



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**INTERVIEW WITH DANICA PETROSHIUS**

May 13, 2008  
Washington, D.C.

**Interviewer**  
Janet Heininger

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH DANICA PETROSHIUS

May 13, 2008

**Heininger:** This is an interview with Danica Petroschius, on May 13, 2008, in Washington, D.C. Tell me about how you met Ted Kennedy and what your first impressions of him were.

**Petroschius:** I met him in 1995. I had started working on the [Labor] Committee. Since 1993 I had been at the Department of Education. There's a process by which administration folks can be borrowed by the Senate or House or other agencies. It's called a detail. Kennedy was looking for a detailee to work on K-12 education. At the Department of Education, Tom Wolanin, who did Congressional affairs, said, "You should do this. This is a no-brainer. You're perfect for it." I didn't have a concept of it, but I said okay. I went and interviewed with Clayton [Spencer], and she hired me. At that point, I technically was not a full employee of Kennedy's. I was an agency person, but I worked on policy. It's very common to do that. It's like a fellowship.

I remember that Clayton came to me at the time of a budget fight. It was during the early [William] Clinton years, so it was in the summer of '95. Congress was trying to zero out education funding or to cut it dramatically, so Kennedy was going to the floor to make a speech. I'd never written a speech. I didn't know about the budget. I didn't know what I was doing. She said, "Write a speech about the budget." I asked, "What do you do?" She talked about how to do it and what she would think of. I drafted it and she tore it up, of course, so I did it again. I remember rewriting it and then watching the television and watching him say the words. I wasn't on the floor at that point—I didn't have privileges yet—but I remember thinking, *This is amazing to do.*

Right away I was put in charge of the D.C. voucher bill. At that time, Senator [Carol] Moseley Braun was in the Senate, and there was a lot of debate around school construction and all of that. The Republicans, to counter that, were pushing hard on D.C. vouchers as their signature item. They wanted private-school vouchers for the District of Columbia. Historically Kennedy had been against vouchers, but he was very pro-D.C. voting rights, long before I was there. He has a history with that and with D.C.'s independence to vote and all of that. Eleanor Holmes Norton, who is the Delegate, was also very much opposed to these vouchers.

I remember a moment that changed my feeling about the whole thing. I basically had to organize a filibuster. I didn't know what a filibuster was. I was learning as I went. This is a big issue for the groups to fight, and they were relentless on me. But of course I agreed with the policy, and Kennedy had a history on it, so I was okay. At the time, Nick Littlefield was our staff director. We went in to meet with the Senator, and Nick said, "I don't know if we're going to get the 40 votes we need. This is a losing issue. The world's changing on vouchers. Let Moseley Braun run

it. She can put out the construction stuff against it.” I told the Senator—and this was one of my early meetings with him too— “I disagree. Here’s where the D.C. people are. Here’s where the groups are. Here’s why it’s bad for education policy. I think we have 40-something votes.” I think it was 43. It was close, but it was enough to hold the filibuster.

The Senator was listening to us, and Nick was in one of his moods—he’s very dramatic—and he was talking, and the Senator finally said, “Nick, I’m for kids. This is bad for kids. I should be down there leading it. I’m going to do this. I’m going to go down there now and spend the next few days fighting it. I’m for helping all kids, not just a few.” So I won. It was a great moment for me. The Senator went down, the filibuster was sustained, and we won. For me—this little detailee against big Nick Littlefield—it was great.

But for me, the moment for the Senator was watching him weigh the arguments. He made that decision. Nick and I had different views, different information, different facts, and different approaches, and I enjoyed watching the Senator calculate the politics and the policy, who his friends were, what his history on this was, and figuring out where he wanted to be. That moment changed everything. I thought, *This is fun. He doesn’t just listen to just one person. He doesn’t automatically do something because he’s always done it.* For me it was fun to put something out there and have it be decided.

**Heininger:** Did he challenge you on the vote count?

**Petroshius:** Oh, yes, he wanted me to prove it, so we went through it. I had the list there, and there were the 38 certain and six maybes. I said, “But the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] and the NEA [National Education Association] and several others are saying that these guys are solid,” so he said all right.

**Heininger:** The interesting thing is that you had more information at that point than Nick did. He was concerned that you didn’t have the 40 votes, and you came in, a new detailee, and said, “We have the votes.”

**Petroshius:** Right. It was probably three or four months into my detail time. It was probably the fall, and I got there in the summer, but it certainly got people’s attention. I’m a pretty quick learner, but it was a learn-by-fire situation. You also have to remember that I was there when we got the Internet in the Senate. This was when everything was done by phone call and meeting. Now it’s constant e-mail and BlackBerry back and forth, but to get vote counts and all of that, people are on the phone. The groups that cared about this were relentless. I mean, it was nonstop calling, and it was a lot of pressure, a lot of work, and a lot of coordinating meetings.

The other person we worked closely with was Senator [Ernest] Hollings, who was very much committed against D.C. vouchers too for various reasons, so we worked closely with his office. He is not somebody we normally would work with, because he wasn’t on the Education Committee. But between the two of us, we led the coalition to defeat it.

**Heininger:** Who clued you in about the necessity of getting a vote count?

**Petroshius:** I don’t remember exactly, but I’m pretty sure it was Clayton. Frankly the groups helped educate me too—some combination of those two. Clayton had her higher-education

issues going on, so she didn't help me with the day-to-day work. She was an incredible mentor to me in all things education and Kennedy, and the groups were mentors in a lot of ways. It wasn't bought hook, line, and sinker, but process-wise, I learned a lot. These people are 30- and 40-year veterans of their issues. They've worked on the Hill. They've worked outside. They've done all the different things. Among them, I think I got my best training.

**Heininger:** How did you make the decision to go from detailee to permanent staff?

**Petroshius:** I was a detailee for a year and a half, and my agency was getting tired of paying my FTE [full-time equivalent] and not getting any work out of me, so they were pressuring me to come back or cut loose, to decide one way or the other. I don't say this against Nick, per se, but the Hill is cheap, right? If they can get you for free, they prefer free. He kept saying, "You can't get a better job elsewhere. I'll tell Secretary [Richard] Riley's people that I'm going to keep you, and they'll do it for Kennedy." I said okay, but I didn't want to. I wanted to be full-time staff. There's still a switchover. If you're going to be in the Senate, you have to be real staff. If you're a detailee, there's a limit to what you can do.

I looked around, and George Miller, who was the head of the Education Committee in the House, was looking for an LD [legislative director]. I interviewed and went through all of that, and they offered me the job. I came back to Nick and said, "I'm going to go be Miller's LD." He looked at me and said, "They gave you that job?" I said yes and he said, "Wait a minute. You can't go! Let me work it out!" Then he made me an offer. I wanted to stay with Kennedy. Kennedy was, for education, the place to be—all things, all around, no question. If I had had a second choice, Miller was it, and I have extreme respect for him, but I wanted to have a longer stint with Kennedy. Sometimes you have to do that. You have to prove your worth, and that's okay. Nick was a tough one to convince, but once I did, it was all good after that.

**Heininger:** When did Clayton leave?

**Petroshius:** I think it was in the winter of '97 when Marianna Pierce came on. Clayton left at some time in that range.

**Heininger:** At that point, did you become the senior education advisor?

**Petroshius:** No. About the same time that Marianna came on, I was hired full-time, so I became an official LA, legislative assistant. Marianna was still the head of the education office, but then she left, and that's when they made me the head of the education office.

**Heininger:** So she didn't stay long?

**Petroshius:** No, she stayed until '99. She got through the '98 higher-education reauthorization, and then she left after that, and I became the head of the office. At that point, the switchover with [James] Jeffords happened, so we had the majority for a little while. We were able to staff up. Jane Oates had already been working with us when I was promoted, but then I hired Michael Dannenberg and Roberto Rodriguez, and we staffed up right after the 2000 election.

**Heininger:** So after you were a detailee, were you then on personal staff?

**Petroshius:** No, I was on the committee for the first eight years. I moved up in the committee chain of command. So I was a detailee, then I was a legislative assistant, then I was the senior education advisor, and then I was the chief education advisor. After No Child Left Behind happened, I was promoted to deputy staff director, so I was Michael Myers' second. I helped him manage the committee, and I did a lot of negotiating with the Republicans around hearings and markups and all of that—not the policy work but the process stuff. I also was running the education office still, so I had two hats at that point.

**Heininger:** Then you became Kennedy's chief of staff.

**Petroshius:** After that, yes, when Mary Beth [Cahill] went. Yes, I think I have one of the more interesting stories in terms of Senate or Hill experience. I think it's very rare, and it was a place-and-time thing every time. To have had the experiences on the committee and in the personal office, to have been both in management and work, to have delved into one policy area deeply but also to have had this management experience, it's unusual. I feel like I got a PhD in the Senate, which is great, and I loved all of it for various reasons. I give Tom Wolanin, at the Department, and Clayton credit for pushing me to do it and for making my initial training strong enough to handle it.

**Heininger:** Let's talk about the first [George H.W.] Bush's approach to education, because it seems that that's where education started to become a big, national issue. Talk about his approach to education policy, and also about the '83 *A Nation at Risk* report, and about the effect all of this had on Kennedy.

**Petroshius:** Obviously this is second hand, because I wasn't there experiencing it.

**Heininger:** I know, but you have the big picture.

**Petroshius:** Yes. The *Nation at Risk* is still a marker. It's funny. It has its ups and downs now, so people still refer to it. It just had an anniversary. But everyone said that education was terrible. It's still terrible now. What's the point of continuing to refer to it? We're not doing what we need to do.

**Heininger:** And it's been 25 years. It doesn't feel like 25 years.

**Petroshius:** Yes. But it certainly was a big turning point. The Bush administration, of course, had a different approach: less of a federal role, which meant block granting, vouchers, and minimizing the Department of Education's role overall. They said, "This is a local issue. The Feds should stay out of it," which was not unlike their general approach to policy.

Around that time, there was also the Governor's Summit, where the Governors took the *Nation at Risk* and described their struggles with education. Bill Clinton was a Governor at that point, and he said, "We need standards." The Governor's Summit started the discussion nationally around standards—whether we had high-enough standards and whether they were common. States varied widely on whether they had common standards across their state. That discussion, I think—I don't know personally, of course—hooked Bill Clinton. He had done a lot of work in Arkansas, and he led that discussion. Secretary Riley, who was part of that discussion, was the Governor of South Carolina at that time.

I know that Mike Smith, who knew Bill Clinton a little bit as Governor, was also explaining things. Mike Smith, in a lot of ways, is the mind behind the systemic reform and standards movement that we see implemented now, although one could argue that it's probably not his vision exactly. He was, however, a big part of the thinking behind that. He was at some of those meetings, and he had talked to Bill Clinton. Many people had bits and pieces around standards.

At the same time, there was a push in the Senate on national standards. This was prior to Clinton. We were going to have one standard for everybody for reading, math, and history, and it became a big political war. The philosophies of the world were saying, "You're going to teach the wrong kind of history about the South or the wrong kind of history about the Civil War"—whatever the subject was—and it became a big battle. It became a "the Federal Government is going to take over your child's reading in his room" type of thing. Under Bush, they had the debate in the Senate about national standards. It totally failed, and it left a bad taste in people's mouths. There was a lot of political heat for it. Then the Governors said, "We want standards," but they didn't want national standards, not one set of standards for everybody. They wanted each state to have its own high-quality standards that served all children.

The other big difference was that the federal monies before them were targeted to poor kids, and the educators who were serving poor kids had to do certain things. Those kids often had education programs that were different from those of kids who didn't get federal dollars. There were almost two kinds of education going on at the schools that got federal dollars. They had what they called "pullouts," meaning that the poor kids, often minority kids, were pulled out and were put into what ended up being an education of lesser expectations. Pulling all of that together, Bill Clinton was elected and said, "We're not going to do that anymore. Every state is going to have high standards that the Feds are not going to create but that we're going to sign off on. They're going to be the same standards for every child, whether they derive federal funds or not." Huge shift.

People talk about the current [George W.] Bush and how he is pushing high accountability—and it's true; he's gone much further in terms of testing and accountability—but the first big change, in terms of the Federal Government driving reform in states and communities, happened with Bill Clinton. He and the people who supported him bled for that. Goals 2000, which had a small amount of money, \$400 million or something, basically gave states the money to create their standards and to set up the tests and assessments that would go along with them. It was a close vote in the Senate. There were a lot of Republicans who saw Goals 2000 basically as a back door to the Feds.

**Heininger:** You were then in the Department of Education.

**Petroshius:** I was at the Department of Education. I remember reading an article from a local paper in Minnesota or somewhere—I can't remember exactly where—that read, "Goals 2000 funds sex slaves," or, "Goals 2000 funds the bureaucrats to come into your home and tell your children what to read." It was so ridiculous. There were ludicrous, over-the-top messages and stories being told about Goals 2000, and they were "the Feds will come take over your home" kinds of things. But the Democrats were able to get enough votes. I heard that they were in the Senate until 3:00 in the morning or something, and [Christopher] Dodd and Kennedy finally got

that last vote, and it won. They called Bill Clinton from off the floor, and he was in another country, and they said, “We did it!” and he was excited, that kind of thing—very dramatic.

That funding gave states the ability to create standards, and now every state has its own standards. Of course everyone’s now saying that the Feds ultimately weren’t able to quality control for every state as much as they would have liked. So you have low standards in Georgia and Mississippi that are easy to meet, but they don’t serve the children well. They’re not getting as good of an education as, say, in Massachusetts or other states. Now the big question is how do you drive high standards in every state without having a national standard? Do you need a national standard?

**Heininger:** How did the states react to the concept of developing standards?

**Petroshius:** Most of them embraced it. Many of them said, “Great, now we have money to do better education reform.” Most of the time, when you put money with it, they’ll do it. But Utah and Virginia, if I recall, fought doing Goals 2000 for a long time. People such as Mike Cohen, who were in charge of Goals 2000 for Secretary Riley, had to work with those states to get them to do this. They finally did. They finally saw the value of it, but they held out for a long time. They were the last to go.

Massachusetts, in ’93, did its own education reform act that basically did this at the state level. It got the business and education communities together and said, “We need higher standards, and here’s state money to do it.” So for them, Goals 2000 was great. “That funds what we’re already doing, or it helps fund more of it, so super.” They were already ahead of it, so these things didn’t come out of nowhere. There were other states that had started this process too. This wasn’t totally new, but again, states varied. Some states were far along in this process already, and some were not doing anything.

**Heininger:** Part of this had been catalyzed by the Governor’s conference.

**Petroshius:** Oh, yes, no question.

**Heininger:** You could argue that some of the impetus for this came from the states that recognized that they needed and wanted to do something.

**Petroshius:** Absolutely. Most of the time, education policy is not made up in the national arena. It’s something the states are doing—or that a few states or communities are doing—that has research behind it that shows that it is a good thing, and then somebody takes it on. Some states were already doing these standards, and Bill Clinton, as President, said that they should all do it.

Frankly, Goals 2000 was, in terms of policy, basically a block grant. They didn’t have to do much. There wasn’t a lot of accountability at the back end like the kind we talk about with federal education policy now. It was basically, “Do this. We’re going to make sure you do standards,” but ultimately there wasn’t a lot that the Feds could do to drive the quality in the states at the final compromise stage when the law was signed. They said, “You have the money there. You need to set these goals, and you need to set standards and assessments,” but that was it. The Feds could work with states, but there was no teeth to say, “You need to have X quality at the end of the day.” That’s why there is such widely varying quality among the states from that

process. But it was a first step. In any policymaking, you can't do it all at once. It was the first step to get them all standards.

Now nobody questions standards. People were questioning standards then. The articles about it, even at the state level, were about how we get state standards, and about how communities were fighting back. Now almost nobody fights the idea of having state standards. It's commonplace. It has also brought that discussion to the dining room table. I think it's fascinating that after Goals 2000 and all of that started, people now talk about testing more. But back then, people were talking about standards. People said to me, "State standards are being developed," because it was in the newspapers in a way that it never was before. It was such a local topic. It then became a national topic in a way it hadn't before, in my opinion.

**Heininger:** What were people talking about when they discussed standards? How did they define standards? Was it, "What a child needs to know in order to pass a certain mark"?

**Petroshius:** Yes. The way we talked about it was, "What children should know and should be able to do." That was the phrasing. You'd talk about them as content standards and performance standards. They started with reading and math. They didn't get into all of the other subjects. Even No Child Left Behind started on the science standards. It says that by 2007, states should have science standards and maybe assessments. I can't remember exactly. It's focused on reading and math. If you think of all of the other subjects that there could be standards for, most states have their own standards, but in terms of federal accountability, it has to be reading and math. Basically, for math, there are standards in each grade.

**Heininger:** But originally, they weren't on each grade level, right?

**Petroshius:** Standards were in every grade but the testing and accountability systems were not. They were third through eighth, and then it was at least once in high school. So for every grade, the question was, for instance, what should children know and be able to do in eighth-grade math?

**Heininger:** That means picking the concepts they need to know and the problem skills they need to have. This gets into the nitty-gritty of what an eighth-grader should know.

**Petroshius:** Very much. In some ways it's not subjective, because math, for example, is math. But at the same time, it is subjective. When should they be introduced to pre-algebra and all of that?

**Heininger:** That's where a lot of the debate was.

**Petroshius:** Yes. There were models out there, models of national math standards and reading standards, from different groups. A lot of states adapted those standards to their liking. Once you set the content standards—what should the student know and be able to do?—then how well you do it is the performance-standard side. Then you have to set other standards. For example, for an eighth-grader, if they have to know ten things but they master only eight of them, is that good enough?

So three designations were created: basic, proficient, and advanced, the three levels that most states go by. Basic would be you're just getting by. Proficient is the goal that everybody talks about even now with No Child Left Behind. Proficiency is the high level that shows that you've mastered things. Of course they'd prefer that everyone were advanced. That would mean that everyone is at the same level. But even within that, what one state calls proficient and another calls proficient, totally different.

**Heininger:** Here's where the problems cropped up. They not only didn't agree on what those ten things were, they didn't agree on where to set the bar for basic, proficient, and advanced.

**Petroshius:** And the reason why I brought up the national history-standards debate was that during this discussion, nobody has ever bothered or tried to push history standards, although it's a critical subject. History is so subjective and so politically strung on so many levels in this country that nobody even talks about it. It was hard enough to get reading and math. Science sounds pretty hard and not too subjective, although you get into evolution and all of that.

**Heininger:** History is the one they set aside.

**Petroshius:** Nobody even tries. Sure, if a state wants to do it, that's great, but nobody even tries to do it federally because each state has its own problems. When states have developed their standards in history, it has been a bloodbath at times. I know that for Massachusetts, it was *the* most difficult process they went through. That was a state-chosen process that they went through, not a federally funded process. So it's interesting, and sometimes it seems so basic. For instance, reading. Of course all kids should read. This is what it means to read. There are levels you read at, but it's so political and so personal at the same time that it is difficult to pass policy, and for reasons you wouldn't necessarily think.

**Heininger:** How did the states react to being required to do standards?

**Petroshius:** Some of them took it and went with it and were great. Some fought it. Interestingly, there are two states that even now get a little bit of a break: Iowa and Nebraska. They still don't require state standards. They took the money and they wanted to improve their standards, but they have local standards. They get a special exemption. They still have to show that the local standards have some quality. I don't know if it's constitutional or what, but their communities refuse to follow state-created standards. I can't remember what they're called. It's something like "locally designed and compared local standards" that equal a state standard, kind of. So they still have an exemption. They never fought it, per se, but they weren't ever going to go with the one state-standard model that everybody follows, and that's true every time this law is reauthorized. You hear from [Thomas] Harkin and the Nebraska Senators, "This isn't how we do it. We have to have our own little policy."

**Heininger:** Once you get into the business of developing standards and setting performance levels, you then get into the question of how you assess them. That gets into the testing. Where did the debate for that go during the Clinton administration?

**Petroshius:** We've always had testing, so they didn't change that policy. The standards are required for every grade, three through twelve, but the question is, when do you test? This is how it was before Clinton. He didn't change the testing rubric. It was different from testing every

year, as Bush has it. So it wasn't every kid every year; it was a cohort testing. Basically you tested once in each of three grade spans. But essentially you weren't following the same kids; you kept testing the third-graders, and that was your mark for whether you did it well. So for the school that tested third-graders, it was a different set of third-graders every year, and that school was judged on whether those third-graders were making progress each year.

That's very different from No Child Left Behind, which says that you must test in every grade and that you'll be tested on the progress. The same students are tested every year. Even though they're tested in different grades, it's a very different approach. It's every year; it's not just once in these grade spans, which would give you a snapshot of what's going on in that school. That school is being told, "Grade to grade, you have to make progress each time," which is a different rubric. For Clinton, you tested at the same time that they always did for Title I. Now the testing is for everybody, not just for the Title I students. That was the big switch they made, so you had data to compare different students, and you could see whether there was truly equity going on.

Bush II argued that you can't tell what's going on when you're getting a snapshot of only third-graders. They could have a great third-grade teacher, but then in fourth and fifth they could be doing nothing and you would never know it. The schools have to make continuous progress over time with all of the kids. So it's a different mindset, and that has been a big change for schools across the country as they do that.

When you look at the staging of this stuff, you can't have good assessments without good standards, so Clinton got, for the standards movement, the idea that there was no going back. "We'll never not have standards. Yes, we're going to fight about quality and equity, but that is where the education system is now." That was a huge push and a huge step, and he deserves huge credit for having pushed that. The next level of accountability and testing is the next stage of that same movement.

Nobody can know for sure, but if we had had a Democratic President, I'm not sure he wouldn't have taken that next step. It wasn't a Republican, per se, idea to do what Bush was doing on accountability. It was actually the civil rights' community's idea. This is what they had hoped for all along, but Bill Clinton couldn't pull it off for them. He couldn't go as far as they wanted to go. Then we had this Republican President taking it even further, so that you could know what every kid was doing. You could have data comparing poor kids, rich kids, minority kids, and non-minority kids, and you could show that these kids weren't getting the same education. It was something we all knew, but now we had the data. In education, the politics don't always align along traditional-party, interest-group lines.

**Heininger:** How have Kennedy's views on education changed? Was he an early convert to the concept of standards? How did he feel about what Bill Clinton was doing? What was his role?

**Petroshius:** He had the lucky situation of the Mass. Ed. Reform Act and of that group having led the standards fights in a lot of ways for the country. It was one of the states that were ahead of the Goals 2000 time.

In terms of standards, traditionally the federal role was to give funding to the communities that had the most poor kids and let them do education. Clinton led many of the fights to make sure

that the federal money was not abused. There were a lot of abuses of the federal money, and he, over time, made the communities more and more accountable. There was a big report, the National Assessment of Title I, that came out before my time there, that basically said that Title I funds were being used to fund swimming pools and lawn upkeep, or whatever, of the schools—things that it was not intended for, non-academic purposes. He made the conversion to holding people more accountable for the money. It became more about how they spent it.

Then he was easily brought into the standards debate, because in Massachusetts, it wasn't going to be a problem. They were leading it, so he could help lead it here, and I think he understood both the value of equity that standards can bring and the quality issue. But early on he did not buy into the hard accountability line that the civil rights community would have liked these guys to take. There was some nervousness about getting the neediest kids the services they needed. The civil rights community was saying accountability has to drive that.

My impression was that his heart and his policy mind were thinking, *Get them the services they need, such as academic tutoring or services or the right teachers. Let's give them money, and let's make sure it's spent on the right services.* The outcomes were not as important as making sure they got the services, because there was a fear of what to do. If you hold them accountable, do the kids lose services? That would not be the right policy, so how does that work? Over time he became a convert to accountability, because we learned that it drives better services. It flipped the situation on its head.

I see his philosophy before as *get the kids the services they need and ultimately that will lead to success.* Now it's *if you hold them accountable, then we have more ability to drive better services and more services to those kids.* If you can say, "There are kids out here who can't read," that's a much better argument than driving funding or policy or whatever. During my time, I saw that conversion pretty clearly.

**Heininger:** His original stance is much in line with his philosophical approach, which is that the Federal Government has the responsibility to take care of those who have difficulty taking care of themselves. Ergo his support for the longstanding Title I approach, which was meant to direct services to the disadvantaged children who needed them so that they could be educated at the same level as the non-disadvantaged.

**Petroshius:** Exactly.

**Heininger:** But that ultimately was overtaken by the standards movement, which said, "If you don't set a baseline for what they need to do, how do you know whether they're equal?"

**Petroshius:** It also came from the national assessment, Title I-type group that said two things. One was the funding was being abused, so there had to be some accountability; and two, they said you guys basically set up the worst-case scenario: two systems. We're back to a separate-and-unequal situation, and that's even worse. In all of your do-gooding to drive services to the neediest kids, it has created a bifurcated system, and what the Title I kids are getting is not good.

**Heininger:** The Title I kids were not getting the things that would bring them to the level of the non-Title I kids.

**Petroshius:** Right.

**Heininger:** The expectations of them were lower, so they didn't meet Kennedy's need for egalitarianism.

**Petroshius:** Right. They also said there's another thing going on here, which is, the Title I kids are having low expectations set for them, and they're getting a lower quality of education, and they're not succeeding even within that, so the services aren't getting to them very well. Other kids are getting a better quality education and they are being held to higher standards, but all kids should be held to high standards. So even the kids in Scarsdale and other so-called high-end communities are not being taught on an international standard with comparative countries.

**Heininger:** Which was the point of *A Nation at Risk*.

**Petroshius:** Exactly. All of those things mixed into OK, what does that mean for kids? The civil rights community, a lot of time it litigates, but in its litigation it learned the details of that situation, and that was bad.

They also learned that there isn't a lot of data to prove it everywhere. So the data movement around accountability became an important piece of this pie too, because you could no longer hide, whereas before you could hide. I mean, they had to go find these problems and go research them. Standards have also driven data systems. Now you can track so many things, and those methods are going to become more sophisticated, generating better teaching practices and a series of things.

**Heininger:** What happened when [Newton] Gingrich came in?

**Petroshius:** Gingrich. [*sighs*] Getting rid of the Department of Education was one of his big platforms, and from an education point of view, he handed the issue to us. Gingrich did things in other policy areas that probably helped his party, but on the education issue, he made it easy to beat the Republicans, because they had no proactive stance. Their stance was, eliminate the Department of Education, privatize, and do vouchers. Then [Robert] Dole went up against Clinton, and Ted Kennedy talked to people on their behalf at campaign events or whatever, and he said, "The Republicans want to get rid of the Department of Education. They want a President running this country, but they want no one at his ear." I'm not saying it as eloquently as he did, but basically he would say, "I want a President who wants somebody telling him every day, 'Pay attention to kids. Pay attention to schools.' They don't want that. They want the President to ignore schools and education." That was a very simple way to explain what they were doing.

**Heininger:** It was a very effective 30-second sound bite, and not for Gingrich.

**Petroshius:** It was so easy, it was embarrassing. For Dole, I remember, in the campaign it was embarrassing. He was so uneducated about education. He had no platform because the party had taken this Gingrich stance, and it was so easy. What Bush II did has usurped the education issue. It used to be a bread-and-butter issue on the campaign trail that would win us votes, but now it's all mushed up. Education is no longer a Democratic issue. It's no longer clear who sits on one side or what the other side is.

Gingrich also basically wanted to help the loan industry, the banks, so there were all kinds of easy things to use. I remember one of Clayton's slogans, which she created, was, "Not one penny from students." The Republicans were zeroing out [Claiborne] Pell grants and no-interest loans or low-interest loans. There were all kinds of fees, and they would tack on fees for students. If a student got a cheap loan but there were all these fees, it ended up costing more.

We would ask, "What are we doing if we're not helping students? Whatever policy you pass, we're not going to take one penny from students." It was easy to win those arguments, so we had fun. I remember the campaign trail with Clinton and him calling it the "Gingrich Congress," and everyone would yell, "Boo!" Gingrich made it easy to fight and win on education. Bush, smartly, has captured that issue and has made it much more difficult for Democrats to own it. I don't think Democrats own it anymore. We owned it before, no problem.

**Heininger:** That's true. Tell us about Kennedy's efforts to get the money to hire 100,000 new teachers.

**Petroshius:** Also known as class-size reduction. That was a Bill Clinton idea, which was brilliant—again, an easy message to understand. Small class size makes so much sense to a parent, so it was a great idea, but from a policy and political point of view, it was very difficult. Not all of the education communities supported it. It was a billion-dollar program, and the communities that support schools would much rather have seen that money go into Title I. Title I serves the poor kids already, it's a main driver of reform, and it funds a lot of teachers. They asked, "Why are we creating another program? They can do class-size reduction with Title I." So there was pushback on this issue from the education groups that traditionally support Clinton.

**Heininger:** Were they afraid that it would rob money from Title I?

**Petroshius:** Essentially. And frankly, Clinton's budgets weren't good to Title I, because he had other new ideas. You have only so much money to play with, and he was big on balancing the budget and all of that. They would have rather seen the new monies go to Title I. So that was an internal fight, but Clinton eventually got them on board. They supported it because they eventually saw that if it were targeted to the poorest communities and if it had certain flexibilities around it, they could live with it and use it. So he did a lot of work internally to get some of the groups to support it.

Then, as the head of the Democrats, as a ranking member at the time, Kennedy took it on. He believes in the issue from the point of view that this makes sense, this is good policy for kids. It was a big political fight. I don't know how many times we were on the floor fighting about it, but it was a great message. The Republicans didn't have a good answer for why they shouldn't do it. If they were asked about smaller class sizes, they would say, "We should let the locals decide." Well, that's not a good message answer. It doesn't have the same impact.

**Heininger:** Nor could they go around saying, "No, big classes are better."

**Petroshius:** Exactly, but they were in charge, and on education, they would take a lot of heat. They were cool with that. So we lost a lot of floor fights on budget. Every time there was a budget appropriations bill or an education bill, we would do an amendment to fund class size.

There was both a political and policy reason to do it. Make them vote on class size again. That was an overall Democratic strategy in the Senate, which we could do.

Finally we got to the point where they couldn't hold out against it anymore. There was so much pressure on it—and Clinton was bearing down on it too—that [William] Goodling, who was in charge of the committee in the House at the time, had to negotiate with the Clinton administration. There were Kennedy and Goodling and a couple others. Barbara Chow, a political appointee of OMB [Office of Management and Budget], was Clinton's person, and she was in charge of negotiating that.

We sat in rooms in the Capitol for a week, late nights, and Goodling, if he had to do this, had to have as few strings attached as possible. The only way he said he could sell it to his people was with the fewest strings attached. Of course Clinton and Kennedy were asking, "Is it targeted to the poorest kids?" There has to be some assurance that they're going to do something useful with it and that they're going to have the professional development around it. Just because class sizes are smaller doesn't mean that everything is perfect. So for that fight, we put in late nights. There were ugly battles for about a week.

Also, I forgot to mention that Senator [Patty] Murray was up for reelection, and she had grasped onto this issue as her signature campaign item. The Republicans knew that, and they wanted that seat. If she were to win this issue, that would be a huge victory for her to take home. Kennedy, of course, wanted to deliver for his colleague, so she was brought in to many of the negotiations—not all the time at every meeting, because there's protocol about who sits in the room and how many people, but Kennedy was constantly on the phone with her. I had to update her staff constantly and make sure that she could live with it.

I remember when they finally cut the deal. It was late at night, and if somebody were interested in comparing the Goodling press release with the Kennedy and Murray press releases, you would think that they were describing two different programs. I mean, I remember that theirs said something like, "Local control for classrooms wins," and ours said, "Smaller classes for every child," or something. They emphasized totally different aspects of what happened, but that was the only way Goodling could sell it to his party. They did it and it was a huge victory for Clinton and a huge victory for Murray because they had both put so much of their names into that. I don't remember if Kennedy was up for reelection then, but he was always different.

**Heininger:** In 2000 he would have been up, yes. This was before 2000, so this was, like, '98 or '99?

**Petroshius:** Yes. I think it was '99, 2000. He might have been in Murray's class, but he didn't have the same problem. Ninety-four was his big, hard year, and after that, he campaigned hard and we sent the issues home, but he didn't have to make it his own issue for his reelection like Murray did. He did it because it was good policy, but he also did it to help his colleague. It was popular in Massachusetts, so it was easy to sell to them, but it wasn't his signature issue in the way that certain health care issues might have been. He delivered and he was good on it, and they couldn't have done it without him. There's no one else in the Senate who can negotiate something like that for education and have the power to make it happen. If somebody were to look back, they would say, "Murray was class size," but Bill Clinton—

**Heininger:** It sounds like it was a conscious decision on Kennedy's part.

**Petroshius:** Exactly.

**Heininger:** He takes credit when he needs to take credit, and he's willing to give it to others.

**Petroshius:** In the Senate, when you do these message amendments on the budget appropriations, there's always a discussion about who will be the first on the amendment from the Democratic Party. I have had to facilitate fights between other Senators about who's first and second. For example, Dodd and [Barbara] Boxer always fight about afterschool. Kennedy said, "No, Murray's first. It's her amendment." We would always be second. He would go speak on it, sometimes more than she would, because he wasn't going to let it go, and he was going to make sure that people knew that this was serious and that it mattered and that it was a good thing, but he always would defer to her and make sure she had the lead. She spoke first at press conferences, for example—just good politics. He's a good political manager. That's what he does best.

**Heininger:** How did No Child Left Behind come about?

**Petroshius:** We finished class size, I think, in '98. I think Murray was '98 and he was 2000. Ninety-nine was when the current ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act]—No Child Left Behind is just the newest name for the ESEA base law—was up for reauthorization. So '99 came around and we started having meetings about what the staff could do on it. People were introducing bills all over the place. [Jeff] Bingaman introduced a bill that had a lot of the AYP, the Adequate Yearly Progress, and other accountability items that basically ended up becoming law. [Joseph] Lieberman and his moderate colleagues introduced a similar bill.

Kennedy rarely introduces a bill as the head of the Democrats. He was sometimes chairman and sometimes ranking member during this time, back and forth. But as that, he doesn't introduce a bill separately from everyone else. During that time, the Clinton administration came up with their reauthorization bill. On behalf of them, Kennedy introduced it, so it was around. He might have some special issues that he introduces bills on, but his job is to put the thing together. That's what we were doing: we were looking at the different proposals plus his ideas, and I was working on that.

We went to the Senate floor during '99 and 2000 a couple of times. We knew that it was going nowhere. The Republicans were in charge, and they didn't want to renew ESEA, and they wanted to block grant the whole thing. They wanted to make vouchers the top thing. Of course the Democrats would have none of that, so I was on the floor for two weeks for this bill, knowing that it wasn't going anywhere. We knew that different parts of the bill would be filibustered, but we had the debate about block grants, and we had the debate about vouchers.

There was a very political game going on. We would try, but both sides knew that we couldn't get an agreement. It was two years of developing policy, of bills being introduced, of discussions, of floor fights. A lot of things were discussed and energized and put together. I say that because people think that Bush got elected in November of 2000 and then in January of 2001 said, "I want to redo ESEA to be No Child Left Behind," and then in a year got it done.

**Heininger:** It was already delayed by two years.

**Petroshius:** That is true. It was already delayed, and two years of work had gone on in the House and Senate separately that got people ready for this debate. So it was a three-year process, and historically, on education bills, that's the minimum. No education bill is ever reauthorized on time, and it usually takes at least three years. So this was not uncommon, but it's important for people to remember that people had dug in on certain issues, and Bingaman and Lieberman had their ideas about accountability that were driven by the civil rights community, which ended up, at the end of the day, being exactly what Bush pushed. Again Bush's idea of accountability was not new. He took it from the civil rights community, which happened to be where these guys took it from, and he happened to have a Democratic and Republican meeting of the minds around the issue.

**Heininger:** What was the view of the civil rights community on accountability? Where does the accountability piece fit into this debate?

**Petroshius:** The accountability piece was that you have content and performance standards, but if you don't hold schools accountable for progress, they're meaningless, because schools will continue to fail certain kids, and the kids who already do well will continue to do well. A bunch of people were saying, "We have the standards and we're going to guide them, so maybe our system is better, but no one is holding me accountable for the progress."

**Heininger:** But what's the lever? Is it money? How do you hold them accountable?

**Petroshius:** Right. The accountability is to not give money to the schools. But nobody could stomach taking money away from the services for poor children when it's not the fault of the children if they are not doing better. I mean, the system isn't working for them, but that doesn't mean that they shouldn't get at least the base services. Those services should be improved. The accountability is on the public. It's public accountability.

**Heininger:** You mean shame?

**Petroshius:** Yes, or a bright light. And schools don't like that. Schools don't like to be called a "failing school" or a "school that needs improvement" in their newspapers. They don't like it known that all of their African-American students are failing and that the white students are doing fine. That's not good.

**Heininger:** When the standards began to go in, how much data was being collected?

**Petroshius:** Hardly any. Again, not only did the standards take time to get into the process, but there was no requirement for any data collection. There was some, but again, it was grade span. It doesn't give you a picture, and it's not what they call disaggregated. Overall, kids might be doing well, but it doesn't tell you how African-American students and Hispanic students do in comparison to white students. It isn't broken down by what they call subgroup.

**Heininger:** So in order to make things accountable, you have to have data collection.

**Petroshius:** Yes.

**Heininger:** And you have to have a way of publicizing the information.

**Petroshius:** Correct.

**Heininger:** And you have to have a place where it's collected, and that place is then responsible for making the results public. Who does that?

**Petroshius:** Everything is driven by the states. They all have their approaches and their data collection, but the Feds can say, "You have to report this publicly at least once a year in an annual report card at the state and local school levels." So they required report cards at the state and local school levels—local meaning district—and for them to be done by these disaggregated populations, and they required that certain things be reported.

Knowing that the data exists, anyone can go in and ask for it too. Civil rights leaders can go in and say, "Give me your data." It's a public entity, and it's available. Now this data is everywhere, and there is no question that the data, as honest as it can be, has been the driver of so much reform in schools. The schools feel shame. The parents feel empowered. They finally understand. Especially in the communities that have been underserved for so long, parents had no information. They had no access to their schools. People complain about No Child Left Behind for a variety of reasons, but that is the one huge success that almost everyone agrees on, that now we have proof of what we always thought was going on in these schools: (1) that there was unfair education going on, or unequal education, and (2) that parents now have the power.

All kinds of parent community groups have sprung up to advocate for the schools, both for funding and policy. Parents are able to better help their children too, and you hear this. It's one of the most compelling stories around it, and I've heard it in a variety of places. The civil rights community can also use this data as they advocate at the state and local levels for funding, for better teachers, for their desegregation issues, and the like. It's powerful.

How you get them to change their practices based on that data is sometimes by public pressure, sure, but there is a series of what they call "sanctions" in the law. They're not sanctions; they're more like you have to change what you're doing. If your numbers aren't meeting a progress rate, then you first have to offer some public-school choice, and then you have to offer tutoring, and if it's still not working, you have to dramatically change the school. For instance, you may have to reconstitute it—which means, basically, that they have to shut it down and start it up again or change it to a charter school. There's a variety of things in the law that change. That works because the Feds have a couple of hooks. First, they can go into the schools and say, "You have to do this. There is a law that says so." Two, there's incentive to not have to take such a dramatic step.

There's a lot of reform that's been happening, and frankly, if you talk to some principals, they say, "This is great. We've always wanted a change. Now I have a reason to go to my school board, and I have the data, and I can blame the federal law and say, 'We have to do something different. We have to have more money for professional development,'" or whatever it is. It has been used as a tool all around, all across the board. Now, people can disagree about how much testing there is or how tough the sanctions are or if they're the right sanctions and all of that, but the basic premise, I think, works, and it's hard to argue against the basic premise.

[BREAK]

**Heininger:** Let's go to George Bush coming into office. How did the bill come about? You said that a couple of years of preparation had already been put into it. How was Kennedy feeling about what Clinton was doing? Was it working out?

**Petroshius:** Kennedy generally felt that adopting standards was the right direction to go. The process of reauthorizing any law, because it is supposed to be reauthorized every five or seven years or whatever, by definition people want to change it—not because it's necessarily broken, but there are new ideas, new information, new research. So the reauthorization process is a good thing. Times change.

There were all kinds of ideas. He didn't necessarily think that the baseline system was broken, but he knew that it needed to be improved because we had information that there were a lot of kids out there who were not getting a good education. How do you do that? That's a different question. Kennedy, in terms of his signature issues, was very focused on improving teacher quality. He had all kinds of ways of doing it. He also was very focused on the Reading Excellence Act, which was changed to Reading First, under Bush. Kennedy was focused on reading for kids, and he was also very into the math and science and those kinds of issues. In terms of signature issues, that's where he spent a lot of his time. But when you talk about Kennedy, everything is his signature issue. He was the leader of that bill, and because he's the head of the Democrats, he had to negotiate everything.

**Heininger:** Did he feel like kids were making enough progress?

**Petroshius:** No. For sure that was a problem. He was not the leader of the accountability movement. It wasn't his brainchild, but he quickly got into it and saw the benefits of it, as long as it was doing the right thing.

The big picture of this was that during the campaign between [Albert] Gore [Jr.] and Bush, Bush slaughtered Gore on education. In all of the town meetings, he had the right message: "No Child Left Behind. Testing every year. You're going to know how your kids do," and they were going to fix it. Gore didn't have a good comeback for that. I was sorely disappointed on that piece of it. Even though he won the election, it wasn't because of education. Then Bush said, "It will be my top priority going into office." So Kennedy read the tea leaves. He's not stupid. He knew, *All right, if you're going to do education in my house, in the Senate, it's going to be with me, and we're going to do it right, and we're going to do it together.* He's also a pragmatic politician. *If this train is moving, I'm going to be on it to make sure it's the best it can be.*

Early in December 2000 there was a gathering that everyone refers to as "the Austin meeting." Bush invited Tim Roemer, George Miller, and a few others—maybe Lieberman was there—to talk about education in the new administration and how to do No Child Left Behind. He didn't invite Kennedy. There were rumors around town that Kennedy was being shut out of the process and that Bush and Lieberman were going to make this happen. Kennedy wasn't sweating it a bit.

We all knew that you can't do education without Kennedy. You can't pass an education bill in the Senate without Kennedy leading it. It doesn't work that way. And everybody knows that Lieberman can't lead the Democrats to a solution. It's not the role he plays in the Senate for that issue.

So Kennedy waited. In January, right after the New Year, I remember that we were in the office, and Bush called Kennedy and basically apologized for not including him. "I want to work with you. You're the leader on education." Somebody had gotten to him and said, "You have to bring Kennedy into the fold. You're not going to do this without him. It can't happen." Kennedy was very friendly with Bush senior. Although they didn't see eye to eye on policy all the time, Kennedy's very fond of him, and they've done things together over the years, so he was open. He didn't know the second Bush personally, but he had a fondness for Bush senior and was open. He's open to working with anyone who will try to compromise. He said, "Okay, I'll work with you."

So Bush, soon after that, brought in the leaders of the two committees—[John] Boehner and Miller in the House, and Kennedy and [Judd] Gregg in the Senate—and had a meeting, and basically it was very top level. "I want to get this done. Can you help me? You guys are the leaders in the House and Senate. I want to make this a top priority. I want to do it fast and furious." In those first few planning meetings, of course Kennedy and Miller said, "Yes, let's do it, but we have some baseline things."

The politics of it were so fascinating. There were Gregg and Boehner, whose instinct was to have vouchers and block grants. That was their top priority and had been for a long time. Bush's top priority was this tough, very specific accountability stuff, and the annual tests. So Bush, the leader of the Republicans, in this meeting said, "I have to have these annual tests. It has to be called No Child Left Behind, and I have to have it targeted to poverty." Miller and Kennedy said, "Targeting poverty, we've already done that. We're on board with that. No problem. We'll work with you to get the testing and accountability done, but we can't have vouchers, and we can't have block grants," and Bush said okay. So in the first minute, he'd already taken two signature Republican items off the table. At that moment I felt, *This thing is going to get done*, because for two years those things had hung us up in the Senate.

Gregg and Boehner, I'm sure, were not happy about that, and I'm not sure they knew it was going to happen, but you're talking about differences in policy. You're not talking about big philosophical differences. They were so excited to have a Republican President, a popular one. Boehner took this for all it was worth and said, "I'm going to deliver this for the President." He was in charge of the House, and Boehner is a doer. Boehner and Kennedy got along very well, because Boehner is pragmatic, like Kennedy, and he's a doer. He pushes and drives things and makes things happen.

We named this group the "Big Four," who were the four guys I just mentioned, who would drive this process through the House and the Senate. Miller and Kennedy, of course, coordinated a lot because we were both in the minority at that point. The House had their process, and the Senate had its process before we conferenced, but we coordinated and talked quite a bit.

**Heininger:** Was Miller also frustrated with the lack of progress with how the implementation was going after Clinton?

**Petroshius:** Yes. Miller probably more so at that point than Kennedy. He was more in the tough-accountability camp first. And again, I'm not saying that Kennedy was ever against it. It's a learning process. You look out there at what ideas are available, and this was an idea that we hadn't focused on. He came to understand how it could work. By being the one who comes to the table a little late, you're able to negotiate a more realistic compromise. You're not locked into what you've already established as your goal. So he was a good person for them to bring along in order to get it done right.

We basically got the Education Committee's bill. We wanted to move something very quickly, so we didn't do the full-out accountability stuff. We knew that the accountability stuff was very complicated. It had larger implications across the Senate, because we had the Lieberman bill. Normally, for instance with Bill Clinton, when he introduced a policy, he would create the legislative language and have somebody introduce the bill, so you would have something to work with. Bush created just a blueprint. He basically created a summary document, so we had nothing to work with. We had to guess at what the policies were.

So we wanted to move a bill early, and we moved the pieces that were fairly easy to negotiate, and we said publicly, "We're going to do the accountability and some of these other things after committee, between the committee and the floor," which is what we did. It got the process moving, and it showed that we were serious. We marked up pretty early. It happened at the end of February, early March, in the committee. The House moved fast too, so even though they did their process a little differently, it was moving.

There was a lot of press, and Lieberman was trying to thwart the process. Bush and Lieberman kept saying that Kennedy would be soft on education and that the committee doesn't do accountability, even though Bingaman sits on the committee and he had the accountability bill before Lieberman. There was a lot of posturing going on. This was another big teaching moment for me from Kennedy. I was pissed off at Lieberman because they were saying things that were untrue, and they were creating noise, and they were posturing around the system. All it did was muck up our ability to negotiate. It didn't do anything, and they don't sit on the committee.

We knew because we'd heard—it's all gossip—that Gregg and Lieberman were meeting separately and that they were going to negotiate the bill that became the floor bill. I remember that Gregg's staff came to us and said, "We can't work with those people." *[laughs]* It was true. They didn't have the expertise. They only knew their proposal, and it was all or nothing. They didn't know how to negotiate and go deeper. When Gregg came to us, that was when we were able to start working something out with him. We brought Sandy Kress in to get a Senate bill to the floor. This wasn't conference. Sandy Kress, Bingaman's staff, and our staff hammered out the accountability stuff. Then we hammered out the other difficult pieces around the tutoring issues that Bush wanted. There were late nights. Every weekend we worked until midnight.

The other piece is that the Republican leadership, [Trent] Lott, was very committed to getting a Senate bill. Again, they were delivering for their President. Even though they had practically no policy in this, they were delivering a signature item to the President. So Lott's people took over

and started organizing the meetings. Remember that we were the minority at that point. I worked very closely with Lott's staff. They weren't in the nitty-gritty, but they were saying, "Let's move this, get it going, and move the process," helping Gregg keep things in charge.

This would be something for a history student to look up. I can't remember, but I think we were second to the Civil Rights Act for however long we were on the floor with this bill. It was something like eight or ten weeks, not continuous. There would be, say, three weeks, and then there would be a few days when they would do something else, and then another three weeks. I mean, I lived on the floor for a couple of months. In the middle of that floor debate, the Jeffords' switch happened. Jeffords went to the floor. We were literally in the minority in the morning, and in the afternoon, in the majority. It totally changed the dynamic. Suddenly Kennedy was able to decide what amendments would come up. Kennedy was able to decide what the final negotiation would be.

My big teaching moment in all this was that the Lieberman people continued to stir things up before we got to the floor. Kennedy said, "I want to do a meeting with Lieberman and Evan Bayh." They were the two leaders of the moderates. I asked, "Why are you meeting with them? They're just causing problems." Again, he has many years of history with this stuff, and I have only my few naïve ones. The meeting was the smartest thing we ever did, and he's so smart because he brought them into the fold. Once you bring them in, they can no longer cause you problems. He said, "They're going to sit at the staff tables. They're going to help. Even though they're not on the committee, they're going to have a special non-committee seat at the staff negotiations." That was very unusual. He said, "I'm going to try to work it out with them to get this done." So I had to put up with having them there, which the other committee members were very pissed off about. The staff members were very upset.

Their staff members weren't as knowledgeable as the committee staff about this stuff, so we ended up running the negotiations. We ended up teaching their staff how to negotiate and so on, and we essentially ended up bringing them into the fold so that they could no longer do their press conferences. The committee was not a problem to them anymore because they were sitting at the table. Suddenly the Lieberman problem, whoosh, went away, and it was brilliant. It was Kennedy's thing. He saw the long view, whereas I saw the short view and thought, *Why do they get to be a squeaky wheel and get this done?*

In the end, the policy pointed us in the direction, in general, that all of us wanted. Everyone was happy, and they each got their pieces. It was a good moment for me. On the floor—and I think of this in many aspects of my life, not just in politics—it was a big teaching moment for me. Not that I'm an enemy-camps-versus-us type of person, but all of a sudden a light bulb went on in my head, like, *This is the way to work in your life.*

Then we went to the floor, and Jeffords' switch totally changed the dynamic. Suddenly Boehner was calling Kennedy and saying, "I want to work with you to get this done in conference." It changed, whereas it had been him and Gregg. Frankly, without Lott's people, Gregg couldn't have driven the process. Gregg isn't a process driver; Boehner is a process driver. Kennedy is a process driver. There are different ways to go about it. We finally got to the Senate floor, a big hurrah. Some Democrats voted against it, and some Republicans voted against it, but the vote was in the 80s for it, something like that.

Then we came to the hard part, the conference. The Senate and House bills were different. We didn't know Boehner well. He had very knowledgeable staff, so they were formidable opponents, so to speak. Kennedy and Boehner sat down with Miller and Gregg, but at that point, Kennedy and Boehner were the chairmen who were leading it. They were saying, "We're going to do this." When you have the principals sitting down with staff and saying, "We've agreed to do this, so go get it done," that creates a dynamic of negotiation. Right there, you are in a good position.

I worked very well—although we had some knockdown, drag-out fights that were notorious among the staff—with Boehner's person, Sally Lovejoy. She and I became very good friends through the process. She and I are very systematic and organized about moving things, and we did it. The process was that my Democrats would meet, the Senate Democrats would meet, and then the Senate and the House Democrats would meet before we would go into negotiations. So we had common goals. When we knew that there were differences among the Democrats, we would allow those people to fight their fights as they needed to, but we were very organized and strategic about it.

We worked nonstop, starting in August, which is usually recess. I did not have a vacation that year, and I basically worked every weekend for a year, and then straight through. We negotiated that conference from August basically through early December. In the middle of that, 9/11 happened, as well as the anthrax scare. I remember several groups saying, "This will slow the process," but Kennedy and Boehner kept calling us, saying, "Keep meeting. Keep working." We met at people's houses when everything was shut down for a while. There was a constant drive.

Talk about the stars aligning: only in this moment could this have happened, because in the big picture, the President was wildly popular at that time. The President was basically willing to stomp on his own party's signature items in order to get his signature item, which is not a very Republican idea. Kennedy and Boehner were leading the effort, and they were willing to negotiate and compromise in order to get it done. All four of the Big Four were committed to moving the bill. That was very unusual. With all of that happening, by December we had a bill. It passed the House and the Senate, and then they did their tour of signing in January of 2002, where Bush actually signed the bill.

**Heininger:** How well has it been implemented?

**Petroshius:** Some parts of it well and some parts of it not well, but overall, not well. Part of the bad branding, I think, is that among educators, Bush is not popular. He has never been popular. His brand of No Child Left Behind became synonymous with bad federal intervention in education.

The Bush administration did not do what they needed to do from the get go to implement the bill well. They didn't do the outreach. They didn't do the education. They allowed the spin doctors who were against this law, on both the liberal and conservative sides, to work against it. They were so happy with their victory, they forgot about the work that must come afterward. There was a lot of confusion. They would change the rules partway through the implementation of certain pieces. They didn't do the regulations on certain pieces until much later, or they would change the regulations. There was so much confusion and so much messaging around the issue.

It seemed negative when it was actually positive, but the way they presented it, it came across as negative. Well, two years into that, they lost it. They lost people's trust and belief in them.

**Heininger:** Was that because of inexperience?

**Petroshius:** Partially. [Roderick] Paige was the Secretary at that time, not [Margaret] Spellings. I think it was inexperience, and I think it was also Bush's inability to lead. He wasn't a great leader to carry some of this stuff, so there were groups who said, "We're going to do this right. We're going to try it."

There were some states that embraced the ideas in No Child Left Behind—Massachusetts being one of them, Florida being another—because they were already on this path anyway, but a lot of them were fighting back. These were significant changes to the way people did business, and there was so much bright light being shone on what was or was not happening, it made people very nervous. Newspapers immediately picked up on the fact that now they and everyone else would know which schools were failing, an idea that scared people. So it wasn't managed well.

**Heininger:** And the Bush people were not countering that negative press.

**Petroshius:** Yes, because they were buying into it and pointing fingers instead of putting out a different message, such as, "The parents are finally going to know what's happening. You're going to support your schools. This is going to drive more money." He never brought them more money. That broke the trust between Bush and Kennedy and Miller, and between Bush and the education community.

**Heininger:** So it wasn't implemented well or positively, and he didn't adequately fund it, and the message was punitive.

**Petroshius:** Exactly. Spellings has changed some of that in her own way, but it's too late. I think she has done some smart things on policy guidance and regulation. You can make some concessions, but they were unwilling to make any concessions on how to implement it. No law is written perfectly, and no law is written for every exception or case that comes up. They could have had some flexibility on that that wouldn't have undermined, early on, the core law that allowed states to do things that made sense to them.

**Heininger:** Was Clinton's implementation of his education reforms done in a more flexible way than Bush's?

**Petroshius:** A lot of people would argue that it was too flexible. In other words, a lot of people argue that they bent over backward to be too flexible, and that's why you have widely varying state standards. They could have been tougher. My feeling on that is they were so desperate to say, "All 50 states did Goals 2000 and accomplished their standards," that they conceded almost everything to get to that, whereas it was the opposite with Bush. He didn't want to concede anything, and that also doesn't work. There's a middle ground that's better. But that's where it ended up. I think it's a shame, because there are some tenets of this law that are good, that have done good things for schools. You can go to schools and principals will tell you, "Without this law I couldn't have done what I did," and, "I made a tremendous difference in scores and in the lives of kids," and all that stuff.

Maybe I'm too sunny-eyed about it, but I also see it as an evolution of education policy. There is a hard-fought standards movement that got us to that, and there is a hard-fought accountability movement. Shine the bright light. The standards stuff wasn't done perfectly, so they'll never go backward on accountability now.

**Heininger:** It's a sea change.

**Petroshius:** Yes, the standards were a sea change. What's next? Now they'll ask, "How much testing makes sense in order to get the accountability we need? What kinds of tests? Is there a better quality of tests? Should we have national standards because states can't seem to agree?"

**Heininger:** The idea that was verboten in the early '90s is back on the table as a corrective to what has taken place over the last 20 years.

**Petroshius:** It does not yet have momentum in Congress, but it has momentum with the players around Congress. Jim Hunt, who used to be the Governor of North Carolina, has a group that's working on it; the [Bill & Melinda] Gates Foundation is thinking about funding some people; the group Achieve is working on it. They all have different approaches to it, but essentially there's a No Child Left Behind Commission, at the Aspen Institute, that's promoting it, that's run by former Governors [Tommy] Thompson and [Roy] Barnes. There are a lot of places pushing this. So now that we basically know that No Child Left Behind is not going to happen this year, in 2008—and we'll have a new President, and we'll have new, different, and potentially more people in Congress, whichever way it goes after this election—who knows what will happen?

**Heininger:** Was this bill passed in 2001?

**Petroshius:** It was signed into law in January of 2002. The work was all done. It was passed in the House and Senate in 2001.

**Heininger:** When did it have to be reauthorized?

**Petroshius:** 2007. It was a six-year authorization. Maybe it was seven years. It should have been done by the end of 2007. Everyone knew that they wouldn't meet that, but they started hearings. In 2007 there were a lot of hearings and a lot of work done, and the Commission on No Child Left Behind came out with a big report on what they thought they should do. It's an Aspen/Gates thing. Now in 2008, they've continued to try, but the politics are such that it's not going to happen in this Presidential year.

**Heininger:** In theory, following what you said earlier, reauthorizations tend to take three years. That should mean that in the first year of the next Presidency there should be some—

**Petroshius:** I didn't say three years; I said, *at least* three years. IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] once took 10 or 15 years to reauthorize.

**Heininger:** Oh my.

**Petroshius:** Yes, and it's anyone's guess. I know that Kennedy and Miller are still committed to doing this as soon as possible, but the politics around it are messy now and they don't know. If a

President were to come in and say, “This is a priority,” even if he doesn’t have a specific agenda, Kennedy and Miller could use that to drive a process to get it done. If the President doesn’t say that but instead says, “Health care is my priority, and I don’t care about education right now,” then that will make it a problem for them.

**Heininger:** How does Kennedy feel about No Child Left Behind?

**Petroshius:** He feels that there were some successes but that it has to be fixed, which, frankly, is no different from any other reauthorization. The drama around this law is unbelievable to me. When we talk about any other law, in education or otherwise—if, for instance, some finance bill or transportation bill comes up—people say, “It needs to be fixed,” and there are big fights about it, but they’re not screaming, “Get rid of it!”

**Heininger:** This is about people’s lives, and parents see it because it has filtered down into the schools.

**Petroshius:** It has, yes.

**Heininger:** And it resonates.

**Petroshius:** Yes. And we have such arcane processes in the Senate that when you say “reauthorize,” people don’t know what that means. It sounds to them like you just get rid of it. People don’t realize that you don’t just get rid of it, because that’s \$20 billion that will no longer go to the schools. That’s not going to happen, so it means fix it or strengthen it or improve it or change it—and Kennedy agrees.

Now, Kennedy and Miller both would like to hold on to some of the core tenets of accountability, even though there is great pressure, for instance, from the teacher unions that are fighting tooth and nail to get rid of accountability and to undermine it. Of course the civil rights community’s view is, “Stay strong or stronger on that,” so you have a pretty significant battle going on there. But Kennedy, in his constant wisdom, is trying hard to work out something in the middle. Sometimes making nobody happy is making everybody happy. They’re working on that, but my guess is that nothing will come out this year. They’ll come out next year with something and see where it goes, when people are starting fresh on the politics. They’ll see what the Presidential candidate’s stance is on this. I mean, they both have said top-level things—“Strengthen it. Get rid of it. Change it”—but they’ve given no details of what that means, so it’s hard to imagine how to proceed and who the President will be.

**Heininger:** Tell me about Kennedy’s other education interests over the years.

**Petroshius:** I think that higher education was his first love, and it’s not dramatically different. In other words, Title I has been important to him over the years. One of the big things he considers—from the ’70s, one of his first education accomplishments before he was the education leader—is the Urban Teacher Corps. He’s very proud of that. He has always had a K–12 and higher-education balance, but he started to get his hands into the higher-education stuff a little earlier than the K–12 stuff. His K–12 role developed over time, and the higher-education role was, “We set interest rates, and we help students with Pell grants get to college.”

He also has had people like Terry Hartle, who had the background in higher education, running things. It's all staff, and it all makes sense. So he has had a great history on that, but you have to remember, when I came on, education wasn't his top priority. It has risen to the top three over time, as the world has made it more important and as the federal role has become more important, but education was not always a top priority. Now I think there's no question that you would call it one of his top three. It's interesting to see that evolution. I think that on higher education, he's a hero to students for drawing the line and saying, "We have to make college education affordable and accessible for all students." That basic premise has driven so many great policies and fights for him, and he has become a hero in a lot of ways in that area.

When I think of his education portfolio, all the issues are important, but the K-12 reform and making college affordable and accessible are his signature issues—and particularly looking at first-generation students, the poorest students, making sure they have access. With K-12 reform, again, how do you get the poorest kids in the hardest-to-serve places the best education possible?

There's a second tier issue that's important, but I would say that not quite as much energy is spent on it: the workforce-development part of education, job training. It is strongly tied to the economic state of play, and although it's a national issue, when it is dealt with, it has a stronger, direct Massachusetts economic-development angle to it. So it has a different role, as I see it, in his policymaking, whereas in higher education and K-12, Massachusetts is a factor, and he is a national policymaker on that. With the workforce development—and I think it's true, because that's how these programs work; it is true for other Senators too—he's trying to bring the Federal Government to more of a state-based approach to policy, and hopefully it better supports the economic development in the state. It's a huge deal because Massachusetts relies heavily on job training and workforce-development programs.

He was always particularly interested in the summer-jobs programs, where poor youth could get summer jobs, basically, through mayoral money. I mean, it's federal through the city. It keeps them off the streets, has them learn new trades, and offers them positions and opportunities and mentors. He's into that small piece. Again, he usually finds niches within the larger policies that he can hold onto. The education of children with disabilities was in that second tier too, but again, it's not as much of a big-picture, marketed thing as much as it's a hardcore policy issue. That issue is also difficult. The issues around children with disabilities and around schools' and parents' rights are very complicated.

**Heininger:** It's messy.

**Petroshius:** It's emotional and there's strong lobbying around it. It's an interesting issue because he probably sides less with the school community on that law, whereas his head is usually with the school community. On this one it's more with the parents, so interesting things happen when you have to negotiate that.

**Heininger:** The laws are written, basically, to provide parents a way to put pressure on the school districts to provide for their children.

**Petroshius:** Exactly. More than with other education laws, with the way it's done, it's a civil rights law and not an education law. That was the first law I worked on to be reauthorized.

**Heininger:** You did IDEA?

**Petroshius:** Yes, from a reauthorization standpoint, I worked on the filibuster stuff. IDEA was not my expertise, so we brought in Connie Garner, who is now his disability expert, as a detailee to help me with that law. In a lot of ways it was the most difficult thing I did, even more difficult than No Child Left Behind. It wasn't as long or as high profile as No Child Left Behind, but it was so difficult. I was not as knowledgeable at the time about the No Child Left Behind issues as I was later. The negotiations were so personal, and in a way that I was not used to in a professional circumstance. Without Connie, I don't think the Senator or the world would have been well served. I was good at managing the process and the decisionmaking and at helping make a final decision, as was the Senator, but she was, by far, the policy expert.

I had parents calling me at my home at 11:00 at night, screaming at me about things that happened in private meetings, things I didn't know people knew about. It was hard. It was an intrusion on my life, for sure, in a way that the other work I did wasn't. So it was hard, but in the end, I think we all got to something good, and Kennedy was certainly proud of it.

The difference between working on that bill and on No Child Left Behind, for example, from a Kennedy perspective, was that Kennedy was pretty hands off on IDEA. We had a bunch of staff meetings. We would maybe report when something was moving, and we'd give him a memo, and then we might ask to meet with him every couple of weeks or so. With No Child Left Behind, he called me every day. I met with him almost every day for a year. I mean, I saw him nonstop. He wanted that thing. He wanted to know what was happening. He was into the policy. He made very specific policy negotiations with me, and he wanted to be kept abreast constantly.

There were different levels of interest in these things, and there were a lot of reasons. It's not that he cares any less about children with disabilities; it's the nature of the law. The law is high profile. It's complicated. There's a series of reasons.

**Heininger:** Depends on who it's serving.

**Petroshius:** Yes.

**Heininger:** I also meant that you were getting calls from the parents, not from him.

**Petroshius:** Exactly.

**Heininger:** What else falls into that second tier?

**Petroshius:** I was going through my list. Although they are not directly related to education—though they are in the portfolio—national-service issues are important to him, partially from the [Robert Sargent and Eunice Kennedy] Shriver legacy part of it and partially because he has always cared about service learning and volunteers, and he has always supported that. Even within the education stuff we did, he was always promoting service-learning programs in the K–12 arena, as well as to the post-college, go-do-something volunteer. That was a big part of the portfolio. It had a specific community that supported it. It was not as controversial as some of it, although Clinton's AmeriCorps was controversial, and Kennedy carried the water to get that done—I mean controversial relative to national service. It wasn't controversial in an Iraq War

sense of controversial. That was a big portfolio. Again, this all fits into the accessibility, affordability, opportunity portfolio he has.

**Heininger:** What about things like migrant and Indian education?

**Petroshius:** I would call those niches within K–12. When we had the big block-grant fights on the floor that I told you about, he was most successful, most eloquent, most impassioned—I don’t know if C-SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network] keeps tapes, but if people watch those tapes—I don’t know how they record this stuff. I guess it’s in the Congressional Record. It’s hard to hear passion in the written record, though. They were trying to block grant all these programs.

The three big groups that were affected were the immigrants, the migrants, and the homeless. These are targeted, relatively small programs, but they only go for those populations that traditionally are much underserved and that have specific circumstances. He was livid that they would try to get rid of those. He said, “I can understand trying to remove the strings that were attached to Title I, but I can’t understand why they’d want to take away dedicated funds for homeless kids who have nowhere else to go.” He was extremely impassioned about that.

**Heininger:** These populations touch heart strings and family strings for him.

**Petroshius:** Correct. In addition to that, there is his Native American education program, which is separate from the way this debate went on, from the block-grant perspective. He is so beloved by the Native American community because he has carried on his family’s tradition of supporting that. One of our best hearings was on this issue. Again, in ’99/2000 we did hearings. We didn’t do a lot of hearings in 2001, when Bush came in, because we’d done two years of hearings on these issues, and people were saying, “Let’s get to it.” He didn’t spend a lot of time protecting and improving that program, but he wanted to know that it was done well, and he always made sure. It was very important.

There were all kinds of little moments. There was a chief from Washington State who had come to town, and a chief of staff from the House side called me and asked if he could meet Kennedy. So we arranged to have Kennedy meet him. I mean, it was a two-minute meeting. They came to the conference room, he stopped in, and they were crying and forever grateful. Given the emotional connection he feels, he never would have said no to that.

There was a woman who had been a migrant worker, who had gone through the migrant-education program. She now runs a migrant-education program, a success story, and she testified. She and her family came to testify, and Kennedy, on the record, said, “Make sure they get a tour. Anything else you need, you stay in contact with me.” We gave them a tour, and I think I talked to her on the phone for two years. She felt a connection. I would let the Senator know how things were going. She happened to be from Pennsylvania too. She wasn’t even from Massachusetts. There’s a strong belief that he is looking out for them, and he is.

That was one of my favorite parts of my job: I could honestly say that he was truly trying to help people who needed it the most. And he got that direct feedback from people he’ll never know. It’s pretty emotional when he is in those situations. It’s a dream to work for somebody like that,

somebody who cares. And he doesn't have to. He's not from New Mexico, which has a big Native American population. It's not a must do for him in any of those circumstances.

**Heininger:** It's probably a must do for him inside.

**Petroshius:** Inside, exactly, not for political voting purposes.

**Heininger:** What about special interests and projects?

**Petroshius:** There are always a million projects. What do you mean by special interests?

**Heininger:** Like, the Star School and Ready to Learn Television, the little things that aren't his first priority but are ways of getting things done.

**Petroshius:** There is maybe a niche level of work that we do. He grabs onto an idea because of a person, because of a moment in time, because of an idea that he thinks is smart. He can champion those issues while he's championing all the big issues. He has the energy and power and ability to champion the little issues too. He had a series of education issues that I knew and we the staff knew to look out for even when no one else did. They are usually issues for which people would create bipartisan niches.

**Heininger:** He's usually working with somebody else on these issues.

**Petroshius:** Yes, because these little niche issues don't fall into the traditional political category. For example, Ready to Learn Television, which is a big thing for public television, was started by Ernie Boyer, to whom Kennedy was very close, of the Carnegie Institute. But the idea that you could reach little kids and help them with their prereading skills and pre-everything skills through television was a big deal. He helped create the program, and he and Senator [Thad] Cochran, from Mississippi, have been the only two people in the Senate who have carried and cared about that program and have made it what it is. It's one of the signature programs of public television. It's wildly successful, and it's a brand also. Everyone has heard of it, so it's great. They're trying to build on that and do more, not just for little kids but for other kids.

Star Schools is another example. He seemed to get into that. When Clinton started, Kennedy started to get into the technology issue generally. He was the first Senator to have a Web site, even though he is not the most technologically oriented person. I mean, there are Senators who will Blackberry you—not this one. *[laughter]* But he understands the value of it. Again, he's not a migrant worker, but he understands the value of supporting migrant education or whatever. He applied the same thing to technology.

To carry that through a little bit, Clinton created a dedicated education-technology program, which was new, so Kennedy carried the water for that and led part of the fight with Bingaman. But within that, prior to that big notion, the issue of distance learning had carried through, even prior to the big computers-in-schools debate. Again, it was based on the notion that rural communities don't have access to the same resources as other communities do. They can't attract foreign-language teachers necessarily. That stuff always attracted him.

The Star Schools started as a video distance-learning program, and then as technology changed, it became more sophisticated. Some of that two-way video stuff is still used. The Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications was quasi-governmental. MCET was the acronym. I think they've closed it or renamed it or something, but at the time, it was doing all kinds of distance learning in Massachusetts, and Kennedy was very tied to them. Every year he would do a distance-learning event with them. He'd go on TV, and that was funded, in part, by Star Schools. He saw the value of reaching so many people and kids through that medium.

He and Senator [Orrin] Hatch and Ellen Guiney also started the idea of honoring James Madison at the Bicentennial, something like that. They made coins that then were sold and that raised the money to create the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation. It's not a government agency; it's not a government program. It had a one-time federal funding, and now it raises its own money, and it has an endowment. It basically funds one teacher per state, and if they have funding in certain states, an extra teacher.

So it's maybe 60 or 70 teachers a year, and it's a highly competitive process, but the teachers get their masters degrees funded. They have to earn the degrees in history, and they have to specialize in the Constitution. So it's social studies teachers and history teachers at the junior high or high school level. So wherever you go to school, maybe it doesn't pay for all of the dollars, but it pays for a significant amount. It's probably more than \$20,000 a year—I forget exactly—but it pays for a significant amount of the masters program, depending on the cost of your school.

Then they come for a summer institute, where they learn from constitutional experts at Georgetown. It used to be at AU [American University]. They delve into the Constitution. They have sessions with Supreme Court Justices. Senators Kennedy and Hatch always do a session with them. They obviously visit historical sites around here that are related to James Madison. And it's hard. All the teachers have said that the summer load is always the hardest for them, because it's so intensely focused on the Constitution. Some cool things have come out of that. Teachers have made connections across the country, and they do their own distance learning, classroom to classroom, based on their relationships there.

They have a network of people doing it. He and Hatch are still the heads of the board, and there are White House-appointed board members. The two of them are always appointed. There's always a teacher, local politicians, and two judges. The categories are set. Professors are on the board, and they help run the foundation. It's a great program. Nobody knows about it. I mean, the people who know social studies and history know about it, but it doesn't get Kennedy any votes. It's just a good idea. It's a small program, and he cares so much about it. When I came up, Ellen said, "Don't let that program fall through the cracks."

When the teachers are here in the summer, they walk around, and they wear buttons. If Kennedy sees them, he'll stop his car, jump out, and say, "Hi, you're Madison Fellowship teachers." So it's one of those little niche things for him that's exciting, and again, it doesn't cost him anything. It's a high-quality program, and it connects his personal love of history, and it makes history come alive for students.

**Heininger:** It ties in with improving education for students too, and with professional development. It unites all of them.

**Petroshius:** Yes, exactly. In the higher-education arena, I don't know the history of who started the TRIO program. I don't know if Kennedy was part of that, but it's one he protects that not as many people protect. It basically funds first-generation college students. It funds programs. It doesn't fund their educations, because they can get Pell grants or whatever, but it funds programs that help kids in high school. It says, "You can go to college. Here's counseling to help you do it. And once you get there, here's a way to help you stay in college." He likes that program, and it has been a tremendous success for a lot of kids. I talked about the summer-jobs programs. It's small compared to the larger workforce thing.

Early Head Start. We didn't talk about Head Start, which is a big issue for him too. He always takes a lead on Early Head Start, but I would definitely put it in that second tier below the other two. Head Start basically started at the four-year-old, preschool age. Kennedy helped create the Early Head Start program, which is for children ages zero to three. There was a period when brain research was being talked about a lot—how if you're prenatal, your brain is developing, and if you're held a lot, your brain develops. Kids who aren't held in their first months are not developing, all this stuff. That drove much of his interest in the Early Head Start, which is a neat little issue, and it is particularly important in the poor communities that have fewer resources for checkups.

Another niche program he supports is called Reach Out and Read. It's run out of a Boston hospital, and as part of welfare and other programs, you have to have wellness checkups. If you're on welfare, you have to go in and they make sure that your child has milk or has whatever. Kennedy was always frustrated because, as he said, "There's this great opportunity. These people have to come in, and they are the least likely people to be literate or to help their children be literate. They don't have access to newspapers and books in their homes."

Knowing, for instance, how to hold a book right side up, as opposed to upside down, is a big pre-literacy skill. So Kennedy supported a little program in Boston called Reach Out and Read, which basically says when these folks go get their kids' wellness checkups, they are required to take a book home with them. The training says make sure they eat milk and cheese every day, or make sure—whatever the food and health stuff is. They add, "Make sure you read to your kid every day or have them sit with someone who can read, or have them just look at a book. You don't have to read to them; just look at the book with them. Show them how to hold it. Show them how to look at it. Talk to them about the pictures," that kind of stuff. It has been a success in terms of improving preliteracy rates for these kids.

So they came to Kennedy, and he helped get some federal funding for them, and it has made a huge difference for these kids, and they're trying to take the program to other states. That program bubbled up from Massachusetts, so that's a cool idea, and it blends his strong interest in health care and education. It's a unique little opportunity. That's another one that we worked a lot on. A lot of those small issues take up a lot of your time when you're there.

**Heininger:** Let's shift gears and talk about when you became deputy staff director of the Labor Committee. What did you do that was different?

**Petroshius:** It happened around February or March of 2002. No Child Left Behind was done, so in some ways it was a reward for work done, and I was also a little bit burnt out on policymaking. I was feeling *OK, I've done this now*, like there wasn't another bill that would be more high profile. There were other bills to do but none that were more high profile or more intense. I had learned a ton about the process of making bills and laws and all of that. That was what I wanted to keep doing.

Then Michael said, "I want a deputy." Another woman was leaving, and he wanted to see if I wanted to do the job, and I thought it would be a great chance to learn more about other committee issues as well as to be part of management. So I still oversaw the education portfolio and the education staff, and I managed the laws that would come up during that. I also took on, because of some shifting on the Judiciary Committee, "women's issues," which included some choice issues, some workforce issues. I ended up staffing that, so I learned another portfolio. I also helped with the management of the committee.

Michael Myers is and was the staff director, so he and I split duties, and he continued to be the main person on the floor with Kennedy when these bills were moving, and he's the staff director of whatever is going on on the floor. I was the behind-the-scenes person. Leading up to committee markups, I would focus on the committee work while the other committee work was happening on the floor or in press conferences. I would negotiate with the Republicans—what hearings we would have, how many witnesses there would be, when we would do the markups, what bills would be on certain markups—which took a lot of time. It seems simple but it isn't.

I'd manage the amendment processes for bills, and then I would manage the markups. So I wasn't formulating policy—because all of the policy staff is there for a health bill or an education bill or whatever comes up—but I made sure that the process started on time, that enough Senators were there to get a quorum, that the process moved, that everybody knew what they needed to do next. It was a lot of logistical management, but it taught me how the committee process works. I was so education focused. I'd show up, do my bill, and maybe we were worried about our amendments, but there was a whole other structure.

**Heininger:** Somebody has to make it happen.

**Petroshius:** Yes. I would work with Denis O'Donovan, the clerk, to make that stuff happen. I also coordinated, for example, what we wanted to do or say, or getting a memo to Kennedy on the budget. "Well, that has an education piece, a health piece, a labor piece." I got the right information from each of the staff members about their pieces, and then I put it all into a comprehensive memo, an analysis that combined everything. Michael and I together would help set priorities for Kennedy. For example, if we could do only two amendments, would health get it? Would education get it? Would labor get it? We had strategic discussions about doing more together to make recommendations to the Senator.

I also helped manage staff. Michael and I together would manage staff. I dealt with a lot of day-to-day issues that came up on the committee staff. Michael ultimately would make promotion and salary decisions, but I would make recommendations to him. That was the gambit of what I did there. I loved it because I loved managing. I loved getting to some of the other issues and getting to know some of the other staff on the committee better. You get focused sometimes on

your issues and on your office and on moving forward. I was glad to not have to focus solely on education policy for a little while, but I kept my hand in it.

**Heininger:** Then you became chief of staff.

**Petroshius:** Yes.

**Heininger:** How did that happen?

**Petroshius:** I had a volleyball injury, and I was at home, and it was the funniest thing because the news broke and Mary Beth's picture was on the TV, and my boyfriend—now my husband—and I were sitting there watching. They said that Mary Beth was going to the [John] Kerry campaign, which was news to everybody. He said, "I wonder if they'll ask you to be chief of staff and take her place." I said, "You're crazy. They're not going to do that." Literally, about an hour later, Mary Beth called and asked, "Hey, do you want to be chief of staff?" She called to feel me out about it. Michael called me to talk about it. Then the Senator called, which I was glad for because I needed some time to think about it. This was not something I had planned.

I think they asked me, in part, because they needed a quick in-house person who could easily transition into the job, as opposed to conducting a big search. Mary Beth was moving quickly to the Kerry campaign. I had a good rapport with staff, my management was respected, and I could hold a staff together. It would be an easy transition with me. There would be trust there, I thought. I didn't have the political-campaign background that a lot of chiefs of staff have, but I think there was a lot of internal trust and management trust among staff. They felt that this would be a good transition.

Personally I was so honored and so excited—scared but excited too—because I had had it with policy for a while, and I was burnt out. No Child Left Behind burnt me out, no question about it. So I thought it was great. I also thought that even if this were just for the short term, it was a way to see the full aspect of what goes on. I knew a little bit about the personal office, but there is a separate set of issues that happen that you could be on the committee and never know about. Nobody was totally honest with me about what the job entailed [*laughter*]*—nobody*. I was joking with Mary Beth once about that, because even though I worked there for eight years, I didn't know, because I didn't have a lot of interaction with the chief of staff. It is a fantastic job. I was lucky because I was able to be part of the convention in Boston. That was a cool time to be there. That was my first year, and that drove a lot of my fun.

The second year wasn't quite as much fun, because I didn't have something big like that, and it's a lot of secretarial work. I don't know if "secretary" is the right word. It's administrative. Everyone complains about his or her salary. You're on call 24/7 with him about everything, though not on policy, not strategy—inclusive of those but everything else too. I had had a job where I worked all the time, but I was floored at how much time I had to put in. It was a 24/7 job, 100 percent. That was fascinating.

I loved the interaction with him, the planning of the convention, the politics. I learned the campaign stuff, but it wasn't my interest, per se, and we had good campaign staff. I left before his reelection heated up. I was more involved in the fundraising for the campaign, overseeing that. The policy strategy is done by the committee, and Michael Myers and I would weigh in,

because Michael and I were close. We'd talk about stuff. But I was the administrator of the office. I was surprised by how administrative it was, I guess. I thought it was interesting.

**Heininger:** How was your role different from Carey Parker's?

**Petroshius:** Carey Parker, besides being a writer and editor, doesn't do any administrative stuff. He is a strategist, a thinker. Let me give an example of a big decision. Should Kennedy make a speech on the Iraq War, for example? Who would be in the room? Me, Carey Parker, Michael Myers, and in this case, the foreign policy person who would write the Iraq War speech. There would be pros and cons to doing this speech—or whatever speech; it doesn't matter—just as an example. The discussion would include all of these people.

Carey's role is to give his opinion. Not always, but Carey's opinion on big strategy stuff has great weight with the Senator, and I think he's a brilliant person. I rarely differed with him or thought that he hadn't thought something through. He's also thoughtful. He asks a lot of questions and knows how to get to the heart of an issue quickly. He's a great asset. So that's the role he plays, that big strategy stuff. Then he makes Kennedy's words sound the same to everybody. So I might draft an education speech, and somebody else might draft a health care speech. He edits it (a) so there is no conflicting information and (b) so it has the same voice. And he's great at it. He's a great writer.

**Heininger:** Given that you've held the position of chief of staff, does Carey administer and manage the legislative staff, or does that fall to the chief of staff?

**Petroshius:** No. It falls to the staff director of the committee. I mean, it's weird. In general on the Hill, in every office you can have a title but the title means something different in every office. It also, I think, is partially based on the people who run it. In Kennedy's office, Carey's title has always been LD, but he doesn't run the legislative agenda. The staff director of the HELP [Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions] Committee runs the legislative agenda for Kennedy, aside from Carey always being involved in the strategy and the big-picture stuff. He's a sounding board for everybody in the office.

**Heininger:** Ergo his presence on an Iraq speech.

**Petroshius:** Right.

**Heininger:** So Michael Myers runs the foreign policy staffers as well.

**Petroshius:** From a policy point of view, the staff director of the HELP Committee oversees the Judiciary agenda and the foreign policy agenda. Part of that is because Michael used to be the staff director for the Judiciary Committee. But even under Nick, the HELP Committee is Kennedy's core work, and that position always oversees everything else, no matter who is there and what's going on. Not for an individual policy, such as when an immigration person deals with immigration, but when you're talking about floor agendas, Michael is always there, or Nick will be there or whoever that person is at the time. That's how it has always been, at least in my experience.

The chief of staff is responsible for managing the staff, particularly the personal office, and he or she has the overall responsibility for everybody's salaries and promotions. It has been run differently by every chief of staff. The way I ran it, basically, was that Michael and Jim Flug and I would sit down. I was responsible for the personal office and the Boston office. Michael was responsible for the HELP staff. I mean, you don't know everybody all the time, so we would talk and I would try to understand how people were doing. Were there any problems? Were there issues that we should address? Kennedy would also have ideas on that stuff.

They would give me their recommendations for salaries or promotions, and finally I would make the decision based on how the budget worked out, because the budget was considered one budget, even though there were different pots of money. That's how I ran it. Other chiefs of staff decided in different ways. I used the managers. I felt like they knew their people best. That's how I functioned. I also worked with Michael because he has a much larger—the Judiciary staff was very small.

When I came on, I wanted to create a more structured system around salaries. It was very ad hoc before that. It might have been that because you were close to a person you got a raise. Maybe you asked for it and you got it. There wasn't a system. I created more of a management system, where twice a year, staff members were evaluated. There was more formality. Not every manager followed through, but at least they were supposed to review people and give them help if something wasn't working out.

There was a salary schedule so that it wasn't so random, and there was some equity involved that was based on merit. I worked a lot on that, and that was a big change. I was proud of it. It wasn't a sea change, but having been a staff person, I felt it was necessary. I worked on that a lot, and I enjoyed my time there, but I reached a 10-year mark. I was getting married, and I couldn't envision life with kids and a family while working in the Senate, certainly not as a 24/7 job.

**Heininger:** How much have you stayed in touch?

**Petroshius:** I've seen the Senator and I've had conversations. I don't talk with him all the time by any stretch, but I've seen him a number of times and I've talked with him. I talk to the staff a lot. They ask me, "He was wondering about this. What do you remember? What do you think about it?" On the education stuff, I still keep in close contact.

**Heininger:** Always on staff regardless of payroll.

**Petroshius:** Yes, that's true. There's no question about that.

**Heininger:** Does everybody fall into that category, or are there some people who don't?

**Petroshius:** People fall into varying levels of it. There are definitely some people who don't fall into it. They either weren't senior enough, or they didn't have that kind of engagement with the office, or they weren't there long enough to engage, or whatever. Then there are people like Ranny Cooper, who is practically still part of the staff. I used to talk to her all the time when I was chief of staff. Mary Beth and I don't have that, and Gerry [Kavanaugh], at least when I was there—my comparison level is Gerry and Mary Beth. I don't have the same kind of engagement, post-chief of staff, as Ranny does, but she was there for a long time, and she knew the Senator

better than any of us ever did. When I was there, not on every issue by any stretch but on certain things, he'd say, "Call Ranny and see what she thinks." Then there's his brain trust, of course, his ongoing advisors, and I guess one or two of them might have been chief of staff. Certainly former staffers who call about things. It's a small group.

**Heininger:** Like Larry [Horowitz]?

**Petroshius:** Yes. Larry and Paul [Kirk]. It's only three or four people, and if you think about how many staff members he's had, I would say yes, you're always a phone call away, but most people don't get utilized like that because he has his brain trust and other people he trusts, and that's okay. That's good. That's his consistency throughout.

**Heininger:** Is Greg Craig in there?

**Petroshius:** Yes. Not in the same way, but on certain things.

**Heininger:** Legal.

**Petroshius:** Yes. Paul was always my favorite to talk to, because he's very thoughtful and reasoned, and he thinks things through. Ranny was a big help too. Those were the two I relied on most, but I'm sure it differs. I don't know who other people relied on.

**Heininger:** Not Larry?

**Petroshius:** No. I didn't know him very well. I knew him a little bit. I mean, he certainly was involved in some of the events with the convention and stuff, but it also depends. For instance, Paul helped on the starting of the Center on the Senate, and that was going on when I was there, so I talked to him a lot. I think it depends on the time and place too, depending on the issues that come up. I think that everybody gets called for different things, but I think that only a very few are consistently in his life all the time, and most of them are from longer ago. But the network that is created among the staff is awesome. He's awesome.

When I do stuff on the Hill—I've had to do some events in my new capacity—I try to stay away from him. I hated when people would drop in, because it screws up his entire day, and it screws up the staff's day. I don't drop in. But he might see me in the hall and say, "Come on in. Let's chat and catch up," and we'll hang out. He's always so nice. I'm not a lobbyist, so I don't ask for anything, so there are no worries about that in terms of him wanting to talk to me. But it's great. If there were a reason to ask for support for a job or something like that, I would have no doubt that he would do that. I talk to Eric [Mogilnicki] quite a bit—more the first year, I should say. I think we all have had that experience.

I came to the conclusion that the big thing for me, and with what I'm doing now, is that although I have been burnt out on it, policy is what I love. I've found a way to focus almost 100 percent on policy, and a lot of it is federal, and a lot of it is affecting, and is affected by, things that are going on in Kennedy's office. But I'm doing it here, doing it where I can work with different organizations, and I can do it on my time. It's a good place to be.

**Heininger:** And you can have a baby upstairs.

**Petroshius:** Loving the policy so much, then needing a break from it, and then going back to it was great. There's no way I could do what I'm doing now without that experience with him, without everything I learned from him and from the Senate and from my colleagues and mentors. It was the best experience, no question.

**Heininger:** This has been fascinating. Thank you very much.

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