



GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH J. DENNIS HASTERT

May 16, 2014
Washington, D.C.

Participants

University of Virginia

Russell Riley, chair
Barbara A. Perry

University of Richmond

Dan Palazzolo

Also Present

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To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], George W. Bush Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia

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INTERVIEW WITH J. DENNIS HASTERT

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Riley: This is the Dennis Hastert interview as a part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. We are all in Washington. Happy to have you with us on a soggy day.

Hastert: Good to be here on a soggy day.

Riley: We have plenty of things to keep us going. I want to make sure we're good to go until five o'clock if we need it.

Hastert: Yes. I have a plane out of here at seven.

Riley: We'll make sure you get your plane. I want to make sure we're all operating under the same understanding. We talked before the tape began running about the fundamental ground rules. The most important one is that nobody at the table is allowed to repeat anything that is reported. This, again, is to get you to speak candidly to history.

Normally we would begin by talking about some autobiography, but you've written a book that covers all of that territory extremely well [*Speaker: Lessons from Forty Years in Coaching and Politics*]. This was an enjoyable read for a guy who grew up in Alabama. Coach is probably the most eminent title anybody can have, so I didn't know whether to address you as Coach or Speaker.

Hastert: I come to about anything. Call me for dinner. Just call me. [*laughter*]

Riley: I don't know that we need to review the biography.

Perry: I just had one biographical question. I think I remember from the book that you said both sets of your grandparents were Democrats, but your parents came out of the Depression as Republicans. I just wanted to ask you why you thought that was.

Hastert: I'm not sure, but they were both railroad people, so I think they tended to be Democrats. On my dad's side, he was a superintendent of the shops for the E, J & E [Elgin, Joliet & Eastern] Railroad in Joliet. I don't know why; my dad always said they were Democrats, so I assume they were Democrats. It was just people came into the Depression and I think they tended to be. My other grandparents were Germans coming from a couple of generations out of Philadelphia. He was a bookbinder by trade, but he was a pro athlete when he was a kid. I think that is where they came out of it, that culture. I grew up in a little county where everyone was a Republican and you just kind of grew up that way.

Riley: Dan, were there any questions from the biography?

Palazzolo: No, I don't think so. I will come back to the coaching.

Riley: You come from a long line of coaches, don't you?

Palazzolo: Not a long line.

Perry: A short line.

Riley: Let's come forward to your time as Speaker, then. A few preliminaries before we get into the 2000 era, which would be our main focus from the Bush Presidency. A lot of what we read about your time as Speaker, or the beginnings of your time there, has focused on the difficulties of the circumstances of your rising to the office and your claim to the office, given those conditions.

I have a slightly different angle that I want to ask you about. That is that one of the jobs, I guess, of the Speaker is to serve as an institutional leader in an environment of other institutions in Washington, and chiefly as either a companion or a counterbalance to the White House. You are coming into the speakership at a time when the House of Representatives and the White House were not having a very good time of it. I'm wondering, did you have any meaningful relationship with the [William J.] Clinton White House after you came in, and can you talk with us about how that—

Hastert: I never intended to be Speaker. That was never anything in my mind. Even the morning it happened, I never knew it was going to happen. But you look at what leadership is about. It is really about trust and the building of trust. Who do you trust? What happened during that period of time? Newt [Gingrich] was a dynamic guy. He was always on TV, a very intelligent person. He was always talking about concepts of big issues. I was Chief Deputy Whip for four years under Newt. We'd be sitting in leadership meetings for five or six hours, listening to Newt lecture about the campaigns of the Duke of York, and the historical perspectives. We'd sit and listen. It was not always relevant to what we're doing, but he loved to lecture.

I was Chief Deputy Whip. [Thomas D.] DeLay took the politics of the Whip organization. He got outside groups and all that sort of thing. I went and buttonholed people every day to make sure that they had the vote. We had one rule; we wouldn't bring the bill to the floor unless we had 218 votes. So I knew where people hid. I knew where they hung out in bars; I knew where they slept in the cloakroom. I knew their wives' names, their kids' names, because that was just my job.

Over the four years I'd stand in the back of the Chamber as they came in to vote. I'd tell them what the amendment was, what our position was, why it was that position. People came to me to start asking questions. One of the things I found out in politics: If you know more about any one thing than anybody else, people come to you. I was just kind of a workhorse naturally. So when I was in the legislature I did a lot of telephone reform, I did public utility reform, I did tax reform, property tax reform, so people came to me. I did the same thing in the Congress. When I was Chief Deputy Whip I was doing telecom, I was doing health care, I was doing illegal drugs issues. People would come to me, especially in health care; it was a big issue back then. Not that I knew any more about health care; I just learned it. I wasn't a lawyer or anything else.

So I built up this trust. Newt really believed that pushing the impeachment—He and DeLay, probably more than anybody on our side, really pushed for this impeachment. I kept saying, “I’m not sure that’s where people are.” People didn’t even want to turn the TV [television] on. That was a nasty time. Here it was the 19th of December, five days before Christmas, and nobody wanted to be in Washington. Nobody wanted to be listening about impeachment, but we were there.

[Richard K.] Arney took four ballots to get elected majority leader. DeLay got the first ballot, but he had some of the same problems Newt did. To be leadership in the conference is one thing; to be Speaker, you need all your votes, because it is the vote of the whole House. So you could have a simple majority of the Republicans and become Majority Leader or Whip. [John A.] Boehner just got booted out as the conference chairman and J. C. [Julius Caesar] Watts [Jr.] got elected in his place, so Boehner was kind of a nonentity. Chris [Charles C.] Cox wanted to be, but really didn’t have the lift power to do it.

I’m sitting behind all those guys. I’m like five people back. When that happened that morning, I know Bob Livingston [Jr.] got up on the floor of the House and basically said, “Mr. President, you need to resign,” and he went on, “for the same reason I’m going to step down as Speaker of the House and resign my seat in Congress.” You could have heard a pin drop. People turned around to me and said, “You’re going to be the next Speaker.” *Why me, Lord?*

Anyway, Livingston wasn’t even done with his speech yet and one of our floor guys tapped me on the shoulder. I was standing back where I always stood, and he said, “The Speaker wants you on the phone.” So I slipped off in the cloakroom and picked up the phone. He said, “You’re the only guy who can really take this conference and lead it. You’re going to have to be Speaker.” That was it. In two hours I was the Speaker of the House designate. It was all basically on trust because people knew me. They would tell me—I would keep their votes in confidence, but they didn’t want, if it was a tough vote, somebody saying, “George is voting for this,” or “Smith is voting for that.” You needed to have that vote, because you couldn’t bring a piece of legislation without knowing exactly where the vote was.

So I’d built that trust up, plus working. I think that was what it was all about. I didn’t agree with Clinton on a lot of philosophical things, but Bill Clinton was a guy that you couldn’t *not* like. He’d come in and take all the oxygen in a room. He’d sit down there and jawbone with you for ten minutes and you couldn’t not like the guy, so I got along with him well. The first thing that happened—We had this vote; I think it was a vote on Kosovo or one of the Baltic—not Baltic—

Perry: Balkan.

Hastert: —Balkan situations. So I went to the White House, sat down with—I knew their Chief of Staff, John Podesta. He was a roommate of the guy who helped me write the Public Utility Act in Illinois. So there was an Illinois connection, and his brother, Tony [Podesta], and I went to Japan together in the 1960s.

Riley: I saw that in your book.

Hastert: So there was Podesta. I could call John up and talk to him and he would call me up. We got along. We did some things together—First of all, Plan Colombia; Clinton and I basically

wrote it. Some people think that was probably the best foreign policy coup that we've made in a couple of decades. We actually gave a country back its freedom. They won it back, but we gave them the tools to do it.

Then we did a bill—It was something that J. C. Watts wanted to do, to bring private capital into depressed urban areas and in rural areas. We worked on that together. So I could sit down and talk to Clinton. I remember we had the balanced budget agreement. One time it was up against a deadline; I think it was probably 2000. He was off on kind of his farewell trip and made a trip all the way through Africa. I'm talking to Jack [Jacob J.] Lew, who was at that time the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] Director. I said, "I've got to meet with the President; we've got to get this agreement done, because the Senate spent a hundred million dollars more than what the agreement was. We've got to make some cuts."

He couldn't get ahold of him. He's in Africa. Finally, I said, "We're going to be out Friday and we're going to go on recess. We have to get this done." Finally he says—I think it was Lew or his chief of staff, I wasn't sure—"The President is going to be in Ankara, Turkey, tomorrow morning at ten o'clock someplace at the airport and you can reach him then." Well, ten o'clock in Ankara was like two o'clock in the morning in D.C. So here I am at my desk at two o'clock in the morning getting ahold of the President. He was in his limo on the way to the airport.

He said, "Hey, how are you, Mr. Speaker?" I said, "Fine, Mr. President. Congratulations on your trip to Africa. According to the headlines, you had a very successful trip." He said, "Oh, yes, we had a great time. What can I do for you?" I said, "Well, we've got to get this budget done. We're about \$10 billion over where we agreed to be, and we need to make some cuts." He said, "What do you think we ought to do?" I said, "I think I would recommend a 1 percent across-the-board—It's about a trillion-dollar budget, not quite—1 percent across the board." He said, "Now, 1 percent—We've got armed services. You can't just jump into that. You've got all these other programs."

I said, "What do you recommend?" He said, "How about a 0.25?" "Well," I said, "I don't think a 0.25 will get us there, but I'll tell you, I'll cut down a little bit." So we start negotiating. He comes up, I come down, and we ended at a 0.86. [laughter] But the fact is, you could sit down and talk to him, and if you get a deal with him, you had to make sure that his staff knew that you had, because the staff would come and try to talk him back out of it. We made that deal. We could do things.

I don't care who the President is or who the Speaker is, as long as you engage and try to work things out, there's always room to do that. I had a good relationship with Clinton in that respect.

Riley: Was there residual bitterness between the administration and the House over—

Hastert: I don't think so. I think the bitterness was more personal. I don't think there was institutional bitterness. Even when I was Speaker, and on into the first couple of months I was Speaker, there was the trial going on in the Senate. It was still an issue.

Riley: OK, any follow-up on that?

Perry: I'm just formulating here. So many people point to that time as the genesis of what they

view as lack of bipartisanship now, politics of personal diminution, and that sort of thing. I guess my question is, Do you think it is personality-driven, both for good and for bad? In other words, your personality was such that you were open to negotiate, and it seems as though you're saying the same for President Clinton.

Hastert: I think the bitterness started—First of all, Newt was with a pitchfork all the time. Some of that carried over. I think it relaxed when I was Speaker, but I still had Arney and DeLay, the Texas crew, that I had to deal with, and I had to deal with them all the time. DeLay and I were kind of like good cop, bad cop. We got a lot of things done. I attribute a lot of the success that we have to Tom DeLay, because he was an excellent Whip. He was excellent in counting votes and persuading people they ought to do some things, sometimes things they didn't want to do, but he was very helpful. I'd come in and put my arm around them, the Members, and thank them, and DeLay would jab them and we'd get it done.

Palazzo: One of the things that political scientists have talked about in that transition from Newt to your speakership is that the responsibilities of leadership were spread out a little bit more. It wasn't just Newt deciding everything.

Hastert: I had a different—Newt was on TV all the time. He was always out with the pitchfork, the way I said. I figured—I said in my acceptance speech—you can't solve problems with a pool of bitterness. Both sides have to come a little bit more than halfway, and you get some things done. [Richard A.] Gephardt was an interesting guy. As a matter of fact, I'm doing a lot of stuff with Gephardt now. You can sit down and reason with him.

He would never give you a straight answer, because he'd always go back to what he'd call "his people." He always went back to a sounding board before you ever got anything. Sometimes you'd think you were making progress, here you go back to a sounding board, and you find out you're way over there. But at least you could talk to him. The guy who was really the hard guy was Dave [Bonior], his Whip from Michigan.

Riley: Bonior?

Hastert: Bonior was kind of hard, but I got along with Bonior, too. He was a union guy; I was a teacher. I could talk to Bonior. As a matter of fact, we had a pretty good relationship. But Bonior hated DeLay and hated Arney, so there was always that kind of situation there. But I really think what happened in 2002 was the [John S., III] McCain-[Russell D.] Feingold bill came down. Prior to that time, most of the money went into the parties. What happened in the Bush primary campaign in the 2000 election was that Bush won South Carolina. He won it with state money; the state party helped put that over.

McCain was very bitter. That was the thing. It was a pivotal point in that primary election and really put Bush over the top. McCain was very bitter, and he was going to change the whole system. So the McCain-Feingold bill basically took the money out of the parties and said if you're a state party, you can't put any money into a federal campaign. Federal money can't go into state parties, so separate them. The state parties—The party folk are always misunderstood. The party never made anybody a candidate, but the choice of candidates was rather homogenized. If you're a Republican and weren't too far to the right and weren't too far to the

left—It depended geographically where you were, who you represented—but you basically represented where the party was.

[Tyler Garrett, an intern working with Hastert, enters]

Garrett: Sorry I'm late. The Metro was stalled this morning for half an hour.

Riley: Before we got started, the agreement around the table was that nobody is allowed to say anything about what we talk about at the table.

Garrett: Great. That's acceptable.

Hastert: Where were we?

Riley: McCain-Feingold.

Hastert: So what that bill did was basically eliminated soft money going from state to federal elections and vice versa. I fought it. But the *New York Times* editorialized for it every day. I think they thought it would give the press more say in elections. They'd list our East Coast guys, call these guys, on the front page, the editorial page. To have your name listed day after day, week after week, it's really an erosion type of thing. Finally, I had some guys like Charlie Bass from New Hampshire come in and say, "We can't withstand this anymore. We're going to have to sign the discharge petition," and he did. So it got the 218 votes. It was [Christopher H.] Shays-[Martin T.] Meehan in our House. Chris Shays is a Connecticut guy. It moved. I resisted it, voted against it. When it came to the President's desk to sign, I begged him not to sign it.

What that bill did was take the money out of the parties and push it to the edges. For the first tranche of that, it really went to the George Soros, unlimited funds. The funds were supposed to be isolated from party influence, but because the Democrats had kind of a network of boutique law firms, they really worked together. They weren't supposed to, but because of lawyer/client privilege, they could talk back and forth and they did. The Supreme Court decision then opened it up—So then all of a sudden you had all the money there going to the George Soros types or the [Charles G. and David H.] Koch brothers. That's where it is coming from. They didn't necessarily choose the candidate, but they chose the issues, and then they funded the private, nonpolitical message that came out around each candidate.

All of a sudden candidates weren't looking at—They'd look over their shoulder and see who the general opponent was—Now they look over their shoulder and see who the primary opponent is going to be. So it has made, I think, the whole political process more partisan, much more a far-right, far-left process, and there's nobody in between. I think that's what happened. Eventually that will change, I think. The pendulum swings back and forth. I think that's where the whole vitriol you find in the Congress today, in the legislative process, comes from. Basically, it shouldn't be that way.

I grew up politically in a general assembly, and we were in the minority most of the time, but I could go across the aisle. I always worked on a bipartisan basis. Even in Congress I worked on a bipartisan basis on a lot of stuff. It is all on relationships. When you foul the water and you can't have the relationships, then it becomes more bitter.

I saw something. In '92, the first George [H. W.] Bush got beat because Ross Perot got in the race. The Perotists, what I call Perotists, were basically disenchanting Republicans. They didn't like the inheritance tax; they didn't like immigration policy. There was something they didn't like. So they went and voted for Perot.

In '94 we had the majority for a number of reasons. A lot of those people who ended up being elected to the Congress were people that either came up through the ultraconservative system or were the kind of Perotist fringe people. Same thing happened, I think. The Tea Party people basically came back in droves after President Obama moved his health care policy. That was the stimulus. Those folks kind of coalesced. If you talk to the Tea Party people, there is no one clear issue out there. There are very diverse issues, but they do coalesce around this "against everything" type of thing. I think that's what happened. That will come and it will go.

Riley: Let me ask about the planning for the 2000 election. When you come in, are you looking toward 2000 and what you can do as a body to try to secure the Republican majority in the House?

Hastert: The first thing my conference, my leadership, and I decided was not to spend the surplus. I always felt that my job as Speaker—You had to be the Speaker for the whole House. It's a tightrope. You had to balance being fair to everybody on the other side—make sure the minority had the ability to at least be heard, be recognized—but you were the leader of your own party. By that time, I think we changed who was the leadership in the Senate. It went back to Democrat because of the switchover of the Senator from Virginia. We didn't have the President. So I was kind of the leader of the party, at least in Washington.

I felt it was my job to go out and really work. Because when Newt left—One of the reasons that Newt didn't have the support is that we lost, I think, six seats in the Congress. All of a sudden I only had a five-vote majority. So everything we did from '99—2000 up to 2001—we moved with a five-vote majority. That was to hold the line on the budget, do all these things. It's not easy, because any time that four people get up on the wrong side of the bed in the morning or go out to the press and stake out their position, it would be a dumb position to take. "Well, I've talked to the press. I can't change my mind." You had to work through all those problems and be able to do it. We moved a lot of legislation; we even moved tax cuts.

The whole issue was we hoped that we would get a Republican, and Bush was our candidate. Bush was someone I felt I could work with. I really didn't know him, but some other folks did know him, and they had a lot of success in Texas.

There were tax cuts and some things I wanted to do. We passed them, but we couldn't get them signed by President Clinton. I was anxious to do that. I felt that the best way to hold our majority and to help Bush was to build our majority. So I went out and really worked hard that whole year. I did a thousand campaign stops in the eight years I was Speaker. If you start to figure that

out, in off years I probably did 125 a year, and election years I did 150 a year. In off years you helped your Members so they could raise some money to help everybody else, and in election years you were out raising money for new candidates, challengers, and open seats.

We picked up seats. Every year I was Speaker we picked up seats. We picked up seats because we worked for it. We worked hard. Every weekend I was on the road. Every August I was on the road. That's something that nobody really saw because it was sort of *sub rosa*. But you're out there working. The best thing is to bring people—There were good candidates out there—to the party; that helps the Presidential race as well. That's how I thought we could best serve and help the President. We had talked a couple of times, and I knew [Richard B.] Cheney pretty well. He was in the House. He was the Whip when he left to be the Secretary of Defense. We had those types of relationships.

Our best job was to make sure we had a solid majority in the House. So when he won, everything was in limbo because of hanging chads. I'm getting ahead of my story, but the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] would come and start to brief me. I was going to be the temporary President if the decision wasn't made by some date in January. The last thing I wanted to be was a temporary President.

We went down to Texas in December. Trent Lott and I flew down. They sent a plane for us. We went down to Texas, sat down with the President, and really laid out some of the things we wanted to do. Our ideas, our plans, were almost parallel. Tax cuts, capital gains, all the types of things we wanted to do. We were pretty much in sync. One of the things I really felt serious about, having either a majority or a very close swing majority in the Senate and having a majority in the House, instead of having this bickering back and forth that happened during the [Jimmy] Carter administration when they had both parties and the White House and other administrations, obviously even Clinton, there's always this bickering and fighting going back and forth. It didn't really get any heavy lifts done.

With Clinton we got three or four things done. One was a gun control thing that really smacked against them, because that helped us in the '94 election. He did health. Mrs. [Hillary Rodham] Clinton was doing health care. I worked the counter to that. I was doing health care in the House, and basically we beat them in Energy and Commerce because I picked up six Democrats on our bill and they couldn't pass their bill out of the House. But that was a real effort. They put a lot of political capital into that and couldn't move it.

Then they moved a BTU [British Thermal Units] tax in the House, but couldn't pass it in the Senate. So it was their inability to get things done. There was really the lack of cooperation between the White House and the Congress. I felt what we needed to do was sit down and really work on our agenda. There's no reason that any Republican President ought to veto a bill that came out of a Republican House. We tried to work everything that we could. We worked it out before it went to the President's desk.

Later, Dave Hobbs was his legislative liaison, and before that we had Nick Calio. Those guys camped out in our office all the time because we worked things out. We spent hours and hours and hours going over things where we had differences that we could work out in a legislative way so that the President could accept them. I think that was a real difference. I'm not sure that

had been done much before; it hasn't been done much since. When you look at the amount of policy that we got done in those six years, *especially* those six years, Bush always had a clear way to move his legislation and we were pretty much in sync on things.

Perry: Mr. Speaker, can you tell us about that process when you would be sitting in the office with the legislative affairs people from the Bush White House? Would you go line by line through legislation? Where would you give and take?

Hastert: If you want to move a piece of legislation, where are the principals? If the President has a tight spot someplace and he doesn't want to see it happen, we try to avoid it. So when you're putting legislation together in the beginning stages or through the process, if it's in one of the committees, you work it out and make sure your committee chair is in agreement. At the end, if you had something that they couldn't quite stomach, then we dropped it out, amended it, changed it, smoothed it out. It's like polishing a car. You find all the imperfections; you give it a little extra rub.

Riley: You mentioned going down to Texas. Do you have any specific recollections of traveling down to Texas?

Hastert: They sent a government plane up for us. They picked me up at home in Sugar Grove, Illinois, to get on a plane and fly. You're in high cotton, meeting with the future President of the United States. His new home was being constructed. So he puts us in a pickup truck and drives us around the ranch and goes through the creek and shows us where he's cutting the cedar down. He takes us on a grand tour of the ranch. We go in. We have hamburgers. Cheney is there. Mrs. [Laura] Bush is doing the cooking. Another couple is there helping her. So it's a real down-home type of situation.

I just had an old—We were going to the ranch; we didn't dress up. I had a pair of blue jeans or khakis on and a kind of all-purpose outdoor shirt. But Trent Lott comes down and Trent Lott has this cowboy hat with a big turkey feather. It's just typical Lott, kind of a showboat. The President is just making fun of the turkey feather. I think by the time we got done with the meeting the turkey feather was gone. [*laughter*]

Riley: The meetings themselves—Do you have any recollection?

Hastert: We just sat around the table and started laying out what we wanted to do on tax. I think Cheney was there.

Riley: So Cheney at the table. It would have been you and Lott—

Hastert: And Cheney and myself and the President. We each had our chiefs of staff. A guy named Scott Palmer was my chief of staff. Cheney had his staffer as well.

Riley: At that time, you're sort of laying out what you're going to do the first—

Hastert: What do we want to get done quickly? What do we want to get done first? What is our statement? How do we want to brand the first 100 days? I think the tax policy was really the thing that we wanted. We had some Members who had been pushing priorities like marriage

penalty, the death tax, and those types of things for a long period of time, but they all fit into the program of what we wanted to do.

Riley: This would have occurred—

Hastert: In December.

Riley: After the Supreme Court?

Hastert: I think during, anticipating. They're still talking to me about being—The cartoon is in the paper—potential President.

Palazzo: Do you recall from that meeting the President's priorities, besides taxes? Did he talk about education as a high priority?

Hastert: I think we talked about those things generally, education and immigration. He was close with Vicente Fox, the President of Mexico. That was something he wanted to do. There was some resistance from our party; that was an issue. Bush really had a lot of things. We were working on a highway bill to get done, education, health care, energy. We wanted to do some more things. I was pushing health savings accounts, medical savings accounts, something I wrote. Everybody agreed on it. This was kind of a free market way to open—Mrs. Clinton disagreed with me, but it was something we wanted to get done. A lot of priorities: health care, education. He wanted to do some things on accountability in education.

All these things were on the back burner. I think the tax things—This is what we're going to do, we're going to really hit—Inheritance tax was a big issue. Every time we'd do a town meeting, there would be some small businessman or farmer coming up and saying, "Look, my family is going to lose our farm because of the inheritance tax, and I can't pass it on to the next generation." So those types of things, but tax issues I think were the first priority.

We had education. We had highways. You had health care, strengthened defense situation. Then when 9/11 came along, it changed the world. It changed it from a peacetime Presidency to a wartime Presidency and from a peacetime speakership to a wartime speakership. Your whole set of priorities changed. Immigration after 9/11 almost became impossible. People were tightening down, wanted to tighten the borders up and not open them up.

Riley: Did you have a hard race in 2000?

Hastert: No, my toughest race was the first race I had. I never overlooked a race. I don't even remember who ran against me in 2000.

Riley: That's a pretty good sign.

Hastert: I always won my district in the high 60s or into the 70s.

Riley: So serving as Speaker was not a problem for you back home.

Hastert: As a matter of fact, my folks—I always lived back home. Even when I was on the road,

I'd be back home on a Sunday or Saturday or Monday. I always made two jokes about Walmart because I always used that as kind of a symbol of Everyman. Matter of fact, the place where we went to shop was Walmart, because where we lived in the country it was the closest store to us.

One time we were at a state dinner in the White House; I think it was the Duke of York, Duchess of York, and Prince Charles. My wife got to sit at the table with George Bush the first and Yo-Yo Ma and Prince Charles and Laura Bush. They all signed their menus and passed them around so everybody had everybody's autograph. She was showing me everybody's. I said, "I sat next to Mrs. [Linda] Scott." She said, "Who is Mrs. Scott?" I said, "[Harold] Lee Scott [Jr.] is chairman of Walmart."

That was nice. They kind of spread everybody out in the dining room. Somebody was there at the table, and the rest of the table was mostly British jet set. They were English and had no connection to me whatsoever. But Mrs. Scott—He worked for Kmart early in his career. They lived in a little town right next to where I grew up. We had something to talk about.

I said, "Well, Jean [Hastert], just think about it this way: Of all the 150 or whatever people in the room, you and I are the only people that ever shop at Walmart." But also the issue—My kids would never go to Walmart with me because they knew it took me two and a half hours to buy a loaf of bread and half a gallon of milk. That was a good way to have access to people. They know you're there, try to get into the coffee shop. Of course I had security, so I'd be driving my pickup truck and I'd have an SUV [sport utility vehicle] in front of me and an SUV behind me, following me to the post office or coffee shop. Everybody got a big kick out of it.

Perry: Can I ask about that issue of going home and being at home and living at home? Because that is something that people point to again now to say that so few Members have their domicile here and therefore they don't have their families here, so the families don't get to know each other and they don't go to common religious services. The kids don't go to the same Little League. Do you think that that has had an impact on how people deal with each other, or not?

Hastert: Part of it, I think—I wasn't there when they did it, but when they put the TV in the Chambers—

Perry: C-SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network]?

Hastert: The rhetoric would heat up because they'd be playing to the audience. That's one thing. Also, from the time I came in, you did all your work in the office, so you watched what was going on the floor on TV, but nobody was ever in the Chamber. In the old days, everybody was in the Chamber all the time. You sat across the aisle and you went to lunch with somebody and you had this camaraderie. Probably the only camaraderie I really saw across the aisle—I went to a prayer breakfast every Wednesday or Thursday morning, both sides, 50 or 60 people there all the time. You got to know people. Everybody would give a speech about what their background was, so you got to know people and where they came from and what their values were. I think that was good.

The whole issue of televising Congress kind of took the personal relationships out of it. All of a sudden every time you're on TV, you have to make a point. You have one minute. Everybody blasted the other side, especially the Clinton group. You had Rahm Emanuel and all those

Democrat operatives. They coordinated their message very well and we started coordinating our message. So you had a pissing match all the time, just pissed in rhetoric.

I remember when I first came to Congress they still had teller votes. The teller votes were you walked down the aisle, somebody tapped your head, and you went yes or no. So your name wasn't on the board all the time. Not everything was on the record. When everything wasn't on the record, of course you didn't have the transparency that voters liked, but you got things done, and it wasn't as acrimonious as it is now. So I was at the very end of the transition.

Palazzo: Can we go back a little bit to the theme of the relationship between the White House and the leadership? There is a caricature among some political scientists that the Bush administration sometimes didn't consult enough with the Congress, and there is another caricature that suggests that the liaison office was less important than it might have been in other Presidencies, that in fact Cheney and [Karl] Rove had their own independent channels of communication. Can you talk about that at all?

Hastert: Yes. If the President had something good to tell me, he'd call me; if he had something bad to tell me, Cheney would call. But Cheney and Rove did have their contacts.

Palazzo: They had their own division of labor.

Hastert: I thought that was important. First of all, Cheney was a man of the House. We took the office right off of the House floor that used to be Ways and Means's office. Bill Thomas became the Chairman of Ways and Means. I gave him an office that he wanted, which was an office right under the Speaker's office, which is a regular office. He opted to take that office and gave up that office, so we gave Cheney the office right off the House floor. I think it was important. There you had a place, so if you wanted to talk to some Members you could do that. We did it for him.

So I think Cheney had a good relationship. I'll tell you, after four Presidents I can make a comparison. I was there with [Ronald W.] Reagan; I was there for the first Bush; I was there for Clinton; and I was there for George W. George W. came to the conference and talked to members of the conference more than any other President did when I was there. When I was with Clinton, Clinton would come down and we'd talk once in a while, but every Wednesday morning Bush would have all leaders, bipartisan, to the White House.

We had to be there at a quarter to seven in the morning. Had to leave the house at a quarter after six to get through all the security, but we were there. It was either [Nancy P. D.] Pelosi or Gephardt or myself or [Thomas A.] Daschle, and Lott and then later on [William H.] Frist. We were there.

Garrett: It was very helpful.

Hastert: We sat down and had breakfast together. The President was up at 4:00 or 4:30 in the morning, talking to world leaders, basically, and he could do that because everybody else was in different time zones. So he'd have the CIA briefing. He'd brief us on what's going on and we'd have these discussions; they were discussions about issues that he wanted to move forward or problems that the Democrats had. There was a free flow of discussion every week while we were in session without fail. I think he was more communicative than any other President I had seen,

in my point of view at least.

When Clinton was there and I was in leadership, I never saw a Clinton representative in the House. They weren't there. Today we're talking about [Barack H.] Obama. There is no legislative representation from the White House. There is no dialogue that goes on. I think we were very blessed. I think Bush did a great job of that. I can't tell you how the Democrats proceeded. I don't know if anybody was over there sitting in their offices talking to them as much. I know that Dave Hobbs came out of the House. The other fellow I mentioned before; he was around all the time. They went over and talked to Democrats all the time. So I think that is a disingenuous charge. I think Bush did a great job at that.

Palazzolo: That's helpful. I appreciate it.

Riley: Any recollections from the inauguration in 2000?

Hastert: It was interesting, because Lott and [Christopher J.] Dodd were kind of the guys in charge; precedence was that the Senate Rules Committee had jurisdiction over inaugurations. Actually, it wasn't Lott, it was the guy from Kentucky. I'm getting old and senile.

Perry: [A. Mitchell] McConnell?

Hastert: Sure, McConnell. It was McConnell and Dodd who really put it together. That was the Senate bailiwick. My wife was invited to come in and look at plates, the china, and all this detail. That wasn't a big deal for her, but the women just went—The color the tablecloths were going to be for the luncheon in Statuary Hall and all this preparation. So the Senate kept that all. That was their turf. It was a grand deal and it was fun to do, and it was so cold, a nasty, rainy day.

I remember the pictures. My wife would never let me put up the picture of the inauguration because she had this rain bonnet on and looked like a wet cat. *[laughter]* It was a wet day. I remember riding down to the White House, what happened. The tradition is that Dodd and I were with the President. He came to the Capitol in a limousine, picked us up. We went down Pennsylvania Avenue before the inauguration, went to the White House. Clinton was there. Of course they had spent the whole night changing the key caps on the typewriters, or whatever they did. It was kind of a nasty transition.

We had coffee and doughnuts or whatever. Everybody was down there. Dodd was telling stories all the way down from the Capitol to the White House, Members of the Democratic Senate, what they did. I remember him talking about the Senator from Maryland, [Barbara A.] Mikulski. He said, "Every family has got an old maid aunt like that." He went on and on. This wouldn't be public, but this is on the sidelines, going down to the White House. All these people with their "hate Bush" signs. The Democrats never thought that they lost that election. They weren't really ready to give in to it. He took it in good spirit. But Dodd was funny all the way down. He kept things going.

Riley: So you come in—

Hastert: One other thing about that election: When the electoral college met, I was presiding. The Vice President was the guy standing up and counting the votes as President of the Senate. So

here was [Albert A., Jr.] Gore, and southern blacks were about ready to rebel because they didn't like the results at all. The way the rules are, they could vote different from what their state said. So we're trying to make sure that in parliamentary procedure we were all set in case that happened, but Gore was very good. Here Gore was presiding over his own defeat. He did a good job of holding that down and keeping that at bay. Of course there would have been a big controversy if anything had happened in the electoral college. But standing there watching that guy do that, it was really kind of a historic moment. I'll always remember that as part of that election.

Riley: There was a discussion at the time that maybe because of the tightness of the race the President ought to trim his sails a little bit, sort of bend over backward to accommodate the Democrats, which is something that he didn't do. Do you recall any discussions at the time?

Hastert: We were all frustrated because we wanted to get our agenda done.

Riley: Sure.

Hastert: He had to do what he had to do. So I think there were discussions about it, but Pelosi—Her way was the “my way or the highway” type of attitude. They just didn't want to participate. That was a big frustration for me, because I really couldn't get—I could go to John Dingell and try to talk to him on some health care issues we were doing, even the Medicare Part D is something the Democrats should have jumped on. She would absolutely forbid him to be engaged. Or a Ways and Means issue.

Of course Charlie Rangel and Bill Thomas, who just—Part of my job was just trying to keep people working together, but they hated each other. That was a very acrimonious situation. You just kept moving on. Ways and Means was a big committee, an important committee. Again, one of the jobs as Speaker, there is always the backroom stuff. You had to keep the egos together. You look at guys like Bill Archer and then Thomas, who followed him on Ways and Means, and then Don Young, who was Resources and then Highway. Tom DeLay himself was rather—not mercurial, but he certainly had a point of view. Thomas was a very mercurial person. Then Jim [Francis J., Jr.] Sensenbrenner, who was head of Judiciary—Those people, first of all—and Joe Barton, who was Energy and Commerce—Those guys were very aggressive people. They were always trying to chew each other's turf up and they wanted to get into each other's policy jurisdictions.

I had those people at the table all the time trying to solve problems of who had this jurisdiction. It was always a jurisdiction. So you spend a lot of time doing that. Just to try to keep harmony in your own party was time and energy consuming. The rest of the time it was just bringing people together, bringing the moderates and the conservatives together and trying to find a middle way to get things done. Compromise is a dirty word, but you had to have compromise to get something done.

Riley: Were there any big organizational issues or questions that you had to deal with at the beginning, in 2001?

Hastert: Meaning?

Riley: In terms of committee structures or—

Hastert: There was always a fight. Democrats always wanted more representation, and we tried to—Except for Ways and Means, which was a very partisan committee, we tried to keep a fairly close margin. In some committees they did more. Rules, for instance, you needed to make sure that you had a strong majority. But Rules and Ways and Means were probably the most lopsided committees. They were never happy, but we were never happy when we were in the minority either, with what we got.

Riley: Dan, were there any major rules changes or anything?

Palazzo: I guess what I'm interested in is the extent to which this concept of working together as a team—You sort of branded that, I think, as part of your speakership—the extent to which that might have extended to the Presidential relationship at all. Was that simply an internal House matter, or did that also echo out into messaging in the campaign?

Hastert: One of the things in which I was different from Newt—I really started things at the bottom and let it bubble up. I was the benefactor of what Newt did. He always had the Speaker's Task Force—Well, I headed the Speaker's Task Force on Health care. It was always the “Let Denny do it” type of thing. It was controversial, but he had me do it.

One of the things I said was if you work at something, you know more than anybody else, and people come to you. I just did it. It was part of the trust that built up. I really believe that: Let the committees do the work. I didn't have a Speaker's Task Force, so we worked together, and when there was a jurisdictional battle—and that's what Newt probably tried to avoid sometimes, a jurisdictional battle, so he just took the jurisdiction himself. *[laughter]* Seriously. We really tried to work it out. Sometimes it wasn't a pleasant thing.

There was always a fight between Energy and Commerce, which was my old committee, and Financial Institutions. We moved insurance from over there, from Energy and Commerce to Financial, where it should have been. But who was always looking at the accounts and the accounting and that type of fiscal issues? There were always fights. We had to sit down—Joe Barton one time sat in the Chamber on the vote for Speaker, an organization vote on opening day. Barton was trying to hold out his vote and those of some of the committee members for Speaker. Finally, I got this guy, his chief of staff, with whom I could work. Bud was an energy lobbyist from Houston, Bud [Clarence H.] Albright. I finally got Bud over. I said, “Look, you tell Joe that he has to do this.”

Finally, Bud told Joe he had to do it. Joe did cave and the vote for Speaker proceeded. But you also had to know where the buttons to push were, who to pull in if you couldn't get somebody to agree to something. Joe was going to hold up the whole election to the House because of some position he had on committee jurisdiction. That was a jurisdictional issue.

Palazzo: So that power of multiple referrals already had been part of the Speaker's powers anyway, you were just utilizing them, the power to manage the agenda?

Hastert: Right. Marge [Margaret S.] Roukema got up at a Republican conference one morning—Every Wednesday morning we had a Republican conference. Marge got up: “I'm so

tired of your coaching acronyms and athletic acronyms. We're not up to speed." I said, "Marge, I am what I am. You're not going to change me." That's what I talk about. I talk about team. I talk about working together.

Riley: Exactly. The first big thing out of the chute for the administration is the tax cut. In your recollection, were there some major issues with the White House that you had to deal with over the content of the tax cuts, the speed that it was moving? It came out of the House pretty fast, as I recall.

Hastert: Two issues were in question: 1) the so-called marriage tax, and 2) the inheritance tax. I always say the Democrats were always the adversary, the Senate was always the enemy. We could move things out of the House pretty quickly all the time. There was pretty much, I think, agreement on what the tax cuts should be, but the Senate was always cutting a deal. So [Charles E.] Grassley, Senate Finance Committee Chair, was always cutting a deal with the Democrats and whoever was the Chairman or Ranking Member over there. The Senate would go back and forth; they all held hands with each other. That was always the frustration, what we passed and what was going to come out of the Senate. Sometimes we'd have to pass a tax bill three times before we could ever get what we wanted out of the Senate.

Garrett: I think the main issue was that House bills were split. There were two or three tax bills. Then when the Senate put a sunset on the tax bill, that was the key difference, I think.

Hastert: The Senate said they couldn't do anything more than ten years. That was the frustration. If you're going to do, for instance, the inheritance tax, how can you say—It brought it down to zero over a ten-year period. Then if somebody died on December 30th at such-and-such a time, and the next day it went back up, that's not fair. How are you going to plan estates? How are people going to be able to sustain a small business or family from one generation to another?

What happened with small businesses was small businesses didn't have enough capital to pay the tax, so you had to sell the business. So how are you going to keep businesses small? Who bought them? It was the Fortune 500 companies that were starting to pick up those small businesses. How are you going to keep a family farm together? People who bought these family farms were people who had capital, and they were big corporate farms. So instead of having 180 acres or 400 acres, it went to somebody who had 10,000 acres.

Garrett: I think the thing that comes up in the tax bill, which seems to be a model for the Bush administration, is you have the votes in the House, work through the House, take it as far as you can go, and then deal with the Senate at the margins and then in the conference hopefully—

Hastert: In the conference you just kept on banging. Senate leadership—Lott was pretty good at moving people. Frist was not as good at moving people. I can tell you a story when Frist was there. It was one of the last tax bills we had. It was a change in the tax code. So we get an agreement, and Frist had just become leader. Lott had just left and Frist was leader.

We worked through the details. We sat down and finally the leadership decided where these numbers were going to be, and I don't know exactly what the real issues were. It was time and amount. Grassley found out. He got on the floor after we made our agreement, very late at night,

and said, “They might think they have an agreement, but I have an agreement with the Senate Democrats. We’re not going to change that.” That was after Frist and I had agreed.

So I went into Frist’s office the next morning. I was waiting for him when he came in. I said, “Look, we can work together, but if we shake and have an agreement, you’re going to have to control your people. We can’t work together unless your word—I can take it—is your bond.” He felt terrible and had been betrayed by Grassley.

The President calls us down to the White House to work this thing out. Bill Thomas, as I said, can be very mercurial. So Thomas was ready to just go crazy. I said, “Bill, this is what we’re going to do.” I talked to DeLay about it, so DeLay understood. I think by this time DeLay was probably the majority leader. I said, “I’m going to ask you and Bill to work out something that is workable, a compromise, and let me do the dirty deed here.” So our strategy was that we would all go in. We happened to be on the [Harry S.] Truman balcony. It was a beautiful spring day. I think it was not too hot, but it was nice to be sitting there. Of course everybody had a beer or something. The President was drinking near-beer, sitting there and talking, and Cheney was there. My staff was there, and DeLay was there. Grassley was there. Thomas was there. The President, obviously, was there.

So we started out, “Mr. President, we have a real problem here, that Senator Frist and I have an agreement, but there was a statement made on the Senate floor that we couldn’t do this.” I said, “I think it is very egregious. If somebody is trying to go around the agreement that we put together and said they can’t do it, I can’t see how he can be appointed, that person, to the conference committee.” It was before the conference committee. You can see that Grassley’s face just got red and Frist’s face is getting white. The President is looking at me and Cheney is over there shaking his head.

Right on cue, Thomas said, “Oh, I think we can work this out.” It just worked perfectly. Cheney in his book had a different recollection—He had to go work things out. But I think we had everything worked out before we got off the balcony. Those were some of the things you had to do.

Riley: We have the tax bill. Is there anything else on the first tax bills?

Palazzo: No, I think the only other thing that started to happen at that time was that there was a surplus for a short period of time.

Hastert: We paid down \$650 billion of public debt in the first four years I was Speaker, but what happened—You had the whole Enron situation; you had the high-tech stock issue. Everybody put in \$1,000 on a stock and expected to cash it in a year later for twice as much money. It was a money machine. Well, that could only go on so long. That blew up. We were down \$250 billion just in capital gains receipts.

What I’m trying to do is get the President—This has a timeline to it. This was September 10, 2001. I get an appointment with the President on a Monday. I come in early Monday afternoon and sit down and say, “I think we need to get some economists in to try and look over the horizon. What do we have to do? Is it capital gains or is it free trade? Treat dividends differently? What do we have to do to get this economy going again and get people with some

faith in the markets?” Everybody’s IRA [individual retirement account] and everything else was tied to the markets. One of the things we’re trying to talk about with Social Security is giving people more of a free market, and if the markets go to heck, how are you going to do this?

We had this discussion, and then Bush went off to Florida and 9/11 happened and we completely went into a different situation. But until that downturn in that market, and of course after 9/11 we held the line on spending, but we spent on defense and veterans and homeland security. After 9/11, those were the only things that were really starting to go over more than what we had spent before.

Palazzolo: One of the things, I guess, before 9/11 happens, there are two big bills going through the House: taxes and education.

Hastert: Right.

Palazzolo: It seems to me those actually took slightly different paths. The tax bill was kind of like the textbook: drive it through the House, get what you can out of the Senate. The education bill was very different. It seems like that was much more of a bipartisan negotiation. The reason why I mention this, Mr. Speaker, is because in political science we try to sort out the different ways in which legislation gets through, and it doesn’t always follow a simple textbook pattern, as you just pointed out. I thought it would be interesting here to reflect a little bit on when is it— Could you get a sense from where you were sitting of what the President was trying to do in terms of either taking this more bipartisan strategy on education and taking what would be more of a partisan, or what we call “crosspartisan” strategy on taxes?

Hastert: On the education piece we had—First of all, there could have been a fight for who was going to be Chairman in Labor, but Boehner had gotten bounced out of leadership, so he was kind of the guy. Pete Hoekstra, with whom I work now in our firm, Pete really wanted it. Pete was conservative and he had his own ideas about what education should be, so there was a fight. It went into steering committee and Boehner won out. Hoekstra was a little bit bitter. Hoekstra really was opposed to No Child Left Behind. He fought it tooth and nail.

Here is a deal where our “conservatives,” a lot of the ’92 people, some of them—Pete came in in ’90 I think—were philosophically opposed to what Bush was trying to do. They didn’t think there ought to be more federal fingers in education. Education should be a local entity and be under local control. You shouldn’t have federal mandates. Of course a lot of Democrats think everybody should have more federal mandates.

Here was a thing that Bush really thought was going to improve education. He had done it in Texas with some success and his Secretary of Education had come with him from Texas. Really No Child Left Behind was cutting into the core of the actability of education. So you could compare tests, and here’s how you’re doing and here’s where poor teachers are and here’s where good classrooms are. People could make those comparisons. Of course the unions didn’t like it. [Edward M.] Kennedy thought there was some merit to it. Boehner was the guy carrying that portfolio. He went and really worked it out, he and Kennedy with the White House’s help on both sides. I think the White House really leaned over to do this on a bipartisan basis.

Taxes, this is a philosophical thing, where education was—I got my master’s in the history of

philosophy of education—had absolutely no relevancy to reality. [laughter] You can fight over taxes. Education was different. Everybody had a different opinion.

Riley: What was your role in both of these things?

Hastert: The education thing I just let Boehner go. The White House was very engaged, so I said, “You take it. We can pass the bill. We’re going to have resistance on our side, but if you get an agreement, we’ll pass it.” So that bill was kind of baked and put together on a bipartisan basis before we ever got it out.

Riley: But Boehner was the one who was the chief cook or baker—

Hastert: He and Ted Kennedy, because the Democrats had control—

Garrett: And George Miller, right?

Hastert: George Miller, yes.

Riley: So you got the bill. The White House is pushing it, so what does a Speaker of the House in this situation, where you have a significant portion of your—

Hastert: The White House wanted it and it was going to be a bipartisan bill. We just let it come to the floor on a bipartisan basis. I’m not even sure we whipped it.

Riley: Do you remember specific votes where you were whipping in the pre-9/11 era?

Hastert: I whipped every vote. Once you’re a Whip, you’re always a Whip. I would get the same seven or eight or ten people who were difficult all the time, especially if we didn’t have the 218 votes. If we had 218 votes, we just went with it.

Riley: Gotcha.

Hastert: Most votes really didn’t come down to that. Some of the more difficult votes—I told a story in the book about looking at an opportunity to be an assistant principal. A friend of mine was a principal and there were always seven or eight chairs outside of his office with the same kids in those chairs every day. The whole process, they end up in the legislature and in Congress and Speaker. I had this beautiful office with a view, and I had these seven or eight chairs. I end up being principal of the Capitol, the disciplinarian.

Riley: With the same people. So you knew who your problems were with?

Hastert: Oh, yes. Sometimes different people for different situations.

Riley: Who were your main problems?

Hastert: Different problems at different times. Sometimes there were a lot of the more conservative people who were really in the far-right wing that you had to bring along. I did a lot of stuff on health care. I remember even before I was Speaker—Charlie Norwood, who was a hard case and wanted everything for the docs, and Thomas—Charlie is on Energy and

Commerce, Thomas on Ways and Means. Thomas wanted it his way.

I'd be at this table and we'd get everything settled down and bring people sort of in agreement, and then Charlie would say some obnoxious thing to Thomas and get him riled up. I'd be sitting over there and kick Norwood in the shin. "Just shut up. We've got this deal done." A lot of the stuff is just personal stuff all the time. The important thing to remember is even if you didn't get someone's vote today, you will need it tomorrow.

I remember sitting with Thomas and Bill Young when we were trying to get a highway bill done. What happened is the President gave us a mark and we agreed. The highway bill was going to be \$350 billion. We were almost getting this bill done, ready to go. A highway bill is a tough thing. You have all the pieces. You have donor states and donee states, and the donors are unhappy because the donees are getting more. You try to get all that balanced out, plus projects that Members want. So we've just about got this thing done and I get pulled into the White House one morning. OMB came in and said we're not going to have enough money in the Highway Trust Fund and we don't want to tip outside the Highway Trust Fund, so we have to move the bill down from \$350 billion to \$275 billion. That's a huge cut.

You're cutting into everybody, changing everything that people had finally agreed on. It took us another, probably a year, to get that bill done. I remember finally at the very end I'm sitting down with Bill Thomas and Don Young. Don Young was notorious for carrying a knife in his boot. He was an old steamboat captain from Alaska. He was just rough and ready. His wife was an Indian woman. That's how Don was. He had a quick trigger. So did Thomas.

So I'm trying to keep these guys at bay with each other. Thomas looks like the guru. If we're going to do something, an extra tax, how are we going to do it? Thomas was hocus-pocus. He could do a lot of adjusting without really passing a new tax. Don was sitting there, blah, blah, "You have to do this; we can't cut here." Finally, I said to Young, "Really, we're going to do it this way." Thomas said, "This is the number I want." Then we got together and we did it. But just sometimes it is bringing people together at the table and working it out.

I think when we did it—In 2006 we had a reconciliation bill. When we started out, DeLay was majority leader. What we wanted to take was mandatory spending, not appropriated spending. There was a lot of redundancy and a lot of progress that could be cut. We were talking about a trillion dollars in appropriated spending and two trillion dollars counting mandatory spending when you add Social Security, Medicare, pensions, and all those programs. But there were a lot of programs—housing projects and education projects—There might be six or seven pieces of legislation that all do the same thing.

We started going out and cutting out redundant spending and mandatory and we cut \$450 billion over ten years. It was tough to do that. People like the former Governor of Delaware, Mike Castle; and Jim Walsh from New York; and some of those people who were HUD [Housing and Urban Development] people who were more moderate, they didn't want to give up any of those programs. We just had a terrible time because we had a very narrow vote.

Then we had guys like Ron Paul who never voted for anything. So the seven- or eight-, ten-, twelve-vote margin always was skinned down, because you just never had all the votes. We

had to get almost everybody on board. So we finally pass it with \$450 billion. It went to the Senate. The Senate mulled around on this bill for a while and sent it back to us at \$45 billion. So they cut 90 percent of our savings out of this reconciliation bill. Then it went to conference.

In conference, Senator [Gordon H.] Smith from Oregon found out that his lentil program was being cut and just threw a hissy fit. Frist never could change those people, so he gave in. Well, he gave in to lentils, and then we had to give in to wool and had to give in to the bee program and all these honeybee programs, then the apple people wanted in, all these things that were subsidized agriculture programs. The bill went from \$45 billion to \$40 billion, but we passed it.

Now \$40 billion was a piddling amount. Of course the conservatives, guys like [Michael R.] Pence, who is now the Governor of Indiana, and [T. Jeb] Hensarling, who is now Financial Institutions Chair. Those guys were the firebrands at the time. We would work with them, but they were very unhappy. So you had the moderates unhappy and you had the conservatives unhappy, but you had to bring them together to get something done. It was just working to get people together around the table and find a solution to be able to agree on.

What happened: DeLay ended up getting indicted, so he left, and Boehner was challenging Roy Blunt for majority leader. So Boehner was out campaigning all the time and wasn't helping us at all on this thing. He wasn't elected yet to do anything. But poor Roy, he and I sat for months at a time with these same people. Roy could tell you today who sat in what chair for how many hours beating on these people trying to bring them around. He was the Whip, but actually didn't have a majority leader, so he was kind of acting majority leader. I had to step in to get that piece of legislation. That was probably the toughest piece of legislation to get passed within our own because we didn't have the votes.

Pelosi had the National Council of Churches and Catholic League and the Lutherans and—Everybody was beating us up and saying we're terrible people because we're cutting some of this spending. It was just things you had to do. We got it done. That was probably the toughest piece of legislation we ever did.

Then the other really tough legislation was always trade legislation. Of course, Bush tried to push trade legislation. Even when I was the Whip, Clinton had the NAFTA [North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement] piece. Especially the GOP ["Grand Old Party," Republicans] southerners that had textiles in their district. Any time you had a trade bill, it dealt with a textile issue. I remember a couple of our Members that I had to continually go to for a vote on trade. They voted for it, but it hurt them. Every time we had a trade bill, I had to go to this one guy and have him change his vote and vote with us. There was always blood on the floor. It was really bad, but there were things you had to do.

Riley: I remember in your book you indicated that you might drive at some point through somebody's district on one of your trips and how you gathered a renewed appreciation for the pressures that he was operating under because he was representing a constituency from a really economically depressed area.

Hastert: Like I said, I made a thousand campaign stops. I was in almost all our Members' districts, and a lot of people who were challengers. So I was almost everywhere in the United

States. We were in every state. Didn't get to Vermont very much. Finally had a candidate that we worked on, [*laughter*] but when you're there, you get a sense of where people come from. I said I learned when I was in the legislature, there was this guy from what we call "down below," which is like the east St. Louis area, to a little bit above Granite City—that area almost by Alton, Illinois. He was always ranting against the farmers, really a pro-union guy, a younger guy, smart, Air Force Academy graduate, fighter pilot in Vietnam, good credentials. Where is this guy coming from? How can he stand up day after day and rant and rave like this?

Finally, one day I got on a train—I was going to meet my wife in St. Louis, so from Springfield I went down through his district, with all these old refineries that were all broken down and nothing going on and factories with windows broken out, empty, unused, and unemployment. Everybody is from somewhere. You build that appreciation. Even people on the other side of the aisle, because you know where they're coming from. They're representing people and that's what makes, I think, the Congress a great place, because there is the place where you bring all these differences together.

My old adversary Dick Gephardt would say it is the only place where you can sit there and argue with words and come up with a consensus instead of pitchforks and knives.

Perry: So is that the Tip [Thomas P.] O'Neill classic line that "all politics is local," and then it's up to a leader like yourself to try to knit together the common interests?

Hastert: I think so. It is. You have to find that commonality sometime. You're never going to bring hither and yon together, but you have to get hither and hither to shake hands.

Riley: We're off to a terrific start. Why don't we take a five-minute break?

[BREAK]

Riley: I would guess as long as you've been in politics you've probably had some of the world's worst coffee.

Hastert: And fried chicken. I worked my way through college cooking fried chicken. I became an expert. You get a lot of rubber chicken.

Garrett: Is that what you cooked at your family's restaurant?

Hastert: Yes, we were a big chicken place. [more discussion of unusual cuisine]

Riley: You have a lot of experience in Japan.

Hastert: Absolutely.

Riley: A friend of mine had gone to Okinawa on a Fulbright to teach—this is Mike [Fowler].

They did that thing with sea urchin.

Hastert: Oh, yes. I eat almost anything, but I don't like uni. Uni is sea urchin.

Riley: He said he was going to try that and there was a plate of it that was maybe one of these that went all the way around. He said he took a bite and the gag reflex was overwhelming. He managed to swallow it down and he thought, *Well, at least that's over with*. So he passed the plate on and he noticed nobody was taking anything. It worked its way all the way back around to him and he said to the guy on his right, "Don't you want some of this?" "No, I can't eat it. That's for you." He had to eat the whole thing.

Hastert: Uni is something you put in sushi.

Riley: Yes.

Hastert: Not good.

Riley: So what's worse, sea urchin or sheep eyeballs?

Hastert: Probably the sheep.

Riley: I'm doing an oral history of international cuisine.

Perry: Speaking of eyeballs, I was watching the Ethel Kennedy documentary that her daughter did for HBO [Home Box Office]. Crazy Ethel Kennedy, in a number of ways, turned up one day with a seal. She got a seal somewhere and took it home to Hickory Hill and they had to feed it fish every day, but it didn't like the fish eyeballs. So it would eat the fish and then she said there were eyeballs all over Hickory Hill that it was leaving behind.

Hastert: I got invited to Ethel Kennedy's one time. When I first came, Joe Kennedy came into the Congress with us.

Perry: Right, her son, the second.

Hastert: So we had a new Members' reception. We got invited to go out to the home. It was like walking into a museum. They had some guests there. The old historian—I'm trying to think of what his name was.

Perry: Arthur Schlesinger?

Hastert: No, we met him up in—He was in Harvard when we went there. There was another guy.

Perry: Ted Sorensen?

Hastert: Maybe. Big hair, kind of redhead-ish, big guy. He was telling stories. It was just an amazing place. The whole place was just covered with pictures of Robert [Kennedy] and Jack [Kennedy] and the kids and family. I'd never been in a house with so many pictures.

Perry: I went there as an intern. I interned for my Kentucky Senator back in the '70s, Wendell Ford. So we went to a fund-raiser. They said there was a fund-raiser at Hickory Hill, so we all went. It was in the summer, so I went to the pool house, and it was the same thing, only because it was a big pool house, the pictures of Bobby were over seven feet.

Riley: Jumbos.

Perry: Yes, jumbo size, all over.

Hastert: The guy I work with every day was a chief of staff for Wendell Ford.

Perry: Is that right? What is his name?

Hastert: Rob Mangas.

Perry: When I was there, it was Bill Western, Jim Fleming. In fact, Senator Ford didn't have a chief of staff. He had three AAs [administrative assistants], and they were the troika that ran the office, but they were interesting.

Hastert: Rob played for the University of Kentucky, and that's how he got in. I work with him every day. A friend of mine had a contact with somebody who had a lot of contacts in Afghanistan. We picked up to run the election of the guy to run for the President of Afghanistan—but he sat in with all the negotiations with the Afghans and—

Perry: Is this Abdullah Abdullah?

Hastert: Yes, Abdullah Abdullah.

Perry: I love that name.

Hastert: His brother, the last guy, he got killed—

Palazzolo: His brother.

Hastert: A couple of elections ago.

Perry: Yes.

Hastert: It is interesting.

Perry: I'm sure.

Hastert: So Abdullah Abdullah is our candidate anyway.

Perry: He is a very bright man as I understand it, and very Americanized and westernized.

Hastert: I think he is someone we can get along with.

Perry: Absolutely.

Hastert: But I also say we lost 3,000 lives over there and billions of dollars and ten years of angst just trying to make things better there. We hope we can leave it a better place. I think whoever becomes President is a part of that.

It's kind of fun, what I'm doing now. Every day is something different. We did that one day, and the next day we're working on spent nuclear waste storage, and another day working on something else.

Riley: All right. We're going to get to some of this eventually.

Perry: I have a question before we leave these early legislative acts, and it's about the Kennedys, by chance. I wanted to see if the timeline is accurate in saying that Congressman DeLay and you, it says, reportedly asked President Bush to drop Edward Kennedy from the NCLB [No Child Left Behind] alliance because of congressional conservatives not supporting some elements of the bill that he did. Is that the case?

Hastert: Edward Kennedy?

Perry: Yes, Senator Kennedy and the Alliance on NCLB, No Child Left Behind.

Hastert: I don't remember doing that. It sounds more DeLay-ish than me.

Perry: It does. Did you work at all with Senator Kennedy?

Hastert: Yes, I did. The first time, before I was Speaker, I was doing medical savings accounts. We got them passed in the House, and in the Senate, Kennedy was not going to move them because it didn't go to single payer. It was a different free market system. I remember sitting for a week with Kennedy and Daschle going over it piece by piece by piece. Finally, when we did the HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] we got it in as part of that HIPAA act. It kind of became the camel's nose under the tent.

Kennedy was a very decent guy to work with, but I remember Bill Archer was the Chairman of Ways and Means, and of course Kennedy was Finance. We got it done, but the final deal Kennedy went to see Archer and gave him a book from his mother, Rose [Kennedy]. I was left out of the cycle, but I did all the negotiations. It was Archer's ego.

Riley: Exactly.

Perry: Does this bring us to the Patients' Bill of Rights?

Palazzo: Are we going to stay on it chronologically?

Hastert: Sure.

Palazzo: One of the things I wanted to talk to you about was the USA PATRIOT Act [Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001]. You talk a lot in your book about the effect of 9/11 and that sort of thing. I just wonder if you could talk a little bit about your role in that process from the bill going

from the Senate to the House and then ultimately getting resolved. Do you recall—

Hastert: You had the Attorney General, who was pushing it, and our guy Sensenbrenner, who was head of Judiciary at the time. So I got a call one morning. I was in Omaha or some God-forsaken place. I was out there campaigning. I was on the road and I get this call from Sensenbrenner. “We’re not getting—They’re trying to push this thing through. It’s going to go regular order,” and I said, “Yes, it’s going to go regular order.” So the Attorney General just wanted to slam-bang it and not go through the process. He wanted everything his way with no protection.

I went to the White House and said, “No, it’s got to go through regular order or we’ll never get it done.” You had [Patrick J.] Leahy and those guys over on the other side of the Senate. If you don’t go regular order, you’re not going to get this bill. So it did. It got changed a lot. There were a lot more protections in it. It was still a controversial bill, but we got it done and we did go regular order.

Palazzolo: That’s interesting that you reflect in that way, because one of the things I think that scholars would want to think about is how powerful the President is at that moment. So it is 9/11; we tend to think that power flows to the executive. I guess my account of the Patriot Act is that there is a lot more give-and-take going on from the legislative side, beginning in the Senate with Leahy. On the House side, I think Sensenbrenner worked with [John J., Jr.] Conyers, and they drafted a unanimously supported bill coming out of that Judiciary.

Hastert: But the fact is we didn’t take what they handed us. It went through the process.

Riley: What they handed is what the White House—

Hastert: Yes, the White House. The Attorney General was going to jam this thing through. I said, “Hell, no. You’re not going to do it.” I called him up and said, “This bill is going to go regular order. We’re not going to do what you want to do.” I told the President that.

Palazzolo: Do you recall a meeting that was reported where the Senate had passed their bill, then the House Judiciary Committee passed the bill? I remember reading somewhere where you were called in along with Sensenbrenner to talk with somebody in the White House, at which point you then decided to adopt the Senate bill, I think. Is that right? Do you remember, or is it too much in the weeds?

Hastert: A lot of things happened. The nine months after 9/11 we had so much that we had to do. The Patriot Act was just one piece of that. We were redoing Homeland Security. We were taking 26 government agencies and trying to combine them into one, which in hindsight maybe wasn’t the best thing to do, but we did it. We had to create a reinsurance program because we had every airplane in the United States grounded and no airline would fly their plane unless there was a reinsurance program—terrorist insurance. So we had to create reinsurance out of whole cloth. We became the reinsurers, the federal government, which is something that some of my guys like DeLay and those guys didn’t want to do. But there wasn’t any alternative, because Lloyds of London and those people weren’t going to reinsure on terrorism insurance, and we had to do it.

We had people who were willing. The private sector was willing to float the insurance, but not the reinsurance on it. It was the same way with the building. In Manhattan for instance, the AT&T [American Telephone and Telegraph] building next to the World Trade Tower, one side of it was just melted off, burned off. The switches were all clogged and nothing was working. There was no telephone service to lower Manhattan. You couldn't open up the markets until you had telephone service. Nobody was going to build a building unless there was reinsurance or terrorism insurance because nobody wanted to have the liability. So we had to create reinsurance on terrorism just to get any construction done.

What we did in the first nine months, probably the first nine weeks, after 9/11 was amazing. We sat in my office night after night after night just working things out. DeLay would be over, Daschle would be there, and if it was appropriations we'd have the Senator from Alaska in, Ted Stevens. We always had [Robert C.] Byrd. I remember—This is off the record—but Byrd one time—We were in there and Arney was there. You could see Arney was at one end of the table and Byrd was at the other end. Arney never said much in these negotiations, but he was there.

Somebody asked Byrd, and Byrd got up and started a tirade against Arney, because Arney had said that Byrd used the word “nigger” one time. Byrd remembered it. It was a year, a year and a half ago, but just—Finally we had to calm Byrd down, get his staff to talk to him, get him refocused on the whole thing to get anything done. He was a factor on the appropriations part. It was just those types of things that I remember. You had to dull the thorn to get through the process. It was the little things that would hold things up.

Sam Lancaster kept my door. He was my office manager. Hillary Clinton, as Senator from New York, wanted to get in the discussions. New York was going to do OK on this thing—We're talking to Governor [George E.] Pataki and everything—but if Hillary got in, then you'd get everybody's hackles up. We weren't letting anybody else in, just leadership. She was screaming and yelling at my door guy, Sam Lancaster, because he stood in her way and wouldn't let her in. He talks about that. It wasn't in the best graces of Hillary, but those are the kind of little things that had to happen because things were going pretty well, and you didn't want somebody leaving the table because they're unhappy with somebody coming in and making demands.

Riley: I want to come at this issue from a slightly different way, Dan, and that is to ask you about your own sense about the institutional relationships and the changes after 9/11, if in fact we've gotten to that point. There may be some bits and pieces of things we'll want to go back to. In your book, it is clear that you have a sensitivity about congressional authority and Presidential power.

Hastert: Separation of powers.

Riley: Exactly. So how do you characterize the changes that occur after 9/11, and what was Congress doing? Was it merely being responsive to the President's leadership? Or is there an independent kind of—

Hastert: People praise 9/11 for a time of bipartisanship, but it was also working both with the Congress and the administration. We had the safety of the country at stake. I remember sitting down with the President and making a pact that we're going to do everything we can so that 9/11

never happens here again. We did a lot of things, the Patriot Act and other things, and security issues and CIA issues and letting people have some operative ability so that it didn't happen again. The White House tended to pose the operative problems and we solved them.

Circumstance—We were lucky; we actually helped prevent potential terrorist attacks. People will debate that for a long time. We did work together, but we still kept the priorities of the House. For instance, in the Patriot Act we stood up. We weren't going to do what the administration wanted to do; we were going to go through our whole system and get it done. All this action was actually legislation: it was debated; it went through the Senate; it went through committees; and it went through the House.

Riley: I guess the first major act would have to be the Authorization for Use of Military Force. Do you remember any of the particulars?

Hastert: That was Afghanistan, right?

Riley: I guess it was more of a generic—Forgive me for interrupting.

Hastert: I guess there were two—Afghanistan was not a very controversial thing. When it went to Iraq, the yellow powder [yellowcake] and all the reports from the different security agencies—the Brits, ours, Israelis, others—all said that Saddam Hussein had this yellow powder and the ability—weapons of mass destruction. It was all part of this—People still say it was a ploy by Cheney. I don't think so. But we made a decision on the information we had. Hillary voted for it and Kennedy voted for it. It was bipartisan. Some people were for it; some people were against it.

Riley: The question I wanted to head down was the original—There was a sort of generic Authorization for Use of Military Force. It would have been within a few days after 9/11, the blanket authorization to use force to deal with whatever was necessary.

Hastert: We weren't sure what was out there. I'm not sure. I don't remember. That whole period of time, every day you had 13 things that you had to do. You had to get through them. People said, "Weren't you worried? Weren't you afraid?" Never had time to be. Even 9/11 was such a day, all this stuff was before you. You had to get it done and you had to get through it. You never had a chance to worry about your safety or what you were doing or anything else.

Riley: How hard was it among the conservatives in your party—You're looking at a very different kind of environment where there is going to be a growth in government and there is going to be a growth in the size of the police state and surveillance and things of that nature. Is that creating headaches for the party that you're having to deal with at this time?

Hastert: We had some problems we had to solve. First of all, nobody knew this was coming. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] had some ideas of what was happening, the CIA had some things, but really during the Clinton administration they siloed all these; there was no crossfertilization or crossinformation. So what we tried to do in the first act of Homeland Security is try to bring some of these agencies together. There was a whole issue of TSI [transportation security inspectors]: Should we create this thing? Then should it be unionized or shouldn't it be unionized? There was a whole bigger government thing that was an issue out

there. So every security issue had to be weighed against the issue of civil liberties.

As I said, in retrospect, if we had four or five years to look at it, maybe we would do some things differently, but we did what we had to do with the knowledge that we had at the time. We made the very best choices we could make with what we had in our hands to make that decision with. People always say, “Don’t you regret that you did this or did that?” Probably, in retrospect. I coached for a lot of years, so we always had Monday-morning quarterbacks, and everybody analyzed what the coach did on Friday night on Monday morning at the barbershop or coffee shop. “They should have put that kid in, done this.” But we did what we did with the knowledge that we had and the resources that we had at the time.

I’m used to that Monday-morning quarterbacking. I go and say that we made the very best decision with the ability to do what we could politically, lining up votes to get it done and with the information that we had. Almost everything we did was that kind of—

Riley: You write a little bit about the anthrax scare in your book, I think coming on the heels of 9/11—

Hastert: That was actually a month after. So 9/11 was 9/11; this was 10/15. I remember that morning, because we got up early. We had a briefing at the White House. We had Daschle and Lott and myself and Gephardt, so we go to the White House. We’re always getting there a little bit early. We’re sitting in one of the outside rooms waiting to be ushered into the breakfast area, which is off the Oval Office.

So Daschle and Lott come up to Gephardt and me and say, “We have a real problem. We think there’s weapons-grade anthrax that has been sent through the mail into the Senate office buildings. What we’d like to do is shut down today so we get it out, but we don’t want to shut down without you guys agreeing to do it.” Gephardt and I talked for a few minutes. We agree that stuff is pretty serious. I didn’t know to what degree it was. We agreed that we’d shut down in the House and they’d shut down the Senate.

We talked about it at the breakfast. The President understands. He agrees that it is the right thing to do. We go out and I have a nine o’clock conference meeting. I go to my conference and I have a few guys who say, “Oh, that’s a Senate problem. We shouldn’t do that.” I persuaded people that this is the best thing to do, for us to shut down, get away from here. The doctor came in and I think said, “Don’t open anything in the mail that is suspicious,” and this and that.

Gephardt had his meeting I think at 9:30, did the same thing. Had a little resistance, but prevailed. Then the Senate goes in at 10:00 or 10:30 with their conference, Democrat and Republican Members. The Senate—I’m not sure who it was, I think it was probably McCain, that’s the word that got out—“Hell no, we’re going in. Those guys are all pansies.” That was the deal that we cut with the leadership. Then Lott and Daschle caved to their Members and reneged, so they go ahead and open up the Senate for business after we closed the House.

What they do is they also move all this mail over to the ceremonial Vice President’s office, into the Capitol building. That’s contaminated. So this mail is all the way through the Senate system. There is a lot of the stuff—A number had those letters coming in. But we closed down the House and set up this process to catch the mail. It only gets into one of our office buildings; I think it

went into Longworth. I'm not sure exactly. We were out and closed that post office down. I remember we had to do a temporary type of thing maybe for three weeks.

The Senate was out of their offices for six months. A number of months they weren't in their offices. It was probably for me the biggest breach of trust that I saw while we were in the Congress. It probably pushed Gephardt and me much closer together. We really had to deal with the enemy, and the enemy was the Senate.

I remember McCain was on [Jay] Leno or something, calling us cowards. The front page of the *New York Post* had a picture of Gephardt and me standing on the Capitol steps with a big headline: Wimps! We did what was the right thing to do, abided by their request, and then we were betrayed by those guys. It didn't make for a very trusting situation.

Riley: We didn't ask you about the [James M.] Jeffords situation.

Hastert: [William J.] Jefferson?

Riley: Jefferson comes later, but I'm curious about the extent to which that resonates in your office.

Hastert: It was interesting. The guy who ended up being the first Attorney General for Bush; and Jeffords; and the guy who was the Senator from Idaho who got caught in the restroom in Minnesota—

Palazzo: Larry Craig?

Hastert: Yes—and Lott were all in this quartet. They would go sing in this Senatorial quartet everywhere, boasting about the Senate, how well they got along together. Well, Jeffords was the first guy to get dropped from that quartet when they wouldn't let him sing in the quartet after he switched parties. That was always—We'd laugh at that; it was kind of a joke. They weren't very good anyway. *[laughter]* The quartet really had a history to it. Look, it's one of those quirks that happen. Jeffords was in the House and he was a little quirky when he was in the House. I remember him holding up dairy bills because of Vermont cows. Trying to get some accord in Agriculture was always problematic. Jeffords was always the guy dragging his feet.

Jeffords never got the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, or the ranking position on the Ag [Agriculture] Committee in the House. He had such a contrary view of dairy. Ed Madigan ended up with that spot. Ed Madigan became Secretary of Agriculture. I think Jeffords ran for the Senate just to get out of the House. He wasn't treated well. Then when he got to the Senate, I don't think he felt he was treated well, either. Part of this thing was there is much more camaraderie, I would think, in the Senate. There are fewer—They pat each other on the back all the time, defer to each other. You can tell I didn't spend much time in the Senate.

Anyway, there was this breach of trust somewhere in that process and his ego prevailed. When he switched parties, it changed the whole balance of power for us. We had the House and the Senate and the President. So it made things more difficult, but it was a close-enough margin, with the Vice President's vote. We could pull some people over. Lott had an ego. We weren't the same kind of people; we were a little different. But Lott was a Whip in the House and he was

very good. He could persuade people or get people to line up votes. So he was able to overcome that vote. He did a very good job in the Senate during that period of time in a rather adverse situation, rather than singing in a quartet.

Riley: You never appeared in any quartets?

Hastert: No, I never did.

Riley: How's your singing voice?

Hastert: I take the fifth. *[laughter]* This is confidential and won't be open for a long time. When I was in high school, everybody did minstrel shows. The only time I ever sang in my life was in a minstrel show, and I've never admitted it politically. I haven't opened my mouth—

Perry: What did you sing?

Hastert: "Old Man River," or something like that, maybe "Alexander's Ragtime Band."

Perry: You can do that at lunch for us, be the floor show.

Riley: Probably not.

Riley: Dan, anything in particular?

Palazzolo: Chronologically?

Riley: I don't know that we need to if there are pieces of things that you want to get to. Dan is going to have to go back to Richmond a little early. He'll have to take off after lunch, so there may be some things that we'll take out of sequence to give him a chance to dig into.

Palazzolo: I guess one of the things that I observed, just tracking some of the legislation, is— Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between your office and the White House over time? If we get past 9/11, there is the 2002 election, then there is the 2004 election. These elections are key flashpoints in terms of the agenda, what needs to move forward. I just wonder—Would you say that the relationship between your office and the White House was pretty constant over time, or did it decay or get better or worse?

Hastert: Nick Calio did a pretty good job, but when David Hobbs—David Hobbs was Dick Arney's chief of staff. He had good relations with DeLay's people, had a good relationship with my staff. We worked hand-in-glove; it was almost seamless. So there was constant communication between the White House and what we did, I think because of the personalities.

Palazzolo: I wonder if I could look at two issues, then, separately. One would be Social Security reform. After 2004 it looked like the President was focused a lot on Social Security reform. He went around the country and talked about it, but it seemed like there wasn't enough agreement within the House.

Hastert: Tom Reynolds, who was the campaign chairman at the time—They had their folks out

doing polls and seeing where things were. The thing that would split our party and split our base would be Social Security. We all want to do Social Security reform, but to go into the private sector with Social Security, the populace wasn't there. It was an issue that the Democrats could demagogue. Bush was safe after 2000; we weren't. If he wanted to be successful, we had to keep a majority, because quite frankly, when he didn't have a majority he couldn't do anything, as what happened after 2006.

We felt our goal, maybe independently from the White House, was to keep the majority. I remember going to a restaurant in D.C.—There was an Italian restaurant not too far from here, I forgot what the name was, but it was a meeting where we had the pollster and Tom Reynolds and my staff and a couple of other people from the NRCC [National Republican Congressional Committee] in. He gave this presentation about where the numbers were. We decided it probably wasn't a smart thing to move on Social Security reform, just because the numbers weren't there.

Palazzolo: So in a situation like this, is that something you communicate with the White House on?

Hastert: Yes. Two times I had to go down to the White House and tell the President face-to-face, "We can't do this." One was Social Security reform. We weren't going to get it done. The numbers weren't there. We can't do it, not going to do it. The will isn't there to do it in the House, and certainly if the will is not in the House, the will is not in the Senate. The other time was immigration reform.

After 2004, Bush was trying to push this again. There was movement in the Senate on getting immigration reform. I sat in meeting after meeting after meeting. I would go regular order. I wouldn't go outside of regular order, so I had to go to the Judiciary Committee. I had Lamar Smith, who was a good friend of mine. We came in together and we were classmates for now 20 years. Jim Sensenbrenner had his own view of the world and could be rather testy at times. You had Steve King from Iowa on Judiciary who certainly had his view on immigration. I'm trying to think of the guy from Colorado; he left the House. He was running again for the House from the suburbs outside of—

Riley: You can put it in the transcript later.

Hastert: He demagogued the issue. It was all he ever talked about, and he was getting national press on it.

Garrett: Are you talking about [Thomas G.] Tancredo?

Hastert: Yes, Tom Tancredo. He had kind of an Italian name—That was a joke. Anyway, he was absolutely against immigration. He became, in my view, a national demagogue on the issue. I remember going down to the White House. It was the day we were having the White House picnic for the Congress. I had an early meeting with the President. I went down and told him we can't get this through committee; it's not going to happen. He was very upset. Sometimes you had to tell him the bad news.

Palazzolo: I think that's interesting. It seems to me a very healthy relationship that the Speaker can go to the President and say, "Look, this isn't going to happen." But it's striking he seemed to

persist, particularly with Social Security for a couple of months and then even with immigration. What is your sense of that? When you give that kind of advice—

Hastert: It wasn't going to move. He may have persisted, but it wasn't going to move.

Palazzo: But why? Does that puzzle you? Why wouldn't they shift to another issue?

Hastert: Whatever rhetoric he had, he had to back off easily. He had the Senate tied up ready to go. He couldn't just turn around like that. I would think from his position he probably had to back off this thing, but he also believes in it very strongly, that it should have happened, and it wasn't going to.

Palazzo: If we go back to January of 2005, would it have made more sense to select some other issues that might have had a little bit more feasibility?

Hastert: You have to look back. We got most everything that he wanted done. This is something that was big for him. I remember we did leadership hearings all the way through the summer in 2006 about this and ways we could—but we couldn't finesse it.

Palazzo: I understand.

Hastert: Couldn't get it through.

Palazzo: Just one other issue I wanted to talk to you about, and that's on the embryonic stem cell research. This is about the [Michael N.] Castle-[Diana L.] DeGette bill, which wound up getting on the floor. I guess the puzzle from my standpoint would be that this wasn't something that you necessarily supported, and the President clearly didn't support, and yet it wound up on the floor and it passed. I don't think it followed the Hastert rule. I thought that was one of the bills that maybe was an exception.

Hastert: Let me go back. There never was a Hastert rule.

Riley: Please do.

Palazzo: That's a thing unto itself, but the idea that this bill went on the floor. Was there a way that you could have kept it off the floor? How did that happen? How did they—?

Hastert: This is a moral issue versus a moral issue. Can you make life better and save lives by having stem cell, and are you going to take embryos, which are live beings in different degrees in people's minds, but they are. So it was something that the religious right felt very strongly against. So it really split, not just split our party, it split the Congress. I think there were more people who thought we needed to do some things, especially in stem cell that doesn't necessarily hurt embryos. We should move forward with this legislation.

You always try to keep a balance, and the balance—I think it was moving out of the Senate if I remember right. I'm not sure.

Palazzo: It came out of the House first, and then Frist, in the summer I think of '05, decided

that he was now going to move it. But the regulatory framework was in place.

Hastert: The people who believed in it moved it through the committee and went through regular order. We were trying to constantly finesse it and trying to find a balance, and constantly having meetings between people with different positions. Never satisfied everybody, but the Castle-DeGette—They're both moderates in their own parties, somewhat to the left, both sides, DeGette was more to the left than most members of the Democratic Party, I would think, and of course Castle was more moderate. I always said it's a big-tent party. We had to have everybody.

Palazzolo: So the time was right for it in terms of the bill coming forward?

Hastert: I think sometimes things are ripe.

Palazzolo: At that point I think it built a number of cosponsors in the 200 range as far as cosponsorships went.

Hastert: When you have most of your people on something—

Palazzolo: So tell us about the Hastert rule. If there's no Hastert rule, that's interesting.

Hastert: The Hastert rule is kind of a misnomer. They asked me when we were doing immigration, "Why don't you just move this bill and get all the Democrat votes?" First of all, I'm not going to move anything when I don't have a majority of my own people, which is common sense. Every Speaker that ever was, if you start moving bills for which you don't have your own majority, you're not the leader anymore; someone else is the leader. So that was just kind of a common-sense thing that I said. Then they put that down as the Hastert rule.

I always said the Hastert rule was when you get 218 votes, you can move the bill. I don't care if they're Democratic votes or Republican. But if you count them, make sure that you go back to those people three times to make sure you get the vote, you move it.

Palazzolo: That's interesting. It keeps getting used at times.

Hastert: Oh, yes, used and abused. The fact is that if you use regular order, you probably need a majority of your party to move through, to the floor, second reading or passage plus a conference report.

Palazzolo: Especially in the Obama administration, because there are so many issues that have had to go with crosspartisan votes in the other direction. The big debt ceiling, for example. A lot of issues.

Riley: More than there should be?

Hastert: The majority party, in my view, should be able to build a consensus to be the leader. You shouldn't have the centerpiece legislation come from someplace else; it needs to come out of your own party, I would think, even if it is a compromise.

Look, everybody has a different style. John Boehner certainly has a different style. John

Boehner's style ever since he came to Congress—He had a group he called the “magnificent seven”; Boehner was the leader. One of the Members that came in with him is a good friend of mine named Jim Nussle. He got Nussle to go out on the House floor with a bag over his head. Boehner stood at the back behind the rail and smoked a cigarette and watched. If it went over well, Boehner would take credit for it; if it didn't go over well, Nussle had this bag over his head. That was just John's style, push everybody else, let them do it, and if it works, it works. If not, he doesn't take any crap for it. But still it's John style. He'll push everything out, let somebody do it. If it works—

I did a lot of stuff in the back room. I wasn't on TV, didn't do a lot of press conferences. I brought people in constantly around the table. I wore out three tables. We had that old Lincoln room with that big table around. I had maybe five meetings a day around that table, just bringing people in, working things out, and trying to find a consensus. It's engaging. You take people who don't want to do what you want to do; you make them sit down and talk to you and find a middle ground.

Riley: And don't let them leave the table until you have them.

Hastert: I had the keys to the john and fed them coffee. That's an old union trick. *[laughter]*

Riley: Looking back, I see you wore out three tables. Can you point to a couple of instances for us where Speaker Hastert's fingerprints are all over something but we don't really know about it?

Hastert: I don't know—

Riley: This is a time for you to toot your horn.

Hastert: Almost everything we did I was bringing people to the table and my fingerprints were over everything. It was the way I operated, and everybody else took credit for it.

Riley: Sure.

Hastert: I always believed that what you needed to do is—The opposite—Newt was always Newt did this, and Newt did that. I felt that if you kept your people busy and let them take credit for something—It's Reagan's saying, “Who cares who gets the credit as long as you get it done?” I didn't care about having my name on headlines or a bill being named after me. One time I remember I was very incensed because [Thomas R.] Harkin and the Republican Senator from Pennsylvania, both leaders of Senate Appropriations—

Perry: [Arlen] Specter?

Hastert: Specter. Those two guys, they were Appropriations. They were always dumping a lot of money into Atlanta, the health care, Center for Disease Control, big bucks. Then they'd name a building after them. I was just incensed. If something is credible, we ought to do it, not with the contingency that you get your name on a building. So I held up an appropriations bill, Health and Human Services, which was for billions and billions of dollars, because they had all this money going to these agencies and then these guys got their names on the building. That's just wrong. I

ended up losing that because we needed to appropriate the money. I always said that we ought to call it after Sojourner [Truth], two women, civil rights movement, or something. I lost that fight. I'll probably never have anything named after me.

Perry: A table?

Riley: You have your center.

Hastert: It wasn't named by the Senate though. [*laughter*]

Perry: Can I circle back to your point about campaign finance reform, so-called reform, McCain-Feingold and what that did to the parties in terms of funding and therefore creating extremism. It's this extremism that doesn't lend itself, of course, to bringing people together and finding middle ground or finding compromise. Is that part of the change as well that you see, and/or that extremists on both sides really *don't* want to accomplish things? It is by not accomplishing things that they are accomplishing their agenda?

Hastert: Partly that's right, because if you're not going to get what you want, nobody else is going to get what they want either if you don't give them what they want. Then you're not passing bad legislation. But I think the legislative process is there to solve problems. If you're going to solve problems, you need to come together and find a common ground. A lot of these folks—60 percent of the Congress is new in the last six years—All these people talk about term limits, but it is a nonentity now.

The issue is I think some people in Congress—and I don't know them, it's all hearsay or what you read about or what somebody tells you about—they're just not willing to come to the table. It's not "no," but "*hell no*," which is unfortunate. Again, I would say those are the people you have to sit down and engage. The longer people are there, they mellow a little bit when they really find out what the system is and what you have to do, even the hardest guys. Paul Ryan and Hensarling and Pence were throwing daggers when they came to the Congress, but you got them around the table and worked with them. Paul Ryan has become a very stellar Member of Congress, very productive. You have to break a mustang sometimes to ride it.

Riley: Is that a part of the Speaker's job?

Hastert: Absolutely.

Riley: Is it a part to get those young flamethrowers—

Hastert: Find those guys and give them something that they can do. Give them a task, let them do something, and then try to incorporate them in legislation. Let them feel like they're part of the process. It's what they're there for.

Riley: And if they feel like they're part of the process, then—

Hastert: Slowly they'll come along. I'm not saying you're going to make a moderate out of them.

Riley: Sure.

Hastert: But there's a role for them to play.

Riley: How much of your time was spent on, for lack of a better word, team building? In other words, it seems like some part of what you're doing is—building on what you just said—finding a position for every ballplayer. This guy, he wants to score. I'm going to put him—

Hastert: If you just put people on the bench, they're going to be disgruntled and you're going to have to deal with them. You find a place for everybody and find a task for everybody. Find what they want to do, something constructive.

I remember we had a young Member from Florida, Adam Putnam—It was when gas prices were high—and he got up and just ranted and raved about we're not doing anything. I put him in charge of a task force to find out what could be an alternative. I actually had staff working on it for weeks, but I put him in charge. We got in with offshore drilling in Florida and a lot of things that were very complicated. We made some progress with it.

Look, I would say that all my time was basically team building. Some of it was just keeping your leadership together, marching in the same direction. Tom DeLay was a great legislator and a great Whip, but he also had a lot of ideas that you had to rein in from time to time.

Riley: Tell us about him. Talk for a little bit about each of the members of your team, strengths and weaknesses.

Hastert: I saw it with Tom DeLay in the fight between Madigan and Gingrich. So DeLay—I don't know why he was not on Gingrich's team, but he wasn't, but DeLay and I were rule vote counters for Madigan and we lost the race by one vote. A guy switched his vote at breakfast right before the conference went to vote. Larry Coughlin from Pennsylvania was from the Main Line outside of Philadelphia. Bob Walker got to him and changed his vote, so we lost that election.

Newt became the Whip. We were still in the minority, but Newt had two guys. He had Fred Upton and Steve Gunderson. Upton was from Michigan and Gunderson was from Wisconsin. They were his Deputy Whips. Gunderson and Upton were much more moderate than Newt was, but one of the ways Newt put his majority together was he got moderates to back him up, mostly on the Clean Air Act. Madigan was out on the other side of the Clean Air Act because Illinois was a coal state. So the Clean Air Act, Newt had the Conservative Opportunity Society, which was the other side, the conservatives.

Riley: Right.

Hastert: Newt had people from the Transportation Committee, and I think he had pretty much most of the state of Pennsylvania because he had Walker, and Walker would line up Pennsylvania, all except Larry Coughlin. They got him to change the morning of the vote. Then in that race it was interesting, because Jerry [Gerald B. H.] Solomon, who was from New York, didn't necessarily like Newt, but he didn't necessarily like Madigan either. So he nominated Henry Hyde. I think he probably picked up himself and Hyde and Phil Crane, two Illinois guys, when we lost their votes in that election because it was close enough—We lost it by one vote.

So we started together on that race. Then because Gunderson and Upton didn't fit in with what Newt's agenda was, he came over and picked up DeLay and me to be his Deputy Whips. So we served as Deputy Whips. Then when we got the majority in '90 and DeLay ran for Whip, I was running that race for about a year and a half before the race. Again, I worked everybody. We went state delegation by state delegation. Walker was running as the opponent and a guy from Florida, Bill McCollum, was the other candidate who really didn't have much traction.

We picked up all the states around Walker. We picked up Ohio, picked up New York, picked up New Jersey and Maryland and isolated him as far as where he could go and built out from there. It was fun doing it.

Tom won that race and I became Chief Deputy Whip. We were in the majority with the Clinton White House. It was a fun time. We worked really hard lining up votes and made sure that every time we had—the first hundred days he had the Contract with America. Some of those things were fairly controversial. We started building the vote. We would take three weeks before we'd start on a piece of legislation and start to build the vote. We had to build outside support to give people constituent support to go ahead and vote it. We did that.

Tom was really good on outside groups. Tom was very effective with the Christian right and other groups, chambers of commerce and business groups and ag groups. Tom would go out and line those people up. I would count the votes on the inside, which I think in the long term was to my advantage; I had the trust of the people inside. So we had that relationship. A lot of times even in a whipping situation we had good cop, bad cop. Tom was always—they called him “the hammer” and they called me a bear. I'd put my arm around them and pat them on the back, sort of a big teddy bear. They gave me a big teddy bear one time. We just worked that way. There was hardly anything that we could never pass.

The only thing we never got passed during the Clinton administration was a banking bill. Boehner was the guy who for some reason had that bill. He was the guy. He could never quite put it together. We never could quite get the votes to pass it. So we had to wait until we got the majority and we passed the banking bill. I think that was the only bill, and we never really could pick up momentum. We needed a lot of Democrat votes. Some of our guys were off. You had the whole issue of credit unions, savings and loans, insurance all involved. It was really a split within the body.

We worked together well. We really did. I went down and testified at his trial as a character witness. We're still good friends.

Riley: In that trial he's in appeals?

Hastert: He was in appeal for a long time and he won the appeal. Now the prosecution has gone and appealed the appeal.

Riley: Is that right?

Hastert: Kind of senseless. I don't want to get into that.

Riley: Understood.

Palazzolo: I want to come back to the elections a little more. I'm thinking about this narrow margin of the majority and the President's role, particularly maybe in 2002. Was he focused on helping to maintain that majority or build it a little bit?

Hastert: He did. He campaigned for us. He helped raise money for us. He was helpful.

Palazzolo: Was it more focused on the Senate? There were some pretty nasty Senate elections.

Hastert: We always felt the Senate got more attention than we did. Seriously, they did. A lot of those guys were prima donnas over there in the first place. They just had to be stroked all the time. After all, they were Senators and we were just House Members. He was fair with us, too; he helped us raise money.

Somebody was going to ask me about the Medicare vote. I thought we'd get back to that. You want to talk about that?

Palazzolo: Before that, that's a really important issue—

Hastert: I want to talk about the President's role in that.

Palazzolo: I do want you to get to that, but did the conference share your views, the same view you have of President Bush? Did they feel that he was working on their behalf and he was reaching out? Was that something that was just felt more at the leadership level? I'm curious if you had a sense—

Hastert: There was always this whole Afghan thing and then on top, the Iraqi thing. When we were winning, everything was fine, but then when the war started going for years, people I think were getting tired of it. All the good headlines were gone. So I think that started to wear on people; it certainly wore on the electorate.

Palazzolo: Sometimes we sense that Presidents get more insular as their time goes on; they tend to close off a little bit. I guess that's one of the—

Hastert: I wasn't there for the last two years. I was there for the last two years of Reagan. I remember our freshman class going down to the White House and telling President Reagan, "Every time you sign an omnibus bill—" I'm sure the Democrats, the majority, took all 13 appropriations bills and stuck them together and put it on his desk. I said, "We'll stand behind you. We won't vote for that until we have all 13 bills separately."

For the State of the Union he went up—I remember Reagan had this stack of appropriations bills; they were all in one bill. It was huge. Standing there, he said, "I'm not going to do this again." It was 13 bills. So we had an influence. We were able to do that, to go back to him. We did regular order all the time that we were there, even in the minority. We'd pass our 13 bills, get them out right about the 15th of March, and then the Senate was supposed to do theirs and had to be reconciled by the 15th of April. We didn't always get the Senate to get all their bills out, but we pushed that agenda all the time. We had a budget line, worked on 13 different appropriation bills, and really worked across the aisle with the whole Senate appropriation process.

What happened, I think—Later on in the Bush administration we were fighting a war. We created Homeland Security, which was a whole lot more expensive, but we had to do the things to keep us safe from terrorism. We were doing a lot more with airports and everywhere else, in Homeland Security, ports and containers, railroads, and much more. So that was costing them more money and veterans. We had people coming back with the whole side of their face blown off or legs blown off. People were living; they were surviving IEDs [improvised explosive devices]. We'd bomb things and go on, which didn't happen in other wars. So we had the huge costs of Veterans Affairs. Soldiers were surviving grievous injury at a much higher rate than even Vietnam vets.

There was hardly any—It's interesting, this whole veteran health thing. We increased the veteran health tremendously, the Tricare programs and such. Nobody would vote against a veteran. There was a deal where veterans wanted to be able to—The veterans association was pushing that if you were a disabled veteran, you got your disability until you retired. Veterans' disability they didn't pay income tax on, but when they got to retirement, they had to pay income tax. So they didn't want to substitute retirement for disability.

It ended up that Mike Bilirakis, a Republican, sponsored the bill to start to pay these people double. We ended up working this thing out. I brought a young Marine in that I had in high school. He was a Marine lieutenant colonel, I think. He was a major, but made it to lieutenant colonel. So I brought him into our office and let him negotiate this thing out and got it done, but it was a negotiated thing. It really expanded benefits, so the cost of veterans went up.

As war continued, the veterans' costs went up, and Homeland Security. Everything else we held flat. We had people who were blaming the President for spending more money, but we were in a war.

Palazzo: I know you want to talk about Medicare. I think Medicare in some ways relates to the 2002 elections. Some of that met him coming on in 2002 on health care and prescription drugs. Were you going to ask about that, Barbara, Medicare?

Perry: I was going to ask about the Patient's Bill of Rights earlier, but let's do the Medicare.

Hastert: I can tell you about the Patient's Bill of Rights. The Patient's Bill of Rights was something that Charlie Norwood got in his craw and tied up with Dingell. Dingell used Charlie to split us. So any time you have a Member going over to the other side of the aisle and hooking up, you had a problem.

Charlie was a friend of mine, and Charlie and I did a lot of stuff together. We did a lot of health care stuff when we did the whole issue with the Kennedy-[Nancy L.] Kassebaum bill. All of that was negotiated out of my office when I was Chief Deputy Whip. Senator [Robert J.] Dole would come to my office and we'd sit down at night and work that thing out with Thomas and a bunch of us. We were in the majority; I was the Deputy Whip, but I was doing all the health care legislation. I was leading Newt's health care Speaker's Task Force.

I'd worked with Charlie, but Charlie got this thing—We always had the American Medical Association—The AMA would always be with us and the trial lawyers would always be the bad guys. But what happened in the Patient's Bill of Rights, the trial lawyers were able to snaggle the

AMA together. So you had this unholy alliance of the trial lawyers and doctors together. Because of the Bill of Rights—If the patient didn't get the Patient's Bill of Rights, the government guarantee, the lawyers can sue, so the doctors bought into it.

I had been working with the AMA on this stuff for years and years, and at this time I told all my friends, "You're a bunch of traitors with what you're doing here. You're hurting yourself if you ally with the legal group." Charlie was on it. He was going to move this bill; we had a counter bill, which we didn't call the Patient's Bill of Rights. It was trying to move across-state sales of health care.

I talked to Meg Whitman, who at this time was CEO [chief executive officer] of eBay. I went down to Silicon Valley and visited with her one time. We sold stuff on eBay one time, and we had a long discussion, probably 45 minutes in her office, a little cubicle where everything was open. I said, "What do you need?" She said, "One of our big problems, we have 400,000 people who put their products on our website every week. Most of them are small-business people and they all need health care."

I said, "Why don't you sell it over the website, supply and demand?" She said, "You can't, because every state has its insurance commission. You can't do it." So I said, "Well, why don't we write a piece of legislation?" I went back and got John Shadegg, who was a Member from Arizona. John was smart, a good lawyer. He got his staffers and I made sure he was hooked up with a legislative reference bureau so he could get it in legal language. He wrote a bill so we had across-state health savings accounts and a couple of other things. That was our counter to it.

I got convoluted into a story here, but our job was to try to put forward good policy, and Charlie got into this Patient's Bill of Rights thing. I got Charlie to go down to the White House with his wife, so Bush entertained him. Bush was able to chat up his wife and get Charlie to back off the Patient's Bill of Rights.

Riley: Was Bush good at that?

Hastert: Yes. He did that a couple of times. We had a Member from Illinois, John Shimkus, who was really a bright guy. I got him on Energy and Commerce. Still there, solid guy. Graduate of West Point, solid, a workhorse. He took the pledge. He was only going to serve three or four terms. "John, we've gotten you to a place where you can get things done and we need you. You can't leave now. You're getting stuff done and you're productive." His seat was Senator [Richard J.] Durbin's old congressional seat, so it wasn't a solid GOP seat. There was something going on in Chicago, so I got invited on Air Force One to fly back with the President. I said, "Let's get Shimkus on Air Force One and we'll ask his wife to go with. You get him and his wife up in the office." Bush pulled them out of the regular seating, took him up in the front of Air Force One, and by the time we landed in Chicago, Shimkus was running again. *[laughter]*

Riley: Did you get the impression that the President liked dealing with Members?

Hastert: I think so. Look, Bush is a good-hearted guy. I think he related. He did the same thing with the Texas legislature. He was very engaged in that process. He didn't have everybody, but sometimes I'd be down in the White House three times in one day, and sometimes it would be three weeks before I'd go down. Basically, I think he did a very good job engaging with people.

I wasn't a golfer, so I didn't go golfing with him. I didn't go fishing with him or any of that kind of stuff. It was always on a business level. I don't think he engaged anybody on—He did his biking and track and it was his own group of people he moves with.

Riley: You always felt that he was understanding of the institution?

Hastert: One time we talked about Bill Jefferson. This guy was from Louisiana. It was after the Katrina hurricane floods and they went to his house and they found \$90,000 in the freezer. There was a question of where that money came from, and it was thought it came from Nigeria. The Attorney General, or I think it was actually the FBI who did the investigation, asked us to sequester all this office data and information, so we did, to respect the jurisdiction of the House and the White House, the separation of powers. The Attorney General at that time was Bush's attorney general from Texas.

Riley: [Alberto R.] Gonzales.

Hastert: Yes, Gonzales. I like Bush. I think he had some weak Cabinet people. In my opinion I think the first guy, the Senator from Missouri, was a very weak Attorney General. I think Gonzales was a terrible Attorney General. I'm not a lawyer, but just my layman's opinion. Gonzales wanted to make this big push on Jefferson and show that they were on top of this thing. He brought in the FBI and broke into his office and took out all the computers and all the records.

I went up to the White House and we had a meeting the next morning at the White House. I said, "I'm calling for the guy's resignation. He broke the separation of powers—" Bush had tears in his eyes because Gonzales was his guy and he didn't want to see that conflict.

We ended up filing a court case in the Supreme Court and won to protect. I got flak on my side. Pelosi, I had to bring her dragging and kicking to come and join with me in the lawsuit. She wanted to space herself from Jefferson. She is running on this thing, anticorruption. Using corruption all the time to label us, but here it was her people that were corrupt. She didn't want to get involved in it, but we pulled her into it. We ended up going to the Supreme Court and winning that thing. It was one of the things you had to do.

Riley: Right.

Perry: You said, of course, that you went down fairly frequently, once a week at least with the leadership to meet with the President, and then you've mentioned the White House picnic for all the Members. Did President Bush have other social events or occasions or invite small groups of Members down?

Hastert: I don't remember him doing that much. If he had an issue, he'd bring someone else down, but watching television or going and watching a ballgame, I might have gotten invited to do that once or twice, but I never went. I always had something else going on. I don't think he did a lot of that. He didn't invite people over to the ranch for a weekend or anything that I knew of.

Riley: Camp David?

Hastert: Once the leadership went to Camp David. There was some issue. It was right when we went into Somalia, the whole process right after Somalia. We went and watched a movie. The movie we watched was on the Somalian issue. There was something he wanted—It was early spring because we had a Republican conference. I think it was a leadership retreat out in Maryland on the Eastern Shore. They sent helicopters. We flew from the Eastern Shore over to Camp David in helicopters, quite the show. We spent the weekend there with the President. That was the only time we ever did that.

Palazzolo: I really liked the example of Shimkus, and in particular how the President was able to persuade him to run. In general, how would you rate President Bush, maybe in comparison to other Presidents, in his ability to persuade people to do something that he wanted them to do?

Hastert: I think the master was Clinton. As I said before, you could not like Clinton. He just had a magnetic personality. You didn't always agree with him, but he was very likable. I think he was very good at getting his people to do what he wanted them to do, but not very good at getting our guys to do it. I think he was the master at that. I would say Bush was below that level, but he did it when he had to. He didn't overdo it. When you needed him to go talk to a Member, he would go do it.

Another issue goes back to the Medicaid thing. I didn't want to get into it until we talked about Medicaid, but another issue on the President's involvement.

Palazzolo: Yes, Medicare.

Hastert: You want to get into it?

Palazzolo: Whenever you're ready. That's really the closest vote, right? As far as on the items that he really wanted and you shared?

Hastert: We thought this was an important issue. First of all, it was a common-sense issue to me. I'd been doing health care for, well, ever since two years before Hillary. We would spend \$400,000 for somebody who had diabetes. First of all, they'd have to have their leg amputated, then they were on renal dialysis. The last nine months of a person's life you'd spend half a million dollars on them. But if you gave them the Glucophage or the insulin, you could keep them healthy and they wouldn't have to go through that, that pull on their life. You'd keep them healthy.

It was a cost savings when you start to compute it, lifestyle and behavior style. The same thing with heart medicine. If somebody had heart disease and they had to have a quadruple bypass, it was very expensive. But if you had the heart medicine for cholesterol and other cardiac problems, you could prevent many life-threatening events. In the long term, \$30 a month for medicine or half a million dollars for some intervention is pretty common sense. But Medicare didn't pay for pharmaceuticals.

Now, when Medicare was drawn in the 1970s, most of the cost was doctors and hospitals. There weren't a lot of pharmaceuticals. Medicare didn't pay for them, so people weren't taking them or they didn't go out and buy them because they couldn't afford them or they'd be eating dog food so they could buy their medicine. Didn't make sense to me. For good health care, I thought you

would save money if you included pharmaceuticals. So it was something I really believed in.

It was really a Democrat issue, in a sense, because it was something that would be added on to Medicare, so it had a lot of resistance from the right wing of our party. Again, the same people that didn't like us to get involved with education didn't want us to add on to Medicare. But I saw it as a cost saver, the right thing to do. If you're going to have Medicare, you'd better treat the whole person. We passed that bill three different times. The interesting thing, Arney was majority leader twice when we passed it in the House. Then he left and DeLay became the majority leader. So the third time we passed it, Arney was out against it. He had this group of people that he got money from; he was advertising against it. He was the guy who had advocated for it two times before. So just how swishy people get sometimes.

We had worked on this bill. As I said, we passed it three times. The third time we got it through. We really worked hard and negotiated it, finally got the AARP [American Association of Retired Persons] on board. For a Republican issue, that was a big deal. DeLay worked hard on trying to work out some of the language. He was constantly working with the right wing of our party on it.

I had two other elements out there. I had Joe Barton, who wanted to do something completely different. I had Charlie Norwood, who wanted the Patient's Bill of Rights. I had a couple of people, I'd say mainly from the border states but not all from the border states, Minnesota, the lady from Missouri, and a guy from Georgia. They wanted this reimportation of drugs. During the Clinton administration they had a treaty with NAFTA that Canada could buy our drugs at the fixed cost. So the research and development, we put billions of dollars in before you ever get a product; variable costs were not included. They only paid for the cost of the chemicals and punching out the pills. They got the drugs really at a much lower cost.

Well, when people started comparing what they paid for the drug in the United States and across the border into Canada, people started sending busloads of people over into Canada to get their drugs. Now, there is only a finite amount of drugs that went to Canada that were supposed to take care of the people who were sick in Canada. So I would talk to the Prime Minister of Canada. He said, "We don't want to do this either," but people were now buying drugs through the post office. What also happened in this reimportation of drugs was that medicine was coming from Bangladesh, Pakistan, or China or wherever, where there was no FDA [Food and Drug Administration] approval.

If you have the FDA that is supposed to make sure the drugs are real, nobody was checking these drugs coming across the border, so this whole reimportation thing was a bogus thing, and I think a dangerous thing for our health, so I wouldn't give in to them. I didn't have—it was a very thin majority of people. We went into that vote. It was again one of those times we were up against a deadline of time. Bush had gone to London to visit the Queen or whatever he did, I think to visit the Queen.

He was gone a whole week. I needed him. There were four or five people I needed him to talk to. Two guys in particular wanted to talk to him about who was going to be the Supreme Court nominee, not saying, "I have to have this person," but they wanted to have the discussion with the President about the importance of who was going to be his nominee to the Supreme Court.

Riley: OK.

Hastert: I knew I had these guys hanging out.

Riley: Can you tell us who the Members were? Do you remember?

Hastert: One was Trent Franks from Arizona; another was a guy who is now the Governor of Idaho, Butch [Clement Leroy] Otter. Trent Franks was a great Member, but he was very far-right.

Perry: This would have been for Sandra Day O'Connor's seat that these people wanted to get to the President and put in their two cents, for that swing seat?

Hastert: Actually, there were two seats up, eventually.

Perry: But I'm thinking this is 2005, or is it—

Hastert: I think it is before he named [John G., Jr.] Roberts. He named Roberts as the Chief Justice. [William H.] Rehnquist had died.

Perry: But he named Roberts to Justice O'Connor's seat and then the Chief died.

Hastert: You're right. That's the sequence.

Riley: But maybe more importantly it was a live issue at that moment. It wasn't that they wanted to generically discuss with him the Supreme Court in anticipation of some—

Hastert: They knew that they couldn't get the President's yes or no, but they wanted the President to know that they thought somebody who had conservative social values—

Riley: Understood.

Hastert: It was important to them to have someone with a social conservative mindset on the Supreme Court. They wanted to have that discussion.

So the President is in London. We're holding the bill up. Finally get the bill ready to go. I'm trying to get this meeting with the President. The President comes back from London about midnight and the Secret Service puts him to bed. So I have Dave Hobbs with me and I have the Secretary of Health and Welfare with me, but we can't get to the President. I know that I'm probably a couple of votes short, because I have these people who want the reimportation of drugs. They're sitting back, holding off. I have Ron Paul, who would never vote for anything. He had [Walter B.] Jones. They would go off in a corner and hold off.

I had a couple of people who promised they would vote for it, and when voting came in voted no and went and hid. One is now the junior Senator from Kansas. He went to the senior Senator from Kansas's office and hid in his office for four hours while we were trying to find him. I sent Frank Lucas from Oklahoma, who could find anybody, but couldn't find this guy. All these things were going on that early morning.

So we got the vote and we're a couple of votes short. We needed 216 votes to get it across because a couple of Members were gone. I'm going to talk to the people holding out. Then there is a group of people in the cloakroom who want their specific thing. One was Charlie Norwood, one was Joe Barton, one was Senator [Richard M.] Burr, who was a Member of the House at that time. They all wanted some particular thing. Just couldn't do it.

We have all this drama going on. Then a couple of people intimating that they have a son running for this, a son running for that, and they wanted help. I think Dick Smith was one of those people who had a whole brouhaha afterward. At the same time, I'm trying to get the President. I knew we had probably about 20 Democrats who wanted to vote for the bill, but Pelosi would not let them vote for the bill, absolutely would not let them vote. So when we're voting, they're just sitting on their hands.

I know a guy named [David] Wu from Oregon. They had five or six people circle him for hours, wouldn't let him get up and vote, and he was going to vote for us. All this stuff was going on. All of a sudden—one hour, two hours—Thomas is having fits on the floor because he's the chief sponsor of the bill.

Riley: You're comfortable leaving the vote open that long?

Hastert: I felt this is so important.

Riley: OK.

Hastert: There's no rule against holding the vote open; there's only a rule about how long it has to be open. It has to be open at least 15 minutes.

Riley: And you're checking with your parliamentarian.

Hastert: We know what the rules are. Sometimes you start a vote, people are coming in, a travel day, and sometimes the vote is open for an hour. But we know what the rules are. The precedent is not to hold the vote open that long, but the rules don't forbid it. I'm just trying to get people to vote. As soon as we get the numbers, we'll close the vote. The debate was maybe we ought to table the bill and have somebody vote against it so they can say, "I voted against it, but I want to bring it back off the table."

I said, "That's not going to work. You'll have a record of people who would know even when you table a bill, and you're never going to get them to change their vote after the vote is recorded as a no vote. Even our Members—You're never going to make that happen. If we start to do that, you're going to have people jump from yes to no just so—They don't want to be hung out on this thing." I vetoed that idea.

I got Hobbs trying to get into the White House. Finally, at four o'clock in the morning, Hobbs gets in to the President. I get the President on the line. I get the two guys—the guy from Arizona, the guy from Idaho—Bush got Otter. The President agrees to have a meeting with him. So they go out, change their vote to yes, and I get my two votes. When I get my two votes, we got 16 Democrats to come over and vote for it, so we pass it with, like, 232 votes, a good margin. But the fact was, we didn't get it done until I got them in to the President to talk. It wasn't the

President's doing; it was that the Secret Service kind of wrapped him up.

That's the story behind the story. It took us three and a half hours to do it. All the green-eyeshade people said it was going to cost another \$400 billion; it saved \$350 billion. Really it was a very effective piece of legislation. Sometimes you know that you're right and you just have to keep at it and pound at it because you only have one chance to do it. Again, it's the coaching philosophy. You only get on the five-yard line every once in a while; you'd better not lose the opportunity to score.

Riley: Exactly. Any follow-ups on that?

Palazzo: It's a good analogy, just thinking about what Presidency scholars are going to think. Looking back at this ten years from now, what are they going to look for? Where does the President make a difference working with your team? That's a very good illustration on a very high-profile piece of legislation that has long-term consequences.

Hastert: Absolutely.

Palazzo: This one has a long-term consequence. I think the big question in Medicare and prescription drugs—You talk a little bit about it in your book, and it was covered in the record, obviously—is how hard it was to get Democrats and the Democratic leadership to want to find a solution to provide more coverage.

Hastert: If they were in the majority, they would have passed that bill in a New York minute; they just didn't want us to have the credit for it. It was all about the election.

Palazzo: It sounds like there was also this tension going on about where is Medicare going as a program. Is it becoming more privatized—because the drug package was essentially an insurance-company-based plan, right? It seemed that there were concerns about—

Hastert: Insurance companies insured, but the drug companies wanted it, because all of a sudden it made drugs available. They were for it, obviously; they weren't going to be against it, so you had to pharm it. Some people talk about the big drug companies and people making all this money. The fact was it made drugs affordable for people and made people healthier. It gave them a better lifestyle.

Palazzo: You made a comment earlier, which I really thought was interesting. It was the idea that the legislative process is designed to solve problems, but that's not how everybody looks at the legislative process. Sometimes the legislative process is designed to make an issue that can carry forth in a campaign and they misuse the process in a way. I think what you're describing is that the Democrats were, in a sense, unwilling to give away the issue of Medicare as a political issue. Does that make any sense?

Hastert: I remember Sheila Jackson Lee; we passed that bill and she is sitting on the other side and says, "There goes our chance for the election."

Palazzo: Right.

Hastert: She made that comment. “There goes our chance to win the next election.” They would like to show us as not caring and not doing anything and not getting anything done. This was a big senior—We did a good job on the rollout, too. We spent a lot of time and spent some advertising and told people how to roll it, much better than this administration did in rolling out their Affordable Care Act. We got seniors to sign up, educating them, a whole six- or seven-month process before we rolled it out.

We worked with the White House very closely in making sure that happened. We didn’t want to end up—

Riley: I’m curious about this, because I’m not sure I’ve heard that side of that story.

Hastert: We didn’t want to pass a bill that people didn’t take advantage of, so we passed that bill. I don’t know when it went into effect, but we had about six or seven months and really worked hard. The President had a special guy who we agreed with—I’m trying to think of his name. He laid out this program. They had big purple buses going all over everywhere educating seniors about how they sign up and what it does. They can go to their pharmacy or the local grocery store, Jewel Osco or whatever it was, and sign up for it. It was very affordable and the whole issue was the doughnut hole. That was a controversial issue.

We had to build it within a certain dollar number that was acceptable so it could be paid for. So there is a doughnut hole. You get so much coverage, then you hit that, you pay it for yourself, and if you get over a certain amount then everything was picked up. It was kind of like a reverse deductible in a sense.

Palazzolo: This is probably a good time to ask or talk a little bit about messaging. There is always this idea that you’re trying to get legislation through, but it has to work in the grassroots. It has to sell. It sounds like both in the case of education and health care there is something to do with framing the issue.

With education it seems like what worked among conservatives might have been things like accountability. When you get to Medicare what works is something like, “It’s cost savings. We’re going to actually wind up saving.” Is that fair to say?

Hastert: First of all, it was better health care. When people are healthier you save money, because you aren’t spending on the most expensive things, you are spending on something to prevent that. At the same time, the way I got conservatives on it, we had health savings accounts, which became a real issue. I wrote that first bill on medical savings accounts. I’ve been nursing this thing through the whole Congress for 12 years. For me that was a big thing because you could get it done. But we also got conservative votes on it because they wanted health savings accounts. It was a real market-based approach to health care.

Then we also did the whole issue on giving people private choices on Medicare Advantage, or I forget what the technical name of it was. It opened it up to the private sector. So people didn’t have to go through the Medicare part of the thing; they could go through their own personal doctor. They could choose who they wanted to. If they had that insurance account, they could have a better choice in health care.

Palazzolo: Medicare Advantage. My question is, how much of the messaging, how much of the framing of the issue, was something that you worked with the White House on? In other words, was there any coordination—

Hastert: We didn't really work with the White House on messaging much at all. We passed this thing twice before we got it the third time.

Palazzolo: Sure.

Hastert: We were pretty good at talking about saving money, giving people better choices, keeping people healthier.

Palazzolo: Let's raise it to a little more of a general level. In these meetings that you're having with the White House in terms of developing legislative and political strategy, does the message come up at all, what kind of language you'll use?

Hastert: The President went along with us, but I don't remember ever sitting down with the White House and really working on strategy. Our strategy really came—It was our strategy.

Palazzolo: That's what I was interested in. You think about unified party government and the extent to which there is much collaboration there.

Hastert: I was always a big guy, especially when Newt was Speaker, for trying to brand what we're doing to try to get a bigger message out. I was always for hiring a PR [public relations] firm, but we never had the ability to do it. There were never funds to use for PR. We were doing, I thought, always the right things, but how do you get that message out to people to really understand what you're trying to do? People think the people in Congress are a bunch of people who are arguing and crazy and not doing anything. Actually, there are things that are really important for people's lives. How do you get that message out? Whether you're talking about insurance or pensions or all these things, there is a real message. There is a social message or economic message out there.

I told you I had this center at Wheaton to tie economics and government together. There never is a decision in politics that doesn't have economic consequences, if it's taxes, or more money, or bigger government—There's nothing that happens in government that doesn't have an economic consequence. It works both ways.

Perry: Back to Dan's question about messaging. You had said earlier that you were not one to seek out the cameras and be on television a lot. Did you farm that out?

Hastert: J. C. Watts is a great guy; he was a great face for us and had this folksy touch, talking about Joe Six-Pack. He was a great guy to go out and do that kind of thing for us. Adam Putnam was a junior Member from Florida. I brought him on and put him on the leadership because he had just a very good way of looking at the cameras and talking about things and people could understand him. Paul Ryan the same thing. He could look in the camera with those big blue eyes and tell people anything and they'd believe him, seriously. So you found people who were good messengers. We tried to get women, Deb Pryce was a Member from Ohio who was in our leadership and did a very good job getting messages out. Kay Granger—

Riley: You weren't worried you were going to lose them to the dark side of the Senate if they got to be on the camera?

Hastert: If you look at the Senate, most of the Republicans in the Senate are guys that came out of the House, except for [Rafael E.] Cruz and some of those other guys. Some of the guys who are the real workers were House Members.

Palazzolo: If you think back on the Medicare vote, since it failed twice—

Hastert: We passed it. It didn't get out of the Senate. We passed it in the House twice. We never got the Senate to move.

Palazzolo: It's an interesting case study. It goes back to the scenario that is coming out. Some of the scholars on Presidential-congressional relations are talking about how President Bush's approach, again, was this idea—This narrative is starting to develop about how President Bush would work closely on the House side because he felt like it was more reliable. Then he'd stroke the Senate to try and get it over the finish line. That's kind of interesting.

Hastert: We did work together, we really did, but we didn't do things that we didn't think were the right things to do.

Riley: But your perspective, just to be clear, is that the conventional wisdom is that the White House's default setting was let's move something in the House and sort of stake out that territory and try to bring the Senate as close to that. That generally comports—

Hastert: I always say everything we ever got to pass through the Senate we passed through the House three times, those tax bills or health care bills. We had to do it. I always say there are four "Ps" to politics. First of all, you have to have a purpose, know what you want to do; you have to have passion to do it. Then you have to have persistence, you have to bang it time and time and time again. Finally, you have to have patience to get it done.

Most of the legislation I worked on—My first real piece of legislation was the earnings assessment on Social Security. It took me eight years to get it done. Another piece I worked was the intrastate—

[BREAK]

Palazzolo: We were talking about how the Bush administration tried to move issues through the House and the Senate.

Perry: And the messaging.

Hastert: I can't see any issues—Immigration was something the President felt passionate about. He probably could have passed it if we didn't have 9/11, but it really threw a brick in the road.

Social Security reform a lot of Republicans liked to do, but the politics of the time wasn't ready to do it. So those were the things that he wanted to do that we tried to work with him, and eventually just pulled the plug on it.

Palazzo: What I find kind of interesting about this discussion is that political scientists talk a lot about the parties being polarized; they're on opposite ends. But a lot of the stuff you're describing is trying to figure out how to keep the party together. That is what I find interesting. The closer you get to the legislative process, the more differences you see within the party and the more there is still a key role for a leader to be in a sense a mediator among these factions. That's how we traditionally see party leaders, right? They're people who work through the differences. I just find that fascinating, the way you describe these—

Hastert: You have somebody out there willing to raise the pitchfork and charge with the spears, and the guy who is going to get things together.

Palazzo: That suggests that in order to get things done it seems like you have to work with groups or you have to work on issues that are traditionally seen as owned by the other side, or at least the other side, like in education. Obviously taxes are different because that's kind of a Republican issue, in a sense. But it seems that you have to work with these other groups like AARP. That's how you work through the polarization. You just split the other side's—

Hastert: If we hadn't gotten AARP—and again I credit DeLay for doing that, because DeLay went out and he was good with outside groups and really got those guys on board—we wouldn't have ever got this thing. We couldn't have had the swing with seniors unless we had AARP because they would have been the other way and there would have been no way we would have gotten it done.

Riley: Can I ask you about your own conception of your party in the Chamber? You're dealing with 200-plus people. In your own mind, did they sort of cluster? Did you have factions that you knew, *OK, on this issue I'm going to lose this bunch* or—

Hastert: First of all, what you wanted to do is develop a relationship with everybody.

Riley: Individually?

Hastert: Individually.

Riley: And you could do that with 200-plus?

Hastert: I did it pretty well, I think. You spend time listening to everybody. They called you a Speaker; they should have called you a listener. You spend a lot of time listening to what people have to say.

Riley: OK.

Hastert: Even when I was a Whip I started doing that. You told them what you wanted and you tried to get there, but you always listened. You had all their commiserations before you ever got to the point of a commitment, so you'd just spend a lot of time with people. I got to know

Members pretty well, where they came from, what their issues were. If we ever had a fiscal issue we had to deal with—I always had the New Jersey delegation to deal with, because New Jersey and their hospitals were close to New York, but they got probably 30 percent less on their health care from the federal government than New York did. So what happened is that New York would take all their doctors and all their nurses because they were paid better. So we always had the New Jersey hospital thing.

Every time we would have a piece of legislation, the New Jersey delegation would hold me up on trying to get more money for New Jersey hospitals. I knew it was coming down the track. I'd sit there and it would take us six weeks to work through their problems. I'd sometimes help them and sometimes stiff them, but I just had to get it done. Now you take six or seven or eight or nine people in a bloc; it was just things that you had to deal with. I dealt with them month after month after month. Every time we had some type of fiscal or health care bill, I had to deal with the New Jersey guys. You could never really fix their problem, because when you fix their problem, you create a problem with Pennsylvania or someplace else.

Palazzo: But the main tools of leadership are some persuasion, maybe an occasional appointment that you could make. Committee assignments become important.

Hastert: People earn those committee assignments, pretty much; those aren't given as plums. You put people in there you think can do the right job. You have to remember that I was in everybody's district campaigning for them.

Riley: Which is unusual, I would think.

Hastert: We did it.

Riley: I want to ask you a question. This is asked out of complete ignorance about the position itself. Is it unusual for a Speaker to come to the position having been a Whip or a Deputy Whip, or is that standard procedure?

Hastert: That's funny, because I looked at that. I never planned to be in leadership, never planned to do it, it just happened. Most people scheme to be Speaker. I had this book about all the different Speakers; I'd read about it. These guys would start out in their career and they'd end up being in the leadership. They might be the secretary of the party and then they'd work out as a policy person and work up maybe to conference chairman and then maybe they'd work up to minority or majority leader and then finally after 40 years they'd end up being Speaker and they'd live for a year and a half and they'd die. *[laughter]* Seriously.

Palazzo: Under the old system, it kind of worked that way.

Riley: All right.

Hastert: That's how it worked. So for a majority of the Speakers that's exactly what happened. They didn't last.

Palazzo: In the recent era, they'd mostly been Whips, or certainly since, either a Whip or a Leader.

Riley: So my question was completely asked out of ignorance, but it was aimed at wondering whether that is really good preparation. If you've been a Whip, presumably you know where all the hiding places are.

Hastert: But you build a relationship with people. You have to go and buttonhole them and get an honest answer. You have to be honest with them. One thing, I never promised somebody something I couldn't deliver, so I didn't promise very often. I always told people, "I'll do the very best I can to help you." That wasn't a push off; that was just saying I will do the very best I can to help you, but I can't promise you I'm going to get it done. I was always straightforward with somebody. I was never a very good liar, either, so it forced me to be honest.

Riley: We have that in common. I'm a terrible liar. I would think in political life that must be a bit unusual—not lying necessarily, but being able to speak nuanced truths.

Hastert: I'm pretty plainspoken. That's what I did.

[BREAK]

Palazzolo: You might drift in this direction this afternoon.

Riley: Drift, no; purposefully steer, yes.

Palazzolo: One of the things about the Bush Presidency that a lot of people talk about is the unilateral use of executive power or that sort of thing. The one area where it seems to relate to Congress, I think, is maybe in the signing statements. When the President would sign off on legislation, he would put these conditions in there. I don't even have a specific example. The reauthorization of the Patriot Act is one of them. But do you have any thoughts on that? How does that affect legislating, to go through all of that work and then have the President sign it and attach some kind of signing statement about whether he is culpable or whether he is responsible for implementing certain provisions? Is that something you can respond to?

Hastert: Never was a big issue, never really raised its head on anything. The law is the law. Once you wrote the law, you never knew how the administration would implement the law. There are probably more instructions in the implementation.

Palazzolo: So it is sort of a formalization of what could happen anyway once the—That's an interesting perspective.

Riley: But you don't recall there being any—

Hastert: Any big controversies? I don't remember any.

Palazzolo: Nobody came back to you and said, "Well, gee, that was—"

Hastert: I remember pretty well, but I don't recollect that as being an issue. I would say that the problem with that type of precaution or what he did—He wouldn't have done it himself. He had staff who said, "Look, we don't want this bill to go this way. We want it to go *this* way." Then the implementation, the rules and regs [regulations], that was the instruction of how to do it. I would guess that is more of that direction.

Palazzolo: I think that's interesting.

Hastert: More than trying to countermand what Congress has done.

Perry: As a follow-up then, to link to that, there is this concept of this unitary President with all sorts of power, particularly in a wartime situation. Oftentimes that theory is ascribed to Vice President Cheney, and given that you knew him when he was in the House and then you offered him and he accepted the office space on the House side, did you ever have discussions with him? I like the way you described him at a meeting, that he would sit quite silently oftentimes and take in everybody's view and then come to a decision and put it out. But did you ever talk to him or did he ever talk to you about his theories of the Presidency and how he viewed it from Pennsylvania Avenue as opposed to the Congress?

Hastert: He was always the good, loyal Vice President. I knew when we left the meeting that he would have the President's ear afterward, so the President would get his point of view on where he was. Cheney never tipped his hand one way or another, but you knew afterward. Cheney sat in the meetings in the mornings when we had briefings. He was always there. He was always on top and always listening to what people had to say. You knew afterward that the President got his point of view.

Riley: Do you have a reaction to the claims by some journalists that Cheney was actually the one in charge of things in the White House?

Hastert: I don't think so. I think he did drive some issues. I think he was more of a war hawk than Bush was, certainly, and he saw things in different ways. But I think that Bush made his own decisions. I don't think Cheney made decisions for him. I would stake my life on that. Cheney and I didn't always agree.

I remember one time we were sitting in his office in the House and the issue of importing LNG [liquefied natural gas] came up. He was trying to build ports for importing LNG. I'd tell him, "Why would we do that? Why would we import that? We're on the line for foreign oil. Why don't we develop our own resources in LNG? We've got it in Alaska, we've got it in Canada." He was quite straight, "We need to import it." We didn't always agree on issues. I didn't change his mind, either.

Perry: Speaking of the Vice President and energy, did you want to comment at all on the energy legislation coming out of the energy task force that the Vice President ran?

Hastert: Yes. I think we did that to get the White House—From my point of view, to get the administration on board, we had to do an energy—You had to look that Cheney and Bush were both energy people, but they had to be able to put their ideas into some kind of policy. The Congress, we were pro-energy too. My belief was that what we had to do in energy in three years

drives your economy for the next 30 years. One time we were 60 percent dependent on oil coming from places like Saudi Arabia and Iran and Iraq and Kuwait and Nigeria and Venezuela and places not always friendly to us. So we needed to develop our own energy resources. I was always for developing our own energy resources.

One of the things—I mentioned Nussle before, but Nussle and I would push for ethanol. Every time Bush would go on a Presidential election tour, or his father, we always made sure they went to Iowa and Illinois with an ear of corn in their hands talking about ethanol. It did two things. First of all, it was a home-based resource and it also was a margin for our family farms to have corn prices high enough that you could make a living growing it. It took some of the chunk away from what we were importing. Nearly 10 or 15 percent of used fuel was ethanol. We didn't have to import it from someplace else. I just thought that was an important thing.

We were constantly pushing those things, that type of energy policy. I was always for more drilling. ANWR [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] and all those issues were always a pivotal piece, and nuclear. I was very supportive of nuclear. I thought that was important. We had to fight with the administration sometimes to make sure that the funding for Yucca Mountain and those types was there because they would just as soon keep that funding in the pot and spend it. But we made sure that the funding was there, pushed it until recently. They just did away with the Yucca Mountain. We sat yesterday and listened to this need for what do you do with spent nuclear fuel. Nobody has an answer for it. If you don't find a place to take that other than dry cask storage, you shut down the nuclear plants. Anyway, I have to get off on my toot here.

Riley: You're entitled. I want to ask more generally about the foreign policy issues. These certainly come to dominate the national agenda after 9/11. Is it the case that the House feels itself to be in a kind of secondary role when it comes to U.S. foreign policy?

Hastert: Yes, it has always been. The Senate always saw themselves as the world ambassadors. It is just the nature of the place. But we had people who were very serious about foreign policy. Henry Hyde was, and a lot of Members were. We took it seriously. The Senate always kind of took the lead on it. They had the treaty issue; they had the ability—We didn't have a lot of treaties. I did a lot of traveling, met a lot of world leaders, and met with [Vladimir] Putin a couple of times.

Riley: Did you stare into his soul?

Hastert: No. As a matter of fact, one of the last years I was Speaker we had a G8 [Group of Eight] Speaker's Conference. One year it would be in the United States, another year in Japan, another year in France, England. It was the turn to go to Russia. The Speaker was the former mayor of St. Petersburg. So I went to St. Petersburg. I went there on a Thursday. We met Thursday and Friday, and Saturday morning I was supposed to fly home.

Friday night we got this invitation to go down to Sochi for lunch with Putin. Two of them couldn't go. They had to go to some other commitment. The Russians flew down five. I flew down by myself. We had our own plane. We flew down to Sochi and went to this whole series of bungalows that made up Putin's dacha. It was the same way with [Joseph] Stalin. He had his place. We were all isolated, each in our own bungalow, until it was time to go have lunch.

We walk over and have lunch. It was around this round table; we had eight or nine people around the table. It was a typical Russian lunch. It was frozen vodka and nice glasses and caviar and smoked fish, typical Russian. We go through that and finally some kind of dessert.

Putin then takes the menu. Everybody looks at the menu again. He turns it over, draws a map of Russia and says, “Well, now we have a pipeline. The pipeline goes up here to our Northeast to take care of Korea, Japan, and the needs for fuel and natural gas. Then there is a line that goes down through here in Southeast Asia. Then we have this pipeline that goes out here and around Georgia and takes care of the south of Europe. Then another pipeline that goes up to Poland, Germany, the Baltics.” He basically said, “We can provide all the energy needs of the Western world.” He looks at me and says, “Tell your President that if he is interested and he puts some capital in this he can join with us.” I went back to Bush and he laughed.

Riley: A Texas oilman he is giving lectures to.

Hastert: We had those kinds of relationships. A couple of times that’s probably—You end up being the messenger back and forth. One time we went to Argentina. We were going to Uruguay—I think that was it. We went to Brazil, Uruguay, then down to Argentina, and then we were going to Chile and back home. It was codel [congressional delegation]. So I had probably ten Members of Congress with me. We were going into Argentina. [Néstor C., Jr.] Kirchner was the President—now she is, Christina Fernandez de Kirchner. Her husband passed away. We were giving some big loans and bailing them out of some economic problems, but he kept badmouthing Bush and badmouthing the United States. They were going to some Pan-American Congress. I don’t know which one it was, but a big conference. Maybe it was in Mexico or a Central American company. Bush was going to attend.

My message was, “Look, if you’re going to take our money, you’d better watch what you’re saying” kind of thing. So we went to the big pink house and I had this dialogue with Kirchner, and the next day, one of the papers in Argentina had a picture of me and Kirchner doing the tango. More like tangle. [*laughter*]

Riley: We’ve heard about your singing. Now you’re dancing.

Hastert: Not very good.

Palazzolo: Tom DeLay danced with you?

Hastert: Tom DeLay can cut a mean rug.

Riley: When you would make these trips, would you get briefed in advance by the State Department or CIA or—

Hastert: It was usually somebody from the White House.

Riley: Probably National Security Council. When you came back you would debrief with them?

Hastert: They had somebody with us.

Riley: Oh, somebody was with you.

Hastert: The President had—The Vice President, somebody was out there, legislative liaison. Then the President’s legislative—We usually took somebody from the White House with us any time we took a trip. There was good communication.

Riley: You said the legislative liaison would go?

Hastert: Sometimes.

Riley: Do you remember any of these trips being particularly productive, or were there purposes for which you were sent on trips by the President?

Hastert: I don’t think we were ever sent on trips, but I think we had planned to go someplace and there was a mutual interest and we’d deal with that.

Riley: Do you recall there being any pressure in the aftermath of 9/11 to issue a formal declaration of war?

Hastert: No. It was interesting. Of course 9/11 happened, you go through the whole procedure of what happened that day. I’d met with Bush the next day before he went, I think, to New York that day. I met with him before he got into town. We talked and basically said we would work together to do whatever we needed to do to make this country safe. It’s not going to happen—It’s kind of a pledge that he and I talked about.

Then I also said, it was either then or the day—It happened on a Tuesday. I think it was a Thursday conversation I had with him. I said, “You need to come up to the Hill and talk to the Congress and the American people and lay out a plan of where we’re going, what we’re going to do.” He said, “Ah, my staff doesn’t want me to do it. They want me to wait a couple of weeks when we know more about what is going on.”

I said, “I think you need to do it now.” He did. It was really one of the best speeches that he ever gave to the Congress, I think. It was a very good speech. It talked about fighting terrorism. Terrorism isn’t something you’re going to deal with in three weeks or months or years, it could be decades. He was right.

Riley: Dan, you’d flagged for him about his maiden speech as Speaker—

Palazzolo: When you first became Speaker, you gave a speech and you talked a lot about process and this and that—I didn’t get a chance to look at the speech again last night. I recall you talking about some of the nation’s challenges in that speech as well, including a reference to terrorism. Am I mistaken?

Hastert: I’m not sure.

Palazzolo: I’d have to go back and look at that speech.

Hastert: Before 9/11, terrorism was always something that happened in Israel or Ireland. It

wasn't happening here.

Palazzo: It might not have been relevant.

Riley: To go back to your request for the President to come down, what was it specifically that made you think that the President needed to address?

Hastert: There were a lot of questions. Nobody knew what happened, for sure. Nobody knew what direction we were going to go in. We needed somebody out there laying it out so people had some faith and some confidence that we're doing something. I didn't think it could wait.

Riley: At that time the mode within your membership is to be supportive of the President as necessary in order to deal with the crisis?

Hastert: I think we all saw that we were in this thing together. It wasn't a partisan thing. The nine months after that, until we got into the next election, people really worked together. As I said, I told this story.

We had people in my office every night working on appropriations, working on legislation, working on what we had to do with the Patriot Act, those types of things. That was just the tip of the iceberg of things we had to do.

Palazzo: One thing on the Patriot Act I noticed was on the reauthorization of the Patriot Act. The coalition that came together around the original Patriot Act of 2001 broke down a little bit.

Hastert: First of all, the Patriot Act was supposed to be a temporary act. When we laid it out, we talked about a temporary act. So all the people who were into civil liberties, those types of folks were ready to pull off on this thing.

Palazzo: It had a four-year sunset in it.

Hastert: Right.

Palazzo: Initially, I don't think the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] was all that involved, but then it got extremely intense after the first hearing, as I recall.

Hastert: Yes.

Palazzo: There were even some people like—They tend to be the kind of hard core Bob Barr, et cetera, Republicans who voted against reauthorization. It wasn't a big number, but I do think, if I recall, you needed some Democrats to get a majority on that one. I can't remember exactly what the coalition was. It was close to 200 Republicans and then—

Hastert: We picked up some Democrats. I think that was when Gephardt was still there, before Pelosi was there. So we could work together on it. Not so much the—We let some of those guys off the hook.

Palazzo: You made a couple of references to the difference between Gephardt and Pelosi. Was

there a strong enough difference there?

Hastert: It was night and day. Pelosi came in and there was no cooperation. Just drew the line. If we didn't do it her way, we weren't going to do it. I couldn't pick up—We couldn't work with their chairmen on issues. There was no bipartisan work at all. It was just absolutely down the line.

Palazzolo: You suspect that's a difference in their approach? He just comes from a different part of the country? How do you account for that?

Hastert: Purely political. She hired a wordsmith to come in—That's where they created the whole "culture of corruption" thing and just banged on it. Her goal was to take over. She put Rahm in charge of the DCCC [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee], a pretty powerful team.

Palazzolo: Interesting. I think I'm going to make my way out.

Riley: Thank you, Dan. Sorry to lose you.

Afghanistan. Is there much of a story for us to know about the House and Afghanistan? That was a relatively easy venture to accept, or—

Hastert: First of all, most people you had to give them a map and show them where Afghanistan was, seriously. All that stuff that had been going on before was just kind of a religious thing. You knew that the Taliban were blowing up the Buddhist statues and things like that, but people really—It was a place where the Russians were getting their tails beat. That's all anybody knew. We had some of our Members over there.

Perry: Charlie Wilson.

Hastert: As far as the right people knowing about the culture and what the real divisions were and what the problems were, nobody was really tuned in. So all of a sudden this Afghanistan is the place where the whole Taliban issue came from and where al-Qaeda were harbored and being able to redevelop.

I remember once, when we had the first World Trade Tower, Clinton set off a rocket into Afghanistan or someplace out in the desert. Nobody was able to relate to it; nothing ever happened. You heard about Osama bin Laden, but it was kind of a joke. Nobody really paid much attention to it.

Riley: Was that name familiar to you before 9/11?

Hastert: I'd heard it before, but it wasn't familiar. We knew that he had something to do—He was at that time hiding out in Sudan. I had been to Sudan and found out I was in the same hotel he was in at the same time.

Riley: And you missed him.

Hastert: I missed him.

Perry: Were you briefed? When you were being briefed with the possibility that you could become the temporary President in 2000, I don't know if you can say if you did hear about this, but was that part of the briefing?

Hastert: Not that I recollect. First of all, it was mostly what would happen. I got briefed every week by the CIA anyway, so I knew what was going on. It was just a little bit more intense.

Riley: Sure. Your briefings in the summer of 2001, were they communicating to you that there was increased anxiety about a potential terrorist attack?

Hastert: What we were worried about most, if I remember right—What I can say is that we were constantly being advised of what was going on between Pakistan and India. There were constant troop movements and potential missile bases—movement of nuclear weapons back and forth. That's what we were concerned about. Of course, when this thing happened, that whole thing dissipated.

Riley: Right, exactly. So your recollection was that before 9/11 you don't remember there being any increased chatter of what was coming through?

Hastert: That's what we were focused on.

Riley: When I asked you about Afghanistan, your immediate response was we have to educate our membership about where this is. My follow-up question is how does that education process take place? Is the White House organizing national security briefings?

Hastert: There are security briefings. We had our intelligence people talking. Guys like Porter Goss would sit down and—

Riley: I see. So you say "our people." That would be the chairs of your relevant committees who would be responsible for organizing briefings—

Hastert: I had people from the military coming in.

Riley: Understood.

Hastert: Wherever our resources could sustain.

Riley: So in the run-up to Afghanistan, is there any friction whatsoever between Congress and—

Hastert: I can't speak for the Senate, but I can speak for the House. There wasn't much friction.

Riley: OK, that's all we're asking. Not much, or you don't recall any friction?

Hastert: I don't recall any, but that doesn't mean that there weren't some people saying that we shouldn't be getting involved.

Riley: So then moving to the run-up, then basically the President realizes that he can act with the

full confidence of the House, that this is a necessary and an endorsed endeavor.

Hastert: I think we had a vote.

Riley: And the vote was—I don't remember.

Hastert: I think it was bipartisan, fairly heavy.

Riley: Once the combat operations start, are your intelligence briefings increased in frequency?

Hastert: Never more than one or two times a week. I would take one or two hours out to get briefed by the CIA. It was a big chunk out of your schedule.

Riley: Of course.

Hastert: Got to go upstairs and—

Riley: Do you remember any discussions about Iraq at this early stage, immediately after 9/11?

Hastert: No. I think the first time the President indicated that Iraq was a problem was the State of the Union. I was listening to him and he started talking about Iraq. I said, "Oh, crap. We're going to end up in Iraq." He was making the case that we needed to move against Saddam Hussein. We were getting intelligence things about yellow powder and evidence it was there. We were constantly getting intelligence briefings on what the potential for—how many centrifugal force machines they had and all those types of things.

Riley: Was that coming as early as the fall of 2001?

Hastert: We had people going in there even when we were going to Kuwait. That was a different issue. That was the first President. Remember, we were sending people in there to do— with the UN [United Nations] on nuclear inspections.

Riley: No-fly zones.

Hastert: Not no-fly zones. They were also sending people in to look and see what they had as far as nuclear capability. Remember, Saddam Hussein kept moving people around and wouldn't let them in. So we had these inspectors that were actually UN inspectors. This is right after Kuwait, so this was before Bush. There was always a problem. We knew that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction. He used gas on his people.

Perry: Can we come back to your inner thoughts as you were listening to the President's State of the Union Address when he mentions Iraq? Because even in our short time with you, you seem like a very even-keeled person. So if you were thinking, *Holy crap*, that's a pretty strong reaction it seems.

Hastert: Oh, yes. All of a sudden we're fighting a war—we're focused, we have all our forces, recruiting people, our guys in a fight in Afghanistan—and all of a sudden we have a two-front war, so it's a little bit different. I wasn't sure we were ready for that.

Riley: Right. How quickly—Is it the case that after that address you're beginning to be approached by the administration more directly to prepare for intervention in Iraq, or you have your hands full doing other stuff, and that's—

Hastert: Definitely there was more and more focus that we had to do something in Iraq. Clearly Cheney was part of that group that would talk to people.

Riley: Is he approaching you about Iraq?

Hastert: I don't remember specifically whether it was informal or formal discussion about it.

Riley: This would have been the early part of 2002 at that point, when they're beginning to make the case publicly that something needs to be done here.

Hastert: They're trying to get Congress to go along and agree with them.

Riley: Of course. They do come to you for formal action on at least one occasion.

Hastert: We passed it.

Riley: But there was a question about whether they might come back to you at some point? The sequencing on this I'm a little fuzzy on.

Hastert: I don't think so, once they have—

Riley: They felt like they had sufficient authorization at that point?

Hastert: There were other things that were going on, some telephone communications, the whole NSA [National Security Agency] thing.

Riley: Exactly.

Hastert: That was going on too. That was kind of separate.

Riley: On that issue, are they proceeding pretty much unilaterally in the executive branch? Are they coming back to you for legislation? Are they trying to—

Hastert: [Michael V.] Hayden is the advisor to the Vice President, and I think Porter Goss is CIA at that time. Pelosi is leader. Pelosi came out of the Intelligence Committee. She has her Chairman and I have my Chairman. Was Goss at CIA at that time?

Riley: I don't think so. I think he goes later. Is he still Chair of the Intelligence Committee?

Hastert: He was Chair of Intelligence, and then he went to the CIA. When he left, the CIA put Pete Hoekstra in charge. That was my choice, anyway.

Riley: I don't remember either.

Hastert: We get called in to this meeting with Hayden and the Vice President down in the

basement, the war room in the White House, basically saying we think there is movement out there with the al-Qaeda and their cells in this country. We know there are phone calls coming in from places like Lebanon and Kuwait and other places to known terrorists in the United States. With the cell phones and the instantaneous things that happen, we need to be able to get access to those conversations and snag them, analog rhythms. I don't understand all the mathematics of it. With high-speed computers we can pick this stuff up when the calls come in, but you have to do it instantaneously because there are like one and a half billion calls coming into the United States every day. To pick these things out, you have to have instantaneous ability to do it. They had it; they just needed to go ahead and do it.

The agreement—I'm trying to think of the Democrat from West Virginia who was head of Intelligence. Senator—

Perry: [John D.] Rockefeller.

Hastert: Yes, he was there. Pat Roberts was there. The Senate leadership—Pelosi had to catch a plane. It was a Friday or Thursday. They were getting out of town, so she didn't even stay for the whole meeting. She said just do what you have to do. We decided—We didn't want to go and legislate this, because if you legislate, you let everybody know what you're doing. So we agreed to go ahead and let the administration do this with the NSA. That's what the agreement was. Two years after that, then everybody forgot that they agreed. I remembered what it was.

Riley: The idea was that because you were dealing with the relevant leadership of Congress, if you had their approval for this activity it would—

Hastert: We were notified.

Riley: Was that a formal requirement by law that you be notified?

Hastert: Yes.

Riley: So they weren't just doing this just to make sure that they weren't going to get—

Hastert: One of the things we decided—If we could legislate this, we should legislate it. But we decided in theory we really couldn't legislate it. We couldn't because there is no secret to it. You don't want everybody to know it.

Riley: Could you have gotten the votes if you—

Hastert: I think probably. It's opening a can of worms.

Riley: It is sort of immaterial. What other—Let's see, Afghanistan—This entire cluster of issues related to detainees and captives, battlefield captives and so forth. Is that something that is finding its way to your plate?

Hastert: Look, we felt that the whole Guantanamo thing—There needed to be a safe place to put these people. We didn't want them in our population. Probably the safest place to put them is out in the tip of the ocean there in Guantanamo. They're isolated. They weren't getting back in their

population; they're away from our terrorist activities. It was the best place for them.

Riley: The question is sometimes raised about the feasibility of bringing them back into the United States and subjecting them to U.S. legal procedures.

Perry: To view it as law enforcement, as the Clinton administration had, rather than terrorism in a military situation.

Hastert: Look, first of all, you don't want—I think there was a general feeling by a lot of us that we didn't want these people in our civil courts. We didn't know what was going to happen. You're looking for a lot of problems. If they're safe, they are, they were, definitely military. They ought to be isolated. They are terrorists.

Riley: Did you go to Guantanamo?

Hastert: No.

Riley: Were you—Did the issue of—

Hastert: We had Afghanis in the other day. We were talking about the election. Somebody was talking about the prisons that they had, that the warlords had. I would much rather have been in Guantanamo than one of the warlords' prisons, I'll tell you that.

Riley: I'm sure that's true. That leads me to another cluster of activity, which was the interrogations—

Hastert: Waterboarding, basically.

Riley: Was there notice given to you about interrogation proceedings?

Hastert: I had CIA briefings all the time, so yes, I was told that they were doing waterboarding. I wasn't sure what waterboarding was, but if we're getting facts and information that saves our lives, let's do it. I wasn't going to stick somebody up on a cross or something, but I think whatever we could do—These guys were surviving—get the information. We knew some of those things that were going on in Iraq. We got good information where people were, what actions were, because they were doing that type of interrogation.

Riley: Did you have concerns after that initial reaction to the President's speech that there was a lapse of attention being given to Afghanistan once the focus—

Hastert: Any time when you all of a sudden are on a two-front war, there was not as much intensity on any one side as there should be, probably. I think we lost some great opportunities both in Afghanistan and in Iraq because we really didn't take the sensitivity with what the culture was. We tried to bring [Lewis Paul, III] Bremer and a few other people in and impose our will on a place that never had democracy before.

Riley: If you had anxieties about these things, you're suggesting now—

Hastert: A lot of this stuff I'm having in retrospect.

Riley: That's sort of what I'm trying to get at, Mr. Speaker. Did you have anxieties at the time, and if you did, were they sufficient where you either voiced them directly, or did they motivate you to dig further into things?

Hastert: There was so much stuff going on all the time. It was like drinking stuff out of a fire hose. You really hardly had time to gulp before you had to take the next mouthful. One of the things I always thought—You never had time to look over the horizon and look at the bigger picture and bigger solutions. You just had problems that you had to deal with every day. It was not just the problems of big issues, the military and things like that, but just keeping people at the table, keeping them talking, your own internal operations every day. You didn't have a lot of time to think big thoughts. If things were running, if things were getting done, I didn't take a lot of time to think about what the bigger impact was in Afghanistan.

Riley: I appreciate your saying that. That is sort of what I'm trying to get at. We talked about all these other issues. You have budgets and campaigns, and not to mention the fact—

Hastert: Health care and education and the highway bill. All this stuff is going on at the same time. It is like a juggler in a three-ring circus.

Riley: Only it sounds like you have about a dozen balls in the air rather than three. So part of what I'm trying to do for history's sake is to elicit from you that portrait of what life is like while you're trying to keep all these balls in the air. The only way that I know how to do it is to bear down on some of the things that later on become big issues, but it is kind of hard for us to know when do they become important for you to deal with.

Hastert: First of all, you had terrorism. We were trying to stop any further—We lost 3,000 people in 45 minutes in this country in that time span. You didn't want that to happen again.

Riley: Sure.

Hastert: Our focus was to make sure that those bad guys were taken care of. If we had to round them up, put them in a prison in Cuba, fine. If you had to waterboard them to find out what the real truth was, whatever waterboarding was, you had to do it.

Riley: As we get closer to the intervention in Iraq, are there voices within your party that are nervous about that intervention? Are you getting pushback from your people?

Hastert: There wasn't a lot of pushback. Everybody is listening; everyone is a little bit cautious. We're trying to digest all the intelligence coming at us. The intelligence that came at us for a number of years—It wasn't just all at once—suggested this guy was a bad actor. It wasn't necessarily that al-Qaeda was being foisted in their midst, but he was doing weapons of mass destruction and there was some intelligence that there was some collusion, that Osama bin Laden was getting some help.

Riley: As you were getting closer to the invasion date, the preparation, the mobilization for all of this, are your Members satisfied with leaving this largely to the executive branch, or are there

substantial voices, particularly in the House?

Hastert: I think most of the pro-defense voices were very happy with what was being done, and nobody else knew enough to be able to mount—

Riley: Do you have any specific recollections about the decisions to go? Did the President call and notify you when things were—

Hastert: The Vice President did.

Riley: The Vice President called you, and that was sort of standard procedure?

Hastert: Yes. The Vice President called me too when we went into Afghanistan.

Riley: So we go into Iraq. What was your reaction to how it went?

Hastert: We're watching TV and watching the night vision and all the stuff going on, bombing the Secretary of Intelligence in Baghdad, watching the bombs going in. You don't know what impact you're having, if you have to penetrate down, and nobody can find Saddam Hussein. So you weren't sure—then when they pull down the statue of Saddam Hussein—but we're probably having a victory on this thing. But the fact was that now in hindsight you look at it, and you probably should have listened to the Ba'ath Party because of the leadership. They're Sunni and not Shi'a, so they weren't going to turn to the Iranians. You probably should have used his military; at least they had a military in place. They knew how to take command. If they had a different commander, they probably would take commands.

We didn't do that. We basically turned those people loose and they became somebody else's army.

Riley: I wonder if you have—There is a fair amount of Monday-morning quarterbacking on this, as you might know. The Democrats at this time were still pretty much in the fold then? Do you recall any of them bolting this early?

Hastert: No, there were a few in the Senate that were, early on, but no one said, "I told you so."

Riley: Do you remember about how long it was before you begin to feel the center of gravity on this is a little shakier than—

Hastert: First of all, we basically had a victory in Afghanistan and we had a victory in Iraq. It was just keeping the peace, which was the problem. So you had the Shiite leaders in the south that were getting troops together. You had groups in the north, and all of a sudden you had kind of a countrywide revolution. I remember bringing Condoleezza Rice in when she was still NSA advisor and Mike Rogers, who now was Chairman of Intelligence because he was an FBI guy. He came in and got me one morning and said, "My old buddies in the FBI said there were good sources that say there are a lot of weapon caches out there in the desert. We don't know what is in them, but we're not controlling them, we're not taking care of them, we're not guarding them."

Condoleezza Rice came in one morning. I briefed her up. I said, "Look, you're going to get a

question from Mike Rogers about these weapon caches. You ought to be up to speed and have a good answer for that.” She looked at me and said, “Everything is taken care of.” Well, it wasn’t. All our opponents were getting these weapons and hooking them up and making the IEDs out of them. She bald-faced lied to us. I’ve never been much of a supporter of hers ever since then. She just didn’t tell us the truth.

Riley: Did you—I’m trying to get a sense about—

Hastert: This is before they really organized and were really doing counterinsurgency on us.

Riley: It sounds like this must have been fairly quickly after the course of the invasion. You had mentioned that you were getting a lot of your news from television. You’re getting your own national security briefings. The membership—

Hastert: CIA briefings, mostly CIA.

Riley: The relevant membership—I’m guessing there must be a fairly large segment of the membership for whom this is important, but it is not their—

Hastert: I always divide it up. You had 25 pretty-far-to-the-right Members. We had maybe 15 to 20 fairly moderate. Everybody else was in the middle someplace. The middle was pretty malleable. They were worried about their districts and what taxes were and were they getting social services, or what housing developments they were having in their districts—real things. International relations was something that we just didn’t—unless we were going to all-out war. All of a sudden we found we were in an all-out war, especially when we were up against this terrorist resistance. They weren’t wearing uniforms or carrying their flags or tank formations anywhere; they were just everywhere.

Riley: The interested membership is getting their information then mostly through hearings? Was it oversight?

Hastert: A lot of those guys were going over there.

Riley: Who went over?

Hastert: I didn’t go over there because I thought it would be detracting from security and taking 10 or 15 people worrying about you rather than worrying about their own life.

Riley: Were you getting reports back from some of them who were going over there? Worrisome reports or encouraging reports?

Hastert: Some of them were encouraging because they thought our troops were doing a good job, but on the other hand, some of them were worried because they saw this insurgency happening. It wasn’t anything that you could predict. You weren’t sure how it was happening, but they were there.

Perry: What was your reaction to the Abu Ghraib scandal?

Hastert: I looked at that. I'm not sure what goes on in all prisons, but there was certainly prisoner abuse there. We had to be careful because we had to set the example. I didn't think there was probably any more abuse than what happened in other places at other times. It did happen on our watch, and we needed to be better at it and not let it happen again. But there are only so many *mea culpas* you can take on that episode.

Riley: The administration's problems with this began to mount, partly because of the resistance and the—

Perry: The insurgency.

Riley: The other piece of it was the absence of finding weapons of mass destruction. Do you recall your own thought processes as this was unfolding?

Hastert: Certainly would have liked to have caught them with the goods, but they were moving weapon caches all the way around. That stuff could have disappeared in Syria; it could have disappeared anywhere, Egypt—not so much Egypt—even in Iran.

Riley: So our inability physically to put our hands on it, to you was not—

Hastert: We were looking for a needle in a haystack in the first place, and the haystack moves.

Riley: In this case it does. Was the anxiety level of your membership creeping up because of this issue or not?

Hastert: Members had other things to worry about. They had elections at home to worry about; that was a long way away. Even though we were sending young men over there, it wasn't like we were in Korea or Vietnam.

Riley: Not that many. How was that? This is an all-volunteer force. Does that create a different dynamic on Capitol Hill when it comes to—

Hastert: You don't get the draft resistance type of thing. We're for our troops and we want to support the kids. As I said, we didn't have one piece of veterans' legislation that didn't pass. If you want to look good back home with the veterans, everybody had a piece of legislation, whether for Tricare or health care or coming back or getting an education or whatever. Pretty generous times. There was good support for our men and women who served. People were focused on other things as well.

Riley: I see.

Perry: So coming up then to the 2004 election, the first election that takes place after the invasion of Iraq, and things begin to go sour. At that point the Members are not yet worried about the impact of the war.

Hastert: We're passing tax legislation. We're doing good domestic stuff.

Perry: Their concerns are their local concerns at home.

Hastert: Yes.

Perry: My next question is going to be, when do you see that begin to shift among your Members? Before we do that, we didn't really talk too much about the 2004 election, and we know that you spoke at the Republican convention in 2004. How did you put that speech together? Was that totally in your court, or did you—

Hastert: Somebody wrote the speech. It was a short speech. You only have two or three minutes. He had a basic idea, and you let somebody wordsmith for you.

Perry: From the President's campaign? From the White House or from your own staff, or both?

Hastert: We got somebody to do it from my staff. We brought somebody in to do it.

Perry: So then the next question is—as we move—I don't want to jump too far ahead.

Riley: You're going to ask a 2004 question, and I actually wanted to come back and ask one 2002 question. There was a lot of howling in the Democratic ranks about the authorization for the invasion of Iraq occurring within weeks of the 2002 election. I'm just throwing that out as an observation to get you to comment on it.

Hastert: We just looked at it as political.

Riley: Did those elections surprise you with the results?

Hastert: No. In 2002 we picked up seats.

Riley: That's what I meant. Was the magnitude of that—

Hastert: We didn't pick up that many seats, but we picked up another five or six seats, which was good for us.

Riley: And unusual for a President's midterm.

Hastert: But we worked hard at that too; we really did. We went out and—

Riley: Tell us about that.

Hastert: I told you. I did a thousand campaign stops. We were on the road a lot. We raised money for Members. Before we did the McCain-Feingold bill, I think we raised like \$150 million. We raised about \$50 million every year after that. It was a lot of money.

Riley: Are you involved in recruiting candidates as well?

Hastert: Sometimes. This whole idea of recruiting candidates—Candidates recruit themselves. It's a lot of baloney that somebody came up with a search committee to find this guy to run. Everybody has their hand up and is jumping up in front of the class. You find good candidates that you want to support. They got there on their own.

Riley: Got you. Now, Barbara, if you want to move ahead to 2004, where you were—Did I interrupt your train of thought?

Perry: I was headed toward Katrina. Is there anything we want to ask about 2004?

Riley: I'd be interested in knowing were there any strategic decisions you made about running the 2004 campaign? Is it basically just repeating what you did in '02 or—

Hastert: The issues were a little bit different. Again, it was fiscal integrity and trying to hold down the size of government, even though we had more defense and more veterans' issues, but we weren't spending more money in other areas. We were pretty much flatlined. So that was the story that we had to tell. We picked up Members on it.

Perry: Except for the tax policy, we haven't talked too much about the economy and the dip in it in the wake of the bursting of the high-tech bubble and then 2001 first and the dips in the economy. Are you thinking about that in addition to the tax decreases? You passed stimulus packages—

Hastert: Anything that you do in tax policy or fiscal policy, you try to counteract what has happened. So we're trying to put more money in people's pockets. We're trying to get more money into small businesses, so the deductions on capital investment and small businesses especially. So you go out—Somebody buys a pickup truck or a computer, they'll hire somebody to work in it to create jobs. Small business is the biggest job-creator engine that we have. So we were really focused on small businesses to go out and make capital investments to create jobs. That's the philosophy.

We again believed in a smaller government, people spending their own money instead of the government spending their money. I always said—People ask me the difference between Republicans and Democrats and I tell them the story—Mrs. Clinton and I were doing health care. I was doing health savings accounts and she wasn't doing it. I met with this guy, Ira Magaziner, every Thursday morning. He would come up to my office 7:30 in the morning. We'd have doughnuts and coffee and real healthy stuff. *[laughter]*

Perry: Speaking of health care.

Riley: You're going to need some pharmaceuticals after that.

Hastert: Anyway, I'd be talking about health savings accounts; he'd be talking about gatekeepers, and all this kind of stuff. There was supposed to be a bill in March, supposed to be a bill in May, supposed to be a bill in June, never happened. Finally, John Kasich hosts this thing over at his house in Alexandria, about ten of us around the table, most of his Budget Committee members. I got asked because I was the point man for health care. Mrs. Clinton had this guy, *[Christopher]* Jennings, who was her staff for health care. So it was Clinton and Jennings. We have this discussion around this round table, maybe nine, ten of us. I'm the last person to ask questions.

Mrs. Clinton—We were talking about Ira Magaziner, about six, seven months, and we talked about health savings accounts. "I think it would be a good idea if you can incorporate them into

your program.” She said, “We can’t do health savings accounts.” I said, “Why not?” She said, “Basically, the first reason is we have to trust people to do the best, and people are basically greedy, so if they get that money—It was a paid-up health benefit, and if you don’t spend it you get to keep it tax-free. People will not spend that money. They won’t get their wives to go into the clinics and they won’t get their kids inoculated. We just can’t trust people to do the things that they’re supposed to do to keep their family healthy. The government will tell them, will mandate when to get the inoculations, so we can tell people and regiment and we’ll make sure people are more healthy.”

I said, “I don’t agree with that. You said there were two reasons, what is the other reason?” She said, “The other reason is, with health savings accounts, all that money goes in the private sector.” I said yes. “Well, we know that the government can spend that money better than the private sector can.” So I just kind of rolled my eyes and went back to Bob Michel, the Republican leader. I said, “Look, we’re not talking about policy; we’re talking about philosophy. They really believe that government can make better decisions than people can make for themselves and their family. They really believe that government can spend money better than people can spend their own money. That’s a philosophical difference.”

Almost everything that you’d look at—When kids ask me what is the difference between Republicans and Democrats, it is really the difference right there, whether you trust government to make better decisions for people and they can spend money better, or people can make better decisions for themselves and are wiser spending their own money. That’s really the divide. It is almost everything you do in the Congress—Whether you’re talking about health care or education or tax policy or business policy, it really comes down to those issues, I think. It’s pretty simplistic. There are certainly exceptions to it. It’s a crass generalization, but it’s basically true.

Perry: I wanted to follow up on that, because in our earlier discussions this morning about post 9/11 and having to turn to the government for the reinsurance, for example, for the airlines and for buildings and companies in New York, did you ever see any philosophical change among your own party members who might have even come to Washington thinking this philosophy? Really we trust the people and we trust the private sector to do a better job than the government, but then there are some times when—as you pointed out—the private sector was not going to insure the airlines or insure—

Hastert: They couldn’t.

Perry: Right. They just literally couldn’t, and reinsure the buildings and the companies in New York.

Hastert: Eventually they could.

Perry: So in other words, the government would be kind of the stopgap provision. But again, all during this time that we’ve been talking about, the power of the government keeps on growing because of the wartime situation. Most of the time it is bipartisan support of what the government is doing to increase its power to try and stop terrorism. I guess my question is, do you see any philosophical changes in your own party, where people say, “I get this. There are

times, like the Great Depression, when we have to turn to the federal government because it is the only entity big enough, and private interests, the private sector, can't do the job or won't do the job"?

Hastert: The only rearrangement we did of the federal government was Homeland Security. So we took 26 agencies of the federal government and rearranged them. We didn't try to make it any bigger or any stronger. We did in a sense strengthen it. We took immigration and we took border patrol and we took customs and Coast Guard and tried to put it in one box. So these people are coordinating. We did concentrate government, but it was for, we thought, a better and higher good.

In retrospect, was it everything we should have done? Probably should have done some things differently, but that's in retrospect.

Riley: Were you directly involved in the Homeland Security restructuring?

Hastert: Yes, as a matter of fact my chief of staff was over on the Senate side. I thought he went and worked for the Senate. He was working with [Susan M.] Collins and the Connecticut Senator [Joseph I.] Lieberman. He was over there a lot. One of the problems was you had to do it with the federal government, but you also had to do with the Congress. All of a sudden, you're taking people's turf away.

To make it work in Congress, I had to take 13 different pieces of legislation and put them in one, made Homeland Security, put a Chairman in there. But to get the buy-offs from these guys who are giving up turf, I had to make them ex officio members of the committee until they got tired of it and then they sort of sloughed off. It was a real turf issue. It wasn't perfect. It wasn't the way that you really wanted to do it, but the only way that you could do it was give these guys some ownership of things that they were losing.

Riley: It had an interesting birthright, because basically the White House created a bill without any external consultation. Maybe not a bill, but a framework.

Hastert: We were the ones who had to do it; they had the framework, but we had to do it. We did enact it. But the thing was, we had to do the same thing in the House and the Senate because we had the committees that had jurisdiction over it and appropriations process over it. We shuffled the whole deck. So you had all these chairmen who were unhappy because they were losing their turf.

Riley: Do you have any specific recollections about—

Hastert: Don Young was in surface transportation. He had the Coast Guard and lost the Coast Guard. Well, the Coast Guard was a big thing in Alaska. He just raised holy hell. Down the line everybody was losing something that they didn't want to lose.

Riley: So ultimately how do you win that?

Hastert: What I did was, I put everybody on a committee ex officio. I put those chairmen on, put the committee in, put a chairman in, put a committee in place and let the chairman sit on the

committee as ex officio. At least they understood what was going on. They didn't like it, but they had to do it. That was one place where you did something where you had to be somewhat forceful and just do it. You weren't sure if you were doing the right thing or not; you hoped you were doing the right thing.

Riley: Were there any lasting repercussions with the Members over this, or did they—

Hastert: I don't think so. There was some mumbling and grumbling. I was getting toward my eighth year as Speaker. My predecessor in Congress—I actually worked for him, John Grotberg, in the state senate. When I was teaching school I spent a summer working as an intern with him. He kept saying, "You know, politics is like a boat. You can only float it so long and the barnacles don't sink it." [laughter]

Riley: We do need to think about that. Barbara, did you have something more from that?

Perry: Did you think that the 2004 Presidential election would turn out to be as close as it was, depending mostly on Ohio's popular vote?

Hastert: No, but every election is close. It's the way the country is split. You remember the 2000 election, how that happened, and there were still a lot of people disgruntled over that. The Democrats never really did believe they ever lost that election. They felt they had a President of the wrong party foisted on them.

Perry: Did it ever cross your mind that the incumbent could lose the 2004 Presidential race?

Hastert: I think going into that we had a pretty good handle. We knew it was going to be close, but we thought it was a win. You never take anything for granted in this business, ever, including your own race.

Riley: So 2004 was fine for you.

Hastert: Oh, yes.

Riley: I'm moved to ask—I'm going to brace myself—observations about John Kerry, who was a Member of the U.S. Senate?

Hastert: I knew Kerry a little bit. I remember doing *Face the Nation* one day. Kerry was in there and I was going to follow him; I was going to be the next guy up. Who is the guy who died who was the emcee?

Riley: [Timothy J.] Russert.

Hastert: So Russert was giving Kerry—

Perry: *Meet the Press*.

Hastert: Yes, *Meet the Press*. So we were off in this studio over in northwest Washington. I was sitting there watching. I was the next guy on. Kerry was stumbling around; he had not very good

answers. This is before he became the candidate, but he was one of the top guys. *Wow, he is going to have a hard time making it.* He said, “Hey, how you doing, Speaker?” walking out. Look. You’re always amiable with those people, but now he is Secretary of State; he has his hands full.

Riley: I would say so.

Perry: Russell, while you’re looking at the timeline, one issue that we didn’t get around to this morning, it happened before this, but it is sort of ongoing, is the faith-based initiative legislation. I was very moved by your references in your book to your own faith and coming to it as a young person, and that it is very strong, but that you don’t wear it on your sleeve. What were your thoughts about the faith-based initiatives and the legislation toward that, and particularly the charitable choice controversy?

Hastert: First of all, I told you I had done a lot of antidrug stuff. Just because I was a teacher and I had a chance—We lose 16,000 young people a year to drugs or drug violence and drive-by shootings and people getting in accidents. People are voluntarily not part of it, but they get involved. That’s a lot. If we lost 16,000 people in a war in Southeast Asia, people would be marching in the streets, but we lose these kids in the most affluent areas and the most poverty-stricken areas. It just happens. Nobody gets excited about it.

Rob Portman is the guy that I worked with a lot on this issue. But I became the Chairman of this committee. It was kind of funny how it happened. Dan Burton from Indiana was the Chairman of Government Reform and Oversight, the committee that [Darrell E.] Issa has now. But Burton was kind of a loose cannon.

I was on that committee, but when I got Energy and Commerce, I had to give it up. That was Energy and Commerce, a solo committee. So Newt put me back on the committee with my seniority to sit next to Burton and to make sure that things were—

Riley: You kept his firearm holstered?

Perry: Kept the lid on the pumpkin.

Hastert: Somebody in kindergarten. But then I also was Chairman of a subcommittee on drugs. So I really got into the issue of illegal drugs. There was a lot of—I always said there were seven tiers. Moms and dads and teachers and preachers who got together and made sure they kept their communities clean. It had to be a community force. Then you had the whole issue of what are you going to do with people who were already on drugs, and how do you get—

We found out that if you had regular drug treatment, about 85 percent of those kids ended back up on drugs. But somehow in faith-based treatment, we had 85 percent cure rates. The numbers were there. They were involved. Kids got some type of spiritual insight, a lift, help, psychological, whatever you called it. They were able to get out of it.

We made an argument that we ought to be able to use federal funds for faith-based organizations if they were having good results. So the charitable choice thing is you put some money in there. That’s where it really came from. You could apply that to other things, orphanages and childcare.

Perry: So was the initiative coming from you and the Hill, and then coinciding with the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, and John DiIulio was bringing his thoughts and then melding those?

Hastert: Yes. There was a force from outside too that said we can do a better job. We need some help. You always want to keep separation, but yet when economics showed that there was a better way to do things, it was a better government investment, we were getting a better bang out of your buck, let's do it. Kind of a pragmatic sense.

Riley: You mentioned a little while ago that you did not think highly of Condi Rice after this episode. She was still the National Security Advisor, presumably for a couple of years after.

Hastert: She came in as Secretary of State.

Riley: Exactly. I wondered first if there were other members of the executive branch team that you found yourself at odds with.

Hastert: First of all, I lost faith in Condoleezza Rice. When somebody lies to me, I lose trust, and trust is the glue that holds things together. I just didn't trust her anymore, whatever she did. When she became Secretary of State, we had a lot of initiatives on drug issues in South America. She just abandoned them. That wasn't important to her. All the stuff that we were doing, antidrug stuff in Colombia and Bolivia and Peru, she just took her support away. We also needed the Secretary of State's help on that. So I didn't have a very high opinion.

Riley: Did you voice that concern to the President?

Hastert: Condoleezza was a favorite of the President. She really was. I had my own opinions, but—

Riley: You thought that was not a battle worth fighting?

Hastert: No, that's his choice and I'm not going to get involved in it. I did express my dissatisfaction over Gonzales. I was not happy with his two Secretaries of the Treasury, the first two. Frost. Was it Frost?

Perry: [John W.] Snow.

Riley: Something cold. [*laughter*] Frost or snow.

Hastert: I called him "the Iceman." So Snow, I think, was very poor. Then the next guy was—

Riley: He started with [Paul H.] O'Neill.

Hastert: O'Neill was first. O'Neill was not a good—

Riley: I think the President probably agreed with you after a while.

Hastert: Then Snow got in. We got into an issue with airlines after 9/11. American and United took the big hit on that. We felt we wanted to get all the airlines up and running again. We made a provision that Treasury would loan money to either United or American because of the 9/11

situation. Well, United was a Chicago-based airline and they were going upside down; they were going bankrupt. So I went to the president of United—The president of United Airlines went to Treasury to try to get the loan, went through the whole procedure, but Snow was not helping.

We found out that Continental, which was a Texas airline at the time, ironically had been part of United, but Continental at the time and others were lobbying, so Delta and Northwest were lobbying against this funding, and Snow withheld it. I just raised hell. Look, it was part of the law, this guy in his discretion overused the intent of this law. He told me, eyeball to eyeball, he was going to get it taken care of. As he is telling me that, he is denying the loan to United.

I went to the White House and I was just irate. I don't know if I caused Snow's demise or not, but he left after that.

Perry: So when you went to the White House, how did that operate? Did you phone and say, "I'm coming"?

Hastert: I would go down there on a regular basis anyway. That was one of the points I wanted to talk about.

Perry: You said that directly to the President?

Hastert: Yes.

Perry: What did he say?

Hastert: He listened, didn't say much. Typical, President.

Riley: Other members of the Cabinet, or—

Hastert: The two Treasurers and the two Attorneys General and Snow.

Riley: Had you had trouble with [John D.] Ashcroft when he was in the Senate?

Hastert: No, other than listening to him in quartets.

Perry: The eagle soared.

Hastert: I got along with Ashcroft OK. I just thought he was weak as Attorney General. When he came through and really insisted when we were going to do the Patriot Act that he knew best—The guy didn't know best. We needed to go in regular order. He was kind of arrogant when he did it. We got into this whole thing on the telephone, the NSA thing. He equivocated on it. He was yes and then he was no and then he was yes. He didn't have the backbone to stand up, in my opinion, and do what he had to do.

Riley: Sure. Were you at all in the loop when the Justice Department was about to flip out over the continuation of the surveillance programs in I guess it was '03? This was the Jim Comey—

Perry: George Washington Hospital room scene?

Hastert: We knew that was going on. That's when we went down to the White House and said—

Riley: That's right, because there was a meeting. Can you tell us about the meeting that occurs— I guess it must have been the day of the hospital meeting?

Hastert: It was a meeting. We went downstairs. We had Roberts and we had from West Virginia—

Perry: Jay Rockefeller.

Hastert: Rockefeller.

Riley: That was the meeting you were talking about earlier.

Hastert: We had Pelosi and Jane Harman and myself.

Riley: Was this the meeting you were talking about earlier?

Hastert: Yes.

Riley: I'm sorry. I didn't connect that. Barbara, maybe you did.

Perry: Not at the time, but later when I realized it was the—

Riley: It didn't quite register with me. Very good. I'm trying to think if there are any more—

Perry: I just remembered that you're registering doubts about and negativity toward Gonzales as Attorney General. Was that before the President even put him into that position? Or once he got in you saw—

Hastert: Once he got in and he was—

Perry: How long did it take before you registered your concerns?

Hastert: When he invaded the House and didn't abide by the separation of powers, just blatant disrespect. He didn't have the concept of it, I don't think. I thought he was weak anyway. I just thought—My opinion—I'm not a lawyer, so I don't have a good—I can't say I have a valid opinion because I'm not a legal guy.

Riley: You mentioned your Members who wanted to have a conversation with the President about his nominations to the Supreme Court. Did you yourself ever register any observations to the President about Court appointments?

Hastert: I think the President was pretty much on the same line. I thought the first—the woman who was on his staff—

Riley: Harriet Miers.

Hastert: I thought that was probably weak. She didn't have the lift that some of these other people had. But that was his bailiwick and I stayed out of it.

Riley: I thought that was probably the answer, but we don't often have the chance to—

Perry: We can presume that you were pleased that Alberto Gonzales didn't get that nomination.

Hastert: Absolutely.

Riley: Katrina?

Perry: That was next on my list.

Riley: You want to tell us your involvement?

Hastert: Hurricanes and things are something you never really anticipate; they happen. We were told it was bad. I think that was Labor Day weekend it stretched over, if I remember, right?

Riley: A little earlier. It would have been the last week of August when it hit, but moving ahead to the Labor Day weekend.

Hastert: We didn't know how bad it was and we were told that there were enough funds to manage. Then all of a sudden we didn't have enough funds. We just did a fly-by-night piece of legislation without bringing everybody in to increase the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] fund. Then Pelosi kind of got—"We're not here. How can we do this? We need to have a session." So we called a special session and we went in. You could see from the beginning it was going to be politicized.

New Orleans was a mess. Trying to get money into the right places. The evacuation plan was flawed, so you had these people in the stadium and the school buses trying to get them out and people died and all the suffering. I look at it—You put 3,000 or 4,000 people in a stadium and they're all sick and homeless people, probably someone is going to die. You can't say that, it sounds crass.

Riley: Sure.

Hastert: You're trying to make the best of a bad situation. So I go down to New Orleans.

Riley: How soon?

Hastert: It was about a week after, maybe ten days after, just to see what it is, not to get in the middle. I go down, there was a third ward that was below level—

Perry: Ninth ward.

Hastert: It was absolutely pathetic. These old houses, you're under the sea level anyway. These places aren't very viable anyway. I stick my foot in my mouth. I go back and do an interview and said, "I think they ought to knock that down and make a park out of it and move those people." Most of them didn't even own the houses. Somebody else owned them. They were renting. It

was a travesty. I couldn't see how you could save any of those houses.

Of course then they said I was a guy who didn't have a heart and all that. But I was right. They should have bulldozed them, made a park out of it, and relocated those people. That's pragmatic and probably not sensitive. So trying to deal with Louisiana—Everybody was on the take in Louisiana. So you never knew—You would push money in there, but where it was going to go? Whose pocket it was going to end up in?

Working with Louisiana was one thing. The difference between Louisiana and Mississippi—Haley Barbour was the Governor of Mississippi. He got it cleaned up; he just got it done. A little bit of Alabama got done. That was such—down there on the Gulf. My story of Alabama is one time we flew down there. It was late at night. I was on a long campaign trip. I got in this place and I wasn't sure where I was. I got out of the plane and the guy says, "Welcome to LA." I look around. It was Lower Alabama. A good office story.

Riley: With Jo [Josiah R., Jr.] Bonner down there or not?

Hastert: With Jo, and his predecessor before him?

Riley: Sonny [Herbert L.] Callahan?

Hastert: Yes, Sonny.

Riley: I knew both of those guys in Montgomery in a prior life. We have more to talk about. Go ahead.

Hastert: Anyway, we worked with all those guys. Alabama and Mississippi got cleaned up because at least somebody was responsible and not everybody was on the take. It was questionable how some of these operations worked, but Louisiana was like throwing money down a rathole, literally. You just didn't know where the money was going and how it was going to be spent, how it was going to get there.

You had people living in these huge government trailer homes, lots. It just wasn't a good situation. Could it have been handled differently? Probably. But some of those locks and dams were old. They put more money into them to modernize them prior to Katrina, but it wasn't modernized enough, I guess. I don't know. So it is one lock and dam that gave out. It wasn't the storm; it was the precautions.

Riley: Was there a general loss of confidence within Congress toward the administration over the way this was being handled?

Hastert: The Democrats used that as a whipping boy. Anything that can happen can be rethought of ten days after it happened, how you would do it. Probably the guys who did it could have done some things differently. They certainly didn't anticipate it. It wasn't the rain; it was the fault of the lock and dam. Should you have gotten people out of there quicker? They did according to what the plan was. The plan wasn't good.

Perry: Just a little bit about FEMA and congressional oversight?

Hastert: That invited a lot more congressional oversight. The next thing that came along was handled a little bit better. FEMA is something that you never really worry about until after something happened.

Riley: What about the more general question about congressional oversight? It is fairly evident that if the White House is of the same party as the Chamber, there isn't going to be the same level of hearings? But I don't know whether—

Hastert: You tend to go out in hearings and do hearings more on the private sector. Who is not playing good ball out there? You tend to focus away. There are still things even with CIA or some agency that you want to take a look at. I did oversight; I was on the Government Reform and Oversight Committee, and I was getting put back on it when Burton was there. I was there when the Democrats were in charge.

The first term I was there was the last two years of Reagan. Those guys would get up on their high horse and they'd just beat up on the administration day after day after day. I was a rookie, but I was a guy who would show up and try to listen to what the administration had to say, at least put in a good word for them. There were a bunch of guys from Oklahoma who were just hell on wheels. They were just beating up—I'm trying to think what the guy's name—

Riley: [Michael L.] Synar?

Hastert: Synar was one of them. I was on Synar's committee. Synar would come in and hold the hearings on Monday mornings so nobody else would be there. I would make it a point to get in there Monday morning. I remember sitting next to Synar and Synar was on the dais and I'd be down here. Synar would get in, had a staff, would put two telephone books underneath him so he would sit higher on his dais.

Perry: A booster chair.

Hastert: So that's what you were dealing with.

Riley: It is easier to see over if you sit taller.

Hastert: Oversight is important. During the Clinton administration I did a lot. As a matter of fact, I got an award from Arney before I became Speaker on the oversight I did on Energy and Commerce. We did a lot of oversight on security for our military bases. That was one of the areas that I had, and security on our embassies and drug issues. We worked hard on that.

Riley: Why don't we take a break and come back and plug away.

[BREAK]

Riley: One of the things that we've discovered over time is that academics have to have breaks

much more often.

Hastert: You learn to train your kidneys; you do a lot of sitting.

Riley: It's true. These guys can sit there forever. It is like natural selection.

Perry: I've never met a Speaker of the House and it's an honor.

Hastert: Thank you. Just an ordinary guy.

Perry: But that's what makes you a good leader, it's that you know people because you're one of them.

Hastert: I always said it is a place where ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

Perry: That's the truth—but following your line and your logic—*if* they will come together and work together and find common ground. Look at how great this country is. I read with interest your last sort of epilogue about Ronald Reagan and his pointing to the men of D-day—they were Americans, that's what brought them together, and to me that's what made them great, made them successful.

Hastert: I have another great story of D-day. I sponsored the 50th anniversary, but I didn't get to go because my chief of staff didn't want me to go. The 60th I went to and I was Speaker. Bob Michel, who was a Republican leader, was out of Congress, but I invited him to go with. Bob was in D-day. We were standing on the beaches of Normandy and Bob would say, "We went up this road and there was a machine gun placement there; we lost some guys here." He was 18 years old, right out of high school on D-day. Then he fought his way up through France, up through Belgium.

Perry: Not the Battle of the Bulge.

Hastert: Yes, the Battle of the Bulge, and he got wounded. He was out of the fight after that. Amazing guy. He's still alive, 92 years old.

Riley: Is he?

Hastert: Still in town, still works every day.

Perry: I don't think this takes us too far afield, and in fact I think it is relevant to the mention that Dan made earlier about having an all-volunteer Army, an all-volunteer military force.

Riley: That was me.

Perry: Oh, you are brilliant. The Speaker's response was you didn't have the kinds of protests against the draft as we did in Vietnam. My question is, what do you think about the decreasing percentages, men and women, but particularly men in the House and Senate who will have or would have served in the military?

Hastert: First of all, I didn't serve. I was in ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps] in college,

in undergrad. I went to Advanced ROTC to help pay my tuition.

Perry: That was service.

Hastert: I didn't qualify because I had a shoulder injury in high school and I had a calcium deposit in my shoulder. They said, "You can't carry a rifle." I said, "I can play football and wrestle." "You can't carry a rifle, so you're out."

I graduated with a lot of my friends as second lieutenants. My roommate was a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps through that program. He got killed in Vietnam. I think service gives a person a really different perspective, an important perspective. I look at the kids going into the military today voluntarily. I went to Wheaton graduation and watched some of these guys that I knew. One kid happened to be the captain of the wrestling team, going in as a Marine second lieutenant. Great kids. People who volunteer—I can't say enough about the people who go through that process. They come out even better people, I think. We lose something when people don't do that.

There are other ways to do it. There are other ways to do government service, the Peace Corps, other types of things. I think sometimes—We probably could never do it in this country, but when you have some type of mandatory service—

Perry: That was going to be my next question.

Hastert: —it's a good thing. Is it practical? Probably not. There are a lot of Mormons in the Congress, and probably a larger percentage of Mormons per capita than any other religious group. All those kids go into service for two years of some kind. I think they end up better citizens with a better view of the world. It is more wholesome.

Riley: I'm following the timeline at this point. We've covered so much ground. The Terri Schiavo case turns up in 2005. Is that something that you were a piece of?

Hastert: We are always a piece of, because DeLay and a number of our Members felt—It is a sanctity-of-life issue. You don't want to get involved in people's personal family decisions, but yet that was a mixed decision. Should you pull the plug on that person, or is there a real life thing? I've always given people the benefit of the doubt. The question is, did she really want to live or did she not. There were mixed feelings on that. That became really a national issue, so we did get involved in it. I would rather err on the side of really giving everybody a chance. It shouldn't have been a national issue whether the family is going to pull the plug or not, but it was.

Riley: Your own particular role in that was—?

Hastert: We tried to agree to do a moratorium on it or hold it back. We did it for a while, but it didn't last very long.

Perry: I think another issue we have listed here is same-sex marriage and efforts to have an amendment to ban, and eventually DOMA [Defense of Marriage Act]. DOMA is the Clinton era.

Hastert: DOMA was a very important thing, a reaffirmation. Marriage is a pact between a man and a wife, and in a religious sense. It should be the church, whether they're going to do it or not do it. So the Defense of Marriage Act I think was valid. There are a lot of people who changed their perspectives on it, and time changes. I think we're in a time change right now, a majority of the young people, not necessarily at Wheaton College, but most other places, have a different opinion of what that is all about.

I think it is inevitable that our position will change, but whether it is right or wrong, it is up to everybody to decide that for themselves. I think it's really up to churches to decide if they're going to marry somebody. If there is a civil union, so be it.

Riley: Was there any way in which the internal White House controversies over the [I. Lewis] Scooter Libby thing found its way to you?

Hastert: I had to be pretty transparent. My son worked for Scooter Libby. He graduated from the University of Illinois right at the 2000 election. He went and worked on the transition team. Then he was asked to come back to the White House and he worked for the Vice President. He was really the guy who prepared Scooter Libby's briefings every morning. He got up at four A.M. and did all the CIA and intelligence briefings and put them together. He would brief Libby so Libby could brief the Vice President.

Riley: Did he get subpoenaed, your son?

Hastert: No. I think there were—First of all, I fault the prosecutor. The prosecutor was out—He knew what the answer was. They were just looking for somebody to prosecute. They knew that Libby wasn't involved. Where they got him was mincing on what "was" was, what "is" is. It wasn't that he did something wrong. He gave two different answers. He had the Vice President and he had the Presidency that he had to take care of.

On the other hand, the prosecutor went out—It was after—The prosecutor knew that he wasn't involved in the case in the first place. I just think it was an abomination.

Riley: But as Speaker that was not something that crossed your—

Hastert: No, it was out of our jurisdiction.

Riley: I didn't know if there might have been some piece of this that had come past you. It was just a generic question. Was there a sense on the Hill of anxiety about the internal—about the effect that this was having on the White House?

Hastert: Any time that these things happen, it is a wearing down. It's a process—You get skinned so many times, all of a sudden you have a scab. It's not a good thing, but the fact is, ironically, this guy was a special prosecutor that I warned the President against the first time.

Riley: Oh, yes?

Hastert: He was the prosecutor in the Northern District of Illinois.

Perry: That's right.

Hastert: A Senator named [Peter G.] Fitzgerald named the guy, [Patrick J.] Fitzgerald, to be the prosecutor. He was out to get the Governor of Illinois because the Governor of Illinois crossed him on an election. He got him. So the prosecutor did go out and put [George H., Sr.] Ryan in prison. Then they brought him in and he got Scooter Libby. They were shooting themselves in the foot.

Perry: So just to back up. You directly had said to the President, "Don't appoint—"

Hastert: I didn't say, "Don't appoint him." I didn't do that, but I went to the President when he first became President, the first thing in the White House. I was doing this antidrug stuff. I said, "You have a choice here of getting a good prosecutor from the Northern District of Illinois that will be tough on drugs and tough on money laundering." Fitzgerald, who was a Senator, who had the prerogative of making the nomination, was in the banking business, and banks were tied in with a Montreal bank that was doing all the money laundering. I was suspect of who he might name. So he brought in this prosecutor from the Northern District of Illinois who came out of New York and was a hired gun, basically, to get the Governor. He not only got the Governor, he got Scooter Libby too.

I didn't say no to this guy specifically, I just said be careful of the situation. It was interesting, because Karl Rove was Fitzgerald's campaign guy. I think the President listened to Karl Rove on this thing, and ironically the nomination came around to bite them.

Riley: We talked about some sectors of the world, and particularly the War on Terrorism, but I'm wondering—You mentioned a couple of times South America and Latin America. You had a special interest in some of these regions. Did that carry over into your relationships or your engagement with the White House on issues—

Hastert: Oh, yes. The President had an empathy for South America, especially Mexico. He spoke Spanish and really wanted—He was a pusher of the immigration partly because of that compassion. He had an empathy with South America.

My first travels I did right out of college. I was in Japan twice, but I was also in South America and Colombia. I was with the International YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and Peace Corps. I think that's the most overlooked part of the world. We worry about Africa; we ought to be worrying about South America. They're our neighbors; they're right there, and huge potential.

The Chinese are there in spades, and everybody else, except we aren't. I was pushing—I'd always pushed for—I got involved with Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru, source countries, because of the antidrug issue—I told you, I think, there were seven areas. First of all, we had moms and dads and then drug treatment and police agencies working together. We created HIDTA, High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas we put together to bring these agencies to work in a cooperative effort.

We did something on the borders. I did a lot of stuff on the borders. I was an early advocate of putting a fence at the border, not to keep people out, but at least to know who is coming through

and make them come through specific areas and know what they're carrying on their back. Seventy-five percent of all the drugs in this country came through the Southwest border. When you were tough on the border in the Southwest, then they came through the Caribbean and they came through the eastern Pacific, but at least you could start to control what came into the U.S. Then you did interdiction, which is stuff coming up, and then you did source country.

I worked with [Alberto F.] Fujimori in Peru, the President—but Fujimori did away with the Shining Path guerrilla groups almost single-handedly. He just cleaned them up and put those guys in prison, put them away. He made Peru a much safer place to live in, to do business in, and to be in. I was in Bolivia. Bolivia was a landlocked country. They were growing drugs. What the cartels were doing was growing their drugs in Peru and Bolivia and bringing them up and refining them in Colombia and then moving them up through Mexico and into the United States.

When they brought the cartels deal in at the same time that the Soviet Union fell, that money that was going from the Soviet Union to Cuba and into the political terrorist organizations in Central and South America—Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador, and to a lesser degree Honduras—then the money was stopped, so the terrorists who used to be ideological terrorists became narcoterrorists. They started using narcotics as a way to get money, and kidnapping and other types of crimes, especially in Colombia. They brought the cocaine up and started growing it in Colombia. This was all in the process that I was involved in.

I wrote Plan Colombia with Clinton. Basically, as I said before, it was probably one of the more successful international efforts that we've had over recent years. I've had that sensitivity. I don't know how many times I was in Colombia.

Riley: How about Asia?

Hastert: I had an affinity for Japan. I think it's important that we keep our relationship. During the President's term he had a great relationship with the Prime Minister of Japan. We probably couldn't have had better relationships during that period of time.

Perry: I'm looking in 2006, and we've talked a little bit about the Supreme Court just in reference to appointments. We talked about the President and signing statements and what that could or couldn't do to how a law was enforced. I'm noticing, of course, in 2006 the Court striking down the military tribunal system. Can you respond to that? What were your thoughts about the Court's actions, the Court's movement?

Hastert: I think by 2006 I had enough on my plate that I really wasn't worried about what the Court was doing. I was in a different section. Sometimes when the Supreme Court would interject itself in what we were doing I would get my antenna up, but sometimes they would get in these military tribunals. I just didn't—

Perry: As you worked on legislation, did you ever look ahead that far to think, *Will this pass muster before the Court? Would this be challenged? It will be, but we still have to do it.*

Hastert: I'm not a lawyer, so I never really looked at it from the legal perspective. I tried to look at what was right to do. I figured if it was right to do, it would probably pass muster with the Court. The few times they would challenge it, we would change the legislation to fit whatever

their concerns were.

Riley: You had just mentioned that by 2006 you had seen enough?

Hastert: Not seen enough. We had our hands full. We had a war going on that wasn't going that well. The economy was starting to tilt a little bit. We had a lot of things.

Riley: There was not a history with the Court itself.

Hastert: No.

Riley: I'm sorry. I misheard that. How early are you beginning to get concerned about the 2006 elections?

Hastert: I felt pretty good about the 2006 election right up to the first of October. That was because I knew we had some problems, but we worked on it. We had a pretty good campaign plan. I was going to do some campaigning. Then this whole thing burst open with this [W. Curt] Weldon affair. It just exploded from there. I think we knew there was some—People were getting tired of the war. Four years. People were used to wars with Clinton: you drop a few bombs and declare victory and that was it. Nobody would ever put their feet on the ground. Now we were in two places with a pretty tough situation and we weren't always winning.

I think people were tired of that and it was an issue that they felt the economy was starting to tilt down and they wanted to blame that on Bush. A lot of people thought it was time for a change.

Riley: Do you recall there being any growing anxiety in '05 and '06 among House Republicans about either the course of the war or, more particularly, the cost of things? Were people beginning to bear down and say—

Hastert: I think the attitude was we have our men and women committed to this and we've got to give them everything. We saw kids getting blown up with these roadside bombs. We're trying to make sure the equipment they had was good equipment and trucks were reinforced and the hospitals were taking good care of them. I think that's where most of our focus was. We were tired of seeing our kids coming home blown up. You saw that this thing wasn't going better, that it was going worse. The resistance was basic Iranian support and Shi'a against Sunni, and it was a religious issue getting kind of out of our control.

In hindsight maybe we should have done something with the Ba'athists and maybe we should have done something with the military, but we didn't, and now we're fighting them.

Riley: Do you recall—Again, you're going back to your district just about every weekend. In 2005 and 2006 is there still a fairly high level of support for the President at home?

Hastert: Yes.

Riley: So you're not getting a lot of aggravated constituents coming to you saying, "This isn't going well."

Hastert: Immigration was a big issue at home. I'd get protests in my office because I was Speaker. I'd be a target for those. We'd have people marching. In fact, I'm doing some stuff on immigration now. One of the guys who was organizing protests against my office said that was a lot of fun. "We'd march from Chicago, go out, and stay overnight." Miller Brewing was supporting this because they had slighted the Hispanics, so that was a payback. I'm thinking about all those things. We were playing whack-a-mole all the time, trying to knock down all these internal issues to the protesters. It was sport.

Riley: But immigration—These were conservatives concerned that you were going to do something, or these were—?

Hastert: It was the Hispanic population.

Riley: The Hispanic population who wanted reform. OK, got it.

Perry: In hindsight, for the 2006 election, do you wish that Don Rumsfeld had left earlier?

Hastert: Might have helped a little bit, but I don't think that was a deciding factor. I think it was a combination of things. I think Rumsfeld was trying to do the best job he could, but he'd been around the track a few times. You pick up the barnacles. It was time for him to go.

Riley: Tell us what happens in the election of '06.

Hastert: From my perspective, it was a grand scheme. Rahm Emanuel, who was doing the DCCC, his brother worked for one of these magazines, *Vanity Fair*, I think. They had this thing all tuned up. They knew that this page had been tweeted by [Mark A.] Foley on his birthday and they were making a big deal out of it. We didn't know it. Boehner knew it because Rodney Alexander, who was a Member from Louisiana who had sponsored this page, went and told Boehner. So Alexander told Boehner, thought he got it off his plate. This kid went and had a connection with somebody in the DNC [Democratic National Committee] who got tied in with Rahm Emanuel. So this thing happened almost a year before I knew about it happening. Emanuel had this thing all set up. It was a perfect October surprise.

The media was out there before we even knew it happened, were all apprised of it. Boehner had cut a deal with the Chairman of the Ethics Committee and hired his guy named [Edward M.] Cassidy to become his floor leader. Cassidy was the head staffer in the Ethics Committee. He tied up my staff and I was stuck and really couldn't campaign or anything else. So it was an inside job, both sides, both parties. Boehner had set up his rise to power and cut us out, hung us out, really.

Riley: So that's what happens to you, but what about the party?

Hastert: This thing all kind of blossomed out there and it was really what the media was grabbing at all the time. So the party was drifting without a leader, in a sense. I was tied up and couldn't do anything. So we had the war. Everything just kind of piled onto it.

Perry: I believe you said earlier that the Democrats had hired a wordsmith and came up with this "culture of corruption."

Hastert: Yes.

Perry: I think I remember Frank Luntz working for the Republicans at some point and calling the estate tax the “death tax” and helping Newt put the Contract with America together. Did you all think in those terms at any point in this period to try to combat what the Democrats were doing with their wordsmithing and their packaging?

Hastert: I always believed in wordsmithing. Wordsmithing was kind of my middle name. How did people really understand what you’re trying to do? And how you describe it is what they understand. I was always trying to put it in plain language. Luntz was a guy that I didn’t put a lot of stock in, but he was one of the people out there. He was more of a pollster. As he would talk, he would show how people reacted to the speeches. So it was how you framed things and how you talked about it, which is what Luntz did.

All this was part of it, but this culture of corruption thing was interesting, because he had a lot of her people. He had [James A., Jr.] Traficant, who ended up in prison. He had this guy from Louisiana who had cash in his—

Perry: Jefferson.

Hastert: They had three or four of those, but nobody ever talked about that. At the same time, I had this guy who was top gun from California—I forget names—Randy Cunningham. Randy Cunningham was top gun. Remember the movie that came out? It was about him. This guy was a hero. He was pushing me to become Chairman of the Intelligence Committee. He had pushed me to get on—He was on Armed Services and he wanted to get on Armed Services Appropriations. They pushed and pushed and I finally got him on.

He was one of the guys who was in line and wanted to be Intelligence Chair and it was my choice. The other guy was former Governor of Nevada. I don’t remember his name. One was Ray LaHood, who was my seatmate, district mate, and I served with him in the legislature. Ray was a friend of mine for a long, long time. Ray loved to talk to the press. I just never thought Ray would be a good fit for Intelligence. Ray was on the Intelligence Committee for a number of years. Ray had a hard time with just keeping quiet sometimes. I thought that was not a good fit.

I ended up putting Pete Hoekstra in, who was kind of the black horse in that whole race. Pete, I knew, was hard-nosed and he would do the job. He ended up doing a great job when Porter Goss left. I passed over Cunningham.

Then another guy, Bob [Gibbs] from Ohio, was Boehner’s guy. Got him elected. He was from not Toledo but just south of Toledo. Anyway, he got indicted for going with this guy that was the Indian guy, went to Scotland, the lobbyist who had the Indian connection.

Riley: Jack Abramoff?

Hastert: Abramoff, yes. He went and played golf with Abramoff and won some holes and made some money and ended up getting indicted for it. So he went to prison. All of a sudden we had these two guys going to prison, and it fit perfectly with this culture of corruption. Of course everything that the Democrats did, nobody ever paid any attention to.

Riley: Didn't have a name.

Hastert: Plus Abramoff. So it was just something. Things happen.

Riley: What about the transition then back to minority status? How did that go?

Hastert: The day after the election you pull in about a hundred people who work for you, telling them they don't have a job anymore. I told Boehner if we didn't have the majority I wasn't going to run for minority leader.

Riley: Why was that?

Hastert: It's hard to step back down. Pelosi has done it, but I don't think she has helped her party by doing that. I'd been there eight years. That was long enough to be in leadership. You've picked up enough arrows in your back over that period of time. That was enough. I thought I could stay and do something. I was on Energy and Commerce, and I really felt there was a lot of potential on energy. I came back. I was on Energy and Commerce. I'd be Chairman today if I had stayed, but I didn't need that. [John D., Jr.] Dingell was emasculated by Pelosi. They put somebody else in charge of the whole energy issue. So we weren't getting anything done. It was shut down. We couldn't move anything out of the committee. Like I said, Dingell was basically emasculated. I decided it was time to do something else, so I left Congress in midterm.

Riley: I'm trying to remember what exactly the timing was.

Hastert: Sometime in November I left.

Perry: You announced—

Hastert: In '07.

Perry: Left in '07.

Hastert: I ran, got elected—I was going to leave and Bush asked me to stay. He wanted me to finish his last two years. I went ahead—both Bush and Cheney made a personal request that I do run again and stay, but it did not work out. The press was starting to come to me and say, "What do you think about what Pelosi did?" or "What do you think about what Boehner did?" I just didn't want to be there second-guessing people all the time. If you didn't say anything, you were always insinuating or something. I felt it was time for me to leave.

Perry: Two questions. If you had your druthers, would you lengthen the term for Members of the House from two years to four at least?

Hastert: In a perfect world, yes, but it is not a perfect world. In the Constitution—It would be awful tough to change that, I think. You spend a lot of time raising money and doing this.

Perry: Permanent campaigning, even aside from being Speaker, and campaigning for everyone else, but did you feel like you were in permanent campaign mode?

Hastert: You really weren't in campaign mode until right before, but you're always raising money and you're always putting pressure on people to help the NRCC and raise money. You can't just do it six weeks before the election; you have to raise money all the time to make sure that you're there. Pay off debt from last time and make sure you have money in the bank for this time. It was a nonstop issue.

Riley: I don't detect from you discontent with that. It is just because you're a realist?

Hastert: I am a realist. If you have a four-year term, you'd be raising money all the time anyway. Senate is six years, and they're raising money all the time.

Riley: So there is no alternative to having to generate that much?

Hastert: I'm afraid if it's a two-year term and an election costs \$2 million, a four-year term costs \$4 million.

Riley: There's no alternative to that?

Hastert: You can have somebody appoint them.

Perry: Publicly funded elections.

Hastert: Basically, the parliamentarians, they have the party appoint. We don't want to go there. So there are tough alternatives. I spent a lot of time traveling around. Also, I felt our speakership is unique because we're different from any other. Probably the closest speakership is France, because they don't have a Parliament. They have a republic, so they do have a Speaker.

Our Speaker has so much control. First of all, you control the budget; you control the flow of legislation. So all tax legislation, all appropriation, starts in the House. You blue-slip anything that started in the Senate. If you don't want to do it, they don't have the power to do it. You do appointments. There is a lot of power in the Speaker of the U.S. House. It really is a power position. It makes you a little humble when you think about it.

Riley: It is interesting to hear you say that in the context of the time when you served, because the broad flow of history during this period is of a very powerful Presidency. You're suggesting that both can be powerful at the same time in different settings?

Hastert: I think we helped the President be powerful. We got a lot of things done because we worked together.

Riley: But you were doing that to support his efforts?

Hastert: I would say that his efforts were not out of line with where our efforts were. I felt that when Bush came in and I became Speaker—I was Speaker and then he came in. If we worked together, we could do a lot. If we worked against each other, we weren't going to get anything done. So I wanted to lean forward and do as much as possible. We worked hard to lay out what our agenda was. By and large he went along with most of the issues that were in our agenda. He had some things that we couldn't pass, not that we didn't want to, but it just wasn't possible. So

the immigration issue, some of the Social Security reforms I think were probably the right thing to do. Especially where Social Security is today, it's the right way to go. It wasn't going to happen, politically it wasn't going to happen. Couldn't get it done.

Riley: Because you couldn't get the votes?

Hastert: Couldn't get the votes, and the political repercussions I think would have probably caused us to lose earlier than we did.

Perry: But it did help both sides of Pennsylvania Avenue. You said from the start—You say in your book that from the moment you started paying attention to George W. Bush, you realized you had very common legislative goals.

Hastert: If you lay the matrix over it, it was basically the same thing.

Perry: Right. Two quasi-judicial, perhaps legal, questions for you. One is, before you leave the Congress, Alberto Gonzales presides over the firings of the seven U.S. attorneys.

Hastert: Yes.

Perry: Given what you said about appointments of U.S. attorneys, could you comment on that?

Hastert: I think those were justified. As a matter of fact, I was down on the border and we were down—I was in Tucson, Arizona, and I had a border patrol officer say, "Look, they're bringing these people in who have 20 coyotes. The coyotes had 20 mules and they're carrying 20 kilos of coke on their back, bringing them into this country. We stop them and we take the coke, because it is under 500 pounds." When you add it up it is 440 kilos or—I don't know how the numbers come up. The prosecutors won't touch them.

They said, "We have the evidence, we have the people. The prosecutors are just letting them go down in Tucson." So I went to the President and said, "Look, there's a problem here." Some of those—I don't know why, what the problems were with Gonzales, but some of those people they fired were people who weren't getting the job done down on the border. I didn't feel bad about that; I felt that was a justified thing. Quite frankly, he kept people on as a U.S. attorney, including the guy in Chicago, that he probably should have let go.

Perry: My other quasi-legal question is about the President leaving office. If you had been in his position, would you have pardoned Scooter Libby?

Hastert: Yes, I would have. That was a setup deal. He was prosecuted on something he wasn't really guilty of.

Perry: Did Vice President Cheney, who talks a lot about that in his own memoir, ever speak to you about that?

Hastert: No. People came to me—By that time I was in a law office here. I had all kinds of people coming out of the woodwork saying, "We want to try and get a pardon." I knew this guy wasn't going to pardon anybody. I said, "You're wasting your time. It's not going to happen."

Riley: He didn't do it in Texas.

Hastert: He only pardoned two border patrol guys who got prosecuted for stopping somebody on the border, but that's all he did, contrary to Clinton and others.

Riley: Exactly. Looking back on your time as Speaker, are there a couple of things that you reflect back on—I'll give you the broad question. Did you think, *We really did good work on this; this is where I really did the heavy lifting, and it bore fruit?* Then the flip side of the coin is looking back—Is there a notable place or two where you felt like we got close but we left the ball on the five-yard line on this one and I wish I'd had another run at it?

Hastert: First of all, the tax policy. We really did a lot of stuff, and I think it was good for America. This President has pretty much undone all of it, but it was good. People got to keep their own money in their pocket. They made decisions for themselves and their kids' education and their own health care. So the health care thing was a big lift for us. We spent a lot of time and a lot of effort to make that happen, and it did. I think our role in South America, and especially Colombia, paid big dividends with Colombia, kind of gave the country back its democracy. It didn't stop the flow of illegal drugs, but certainly slowed it down. I think the whole issue of supporting our troops when we're overseas, we did the best job we could. I think we owed that to those young men and women.

When you look at what we did in medical savings accounts and Medicare reform, that was a heavy lift and it was a good thing. It served a lot of people. So there were a lot of pluses.

Negatives? We didn't quite get there with Social Security reform. The politics weren't there. We didn't quite get there on immigration. I couldn't get the right people to move forward on it. They are still—The same people are holding things up. We didn't get there. So there are some areas where we didn't quite get the ball over.

Riley: Let me ask this as a global question to you. We were speaking about the Speaker being a powerful job. What are the sources of the power in the Speaker's office? Is it strictly constitutional, or is it powerful by virtue of the position it holds in the sentiments of the Members, or a combination of both?

Hastert: I think certainly the seat of the power is constitutional. You are basically third in line for the Presidency or second in line after the President. It gives you a kind of status. It is something you don't think about when you're there; you just hope it never happens.

The fact is the House has a lot of power, even more so than the Senate, for the creation of tax bills and the spending process. So you have the power of the purse, which is for the government the big deal. My biggest fight all the time was trying to get control of the Appropriations Committee because they were an entity unto themselves. Nobody had ever really gotten control of them. We finally put somebody in there that made them read the bills out. Every time you had an appropriations bill, somebody got surprised. You didn't want to get surprised.

Riley: Yes.

Hastert: Those were the types of things—we'd try to wrest back the control of the Speaker over

some of these things that made the House as powerful as it was. It's interesting. The Appropriations Committee is the only committee that never had to go through the House administration to get its appropriation budget, so nobody ever knew what they spent.

Riley: Nice work if you can get it.

Perry: That puts me in mind—Your last question and the Speaker's answer to Richard Neustadt's "The power of the President is the power to persuade." I think that's what I have been persuaded of today, that you were very persuasive in your leadership style and how you dealt with your colleagues and the President.

Hastert: I'm not sure if I was so persuasive or persistent.

Riley: Another "P."

Hastert: Look, I'm a pretty common-sense person. I tried to paint what was right and what I thought was the advantage of going down the trail we were going. Sometimes people agreed with me; sometimes they didn't. I always go back to the leadership that we had. Roy Blunt was a really good guy to work with. Arney never really did much. Arney talked a lot, but was never—if we had a tax bill, I would put him with Bill Archer to work on him because he thought he was an economist. Arney talked, never really had a lot of lift, but DeLay did. DeLay really worked hard with Members. It's all a relationship business. It's all relationship. If you can relate to people and people trust you, you get a lot of things done. If people don't trust you, you can't do anything.

Riley: I'll echo what Barbara said. That certainly comes across during the course of the interview. When you're teaching politics classes, that's sort of a vague lesson to convey to people. I mean, you can teach constitutional forms; you can say this is what the Constitution sets up, but one of the things that is most difficult to do is say—You put real people in these positions and then if you say their relationships determine whether it succeeds or fails, that seems to be an awful loosey-goosey—

Hastert: I always said—I taught economics, government, history, sociology, speech class, and civics. It was all high school. I drove a school bus.

Riley: I'm not going to complain about my teaching load ever again. *[laughter]*

Hastert: I taught. I had six classes and five preparations. One semester was economics, the other semester sociology. So you were busy all the time and you integrated a lot of stuff together. I always said when I went to the legislature there was a big gap between theory and practice. You knew how a bill became law, you knew what you had to do, but actually getting it done was a lot of persuasion and working with people and just pushing at issues. Nothing gets done unless somebody is inspired and has an idea to do something.

Riley: That's true. I think one of the great virtues of these interviews when we get them all produced and put together and available for people to look at is that that lesson gets communicated in the interviews in a way that you don't see in a textbook. It is the importance of these relationships and the people who are there. We're very grateful for your time today. You

have been most patient with us as we fumbled along trying to figure out how to ask the right questions.

Hastert: I hope I answered your questions—

Perry: An A+.

Riley: It was splendid.

Perry: We learned so much.

Riley: We definitely did, and as I said at the beginning, because of the nature of the project, we spend so much time talking to people in the White House and the departments, there has been this missing dimension. To borrow Rumsfeld's term, that was a "known unknown," and it was good to finally have the chance to fill in a big piece of that.

Perry: Think of all the students you've taught over the years and continue to teach, but think how into the future and on into history you will continue to teach just through this interview, and the one that you're doing for the—

Hastert: I took all my papers and put them over at Wheaton. Anytime I do an interview or something, I stick that over there too. Northern Illinois University was in my district, and they've done some oral stuff. I think it is important, not for any personal glorification, but for people just to understand. Wouldn't it be great if we could sit down and listen to a recording of Thaddeus Stevens during the Civil War?

Perry: Henry Clay.

Hastert: Hear why they did things.

Riley: Exactly.

Hastert: Some people on the back benches, why—

Riley: That's exactly right. You've done us a tremendous favor. We always tell people that this is a continuation of your public service, and we're grateful for your contribution.

Hastert: Once you're a public servant, you're always a public servant. You always have that responsibility. I look at it as just a great honor and am very humbled. I never thought I'd get involved in politics. I never thought I could afford to get into politics. I was in coaching and kind of got in that way and then got into legislature and never dreamed I'd ever go to Congress. I got to Congress and never believed I'd get into leadership. Matter of fact, a funny story is the day I became basically the Speaker nominee, the next day I had a headhunter scheduled.

I thought, *I'm not going to get as much with Livingston here as I did with Gingrich.* I was here 12 years; maybe it's time to move on. I called the headhunter up that Sunday morning and said, "I don't think we need to meet."

Perry: I'll call you in eight years. [*laughter*]

Riley: Somebody had other ideas for your time. Thank you.