

REFLECTIONS PROJECT
REP. SHERWOOD BOEHLERT INTERVIEW
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LINDA DOUGLASS: You have had this extraordinary four-decade experience in the Congress both as a staff member and as an elected member of the House of Representatives. If you can put your finger on any one thing, what would you say is the biggest change that you've seen in the way that the House, in particular, is today versus how it has been over your long time there?

SHERWOOD BOEHLERT: Let me give you two answers, not just one: The one is very positive, the other is very negative. The very positive is the high degree of professionalism that's evident in the Congress particularly in the staff, the support staff, individual offices and committee offices. Let me give a for instance. When I first came to Capitol Hill as a starry-eyed youngster back in 1964, the preponderance of personal staff and even a large number of the committee staff were there because they were involved back home in the campaign or they were related to one of the big contributors. Today a high degree of professionalism, I mean, for example in the Science Committee our professional staff has fourteen PhDs. Quite honestly I don't even know if they are Republican or Democrat. I don't care about that. What I do care about is there professional ability to add something of significance to the committee and our deliberation, so that is a very positive. On the negative side, I am leaving at a time when I have never seen Congress like it is today. The highest degree of partisanship I have ever experienced. From the days as a youngster in the staff to the present, by partisanship is virtually nonexistent. Partisanship is there and the lowest level of tolerance ever. It's my view and my view is the right view and I don't care what you think, it's my view. No tolerance for another point of view, so that's, that's a plus and a minus.

DOUGLASS: Why is that? That is really central to what we're trying to understand about Congress today. Why is the partisanship so personal, so sharply defined, so bitter, do you think?

BOEHLERT: Well, I think the major contributing factor particularly of recent years is the close division in the Congress. It's not an overwhelming majority or an underwhelming minority. It's very close, almost evenly divided, which reflects where Americans are, the people we represent. I think that most people, when all is said and done – now this is self-serving because I am the quintessential moderate or centrist as-- as some people will label us -- but most people if you really examine in depth their attitudes towards government and towards public policy, they're

somewhere in the middle. They want to avoid the extremes of the left or the right. But here's what happen today, and you as a, distinguished, journalist, know full well, it is the fringes that get the attention and grab the headlines. You know, I tell kids-- I try to meet with youngsters when they come in, , from all levels, but high school students are coming more and more to Washington in various support groups, Presidential Classroom, Young Americans, National Youth Leadership Conference. And I always instruct my staff try to figure out how my staff, my time, can be juggled so I can meet with these people. Because I want to talk to them and sort of get them interested in government and-- and develop in them a greater appreciation for what it's all about. And I find that very instructive.

DOUGLASS: Can you give us any personal examples of how you've seen the relationships between the parties change from when you were initially in elected into Congress until now? Is there anything personal that comes to mind in your own experience?

BOEHLERT: Well I just, the way that we operate. It used to when I first came they called the roll, alphabetical order, and then those who didn't answer, didn't respond, they'd have a second call. So it would take about forty-five minutes and if you were an observer sitting in a gallery back in the sixties, early sixties, before they went to the electronic voting, you would look down at the floor and you would see members sitting on the floor waiting for their name to be called. And you know what they were doing when they were sitting on the floor? They were actually talking to each other. And it may have been, I mean, people will be in the gallery now and they might see me with some of my friends, John Mchugh of New York or John Sweeny of New York, Jim Walsh, you know, we tend to stick together. But chances are we're talking about what happened to the Yankees last night or something, but you get, you used to be able to get to know members better. Today, I, with electronic voting there's no reason to be on the floor. Members will dash in at the last minute, look up at the board and see what's happening, put their card in, press the button and dash right out, don't have any interaction with their colleagues. And I can say truthfully today there are members on both sides of the aisle; this is not party- specific, who really can't in all honestly say they know a member on the opposition. Oh, they all know their-- their names, Linda Douglass, you know and Sherry Boehlert. They don't know if they're married or single, if they got family, if they're, you know, trying to struggle to pay tuition payments, they like the Yankees or they hate the Yankees. They don't know any of that and so when you don't know someone you tend not to, relate to that individual. And so that that's the biggest change I've seen. One of the, the best advice I give young members, I say when young members come into Washington, you know, now a veteran member, I say let me give you a couple of tips on things I think would be beneficial. First of all, get to know your colleagues. That's, that's an obvious thing. But secondly go on a congressional trip some place. Now I know the public perception is yeah well they're drunk. It's the taxpayers are footing the bill for some trip to an exotic place

that's not going to accomplish anything. That's nonsense. Are there drunkards? Sure there are. But the overwhelming majority of trips are for legitimate purposes and usually spouses will accompany the member. So if you're sitting down with another couple, you may be a left wing Democrat and a right wing Republican with spouses having dinner, maybe a glass of wine, and talking. You understand there is a human element and you understand more about the other person and so that that I think is very important. You've got to-- to know people. You've got to get to understand, to appreciate that there are other points of view.

DOUGLASS: How has that partisanship, in your view, affected the legislative process and even the decision making capacity of the Congress?

BOEHLERT: Well just take the current Congress we're serving in now. We're coming up to, as this interview is going on; we're coming up to election. And if you follow all the guestimates, it could go either way. The Republicans could maintain the majority or the Democrats could regain the majority. And what is happening now is you're watching both sides getting into that campaign mode, where anything one side proposes the other side feels obligated to oppose no matter what. For example, the Democrats who are now in the minority, I said earlier today when someone asked me this question, I said, if I introduced a bill to, codify into law that the third Sunday in May would be Mother's Day I'm convinced because I'm a Republican, it would be universally opposed by the Democrats. Because their, their mode now getting into election is; don't let the Republicans do anything that they take credit for because that will hurt our chances of regaining the majority. And then on the Republican side, there are people that will look, look at you down their nose if they see you have a Democrat co-sponsor of a bill. Used to be, when you had, you thought you had a great a idea, you'd try and convince some of your colleagues to support it and you'd always showcase "I got broad-based support". I've got Republicans and Democrats. I've got easterners and westerners, and northern and southern, and so you could say look at this. This is a great idea and has widespread support. You don't do that anymore. The bipartisanship is sort of out the window. From my experience over all these forty-two years, it used to be, in my view that about six months before a presidential election everything would begin to change, and everyone would get into campaign mode. Us against them. Then the election would occur, no matter who won, then we'd revert back for the next three and a half year to the old way of doing things. Try to sort things out, work together on a bipartisan basis. That has changed dramatically; It has been in the campaign mode since early '02. And here we are in '06.

DOUGLASS: What do you think about the theory that is not written down anywhere but certainly is talked about a lot that the current Republican leadership has applied to some votes, which is: You don't pass legislation unless there is a majority of the majority, meaning a majority of the Republican party. And presumably if the Democrats were be in power, they might start doing the

same thing. We don't want to pass legislation that is not preferred by the majority of our majority. Well, what do you think is the effect of that policy on policy and on the public interest?

BOEHLERT: It's bringing a smile to my face and I'll tell you why. That just plays into the hands of people like me, the, the centrists, the moderates, because that's exactly what is happened in this Congress. The minority is convinced that they've got to go with opposing everything the Republicans propose, almost right down the line. So the Republicans in the majority realize that the only way they can get anything accomplished is to get a majority of the majority. And to get two hundred and eighteen out of two hundred and thirty one is very difficult if you have fifteen or twenty moderates or centrists going off in a different direction. So that, that makes what I like to call "the moderate's moment" surface and the moderates have a disproportionate influence to their numbers right now. And we have no better example than the budget deliberations. And when we had that budget reconciliation bill within the past year, that passed by just two votes. Not a Democrat voted for it and the Republican initial proposal was unacceptable to a number of us who are moderates. We thought it was foolhardy to talk in terms of denying food stamps to hundreds of thousands more people. We thought it was foolhardy to do some other things like that. And we said, "No we're not going to support it." So we became, in effect, empowered. And the leadership had to listen to the moderates. And at the last meeting, the Speaker and the acting Majority Leader, this was after Tom Delay had stepped down as majority leader. Roy Blunt was the new acting minority, Majority Leader. The last meeting the Speaker had before the early Friday morning vote was at eleven o'clock in his office with Mike Castle, a colleague of mine from Delaware, a leader of the moderates, and me. And we sat down with the Speaker and, , acting minority, , majority leader, Blunt, to go over some things that are on his mind. Let's see you've agreed to take this out and you've agreed to add this and you, we just wanted to make sure. Because, first of all, we're dealing with a guy of unquestioned integrity in my mind; the Speaker. I didn't need, you know, a signed document but I just wanted to clarify as to Castle that this is the agreement. And he said, "Yes we will agree to do this, yes we agree to do that, no we're not going to do that". But, so we got our whole list and we walked out satisfied that we really had had a favorable impact on the budget reconciliation package. And the early hours of the next morning, it passed by two votes and the moderates made the difference.

DOUGLASS: Well you're absolutely right that even though the moderates in the Republican Party are a small, intriguing number, which I want to ask you about, you had tremendous influence on that, on salvaging some social programs and on getting the House of Representative to vote in favor of stem-cell research, and on preventing oil drilling in Alaska. Nevertheless the number of moderates is shrinking. And moderates in the 2006 campaign are fighting for their political lives in very, very, tough races. so I guess my question is, isn't it getting harder to

be a moderate, harder working with your more conservative colleagues in your party, harder getting Democrats to work with you and harder to get reelected?

BOEHLERT: Well I would have some argument with your idea that the moderate ranks are shrinking. Now this is before the election we're talking about, and I will concede that the moderates are usually in more difficult races because they tend to represent districts that are more balanced in the registration. I mean there are probably three hundred and fifty or so of my colleagues running in a district where the opponent doesn't have a snowball's chance in you-know-where of winning. You know you get the nomination of your party if you're from central New York City, the Democrat line, you get by the primary, you're guaranteed to get a win. The Republicans can spin their wheels forever more and spend a gazillion dollars, they're not going to win. And you're from other districts that are very Republican in nature, and the same thing holds true. So the moderates tend to represent districts that are more balanced. And they're under siege because the the opposition, the Democrats, see opportunities in closer districts. But the moderates' rank, as I would maintain, are actually increasing. Because there are some people that are sort of silent about their affiliation. Not everybody wants to affiliate with a block in the Congress whether they're Republican or Democrat. A lot of members prefer the luxury of saying well I'm not affiliated with any group, I just call them as I see them and I just give my all every single day. But I'll take a couple examples. I have got the clean bill to increase the minimum wage.

DOUGLASS: And by that you mean a bill that is not encumbered by any other issue.

BOEHLERT: Right, and it's a Republican proposal. When I started out, there was one co-sponsor, me. The present federal minimum wage is \$5.15 an hour. And my bill would incrementally raise that to \$7.15. Well, more and more I'm getting more members to come aboard. Because I'm arguing on the merits of the case, not just that we haven't had an increase in the minimum wage since 1997. But I would go to a colleague, for example, from New York, a Republican, who might have some quarrel with whether or not the federal government should be involved in determining a minimum wage. And I'm able to convince that individual that, look at, guess what, in New York the minimum wage is already well above \$5.15 and some states it's approaching \$8 an hour. In New York, on January 1 of next year, 2007 it's going to be \$7.15. So I say to them; doesn't it make sense if you're going to be faithful to your representational duties for your district and your state to level the playing field. I mean in my own congressional district, the southern part of my district borders on Pennsylvania, Tioga County. We've got one small community, Owego, its home to Lockheed Martin. Lockheed Martin is growing by the hundreds of new jobs because they've just had some big new contracts, among other things, from the new presidential helicopter. But they're hiring left and right. But some of their suppliers want to locate closer to Lockheed Martin so they can eliminate the

high transportation cost. Why would they in their right mind come to Owego, New York if they had maybe seventy-five, eighty people at the entry level minimum wage when they have to pay \$7.15 when they go across the street in Pennsylvania and it literally, well it's across the bridge, and go right across the river and only pay \$5.15 an hour? That comes out to some real money. So I'm able, more and more of my colleagues I find are becoming more pragmatic and not so much ideologues.

DOUGLASS: Well that's interesting. Now that's an interesting observation because there has been such a sharp ideological definition of the party, Republican party for the last few years. So you're saying, what you're seeing now is evidence that that is beginning to change?

BOEHLERT: Yeah but I, I look at there's no fast movement forward. I mean, it's like the tortoise and the hare. But I see, rather than the moderates declining in numbers, under the present circumstances, assuming that everybody runs is reelected and you can't assume that, I know, but assume that. The moderates ranks are increasing slightly because more and more people are being told when they go back home, I don't care if you're a Republican or a Democrat. I just want you to deal with this. There's no Republican solution to the high price of gasoline or Democrat solution. There's got to be a solution that's good for America and get on with it. Do something.

DOUGLASS: Let me ask you about, because I'm thinking about your lonely but relentless quest to get the minimum wage raised. You have never hesitated to fight big fights inside your own party. And when the Republicans first took the majority, 1995, you waged a very famous and well documented fight against Tom Delay, who was determined, and this was an issue of the heart for him, to reduce the regulatory power of the Environmental Protection Agency. And this was at the height of the euphoria of the majority coming in. He was one of the strongest ideological voices in the party. Tell us how, how that, happened exactly. What, what happened there between the two of you and your ultimate success?

BOEHLERT: Well, it was never personal thing between Delay and Boehlert. As a matter of fact, I, I've enjoyed a very good relationship with Tom Delay because one of his strengths is he's smart enough to recognize if we want to maintain the majority, we can't all look just like Tom Delay and we can't all be from Texas. And if we want to be a national party, we've got to have some New York guys. We've got to have some people from Washington State, and like that. So I've got the good relationship. But I think some people in leadership misread what ninety-four really meant. In ninety-four after forty years in the wilderness, Newt Gingrich in Contract with America largely led us to the Promised Land. We then became the majority. And parenthetically, let me point out the Democrats said, Well that's an anomaly. It will never happen again. Well its 2006, we're still in the majority. But there's an old saying in politics. You dance with who brung you. And there was a feeling in--

in the Republican leadership that the business community has always been, by in large, very supportive of the Republicans, had been generous in supporting Republicans financially and there was a genuine interest in helping the business community because the theory is that as business goes, you remember engine Charlie Wilson from General Motors, as General Motors goes, so goes America. Well, the philosophy among the Republicans is, If we do well by business and not just in rewarding them, but if we make it possible for business to prosper, the country prospers more, people are employed, etcetera, etcetera. So one of the things that some wizard came up with is an idea for devolution. They're going to take the environmental protection agency and instead of having a central agency in Washington in charge of environmental policy and regulation, devolve to the states and give it to the individual states. We are great states'-righters. Only they didn't factor in something. The business community said we don't want that. The last thing we want is to deal with fifty individual sets of state regulations. We want to deal with one agency at the federal level. Now we want to influence in a pro business way the decisions of that agency. But please don't go ahead with this devolution policy. Keep EPA. And so go, we're going up to the first recess we have, the first major recess we're going to have in the new majority in August. And there were appropriation bills on the floor and the Washington Post captured it in an editorial called headlined "the seventeen riders from hell". And there were individual provisions of those appropriations bill that would weaken environmental policy and a whole bunch of different areas, seventeen all together. And they thought it was going to slide right through. And it didn't because there were some of us who said no that's not the way to go. And I was a leader made by default because no one else wanted to step forward. But I led the effort and we succeeded in getting those seventeen riders from hell out of those appropriation bills. I would suggest that the environment was better served by getting rid of those. I would suggest the business community and all Americans were better served by getting rid of that. And I think the Republican Party was better served because lurching to the right, we're saying wait a minute. Come back to the middle where the majority of the Americans are; and on environmental issues my experience is the American people are usually ahead of the Congress.

DOUGLASS: But your environmentalism made you quite unpopular with some of your colleagues in your party from the west, who really saw this as a matter of their constituents ability to make a living either by developing or by drilling for oil, or by logging. And you butted heads with some members of your own party who were personally critical of you. Somebody, I'm trying to think who it was, who said, "What does he know?" He's from a place where there's just concrete and understanding where Upstate New York is exactly.

BOEHLERT: It personally cost me a great loss short-term, temporary. Because I'll never forget, we had an air base in my district, Griffiss Air Force Base that in 1993 was designated by the Base Realignment Closing Commission for elimination.

They'd lost the area but the commission said you ought to keep just one separate function air force research laboratory in what they call a containment area. So it would be a stand-alone research facility, no longer on a military base. Because everything else went away. And so in '95 the next BRAC Commission said, "Let's eliminate that laboratory", so everything would have gone. And we fought it and successfully fought it and so we won. So the laboratory was retained and the commission concluded it would be far too costly to move a couple of hundred million dollars, and you know, to different places. And it would be totally disruptive of critically important ongoing research, so don't move it. So after we go through congratulating each other, I said to myself there will be another BRAC Commission. Where is our potential area of vulnerability? And when I examined it carefully I discovered that, you know, we have older facilities, just post WWII facilities, in various states of disrepair, didn't have a modern up-to-date laboratory. So I went to work to get a laboratory facility and I got the Department of Defense and the Air Force to put in the budget request, some money for this, and then I was able to get the Armed Services Committee, I thought, to approve twelve and a half million dollars. And I was able to convince the state that they should match it so we get twenty-five million dollars for this new laboratory. And the subcommittee, Military Construction of the Armed Services Committee, met and reported on the bill. And every one of the Air Force requests was in that bill except mine. So I went to the chairman of the subcommittee, Joel Hefley of Colorado, who is now a good friend, but I went to him on the floor. He's one of the westerners you're talking about. I said Joel, what happened? You reported the bill. Was this a clerical mistake? He said no. I said well, what happened? He said I don't like your voting record. You're involved in issues that are none of your business, those are our issues. I said what do you mean they're your issues? National parks, they're just western parks? What do you mean; we don't own them in the east? And so it took the Speaker of the House, he had, we had three separate meetings with, with Congressman Hefley. And the Speaker said, look it the Air Force wants it. It's cost effective. It makes sense. Boehlert's a good guy, a senior guy, part of our, he's carrying it. Joel I wish you'd back off. He refused to do it. He didn't budge. But to the credit of the Speaker we did an end run and we got it in an appropriations bill without the authorization. And that lab is there today; a new twenty five million dollar state-of-the-art facility. And fast-forward to 2005, another BRAC Commission came along and they were going to do damage to the Air Force lab at Rome. But when they reviewed everything and we pointed out they have these magnificent facilities and critically important work, they decided against it. And Rome lab is still there operating in a new facility.

DOUGLASS: But what was that like for you to be actually personally disliked because of an issue about what you felt very strongly and about what you have great principles, by colleagues within your own party? Did you feel ostracized? I mean, was that an unpleasant time in your career?

BOEHLERT: Temporarily, you feel a temporary ostracizing underway, like when I when I was given with “the seventeen riders from hell”. I mean, they didn’t like, the leadership didn’t like going home for a— for a major recess after suffering a major defeat on the floor. But, okay, politics is of the moment. You took a snapshot at the time you say Boehlert’s ostracized because of this. But the next day politicians know that you have different allies, different days, different fights, and different days. It goes on and to this day, Joel Hefley’s retiring right now, I consider him a very good friend. And Joe Barton of Texas, we disagree on a number of things. He’s chairman of Energy and Commerce Committee, but we have a good working relationship. And he has every reason to quite frankly hate my guts because I led the fight about ten years ago to put an end to that vast superconducting supercollider project that was going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars and was in his district. And so you know when that went under and that cost that district over three thousand jobs and a lot of potential for other growth, he had every reason to say that S.O.B. I’m never going to talk to him again but he did. He, he is above that, just like Hefley’s above that. For the moment there were daggers between us but the moment passed and we went on and we’re allies in other ventures.

DOUGLASS: Well I want to ask you for sure and I’m sure our students are as well, several questions about the policy-making capacity of Congress, and also in your area in particular, of science. And also about the changes that the Republican majority have brought into the Congress. That’s a very important area that we want to get into with you. But first of all before we, before I ask anymore questions I want to bring the students in and see if they would like to start weighing in with their own questions. So why don’t you just raise your hands and I’ll call on you and we’ll take it from there. So who would like to go first with a question? Jon?

STUDENT: It seems as though, I mean, you’ve had a very large scope in terms of your experience with Congress -- Recently national security has been very politicized and I’m curious if you can comment through your experience under Reagan, Bush one, Clinton, Bush two, how, along with that the politicization of national security, that’s also lead to a shift in power from Congress to the Executive Branch.

BOEHLERT: Well, I think, by and large whether you have an ‘r’ or a ‘d’ after your name, my experiences over the years have been very supportive of the Department of Defense, for example, or any effort in the national security arena. And there hasn’t been that partisanship so much. I go way back on my staff days when there was Vietnam, there was some partisanship there, and a lot of people would look back on that and say boy we should’ve done things differently. But then you go forward to the present involvement in Iraq and one of the things I point out to people who are so critical of our decision, Congress’ decision to give the authority

to the President of the United States to take action he deemed necessary to protect our national security interest; the thing I point out to my partisan friends, look at John Kerry and John Edwards who led the Democrat ticket in the last presidential election. They have voted the same way that people like Sherry Boehlert or Tom Delay voted. But we're operating on the information available at that time. Looking back, hindsight is 20/20; would we have done things differently? Of course we would have. But I don't think there is that overall partisanship on national security issues or defense related issues. I don't think it breaks down to 'r' versus 'd.' And you tend to find some more support from members of Congress who have significant direct impact in their districts, major defense contractor in our districts. You might find a member of Congress, regardless of party affiliation, who is very mindful of the fact that this is a, an economic engine for his or her district and therefore they will be more supportive than maybe ordinarily that individual might be. But I really don't see that partisanship in in those two arenas. There's some strong differences of opinion but not so much partisanship. There's no one arguing that we dramatically reduce overall defense spending. There are a lot of arguments over how we're directing defense spending. There are a lot of arguments about the need to reduce waste, fraud and abuse which is sort of an easy way to say how I'd vote for less money for defense. Because if we eliminated waste, fraud and abuse, we'd only have left the money necessary to support our troops and give them the best equipment and the best training etcetera, etcetera.

DOUGLASS: Let me just follow up on that question, because it raises the question of the role of Congress versus the role of the Executive branch. And you've certainly been aware that there many experts who study the Congress, and Democrats in particular, who complain that there has not been enough exercise of the congressional responsibility to engage in oversight of the executive branch. Do you think that Congress is playing the role that it was intended to play with respect to overseeing how the war is managed, overseeing how foreign policy is managed and perhaps other issues as well? Is the congressional oversight in your view, and particularly in respect to the war, has it been as aggressive as some would like to see it be?

BOEHLERT: The direct answer is no. But let me qualify that by saying it's not just the war or foreign policy. One of the shortcomings of Congress, if I were to give Congress a report card, where I'd give it a check, needs to improve is in oversight generally. Not just the current Congress with the current majority. Throughout my years in Congress, no matter who was in charge, there's a tendency on the part of people in the legislative branch to have a problem identified, to address it at hearings, then you develop legislation, you pass the legislation, you say, boy we've done our job. Let's go on to the next thing and not pause to look back to see if what you did was having the intended effect, if it was working the way you envisioned it. So that is an indictment overall of the House and the Senate and

Republicans and Democrats. We don't do enough oversight and we've got to do more of that in the future.

DOUGLASS: Why is that though?

BOEHLERT: Well because, I just think that, first of all, that we've got one of the things that the Republicans did that I think made a lot of sense back in '94, when we got the majority, one of the first things we did was eliminate a lot of subcommittees. And there were actually conversations about eliminating committees altogether. Some of them were really dumb ideas, let's eliminate the Department of Education and therefore the committees in Congress dealing with education cause that's a state responsibility. Well fortunately that died a natural death. There's even a suggestion that we should, they should, at that time eliminate the Science Committee and-- and take some of the responsibilities of the science committee and assign them to other committees. So you deal with all the agencies covered by the science committee but you wouldn't have a committee dedicated to that and quite frankly, the only reason it was saved was because Newt Gingrich was Speaker at the time. And he had a natural curiosity and a love affair with science. But even more important, his best friend, one of his able lieutenants in that whole revolution that took place that brought the Republicans majority status was a guy named Bob Walker, senior congressman at the time from Pennsylvania. And he was due to be the chairman of the Committee on Science. So the Speaker's natural inclination to support science plus his personal relationship with a key advisor saved Science. And it's proven to be, back twelve years later; I think one of the most valuable committees in the Congress. But oversight is, you want to deal with a problem, you want to spend time and working out all-- all the angles of it and then you're absolutely convinced that, boy, this, we've done a good deed. And we've addressed this problem in a meaningful way. And you put out your press releases and then you want to go to the next thing and that's I, I suppose that's human nature. But there should be some time pausing before going to the next thing and coming up with these new grand ideas. I would almost obligate that you have to have so many oversight hearings and each committee with the agencies under your jurisdiction. Right now we do in the Science Committee. I'm an unabashed cheerleader for the National Science Foundation, for example, which is in the jurisdiction of the Science Committee, a country that funds most university-based research in America, which is great for competition for the development of new products and new opportunities, and-- and I make no bones about it. I think they're doing wonderful work. But we call up the NSF people and every year and we go over programs and we say gee, we think this is fine; but this doesn't seem to be working so well, how do you explain that? And you're seeing more oversight now. And I'll bet you in the next Congress, I won't be here but as I look back, and I'm going to follow it very carefully, as I look back I bet you're going to see a lot more oversight.

DOUGLASS: But has Congress-- as some say, some experts and certainly Democrats again-- has it given away any of its power of the moment because, these things are obviously cyclical to the executive branch because of the (interrupted)

BOEHLERT: Some people accuse us of doing that. But you know it's a tug of war all the time. Look. I'll tell you what the Executive branch thinks whether it's George Bush or Bill Clinton or anyone sitting at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The legislative branch is an inconvenient truth. Now, that's not a plug for Al Gore's movie but I, you know, they, they don't really want to deal with us. And it would be far better for them, they think, obviously, if we didn't interfere in their business and they could run everything. And we, on the other hand, we think, well, the administration doesn't understand it, they don't have the depth of understanding and-- and they should listen more to us. But this comes up all the time with Iraq. We've ceded too much responsibility to the Commander in Chief, the President. And I say, look it, put yourself in the shoes of George Walker Bush, the President of the United States. You get a briefing every morning by the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, who comes in at 7:30 or 8 in the morning, closed doors, got to have the top classification to hear what he has to say. He's got the compilation of all the information gathered over the previous 24 hours from satellites in the heavens and spies in the field and talking to allies and, condensation; here it is. So he come into the oval office, "Mr. President, not only is Iraq bad, not only is Saddam Hussein evil, but they have weapons of mass destruction. Not only that, they've used them. How else do you explain 400,000 dead Kurds in the north? They didn't pop off one by one. They were victims of chemical or biological warfare, which is weapons of mass destruction." And so the President listens, asks the questions and the briefings all over. Out he goes, in comes the Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld, "Mr. President, I know you've got that briefing from the intelligence community. I'll tell you what. We've got to go in there. They'll greet us as liberators. They'll throw flowers at our feet." And so he's got the advice there. I, I, remember from my days on the Intelligence Committee and I served beyond the 6-year limitation that they the Speaker and the conference granted me a 2 year extension so I served 8 years over and above the term limit because they thought I should serve. I remember David Kay, the arms inspector, internationally recognized, testifying before our committee. And I'm not violating the sanctity of that committee the classification because this has since come into the public domain, David Kay saying to us very specifically, "Given the information the President was given when it was given I came to the same conclusion", this international expert. Now we haven't found the weapons of mass destruction. They're illusive, they're, nowhere to be found. But I think part of the problem is too many people are thinking the old way. Some big two ton bomb that you can see a couple blocks away. You might be talking about a 6 ounce vial of some deadly agent, who knows? They might still be there. That's not to excuse what's going on in Iraq, but that's to help explain more what's going on in Iraq.

DOUGLASS: Okay, another question from a student. Any of you brave kids want to get up there and ask a, another question? Yes. .

STUDENT: You've mentioned how Congress and the presidency, the Executive branch, have been interacting. But can you comment a little bit on how Congress and the judicial branch have been interacting? What have certain court decisions done to affect the decision making process in Congress?

BOEHLERT: Well, there's almost no interaction between Congress and the judicial branch and unfortunately the body politic as a whole doesn't really pay much attention to the judicial branch until there's a controversial issue decided. And then there, there's reverting back to the basic philosophy. And it's dominated by whatever comments come from the hard left or the hard right, I think the typical member of Congress doesn't pay a heck of a lot of attention to those issues under the theory that we can't really impact them much. And they're going to decide based on the law. And the law's beyond my— my area of responsibility, they would say. I guess that's the best answer I can give you, but I you know there's going to be some high profile cases, you know when that sensitive issue involving the 'a' word, abortion, you know when the court is going to decide on an issue involving reproductive rights. I can almost go right down the list of all members of Congress and tell you what their reaction's going to be depending upon the decision of the court. I mean and people get so set, like an abortion's a classic example. People get so set, they come early. And I've had this actually happen. I have voted. I happen to be a pro choice Republican. I, I feel deeply about the woman's right to make the decisions on women's reproductive rights. But I've actually watched, I've put my card in and voted yes, to guarantee a choice or no to prevent anti-choice effort from going forward. And I've had colleagues stand beside me, "You know, you're probably right, but"...And the but usually is: I'm getting so much heat from the protestors at home I don't really feel strongly one way or another. It's sort of equally divided. They make good case on one hand, on the other hand, either way you want to argue it, so the most vocal people back home, it's like the squeaky wheel gets the grease. So I am convinced in my mind and heart that there are some of my colleagues who vote one way on that issue and don't really, deeply believe that's the right way. They have their doubts but because of the pressure from back home, the mayor, the protestors and all that stuff. That's the way they vote.

DOUGLASS: That raises another question in my mind again having to do with your fierce defense of science and scientific integrity. You have butted heads also with religious conservatives on a couple of science issues. Certainly the religious conservatives have opposed stem cell research. They have opposed the teaching of evolution in schools you've brought up...

BOEHLERT: ...they want intelligent design taught...

DOUGLASS: ...right and you, you brought up the abortion issue as well. Do you think that in the last decade or so, religious conservatives, cultural conservatives, have had undue influence on scientific policy in this country?

BOEHLERT: I think they've had more undue influence on media coverage, because they're so loud, so vocal, so active. But in terms of the decision making, I would point out that the movement is going the opposite direction from the one, the course, they would chart. Because more and more research on embryonic stem cells, which is the real issue-- people say wrong for adult stem cell research, well who's against that? I mean but embryonic stem cell that that offers the greatest promise and that involves the most sensitivity in terms of discussions. And you're having people who are highly regarded in the right to life movement, like Senator Orrin Hatch. Very vocal in support of stem cell research and so, but you know, you deal with an issue like that and its tough back home. People don't follow it as closely as we have to in Washington, involved in the debate and everything else, and I would venture to say if you quiz a lot of people they don't really know the difference between embryonic stem cell research or adult stem cell research. But they know there's some controversy going. So they tend think all stem cell research is bad. And so it it's part of our job, one of the things that I do. I'll have town meetings and people will say I'll get someone who's more supportive over the right to life approach and therefore anti-stem cell research in their minds say to me: How can you be for stem cell research? That's killing an innocent life. And you try to get into a technical explanation and everybody's lost. And I'm not adequate in terms of giving a real technical explanation. So I usually say something like this: Do you realize that we have a choice? We either take these embryonic stem cells that are accessed to the needs for in-vitro fertilization, and either flush them down the toilet or send them to the lab where scientists can do research that might, might some day cure or find a partial cure for Alzheimer's or juvenile diabetes or Parkinson's? And when I put it in those terms, they sort of shake their heads. They say, I didn't know they would be destroyed anyway. So if you say discarded, that's not strong enough. Flush them down the toilet. You know, you flush something down a toilet, it's totally distasteful. It's not going to serve anybody any good and so---

DOUGLASS: Well but to follow just follow up on that question, and I promise I'll let you guys ask your questions, but there has certainly been the criticism made over the last several years within the government and you've, you've mentioned one of these-- these scientists earlier yourself, we'll talk a little bit about this, that the government and the Administration has been interfering with or trying to push scientific outcomes and findings in a certain political direction. You defended, for example, a scientist, a climate change scientist, who said that he was muzzled by NASA, his agency because they didn't---

BOEHLERT: Dr. Jim Hanson, a highly respected scientist. And we looked into that. You know, I mean, I think, I know the government has some very accomplished, distinguished scientists on the payroll, paid by the US tax payers and various agencies. And so and and there have been suggestions that this administration is trying to prevent them from speaking out, if– if they’re speaking out in a way that is contrary to the direction the administration wants to take us. So I, I’ve been deeply involved in it. But I, I find no fingerprints that would lead the trail to the White House. Here’s what happened in this one instance, in the case of the NASA scientist who is very outspoken and is saying global warming is for real. Guess what? I happen to agree with him and so does the overwhelming scientific consensus. But then there were charges that he was being muzzled, he was being denied access. NPR wanted to interview him, and the way it was reported he was denied that opportunity to go on for an NPR interview. We ended up doing a thorough analysis and the investigation of that, and it turned out some real young guy, 24 years old, who is in the– the public affairs office, was the culprit. And I am convinced this young guy, with stars in his eyes and you know and he’s a true believer. I think he got up every morning and instead of pledging to the flag, pledged to the Republican Party and all that stuff. I think he thought he was doing the right thing because the administration generally has not been as– as open about embracing the notion that global climate changes very young. I’m trying to choose my words very carefully because even the President of the United States has said it’s for real and even the President of the United States has said man has contributed to it and we got to do something about it. The big difference is what to do about it. But so this guy really got involved and tried to muzzle this scientist but it was the one 24 year old guy and ironically he’s later dismissed because it’s discovered that he fudged his resume. He lied about his qualifications etcetera, etcetera. So he’s gone and the problem is no more. But nowhere could I find any indication that the administrator of that agency, Dr. Mike Griffin, or that the President of the United States or any of his operatives were trying to muzzle him. It’s just this one 24 year old believer who thought he was doing good for the cause. It’s like my one of my first campaigns some young volunteered kid, high school kid was out, and then he came in the office one day and he said., “Boy we really did good work today.” I said, “What’d you do?” He said, “We pulled down some of the posters of your opponent.” I mean he thought he was helping and I said don’t you ever do anything like that. But I’m easy on the kid, so I explain to him that that’s– that’s not the way to do it. That’s, you do a lot of work to support me, not try to support me by tearing down the opposition’s posters.

DOUGLASS: Any more questions from students? Yes. .

STUDENT: I was wondering what has been the change during your time in Congress in terms of its role and its ability to choose its political priorities and issues it wants to address. I think that a lot of people believe that global warming has been set off because there is an imbalance in the media and how it’s

portrayed; whether it's real or not. But how does Congress fit into that into that system of finding what is an issue that matters whether Americans believe it matters or not?

DOUGLASS: Good question.

BOEHLERT: Yeah it is a very good question and (stutters) in this instance the people are ahead of the Congress as I find is often the case when dealing with sensitive environmental issues. And let me tell you exactly why I think that happens. If I had suggested to you just a couple of years ago just a couple years ago, not 20 years ago, a couple years ago, that Americans in shopping malls all over America were going to Cineplex's and paying 8-10 dollars to see a movie starring Al Gore called *An Inconvenient Truth*, you'd say Are you crazy? And the whole movie's about global climate change. That's exactly what's happening in America. If I had suggested to you just a short while ago that Newsweek's cover story, the greening of America, not because of action by Congress but all over America people are saying you know this is a fragile environment. Pretty darn important that we protect it, and we'd better do something about it. And we've got a lot of activists out there, Natural Resources Defense Council; we've got Defenders of Wildlife and all these organizations who are communicating with their members. And their members are starting to communicate with us. And so we're hearing from back home, "Do something about all of this." I mean I didn't get involved in my early fight on acid rain way back when I first campaign because I sat down and after reading 38 books and going to 37 lectures and decided that acid rain was a problem. I got involved because I was a kid who grew up on the second floor apartment in the inner city of Utica, New York but I was going to campaign for Congress. And I was leaving my post as County Executive. The guy who I designated to succeed me was a great outdoorsman, hunter, fisherman; he came into me one day and said, "You know as you developing your platform, you better do something about acid rain." I said, "Well tell me about what the acid rain really is all about." This guy said, "Do you realize all those wonderful lakes you see when you drive north into the Adirondacks"—and incidentally acid rain came into our lexicon because of what was happening in the Adirondacks. He said, "A lot of those lakes are dead. Fish can't live in them." I said, "No I don't believe that." He said "I'm telling you", and so I did a little research and found out that of all those 3,000 lakes, over 500 of them were dead. And they were dying before our very eyes. Why? Because of acid precipitation, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide all these cancers in the sky coming down. And so I vowed I was going to do something about it. It's been a success. I went to Washington, and it only took me 8 years. But in , on November 15, 1990, George Herbert Walker Bush, 41, as we affectionately called him, signed a law on the legislation, Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, launching the nation's war on acid rain. Prior to that, we did nothing in the federal government. Canada was way ahead of us. They were doing something. We were doing nothing. So what I'm suggesting is, we're not short of issues demanding our attention. And we're not

short of high priority issues. I mean if I can name them all, so can you: War in Iraq, terrorism, health care delivery, education. We've got a whole bunch of things, but when we start hearing in in large numbers from the people back home, in contrary to the popular skeptic's approach, we really do pay attention to what we hear from back home. When people start writing in about global warming, "I just went to the movie and saw this picture with Al Gore. I don't like him but boy this movie he's right on target". Or I was at the local college and they had a visiting lecturer and he talked about global climate change and the implications. Or I pick up my daily newspaper, not just the trades journals but the daily newspaper and there are articles that help prioritize something for us. I always tell my constituents, if it's important to you it's important to me. That's more than a slogan. But if they express the view that this is important to them in large numbers, boy it damn well better be important to me or I won't be there very long.

DOUGLASS: But this does get at one of the points that we talked about earlier and that s whether or not Congress has the capacity to address an issue before it becomes a crisis. And you have been relentless at trying to get Congress, the House, to pass a law that would require automakers to make more fuel efficient cars, you have been pushing ...

BOEHLERT: ...can't make them...

DOUGLASS: ...and pushing and pushing for that without success as the other the

BOEHLERT: ...but we're getting closer

DOUGLASS: But why, is why, tell us give us the inside story there. What is the dynamic there that keeps something that seems fairly obvious that if we use less oil, we'd be less dependent on oil it would be certainly helpful to the admissions in the air and so forth? Why is it so, what is the dynamic in that particular case, what goes on there?

BOEHLERT: Special interest in misinformation. Let me tell you a lot. We consume, the American people, 21 million barrels of oil a day, we import 14 of those 21 million barrels. We are dependent to fuel our economy on disproportionately dependent on foreign source oil. So you can get a bunch of people getting together in some city in the Middle East and did I OPEC decide to turn off the spigot. And boy has that had a devastating impact in the economy. So everybody wants to search for new sources of oil. Now I mean that's an easy one. All you got to do is research new sources of oil. But that's not the only solution. And in some instances for example, ANWR, it's the wrong solution. So there's another way you can save, and that's by conservation. How do you do that? Well you make more fuel efficient vehicles that get more miles to the gallon. Guess who fights me every step of the way? The auto industry. It's a knee jerk reaction. The

auto industry says, “We don’t like government mandates telling us we have to do something.” Business in general, I understand this, business in general doesn’t want to have government mandate anything on them. But I remind these auto industries, look it, the Big 3 used to be the Big 3. But now Toyota has surpassed Chrysler, and then it surpassed Ford. And it’s going to overtake General Motors very soon. It’s going to be the one, number one auto maker in the world. You know if you look at figures, month after month after month, and you find Toyota, Honda, and Hyundai, up double digits, 12 percent increase in sales, 13 percent. Month after month after month GM, Ford, Chrysler are down. Now what’s the dynamic in the market? What are Honda and the other 4 manufacturers, although some of now have domestic facilities, what are they selling? They are selling style. Everybody sells style. You’re going to make a big investment. You want something that you’re comfortable in. It looks good. But they’re also selling fuel efficiency. What are Ford, General Motor and Chrysler selling? They’re selling style. You’ve got to sell style. They’re selling power. Their biggest advance in automotive mechanics in the last 25 years is to lower the time to go from 0 to 60, from 14.4 seconds to 9.9 seconds and that’s what they’re selling. Power. They’re reluctantly coming around and now starting to sell fuel efficiency. All right so you’ve got the auto industry against you, then you’ve got the United Auto Workers; and they’re pretty darn influential, and they make the big argument that if you force CAFÉ standards on the auto industry that it’s going to cost us thousands of jobs. I never could understand that convoluted logic, I said wait a minute, UAW makes all these automobiles and if you make them more fuel efficient then fewer are going to be sold? That doesn’t wash. But those two dynamics are involved. Then you’ve got people trying to argue, well they’re not going to be a show for the auto industry or for UAW so they come up with a different argument. And I remember one time in a closing session it was 108th Congress I had my CAFÉ amendment on the floor, and the closing argument, I knew instinctively that I won the debate on that. But I was going to lose the vote. Because here’s what my opponent said in his closing statement: if the Boehlert amendment is passed our nation’s highways will be strewn with thousands of dead bodies. Because the only way you can make vehicles more fuel efficient is to make them lighter and therefore less safe. Well he was operating with 1970 technology. We’ve got all testimony and evidence from distinguished scientists and people who know about automotive factory that point out that you don’t have to sacrifice weight to get fuel efficiency. You got to make some design changes, and it might end up costing you several hundred dollars, maybe a thousand dollars more for the vehicle. But guess what? You save that at today’s price in gasoline in no time at all. So it’s the old way of thinking. And people just get so set and so you get the amendment on the floor. First time I had it on the floor was 107th Congress, I got 160 votes, 108th Congress come back again I got 162, 109th Congress in the beginning, I come back again I got 177. So we’re making some progress. Then it’s, a yeah, another energy bill came on the floor later in the Congress and I went to the rules committee (I’d been before the rules committee) and asked for my amendment to be made an order, which they have to sanction and then your amendment is

made an order and you have to debate and you get a vote and I had every reason to expect that they were going to allow my amendment to be made and order. This time they said no. Why? I've got a theory. Here's my theory. They did an informal whip check and they discovered my amendment had a chance to pass. Now wait a minute. It got only got 177 votes, more than before at the beginning of the Congress and later on in the Congress why would it then pass? What happened in the interim? What happened in the interim was Katrina and 3 dollar a gallon gasoline. And all over America people write their congressman, "Do something about the gas prices". Well you can't drill in every corner in America and find oil. The only way you can do something is if you impact the price by conserving and therefore lowering the demand for the product. And that's the story of CAFE and so hopes springs eternal. I am convinced that in our next Congress whoever will take up the (stutters) cudgel and advocate for increased café standards it (stutters) will pass because it's a win, win situation. It's national security interest to lessen our dependence on foreign source oil. Consumers all over America are sick and tired of driving to the corner gas station filling up and getting shocked, 50, 60 bucks to fill up a tank, a car with tank of gas. So it's, everybody wins if we do that.

DOUGLASS: Okay, another question. Yes.

STUDENT: Hi you spoke about some of the leadership qualities that have helped you be an effective member of Congress over the years. And I'm wondering what other qualities have helped you be such a maverick and how they've changed over time. How you've seen some be more appropriate in your earlier days when the face of Congress was different and which ones now help you?

BOEHLERT: Well, first of all I think the test of leadership as well as, there's followership. You know, it's all well and good to be independent of thought and deviate sometimes from the party line. But if nobody follows you, what good is that? Doesn't accomplish anything. It might get you a few headlines. And you get the satisfaction of reading your name in the paper and saying this is an independent maverick or something, but that's not much. I think the qualities should be, first of all, you've got to be a good listener. We're not good enough at that, any of us in the Congress. We're so used to talking that we sometimes don't take the time just to listen. And we're so busy. And I would suggest that one of the fallacies, one thing that should change, members of Congress shouldn't be like – I was two (stutters) Congresses ago, chairman of science committee, senior member of the transportation committee, senior on the intelligence committee, and the Speaker asked me if I would be part of the forming block for this new committee on homeland security. And then in the midst of all this, Porter Gross is designated by the President of the United States to be the next director of the C.I.A. So he steps down as chairman of Intelligence. Then in addition to being chairman of the Science Committee I was acting chairman of Intelligence at a time when the profile was at an all time high, because you had the 9/11 commission reporting. So one of

the things I would strongly recommend is that leaders of the future consider is having members be more specialists and narrow their area of responsibility. Because I used to in my younger days as a staff member I used to laugh when we compared the House and the Senate. Because I said I used to say to people, "Look what happens when they're in the media". House members they'll meet and they'll ask questions. The Senate members, the senator will come in drop in for a cameo appearance. He listens to a staff member, the staff member gives him a question, he asks the question not even sure he fully comprehends the context or the question and then answers it. And then he gets up and goes out to the next one. And the rule always used to be and now they're we're just as bad as the Senate, the House, that invariably the House would prevail in a conference because when you get into conference and you have two separate versions of the same bill passed and you're negotiating and trying to reach a compromise, the House members were invariably more knowledgeable and invariably when push comes to shove and it gets to the crunch, the principals and not the staff have to make the ultimate decisions. So you have the more knowledgeable House members minus the staff dealing with and understandably Senate members who not are not as knowledgeable because they're spread so thin and didn't have the benefit of the staff, and the House who'd win but now is as bad as the-- the Senate.

DOUGLASS: And that coming from a House member is quite condemnation. What is the expression that the-- the Democrats are the opponents and the Senate is the enemy? Isn't that usually what they say in the House?

BOEHLERT: That's exactly right.

DOUGLASS: Any other questions from students? Yes sir.

STUDENT: I think one of the concerns that seem to be appearing in-- in more recent decades of Congress is the issue of partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts. I wonder if you feel that is a serious problem. Also one of the concerns people tend to bring up is the fact that as the United States population increased that increasingly congressman are representing larger districts even larger numbers of people. It's harder to reach the concerns of those people you know with gerrymandering. That also brings into question the ability to respond to the needs of constituents. I wonder if you could speak to those issues and if if you do seem them as problems, what sort of solutions you would offer?

BOEHLERT: Well the purist-- the purist in me says that it's all out the way we do it now. The partisan in me says it's working just fine, thank you, because it works to decidedly to the Republican's advantage. But I don't I haven't given a great deal of thought to it because I've been a beneficiary of that, the way it works. But incidentally the- there's some fallacies in the present system even among those of us

who are Republican and acknowledge that the present system works for the advantage of the Republican. When they redistrict New York State for example, the state legislators, do you think they care what someone like me in Washington has to say? They don't pay much attention to that. Those guys are all juggling up there because they've got an ambitious senator or assemblyman who wants to restructure the district to suit his or her interest. And I don't care what the congressman has to say, I would think that the good government groups, Common Cause comes to mind immediately, other good government groups, should really start a national movement to insist that we have independent scholarly type commissions that would deal with this subject. Now my partisan friends no matter which side of the aisle they come from would be madder than heck at me for saying that, but it ain't fair to them.

DOUGLASS: ...by which each political party gets basically a safe seat that all Republicans are elected from, almost all Republican districts, Democrats from almost all democratic districts. Hasn't it had 2 consequences: Number 1, incumbents as such as yourself are rarely defeated, making it more difficult for fresh faces and voices to come in, and number 2, the Republicans and Democrats who are elected from those solidly partisan districts are much more at the extreme end of the ideology of their parties. Aren't those 2 consequences?

BOEHLERT: Yeah you're absolutely right. I mean you put your finger right on it. That shows that you're a pro, you understand the whole system. I mean if we were tailoring districts, the ideal district would have some areas-- in some areas of the country you don't have inner city. You just don't have them. But upstate New York, my district, one of the things that I prided myself on was that my district, although decidedly Republican, an advantage, it's not overwhelmingly Republican but there are more Republicans than Democrats. But an increasing number of independents and that's healthy you try and get the districts more evenly balanced, R's versus D. But then you try to get a city, suburbs and farm country. I mean there's some members I can predict to you how they're going to vote on every single issue if your whole district is in in Bronx within 3 blocks, you know how that person's going to vote and I guarantee that person's a Democrat and that person's going to probably vote for every social benefit program that comes down the pike because his district is largely independent on these social benefit programs. Or if you're from a state like well take a state like Montana, well you can almost predict with certainty how that guy is going to vote, particularly on all the ag issues and it's not going to be their interest, it's going to be grain interest. And so but if you mix up the pots so to speak and you have 435 people who have some exposure to the problems faced by the inner cities, and they might be small inner cities-- not all are from states with urban centers. And you have some suburbs where people are a little more fluid and they're doing a little bit better. And you have some rural areas where they are in a variety of different things; you have a better, broader understanding of the total. But now you have people that I guarantee are going to

be from big cotton or Texans. Can you imagine a Texan voted against big oil? I don't care if he's a Republican or Democrat, you know? So that's commissions taking all the political process, fair, well balanced districts.

DOUGLASS: Another question from a student? Uh, Jake.

BOEHLERT: No fair. Jake served an internship my office and he really directed the operation for a while.

DOUGLASS: So we're expecting a soft ball.

BOEHLERT: It's probably going to be a hard ball.

STUDENT: Congressman, I'm just wondering, regardless of how Congress turns out after this this falls elections, I'm wondering what you think would be the best thing that Congress could do to improve its performance in the next term?

BOEHLERT: Well Linda Douglass touched on it earlier: The need for more oversight. I think public confidence in Congress is eroding. Some things are not a fair indictment, other things probably are. I mean this whole unfolding Foley scandal, if you will; I think is an unfair indictment. Look at this guy is guilty, apparently, everything we know, some of it acknowledged publicly, of something that's totally unacceptable, totally unacceptable. And so there are too many people out there who are saying, well they're all like that. And I'm like, well we're not all like that. I mean I spoke to a group the other night of fellow Republicans. It was a county dinner in Amsterdam, New York and they were sort of down because they say gee we keep reading the paper that we're under siege and we might lose the majority. And it's all terrible, and all because of Foley. And I said give me a break. I happen to be Catholic. You know there's some been reports, high profile reports, over the past years about some members of the clergy who have been involved in totally unacceptable conduct for anyone. Does that mean I should stop going to mass or give up my religion? No, and so if a Republican is guilty of something wrong, does that mean all the other Republicans are bad? The answer is no. So, I think we've got to be more conscious of our image quite honestly and we've got to do a little polishing up. I remember after the baseball strike a few years back, I mean the fans were fed up to here. And it's sort of an analogy I would drop today. A lot of people are fed up to here with what's going on in Washington. Does that mean everything's wrong in Washington and everybody else will be changed? No. But it means we better take stock of how we are perceived out beyond the Beltway as they say that big long highway that's 66 miles around the nation's capital. In the real world and we ought to be conscious of how they view us and what they think about us. And we ought to try and correct a wrong impression and I think many of the impressions are wrong.

DOUGLASS: That brings up another question about Congress' image, some of which is based upon the perception that there is kind of a hint or stain of corruption sort of in the atmosphere. Now that's long been said of Congress for decades but certainly ah there is the perception that special interests have a new influence, that the wealthy interests and moneyed interests have more access to policy making than the average citizen does, that lobbyists have undue influence. So with that as a premise of one of the reasons that Congress' image has been tarnished, especially this year with the Jack Abramoff scandal: You were there in the Republican majority when something called the K Street Project was instituted. It was Tom Delays idea and this was an idea to put more members of the majority into lobbying firms, have put more Republicans into lobbying firms and then bring those lobbyists in to help write legislation, which he believes to this day was a very successful way of disciplining, focusing legislation, bringing in the people who you know are going to support what you do using their expertise, etcetera. Did you see that close up and did it have the impact that it's been said to have and was it a good thing or bad thing?

BOEHLERT: Well people think Tom Delay invented the concept. He didn't. He just refined it and and made it more structured. But I would suggest to you in my experience, is lobbyists have always been considered resources. And lobbyists doesn't mean someone who has the name lobbyist, doesn't mean you're evil and sinister. It just means you're an advocate. I point out to people that-- that lobbyists-- council of churches has lobbyists, conference admissions has lobbyists, common cause in a lot of the good government organizations have lobbyists. They're not all evil, sinister people. As a matter of fact I would say Abramoff is the exception, not the rule. But they're advocates and they're talented and they're well paid and they're highly skilled. And it's always been that amendments were posed to advance one cause or another and over the years, whether the Republican or Democrat was, "Give me some suggested language" type of thing. Those things, that's gone on since the beginning of the republic. But it was so organized and so structured that one had the impression that unless your entity hired only a Republican you wouldn't get in the front door. And I think that is absolutely wrong I don't I don't find anything wrong with reaching out to your friends, people that are sympathetic to your cause and you're sympathetic to their cause and getting their assistance. But he made a new art form of it, Tom Delay, the K Street Project. I think he overdid it. I can recall one high profile case when he protested vigorously because one association was hiring a former member who happened to be a Democrat. And he insisted that not happen. Well the Democrat got hired and he's a very effective lobbyist in Washington today and I might add a highly respected guy. But I think people I have hard time, a people say I bet you spend a lot of time with lobbyists, I say you're darn right I do. The lobbyists who is really worth his weight in gold is a lobbyist who'll come in and say "here's my position and here's why I think its important and here's why I think you should support it". But he's also going to say, "Now here's what the other side is saying and here's how you

respond to the other side". So he gives you the other side. I always say, "What's the best argument against what you're asking me to do? And any lobbyist that's any good will say "Well here's what you'll hear most frequently in opposition to what I'm proposing, that's all your answer to that." Doesn't mean I'm going to buy it so lobbying is sort of a necessary evil and I don't even want to associate evil with lobbyists although there are lobbyists who are evil. But the overwhelming majority of lobbyists and Washington has them by the thousands are just fine decent people just like the people in this audience who are working for an employer and doing the best job they can in their particular position. Their job is to advocate for this or for this.

DOUGLASS: Let's see we've got just a few more minutes here so lets get a another question from a student.

STUDENT: As an elected official, you have to pander and represent the interests of the people who elected you, but as a human being you probably also has a conscience that you have to vote on. Have those two things ever come in conflict while you were in Congress? Have you voted on something and the people who voted for you were like, no that's not right, or anything?

BOEHLERT: I would say to you in response, "no I don't think that's happened" and I would say to you how you know what your people want? What, the people I represent, what I guarantee them is that I'll got o Washington and here's what I think they'll say to me. You go to Washington. We're hiring you to do a job. We don't have time. We've got a career, we've got family, we've got other obligations. You're our hired guy. Go down to Washington and do the best job you can. We don't like what you do, we're going to get rid of you. So I think the marching orders are go to Washington, study the issues get as much information as you can, weigh the pros and cons and then do what you think is right and that that's the guiding principle I operate under. I, you know-- Edmund Burke, your representative, owes you not his industry only, but his judgment and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion. So I think about these issues and there are a lot of issues where I agonize, well not a lot of issues. There are some issues where I agonize and I genuinely sort of toss and turn and wonder what the right thing is. And there's no place you can go to, any book, chapter 7, paragraph 3, and here's the answer. You have to do what inside tells you and what your gut and what your intellect, based upon if you did your homework, tells you. I mean there've been a few votes I've had in my career, I was sort of embarrassed. And then I'll tell you a classic example that's going to make you laugh. There was once an amendment on the floor that would deny funds to the Library of Congress to translate "Playboy" into Brail and I stupidly voted for it. You know, and it's one of those things, its sort of a throw away vote, it no long range significance. But I was embarrassed for me after I thought more about it, you know. But I, you know, that that's one of those issues where they take it out of context, they play it

back home, well I spend our tax payers money to translate “Playboy” into Braille. You’ve got those pornographic pictures. You can’t translate picture into Braille but did you know, “Playboy”, when I was at college, I was that magazine just started, I was a “Playboy” representative in college. I used to have blazer with a little bunny on it and I used to sell subscriptions to my classmates. And they’d send me some aftershave and stuff like that and I made a few bucks. But “Playboy” over the years had some pretty darn good literature in there. So I there are some votes that if I examined the 12 or 13 thousand votes I’ve cast during in my career, if I had to do over, would I do it differently? The answer is yes probably upon sober reflection. But I really honestly can’t think of any major issue where I voted one way and then thought about it later and decided I voted the wrong way based upon the information available at that time. You always have to qualify it, everybody, hind sight is 20/20 and people are saying now boy if I knew then what I knew now I never would have voted to give the President authority to go into Iraq. Look what’s happened. Well we didn’t know then what we now know and so and I played poker a lot in my life

DOUGLASS: So if you did know now what you knew then would you still have voted to authorize the use of force in Iraq?

BOEHLERT: Yes. I would have and under the theory that the President of the United States as Commander in Chief should have that authority in this very difficult situation. And what a lot of people forget, Linda, is that the President of the United States has the authority at any time to deploy troops, just like that, his order anywhere in there world where he thinks our national security interests are in jeopardy. But the President wisely, and even one of the lessons he learned from his dad is to go to Congress first, and he went to the Congress and asked for the resolution before he acted. So that was that was a smart thing he did. He did the right thing. Now the mistakes in Iraq I think were not so much involved with going in with the military actions that we did when we did base upon the information available at that time. The mistakes are after we went in. We first of all I don’t think we sent enough troops in initially. Secondly I think we totally misread what was going to happen. And quite frankly the guy who left the administration is a guy for whom I have the highest regard and wasn’t on the winning side of many battles with Rumsfeld and company, and that’s Colin Powell. The wrong guy left the administration in my mind and I remember vividly I wrote him a note when they were speculating in the paper that he might step down, I I, Dear Mr. Secretary, please, please, please, resist the temptation. Stay, stay, we need you now more than ever. And I signed, I used to send him notes 2 or 3 times a years. In a few weeks later I got a note back from him; “It’s time”. I used that in my announcement that I was not going to run for reelection. I use that vignette and then I said when I announced I was not going to be a candidate. It’s time.

DOUGLASS: And I want to be sure and not let you leave before asking you about your own thoughts about yourself looking back. But I want to be sure if there's any other student who wants to ask a question. Here, yes ma'am.

STUDENT: I was wondering if you could talk about the EPA, being head of the EPA. If that was made a cabinet level position how that would change environmental policy and the shape of passing legislation in the future?

BOEHLERT: Well it all depends on the administration. I mean there was some speculation only in a few quarters probably those people who are my biggest supporters and closest to me, who said the rumor was that that I might be in line for the EPA administrator. I wouldn't accept the position if it was offered. Because I don't feel this administration is giving the sufficient priority to dealing responsibly with environmental issues. That does not mean that I think they're all anti-environment. I just don't think it's given sufficient priority. And I'll tell you this: I had the opportunity in my capacity to occasionally meet with the President. And every time I meet with him, I come away from the conversation when we talk about issues like CAFE standards or global climate change, I walk away feeling better. Because I think he really gets it and I think in this instance, his heart is in the right place. And I've told him this story and then I pause for effect and say, "It's your staff that screws up." And so that's, that's my response to it. I I wouldn't have accepted it if it was offered simply because I would've been a voice in the wilderness and and tilting against windmills.

DOUGLASS: Interesting, good question.

BOEHLERT: But is that is that an adequate answer or do you want me to go

STUDENT: I guess its an its an adequate answer in that I understand why you wouldn't accept the position. But I guess my question is do you think the Executive branch in general takes the Environmental Protection Agency seriously enough?

BOEHLERT: Not as serious as they should. No. But I think in too many instances it's almost an after thought. It's not that they have malice aforethought. It's not that they're out to undo the environment. I just think that the environment is not high on the priority list of a lot of the key advisors to the President. And so when they come in I mean when the Department of Defense comes in with a new policy proposal I don't think in most instances they factor in at all any impact what they're proposing might have on the environment. And if you had a different approach from some of the advisors within DOD or some of the advisors within Agriculture or Interior who were more sensitized to environment, therefore when the cabinet officers got to the President to talk about the issue they would factor in the

environmental equation. I don't think that's done enough. But I don't think it's a conscious effort, I think it's just a result of the conditions that exist.

STUDENT: Do you think those conditions should be changed, that the EPA appear with these other different agencies?

BOEHLERT: Oh yeah, I mean, look at, I've got the legislation that I've introduced to elevate EPA to cabinet level status. Now the administrator of the EPA sits in the cabinet room when the other cabinet officers are there at the discretion of the President. I think statutorily we should make that a cabinet post. It should be Secretary of Environmental Protection. We are the only developed nation in the world where the person charged with overseeing environmental policy is not in the inner circle of the President, whether it's this President or the previous President Bill Clinton. So I mean it's just too many people for too long have sort of taken the environment as an initiative that concerns those people are so soft and squishy and, you know, and you want to make nice and everybody happy. And there's much more than that. It's a very serious issue that impacts on our daily lives. And I would like all members, Republican or Democrat, all presidents, Republican or Democrat, to come to that same conclusion.

DOUGLASS: Thank you. Just a couple questions to wrap up here. You've I'm sure you've seen reading, we're at the end of 2006 articles speculating that the Republican revolution is dead or dying: The revolution itself that was led by Newt Gingrich and put the Republicans in the majority in the House. What do you think about that? Is that, where is the Republican revolution at this point?

BOEHLERT: Well it's all in the eyes of the beholder. How do you define the revolution? I mean, what is a Republican revolution? Does that, is that to say that all all the people on the decided right within the branch are going to dominate and go forward and we're going to follow their lead? Or does a Republican revolution involve an active and growing centrist faction; they're going to have more influence? So, I don't think it's it's over. In '94 Democrats said, and I mentioned that earlier in our interview, that, look at, that's crazy. We were asleep at the switch. We weren't paying attention. We got too fat and lazy and after 40 years, 2 generations in the majority. We weren't paying enough attention and we lost to these upstart Republicans. But boy that-- that'll never happen again. Well guess what, the next election and the next election and the next election it it's happened. I am convinced that that unless we move too far to the right, this year's an exception because of so many different things, it's, unless we move too far to the right, we're going to maintain the majority. But I think the absolute majority of American people are more centrist in their thinking. And I would point out that there are several Democrats who are decidedly to my right. There are several Democrats who are to the right of a lot of Republicans and so having an 'r' or a 'd' after your name doesn't really identify much except your party affiliation. But that

doesn't really tell you about the philosophy or approach to governing of the member, who has an 'r' or a 'd' after his name. You need to know as Paul Harvey always tells us, the rest of the story. But I think I was willing to bet, now here we're sitting here on the eleventh of October in downtown New York, a month ago, I was willing to bet my mortgage money that the Republicans would maintain the majority. And the simple answer to why is you can't beat something with nothing and the Democrats are all over the lot. They don't have a plan. They're guilty of "hypo cognition", a word introduced to me by Matt Bai, who's a writer who did a cover piece in the New York Times Magazine a couple years ago about his investigation of what the Democrats were doing, convinced they were going to recapture the majority. They've got the right approach but they've got to reframe their message. And this guru came in and talked to them and said, you're guilty of hypo cognition. And I read that and I said what in the hell is that? Lack of ideas. So they don't have a plan and they're all over the lot. So I thought we were going to maintain the majority. I think that majority is under severe challenge right now because of the publication of Bob Woodward's book, *State of Denial*, and the high profile that's received the Foley episode, and the threat coming from Korea. Now people for the first time, some people who are following events are really scared, on edge again where I thought we're getting back to more not comfortable complacency but comfortable that we were dealing responsibly with national security at the homeland and so we're not under any great danger. But I think with what's happening over in North Korea and these other 2 factors, I mean if I had to bet now I would put money even money, it's going to I still think we're going to go over the finish line as Republicans. Probably lose a few seats and maintain the majority in the House, I don't follow the Senate that close, but there are good signs in the Senate. Lincoln Chaffee even survived that primary against the right wing and Rhode Island, boy that warmed the cockles of my heart. And I was glad to see reports that Joe Lieberman is ahead in Connecticut because I think he's-- he's a centrist.

DOUGLASS: Final question for you and this is a 3 part question but I know you'll remember all 3 parts. Of which piece of legislation or act are you proudest? What do you think was your greatest disappointment and how would you like people to describe your service after you're gone?

BOEHLERT: Well when you're departing you get asked that question often so I've thought long and hard about it. Can I give you a 2 part answer to the thing I'm proudest of?

DOUGLASS: Absolutely.

BOEHLERT: Alright, part 1 is the is the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 and I proudly display in my wall the pen used by President George Herbert Walker Bush to sign that with a letter congratulating me because that launched the nation's war

on acid rain. Now overall that's not the most significant of all the things but it takes on added significance for me because I was in the minority when that happened. And you're in the minority you don't have as much influence or leverage as you do in the majority. So that says to me, it satisfies me that that proves that I was a legislator who accomplished something worthy of note under difficult circumstances. But for long range impact on America I am so pleased to have the American Competitive Initiative going forward. It's something I've pushed for the longest time and what brought us over the goal line was not me as the strong advocate for more investment in in university based research, in technology, in in finding alternative fuel sources through RND. What brought us over the finish line was the business community issuing a report from the National Academy of Science called "Rising Above the Gathering Storm". And they pointed out some real danger signs that if we didn't address them in a meaningful way now we were going to lose our preeminence in the international marketplace. And among other things they recommended was the doubling of funding for the National Science Foundation and the Office of Science and the Department of Energy and the National Institute of Standards and Technology and investing hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars more in basic science and math education starting at Head Starts for their elementary and secondary education because the way its going, we're just not going to be competitive unless we change. I mean we graduate 70,000 engineers in the United States every year, trying to graduate 600,000. So the thing I'm most disappointed about is the failure coming so close to get CAFE standards passed. Because our dependence on foreign source oil is a national security activity that we've got to deal with in a better way. And we just can't keep being so dependent on people who are not responsible in in large measure. There's the irony of the whole thing, we're sending all this money overseas to buy oil and now we're paying 60 buck a barrel to countries where the money is being funded to people like Taliban and Al Qaeda. And people who are doing everything every day they can to undermine us. So we've got to deal with that in the national security. Now, I forgot the third part.

DOUGLASS: The third part was how would you like to be described? How would you like your service in Congress to be and yourself to be described by others after you've left Congress?

BOEHLERT: That's a real soft ball, you just feathered right up, you know

DOUGLASS: You're so right

BOEHLERT: Well thank you so much Linda and I appreciate that. How about: That he was engaged in a meaningful way. He really cared, and he was productive in making policy that's going to make life better for all of us. Because in the final analysis, that's what we're all about. We're all finding ways to make life better for all of us.

DOUGLASS: Excellent, thank you very much