviously is dangerous to fool around with free speech, but at this point, news, the news and information has turned into weapons in the ideological wars, and combined with money, that hurts as well.

I think one thing also that Congress could do, which would be helpful is to enforce greater discipline within itself about what is and what is not acceptable rhetoric. And I testified before the Select Committee on Modernization of Congress on this specific point. In 1984, Speaker O'Neill's words were taken down, again, technical stuff, but it's a way of punishing any inappropriate speech that's used on the floor, because he accused Speaker Gingrich, [then] Newt Gingrich, wasn't Speaker then, of, and the quote was, the lowest thing I've ever seen in my time on Congress, that was, led to this rebuke of the Speaker of the House.

Today you have people standing on the floor the House accusing other people of treason, and, you know, when people around the country turn on their televisions and they see either commercials or they see coverage of this kind of virulent, obnoxious, desultory language coming out of the voices of members of Congress, or for that matter, presidents of the United States, it makes politics meaner, it makes compromise and conciliation more difficult, and that's something Congress can do.

I mean, there are rules of the Congress that you're not supposed to refer to members in certain ways, that you're not supposed to refer to the other House, for that matter, and I think that is worth really looking at and saying, if we're going to have debate here, you're going to have to debate at a certain level of cordiality and collegiality, which traditionally was the case in Congress. It's not going to change how angry people are, but it may very well lessen the temperature, both on the floor and among people who are watching it.

And I think that's something members of Congress can self-discipline, certainly, but I also think that it's something the rules will do. We know that when members use strong language, even if they're rebuked on the floor, they immediately go out and do fundraising based on it, and they do very well. At this point again, as I was saying, you've got to find ways for rewarding the kind of contract conduct on the part of Congress that you want to see. You have to find a way of punishing people so that they are not able to utilize what you identify as undignified, divisive rhetoric and then profiteer from it, and I think that's something Congress can do among itself.

CHERVENAK: The next question is, what book or article most shaped your thinking with respect to congressional reform?

LAWRENCE: I looked at a lot of the reform proposals that were put out by some of the reform committees in the '60s and '70s that looked at these structures. They were, in some cases, congressional committees, legislative reform initiatives, that, they're not necessarily the most exciting reading. I'm not sure anything on congressional reform necessarily is.

CHERVENAK: This is a series about congressional reform. I think it's very exciting.

LAWRENCE: Yeah, okay, well I mean for the average reader it may not be, but this is the nuts and bolts of how the place functions. And you know there, if you go back and look at the work product of the Legislative Reform Committee in 1970, and even the 1946 reports that were done, they really identify ways to make Congress more efficient, to make Congress work more

effectively and be more responsive, and I think those, I think to some extent that's what the committee on modernization is doing now. And I really look at that because I like the idea of looking at what practitioners tell you to do. It's, to me, and I think to a lot of people who work within the institution, it's very difficult to read sort of these idealized external, you know, if I were, if I had a magic wand, I would do that. You know, they don't hand out magic wands when you go to Congress, they hand out voting cards. And so it helps to have somebody with that experience look at it and say, this is what I do I think this really would make the place more productive and frankly more enjoyable for people to work it.

CHERVENAK: Last question is really just about your plans. You know, it sounds like you have a book coming, and what else is on your plate?

LAWRENCE: Well, I hope that this book gives me an opportunity to travel around and talk to people about this particular period of great productivity in Congress but also a period that helps to illustrate the kinds of institutional problems that Congress confronts in addressing issues, and I want to continue to do that through my teaching, through talks that I give. I'm not sure I'm interested at this point in finding someplace where I can go forty hours or fifty or eighty hours a week to do that, but I think that this combination of the historical perspective and the practical experience gives me some greater capacity, at least my students tell me it does, to try to design something that that is both workable but also it goes to some of the underlying challenges that we face, and that I think most people who serve in government would welcome but just have trouble figuring it out from the inside. And so I look forward to doing that, and I think maybe, you know, maybe the book can help. But, you know, programs like this help outside organizations to try to facilitate discussion among members and former staff, and people who are part of these processes are all ways to go about raising those issues and, you know, maybe moving the ball somewhere down the field.

CHERVENAK: Professor Lawrence, thank you so much for your time and for your service, and best of luck with the book and in your future activity.

LAWRENCE: Thanks so much. I appreciate it, and it's good to meet you.

CHERVENAK: Thank you.