

ILOHI Interview with Dave Cheatham

March 30, 2022

Indianapolis, Indiana

Interview by Ben Baumann

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> and Ben Baumann

MP3 File, Sony

Dave Cheatham=DC:

Ben Baumann=BB:

Copyright ILOHI/Indiana State Library

BB: [0:00:00]

Alright, so before we begin, I would just like to state for the record that today is March 30, 2022. And my name is Ben Bauman. I'm here in Indianapolis, Indiana. And I'm speaking via phone with Dave Cheatham, who is in North Vernon, Indiana, and we are doing an interview for the Indiana Legislative Oral history Initiative. So just starting off, when and where were you born?

DC:

I was born in Madison, Indiana in 1951.

BB:

Okay, and what were your parents' names?

DC:

My dad's name was Gene G-E-N-E. And my mother's name was Vera V-E-R-A.

BB:

Okay. And when did your family move to Indiana?

DC:

Our family has been in Indiana for a long time. We actually traced history back to Sarah Mosley, who was a great, great, great, great grandmother who lived in Madison back in the 1800s. So, it's been we've been around Madison for a long time.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. [0:01:00] And what were your parents' occupations?

DC:

My dad worked for the Jefferson Proving Ground, which is a military testing facility for ammunition. And my mother worked in a factory in Madison, making musical instruments called conoregon.

BB:

Okay. Did you have any siblings growing up?

DC:

I have two sisters. I have an older sister. Her name is Kris. She lives in California. And I have a younger sister named Debbie, who lives in Lexington, Indiana.

BB:

Okay. And how would you describe your childhood?

DC:

I had a good childhood. Parents were hard workers and taught us good morals. And my mom was a stay-at-home mom, which was typical back then. [0:02:00] But she just took really good care of us and did a lot of things with us and just had a really good upbringing.

BB:

And where your parents the most influential people you would say then in your childhood?

DC:

They were most definitely I had a grandmother that my grandmother Cheatham, who was very influential to, she kind of got me interested in reading the Bible and to learn about Jesus. And I was really thankful later on that she took the time to do that.

BB:

Yeah. Okay, cool. And what were your family's political views growing up?

DC:

Well, they weren't really very strongly political, my mom and dad weren't. I had an uncle that lived in Madison that was elected as county clerk back in the 1960s. So, while he was in that office, he stored the voting machines for the county, and my grandmother's garage so he had to keep them someplace so that's where they stored them.

BB:

Yeah. So, did you ever, like, have conversations with your uncle [0:03:00] about politics and stuff or?

DC:

I did in fact, when I first ran in 1984, he was my campaign manager.

BB:

Oh, wow. Okay. So, did he then kind of like groom you then as a as a political figure? Did he kind of mentor you and help you develop?

DC:

He did. I didn't know much about politics. And I was pretty naive, and, and, and still am about a lot of things. But he had a lot of connections and knew a lot of people in Madison. And, he was

able to be very helpful. One of his really good friends was a guy named Spence Schnaitter who was a former state representative. He was also involved in my campaign and gave me a lot of good advice. And I appreciate both of them.

BB:

Cool okay. What schools did you attend growing up?

DC:

I attended Madison schools to (unintelligible) Muncie grade school, Madison Junior High, Madison High School.

BB:

And how would you describe your educational experiences there?

DC:

Had a really good education of top-notch teachers very [0:04:00] well educated themselves and very good teachers. And just a really enjoyable experience being a child growing up Madison and the system there, it's just a really good time?

BB:

Did you have any favorite subjects?

DC:

Well, I did like social studies quite a bit. I ended up teaching social studies when I got out of college.

BB:

Oh, wow. Okay, really liked it.

DC:

That was my favorite subject honestly. (Laughs)

BB:

Yeah, I guess. Were you involved in like clubs or sports teams in school?

DC:

Yes, I was in High Y was a Christian group in school. I was in the Letterman's Club. I played sports in Madison and had several letters. And so, I was in that organization. They actually had a Ping pong Club. I was in the Ping Pong Club. I liked playing ping pong. (Both laugh)

BB:

Wow, that's cool. All right. [0:05:00] And so how did you view the state of Indiana growing up?

DC:

Well, I enjoy being in the Midwest. More rural, small-town area and I enjoyed that I liked, I still like living in rural small-town area. My first adventure at the State House was when I was in high school, I was in my government class and the teacher brought us to the State House to sit in the gallery and watch the proceedings. I still have a picture of that. And my teacher wrote a comment later on. I sent her a thank you note, and she said, "Well, I'm glad you're able to sit there and watch what was going on and not fall asleep like you do in class." And she was just kidding. She's just kidding, of course. (Both laugh)

BB:

So, when you were there, did you ever imagine yourself, like going to the State House as a legislator one day?

DC:

No, I didn't. I didn't have any idea that I'd ever do something like that.

BB:

Yeah. So, what [0:06:00] did you do after high school then?

DC:

After high school, I went to college, and I went to Indiana State, got a degree in social studies. And I went to Purdue after that and got a master's degree in political science. Then after that, I got my first job teaching high school here in cities (unintelligible) County.

BB:

Interesting, all right. And were you involved in any clubs in college or?

DC:

Not really, I just more or less focused on the academic part of it. Didn't really get involved anything besides that.

BB:

Was it a good experience for you in college?

DC:

Well, it was in certain ways. I did transfer from my first, I actually went to IU my first year. And it was just IU was such a big school. I was used to being from a small town. So, I transferred to Indiana State the next three years. So, a bit better situation for me.

BB:

Sure, yeah. Okay. And [0:07:00] how did your awareness of politics change when you were in college?

DC:

Well, it was interesting, one of the, I think it was the first time that the constitutional amendment that lowered the voting age to 18. So, I remember voting for first time. Around that time, it was an interesting experience to be able to vote for the first time. I was interested in just to be able to do that to see what the process was like.

BB:

Yeah, sure. So, let's see. Thinking about your family life. When, if at all, did you get married?

DC:

I got married in 1973. To a girl that lives in Madison, also. And we we've been happily married ever since. We have three. I'm sorry. We have two children. We have seven grandchildren. So, we have a nice family. And we just really we really enjoy being around family.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. And did your family have much influence on like your decision to run for the General Assembly?

DC:

[0:08:00] Well, they did. I mentioned earlier, my uncle was very influential and encouraged me to do that. And my wife is very helpful, very supportive. She's worked hard to help me campaign and (unintelligible) kids and when the General Assembly actually moved Indianapolis and stay there during the week. And so, she had a lot of responsibility taking care of the kids while I was gone.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah. How'd you how'd you guys manage that sort of family and work balance then going back and forth?

DC:

Well, we were a lot younger then, so we were able to handle things a lot better than when we get older. But that's typical for everyone. But, she was uh, very hard worker. And we have other family close by my, my parents and her parents live close by name, and they helped us out a lot too.

BB:

Okay. That's helpful. So, what shaped your political outlook, then [0:09:00] when you first got involved in politics? And you know you decided, okay, I'm going to run for the General Assembly. Were there any particular political topics that you're most interested in? Or?

DC:

Yeah, I, being a public school teacher, I was very interested in education and education is one of the biggest (unintelligible) that the General Assembly deals with. One of the biggest items in our

budget, of course, so I was a public school teacher. I was very interested in educational funding and educational laws. And, and that was really one of the main reasons that inspired me to try to run.

BB:

Did you have a campaign strategy?

DC:

Well, first time I ran, I really didn't have a developed strategy. I just listened to other people that gave me some advice that had run before. [0:10:00] And I was I kind of patterned myself. Our Congress at that time was Lee Hamilton, who had been a well-known congressman and just very, very popular. And so, I got to know him and try to look at some of the things he did and how he approached the job and kind of used him as an example of what I wanted to do in my campaign as well.

BB:

Sure. Did you do any of like the door to door campaigning? Or was it mostly like, just reaching out to people in other ways? Or?

DC:

Well, we did. The first time, I actually ran three different times. I ran in 1984 for the first time, and then I left office in 1992. And I came back in 2006, and ran again and stayed for six years so. The first campaign of both of those periods I did a lot of door to door and in 2006, we went to like 6,000 houses. This one Summer of campaigning.

BB:

Wow, [0:11:00] geez okay. And how was that experience for you? Did you meet interesting people that way? Or?

DC:

I did. (Both laugh) You go their houses, you know, a lot of people I knew I grew up in Madison and of course taught school in here North (unintelligible). And so, I knew a lot of people just that way. We (Unintelligible) in the summertime and my wife was with me and a couple of days it was pretty hot. And a lot of people have sympathy on us. We've been sweating as we walk door to door and it's kind of hot. They say, "Oh, can we get a drink of water." You know, "Okay, we will." So, you know, it was an interesting time.

BB:

Did you ever have any like, because I imagine, you know, whenever someone's campaigning, you're going to someone's house, especially if it is somebody you don't know. You kind of don't exactly what... You don't really know what you're, I guess, gonna be walking into. Did you ever have any kind of weird situations or awkward ones? Talking to someone?

DC:

You know, I had two different occasions where I was bitten by a dog. (Both laugh) I guess that would be very awkward. The first one was a little dog and it bit me [0:12:00] on my ankle. And the second time it was a big dog, and I won't tell you where it bit me.

BB:

Okay. Not good. Yeah. (Both laugh) Wow. Yeah. That makes it a little weird.

DC:

Yeah, it was, you know, I I like dogs, but I guess some dogs are very protected when you go to the house. And there's no one there. They become very defensive and very aggressive. And I found that out. So, I was always careful after that about dogs.

BB:

Fair enough. Do you remember who your main opponent was the first time you ran for office?

DC:

Yes. First time I ran it was another teacher at the high school where I taught.

BB:

Oh, okay. That's interesting. Wow.

DC:

Yeah, it was it was, you know, it was a little bit tense to me. We're still good friends. And we were good friends back then. But things that other people that were campaigning kind of did things that made a little bit tense, which you know, can get that way sometimes when you campaign, but I never wanted to be anyone to [0:13:00] attack the other person running against. I just wanted to talk about myself, and hope people will consider that when they vote. And she was about same way, she didn't really have an aggressive campaign. But other people that were involved in both sides kind of got aggressive. And that happens sometimes.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. I guess. Yeah, that's uh, goes with the territory to a certain extent, I suppose. So what did you think of the election process as a whole?

DC:

Well, it's, it's interesting. With the, the legislature, you have more than one county, so I had three different counties. And this is more of a regional type of campaign. And I was fortunate to have people in other counties that were very helpful in showing me around and getting to meet people. So that was a difference between running for State led states than just a local office.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. And what was your [0:14:00] reaction when you found out that you won the election?

DC:

We were pretty happy. We celebrated and especially the very first time, we didn't know what we were getting into, but it turned out, okay, everything was well, but we had worked hard, and it was something that we prayed about a lot. And we figured that God had led us to do that. And we were willing to go ahead and see what kind of adventures we're gonna have.

BB:

Right? Okay. Did you change campaign strategies for future elections? Are you just kind of go with the same type of strategy or?

DC:

Well, I'd say more, like we refined the things we were doing. You know, to kind of look back at some of the different campaign ads we had and yard signs and things we kind of developed a strategy of having like a similar orientation. For signs we have bumper stickers and signs that have the same design. [0:15:00] So it's like, almost like having your own trademark. So, When people see the signing recognizes simply by the way it's designed and everything. And my wife is really good at writing campaign ads. And she's very good at using language. And she's very much in tune with what people think. And so, she was very good, very helpful in running campaigns.

BB:

Okay. So what were you thinking, the first day you walked into the State House as an elected official?

DC:

I was, you know in awe, it was just an awesome scene. And it's like, I looked at myself, I thought, How did I get here? I didn't really think I deserved to be there. It's just I guess, the setting was pretty overwhelming, and to just have all the other people there, and just seeing all the things going on, it's just I felt really blessed to be there. I mean, I was thankful that I could do that. It was such a great opportunity in my life to be able to serve, [0:16:00] And I learned a lot of things about laws about different things in politics, and I learned a lot about human nature.

BB:

Sure, I bet. I guess you kind of have to become almost an expert on analyzing people when you're in that position.

DC:

Yeah, it's a lot of personal relationships, you know, and we hope when you talk to people that when you give your word or you say, you're gonna do something or not do something that you keep your word. And in politics, that's, that's not always easy to find, personally, but you know, I

always try to keep my word. I was very careful not to say I would do something or not do something unless I was absolutely sure I could do it.

BB:

Yeah, yeah, that makes sense.

DC:

Yeah, there's, there's a couple of times where I give my word to do something that was a very, very interesting situation, a couple of bills that came up. Back in the 1980s. [0:17:00] The Governor at that time, Bob Orr had a program called Build Indiana, where they wanted to increase gasoline taxes, to be able to have more funds to build more roads, more upkeep, on the roads. And it was a partisan issue in a way because an election was coming up. It was the first time that Evan Bayh was running for governor, at the time I was a Democrat. So, the numbers in the House were 52 Republicans and 48 Democrats. And to pass the bill, of course, you had to have 51. Well, there were two Republican representatives who had never voted for a tax increase. And they had publicly stated that they weren't going to vote for this bill because they would not vote for a tax increase. So, to pass the bill, there had to be one at least one Democrat voter representative to vote for the bill. And as it was Governor Orr [0:18:00] actually called me at home and he told me that "There are two projects in my district that were on the list, if this bill passed, that they would spend several million dollars updating State Highway 7 and State Highway 62 in Madison, and in North (unintelligible)." And certainly, if this bill passed, those projects will be done. And you know, I was in a party, but I also represented an area. So, I said, "You know what, we'll do that I'll vote for the bill." And so that would have been a 51st vote. Well, the day the bill came up. We had a caucus, both parties had a caucus and the leader of the Democratic Caucus and others, if all 48 of us stick together. This bill won't pass, because we know for sure there are two Republicans that won't vote for it. So, everyone's gonna vote no. And I raised my hand, I said, "I'm going to vote yes." And so, 47 people that were there, [0:19:00] started trying to convince me to not vote for the bill. And number one, I'd already given my word. And I thought I need to keep my word. And number two, I was more concerned about the people I represented in my district and about what happened with the political party. So after two and a half hours of being in the room, with everyone doing everything they could from yelling and screaming to threatening to everything you can imagine trying to convince me to change my mind. They finally left the room and went out to vote and the machine was open for like 15 minutes. Everyone had voted except for three or four people and I was one of the ones that hadn't voted. And after that time, I finally voted yes. And as soon as I voted yes, I was the 51st vote and the machine locked up the vote and it passed. So, all 47 of the other people in the caucus turned around or looked at me and they all shook their finger at me and said, "Well, this will be the last major vote [0:20:00] you'll ever have because we'll get someone to run against you in the primary and you won't be here anymore. I said, well, at least I did something to help the area I live in. So, after the session was over, we got back in the primary, they tried to recruit a lot of different people in different areas of the district to run against me and no one would run against me. They said, people said, "Well, actually, he got this bill passed to get this highway project started. I mean, who would want to run against someone like that? He did something

that's really good for the district." So, I didn't get an opponent. And I got reelected very easily. And till I learned a lesson, it's good to keep your word.

BB:

Wow. Yeah. So, I mean, did the party leadership try to punish you at all, by like, trying to take away your committee assignments or something like that, or?

DC:

Yes, they did. The next election, we got the majority by one vote, or one or two votes, and all of a sudden, you know, those one or two people became more valuable. So, I was restored to full equality of things. [0:21:00]

BB:

Wow. Yeah. So, I mean, I guess that's kind of the dilemma, especially with people that are in districts that don't necessarily reflect one political party all the time. Where your kind of put in the position that you may have to go against your party, and deal with the consequences of that. If you're going to follow what your constituents want. That's gotta be a tough situation to be in.

DC:

Yeah, it's a tough decision. I knew I was doing what was right, because I thought, even if by doing this, the party was able to have somebody beat me in the next election. I could leave office feeling I've done something good for the people that elected me in the first place.

BB:

Right. Yeah. Yeah. Okay. That's, that's interesting. Wow. And going into the General Assembly, did you kind of have that understanding or expectation about the complexities of the General Assembly and [0:22:00] the dynamics working with, you know, party leadership, or working across the aisle?

DC:

Yeah, that that was something that I probably did a lot more than most people in the General Assembly, I had two different timeframes really to look at, they had the 1980s, early 90s, and then 2006 to 2012. And in the earliest timeframe, there was a lot more collegiality between the two parties, mean we'd go out and have dinner with each other and have a lot more social interaction. It got a lot more political and the second time around, it was a lot more political and things of value in associating with those socially. So, you know, you have to make friends, you have to go to events to be able to get to know people, I mean, it's all personal relationships, and not just with each other. It's also personal relationships with a lot of lobbyists. They're there to represent certain interests because these people [0:23:00] have, you know, sort of some people that they represent, so to speak, that have certain needs you have to try to evaluate those needs and a lot of times you'll find you know, there's opposing lobbyists like to this thing, there's a trial lawyers, lobbyists. They represent people that will sue for damages and then the insurance companies are the ones getting sued. So, they don't want to have it make it easy for things to be

sued on issue. So those two groups tend to be opposed to each other as a lot of times on different issues on different bills that are in those areas. So, you find out well why there was the one went this certain way and why did the other one went this certain way and you try to have to balance those lobbyists out.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I guess dealing with lobbyists has gotta be a complex thing because how do you know if a lobbyist is telling you like accurate information or if they're just you know, just trying to push their agenda?

DC:

Yeah, and that's [0:24:00] that's the thing too about keeping your word, because there is there is mostly honor among the lobbyists when they say well, we're going to support this and we want, we will do this to the bill you had, make this change and we will support it and try to get other people to vote for it. So, you know, there's honor like that too. And for the most part, most people there were very honest about what they say and I'd like people come out and tell me exactly what, you know if they don't like it, tell me and tell me why. And I operate better that way, than somebody you know, that tells you something does something else. That one example when I was there in the 80s, I had a bill that I introduced about student working hours and actually teaching school I had a student that came in one morning and just really sleepy and they had a test that day and I said why are you so sleepy? She said, "Well, I had to stay up late last night, I work at a local food store, fast food place and they haven't closed I didn't get done until about midnight [0:25:00] and by the time I got home and studied I just was really sleepy. And I said, "Well, they could keep you out that late?" She said, "They told me if I didn't do that they would fire me, I would lose my job." So, I wrote a bill that said that when you are in high school and you're a certain age, there are certain hours that employers can't have you work past on a school night, so that a student wouldn't be forced in that situation. So, I got the bill introduced, I got it passed the committee in the House and it passed the House, as it went to the Senate, the lobbyists for the fast food industry, kept working with me to try and make changes to it. And you know I made a few little changes to it, but basically, went and kept the same idea. So, it passed the Senate in a different form. It was amended a little bit and went to Conference Committee. And so, I talked with this lobbyist, I said, "Are you supportive of the way we have the compromise? Are you supportive?" "Oh, yeah." He said, [0:26:00] "I'll help you get it past the Conference Committee, and we'll make sure it gets passed." He said that in the hallway in front of a bunch of other people, in front of a bunch of other lobbyists, there's a lot of people who heard him say that. The next day, he went to the Conference Committee, and before the Conference Committee met, he had met with people on the Conference Committee and convinced them to vote against the bill. And they did and they killed it. And when I got there, I was shocked to see that he didn't say anything to me, he just turned around and walked out. And one of the guys on that committee, they voted against it said, "Well, such and such says they've missed his name, "He said hat you didn't want this bill to pass after all, that he there was some things wrong with it. He convinced us to vote against it." I said, "He did?" So, I follow him out in the hallway. And there's us out there among all the other people that heard me that other day

when he said he would support it. And I asked him if he did that. And he kind of put his face down and said, "I did." He said, "I had to work for my organizations." I said, "I understand that, you lied to me." [0:27:00] And he didn't say anything. He just put his head down. "So, you know, I could handle if you told me that you were against it, you'd still be working against it, but I just don't like people that lied to me. Because you wouldn't want me to lie to you. And you'd lie to me. I just don't think that's the right thing to do." And I just, you know, I was a little bit upset. I didn't shout about this, you know, I have a strong voice. So, I was talking to him. And he just put his head down, didn't say anything. And when I turned around to walk away, the other people in the hallway applauded. They actually thought they clapped their hands like they had known this guy. Guess that he'd done it to them before two. So interesting turn about the next year I reintroduce a bill again, and this time not only did the same guy that stopped it last time did he help. He also convinced the Fast Food Association to have a scholarship, he established a scholarship to give the students that work in the fast food industry and it passed and they got a scholarship to help these students so that it turned out really good in the end. [0:28:00]

BB:

Okay, I guess he kind of just felt bad about it I guess and tried to help out the next time. Wow. Yeah, that's pretty. That's a pretty wild situation. So, it sounds like then lobbyists have a fair amount of influence on helping craft people's views then about legislation. Would you say that's accurate?

DC:

Yes, I think that's definitely accurate. There's, there's certain groups that kind of line up with certain parties, and there's, you know there's different people in the legislature, they have more power, if their committee chairman or if there, one of the leaders and, you know, they tend to make alliances with different lobbying groups, not only for the issues, but also there's campaign support, you know, a lot make donations to campaigns.

BB:

Yeah, so I mean, that that's another interesting aspect then to look at, like, how influential would you say campaign donations or gifts from lobbyists? How influential was that to a politician's views when it comes to legislation? [0:29:00]

DC:

Well, I think it's very influential. Sadly, in my view, it's more influential than just a common everyday voter. They're organized, and they have numbers, and they have money. And, you know, there's an old saying in politics that money is the lifeblood of politics. Well, that that's true at a lot of levels, and especially the higher up you go. And it's probably more of an issue with leadership, because leadership has such an inordinate amount of influence on what happens with legislation and shaping policy in general. That, you know, it's probably more common to see that kind of influence at the level of the State Chairman or the Speaker, or the Majority leader or somebody like that.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah, so party leadership then also plays a huge role. And I guess party leadership doesn't necessarily have to, to hear legislation [0:30:00] in a committee then and they can just describe, describe the, I guess how influential party leadership is in terms of just getting a bill heard in the first place?

DC:

Yeah, well, you know, like I mentioned, the other example I gave you about the caucus, and both parties caucus, leadership will come out in the caucus. So, here're certain bills we want to have passed. Here's certain bills we don't want to have passed. And then there's other bills that you vote the way you think you should vote on yourself. So, they gotta go through an agenda like that. And the leadership you know picks the things that they think and they give reasons for it. You know, it's there's, there's always reasons for it. But you know, you still have some discretion yourself, but most the time, most people will follow those directions.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah, that's interesting. So, you know, going through then that process, as a legislator, are there things that you would like, if you could, are there things that you would change about the legislative process based on your experiences?

DC:

Well, I don't know. I guess part of it would be with Indiana. It's a part time legislature [0:31:00], you know, we still call it citizen legislation you meet for different terms, like long years, up to April 30 and then short years, like March 15. Especially this short session. I mean, there's, you know, there's hundreds of bills you go through, and you should at least read a summary of each thing and try to read the actual bill itself, if you can, but toward the end of the session, I think it's almost impossible to do. So. It's like you're voting on things that you don't know exactly. All the details to. Which, and you know, I know, if you have full time legislature, then it would make it difficult, because then people would have to have that job as a full-time job. Like Congress. And that's not good, either. Because I was a teacher and I, you know, I went to the legislature when I was, when it was in session. And when it was over, I came back to my teaching job. So, I still had a job if I lost the election or didn't come out, okay. So, there's, you know, good and bad to change it to make it full time. [0:32:00] But you know, maybe just make it a little bit longer than what it is, so you have more time to actually rebuild and see what's in them.

BB:

Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. Now, how influential would you say things like gerrymandering, were when you served?

DC:

Yeah, gerrymandering is pretty influential. The last time I ran in office was 2010. And that election, the majority changed from being Democrat to Republican in the House and the Senate was still Republican. And so, the district I had was basically the same district that I started out in

1984. The main area was Jennings in Jefferson County, which [0:33:00] I had a lot of students in school, I have family in Jefferson County. So, I was so called well situated as far as knowing people in the area. In 2010, gerrymandering changed the district I was in to just have a very small part of Jennings County, having most all, of Jackson County, which is Seymour, and very little, so probably the district that I started out in probably only about 25 to 30% of it was left, after the the gerrymandering. And so, and there was a gentleman who is currently the legislator for this district. It lived in Seymour and I knew that without gerrymandering, that it was going to be a really difficult campaign. And in fact, at that time, I've been in office so long I was I was ready to retire anyway, I'm thinking I just probably go ahead and retire [0:34:00] from office and I served 14 years. If it's getting very contentious in the legislature, anyway, was the year before the walkout when the Democrat Party walked out. All that was going on, and I just I just don't have that kind of personality to be in a contentious situation like that. So, it had a lot to do with my decision not to run again in 2012.

BB:

Yeah, so I guess it just kind of got too toxic almost than to be there.

DC:

Yeah, it was. More toxic atmosphere. And the fact that, you know, the district itself has changed substantially it's almost like having to start completely over again.

BB:

Oh, wow. Yeah. Okay, that makes sense. Now you mentioned the legislative walk out, can you describe exactly what was going on, in that situation?

DC:

Yeah, it was a very unpleasant situation. [0:35:00] The numbers have changed in the election 2010, the Democrats had like 51-49. And after the election, it was like, something like 61 to 39 Republican. And the Republican Party drafted legislation, that was not just a matter of changing some small things, but basically wanted to take away a lot of the legislation that affected labor unions, and teachers and public education. They wanted to have the budget reduced for public schools, and that money that was going to public schools were given to private schools. And I didn't have a problem with giving money to private schools, I had a problem taking away from public schools, as did most of the people in the Democrat party. So, at that time, with the numbers, the only way to stop that kind of legislation, [0:36:00] or at least have some leverage to try and negotiate a different set of circumstances would be to walk out and not have a quorum. So that's what the Democrat Party did. I, being a public school teacher thought it was the right thing to do. And I did. And I guess I was disappointed in a couple of ways. One was that I thought a lot of parents and a lot people in the schools would support what I did, and they didn't. They were just apathetic they are, there's really no offer to help or support. And I was really surprised and disappointed about that. And the second thing was after doing the walkout for such a long time, and trying to get some out of leadership, came back in and really didn't gain any advantage in doing all that all the legislation passed anyway. So, it's like, [0:37:00] it was a very

stressful time, the Republican Party, and I still am really doubtful about the legality of it, but no one really challenged it, but they imposed fines on us without even having the authority to do so, because they couldn't pass a law since they weren't in session since there was no quorum. But did they just on our own impose fines on all the people who walked out. And at that time, I was fined around \$7,000 for the walkout, which was very difficult for our family to, to have to pay that. And we couldn't use campaign funds. They passed it this way so we couldn't use campaign funds. It had to come out of our own pocket. And so that was, you know, it was questionable, legality wise. I don't know. Constitution says you can't have lose life, liberty or property without due process of law. [0:38:00] Well, I lost property without due process of law. There's no law that said that we're just simply a party victim and said they're gonna do that. So it was that was a difficult part of it. But just the, you know, the whole nature of the whole thing. There was so much. The hallways were filled with people with honors yelling and screaming at each other. And just like, it's just like God was telling me, well, this is your time to be there is now done. You need to go on and do something different.

BB:

Right, yeah. Yeah. Sounds like it got pretty frustrating.

DC:

Yeah, it was very frustrating.

BB:

Well, thinking about your legislation that you that was going on when you served. The legislation you worked on. Do you remember by any chance the first bill that you sponsored?

DC:

I do, I remember that very well. When I first got elected, and Jefferson County, where Madison is, they were building a nuclear power plant called Marble Hill. And it was [0:39:00] Public Service in Indiana and Northern Indiana Public Service had gone together and they were building this nuclear power plant. Well, it's very controversial, because it's on the river and nuclear power contracts were very new at that time. And construction was very new. It wasn't really refined like it is now. So, they started the project. They went along so far, and they invested over a billion dollars in the building. And as they got to the point where they were doing checking on some of the structures, the x-ray, from the concrete pours, they found there were honeycomb there were pockets inside that were not concrete, there was defective construction and so they shut the whole project down. What happened locally with the local tax rate in Jefferson County. With this, this facility was being taxed [0:40:00] into over a billion-dollar facility. So, they were paying, like 3/4th to 7/8th of all the property tax for the area because they were such a big property. And when they shut down and they went off the property tax roll because they were no longer, they were they were bang, they would declare bankruptcy. So, the school system and Hanover Southwestern school system because of Marble Hill shut down, was going to have to increase the property tax in that small part of the county, just small town, Hanover we're 5000 people, they're gonna have to increase the property tax 1800%. So, it would just, you know,

there's a lot of farmers that had a lot of land, they were just gonna really be devastating for the area. [0:41:00] So I get elected. The year this happens. And I come in and people are trying to figure out what to do you know, they don't know how to handle this. They know that you have to do something. So, I had a bill written by a guy named Greg Landwehr, who was the fiscal, legislative assistant or legislative services person. And I had him write the bill this to do this to take the school formula, and simply create a scenario as if Marble Hill had never existed at Marble Hill had never existed, how will the formula then react with a local school system. And that's what we would pick up on, we pass a bill that just kind of put in that situation, so go on as if it had been normal. So that's what we did. And being in the minority party, that time, I was very pleased Pat Kiley, who was the Republican chairman of Ways and Means Committee, was very gracious and very helpful. He liked the idea. So, I wrote the bill [0:42:00] was the original author, but he came on and we switched the authorship or he became the original author. So, he would have controlled the bill. And I was the secondary author on the bill. So, we really get it passed the house and we got the Senate, and the Senate Finance Chairman wanted to have control of it. So, he switched over to Senate Bill 156. And we were the two House authors, and he took it over as a Senate Bill. And it passed basically unchanged from where we started out, and the governor signed it. So, it saved a lot of headache and a lot of distress for the people in that school district. And in the county of Jefferson County. They were it was affecting their tax rate a lot too. It all evened it out. And there was no damage and people went back to normal. So as a freshman, you know, they have a piece of legislation passes unusual in the minority party but they have something. And that kind of an issue was even more nice as always very thankful that I got some help and kindness [0:43:00] especially from Pat Kiley, who was also you know a former legislator, and he was really good to work with and it wasn't a matter of who took credit for it, it was a matter of getting it done. And that was really something so like the local school superintendent, when I first got elected, he said, "Well, so what we're gonna do is say you haven't been there, you don't know what you're gonna do." And he said, "I'm just really worried. Well, I said "I'll do the best I can you know." After it all came out and turned out good. He came back to me, he said, he said, "I'm sorry, I underestimated what you could do. So, he did a pretty good job after all." So, we became close friends after that. Well, if there's any other things at school, he said, "I'll give you a call." I said, "Okay, well, thanks."

BB:

Wow. Yeah, that's like a pretty big challenge to walk into for your first session.

DC:

Yeah, it was it was, you know, at first, I had to do a lot of work and a lot of study just to get, you know, what all the involve, you know, how bankruptcy affected with the local tax, [0:44:00] property tax rate was and all the different information like that. It was a lot of work, but it came out pretty good.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. What would you say were the most controversial legislative issues when you served?

DC:

Well, I'd say that I've always been pretty conservative, and even as a Democrat. And I've always been in favor right to life. And there's been a lot of different bills that have gone through the time I was in and the legislature to restrict the availability of abortion, or in some cases, he was trying to eliminate abortion in Indiana. back in, I think it was 1988. We had when the election was held, there was a tie, there was 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans. So only the first time in Indiana and it hadn't happened twice. And then in between first time it happened. I was there. And it only happened three times in United States history as far as having a tied legislature [0:45:00] like that. Yeah, okay. So, at that time, the solution to having 50-50, it was we had two speakers and two chairmen of each committee. That year, I introduced a bill on viability. For abortion, if a fetus can live a certain age, outside the mother, then there shouldn't be allowed to be an abortion because it could be a person that could be living on their own, they shouldn't be aborted. So, I introduced this bill. And there's like I say, there's two chairmen. So, it went to the Public Service Committee. And since it was a controversial abortion bill, they knew they were gonna have a big crowd of people to come, testify or at least watch what was going on. So instead of having at the Statehouse, they actually went to IU campus in Indianapolis, and rented an auditorium that held 5000 people. So, we had a hearing at this auditorium and it was packed. And it's almost like you can see on [0:46:00] like, on the left side from the stage, you can tell people when I was getting ready to make a presentation, they were smiling at me and about the other on the right side, you know, people were there with their arms crossed and scowling. So, it's like, almost evenly divided audience, if I could just kind of tell by looking at the facial expressions of people in the audience. And so, I had to give up and present this bill that's controversial in front of 5000 people. And, you know, the chairman was good about keeping order. He told people that they couldn't speak out or say anything, and people cooperated for the most part, but I could tell that when it was over, you know, there's a lot of people that just when I finished, they just got up. About half the people have gotten walked down the other half to kind of stay there. And we're smiling. So, I thought, well, I can kind of see who supports it and who doesn't? So that was it was pretty controversial. And I had another time the last [0:47:00] couple of years, I was in session in 2010 session where I had another bill that passed the Senate that was about abortion services. If a doctor gave a woman abortion, this bill required that the doctor provide health care for her after the abortion, which sounds like a very reasonable thing to do, you know, if you're gonna get a lady abortion, you should be able to go back to the doctor, have a checkup later on to make sure that everything was fine. That became a very controversial deal also. When I was the House sponsor of the Senate bill, I was the House sponsor when I made the presentation, my own party attacked me on the floor, they said things about me and kind of said how wrong I was and how this is a terrible thing. And, so that was different to be attacked. I mean, it was very widespread. And I had people before the hearing, even from my own party saying they begged me not to have the bill and not to let it go up. [0:48:00] And, you know, I mean, it was really a very tense situation that way, too. And I remember as I sent a bill on the floor. I was at that point, I've been there for a long time. I didn't really get nervous that often. But I was pretty nervous about this. Because of all the tension going on. I remember I looked up in the gallery when I was making my presentation, and there's a lady up there that can see was praying for me. All of a

sudden, I just, I just had this feeling calmness come over me. And I was able to go ahead and make the presentation. I was just like, you know, all this weight was taken off my shoulders instantly. It's just really amazing thing.

BB:

Yeah, I mean, it kind of sounds like because it sounds like you've had several kind of brush ups with your own party. It almost sounds like you must have kind of felt like you're almost an independent, you know, member of the General Assembly at some points in your career, because you, you know, had really you either get criticized by one party [0:49:00] for by the Republican Party, because you're usually working on Democrat legislation or you get criticized by the Democratic Party for crossing over on the other side for legislation that you identify with more. That must have been a kind of a challenge then to be in that position.

DC:

It was and it was more of a challenge the second time I was in (unintelligible) the first. I've always been conservative. I was in the Democrat Party because of being a public school teacher. But I think there were less conservative people in the Democrat party as time goes on. Even more so today than what there has been in the past.

BB:

Okay. So, do you think then that like the parties and Indiana Republican Party and the Democratic Party, have they become further away or like more to the extremes than before in terms of being conservative or liberal?

DC:

I think they have, yes. [0:50:00] I think there's more strange now because the Republican Party has as more of a base and really they have super majorities in both houses now in Indiana. I think that there's a lot of Democrats that realized that it would be more difficult to get elected in Indiana as a Democrat. So, the moderate, the moderate Democrats have switched over to the Republican Party and it's made the Republican Party less conservative than what it had been. I think that's what happened right now. And I think this past session, if you can see that with some of the legislation that came out on some of the schools, the school social issues, like critical race theory, and gender sports and things like this, that, you know, the General Assembly only really passed one bill that dealt with all these issues on this current session. And the governor vetoed that. So you know that was a conservative bill. And [0:51:00] I don't think the governor is very conservative, I don't have anything against him. But I just observation, but he did with this bill, that I think this made the whole state a little bit more, more liberal and less conservative than what it had been.

BB:

Interesting. Okay. Yeah, that's an interesting concept. I've kind of always wondered about because you see the super majorities. And obviously, if you're interested in running to be a member of General Assembly, and you see that, you know, the proportion of Republicans versus

Democrats, if you are somewhat moderate, you would think that maybe that running as a Republicans is like your only shot of getting elected unless you're in a really safe Democratic district. And almost, you wonder, then, if that super majority were to increase over time, if you're almost gonna get the Republican party split almost at some point, because it's...

DC:

Yeah, that's what's close to happening right now. [0:52:00] There's, there's a conservative wing and a more liberal wing of the Republican Party.

BB:

Yeah. Interesting. Okay. What would you say was the most complex piece of legislation that you've ever worked on?

DC:

Well, I worked on a piece of legislation that had to do with missing persons. It's, there's a girl that lived in Madison, who was in college, and she was out running and she disappeared, and didn't return the dorm and was gone, missing and she was never found, it's been, you know, 20 years ago when it's happened, maybe but. And there were people that were with her, that were roommates that called the police and reported her missing. But the police didn't start the investigation until like three or four days later. And at that point in time, it was just like the trail was so cold, they just didn't have any chance to really find out what happened. So, I introduced some legislation that had to do with missing persons. [0:53:00] And it required local police authorities to if there's a call about a missing person that they need to go ahead and begin the investigation immediately. Because there's a lot of statistics from the FBI on down the state police have cases where if the investigation started immediately, there was a much higher success rate of recovering that person and finding that person than if it went for a day or two. So, it was complicated. The State Police opposed it because they didn't want to have that imposed on them by the legislature. It wasn't that they didn't want to have, you know, people investigated, but they didn't want to have that forced on them. But they don't tend to do that. You know, they have other things. They just they have their own preferences. And the statistics were just overwhelming showing how much more you can save a person's life. If you were to start investigation immediately. So, it was very complicated bill, I had to try to compromise with the state police. They were they were very good to work with. [0:54:00] They had their own procedures and things they wanted to do. But we found we're able to get it passed. And if there's some cases that happened after that, that people were actually probably saved, they say probably saved their life because they were...they did start the investigation a lot sooner. And that the whole thing that probably stuck out in most my mind as we went through this bill, when it was in the Senate committee, had passed the House and in the Senate committee Senator Young was the Senate sponsor, he had someone in his district that had been kidnapped and found murdered and he was very interested from a personal standpoint. Since we had the committee meeting, there was a lady that came in and I don't remember her name, but her testimony still sticks in my mind. She came in she testified that a couple of years ago, her sister was abducted from a house trailer and when she reports to police she called him, when she found out like within an hour or

so when she was abducted. [0:55:00] She called the police. And from the neighborhood she lived in it was a poor neighborhood. And the police wouldn't even talk to her. They said, well, we get all these calls all the time. We don't we don't have time to check on these things. And so she was, you know, she was so disheartened by the fact that the police wouldn't even listen to her and says, like well, you know, you're in this bad neighborhood, we don't listen to calls in this neighborhood, and we can't help you out. So, they told her they couldn't help her and her sister ended up turning up murdered. And you know, she was just really bitter that the police didn't even try to help save her sister's life. Here she is testifying at this committee. And she said, "You know, I called the police to get help to save my sister's life. They wouldn't listen to me." She said, "Here I am now at the Statehouse in Indiana, Indianapolis, before the Senate committee in the state of Indiana with senators and representatives of the state of Indiana. And I'm [0:56:00] standing here and I'm telling my story, and you guys are listening to me." She said "This has restored my faith in government. Because when I tried to do something to help my sister to save her life, no one listened, you should now you're listening to what I have to say. And you're trying to do something to help save other people's lives in the future." She said "That's restored my faith in government." And that just stuck with me. It's just like, yeah, that's what government should be all about. Shouldn't be where you live or who you are, should be there to help anyone that has a need.

BB:

Right. Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah. Wow. Let's see thinking about some of the specific legislation stuff that was going on when you served. I saw like in the newspapers, there were debates going on around like gay marriage and stuff. What do you remember about those debates going on, and?

DC:

The gay marriage, I was there at the time. In fact, I was [0:57:00] the coauthor of the marriage amendment in the House. And I remember, there were there were, again, are a lot of people out in the hallway. There were people that, you know, just filled the hallways about very controversial issues. And it was like, I felt that sometimes, you know, some of the traditional things, we do things, it's based on what God said about marriage. And I had no problem with people making contracts about if you want to have certain persons inherit your money, or have certain persons visit you at the hospital, you can sign a contract of some sort and do that you know I had no problem with doing those kinds of relationships, which is really what a lot of gay people were asking for. But to say it's a marriage, I just I just couldn't accept that. I just think that was wrong. And so, I was the coauthor in this marriage amendment. And it was interesting, the testimony, and you know, we listen to what people had to say. [0:58:00] And in a constitutional mandate, you had to pass it two different years, to get it to be part of the Constitution and have it voted on by the people. Well, it passed the first year and before the second year, it can be done in second year, the Supreme Court of the United States actually made a decision that allowed gay marriage. So, it kind of took away the illegal possibility of doing something like that. But during the whole time we were doing that it was one of the things that stuck in my mind. There was a young lady that came in to testify the committee. And she reported that she was gay. And she

was here to testify, I thought, well, she's gonna be against the bill against the constitutional amendment because she's gay. She said, "You know, I was gay." And she said, "I thought, that's who I was. That I was born a gay person." She said, "Then I accepted Jesus as my savior. And I realized that that's not who I am. That's something I do." And she said, [0:59:00] "I realized that I don't have to do that, that doesn't define who I am. I'm a person who is a child of God, and I am not going to do that." And she said, "I have given up being a homosexual." She said, "I'm not doing that anymore." She said, "No, it's just the behavior. It wasn't who I am or who I was." And she said, "I just changed my whole outlook on the whole thing." She said, "I think that's really the myth and the lie that people are believing they think that they're born that way, and they have to be that way. And you don't." She said, "I'm living proof of that. I rejected that lifestyle. It's not who I am. To me, that really made a lot of sense, you know, because it's like people were saying, well, it's like race. Well, if you're born a certain race, that's who you are. You can't change that. That's kind of a way that people were looking at homosexuality, but this girl who had been a homosexual came in." And said, "That's not it. That's not true." And it really, really made me think about the whole issue in a different way.

BB:

So you, I guess you then you really got people from all sorts of different perspectives [1:00:00] coming in to that committee to sort of give their perspective on it. That's interesting. Sounds like a lot of different people. And so, was that another piece of legislation then that kind of alienated you from your party then? Or?

DC:

Yes, it did (Both laugh). My party didn't let that pass and I don't understand that. We, they didn't want me to be coauthor and I did anyway. Because it's something I sincerely believed in.

BB:

Yeah okay. Let's see. Now just moving towards some kind of big picture reflection questions. How would you summarize your time as a state legislator.

DC:

It was a very enjoyable time, mostly. [1:01:00] I enjoy being able to do that to be able to serve I, I felt it was a privilege. I mean, necessarily didn't deserve, but I still look at it as being a privilege to be able to have some of the opportunities that I had to do things and to be where I was to see different people. And to get to know some people who are in the legislature, I've made some lifelong friends in the legislature. So overall, it was a very rewarding experience. I'm thankful that I got to do that.

BB:

Yeah, okay. Let's see, do you have like, a favorite memory or story from your time in the Indiana General Assembly?

DC:

Well, there are a lot of different stories, I guess one my favorite ones was, I was, [1:02:00] second time I was in office, I had this place in my district where there's a farm. And they had older horses that they would take and they would ship to Mexico to you know made into fertilizer or something like that, but they...poor horses were out in like this field of mud, and it was all dirty and everything they weren't very well taken care of. So had several people in the district said, "Well can you do something about this?" I thought, well, you really can't pass a law on how horses are treated unless they're just being really mistreated. You know just standing out in the field of mud is not mistreated, mistreatment. But I thought, well, I'll try to do something just to make a point that draw attention to this, maybe the guy that owned the farm would try to make it better for the horses. So, I had (unintelligible) an amendment on a bill that would have somebody do with the same area, that anyone who had a farm, that they had to provide a dry place for animals to be able to be taken to, so they wouldn't be out in the weather or in muddy conditions or [1:03:00] something like this. But they'll have a place to go. That's about the best I could think of you know. And I knew if I got passed, I thought well, at least I have to try and get some attention to this one situation and maybe the guy would change the situation. So I presented my amendment, and one of the legislators who is a farmer, when he's not in the legislature, he got up to questioning and he started asking quite "Well, how are you going to, you know, what kind of place you're gonna have for the animals to be at?" "Well, you could have a concrete slab, you could have a dry area on a hillside or grassy area, something like this, you know?" "Well, what if, what if a farmer doesn't do this? What are you gonna do?" I said "Well, I guess you could have a fine." I tried to answer all these questions. And he said... The next question was, "Well, is this mainly for horses?" (Laughs) And this just came into my mind, and I knew like go past him. I said, "Well, representative and I said his name I said, "From all your questions. To me it sounds [1:04:00] like on this particular amendment that you're gonna vote nayyyyyy." (Both laugh) "And the whole the whole area just broke into laughter. I mean, it was it kind of cut the edge a little bit because he was you know, really grilling me on things, but we just kind of had a little humor on it. It was meant to be funny. And one of the guys in the front row, but almost fell off his chair. He's laughing so hard, because the guy that was asking the questions and he just had this deer in headlights look on his face. He didn't know how to respond, I was just joking. You know I was just joking about it. I said, "I guess from your comments you're gonna vote Nayyyy". Yes. So that was that was a fun moment. Good memory for me.

BB:

Yeah, sure. What lessons did you learn from your experiences?

DC:

I think probably the, the biggest lesson is I learned how to be a better judge of human nature. To be able to understand people better [1:05:00] on what they what they're really saying and what they really need, what they really mean when they when they do something. And you know, I had a lot of cases I can compare myself to when I first started out, you know how naive and green I was, I learned a lot. When I went... I still don't know everything and never will. But I learned a lot about human nature, I had guiding the opposite party a good friend of mine, he was also one we did a lot of bills together. And I had a bill on education about bargaining with school

systems. And he went on as a co-author. And I said, now, you know I say he's never said, "You know, your party's not gonna let you to do this." I said, "You're gonna they're gonna be toted you can't do this, you have to get off." He said, "No, I'm gonna do this anyway." He said, "You're a good friend, I'll be co-author with you." I said, "No.", I said "You're gonna, you're gonna get some heat for your party." He said, "I don't care. I can handle the heat." Okay, so I put his name on the bill. Well, a couple of days there, he comes back. And he said, he needs to talk to me. I said "Okay". He said, [1:06:00] "You were right." He said, "I'm getting a lot of heat from my party, and they want me to take my name off the bill." I said "Okay, let's go ahead and take your name off the bill." He said, "No, no." I said, "I gave my word to you that I'd stay on this bill." And he said, "I'm gonna stay." I said, "No." I said, "Let's go ahead a take your name off the bill, I don't want you to get all this heat, because the bill is probably not gonna pass anyway." I said "To me, it's better to have a friend than to have a coauthor on the bill. And I want to protect you as a friend. So, I'm gonna go ahead and take your name off. And that's, that's just what we need to do." So, he thanked me for that. And we were friends already and became even deeper friends, because it's like, I was looking out more for him, than I was worried about the bill itself. And I learned that those are the important things more than what you have, as far as passing a bill or getting something done is a kind of friendships and kind of relationships you have with other people.

BB:

Yeah, okay. Sure. Did you have any regrets as a legislator?

DC:

[1:07:00] Yes, I have one regret. I should have done something differently on a particular bill that I was just kind of overwhelmed on. And I won't go into details of it. But I was lied to by my own party leadership. And instead of doing something about it, I kept thinking that they were going to come around and be honest about and do what they have promised they were going to do. And they never did. And it affected things. It really made it difficult. And you know, looking back now, I wish I had been a bit stronger and standing up to leadership on this one particular thing. But again, you know, you live and learn when you go through situations, and that's sometimes when things just happen like that.

BB:

Yeah, sure. What was your proudest moment?

DC:

Probably, I'd say to have that missing persons [1:08:00] bill passed. That was that was something that could save people's lives. And that was I thought...And I had some good help from a lot of people. I mean, the cousin of the missing girl was very, very helpful. She actually became my legislative assistant later on. It was just something that was, you know, when you do something that will be good for people, especially if you can potentially save someone's life? That was a good moment.

BB:

Yeah. Sure. What advice would you give to future legislators or even current legislators?

DC:

Keep your word. One, number two, don't go, don't go into office and just try to get by this kind of coast through and don't. There can be controversial things that you want to avoid, but take a stand for what is right, don't just go there and say, well, aint anything I can do about this, you know, this, this is something [1:09:00] that is that bad is happening, but I just couldn't do anything about it. You know, it's like, sometimes you got to take a stand. Sometimes you got to put yourself out there and like I did on that one bill that benefit my district for those construction projects. You know, I knew it's gonna be a difficult thing. But I had to do something than to try it on my district. And it could have cost me the election. It didn't, but it could have and, you know, people get too concerned about getting reelected, and they do everything, for the most part to see how make it easy and less controversial. Not getting reelected, but you shouldn't be looking for controversial things, but you shouldn't stay away from something controversial if it means doing the right thing. And I see there's so many legislators now that just don't want to stand up and take anything that's controversial because they don't want to jeopardize your chances getting reelected. They're worried more about their job than they are what they're supposed to be there for in the first place.

BB:

Okay, yeah. So, what would you say is the most [1:10:00] important work of the Indiana General Assembly?

DC:

Well, I think the most important work probably is education. And that's the biggest part of the budget. I, as a former teacher, I just really disappointed in the way, a lot of the things going, we spend way too much money and time on testing from the state. I taught school, I gave tests in my class, on the subject I taught. And they were good indicators of how students were doing, because I taught the subject first. And then I tested them. With the state testing now they, you know, they don't give you what they're going to be putting on the test. So, if you're teaching math, or the concentrate more in poly equations, or in algebra, you know, [1:11:00] well, one test they have in the state might have, you know, 60% of questions on one thing, and you might not be able to teach all that. So, you only have a fair test, if the material has been taught first, and then tested on state testing, that doesn't happen. They just they just randomly pick different things to put on the test. And there's just so much different things they put on, there's a lot of things they put on, having been taught to kids and their being test on something they were never taught. And that's just, that's just simply not fair.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. What does the public not know about the Indiana General Assembly and how it operates?

DC:

Oh, they probably suspected that they don't know exactly how all these deals are made. A lot of deals go on, there's a lot of trading back and forth for this and that. And I don't think they realize how much money influences the legislature. Something passes, because somebody gives a lot of money. [1:12:00] And, you know, it's legal because you make campaign contributions. But you go back and look at how much money is contributed by certain groups to certain people. And that concerns certain issues, and you'll find a big tie there. Between those two things. And people. They know what they don't realize how deep it is.

BB:

Yeah. How has the state of Indiana changed over the course of your lifetime?

DC:

Well, I think the thing that's changed more than anything is technology. It's just changed a whole life on everything. I mean, just think how quickly things have changed in the last few years, you know, the internet and the iPhones and all the cell phones. And you know, just when I was in office, first time, when I sent out letters, I had had a typing pool, write out the letter by hand, and the typist would, would type it and send it out. Second time I was in, I was just, I was speaking to a recorder and the computer would print [1:13:00] it out and send it out and have it mailed out. So, it's like, the whole typing pool was eliminated. Even toward the end of the time I was here. I mean, we still have when I came back the second time in late 2006, we still had stacks of paper bills on the desk, we could read. We had laptop computers, we had our desk, we didn't have all that paper, we just simply brought it up on the screen and read it on screen, save tons of papers made a lot easier to get information. So, the technology has really made a big difference on what's going on. It's changed the whole state and the whole country and the whole world really, but that's been the biggest change probably I've seen.

BB:

How have the people of Indiana changed?

DC:

I think the people of Indiana have. I don't know, I think they've become more liberal. And I you know, it's not necessarily a bad thing. It just it just the values. [1:14:00] It's I think it's more of a generational thing than anything think. Every generation doesn't understand some things. I think a lot of people younger people now think socialism is okay. And it's not, I lived during the time of the Soviet Union and we were looking at nuclear war and Marxism and, and all that stuff, I mean, and all the death and destruction of the socialist system did people in Europe and Russia I mean, they didn't people didn't live through that era, people now didn't live to understand how terrible it can be. I did I lived through that. We had nuclear survival drills in school we had to get under a desk and did you know, because we were expecting a nuclear war. We went to the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was in school. I thought the world's going to end. All the effects of socialism and now people think oh, it's okay. Everybody gets everything free. You know, it's like

no, that's not the way it works. But that's probably the biggest change I think, is people [1:15:00] generationally have been, I think brainwashed to think socialism is a good system.

BB:

Yeah, it does seem like there's a big generational gap. I guess a lot based on...also I guess your different experiences growing up. And yeah, that sort of historical memory doesn't necessarily carry on, I suppose from generation to generation.

DC:

Yeah, I taught history in school, I taught oral history. And, you know, I understand that maybe better than some, is that if you don't study history, you're doomed to repeat the mistakes. But a lot of kids, they don't they don't look at that history. They just take the media's word for it now oh, this is a good thing we get all this free stuff, everything's free. And nothing's free. (Laughs) It's not.

BB:

Let's see what hasn't changed about the people of Indiana?

DC:

I think the people of Indiana still care for each other. I think they want to do what's right and want to do what's good for the kids. [1:16:00] And for, you know, there's a basic belief in God, I think they're still we're still very religious people. We still believe in each other, and believe in helping each other. Helping each other you can see that a lot of times when something bad or a lot of people step up and help other people. I don't think that's changed. I think that's there's still good human nature in people of Indiana.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. Final question. What do you want the people of Indiana to know about their influence on the General Assembly?

DC:

They have more influence than they realize. I mean, I used to be, if somebody came up, and I heard, you know, 10, or 12, people would call me or contact me, I knew that there was something important to look at. And, you know, if you if you, if you have 100 people call you, then you better be paying attention, you better be looking at things because it's and people don't realize that one or two people calling [1:17:00] doesn't make much difference. But if you have a group or large number, legislators do listen to it, because they are concerned about getting elected, and those are voters, and they need to listen. So, I think that people need to understand it better, that they do have some, they have do have more control than they think as far as contacting legislators.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. All right. Well, is there anything that I did not ask about that you want to mention, or?

DC:

I think we've covered it real well, I hope I've provided some good information for you too.

BB:

Yeah, definitely. Should be a good addition to the collection of interviews. So, thank you again for taking part and doing this.

DC:

Sure, I enjoyed it and cover some of the old memories. Yes. Right. Yeah, that's

BB:

Yes, that's right. That's right going down memory lane. And yeah, it's always interesting, for sure. So. All right, thanks again. I appreciate it.

DC:

Thank you for your time. Good talking to you.

BB:

Yes, you too. I'll be in touch.

DC:

Okay, bye.

BB:

Bye bye.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>