

Politics Then and Now, in Maine and the Nation

Conversations with the Sages

presented by the Muskie School of Public Service and
the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University
of Southern Maine



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Dedicated to Our Wives
Martha Freeman and Janice Palmer
for Their Gifts of Abiding Love and Artful Persuasion
R.B. & K.P.

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1. Introduction and Lessons Learned

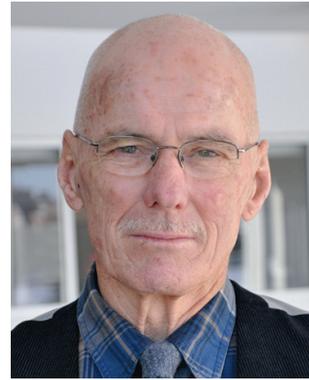
Background and Context

It is now commonplace that American national politics has become polarized and dysfunctional of late. The inability of Congress to accommodate partisan differences has led to its failure to enact a federal budget in the past four years,¹ a partial federal government shutdown for the first time in 17 years, and the absence of progress on immigration reform, infrastructure repair, climate change, and other important national challenges. The partisan gridlock has led the American public of late to give Congress some of its lowest approval ratings in history. One recent poll found 85 percent of Americans hold an unfavorable view of Congress, while only 9 percent approve.² Another indicated that fully 54 percent of Americans favor removing *all* the members of Congress.

The face of the gridlock is the lack of civility, comity, and cooperation between two political parties with divergent worldviews, as they vie for political power and policy dominance in a changing world, within a constitutional system designed for coalition-building and principled compromise.

In a parliamentary system like Great Britain's, where the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers all hold seats as lawmakers in the Parliament, a single election may determine the policy direction of the government. In the United States, where the president, the House of Representatives, and the Senate serve different terms of office, three election cycles may be required to set direction. Occasions where each party controls but a part of the government are frequent, as a result.

This framework was established in the U.S. Constitution, itself. It was much praised by the writers of the Federalist papers, particularly James Madison, as a way to curb arbitrary authority and to discourage dominance of the government by any one group or faction. Power was purposely distributed among three branches – the legislative, executive, and judicial – to slow the governing process and the accretion of power, and to allow for careful deliberation. Of necessity, compromise and bargaining must take



Richard Barringer



Kenneth Palmer

place between the political parties in this system – as well as among the three separate branches of government – for national policy to be set and for national institutions to do their work.

How ideological battles and party polarization came to replace the accustomed “consensus” arrangements of compromise and coalition-building is a topic that draws much scholarly attention today.³ While the cited causes for dysfunction are many and complex, a single fact illustrates its centrality in today's Congress. In surveys of voting behavior among members of the Senate, the most liberal member of the Republican caucus was still recorded in roll calls as more conservative than the most conservative-voting member of the Democratic caucus.⁴ In brief, a long-existing area of ideological overlap between the two parties at the center of the political spectrum has disappeared.

Our series, *Politics Then and Now, in Maine and the Nation*, was presented by the Muskie School of Public Service and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Southern Maine. It was held at a dark time – mid-September through early November 2013 – when the federal government was partially shutdown for the first time in 17 years, for lack of a federal budget that was then extended to January 2014. The Congress threatened to default on the nation's debt and, at the deadline, extended the limit to February 2014. The initial, technically-flawed implementation of the new Affordable Care Act, “ObamaCare,” only renewed Congressional debate about the legitimacy of the law and deepened the partisan divide.

On November 7, 2013, the same day as our Closing Panel presentation, the 2013 Cohen Lecture was delivered at the University of Maine, featuring Sec. William S. Cohen and Sen. Alan K. Simpson, on “The State of Our Nation: Hardball vs. Civility.” Because of its cogent and timely content, it is included here with permission as a Special Supplement to the series, under the title, “Enough Is Enough!”

The central idea behind the series is that we've come a long way since President John F. Kennedy characterized public service as “a noble calling,” to today, when the na-

¹ On January 17, 2014, the Congress passed and the President signed into law a budget to continue operation of the federal government through the end of federal fiscal year 2014, September 30, 2014.

² Public Policy Polling, Raleigh NC, January 8, 2014.

³ See, for example, Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, 2012; Daniel M. Shea and Morris P. Fiorina (eds.), *Can We Talk: The Rise of Rude, Nasty, Stubborn Politics*, 2013; Susan Herbst, *Rude Democracy: Civility and Incivility in American Politics*, 2010; and Sean M. Theriault, *The Gingrich Senators: The Roots of Partisan Warfare in Congress*, 2013.

⁴ John H. Aldrich, “Partisan Polarization and Satisfaction with Democracy,” in Shea and Fiorina, *op.cit.*, New York, Pearson Education, 2013, pp. 125-26.

tion's political system is routinely described as "dysfunctional" and public servants, as selfish bureaucrats. Systems theory⁵ has developed and been refined since World War II to help us better understand and improve the behavior of complex systems – natural, human, and social. A well-established principle of the theory is that, in *any* healthy system, competition and cooperation co-exist side by side – and sometimes cheek-by-jowl – to advance the system's purposes and ends. Whether it is a forest ecosystem, the human body, a bureaucracy, an economy, or a constitutional system, the system's elements compete for resources to meet their own needs, even as they act to contribute to the survival and persistence of the system, itself.

Somewhere along the way from the 1970s, the U.S. political system lost sight of this important principle, threatening its health and survival. Our series brought seven distinguished speakers to campus, to address the issue of political polarization and dysfunction in our politics. A concluding panel of younger political leaders examined lessons learned from the seven presentations, and offered comment on their prospects, going forward. The speakers were prominent public officeholders, either present or past, whose careers had in most cases spanned both Maine and national politics. We asked each of them to address three timely and important questions:

- How was politics "played" in earlier times in Maine and the nation? And how has that changed today?
- How did this come about? What are the implications for the state and the nation of our continuing along this path? And what will it take to change course?

⁵ The online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, defines "systems theory" as the interdisciplinary study of systems in general, with the goal of defining principles that may be applied to all types of systems at all nesting levels, in all fields of research. The word "systems" is used to refer specifically to self-regulating systems that self-correct through feedback mechanisms. Self-regulating systems are found in nature, including the physiological systems of our body, in local and global ecosystems, in climate, and in human learning processes. As a trans-disciplinary domain, systems theory brings together principles and concepts from ontology, philosophy of science, physics, computer science, biology, and engineering, as well as geography, sociology, psychology, and economics, among others. It thus serves as a bridge for interdisciplinary dialogue among autonomous areas of study. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/systems_theory

⁶ *The American Experience: LBJ*, Part III, North Texas Public Broadcasting, Inc., 1991. Available at www.pbs.org

⁷ Merriam-Webster defines "consensus" as, first, general agreement, and, second, group solidarity in belief or sentiment. "Consensus decision-making" is an alternative to commonly-practiced, adversarial decision-making methods. It is a group decision-making process that seeks the consent of all participants. Its goals are to help everyone involved get what they need, and to reach a decision that can be generally supported by the group as a whole, even if it is not the "favorite" of each participant. Perhaps the oldest-known example of consensus decision-making is the Iroquois Confederacy Grand Council that, since as early as 1142, has used consensus decision-making to finalize decisions through a 75 percent super-majority.

⁸ U.S. Senator Susan Collins, former U.S. Senator and Secretary of Defense William Cohen, former U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe, and former U.S. Congressman and Maine Governor John McKernan were invited to participate in the series, but were unable to attend.

- What does Maine have to offer the nation in this regard, based on our experience here?

We asked all to include personal anecdotes and vignettes from their own experience, to throw light on these questions; and to reflect on the lessons their experience offers Maine and the nation today. Questions and answers followed each lecture and the panelists' presentations. As co-hosts for the series, we started with a couple of questions of our own, and members of the audience joined thereafter. The speakers' responses elicited many heartfelt stories from personal experience.

To set the tone for the series, the first lecture opened with the viewing of a brief excerpt from the splendid Public Broadcasting System's *American Experience* biography of President Lyndon Baines Johnson (1963–68), entitled, *LBJ*.⁶

Fifty years ago, in the time of presidents John F. Kennedy and LBJ, Americans had come to expect and rely on what was called a "consensus politics" in our national government, one built on principle, compromise, and deal-making across party lines by lawmakers and chief executives, alike, who believed in this system and its abiding benefits to the people of the nation.⁷ The growth of ideological, uncompromising, take-no-prisoner politics over the past generation takes many in our generation by surprise. It has a number of root causes, and the difference is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in this brief video excerpt.

It portrays LBJ in all the glory of his domestic legislative triumphs through the skillful application of bargaining, negotiation, persuasion, and cajolery that were his stock in trade; and the utter frustration and despair that attended his inability to reach agreement with Ho Chi Minh and end the war in Vietnam. "If only I just had him in a room, if only I could sit and talk to him," LBJ laments, "I'm sure we could cut a deal!" It is a tale of irreconcilable differences, a zero-sum game driven by conflicting worldviews.

The excerpt brings to mind the story of a medieval cardinal, attending the King of England during the course of a long, protracted war with the King of France. "If only you could sit with the King of France," the cardinal urges, "I'm sure some agreement and accommodation might be reached, and all this suffering would end." "I'm afraid you fail to understand the matter, my dear Cardinal," the King replied; "the King of France wants *my* kingdom, and I want *his*!"

Lessons Learned

So, what lessons may we take from the series? Each of our speakers came to it from a distinguished career. They represent different places on the political spectrum: five Democrats, three Republicans, and one independent.⁸ Six had been candidates for governor of Maine, two had served as governor. Five had held seats in the U.S. Congress. Two others had served in the Maine legislature. Five had held offices in both Maine and national government. While legislative service figured prominently in their resumes, seven of the nine speakers had also held executive posts. The closing panelists – an academic, a Republican, and a

Democrat – each brought to the series years of devotion to and accomplishment in Maine public service.

Despite their various persuasions and public offices held, all were in somewhat surprising agreement on a number of points:

1 *The social distance among members of the two political parties in the Congress and the White House has greatly increased since former times, especially in the past two decades.* Lawmaking in Washington today relies less on personal relationships than in the past. In their place, ideology has become far more important and the fulcrum for policymaking. Fewer and fewer issues may be discussed in anything but partisan terms. Where once negotiations took place over dinner and in after-hours conversations, congressmen and senators now mostly regard themselves as visitors to Washington. Normally at home from Thursday evening through Monday, they are reachable in person only during the middle of the week, when votes are taken.

2 *Maine retains a political culture in which civility and personal relationships count importantly in elections and policymaking.* In a small, rural state with a relatively large legislature, Maine legislators traditionally win office by door-to-door campaigning. Ideology is generally of lesser importance than inter-personal skills in both electioneering and the building of legislative coalitions. These habits carry over in the delegations Maine sends to the U.S. Congress, and support the state's reputation in Washington for moderation and independence, especially among its senators. At the same time, this tradition may be changing with the injection of significantly greater sums of ideologically-driven, out-of-state money into recent state legislative races.

3 *Maine's pragmatic and bipartisan tendencies of late have generally served the state well, and especially well in the 1960s and early '70s.* Then, the Democratic Curtis administration was able to reorganize state government and undertake major reforms in tax policy, education, social welfare, human rights, and environmental protection. Each of these initiatives was enacted by a Republican legislature and has largely remained in effect through four decades, under administrations led by Democratic, Republican, and independent governors.

After more than a century of Republican Party domination, Maine had developed an effective accommodation between the two major parties, one based on electoral competition and purposeful governmental cooperation to advance shared values and goals for the state. This accommodation had the overall effect of raising the Maine of the 1950s from among the lowest states nationally in virtually every standard measure of prosperity and promise, to approaching near the middle of the pack (if not much better) by the early 1990s.

The accommodation was periodically interrupted, how-

ever, following several events of national and state distress – the Watergate scandal of the '70s, the state government shutdown of the '90s, and the Great Recession of 2007–08. Each was followed by the election of an independent or Tea Party-backed candidate for governor, with substantially less than a majority vote and mandate to govern.

4 *The computer-driven techniques employed today in state gerrymandering of U.S. House Districts often produce lopsided majorities for one party or the other, and appear to contribute significantly to party polarization.* While most presidential and Senate elections tend to be competitive, House primary elections routinely produce landslides for the dominant party, with the result that the party primary is often the only real election. This in turn encourages candidates with strong ideological agendas and financial support to compete, often at the expense of more moderate incumbents; and pushes the House to be more conservative than the non-gerrymandered Senate. State commissions or judiciaries that are independent of state legislatures may be the only way to provide greater party balance in the configuring of congressional districts.

5 *Money matters, and there is far more of it in politics today than ever imagined heretofore.* Two narrow (5–4) decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court – *Buckley v. Valeo* in 1976 and *Citizens United* in 2010 – have declared that money is speech and corporations are persons; and removed all limits on corporate and union contributions to elections, fundamentally altering the political landscape and pumping previously unimagined amounts into state and federal elections.⁹

A recent race for the Maine Senate – a position that pays some \$18,000 for a two-year term – cost each of the party candidates more than \$250,000, most of which came from unidentified, out-of-state donors. Previous races for the same seat would have been expected to cost each something on the order of \$25,000. The only hopes for changing this are (1) amendment of the U.S. Constitution, a lengthy and intimidating process; and (2) change in the composition and disposition of the U.S. Supreme Court, appointments to which have only become more contentious since the nomination of Robert Bork a quarter-century ago (so much so that the word Bork has become a verb in Washington-speak).

⁹ For example, Matea Gold reported in *The Washington Post* of January 5, 2014, that analysis of recent tax filings “reveal(s) that in the 2012 elections the 17 conservative groups that made up the political network headed by billionaires Charles and David Koch raised at least \$407 million and outpaced other independent groups on the right and left. Its funders remain largely unknown; the coalition was carefully constructed with extensive legal barriers to shield its donors. The coalition's revenue surpassed that of the Crossroads organizations, a super PAC and nonprofit group co-founded by GOP strategist Karl Rove that brought in \$325 million. The left has its own financial muscle; unions plowed roughly \$400 million into national, state and local elections in 2012. A network of wealthy liberal donors organized by the group Democracy Alliance mustered about \$100 million for progressive groups and super PACs.”

6 *There appears not much prospect of a third or independent party arising as a result of the current dissatisfaction with the two national parties.* It is more likely that divisions within the parties, especially the Republican Party, will appear and prompt a party-split, or at least reveal the need for accommodation within the party. One possibility is the divergence of the more moderate Wall Street Republicans from Tea Party Republicans, especially over matters concerning the national debt. Another possible division lies between the more moderate and pragmatic Republican governors and the Tea Party members of Congress.

7 *In the end, the electorate must and will set the nation's course in this regard, for better or worse.* Ultimate authority in the system resides with those who vote in elections – “the will of the people,” as framed by the Constitution. There will be no abatement of dysfunction and gridlock unless and until the voters elect to office people who will deliver it. Money in politics today may be more influential in determining *who runs* for office than in *how they vote* once they get there. The question now becomes, how to level the playing field for entrants who would seek a more civil dialogue, and a more fact-base and less dogmatic approach to the nation's abiding challenges.

In fairness to the voters, the editors would address the question of how deeply (or not) party polarization has infected the American electorate, itself. Recent literature on polarization and gridlock indicates that polarization has grown among party activists (who supply most of the money) and officeholders, and less so among the voters, themselves. Partisan activists and officeholders have more contempt for and hostility toward one another today than in past decades. Voters show less change from the mostly centrist, politically disengaged habits identified in the University of Michigan voter survey studies of the 1950s.¹⁰

It may be useful, then, to separate the ideas of party realignment and polarization. Parties have realigned since the 1950s and 1960s, such that each is now more homogeneous; and neither remains, geographically, a truly na-

tional party. Republicans win in the South, Midwest, and rural-suburban areas; and have little support in New England. Democrats win in the coastal states (East and West), the upper Midwest, and the big cities, and have little support in the South.

The result is a sorting process in which voters' ideology and party affiliation have become more closely tied than in the past. This has intensified cohesion within the parties; and especially among party elites, in the stark choices they now offer the electorate. However, it does not necessarily mean that the voters insist that these be the only choices they will consider. Former Cong. Barney Frank notes, for example, a number of Tea Party extremists who were defeated by more moderate candidates in 2012.

8 *Camaraderie Then, Confrontation Now?* Finally, several of our speakers – George Mitchell, Barney Frank, Libby Mitchell, Peter Mills, Bill Cohen – make note of the human tendency ever to look back and see the past through rose-colored glasses and to imagine the best of it. At the same time, it is difficult for the editors not to remark upon the sense of fellowship, camaraderie, and shared purpose that pervades the tales of “Politics Then” – as opposed to the vitriol and contempt that too frequently characterize exchanges in the “Now.” The good feeling “Then” appears to have derived from a shared understanding that while the players might compete vigorously, especially around the questions of “how” best to serve the state's and the nation's purposes, there was until recently a widely shared understanding among elected officials on the nation's purposes and goals – on “what” government is for and will do in our democratic society.

There is a potentially historic struggle underway, one that may set the course of the nation for generations to come. Cong. Jim McDermott (D-WA) has characterized it delicately as “a fundamental debate about what is the public good.”¹¹ In our series, former Cong. Tom Allen describes it as a profound clash of basic worldviews, between the extremes of what he characterizes as a “Me vs. We” nation. Senator Angus King sees it in the rise of elected representatives whose avowed purpose is to shut down or cripple a national government built over three generations since the Great Depression. Our speakers note, however, that the camaraderie now lost in the halls of Congress may still be found elsewhere in the nation. Several point to the political culture and processes in Maine, where elements of confrontation and cooperation co-exist within state government, even as it is now divided between a very conservative Republican governor and more liberal Democratic majorities in the Legislature.

A historic time of decision may be upon us, then. Those who vote will decide the nation's course; and, accordingly, determine who will win and who will lose from the policies adopted along the path chosen.

R.B. and K.P., March 2014

¹⁰ See Angus Campbell *et al.*, *The American Voter*, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1960. Among the central and most controversial themes of the book is that most voters are quite unsophisticated in their thinking and voting behavior. One of the co-authors, Philip Converse, developed this argument further in his 1964 article, “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics” (in David Apter, *Ideology & Discontent*, Free Press, Glencoe IL, 1964). Drawing on the survey studies, he concluded that less than four percent of the voting public had a well-formed political belief system and the ability to think abstractly. The rest based their decisions on how they felt a particular party treated different groups; on whether they associated a party with a particularly good or bad event, such as war or recession; or on “no shred of policy significance whatever.” (Converse put the last group at 17.5 percent.) Many political scientists, including Converse, would argue that the voting public has become somewhat more sophisticated in the intervening five decades. Converse credits the improvement to a more educated populace and the easy availability of information. The ideas from this book and legendary article are still widely discussed today.

¹¹ The *New York Times*, March 8, 2014.

“If there is one thing the long travail of the last four presidencies has taught us, it is to be skeptical of the easy answer.... The cost of being an American citizen is going up. If this nation is to survive and meet its challenges, many of us will have to sacrifice some of our personal luxuries to help pay for the society’s neglected needs. What is more, we will have to give up the idea that we can escape from the consequences of our civil irresponsibility by purchasing private passage for our families to the segregated suburbs, to the private schools, and to the protected professions.

“It is going to cost us time and energy and thought, diverted from our private concerns, to make government workable and politics responsible again in America. Our parties, our government will be no more representative than we make them, by our own commitment and participation. If we do nothing, we guarantee that our nation will be nothing. There is nothing for nothing anymore. Our choice is simple: either we become partakers in the government, or we forsake the American future.”

–David S. Broder, “The Party’s Over: What This Country Needs Is Some Unvarnished Political Partisanship” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1972.

“Political scientists analyzing three compilations of longitudinal data – election results, interviews with voters, and congressional roll-call votes – claim that voters and legislators alike are more polarized today than they have been at any time since the Confederacy seceded. What’s going on could be anything from party realignment to the unraveling of the Republic....

“One well-established fact is that polarization in Congress maps onto one measure better than any other: economic inequality. The smaller the gap between rich and poor, the more moderate our politicians; the greater the gap, the greater the disagreement between liberals and conservatives. The greater the disagreement between liberals and conservatives, the less Congress is able to get done; the less Congress gets done, the greater the gap between the rich and the poor. That’s not bad math. That’s what happens when the kitchen’s on fire and all you’ve got is matches.”

–Jill Lepore, Professor of History, Harvard University, from “Long Division: Measuring the Polarization of American Politics,” *The New Yorker*, December 2, 2013.



2. Tom Allen

Worldviews in Conflict

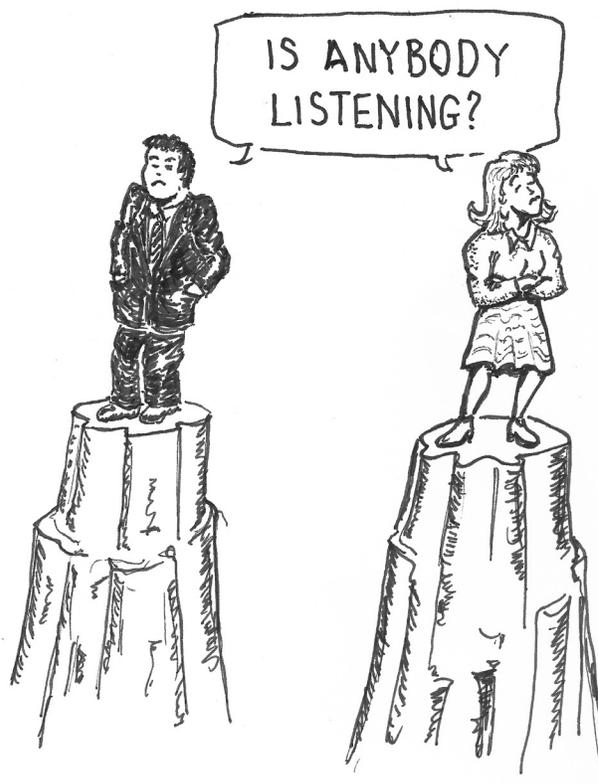
September 19, 2013

Introduction

Former U.S. Congressman Tom Allen is the scion of one of Maine's most distinguished and accomplished civic families. His grandfather, Neal W. Allen, led the effort in the early 1930s to create Portland's city council and manager form of government, and served as the City's Council's first chairman. His father, Charles Allen, after World War II service in the U.S. Navy in the South Pacific, served with distinction on the Portland City Council as a strong and unrelenting advocate against discrimination and the Vietnam War. He later led the effort to establish the new Portland Public Library in Monument Square. Tom's mom, known as Sukey, served as president of the Greater Portland League of Women Voters and state board member of the League during the time of its greatest influence in public policymaking in Portland and in Augusta. Sukey became known especially for her literate and informative pamphlets, written on all manner of public issues of the day.

Tom Allen continued this distinguished family legacy, serving as a Portland City Council member for 6 years, as Mayor of Portland; and from 1997 to 2009 as member of the U.S. Congress, where he co-chaired the House Oceans Caucus and championed campaign finance reform and prescription drug relief for all. Prior to all this, Tom was as a youth a noted scholar-athlete, honored in many ways, perhaps most notably as National Football Foundation Scholar Athlete. It is a personal pleasure and honor to introduce a good friend and an outstanding Maine citizen, former Maine First District Congressman Tom Allen. (R.B.)

TOM ALLEN: Thank you Dick, and thank you, Ken, for all the work you've done to organize this series. It's really nice to see so many here in the audience, many of you I've long known. This time I'm not



asking for money; life after Congress has some real advantages. I do appreciate your being here, however, because this topic is so timely. Once again, we are a few days or a week away from another threat of shutdown of the federal government; and two weeks after that, another of the debt ceiling crises that seem to come up regularly now.

It's amazing to me how different the environment is today from what it was when I left the Congress in 2008; on the other hand, it's not very different in terms of what the members of Congress actually believe, and what they say. Some are just more stubborn than others used to be. I'm not going to talk very much about how politics was

played in earlier times in Maine and the nation, however. You will notice how many “formers” there are on the speakers’ list for the series. We are all “formers,” except for Angus King who is a “current,” but the rest of us are all formers; and some have a lot longer history in politics than I do.

Some Partial Truths

I want to concentrate on the topic of *why* we are where we are nationally, and to some extent in Maine – although Maine is still different from what’s going on in the U.S. Congress – very different – and I will note some of the differences as we go along.

A reviewer of my new book¹² said, “Tom Allen has a different take on political polarization.” I do. I wrote the book, in fact, because I was dissatisfied with the public commentary. With some exceptions, I didn’t think that people were getting the source of polarization right when they wrote about Congress; and I wanted to say my piece.

When you have gone through a career as I have, and you get quoted for a sentence or two in the newspapers and on television, you want to tell a longer and more complete story to people. I wrote the book because there were a number of explanations for the polarization that I thought were just *a bit* of the truth.

- First, members of the Congress don’t live in D.C. any longer, they don’t socialize on weekends the way Ronald Reagan and Tip O’Neal did, and *that’s* the cause. Not really!
- Second, Congressional re-districting now shapes uncompetitive districts, and allows Democrats and Republicans, alike, to have safe seats; and, therefore, they no longer have to appeal to the middle. There is *some* truth to this; and when you look at the number of congressional districts that are no longer competitive, they are the vast majority. Party primaries are structured so that the more extreme candidates in both parties tend to get nominated; then, because so many are running in safe congressional districts, they get elected. There is a built-in bias, in that primary elections are now structured *against* people who are more centrist and able to reach out to the middle.
- Third, 24-7 cable news coverage. All-politics-all-the-time, with people on the TV shows who are over-here and over-there, with not many in the middle because they just don’t keep the ratings up. The media loves controversy, in order to keep the ratings up.
- Fourth, it’s all about the money and the power. Re-

“Ideas matter; they *really* matter. And the big ideas – what I call worldviews – matter the most!... Today, the parties are divided largely by worldviews. And when you’re divided by fundamental worldviews, these cannot be compromised.”

publicans and Democrats, alike, are captured by big money. I’m going to make the case that it isn’t, on either side. I’m not saying it isn’t partly about that, because these are human beings, after all.

- Fifth, the American people continually elect selfish jerks who go to Washington, forget who sent them there and why, and lose contact with the people back home. ‘Not really true. There are good people on both sides of the aisle.
- And finally, it is argued that the House and Senate rules have been manipulated – in the Senate by the minority or the majority, and in the House particularly by the majority – and a lack of trust has grown grow out this sort of unrestrained combat over the rules.

Ideas Matter

After 12 years of listening carefully to my Democratic and Republican colleagues in the Congress, I believe something else is going on. What is most fundamental is this: We debate issues, and ideas actually *matter*. They matter on the floor of the House, they matter in terms of what we say to the media, and they matter in the Democratic and the Republican caucuses. In those rooms, closed to the press, debates over policy always intertwine with politics. They are intense, and people get angry and yell at each other. They wouldn’t do this if it were all just about power and money, and just staying there. Most members of Congress, on both sides of the aisle, care *deeply* about the ideas and causes they took with them to Congress. I’m saying that these ideas *matter*; they *really* matter! And the big ideas – what I call *worldviews* – matter most!

I picked topics for my book that did not include abortion, gay marriage, immigration, and all the other social issues where you can understand that people feel intensely, and why bridging those gaps in belief is really, really difficult. I picked topics of the kind that *used to be* subject to negotiation and compromise and are no longer, in a time when every political issue is infected with partisan combat. I picked four topics: budget and taxes, Iraq, health care, and climate change.

¹² *Dangerous Convictions: What’s Really Wrong with the U.S. Congress*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013.

These four topics involve different subjects and factual evidence, and need thoughtful approaches. Yet, they now appear to be part of a whole in the Congress, as if something not apparent were tying them all together. Otherwise, the two parties would not have been so fiercely divided on such disparate matters. Interest group politics can explain some of the differences. Each party appeals to and is supported by different combinations of business, labor, and other organized interests.

Today, however, interest group politics is often overwhelmed by “worldview politics,” a widening and hardening conflict between

“(Historically,) the power of the President is ultimately the power to persuade. Well, not today. Now, the President has almost no power to persuade anyone on the other side of the aisle, and limited power to persuade people in his own side.”

those who believe that the mission of government is to advance the common good, versus those who believe that government is an obstacle to that end. If this is true, all domestic issues merge into one – into an unproductive, irreconcilable, ideological conflict about the role of government, itself.

You, the citizen, do not get off scot-free, however. Ultimately, this conflict is less about the role of government than the enduring tension between

individualism and community in American politics and culture. It is, therefore, as much about the electorate as it is about our representatives. That, in a nutshell, is what I’m saying.

Two Worldviews

One worldview is grounded in the quintessential American value of selfreliance. I call that worldview *individualism*. It’s what we teach our children: “You can be anything what you want to be, if you work hard enough. You have to pull yourselves up by your own bootstraps. You can’t be dependent on other people. You make your own life.” We believe this. It is good advice. There’s another view, however. It is what I call *community*. It grows in part out of our religious traditions. We have come to relate to one another through connection to a higher being, however we may define this. It grows out of James Madison, who believed he was creating a tradition of civ-

ic republicanism in which we are all joined together in a common, democratic experience – one where everyone as a citizen is in some sense equal to everyone else. This binds us together.

These are the two big ideas, I believe, in American politics and political culture. What interests me now is that Americans have become sorted, divided into two groups with respect to government, depending on whether we are primarily individualist or interested in community and working together. Importantly, these are the *lenses* through which we absorb information. We tend to take in information that supports what we believe, and to shut out information that challenges what we believe. This is true across the board.

There are other kinds of lenses, as well. One is very simple: some people see the world in black and white, and some see the world in shades of gray; we’re just wired differently. George W. Bush, by his own admission, didn’t do nuance; he saw the world in black and white. Barack Obama, I believe, very clearly sees the world in shades of gray.

Isaiah Berlin wrote a little book in 1953, against the background of our great ideological struggle with fascism and communism, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*.¹³ I read it a long time ago and it made a deep impression on me. The title is taken from a fragment of a Greek poem that goes like this: *The fox knows many things, the hedgehog knows one big thing*. Berlin was talking about how people may be looked at as if falling into one of two groups.

One group, characterized as “the fox,” enjoy and even revel in the diversity, the contradictions, and the confusions we human beings bring to this world; they say, that’s the way world works. The other group, “the hedgehogs” tend to focus on not just one thing necessarily, but they tend to want to order the world according to a single, structured view. That’s why we have religions that are more structured, more literal, on the one hand; and more open and diverse, on the other. We have groups in our politics that are just the same. Take a look at our political situation in the US today. A lot of it is about individualism vs. community; and about how we are wired to approach public issues through that singular lens.

I would summarize it this way: the public is more diverse today than the members of the Congress. Most Republicans in Congress tend to see government as (1) by its very nature, infringing on individual liberty; (2) creating a culture of dependency among those it serves; and (3) screwing up just about everything it does. These views are deeply held; and when you connect them to American individualism and self-reliance, you can see that it’s pretty deeply rooted in the American experience.

On the other hand, most Democrats in Congress look at the government and say, “Government is one way,

¹³ Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy’s View of History*, George Weidenfeld & Nicolson, Ltd., London, 1953. Berlin elaborates a fundamental distinction between those people (foxes) who glory in the infinite variety of things, and those (hedgehogs) who relate everything to a unitary vision and a central, all embracing system.

with the right programs and the right approach, to create opportunity for people who weren't born with it or, for whatever reason, don't have it; so, it can be a positive force for good." Democrats would say, "This is *how* we deal with pressing public issues: government is a major vehicle by which we tackle education, health care, environmental issues, and economic issues. We work at these through our government." The conflict between these two worldviews sets and drives us apart.

Dangerous Convictions

I'm now going to explain *Dangerous Convictions*, because I chose for my book a title that creates some confusion. The title comes from a quotation from Frederick Nietzsche, who said, "Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies." He was saying that once we believe something so strongly that we reject any evidence to the contrary, we are in big trouble; and this would be shorthand for what we are seeing in the U.S. Congress today.

Let me say as a Democrat that Democrats have done a lot to make this situation worse. I'm not talking about all the bad things that each party has done to the other. I'm concentrating here on a set of Republican ideas that I believe are not supported by evidence or by expertise, particularly in economics and science; because the hope for America is that we may have a more pragmatic Republican party that will work with Democrats across the aisle. It is a little unusual for me to try and make the case for a different kind of Republican Party that would be more competitive with the Democrats; but that is a large part of why I wrote the book.

"Tax cuts pay for themselves." We heard this all the time. It wasn't true, it was never true. It is theoretically possible to be true in certain circumstances; but by and large, if you do a tax cut, revenues go down. The idea that tax cuts will always stimulate the economy so much, the economy will grow so fast, and you will make up all those lost revenues and gain revenues for the federal government: it just doesn't happen that way; but that assertion was made over and over again. The Bush tax cuts passed in 2001 and 2003 were enormous, and were rigged to be even bigger than they appeared on paper. By the time 10 years had passed, the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office figured that they had drained the federal treasury of \$2.9 trillion!

Now, let's just say that \$2.9 trillion is a really, really big number. It is beyond comprehension. In July of 2010, when we already knew that was the trend and it would wind up there, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell stood before the press and said, "The Bush tax cuts stimulated the economy so much that they increased federal revenues; (and) I'm sure that is the position of all Republicans in the Senate."

This is one of those moments when you ask, "How can someone say that, and how can the media report it without saying, 'You're nuts!'" But many of the major media outlets today see it as their role and duty to report what each side says, and just let it go at that. Here's the difficulty with this: if you are an American citizen, you have all this information washing over you, and it's very hard to cope with it all, sort it out and make meaning of it.

"I used to have a speech that my staff called my "pronoun speech." I basically worked American politics into two pronouns, Me and We.... Americans have become sorted, divided into two groups with respect to government, depending on whether we are primarily individualist or interested in community and working together."

Bruce Bartlett, who served Jack Kemp, Ronald Reagan, and George H.W. Bush, has written a new book called *The Benefit and the Burden*,¹⁴ a fabulous book. He points out that when Reagan got the big 1981 tax cut passed, he increased deficit spending dramatically; and his budget chief, the supply-sider David Stockman later said, "We were mistaken, I was mistaken." Reagan raised taxes 11 times, and nobody knows that; Bush 41 did it once; and Bush 42 did it *zero* times. Bartlett said that he's never heard a conservative say, "There is some level of taxation below which you should not go." Former Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, who I wouldn't hold up as a leader of the Republican Party, was asked this question during her 2012 campaign: "What should the appropriate level of federal taxes be?" She responded, "*Zero*," confirming what Bruce Bartlett had said.

What I'm trying to convey is the importance of ideas. I'm going to divide the room. Whatever your political views, you on the right side are absolutely committed to smaller government, and lower taxes, that is your abiding belief; and you have to develop policies that I'll mention in a moment, to fit. On the left side, it's "opportunity, responsibility, community." That was Bill Clinton's 1992 slogan and what you believe in, whatever policy you may have to develop.

For those of you on the right, who have the smaller government, lower taxes mission: what are you going to do about health care? You've got a system before ObamaCare, one that isn't functioning, with 30 million people

¹⁴ Bruce Bartlett, *The Benefit and the Burden: Tax Reform, Why We Need It and What It Will Take*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2012.

who do not have health insurance, and tons of small businesses who simply can't afford to cover their employees. While you think on that, I offer the same assignment over here on my left, to the people who are OK working with government, to work through "opportunity, responsibility, community."

It's a whole lot harder for the small government, lower taxes group to come up with a policy that will cover a large number of people and still satisfy that core principal. Remember "Repeal and replace ObamaCare"? Over and over again, it's been a number of years now, they have talked

"Both of the worldviews I have mentioned – individualism and community – are deeply rooted in American culture. They are us.... Most of us value both self-reliance and working with others.... As long as we keep these two ideas in balance – self-reliance and community, working together as individuals – we will be a stronger and better country."

about repealing and replacing ObamaCare; but there's never been a Republican proposal put forward that would come close to covering the 30 million people, fully implemented, not even close; and the reason is, it's too hard – there is no proposal out there!

Not many people know that ObamaCare came from the conservative Heritage Policy Foundation. Two of the central components of the Affordable Care Act were grounded in work done at the foundation in 1989 by Stuart Butler, a very smart and able guy. The core elements of Butler's idea were (1) Instead of having a single-payer system, you

would have regulated exchanges where private insurance companies would compete for beneficiaries (sound familiar?); and (2) You wouldn't have an employer mandate, you'd have an *individual* mandate. By the time Obama took office and was pushing his health care plan, the Republicans had abandoned the Butler approach, and they haven't adopted another one since. Butler's plan was about as conservative as you could get and still be comprehensive. This is why ideas, why *worldviews* matter tremendously in your ability to deal with difficult issues.

I used to have a speech that my staff called my "pronoun speech." I basically worked American politics into two pronouns, Me and We; and I still think it works. Healthcare politics in particular is really about how much voters care about other people's healthcare. Many times someone would say to me, why should I pay for someone

who can't afford their own healthcare. Part of the answer from the left is, "If you don't, you will pay more; if we don't share the burden of insurance, share the burden of bad things happening to anyone of us, we will not be as strong or healthy as a society."

Today, of course, we're still fighting this battle. The arguments of those who wish to defund ObamaCare portray it as a disaster for the American people, a disaster for business, just the worst thing that ever happened; and, like Senator Ted Cruz (R-TX), "We have to stop it before it gets implemented, because once it's implemented people are really going to like it!"

Iraq is the most interesting non-domestic issue of our time in terms of these competing worldviews. To my mind, the single most stunning fact about the decision to go into Iraq is this: the National Security Council of the United States *never* had a single meeting to debate whether or not to invade Iraq. Not one, it was just done! If you have a worldview that is based on core principles that are not going to be changed by evidence, you really don't need to listen to evidence; and *that* is what the story of Iraq is about.

Just prior to "shock and awe," if you look at what Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld told the President, he was basically determined that after the military victory, the Defense Department should control the reconstruction period, not the State Department, which he believed would be there too long. Rumsfeld wanted to go in and get out. A month before the invasion he gave a speech and said, "The reason why is this: if you stay, you will create a dependency among the Iraqis."

Dependency. You hear that word over and over again. If self-reliance is the principal American virtue, dependency is the principal American vice. That's why I think even the conflict in Iraq, even what happened there, is driven by how much respect for evidence you have and data you need to make a decision that is data-based, as opposed to your going in and doing something because you think you need to and can make it work, regardless.

I suspect the reason they never had a meeting to debate going into Iraq is that the President didn't want a big fight between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld. Powell did meet with the President, and said, "If you go into Iraq, it's like crystal glass; it will shatter, and we will have to pick up the pieces." And he proved to be right.

The fourth substantive chapter of my book is on climate change. The defining environmental issue of the 21st century, it carries enormous consequences and potential costs if we don't do something about it. Yet the parties are so fundamentally divided, they can't even agree that there is a problem. Certain people who deny climate change have made it clear – particularly the Cato Institute and others – that if you admit that climate change is real, this will give

government more power over the economy. Meanwhile, Harvard's Greg Mankiw,¹⁵ the former head of President George W. Bush's Council of the Economic Advisors, wrote a recent column for *The New York Times* in which he said we now had better take a look at a carbon tax.

Let me divide the room again. For those of you who want small government and lower taxes: you are confronted with climate change and carbon taxes are your solution. That's what Republicans should be arguing for, except for one thing: they have campaigned for decades against *any and all taxes*, so you must call it a carbon fee! You can see again, what I'm saying is, we get boxed in by our big ideas and we shut off data, information, and possible solutions. This is what happens on the Republican side. The result is, as Tom Mann and Norm Ornstein have said, "It's even worse than it looks!"¹⁶ They basically argue that the party system is broken; the parties are divided; and the Republicans have become essentially an outlier on the political spectrum, not accepting conventional mainstream science and economics, and as a result offer little to do about anything.

Fixing The Problem

So, where do we go from here, how do we fix it? The last chapter is always the hardest to write, when you have to explain where you think we need to go.

I think part of the problem is media coverage and political campaign messages that have been dumbed down, even as our problems get more complex and it gets harder and harder for people to sort out the different messages.

When I look ahead I am an optimist. If I look back at the 20th century, I would say it was a century of enormous ideological, devastating conflict – of all sorts of wars, mostly about different ideologies and worldviews. I believe the 21st century is going to be marked by global collaboration on a scale we've never seen before, driven in part by increasingly integrated economies. If Greece goes badly, it does damage to Europe, and if Europe has problems, the US and Asia do, too.

That's what's happened in the last couple of years, and it will continue. That's why, when the central bankers and the finance ministers in the developed world are trying to figure what to do about the worst recession and economic downturn since the Great Depression, they are talking to each other all the time; they may not agree, but they are talking to each other all the time.

This broader communication and collaboration between nations and groups may be threatening to people who worry about our independence and self-reliance. It raises all these questions in spades. It's driven by the vastly improved communications we use all the time, by the faster spread of education, and by what I call the compelling ideas that simply catch on. At the end of the

day, the questions are, "Are we going to be OK with this developing world that is coming, whether we want it or not? Are we trying to shape it so that collaboration will work while protecting individual rights, or are we going to be afraid of it?" There's a real difference there.

Finally, I would say that both of the worldviews I have mentioned – individualism and community – are deeply rooted in American culture. *They are us*. When you realize this, it means – at least I hope it means – that you will gain a little extra tolerance for those who have diametrically opposed views from your own. I believe that if we are going to get this right – if we're going to move beyond the kind of dysfunction and polarization that we have today – it's going to be because people better understand these two worldviews as the source of the polarization. We will need a more honest conversation.

"The public is more diverse today than the members of the Congress.... We Americans will find our way to a more pragmatic public leadership, one inspired by a clearer commitment to the public good. It may be a long road; but it is a road we will find over time."

I finish with this, from near the end of my book. People will always be divided among those who largely see the world in black and white, and those who see it in shades of gray. But most of us value both self-reliance and working with others. However inarticulate we may be, we speak both our first language of individualism, and our second language of community. These core aspects of the American psyche, the yin and the yang of what it means to be an American, have been split apart by worldview politics. We are unlikely to recover a productive balance without an honest conversation about them.

I close with this thought. For all my alarm at the frozen state of today's political discourse, I believe that by some not-yet-visible process, we Americans will find our way to a more pragmatic public leadership, one inspired by a clearer commitment to the public good. It may be a long road; but it is a road we will find over time. As long as we keep these two ideas in balance – self-reliance *and* community, *working together as individuals* – we will be a stronger and a better country. Thank you very much.

¹⁵ N. Gregory Mankiw, "A Carbon Tax That America Could Live With," *New York Times*, August 31, 2013.

¹⁶ Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism*, New York, Basic Books, 2012.

Q & A

Question: *In your book, you say you see no way out of our current political polarization without a sustained public dialogue about individualism and community in American life. There is much caring attention in Maine to the core values you cite. Some here may remember Ellen Goodman, who used to write a syndicated column for The Boston Globe. Goodman has long spent her summers on a Casco Bay Island, where she owns a cottage. She once wrote that she goes there every summer “to watch my island neighbors struggle successfully with the ongoing tension between individualism and neighborliness.” Is there anything that Maine, itself, has to offer the nation in this regard?*

ALLEN: Absolutely. There are a lot of things about Maine that are really special; and what I appreciate most is probably the sense of independence. Massachusetts

“You do not get off scot-free, however; for this conflict is less about the role of government than the enduring tension between individualism and community in American politics and culture. It is, therefore, as much about the electorate as it is about our representatives.”

wanted to get rid of us in 1820; we were way-too-independent even then. We have space, you know, and the kind of pressure that you feel in big cities is missing here. We have space, we have time, we can relax. One of the reasons that we do better politically is that we have something like 500 municipalities and 200 school districts; and everybody knows someone who has served in some sort of government capacity. We have a very high voter turnout. People are used to working

through our governments. There is a lot more tolerance here. I have never heard Susan Collins or Olympia Snowe say, tax cuts pay for themselves. They have never adopted the rhetoric of the right wing of the Republican Party.

All this keeps American politics in Maine dialed-down. The Maine tradition is, you just don’t pick people for office who are way-off on the left or way-off on the right.

The sense that we have to work together is a very high priority for Maine people. If you look at Colin Woodard’s book on American Nations,¹⁷ we clearly live in a different place. The Northeast, as he points out, was settled by different ethnic groups and religious traditions from people in other parts of the country. He makes the interesting point that, despite the fact that Americans move all around from one part of the country to another, we tend to adopt the values of the place we’re going to. As a result, some of our regional and ethnic differences tend to persist.

I certainly feel, and always felt in the Congress, that the people from the South are *really* different! (Laughter) People between the Rockies and the Mississippi are substantially different from the people in the Northeast, along the East Coast, in Middle America, and in the Far West. There are different values, different outlooks, and different concerns; and some of it is religion. Someone can write a book about religious traditions across America, and I’ll bet these would track to a large extent with differences in political traditions, as well.

Question: *Accepting your view that our convictions are deeply rooted, how do you explain that our elected officials were able to reach compromises in the past, while they are now unable to do so?*

ALLEN: That’s a great question. When I worked for Ed Muskie from 1970 to ’71, I followed politics all the time, and people worked across the aisle much more effectively. When I was in college, the leading book on the presidency was by Richard Neustadt, the gist of which was that the power of the President is ultimately the power to persuade.¹⁸ Well, not now. Now, the President has almost *no* power to persuade anyone on the other side of the aisle, and limited power to persuade people in his own side. I think that the parties were different then, and the public, too. You had southern Democrats and northern Republicans then, and there was a lot less diversity within each party. The parties were divided by many topics; sometimes it was economic issues, sometimes it was regional issues, divided by industries or agriculture, or whatever.

Today, the parties are divided largely by worldviews. And when you’re divided by fundamental worldviews, these cannot be compromised. That’s why I divided the room, to see if you can build a comprehensive healthcare policy on smaller government and lower taxes. That’s what is different today: we are divided differently and more deeply. There is a new book out, *The Big Sort*,¹⁹ that argues that Americans are gravitating toward places where people live who are very like themselves in this regard. So, we’re more and more listening to and talking to people with whom we already agree, and whose views are not being balanced by people with significantly different opinions. That’s a big part of the problem.

¹⁷ Colin Woodard, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, Penguin Group, New York, 2011.

¹⁸ Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1960.

¹⁹ Bill Bishop, *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America Is Tearing Us Apart*, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 2008.

Question: *Can you give us an example of Democrats being boxed in by their own ideas?*

Allen: For Republicans, it's primarily ideological convictions that they have a hard time getting away from; for Democrats, it's primarily constituency demands that they have a hard time getting away from. When I was in office and spent most of my time on healthcare, I would get bombarded with requests from Democrats to support a single-payer system, the Canadian system in particular. The system in Canada works well, and provides better care for less money than the system we have. I never supported it. A lot of Democrats did because they were boxed in by the idea of it and by their constituencies.

Democrats get so attached to particular constituencies – it can be government employees, teachers, seniors on Medicare – and we can never make any changes to Medicare or Social Security, we can't even consider chained CPI,²⁰ which would drop benefits for Social Security by a very, very small amount over a number of years. And once you get locked in like that, and you have a system like Social Security that does need some adjustment, you have little room, if any, to compromise.

Question: *Do you think that greater collaboration may yet be forced by serious crisis, such as that caused by climate change?*

ALLEN: Collaboration is being forced already. It may take a year, but after the 2012 election, suddenly immigration reform is on the table. It hasn't passed the House, and may not; but it sure got a lot of attention in the Senate. There was a big push to pass immigration reform, including a pathway to citizenship, by Republicans who never supported it before. In the immortal words of Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina (whom I have served with and actually like a lot), "What are you going to do?", he asked. "The Republican Party is in a demographic death spiral, and we better do something about it." Now, that's probably not the purest motives for doing immigration reform, but I'll take it!

When I mentioned Greg Mankiw's article on the carbon tax, I mean there are a few people who see the writing on the wall. Over the next 10 years, and it may take that long, we'll see a real struggle within the Republican Party, between what I call the conservatives and the libertarians. If the conservatives win, we will have over time a more pragmatic Republican Party – a somewhat more moderate, but at least a more pragmatic party. This is how it is going to turn out, at the end of the day: if the Republicans cannot compete in presidential elections, there will be more and more who will say, we've got to do something different. And they may compete in the House elections for a while; but in 2016, Florida, which was a swing state in 2012, will

have some 900,000 more Hispanic voters. Some of these swing states may no longer be swing states in 2016 and 2020, unless there is a remaking within the Republican Party to give itself broader, less ideological appeal.

"I believe the 21st century is going to be marked by global collaboration on a scale we've never seen before, driven in part by increasingly integrated economies."

Question: *Tom Mann and Norman Ornstein argue in their book that, in the end, "the voter must take ultimate responsibility for healing a broken and very, very dysfunctional political system." This is surely true. At the same time congressional districts have been gerrymandered to strengthen partisan division in primary elections that are structured to favor extremists. What, if anything, can the average voter do to overcome these obstacles and regain a voice in the electoral process?*

ALLEN: I certainly think that redistricting reinforces the problems we have in the House (although the problems in the Senate and the governorships suggest it's not all about redistricting). First of all, don't assume that any one voter can fix the problem; but every one of us has a voice and every one of us has a vote. This makes a difference, if you can find ways to weigh in. There is almost always a political group pushing one cause or another; and being involved in these kinds of activities over time makes a great difference. After all, none of us expects to change the world. (Well, maybe some do; I think I never did, only to make a contribution.) And I think that's how you do it, you find a group.

With respect to congressional redistricting, I really believe in a system like we have in Maine, and the system in California; you need a commission with judicial review, to take it out of the hands of the legislature. Ultimately it *has* to be out of the hands of the legislature, because they will protect their own, on both sides of the aisle, and the public will suffer.

²⁰The Chained Consumer Price Index (C-CPI) is a time series measure of the price of consumer goods and services created by the Bureau of Labor Statistics as an alternative Consumer Price Index. It is based on the idea that in an inflationary environment, consumers will choose less-expensive substitutes. This reduces the rate of cost of living increases through the reduction of the quality of goods consumed. The standard or "fixed weight" CPI also takes such substitutions into account, but does so through a periodic adjustment of the "basket of goods" that it represents, rather than through a continuous estimation of the declining quality of goods consumed. Application of the chained CPI to federal benefits has been controversially proposed to reduce the federal deficit.

Question: For many decades from the 1930s to the 1970s, economic differences among voters were closely related to party affiliation. Upper income people tended to support Republican candidates, while lower income groups favored the Democrats. Despite growing income inequality in the United States in recent years, economic factors now seem to be less relevant to how people vote. Why do you think this is the case?

ALLEN: Education is more important than it used to be, and the voting pattern shifts depending in part on education. Another part is change in the nature of work, itself. I was speaking recently to a man with a small publishing company. In 1960, he said, 80 percent of the jobs in America were unskilled, and now that number is just about 20 percent. In manufacturing and other areas, the demographic group that's been hardest hit by change is white men. As women have entered the workforce in record numbers and established themselves, all those blue-collar jobs that men used to support an entire family have receded. Politically, there is some anger there. As you know, the conservative vote today is increasingly older, white male, and southern and rural. Those tendencies are shaping where we are going.

Question: To change the subject, should the US endeavor to influence the Syrian civil war, other than on the issue of chemical weapons?

ALLEN: I believe that we should endeavor to influence, but not commit to it. We learned some terrible lessons from the invasion of Iraq, which was the defining catastrophe of the Bush II administration, and we can't go back

there. President Obama is right to be very cautious about engaging in any conflict.

I supported some sort of military action in retaliation for the use of chemical weapons, because I feel that while we can't be the world's policeman, ours is the only country that has the military capacity to send the message that those weapons are out of bounds.

The threat of military action undoubtedly had an effect on Syrian President Assad and his saying, "I've denied it until now, but we really do have those weapons; and I'm willing to sign a chemical treaty and turn them over."

But the major undertaking for the United States has to be to drive as hard as possible during this last part of the Obama presidency to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine. If we can fix this problem in some way, despite the enormous difficulties, the Middle East will be a better place. And we will have a better world. That, to me, is the highest priority.

Question: So, tell us: where do you get your optimism?

ALLEN: It's genetic. People often say things are only getting worse and worse. My response is, no trend lasts forever; it just doesn't. At the end of my book you'll see a passage from Reinhold Niebuhr that sums up how I feel: "We cannot complete in our lifetimes the things we would like to see happen. We must, therefore, rely on faith, hope, and love" – that, somewhere down the road, the problems that worry us so much now will be resolved to a greater or less extent. And future generations will be dealing with different problems.

Thank you very much. (Applause)



3. Sen. George J. Mitchell

The Importance of Listening

September 26, 2013

Introduction

The breadth of former U.S. Sen. George Mitchell's lifelong career in public service to this country and the world is, in a word, breathtaking. It includes all three branches of our national government – federal district judge, United States Senator and Senate Majority Leader, and Special Envoy under two American presidents. He has served in law enforcement as United States Attorney for Maine. While in the Senate, he led re-authorization of the Clean Air Act of 1990 and passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, both signed into law by President George H.W. Bush; and he guided passage of North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement of 1994, signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

Some highlights of his post-Senate career include service as U.S. Special Envoy for Northern Ireland in 1995, and architect of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998; founder of the Mitchell Institute in 1995, to encourage young people from every Maine community to aspire to and achieve a college education; co-chair (with former House Speaker Newt Gingrich) of the congressional Task Force on United Nations Reform in 2005; chairman of the Walt Disney Company from 2004-07, and membership on the boards on many other national corporations; director of the Investigation of Steroid Use in Major League Baseball in 2006-07; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace in 2009. In 1999 he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton.

Among his proudest contributions, personally, is the Mitchell Institute, which conducts important research on Maine student aspirations and annually provides a scholarship to a graduate of every Maine public high school who plans to attend college.

Beyond all this, it is said there is one job here in Maine to which Sen. Mitchell aspired when he was young, but



has not yet held: Mayor of the City Waterville, his home. All things considered, however, George Mitchell is surely the most accomplished public servant in the history of this state. It is an honor to present our former United States Senator George Mitchell of Waterville. (K.P.)

GEOERGE MITCHELL: Thank you, very much, Ken, for your extremely generous introduction. Thank you, ladies and gentleman, for your presence and your warm reception. To President Kalikow and the faculty and officials of the University, it is pleasure for me to be here.

The Mitchell Institute

My scholarship program has been mentioned. I'm often asked by reporters and the media, "What do you think is the most significant contribution of your career?" Most ask about Ireland and my years as Senate Majority Leader; but I believe that the most important thing in my life after my family has been the Mitchell Institute and its scholarship program. We give out a scholarship each year to a graduate of every high school in Maine. Since I left the Senate to found this program, we have distributed over \$10 million in direct assistance to more than two thousand deserving young Maine people. (Applause)

More than half, over a thousand, have gone to the University of Maine System; and at this moment there are more than 250 in the system. USM has played a large role, as we've had about 150 students here; more than 25 are here now. Two-thirds of our students are the first members of their families ever to go to college, and we include need as one criterion. As against the national average and the figures for the University of Maine System, we have a very high rate of graduation; that is, our youngsters who start, finish.

"There is a tendency on the part of most humans to look back through rose-colored glasses and imagine an ideal time when there was not controversy, when there was all cooperation. That has never existed in our political system."

Maine has a very unfortunate pyramid of educational attainment; that is, we have a very high rate of graduation from high school and a very low rate of graduation from college, compared with the rest of New England and the nation. The principal barrier we have found, through research at the Institute, is financial; so, we do our best to make it possible for *every* young person in Maine to have the same chance in life that I had.

My mother was an immigrant who could not read or write; my father was the orphaned son of immigrants who left school after the fourth grade. Because of their efforts – but more importantly, because of the openness of American society; and because I was the beneficiary of many helping hands along the way – I want to devote my life to see to it that others in Maine who are in a situation similar to that in which I found myself have the chance to get an education – to go as high and as far as their talent and willingness to work will take them.

I believe that in America nobody should be guaranteed success, but everyone should have a fair chance to succeed; and that means education, knowledge, and skills.

So, I thank you for mentioning the Institute. I did want to mention it to all of you, in case you want to help out in some way, at some point in time.

On Competition & Collaboration

Let me begin our topic today with another story. On the day that I was elected Senate Majority Leader, among the first persons I called was Bob Dole of Kansas, then the Republican Leader of the Senate. I asked if I could come see him, and he said, "Of course." I walked down the hall to his office, where I said to him that these are very tough jobs; that he had been in the Senate for many years, and I was relatively new, just a few years in the Senate; and that I did not think either of us could succeed, nor could the Senate, if there were no trust between us. I said, "I've come here to tell you how I intend to behave toward you, and to ask if you would reciprocate, and act the same way toward me."

Then I described the most simple, basic principles of fairness and common courtesy. I told him that I would never surprise him, that's important in the Senate; that I'll always give him the opportunity to think about his response to any action I was going to take as Majority Leader. I told him that I would never try to embarrass him; that I would never criticize him personally when we disagreed, to the extent that I could humanly do so; and that I would keep the debate on the merits of the issue, and not make it personal. Bob Dole was delighted. He shook my hand and to this moment, never has one harsh word passed between him and me – never in public or in private.

Every year my scholarship program has a dinner here in the Portland area, and I invite a speaker. A few years ago, Bob Dole came and spoke on behalf of my program. He was so impressed, he went back to Kansas and started a similar program there. Last year, I went to Kansas to promote Bob and his program.

I tell that story to say, it *can* be done. It need *not* be as personal and acrimonious and difficult as it is now – although I balance that by saying that politics in the United States has always been rough-and-tumble. There is a tendency on the part of most humans to look back through rose-colored glasses and imagine an ideal time when there was not controversy, when there was all cooperation. That has *never* existed in our political system.

University of Maine Professor Amy Fried wrote an op-ed piece in the *Bangor Daily News* last year, describing the presidential election of 1800, in which the name-calling between John Adams, the incumbent president, and Thomas Jefferson, the challenger, exceeded anything heard in the most recent presidential election campaign. A supporter of Jefferson called Adams a hermaphrodite, that he had neither the firmness of a man nor the gentleness of a lady. He went on to say other harsh things, and Adams'

supporters responded with even *more* vitriolic attacks on Jefferson.

No matter what happened between Obama and Romney, nobody called the other guy a hermaphrodite; and it's been rough for the President ever since. Frankly, when I was there, I thought it was very tough, very hard to manage and to restrain – even though Bob Dole and I were close friends, had dinner a couple of times a week, and talked several times a day. It isn't easy, and it won't be easy to restore some degree of civility.

One reason is, there is a deeply ambivalent approach to politics in American life. We, of course, value competition in *every* aspect of our society. We believe that, in economic affairs, competition produces the best results for consumers. We're glued to the television on Sunday, as we watch sporting events in which competition prevails. Our judicial system is based on the premise that a competitive process is the one best designed to reveal truth. And nobody, even the harshest critics of American politics today, suggests we should have a one-party system or a one-party state. We want, we need, and we demand competition.

At the same time, we want, we demand cooperation. Unlike business, where there are laws governing the mechanisms by which competition occurs; and unlike the judicial system, where we have a highly controlled system of adversarial discussion to arrive at truth, there are no such abiding and enforced rules in politics.

The Importance of Listening

If I asked each of you here to write a single paragraph on where the line is drawn between competition and cooperation in politics, I guarantee you, no two answers would be alike. You would also come to what we all, as humans, are afflicted by: when we hear arguments and information that are consistent with our prior beliefs, we have wide-open receptors in our brain that receive, welcome, and remember that information. When we hear arguments and data that *conflict* with our prior beliefs, we have very tiny receptors and are disposed to resist the information. It's hard for the things we don't believe in to get through to us. We all see events and interpret facts based on our prior beliefs and perceptions. *We all* do it.

President George W. Bush was elected president in 2000 by a very narrow electoral vote, and a less than the majority popular vote. In 2004, he was re-elected and received about 280 electoral votes with a plurality of about 3 million votes. The *Wall Street Journal* wrote in an editorial that few presidents in American history have enjoyed the mandate that President Bush received in this election; that he now had a true mandate to govern. Eight years later, in 2012, when President Obama was re-elected by a total of 330 electoral votes and a popular vote margin of 5 million votes, the *Wall Street Journal* said he does not

have a mandate, and he cannot claim one to govern!

While I pick an example that may sound partisan, I don't want to suggest that people on the other side don't act the same way. We interpret events in a manner consistent with our prior beliefs. If we are to break out of the situation we're in, there have to be individual and collective efforts to try better to *listen*, to understand the point of view of those whom we oppose.

"We have to open our ears and our minds and our hearts to the views of those with whom we disagree. We have to have the humility to accept that we are not always right – no individual, no institution, no political party.... We don't have the moral authority or standing to say that we can't be wrong, or that those who oppose us cannot be right!"

People ask me often, how did it happen in Northern Ireland, with hundreds of years of conflict and many prior efforts to bring about a solution? There are all kinds of reasons, far too many to go into today; but I'm certain that one of the reasons I was able to gain the confidence of the parties to the negotiations is that, I *listened!* I especially listened to the people whose views I didn't agree with. *We all* have to make an effort to open up our ears and our minds to those with whom we disagree; and we all have to have the humility to accept the reality that we are *not* always right – no individual, no institution, no political party.

I'm a Democrat, and I'm proud of it; but I'm frank enough to say that the Democratic Party has made many, many mistakes in its long history. On the most important moral issue in all American history, the issue of race, the Democratic Party was on the wrong side for 100 years. We don't have the moral authority or standing to say that we can't be wrong, or that those who oppose us cannot be right! The intolerance now demonstrated on the other side by some who presume to have a level of certainty, a righteousness about their positions is one of the obstacles that we face; but we *all* have to recognize that this is *part of us as humans*, part of our society. We have to open our ears and our minds and our hearts to the views of those with whom we disagree. We have to have that *necessary humility* about our own positions.

Why We Are Where We Are

Let me talk about a few of the reasons we're in the fix we're in. I won't go into great detail, and I don't presume

to have any superior knowledge on the matter. I'm not a historian, or a social scientist; I work full-time and don't have time to devote to analysis. What I'm giving to you is just a few opinions about why we are where we are.

First, redistricting. We benefit every day from technology. It's accelerating, it enhances life, and those of us with children know how rapidly generations can change in almost every aspect of life through technology. But technology is, in and of itself, and like all science, neutral. It doesn't favor outcomes, it enables us to produce outcomes; and *how* we use technology makes a difference.

Technology now permits a degree of precision in redistricting that didn't exist for most of our nation's history. I would ask each of you to look at some of the maps of districts in the U.S. House of Representatives today. There you will see the fruits of highly computerized and partisan redistricting. It has now developed to a degree

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that most of those who serve today in the House of Representatives do not run in competitive districts. Most estimates are that, of the 435 house seats, fewer than 50 are genuinely competitive.

Most members now sitting in House seats *know* that the outcome of the next election in their district will be in the favor of their party or the other. In other words, you can predict the *party-outcome* now because of the manner in which redistricting has occurred.

The Republicans have been most successful at this, the last time around for redistricting, because they controlled more State legislatures after the 2010 election, the last Census year. Democrats, there in the past, did much the same.

What we have to do is to adopt a process whereby we take political partisanship out of the redistricting that occurs every 10 years after the Census, as much as humanly possible. We must because, at this pivotal moment in American history and particularly in the House of Representatives, it is the nominating process, the party primary, and not the general election that matters most! It no longer matters who was nominated in most districts: the Republican will win in some, and the Democrat will win in others.

We all know that in our country we have an embarrassingly low level of participation in elections. In a hotly contested presidential election, it is between 50 and 60%.

In the mid-term congressional elections, far fewer than that; and in the nominating primary process, only a *tiny* fraction of the American people participate. This gives hugely disproportionate influence to the most activist, the most ideological, the most rigid, and the most uncompromising persons in their parties, on *both* sides.

I watched a television talk-show a few months ago where they showed a film-clip of a Tea Party member of the House of Representatives who stood up and said, in effect, "I'm against compromise. Compromise is what's created all our problems, and we can't compromise. We have got to have it *our* way!" When you think about it, in a country of 315 million people, the most diverse nation on earth, with hugely competing regional, social, and other interests, to suggest that *anybody* can run this country without compromise is a fantasy!

One of the two commentators criticized the House member for his remark, and said, "I'll bet 90 percent of the people disagree with him." The other said, "Yes, but he's talking to the one in ten who might participate in the nominating process, and who shares his view." That is why redistricting plays such an enormous role, particularly in the US House of Representatives.

Second, Money! It's been a while since I was Senate Majority Leader. One day, at a meeting of my colleagues, frustrated and angry as I looked at the day's calendar, I told them: "Every morning when I get to work around seven o'clock, I have on my desk at least a dozen calls from other senators, saying, 'Please don't have a vote at noon because I have a fund-raising lunch; please don't have a vote of four o'clock 'cause I have a fund-raising meeting; please don't have a vote at five o'clock 'cause I have fund-raising reception; don't have a vote at six o'clock 'cause I have fund-raising dinner; and don't have a vote at eight o'clock 'cause there's another event after.'" I said to them, "I if I granted every request I had, not to have a vote when someone's having a fund-raising event, the only time we could vote is between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m. on Thursdays." (Laughter)

I purposely exaggerated to make a point; but if it was bad then, it's ten times worse now. There is a mad money-chase that is occurring that is demeaning to the participants; and most importantly, it has severed the bond of trust between the American people and their elected representatives that is crucial to the effective functioning of our democracy.

I'll illustrate this by asking a question that I have asked all over America, to audiences from Maine to Florida to California. "How many of you believe that members of Congress are more responsive to their constituents than they are to their donors?" Does anyone here believe that? Not a single hand. In more than a year of asking this, only one person has ever raised her hand. It was in Washington, where a woman raised her hand, got up, and said,

“My husband is a *member* of Congress!”(Laughter)

The problem is not that members of Congress are openly corrupt, that someone walks in and says, “I’ll give you \$20,000 if you will vote this way or that on a bill.” It’s more subtle than that, and more difficult to deal with. Most members actually get money from people who agree with the positions they had when they were elected. The problem is that, to run for office now, you need to raise these fantastic sums of money; and you have to devote time, effort, and energy that would better be spent trying to meet the needs and demands of the people.

This has been greatly aggravated by the atrocious decision by the United States Supreme Court in the *Citizens United* case, which basically said, “There’s a fire, so let’s pour a can of gasoline on it.”(Applause) I invite and challenge each of you to get that decision and read it. First, you’ll have a very hard time plowing through it. It is illogical, almost incoherent; and the premise on which it is based is absolutely and obviously false – namely, that the American people don’t think that corruption follows from financial contributions to Congress.

Read the opinion. You won’t be able to fathom it; but what you will recognize is that it is divorced from the reality of the American electoral process today. I want to be clear: the Court didn’t create the problem, the problem was there long before the decision was rendered. It aggravates it greatly, however, and makes it more difficult to bring the present crisis under control.

Finally, Television. I don’t want to insult people here who work in television. Again, the technology is neutral, it brings us enormous benefits, and it is one of the great inventions in all of human history. Yet, it carries with it the misuse that we see now in negative television spots.

In the 2012 Republican presidential primary, almost *all* the TV spots were negative. In the presidential campaign, itself, we in Maine lagged behind the country in negative advertising; but it has reached here. You all saw the ads run against Angus King in the last election. Nobody makes a positive case anymore, it’s *all* negative. If you’re a member of the public, and you have two candidates calling each other a bum and a crook, and spending millions of dollars to do it: why should you believe anything different, if that’s all you hear?

I don’t advocate censorship in any form, or restraints upon the television industry of any kind, or the use of electronic media to convey certain views. What I do advocate for is a way to control the limitless flow of money into the electoral process, the vast majority of which goes to television advertising. We *can* legally and constitutionally control the amounts of money that are being contributed and spent.

Ultimately, it will change only if the American people *demand* change. This is a representative democracy. So many of you nodded your heads when I talked about

negative ads. The polls are very clear, Americans don’t like them. The same polls are equally clear that people are *moved* by them. Most people running for office are intelligent people, some are very smart, and they would not use a tactic unless they believed it would be successful. They *know* that you and everybody else think negative advertising is not a good thing in politics; and they *know* it has a beneficial effect for them.

“Without a doubt, people who contribute large sums of money or raise large sums of money for elected officials gain access, to get their views across, to a degree that simply doesn’t exist for most ordinary citizens. ”

There may be limited circumstances where negative ads don’t work, but the vast majority do; and they are going to increase in the future. You can imagine a world in which the amount of money spent increases exponentially, and the vitriol distributed around the country continues indefinitely. It’s very difficult, and it’s easier to describe the problem than to prescribe a solution; but it will not happen until the American people say, “Enough is enough!” In some election somewhere, in some state, in some district, people are going to rise up and convey a message through the ballot box, which is where it has to be conveyed. I hope it happens here in Maine, if it doesn’t happen elsewhere; because this is a representative democracy, and The People *do* decide what kind of government we are going to have.

A Final Word About Mr. Muskie

After my parents, the most influential person in my life has been Ed Muskie. He was my employer, my hero, my mentor, and my friend. He was also the smartest person I have ever met. Smart as he was, he was human, and he had his faults. I’m going to tell you one story, of a time that I didn’t follow his lead.

When he hired me, I was very excited and nervous. Among his faults, Senator Muskie had quite a temper, and so I was a little afraid of him. He asked me to come with him to Maine, back home on a week’s congressional recess, where he had a series of events planned. I drove and was sort of an all-around go-fer for him. He started in Rumford, spoke every night across the state, and ended in Calais.

It was a wonderful time; and he was well- received, he was so intelligent and persuasive in his arguments. And we finished later and later, each night. After six days of this, we were driving back to Bangor where we would stay overnight and fly out the next day. We left Calais

and drove onto the well-known Airline, 100 miles of road through the woods between Calais and Bangor. It was rainy, foggy, and we were quite silent, both very tired.

After about 20 minutes Mr. Muskie said to me, “What did you think of my speeches?” I had a moment of panic, because I didn’t know if I should dare tell him the truth, or say nice things. I decided I would tell him the truth, that I thought they were too long. “They were great, especially in Rumford,” I said. “You gave a really great speech the

“It is in our national interest to be involved around the world. If 9/11 demonstrated nothing else, it showed there is no wall high enough to secure the safety of our people.... The central challenge we will face is to determine on a rational and logical basis, when and how we should intervene.”

first time, and the audience loved it; the second time, you went on and on about the same subject, and they were getting a little tired; the third time, they were exhausted. After the first, they were *all* too long.”

There was a *long silence*, and I began to get nervous. I thought, hopefully, “Maybe he fell asleep? Or maybe I’m going to get fired and thrown out of the car right here on the Airline?” Finally, he said to me in a very low and calm voice, “You’re a smart young man, George, and some-

day you’ll be giving speeches like I just did. When you do, you will find that there is *nothing in the world* like the sound of your own voice!” (Laughter)

Every time I go on a little too long, I tell that story. I’m sorry I got carried away. Thank you all very much for having me. I’ll be glad now to take whatever questions you may have. (Applause)

Q & A

Question: *I would like to begin by offering an unsolicited plug for Senator Mitchell’s book, Making Peace.²¹ It is a superb book, both because of how much insight it offers into negotiation under the most trying circumstances, helping lifelong enemies come to agreement; and also because it is revealing of the character of George Mitchell, himself. Those of you who would like to know the Senator better owe it to yourselves to read Making Peace.*

In it, Senator, you say that in the politics of Northern

Ireland, there is not a tradition of anybody ever giving up anything! You go on to say that what made agreement possible was that the vast majority of people had had enough of the violence, and the highly publicized and emotional funerals that followed. They were sick of it, they wanted change, they were demanding change. Do you see any signs of such change in this country – that people have had enough?

MITCHELL: No, because there is one obvious and dramatic difference in the circumstances: what they were tired of was the *violence*. There was enormous fear and anxiety, thousands of people killed, and (not well known in this country) tens of thousands brutally and permanently maimed. The number of deaths was not high in comparison to what has occurred in the Middle East and in Africa; but the number of permanently maimed was very, very high. The car bomb was invented in Northern Ireland; the method of kneecapping, of firing bullets through both a person’s knees and frequently both ankles, to permanently cripple him, was first practiced there. There was overwhelming fear, such an abnormal life – that is, people just couldn’t live a normal life because of the fear, because death was so random – that the people were exhausted.

Northern Ireland is a conservative society in which women had not previously played a large role. Many of those who were killed – originally, at least – were military and police personnel, mostly male. Their mothers, sisters, and relatives began to get active; and women began to take a more significant role, demanding an end to this violence.

It isn’t the same here. We are all disgusted by what is going on; but it does not have the immediate impact that widespread and brutal violence has on people, on individual lives. It doesn’t permeate and dominate life so much as if your husband or child was murdered. When that happens, people are so consumed they really can’t focus on anything else, they have trouble thinking of going to work, going to school, doing things. We haven’t reached that stage here and, I certainly hope we never do.

With respect to violence, we get enough of that outside the political process; but I do think there comes a moment in history, in every society, when people demand change. You are seeing it now in the Middle East. I think there will eventually be some event that will trigger a change in American attitudes, and lead to people’s taking the large, broad view that’s held about this now, and converting it into action.

Question: *I am a student of political science at USM, and am also in a program that the Democratic Party runs, to train women to run for office. How we can encourage women and people of color and other minorities that are not represented fully in politics right now, and involve their voices to a fuller participation in the system.*

²¹George J. Mitchell, *Making Peace: The Behind-the-Scenes Story of The Northern Ireland Peace Accord*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999.

MITCHELL: One of the paradoxes of life is that the solution to every human problem contains the seeds of a new problem. One of the reasons we have this extreme gerrymandering is that there are legal requirements with the respect to minority representation; and this requires some form or degree of gerrymandering to enable effective representation. This has been taken by some who really don't favor it, to an extreme that has produced a disproportionate and adverse result. You have to be careful, very careful in what you do, because secondary and tertiary effects sometimes have far more negative results than the benefits that accrue from what you are trying to do in the first place, unless it is done carefully.

Otherwise, we have continuously to encourage full participation by all, and break down the barriers that have for so long bound us. I'm optimistic in this regard. We are all so fortunate to be Americans, to be citizens of this great nation. For all its many imperfections, it remains the most free, the most open, and the most just society on earth, and the first meritocracy in all of human history. When I make criticisms, I'm not suggesting a lack of faith in our society; it's more a desire to improve it. We've shown in our history that among the greatest things about our society is the capacity to confront wrong, to take actions, to improve.

We all, rightly, revere our Constitution, a great political and literary achievement. Yet, our Constitution explicitly endorsed the concept and practice of racial indifference and intolerance. A black person was considered by the Constitution not to be a full person, only three-fifths. It actually specified the fraction, and it took three generations and the bloodiest war in our history to extend the right to vote from adult white men who owned property to *all* males. Then it took *another* 60 years and a bitter political battle to extend the right to women. It seems so preposterous to us now, that anybody could even argue about the proposition; yet it took 60 years of intense argument.

It took 100 years *after* the Civil War to have even the beginnings of genuine racial integration. It wasn't until 1965, when the Voting Rights Act passed, that for the first time black Americans could not be denied the right to vote just because of the color of their skin – a proposition so incredible that it's hard to imagine that just 50 years ago it was in doubt. It was a *fierce* political battle. Now we are engaged in similar struggles with respect to sexual orientation.

The American people have shown a remarkable willingness to confront errors, to improve, to expand our notion and definition of civil and human rights, to accommodate the dynamics of history that occur in every society. I'm pretty confident, really, about the future overall, and particularly in this area.

Question: You spoke about your informal poll of audiences, about whether people believe that the politicians are more responsive to their constituents or to their donors. The results are not surprising, because we all know everyone is so jaded; but it's so disheartening. How true is it, that politicians are more responsive to their donors than to their constituents?

Mitchell: Without a doubt, people who contribute large sums of money or raise large sums of money for elected officials gain access, to get their views across, to a degree that simply doesn't exist for most ordinary citizens.

They say that necessity breeds invention. After I was appointed to the U.S. Senate and before I ran in my first election to the office, I was 36 percentage points behind in the polls and given no chance to win. The *Bangor Daily News* reported a poll that indicated my opponent would defeat me by 36 points; the sub-headline quoted the pollster, "He has no chance to win."

"We have to accept the fact that people elsewhere have different interests. If they have the right of self-governance, they are going to produce results that we disagree with at times. We can't say that we are for democracy only in those cases where people agree with us."

Well, this focused my mind, and I searched for ways to distinguish myself from the other candidates. What I came up with was to state publicly that I would meet privately with any person in Maine who wanted to speak with me. Would you be surprised to learn that not a heck of a lot of people cared to meet with me at that time? I would come on Saturday's and Sunday's to Portland, Bangor, Presque Isle, and Rockland, where I had offices, sit in my office, and anybody who wanted it could have 10 minutes. I got a lot of cranks and a lot of criticisms; but I learned a lot, and it was extremely helpful to me then and later.

This got very difficult, however, when I became Senate Majority Leader and had a lot of people who wanted to see me. I would spend a week in Washington, arguing over some bill and fighting like it was life-and-death. Then I'd come back to Maine and meet 30 or 40 people – and *not one* would even mention that bill. They talked about their mortgage, their job, their kids' school, or something; and this helped me remain grounded – and it obviously helped me politically, too.

In general, however, elected officials more easily and readily grant access to those who are substantial contributors, than to ordinary citizens. It doesn't mean they don't

meet with ordinary citizens – they come home, they hold town meetings, and so forth; but in terms of getting 15 minutes to tell you exactly what to think about a particular bill or position, there is a mismatch there.

Question: *I especially appreciate your comments about the importance of humility. Taking that from the national scene to the international, the basic question is, What is the appropriate role for the United States to play, whether in Syria, the Middle East, Kenya and all of Africa, or North Korea and all of Asia? Should we have humility about who we are – not becoming the policeman of the world, and being sensitive to the incredible violence and suffering that's going on?*

MITCHELL: A great question. Throughout human history, there have been dominant powers, “dominant” generally defined in economic and military terms. Without seeking world dominance, the United States, dating largely to the period immediately following the first World War, has become the dominant power in the world economically, militarily, and, increasingly, culturally.

“As a country, we don't always succeed in matching our actions to our aspirations, sometimes we fail; but the fact is, in the United States we recognize it, and we try. We try to elevate ourselves to a level that meets our aspirations.”

Being in that position provides great benefits. A lot of economic benefits flow to Americans because the dollar is the reserve currency around the world. At the same time, it produces negative consequences. There is inevitably a lot of resentment and envy in any dominant-subordinate relationship, whether between nations or individuals. People who ask for help and receive it frequently are both grateful

and resentful at the same time. There develops around the world – as there has about the United States – a myth of omnipotence. Everything that happens in the world is believed by some to be the consequence of our actions.

When I travel in parts of Asia and the Middle East, I illustrate this point by telling a story about the businessman who wakes up one morning in Karachi, Pakistan, goes into the shower and turns it on, and finds there is no hot water. “A-hah!” he says, “there go Obama and the CIA again!” (Laughter) And that myth has spread to *this* country, as well. People believe that we have the power to control everything. We don't; and we have to be prudent in how we use our power.

I believe that it is in our national interest to be involved

around the world. If 9/11 demonstrated nothing else, it showed there is no wall high enough to secure the safety of our people. We do have enemies in the world. Some are the consequence of our mistaken actions; but many are not generated by that reason. There are people who want to do us harm, and do our citizens harm. It is a high priority for our national leaders to protect us, and this often requires affirmative, aggressive action in other parts of the world to prevent people from organizing to conduct the kind of death and destruction here that might otherwise ensue. How to find the proper balance is the real challenge.

The even more difficult challenge is the one you pose: When do we intervene in affairs around the world? We have *never* had a proper debate of this vital question in this country, not even among our political leaders, let alone among our ordinary citizens. Does a humanitarian cause, by itself, justify an American military intervention; or does it require some additional fact or factors that directly involve our national interest or national security? Think about that. When, where, and how should we intervene?

I spoke in London about six months ago, about the Middle East. When I finished, a man got up and delivered a brutal and harsh denunciation of President Obama. He said, “60,000 Syrians have died, and the blood is on Barack Obama's hands; and Senator Mitchell, it's on your hands, too, because you Americans have the military capacity to intervene and send troops in there. Stop this killing!” I said to him that, by complete coincidence that morning, the *Financial Times* of London reported that in the Congo, 2 million people had died.

“Why are you not standing up, demanding that the United States intervene in the Congo, because 2 million have died as against 60,000 Syrians?” I asked. Before he could answer, an African man jumped up, from the other side of the room, and said in a loud voice, “Senator Mitchell, you're wrong. It's 5 million, not 2 million!” And sure enough, a few months later the CIA declassified a report that 5 1/2 million people had died in the Congo. How, and on what basis do we decide these matters?

If you think that's complicated, let me tell you a few things about the future. Right now, at this moment, there are about 7 billion people on earth. One in five is Muslim, some one and a quarter billion people. Between 2050 and 2060, based on current United Nations population projections, there will be between 9 1/2 and 10 billion people on earth; and *one out of three* will be Muslim. There will be 3 1/2 billion Muslims in the world, which equals the total population of the world as recently as 1965.

The internal conflict in Islam between Sunni and Shia, which dates back to the contest for succession to the prophet Muhammad 1300 years ago, is intensifying. In all of these countries, populations will be rising dramatically,

and the competition for jobs, for economic growth, for land, for water, for natural resources will intensify. What we're seeing now is going to become the new norm.

This is not an aberration in history. I saw a man on television just last week who said, "You know, the Egyptians had this Tahrir Square thing a year and half ago now, and they *still* haven't figured it out." He is imposing upon the Arabs a standard that no western democracy has ever met. In the United States, in a far simpler time, eight years elapsed between the time the American Revolution ended and United States government was established. In France, 50 years. In England, 230 years. Yet people here go around saying, "Well they've got to sort it out next week, next month, this year!"

This is going to go on for very long time. And the central challenge we will face is to determine on a rational and logical basis, when and how we should intervene. We all begin from the premise that we can't simply intervene everywhere; it's impossible. There isn't any way we can involve ourselves militarily in every conflict in the world. We also begin from the premise that we cannot deny ourselves the right to intervene where our national interest is involved.

What we need is a debate that helps us define what we mean by the national interest today and tomorrow. The specific question I come back to is, "What role does humanitarian assistance play in that decision?" These are very tough questions. So tough, that people tend to avoid them, ignore them, and not discuss them. Even if you get the best brains in this country or in the world, you cannot draw up a universally accepted set of criteria that will dictate every decision in the future. What you need to rely on and trust in a democratic society is the integrity and judgment of those who are elected to high office. That is what matters in the end.

President Obama's getting a lot of criticism now, and

I'll say this: American presidents for the next half-century had better have a high level of restraint; because if they don't, we're going to face not just two, not just 12 worldviews, we are going to have them all over the globe. We will be asked to intervene over and over and over again, and there will be circumstances when it will be right to do so. The problem is, we cannot now know when, where, and how they will occur. It is a case-by-case circumstance, depending upon our interest at the time, our alliances, our commitments, our policies, and everything else.

A nation is a collection of individuals. Every individual, every human being is fallible. Every one of us wakes up each morning saying, "I'm going to do right today, I'm not going to tell a lie, I am not going to cheat, I'm not going to do anything wrong;" and every single one of us fails, every day. Then we get up the next day, and we try to do better; we try to match our actions to our aspirations.

It is the same with nations. As a country, we don't always succeed in matching our actions to our aspirations, sometimes we fail. Sometimes out of genuine necessity, sometimes out of error, sometimes out of mistaken judgment; but the fact is, in the United States we recognize it, and we try. *We try* to elevate ourselves to a level that does meet our aspirations.

In the end, what really matters is that we can't stray too far from our aspirations. We can't be for democracy here, and not for it elsewhere. We can't define democracy as the election of a government that agrees with everything we do; that's just too inconsistent. We have to accept the fact that people elsewhere have different interests. If they have the right of self-governance, they are going to produce results that we disagree with at times. We can't say that we are for democracy only in those cases where people agree with us.

And I thank you all, very much. (Applause)



4. Sen. Angus S. King

Ten Comparisons, Then & Now

October 17, 2013

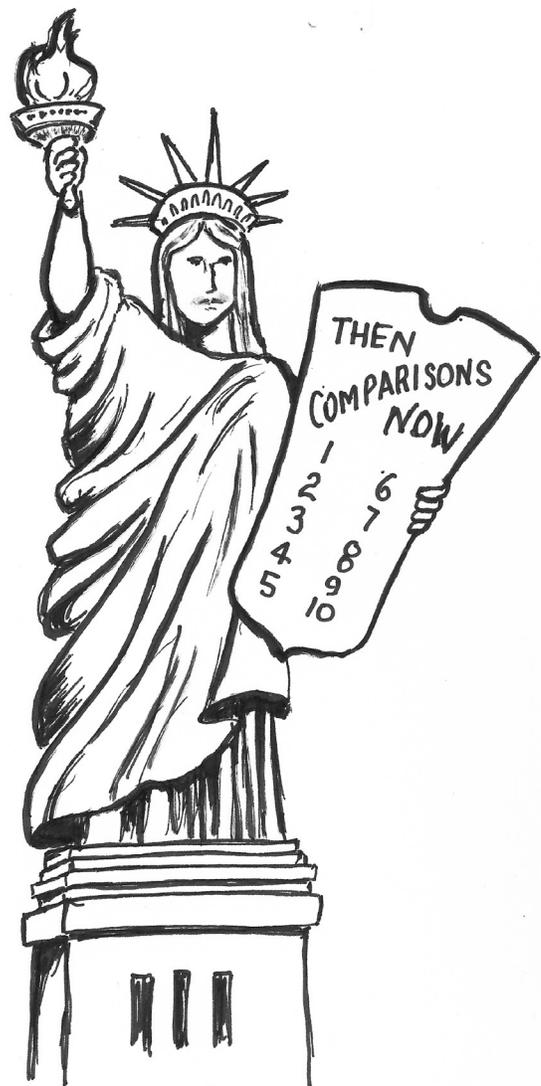
Introduction

Angus King's career richly reflects Maine's long tradition of civic leaders who combine a successful business career with major contributions to public service. In the 1980s and early '90s, we remember him as host of *MaineWatch*, a weekly public television program that probed political and policy matters in Augusta and Washington. After the shutdown of Maine State government in 1991 and the hardening of partisanship in Augusta, he ran and won the governorship as an independent, pledging to work for bipartisan solutions to public issues.

In eight years as the State's Chief Executive, he succeeded in a broad range of areas. His administration oversaw the largest acquisition of conservation easements on private lands of any state in the nation. Maine became a leader in the use of the Internet to provide citizens with new ways to access State agencies for services and assistance. His successful effort to provide laptops for all middle school students placed Maine at the forefront nationally in integrating computers into public school instruction.

During part of this period, the Maine Senate was Republican-controlled while the House was led by Democrats. The two chambers had widely differing ideas about the role of government and, especially, the content of the State budget. Still, Governor King was able to work successfully across party lines. As Michael Michaud, one of the two Senate leaders at that time and now Maine's 2nd District Congressman said, "Governor King was one who could bring both sides together effectively."

The message of his time in Augusta seems to have been that centrist, bipartisan coalitions can be fashioned if you believe in them and in government itself. Our hope is that such an understanding will once again take hold



in Washington. There is no better qualified person to help achieve this understanding than today's speaker. It is a distinct privilege to present the junior United States Senator from Maine, Angus S. King, Jr. (K.P)

ANGUS KING: Thank you very much, I am delighted to be here. I'm sure you're interested in what's been going on in Washington these last few days, as we struggled to end the federal government shut-down. Well, it has been just weird. I don't know how to describe it! I was on television this morning and the commentator asked, "What does it feel like?" I said, "I feel like the kid who would hit his head against the wall all day, and then somebody said, 'Why are you doing that?'" He said, "Because it feels so good when I stop."

You know, we were sort of celebrating this morning, having kept the government open for three months. We addressed such basic issues as, do we keep the government open, and do we pay our bills – questions that should have taken about fifteen minutes to answer! It's just inexplicable to me, what we've been through; but we did finally get it done last night at ten minutes to midnight. (We all did our book reports on Sunday nights, right?) But this is ridiculous and totally unnecessary.

One of the leaders who helped us get there was our own Senator Susan Collins. I happened to be presiding over the Senate last Saturday – don't be impressed, that's a chore for freshmen – when Susan got up and said, "We've got to get out of this, and here's an idea." She outlined three or four principles, and several of us started to get together to talk. We ended up with 14 Senators – seven Republicans, six Democrats and me. We met off-and-on all last week, and we developed a bipartisan plan.

'Funny, but sometimes during these meetings we would get calls from our respective leaderships, saying, "Quit it, what are you doing? *We'll* take care of this." Then it would all break down on their level, and we would get a call saying, "Keep talking, you're the only game in town." On Monday morning we were there, we had an agreement and a very interesting group of people behind it, including Kelly Ayotte (R) and Jeanne Shaheen (D) of New Hampshire. I am very proud that of the 14 Senators, four were from Maine and New Hampshire.

We came to agreement and were within hours of holding a press conference, when the leadership talks just broke down. They just stopped. Then, suddenly, Republican Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Democratic Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) got back together and crafted the agreement that was voted on last night. It would be an overstatement to say it was identical to our own plan, but it was pretty darn close. I like to think that our work kept the leadership nudging forward.

Ten Comparisons, Then & Now

Let's talk about *Politics Then and Now*. It's fun for me to do this, because I was sworn in as a U.S. Senator 40 years to the day after I went to work as a staff member in the United States Senate, on January 3rd, 1973. So, I have an interesting perspective from having worked for Senator Bill Hathaway of Maine in his 1972 campaign;

then gone to work for him in Washington; and now, unexpectedly, finding myself back there 40 years later. I would like to share with you some comparisons between politics then and now.

1 Money. Bill Hathaway's campaign in 1972 was the most expensive campaign ever run in Maine to that point, and it cost \$212,000. My campaign last year cost \$3 million, and it was the *cheapest* winning campaign in the United States. In fact, a friend from Washington called during the campaign and asked, "What's your budget?" I said, "Well, about three million dollars," he replied, "What a *quaint* number!"

Money has become a huge problem in American politics, huge because there is an *insatiable* demand for it. My campaign cost three million. There was probably another million and a half or two spent on my behalf by outsiders; and then there was six or seven million spent against me. Do you remember the ads with the little crown on my head? My granddaughter loved those ads. She said, "Look, there's granddad with a crown on". She thought it was really cute; she didn't know they were spending millions of dollars to assassinate my character.

"Today, to run for re-election in a competitive state, the average U.S. Senator needs to raise between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a day, every day, 365 days a year, for six years! Think for a minute: \$10,000 a day, every day, seven days a week! You very quickly run out of friends and family."

I think we have a good measure of what all that spending was worth. When I ran for governor in 1998, I got 59 percent of the vote; this time I got 53 percent. They spent \$6 million on negative ads. I figure they spent a million dollars a percentage point, to take me from 59 to 53 percent. That's a rough figure for what it was worth. I'm just glad they didn't spend \$50 million!

Here's the problem. I spent three million, and there was probably ten million spent in total. In Massachusetts, where Elizabeth Warren was running against Scott Brown, the expenditures were \$42 million *apiece*! That's \$42 million on *each* campaign! Massachusetts has a larger population than Maine's, but it's not *that* much larger. Today, to run for re-election in a competitive state, the average U.S. Senator needs to raise between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a day, every day, 365 days a year, for six years!

Think for a minute: \$10,000 a day, every day, seven days a week! You very quickly run out of friends and family. Where does all that money come from? Unfortunately, it

tends to come from people who are interested in what you are doing. I remember former Congressman Barney Frank saying a few years ago, with typical wit, that, “We have the only political system in the history of the world where perfect strangers are expected to give you large sums of money and not expect anything in return!”

“In 1972, when I was working for Bill Hathaway, there was an ideological spectrum across the Senate as a body.... There was considerable overlap at the center! Today there is, literally, no overlap.”

have this terrible *Citizens United* case, where people can give all this money anonymously. It’s one thing if you know where it’s coming from; but now there’s no way to know!

The six or seven million that was spent against me? Nobody knows who gave that money. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce was at the bottom of the “crown” ad, but we don’t know where they got the several million they spent. I believe it was Sen. John McCain of Arizona who said that they had become kind of an identity-laundering organization; and I think that’s a real problem.

In the *Citizens United* decision, the Supreme Court invited the Congress to *require* disclosure. The Congress hasn’t done it yet; but it’s something we should do. You cannot go to a Maine town meeting with a bag over your head. You have to say, here’s who I am, here’s what I believe, and here’s who I am contributing to.

We in Maine, in New Mexico, in California, and everywhere, are being battered by these advertisements, without any idea of who’s behind them. There are no limits. It can be a single person with millions and millions of dollars. In 2012, one man backing Newt Gingrich for President wrote a check for well more than ten million dollars – one person! That’s not good for our democracy. So that’s a big difference between politics then and now; \$10,000 a day – just think of that!

2 *Gerrymandering the U.S. House of Representatives.* Gerrymandering is a term that dates back to Gov. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts in the early 19th century. It refers to the purposeful drawing of election districts to exclude certain voters and include others, so these become “safe” districts for the party in power.

It is a scandal waiting to happen. It’s a *real* problem, not only in terms of the amounts involved and where you get it; it is also a problem in terms of how much *time* it takes. I see my colleagues who are up for re-election next year, who are spending hours and hours *every* day on the telephone, asking for money. On top of this, we

Half or more of the House districts today have been gerrymandered to the point where they are politically “safe” seats. This means that the *primary* election in that district is the election. If you win the Republican primary in a Republican-drawn district, you are going to be the Congressman. There’s no contest. The Democrat doesn’t have a prayer, because the lines have been drawn in such a way that it’s going to be 60 or 70 percent Republican, and vice versa. And by the way, there are safe Democratic districts, too.

This means that the person who runs in the primary is vulnerable only to somebody running on their flank. If you’re in a Republican district and running in a Republican primary, there’s always the threat of somebody running who’s going to be more conservative than you; and you’re pushed to the right. By the same token, for the Democrat, you’re being pushed to be more liberal. So, it is the extreme activists who control the primaries; and in many places, unfortunately, not many people vote in the primaries.

Last summer, when I was running in Maine, the Republicans nominated Charlie Summers with just 13 percent of the registered Republican vote. The Democrats nominated Cynthia Dill with just 9 percent of the registered Democratic vote. If you do the math, it’s like one or two percent of the people of Maine who nominated the two major party candidates. The activists in each party tend to control these primaries, particularly if there’s a small turnout. This is what produced this immensely polarized House of Representatives and the government shutdown.

I have heard commentators say, “Well, the Republicans in the House are going to cave-in soon, because the polls for the Republicans are down.” Remember hearing that? “They’re getting hammered, their polling numbers are down.” Then I heard, “Well, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the business community are not going to contribute to the Republicans, and that will shape them up.” No! If you’re from one of those safe Republican districts in Georgia, or Ohio, or Wisconsin, or Tennessee, you don’t care about these national polls. All you care about is your district; and in that district, you were being cheered for closing down the government. That’s what they went there to do!

I talked to one writer who said she had talked to some of the Tea Party Republicans, and the calls from their districts during the shutdown were ten-to-one in favor! Do you see what I mean? It’s why the House didn’t care about the polls. What happens nationally doesn’t really matter, if you’re base is that district. It can work both ways; but right now it’s working more on the Republican side that is so one-sided; and it’s the reason that things have pulled so far apart. It’s why the House didn’t care about the polls.

3 *The Center-less U.S. Senate.* In 1972, when I was working for Bill Hathaway, there was an ideological spectrum across the Senate as a body (extending both arms). Among the Democrats, you had Teddy Kennedy on the left and John Stennis, a Democrat from Mississippi and the long-time chair of the Armed Services Committee, on the right of the party.

On the Republican side you had Barry Goldwater on the right; and you had Jacob Javits of New York, a Republican who was way-more liberal than Stennis, on the left of the party. There were about 20 people in this broad, middle category, who were liberal-to-moderate-leaning Republicans and conservative-to-liberal-leaning Democrats. There was considerable overlap, you see, *at the center!*

Today it's like this: there is, literally, no overlap. Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, and John McCain of Arizona (sometimes) are over here on the more moderate side of the Republican party; Joe Manchin of Illinois and I and several others are over here on the right side of the Democratic caucus; but generally we don't overlap. You see the problem? *There is no center!* There is, of course, our little group of 14; but it is harder and harder to find a center.

I can remember in college, there were political scientists who wrote, "We need more ideologically pure parties; these 'big tent' parties just don't make sense."²² It turns out, they did make sense; and now we're reaping the whirlwind of having these ideological parties. It makes it so hard to solve problems. *That* is a big change in the last 25 years.

4 *Balkanization of the News Business.* When we grew up, we all got our information from essentially one person, Walter Cronkite; or, at most, from a relatively few, national sources. Today there is a news source to fit your biases. If you're a liberal, you watch Rachel Mad-

²²See "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties," *American Political Science Review*, 44 (3) Supplement, 1950. The controversial majority report of this committee, including the noted authors of two textbooks on political parties, Austin Ranney and Elmer Schattschneider (later president of the ASPA), supported the two party system while asserting that the parties should be reorganized to represent clear differences on fundamental issues, as conservative or liberal. In the wake of the Populist movements early in the century and the deep partisan conflicts of the 1930s, the majority report argued that democracy would better be served through competition on these issues between parties rather than within their internal structure and processes. In the decades following, the parties weakened in virtually all aspects, leading to the present-day system with polarized parties similar to those advocated in the 1950 majority report. The advent of more ideologically coherent parties has made scholars more sensitive to their potentially unhealthy effects in a separated governance system. A program to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the "Responsible Parties" report was held at the 2000 APSA meeting in Washington DC. The proceedings are published under the title, *Party Politics: A Century of Change and Continuity*, J. C. Green and P. S. Herrnson, eds., APSA Responsible Parties Project, 1950-2000.

dow on MSNBC; if you're a conservative, you watch Fox News; and if you can't make up your mind, you watch CNN. The point is, its human nature to seek out sources of information that agree with our biases. We tend to read and listen to those sources and commentators who already agree with us.

The problem is, we end up living in alternative-reality universes, where we don't share the facts. I found when I was governor that, if you can get people into a room and have a common understanding of the facts, it's often easy to find a solution; it becomes self-evident. It's when different people have different versions of reality that it's almost impossible to find a solution.

Here are two examples from my experience in Augusta. One was forest clear-cutting. Remember the big "clear-cutting" controversy? Jonathan Carter of Lexington Township had his version of what was going on in the woods; and the paper companies had an entirely different version about the facts - about how many trees were growing, how fast they would grow back, and all that. So, it was virtually impossible to find a middle ground for a policy solution.

"Today there is a news source to fit your biases.... The problem is, we end up living in alternative-reality universes (that) make it virtually impossible to find agreement."

On the other hand, we decided with the New England Governors and the eastern Canadian Premiers to do something about transported mercury pollution. Instead of starting with a prescription about what to do about it, we assigned our environmental commissioners to spend a year quietly studying the problem. Where is the pollution coming from? What is it doing? How bad is it? We established a really good scientific basis, and ended up with a piece of legislation that passed the Maine legislature almost unanimously - because of the facts! We agreed on the facts.

Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the late and great Senator from New York, once said, "Everyone in America is entitled to their own opinion; but they're not entitled to their own facts." One of the problems now is the multiplicity of information sources that create these alternative realities and make it virtually impossible to find agreement. As we go into the upcoming budget negotiation, that is going to be one of our major hurdles.

5 *Social Media.* One of the most important things in my campaign last year was Facebook. At the end of the campaign we had something like 45,000 people fol-

lowing our Facebook page. For a politician, Facebook is like going door-to-door without having to walk between the houses. It's an amazing way to connect with people, to have a certain kind of direct communication with them.

I see people all the time who say, "I love your Facebook page, thanks for keeping us up with what's going on." It's the kind of connection that we all crave. Of course, Twitter and texts and those kinds of things are the same: they have changed politics and are making a huge difference. There are specialists in Washington now who do nothing but tell you how to maintain your Facebook page, how to get more viewers, how to get a higher ranking in Google, and all that. By the way, I don't know about you all, but I feel pretty cool to have been alive at the invention of a new verb, "to google." Can you imagine telling your grandchildren, "I was there when they invented 'run'?" Social media in 1972, when I was working for Bill Hathaway, was calling your mother-in-law and asking, "How's it going here?" That was about it!

6 *Everyone Goes Home.* Nobody lives in Washington anymore. When I worked for Bill Hathaway, almost all the senators lived in Washington. Bill Hathaway lived

"Nobody lives in Washington anymore.... The center of gravity of these folks is away from and not in Washington. This has diminished the kind of personal relationships that are necessary to make a complex organization like the Congress function."

in McLean, his kids went to school there. His wife was there, his family was there, and they hung out. They played golf, they had dinner together, and there was a lot of socializing among the members of Congress. Now that's almost all gone because everybody goes home. Even my friend Michael Bennett of Colorado goes home every weekend; his wife and kids live in Denver.

Washington clears out, and the work schedule now accommodates this. The work schedule of

Congress is generally from Monday afternoon to Thursday evening – which means you can go home Thursday night; stay Friday, Saturday, and Sunday; and come back Monday morning. A lot of the time at home is spent campaigning and fundraising; it's not just kicking back and relaxing.

The point is, the center of gravity of these folks is away from and not in Washington. This has diminished the kind of personal relationships that are necessary to make a complex organization like the Congress function. One of my friends in Augusta once said, "You can't hate some-

one if you know the names of their kids." There is a lot of truth to this. Right now, we don't much know the names of each other's kids.

I'm doing my best to crack this. Mary and I have a little place that's within walking distance of the Capitol. I don't even have a car, I walk. (And by the way, it's amazing to turn a corner early in the morning and see the sun rising on the Capitol building, and realize that's where you're going to work. It's stunning and overwhelming and humbling. I probably have 200 pictures of the Capitol on my iPhone, I can't stop taking pictures of it.) There's a rib house two blocks from my house, and in the last few weeks I've had seven, eight, or nine senators in for ribs. I don't have to cook, we just pick up the ribs and go home. We've got to try and crack this business of not knowing one another; and *all* of these people have fascinating stories.

The highlight of my week is often Wednesday morning, the Senate Prayer Breakfast. The reason I like it is, it's nice to have a little time for a spiritual something; but it's also the only truly bipartisan event of the week, where Republicans and Democrats are together. We have breakfast together. The Senate Chaplain, retired Admiral Barry Black, gives a prayer, we sing a hymn, we say a prayer, and then one of the senators tells their story. It involves their faith, but it also reveals who they are.

One of the things that has struck me is how many of these people come from unexceptional circumstances; in fact, almost all do. A remarkable number of them come from single parent homes – a disproportionate percentage, it would seem. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina grew up above a bar and pool room owned and run by his parents, both of whom died when he was 19 or 20 years old. He raised his 13-year-old sister and adopted her so she could get benefits and put her through college. Tim Scott of South Carolina had a father who was an alcoholic and died when Tim was 16. Joe Donnelly of Indiana lost his mother when he was ten. His father raised four children.

Someone has asked me, "What are your biggest surprises?" One of my biggest is, these are, mostly, just regular people. (I mean, Jay Rockefeller? Okay; but he's a wonderful guy.) These are very interesting people. Many of them are wealthy; but virtually all of them, with the exception of Jay and a few others, achieved their wealth on their own, later in life. They weren't born into it. It's not some kind of aristocracy, and that's kind of reassuring; but the problem is, people don't live in Washington.

7 *The Rise of the Governmental Luddites.* Remember the Luddites? They were the people in 19th century England who hated the machines that were taking their jobs, and set about to break them. There is a bunch of people in the Congress today who hate government. Now,

it's an odd thing to run for government if you hate it; but there are a lot of them. That is the other reason the shut-down was so hard to deal with, because there were many people for whom it represented *success*. They came to Washington promising their constituents they would shut down the government. They don't want to govern; and that makes it hard. It's easy to negotiate with someone if you share the goal of governing effectively, of taking care of the people's needs, or whatever.

If you are going to buy a car and I'm going to sell my car, you may want the car and I want to sell it; in the question of setting a price, we share a common goal. But if one side has no interest in governing, and really wants the whole thing to fail, that makes it very difficult to govern. It makes it difficult because of the way our Constitution is designed.

Our Constitution has two operating principles that are in constant tension with one another. The one is *governing*. After a Senate hearing two or three weeks ago, I ran into one of my college history professors, whom I hadn't seen in 47 years. I asked him, "Larry, is there *any* precedent for this totally chaotic situation that we're in now?" He replied, "Of course. It was during the time of the Articles of Confederation," the period after the Revolution and before the Constitution. It was so chaotic, disorganized, and ineffective that the framers came together to write the Constitution. The Articles of Confederation didn't create a functioning government; it created the occasion for the Constitution, to govern ourselves.

Then, the framers also said, "Yes, but we're afraid of government, we don't want it to abuse us. We're afraid of concentrated power, so we're going to create all these *checks and balances*, and make it very complex and hard to get things done." These two forces, you see, are always in tension; but if you take the governing part away, it's really easy to screw up our system. In fact, it's ridiculously easy to bring it to a grinding halt, if you don't share the common goal of getting to a conclusion that's beneficial to the American people.

This is a new development in my experience. I've dealt with plenty of conservatives in the Maine legislature and throughout my life; but to say we don't want government to work, we want it to fail, we want to destroy the government, is a new kind of experience for me. I'm sure there's always been this undercurrent in the nation; but to have it be a significant political force in the country is something that we didn't face in the 1970s.

If I may, let me say one thing more that is related and really bothers me. It's about *public service* in America today. There's a mood in the country today that denigrates public service. I mentioned Carl Levin of Michigan. He and I went to Turkey and Jordan in July, to learn about the Syrian situation. We met with all kinds of people, the Syrian opposition and the Turkish politicians. We also

met with these incredible young Americans in the State Department, in the intelligence community, and in the military who are idealistic, hard-working, and doing great good in dangerous situations. They haven't had a raise in three years; they have been furloughed once and they had just been furloughed again. These people are doing so much for our society. Then, there's an attitude out there that's so negative – you know, "those bureaucrats!" – and it really bothers me.

"I've dealt with plenty of conservatives in the Maine legislature and throughout my life; but to say we don't want government to work, we want it to fail, we want to destroy the government, is a new kind of experience for me."

When I got back and Mary asked, "What did you think of the Middle East?" I said, "The thing that struck me most is the quality of these young people we have working for us over there, under the most difficult circumstances; and we're not treating them properly for the incredible contributions they make." I wish I had a crisper answer, but I really think that may be at the heart of it.

8 *Abuse of the Rules*. Lyndon Johnson of Texas was Senate Majority Leader from 1954 to 1960. In six and a half years, he dealt with cloture motions on *six* filibusters. In the last six and a half years, Majority Leader Harry Reid has dealt with cloture motions on *400* filibusters. That's not right. That is just not the way the system was designed to work. Of course, the way the Senate filibuster rule works is, you have to have 60 votes to break it.

To give you an idea of how this has changed, I was on the floor one day and listened to Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who's a very smart guy, with an amazing family history. His father was born in Cuba and went into the mountains at the age of 14 to fight with Castro's army. He was captured by the dictator Batista, was tortured and put in jail; he escaped from Cuba, went to Texas, raised a family, and was Ted Cruz's dad. Anyway, Ted Cruz said something – without any sense of irony – and I remember sitting there being shocked by it. He said, "This amendment should be subject to the *normal* 60-vote requirement." It's *not* a "normal" 60-vote requirement! It wasn't "normal" for more than 200 years; it's been "normal" for just the past five or six years.

When I came in January, there were 46 Senators who had been in the Senate for six years or less. Does this surprise you? You think of the U.S. Senate as a place where people go and stay forever; almost half, with six years or less. One of the problems with the filibuster is

that these people all think this is the way it's *supposed* to be, you know. Not doing anything is the norm, because that's been the way it is! I went in as a firebrand, saying "Let's change that filibuster rule." I was ready to vote for it with Majority Leader Harry Reid back in January. I'm probably still there, but I'm less enthusiastic than I was before. We could spend a month writing a filibuster rule; but if people want to abuse the system, they're still going to do so.

"There's a mood in the country today that denigrates public service.... and it really bothers me.... We're not treating them properly for the incredible contributions they make."

all we would do is read bills. It would take hours or days to read a several hundred page bill; and there are all kinds of other things that could gum up the works.

The point I'm making is, it's more about attitude than it is about the rules. It's more about institutional respect than it is about the rules. We may end up changing the rules, but I'm not sure that's going to be the answer. Some of the old, stalwart Democrats are very against changing the rules. Carl Levin of Michigan and Barbara Boxer of California, who were there when the Democrats were in the minority, have said, "Oh, no! We don't really want to do this. What if you have a Republican President, Senate, and House, and they decide to privatize Social Security? We would like to be in a position to slow that train down." So they were very passionate. Carl Levin of Michigan, who is a wonderful guy and unfortunately retiring, was very passionate. He said, "Be careful, because you change the rules and then they can be changed on you. You may regret it."

What really worries me is the attempt by a portion of the House to gain results that they can't gain through elections, by using the government as a hostage. I've been criticized for using that word, but I don't know what else to say when somebody takes something, and insists, "I won't give it back until you give me what I want." I was very much against using the shutdown and the debt ceil-

ing to change the Affordable Care Act. The way to change the Affordable Care Act is to elect Republicans to the Senate and elect a Republican President, not use the system to make laws in a way that's not in the Constitution.

It's an extra-constitutional way of changing the laws that I find very, very troubling. It's why the President and Harry Reid were so resistant to what was going on. If this had been successful, it would have become the norm, just like the 60 vote majority. It would have been, "We'll just do this every six months or so, and we'll get what we want." Particularly when you're talking about a group for whom a shutdown is a success. It's a very dangerous situation, and it is not the way our system is supposed to work.

If you go to a little book, "How a Bill Becomes a Law,"²³ nowhere does it say, "If all else fails, take the government hostage and then you can get your law." It's not there. You're supposed to win elections. In effect, what we just went through was an attempt to nullify the 2012 election; and I think that's anti-democratic. That's why I am so concerned about it.

9 *The Real Issue*. The budget fight is not really about the budget, the debt, and the deficits. There is a deeper discussion going on, and it's really about how big should the federal government be, what should it do, how much it should take in taxes, and how much should it spend; and this is an age-old discussion. It's about the size and scope of the federal government. That is really what is at stake here. You're going to hear a lot of talk in the next 60 days about deficits and unsustainable debt and that kind of thing, and that is important; but you should know that there is a deeper discussion going on here about how big the federal government should be. And it is an age-old discussion.

I've gone back and looked at our history, and found that we've had this argument nine different times since 1787. The most famous, of course, was the Civil War. We fought over the question of what is the proper role of the federal government, and what is the role of the states? It's a legitimate question; if we've had it eight or nine times, it's clearly a live question that should be discussed. That is what is going on in this budget debate.

And the *real* debt and deficit issue is healthcare costs. That's what is driving the debt, that's what's driving the deficits. If you look out into the future, it is the whole deal. What we call "domestic discretionary spending" – not Social Security and Medicare, but all the other things we think of – Pell Grants, National Parks, the EPA, the FDA, farm programs, and all those kind of things – is *down* as a percentage of the GDP, the gross domestic product. It is now about 3 percent, the lowest it's been in 40 or 50 years. Defense spending goes up and down when we have wars; it's now around 5 percent and relatively flat.

²³How a Bill Becomes a Law, at <http://kids.clerkhous.gov>, created and maintained by the Office of the Clerk, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C.

When you look at the federal budget, the items that are doing damage are Medicare, Medicaid, and medical costs for federal employees and retired veterans. This is where the cost is, where the deficits are out into the future. My view is, we need to talk about this problem more generally, and not just in the context of the government. We need to talk about how to lower healthcare costs across all of society, for *everybody*.

Right now we have the highest per capita healthcare costs in the world, and we're 17th in the world in terms of results. It's inexcusable. We spend now 17 or 18 percent of GNP on healthcare; in Maine it is 20 percent. This means that one in every five dollars spent in Maine is spent on healthcare, and our results aren't competitive with the rest of the world. This is a whole different way to talk about healthcare, but it means changing the way we pay for it and what the incentives are.

10 *Two to Tango.* The only way anything gets done in Washington is with *both* parties. It is simple arithmetic, and you would be amazed how few people get this. The Republicans in the House think they run the place. The Democrats in the Senate think they run the place. The President thinks he runs the place. But, if you have a Democratic President, a Republican House, and a Democratic Senate – with rules such that the Republican minority has enormous power – you can just do the math.

In order to do anything, it's got to be bipartisan – or as I'm training them to say, nonpartisan. Occasionally they say tripartisan when they see me in the room. This means that we are stymied if one party tries to assert *the* answer to all the questions. It just can't happen. What I am trying to do is to work with Susan Collins' working group as I did with last summer's working group on student loans. I had a very heated meeting with the Democratic Caucus on the student loan issue, because they wanted to hold out, to have their plan and nothing else! I got up in front of them and said, "Yes, but you don't have the votes! If we're going to do this, we *need* Republican votes."

We put together a coalition involving Republicans and Democrats, built out from the center, and ended up passing a bill in the Senate and in the House, and the President signed it. This would never have happened if both sides had held to their iron-clad positions.

By the way, it's no coincidence that four of the six senators who did the student loan deal are former governors. I was talking with Mitch McConnell, the Republican Leader, about this and he said, "Well, I have found that if you ask a former governor who's now a senator which job they like better, and they say senator, they will lie to you about other things, too!" (Laughter)

Well, as I hope you can tell, I'm a person who is curious, who likes public policy, and who likes to try and fix

things. I'm having a great time in the Senate, and I want to thank all of you for giving me this unbelievable opportunity to work for you and for the people of the country.

What we did over the last couple of days on the shutdown is by no means a dramatic answer to everything. It may be just a sliver of hope that budget negotiations may work. It's going to be very hard to solve the budget, because the two sides are very far apart; but I'm hoping that people now realize that nobody can get it all, that it has to involve compromise.

Yes, compromise. This United States government was built on compromise. The United States Senate was created as a result of a compromise at the Constitutional Convention, and that's the way we have to make it work.

Thank you so much.

Q & A

Question: *What concerns me is the effect of sequestration on Section 8 housing vouchers, because I know many people need a place to live. Do you have any comment on that?*

KING: Sequestration is an arbitrary, across-the-board cut in spending. It affects everything. It's not thoughtful, it was designed to be stupid, and it is. It was designed to be so bad that nobody would ever contemplate letting it go into effect; and, of course, it went into effect. It has affected Section 8.

"We could spend a month writing a filibuster rule; but if people want to abuse the system, they're still going to do so.... The point I'm making is, it's more about attitude than it is about the rules. It's more about institutional respect than it is about the rules. "

This budget negotiation we're about to begin is going to be a lot about sequestration – how to manage it, how to allow more flexibility, how to try to ameliorate the impacts to the cuts. That's going to be very tough, because now the Republican members view sequestration as the base, the law. That's what we're going to have to deal with, in the next two months.

Question: *Can anything be done about the gerrymandering? Neither party wants to change it. And it is very undemocratic, when one considers that a candidate gets elected to the House and has to become more and more conservative to stay elected. How can we eliminate gerrymandering?*

KING: I had hoped we could pass a law, as it's a really serious problem, number two on my list. Unfortunately, it turns out to be a state-by-state matter; and if you've got a state that's solidly in the hands of one party or the other, they're not likely to let go of this power. California has done it. When he was Governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger got through a referendum that created a non-partisan commission to do it on a scientific basis; and my impression is that it's worked pretty well; however, I don't think the Supreme Court will get involved.

Question: *I had something to ask, but the gentleman before me got to the question. So thank you for coming, and I'll let the next person go.*

KING: Thank you. You would never make it in Congress, because once a Congressman or Senator gets to the microphone, they will find something to say! Thank you. (Laughter)

Question: *Thank you for speaking up as strongly as you have for the importance of health insurance in people's lives. You were quoted in the New York Times as saying it's immoral to encourage people not to sign up for health insurance. My question is about the issue of campaign finance reform: what can we as citizens do in terms of getting some movement on that?*

"The budget fight is not really about the budget. There is a deeper discussion going on, and it's really about how big should the federal government be, what should it do, how much it should take in taxes, and how much should it spend. "

this. I can't figure out how it's fair for me to be here while some other person, who didn't have that health insurance and get the checkup, died. Nine thousand people a year die of melanoma. Between 25,000 and 45,000 people a year die in the U.S. simply because they don't have insurance. Often they put off treatment until it's too late.

On campaign finance reform, this will have to be a na-

KING: On health insurance, here's my story. When I worked for Senator Hathaway I had health insurance and went for a routine checkup because it covered annual checkups. I hadn't had a checkup in nine years. They found that I had a malignant melanoma. It's a disease that you either get operated on right away and you're okay, or you don't and you're gone. I'm here only because I had health insurance, so I feel personally passionate about

tional movement. Call your cousins and uncles and aunts in other states. I think everyone in the Maine delegation is okay on this issue. The problem is, the parties are always asking, "Will it benefit me and help my party, or will it help the other party?" You never know when it's going to work one way or the other. The one thing we can do, although it's not going to be easy, is disclosure, so at least people know where all this money is coming from.

Right now you can't give more than \$2,500 to a federal candidate. The Supreme Court is hearing a case right now and there's an even chance that they will declare that limit unconstitutional, and say people can give whatever they want.* That is not what our country was designed to do. The idea that money equals speech, I'm just not sure about; but that's what the Supreme Court has held. Keep active on the issue.

Question: *I, too, am very concerned and disturbed by the corrupting influence of campaign finance. The system we have today can be best characterized as a legalized mixture of bribery and extortion. What can we do? Is there a solution short of a constitutional amendment?*

KING: I doubt it. I think it's going to take a Constitutional amendment, because *Citizens United* is based on a reading of the First Amendment. I don't believe it's a correct reading, but that's now the law. The Supreme Court decided it, and it's going to take a constitutional amendment to change it. This is a very tricky thing, a constitutional amendment; you've got to be very sure about how you write it. I don't know how the current case is going to come out, but if they rule that there can be no limits whatever on contributions, it will be a very deleterious decision.

Question: *I'm a student at USM, a junior majoring in communications with a minor in economics. I just want to know how you would feel about a more socialist society, like a lot of countries in Europe have; and if you think that would be a good fit for our society.*

KING: Do you think I'm going to come out four-square for socialism? I'm brave, but I'm not stupid. "Socialism" is often bandied about, without talking about what it really means. My impression growing up was that socialism meant the government owned the means of production – the steel mills, railroads, car companies, all of that. Nobody is advocating that. I don't think Social Security is socialism. Social Security is social insurance: we all pay in and we all take out. It's the same with Medicare.

We want to be humane and take care of people who, for whatever reason, are disadvantaged in life. At the same time, we have to be constantly vigilant about not creating an entitlement society, where people are given incentives not to work and produce. That's the tension. The debate isn't helped – and this isn't directed towards you, person-

* Note: See *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission*. On April 2, 2014, by a 5-4 vote the U.S. Supreme Court struck down aggregate limits on contributions to candidates, as Sen. King had feared.

ally – by using the term, “socialism.” I think it’s misused. The term I would use is, “caring.”

Question: *What about Sweden, then, where they have education paid for, healthcare paid for, they have all this stuff paid for, and it’s equal – everyone gets it. Unlike America, where if you don’t make enough money, you can’t get health insurance, you can’t go to college?*

KING: That is why I supported the Affordable Care Act, which is really much simpler than it has been portrayed. It contains some needed insurance reforms: you can’t deny people because of pre-existing conditions; you leave your kids on their parents’ policy until they are 26; you can’t discriminate against women because they’re women. Then it creates this marketplace for buying private insurance. You can’t go and “sign up” for ObamaCare, itself; it doesn’t exist! You go to the private marketplace – once they get the website working, and don’t get me started on that – and you buy from Aetna, or Blue Cross, or whoever. It is a private enterprise kind of solution. I’m sort of amazed by the violent reaction that it’s somehow “socialism.”

The issue of the personal mandate – everybody has to buy it – well, that’s the kissing cousin to the ‘no pre-existing condition’ exclusion. You can’t eliminate pre-existing condition requirements and not have a personal mandate. Otherwise, none of us would buy insurance until we found ourselves in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. It would be like being able to buy fire insurance when you see the flames on your roof.

We in Maine have had mandatory insurance for automobiles for some 40 years. Nobody thinks much about it; it’s a matter of personal responsibility. We need to give the Affordable Care Act a chance, and I think it’s going to make a real difference in people’s lives.

Question: *Since the 1970s, we’ve had an enormous increase in economic inequality in this country. The average income of a white male has actually declined and practically all of the increase in gross domestic product per capita has gone to a very thin sliver at the top. With the Supreme Court’s decisions on money and politics, this thin sliver seems to have even more influence in what goes on, and in the long-run this clearly is not sustainable. We don’t want a violent revolution. How do we get out of this dilemma?*

KING: This concerns me because the numbers verify exactly what you have said. I’m not a redistributionist, I don’t think that’s the answer, but I think the government shouldn’t aggravate the problem. The tax system and the way our programs are funded ought to be fair and equitable; and I believe in the progressive income tax.

Yes, I worry about it. This is a little bit of an exaggeration, but we don’t want to become a country of gated communities. We don’t want to become a country where the wealthy are behind barbed wire and everybody else is outside. I worry about violence. A man from out-of-state, who was starting a new business in Maine, once visited me in Augusta and wanted to know where Maine’s gated communities were. I told him the only one I knew of was in Thomaston.

I wish I had an answer to your question. The best answer is probably investment in education so that everybody has a chance. You know the old saying, “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” In the future it’s going to be, “the educated get richer and the uneducated get poorer.” Education is the opportunity.

Question: *The executive branch proposes a budget and the Congress approves a budget. Why do we have a debt ceiling at all, and how can it be gotten rid of? No other developed country in the world has a debt ceiling.*

KING: It is an anomaly, provided for in a statute that was passed 1916, I believe. It isn’t in the Constitution. In fact, in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution says, “The debt of the United States shall never be questioned.”

I have been thinking of introducing legislation to automatically extend the debt ceiling when a spending bill passes, because there’s a terrible misunderstanding about the debt ceiling. When most people hear “the debt ceiling,” they think, “Well, if we raise it, the government is just going to spend more money.” The debt ceiling is what allows us to pay the bills we’ve *already* incurred. It’s exactly like, at the end of the month, saying, “I’m not going to pay my credit card bill. I’ve gone out and spent a lot of money, but I’m not going to pay it.” That’s exactly what we just went through.

“This United States government was built on compromise. The United States Senate was created as a result of a compromise at the Constitutional Convention, and that’s the way we have to make it work. ”

What bothers me is that, the way the system works now, a politician can vote for the spending – “I want a new highway in my state” – and then six months or a year later say, “I’m *against* raising the debt ceiling.” They have it both ways, you see. It ought to be, when you vote for the spending, there’s a clause that says, “And the debt ceiling is raised in order to accommodate the spending we voted for.” I’m told that was the rule in Congress for

some period of time. To use the debt ceiling to achieve an unrelated end is puzzling to me. The shutdown we just went through cost \$24 billion to our economy, and it was done in the name of saving money!

Question: *When you were working with Senator Hathaway, Senator Muskie was the senior senator. From what you saw then, has working with senior leadership changed from what it was then?*

KING: Senator Collins is my senior, and I've got to tell you, she is terrific. I always liked her and respected her. I knew she was tenacious. I now serve on the Intelligence Committee with her, and I've seen her mind work. She's really smart, well-balanced, and she has guts. It took guts for her to put this non-partisan group together, to try and work out this budget matter. She took flak from her leadership, from other people, and she did it. I always liked her, but my esteem for her has only grown from working with her. She's really an able senator and we're fortunate to have her.

Question: *My concern is Social Security. Why would any Democrat, including the President, be willing to consider messing with it, when we need to get Wall Street and the financiers, "the banksters," to return money to the Treasury?*

KING: I can't speak for the President; but the only reason to discuss Social Security is to be sure it remains sound. It's not contributing to the deficit, you are enjoying it, I'm hoping to enjoy it, and we want to be sure our grandchildren enjoy it. In 1982, it was fixed for about 50 years. We're now coming to the end of that time, and there may be some modifications needed. Social Security is not in serious financial trouble. Medicare is, because the cost of medical care has escalated so fast; but Social Security can be fixed with three or four not terribly dramatic changes.

One is that the Social Security tax now stops at \$113,000. If you make over \$113,000, you pay the Social Security tax on the first \$113,000, after that you pay zero tax. Changing that could help. Similarly, raising the retirement age – some 30 or 40 years from now, way out into future – could help. The only reason to do anything

with Social Security is to be sure it is actuarially sound for the long term.

Question: *Given the State of Maine's recent refusal to accept Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act, do you think Medicaid should continue to be implemented by the states, individually, or should it be more of a federal program?*

KING: Well, it is federal. It's funded two-thirds by the federal government, and there are federal regulations governing its administration. The states administer it, and as a former governor, I'm OK with that. Now, an individual governor or legislature may make decisions that we don't agree with; but I'm not sure all wisdom resides in Washington; after the last nine months there, I have to wonder about that. That's the dilemma, and I'm reasonably comfortable with leaving many of these decisions to the states.

Question: *I'm a farmer, and as a farmer, there's not a whole lot of power or money in my profession. I would love to hear from you about the role of integrity and accountability in Washington, and how you maintain the values that I hear you talk about.*

KING: It is a question of values. Why does one do what I'm doing? You do it because you think you can make a bit of a difference in peoples' lives. I thought long and hard about whether to run for public office again. I was pretty happily retired, teaching, building windmills, and having some fun. It changed my life utterly to do this; but ultimately, here's how I decided to do it. I can tell you the exact moment.

Mary and I decided that, after our daughter went off to college, we would go RV'ing again, and travel the country. Then I began to think about running for the Senate and what a drastic change that would make in my life. How do I make this decision? It finally came to me, how will I feel ten years from now, looking back, and answering this question: "You might have made a difference for the country – and you decided to go RV'ing?" Once I put the question that way, the answer was obvious. And here I am.

Thank you all, very much. (Applause)



5. Barney Frank

It's Not the System, It's the Voters

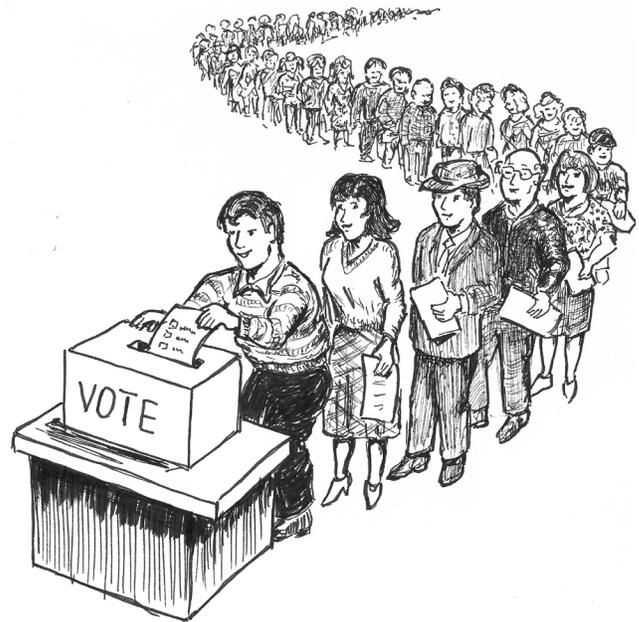
October 31, 2013

Introduction

Our guest today is a distinguished politician whom I've known and admired, from near and afar, for almost a half century. His is a remarkable life and career that defies reducing to a few words. Most recently, for more than three decades until his retirement in January 2013, he served as a Democratic member of the U.S. Congress from the 4th Massachusetts District. As Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, he was at the center of activity in Washington from the start of the Great Recession throughout the mortgage foreclosure bailout crisis and the most extensive reform of the nation's banking and financial services industry since the Great Depression. At this most trying time, Henry Paulson, Secretary of the Treasury in the administration of President George W. Bush, said he especially appreciated Barney Frank's penchant for brokering good deals. "He is looking to get things done and make a difference", Paulson wrote, "He focuses on areas of agreement and tries to build on those."²⁴

Barney Frank was born and raised in Bayonne, New Jersey, the grandson of Polish and Irish immigrants. He graduated from Bayonne High School before attending Harvard College, did graduate work in government there, and served as chief assistant to Boston Mayor Kevin White and four terms in the Massachusetts legislature. At the same time, he earned his degree from the Harvard Law School and was admitted to the Massachusetts Bar, while teaching part time at UMass Boston, Boston University, and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in



1980, he quickly became known for his quick wit, his keen intelligence, his extraordinary work ethic, and his passionate eloquence, for which the congressional staff and Washington press corps repeatedly recognized and honored him. The breadth of his contributions while in the Congress is, in a word, breath-taking. From the recent reforms of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the entire financial industry, it extends over the course of his congressional career to affordable housing, civil rights, women's rights, hate crimes, the death penalty, decriminalization of marijuana use, promoting the economy and public health, protecting the environment, supporting the military and their families, regulating Internet gambling, and strengthening US/Israel relations – on each of which he has left an enduring mark.

He once said that, "I worked very hard at legislating, I enjoy it. It's the most important thing I can do, because

²⁴Henry M. Paulson, Jr., *On the Brink: Inside the Race to Stop the Collapse of the Global Financial System*, Hatchette Book Group; New York, 2010; with a Foreword by Cong. Barney Frank that begins, "For many people, what will be most striking about this foreword is the fact that I wrote it."

it's a chance to make the world a fairer place; and I think I can show you that you can make it fairer without making it less efficient." He also said, "I've always believed I'm a much better legislator than I am a candidate. I am not a great candidate." When asked why he felt this way, he replied, "Well, there are things I'm terrible at. I have not handled my personal life well until a few years ago, and now I'm doing a really good job and I'm very proud of that." When asked how he felt about leaving the Congress, he said, "I don't have to pretend now to be nice to people I don't like".

Ever candid, witty, tireless, and courageous, occasionally outrageous, and always very human, and – during his long tenure in the Congress – perhaps its finest orator and one of its most effective members, it is a personal pleasure and privilege for me to introduce to you Barney Frank of Newton MA and Ogunquit ME. (RB)

BARNEY FRANK: Thank you very much, Dick, it's nice to see you again; it's been awhile. I was intrigued by the topic, *Politics Then and Now*; and I see that the "Then" is very heavily represented in the audience today. This is actually good, because there are ancient references I make from time to time that I have to explain to people, including my husband. So, it's nice not to have to worry about that. Then there are newer references, which I don't know myself; so I don't have to worry about those, either.

The premise of this series is that there has been a deterioration in the nation's politics, and I subscribe to that with a couple of qualifications. I want to say at the outset that, yes, politics *has* deteriorated. I was talking recently to the man who succeeded me in the district I represented in the U.S. House of Representatives, Joe Kennedy III. I commiserated with him and said, "You have entered the House at its worst point since the vicious physical and other conflicts just before the Civil War." I agree that things are terrible now; but I'm sure they will get better.

It Begins and Ends with the Voters

Where I disagree with some people is the often explicit assumption that there are deep, systemic failures that have produced this state of affairs. In fact, this breakdown, this deterioration, this inability to get things done is only about two-and-a-half years old!

Dick quoted from the memoir of Hank Paulson, George W. Bush's Secretary of the Treasury. In 2008, six weeks before the presidential election, the most fraught time in the American political calendar, George Bush sent his top economic people to see House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, both Democrats. The emissaries from the President said, "We have a terrible economic crisis coming. We need you to join us in doing some things that are going to be very unpopular, but are

very necessary to stave off a disaster." And we did. We, the Democrats, gave him more support, particularly in the House, than the Republicans did!

In other words, this question about, "Whatever happened to bipartisanship?" Well, I agree that it disappeared; but it was alive and well in September 2008. In fact, during the Bush II eight-year presidency, he got a lot accomplished, not all of which I agreed with. I voted against *No Child Left Behind*; but it was a significant piece of legislation, if you want to talk about the ability of Congress to function. He got his massive tax cuts through – although it's always easy to *cut* taxes. He got his prescription drug bill through; again, I thought it was flawed in some ways, but it went through.

Then we had the economic crisis of 2007–08, and there was great collaboration between the Democratic Congress and the Republican President, culminating in passage of his TARP legislation – money lent to the banks – which I am convinced will go down in history as the most wildly unpopular and highly successful program the federal government ever had. We did that with George W. Bush. In January 2008, President Bush again said to the Democratic leadership, "The economy is slipping, it needs a stimulus." Nancy Pelosi said, "OK. I understand you won't be for the kind of spending that I would be; but I will support you in doing this "stimulative" tax cut if it is weighted in favor of lower income people, if it increases those things that help people at the lowest levels." She did that.

I don't know if there are any students here who want to do a paper on this; but go back and see, when did you first start reading about the system "breaking down"? I don't believe you were reading that through the first years of the 21st century. Then, when President Obama won in November 2008 and we had a Democratic House and Senate, we had one of the most productive legislative years since 1965, the first full year of Lyndon Johnson, before the Vietnam War bogged him down.

You got the Affordable Health Care Act, a massive achievement that some people may dislike. We're talking now, though, about whether the system can function. The financial reform bill was passed, of which I am very proud. We repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Act, which significantly increased the ability of people to sue for job discrimination. The right-wing Supreme Court had ruled five-to-four that you could not sue for job discrimination if the statute of limitations had lapsed before you even knew you were being discriminated against. That is, you found out years later that you were being screwed, and it was too late; but we said, No, the statute runs from the day you could reasonably have found that out. We did great increases in the children's health bill.

Again, if you read the news at the end of 2009, you wouldn't see a lot then about the system "breaking down." It's as simple as this: the system broke down as a result

of the right-wing Republicans taking over the House of Representatives in 2010; and that's the end of it. Bipartisanship largely ended in 2010, after we had had a Democratic House, Senate, and President. What I'm saying is that the cause of the breakdown – and it is very severe – is *electoral*.

A problem I have with a lot of the analysis is that it looks at the 535 members of the Congress as if they were all autonomous actors, simply doing these things on their own. Every single one of those people is there for *one* reason alone: more people voted for them than for anybody else. So, when you start looking for the causes of the problem, begin with the voters; and the voters include the non-voters – the people on the Republican side, in particular, who sit out the primaries, so that the most rabid and extreme people can dominate the primaries.

I once was asked, "Why, when you were in Congress, couldn't you do a better job of cooperating with the Republicans, particularly after the 2010 election?" My answer was and is, "Well, *you* go and try to work out a deal with Michele Bachmann!" (Laughter) The response is, "Are you saying every Republican in the House is Michele Bachmann?" My answer is, "No, only *about half* of them think like Michele Bachmann; and the other half are afraid of losing the primary to someone *like* Michele Bachmann. It makes no practical difference!"

The Good Old Days?

There is always a temptation to look back on "the good old days" as if the past had been better than it ever really was. This is often done to fashion a stick with which to beat the President. My favorite quote in this regard uses some typically British understatement. There was once a British humor magazine called *Punch*, now out of business. Towards its end, someone said to the editor, "You know, *Punch* isn't as funny as it used to be." To which he replied, "Oh, yes – it *never* was!"

Nothing is ever as good as it used to be; and there are some areas where "the good old days" really *weren't* so good. For example, I stand here before you as a gay man who married during my service in Congress; when I was younger, I had to worry about whether being gay was going to keep me out of politics, altogether. When I left politics, being gay was even more socially acceptable than being a politician! (Applause.) That is a great advance. It remains the continuing and besetting sin and problem of America; but we have made enormous progress in the area of race. We have made great progress in breaking down discrimination against women.

On Healthy Partisanship

So, this is a better society today; but there has been this serious political breakdown. People say, "Well, we really

need bipartisanship." One of my semantic problems is that people always use "partisan" as a negative. I believe if you did a search, the only positive references you would find to "partisans" would be to Tito's people who fought the Nazis in occupied Yugoslavia during World War II.

Partisanship is *essential* to democracy. The founders of this country and the people who were evolving democracy in England didn't like political parties. James Madison hated them, John Adams hated them. Yet, while they were hating them, they were forming them – because political parties are an essential element in democratic self-government, in a community of any size. Absent effective political parties, you have pure rule-by-personality.

It turns out that in free democratic societies, there tend to be two ideological groupings – not always two parties – but there's a strong tendency to two ideological groupings. There is one group that stresses the importance of the public sector in enhancing the *quality of life*. Then there is the other, whose primary concern and orientation are to the private sector as the *creator of wealth*.

"It's as simple as this: the system broke down as a result of the right-wing Republicans taking over the U.S. House of Representatives in 2010; and that's the end of it. Bipartisanship largely ended in 2010.... So, when you start looking for the causes of the problem, begin with the voters; and the non-voters."

A healthy politics in America, in England, and in any democratic capitalist society is the tension between the two perspectives; but it begins with each side recognizing the validity and importance of the other. No Democrat thinks, "We don't need a private sector to create wealth;" and until recently, Republicans thought the public sector was a necessary thing that needed to be contained, if not diminished. A healthy politics is concerned with, "Where do you draw this line?" The difference is embodied by parties; and so, parties are very important. Parties give some coherence to governance.

I know, the supposedly ideal candidate says, "I will go to Congress and I'll just follow my conscience and decide what *I* want to do." If you want to see gridlock, see that happen! Take some of the most complicated issues that human beings can deal with, and have everybody go off on his or her own. If people aren't willing to compromise, *nothing* will happen. As a result, you have these parties that get together; and I will sometimes yield on something I care about to some extent, in return for getting support for something else that I care about. The alternative will

be everybody vetoing everybody – like the old Polish Diet, where there was a universal veto, a requirement for unanimity – and any *one* person can block things.

Un-Exceptional America

We had healthy, partisan politics up through 2010. What’s happened is that government-in-general has gotten less popular in America. In 1960 the stirring cry from our popular young President was, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what *you* can do for your country.” The next four presidents were all driven from office against their will. Johnson couldn’t run again; Nixon was impeached; Ford was defeated; Carter was defeated. The next popular president after John F. Kennedy was Ronald Reagan, 20 years later; and his singular refrain at his inauguration was, “Government is not the answer to our problems; government *is* the problem!”

Government has become unpopular

The basic reason for this is that people have taken the exception for the norm, and they are very unhappy

“There is always a temptation to look back on “the good old days” as if the past had been better than it ever really was. Nothing is ever as good as it used to be; and there are some areas where “the good old days” really weren’t so good!”

about it. The exception was America’s economic dominance of the entire world in the post-World War II period, because we had the only economy that survived World War II. Every advanced economy was devastated by the war. Ours was stoked, because we became the supplier for all our allies. From 1945 on, and well into the 70’s, we dominated the world. We could make the steel, the coal, the glass, whatever; and Americans without

any great education and with a willingness to work made a good living.

People ask, “What happened to America’s competitive position in the world?” Essentially, the rest of the world

caught up, because they were unnaturally depressed. We are now still in very good shape, but we don’t have the dominance we once had. For whatever reason, government has become less popular. Democrats and Republicans, alike, tended to become more critical of government. Then, again for reasons we’re not quite sure of, a significant segment of the population became not just skeptical and suspicious of government, but so angry as to forget what its essential role is. This is why you had people in the Congress shutting down the government.

There follows a paradox. There are a lot of people in the country who say “Yes, we *hate* the government very much.” The same people also *like* very much the specific programs that government delivers. Politically, we have an America where the whole is now smaller than the sum of the parts – the whole being respect for government; the parts being support for its individual programs. You saw this play out in a ludicrous way when Republicans who had voted to shut down the government then reacted indignantly when *parts* of the government were shut down.

“Why aren’t the parks open?” Because you voted not to give them the money. “Why isn’t more being done for our veterans?” Because you voted to take away the money. There was a great disconnect. Then, the public finally figured it out; and, frankly, one of the silver linings of the gray cloud over the economy that the shutdown represented, was that some people began to think, “Well maybe government is not so bad after all.”

You see this paradox now in the widespread anger toward government involvement in the delivery of health-care under the Affordable Care Act. At the same time, direct government delivery of medical care is among the most popular things we do. I’m not talking here about Medicare. The most popular form of medicine in the United States, according to those who consume it, is the medicine dispensed by the Department of Veterans Affairs; and *that* is socialized medicine, plain and simple. If you are a veteran and you go to a VA hospital, a government doctor puts you in a government bed and tells the government nurse to stick a government needle in your backside. It is entirely government, a “socialized” operation; and it is enormously popular with its recipients. It doesn’t create a model for everything we do, but it ought to give some people pause.

The James Madison Problem

What we have, for whatever reason, is a growing group that professes not to believe in the legitimacy of the public sector; and they took control of part of the government in 2010. This is the very specific reason that we have gridlock; and if you want to name one individual who is responsible for the situation we have, it is James Madison. He created the system of government with the separation of powers, which has this result.²⁵

²⁵See *Federalist Paper No. 51*. Published in 1788, No. 51 is among the most famous of the *Federalist Papers*. In it James Madison addresses means by which appropriate checks and balances can be created within government, and advocates a separation of powers within the national government. One of its most important ideas is the oft-quoted phrase, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.” Madison argues that, “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions.”

In England – and in France, too – if you win on Election Day, you take majority control of the government. In England, if you win, you’re in charge immediately. They don’t have the months-long transition we have; they have the Opposition, the shadow cabinet, there and waiting. If you win the majority in the House of Commons on Tuesday, you’re kissing the Queen’s hand on Friday and you’re the Prime Minister.

In America, it can take *three* election cycles to create a governing majority, because we have two-year terms in the House, four-year terms for the Presidency, and six-year terms in the Senate. At any given time, America is governed by the people who won the last House election, by the person who won in the presidential election of X years ago, and by the Senate elections of up to five years ago.

What happened this time is that there was a more drastic shift in public opinion between the 2008 and 2010 elections than I believe we’ve ever had in this country. In 2008, the voters gave the Democrats the presidency and a good majority in both the House and Senate. In 2010, they gave Republicans the majority in the House and reduced the number of Democratic senators. So, this is the cause: a combination of our separation of powers, the public changing its mind, and the new element of people in Congress who don’t believe in government; and I don’t believe there is any structural way to change this.

The Filibuster

There is one other, added factor that exacerbates the situation, the Senate filibuster – which is, simply, an outrage! The Senate filibuster is an extra-constitutional—in fact, an *anti*-constitutional – mechanism. People talk about, “Oh, we have to have the filibuster, that’s the nature of our system.” The fact is, we already have the separation of powers and the checks and balances; delay is already built into our system. As far as runaway-democracy is concerned, the constitutionally-embedded principle of two senators per state already dilutes democracy, where Wyoming has the same vote as California. The filibuster adds to this; and the U.S. Constitution clearly does not contemplate the filibuster.

There’s a saying that people often use, “The exception proves the rule.” The exception proves the rule means, “Well, you caught me this time; so, I’m going to say something that gets me off the hook.” No, the exception *undermines* the rule, if there are enough of them. It’s a misstatement of a sensible legal position, which is this: the statement of an exception implies the *existence* of a rule. If a law says you may not sell liquor on Sundays, this means you can sell it six days of the week. That’s what the saying really means: if somebody states an exception, you imply from that that there is a rule.

In several instances, the Constitution expressly states

the exception that it takes a two-thirds vote in the Senate to do certain things. It takes a two-thirds vote to convict someone of impeachment. It takes a two-thirds vote to ratify a treaty. It takes a two-thirds vote in the Senate *and* in the House to ratify a constitutional amendment. The fact that the Constitution in three places prescribes a two-thirds vote in the Senate – if it were any other legal document – would be conclusive proof that the rule is *majority rule*, and that two-thirds is stated as the exception.

We’re also told the filibuster is “to protect minorities.” I’ve asked people – and nobody has answered yet – to give me one example in American history of a minority that has been protected by the filibuster. The only one you can describe as a minority is the Southerners who wished to abuse black people; because whenever the House would pass anti-lynching laws to protect black people against official violence in the South, the southern senators could filibuster it to death. There is *no* example in American history of a minority benefiting from the filibuster. The filibuster only deepens the dysfunction.

What Do We Do About It?

The fundamental problem is this: we have this system of government that is complicated and difficult to begin with, and has broken down only recently. This is *not* a systemic thing; it is because very angry people have taken power who do not accept the role of a public sector in our lives, in any serious way.

“When I was younger, I had to worry about whether being gay was going to keep me out of politics, altogether. When I left politics, being gay was even more socially acceptable than being a politician!”

I can offer this to the Republican Party: the most important issue right now is for mainstream Republicans. Your question is, “Who will take over your Party?” I’m not talking here about liberal Republicans, they’re gone. I’m talking about mainstream conservatives on the whole, people who believe in the private sector and worry that the public sector will go too far; but would understand the need for *some* of it. If the more extreme people continue to dominate the Republican Party, what will happen is, the Democrats will do better!

There are five United States Senators sitting today who are Democrats, and are there *only* because the Republicans nominated most implausible people. Christine O’Donnell in Delaware, who talked about being a witch or not being a witch; if you have to deny you’re a witch, you’re in trouble. Or Richard Murdock in Indiana, the man who

talked about “legitimate” rape; who said that if a woman was raped and became pregnant, it was God’s will that she bear the child. Without these five senators, the Senate would now be 50/50. Right now, the Democrats look poised and better in the House than in a very long time; and the Republicans have this internal fight to resolve.

Toward a Healthy Partisanship

Let me summarize, if I may. Politics very recently broke down. Even with this, it is in many ways better than it once was. When the American Constitution was ratified, it said wonderful things; it set forth wonderful values and freedoms that only a small percentage of the population could take advantage of. To fully enjoy the rights of

“Partisanship is essential to democracy.... Absent effective political parties, you have pure rule-by-personality.”

the country at the time, it was a very good idea to be a rich, white, Christian man. In over 200 years, we have broken down those barriers, and other groups have gotten in; so, we have made progress in some areas.

Let me give you one other example. Forty years ago, a lot of children were having their brains severely damaged by the ingestion of lead. They were eating paint chips and inhaling gasoline fumes. Then the government stepped in and passed laws taking lead out of paint and gasoline. Private industry said, “Oh, this will be terrible.” By 2005, the uncontested result was that there were tens of millions of Americans whose brains were free of damage from lead that they otherwise would have had, if the government had not acted.

So, we do some things right; but we are at a dangerous point now. There are people who do not accept the legitimacy of a healthy, competitive relationship between the private and public sectors, and want just the private sector to rule. The outcome of the matter lies with and within the Republican Party. One of two things will occur. Either the more reasonable conservatives will take over the Republican Party, or it will be good news for the Democrats, because we will do better; but this will not be so good for the country, because a more healthy partisanship is better for all.

Thank you for your time and attention. (Applause)

Q & A

Question: *In times of worsening economic conditions, the country has occasionally seen the rise of populist movements that have sought to alter the relationship between government and the electorate. Do you see in the country’s growing economic inequality any evidence that*

such a movement might now take place?

Frank: I would like to see it. Unfortunately, the one movement we have today with a populist element favors more inequality, not less; that’s the Tea Party. They will tell you they don’t like big government; but the only way you’re going to diminish inequality is with some government thumb on the scales. Left entirely to its own, the free market will produce more and more inequality. Inequality is necessary for a capitalist economy; but, unchecked, you can get too much of it. It becomes unhealthy, it becomes an economic drag when it cuts consumption; so, you need the government. Only the government helps reduce inequality in our society; and you have a movement that is dedicated to crippling the government. As I said, the paradox is that the angriest people today are generally supportive of things that worsen inequality.

Question: *Over the years, you were twice the target of purposeful gerrymandering of your district, aimed at your defeat. Computers today have made an exact science of gerrymandering; and George Mitchell suggested that he sees no solution but to take gerrymandering out of the partisan political hands. Do you agree?*

FRANK: I think it would be a good idea to take redistricting away from the politicians. Still, the 2010 election that caused our present problems predated the redistricting. What happened then was, after the 2010 Census, there followed a re-engineering of the districts. The Republicans were very angry at the Democrats, as you know. The great irony is that these angry people who seem to be known as populists were heavily financed by the richest people in America, especially from the financial community (and very much against their own self-interest, as they’re beginning to see). They empowered these angry people to do these irresponsible things. Nobody in the financial industry is happy when the Tea Party folks talk about not raising the debt limit or they attack the Federal Reserve; but they did this. The 2010 election that they won then allowed re-engineering of the districts going forward.

I believe people over-use gerrymandering as an explanation of the dysfunction. Ted Cruz represents the entire State of Texas, not a House district. The House is more extreme in some ways than the Senate, but the Senate has this group, too. In the five cases I mentioned earlier, extreme right-wingers were nominated and lost. Having said that, I agree that the thing to do is what they did in California, or Iowa, or elsewhere: put re-districting in the hands of a neutral body. Still, it’s not clear what the neutral principles will be. Do we want districts that represent particular viewpoints? Do we want districts that are all neatly-balanced?

In 2008, I was charged with getting House members to

vote for hundreds of billions of dollars to lend to banks that everybody hated. Now, we got all that back with interest; but people didn't believe that, at the time. If I had a membership, all of whom were worried about re-election, I don't know that we could have passed that. There is something to be said for not forever defying the voter's will, but at least temporarily. Having said this, it would be better to take redistricting out of the hands of self-perpetuating politicians. It will be less of an improvement than people expect, but it will help.

Question: *There's a lot of concern today about the corrosive effects of money in politics, especially after the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling. How would you deal with it?*

FRANK: Two things. First, keep electing presidents until enough of the right-wingers die and we can get a better Supreme Court. That's the way it works. Part of it has been the bad luck of genetics. Jimmy Carter is the only President in a hundred years who never got to appoint a Supreme Court Justice. Talk about redistricting! The conservative Supreme Court majority elects George Bush, and by electing George Bush perpetuates a conservative majority. They are anti-historical, very radical in their arguments. So, you hope there will be some turnover in the membership.

We have some court decisions – what we call *stare decisis* decisions, or the doctrine of honoring precedent – where we're interested not to disturb well-established things. Those are very much up for grabs these days; but there is nothing that will constrain a more liberal majority from overturning them once again. You can talk about a constitutional amendment; but that's practically impossible to do. Fundamentally you need to get the Supreme Court back!

Second, if you have a Democratic House, Senate, and President, we will almost certainly be able to pass legislation that will require the political money-givers to identify themselves; and that will have some diminishing effect. And let me give the rationale here, by the way. People say, "Oh, well, money is free speech." We have two systems here, paralleling what I said earlier. We have a private sector where inequality is important. If you don't have inequality; if people who have better ideas don't make more money; if people who work harder don't make more money; if people who are better able to figure out what the consumers want don't make more money, the system doesn't work. So, inequality is very important to the health of the capitalist system. Meanwhile, equality is the core principle of the public system.

The problem with an approach that allows unlimited spending in campaigns is that it allows the inequality principle of the private sector to overcome and suppress the

equality principle of the public sector – when they ought to be held and kept both vital. There should be inequality in the private sector, with some limits at the extremes; and one-person, one-vote in the public sector. What the Supreme Court has done is to allow the unequal wealth of the private sector to moot the equality of the public sector.

Yes, there are other ways to do it; but the best answer is sooner or later to elect the right kind of presidents, who will turn it around. Otherwise, I don't see it happening.

"There are a lot of people in the country who say 'Yes, we hate the government very much.' The same people also like very much the specific programs that government delivers."

Question: *Some Republican governors have moved against ideas of the Tea Party in their states. Do you see a division possibly developing within the Party in some of the larger states?*

FRANK: It's true there are Republican governors in some states – not here – who have decided to act otherwise. This notion that you pass up 90 percent in Medicaid money is just nuts! Do these people know anybody who runs hospitals? This is hurting hospitals.

There is an old saying attributed to Lord Acton in the late 19th century, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Frankly, I challenge that. What corrupts is impotence. If people are for too long in a position of prominence with no real responsibility for outcomes, they can act badly; and responsibility can sober people up. I think you're seeing this in Governor John Kasich in Ohio and Governor Rick Snyder in Michigan. Here's what it is: politicians generally don't like to pick fights. If bankers were as risk-averse as politicians, we would never have had a financial crisis.

Politicians like things to be safe and sound. But the pugnacious nature of the right-wing is now pushing the more mainstream people into fighting back. It was their pugnacity that let them take over the party and forced the mainstream into a self-defensive posture. Yes, I think there is a good chance that some of these governors who have tried to be responsible are going to have to fight back against the Tea Party people, with good results.

Question: *You've come out of two closets. Sometime a generation ago you publicly revealed that you were a gay person. After you retired from politics you revealed that you were not a religious believer. I'm an atheist. How do atheists become as accepted in this country as similar leaders in other English-speaking countries, who are*

non-believers? How did the gays do it, and how can atheists do it?

FRANK: This hasn't always been the case in America, respecting atheism. One of the great political figures of the 19th century Republican Party was Robert Ingersoll, who nominated Maine's own James G. Blaine for President. Ingersoll was one of the great orators of his time, and an atheist. I have meant to look back and see how it worked then.

I accept much of what you say. In my own case, I did not proclaim the fact that I do not have *any* religious beliefs; I am the complete agnostic. I have no idea and no interest, because I don't want to think about things I can't possibly know the answer to. So, I just ignore the whole subject; but I certainly have refuted consistently the notion that religion somehow makes you a better person.

Religion operates at two levels. Within countries, religion is often a good thing, even religions that I disagree with in some respects. The Mormon Church has a very good record of delivering social services to people. When

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Protestants in Northern Ireland, or Muslims in Africa and Sri Lanka. You would think that if they believe what they profess, they would try to calm ethnic and religious tensions and clashes.

Having said this, I never thought it made much sense to make atheism an issue, for this reason. If you say you're an atheist, you will lose some votes; but on the whole – and this is a distinction I would make between being gay and being non-religious – there is not a pattern of discrimination otherwise. People generally don't lose their jobs because they aren't religious enough; and there is not the shunning and family disowning when they refuse to go to church. When you take the oath of office as a member of the House, you do it en masse; and I never said, "So help me God." I always said, "I so affirm;" and nobody could hear me because there were 440 of us.

I did ask the governor of Massachusetts earlier this year to appoint me to a temporary vacancy in the U.S.

I was in the Congress, I worked closely with the Archdiocese of Boston and the Diocese of Fall River, with women who did great work in the social welfare area.

On the other hand, what's particularly troubling is when ethnic groups or nations clash, the clerics are often among the worst in promoting conflict, whether it's Hindus and Muslims in India, or Catholics and

Senate. I had no interest in being a long-term returner to Washington; it was for just a few months, and I thought these were critical times. It was my plan, if I had been selected, to warn Vice President Joe Biden who would administer the oath of office, and to stand there with my hand on the Constitution held by my husband and *affirm* that I would uphold the Constitution. I would "affirm" my commitment, and was hoping to make that statement.

So, how do you do it? The same way it happened with gay people. People need to come out; that's what did it with gay people. Once people began to realize that there was not this stereotype that existed only in their minds – but their brothers and sisters and fathers and clients and doctors and teachers and students and teammates, and so on, *these* were the gay and lesbian people – it eroded. There is always a cultural lag on the part of the politicians; and the public is ready to be more supportive of people who do not profess their religion. The semantics of it are interesting, too. Being "atheist" sounds like you're repudiating other people's beliefs; having no religious preference, or not being religious, is probably the way it will be smoothed into.

Question: *It seems that the gay rights laws have created the occasion for thuggery – for gay people to beat up on Bible-believing Protestants, for example. I'm wondering, what is your biggest fear in life? If you were to judge between Bible-based Christianity and Satanism, which are you more fearful of?*

FRANK: Your assumption that gay-rights laws are leading to violence against Christians has no factual basis. Gay people beat you up because you're a Christian? To be honest with you, I do not believe you. Did you report it to the police? The fact that you apparently did not report this to the police reinforces my belief that it didn't happen. As to whether it should or shouldn't happen, the hate crime law that I supported applies to any gay person who might attack a person because she was straight, or to a black person who might attack someone because he was white. The hate crimes laws apply equally. As a great student of law enforcement, I find the notion that there is widespread or even occasional violence by gay people against straight people is simply a fantasy.

As to Christianity, in representing my district I worked closely, as I said, with the Archdiocese of Boston and the Diocese of Fall River on affordable housing and immigration matters. I dedicated a subsidized housing site in the church in which John Kennedy was baptized in the Town of Brookline, standing next to our cardinal, over the objections of some of the neighbors. My answer is, "No, I'm not afraid of Christianity."

I believe this, about conflicts in the world. In Northern Ireland, I thought both Catholic and Protestant clergy

played an unfortunate role. In Africa and Sri Lanka, Muslim leaders have played a terribly blood-thirsty role in many cases. In Myanmar, the former Burma, the Buddhist majority is actively and violently persecuting the Muslim minority; and, by the way, I will throw in the ultra -Orthodox in Israel. I am unhappy to see leaders of *any* religion urge people on, when they act violently toward others.

As to Satanism, I certainly don't approve of it; but I must tell you, I have never encountered it as a significant social factor, so I don't regard it as a great danger. I think it's a great error to worship Satan. In my case, it is doubly unwise because you are worshipping something that is not only evil but doesn't exist. So, that seems to me to be a double problem. (Applause)

Question: *You say the moderates within the Republican Party have been intimidated by the Tea Party element, and must do battle with them to restore bipartisanship. Do you see signs of this occurring?*

FRANK: I would say, yes and no; but it depends. These days, being a moderate Republican is very difficult; the pressures of being a Republican today often submerge moderation. Susan Collins didn't think the government should be shut down; but that didn't stop her from voting to keep it shut down. I haven't heard that Susan is going to vote for cloture on the filibuster of former Cong. Mel Watt of North Carolina, a very able guy, to head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency. For a Republican, she stands up for moderate values more than most; but nobody makes anybody be a Republican, and there are pressures on her that she could avoid.

Angus King shows a different response. He's declared himself independent; although if you were to know only his voting record, you would guess he was a Democrat. By declaring himself independent, he preserves a little bit more of his autonomy there.

Susan Collins does well for a Republican; but her choice to continue to be in that party is a problem, because control of the Senate is now in doubt. The single most important vote Susan Collins or anybody else will cast in January of 2015 is, "Will the Majority Leader be Harry Reid or Mitch McConnell?" As long as Susan says Mitch McConnell, moderation and bi-partisanship will be submerged.

Question: *Can you explain whether or not our government is adequately protecting us against a future financial meltdown?*

FRANK: We are, to the best of our ability. I can't predict the future, but we have clearly outlawed the kind of irresponsible behavior we saw before. Let me put it this way: the answer is, yes, for a while; but I can't say that permanently.

The private sector creates our wealth; and it is governed by rules set forth by the public sector. The thing about the private sector is that it's constantly innovating. There's a nice thing about innovation in the private sector: participation in the private sector is voluntary. If you don't like it, don't buy it (although sometimes there's a monopoly). It innovates. At some point, though, innovation reaches a kind of critical mass, and the economic system becomes very different from what it used to be. Then it's important that the government be able to step in, because the old rules don't make sense any more, and we need new rules.

"There *should* be inequality in the private sector, with some limits at the extremes; and one-person, one-vote in the public sector. What the Supreme Court has done is to allow the unequal wealth of the private sector to moot the equality of the public sector,"

In 1850, there were no really big businesses in America. By 1890 there were coal and steel and oil and railroads, and you needed to create antitrust laws, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Reserve; and they did it. There were some crashes along the way, but that worked well. Then, when you got these big businesses, something new came in: the stock market. You don't need stock for family-owned companies. What happened was, the stock market evolved and there weren't rules for it, and that contributed to the problems that led to the Great Depression. So, much of what Franklin Roosevelt did, in addition to welfare and job stimulation, was to create the Securities Exchange Commission, do deposit insurance, regulate mutual funds, *et cetera*. And the system that Roosevelt created worked for a while.

He created the Securities Exchange Commission to stop the shenanigans in the private sector; and his first chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission was the chief shenanigan-izer of all, Joseph P. Kennedy – who said, "Hey, fellows, I know all the tricks; and they're over!" (By the way, people have sometimes been unfairly critical of Obama, because some of the people he's appointed to the regulatory agencies have been from the private sector.) Beginning in the 1940's, the new system of rules worked pretty well. It was based to some extent on a situation in which if you borrowed money, you borrowed it from the person whom you had to pay back; and when people lent money to persons whom they were expecting to pay them back, they knew pretty clearly who they were.

Then, in the '80s, two things came along. First, greatly increased amounts of money became available outside the banking system. The bank system is very, very good;

but now you've got money outside the banking system. Second, information technology came along, so you were able to take all these instruments, package them as securities, and sell them. In particular, what happened was this: people began to make loans and, instead of getting repaid on the loan, information technology allowed them to put all the loans into a security package and sell it; and they were no longer involved if nonpayment resulted. That's why it's called securitization; they sold mortgages as a security. This was a disaster; and what we have done is to try to deal with this.

Now, there's now a fight going on in Washington over one of the things we put into the law: that if you're going to lend something and then sell it as security, you've got to keep some of the risk; I worry that some people are trying to undo that. We had the crisis because of this conservative philosophy of non-regulation. We waited

"We have made it very unlikely that we will have a crash in the next 30 years; but I can't tell you what new things the private sector may get into that might cause future problems."

too long. What we did in 2009 and 2010 should have been done in the late '90s; and, you know, the country waited too long for FDR's reforms. We put in rules, just as Roosevelt did to stop the abuses of the '30s, and what Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson did to stop the abuses of the late-1890s. We have stopped those abuses, but

I can't tell you there aren't going to be new ones.

The one thing we did do that we learned from the past is this: we empowered our regulators now to get into new areas when and as needed, without having to go to the Congress to re-authorize it. I am somewhat confident that we now have regulators who will stay on top of this. We have made it very unlikely that we will have a crash in the next 30 years; but I can't tell you what new things the private sector may get into that might cause future problems.

Question: *I have a question in the same general area. It appears that there are attempts in Congress to at least weaken parts of the law that bears your name before it's even fully implemented. What do you see in the immediate future in the carrying out of the Dodd-Frank Act and regulation?*

FRANK: You're right, those efforts are in the Republican House; and they're not going to go anywhere. The Senate won't enact them, and the President wouldn't sign them if they did. However, Republican control of the House has led to one severe problem. The biggest grant of new authority in the legislation was over financial derivatives to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC).

The CFTC was a sleepy little agency that was in charge of regulating pork bellies and corn futures, and keeping that from being abusive.

In the period I was talking about, part of the market innovations were the "derivatives" that grew out of all this money, and the securitized loans that weren't going to be paid back to the persons that made them. The derivatives were bets made on the basis of the securitized loans. We gave the CFTC the power to regulate these, and we have a very good chance of regulating them with Gary Gensler in charge as chairman; but the Republicans in control of the House have refused to give them adequate money. So, the CFTC has a budget of \$300 million to implement rules for hundreds of trillions of dollars.

Added to this is the conservative control of the federal courts in Washington, DC that are very tough on regulators. The President is trying to get some new nominees, and they're being filibustered in the Senate. I'm worried about this risk regulation. In general, we are going forward. Efforts to repeal the legislation will go nowhere so long as Barack Obama is President, and by then they will all be in place. The danger in the future is that they will appoint regulators who don't want to regulate; but even then, there will be some momentum built up with these rules. The current threat is the failure to provide funding enough to the CFTC. With all this, I believe much has been done; and by next spring, the law will be fully implemented and it will be permanent. There won't be any danger of repealing it.

Question: *I would like your comments on why we need such a huge military, so much more than other nations. And as an aside, I would like to say we atheists have to be better, because we have no one to forgive us.*

FRANK: It is true that absolutism can be a very convenient way to rationalize things.

The answer to your question is, we have no need for so large a military budget, thank you very much! I read a recent article in *The New York Times* that explained what new things the Army was doing in Africa. This was clearly an article the Army wanted to see published, so people would know how important they are. There was the following sentence that clearly came from the Army, "With expenditures in Iraq and Afghanistan winding down, the Army is now searching for new military missions around the world".

In other words, to go back to theology, God forbid that we should save some of that money! First of all, the military got their high levels pumped up by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, they're acting as if that's their entitlement, and they've got to keep spending it. The answer is, the military budget is wildly inflated; and this goes back to some of the other things we do.

Do you want to deal with inequality? Do you want to diminish the anger at government? I do. We are in a vicious cycle. People have expectations that the government will deliver services; and the government can't deliver the services because it's underfunded; and then people get angry at them. We've got to break this cycle. I have two ways to break the cycle: one is substantial reductions in the military, at the federal level; the other is at the local level, ending the laws that put people in jail because we don't like what they put in their mouths. That's not just marijuana; that would be heroin and cocaine, as well. I would ban only those substances that cause people to hurt other people; except that the biggest one of all is alcohol.

At the federal level, the military budget is wildly overdone. After the collapse of communism, both George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton began to bring it down. Then Vice President Dick Cheney, under George W. Bush, succeeded in pumping the military budget back up by inaccurately equating terrorism with the kind existential threat represented by the Soviet Union at its height. Terrorists are very bad people, and I have no objection to shooting them if we can find them; but they are not a threat to the existence of the United States. Nuclear submarines do not defeat terrorists. I wish they did, because we have a lot of them, and they don't have any.

In the absence of this Soviet-style threat, there is the notion that we have this world-wide role to play. Even the President gets into it, when he says, "America is the indispensable nation." No, we're not. If I thought we could do some of these things, I would be morally conflicted, because we do need some of the money here at home.

Here's the fundamental mistake that we make: we don't understand *this* distinction. We have a wonderful military, excellent people, better equipped than any military has ever been, and they can do well what a military can do. They can stop *bad* things from happening; but no military can make *good* things happen. No military can make the Shi'ite and Sunni get along in Iraq, or end corruption, or promote democracy in Afghanistan, or create social cohesion in Somalia, or do any of these things. So, we should substantially reduce the military budget.

I mentioned the Army, and I don't want to single them out. Two other examples come to mind. Mitt Romney went after the President and said, "We need more ships." The President to his credit stood up to that, and I'm encouraged. I think the public is ready to support this reduction. Why do we need more ships? "Well, I worry about the Iranians;" but we have plenty of ships there. Why do we need even more ships? "Well, we have to be careful about an emerging China, and to keep open the sea lanes." Now, why would China want to shut down the sea lanes? Do you know what happens on the sea lanes? China makes an enormous amount of money. China no more wants to shut down the sea lanes than a pizza delivery truck wants to tear

up the streets; that's how they make all their money!

So, we don't need as big a Navy; and then we have the Air Force. Go back to the *Wall Street Journal* on the Wednesday after the 2012 election, to an article by a man who had been Assistant Secretary of the Air Force under George W. Bush. Here's what he said: "We have a problem with the Air Force. It is true that no American has been injured by hostile air power since 1953; and America has had total air superiority on every battlefield since 1953. Because of that, some people think we don't have to expand the Air Force." I said, "Well, yes, I would tend to think that." And he continued: "Why do we need to expand? Because we must be able to respond to any trouble spot, anywhere in the world, at any time." So, yes, it is vastly overdone.

"Money does not influence people as much as you might think. I don't believe it changes how people vote. It does have too much influence on who the people are who *get* to vote in Congress."

We once had the potential of thermonuclear war with the Soviet Union, and three ways of dropping our weapons on them, called "The Triad." We had nuclear submarines with multiple independently-targeted re-entry vehicles, well over a hundred on each submarine. We have the strategic air command. We have intercontinental ballistic missiles, all to make thermonuclear war on a Soviet Union that doesn't exist anymore, and does not have the capacity it once had. This sounds like a bad joke! I want to say to the military, "You know what? You have three ways of destroying the defunct Soviet Union; why don't you pick just two? Give up one, and save us billions of dollars.

Finally, Harry Truman did a great thing. After World War II there was a vicious dictator, Josef Stalin, with a large military force. There were the weak and poor nations of western and central Europe because of the war. Russia was weakened, too, but Stalin and his oppressive regime were able to threaten central and western Europe. So, Truman sent American troops to protect the weak from this vicious dictator. The vicious dictator is dead and his system has dissolved. The weak and poor nations of western and central Europe are today neither weak nor poor. One element hasn't changed, however; we still have troops there for no purpose.

Yes, it is vastly overdone. I believe we can save well over a hundred billion dollars. And there is an action item here for you. Mention this to Susan Collins, or to Angus King. A Congressional sequester will go into effect in 2014, and it will hit the military as well as domestic programs across the board. There will be a push by the na-

tional security people to take money out of the domestic part of the budget and give it to the military; and you will be told that we will be in grave danger, otherwise.

When they tell you we're in grave danger, do you know what you can suggest? Maybe the Army does not have

“Next time you hear somebody tell you she loves campaigning, you're probably listening to a liar or a psychopath. It's really not fun.”

cleanup and transportation and local police, and put it to the military.” That is the single most important thing you can do, to downscale it.

Question: *I am curious to know your thoughts about having to get so much money – thousands of dollars every single day – to run an election campaign?*

FRANK: As I said earlier, that is the Supreme Court's fault. However, money does not influence people as much as you might think. I don't believe it changes how people vote. What it does is have too much influence on who the people are who get to vote. That is, people don't get elected and then change their position because of the money; it influences the kind of people who run and get elected. It determines who the politicians are who win. It doesn't so much affect you once you're there.

One of the things that bothers me most is my friends who tell people, “Oh, don't bother trying to talk to these politicians; they don't pay attention to you, they only pay attention to the big money.” That's a serious interference, a form of voter suppression just like what the Republicans do by requiring all this voter ID. Don't tell people that their vote doesn't count, because then they won't vote; when, if they do vote and speak out, their votes *do* count!

I didn't agree with everything the Occupy movement did. I certainly agreed more with Occupy than the Tea Party, and I wish Occupy had the political sense of the Tea Party. I was on a TV show with someone from Occupy and said, “You know, one of the things that troubles me is that I never saw a voter registration table at an Occupy site.” She said, “Well that's not what we're into.” “Well,” I said, “*that's* called, affecting public policy.” Votes still matter. And the bigger problem with money is that the *wrong people* get elected.

Question: *How are younger generations going to deal with Social Security becoming insolvent if changes are not made?*

to go all the way around the world seeking new missions. If we were in danger, they would probably know that, and they wouldn't have to go looking for missions. Your congressional delegation can be told, “No, don't take money out of housing and environmental

FRANK: It won't become insolvent. Do you think any politician in office at any time is going to vote to let Social Security go down? Of course not! By the way, if economic growth comes back, Social Security will be just fine. The Social Security tax is paid up to a hundred and some-odd thousand dollars of income. Medicare goes up higher. When President Obama campaigned, he said he was going to raise the marginal tax rate on incomes above \$250,000 a year, for Social Security. He had to compromise and set it for only those above \$400,000. I would levy the Social Security tax on the income between \$ 250,000 and \$400,000, and bring in a lot more money. Then, if necessary, there's no principle that says Social Security must only be financed this way. Let's cut the military budget and, if we need a little bit more for Social Security, put it there. But it's not going to go insolvent. No politician is going to vote to let it.

Question: *Do you have any hope for tax reform?*

FRANK: No; and the reason is, the public. There are no tax breaks that aren't there because people want them. There are a number of things that are in the tax code that you wouldn't put in there if you were starting afresh, but they're there: the mortgage interest deduction on people's homes, charity, research, and development, and so on. You can get minor stuff, but I don't see any big ticket items that are available. The problem is that most of the special breaks are there because people want them there; they serve a vested interest. And you say, “Well, it happened in 1986 and maybe it might happen sometime in the future?” I'm very skeptical. Maybe ten years from now, once the right-wing loses its grip on the Republican Party. At this point they only believe in *tax reductions*. They wouldn't support any tax increase on anybody; and that's the problem.

Question: *I'm a student here at USM and also in a program called Emerge that trains Democratic women to run for office. I'm struck that you felt you were a better legislator than a candidate. I struggle with the idea of being a candidate and am hoping you might speak a bit to the process. What is it like?*

FRANK: It's very hard. Talking about women politicians, I'm very proud to be in the district of my very good friend, Chellie Pingree, who is a superb member of Congress and a good role model for all women. (Applause) But it's a tough business.

First of all, there's the emotional strain. Running for office is the only thing I know of where, on a given day, you're either a hundred percent successful or a hundred percent a failure. If you are a lawyer, the client goes to prison, you don't. The patient dies, the doctor doesn't.

There is no other line of work where you're either all or nothing. You are out there, running for office, and all of a sudden you lose! The total loss of thing! It is also the great exposure of your personality. You become fair game for every kind of comment.

It is *not* fun and stimulating. You get to give some speeches that are *very* repetitive; but much of what you do is campaigning, going door to door. Let me ask you, how many people welcome strangers coming to their door to intrude on them; or standing on a street corner and handing out leaflets to people trying to get home; wishing you would stay the hell away from them, stop bothering them? Next time you hear somebody tell you she loves campaigning, you're probably listening to a liar or a psychopath. It's really not fun. The answer I give is, "If campaigning is so much fun, why don't people do it when there's no office to run for?"

You don't run because there's something at the end; you run for office because it is important. There are things you might do in running, practical matters; but there is no rule book. The first rule is, *be yourself!* If you're trying to be something you're not, that's not going to work well. If you're not sure about this, seek out the lowest entry-level office you can, where you can get to know people by who you are; the bigger the arena, the greater the superficiality factor. Go to a fairly small constituency; then, once

in office – and I think this helped me – once in office I impressed people more by being in office than I did when I was a candidate.

There is this difference, though. The first time I ran for Congress, people tell me, I was a lousy candidate: I was argumentative, I was nervous, I was tense. Then, I had to run for re-election. I was gerrymandered and thought I was going to lose. For a variety of reasons, I didn't; but starting out, I was the best I ever was as a candidate, when I thought I was going to lose. It was the freedom of the thing! Nothing left to lose! I was relaxed and loopy-goopy. And not just me. Ted Kennedy ran for President. I was up here, in fact, working on the Maine caucuses in Augusta, when that happened. He was a lousy candidate at first, and then it became clear that he wasn't going to win; and he became a great candidate, he was free and loose. It was great!

Don't have expansive expectations if you're interested in public office; just *be yourself!* Find a small constituency where you can feel comfortable, be yourself, and go from there!

Thank you all, very much! (Applause)

HOST: I was going to ask Barney what he thought were the sources of his authority and effectiveness in the Congress; but I think you've all learned that already. And thank you again for being here. (Applause)



6. Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis Governing for the People

October 3, 2013

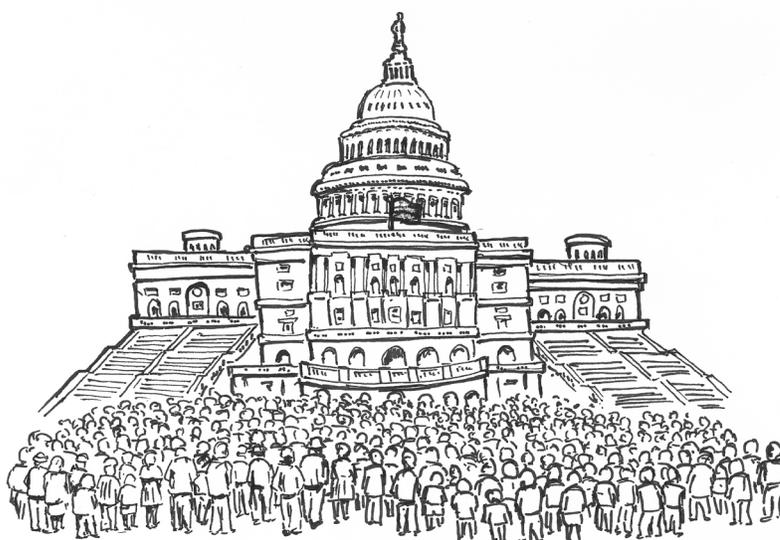
Introduction

It is a singular honor and pleasure to introduce today's special guest. When your co-host, Ken Palmer, and I were asked to put together this series, we agreed at that we could not talk about Politics Then and Now in Maine without inviting former Governor Kenneth Curtis to join us. At the same time, I think of no more eloquent and thoughtful words to introduce Gov. Curtis than those written forty years ago by the late U. S. Senator from Maine, Edmund S. Muskie of Rumford and Waterville.

In April 1974, in his introduction to a Curtis biography by federal Judge Kermit Lipez, Senator (and former Governor) Muskie wrote,

"When Ken Curtis leaves office in January 1975, it will bring to a close one of the most creative and energetic eras in all of Maine history. The eight years he has served as Governor span a period in which the state government has greatly expanded the breadth of human and social services, become a leading partner in a productive relationship with federal and local governments, and responded vigorously to the pressures of growth and development in our rural state...."

"This has been a time of questioning for Maine people, a time of renewed respect for the intangible benefits of Maine life and an overriding concern not only with economic development, but also with the unique quality of life that Maine offers. Ken Curtis has correctly



*sensed that Maine people want change. This sense, coupled with his inherent qualities of sincerity and candor, has made him both courageous and successful. His is a story of a governor willing to try new ways to accomplish the longstanding goals of personal security, opportunity, and human dignity for all Maine people."*²⁶

It is fair to say that no person is more responsible than Ken Curtis for the government that we enjoy in Maine today, and that some would seek to dismantle. When he became Governor in 1966, Maine was dominated economically by a very small number of powerful manufacturing, utility, and financial interests; and politically, by an entitled Republican establishment long accustomed to getting its way in Augusta.

Maine also ranked at or near the bottom among the 50 states in virtually every important indicator of social, economic, and racial well-being: in economic diversity, in personal income, in educational attainment, in spending

²⁶See Kermit Lipez, *Kenneth Curtis of Maine: Profile of a Governor*, Harpswell Press, Brunswick ME, 1974. For a record of the many accomplishments of the Curtis Administration, see *The Curtis Years, 1967-1974*, Allen G. Pease, editor, New England Regional Commission, Boston MA, 1974.

on public education, in social services, in transportation, and in regulation of environmental excess and abuse. All this and much more would change for the better during his term of office, in large part due to the force of his personal character and his ambition for all Maine people.

Welcome, if you will, the man who is generally considered among students of Maine history to be the most accomplished governor in all of Maine history; a Democrat who worked successfully for eight years with a Republican-controlled legislature throughout his entire term of office, former Governor Ken Curtis. (R.B.)

Ken Curtis. Thank you very much for your kind introduction, Professor Barringer. I want to compliment you and Professor Palmer for the timing of this series. With the government shutdown in Washington and the Congress' threat to ruin the credit of the United States, there are many compelling issues before us. You have brought together some very distinguished speakers, with a great deal of experience in Washington and Augusta, who can shed a lot of light on what's going on that a lot of us wish we knew better and could understand.

LBJ

I greatly enjoyed the video of President Johnson. I got to know him quite well – almost accidentally, in fact. He used to reach out to an awful lot of people, and I found myself many times in his company. I think, most of all, that you can learn from President Johnson. Any candidate for governor of any state in this nation should study President Johnson, because he knew how to pass legislation perhaps better than anyone else, before or since.

A lot of people might not agree with *the way* President Johnson did it; but he knew *how* to do it. Perhaps it boiled down mostly and simply to counting votes. He knew *how many* votes he needed to pass every piece of legislation that he wanted in his program; and he knew *where* they all were. I expect that if he didn't know where they were, then probably the legislation would never have been introduced. He was the master of it.

As we look back, here was a Texas politician who was successful in passing some of the most meaningful and important legislation of our or any time – the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act; President Kennedy's work on Medicare was finalized during his administration. So, he was in that sense a great president – except for the Vietnam War, a big mistake that did him in; but he was one of the great presidents in the history of this country.

I was not always on good terms with President Johnson. In 1966, when I had won the Democratic nomination

for governor, he was a great friend of my opponent, John Reed. As chairman of the National Governor's Conference, Governor Reed had passed a resolution supporting the Vietnam War; so, he was a very good friend of President Johnson. When President Johnson came to Maine that year on a non-partisan visit, Governor Reed was invited to join him and I was not, as I was not then an elected official. It became very important to me politically not to be left out, so Senator Muskie called the President's staff late at night on behalf of Elmer Violette, the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, and me.

We were invited – though we weren't made very welcome. I remember that everybody was going aboard the USS *Northampton* on the trip to Campobello Island, where President Johnson was to meet with Canadian Premier Lester Pearson. We somehow got on board, but when we did we were segregated from all of the President's guests; and I remember having dinner with the staff down below in the ship – which was pretty fine, as they were all good people.

We finally got to Campobello and there were helicopters waiting to bring everybody ashore. Well, my name was on a helicopter boarding list, but there was a line drawn through it. Still, I was able to talk to somebody and get on board the launch that was taking the baggage ashore, and it all turned out well. Nobody ever knew the difference, but I saved face and it was quite an experience.

After my election, President Johnson became one of my best friends, I would say. In fact, my wife, Polly, and I have said that we got invited to the White House so many times for dinner that we had sometimes to say, "We don't think we can go this time." The dinners were all the same, they were as big as President Johnson, himself. There was a receiving line, and he came along by himself and with a cameraman; and if you said anything to him, his answer was always, "Now, just look at the camera." Anyway, he did great things; and he's someone people should really look to, to see how to get things done in Washington.*

Looking Backward

I was a little reluctant to come here today, as I was asked to talk about the 1960s and 70s. Well, you know, that was 40 and 50 years ago, and I don't know how all your memories are, I'm not so good about my own; but I looked around at the crowd coming in and didn't see anybody that was that old; so, I feel a little more relaxed.

Prof. Barringer asked me to talk a bit about *Politics Then and Now*; and my experience was in the 1950s and 1960s in Maine. I was thinking how fortunate Maine was in those days for politicians. Then, we only had to feed basically three television stations, and with all due respect to Channel 8, most of the people watched Bangor and Portland; and they only had half-hour news shows, so you didn't have the problem of 24/7 news media that politicians have to deal with today.

The other thing was money. It didn't cost very much

*Note: Richard N. Goodwin worked for JFK and LBJ in the White House and argues that LBJ's great society program did not fail but was abandoned. See his *Remembering America: A Voice From the Sixties*, Little Brown & Co., Boston, 1988, p. 424 ff.

to run for office in those days. In fact, my first gubernatorial campaign cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100,000.²⁷ (Part of that probably shouldn't be declared, because Senator Muskie loaned the campaign a member of his staff, who became its only full-time employee as coordinator of the campaign office.) That made running for office – and the candidate – a lot more accessible to the public than he or she is today. They could judge you, and you could talk to them and find out things. Today, there are so many other things.

Maine in 1950s and '60s was pretty much lacking in good job opportunities. We did have a bright spot in the paper industry, which was doing very well in those days and employed a lot of people; and we had very many low

“Any candidate for governor should study President Lyndon Johnson, because he knew how to pass legislation perhaps better than anyone else, before or since. A lot of people might not agree with the way he did it; but he knew *how* to do it.... He did great things.”

income jobs that we don't have now, in the shoe shops scattered all across the state. Those were low-paying jobs, but they brought us something very good, from Quebec: a population of Franco-Americans who made up pretty close to 20 percent of the Maine population. I don't want to be partisan today, but I can say they pretty much all voted Democratic.

Politically, we still had one-party control in Augusta, namely, Republican. We had the old Executive Council²⁸ – all seven members of one

political party – and they had a lot to say about who was appointed to positions in the government, and even over the budget. In the mid '50s, things started to change. The last Democratic governor we had elected was Governor Louis Brann in 1932, until Edmund Muskie was elected in 1954. As the story goes, the Republicans were divided

among themselves in 1954 and said, “Well, maybe we should let a Democrat win this time; he can stay in office for two years, he won't be able to do anything, and then we can get rid of him.”

Well, Ed Muskie served two terms as governor, they never did get rid of him. He then went on to the U.S. Senate, so there was a good end to that story. In addition, we had elected some members of the Congress: Congressman and later federal Judge Frank Coffin, who was one of the most capable people in the State's history; Bill Hathaway, who made history by defeating Senator Margaret Chase Smith for the U.S. Senate; and Clint Clauson, who succeeded Ed Muskie as governor and unfortunately died after just one year in office. Then we were back to another Republican governor, John Reed, from the Maine Senate presidency.

On Entering Politics

I have been asked why I entered politics. Well, I think anybody who lived in Maine in those years would have been discouraged, and would have asked himself, “Isn't there something better out there for me?” I grew up in a small rural town and went to a one-room school house with one teacher for eight grades. It was just about as poor a school as you could find; still, they actually did a pretty good job academically, although there was nothing else.

The first job I ever had was at that school, when I was hired as the janitor at a dollar a month. There was no running water, and it was my job to get a bucket of water and pour it into the bubbler for the kids; and to build and tend the wood fire to heat the school building. That was when I started saying, “You know, there's got to be more to this.” The kids that you talked to were reconciled to the fact they were just going to finish out their days in that town. They didn't have any dreams, they didn't have any hopes, and it just seemed a bad way for young people to go.

I determined that maybe one way was to pursue education, and I tried to improve that way, without money. I attended a public high school, Cony in Augusta, and had to look at the law a bit to do so. Our town had a two-year high school with three students, and you had to go there or they wouldn't pay for it. I discovered, however, that they didn't have a vocational education course; and if you studied vocational education in another school, the town *had* to pay for it; so, I went to Cony, one that offered it.

After two years, I changed to the college course and went on to Maine Maritime Academy, where you could get a free undergraduate education by trading for ten years in the U.S. Naval Reserve. In my day they had a military draft; and I'm not saying I was the smartest person in the world, but I figured that it would be a lot better to go into the military service as an officer than as a buck-private.

Then I attended law school here on the GI bill. I feel today for all the young people who have to run up such

²⁷Senator Muskie often noted that the entire State Democratic Committee budget for the 1954 election – including his first campaign for governor and the three congressional districts that Maine then enjoyed – came to less than \$20,000.

²⁸The Executive Council was provided for in the Maine Constitution as a check on Executive authority, with responsibility to approve all executive appointments and budget expenditures when the Legislature was not in session. Elected by the full Legislature sitting in “joint session” of all House and Senate members, it consisted traditionally and exclusively of retired and defeated members from the majority party – at the time, Republican. The Council was abolished as an unnecessary encumbrance on the Executive by vote of the electorate at referendum in 1975. On news of the abolishment, then-former Governor Ken Curtis said, “I didn't think I'd live long enough ever to see it happen.”

a huge debt to get an education. My education wasn't the best in the world; but I did get a ticket on the train, which is so essential for any young person today. So, I decided to pursue politics as a career as a way, perhaps, to try to effect change.

After returning to Maine from two years active duty in the Navy, I started looking for ways that I could get to know more Maine people, and get to know the state better. I volunteered for Congressman Jim Oliver's campaign, and he was just a wonderful mentor. Everybody said he talked too much and argued too much; but he was one of the most caring men I have ever known. He always included me in every meeting he had with anybody, whether he was arguing for money or he was speaking too long. He was just a tremendous mentor.

Upon his election, the Congressman hired me as his district assistant. He had a unique way of dealing with the public, and part of my job was to go personally to see constituents who had written to him about a problem. Instead of just answering them with a letter, he would send one of his aides out to see and talk with them. Well, that was great for me because I learned a lot; and it was great for him because it was something unusual that people hadn't seen.

Then, unfortunately, he lost in Maine's anti-Kennedy landslide of 1960. Still, he managed to get President Kennedy to appoint me as the Maine Director of the Area Re-development Administration, making federal loans and grants to depressed areas. That became another opportunity to learn a lot about the economic needs of the state and to meet with Maine people.

In 1964 I decided to run for the Congress, myself, against a person who was one of our better congressmen, Stanley Tupper of Boothbay Harbor, who was totally unbeatable; but that was OK, because if I had won the race for Congress, I would never have considered running for governor. I was able to almost win that seat in the Johnson landslide. Nineteen sixty-four was the first time in a long while that Democrats had captured the Legislature, and they appointed me Secretary of State.

Many said I should have considered the office of Attorney General. In my mind, though, the Attorney General has nothing but problems in everything you have to do; while the Secretary of State is great, because all you do is talk to people about their driver's license, their automobiles, and the elections. The other good thing about it was that part of the job was to be the Secretary to the Executive Council; so, you got to sit in on all the meetings of the Republican Executive Council, which made me want even more to become involved when you watched what they did.

Meeting People's Needs

Much might be said about our legislative accomplishments. We see a product of one of them right here, when

the University of Maine System was created. It's just wonderful to see, after all these years, what's happened with higher education all across the state. The other was, of course, the income tax. Through all this legislation there ran a common theme: to meet neglected needs and, most of all, to make state government more responsive to the present and future needs of Maine people. It didn't matter who was going to be governor, whether it was going to be a Democrat or a Republican, they would need to have the kind of organization and government that they could work with.

"I have been asked why I entered politics. Well, I think anybody who lived in Maine in those years would have been discouraged, and would have asked himself, "Isn't there something better out there for me?""

One of the major pieces of legislation we were able to get through was the reorganization of state government. When I became Governor, we had 213 agencies and commissions that really didn't report to anybody; and most of all, the commissioners were not appointed by the governor. When you got elected, you inherited all those that were already there, and that seemed to me a hard way to administer anything.

I remember one story I'll never forget about the quality of Maine people. I had been very clear about the fact that I thought the governor should be able to appoint his own commissioners; and at the time we had probably the most honest, crustiest highway commissioner in the history of Maine, David Stevens of Hallowell. Dave came in to see me and said, "I hear you would like to be able to appoint your own commissioners. I just want to let you know that you can have my resignation any time you want it." Then, on the way out, he paused and said, "And I'm not so sure I want to work for you, anyway; so, I want the right to leave anytime I want to." That was the best of Maine, and those are the kind of people that we had to deal with.

How did we pass the legislation? There's a lot to be said about that, with a Democratic governor and a Republican Legislature all the while. First of all, we had an outstanding staff of highly qualified people. One is sitting right here, Professor Allen Pease,²⁹ who taught political science

²⁹ Allen G. Pease was for many years Associate Professor of Government at the University of Maine in Portland, later to become USM. In 1964 he volunteered for the Curtis for Congress campaign and, in 1966, co-chaired the research team for the Curtis gubernatorial campaign. Pease became the principal Administrative Assistant for Gov. Curtis during his eight years as Governor and, later, Director of the Maine State Planning Office for Gov. James B. Longley, before returning to USM.

here for many years and was my Chief of Staff; and Justice Kermit Lipez, who is here in the room and is a now a senior judge of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. I could never describe how much they helped in the legislation. Then we had a lot of help from individual legislators and supporters and advisors.

Like LBJ's experience with the Congress, it really boiled down to counting votes. On the income tax, we knew we had all but one of the Democratic legislators; we could count on every one of those votes except one – and we never did capture him. In fact, he ran against me when I ran for re-election; so that's how loyal he was!

Meanwhile, you didn't have to look around very much to know that a third of the Republican legislators would never do anything to help you, would never vote for any legislation you proposed; but that left all the rest. And all the rest really *cared* about Maine, and the kind of things that we were espousing in those days. These were legitimate needs – needs of the State – and many Republicans recognized this. So, by spending a lot of time with them, letting them become involved in the whole process, many of them came around; and we could ultimately count on their votes.

“Through all this legislation there ran a common theme: to meet neglected needs and, most of all, to make state government more responsive to the present and future needs of Maine people.”

because he was going to vote for it, that's for sure. That's pretty much the way it went. The needs were there, it was timely, and I don't know that it was anything more special than offering Maine people what they wanted and needed, on a bipartisan basis.

An interesting part of my life was running for re-election one year after both passing the income tax and introducing gun-control legislation. The income tax is not well understood, never understood anywhere. We don't have one in Florida because they don't understand it. The point is that the income tax is progressive, it meets revenue needs for the future, and it also is a fair tax; low income people don't have to pay it, they just pay the sales tax. As many of you may remember, the Maine income tax went to referendum after it was enacted; and the voters voted

One story that I always like to tell is of the late Senator Harrison Richardson of Portland, who was at first one of my biggest Republican opponents. In the end, Harry drafted the income tax bill that became law. He came up with a version that was in fact better than the one we had. You knew that when a Republican leader came forward with a draft bill, you had better take it, be-

cause he was going to vote for it, that's for sure. That's pretty much the way it went. The needs were there, it was timely, and I don't know that it was anything more special than offering Maine people what they wanted and needed, on a bipartisan basis.

by about 75 percent to keep the tax, because we worked to help them and they understood what it was.

Gun control legislation was a little different. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King had been assassinated, and the National Governors Association had recommended that all the states come forward with some form of gun control legislation. Ours was pretty much what you might call “registration.” It was meant to keep guns out of the hands of convicted felons, drug addicts, and the mentally ill; but it was defeated quite easily in the Legislature.

About 1,200 angry people gathered from all over the state to testify against the proposed legislation, while public opinion polls showed that the general public favored gun control by two-to-one, about like it is today. That was almost 50 years ago, and there are so many similarities to today. Anyway, that was to have been the end of my so-called political career; but I had enough friends working for me that I did get re-elected by 810 votes. (Applause)

The following June, after I'd won by just 810 votes state-wide, the income tax was on the ballot, to be recalled; and it passed by 100,000 votes. Maine people really understood and embraced it. That night I received a call from Senator Muskie, who had been my strong supporter, and he asked, “How does it feel to be so much less popular than the income tax?” (Laughter, applause)

Q & A

Question: *Your administration was particularly interested in addressing the aspirations of Maine youth, and in offering real opportunities for our young residents. What do you regard as the greatest public need that Maine politicians should be addressing today?*

Curtis: I think it's the need for adequate funding for the public schools, the University of Maine System, and the Maine Community College System – the kind of funding they need, because it's really an *investment*. I always talk about my education being totally funded by the government. Well, I modestly say, I think I paid them back in the income tax over the years.

Question: *Governor, your approach to policy making was always pragmatic, making principled compromises and deals to get things done that needed doing, working across the aisle to win the votes you needed. Where has this practical pragmatic approach gone today, and why do you think it has disappeared?*

CURTIS: I blame the media to some extent, the 24/7 media. It makes me angry when I hear about the government shutdown described by people in the media as its being *both* parties' fault and the President's fault. It's the *Republicans'* fault, and the President had nothing to do with it.

It's the Congress' responsibility to pass a budget, and we don't get as clear information as we should on the issue. I don't know that we have today the personal contact that we used to have between the members of both political parties; they need to spend more time talking with one another. If they did more of this, they might find out that they have a lot of things in common.

Question: *The same may be true in Augusta. When you were in office, the entire Legislature would arrive for sessions and stay at the old Augusta House, since demolished. There, they could get to know each other. Now, they're dispersed all over the city and some commute home every night; and it makes for a very different personal setting for decision-making today than it was then. Did the Augusta House setting make a difference for you?*

CURTIS: That was something that got talked about a lot when they left the Augusta House; that the deal that was struck was often made there, because of the proximity and familiarity.

Question: *Do you think that the Tea Party Republicans will become the most influential people in the party, both in Maine and in the nation.*

CURTIS: I'm no expert in this field, but I don't believe they will. My prediction on this government shutdown is that a lot of Republican members of Congress are going to come forward and say, "We have to stop this and pass a simple budget bill, nothing more than what we're supposed to do on the budget." Once they decide that they can stand up to those they seem afraid of, it will slowly lead to the demise of the Tea Party. Of course, we'll have quite a few Tea Party members as long as we have the re-districting that exists today. Until some of the districts are re-done, we'll always have a number of Tea Party members.

Question: *What is the best book a young Mainer can read today?*

CURTIS: Kermit Lipez' book. (Laughter)

Question: *We have a question from an old friend of yours, a legislator from your era and one of the great civil rights leaders of Maine history. "Governor, may I get your autograph?" Signed, Gerald E. Talbot of Portland.*

CURTIS: As many as you want, Jerry; and they're all free.

Question: *This relates to the income tax and some of the discussion that took place in the past legislative session, concerning the proposal to reduce the exemptions in the sales tax. Do you have any thoughts on this? Has*

that been a major problem in your judgment in this state?

CURTIS: Basically, I would not agree with reducing exemptions to the sales tax if this means removing the exemptions for the items working people need, like food. The more you do that, the more you hit the lower income people who have to buy these things. If you have to raise more revenues, you might better raise the income tax, because then you're getting people who can afford the tax to pay it.

In Florida we have what amounts to a seven and a half percent sales tax, covering everything but food and medicine; the state's limit is six percent, and municipalities can add up to another one and a half percent. In Florida you also have a more mixed population, with a lot of very wealthy people, a lot of retirees on fixed incomes and a great many low income people whom the sales tax hurts greatly.

"You know, who would you say is the leader of the Republican Party in the Congress today? It's pretty hard to negotiate a deal with anyone unless they're someone, a leader, who can produce."

Question: *In his very fine biography of you, Kermit Lipez describes you as a governor who appeared comfortable in himself, and always in command. Your appeals to Maine voters were bolstered with facts and punctuated with humor. He quotes you as having said, "I don't know why I did what I did. I don't know if a person ever really knows. It's just that there are so many obvious things that need doing; and I felt, Let's just get about the task of doing them." You did many things in office, including creating the Maine personal and corporate income taxes. What are the obvious things that need doing today?*

CURTIS: Well, a lot of it still boils down to money. We need to continue to find ways to fund those things that are investments in our future. We've lost an awful lot of the traditional industries that supported so many working people. Maybe we should put together the best minds we can find, take a long-term look at the State of Maine, and ask, "Where should the growth take place? What are the best hopes for our State, given all the problems it has?" Then government could concentrate a bit through education and other means to advance these hopes. I get the feeling we don't have a good handle on where our future is, on what our best hopes for growth are.

Question: *President Obama has different talents from LBJ; but even if he had LBJ's talents in dealing with*

the current Republican leaders in Congress, is President Obama dealing with Republican Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois or with Ho Chi Minh.

CURTIS: Ho Chi Minh, I think. You know, who would you say is the leader of the Republican Party in the Congress today? It's pretty hard to negotiate and deal with anyone unless they're someone, a leader, who can produce; and the Republican leaders in the days of LBJ were people he knew could produce and would produce – even if he might have to offer them some incentives.

Question: *Do you think the absence and reduction of earmarks has affected the control leaders have in Congress over the members and the committees? They seem to have a lot less leverage with the members today.*

CURTIS: Well, if they don't have leverage today, the only reason is they haven't used their power to pass legislation and give themselves the kind of leverage they need.

Question: *In his talk earlier, George Mitchell pointed to a number of things that he feels must change in order to restore government by consensus and principled compromise. The first*

“The only real solution belongs with the people and the people's vote. The people can vote for change, and must advocate for change.... All this boils down to the people, people getting into office and taking action.... That's the only real power we have.”

was that congressional redistricting must be taken out of partisan political hands. Second, the Citizens United decision by the Supreme Court has thrown gas on the fire of money-chasing by Congress members and severed the bond of trust between government and the people. Third, the money flowing into negative TV ads has got to be contained. Do you have any suggestions to add to Senator Mitchell's list?

Curtis: No, I think he's a hundred-percent right; but the only real solution belongs with the people and the people's vote. The people can vote for change, and must advocate for change. This is a way you can correct so many of these things, through the legislative process. And, you know, I have great optimism for the future. I don't know whether I will be around to see it, but I think we're going to see a wholesale change in the voting patterns of this country, and we're going to see some of it in this next election.

When you stop and think how the Hispanics of the nation are growing faster than the white population; when

you think how fast the African American population is growing; and when you think how the old-style Republicans have managed to offend the women of this country and the young people – if you put all these groups together, they are going to have more voting power than our so-called white male leaders. There was a picture the other day on television of Republican leaders discussing some important issue – whether it was the budget, or whatever – and every single one of them was a white male. That has to change and it is going to change, no question.

There's a rising star that's come forward in Texas, State Senator Wendy Davis. She's announced that she's running for governor and she's starting out with a pretty good lead. There's going to be more and more women coming forward in this next election who are not going to tell us whether we should have children, or use contraceptives, or stay home and cook. They aren't going to take this anymore, I can tell you because my wife, Polly, tells me that!

Question: *About your two gubernatorial elections, in 1966 and 1970: you got a majority in both, even though it was 810 in 1970. Since that time, almost all of our governors have been elected with a lot less than 50 percent, between 35 and 40 percent. Might you favor a runoff election in the event nobody gets a majority in the governor's races.*

CURTIS: I don't know. It would depend on how they might come out. I'm still partisan and would hate to do anything to mess up the chance of another Democrat.

Question: *At a recent convention of the AFL-CIO, U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren of MA said that the working people of this country know the system is rigged against them today. Do you agree, and if so, what does this mean for our country?*

CURTIS: I'm not so sure that in some way the system hasn't always been rigged against the working person. The average person still suffers tremendous controls from Wall Street and from industry, over what goes on. I would like to say about Elizabeth Warren that she's such a breath of fresh air. She's going to do more than anyone has ever been able to do, to straighten out the nation's finances. She's an outstanding individual and a good example of why we could use more women in politics.

Question: *Is there any way to stem the influence of corporations and big business in our politics?*

CURTIS: Yes, through legislation; through what we're just saying that we would like to see happen; but all this boils down to the people, people getting into office and taking action. That's the only real power we have.

Question: *What is the impact that “independent” candidates are having on the party system and elections here in Maine, and in the 2014 gubernatorial election?*

CURTIS: Well, we’ve had some very good and strong independents, Angus King being one and Cong. Bernie Sanders of Vermont another; but I think they get into office through very special sets of circumstances. For this next coming election, a vote for an independent is probably a vote to keep the governor we have. I think Cong. Mike Michaud has an excellent chance and has gained a lot of support for winning this next election. If he loses, it will be because the voters think they’re going to be better served by an independent who probably doesn’t have a chance of winning.

Question: *Governor, you are known perhaps more than any other Maine governor for aggressively recruiting highly talented people into state government. Where did that philosophy come from, and how did you go about doing that?*

CURTIS: Well, it was kind of a two-fold effort. You need to attract the best minds you can, and we had a lot of young attorneys like Judge Lipez and others who came forward and wanted some government experience. They were extremely bright, and had not spent a lot of time becoming involved in the state, itself. They looked at problems in a fresh way; and when they got a chance to come and participate, they enjoyed it and attracted more.

We also had people like Professor Pease, who is just as competent in his own right; and what he brought to the team was the knowledge of Maine and Maine people. So, we could take some of the best ideas in the world by some of these bright young people and filter them down so they might fit Maine. It was a tremendous team. I’m just delighted that so many came here and got a lot out of being here; and every one I think of has become highly successful. Funny though, most haven’t run for public office; I guess that was one thing they learned, to stay away from that stuff.

Question: *Governor, the market value of labor is not what it used to be. We talk about inequality in this country and the concentration of wealth that only a few enjoy. Now, labor competes with robots, it competes with people all over the world. The people who own the robots can operate with greater efficiency, and workers to a substantial extent are left out. Where is all this going?*

CURTIS: I think you are absolutely right. This is one way the times are changing, because we are creating new oppor-

tunities for new minds to come forth with new ways of doing things; but we can’t forget that it is leaving people out who aren’t going to be part of that. Right now we’ve got the question in Washington of raising the minimum wage; we could do things like that to try and make some of the menial jobs a little more meaningful. We’ve got to make sure people in low income jobs at least get decent pay, pay that reflects their important place in creating wealth for owners and for society.

I think back to the little town I came from. Maybe we can get to a lot of the younger people and offer them more hope, by saying, “You know, you don’t have to settle for the menial jobs. You can prepare yourself. You can prepare yourself to be one of those who invent the robots, and those kinds of things.”

I would say in passing that *many* people have been so helpful to me along the way. Forty years ago, upon the death of my daughter Susan, a few friends created the Susan Curtis Foundation, a summer program for economically disadvantaged children. What we saw then and see now are a lot of the kids from homes and communities with no hope, who think they don’t have a chance. They don’t think they are as good as anyone else. The whole idea of the foundation was to say to them, “You can do *anything* that anyone else can do, you’re just as good as *anyone* else!”

Out of this, we get a surprising number of kids who are making it to college, going through college, and bettering themselves and their families’ lives. Kids who came from communities that I remember so well; who thought that college wasn’t for them, that they never would have a prayer of doing these things. I think there’s a lot we can do with and for young people, to encourage them to think bigger. There are things we can and should do legislatively, as well, to help prepare young people for better employment opportunities

Question: *Governor, when you were in office, the feminist movement was building and becoming very, very lively. My question is, Do you think that the more recent gay rights movement has had a negative impact on the feminist movement?*

CURTIS: I don’t honestly know. The gay rights movement is here, it’s happening, and it’s going to grow. It’s something we had better accept, because it’s here and many believe it’s the right thing to do. It’s going to continue. If I had an opinion, I would say that a negative impact on the women’s movement is not what any of us would like or would wish for. (Applause.)

Thank you very much. Now, you can all go out and enjoy this fine Maine weather.



7. Elizabeth “Libby” Mitchell Productive Partisanship

October 24, 2013

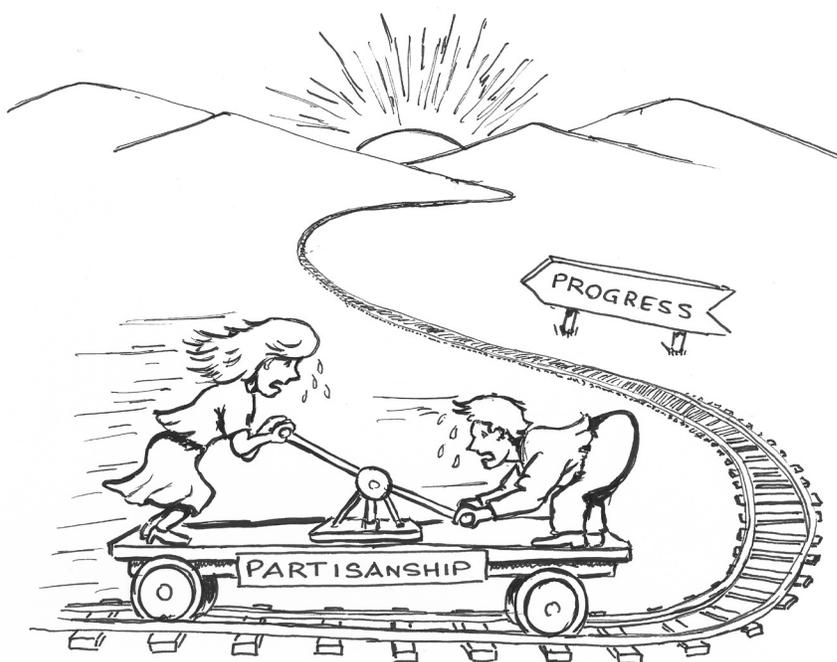
Introduction

It is a personal pleasure and honor to introduce today's special guest. Elected time and again to the Maine House of Representatives and to the Maine Senate, she is the first woman in American history elected to both a House speakership and a Senate presidency.

President John F. Kennedy once said, “Values lie at the very heart of our government – not ideology, not principles, not interests, but values.” By values, JFK meant the things we hold most dear, things that we cherish and are willing to defend with our lives, if needed; so when the pressure is on and issues come at us like water from a fire hose, we know where to turn for decisions that are true to ourselves and to those who brought us here.

I have known our guest for almost 40 years. Our children grew up together. I have watched with admiration her unflagging efforts as a legislator to build a stronger and better Maine for Maine people. Hers are values learned from long hours working in her family's grocery store in South Carolina, on a neighbor's farm while in school and in college, and here in Maine. They include the values of hard work, patriotism, support for the less fortunate and the voiceless, dignity for every individual, and opportunity for all.

Through a long and distinguished public career, Libby has applied these values to advance especially the cause of children, to defend the interests of working people, to create good jobs and a stronger environment, to extend constitutional rights to all citizens, and to reach principled agreement with the other party, as she has



done often on budget and bonding matters in Augusta. A native of South Carolina, her picture today adorns the wall of the Maine Women's Hall of Fame at the University of Maine at Augusta, with every good reason. Please join me in welcoming a true Maine pioneer, Elizabeth “Libby” Mitchell. (R.B.)

LIBBY MITCHELL: Thank you very much. I only wish each of you could have the honor of being introduced by Dick Barringer; it would make you feel very, very great! Thank you, Dick, for your friendship and for the opportunity to be here. Thank you, Ken, for helping to put this series together. I am honored to be part of this speakers' series; and honored that so many of you took time out of your day to think about where we've been and where we are going.

The Maine Difference

My topic today is *Politics Then and Now*; and you might want to say, “The more things change, the more they stay the same;” but, of course that is *not* true. I want to talk about some real differences today between Maine and Washington, which seems like a *foreign* government. Maine is like Washington in some ways; but in others it’s not. There are *real* differences.

I’ve had a personal relationship with each person who has spoken in this series; and this is part of why Maine is different. Peter Mills and I come from different sides of the aisle, and we can talk easily about bipartisanship. There’s nobody I respected more in the Maine Senate than Peter. I worked together with him many times, and argued with him when we disagreed; but we never disagreed personally, ever.

What better governor has Maine ever had than Ken Curtis? Curtis wanted some of the best and brightest he could find, to surround himself with and advise him on policy matters. He brought into his administration the likes of Peter Bradford, who went on to national prominence in the utility regulation field; Kermit Lipez, now a distinguished federal justice; Walter Corey; and my own husband, Jim Mitchell – wonderful men, all. Wonderfully, Ken Curtis wasn’t intimidated by their degrees; he would listen to them and if he agreed, would say, “That’s very good, let’s try it”. Or, if he didn’t, he said, “No, thank you, that’s not the way we do it in Maine;” and they would move on.

You may not know it, but George Mitchell wasn’t always famous. At one point I was one of the chairs of his campaign committee. At the time I was the first woman House Majority Leader, and it was very good to have a woman out-front in your campaign; but that’s not the real story. I’m from Vassalboro, Maine, in spite of my accent, and that’s where we’ve lived since 1971, thanks to Ken Curtis. George Mitchell could not get his picture in the paper, for any reason. One of our friends worked for Heifer International, and they were getting ready to send a heifer to Saudi Arabia. So, Mitchell thought, “Well, maybe if I come out to Vassalboro, get my picture taken with Libby Mitchell and that cow, I might get in the paper.” So, he got there and we took the picture.

Sure enough, next day in the *Waterville Sentinel*, on the front page, there’s George Mitchell and me. He was pretty proud of himself. The following day he was going to door-to-door, went up to one door and this farmer came out. George said very proudly, “Did you see my picture in the paper? What did you think about it?” And the farmer replied, “Well, I think they should send you to Saudi Arabia and keep the cow!” George Mitchell has told that story many times over; I think that’s what catapulted him to his major victories and fame – because he has a sense

of humor and he’s from down home.

I have had the privilege of serving in the Legislature with Olympia Snowe, another extraordinary person; and whenever I went to Washington, I would always go to her office and she would drop what she was doing to make sure she said hello. It didn’t matter to her that I had been the Democratic leader for all these years, because she understood the process and the people; and she worked for the people of Maine.

During independent Gov. Angus King’s tenure, I was Speaker of the House and got the chance to work with him on the Maine Policy Scholars program. It brings together a student from every campus of the University of Maine System with a faculty member, to develop and make a policy a presentation on a topic of public interest. Then-Governor, now Senator King made it their assignment to write a memo to the governor, so it wasn’t just an exercise in thinking about it. “Give us a plan,” he said, “What do you want to *do*?” They have looked at everything from clam flats to nuclear energy, and the students are just amazing.

“Maine is like Washington in some ways, but in others it’s not. There are real differences. I’ve had a personal relationship with each person who has spoken in this series; and this is part of why Maine is different.... Maine is very up close and personal.”

Barney Frank and I worked together raising funds for Equality in Marriage. I have never heard anybody who knows health care better or talks about it more than Tom Allen. These are our role models. This is what we expect in Maine. Bill Cohen, Margaret Chase Smith, Susan Collins, all of these people in a state of a million people. We have an honor roll that is known everywhere for its national leaders; and certainly no one could ever forget Ed Muskie, as we stand in this hall named for him; and the lasting legacy he’s given us for our air and water, for his vision, and for making sure the American people knew the strong, independent spirit of Maine people who won’t settle for anything but the best.

I start thinking about then and now, and how things change. I’ve never seen a bleaker time in Washington. We dwell on this every day as we look at this shutdown that continues on, and is not in the best interest of anyone. I won’t embarrass my daughter too much (she is here today) by telling you she was once in a play called, *Bye Bye Birdie*. There’s a great moment in it where they sing, “Kids! What’s the matter with kids today? Why can’t they be like we were, perfect in every way?!” Sometimes we

like to think, “Why can’t politics be like it was in the good old days?” Well, the good old days weren’t always that good.

I learned today from a former staffer in Washington that, back in the old days, congressmen and women and senators got a ticket home just four times a year, paid for by the government.

“There’s a long history of compromise in the Maine Legislature (that) prides itself on unanimous reports from its committees. You’re a failure as chair if you produce a divided report, and you’re a success if you can find agreement.”

So they stayed in Washington, their kids went to school in Washington. They had dinner and picnics together, and they got to know one another in a different way. It’s pretty hard to yell at Peter Mills when you’ve just had a back-yard hamburger with him.

Now they go home every weekend. The same is true in Augusta. I’m not saying the old Augusta House was ideal, because in those days all the legislators stayed there, and the lobbyists just brought along bills *they* had already drafted. I’m not sure that was so good. We had our fights, then and now. We had our own government shutdown in the State of Maine in 1991.

Political Waves & Cycles

When I ran for the Maine House in 1974, all you needed was shoe leather – going to bean suppers and county fairs, and knocking on doors. That’s all it took. Not a lot of money, because you can’t raise a lot of money with bake sales, in the first place; and the stakes for money were not very high then. That is not true of a House race even in Maine today; but it’s still possible, because Maine is very up close and personal.

We have a million people, and 151 House seats. I see a newly elected legislator sitting here in this room. I’ll bet you knocked on every door in the district, and people got to know you. They see you in the supermarket. My young children (now grown) used to pull on my coat to leave, every time I would bump into someone, because everyone wanted to talk about taxes or the environment or state employee wages.

I once had a wonderful experience. They say I look very much like the woman who was then my State Senator, Beverly Bustin of Augusta; and people got us mixed up all the time. I was once coming out of the grocery store, when this lady and two crying children ran up to me, “Senator Bustin, can you help me with this problem?” I said, “Could you just call me at home please.” And, so, we escaped; but that’s Maine politics – up close and personal

There are waves in political life. I was first elected in 1974, and I thought it was because I was such a great candidate. But guess what? That was the year the Maine House went Democratic for the first time in many years. It was the anti-Nixon, anti-Watergate election. As a matter of fact, most people said, “Well, we might as well vote for you, you couldn’t do any worse.” Now, that’s not a ringing endorsement. I also got a little bit of money donated to my campaign, because then-Democratic Party chairman Severin Beliveau had had his office bugged as part of the Watergate scandal; and he received financial compensation and gave it to all the Democratic House candidates. At any rate, that was a national wave.

In 2010 the Democratic tide went out; and it happened all over the country, in many ways and places. It didn’t matter if you said, “Wait a minute, I don’t come from Wall Street, I didn’t cause this financial meltdown.” If you were a Democrat and you held office, and you tried to tell people, “Wait, look at what we’ve done!” They would say “If you’re so good, why am I hurting so badly?” There was this reaction.

There are cycles in politics, and they’re like waves. They alone don’t cause the change, and many people survive it. But those were two major changes that I was involved in. I wasn’t running for re-election to the House; I was running for the governorship, and I felt the steam of that wave, very strongly.

Political Money

I want to talk about money for just a bit. There’s a doctrine of unintended consequences that I’ve observed and embraced throughout my political life. After Watergate, there were a series of reforms – political action committees, the PAC reforms. After a while they were no longer reforms, but became huge repositories for special interests that could focus money on incumbent Congress members who sat on the right committees. If you wanted to challenge them, there was no way the PACs would give you money unless you had a poll showing you were winning; and that’s pretty rare for a challenger. So, unseating an incumbent became a real problem.

At the same time, in Maine, the Clean Elections Law came along. The important part of it was matching funds; if your opponent, who was not running a “clean” election, raised more money than you, the State matched those funds up to a generous limit. You could stay competitive up to a point; and then you were on your own. That no longer exists, so there’s very little incentive for a candidate to go Clean Elections on the state level – House or Senate – because you know that all these independent groups are going to start spending big-time.

I talked about how inexpensive my first race was in 1974. There was a 2012 Maine Senate race in Bangor

where the candidates spent \$250,000 each for the seat. Do you know how much a senate seat pays? Maybe \$13,000 one year, and six or seven thousand the next; so, it certainly wasn't for the pay. Just think about all the outside money that was pouring into that Senate race! In some ways, Maine is changing its money approach just as Washington is; and it is a very frightening thing to watch.

Parties and Partisanship

I want to read you something, if I may:

“My view is that American politics is at an impasse, that we have been spinning our wheels for a long, long time, and that we're going to dig ourselves even deeper into trouble unless we find a way to develop some political traction. The government has suffered from crippled leadership, from a slowdown of decision-making, and impairment of vital processes. The result has been an accumulation of unresolved problems and a buildup of public frustration so great that our quintessential American characteristics – our optimism and our self-confidence – have now been shaken.”³⁰

If you think that was written about the recent shutdown, I have news for you. It is syndicated columnist David Broder writing in the 1970s, about the failure of politics in America, about how “The Party's Over.” You might want to read it because it is most interesting. There's so much talk today about, “It is the Republicans' fault, it is the Democrats' fault; if we just didn't have parties, the world would be wonderful.”

Running for office is not glamorous, it's hard work and has to be done; and once you're elected you have to do the work of making the government *work*. If you organize yourselves into the blue birds vs. the black birds, it won't make any difference; you're going to have something that resembles a party, because people must and will organize around those values that Professor Barringer spoke about in his introduction.

Mario Cuomo once observed that, “Campaigning is poetry; governing is prose.” I ran as a Democrat in 1974. I didn't know why I was a Democrat. I think my father was a Democrat. After I was elected, I *knew* I was a Democrat, because that's when the prose started. The people I most shared values with were Democrats. That did not mean I didn't like the Republicans. It's just that we had a different set of values.

I also was lucky enough to run in a district that was five-to-one Republican vs. Democrat. This made me *listen* to Republicans. It made me listen to the unenrolled, because I knew I didn't have all the answers and I would not have a “safe” seat. George Mitchell talked here about gerrymandering and the carved-out seats where there is absolutely no diversity, no real competition in those districts.

We've always tried to “fix” seats, to make them safe.

You want to favor your own party; but you don't want the districts to be so lacking in diversity that there's no opportunity for disagreement. When I was in the legislature I had friends from Munjoy Hill in Portland who represented people who generally *agreed* with one another. In Vassalboro and Sidney, Maine, people don't agree with each other, *ever*. So, I had that discipline, and it was very good for me when I became a leader, it was most helpful. When we started using computers, however, we got way more sophisticated in drawing those district lines; and it's had an impact.

“Running for office is not glamorous, it's hard work and has to be done; and once you're elected you have to do the work of making the government *work*.”

I remember when I was in one of those seats that was to be gerrymandered. David Emery, the former Republican congressman, was absolutely brilliant about this. He was ahead of the curve in using computerized re-districting, and proposed new boundaries for my district. I live in Vassalboro on the east side of the Kennebec River. The new district was to be a tiny sliver that ran on the west side of the road down to the bridge in Augusta, took a sharp right across the Calumet Bridge, and then hugged the river up to what is known in Augusta as Sand Hill. It really looked ridiculous, if you could see the thing

I went to the Maine Supreme Court to argue our case against it; and the Chief Justice laughed, because he *lived* in the district. I said, “Mr. Chief Justice, I believe Mr. Emery's computer has a virus”, and so the re-districting did not happen. But that was just the beginning. Not that the Democratic party wasn't very far behind, they wished they had caught up sooner; but I'm sure that's how they get the districts that they want today in Washington.

I recently had a reunion with college friends from long ago, and one couple lives in Asheville, North Carolina. Asheville is a small community that has become a mecca – a sort of progressive center where they have people retiring there from all over, and they're very interested in environmental issues and education and all those things. They're now in a congressional district with the large city of Gastonia, and have zero power and zero votes. So, it's not just here; it's what we're doing now, and we have to be very, very careful.

³⁰David S. Broder, *The Party's Over: The Failure of Politics in America*, Harper & Row, New York, 1972. See also David S. Broder, “The Party's Over: What This Country Needs is Some Unvarnished Political Partisanship,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1972.

Maine Government's Own Shutdown

There are lessons to be learned here. When Maine had its own shutdown, I had just come back to the legislature. I had been there for ten years, left, and came back. I became chair of the Banking and Insurance Committee, right in the middle of what was going on, that so roiled the political temperature in Maine.

Maine's Worker's Compensation market was totally broken; everybody was in what was called the "residual" market. If you had an unsafe workplace or the safest in the world, you paid the same rates. Well, everybody knows that's not right, whether you're a Democrat or Republican; but it was also tied to the perception for some, the reality for others, that the benefits for injured workers were too high and there needed to be Worker's Compensation reform. It had nothing to do with the budget, but let me explain Maine's budget process a bit.

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There's nothing in the Maine Constitution or law that says you have to have a two-thirds vote, a super majority, to pass a budget. However, a Maine law doesn't take effect until 90 days after you adjourn *sine die*. Then there's this pesky thing called the fiscal year, so that means you would have to adjourn *sine die* 90 days before July 1, leaving unfinished business. Well, that didn't happen that year, and I will never forget it.

I had watched Speaker John Martin of Aroostook bring the gavel down many times so fast that splinters flew. But when negotiations between the Republicans and the Democrats totally bogged down over the budget and Worker's Comp reform, that gavel hung in mid-air forever, it seemed.

Whatever one might think of the Speaker, he loved the institution of the Legislature, and did many things to reform it; but he had no idea that partisan brinksmanship would come to such an end; and we went into shutdown mode. It changed me, and it changed my later actions as Speaker. Tents arose in Capital Park, horns blared all night long, the committees of jurisdiction met 'round the clock with the Chief Executive, Gov. John McKernan.

I don't know what it's like in Washington now, I can't imagine; but I'm sure it's not pleasant. As the world is watching, you're doing everything wrong. But I'll tell you something: it is toxic to *both* parties. It is toxic to the

institution. It is really something that no one would *ever* want to do again. My own Banking and Insurance Committee worked through all of this and created the basis for reform, what's known as a self-insurance model, called MMIC. Basically, if you don't hurt people, you don't pay much; and if you hurt people, you pay more. MMIC is one of the success stories of that horrible shutdown; but it took a terrible toll on everybody.

Several years later, when I became Speaker of the House, there was never an issue like ObamaCare tied to the budget, or some other issue. Governor Angus King was an independent, not a Republican or Democrat, and did not want to be seen as a member of either party. As Republican and Democratic leadership kept meeting with him about his first budget, the minority Republicans in the Senate said, "Well, we'll need to change this and change that in the budget; and finally the goal post had been moved so many times that it *had* to come to an end.

The Democrats passed a budget and adjourned *sine die*; and Governor King immediately called us back into session, one hour later. This meant that that budget was going to take effect even though it was a partisan, majority budget. This act became very frightening to many, especially Republicans. When I became Senate President, they said, "Oh, no! Is she going to do that to us again?" And just the fact that it *could* be done again made people work together, better. By the way, the budget that had passed was called a majority budget, and more than two-thirds of it was exactly what *both* sides had agreed to.

Remember this: the Maine legislature prides itself on unanimous reports from its committees. We work on committees, 13 men and women from all over the state; and you're a failure as chair if you produce a divided report, you're a success if you can find agreement. There's a long history of compromise in the Maine Legislature. I love the institution.

Maine Fishbowl Politics

I want to talk about decorum, because I think it is very important. When I was first elected to it, my mentor was a Republican, Bennett Katz of Augusta. He was fighting the battle of equal educational opportunity all across the state; but really it was about taxes. The bill was called LD 1994. What Katz said was, "It doesn't matter where you live in the State of Maine, your kids have the right to an equal education." Well, there was a group that rose up called Maine Freedom Fighters; and if you think the Tea Party is angry, they were *very* angry!

The Maine Freedom Fighters came from everywhere to the bill's hearing, saying that towns like Castine and other places should not be required to pay so much; they didn't have the kids, so why should their property taxes be the equalizer?" And I will tell you this, lest we think that Maine is always peaceful and quiet: at hearings on

this bill, legislators had their windshields broken, people disliked the idea so much. Katz held his ground, however, and modified the bill to try and gain support. Maine tries so hard to make sure that people from Millinocket to Cape Elizabeth get access to good education.

There's also a history of the voters repealing things that happen in the Maine Legislature, and it has an impact on what happens here. During my time as Senate President, we passed a tax reform bill that the *Wall Street Journal* called "The Maine Miracle." We were pretty happy about that, because we needed some tax reform at the time; but the next thing we knew, there was a citizens referendum that repealed it!

We passed some funding for healthcare reforms so that children might have the healthcare they need. We wanted to pay for it with a tax on alcohol. Anheuser-Busch didn't like that very much, and I saw a political ad on television that they ran against this effort, because any one state that broke the barrier would set a bad precedent for other states. A citizens' referendum resulted and, again, the law was repealed.

Legislators in Maine work in this big fish bowl; and I fight for that opportunity to have a people's referendum. We saw one on Equality in Marriage, and how that started to change things, and others. Some of things you work on are repealed, and some things that you work on succeed. When I ran for governor in 2010, there was so much malaise across the land. I think now about how many people were so miserable – they didn't have their jobs, their incomes were not increasing, they didn't know where they were going to get healthcare. I wanted to look at the successes because many of the attack ads then were, "Look at what 30 years of Democratic rule has done to the State of Maine."

30 Years of Democratic Rule

Let me tell you some of the things we did over several decades, on my watch. We achieved improved and more affordable educational opportunities. We created scholarships, vocational programs, historic tax credits to help us preserve our heritage, affordable housing, percent-for-art, and access to healthcare, especially for children. We cleaned up our rivers and our air. Research and development prospered for the very first time. We became the first state in the country to fund Head Start.

School breakfasts for the needy: I worked on this as Speaker, and was criticized, because, "If mom would just get out of bed, these children wouldn't be hungry." Transitions to work: in fact, my daughter chaired the Health and Institutional Services Committee when she was a single mom, herself, and wanted to help people go to work, get the skills they need, the daycare they need, the job training, the things that matter. We're going to have a new courthouse in Kennebec County because

people didn't buckle when things were tough, because they knew they needed to invest in roads and bridges and civic infrastructure for the future!

When I heard the first debate about adding sexual orientation to the Maine Human Rights Act, it was so *crude* and so *bad* that the Speaker of the House had to clear the chamber of children; he did not want them to be exposed to that kind of rhetoric. Later, when I presided over the debate as Speaker, Maine's first openly gay House member spoke about why the bill was important to him; and anybody who voted *against* it had to explain *why*! The table had turned, because the people of Maine had begun to speak out and to learn; it was absolutely amazing when that happened.

There are things I tried and didn't get very far on; but I'm not sorry. I was pilloried for trying to get sick pay for moms and dads who worked, when they needed to take a day off to take care of their kids. Even the businesses that offered this were afraid that my proposal "would be another mandate from the State." So, that failed. The one

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thing I really wanted to do as Speaker of the House – and so, hopefully, someone else will do it one day – is the State of Georgia's Hope Scholarship Program.

Of course, Georgians gamble more than we did then, they had a big lottery fund, and their every student got four years of college at State expense. I don't think they still have it, because times have been tough everywhere; but our proposal was so simple and paired down, we became the "but-for" piece. That is, you still had to get your Pell grants and your student aid. The piece we proposed was still missing, because we had found that for so many Maine students, it wasn't lack of aspirations that kept them from college, it was lack of money; and their parents did not want to borrow, because they had been brought up *not* to borrow.

Enough Is Enough!

At any rate, these and other things remain to be done, for others still to do. I want Washington to get its act together, so it can learn from Maine and it can work with Maine. I have a passion for politics and for making gov-

ernment work. I never went into it for money; you can ask my family, because there's no money there. I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to make life better for the kids in our community. I wanted to make education better. And if we're going to right this ship of state that is now in a lot of trouble, as I always told our party caucus, "Politics is not a spectator sport." You're just going to have to step up and say – as the United States Senate chaplain told them yesterday – "Enough is enough!" Enough is enough because I believe that the party is *not* over.

I believe that we can govern ourselves; but we're going to have to make some extraordinarily important reforms. No one knows how to get money totally out of politics, it has always been there; but we need a whole lot more disclosure. No one should be able to call themselves "Citizens for a Better Government" or "Citizens Who Like Clean Air," when they are paying for something totally different. Who *are* they? With disclosure you can know; then, you can educate yourself. If your candidate is totally

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bought and paid for by a certain group or team – if you know – then it's your responsibility to make a decision. I don't know how to get it out any other way except by disclosure, information, and education.

I am often asked about being in legislative leadership and a House Speaker or a Senate President. I think the most important training I ever had for those jobs was being a mom. You learn there that there's a time to say no; that there's a time to really listen; that you can't reward bad behavior; and you take risks for their

benefit. Of course, they don't always appreciate it until later. Being a mom and a teacher were extraordinarily important in shaping my views. I'm so honored to have been in leadership posts. You never see yourself as "the woman Speaker" or "the woman President," as I see my many of my women colleagues here today. We just did our jobs.

And I would like to say this, about the "prose" part of governing. There are those who say that my experience in the legislature was not a good thing. One person who wrote about this said, "Mrs. Mitchell's successes took place entirely in the rarified atmosphere of the State House. Within those walls she was masterful. Outside of them, not so much." That may be true; but I wanted to

govern. I didn't care who got the credit; and, I'll bet, not three people in this room have any idea what bills I sponsored, because it really didn't matter to me. It mattered to me that the job got done. If we could just get our national elected officials to know that Maine people *do* that! Just look at our role models, let's keep them front and center. If we could send George Mitchell to the Middle East to solve *that* problem, honestly, I know he could solve this shutdown.

Thank you so much for listening. It's been a wonderful trip down memory lane. It's also been an opportunity to think about the future, because I'm not just about the past, I'm about the future. Some of you know I got my law degree and my Medicare card in the same year. Part of the reason is that I once worked at the Muskie School, and the Law School was just downstairs. I kept looking at it and thought, "That looks like fun." So, at the moment I'm trying to be a lawyer, I'm mediating, I'm a guardian-ad-litem, and I'm learning to help people in a different arena.

I think life is all about being full of passion, passion for making Maine a better place, for making the country a better place; and those are the kinds of elected officials you should send to office. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Q & A

Question: *Libby, you have held the top position in both the Maine House and Senate. The chambers differ greatly in size, one having 151 members, the other just 35. Could you comment on the differences you found between the two chambers and their decision making? Is one more inclined to operate in a bipartisan fashion than the other? Or, from your experience, is there no real difference in this regard?*

MITCHELL: I honestly think a lot depends on the leadership and the approach they bring. When I was Senate President, my House colleague was the youngest woman Speaker in the country, Hannah Pingree of North Haven. I loved working with Hannah. She reminded me of youthful thinking; and she could text everybody, and I couldn't do that at the time. More importantly, she really worked to join the two chambers; we respected one another and were able to bring them together. Democrats in the House don't always agree with Democrats in the Senate, while Republicans usually agree. Our job was to bridge the divide. The hallway between the two chambers can be quite long, so we made a special effort to overcome that.

Let me tell you how I managed the House. There are 151 members of the House; and when I was Speaker, at least 90 or so were Democrats. How do you lead a caucus of that size? I broke them down into groups, and brought

them into the Speaker's office and made them part of the conversation in smaller groups. In the Senate, there are 35 members and each is so special and knows everything, right? We all do. But it was still the same focus. You allow people to talk and be heard.

I'll tell you a quick story, if I may. The Equality in Marriage issue was one of the most extraordinary and challenging times in my tenure. I had not taken a strong position on it because I wanted my caucus to agree on a bill without a referendum attached, which the advocates thought most important. We came right up to the day before the Judiciary Committee was to vote on the bill and send it to the full chamber. I recessed the Senate and invited all the members of my caucus to my office, where we sat down, like in a living room, and talked for almost two hours. It was all about member's own experiences, about their relatives, about how they had been treated; it was almost like a revival meeting. It was extraordinary how people were able to talk in a private room about these very difficult things.

My Assistant Majority Leader at the time is Catholic and had been threatened with ex-communication. She was really worried about what to do, because she believed in her heart that the bill was the right thing to do. By the time we left, we had a totally unanimous caucus. When the Judiciary Committee members voted on the bill, they voted together, when they had not been united before. One of my Republican colleagues remarked to me, "I don't know what you do to people in your office. I had some of their votes when they went in there; and when they came out, I didn't." I didn't do anything. I allowed the caucus members to have the space and the opportunity to talk about this gravely important, tough political issue.

And I will tell you this: not one single town in my Senate District had ever supported the issue. So, it was difficult for legislators, it wasn't like getting re-elected at any cost, things like you see in Washington today. It was, "What are the values that we share, that we stand for? And if I don't get re-elected, so be it, because this value trumps being re-elected."

Question: *I supported you for governor in 2010. As things progressed, however, I decided at the last minute to vote for Eliot Cutler, to spare us Paul LePage. If we had Portland's system of ranked-choice voting, I could have given you my first choice vote and Cutler my second, and the outcome would have been different, much better. Your thoughts?*

MITCHELL: I have no problem with the ranked-choice voting, I think that we need reforms like that. 2010 was an aberration. If you think money in politics doesn't matter, we can have a little chat about that. Three weeks out from Election Day, a poll was taken by the Maine Education Association, and we were even with LePage. Then,

as you know, the momentum band wagon started rolling the other way. We knew the earth had started to shift, we knew that; and I am always amazed at the people who say I should have dropped out. How does one drop out when you are the nominee of the party? But I get that from people who don't understand politics.

I mean you couldn't drop out. Your name is on the ballot, and the ballot is printed. If I had dropped out, what would I have done? Who would I have endorsed? I didn't share the views of either of my opponents. So, you stay there. But it's difficult to hear people say, "You should've dropped out." Nobody should have dropped out, you can't. You can only drop out before the ballots are printed.

At any rate, ranked-choice voting might have helped; but I don't think everybody who voted early for me wished they could have gotten their vote back. Some probably did, but I wouldn't take that opportunity away from Maine people, they love early voting. Voting on Election Day is a cherished thing here; and so is *register-*

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ing to vote on Election Day, and that is something that's being taken away in some of the states. I prefer reforms that show positive thinking – like ranked-choice voting – as opposed to taking away registration on Election Day, and that sort of thing.

Question: *Let me follow up on that question, if I may. You ran as a Clean Elections candidate. Did that hurt you financially, especially toward the end of the race?*

MITCHELL: There was a limited amount of money I could have under Clean Elections; and as you know, a Clean Election candidate cannot coordinate with party or PAC groups, there are rules against coordinating with anybody. I discovered an interesting thing about this, however, one that I hope scholars will think about it.

In our system of politics, people have only so many ways to participate. There are shoe leather, knocking on doors, making phone calls, signing up for coffees, and that sort of thing; and there's also the giving of money. I'm not talking about the Koch brothers-scale of money. I'm talking about \$50, \$100, \$2,000, or whatever. I never called or cultivated the well-off opinion makers in Maine who normally participate financially, because I wasn't raising money at all. As a result, many of them thought we

weren't doing *anything*. We *were* doing other things, but we weren't calling and keeping them in the loop, because there was only so much time in the day. I wasn't able to cultivate the opinion makers who tell you whether you're running a good campaign or not.

I don't know that I could have run without Clean Elections, however. It opened the door for people who aren't multi-millionaires, so I do believe in Clean Elections; but

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there have to be some reforms if it's going to work. You can't send people to run with their hands tied behind their back. They have to have the same financial capability, like the matching funds. When the U.S. Supreme Court removed Arizona's Clean Elections matching funds, they gutted it, because that was the disincentive for people to go out and raise a lot of money. When they raised money, you got

money, so why would they bother? That was the guts of it, and since Maine's law was modeled on Arizona's, we lost that piece. If you don't have matching funds, it changes everything. It's the same thing with the *Citizens United* decision: what a disgrace, in terms of unleashing the flood gates of uncontrolled money that you don't know the source of!

Question: *Given the state of political polarization now, are there any special advantages in electing an "independent" for governor or other state office?*

MITCHELL: Well, if you look at Angus King, a successful and popular independent governor, who is now a United States Senator, he's had to pick a side since his election. It's not based on whether he wants to be a Democrat or a Republican; but he doesn't like the shutdown. He wants to keep government running, and he's trying to use his independence to say that. When push comes to shove, you have to be able to govern; and he had to do the same thing with us when there was a budget threat. He had to work with one party or the other.

You have to make decisions; and if you didn't organize either as a party or some other mechanism, there would be total chaos. Who's going to run the train? Who's going to print the bills? In Washington, the Speaker of the House has the power to say that you can or cannot vote on a bill. I think that's ridiculous. In Maine, we don't look at things as they do. Every single bill has to have a hearing. If you think the Maine Speaker could keep anything off

the floor, you are mistaken. So, there are rules and structures that are bad for government.

Whether you're an independent or not, you are going to have to govern with a party; and parties are a simple shorthand for shared values. What you want to know is, "What does the independent stand for? What are his values or her values?" You have to govern with a party, and parties don't always get along. When I was Speaker, I had a faction in the Democratic caucus called the 207 group. They would make the Tea Party blush, because they felt that strongly about their conservative values. But we worked with them, not around them. We tried to include them, even though they went off into their corner to strategize and politicize.

I don't see anything magic about being independent. In fact, being Speaker of the House is like herding cats. They're *all* independent. I don't know where the notion came from that they walk like lemmings over a cliff; except I see that in Washington today, so I guess that's where it came from.

Question: *The Founders closed the windows and suffered the summer heat of 1788 so they could argue, debate, and compromise without interference. Today the role of the media includes covering every time a politician sneezes, and politicians argue through the media, itself. Can you address how the media makes compromise more difficult today?*

MITCHELL: I told you our story about Equality in Marriage. That was an opportunity to speak without the media repeating everything you said while you were trying to get to a place of comfort with your vote. On the other hand, in our very open society, the last thing I would want is to shut people out. The more informed people are, the better. I read a fascinating article about a Republican Congressman who uttered the word "compromise" not long ago; and immediately it went to Rush Limbaugh, and Rush excoriated him, and he apologized and said he would never use that word again. Those things are very troubling.

This is what happened to us with the alcohol tax, when we tried to fund healthcare for kids. Now, who cared about paying an extra nickel on a six-pack of beer? But this wasn't the message the lobbyists gave out: "Those crazy Democrats will tax anything that moves, so you've got to stop them now before they go too far!" It's that kind of coverage that makes progress hard; but I would never take away the democratic right to know everything that's going on. You know, technology is here; I just want to use it better. I don't want to use it to create gerrymandered districts. I don't want to use it to empower the lobbyists. I would like to use it to empower the citizens, because they have the same power if they will just take it back.

Question: *In his writings on Maine politics in the 1980's, our co-host for this series, Dick Barringer, developed an idea he referred to as the Two Maine's. Many academics and others found the concept a useful way of understanding Maine politics and economics. The notion of the Two Maine's pointed to a widening gap in the 1980's between the fairly prosperous counties along the southern Maine coast that were experiencing much in-migration from southern New England, and the state's northern and eastern counties that were noticeably less well-off. Could you comment on this idea, specifically: how relevant is it today to talk about the Two Maine's in discussing our politics and economy?*

MITCHELL: I would probably call it three or four Maine's, because there are economic disparities all over Maine, and Maine is no different from other states in this regard. Go to New York, go to Virginia. There are pockets of poverty in every state and then there's the more affluent, and what do you do with that? It's a policy question. Policymakers have tried to invest in research and development. They have tried to do more about sustainable agriculture in northern Maine. In fact, one young man up there says, "We can grow our beef cattle, but there's no place to process the beef;" so, hmm, why don't we build a processing plant. As you will recall, when the dairy farmers started talking milk in terms of becoming self-sufficient, they created their own organic cooperative, MOO-Milk. There's also been an effort to try to re-do the Limestone Air Force Base, lots of things have been put up there. Downeast, there's the blueberries; and trying to create wind farms.

As I drive to any place now, it's the natural gas pipeline, and it takes you an extra hour to go from point A to point B. It's exciting because it's economic growth. I keep wondering, though, did the State of Maine get anything for the right-of-way that's being used by these gas companies, because that was our plan for alternative energy? In fact Peter Vigue of Cianbro first suggested that. Why don't we sell or lease the right-of-way. Well, we own the road. Wind energy is still important. Alternative energy, Maine can be a producer of that.

Question: *When you were Senate President and Hannah Pingree was Speaker of the House, it was the only time in Maine history that two women were running the Legislature. Did it make a difference?*

MITCHELL: I don't know that it was because we were women. We shared the same values. We wanted it to be successful. We wanted to leave having accomplished things. Hannah was a huge leader on environmental issues and alternative energies, but also in getting that poison out of baby sippy-cups; believe it or not, that was controversial for a while.

We shared values and we also approached it the same way. We had dinner with our Republican colleagues in leadership at least every other week, and we really liked them. They are good friends, and that was our style. We were collaborative, we cared about the House and the Senate, and we cared about our Republican colleagues. That's the tone we set. We got in there to get something done, and people began to realize there was no effort to do a majority budget. Remember, I was the Queen of the Majority Budget, and people didn't trust me; but once they understood that was not the issue, we were able to work together.

"Whether you're an independent or not, you are going to have to govern with a party; and parties are a simple shorthand for shared values. What you want to know is, "What does the independent stand for? What are his values or her values?"

Question: *Occasionally there's an argument in Maine over the size and cost of the Maine House of Representatives – that it's too large, too expensive. Do you have any thoughts about whether the House is about the right size, or whether it should be reduced in number?*

MITCHELL: This reminds me of a Morris Udall quote, "Them's my views; and if you don't like them, I'll change them." I have probably voted on both sides of this issue, because I kept thinking about it in different ways. Probably it could be smaller, and I think that was my most recent political posture; though not a lot smaller, because one of the things that kept us from being like Washington was being "up close and personal," because your constituents can say, "No, no, don't do that."

It's a Two Maine's issue, too. Every time you shrink the size of the House, the people in northern Maine feel disenfranchised – if you think how far they have to drive, from downeast or western Maine. Whereas for Portland, maybe you would get one less representative, so that becomes the issue. How do you make people feel that this is *their* government? It doesn't really cost a lot. You know how little legislators make.

Whether or not you have a smaller House, one good thing we have is the nonpartisan professional staff. This was a reform the Maine Legislature made in the 1970s, and it has made a lot of difference. The old Augusta House lobbyists were bringing over their own drafts of legislation – and why not, it was easy to do. That doesn't exist now because you can go to an independent, thinking

person who can tell you, “If you do this, it has these consequences. If you do something else, it has others.” So, I might reduce the House some; but it’s not about saving money, it’s just because people perceive it as being too heavy with representatives.

Question: *There seem to be far fewer business people in the Legislature today than there were, say, 30 or 40 years ago; many distinguished people from the private sector served in and became leaders of the Legislature then. Does the Legislature enjoy the same respect today within the private sector? Has their respect for the institution, itself, changed?*

MITCHELL: I’m not sure why it has. I want to describe the respect for the institution I got from Senator Bennett Katz, who was a successful businessman from downtown Augusta. I watched how he ran committees, how he demanded respect for the public. I think it starts there: demand that the committee members treat the public with respect. If they don’t, the Senate President and House Speaker appoint members to the committees, and they can take them off. That authority has to be exercised, when needed.

I once got a report that a committee member was being very rude to people who had come to make a statement to their elected representatives. He was walking around, slamming doors, and engaging in behavior not acceptable to me. I called this representative into my office, looked

at him, and said, “I’ve heard some really bad things about your behavior. I put you on that committee and I can take you off.” I didn’t really want to. He disarmed me totally, however, with his great sense of humor. He said, “I’m so sorry, Speaker Mitchell. I had a brat attack”. And so I laughed and it never happened again. These were my expectations of committees, and I carried them through to the Senate. If members of committees mistreated the public or mistreated their responsibilities, I would call them out for it; and Hannah would do the same thing.

You really can’t have our leaders calling one another “spoiled brats,” and such. You can’t have leaders calling each other unworthy to serve in public office. This is not civil discourse. I believe in principled partisanship, and I’m going to close with this. E.J. Dionne once wrote that principled partisanship means, “You know, I might disagree with the Republicans on just how many benefits an injured worker should have; but I still like my Republican friends. They may be right, and I need to talk to them about it.” That’s principled partisanship.

We don’t call each other names and say, “You’re not worthy of being in the Legislature, because you’re not educated enough.” I respect the people around me; and when we demand that kind of respect as leaders, it goes out to everybody, whether you’re a business person or a college student serving in the Legislature. What you bring to the process is way more important than what your background is!

Thank you very much. (Applause)



8. Peter Mills 'Teach Your Children Well'

October 24, 2013

Introduction

Peter Mills is the senior member of one of Maine's most distinguished and accomplished families; and I must thank his younger brother, Paul, for much of this introduction. Just imagine, if you will, a Christian family blessed with two brilliant sons, one Peter and one Paul. What a family dynamic that must have set up! Then there were two daughters, as well; but more about that later.

So far as is known, the Mills family is one of just two families in all Maine history who sent three generations of sons, with the very same name, to serve in the Maine Senate. Peter's grandfather whose name he bears served two terms in the Maine Senate, representing Hancock County. His father, whose name he also bears, served two terms in the Maine Senate before being appointed U.S. Attorney for Maine by President Dwight D. Eisenhower; where he served for 16 years. Peter, himself, using his several forbears' name to excellent advantage, has served no fewer than six terms in the Maine Senate, where he distinguished himself with a principled, pragmatic, and bipartisan approach to the challenges facing Maine.

Can any of you tell me the other Maine family that has sent three generations to the Maine Senate, with the very same name? Any guesses? Well, it is the Collins family of Caribou, none other than that of Maine's senior U.S. Senator, the much admired Susan Collins. Her great-great grandfather, Samuel W. Collins, a Democrat, went to the Maine Senate; as did her grandfather Samuel W. Collins, a Republican; as did her uncle, Samuel W. Collins; and, indeed, as did her own father and my personal friend, Donald Collins. Very fine, practical, and accomplished



County men, one in all.

Peter Mills has a number of distinguished family members of his own in service to Maine. His wife, Nancy, is a Justice of the Maine Superior Court. His sister Janet has served as the first elected female district attorney in Maine history, and in the Maine House of Representatives; today she is Maine's Attorney General. His sister Dora, a physician, served as Maine's Director of Public Health in the administrations of governors Angus King and John Baldacci; and is now Vice-President of the University of

New England. So we have sisters in the family, as well, Janet and Dora; I'm surprised their parents didn't name them Mary and Martha.

His brother Paul, my teacher in all this, continues to "hold down the fort" as an attorney in private practice in Farmington, where he is widely known for his shrewd and perceptive writings on Maine political history and public affairs. Paul also has moderated more than 140 town meetings in Franklin and Somerset Counties, where he remains, as he likes to say, "undefeated in his perpetual quest for minor public office, 140 times without a single defeat."

(If I had but one wish for eternal life) I would choose to be a member of the Maine Legislature during the last three weeks of each legislative session. I have had 16 of these experiences, and I have never felt more intensely alive, more useful, more engaged, more thrilled with my life."

spend a little time in Aroostook County, you will become related to everyone else in Maine within three generations. Peter may even be related to each of you here today.

It is my great personal pleasure to introduce a good friend and genuine Maine hero in the continuing quest for practical and useful government for all Maine people, S. Peter Mills, III, of Cornville and Portland, Maine. (R.B.)

PETER MILLS: It is impossible for me to begin without saying a few words about this series. Dick Barringer and Ken Palmer have done yeoman's work putting it together. I have listened to all of the preceding talks and been thrilled with them.

I need to also point out that it is very easy for those of us in politics to talk about all the problems we face. Indeed, many Maine people start out in politics by writing a book. Eliot Cutler has written one recently. Angus King wrote one. Others have written them, saying, "Here's the situation." Without being critical of any one of these, I find that it's very common to rehearse with graphs and charts all of the problems that this state and the country face; and when you get to the last chapter, to find out what

the remedy is, they sometimes come up a little short.

Joseph McDonnell, Dean of the College that houses the Muskie School, just this past week wrote a very fine piece in the *Portland Press Herald*, reminding us of the day in 1950 when Sen. Margaret Chase Smith took on the communist-baiting Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. I was seven years old. I had campaigned with Margaret in 1948, my earliest memory of politics, in the front seat of a Chevrolet coupe that my father drove. I can remember being allowed to sit in the front seat because in a Chevy coupe, if you were five years old and you sat in the back, you could see nothing, the windows were so small; and Margaret insisted that my father permit her to ride in the rear and me up front.

There are Republicans of that character and calibre even today in government. We have seen examples of how some have responded recently in the U.S. Senate; and we see the likes of them today in the Maine Legislature, as well. Do not despair for the future of the Republican Party!

A Creature of True Democracy

When you get to be 70 years old, as I did last June, you begin to watch movies like *The Bucket List*, where two old codgers begin to dream up things they might like to do before they kick the bucket. I'm a little more fond of thinking about my bucket list in reverse. In other words, let's suppose the grim reaper came by to see me and said, "Mr. Mills, I have some bad news. We're about to take you away, tomorrow; you have but another day. That's the bad news. The good news is, for reasons completely not understood by me, my superiors have decided that you should have until tomorrow to tell us what it is that you want to do up there for the rest of eternity. When I come back for you tomorrow, I would like your decision".

Well, it sets you to thinking, doesn't it? Would you like to spend your time listening to Brandenburg concertos at Merrill Hall; or maybe watching Bob Dylan and Joan Baez one more time sing that duet, *Forever Young*, at the State Theater. Would you like to be seated at your favorite banquette at Back Bay Grill, or sailing down Eggemoggin Reach with your grandchildren in a boat and a light breeze on the starb'd quarter? Lots of things? (The idea of being entertained by 70 virgins has never appealed to me. I think they would grow old. At least, I think my affiliation would be unproductive and somewhat boring after a while.)

I can tell you what my answer would be without equivocation. I would choose to be injected as a member of the Maine Legislature – and Maine in particular – during the last three weeks of each legislative session. I have had 16 of these experiences, and I have never in my life felt more intensely alive, more useful, more engaged, more

thrilled with my life, than to spend that time playing a game of bridge with 185 other players, being lobbied all the way into the men's room, sometimes by female lobbyists, people tugging at your sleeve all the while.

It's an ego bath of sorts, everybody wants your attention and vote. You're required to stand up on short notice, sometimes with no preparation, to argue vehemently a cause that you may believe in or oppose. It is *extremely* intense, and there is nothing in my life that has ever made me feel quite so alive as going through it. I would choose to do that for as long as you would put me into the environment.

I fell in love with the Maine House and Senate back when I did some lobbying for the Maine Trial Lawyers Association, as its president. I really wasn't the lobbyist, we had a very fine one, named Dale Thistle, and he was introducing me to the Legislature. I had very little experience with lobbying, and was brought down because one of the bills we were concerned with needed to be defeated. Dale had been lobbying it all session. Toward the end, the bills are flying back and forth and amendments are being written, and there's chaos in the building. I was sitting up in the back of the House gallery, watching this bill being debated, discussed, and *it passed!* I'm looking at my lobbyist Dale and getting worried. He grabs me by the arm and says, "We're going to kill it in the Senate!"

Down we went running to the Senate chamber; and shortly after we got there, the bill arrived and came up for the vote. The bell started ringing for a roll call vote, we're counting the votes on the board, and it comes out tied, 17 to 17. I'm on tenterhooks, the bell is ringing, and then one of the senators who had been busy in committee comes striding into the back of the room. Sen. Bonnie Titcomb (now Lewis) – five foot ten, shoulders back, head high – stood behind her seat, looked up to see what the issue was, pressed the button, and voted "Nay!" Bang! Down came the Senate president's gavel, and the bill was dead and gone! What an experience! I've seldom seen anything quite so dramatic. And that's the way it is in the Maine Legislature.

It isn't that way in the New York State Assembly. It is not that way in other so-called democratic institutions. The Maine legislature is and continues to be a creature of true democracy. Every member gets to propose an amendment if he or she wishes it. There is no 60 vote cold-cloture. There is no partisan gerrymandering of districts, because the State Supreme Court will intervene and fix it objectively, as they have on occasion. We're very, very lucky in Maine to have the benefit of a true democracy in action. It is a thrill, truly, the biggest thrill of my life to have been part of it.

When I get done at the Maine Turnpike Authority, and if the people of Somerset County would have me back, I would go back in a heart-beat; and I would recommend it to any of you.

It's not easy to get there. I remember having been in the Legislature for 12 years when I ran for governor and lost. The people of Somerset County were kind enough to nominate me again for my Senate seat, and I had on occasion lost the little town of Moscow. Moscow had a number of Democrats and they were a tough audience for me. I remember going around to all the back roads and houses; I went down roads that no politician had ever been down before. I came to one house with a skidder in the dooryard, knocked on the door, and said: "Hi, I'm Peter Mills. I'm running for the State Senate, would love to have your vote". And the man looked at me and said, "Well, you've got it. Anybody is better than that idiot we've had there for 12 years!" (Laughter)

The Power of Narrative

One of the things wrong with our politicians today – myself included – is that they often fail to appreciate the power of personal narrative and storytelling as much as they should.

When I look back at George Mitchell's run for Governor in 1974, and at Angus King's run in 1994, which he just barely won, I think that both of these very smart people were at that time responding to questions with fabulous policy answers, but weren't doing so good a job as they now do at *engaging* with the public on a personal level.

One of the things wrong with our politicians today is that they often fail to appreciate the power of personal narrative and storytelling. Storytelling is what gets your policy over the top."

When George Mitchell ran in 1974, someone would ask him a question about education reform or welfare fraud or something, and he would offer a six-point program and lay it right out for you; and those of us who enjoy that sort of thing would say, "God, that man is on top of the issue." Yet Jim Longley, who beat him, had a little narrative story of his own. He had a *life narrative*, and sort of a beady-eyed, single mission; and he won. Gov. Paul LePage did this to me. He came into the primary with a personal narrative – not just the ability to *tell* a story, but to *be* one. You've seen the evidence of this here, in the last several weeks. George Mitchell is one of the most gifted orators you've ever heard and he's not lost an election since, all because he knows how to tell his stories and *personify* it. And Angus, of course, is one of our finest communicators.

I've often thought that Southern politicians are best at this. There's one story that I've always enjoyed telling.

James Carville, the ragin' Cajun, the Democratic consultant who grew extremely frustrated about the Republican juggernaut to repeal the estate tax. At some point, he said, "If we Democrats can't tax a few dead Republicans, we ought to give up and call ourselves the pro-choice party, because that's all the dang issue we've got left." And Huey Long, his stories are equally fascinating. He was always in danger of assassination because he was such a populist, and was assassinated at age 42. He would say, "If I die, please bury me back in Winn Parish, so I can continue to participate in local politics".

It's true of the Legislature and it's true of politics generally. One of my closest friends is fond of saying that the plural of anecdote is policy; storytelling is what gets your

"This country is once again a plutocracy. It isn't that we are in danger of having money run the show; money is running the show.... Let's at least get the money out in the open and be patent about it."

policy over the edge, over the top. My favorite storyteller in Maine was Republican Eddie Dexter of Kingfield, who went into the woods at age 12 and later ran both successfully and unsuccessfully for the House. Whenever he stood up and was recognized to speak, there was a hush in the chamber. People came in from their coffee clutches and listened. He was quite fond of chas-

tising the Democrats because they were always trying to ingratiate themselves with small business; and making proposals that on the surface were friendly to small business, but in subtle ways damaging to them.

Eddie would stand up and say, "These Democrats come in and talk about being friendly to small business; they remind me of my granddaughter. I gave her a kitten once, and when I came into the living room, I heard this kitten scre-e-eching. And I said, 'Katie, what are you doing to that little kitten?' She was holding the kitty by his neck, strangling him. And she says, 'Oh, Granddaddy, I'm just *loving* this little kitten to death!'"

On a more serious note, I want to get to some remedies, because I think this is what this lecture series needs at this point. Before I get there, let me identify what I think are the major problems with our politics today. I would identify two that are very broad and encompass many of things that were articulated by our previous speakers.

The New American Plutocracy

The first thing I'm bothered by is the fact that this country is once again a plutocracy. It isn't that we are *in danger* of having money run the show; money *is* running

the show. We're already there. This country has survived similar periods in its history. From the time of the Civil War until the onset of the Great Depression, we were a plutocracy. National policy was run in large measure by the trusts, by large companies and corporations, and by secret money and not-so-secret money; and we are there once again.

The Clean Elections system has essentially been gutted by the lack of matching funds available. The U.S. Supreme Court has said that corporations are essentially the same as persons, and that money is roughly the equivalent of speech. Because this comes down on high from the Supreme Court, trying to figure out a remedy is very difficult.

You can consider a citizens' campaign to launch a constitutional amendment, which is very difficult to get through the House and the Senate; or you can say to yourself, "As life goes on, maybe the composition of the Supreme Court will change over the next 30 or 40 years" – the same way it changed dramatically on the issue of race, with the overturning of *Plessey v. Ferguson* in 1954, or on issues relating to gay marriage. The Supreme Court is made up of human beings, and they have the capacity to see things differently, as generations pass; but that's a long-range prospect, a long way off.

If there is a remedy for the money-in-politics issue, it is to insist on laws that require full disclosure. The court has not said that a law that requires disclosure is inappropriate. Let's at least get the money out in the open and be patent about it. When my father campaigned for office in the '50s, his idea of a strenuous campaign was to buy 500 pencils with his name on them, stick them in a coffee cup on the counter at his law office, and have people pick them up as they came in for counsel.

Then we went through phases in the 1970s and '80s when the Democrats taught us Republicans how to go door-to-door; that personal contact was essential; that even if you're a lawyer or a businessman or an insurance agent or whatever, you have to get out from behind the oak desk in your office, and go find out where your clients, your customers, your constituents actually live. For a long time, many of us thought "Oh, goodness, that's hard work!" Well, now we know that it's required, and maybe you even have to go twice to every door.

You may also need \$100,000 or more to win a Senate race in this State, if you're in a real contest. That's very discouraging, and I don't think it is a partisan thing. My observation over the years is that the money flows to the party that's in ascendancy; and right now the Democrats are in ascendancy in Maine, in both the House and Senate. Most intelligent lobbyists think that the money in the next campaigns will flow into the Democratic side of things, because they want to be there to influence the leadership, whoever leads the Legislature.

The Vexing Public Debt

The other problem is more of a policy than a political challenge, though I cannot distinguish between the two on this issue. I don't at all admire how the Tea Party expresses its views on most issues; but I can tell you without equivocation, they are on to something when it comes to the public debt. I'm not just talking about the budget deficit that is being run up in Washington; frankly, that is small potatoes compared to the rest of it, looking ahead.

Someone has estimated that the unfunded liability for Medicare to provide health insurance for people my age and for many of you is five times as big as the challenge that we all recognize in Social Security, another unfunded liability. We have public pensions in some state governments that are unfunded to the tune of several billion dollars. Across the nation, the unfunded liability in state governments is several trillions of dollars. What drives a lot of this is healthcare, which now costs some 17 percent of our gross national product. Most civilized nations are able to get by and do very well by contributing nine or ten percent, *and* they have better outcomes!

When I was a kid, fifteen years old, and got my driver's license, the gas tax was 50 percent of the price of gasoline. It was eleven cents per gallon, state and federal combined, and you could buy gas for 22 cents. Today the gas tax is about 50 cents in Maine, and the price of gas is \$3.50 to \$4 a gallon. The infrastructure that our parents and grandparents built for us – our roads, highway, bridges, water treatment plants, sewer treatment plants – are all lapsing into obsolescence; and we don't have the revenue to keep them in good repair.

On a wide variety of fronts, we are incurring – what? “Debt” isn't the right word! What we're doing is transferring obligations on to the backs of our children and grandchildren across the board, largely in healthcare but also in finance, tax policy, and many other settings. This wouldn't be so bad if we could afford to pay for everything that we need to have done; but we have limits. Even a rich country like the U.S. and a moderately well-off state like Maine have limitations on what the public sector can choose and be able to do.

All of this money we're spending on Medicare and healthcare and Social Security for people like me is money that the public sector should be spending on five year-olds who can't vote. I think our children are in trouble. We're not doing enough for them. It is said that tooth decay among children is a completely eradicable disease; and yet we have third-graders who are sitting in classrooms in pain with tooth decay.

It is also said that illiteracy is eradicable, in the same sense that polio is. Almost any child can be taught to read, because the techniques that are available now are so wonderfully sophisticated. A teacher with proper training can bestow the gift of reading upon a child, yet we have illiteracy in third graders. When they can't read in the third grade, they are losing out not only in literature and reading, but in math, in social studies, and in everything else that has to come to them through the printed word.

In the meantime, people over the age of 65 in our society are very, very well represented in Congress and in state government. *We* all vote, and we're doing quite well in my observation. It isn't that we don't have some unmet needs, we do; but the unmet needs of the young are truly extraordinary in my view, compared with the rest of the population. And it doesn't leave off in childhood. We're having kids graduate from the University of Maine owing \$50,000 and \$60,000; and people graduating from medical school owing \$150,000 and \$200,000.

“All of this money we're spending on Medicare and healthcare and Social Security for people like me is money that the public sector should be spending on five year-olds who can't vote.... Our children are in trouble; we're not doing enough for them.”

When I turned 17, I took an exam given by the U.S. Navy, and they gave me a scholarship to pay my way to Harvard College, and I had to agree to serve in the Navy, which I did for five years. When I got out, I went to law school here on the GI Bill. My wife went through law school. I had two children courtesy of the Navy. By the time I was 30, I had a great job downtown working for Richardson Hildreth and Troubh, a nice law firm. I had no debt and two kids, and my wife and I both had law degrees – not bad!

How many of your children, how many young people at age 30 do you know who are as favored as I was by the society we had going for us in the '60s? Not many. We're cheating our kids, and I'm disturbed by it. I didn't take my Social Security check until five months ago. I guess Governor Paul LePage would say, “Well, Mills, you're on welfare now.” He's right. I'm not foolish enough *not* to take it; but on the other hand, shouldn't we be thinking about this horrible imbalance between those from age 50 and above, and those age 40 and below, and particularly our children?

If I had to suggest something tangible, I'd say, "Listen to Graham Nash." Graham Nash of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, wrote the song, *Teach Your Children Well*.³¹ It seems to me *that* should be our national anthem and replace the one we have.

My mother was a school teacher. She graduated from Colby College in 1939. She got her first job in Warren, Maine. She was paid \$900 a year to teach high school. The smartest women I met growing up were high school teachers, and grade school teachers, too. There's a reason for

"These basic predispositions – the conservative versus the liberal – are fundamental, the yin and yang of human personality. There will always be two parties, and no more than two. I can't conceive of a third, I don't know what a third party would do."

Well, that world is gone now. Smart women are everywhere; and if you're a good surgeon even in Maine, you can make somewhere between half a million and a million dollars a year. The highest paid school teacher you ever met, what is the amount that person is paid? \$60,000, maybe \$65,000? Things are whacky when it comes to taking care of our children. I have daughters who are teachers, and sons-in-laws, too; and teaching is as challenging and important in many ways as surgery.

Meaningful Work

I remember a day, May 20th, 2002, when I was going door-to-door in St. Albans, in a primary race for a House seat. (I'd been term-limited out in the Senate.) As I came down the road, I went up to a front porch where an elderly woman was sitting, maybe 75 years old. I asked her name. "I'm Lucy Burke." I asked, "How are you doing? I'm Peter Mills, running for the State Senate, blah, blah.... How

are you?" She said, "Mr. Mills, if you've got a minute, I'll tell you how I'm doing. Come up and sit down."

I came up to the porch and sat down. Lucy said, "I worked most of my life in shoe shops and my husband worked on the roads. We bought this house, and two years later he died and left me alone here. I grew depressed and felt sorry for myself. I didn't sleep well. I wasn't eating right. I was not at all happy. And I heard about a program through the Kennebec Valley Community Action Program – KVCAP – where they would pay me \$2.65 an hour to go into the schools and work with second graders who have trouble with reading.

"Six months ago I started doing this. I went into the local elementary school, and they gave me a second grader. I worked with him for several months and now he can read like a fiend! Now they have given me a new one. I'm not taking any anti-depressants. I sleep good. I'm eating well. And I'm very, very happy with my life. As you're going around door-to-door, would you tell other old people about this program?" I said I would.

So, there are solutions available to us. If I had to summarize them, I would say, get out and run for the Legislature, it will be the thrill of your life if you get in, no matter how old you are. Learn to tell stories, because that will help you win. Pay our public bills as they come due. And teach our children well!

Thank you very much. (Applause)

Q & A

Question: *I'm going to start off with the Republican Party.*

MILLS: Well, that's what I did!

Question: *At the beginning of your career, the Maine Republican Party was traditionally moderate and centrist. Do you think that the Maine Party is now changing to align itself more nearly with the National Republican Party, with its strong Tea Party element?*

MILLS: It is, but it will recognize that it can't win in Maine without a different formula. It's going to need people like Sen. Roger Katz of Augusta and former Sen. Richard Rosen of Bucksport, and a host of moderate business people who have helped to lead the Legislature over the years; and it will be difficult.

The Democrats went through similar problems, back in the '70s; so, I think that there's a future for the Republican Party. These basic predispositions – the conservative versus the liberal – are fundamental, the yin and yang of human personality. There will always be two parties, and no more than two. I can't conceive of a third, I don't know what the third party would do. Would it be a party that

³¹"Teach Your Children Well" is a song by Graham Nash. It first appeared on the album *Déjà Vu* by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, released in 1970. The recording features Jerry Garcia on pedal steel guitar. Released as a single, the song peaked at #16 on the Billboard Hot 100 charts that year. The song was featured in a 1971 British film, *Melody*.

says, “I’m for the great, muddling middle”? How would that translate into getting votes? I’ve talked with Angus King about this, and asked him, “Why don’t you start a party of your own, or something?” He said, “I don’t know. What would be the platform? How would it gain traction?”

I think the Republican Party is here to stay. It’s going through some evolution, and the Tea Party has to be given some rope. Speaker John Boehner saw this, and said, “I’m going to let this run, but I’m going to let it run just so far.” To his credit, he stopped putting the debt situation into play, and put the radical caucus and the public on notice that he would not allow the nation to default on its debt. It was terrible to shut down the federal government; but sometimes these things have to run a course, and we have to learn from the experience.

Question: *Do you believe the tax rate on the middle class is more burdensome than it is for top income Americans? Would you favor a remedy? Are there two Americas? Does fixing it mean that you have to be a socialist to do it?*

MILLS: I don’t use the word “socialist,” it sort of ends a conversation, rather than starts one. It would be very wise to broaden the base of the Maine sales tax and reduce the rate of the income tax. Why? Because the economists that I have talked to over the years have all said as much. I thought there was an opportunity to do it in the last legislative session, and someone should have seized the opportunity and tried it.

I don’t believe that taxation is the issue, however; it is the *expenditure* side. We are a country that can ill-afford to spend three trillion dollars a year on healthcare and end up with disappointing results. We’re not getting value out of that “system,” and I’m not sure that ObamaCare does enough to control costs.

I wish that Republicans had engaged in the Affordable Care Act lawmaking process, so that cost controls would have come more strongly to the fore. You have to have a united front to fend off PHARMA, the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, the durable goods manufacturers, and the health insurance industry. Those are among the most powerful interests in America, and you need Republicans and Democrats acting together, to take them on.

Question: *How can regular Maine citizens help change the tenor of negativity in politics today in our state and in the nation?*

MILLS: Turn off the negative ads. The unfortunate thing about them is they work, so money will flow behind them; it’s dismal to see them work. We had a nice

legislative race up in Bath recently, where the Republican candidate did almost no negative advertising and her Democratic opponent did a lot of it; to give the latter credit, the ads were paid for by independent expenditures. It was all done by associating the Republican with Governor Paul LePage, and trying to run her down as someone who would be nothing more than a LePage clone. This was not true of her, but we need to respond and react strongly to negative advertising, to the point where it ceases to be effective.

“I wish that Republicans had engaged in the Affordable Care Act lawmaking process, so that cost controls would have come more strongly to the fore. You have to have a united front to fend off (some of) the most powerful interests in America; and you need Republicans and Democrats acting together, to take them on.”

Question: *If you had been elected Governor in 2010, what might you have done and how would the state be different today?*

MILLS: I would have taken the tax code apart in the way I just described. I would have gotten control of healthcare costs within the Medicaid and Medicare budgets. We have 39 very healthy, charity care hospitals in Maine, and they are wonderful institutions; but they now own not only the hospitals, they also own most of the medical practices that are affiliated with them. Therein lies the key to controlling costs.

We need *accountable* care organizations at the local and regional levels, so you can take the local hospital with its associated practices, and say: “All right, you have 2,000 Medicaid patients, they are now attached to you. The State will pay you several thousand dollars a year, whatever it takes, to manage their care; but you must reach out and manage the health of those individuals, from soup to nuts, because you’re going to get X dollars at the front of the program, and all of the risk will be yours to take. We’ll pay you reasonably to do it; but we want you to reach out where those people live, get the asthmatics into care, get the people with COPD into care, get the people with heart disease into care. Integrate mental health with physical health, and have a combined approach to managing the lives of these people, and begin to gain control over this behemoth that is strangling the American economy.” We can do it right here in Maine, we can start here. We’re nimble enough to do that.

Question: *Are you going to run for governor again?*

MILLS: I've got a lot of energy. Not this time; but I might.

Question: *You mentioned Sen. Roger Katz and former Sen. Richard Rosen as the kind of legislators you admire. When you and I were young in Augusta, there were a score of prominent business leaders – mostly men and a few women – who set the tone for and led the Legislature. I think of names like Harry Richardson, Hoddy Hildreth, Joe Sewell, Ken McLeod, David and Sheri Huber, Hollis Wyman, Dick Berry, Chuck Cianchette, Minnette Cummings, and the list goes on. They were major private figures in the state before they went to the Legislature, and saw service there as the highlight of their careers and a civic responsibility. One doesn't see that today. Where is the business community?*

MILLS: I'm not quite sure, but I can tell you a little story about it. Very few people run for office on their own initiative. It typically happens when you get phone calls

“Legislators coming into office are often appalled by the challenge and complexity of putting budgets and tax policy together.... We should get rid of all the stuff that's getting in the way, and make it more appealing for business people and other busy people. ”

gruff voice, “Peter, you ought to run for this Senate seat. I can't stand it down there. Maybe you'll like it”.

Legislators coming into office are often appalled by the challenge and complexity of putting budgets and tax policy together; and they retreat into safe matters like honoring the local basketball team that just won the state tournament, or the 50th anniversary of constituents Joe and Jessie. You wind up spending enormous amounts of time,

with people making self-serving speeches about their constituents and ceremonies; instead of learning the intricacies of state government, plunging in, and beginning to create change. People are afraid of it, and it's beyond me. It is tough work, so they just abandon it and retreat into frivolity. Serious business people have said, “I'm out of here, this is a waste of my time.”

I wrote a memorandum some years ago, “A Grumpy Critique of Maine's State Legislature,” where I state all the things we might do to make life easier.³² I had a friend, a lawyer, who brought files down with him, went into the State Law Library, and sat there with the speaker on, so he could hear the proceedings and still do business. He tried to stay away from it all, and succeeded. Now, with laptops and cellphones, you actually *can* run a business while you're in the Maine Legislature. There is greater opportunity now for a business person to be there and not lose attachment to his client and customers. That's a good thing; but they're still not ready to do it because it's so bloody time-consuming.

My grandfather came up from Stonington on the train in 1902, 1904, and 1906, got into the Augusta House around about the 5th of January, and was gone home by March 28th. He would spend three months in Augusta each two years, and then go back to his law practice in Stonington. It was still this way in the 1950s and '60s. You would meet two or three times a week over a span of just a few months, then go home; and you didn't have to run hard, it wasn't competitive. If people in the community knew you, they would vote for you. Now, you have to spend time going door-to-door and raising money, just to keep the job. As I said, my father didn't campaign very seriously, he didn't have to; and neither did Joe Sewall and most of the other people who ran a successful business.

Question: *On another matter, what was your biggest challenge in taking on leadership of the Maine Turnpike Authority?*

MILLS: I came to the organization with the idea that I would not be a “Chainsaw Al.” Candidly, I saw some of that in state government at the time. It's a mistake to jump into an organization and fire the first fifteen people you find; that's just not the way it should be done. We have 41 fewer people now at the MTA than when I came in. This was done largely by attrition, and in some cases by layoffs and changes within the organization. The first challenge is to understand the organization, so that you can begin to push it in the direction that you want to go; and that evolution is still going on, every day.

The recent toll increase has been the biggest single challenge. I went to nine public hearings scheduled all up and down the different communities. I gave out my cellphone number freely and people called me about it.

³²See Peter Mills, “A Grumpy Critique of Our Legislative Process,” April 1999, at www.petermills.info/articles/maine-legislature

We made it a policy to take on every single citizen complaint about the increase if we could and whether it came over Twitter or Facebook or Internet access. When there was something in the newspaper that wasn't true, we answered it. We made it a point to be on top of it as much as we could.

Question: *The scandal that preceded you at the Turnpike Authority was very unusual for Maine. It seemed to show a lack of effective oversight of the agency by the elected branches of state government. Was this a unique problem with the Authority, or are there other quasi-independent state agencies that need more accountability?*

MILLS: It is unique in Maine, and there are now remedies in statute. I can tell you the cause: the culture of the organization went wrong. It was almost singularly the executive director, who was borrowing practices from Pennsylvania and New Jersey and New York and Florida and Texas and Colorado – and a lot of other places where turnpikes can be run like General Motors, where the expense account is treated as, “So long as it's tax deductible, nobody particularly cares.”

A public institution cannot and must not be run that way; every single expenditure has to be justified. You can't get to the end of a staff meeting at 4:30 in the afternoon and say, “Let's all go out to Back Bay Grill and continue the discussion.” You just can't do that in a public institution. There are some states in America where that *is* done, where it's still going on. I'm very discouraged about the state of democracy in places like Pennsylvania and New Jersey and Illinois. I began by saying we're darn lucky here in Maine; and we're lucky because this happening at the Turnpike Authority was such an anomaly. It is not an anomaly elsewhere.

I was asked one time by Common Cause to come and talk about Clean Elections in front of the Pennsylvania Senate. I spent a day down there just introducing myself to Pennsylvania politics, and all that was going on. They were mostly all white men who had been in service for 20 or 30 years. Each member of the Legislature had a staff of two or three people. They had walnut offices in marble buildings. There was a practice that in the public budget a certain segment would be set aside for you, each member, to be spent ostensibly for something in your own district, earmarked for it. One member was being prosecuted for having spent it on his farm house. When I got the chance to speak I said, “Clean Elections? I'm sorry, you don't want more public money spent on your elections; you've already got it. I don't think Clean Elections is your remedy.”

Question: *Both George Mitchell and Angus King have cited congressional redistricting as one of the big problems they see with the system today, because it cre-*

ates unbalanced districts and encourages extreme voting patterns. Both advise that it must be taken out of partisan political hands. Do you see any hope for this, since it is everywhere a state matter and responsibility? :

MILLS: You know, it is not broken here in Maine; it works, as I said earlier. If the Legislature doesn't get a two-thirds vote for its proposed redistricting plan, then it goes to Maine's Supreme Court to decide. So, the parties are forced to work with each other, and they do, it works. However, the solution does have to come state-by-state. This is part of the price we pay for federalism, and I'm not terribly optimistic. I don't have an answer for that.

“Whatever (the Maine political culture) is, we need to sell it to others. The nation can use what we have; the nation should imitate Maine in government.”

Question: *During Libby Mitchell's visit, we talked at some length about the problem of economic disparities among Maine's counties, especially in the northern and interior counties compared to the southern and coastal counties. Would you comment on the direction you believe state economic development should take in the coming years?*

MILLS: It has always annoyed me that people who get elected to the Legislature go down there with some idea that they can pass a law that is going to make all of Maine prosperous. It just ain't going to happen! I think there is a role for the Department of Economic and Community Development. The most effective thing it can do is to reach out to likely business prospects and bring them in. I think almost anything the Legislature does is likely to be counter-productive, not likely to be successful, and may well be counterproductive.

The most productive thing they could do would be to get the state's own house in order, gain control over the Medicaid account and healthcare and unfunded pension liabilities, and develop a rational tax code. Remember when the Snow & Nealey Company closed in Bangor? They had been in business making axes and hatchets and knives for a hundred and some odd years. When they closed the doors, Mr. Nealey said, “The only thing my family and I ever did wrong was, we paid our taxes every year, and we never got any special benefits.”

We can stop doing special favors just to attract one business over another. Just be fair. And do something about education, because the people who want to come here have children, and the first thing they ask is, “How are the schools? What's the grade school like? What's the high school like?” *That* is the state's function.

Question: *This sort of connects to your comments about Pennsylvania. You say that Maine is special in its democratic functioning. How and why is it different from, say, Massachusetts or other states? What accounts for our particular political culture?*

MILLS: I don't know, I'm just very grateful for it. Whatever it is, we need to sell it to others. The nation can use what we have, and the nation should imitate Maine in state government.

There are just a whole host of things: the rules by which we move bills through the Legislature, the House and the Senate; the fact that the committee chairs are not allowed to kill legislation; every member has the right to offer an amendment if he or she wishes. The way the Legislature functions is very, very open, and self-regulating. Every member takes it on his own not to put in more bills than he should, or more amendments than necessary or appropriate, not to gum up the works. It's very, very gently administered. And it works.

We should get rid of all the pompous ceremonies and all the stuff that's getting in the way, and make it more appealing for business people and other busy people. Any busy person would think twice about going down there. For whatever reason, they are busy – you may be raising children or what have you – but it's hard, it's hard to commit that time. We need to make it easier to get qualified people to participate in this wonderful process called the Maine Legislature.

Question: *President Kennedy once remarked that values lie at the very heart of government, not ideology, not principles, not interests, but values – the things we hold most dear and we cherish and are willing to defend with our lives, if needed. What core values did you try to apply, legislating on Maine people's behalf?*

MILLS: I think the core value that this democracy is founded upon is equality of opportunity; not equality of outcome, but equality of opportunity. I'm trying to make sure that every kid gets a fair start in life; that the remedies for dealing with the poor are fair and appropriate; that the mentally ill are well taken care of, even if we've closed down the institutions that we once used to house them. That's the precept that I used, to keep in uppermost in my mind.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think that Peter should run for Governor. And if Peter doesn't run for Governor, I'm going to run! I just want you all to know. I'm not joking, I'm not kidding you here. I'm very, very serious. I've been in politics. I've been a county commissioner. I've been a counselor. I've been a teacher. I want Peter to be the next governor because the three people running are lousy. They are not the people that we should vote for, and there isn't one of the three that I *can* vote for.

MILLS: And I'll be your Chief of Staff if you get elected!

AUDIENCE MEMBER: No, I'll be yours! (Raucous applause)

9. Amy Fried, Ken Fredette, & Cynthia Dill

Looking Forward

November 7, 2013

Introduction

To look ahead, we have three distinguished and accomplished citizens who combine busy professional careers with very active participation in Maine public life. Two are attorneys, one is a college professor:

Amy Fried is the college professor. She holds a B.A. degree from San Francisco State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, and has taught at the University of Maine since 1997, where she is my colleague in the Political Science Department. Her specialty is public opinion and polling. Amy is the author of *Pathways to Polling*,³³ a highly regarded examination of the polling profession in the United States. Her biweekly column on Maine politics and government in the Bangor Daily News enjoys a large statewide audience. Amy is the recipient of several distinguished awards recognizing her contributions to both scholarship and public service.

Ken Fredette practices law in Newport ME and is the Republican Leader in the Maine House of Representatives, where he serves in his second term. Ken holds three degrees from the University of Maine System, includ-

ing the Muskie School of Public Service and the University of Maine School of Law, as well as a master's degree from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Ken has worked as a political consultant at the state and national levels, having aided in the political campaigns of former Maine Governor John McKernan and former U.S. Senator Bob Dole. Closer to home, he has served on the Board of Appeals in the town of Newport and coaches soccer in Regional School Unit 19.

Cynthia Dill is a practicing attorney in the Portland firm of Troubh Heisler. She holds a B.A. from the University of Vermont and a law degree from Northeastern University. She has served in both Maine's local and state governments, including terms on the Cape Elizabeth Town Council, in the Maine House of Representatives, and in the Maine Senate; and was the Democratic Party nominee for the United States Senate in 2012. Cynthia has been active in furthering the legal interests of disabled persons, having won a major award for this work in 2009. She also leads a project to expand high-speed Internet service to Maine's rural areas.

Previous speakers in the series have examined the causes and consequences of the present-day dysfunction in our politics. We asked our panelists to consider the political prospects in Maine and Washington, going forward. "Do you see us continuing along the present trajectory, improving or worsening? Why? And what will it take to alter the current trajectory?" Our first speaker is Amy Fried. (K.P.)



³³ Amy Fried, *Pathways to Polling: Crisis, Cooperation and the Making of Public Opinion Professions*, Routledge, New York, 2012.

Prof. Amy Fried Some Positive Signs in Maine



Amy Fried

I want to start by thanking Dick Barringer and Ken Palmer for organizing this series, as well as the sponsors and attendees for supporting it. Having listened to all the talks, I've been struck by what an excellent series it's been; and it's going to live on as I recommend it to my friends and colleagues, and assign some of the lectures to my classes. Yes, there will be a quiz afterward!

I've already used some of the material, in particular the lecture by Barney Frank. Frank spoke about when he first came to Congress and couldn't be open about his sexuality. Then he became the first out-member of Congress and the first married gay person in the Congress. Now, "being gay is more highly approved by the American people than being a member of the Congress!" I told this story when discussing with the class Congressman Michael Michaud's recent decision to reveal his sexual orientation, a step that certainly would have been impossible not long ago. It's something that reveals the kind of change that both Maine and the U.S. as a whole have experienced.

The distinguished speakers before me have laid out a parade of horrors, mostly concerning our national politics; and identified some important problems that deserve our attention.

"Most Americans and Mainers care about government being able to do things, to make decisions that improve their lives; they want to see solutions."

– Amy Fried

that will go into a race and fund their primary election opponent. So, individuals and organizations with very deep pockets are having an impact. Another theme has been the more general place of money in politics and the difficulty in regulating it, given U.S. Supreme Court decisions such as *Citizens United*.

Besides these serious problems, we've also heard a lot about bipartisanship as a Maine tradition. There were some really remarkable stories from Gov. Ken Curtis, Libby Mitchell, and Peter Mills about the way that Maine people have governed themselves in the past; and that's what most Americans and Mainers care about. They care about government being able to do things, to make decisions that improve their lives; they want to see solutions. That's what's been undermined in Washington. The Congress has obviously been very ineffective; and while the House stood out in the last month, the Senate has had its own problems with the huge increase in the number of filibusters. Tom Allen, George Mitchell, and Angus King all talked about this as an important matter.

I could say more about what's wrong today, and why. I might talk about the difficulty that our own citizens often have, dealing with conflict and debate; the need to teach people how to differ civilly and to debate productively; and how civics education should emphasize this. But I want today to focus on some more positive signs in Maine and glimmers of hope for the nation's future.

Maine has plenty of issues, of course: healthcare costs, an aging of population, slow economic growth, all kinds of things; but we still have a lot going for us. Unlike what unfolded in Washington, Maine avoided a government shutdown this past spring. As imperfect as this state budget was, by general agreement – no matter one's ideology or partisan position – it got passed and we managed to *do something*.

Second, most debates in Maine politics continue to be conducted with civility and mutual respect. Nationally, as we see more name-calling, polarization, and a degree of nastiness, there remains much civility and respect here. Some may think of a particular exception, of course; but it's much better here than what we are seeing nationally.

A third Maine advantage is that the moderate center has been preserved here. We have U.S. Senator Susan Collins, who will be coming up for re-election and has no primary challenger at present. In this time in U.S. history, that's pretty remarkable. In a lot of other states, a center-right Republican like Susan Collins would have been "primaried" from the right; and there would have been a lot of money placed behind her challenger. Perhaps there is no one willing to do it; but sometimes people just come out of the woodwork, as we've seen in other states.

There may now be a bit of a swing back towards moderation in the nation. This was seen in some of the most recent elections – as, Chris Christie's victory in New Jersey, and the moderate-left Democrat Terry McAuliffe winning the governorship of Virginia. In Alabama there was an election primary where the more business-oriented and conservative Republican won over a Tea Party candidate. So, there's a bit of a moderate swing going on. Still, Susan Collins' not having a primary challenger shows that

there's something different happening here.

Fourth, Maine has shown a continuing commitment to citizen participation by restoring same-day voter registration in 2011, after it was repealed by the Republican Legislature and governor. You can look around the country and see many states where voting has been similarly restricted in various ways. Maine people were able to come together and bring back same-day registration; and stand for a very important tradition in Maine, citizen involvement and voting. We still tend to be in the top five nationally for voting turnout in every election, and often in the top three.

Several other things are important, going forward in Maine. Maine has steadily seen its recent immigrant population incorporated into community and political life. I have a son who runs cross-country track. About two years ago, after one of his races, he said to me, "Look at the top ten runners standing there. Three of their names are Mohammed." They were all from Lewiston, which has a lot of Somali immigrants. Just the other day, the Lewiston boys' cross-country team won the Class A State Championship. This is a way of being involved in community, through sports.

There are lots of shopkeepers from immigrant communities in Maine. In Portland, Pious Ali was just elected to the School Board. This is a new sort of thing, with these African immigrant groups. They have been around for a while; but these communities are at a kind of tipping point now, as their members become better incorporated and more a part of Maine. Immigrants are important, because they add a lot of entrepreneurial energy; they add youth; and they make Maine more attractive to people from outside the state – especially young people who might stay and build lives and careers here.

A final way in which Maine is doing well is that, at least in some places, we're seeing a renewed commitment to, "Yes." There are still quite a lot of cases of "nimby-ism," where people say, "Not in my back yard, thank you! We don't want this kind of development." In Bangor, where I've lived for 16 years, there's been a continual saying of "Yes." The downtown has come back, and the waterfront has been redeveloped.

This all came about from citizen engagement, from citizen groups going out and getting things done, starting with the big American Folk Festival and a commitment to doing new things. Certainly, there are plenty of towns that are lagging, and their downtowns, not doing well; but in many places things are starting and moving along, even outside the more economically vibrant, southern part of Maine.

In Bangor, the initial success has been built by the citizens, themselves; on new people getting involved once they saw some festivals, some other things working. Bangor built a new civic center, restored our library, and cre-

ated new kinds of festivals. One festival organizer was just elected to the City Council; and we elected a 22 year-old to the council. Former U.S. Senator William Cohen might have been just about that age when he was first elected to the City Council; and former Governor John Baldacci wasn't too far behind. We in Bangor have this tradition of bringing in young people who then grow politically.

I don't want to sound Pollyanna-ish, because it's not as if everything in Maine is perfect. A negative right now is that if you look at polling, there is widespread support for expanding healthcare in Maine through Medicaid; but it is currently blocked in Augusta. This is a case where people could get to saying "Yes," if we could just figure out a way to work together. It may not be the traditional Medicaid, it may be some variant. There are many different state models out there, and it's an issue where we could be getting to "Yes." We could be governing just as our legislators proved themselves able to do back in the spring, in passing the state budget.

Overall, then, Maine has some problems; but there are a lot of things we have going for ourselves, as well. It's certainly much better than what we see down in Washington, DC. Thank you very much. (Applause)

Rep. Ken Fredette It's About Relationships & a Budget



Ken Fredette

It's great to be back here. I spent five years at the University of Southern Maine, and I want particularly to recognize Dick Barringer. When I graduated from the Muskie School, it was still a young idea; it was very exciting and energetic; and Dick has been a great friend ever since. We certainly want to recognize him for the great work he's done here, and as a friend.

I currently serve as the Republican Leader in the Maine House of Representatives. Before you take this job, you may want to know what you're getting into. Every time there's a problem, you end up being one of five people in the room trying to decide how to deal with it. You typically will have the Governor and the Democratic and Republican leaders in the House and the Senate. You end up being very, *very* busy!

We saw a very tough time in the Legislature this past year. Some thought we should put a bill in to sell the Blaine House. There were bills to take away the Governor's pension. The Governor at times has been less than

delicate in some of the words that he uses. A lot of this has been driven by politics and the upcoming gubernatorial election. That's made it difficult, but I believe the system will survive and prosper.

The U.S. and Maine constitutions have long been able to adapt to the times and the changes in our society. You had FDR, the eternal president elected four times; and then we finally figured, "Maybe we ought to put this amendment in that says a president can only be there for two terms." Our system has the ability to adapt to the problems that we face over time.

"The legislature is all about developing relationships. That's what may be lacking at the federal level today. People there never get to know who their colleagues are."

– Ken Fredette

board with that. I supported the budget, but it was a tough thing to do. There were things in it that we didn't like, but I didn't believe in shutting down state government. I just didn't think that was the way to move Maine forward.

In my first session, the 125th Legislature, I served on the Appropriations Committee, where I had the opportunity to work with Representative John Martin of Eagle Lake, a legend in Maine politics and government. I really enjoyed serving with someone who, first, is a Democrat; and, second, had been in the legislature for almost 50 years. I learned a lot from him in two years. We developed a very good working relationship; and that's really what the legislature is about, developing those relationships. I think that's what may be lacking at the federal level today. People are so worried about raising money or getting back home to campaign that they never get to know who their colleagues are. I believe that's something that's going to change over time.

Now, if we're going to ask, "What's the trajectory going forward? What has changed in the last 5 or 10 years?" It's these little gadgets right here (holding up a smart-phone)! Everyone has got one of these in their pocket, and you are constantly plugged in. Maybe you're getting a text from some group that you belong to, or from some-

body who's got this issue or that. Technology has fundamentally changed where we are, and where we're going.

I expect that there's only going to be increased political uses of technology. It's used to raise money. It's used to mobilize people to vote. It's used to gather signatures. It's used to help others gather *more* signatures. Technology has fundamentally changed both where we are and where we're going; and, I believe, in a good way. There's this book called, *The World Is Flat*,³⁴ and it's about having the ability, whether you're rich or poor, to have access to information, knowledge, and technology; and that has made the world flatter.

The other thing that concerns me here in Maine is this last election cycle. We have 151 members in the House of Representatives. If you decide to run for the House as a "clean-election" candidate, you get a district with 8,500 people and, under the current system, \$4,500 to run your campaign for the Legislature. In this last election cycle, there were some House races where \$70,000 was spent. If you're getting \$4,500 as a clean-election candidate – and maybe your opponent is a clean-election candidate getting \$4,500 – but through independent expenditures another \$65,000 is thrown into your race, how does your opponent deal with that?

There was a race here in Scarborough where \$40,000 to \$50,000 was spent. In Bangor, \$500,000 was spent in a State Senate race. In 1994 I worked for (State Republican Chairman) Rick Bennett's congressional campaign, when he ran against John Baldacci who later became our governor. We raised and spent \$75,000 in that race for the whole 2nd District; and now we are talking about a State Senate race with a half a million dollars spent. In a recent special election on the coast for a State Senate seat, a hundred thousand dollars was spent on each side. That's a lot of money. It's impossible for someone like me to go out and raise a hundred thousand dollars for a State Senate race.

Money and the influence of independent expenditures are fundamentally changing the game here in Maine and nationally. You have these different organizations now – 503's, or whatever you call them – that get hundreds of millions of dollars in them, and they can decide whether or not they want to spend it against you. That's a very tough thing to fight against. It's going to change the way we go forward. I do believe the system can adapt, however; inevitably, there will be some reforms, and we will continue to be a great society, nonetheless.

Finally, here in Maine and nationally, the role of independent, nonprofit organizations and their influence on the body politic have grown significantly, and very quickly. Three of them – the Maine People's Alliance, the Maine Heritage Policy Center, and the Natural Resources Council of Maine – have amassed large email lists. They have massive abilities to reach out to people and say,

³⁴Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: a Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2005.

“Ken Fredette is in your district and LD 416 is coming up; you need to call Ken Fredette and tell him to vote in favor of LD 416.” Or it might be, “We’re doing a fund raising campaign; Ken Fredette is a big supporter of the natural environment, and we need you to send some money to Ken Fredette.” Going forward, I believe the influence of these independent organizations, using new technologies, will only grow in Maine; and it’s both a good thing and a bad thing.

In the end, this is *all* about democracy. Whether it’s about technology or money, this is all about democracy; and it’s all about us as individuals being part of the system and being engaged. If we all just sit back and allow it to happen, then we’ve permitted it. If we want to regulate it, we can pass laws, rules, and regulations to deal with it. Ultimately, it’s *our* democracy. We need to be responsible and accountable for it. The system we have is obviously a great system. Does it need some reform? It obviously does; and we are the reformers. I am, and you are. If there needs to be some change, then *we* need to do that as individuals. Thank you. (Applause)

Cynthia Dill, J.D. On Wealth & Income Inequality



Cynthia Dill

There’s something very familiar about coming in last! It feels very comfortable for me; I have experience.

I would first like to thank our hosts Ken Palmer, Dick Barringer, Dean McDonnell, and President Kalikow. Thank you very much; and thanks to all of you who have been attending and listening on the air. I, too, have been really enjoying the series and learned a lot. It’s an

honor to be a part of it.

Since I am last, I’m going to give you my conclusion at the very start: America’s biggest challenge is that we are becoming a plutocracy, one that controls the government; and the government is prisoner to this plutocracy. We’re caught up in a cycle of wealth’s having undue influence on our politics; and our politics then being the slave to those who are wealthy.

Abraham Lincoln was the person who said that America is about government “*By* the People, and *For* the People.” There are people in government who govern, and there are those who are governed, like us. Right now, the people who govern need exorbitant amounts of money to win elections.

In the 2012 election cycle – according to Jonah Hahn, writing for the *Harvard Political Review*³⁵ – \$6.2 billion was spent, overall. The average United States Senate race cost \$10.5 million; and in 79 percent of those races, it was the person with the most money who won. For the U.S. House of Representatives, the average campaign cost was \$1.7 million; and 94 percent of the candidates with the most money won. Today we have a system where, in order to get to Congress, you need to raise and spend very large sums of money – in a society where the median income of an American family was \$51,000 in 2012.

“We are becoming a plutocracy; and the government is prisoner to this plutocracy. We’re caught up in a cycle of wealth’s having undue influence on our politics; and our politics then being the slave to those who are wealthy. ”

– Cynthia Dill

Where does all this money come from? It comes from the one percent that we often hear about. We have a growing income inequality; and in the 2012 elections, .000063 percent of the American people gave almost 80 percent of the money. \$240 million was contributed by super-PACs; and 196 people associated with these super-PACs gave the overwhelming majority of it. Elections that cost exorbitant amounts have to get that money from somewhere, and it is coming from a *very* small group of people and organizations.

This means that our political agenda is unfortunately serving those who have the money to sponsor the campaigns. The *New York Times*³⁶ recently reported that Congressman Andy Barr (R., Kentucky) had received \$150,000 from various financial institutions in his first six months on the job; and was sponsor of a bill to remove a rule that would result in a \$500 million dollar tax break to banks. This is just one example that those who govern are governing for a very small group of people and not for the rest of us; not for the majority of us. In my view, unless we have a democracy where we’re equally invested, where our representation is for the most part on a level playing field, we’re not going to have a government that is “By the People and For the People.

Unfortunately, this system that I describe – of gov-

³⁵“The Degrading Force of Money in Politics,” *Harvard Political Review*, Harvard University Institute of Politics, October 23, 2013.

³⁶Eric Lipton, “For Freshmen in the House, Seats of Plenty,” *New York Times*, August 10, 2013.

erning costing a lot of money, and looking to wealthy people to support this – is worsened because the agenda serves the wealthy. In September 2013, the *New York Times* published an article under the headline, “The Rich Get Richer Through the Recovery,”³⁷ and the statistics are staggering. The top one percent of earners took more than 20 percent of all income in 2012, the highest it’s been since 1913. The top ten percent took home more than half of the total income in 2012, again breaking all records. Finally, *this* statistic was staggering: the top one percent of income earners in the country captured 95 percent of *all* income gains since the Great Recession of 2007-08.

“The narrative in Maine has been dominated by the same voices for so long; they’re good voices, but we need to have some new voices. I hope some of the thought-makers and opinion leaders in Maine will cede a bit of their ground to a new generation.”

– Cynthia Dill

with this. We just need to be aware that there’s this very small group of people in our society who are funding government, and who are setting the public agenda. Until we shake that up, until we have a more diverse government, one that’s truly reflective of the population, one that can truly represent Americans, we are not going to change.

That’s why I am so pleased to see people like Cong. Mike Michaud come out and say, “Yes, I’m gay. Why does that matter?” It doesn’t matter, except that it’s good that gay Americans can look to somebody in leadership who is like them, and is forging a path to a more diverse government that will serve all of the people, instead of just this small minority. I believe that until We, the People, are similarly invested, similarly represented, and have a similar opportunity to fully engage in the government, we’re going to have the problems that we have

This cycle – of politics costing so much, and its being a slave to those who have so much – is the problem. (Or at least one of them. I would add that we have a media that is biased toward the wealthy and elite class. The next time you open the *Portland Press Herald*, see if there are any *women* who are offering opinions about politics; count how many are identified as experts.) For all the white, older men in the audience who might be millionaires, I’m not suggesting there’s anything necessarily wrong

today. As Ken Fredette and Amy Fried said earlier, it’s *all* about *us*; and there *are* some promising signs on the horizon.

First, there’s the question of whether we want to have publicly financed campaigns. There have been bills kicking around in Congress for a while. In Maine we have publicly financed elections, and there are problems with it because there are leadership PACs and there’s still private money; but publicly financed campaigns give people opportunities to run for office. We could have a constitutional amendment of some sort, a legislative reform. We could have primaries that are not partisan. There are various things that we can do to get at what is ailing us as Americans; we need to take action.

People have to stop whining about partisan bickering. How many of you pull up in front of the TV and watch football every Sunday and maybe Thursday nights. It’s one of the most violent sports, and we cheer, “Go Patriots.” If you’re at a hockey game and a fight breaks out, it’s the best moment of the whole game! Americans generally like competitive sports, we like challenges. I believe a robust public debate is a wonderful thing. I like a spirited exchange, I like it when there’s argument. But when it comes to sports and politics, we as Americans expect that the rules are fair and the playing field is level. We need to get back to a political system that isn’t so out-of-whack, where a small minority of people have undue influence to get people elected, and then have an agenda that serves only the few and not the many.

I thank you very much for your time and for your engagement. Just being in this series is really inspiring, to see so many people looking to make positive changes. It’s great to serve in a state like Maine. Amy pointed out so many good things; one good thing I would add is that income inequality and disparity in Maine are among the lowest in the nation. We don’t have huge gaps in income, so there are opportunities for us to be equally invested and equally engaged. I urge you all to continue your engagement, and I thank you again. (Applause)

Q & A

Question: *Amy, in the 2010 gubernatorial election, there was a good deal of talk about “the nationalization” of a conservative agenda on the Republican side, on issues of taxation, public debt, education, labor unions and so on. There was a great deal of money poured into our own gubernatorial election from out-of-state, conservative sources. Do you look for this kind of nationalization of the campaign agenda and finance to grow in 2014?*

FRIED: There’s going to be quite a lot of money in the next campaign. There will be money in the governor’s

³⁷Annie Lowery, “The Rich Get Richer Through the Recovery,” *New York Times*, September 10, 2013.

race; there will be a lot of money in the 2nd Congressional District race; and certainly in some of these State legislative races that Ken Fredette talked about. In terms of the ideological swing, it's a bit of a pendulum; and things have moved back a bit from the high point of 2010, in terms of conservatism and the Tea Party movement. That's on a bit of a downswing right now; but we will definitely see money set new records.

Question: *Ken, you mentioned the last race for the Senate in Bangor, where a half million dollars was spent, much of it from out-of-state. Do you see this continuing to grow in Maine, where many people will be excluded from thinking about running for the legislature? And what, if anything, can we do about it?*

FREDETTE: I do think it's going to continue; and the reason is that people have started to figure out just how much power state government actually has. It used to be that everything was focused on the federal government. We wanted to do everything federally, and didn't really pay much attention to state government. Even with Medicaid expansion—though it was passed federally, each of the states now has to decide whether and how they are going to do it. That's just one example of how much power state legislatures now have.

Now, the political parties have figured out that there are districts in Portland that Republicans aren't going to win, and there are districts up in the 2nd Congressional District that Democrats aren't going to win. So, everyone focuses on those races that might be considered "toss-up," or "swing" seats. That's why you have a half a million dollars spent in a Senate race, or \$70,000 spent on a House race, because it's one of those "swing" seats. There are 435 members of Congress, and Maine's 2nd Congressional District is one of less than 30 districts nationwide that are considered swing seats. That's why you're going to see a huge amount of money spent in the 2nd District. There are good candidates on both sides, and you're going to see records easily set in that race.

Question: *Cynthia, you were on the ballot in 2012 when the Republicans lost control of both branches of the Maine legislature, after they had been having quite a good time for themselves. The apparent Democratic Party strategy in 2012 was to run against Governor LePage and his agenda, with little statewide policy platform of its own. How important will it be in 2014 for the Democrats to present a positive program, as opposed to simply running against Paul LePage?*

DILL: I think a positive platform is always very important. I would disagree a bit that the Democrats didn't have a policy agenda to run on in 2012. Clearly, running

against Paul LePage was important and probably won the day; but Democrats generally ran on a platform of health-care expansion; economic prosperity for the middle class; and undoing what Republicans did in 2010 to cut income taxes without paying for it, to cause big gaps in the budget, to change health insurance laws that made it more expensive for rural Maine, to take funds away from Head Start, and other things. There was a policy agenda; but in the upcoming elections, Democrats will have to have a positive platform. It will be about jobs, about healthcare, and about education. Those are the things that people generally care about, and the Democrats will do well.

Question: *There's been a great centralization of power to Washington in recent decades. In light of the gridlock in Washington today, do you see any possibility of a reversal in this? Of a renewed emphasis on state policy-making? Of efforts by some members of Congress to devolve more responsibilities to the states? If so, could this mean a rebirth of federalism?*

DILL: I don't think so. We're living now in a global economy. As Ken mentioned, technology breaks down all kinds of barriers, and that's why people here are giving contributions to candidates in California, and you have organizations like Emily's List. Everything is more complex and bigger today; and by necessity, the federal government is playing a bigger, not a smaller role.

FRIED: I'm seeing a little bit of a pushback nationally. I wrote during the government shutdown in Washington that, ultimately, what is going to stop it is the business community. The business community did not want to see a debt default, which would have been absolutely horrific for the national and global economies; they are tired of seeing the mess in Washington. You're starting to see the rise of solidly conservative groups saying, "We're not going to support some of the challengers we have in the past, who are trying to get rid of Republican incumbents for their being willing to compromise."

Mainers on the whole will think about Maine state policy. We're a very pragmatic state, and people don't want to see Washington-style gridlock coming to our state. If it came here, there would be a lot of pushback.

Question: *Amy, you refer to a greater level of civility and less extremism in Maine politics. How do you explain this? Could it be due to the relative homogeneity of the state? Extremism is often associated with fear, particularly with fear of "the other." How do you explain the relative absence of it here in Maine?*

FRIED: I don't know if it's from the homogeneity. Ken Palmer has written about this, the civic culture of Maine,

and our long history of civility in politics.³⁸ It gives incentive to people running for office *not* to be uncivil, because there is such a reaction to it when it happens. We still have the glaring exception, but it generally applies. Our young people have it, as well. I think of the students in my classes who want to have spirited debate; they are fine with having friends who disagree with them. We see the president of the college Democrats and the president of the college Republicans being close friends; that doesn't happen everywhere. So much of Maine is small towns and relatively small cities; people know each other. We have talked about Congress persons not knowing each other; well, citizens in Maine know each other, and I think that keeps the level of civility higher.

Question: *I'm old enough to remember the day when former House Speaker John Martin of Eagle Lake traveled to the university campuses (and elsewhere), recruiting young people to run for the Legislature. This was a very shrewd and successful strategy on his part. Does anyone have thoughts on the new generation of Mainers, and their level of civic engagement and involvement in politics?*

DILL: Since I came here in 1989, we've been hearing from some wonderful people; but they're the *same* people. We hear from the same economists, the same political scientists. The narrative in Maine has been dominated by the same voices for so long; they're good voices, but I think we need to have some new voices. In order for young people to become engaged, they have to hear from their contemporaries – joining the narrative, collecting ideas, and presenting them on the airwaves and in the newspapers, so that people of a different generation are being informed by their own generation. I hope that some of the thought-makers and opinion leaders in Maine will cede a bit of their ground to a new generation.

FREDETTE: The reality is that both parties have to work hard, to go out and find young people willing to run for the Legislature. I have a 19 year old, and the reality is that young people today have first of all to make the decision about going to college, to a community college, or whatnot. What's the cost of that? How am I going to pay for it? Then, how am I going to find a job? If I have a significant other, how am I going to get married, provide for a home, and raise a family? I think all these decisions are far more complex today than they were when I was a

young person. The opportunity for civic engagement becomes far less available, because all of those things along with today's electronics put far more pressure on young people to pursue other interests. It's not that they don't want to engage; it's just the world we live in today, it's the reality.

FRIED: I see students today who do engage; but they engage around certain issues or in reaction to certain candidates. Last year there was a huge amount of involvement in the marriage equality issue. It is really important to *ask* people to be involved. Former House Speaker John Martin of Eagle Lake offered a good model in his efforts, decades ago, to recruit college students to run for the Legislature. We know from looking at voting studies that one of the things that gets people to vote who don't have a history of voting is someone talking to them about an issue and encouraging them to vote. There are things that the political parties and various other organizations could do to make a difference in getting young people involved.

DILL: I taught politics and government for a number of years. At the beginning of each course, students would be, like, "Ugh!" Then I would say, "We're going to work on a political campaign, and you're going to have to vote!" And I could just see this flowering of so many minds throughout the course of the class. When they actually find out, "Oh, this is going to be on the ballot, this is one side of the issue, this is the other, this is how I register to vote, this is how I go vote" – once people get involved, they realize how exhilarating and satisfying it is to be a good, civic citizen.

Question: *If there were a single piece of legislation or constitutional amendment that might help correct the current partisan gridlock in Washington, what would it be?*

FRIED: It would be something related to campaign finance. Right now, our ability to do anything about it is limited by the Supreme Court. We need a new court right now, or a constitutional amendment to limit money in politics.

DILL: Another fix would be an amendment of the Senate rules to repeal or reform the filibuster; but I agree, the top priority would be around campaign finance.

FREDETTE: My experience in the Legislature is that the fundamental issue in every session is the budget; and what's lacking now is the ability of Congress to pass a budget. They pass what's called a continuing resolution, which means we're going to fund it for just another three, six, or nine months. They never have to make decisions,

³⁸See Kenneth T. Palmer et al., *Maine Politics and Government*, 2nd ed., University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln NE, 2009. This compact overview of Maine politics and government describes how the state's history and political culture have shaped its political processes, governing institutions, and policy priorities.

which means they bear no real accountability for policy. When we pass a budget at the state level, even when it's a difficult budget, it is a policy document; it is a budget, but it's also a *policy* document. I think an easy fix at the federal level would be to say, "You have *got* to pass a budget." That means you're going to have to come together, one way or another, and address spending issues. Not *having* to do that has created the gridlock.

Question: *Amy, James Madison's view of the U.S. Constitution and its separation of powers was that "Ambition would counteract ambition," and this would prevent tyranny from emerging. Are the forces that caused the federal shutdown potentially tyrannical?*

FRIED: I don't know that I would call them tyrannical; but I love James Madison and that paper, *Federalist No. 51*. Madison also says that you can't always depend on that; that there will be lapses from time to time. We're at a time now where things have gone so far downhill that I see some counter-reaction, and there may be growing pushback.

Shutting the government down was just ridiculous. Even some of the people who were involved now think it was not the best thing to do – although others still say that it was good strategy, it's what should have been done. It did quite a lot of damage, however, to the standing of the Republican Party, in the public eye. Their polling numbers are low. President Obama's approval rating has gone down, as well; but it's still far higher than the Republican Party. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Minority Leader has said, "It's just not happening again." There's now that kind of counter-reaction.

FREDETTE: I thought it was a bad strategy. The state shutdown of government, in the administration of Gov. John McKernan, was over a budget issue; but it was also tied to workman's compensation reform. The reality was that our workman's comp system was out of whack at the time and wasn't working properly. The Republicans took the position that we needed to fix it, and they didn't have many tools in their tool box to do it. It was probably the wrong thing to do, to shut down state government. My point is that sometimes there are issues; and the national issue right now for many Republicans is, "How do we continue to sustain the level of debt that our country is absorbing?"

It is a generational problem. People in the baby boom generation have the wealth. When Cynthia talks about where the wealth is, it's in the baby boom generation. It's the older folks who have the money, it isn't the young adults who are 20 and 30 and 40. Many Republicans believe that this national debt of \$17 trillion that grows by the day, is a big problem. I don't believe it justifies shut-

ting down government; but the question is, "How do you stop it, if it's just continuing to grow?" It is a frustration.

DILL: Well, I'm sorry, Ken, but the recent government shutdown had nothing to do with a legitimate concern about debt and deficit. It was some Republicans' attempt to block the Affordable Care Act, which was passed in both chambers, signed by the President, and upheld by the Supreme Court. The government shutdown was not an issue of principle that could help solve the problem. It was a temper tantrum; and an opportunity for Senator Ted Cruz of Texas to get a lot of national attention, to raise a lot of money, and to become the Tea Party favorite in the next presidential election. It was not a legitimate political issue; it was self-serving on the part of someone who put his own political agenda ahead of the interests of the country.

Question: *On another matter, how is the State of Maine going to deal with the outmigration of young people from the state, even as we also have the oldest population of any state in the country?*

DILL: The reason young people leave the State of Maine is that they can't get a job. The older population adds a wonderful dimension to our state, and brings a lot of skills and talent and opportunities for new businesses. But the two aren't necessarily related. Young people would stay here if we had the kinds of jobs that enabled them to pay for school, get a job, and raise a family. The question is, "What are we going to do to increase economic opportunity and create more prosperity and wealth for more people?" Democrats argue that we have to make sure that there's expansion of Medicaid and that there's fairness when it comes to tax exemptions. The Republicans argue that there needs to be welfare reform; but we need to get our arms around jobs.

FREDETTE: This is my favorite question, and I always respond to it from my life experience. I was born in Aroostook County and grew up in a small town of 600 in Washington County. In the 1970's and 80's we saw the out-migration of people from there who were young and in their 30s and 40s. I was in high school when my mother and father moved to New Hampshire. They didn't move because they loved New Hampshire; they moved because they wanted economic opportunity. This happened for lots of families in Washington County, the poorest county in the state.

What happened in Washington County in the 70's and 80's has now happened in the rest of northern Maine – in Aroostook County, in Somerset County, and in Piscataquis County. While we're all under the illusion of trying to do these great things for the State of Maine, my per-

sonal experience is that we're seeing the de-population of central and northern Maine because of the lack of economic opportunity for people, whether they be 20 or 40.

It's great that fifty percent of all the economic activity in Maine is in York and Cumberland County. It's amazing to come down here from Bangor and see the bustling, to walk around the Old Port and see the activity. It's really exciting. But when we're talking about economic inequality in this state, it is North versus South. Somebody gets an education up at the University of Maine, and maybe they were born in Howland, or in Wypitlock. A lot of times, they aren't staying there once they get their degree. They're coming down to Cumberland County or York County, or they're leaving the state. That's a problem that's four or five decades old. We have failed to address it in a meaningful way, and it's the biggest failure of state government in a half century.

Question: *How do you suggest bringing economic opportunity and industries to northern Maine, to all the "rim" counties along the Canadian border?*

DILL: One of the biggest things that I worked on in the Legislature was the build-out of broadband infrastructure. We had the "three-ring binder" project, 1100 miles of high-speed fiber optic cable to enable the rural communities in northern Maine to connect with the global economy. We need to take advantage of the technological opportunities that exist. There is growth in artisan foods and local foods; but we need markets for those products, and we can find markets on the Internet. Technology can go a long way to provide economic prosperity in rural Maine.

FRIED: A lot of the problem was the loss of manufacturing jobs, and this goes back to large, global economic forces and dynamics. The big loss of manufacturing jobs occurred in those areas, plus those at Loring Air Force Base as Washington tried to pare back on federal defense spending. Those sorts of things are not going to come back. We are not going to see more of that happening again because of the larger global dynamics. It's probably going to be smaller-scale kinds of activities, maybe clusters of projects around particular things.

Agriculture may be some of it. For example, we have a different potato market today. Besides the potatoes that get used for French fries, there are other kinds today, like the purple potato. Raising cattle and other animals is another part of agriculture, but there hasn't been a good place locally to process the meat. There's going to have

to be attention to what are the particulars of a sub-region within a larger county, and what it is already doing well that could be nurtured for growth.

HOST: Ken, we'll give you the last word on this.

FREDETTE: When I was growing up in Aroostook County – in Houlton, Presque Isle, and Caribou – the schools took a three or four-week break in the fall of the year to pick potatoes, a practice that went back decades. Some of those schools have stopped doing it because of technology. They now use equipment to pick the potatoes that people once picked. On the blueberry barrens down in Washington County, it used to take hand-labor to get down and pick the berries. Now, there's technology that allows the picking of blueberries by machine rather than by hand. Again in Washington County, a lot of it was about the woods industry and wood harvesting. A crew of men would go into the woods with handsaws, then chainsaws to fell trees; today, they go in with a large, mechanized piece of equipment and cut them down, ten at a time. A large part of the problem is the technological change in our natural resource-based 2nd Congressional District.

My answer is this: what we lack is a long-range and agreed-upon development strategy – Democrats and Republicans, alike – a 10 to 20-year state strategy on how we're going to fix the Two Maine's problem. You have a new group of people coming into every Legislature, and 30 to 40 percent of them are brand-new; you might have a new governor; and they are all going off on their own, in different directions. There's no concrete strategy on how are we going to put a cluster in Houlton, or in Machias, or in Belfast, because it's always moving around and changing so much in Augusta on this issue. Unless and until we get a 20-year strategy that's agreed upon among government leaders, it will continue the way it is.

HOST: Well, we'll look forward to your running for higher office, Ken, and doing just that! Thank you very much! (Applause)

DEAN JOSEPH MCDONNELL: In closing, I would like to say just a few words. This has been a wonderful series and I want to thank you, the audience, and to give thanks and gratitude on the part of all the faculty, the staff, and students to Dick Barringer and Ken Palmer. These are two emeritus faculty members who care deeply about the Muskie School, USM, UMaine, and all of Maine. This fine series has shown that, and we're most grateful to them. Thank you all, very much. (Applause)

10. Sec. William S. Cohen & Sen. Alan K. Simpson **Enough Is Enough!**

November 7, 2013

Introduction

PAUL FERGUSON:³⁹ *Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman, and welcome to the University of Maine and the 2013 William S. Cohen Lecture sponsored by the William S. Cohen Center for International Policy and Commerce at the University of Maine.*

P.M. Forni is founder of the Civility Institute at the Johns Hopkins University and author of The Civility Solution.⁴⁰ “In today’s America,” he writes, “incivility is on prominent display in the schools where bullying is pervasive, in the workplace where an increasing number are more stressed out by co-workers than their jobs, on the roads where road rage maims and kills, in politics where strident intolerance takes the place of earnest dialogue, and on the web where many check their inhibitions at the digital door.” Forni argues that a healthy democratic society depends on the robust practice of civility.

It is my pleasure today to introduce Secretary William Cohen, who will then introduce Senator Alan Simpson. By their stellar examples in public service, each has heightened our understanding of the value – indeed, the necessity – of civility in political discourse. Bill Cohen is known well and deeply respected by each of us here today. The Christian Science Monitor has called Bill Cohen a Renaissance man. What does this say about him? The high compliment would reflect the record he has amassed in his personal and public life. It would include his unique record of being a published author of eleven works of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry, a futurist with degrees in classical Latin and Greek, the son of a working class family who rose to the highest levels of our government,



...serving on the Bangor City Council, in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, and as Secretary of Defense.

From his very first days in public office, Secretary Cohen was singled out as a future American leader. In 1974 Time Magazine cited him among “America’s 200 Future Leaders.” The following year, the U.S. Junior Chamber of Commerce named him one of the ten outstanding young men in America. His Renaissance quality was reflected throughout his service in the House and Senate, to which he was elected in six consecutive

³⁹Note: President Paul Ferguson of the University of Maine hosted the 2013 Cohen Lecture. After introductions, Mark Woodward, former Executive Editor of the *Bangor Daily News*, moderated the conversation between Secretary Cohen and Senator Simpson, and posed questions to them.

⁴⁰P. M. Forni, *The Civility Solution: What To Do When People Are Rude*, MacMillan & Co., New York, 2010.



Secretary William S. Cohen

Maine elections, winning each by a wide margin. It is reflected in his surprising decision in 1996 to retire from public life to promote international business and through his writings and the media to contribute to more thoughtful public discourse on national political issues. He launched the William S. Cohen Center for International Policy and Commerce at this great university; and inspired

creation of the Institute for Leadership and Democracy here, which aims to model the Maine way of leadership exemplified by Secretary Cohen and many of our iconic Maine lawmakers at the federal level.

Perhaps most remarkably, in 1997 President Bill Clinton invited Bill Cohen to lead the Department of Defense, the first time in modern U.S. history that a President chose an elected official from the opposite party to be a member of his Cabinet. After three decades in public service, Secretary Cohen leaves behind a record of unsurpassed accomplishment, integrity and respect; and takes with him unrivaled knowledge, reputation, and relationships across America and the world. Please join me in welcoming Maine's own Renaissance man, Secretary Bill Cohen. (Applause)

BILL COHEN: Thank you, President Ferguson, for your very gracious and overly generous remarks. I thank you very much for your kind words. Let me thank all of you who are here today, I've been looking forward to this for some time. As some of you know, I had the happy occasion to teach at the university for six years before I ran for Congress in 1972.

This annual event is important to me because it has given me the opportunity over the years to call upon many of the people with whom I've had the extraordinary pleasure and opportunity to work – from Prime Ministers to Secretaries of State, to Dan Rather, Bob Woodward, U. S. Attorney General Eric Holder, Marine General Jim Jones, and others. It has given me the opportunity to bring them to the University of Maine to have a discussion, and that's what I would like to do today. I cannot think of anyone that I have wanted more over the years to bring to the university than Alan Simpson.

Alan Simpson is an extraordinary man – a tall, lean, follically-challenged, wise, and witty cowboy from Wyoming. He has managed to take a brilliant mind and leaven it with great humor. He is able to say some of the

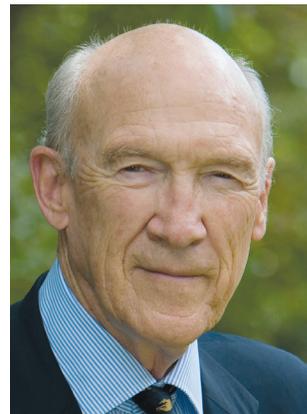
toughest things that need to be said in a way that hits you in the forehead with its precision and accuracy, and then he makes you laugh. He makes you laugh at him, and he makes you laugh at us, at the folly of the things that we do from time to time.

I cannot forget the first time I talked to Alan. We were in the Senate dining room when he came over and said, "I'm really mad. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) is upstairs, and he's carrying on this filibuster." I think it was for a penny a gallon gas tax, maybe five. Alan asked, "Take a look at these few comments I'm going to make on the Senate floor. What do you think?" I looked and said, "I think you better tone it down." And I took my pen and started to make some alterations to it. Alan took it back and said, "Thanks very much. I think I'm going to give it the way I want to. I'm going to roll this thing up and put it under Jesse's desk, like it's a hand grenade." And, sure enough, it exploded right in front of Jesse.

It said, "Look, you can't hold and bottle up this institution because of this narrow issue. If you're going to do that, you had better be prepared down the line, when there's something that involves tobacco or some other commodity that is important to your state. I'm going to be up there, and I'm going to carry on just like you; so you had better be prepared to deal with me in the future." Well, it had the impact Alan hoped for. Jesse didn't like it; and he carried a grudge for a while until he finally got to know the real Alan Simpson.

Alan Simpson is someone who has been out there from Day One, talking about the Number One issue that we are confronted with, when we see civility having broken down over budgets, over debt, over deficits. How do I introduce this extraordinary man – a man whose father also served as a U.S. Senator and knew and worked with Senator Margaret Chase Smith – and who I then had the chance to serve with on Capitol Hill for eighteen years?

Each Senator is given the chance to write a final essay when leaving the United States Senate, and I'll read just a bit about what I had to say then. I wrote, in part, "The first order of business in the restoration of confidence in our



Senator Alan Simpson

ability to govern is the need to achieve a rational fiscal policy for our nation. In the past we have paved the road to political success with promissory notes issued in the names of our children. It is a road that can no longer be traveled.

"Not long ago it was customary for parents to borrow money to ensure a better future for their children. Today the ethic of

self-sacrifice has been perversely inverted. Parents and grandparents now borrow from their heirs so they might enjoy the comforts and pleasantries of the moment. This is tantamount to fiscal child abuse, where the beatings are inflicted incrementally and the damage is not immediately visible. But eventually the pain suffered by our children will become too excruciating and crippling for them to endure. Unfortunately, the wages of our sins will be paid by others after we have departed from public office or this planet.”

Alan Simpson also wrote of his experience and why he was leaving. At the very end he said, “We cannot make these choices if the federal government runs on auto-pilot. Decisions about such vital issues were made for us long ago through the establishment of mandatory spending decisions that we refuse to change. Liberal or conservative, young or old, internationalist or libertarian, isolationist, businessman or laborer, all of us have had a stake in the ability to affect positive change for the causes that we care about; and this requires us to look anew at the entire machinery of mandatory automatic spending, and to determine how best to prevent it from driving our posterity into bankruptcy.”

That has long been the motivating goal of Alan Simpson.

You all know about his role on the Simpson-Bowles Commission.⁴¹ Since the writing and filing of the commission’s report, he has taken his and Erskine Bowles’ show on the road to say that we are in danger of forfeiting our future; that we’re running a 16 trillion dollar debt; that we know what needs to be done to reduce that debt; that we know what has to be done to reduce the annual deficits; and that we are simply unwilling to measure up to those tasks.

Alan has a great sense of humor, he will make you laugh; but what stands out about him is his courage. He has a backbone of steel. I have watched him take on every major interest in our country – the biggest and the toughest – and has never shied away. He does it with great humor, but he also does it with love. I will end with this story, because I want you to hear from him.

Alan is a marvelous storyteller. He once got up on the Senate floor and said that a friend came to him and said, “Did you hear that Joe Jones passed away?” Alan replied, “My God, I didn’t know that. I’d better write to his widow and express my condolences.” He sat down and penned a beautiful letter to the widow about how important Joe was in his life, what contributions he had made to his fellow citizens, et cetera, and sent it off. A day or two later, the friend came back and said, “Sorry, I made a mistake, Joe didn’t die.” Alan was beside himself to get in touch with the widow, to say, “Don’t open that letter, don’t open it, just throw it away.” The moral of the story for Alan, and for his Senate colleagues, was, “Why

do we wait until the end, until it’s too late to tell someone that we love him?”

That struck me then and has stayed with me ever since. It’s important that we look at Alan as a man of great toughness, of intellect and humor, but also as a man of great heart and love. That’s the reason I wanted him here. Now, I’m going to keep my comments to a minimum, because you hear me talk all the time. But we don’t often have a man of Will Rogers’ insight, wit, and wisdom appear before this audience. Thank you for being here. (Applause)

“There is *no* trust in Congress today, not even *within* the parties. Trust is the coin of the realm, and that coin is severely tarnished today. When you lose trust, it’s all gone.” (AKS)

Q & A

QUESTION—*Mark Woodward: Again, welcome Mr. Secretary and Senator Simpson. The two of you share much in common. You began and ended your Senate careers on the same day. You were both highly regarded as senators who could work with members of the other party; and in your post-Senate careers and experiences, each of you has served presidents who are Democrats. I would like to start with you, Senator Simpson, and ask you what the experience was like, working with a President of the opposite party.*

ALAN SIMPSON: First, if I may, let me say it was easy to gravitate to Bill Cohen when we came to the Senate together. Here’s a guy – warm, witty, savvy, and smart – who knows what the hell is going on; and while everybody has some degree of knowledge, few people have wisdom. That’s what Bill has. And he has an additional trait that is extraordinary – sensitivity. He has mastered the fact that politics by itself is barbaric; you have to have the softening agents of life – books, music, theater, the visual and performing arts.

⁴¹In early 2010 President Barack Obama created the bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, co-chaired by Republican Alan Simpson and Democrat Erskine Bowles. Executive Order 13531 called on the commission to address the nation’s fiscal situation in the medium term and to achieve fiscal sustainability over the long run. The commission first met on April 27, 2010. A vote on its final recommendations on December 3, 2010, fell short of the supermajority of 14 of 18 votes needed to approve the report. The eleven members in support included five Democrats, five Republicans, and one Independent; four Democrats and three Republicans voted against. The plan proposed to reduce the federal deficit by nearly \$4 trillion, stabilize the growth of public debt by 2014, and reduce debt 60 percent by 2023.

Then he came out with this book, *Roll Call*,⁴² his first book. I read it and thought, “Man, that’s him!” Through the years he was my mentor. I only wish I remembered then

“People say, “Why don’t you work together?”

Well, we did! People want bi-partisanship, but they really don’t.

They would rather fight and whack each other around.... That’s your country today! You just name a person and then they will dissect him or her with partisan shots from the right and the left. It’s a contact sport!” (AKS)

what he said when I went out to be very uncivil to Jesse Helms; it was not a good day for me. He said, “If I were to give it, this is how I would change it – this, this, and this.” I said, “Cohen, get out of here!” And so I later got my size 15-quadruple E shoe down deep into my mouth!

When I came to the Senate, I wanted to be on the Judiciary Committee. Bill was on the Judiciary Committee in the House, where he set the tone for his success. So I went to Strom Thurman (R-SC), the Republican leader, and said, “I want to be on Judiciary. I chaired that in the Wyoming Legislature.” He said, “I’ll

talk to Ted Kennedy (D-MA, then Chairman); Ted will put you right on there.” Later I went to Ted and he said, “Great, come on; and I’m going to assign three people to you to show you the ropes.” It was his committee staff – Ken Feinberg, David Boies, and Steven Breyer – and they said, “We’re not here to do the Democrat tango with you or to diddle the Republicans. We’ll teach you how this committee works.” I learned, and this assisted me all through my 18 years. That was called, building trust!

On Trust

There is no trust in Congress today, not even within the parties. Trust is the coin of the realm, and that coin is severely tarnished today. When you lose trust, it’s all gone. That’s the relationship I had with Ted Kennedy and Alan Cranston (D-CA) and Gary Hart (D-CO), who became a very close friend. Now it’s gone, and it will take a long time to repair. Trust them? I did! I didn’t care how they lived or what they did, that’s for a different Judgment Day. For me, did they keep their word? Did we shake hands? Any time Bill Cohen told me something, I put it “in the book.” That’s a long answer,

but I got a load off my chest; and I didn’t answer your question.

Question: *So, I’ll repeat the question. In your most recent experience on the Simpson-Bowles Commission, did you feel any restoration of that trust, from your past experience when things worked?*

SIMPSON: Erskine Bowles and I suffered a blowback of people who negotiate: you have to know your negotiating partner. Neither of us really knew Barack Obama. We went to him and said, “You’ve appointed us. Is everything on the table?” And the President said, “Yes, it is.” It was a good conversation. Erskine was the last guy to balance the budget as Chief of Staff for Bill Clinton. How did he do it, working for months with Newt Gingrich (R-GA) and Dick Armey (R-TX)? Nobody today would even think that could happen. You have this situation now where you have to know your client and where you’re going in the negotiations.

We put the Commission report on the table on December 1, 2010, and we set the bar high. Obama couldn’t touch it, because his base would have said, “Wait a minute. You said you would cut the deficit in half, and you didn’t do that. You would close Guantanamo, you didn’t do that. Now you’re messing with precious senior citizens’ entitlements. And, buddy, you keep doing that and you’ll be history!” If the President had voted for it, the Republicans at that time would have caucused and voted against it unanimously. That’s the venom that’s in the snake right now.

Question: *Mr. Secretary, anything to add on that?*

COHEN: Just a couple of words. I’m sort of the accidental Secretary of Defense. Most of my colleagues that I had played basketball with said, “Secretary of Defense? Secretary of Offense, maybe; but Secretary of Defense?” I didn’t know Bill Clinton personally. I had shaken his hand a couple of times at various functions. When he got re-elected and I had already announced my retirement, we had two meetings. When he decided he was going to offer me the position, I said there are two things that we have to agree on.

Number one, you have to understand that if you offer me this job and I agree to accept, I’ll be on your team; and you will never have to worry after a Cabinet meeting whether I’m in a back room calling my buddies up on the Hill, saying, “Look what these guys are talking about.” You’ll never have to worry about that. You will have trust in me and you’ll have to trust me. And I want something from you. If you offer it and I take this position, I want you to agree never to engage me in a political

⁴²William S. Cohen, *Roll Call: One Year in the United States Senate*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1981.

meeting. Any time you're going to talk politics, I want out of the meeting; don't even call to ask. You let me run the Department and I will serve you as well as I can; but never engage me in any of your political discussions. He said, "You've got it," and he kept his word. I was never involved in any political discussion. (Applause)

I will tell you, it really was the most rewarding four years of my life. There's nothing quite like being Secretary of Defense of the finest military in the world. There is nothing that will ever compare to that, just to have the opportunity to represent our young men and women. I know this is Veterans Awareness and Celebration Week here at the university. To be able to serve with some of the best and the brightest, to see these 18 and 19-year-olds who are making extraordinary sacrifices and doing things that are beyond contemplation, actually to be with them and to represent them was the greatest experience of my life. I'm thankful to Bill Clinton to this day for his giving me that chance.

Question: *Were there times when you were walking down the hall and a Republican came the other way and crossed the street? Did you ever have difficulty with any of your colleagues because of your having accepted a position with a Democratic President?*

COHEN: Initially, the Democrats were pretty upset with it. They said, "Hey, wait a minute, this guy didn't vote for you, he didn't contribute to you, and you're going to give him one of the top positions in the country? He's not one of us!" I had Republicans who said, "What are you doing? You're going to serve a Democratic President? You're going to give him whatever credibility you have, you're going to offer it to him? What are you doing to the party?" And I said, "I didn't know that partisan politics played with the security of the country; I'm going to serve the President to the best of my ability." (Applause)

On Integrity

I'll tell you one little story. There came a moment when we launched the mission called Desert Fox, a four-day bombing campaign in 1998 against Saddam Hussein. The Republicans thought we were playing politics with the military and insisted that I come up and address a joint session of the Congress that night. They accused me and the President of "wagging the dog," that we had launched this attack in order to avoid an impeachment resolution that was forthcoming. I took three hours and spoke to all of my colleagues in a closed session, and persuaded them that this had nothing to do with what was going on politically. This had to do with the security of the country, and the plan had been in preparation for some time. They finally accepted it, and I put it on the line, saying, "After

24 years on Capitol Hill, if you think that I would risk my reputation to do this, then you've misjudged me."

SIMPSON: The real risk was the zealots who saw the Secretary lending his reputation and his integrity to a President they hated. That was, really, "How could you go and burnish his image, because you are you and we all respect you." And they do, on both sides of the aisle, and always did. I've always said, if you have integrity, nothing else matters; and if you don't, nothing else matters. It's very simple. That was the same worry with Norman Mineta (D-CA) when he was asked to serve George W. Bush as Secretary of Transportation (and later Bill Clinton, as Secretary of Commerce). He got the same load that you got. "How could you do this?" He told them the same thing. He said, "If you think I'm going on any political activity for you, get me off the screen;" and he served with the same great distinction.

"What's happened is that the country has become fragmented in one sense. The American people are not polarized as a general proposition; the political parties are polarized.... The party activists – the most passionate in the Republican and Democratic parties, who go out and pound on the doors and lick all the stamps, et cetera – are driving the agenda." (WSC)

Question: *The Congress today has abysmal public approval ratings, is considered dysfunctional and immobilized by partisanship. In contrast, you've each worked on a number of high-profile bipartisan panels – Watergate, Iran-Contra, the Iraq study group, the Simpson-Bowles Commission – on issues considered controversial and politically-charged; but somehow your efforts produced substantive results. Senator Simpson, based on your experience, can you give us some examples of the legislative process working as it should, and tell us why you think lawmakers then were able to work together successfully?*

SIMPSON: The first one that hit me was just a few weeks after we came to the Senate, when they appointed the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. Howard Baker (R-TN) put me on it and I said, "I don't even know what you're talking about." Father Ted Hesburgh of Notre Dame was the chairman, and serving on that commission were Ted Kennedy, Romano "Ron" Mazzoli (D-KY) and Hamilton Fish (R-NY), Democrats and Republicans alike, and Charles "Mac" Mathias (R-MD). Strom Thurman warned me, "Watch out for this Mathias, Al; he's a very liberal Republican!"

We did our work and came out with two bills, one on illegal immigration and one on legal immigration. The legal immigration bill never worked because we tried to put in a more secure identifier system which the right and the left then labeled a “national ID card.” Once that little meteor went up (the idea had come from Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform), for the ACLU – man, oh, man! – the earth crumbled! Now they’re talking about retina scans and fingerprints, and nobody has written a thing about it. That was a success in its way.

Then, the Iraq Study Group. Ten of us: Sandra Day O’Connor (R-AZ), Leon Panetta (D-CA), you know the cast. We worked with them all, and we had to agree on every single word. You had Sandra Day O’Connor on the last day, saying, “Alan, this term you are using is a split infinitive.” I said, “Sandra, I don’t even know what the hell that is! So, what does it mean to me?” We worked for a couple of years and gave fifty-seven recommendations to the Bush-Cheney Administration, of which they adopted five! Eventually, fifty-seven of them were adopted – the surge, all the rest of the stuff. And then people say, “Why don’t you work together?” Well, we did! People say they want bipartisanship, but they really don’t. They would rather fight and whack each other around. Anyway, that was an extraordinary thing.

Your Country, Today

Then came this recent budget thing, and Erskine Bowles and I worked for eight months. We got five Democrats, five Republicans, and one Independent in support of the recommendations, that’s sixty percent of the Com-

mission. How can you get more bi-partisan, with a range from Dick Durbin (D-IL) to Tom Coburn (R-OK)? But people would say, “Well, who’s on your Commission?” And you say, “Well, we got the votes of eleven people, over a range between Dick Durbin and Tom Coburn.” And they say, “Dick Durbin of Illinois? That commie guy from Illinois?” And then, “Tom Coburn voted for it? Tom Coburn, that neanderthal Republican from Oklahoma?” That’s your country today! You just name a person and then they will dissect him or her with partisan shots from the right and the left. It’s a contact sport!

Question: *Mr. Secretary, do you have any examples of how things once worked, and why?*

COHEN: Well, you mentioned Iran-Contra. Senator George Mitchell and I both served on that committee; and we wrote a book, *Men of Zeal*⁴³ that I would recommend to you as the single best book on the subject. That was an occasion where Republicans and Democrats had to work together to tell what happened.

The U.S. had a public policy that we would never sell arms to Iran. And we had a covert program that was in fact selling arms to Iran, inflating the price they would have to pay and using the profits from the covert sale to fund the Contra effort in Nicaragua. Colonel Oliver North called it, “A stand-alone, self-sustaining covert capability that was established outside the realm of the appropriation process, that only a few people knew about.” So, you were conducting a foreign policy secretly, of which the American people and most members of Congress had no idea.

It suddenly erupted and became news. Then these Republicans and Democrats came together and said, “Here are the things wrong with this, and why.” And the country accepted it. President Ronald Reagan, to his credit, said, “Look, I didn’t realize I was doing this; but if I did it, it was wrong.” Frankly, because of his popularity he escaped something that President Richard Nixon did not. It wasn’t of the same magnitude as President Nixon; but it came close, because you cannot set up a secret covert capability that has no accountability and the American people are completely unaware of.

SIMPSON: I don’t think anyone will ever forget the shot our colleague George Mitchell took at Colonel North during the hearing.⁴⁴ That was a piece of work I’ll never forget. Powerful!

Question: *“God does not take sides in American politics?”*

SIMPSON: Yes. Everyone in the Congress read it, and everybody in the Senate went up to him and said, “You

⁴³William S. Cohen and George J. Mitchell, *Men of Zeal: A Candid Inside Story of the Iran-Contra Hearings*, Viking Books, New York, 1988.

⁴⁴In the heat of the hearings, Senator Mitchell famously admonished Col. North: “The rule of law is critical in our society. It is the great equalizer. Because in America, everybody is equal before the law. We must never allow the end to justify the means, where the law is concerned, however important and noble the objective. And surely, democracy abroad is important and is noble. It cannot be achieved at the expense of the rule of law in our country.... Now, you’ve addressed several pleas to this committee, very eloquently, none more eloquent than last Friday when, in response to a question by Rep. Dick Cheney, you asked that Congress not cut off aid to the Contras, for the love of God, and for the love of country. I now address a plea to you: Of all the qualities which the American people find compelling about you, none is more impressive than your obvious, deep devotion to this country. Please remember that others share that devotion and recognize that it is possible for an American to disagree with you on aid to the Contras and still love God and still love this country just as much as you do. Although he’s regularly asked to do so, God does not take sides in American politics. And in America, disagreement with the policies of the Government is not evidence of lack of patriotism. I want to repeat that: in America, disagreement with the policies of the Government is not evidence of lack of patriotism. Indeed, it is the very fact that Americans can criticize their Government, openly and without fear of reprisal, that is the essence of our freedom and that will keep us free. Now, I have one final plea: debate this issue forcefully and vigorously, as you have and as you surely will; but please, do it in a way that respects the patriotism and the motives of those who disagree with you, as you would have them respect yours.” *The New York Times*, July 14, 1987.

know, it takes ‘truth to power’ to do that.” It was about America, not Democrats and Republicans, or Contras and Sandinistas. It was powerful stuff. I’ve already been to the Mitchell Lecture at Colby College; and now I’ve paid you back here, receiving nothing at either of these venues. I believe in free speech; but this is ridiculous! (Laughter, applause)

Question: *How would you compare the environment in Congress when you were there and the way it is today?*

SIMPSON: Well, it’s not interparty conflict, it’s intra-party. You have Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) standing in the wings, waiting desperately for Dick Durbin (D-IL) to go down in flames because he voted for this package or that. I suppose it looks like something out of Shakespeare standing in the wings, with House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) – who now has paid all his dues to the extremists and others in our party – saying, “You know, I kept the whole thing running for two weeks (during the partial federal shutdown) and you came up with zero! So, the next time you get all keyed up, just know, I ain’t there! I did what you wanted me to do, it was a feckless thing, and you came up with nothing!” An old cowboy in Cody taught me, “If your horse drops dead, it’s better to get off!” So, that has happened.

You have two people in Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) who don’t like each other at all; it’s quite obvious they don’t. When Bill and I worked together, we started with a couple of masters, Howard Baker (R-TN) and Robert Byrd (D-VA), and then we had Bob Dole (R-KS) and Tom Daschle (D-ND) and George Mitchell. The assistant leaders I worked with, Al Cranston (D-CA) and Wendell Ford (D-KY), became dear friends. You had all these serious committees and ranking people. Bill, tell them who those people were and how it worked; you were awesome at that.

COHEN: Well, Sam Nunn (D-GA) and I worked together on many things. In 1987 Sam joined me when I undertook to create the Special Operations Command and the Assistant Secretary of Low-Intensity Conflict. Over the objections of the Pentagon, I wanted to create a command designed to take our best and our brightest and use them in a way that they would be aware of the culture, the language, and the traditions of the country they were going to be deployed to. They would be our forward-based eyes and ears, and help us to understand what the country was thinking and to prepare if we had a friend or foe. It was strongly opposed by the Pentagon.

Sam joined me, and the two of us were able to create the Special Operations Command, which today is prob-

ably the most in-demand command of all. You have a few people doing lots of things – SEAL teams and Rangers and so forth. It’s calling upon a very select group of our very best to operate in hostile environments without necessarily having to fire shots, but to gather intelligence and help shape the battlefield, if there’s going to be a battlefield. That was one in which Senator Nunn joined with me, we passed it, and now it is one of the most effective commands we have.

“Technology, itself, is neutral. It’s all head and no heart; it all depends on how we’re going to use it. I feel the same way about what’s happened with social media, it’s a river. In a river there is life and regeneration; but it’s also a sewer.” (WSC)

Question: *Why isn’t something like that possible today? It doesn’t seem to be happening; what is missing?*

COHEN: What’s happened is that the country has become fragmented in one sense. The American people are not polarized as a general proposition; the political parties are polarized. The American people are basically conservative people, slightly right of center or slightly left of center, given the issue and circumstance. If you’re heading into a depression, you expect the government to take a more active role in trying to resolve the issues; and that puts you further into the Barack Obama camp initially, asking, “What can the government do?”

But if you get too far right or too far left, you’re going to lose the support of the vast majority of the people who are in the middle. What’s happened in politics today is that the party activists – the most passionate in the Republican and Democratic parties, who go out and pound on the doors and lick all the stamps, et cetera – are driving the agenda.

On Money, Politics, and Self-Government

Take this in combination with the scandal of money-raising today. It is obscene what it costs today to run a congressional or a senate or a presidential campaign. A billion dollars to run a presidential campaign? You have one individual out in Las Vegas who pledged a hundred million dollars for one of our candidates, a Republican. If you have five or ten mega-millionaires who pledge a hundred million dollars – ten people – you could get a billion dollar campaign! How do you go against that?

What’s happened is that money has become the driving force in politics. Not so much when we were there, but our colleagues who are serving now spend all of their

time – when they’re not at home or on the floor – dialing for dollars, all day long. It’s obscene! If any of you were to stand outside the Senate chamber and watch the gauntlet that members have to run to get to the floor, with people grabbing you by the arm, saying, “Vote up, vote down, we supported you, don’t forget!” You would be pretty upset about the way the country is being run. And that’s what takes place on a daily basis.

It’s money, it’s lack of accountability. It’s also the fact that gerrymandering has really set the stage, so that Republicans just have to worry about someone coming from

“The defense budget can be cut, and it can be cut significantly if you do it the right way, if you tailor it to your strategic needs.... Shouldn’t we be tailoring the cuts to fit the strategy?... We don’t have a strategy today, and we don’t have the tactics.” (WSC)

their right; and Democrats now, someone from their left. The parties are pulling candidates to the extremes, and good people are being punished.

We have Bob Bennett (R-UT), a good friend of yours, Alan, and one of the most conservative senators from the conservative State of Utah. He happened to reach across the aisle on the TARP issue when Barack Obama first came into office; and he was punished for it. A brilliant Senator, punished. It’s money; the 24-

hour cable; the talk shows whipping people up; and it’s the phone that we all carry, this thing. Now, you can start a revolution with a Twitter, right? We’ve all seen it happen.

On Working Together

The real issue in this country is, Do we have the ability to govern ourselves any longer? Do we have the ability to try to do what Alan and I did with Gary Hart or Sam Nunn or John Glenn (D-OH), and the list goes on? To say, “How do we work together to make things happen?” We have lost that willingness and ability; and until such time as Republicans (and they’re starting to do it now) speak out against the more extreme elements; and the Democrats have to do the same, and say, “Let’s work together on the big issues, because we know what we have to do.” We know what the Simpson-Bowles Commission recommended. It’s all laid out right there. Here’s how we get control. Here’s how we start reducing the size of this monster that’s going to consume our kids.

Question: When you began your careers in Congress, the daily news was encapsulated in a half-hour in the evening, by the three major networks. Today we have the 24-hour news cycle, the advent of what’s called “tribal” media, and cable stations that pander to the extremes on both sides. How can we elevate the discourse and bring greater civility to our conversations, when people do not even begin their conversations with the same set of facts?

SIMPSON: I wrote a book about the media called, *Right in the Old Gazoo*.⁴⁵ It was about me describing the failings of the media; and, boy, I did! David Broder, our pal and wonderful ace reporter, was the best. He read it and said, “Simpson, I agree with about 60 percent of what you say, and the rest is just a screed, it’s a rant; but you’re right!”

Bill was talking about the right and the left. If you’re a Republican seeking re-election and you talk about taxes or revenue, you will be visited by the Club for Growth or Grover Norquist, who will come to your home in a white robe and visit with you. And if you’re a lefty and you suddenly talk about entitlement reform and doing something to precious Social Security to make it solvent for 75 years – a stupid idea, let’s admit that, for God’s sake – you’re going to be visited by the AARP and their local representatives, and the AFL-CIO. That’s where you are right now.

The worst part of it is that if you’re the leader – say, Mitch McConnell, for example – you can come to Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and say, “You keep messing around with Max Baucus (D-MT) and putting together whatever you’re cooking-up over there, then I’m going to make you chairman of the Journal Committee.” Now that may not sound like anything; but then Harry Reid will say to somebody, “You’re working with Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) over there, that Republican. Be careful there, because I can put you in a whole new position in the Democratic leadership.” That’s the power that’s being wielded now; and it’s really obvious when you see it up close.

Question: Talk about the media, your experience with the media?

SIMPSON: I always had a rule: when they’re after my butt, answer the phone; and they respected that. I always got in trouble. I’ll never forget about the late Peter Arnett (of CNN). I just had a belly full of him, because every other media person left Baghdad except Peter; and at the bottom of the screen it said, “Our loyal correspondent is speaking in the most difficult circumstances” – that is, he’s being censored. He couldn’t have stuck around any time if he hadn’t said, “Go ahead, tell me what I can and can’t say.” So I made a beautiful statement that he was a sympathizer. I’ll tell you, the media – I went from the A list to the Z list! Well, he later was the toast of the town – and I was toast!

⁴⁵ Alan K. Simpson, *Right in the Old Gazoo: What I Learned in a Lifetime of Meeting the Press*, William Morrow, New York, 1997.

Peter later made the final error. He came out and said he really was supportive of our enemies; and they fired him. And guess who called me to talk about it? The media – *The Washington Post*, the *New York Times*: “Did you hear about Peter Arnett?” And I said, “No, what?” “Well, they canned him.” “Well, what did he say?” “He said he was very hurt, he realized he ruined his reputation.” Whatever it was he said was pretty hard and pretty tough for him to say. “Now what do you have to say, because you were right in the middle of that?” I said, “Just take his name out and put my name in and you’re the same people that ragged me and now you want me to take a spade of dirt and put it in his face. Stuff it”. Well, that was the last call I had that week.

Think of that. I mean, that’s where they were eating their own young, and it didn’t matter. They’re interested in confusion, controversy, and complexity, not clarity. And as long as the media just consists of those three C’s and not clarity, this country can’t make it. Once or twice a week you read about somebody saying, “We’re sorry we didn’t vet that more.” Yes; but in the meantime, just the wreckage of human beings is left.

Question: Any thoughts, Mr. Secretary, on the media and the 24-hour news cycle, and what these are doing to our political discourse?

COHEN: What’s happened is, there’s no longer any filter. When we were growing up, waiting for the test pattern on television, you had three networks – Uncle Walter, one with ABC, and David Brinkley – and you assumed they at least were providing a filter for the serious and for the silly, to separate these out.

Today there’s no one filtering the news that’s flowing through. It’s not even news at times. It’s just rumor and speculation and raw sewage flowing through it. That to me is what’s happened with the Internet and social media. It’s like anything else. Everything has its positive side, but it has a negative side as well.

On Technology’s Mixed Blessings

We often think about technology in terms of its blessings; but it has a double edge to it. The same technology that Bill Gates has, Bin Laden had. Technology, itself, is neutral. It’s all head and no heart; it all depends on how we’re going to use it. I feel the same way about what’s happened with the social media, it’s a river. In a river there is life and regeneration; but it’s also a sewer. It’s the sewer that fills some of the information that gets into the media; and suddenly – from something that has no basis in fact, that is just scandalous in terms of its allegations – people can be ruined in a nanosecond. People can be eliminated in a nanosecond by being Twitter’ed, or by having a photograph taken that says, “This was one of

the bombers up in Boston.” They showed a photograph of such an individual, and his face went around the world. He ended up committing suicide, and he had nothing to do with the bombing.

“All of these other countries are looking at us and asking, “What happened, where have you gone wrong? Do you expect us to follow your lead? You want us to be more like you? No, thank you, we’re doing fine without following you.” (WSC)

We live in a time in which there is no zone of privacy. Take this whole notion that the Europeans are very upset with us; Americans are very upset with us, as well. When asked about this matter, I said, “I’m surprised they’re surprised!” Think about it. When I was Vice Chair of the Intelligence Committee and went to the Pentagon, I assumed every single word that I uttered was being recorded by someone, friend or foe. This is what most people don’t understand. It’s not only our adversaries that are following and monitoring us; it’s some of our closest allies.

When we stepped into the Situation Room at the White House, one of the most secure rooms in America, the first thing we did was to take our phones and remove the batteries. Or, we were not allowed to take the phones in at all, because your phone can be activated remotely and used as a listening device by anyone who has access. We’ve gone from state actors to non-state actors to individuals who now have the capacity to read simply everything.

The notion that suddenly the Europeans are stunned by this – when in fact some of the most stunned have been the most active in stealing our secrets – I took issue with that. There’s a line that has to be drawn; but, frankly, when Google now is upset, my goodness! I can’t open my computer in the morning without Amazon telling me what I should be reading, based on what I have already read. We know that Google is now going to be able to tell each of us who has a cell phone, as we walk by a store, a Starbucks, “Oh, by the way, the special is on with the latte that you like.” They know what you bought the day before or the week before, and you’re going to walk through any mall and your phone is going to be going off, saying what’s on inside, the specials – because they know what your preferences are!

All of this concern about big brother – even while we’ve had lots of little brothers. They’re called credit card companies, and they know everything we do. I had my card cut off a couple weeks ago. I was trying to inquire about a device where I could plug three or four of my

iPhones into this one device; and apparently it struck somebody as unusual, so they cut my card off, called me, and said, “Did you try to make a purchase of such and such?” I said, “That doesn’t sound familiar.” They said “It had to do with computer plug-ins.” I said, “Oh, yeah, that was me.” It was a \$28 item. They saw that as an unusual purchase for me, and thought my card had been stolen; so they cut off the card. Your credit card is watching everything you do!

Google now is going to make it so that they can have a Google Glass and monitor everything you do and take a picture of you, et cetera. The notion of a zone of privacy is gone; it doesn’t exist for any of us. The problem is that technology is racing so far ahead of our ability to regulate it, and that’s something we’ve got to come to grips with as a society. The notion that gentlemen don’t read each other’s mail went out in 1929, and it’s not coming back!

SIMPSON: Let me add one thing. I like to say, “What the hell have you got to hide?”⁴⁶ And that always irritates people, I’ll tell you. I was once on federal probation for shooting mail boxes and was sent off to the Cranbrook School. I got drunk one night in Laramie, hit a cop, and spent a night in jail. I called this woman I was going with and said, “I need \$300 bail.” She said, “Well, I’m working my way through school, buster, so you can find a way and just spend the night.” And I thought, “I think I will marry her” – which I did! (Laughter)

Anybody who believes there’s privacy today is just stupid; and the people who ensure that we don’t have privacy are the media. The first thing they’re doing with (Mayor) Bill DeBlasio of New York City is digging through everything in his background, all the stuff, everything personal. Nothing that has anything to do with policy. I don’t know if he’s a socialist or a commie or whatever the hell he is; the issue is, they’re digging, digging, digging. What’s the purpose of that? Finding the guy smoking pot when he’s 20, sitting under a tree with his hair hanging to his knees, you know. Is this a picture of our candidate for the U.S. Senate? Yes, it is. It’s like, forget it!

Question: *We have time for one more question, and could we try to end on a note of hope and optimism? Any observations on what it’s going to take, to get this national dialogue back on the right track?*

COHEN: It’s going to take the people of the country speaking out and saying, “Enough is enough!” As many of you know, I spend most of my time traveling around the world – China, India, all throughout the Southeast Asian countries, Oceania, the Gulf States. They look at us with – it used to be with awe, with admiration. Today, it is with astonishment. “This is the United States of America and you’re closed for business? You are the ones who hold yourselves out as the premiere example of what a democracy should be like – multiethnic, multiracial, multireligious, all of the great things that your country stands for – and you don’t have a budget, and you’re not going to get one for the next two or three years? You can’t even make a decision on what needs to be done on the Simpson-Bowles effort?”

On Defense Spending

Think about this, now. I’m here to say the defense budget can be cut, and it can be cut significantly if you do it the right way, if you tailor it to your strategic needs. I like to give a very simple example. Suppose you go to your doctor and the doctor says, “You know, Bill, you could lose about 20 percent of your weight, you’re getting a little bit too soft. It’s not good for your health, and ultimately you’re going to pay a big penalty for it. So, take 20 percent off.” And I say, “Okay, I can do that”, and I rush to my tailor and say, “Take 20 percent off the cuff and 20 percent off the pants;” and I’ve reached my 20 percent – which is absurd, isn’t it?

That’s what we’ve done with the Defense Department, saying “By the way, here’s the way you’re going to cut it: you’ve got to cut 20 percent out and you can’t touch personnel, that’s off the table, you can only touch operation & maintenance and procurement; and you can’t say how you’re going to cut it, you just have to take it evenly across the board.” You say, “My goodness. Shouldn’t we be tailoring the cuts to fit the strategy?”

Sun Tzu said, “Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”⁴⁷ We don’t have a strategy today, and we don’t have the tactics. All of these other countries are looking at us and asking, “What happened, where have you gone wrong? Do you expect us to follow your lead? You want us to be more like you? No, thank you, we’re doing fine without following you.”

We’ve got a lot to do, and that’s one of the reasons the Simpson-Bowles Commission is so critically important. Why it was taken off the table still befuddles me, because

⁴⁶ A private college preparatory boarding school in Bloomfield Hills MI, near Detroit. “We welcome motivated students of all races, backgrounds, and orientation to our school. Each of them comes here to learn, grow, and discover who they are and who they have the potential to become.” – Arlyce M. Seibert, Director of Schools, 2013.

⁴⁷ Sun Tzu (544–496 B.C.) was a Chinese military general, strategist, and philosopher who lived in the Spring and Autumn Period of ancient China. He is traditionally credited as the author of *The Art of War*, an influential ancient Chinese book on military strategy. The work has been praised and employed throughout East Asia since its writing. In the twentieth century it grew in popularity and saw practical use in Western society, as well.

the commission's recommendations are responsible and rational; and, yes, they touch all of us. They touch people like me and ask, "Do I really need Social Security at this point in my life? I'm still productive, I'm still working, I can still contribute. Shouldn't there be some changes made in the growth of these programs as was laid out by the commission? Can't we sacrifice for our kids, as opposed to borrowing from them now and making them pay our bill?"

On What It's Going to Take

It's going to take the American people to say, "We've been selfish; we haven't disciplined ourselves; we've gotten soft and flabby in our thinking and in our policies; and we are going to forfeit the future unless we change." The great thing about this country is that we are so capable of changing, and we will change when we're forced to do so. The reason I wanted Alan to come and want him to continue to speak out is that it's going to take people like him who have been willing to take the heat, to take all of the abuse that he takes on a day-to-day basis for saying, "We should be challenging and changing our Social Security programs to make them secure for the future, for the kids who are coming up; and if we don't do that, then we are engaging in a terrible thing that we're inflicting our kids and grandkids."

SIMPSON: Or you could do one other thing. You could go to the town meeting of your elected representatives. Don't forget that Maine and Wyoming are very much alike; you cast 26 percent of your vote for Perot, we cast 23. People asked, "How did we get Bill Clinton?" I said, "Well, you bonehead, you voted for Ross Perot. What's your next question?"

Maine and Wyoming are filled with independent and ornery people – my God, just the kind of people you love. (And you've got another one now, and that's Angus King. He's a piece of work, let me tell you. He's trying to make

things work. He's not there to see who can torture the Democrats or the Republicans.) Go to the town meeting; and when the elected representative stands there in the glare, looking into the camera, owlish, and says, "I know what the problem is. And we can get it done without touching precious Medicare, precious Medicaid, precious defense, and precious Social Security. God bless you." You should get up and say, "You, sir, are making a terminological inexactitude, you lying son of a bitch, you!" (Applause)

"It's going to take the American people to say, "We've been selfish; we haven't disciplined ourselves; we've gotten soft and flabby in our thinking and in our policies; and we are going to forfeit the future unless we change." (WSC)

PAUL FERGUSON: *Well, it's a little tough to come back on-stage after that colorful show-stopper, Senator; thank you! And thank you, ladies and gentlemen. We've been enlightened today in our thinking about the value of civility in politics and leadership by example. I would add just one last thought. The reason we hold this kind of conversation at the university is that we're pleased and honored to share it with our students, our next generation, our future. Senator Simpson, we are so grateful for your time here, to join Secretary Cohen; and we hope you'll come back soon.*

SIMPSON: Thank you. We've spent some wonderful times here in Maine, and I've learned to love this state. You have to love it, because it reminds me of my native land of Wyoming – not just in its physical attributes, but in its people. And that's the best compliment I can give. (Applause)

About the Editors

Richard E. (Dick) Barringer

Richard Barringer (A.B. Harvard College, 1959; A.M. U. of Massachusetts, 1963; Pd.D. M.I.T., 1968) is Professor Emeritus in the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. He served in the administrations of three Maine governors as Director of Public Lands, Commissioner of Conservation, and Director of State Planning; and is author and editor of numerous books, reports, and landmark Maine laws in the areas of land use and conservation, education, the environment, energy, economic development, and tax policy. He co-chaired the committee at the University of Maine that created the Margaret Chase Smith Center for Public Policy; and later became founding director of the Muskie School, where he has taught public policy & management and community planning & development for 25 years.

Barringer has organized numerous Blaine House Conferences on Maine topics such as natural resource management, the creative economy, and quality of place; directed the economic analysis of the Department of Defense's Base Realignment & Closure (BRAC) recommendations for the states of Maine and New Hampshire; served as member of the Governor's Working Group on the Structure, Management, and Oversight of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway; and more recently served as chair of the Blue-ribbon Commission on Land Conservation of the New England Governors' Conference and principal author of its several reports.

In 2008 he was awarded the Elmer B. Staats Public Service Career Award by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, given from time to time to a faculty member "whose career exemplifies a commitment to inspiring students to public service careers." He lives in Portland ME and is married to Martha Freeman, father to four grown sons, and grandparent to six.

At present he is engaged in efforts to re-structure the Muskie School in light of the rapidly evolving environment for public higher education throughout the nation; to develop a non-profit corporation, a "Friends" organization, on behalf of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway, in a time of stringent public resources; and to develop a comprehensive plan for the emerging India Street neighborhood of Portland, along the waterfront between the downtown and Munjoy Hill sections.

Kenneth T. (Ken) Palmer

Ken Palmer (B.A. Amherst, 1959; Ph.D. Penn State University, 1964) joined the University of Maine's political science department in 1969, where he taught American state politics and federalism for more than 35 years. Under a Ford Foundation grant, he and several colleagues authored *The Legislative Process in Maine* (1973), the first book-length study of Maine's citizen legislature. Palmer's interest in Maine government expanded over the years to include studies of the Executive Branch, the State Courts, and the activities of political parties. The political culture of Maine is discussed in his text, *Maine Politics and Government* (University of Nebraska Press, 2nd edition, 2009). He contributed important chapters on Maine government to Richard Barringer, Ed., *Changing Maine* (Muskie School, USM, 1990) and Richard Barringer, Ed., *Changing Maine: 1960-2010* (Tilbury House, Gardiner ME, 2004).

In a ten-year association with The Brookings Institution of Washington DC, Palmer examined the long-term impact of federal grants-in-aid on Maine government, including such programs such as the Community Development Block Grant program. He is co-author of the summary publication of this project, *The Changing Politics of Federal Grants* (Brookings Institution, 1984). The evolving relationship between Maine state and local government is explored in his chapter in Dane Krane, Ed., *Home Rule in America* (2001). In the 1990s, Palmer was the book review editor for *Publius: The Journal of Federalism*, the principal political science journal concerned with intergovernmental relations. He also served on the executive committee of the Section on Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations of the American Political Science Association.

Throughout his career, Professor Palmer sought to involve students in the work of state and federal governments and office-holders. From 1969 to 2000, he directed the UMaine Political Science Department's Congressional Internship Program, which placed students for a semester in the Washington offices of Maine members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. He also coordinated various summer programs that placed students in the offices of the Maine Executive Branch and its various agencies. In 2010, in recognition of his career-long work and dedication to his students, the Political Science Department named its State Legislative Internship Program in his honor.

Speaker & Panelist Brief Biographies

Speakers

Tom Allen

Born: Portland ME, 1945

Education

- B.A. Bowdoin College, 1967
- Rhodes Scholar, Wadham College, Oxford University, 1968
- LL.D Harvard Law School, 1974

Early Career

- Staff assistant to Gov. Kenneth Curtis, 1968
- Staff assistant to Sen. Edmund S. Muskie, 1970-71
- Elected to Portland City Council, 1989-95
- Mayor of Portland, 1991-92

Congressional Career

- Elected to U.S. House of Representatives, 1996-2008, from Maine's 1st District.
- Served on Budget and Energy & Commerce committees
- Recognized for expertise in pharmaceutical industry issues

Some Accomplishments in Congress

- Co-sponsored bi-partisan campaign finance bill to limit soft money contributions and require disclosure by groups spending above certain limits
- Sponsored legislation to require power plants and trash incinerators to cut mercury emissions by 95 percent
- Co-authored Oceans-21 to create a comprehensive national oceans policy

Post-Congressional Career

- President, Association of American Publishers
- Author, Dangerous Convictions: What's really Wrong with the U.S. Congress?. 2013

William S. Cohen

Born: Bangor, ME., 1940

Education

- Bangor H.S. 1958
- B. A. Bowdoin College, 1962
- J.D. Boston University, 1965

Early Career

- Instructor, University of Maine, 1968-72
- County Attorney, Penobscot County, 1968-72
- Member, Bangor City Council, 1969-72
- Mayor of Bangor, 1971-72

Congressional Career

- Elected to U.S. House of Representatives, 1972-1978, representing Maine's 2nd District
- Served on House Judiciary Committee during the Watergate Investigation

- Elected to U.S. Senate, 1978-1996
- Served on Armed Service, Governmental Affairs, and Intelligence committees
- Helped to draft several laws related to defense matters, such as the Federal Acquisition Reform Act (1996) and the Information Technology Management Reform Act (1996)

Post-Senate Career

- Appointed 20th U.S. Secretary of Defense by President Bill Clinton, 1997-2001
- Recipient, Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service, Smithsonian Institution, 2002
- Founded the Cohen Group, a business consulting and lobbying firm in Washington DC, focused on international relations and commerce
- Established the William S. Cohen Center for International Policy & Commerce, University of Maine

Kenneth M. Curtis

Born: Curtis Corner, Leeds ME, 1931

Education

- Cony High School, Augusta, 1949
- Maine Maritime Academy, Castine, 1952
- University of Maine School of Law, 1959

Early Career

- U.S. Navy, 1953-55 (rising to rank of LCDR in Naval Reserves)
- Staff Aide, U.S. Congressman James Oliver, ME 1st District, 1959-61
- Maine Field Representative, U.S. Department of Commerce's Area Redevelopment Administration, 1963-64

Maine Political Career

- Candidate for U.S. Congress, 1964
- Maine Secretary of State, 1964-66
- Maine Governor, 1967-1974

Some Major Accomplishments in 2 terms as Governor, with bipartisan legislative support

- Creation of the University of Maine System, 1968
- Enactment of a state income tax, 1969
- Enactment of Maine's major environment laws, 1970
- Creation of a cabinet system in the Executive Branch, with commissioners selected by the governor, 1972

Post-Gubernatorial Career

- Chairman, Democratic National Committee, 1977-1978
- U.S. Ambassador to Canada, 1979-1981
- President, Maine Maritime Academy, 1986-1994
- Super-delegate, Democratic National Convention, 2008

Barney Frank

Born: Bayonne NJ, 1940

Education

- Bayonne High School, 1957
- B.A. Harvard University, 1962
- LL.D. Harvard Law School, 1977

Early Political Career

- A volunteer in Mississippi during Freedom Summer, 1964
- Chief of Staff to Boston Mayor Kevin White, 1968-71
- Administrative Assistant to Congressman Michael Harrington (D, MA), 1971-72
- Member, MA House of Representatives, 1972-80

Congressional Career

- Member, U.S. House, representing MA's 4th District, 1980-2012
- Chair, House Financial Services Committee, 2007-11
- Surveys of Capitol Hill staffers award Frank the title of the "brainiest", "funniest", and "most eloquent" member of Congress, 2004 and 2006

Some Major Accomplishments in Congress A leading figure and noted orator throughout this time, Frank:

- Co-authored the Dodd-Frank Act, mandating the most extensive reforms in the banking and financial services industry since the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, and creating the new Consumer Financial Protection Agency, 2010
- Helped enact the Credit Card Holders' Bill of Rights, 2008.
- Was chief advocate for the National Housing Trust Fund, created as part of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008

Angus S. King

Born: Alexandria VA, 1944

Education

- Hammond H.S., Alexandria VA, 1962
- B.A., Dartmouth College, 1966
- LL.D., University of Virginia Law School, 1969

Early Career

- Staff attorney, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Skowhegan ME, 1969-1971
- Legislative Assistant, U.S. Senator William Hathaway, 1973-75
- Private Law Practice, Brunswick, ME
- Host, Maine Public Television's MaineWatch series, 1980s
- Founder, Northeast Energy Management Co., Inc., 1989

Maine Political Career

- Governor of Maine, 1994-2003
- Elected U.S. Senator, 2012

Some Accomplishments as Governor

- Launched the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, to provide laptops for all public school middle students.
- Led Maine government's wide use of the Internet and e-mail to provide citizen access to state agencies.
- Oversaw major improvements in state infrastructure, including the new Cross Office Building in Augusta

U.S. Senate Career

- Elected U.S. Senator in 2012
- Serves on the Armed Services, Budget, and Rules Committees, and the Select Committee on Intelligence

Selected Issues

- A leader on the issue of stabilizing student loan interest rates
- Supports the No Budget, No Pay Act, to prevent members Congress from being paid until a budget is passed
- Supports reform of the Senate filibuster
- Supports the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare)

Peter Mills

Born: Skowhegan, ME, 1943

Education

- Gorham High School, 1961
- B.A. Harvard College, 1965
- J.D. University of Maine Law School, 1973

Public Service Career

- U.S. Navy, 1965-70, including 3 tours to Vietnam and intelligence missions against the Soviet Union
- Attorney in private practice, Portland and Skowhegan, 1973-present
- Founding member of Somerset Economic Development Corporation and the First Park business park in Oakland ME
- Frequent contributor of letters and opinion articles in the Maine press

Political Experience

- Member, Maine House of Representatives, 2003-2005.
- Member, Maine Senate, 1995-2003, 2005-2011.
- Republican leader on the committees on Taxation, Appropriations, Labor, Judiciary, Education, Human Services, and Insurance
- Consistent advocate for pragmatic reforms in tax policy, health care, education, and public pensions
- Candidate for governor in the Republican Party primary, 2006 and 2010

Current Position

- Executive Director, Maine Turnpike Authority, 2011-present

Elizabeth “Libby” Mitchell

Born: Gaffney, South Carolina, 1940, moved to Maine in 1971

Education

- B.A. Furman University, 1962
- LL.D, University of Maine Law School, 1995

Career in Maine Legislature

- Elected to the Maine House of Representatives, 1974-84 and 1990-98
- House Majority Leader, 1983-84
- Speaker of the House, 1997-99
- Elected to the Maine Senate, 2004-10
- Senate Majority Leader, 2007-09
- President of the Senate, 2009-11

Some Notable Career Achievements

- First woman elected Majority Leader in the Maine House
- First woman in the U.S. to preside over both branches of a State Legislature
- Passionate advocate for public education
- Leadership on women’s and children’s issues
- Inductee, Maine Women’s Hall of Fame, University of Maine at Augusta
- Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate (1984) and Maine Governor (2010)

Some Other Public Service Positions

- Director, Maine State Housing Authority
- Chair, Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston
- Chair, Maine Community Foundation’s Policy Scholars Program
- Board member, Kennebec Valley Community College
- Maine Court System Mediator

Presently

- Practicing law with husband Jim and daughter Emily at Mitchell and Davis in Augusta ME

George J. Mitchell

Born: Waterville ME, 1933

Education

- Waterville High School, 1950
- B.A. Bowdoin College, 1954
- LL.D. Georgetown University Law Center, 1961

Early Career

- Member, Anti-Trust Division, U.S. Department of Justice, 1960-62
- Executive Assistant, U.S. Sen. Edmund Muskie, 1962-65
- Assistant County Attorney, Cumberland County ME, 1971
- U.S. Attorney for Maine, 1977-79
- U.S. District Court Judge, 1979-1980

U.S. Senate Career: Some Highlights

- United States Senator, 1980-95;

- U.S. Senate Majority Leader, 1989-95
- Led re-authorization of the Clean Air Act of 1990, and passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, both signed into law by President George H.W. Bush
- Guided passage of North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement, 1994

Some Highlights of Post-Senate Career

- U.S. Special Envoy for Northern Ireland, 1995, architect of the Good Friday Agreement, 1998
- Founder of the Mitchell Institute, to encourage young people from every Maine community to aspire to and achieve a college education, 1995
- Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton, 1999
- Chairman, the Walt Disney Company, 2004-07
- Directed the Investigation of Steroid Use in Major League Baseball, 2006-07.
- U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, 2009

Alan K. Simpson

Born: Denver CO, 1931

Education

- Cody H.S., Cody WY, 1949
- B.S. University of Wyoming, 1954
- J.D. University of Wyoming, 1958

Early Career

- U.S. Army service in Germany, 1955-56
- Member, Wyoming House of Representatives, 1965-77

U.S. Senate Career

- Elected U.S. Senator, 1979-1997
- Assistant Senate Majority Leader, 1985-95
- Chair, Veterans’ Affairs Committee, 1981-85, 1995-97
- Chair, Immigration and Refugee Subcommittee of the Judiciary Committee
- Chair, Committee on Aging
- Chair, Subcommittee on Social Security

Selected Post-Senate Career

- Director, Institute of Politics, JFK School of Government, Harvard U., 1997-2000
- Co-chair, National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, 2010
- Member, Iraq Study Group, 2006
- Advisory Board, Common Good
- *Bloomberg Markets* magazine, “50 Most Influential,” 2012
- Partner, Simpson, Kepler & Edwards of Cody WY and Burg, Simpson, Eldridge, Hersh & Jardine of Denver CO

Panelists

Cynthia Dill

Education

- BA, University of Vermont
- JD, Northeastern University School of Law

Public Service Career

- Member of the Maine House of Representatives and the Maine Senate, 2006-12
- Served on the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary and the House Ethics Committees
- Democratic nominee for the U.S. Senate, 2012
- Award-winning civil rights attorney with Portland firm Troubh Heisler

Kenneth Fredette

Education

- BS, University of Maine at Machias
- MPPM, Muskie School of Public Service, USM
- MPA, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- JD, University of Maine School of Law

Public Service Career

- Republican leader in the Maine House of Representatives (2013-), elected in his second term in the Legislature
- Served on Joint Standing Comm. on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and the Joint Standing Comm. on Elections
- Member of Maine Air National Guard, serving as a Judge Advocate General (JAG) for 12 years

Amy Fried

Education

- BA, San Francisco State University
- PhD, University of Minnesota

Political Science Career

- Professor of Political Science, University of Maine
- Author, Pathways to Polling (2011), an analysis of the evolution of public opinion research

Public Service Career

- Regular columnist on Maine public affairs, Bangor Daily News



Recommended Readings

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