

REFLECTIONS PROJECT
REP. JIM KOLBE INTERVIEW
December 5, 2006

LINDA DOUGLASS: So, let me start off Congressman by asking you-- given that you were there for so long, and saw so much change, what-- what is it about the institution of Congress that you think changed most during-- your tenure, from the time you arrived to the now you're now leaving?

REP. JIM KOLBE: Well, I think as an institution, the-- probably the biggest change that I've seen in Congress is a change in the demeanor or the attitude of people-- their interaction with each other. There's much less socialization that goes on today than there was when I first came. Now, I try to-- I have to step back from that answer a little bit because when you first come, you're a freshman member.

You don't have a lot of assignments. You don't have a lot of responsibilities as you-- as you stay longer. You become a committee chairman. You have more responsibilities and so your time is taken up more. So you don't have as much time to do the socialization that you would otherwise have.

But I've-- I think it's very noticeable to me that over the years, members spend less time socializing outside of Congress with each other. And I think that, you know, if you're, you were to ask me why, you'd have to go back further than my tenure in Congress; and it's the advent of jet travel.

Before jet travel, members came to Washington and they basically stayed there until there was a summer break or a winter break and-- and went home. Now, every member is on a plane the minute the session is over on Thursday or Friday, and they're out the door. And during the week, they spend much of their time over at the RNC or the DCCC on the phone, raising money.

And so they just don't have time to talk to each other. And if you don't know each other. If you don't talk to each other and you don't know each other, it's a lot easier to say really ugly things about people. When you sit down and you know people one-on-one, about their families, you tend to have a different way of looking at people and the way you think about them and talk about them. So I would say that's the number one change that I've seen in the institution.

DOUGLASS: You know, I've heard from some of the members to whom we've been speaking that there doesn't seem to be the same reverence for the institution of Congress--

KOLBE: I think that's true.

DOUGLASS: --that there was when many of you came in 20 or even 30 years ago. Describe for us a little bit about yourself. How it was that you came to want to run for Congress; to be a member of the House. And how you felt about the institution when you first came into it.

KOLBE: Well, my answer for that is fairly simple. When I was 15 years old, Barry Goldwater appointed me as his page in the United States Senate. So, I went to Washington as a 15-year-old sophomore in high school and served for three years. In those days the pages could come any time in their high school tenure and stay as long as their sponsor would have them. So I graduated from the high school at the end of my senior year. And that experience of serving in the United States Senate as a 15 year old, obviously, left me very awestruck.

But I went away with-- from that experience, with a reverence for the institution. In that case it was the Senate, but Congress as a whole. And I resolved then that some day I wanted to come back. But I wanted to come back on my own terms, when I could be a member, not as a staff person.

So, I resisted through the years, the opportunities that I had to take a staff position on Capitol Hill or even in the administration-- the Nixon or Ford administrations in Washington. I resisted that opportunity and said, "No, I'm going to wait. And some day, I'm going to run for-- for Congress." So, I always knew, since I was a teenager that that was-- that was my goal. And yeah, I had a very strong reverence for the institution. And I-- and it-- it-- and it's still there. I still do think of the institution.

But I'm sad that-- because I think more members really don't have that kind of feeling about it-- today. It's-- it's either just a job or it's a stepping stone, or it's something they can use to promote their ideological goals. I think there's too much of that.

DOUGLASS: Well that brings us to the question of how the public is viewing Congress these days. There is clearly a low regard at the moment, we're in 2006, for the United States Congress. It ranks very low in the public opinion polls. What is it that has brought us to that point, do you think?

KOLBE: Well, I think you-- first of all, we-- I think we need to put this in a bit of a historical perspective. If you look back at some of the campaigns in the 19th century and some of the things that were said about members of Congress in those days-- I

mean they-- they were much more scurrilous than the kinds of things that are said today.

So, people were not hesitant at all about attacking members of Congress. Or-- and-- and I don't think the reputation-- the standing of Congress as ever been that high. But it does have its ups and downs. And people tend to be, for example, the time the Republicans came into the majority in 1995, there was this feeling of-- that we were going to accomplish a lot of things. And there was a very positive feeling about it.

All institutions of government had a real surge of public-- of support after 2001-- after September 11th. And-- you can just palpably feel it when you went home. People wanted to put their hand on your arm, on your shoulder. They just wanted to be reassured that things were going to be okay. Why has it gone down in the recent years?

I-- I think a lot of it has to do with the-- the leadership-- the Republican leadership in the House. I think there has been a-- a sense of divide and conquer, a sense of-- we want to accomplish things without using Democrat votes. There's been a sense of division-- of ideo-- of trying to spread things apart ideologically. And I think as a result of that, the American people just get very tired of that kind of thing.

And they just say, "You know, we want people to work together to accomplish things." Republicans have had that opportunity for six years since they've been-- both had the White House, The Senate and The House of Representatives. And I think a lot of people just said, you know, "You haven't really accomplished what we had hoped you would accomplish. We'd-- to go back-- and we will, I'm sure here-- talk about different issues like the spending issues and the fiscal discipline and immigration and some of the others. And certainly the War-- in this last-- right now-- everybody's unhappy with the President about the war. And I think it-- that just spills over into Congress too.

DOUGLASS: You talked about divisiveness when you announced that you were leaving in some of the interviews that you gave when you announced that you'd decided to retire.

KOLBE: Right.

DOUGLASS: Was the rise in polarization or divisiveness one of the reasons you decided that you were ready to go?

KOLBE: Yes, it was. It wasn't the only one. And I wouldn't say it was the primary. But-- it was certainly on the issues. I always said, there are three good reasons to retire. One, I want to retire when I can walk out of there and not be carried out. I

want to retire when I'm at the top of my game; that is when people are not pushing me towards the door. And I want to leave when I decide it's the right time for me to leave.

So-- I think in all of those cases-- it was definitely the right time for me to leave. My term limit-- I was term limited as Chairman of the Sub-Committee and these last six years have clearly been the highlight of my career in Congress of being Chairman of the Appropriations Sub-Committee on Foreign Operations which you mentioned at the outset.

So those were-- that was one of the reasons. I would have had to go on to a different Sub-committee. And I really didn't see anything else that I would have had the passion and interest in that I had there. So, there were plenty of good reasons. But the divisiveness clearly was one of them. I just found myself tired-- tired of-- of all that division.

And that I didn't find myself enjoying being around most of my colleagues. And I said, "That's not a good thing. I should want to be around my colleagues." And I didn't really feel that way.

DOUGLASS: What is, in your view, the cause? I mean, you certainly talked about how members don't socialize as much as they did. Jet travel has caused them to go and spend most of their time away in their districts on the weekends or maybe even out raising money on the weekends.

Getting ready for more combat, the permanent campaign and so forth. But obviously-- there is a type polarization, a degree of polarization that rose up when Republicans took the majority from the Democrats. Democrats were enraged. They felt entitled to be in the majority, because they had been for so long.

Republicans didn't trust Democrats to work with them. What do you think-- is there-- one or the other party to blame? Or is it both? And-- and what was the cause?

KOLBE: Well before I get to the specific, let me just say on, of-- about the general-- issue of divisiveness. I think Congress is pretty much a reflection of society as a whole. The kinds of people that represent-- are in Congress-- that represent their districts.

The kinds of attitudes and thinking they have. There is less civility today in our society. Go into any school and look at the way teachers are treated, as opposed to the way they were treated at-- a generation ago. There is just less respect for authority, whether it's police or teachers or others. And there's certainly less respect for people in Congress. And people in Congress have less respect for each other. So,

I think, members of Congress in a sense are a reflection of that change that's taking place in our society.

But to bring it down to the specifics of what's happening in this-- in Congress today. As I said, "I-- put a good deal of the blame on the Republican leadership." I think Tom Delay was a very divisive individual. I think he divided people.

I think that was a strategy on his part was to do that. He felt very strongly that that's the way he could keep the majority, was by making-- circling the wagons and saying, "We can't count on any of them over there to help us get this done. So, we've got to rely on ourselves and you've got to stand up and be counted here. We only have 228 or 232 votes when we need 218 votes to pass anything in the United States Congress." And he'd say, you know, "We've-- we've got to get those votes there." Instead of reaching out to the other side and saying, you know, "Okay, let's look-- we won't-- it may not be perfect, but let's look for some compromises that can get-- bring some of your people over here."

And the idea that all good ideas are on one side of the aisle is kind of nonsense. But I have to say, the Democrats have responded to it with a kick in the, in the teeth time and time again themselves. They have spurned any efforts on parts of some of us to reach out and across the aisle.

And I think of that particularly-- we'll come to it I'm sure. But-- talked of that in trade for example, where we've gotten no help at all from the Democrats on those issues.

DOUGLASS: Well, you-- were one of those very few Republicans, the shrinking group of Republicans-- that were sort of caught in the middle in a way, in that you were one of the-- what some think at least at the moment in our history as a dying breed of moderate Republicans. Because so many of them were defeated in the 2006 election.

How difficult did your own party make it for you to be a moderate? I'm thinking for example, that as early as the beginning of the Republican majority, you were interested in a leadership but were-- were not allowed to play that role because you supported abortion rights--

KOLBE: Abortion rights.

DOUGLASS: --and-- and some gun-- control.

KOLBE: Well-- I had voted for a gun control bill. I don't think that was-- (UNINTEL PHRASE) a lot of Republicans ended up voting for that. That was-- caused me some problems at home in my district, but I don't think that was a problem internally. But

clearly the abortion issue is a critical issue. It's kind of a dividing line, as it has been at least until now.

It'll be interesting to see in the 110th Congress whether the Democrats change on that. Democrats have even been more-- one-sided on that. You'll recall that they never would allow Governor Casey to speak at the Democratic Convention, for example, because he was pro-life. And-- whereas you had pro-choice people speaking at the Republican Convention. They were basically banned from speaking at the Democratic Convention. So they've been very one-sided on that-- on that issue. I am pro-choice. But yeah, I think of it-- I am moderate. I don't mind using that term.

I think of myself as a moderate; as a centrist. I think of myself as a practical person. I try to look at issues and see what I think is the right solution; what is going to work best. I sometimes look wistfully at some of my colleagues who see everything in simple black and white terms and say, "Life would sure be easier if I could-- if life-- if I thought everything was that way.

I would no problem making up my mind about anything." But I don't think life is that way. But the truth is, I see myself coming from the libertarian side of the Republican Party-- the Barry Goldwater side.

And that's-- kind of where we are and in Arizona on that-- on those issues. We've-- we come from that where the idea the government out to stay out of your lives. I've always found it fascinating that my Republican colleagues think that government is bad and we should have smaller government, less intrusion of government, reduce government, reduce spending and everything. Except when we get to the issues of your personal life-- what the-- in the-- in the bedroom. And then they want government to intrude there.

My Democratic friends, on the other side, think that's a terrible idea-- that government should not intrude in that kind of thing but they want the government to make all the decisions for your family about the education of their kids, about their healthcare, about their economic lives and everything else there.

So, I find on the-- the broader questions I'm more in touch with where the Republicans are, which is why I am a Republican. Fiscal issues-- those kinds of other things economic issues-- and foreign policy. But I do think that both sides tend to have this view that-- government should play a role somewhere where I don't think it should. So, I think I'm-- I think I'm consistent in my views. (LAUGHTER)

DOUGLASS: But has it been-- has it gotten increasingly difficult for somebody with your views-- a moderate-- to be comfortable inside your own party?

KOLBE: Well– I don't have any trouble feeling comfortable within my– inside– party but, yes, it's– certainly in the last four, six, eight years– certainly since 1994 and– and even increasingly since then, the numbers in the Republican ranks who have been social conservatives.

I mean, Bush really made that. And Karl Rove really decided this is the way we're going to keep the majority. And we're going to get the majority and keep it– and get elected here– is by emphasizing the social issues and keeping that base– building that base there.

I think that that philosophy or that approach came home to roost this year, and didn't work. Obviously it didn't work this year. And I think it didn't work because they just played it too long and too strongly.

And I just don't think that you can do it. Do I– I'm not uncomfortable within the party. But it– there's fewer and fewer of us. I mean it's incredible to think that in the 110th Congress, Chris Shays will be only Republican representative from New England.

The only, in the entire five-state region. He'll be the only Republican left in that entire region. So– the party is becoming a southern-based and western-based party. And we're losing, except for of course the west coast– which is not in the Republican– but, mountain states, prairie states and southern-base, losing the industrial Midwest. We've lost the northeast completely, and we've pretty much lost the west coast.

DOUGLASS: When you looked at the exit polls out for the 2006-- election, you saw that people wanted, number one, their number one issue-- was ethical reform in-- more or less-- in not exactly those terms, but roughly those terms-- they wanted a-- a cleaner Congress. Not that they necessarily think they're taking money, but there certainly is a sense that there is, corruption, however you might define that, is on the rise. In your years in Congress did you see-- an increase in what some would describe as corruption, although that may be too strong a term?

KOLBE: No, I did not– I do not think there has been an increase in corruption within Congress. And I mean, you can go back to ABSCAM in 1980, that involved a whole mess of Congressmen. There have been some very high profile individuals – some very high profile individuals that have gotten a lot of attention whether it's been Duke Cunningham or Bill Jefferson and Curt Weldon and some others. But I don't think there has been a great increase in corruption in Congress. I really think that the vast majority of members of Congress trying to do the right thing.

And our trying to do it as honestly as they possibly can. The laws have gotten so incredibly complicated now, that you-- it-- anybody can play the game of "Gotcha" if they wanted. They can always find something.

The-- just the filing of your financial reports takes me weeks and weeks to put together. And somebody can always find something in there that I missed or didn't get in there if they want to find that. But that's not corruption and I'm-- and that's what you were implying and I don't think that's what most of the public does-- doesn't think that's corruption either. But I-- in general, no, I don't think there has been a rise in corruption.

DOUGLASS: And-- ethical standards are roughly what they've always been?

KOLBE: I think ethical standards are good, as I said. I think where we fall down is in the way we treat each other.

DOUGLASS: Now, let's move to a couple of issues because we want to be sure that we get into all of the many issues in which you played a big role in the Congress and-- and number one, I think in the minds of many people is immigration. Because, you really-- were for so many years-- and I guess kind of left in the same state, a voice in the wilderness on immigration reform, arguing that it had to be a multi-pronged approach with the Guest Worker Program, and some acknowledgement that-- at least from your point of view, that-- that illegal immigrants are going to continue to come in from Mexico.

And the reaction-- was very strongly-- in your party --that the only solution is to build a fence-- maybe build a wall-- do whatever can be done to keep people out. First of all, why do you think that there is this-- this sharp division within your own party, and by that I mean, what are the forces at play here in your party on that issue? That are pressuring members one way or the other?

KOLBE: Whooo (-- well, how much-- (LAUGHTER) no, you could go on all-- all afternoon on this one issue alone there. I'm not a lonely voice within the party, I mean, President Bush is where we are. The Repub-- the-- you had-- Senator McCain, who introduced the same bill that Congressman Flake and I introduced in the House, he introduced with Senator Kennedy--

DOUGLASS: I guess what I mean--

KOLBE: --in the Senate.

DOUGLASS: --is yours has been one of the loudest voices. (LAUGHTER)

KOLBE: It's been-- it's been one of the loudest voices in the House, absolutely about-- that's true. Senator McCain has been a very outspoken person in the United States-- Senator Specter and others have been outspoken on this. So it's not-- it's not that we're lonely. But we've clearly been in a minority in the House of Representatives.

The-- the rules-- of course, and the procedures in the House are such that the-- the leadership, once they make up their mind, they can pretty much block anything from being considered that they don't want. We went to the leadership and asked, when we did the immigration debate December of 2005, we said, "Let us offer the Kolbe-Flake-Gutierrez-- bill as a substitute for that." They-- they didn't allow-- the Rules Committee did not allow that to be made in order. Which means the Speaker decided not to make that in order there.

So we were not allowed to have that kind of a debate on it. And if we had a debate, I don't know whether it would have passed. But we would have a good healthy vote for that kind of approach with all the-- virtually-- most of the Democrats voting for it.

What are the forces that are-- your question was "What are the forces that are at work and-- among Republicans that make them-- do this? I-- react the way that they do?" I think it's like-- it's on so many issues-- it's a strident outspoken, small number of people who are frustrated and I have them in my district. I have my brother who is six years older than I am who writes me nasty letters all the time on this issue. He lives about five miles from the border, and he's constantly being inundated with-- illegal aliens coming through his property and damaging things.

And he wants something done now. And that's all that they-- they just say, "Just stop it. We just want you to stop it. You can talk about all your other things after you stop them from coming across."

But that's like saying-- you know, "I'll be for drug rehabilitation after we stop the sale of drugs." It's not a very practical approach to it. But I think people are simply frustrated with it. But that's always been the case along the border. Or more recently in Arizona. There's a number of things that are at work here. We-- it's hard to know how to even start the answers. I'll try to make it very brief. But what happened when-- in the 1990s when we hardened the border in places like San Diego and El Paso, we funneled them all into Arizona. And it caused this tremendous surge of-- undocumented people coming across the border into Arizona.

In fact today almost 50 percent of all the apprehensions of people on the southern border are in my district in Arizona. So it's just this-- like a funnel of all these people coming through. People were really frustrated by that, and that's what made it such a big issue in my area and elsewhere along the border.

But why is it an issue in Peoria, Illinois as well as it is in Patagonia, Arizona, in my district? And the answer to that is ironically, as we've hardened the border and made it more difficult for people to get across the border, they're coming, and they're staying longer. So they used to come, they would work, and then they'd go back home. Then they'd come back for the next growing – or the next construction season or the next hospitality season– hotel season. They would come back and then kept going and home. No, they're not doing that any more. They're coming and they're staying.

They're saving their pennies, and they're bringing their families up here. So, instead of five guys living quietly in a one room– one bedroom apartment– and going back to Mexico or Honduras or Salvador, wherever it might be– they're now– each of them has their family there.

The mothers are taking their kids to the hospital when they have an ear-ache or a runny nose, because that's the only healthcare they can have access to, is the emergency room. And they're all enrolled in the schools. And they're in the malls on Saturday and Sunday. And suddenly the folks in Peoria are saying, "Who are all these people with these strange smelling food and– and strange voices that are talking here that we've never seen around here before?" And I think that is the main reason why this has become such a big issue. And people culturally feel threatened by this. They feel threatened. They feel– jobs are threatened, and they feel culturally threatened by this.

DOUGLASS: Well, you've said that this is a defining issue for the Republican Party.

KOLBE: I think it is.

DOUGLASS: What do you-- what do you mean by that?

KOLBE: I think it's a defining issue because the Republican Party has been built on– and this country has been built– has been built on immigration. We have accepted and absorbed different groups, whether it's been the Irish, whether it's been the Hispanics, whether it's been the Chinese, most recently, the Vietnamese, before the Hispanic numbers came in. We've absorbed those people into our society. And into the Republican Party. And if we're going to turn our backs on the Hispanic minority, which is now the largest minority in the United States, we will guarantee that we are a minority party for at least another– generation.

That's already happened in California. Governor Wilson in Prop 187 did exactly that. Destroyed the Republican Party in California. And if we do this nationally, we will be a minority for a long time to come. You could see it in this election.

THE REFLECTIONS PROJECT: *Departing Members of Congress Assess the Institution*

2004, Bush got over 40 percent-- about 42 percent of the Hispanic vote. We dropped down to 25 percent in this election. That's a huge difference from when you're talking about-- this minority. People don't remember but until 1932-- Roosevelt came, the handful of African-Americans, Blacks that could vote, were Republicans, because they had been emancipated by Abraham Lincoln, a Republican. He captured that vote and it's to be captured yet today, 60 years later.

DOUGLASS: Why is-- this such a difficult issue for Congress? This goes into the area that we've been studying in this project of-- we're taking a look at how well Congress is able to make policy that will-- be effective in the future. And I don't mean 20 years from now. Obviously you have to keep revisiting these things.

I mean even five years from now. This seems to be one of those issues that must be dealt with that is-- that addresses a problem which is only going to continue to grow. And-- which-- Congress seems to be-- that seems to paralyze Congress when-- when looking at it.

KOLBE: So, your question is, "Why is it, becomes-- why are unable to deal with this issue?" Again, I think it is because the answer requires some leadership on the part of members of Congress and leadership in Congress. It requires a little bit of being brave like Social Security reform, another thing that I've stepped out front on.

It requires stepping out front on that kind of thing. And members would rather say, "No, let me just respond to the people at home." The issue did not turn out to be a swing-- a deciding issue in virtually any election. The hardcore anti-immigration people did not win in this election. Or they either lost or they won but they didn't win because of this. Their margins were reduced. So, I think the-- it is proven that we did not succeed with this issue by using this issue that way. But I think it is because, it is what we hear from our constituents, I can guarantee you when the immigration bill was up, the only people I heard from were those, that said-- you know, stop them at the border, close the border. I don't care about anything else that you do, just stop those people from coming in today.

DOUGLASS: And, finally, on this subject. What kind of leadership do you think that-- President Bush-- offered in-- on this issue?

KOLBE: Well, on this issue, I think his leadership was good. I'd give him a B, or a B minus on it, I guess. I think it was pretty good. But, it was certainly better than he gave on Social Security, for example, or some other areas. He was pretty strong about it, but I think he could-- could have gone out and-- brought in the leadership and said, "Knock this stuff off. This-- crap you're doing over-- up there, on Capitol Hill, of telling people that we're going to-- we're just going to stop them at the border, build this kind of wall."

He signed the bill, for heavens sakes, to allow the wall to be built. I mean, everybody knows it's a joke, it's not going to be funded, it's never gonna happen. But he signed this bill to do that. He should've said, "No." He should've vetoed that and made that a stand, and said, "This is the wrong approach to this. I call on Congress to come up with a more responsible approach that deals with all the aspects of this thing."

He just couldn't bring himself to do that. But he's been a much better leader on this than anybody else in the Republican party, and frankly, anybody in the Democratic party. Although the Democrats pretty much line up on the side of comprehensive approach. You have labor unions which are over here, that don't believe there should be any kind of guest worker program. They don't like guest workers. So, the Democrats have been very quiet on this issue, and they haven't led on this issue, either.

DOUGLASS: Is this the issue, and there will be other questions about other issues, but I'm just trying to think back on your own career-- because you've been so-- you've been fighting for this for so long. Is the failure of Congress to achieve any kind of, what you would consider meaning full immigration reform, is that going to be, as you look back, one of your biggest disappointments, legislatively?

KOLBE: Yes. It would be one of them, though right up there, running right along side would be entitlement reform, next to that. This one was a bit more bitter. I mean, I-- the entitlement reform is just a very-- tricky and difficult, complicated issue. This one, we could've done something about. And may do something about with a Democratic majority in Congress. We could've done something about this one.

I announced my decision to retire in November of last year, just before Thanksgiving, November of 2005, just before Thanksgiving. The debate on this was in December. But, at the end of that, I left with-- at Christmastime, 2005, I left with an extremely bitter taste in my mouth, at the way the leadership had handled this. I thought it was totally irresponsible, I thought the way they treated those of us that were looking for a comprehensive approach, the way they demeaned and degraded the Senate Bill and the Senate approach to this, all through the spring; the way they did those hearings in the summer that were just nothing but a show for-- for building a wall and creating a hard barrier--

(OVERTALK)

DOUGLASS: This is the hearings in the field in the regional areas?

KOLBE: The hearings in the field, which are -- but anyhow-- all those things left me with a very, very bitter taste-- I don't have that bitter taste about Social Security, but I'm equally disappointed, and in the long run, the Social Security one is the one that's going to kill us and destroy us if we don't fix it.

DOUGLASS: Did anybody say anything personally angry to you, in all of that? Sometimes disputes--

KOLBE: Oh yeah.

DOUGLASS: -between members can get personal.

KOLBE: Oh yeah, yeah. I spoke a couple of times in the conference, the Republican caucus. And-- on this issue-- asking for a comprehensive approach, and got booed and shouted down saying, "No-- you know, just stop 'em at the border, we've gotta have border security only." And then there-- these chants of "Border Security! Border Security!" And that was all the members wanted. These members-- they thought that was the only thing their constituents wanted. Turned out, their constituents wanted something more.

DOUGLASS: Is that the first time you've been booed in the caucus-- by your colleagues?

KOLBE: Well-- you know, maybe I'm overstating, saying "booed," but I got groans and then the next speaker would get up and say, "I-- my good friend from Arizona-- couldn't be more wrong on this issue," kind of thing. (LAUGHTER) The-- the usual thing that we do, of all saying, "my good friend," "my esteemed colleague," and all that kind of stuff.

(OVERTALK)

DOUGLASS: That's when you know they're pulling the knife out.

KOLBE: Right, as they're pulling the knife out on you.

DOUGLASS: Well, I'm going to open to students, but I have to follow up, now with entitlement reform. Because I can tell you're burning to talk about it, and you were, and have been-- one of the leaders in every possible effort to do something about Social Security, which will run out of money, at some point, when the-- retiring Baby Boomers need it most, if you believe all the experts.

Again, the question is, why does Congress seem to be paralyzed on this issue? And it doesn't matter whether it's a Democratic President, a Democratic Congress, a Republican President, a Republican Congress, what is it, as the

problem becomes more and more urgent-- that prevents the government from being able to act?

KOLBE: Because it's an issue that can be so easily-- it can be so easily demagogued. And all you have-- it does-- Social Security reform, or whether we're talking about Medicare reform, any of the entitlement reforms is extraordinarily complex. I have an economics background and I've spent years working on Social Security reform. And I still only know, I think, maybe, five percent of what is involved in-- just the Social Security.

And I know little or nothing about what we're going to fix-- how we could possibly fix Medicare. So, it lends itself to a demagogic response that says, "Don't cut Grandma's Social Security benefits." Or, "Jim Kolbe wants to cut your mother's benefits." And then how do you respond to that, with a five-minute explanation of what I'm really trying to do with Social Security-- they've lost you. Doesn't work.

So, you-- there's no easy response to that. That's one reason. The second is that the benefits of reform are long-term. The downside of it comes immediately. You've got to make some changes that are going to affect benefits and taxes and some other things there. And so, you're going to feel those immediately. But in the long-run, you're going to have a program which people that are in our audience here today, might actually get something from.

The way it is now, there's no possible way they could ever have Social Security, at least the way it's structured today. My old view always was, Social Security was the easy issue. If we could fix Social Security, then we can go on to Medicare. The unfunded liability of Medicare is infinitely larger than what we're talking about on Social Security. And on Social Security, we're looking at as much as a 40-- \$35 to 40 trillion unfunded liability-- in the next-- by the end of the next generation, there. It's absolutely going to crush us. And, at some point, we will have to change, and it will be politically extraordinarily difficult, at that point. The longer you wait, the more difficult it becomes, because the more painful it becomes, because the changes have to be bigger and harder and the cuts deeper, in order to save the program.

So I just think that it's just one of those things that's very, very tough. Members of Congress will grapple with it, and they'll say, "Yeah, you're right." I have-- I can't tell you how many times I heard this from people, "You're-- you're absolutely on the right track, Jim, but not this year. Not before the election, can't we do that next year?" And then there's always another year.

DOUGLASS: You were-- complaining about President Bush's leadership on Social Security reform, because he did-- say that he had a mandate after the 2004 election--

KOLBE: He did.

DOUGLASS: --and he was going to use that political capital to reform Social Security and-- try to create a system of-- private accounts. What happened there? What-- what happened, in terms of his own leadership, in your view?

KOLBE: Well, President Bush got it half right. But he only went halfway. Our bill, when I say "our bill," the only bi-partisan bill in Congress, the Kolbe-Stenholm now, the last years, the Kolbe-Boyd bill-- was one that creates personal accounts, basically a 401(k) account. Takes a small part of the taxes you're now paying for retirement and would devote that-- divert that into a 401(k), where you get to basically watch it grow.

You can make decisions about where you want to invest it, in some limited way, into a stock fund, a bond fund. The same kind of thing that Federal retirees now get to-- federal employees get to do with their 401(k). And most 401(k)s are structured the same way. You would be able to do that and that, I think, is the cornerstone. Because that's the thing that young people are going to say, "Look, if I'm going to have to pay more taxes, and I'm going to get less benefits out of the-- defined benefit-- part of this program, at least let me save something on my own and have some possible earnings from that." And so, that's the key for the next generation. But in addition to having this nice chocolate cake out here, you've got to have the spinach. And the spinach, you've got to pay for it. And there's only two things you can do. Well, three things. You can cut the benefits; you can raise the taxes; or you can borrow in the future, which is inflationary--has - all those economic consequences.

So, you either have-- you have to do something, in order to face that music, there. And that's what he never was willing to come up with: A plan-- he always said, "There's a lot of good ideas out there, let's talk about all these ideas." Congress is never going to deal with those-- come up with those things themselves. There's got to be a Presidential plan. Something that the President puts on the table.

He did that with the drug benefit, with prescription drugs. He put a specific bill on the table, and then Congress worked it and passed something that wasn't exactly what the President wanted, but was enough that he was able to sign it. He never did that with this part of Social Security. So, he just didn't go the distance.

I kept begging him when he was in-- came to Tucson for one of his 60 town halls around the country. I said, "Mister President, you've got to get out there and talk about some specifics." "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We know, but-- you know. Let's just talk about this right now."

DOUGLASS: Well, and I'm sure that some of you would like to follow up on that. But, I want to open this up, now to-- to those of you students, who have questions for the Congressman, so that we can delve into this and many other areas. So, who would like to go first here? Who's got-- who, in this audience, is going to be the brave first person who approaches the microphone? All right, back there. And please, do identify yourself.

KOLBE: Right over there, that microphone.

JOHN SPAMPINATO: Hi, Congressman, my name is John Spampinato, I'm a graduate student in the Wagner School, and I'm focusing on-- aid development. It's one of the many areas where you've become an expert and-- exercise a lot of leadership. I was curious--

KOLBE: And we haven't even really talked about aid, yet, here.

SPAMPINATO: Foreign aid-- yeah, foreign aid-- not at all, which is-- what I always associate you with, and it hasn't even come up. So, I guess most people don't care about aid, but-- (LAUGHTER) the--

KOLBE: I do. And I'm glad you do.

SPAMPINATO: No, you do. I'm curious about-- just general trends that you've seen about ways that-- sort of-- priorities in the White House and in Congress and in the public have changed over the past 10, 20 years, as far as public support for aid. And then, do you think we're getting better or worse at it? And why would that be?

KOLBE: Good question, John, and I think the answer is that we are getting, actually, better at it, on-- you know, I'm not patting myself on the back, because I don't have that much to do with it. I never had a town hall before September 11th, 2001 that I didn't get a question from people saying-- you know, "Why are we spending all this money on foreign aid-- you know?" You-- I always would ask them. I said, "How much do you think we spend of our budget?"

"Oh, we must-- we spend 50 percent of our budget on foreign aid." Alright, no-- nobody ever thought it was less than 10 percent-- you know, and, of course it's less than one percent that we actually spend on it. Since 2001, attitudes have changed. People do understand that the foreign assistance budget is connected to our national security. They do understand that. They want-- they still want to see it spent well, they want to see it spent correctly, and they don't like abuse and they don't like it wasted, and they don't like what they hear is going-- has been going on in Iraq and some of these cases, but they do understand they connection between it.

So, I do think there is a-- more of a connection there-- that-- more to support for foreign assistance than there ever was. Now, on this issue, if we're going to grade the President, he gets pretty close to an A on this. This President has asked for bigger increases in foreign assistance than any President, by far. Congress hasn't given him all that he's asked for, but he's asked for huge increases in foreign assistance.

And in two areas, he's been very, very successful. One is the creation of the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which I believe is a new paradigm for delivering foreign assistance and-- perhaps, in some questions, we can go into that. The other is, of course in the AIDS program, where he made a commitment to spend \$15 billion over five years. At that time, we were spending about \$700, as I recall, the year he made that commitment, about \$700 million a year in aid-- in International AIDS relief. So, that was-- if-- \$15 billion over five years is-- if you took it flat-lined, would be \$3 billion a year.

So, we ramped that up fairly quickly, and we were under \$3 billion for two years. This year-- last year and this year, we're considerably over \$3 billion, and next year we'll exceed the \$15 billion, assuming we have anything close to the funding that we've had before, we'll exceed \$15 billion. The President, I think, gets credit for doing that, as he does for the amount of money he's put into the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Some would say-- traditional programs have suffered, whether it's been basic education, or whether it's been some of the other health-- care programs, or whether it's been democracy around the world, some of the other programs have suffered. But, of course, with the supplemental bill for Iraq, and the amount of money that we spent there, the foreign assistance budget just ballooned tremendously after 2003.

For a year or two, it's gone back down, now, but with that huge increase in the supplemental appropriation for both Afghanistan and Iraq, we've seen a huge increase in amount of money that we spend on foreign assistance.

DOUGLASS: Well, you were-- just to follow up on that very good question-- you-- were saying-- that it is your view, and it is also the President Bush's view-- that part of what makes foreign aid important is that it is a national security issue-- national security issue for this country. You are a member-- were-- advocating more foreign aid for Egypt, for example, and ran into some resistance at various points. Which-- brings me to the question of-- how sophisticated do you think Congress is--as an institution, in looking at the complexities of the need for foreign aid. How well informed about these countries and what they need, and their relationship to our country are your colleagues-- generally?

KOLBE: I would say they're generally pretty poorly-- informed on that. I mean the-- I just have to give them a better grade than the average American, who's out there busy doing a 9 to 5 job, where the-- where these people make it-- have to make it their point to-- to understand some of these issues. But no, I don't think they do. And I think that's why, whoever's Chairman of the sub-committee and the relationship he has with the ranking Democrat, makes a-- in this case, may-- Missus Lowey from New York, makes a huge difference.

We've been able to craft a bi-partisan approach to foreign assistance, so that when we got to the floor, members, whether they were from the far left or you go all the way over to members on the far right, who had come up to me, and say, "You know, I trust what you've done here, you've worked this out with Nina, and I think you've got a very good bill." And we passed the last bill a year ago, this-- this year, also, by also the same margin.

But a year ago, we passed the foreign assistance bill with 393 votes out of 435. We can't-- we've gone back to World War II and we can't find any foreign aid bill that ever passed with that kind of a vote in the House of Representatives. It's an easy one to vote no on, because it doesn't benefit your constituents at home. But we got that kind of vote, because we were able to put together that kind of a bi-partisan approach.

And so, there's always going to be-- an issue or two, Egypt was one of them, Saudi Arabia was another, the Palestinian question is another. There's always going to be a couple of issues that people are going to want to get up and make their views known on and members can say, "This is an easy throw-away vote on this one." I can satisfy my Jewish constituency at home, or my Armenian community, or whatever it might be, by cast-- putting-- casting this vote up there. We were able to stave off most of those, but, every once in a while you don't succeed.

DOUGLASS: So-- another-- question for the students, yes? How about you?

NORA TOIV: **This is on a completely different topic.**

DOUGLASS: And then if you could just give us your name.

TOIV: **Oh, Nora Toiv -- undergraduate politics major. I had a question about-- I was looking through your votes, and--**

KOLBE: Uh oh, that's always a-- (LAUGHTER) --now I am in trouble.

TOIV: **One jumped out at me. In retrospect-- do you think that you cast the correct vote in impeaching President Clinton, and if so, has that lowered the standard for impeachment? And also, if you think that the current President has**

committed any impeachable acts, that the House would consider to be impeachable?

KOLBE: No, I— I would defend my votes of— I voted four of the five, I thought one of the— the fifth article— clearly didn't reach the level where the proof had been sufficient there. I'm satisfied with the votes that I cast on that, and let me tell you why.

I think the majority of the American people have really— have confused the issue here. They thought this impeachment was about his sexual conduct. It was not. It was about what he did in response to that. It was about suborning perjury from a staff member. It was about his attempt to try and keep it from becoming— to cover it up. Those are— and would be, if it was you in the general sector, as someone from Enron or anything, those are— not only impeach— not impeachable, those are felonies. Those are felony offenses.

And people do get tried, all the time, for perjury. And it happens all the time. So, I do think that the President met that standard, as far as the impeachment went. I could care less about what his own— his own behavior. I mean, I may find it offensive— personally offensive, but that's certainly not a reason to remove him— from office. But these other things, what he did subsequent that, and I read the Starr report, completely. And— and I think it met the test for impeachment.

Does that mean that this President— I don't agree with everything this President does politically, and I didn't agree with everything that President Clinton did. But I certainly don't think that, that meant that he— should be impeached for that. Either of these Presidents would be impeached for that kind of thing. So, no, I don't think that there's any standard of proof that would suggest that President Bush has reached impeachable offenses, that is, I guess— you— what you're driving at, would be that he's somehow deliberately concocted evidence about— in the war in Iraq.

We had faulty intelligence. We had bad intelligence, as we did, I might add in North Korea, the other way. We thought that things were not nearly as bad in North Korea, as it turned out that they were. Intelligence is a very subjective thing. It doesn't always come out the way you think it should. But, we had bad intelligence, there's no question about it. I think the President acted on the intelligence that he had. But— I don't think that— it was certainly not an impeachable offense.

DOUGLASS: Do you think— as some members— have said, just to interrupt myself for a second, that, though they voted to impeach President Clinton, they didn't think that he should be removed from office, which I always thought was kind of odd. It's like a prosecutor charging somebody for a crime, but assuming that he didn't want them to be convicted.

(OVERTALK)

KOLBE: But then no-- no penalty.

DOUGLASS: I assume you do think he should have been removed from office.

KOLBE: That is the only-- if he doesn't go to prison for it, that is the only thing you can do. That is the only penalty for impeachment. Whether you impeach a judge, he's removed as a judge. You -- yes, that is-- that's it. So, yeah, I don't think there's any question, in my mind, that if we did that, I knew that's what we were-- that-- what we were doing.

DOUGLASS: And I know we're going to want to explore-- your war-- the-- authorization for the use of force vote, as well. But first, let's go back to the students and see who else might have a question. Yes, ma'am.

SHYLA GIRI: HI, my name Shyla Giri, I'm a sophomore in Stern studying finance and international business. I had two questions about the 2006 election that are a little bit unrelated, but they're both about the election. My first question was, in your own district-- actually, the Democrat candidate won, and so I was wondering what your feelings were about that, either disappointed or-- indifferent or excited. And I also had a question about the war in Iraq. The exit polls were citing that people who had turned out for the election-- that the war in Iraq was one of the main reasons that they voted why they did. So, I was wondering if you had any comments or suggestions about that issue.

KOLBE: Okay, both very good questions. Well, here's my first public confession, here. That I voted for the Democrat who took my seat in the House of Representatives. I thought the Republican that we nominated was the worst possible-- I'm biased, however, this individual ran against me two years ago (LAUGHTER) in the Republican primary. And we beat him with 56 percent of the vote. But for a non-incumbent-- for a challenger to an incumbent in a primary to get 44 percent, it was all on the immigration issue. And he was-- a-- Johnny One-Note person on that.

He was all just anti-immigration and on all the other social issues, as well, where I come down on the other side of. I knew, from the moment that he was nominated that the race was over. That the Democrat was going to win, and the Republicans and the Democrats knew that, as well. Interestingly enough, the Democratic DCCC, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, put \$400,000 into the primary race to defeat the moderate Republican.

They figured that was a good investment. They didn't have to spend \$1 million to try to elect the Democrat in the general election as a result of that. After they spent that \$400,000, they didn't spend one penny in the general election, and the Republicans didn't spend one penny, and Gaby Giffords creamed him in the general election, as I knew that she would, there.

So, am I disappointed, yeah, I would've liked to have been succeeded by a Republican, but I guess, maybe I can say it keeps my record intact of having been the— being the only Republican to represent Southern Arizona since statehood in 1912. No other Republican has ever served in Congress from that part of the state, there.

So in that sense, I guess maybe my records intact. And the second part of the question was on Iraq. I wish I had an answer to Iraq. I don't. I'm like many people. I was more convinced at the beginning we were doing the right thing. I thought the war could be short. I thought that—I thought that once the insurgents— once the military part of it was over, and I was quite convinced that part would turn out, as it did, it was fairly quick. It was even quicker and easier than we thought it would be against Saddam Hussein. He put up less of a fight than we thought.

But I think we thought after that, that democracy really would begin to take hold. I don't think any of us really understood the depth, or most of us didn't. There were a few that did, but most of us didn't understand the depth of this insurgency, or this division between the Shiites and the Sunnis and the Kurds, but particularly between the Shiites and the Sunnis.

The years of pent-up hatred of the Shiites against the Sunnis for all the years of Saddam Hussein with their thumb on—on them. So— and it's all just kind of come to the fore at this point. I don't know what the answer is, today. I wish I could tell you that I saw an easy answer. I think the answer is going to be that they are going to have to get control of their own country, and get control of that insurgency.

We don't have a government there that seems willing, either able or willing, and I've put as much emphasis on the willing as the able. Willing to be able to stop this insurgency. At some point, they're going to have to stare at themselves in the mirror and say, "If we don't, we're all going down here."

And hopefully, they will come to that conclusion—jointly. But meanwhile, keep in mind, that much of the country is functioning pretty well. I mean, the north, the Kurdish part in the north is— is going— is booming. Construction's booming— everything's going very well. Most of the area in the south is pretty quiet. It's Baghdad, and it's, of course, where all the news is, TV cameras, and everything, and that's where we were seeing all of this.

And it's a huge problem. And that's where the Shiites and the Sunnis come together and where the clashes take place. But they're going to have to get control of this. I wish I had an easy answer, to tell you how to do it. John McCain may be right, he's way out on a limb on this. We're going to have to send more troops in order to do it, to get control of that.

DOUGLASS: If you had to do it over again, knowing what you know, at this moment, if you had to do it over again, would you have voted the same way, that is to authorize-- the President to use force if--

(OVERTALK)

KOLBE: No, I don't think so, because of the-- the vote was based on the weapons of mass destruction. And we now know that most of that information was faulty. Although, I would again point out-- hope I'm not sounding too defensive, I point that we know he did have those weapons of mass destruction. He used them against the Iranians. So, they were there. Whatever he did in destroying them-- which he-- almost liked to play the game of never telling about, so we never knew what he had done, there.

But, no, I think probably, I would not have-- done that. But on the other hand, Saddam Hussein was going to be a bad player in this thing, if he-- staying around there. He was going to be trouble for us, and he was going to be trouble for the world. And he would've made, I believe, ultimately, a connection with Al Qaeda. He would've made some connection there, and he would've become a base-- for them.

DOUGLASS: Okay, good, honest answer, and thoughtful, very good. Any other question from students? Okay, young man.

ERIC COLCHAMIRO: Hi, Congressman--

KOLBE: Hi.

COLCHAMIRO: -my name is Eric Colchamiro I'm a-- student at the Wagner school, graduate student. Two questions-- two very different questions. When-- Congressman Tom Delay was here, and had an interview, one of his quotes was that he said that Republicans during his leadership-- "governed from the right and then moved to the center," as he could-- in your district, the last candidate, seems like the person they nominated might have been, again, starting from the right, as someone with such a hard-line immigration-- perspective.

Do you think, as a result of the recent elections, that the Republicans will sense the need to change-- I mean, issues like gay rights, abortion, will the Republicans

move toward the middle, or is this-- leadership, under the guidance of Karl Rove and a number of the training institutes, still starting at the right?

KOLBE: Well, it's a man-- it's a good question. And, you may want to follow this up, so you may want to stay right there. I think the issue is whether or not you put it on the front burner. That was the problem. They kept not only putting this on the front burner, they kept putting it on the front burner over and over and over again. You know having one vote on these things is one thing, but repeating it and doing it over again and rubbing the salt on people's wounds on this and making it seem like to the American people like this is the only thing that Congress was voting on was mistake that we made. But do I think that the majority of the Republicans are going to suddenly shift on these issues? No. But I do-- of course; Republicans are not going to be controlling the agenda in the House of Representatives or in the Senate now.

But it's-- they all came from the House of Representatives. But if they were, I think that this current leadership would be very unlikely to push those issues to the forefront again.

COLCHAMIRO: Will they need to do it in order to regain majority?

KOLBE: No. That would be a huge mistake. Fact, I will guarantee they don't regain it, if that's all they try to push. The American people are not interested in seeing those issues being pushed. They're interested in the economy. They're interested in fiscal discipline. They're interested in the war in Iraq and what we're--

COLCHAMIRO: Yeah.

KOLBE: --going to do about those-- those kinds of things. They're interested, I think, in entitlement reform. I think they're interested in immigration reform. They're interested in those things.

COLCHAMIRO: And then the second question, more larger scale-- I was hoping you can reflect on-- health policy trends during your tenure-- specifically-- during my lifetime-- the failure of the Clinton health policy plan, and then as well-- even in the-- this past election where a number-- where the Democrats are going to regain the majority, there's still a number of moderate Democrats and number of Blue Dogs who have come across.

So, there's going to need to be a-- a moderate approach toward fixing the issue of the uninsured. And I'm wondering in the context of reflecting on health policy-- what that solution might be.

KOLBE: I don't know what the solution— thanks very much, John, for the question. I don't know what the solution's going to be. But— I don't think that we're going to see another huge, expensive program. And I think the reason for that is, I think we used up all the dimes we had— with the prescription drug plan. And I think to add another one on top of that on the uninsured, is going to be very difficult. States are moving in this area. They're doing some things on their own. And I think they'll continue— to do this. But I don't see us adding a— yet another layer onto this program.

There's some very interesting stuff that's happening. It really and truly, one of the reasons that I voted for the prescription drug benefit was because of what we did on there on health savings accounts. I think that's going to transform health care in a way that very few people realize now.

Health savings accounts have been resisted by some of the liberals, Senator Kennedy most notably, because I think he does understand exactly what it can do. If you're able to save some money for yourself, put it in a tax-free account, spend it tax-free on your out-of-pocket costs and have catastrophic coverage, which picks up after the amount of your resources are exhausted in that health savings account, you're not going to want to have another huge deduction for a insurance policy over there. You're going to like what you're going to see.

Because the— we know the catastrophic coverage is not that expensive. It's the first dollar coverage. It's the time you go to the hospital—to the doctor to get a toenail— ingrown toenail taken care of. It's the time you go for a checkup. That's the expensive part— the most expensive part, for the vast majority of people.

And if you are able to cover that yourself with a— in a tax-free way with that, I think Americans are going to say, "I want to keep this. I'm saving a lot of money for myself and for my family," this— especially, it allows small employers to get involved where they can't afford to pay the insurance premiums. But they can get involved in matching a 50-cent match, a 100-percent match, whatever it be. Matching some of the money you save in the health savings account, they can put in for you there. So, I think— I think that trend is one of the most significant— that I see. And by the way, one thing that I think has turned out better than any of us expected, is the prescription drug program.

It's been much more popular, much more effective, and cost a lot less than anybody thought it was going to cost. And guess what? Competition, we actually had competition going on there. So, I think it's worked.

DOUGLASS: What do you think about the way in which it was passed, the way that the vote was held open for three hours, and arms—

(OVERTALK)

KOLBE: Pretty bad.

DOUGLASS: --much was made about that-- at the time, that they-- the process of twisting arms until you got that final vote-- for three hours on the floor.

KOLBE: It was-- it's certainly not pretty. But, you know, there's the old saying that-- if you have a weak stomach, you shouldn't watch sausages or laws being made. (LAUGHTER) And I think there's a good deal of truth-- to that.

It certainly wasn't pretty. And there've never been a vote held open that long before. However-- votes have been held open under Republicans and Democrats for different periods of time while arms were twisted. And the reason this one was so difficult is that Nancy Pelosi was able to discipline the Democrats into voting against that thing in a very astonishing way that I don't think we expected. And so, we had to go to the wells, literally and figuratively, the well of the House, and we had to go to the well for our-- our votes, to change some people that had absolutely committed to be against the thing. And it became a very difficult vote-- for them to-- to cast that vote. And it was-- it was an extraordinary thing to watch it happen.

DOUGLASS: But do you think history will look back on that moment, that-- that evening well into the early morning which has been so widely criticized by experts who study the Congress, ten, 20 years from now, and say, "Good for them?"

KOLBE: Well, I don't think there's any magic to the 15-minute vote. I mean, sure, I like to have these votes over and get moving onto the next thing. None of us like to sit around and wait for-- for that to happen.

But I think that it's the-- I think it was the-- I don't think-- no, I don't think they'll look back on that and say, "This was a terrible thing, this has any long-term impact on Congress as an institution."

DOUGLASS: Okay. Anymore questions from students here? Yes, back there.

KATE MCDONAGH: Hi, my name's Kate McDonough (PH). I'm a senior, and studying politics. And I was just wondering. You talked about the divisiveness between the parties within Congress.

And a lot of the people that I've talked to, not necessarily politics students, just average students or not even students at all, I see a similar divisiveness within just people themselves and people who might vote. And I was wondering-- and especially with this whole, you know, Bush for the past eight years, a lot of people

see him just in the media, how he's represented as very unsuccessful and very unpopular almost, like voting for Bush is uncool. And they associate the Republican Party with that. How do you suggest-- because I imagine that this is a very sort of detrimental thing to our government, because being on two opposite sides and not agreeing on anything won't get us anywhere.

So, how do you suggest not only overcoming it in Congress, but even just the people of the nation, trying to work together and not just automatically be like, "You're a Democrat, so everything you say is stupid, or you're a Republican, so everything you say is wrong?"

KOLBE: That's a really big and important question. And I don't pretend to have a very good or easy answer to that. But I appreciate your asking it. Remember what I said at the outset though, when I said that I thought that one of the things that's lacking today not only in Congress but in our society, is a lack of civility. Although Peggy Noonan wrote an article this last weekend in which she said it's not civility. You can always say, "My esteemed colleague," and then say ugly things about them after that, so you've-- fulfilled the-- civility.

She says it's graciousness, grace, she called it, and graciousness that people show to each other. It's not only in Congress. It's in society as a whole where we lack that, the way we treat each other, treat people on the streets. I was mentioning the way-- the lack of respect for authority figures, whether it's school teachers or whether it's police or anything like that. I am stunned by the bumper stickers that you see today about political leaders-- about the President.

And I was stunned on the other side-- about Clinton. And I think it's really been in the last decade where using obscenities on bumper stickers to describe the President of the United State-- I just find that appalling, that anybody would actually go around with all that kind of thing on their car there. No matter what you think of the President as a person, or what you think of him as a political leader and his policies, he is the President of the United States.

Whether it was Bill Clinton, whether it's George Bush. And you respect that, because you respect the office, because you respect the institution, because you respect the Constitution of the United States. And so, you respect the office itself.

Doesn't seem to be any of that much anymore, whether it's-- and little-- not very much of it in Congress, and certainly not very much of it in society as a whole. How do we go about changing that? We start changing it right in your families and the way you treat-- you raise children, and how you teach them to respect other people, different points of view, diversity, tolerance for people of different faiths, creeds, races, and different point-- political points of view.

DOUGLASS: I want interject here with an issue question, because I want be sure we ask you about this. And that's the question of trade and globalization, which is something we haven't talked about with other members. And this is really an area where you've been an activist yourself.

KOLBE: And I'm going to be teaching a course in trade and globalization at the University of Arizona--

DOUGLASS: Well--

KOLBE: --Business and Law School, it's next fall.

DOUGLASS:--well, even-- even better. So-- so, we'll give you some practice right here. The issue of globalization is going to be very important to all of these young people here as they enter the work market, and to all of our future generations. And you had been a big believer in lowering trade barriers, and in what is called free trade, which seemed to be-- gaining popularity during President Clinton, a Democrat's administration with the passage of NAFTA and so forth.

Now, you're-- you've had a Republican government as you say, for six years, with-- Republicans controlling every part of the government. And yet number one, you don't hear as much talk about the benefits of globalization if there are such benefits.

There's of course, disagreement about that. And number two-- you haven't seen as much real action in that area on the part of the Congress as one might've expected with Republicans at the helm. So, I guess the first question is, why do you think that is? Why has trade and free trade become a more complicated issue for your own party?

KOLBE: Well, on one hand, we've run out of steam. We've just run out of steam on this thing. And we've pushed it. And-- people are just not convinced that it's really bringing the benefits that they saw. The second reason that I would cite is that-- you mentioned it, globalization. It used to be fairly simple. When you're talking about trade, you could say okay, we're going to trade this.

They're going to send this to us. We're going to send this to them. We're going to have these kinds of exports. And who's going to benefit from this? Now it's a much more complicated thing, 'cause we're talking about outsourcing, --not just manufacturing products, but outsourcing for services-- for all kinds of things that are being outsourced. We're talk-- we live in a world that is truly global. And-- Thomas Freidman has said that you can-- in this world of globalization, you can run it's like running a 100-yard dash. You run it. And as soon as you finish, you have to run it again.

And you have stop. It just keeps happening to be run over and over again. And I think people just run out of steam when it comes to that. But if we don't run it, those over there that are going to be running that race again and again, and whether it's the Chinese or whether it might be-- the Spaniards, or whoever it might be, are going to keep running that. And they're gonna run right over us if-- if we don't do it. So, you've got to keep running in the race of-- of globalization.

But as to why we've done it, I think if people have just gotten tired of the thing. Why has it happened particularly in this administration? Bush has been good on trade. He's promoted some very good trade agreements. And I think his people have been very good on the-- on the multilateral round, the so-called Doha round, which is the big push. But I just think that we can go in all the things about what's happened in the Doha negotiations as why we have failed to achieve that.

But I-- it just-- there is not the will on the part of either the developing countries or the developed countries, to do it. Trade used to be so much simpler. We used to be talking about a handful of countries. And we're talking about manufactured goods. Now, we're talking about services.

We're talking about complex stuff that-- financial things. We're talking about intellectual property. We're talking about all of these things, are involved in this-- subsidies that are involved in agriculture, and things that we'd never have talked about before. So, it's-- infinitely more complicated. And there's 150 members-- with Vietnam coming in this year, in this month--there's 150 members now of the World Trade Organization. And you have to have a consensus among every one of those 150 members to accomplish anything.

DOUGLASS: But in terms of our own country's even understanding of the issue-- and preparing in any way for what is-- it seems, inevitable, that is, as you've just pointed out, the globalization of services and intellectual property and every possible component of workplace competition, how well do you think that the legislative branch is equipped to begin addressing the effects, the inevitable effects, of these kinds of changes in the world?

KOLBE: We're not. We're not well equipped to do it. And I've been puzzling about that, and it's one of the things I hope to address in this-- talk, is-- in my-- course, rather, is how-- how are we going to address those things? Because I think the legislative process is the poorest possible place to address something as complex as this. And yet, most of the issues fall-- require legislative solutions or at least part of it has to be done through a legislative solution. So, I don't have-- an-- an easy answer to that one.

DOUGLASS: Another honest answer, a man who says he doesn't have an answer. Jake, how about you?

JACOB CROKE: Hi, Congressman. My name's Jake. I'm a senior-- here in History and Politics. And-- I was just wondering that-- because over the past few elections, we've seen the moderates get pushed out, the extreme wings of the party get power, and a decrease in the number of voters who choose to identify with the party. Do you think that if these trends continue, we're going to see a viable third party of independent candidate in-- the coming elections?

KOLBE: No. (LAUGHTER) I'll-- I'll give you a little bit more of an answer than that. No, these are trends that go-- come and go. I mean, if you look at this election, you begin to see maybe the rebirth of a centrist element within the Democratic Party.

Certainly a lot of the Democrats that were elected are much more at the center than they have been before. It'll be interesting to see whether that translates into the Presidential race or not. But in the Congress, you certainly begin to see that-- that growth of that centrist element within the Democratic Party.

So, as the Republicans lose their moderate and center wing, the Democrats seem to pick it up. So, maybe a trend moving towards the Democrats, and they'll-- they'll have this center here. Why don't I think there will be a third party? We have a long, established history of two parties in this country. And people are comfortable with the idea of two parties. And when one-- we have a way of dealing with it. When one gets completely out of line, we punish them.

For years, the Democratic Party was in the throes of being-- either very liberal Democrats-- controlling the party. And time and again, the voters punished them at the polls whether it was in Congress, most notably in the Presidential election-- punishing people like George McGovern and people like that, that were-- were nominated. And so, they-- people say no, no.

This is-- this guy's just too far over there. We're not going to vote-- for that kind of person. And so, they-- they turn away. And eventually, the party, as the Democrats are doing now-- tends to come back-- of the-- towards the middle. I think the Republicans will tend to do that eventually, whether it's this year or this next election cycle or two or three election cycles from now. But-- interestingly enough, look at all the Presidential nominees that are-- or-- possible Presidential candidates that are out there.

With the exception of this morning's announcement by Senator Brownback that he's going to announce that he's going to push the social conservative issues, all of them are centrist. On the Republican side, you're looking at Giuliani. You're looking at--

McCain. You're looking at Mitt Romney -- even Gingrich on policy stuff. I mean, he doesn't have that reputation.

But policy stuff is very practical and centrist. And this health care stuff that he's been doing with Clinton stuff-- is very centrist kind of stuff. There-- so, I mean, there-- and-- on the Democratic side, you've got Hillary Clinton who voted for the war-- and has not backed off from that. You have John Edwards maybe there, but the others, Birch Bayh governor of --Vilsack -- those other-- they're very centrist kinds of people that are there.

So, I think you're looking at-- what I see is the most centrist-- elements in the-- in-- in both parties right now. It'd be interesting to see who the nominees are. And I'll make my prediction. I think it's gonna be McCain and Clinton. Thank you.

DOUGLASS: Risky prediction.

KOLBE: Be quite a race though, won't it? It'll be a fun one to watch.

DOUGLASS: Yes, sir?

TERRY MCMAHON: Hi, Congressman. My name's Terry McMahon. I'm a second-year law student. And speaking of Presidents-- you served with four Presidents. And I was actually curious as to what you thought about them personally, whether you actually liked them, didn't like them regardless of political views, and actually also who was the best at reaching out to Congress.

KOLBE: Good question. Well, of those four, I'll limit it to those four, because I-- I really have started-- I've known every President a little bit or-- or much since-- heaven-- this really ages me, since Eisenhower, since I became a page in 1958 (LAUGHTER) in Dwight Eisenhower's administration.

But-- so, that's nine Presidents that I've known. But of these four that I've served under in Congress-- who was the best at reaching out to Congress? It would be, I would say-- Clinton, probably, or George Bush I. Generally-- the party that's in the minority in Congress or out of power as opposite from the President, finds that they have a better relationship than they do with their own President. George Bush will make more compromises with these Dem-- with the Democrats than he would ever make with the Republican leaders in the House. He'll make more compromises.

I mean, he drove us crazy with his unwillingness to make any kind of compromises with us on things. So, he will make those compromises now. So, Democrats will probably get along with him pretty well. We'll be gnashing our teeth, Republicans will be. So-- Clinton was easy to deal with.

Clinton's also just-- he's very facile. He's very easy to get along with. He reaches out. Bush, by the way, does a better job of that I've-- than-- I guess it's mainly because I've been in the leadership as chairman of the Foreign Operations. But I've been at the White House more often-- under Bush than I have-- Bush forty-- this Bush, George W. Bush, than I have under any other President-- there. So-- I-- just to rattle it off, I would say Reagan was the chairman of the board. He didn't meet with members of Congress all that much. But he had a good-- he had a vision. He had a good idea of where he wanted to go. And he picked the people and delegated it. And-- and they moved in that direction.

The first Bush was the consummate kind of-- insider -- bureaucracy. He'd been-- served in every position in government. And he knew everything backwards and forwards. And-- but he just didn't really understand the politics of the things that he was doing sometimes, I mean, the-- the deals that he made on the budget, which were so fatal of course, for him.

Clinton, policy wonk. Loves policy. Knows details. Remember flying on Air Force One to Arizona with him. We were going to do a social-- his one single thing that he ever did on Social Security, he did it in my district there. Anyway, flying to Arizona with him, and he got into the Social Security. Might've been spending five years working on this thing at that point.

And I'm-- God, this guy knew the details of all the charts. He could tell you every chart and graph of where everything was going to go, what was going to happen in 30 years, 25 years, how all this stuff was going to-- what the-- what the unfunded liabilities would be, what if you changed the half percent here, what kind of an impact it would-- he knew all that stuff.

It was really -- impressive array of details. This-- and then-- but he also sometimes lost the big picture as a result of that, I think. And in the area for example of terrorism, I don't think he really ever grasped what we were facing in terrorism before 2000-- before the-- the end of his term. This Bush obviously came to office, his first defining thing was rising to the occasion on the-- on the events of September 11th, met those well, but I think has faltered-- since that time.

The President is-- gets a bad rap when people say that he's not smart or he's not well read. He actually, I think, probably reads more than any of the others. Every time I see him, he says, "Oh, have you read this book?" And he's got some biography that he's just been reading. And he wants me to read it or something like that.

Gingrich used to do that all the time. He'd always hand off things that he was reading to you. Bush reads a lot. He and Laura read at-- the First Lady, reads every night-- and he always watches movies that are really interesting movies, the things

you would never think that he would watch. I remember one time he said to me-- we were in the helicopter. And he said-- we got talking about books, and-- and movies. And he said, "Oh, have you seen the movie Paper Clip?" And I said, "Paper Clip? I hadn't even heard of it."

(LAUGHTER) I went online. Sure enough, it was actually playing one little art theater in my district there at the time. But I never did get to see it. But it's about diversity and tolerance. This was George Bush, was telling me about this. It was about diversity and tolerance.

And he said it was a-- it's a great movie, it's a documentary about a middle school that tries to collect one paper clip for every person in the world that's been affected-- that's-- has HIV/AIDS, and how they go about doing that there, and the lessons they learn from all that, rather extraordinary, I thought, that this President mentioned-- that thing to me there. So-- and I think this President gets a bit of a bum rap. But he's-- I can give him a rap on the knuckles for a lot of other things there.

DOUGLASS: Good insights. That's a good story. I hadn't heard that Paper Clip story. Let me insert a-- another issue here which is homeland security, which Congress-- has created-- this new department-- with a gun to its head, which is often how legislation finally gets passed.

How well do you think-- Congress did-- in creating this new agency that was meant to deal with the post-9/11 terrorism threat, and has-- it-- the department, made Americans safer?

KOLBE: (LAUGHS) The answer to the second one is no. That's the short and easy answer only that one. Answer on the first one is, I think we did a terrible job with it. But I think we all knew it was going to be a terrible job. And we were responding to what was the need of the moment. Everybody realized that after 2001-- after September 11th, that we had had a-- just a catastrophic failure of intelligence, that the side doing international intelligence, the CIA, wasn't talking to the internal side, those internal-- intelligence, the FBI. There was no meeting.

There was no sharing of the data. And we have something like 38 different agencies doing intelligence work. I mean, it's just-- it's such a mish-mash. And we tried to pull all that together but not completely. Because we didn't take-- didn't pull-- FBI under a homeland security.

We left that over there in Justice Department, because that was just too big a bite to take. So, it was a mix. It was-- and I think I remember at the time saying this is going to be a disaster in terms of implementing it. And-- and it's been true. I-- it's getting better as you go by. But my God, you'd hope at the end of four and a half years that it would be getting better. But it's only now beginning to get a little better

as these-- as the integration really takes place. It's a huge cultural change. It's a huge cultural thing. Let me just give you one example of that.

As much as two years, at least two years after the homeland security went into effect, the border patrol-- and the customs, immigration customs were brought together, of course-- under this. They had been two separate agencies, one in Treasury, one in Justice.

Here, they were brought together under homeland security. And they-- while they have the-- a similar kind of a mission in terms of security along the border-- against illegal immigrants or against illegal goods coming into the country, they have very different cultures. And so, in-- in Arizona, for-- the policy, the policy was for immigration that they could not do hot pursuit. Because they were chasing, perhaps-- children and-- in a van up the-- up the highway. And so, they couldn't do-- and they may crash, and they get killed. So, they couldn't do hot pursuit.

Customs, on the other hand, were supposed to be going after drug dealers. So, they were chasing after all these people. When they put them together and put the same uniform and they got in a car and they went chasing, if they started to do that, they had to stop and let the immigration person out of the car in order to-- for him, the customs guy, to go on with the chase there, because the immigration guy couldn't be-- they had to change the policy to make it one, consistent policy. I mean, there's the kind of nuttiness that you get when you try to pull those kinds of agencies together there.

DOUGLASS: Do you think that there's any hope that Congress-- with its oversight- responsibilities, which some say have not been exercised as aggressively as they should've been, but do you think that Congress will ultimately be able, through its committees and so forth, to-- put this-- agency on track?

KOLBE: They have definitely not-- exercised the oversight responsibility that we should have. It's been a huge failure on the part of Congress. It's my biggest regret of my 22 years, as our failure to do the oversight that we should do.

Whether they'll be able to pull it together, I would be very doubtful that Congress can pull it together. Can you find a president that can pull this thing together and make some more changes? As I said, it's gradually getting better. But you still have a functioning-- or functionally-- an agency that is not functioning the way it should function, and I-- and structurally can't function right.

DOUGLASS: So, you say we're not safer today. Are we less safe?

KOLBE: No. I don't know that-- no, we're not less safe. In some ways, we are safe. And we do have better intelligence. We're more-- we are doing things at the

airports that we didn't do before. But we're clearly not doing much on trains-- and bus-- and-- on shipping and stuff. We're not-- we aren't able to check cargos.

We're not using the technology that's available to us today to do that kind of checking. So, I--we may be a bit safer than we are. But the threats are greater out there, than they were before. So, if you measure them against one another, I don't know that we're any safer than we were.

DOUGLASS: Okay, another student. Yes, ma'am?

AMANDA EKEY: Hi, Congressman. My name is Amanda Ekey. And I'm studying International Relations and Economics here at NYU. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit-- about your experience orchestrating NAFTA with the Clinton administration and reflective--

KOLBE: Oh, concerning NAFTA

EKEY: NAFTA, that's right. And-- reflect a little bit on how it's been implemented now. I know it's been-- specifically Chapter 11, sort of how that-- trade regime is operating, you know, now almost a decade after it was negotiated.

KOLBE: Well, I guess I'm probably not the best person to ask this of, because I was a supporter of NAFTA. I still remain a supporter of NAFTA. I don't think I'm being defensive about it. I think NAFTA is working. I don't think there's any question. If you look at the-- total amount of trade between the three countries, I mean, it's more than doubled-- in the ten years-- during that time. We've had tremendous increases in trade. Mexico's economy has improved. A number of jobs we created in all three countries has been tremendous. I don't know where you say, how people look at and say NAFTA that is a failure, that it really hasn't worked. Has it solved all the problems? Of course it hasn't solved all the problems, it never was going to solve all the problems, it never was intended. And in that sense we may have been guilty of overselling of somehow it was going to be Nirvana when we had, when we had a free trade agreement between the three countries. We perhaps oversold it. It never was going to solve all the problems. If there has been a failure, the failure has been on the part of Mexico to undertake the really fundamental reforms it needs to-- undertake to make it work properly in Mexico. They'd done some of the reforms. And in some areas, they've been very good.

But they have not, for example, reformed their energy sector. They still don't allow investment from outside. And it's killing them. It's killing them. This is a country that now imports gas, natural gas, for heaven's sakes, because they can't produce enough of it themselves. They have not at all-- reformed the education system. And there-- that's their real Achilles' heel. If they don't get more people in secondary

school getting the kind of skills they need-- they're never going to get to the level that a South Korea or a Taiwan, for example, are at.

And the third area, they didn't really make the reforms in agriculture. We said that we would make the agricultural section of the NAFTA agreement, the last one that went into place. So, the-- tariff reductions in agriculture were the very last, to give them more time, was ten years, to give them time for those-- to make those reforms.

But they never really did make the reforms. And so, Mexico was still caught in a-- extraordinarily inefficient-- agricultural system of what they call ejido small, five-- two, three, four, five hectare plots of land where you can't efficiently use capital. That is, you can't efficiently use the machinery in order to-- to-- grow a lot of soybeans or a lot of wheat, and be competitive in a world market.

Whereas Mexico competitive, they're very competitive in the things that are not under the ejido system, which is their fruits and-- and vegetables, which are all on the West Coast south of where I live in-- down in Sonora and Sinaloa.

And you're-- you like your lettuce-- salad here in New York in the winter? Chances are, it's coming from Mexico-- at this time at-- starting in January-- to April. Most of that lettuce will come from Mexico throughout the United States. So, they're very successful in those areas of-- of competing. But they have not made the changes in the basic agriculture. And so, it's cost tremendous-- not only divisions. But it's-- the dispersions of people that have been driven off of the farms because they can't compete any longer against U.S. corn or against U.S. -- wheat or soybeans there. And they have not made the changes they need to make.

DOUGLASS: Congressman, let me ask you a couple of personal questions before we-- because we've only got probably another-- seven or eight minutes here. You-- have-- you're the only openly gay Republican member of the House.

In a party which has really been-- one could say at least in its public-- personas-- hostile to the rights of gays and lesbians-- in this country, and you've-- gone ahead and defended-- anti-discrimination legislation. You've supported hate crimes legislation. How difficult was this for you inside your own party?

KOLBE: Well, this-- answer may surprise you a little bit. But it really hasn't been much of an issue. I mean, it's almost like there's a disconnect-- from-- of members on that kind of thing. I have never had a member say anything negative about me. I guess they wouldn't to my face, but say anything negative about me. I became a cardinal, that is a chairman of a-- of a subcommittee-- immediately after coming out as a gay person in the-- the next January after that, just five months later.

And no-- that was never raised as an issue, that somehow we shouldn't make Jim Kolbe a cardinal and-- and chairman of-- an appropriations subcommittee. So, that was never raised. I've never had anybody on any legislation or any leadership thing ever raise this. Where it clearly was an issue was two years later before I was out. I ran for policy committee chairman. And I didn't get that.

But it was the abortion issue. The abortion issue is the litmus test in the Republican Party. If you're pro-life, you're not going to generally-- you're not going to rise to the top ranks. We've had Deborah Pryce as conference chairman. But they're going to-- they'll-- allow one as kind of a-- and this may change, too.

But they allow one. But they don't allow others to, because that's been the litmus test. I've never found it to be a problem. Do I find it painful to hear some of my colleagues say the things they do on the floor? Yes. They do. I do find that painful.

DOUGLASS: Did you ever take it personally though? Because there was such a strident effort to have a Constitutional ban on gay marriage. And there was an effort to roll back the anti-discrimination laws. Did you feel that personally when-

KOLBE: Sure.

DOUGLASS: --you--

KOLBE: Yeah. I do feel that kind of thing, sure. It hurts to hear people saying that kind of thing, that I shouldn't have rights that other people are able to have. But yeah, I find that-- hurtful. But-- in this business, you just have to learn to-- respect other people's point of view and say, you know, you're going to disagree with them.

But, you know, tomorrow-- there's that old saying in politics, you know. You may disagree. But tomorrow is another fight. And you may need their-- their vote the next day around. So, you better not-- not burn those bridges there. And so, you they are in politics not to burn too many bridges.

DOUGLASS: Great. Anymore questions from the audience here? Pardon me, of the students. Just let me--

KOLBE: They're just exhausted, I guess.

DOUGLASS: --ask you-- we're just almost done here. We've only got a couple minutes anyway. Just a couple of wrap-up questions for you, looking back on your career. What would you say is the-- legislative accomplishment that you feel most proud of?

KOLBE: I would say it is NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement. I think it's had the hugest and longest-term-- I'm not the sole author by any means of that. I was just one of the chief proponents, and was backing it before anybody else.

I was-- introduced a resolution calling for one before anybody else even thought about such a thing. So, in that sense, I was out front on that issue. But-- certainly, others get more of the pats on the back for the passage of it. But I would say that's certainly one of the things I'm most proud of. The other two would be-- best chairman of foreign operations, what we'd done in creating what I think is a really new, and I'm very excited about it, way of delivering foreign assistance.

That's the millennium challenge corporation, and what we've done on international and HIV/AIDS. I think it's made a huge difference. By the end of this year, we'll have more than a million people receiving anti-retroviral drugs around the world. There 25,000 three years ago receiving ARVs. More than a million people. We're almost doubling it each year. We-- price is not the issue that it was once. And we're getting those drugs out there. We're saving lives. There's-- there's hope in a place in Africa where there never was hope before.

And I think that makes a huge difference in many of these countries in terms of changing their attitude and making them realize that life goes on. It's still going to go on. They are able to live with this.

DOUGLASS: Did you wish-- and did you push to have us get more involved in Darfur, speaking of Africa?

KOLBE: Yes. And I'm sadly disappointed that we have not been able to do more. I--Sudan has hobbled us at every step of the way in-- in our trying to deliver the assistance, and trying to get-- African union or United Nations forces in there to prevent this terrible genocide from occurring.

I've made two trips to Sudan. And it just breaks your heart, breaks your heart to see what people are going through there, and the horrors that people are living with, particularly women who are being abused, attacked, raped, it's just-- it's horrifying what's happening.

DOUGLASS: And you must feel helpless.

KOLBE: And you feel helpless. You do-- again, we appropriate the money. We beg-- we try to do this but Sudan has the ability as a functioning sovereign government to block us in doing most of what we've been trying to accomplish there.

DOUGLASS: So, leaving Congress, what is it you think you're going to miss the most?

KOLBE: Well, oh, you know what I'm going to miss the most? Just Saturday and Sunday night was the Kennedy Center Honors. I've been a trustee of the Kennedy Center, (LAUGHTER) Congressional trustee of the Kennedy Center.

And that is really a wonderful program, to get to go to the Kennedy Center Honors. That's really a terrific performance. By the way, it'll be on the 26th of December here-- be shown on CBS. It's really worth seeing here. I think somebody else had a question back there. But let me-- just say-- what I seriously will miss-- I think what I'll miss most is your-- when you're in Congress, all the information comes to you.

It's pouring in on you. You have all this access to this information. You can-- do with it as you choose, sorting it out as the-- as the way you-- you want. When you're not in Congress, you have to go and find that information. You have to get it.

Most of it is available to you. Most of the-- the classified stuff that Congress gets, most of it isn't worthwhile, believe me. Most of you re-- read the New York Times, anyhow, there. But-- it's just that you have to go seek the information in a different way. And I guess that's what I'm going to miss, is that-- not having the access to the information you have, and not being at the center of where decisions are being made every day.

DOUGLASS: And finally-- if you could write this yourself, what would you like history to say about you and your service?

KOLBE: Oh, God. I'm supposed to write my epitaph?

DOUGLASS: You--

KOLBE: 'm retiring from Congress. (LAUGHTER) I'm not retiring from life yet.

DOUGLASS: This is only your professional epitaph. (LAUGHTER)

KOLBE: Oh. You know, I guess it would li-- like it to say something that he was a good person who cared-- and who made a difference, and brought sides together, people together.

DOUGLASS: Excellent. That's a very good epitaph. (LAUGHS) We can all get-- I-- we all have something like that. Well, thank you so much, Congressman. This has been absolutely terrific.

KOLBE: Well Linda, this has been great fun.

DOUGLASS: **Your questions have been great.**

KOLBE: Yeah, questions have been terrific.

DOUGLASS: Yeah. This-- this is a stellar group here. So, thank you very much. And--

KOLBE: Thank you.

DOUGLASS: --we'll-- wanna share this with all the scholars and researchers who wanna look at what--

KOLBE: Uh-oh.

DOUGLASS: --you had to say. And-- (LAUGHTER) yeah, look out, lots of questions to follow.

KOLBE: Great.

DOUGLASS: So, thank all of you very much.

KOLBE: Thank you, thank you. (APPLAUSE)