Elizabeth Letchworth

Page, Floor Assistant, Republican Party Secretary
1975-2001

Oral History Interviews

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Preface

By Katherine A. Scott

In the summer of 1975 a heated debate played out on the Senate floor. After two forced recounts, the 1974 New Hampshire Senate election contest between John Durkin and Louis Wyman remained unresolved. One candidate petitioned the Senate to review the case and it became one of the most hotly debated issues that year. On July 30, 1975, the Senate voted to declare the seat vacant, forcing New Hampshire to hold a special election. One Senate page, Elizabeth Letchworth (née Baldwin), followed these debates with rapt attention. When her summer page position expired, Republican Leader Hugh Scott offered her a position as a legislative correspondent. Her careful attention to detail and organizational skills quickly made her an indispensable member of the Republican floor staff. She rose through the ranks, serving as a page, manager of the mark calendar, cloakroom assistant, director of the newly created Republican legislative scheduling office, floor manager and assistant to the party secretary, and Republican Party secretary.

During her 26 years in the Senate, Letchworth observed major changes in the institution. She describes the rising prominence of women in positions of power, the introduction of television and its impact on the quality of Senate debate, and technological advances that helped leaders organize and communicate more effectively with members and their staff.

Beginning as a page in Hugh Scott's office, Letchworth worked with Republican leaders Howard Baker, Bob Dole, and Trent Lott, and she describes the ways in which their individual qualities helped shape legislative outcomes during their tenure. The role of party secretary, Letchworth says, is to be the leaders' "eyes and ears on the floor." This often meant addressing the concerns of individual members—either related to scheduling conflicts, or objections to legislation—before they became major issues. The demands of the job are many, including earning the trust of members, exercising discretion, and above all, learning the rhythms of an unpredictable institution. Senator Lott once told a staffer, "I have never met anybody who can read the Senate as well as [Elizabeth] can."

The Senate's unpredictability puts extraordinary pressure on Senate floor staff. Eager to set her own schedule, Letchworth retired in 2001 when she and her husband purchased a golf course and relocated to South Carolina to manage it. But she never severed her ties to Congress. Curious golfers often asked why clubhouse TV always featured C-SPAN's coverage of the Senate. Her love of Congress and her knowledge of the legislative process led her to consulting work. While she worked as senior advisor to a Washington-based firm she started GradeGov.com, an online tool that enables the public to evaluate the work of their elected officials. In 2012 Letchworth co-founded

Congressional Global Strategy with Lula Davis. She continues to host a twice-weekly radio show about congressional politics.

About the interviewer: Katherine (Kate) Scott is a historian in the Senate Historical Office. A graduate of the University of Washington, she received a M.A. in history from the University of New Mexico and a Ph.D. in history from Temple University. Scott is the author of *Reining in the State: Civil Society and Congress in the Vietnam and Watergate Eras* (University Press of Kansas, 2013). She lives in Rockville, Maryland, with her husband and two children.

Illustrations:

On the Senate Floor

October 5, 2010
Interview #1

Scott: Welcome, thank you for being here. We're delighted to have you.

Letchworth: Thank you, Kate. This is wonderful. I'm excited about it.

Scott: Let's start with your childhood. Where did you grow up? You are originally from Virginia?

Letchworth: I'm originally from Virginia and spent my summers in southwestern Virginia which is near the tip of Virginia near Tennessee. I did my schooling for the most part in the Northern Virginia area. I am wedged between two brothers. I have a brother 10 months older than me and then myself and then a brother 13 months younger than me. Three kids right away, and I always kind of thought that maybe I was born to be a negotiator because I negotiated in between these two boys. I don't know if that's true or not, you know they talk about the middle child thing, I don't know if that works. Anyway, three kids, grew up in Virginia. My parents were both politically involved. My dad has been a lobbyist for years. He worked on the Hill for years on the House side for a couple of members of Congress. He was AA [administrative assistant] to one member of Congress. My mom actually retired from the Hill. Politics was our dinnertime conversation as you can well imagine. I did all these summer jobs and then when it became time to consider being a summer page, Mom threw it out and I bit. Obviously I bit because I did it.

Scott: Who did your parents work for on the Hill?

Letchworth: My mom worked for Senator [John] Tower [R-TX]. She worked for Senator [James] Pearson of Kansas [R]. My dad worked for [Otis] Hal Holmes [R] from Washington State. No one necessarily from Virginia. They knew Senator Byrd, Harry Byrd [D-VA]. But they didn't necessarily work for Virginia members of Congress, but other members of Congress.

Scott: Were they commuting up here then or had you relocated to some place closer to Washington?

Letchworth: They were in Northern Virginia at that point. They met and married in the Northern Virginia area. Both had entry levels jobs bopping around on the Hill. They kept them through having children.

Scott: Your mom—was she working full time on the Hill?

Letchworth: She was. She actually ended up as a senior staffer of the Senate Republican Policy Committee and created what was known as the legislative notice for the policy committee. It took the committee reports of bills and broke them down in King's English. It was a little bit of a cheat sheet, if you want to call it that, and she passed those out to the senators before they voted on stuff. She kind of created that whole idea and bounced it off Senator Tower when he was chairman of the policy committee. He liked it and it became—Of course they have all that now in the electronic version but that was kind of the beginning of it.

Scott: When did she work for him?

Letchworth: I'm trying to backtrack a little bit, late '70s into the '80s because he left in 1984.

Scott: So your mom was working here when you became a Senate page?

Letchworth: Yes, we actually commuted when we could in the summertime together. She basically had very similar hours to the floor hours and of course, as a page, you're stuck with the Senate floor hours. That worked out pretty well. When she could go home early she just sat in the office and probably did some work waiting for me. We'd chat on the way home—was that a neat debate or not neat debate. She taught me a lot about procedure because as a kid it's all sort of Greek to you, as you can imagine. On our trips back home we would talk about what went on. They probably gave me more intrigue because I was able to bounce off, "What did that mean when this happened today, Mom?" We could talk about that and it kept my interest up.

Scott: Were your parents involved in local politics as well? Or they were politically active as staff for members here?

Letchworth: They have been both. Both politically active locally—my dad ran for the state senate in Virginia. I was literally an infant, so you want to say the early '60s. He lost. He tried his bid for local and they have always been politically involved, both locally and at the federal level.

Scott: And Republicans.

Letchworth: Yes.

Scott: So in 1975 you come to the Senate as a page. You were a junior in high school.

Letchworth: That was the end of my sophomore year. It was going to be a summer job. It was the summer job that never quit. As I said, I took to it right away. It was an exciting time. The Wyman-Durkin debates[1] were going on and they were debating whether to seat one senator versus the other. That taught me a little about the political process. It was Politics 101. For a 15-year-old kid it was like learning in a class. So I didn't, thank goodness, end up being a page during a boring debate like an ag[riculture] bill or something that would have probably bored me to tears so I would have said, "Mom, I don't want to do this. I'd rather babysit all summer." It turned out not to be that. Who knows why, but that's the way it was.

This doesn't occur anymore and it may not be something you are familiar with, but back then before the e-mail, before the Blackberry, before electronic anything, the leadership had their own pages. If you think about it, they had two offices. They had a Capitol office and they had an office in Russell or Dirksen. To get hard copies back and forth somebody had to do it—if we think about it, it sounds so antiquated—so they got assigned the leader's page. For whatever reason, after having been there a couple of weeks, they assigned me as the leader's page. Senator Hugh Scott [R-PA] was the leader at the time. I don't know whether he ran things back and forth to the two offices more often than not. It seemed like I ran all the time. In the process, you got to know both offices. I got to know the Capitol leader's office really, really well. It got to the point where if it was a sort of boring debate, I'd go sit down there with them, the adults, in the Capitol office and ask, "What else can I do for you?" They would say, "Answer these letters." I learned the legislative correspondent's role. After my page-ship was over I didn't want to go home, so to speak. I liked this whole idea. They created a role, a little bit like a legislative correspondent, a glorified intern. The pay was the same as a page. But now I was reporting to them.

Scott: To Senator Scott's office?

[1] The 1974 Senate election contest between John Durkin and Louis Wyman resulted in a winning margin for Wyman of just 355 votes. Durkin asked for a recount, which resulted in Durkin being declared a winner by just 10 votes. A second recount by the state ballot commission declared Wyman the winner by just 2 votes. Durkin then petitioned the Senate to review the case, and on July 30, 1975, the Senate voted to declare the seat vacant as of August 8, 1975; New Hampshire then called a special election to fill the seat on September 16, 1975. Durkin won by a 27,000-vote margin.

Letchworth: To Senator Scott's office, right. He became a wonderful sort of mentor as far as a grandfather. He would stay late at times and tell me about the Senate of old. He really was a charming man. He loved China and at that point in his career had made several unprecedented trips to China before it was cool to go to China. He would tell me about the promise that he could see that China could be eventually. He was an interesting man and I always appreciated the fact that he even knew who I was. Not that members of Congress ignore their junior staff. But you know the whole bit about them not having the time. And he seemed to take the time. I appreciated that.

Scott: Do you think that was because he was of another generation? Or was that more of his personality?

Letchworth: Probably both. He did have a daughter. It could have been that I was a daughter-like person to him. I met his daughter a couple of times. It could have been something like that. I think it was generational. I just think that he liked to pontificate. Do you know what I mean? Sit around the fire and talk about something.

Scott: I want to back up a little bit—how did you get into the page school? Is this something that you applied for? Did you come and interview? How did it work?

Letchworth: In my case, my mom asked the secretary for the minority, the job I eventually got, she asked the then sitting secretary for the minority, who was Bill Hildenbrand, if there was a spot in the summer. He created a spot. That's basically how it happened. Not anything really complicated. There wasn't an application process like the school year-round pages. Now you remember back then you could go to page school all four years: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior. You could do all four years. Because I was parachuting in as a summer page, I kind of skipped all of that. He was fine with that.

Scott: Once the summer internship was over and they created this other role for you, this ad hoc role, what about school? Did you then attend the page school?

Letchworth: I did attend the page school. I finished out those years. I did my junior and senior years in the D.C. public school system. Back then it was a D.C. public school. I do really take pride in the fact that one of the first things I did as secretary for the majority was to take it out of the D.C. school system and make it an accredited private school. There are so many smart kids—I was not one—but so many of these kids are the crème de la crème of little town U.S.A. and the D.C. school system just could not keep up. I would hear horror stories from my friends who would go back to wherever they were from and they can't pick up the geography, they can't pick up the math, they

can't—because the D.C. school system wasn't equipped to do curriculum on the fly, which is what you really need with pages.

Scott: How did you work out a schedule within the page school?

Letchworth: Basically, you do 6 to 9:30 and then walk across the street, come to work, at 9:45. Back then the Senate didn't convene as early so that usually worked out pretty well that you could have the straight almost four hours. If you think about it, traditional school is four hours. If you have 45 minutes for lunch and P.E., you are actually in school for about four straight hours. This was four straight hours. You went from class to class to class until you were done at 9:45, ten o'clock and then you walked across and started your work day.

Scott: What time did your work day end back then?

Letchworth: It was always when the Senate went out. They had some long hours. I could probably pull up the digest and figure out which was longer. It probably pretty much works out to be the same. They were long hours. Of course you would do your homework in the lobby, pages still do that. The curriculum and the accredited private school aspect of the page school [today] to me serves those young people so much better than the D.C. school system ever could. They just couldn't adapt. They were not equipped to adapt. It's like trying to have a charter school within the D.C. public school system. Back in the '70s and '80s, that was probably bizarre sounding to anybody.

Scott: Where was the page school then?

Letchworth: It was in the Library of Congress. It was in what is officially the stacks of the Library of Congress. You took this weird little elevator all the way to the top and they had cleared out rooms, storage rooms, for us. So we did have a math room and an English room and whatnot. But you sort of meandered through these weird little hallways to get to these rooms. It was a real makeshift school. But it did work, it did work as far as serving as the function of the school. You took this weird elevator back down to the first floor and everybody walked across the street to either the House or the Senate. That was back when the House and Senate went to school at the same time. If they convened at different times, which many times they did, that got a little weird. That got a little cumbersome because the House pages would get 15 minutes of math and the Senate pages would have 35 minutes of math. That caused more problems. The writing was on the wall that something needed to be done and it seemed like the natural thing to do.

Scott: Were you the only female page in the school at that time?

Letchworth: No, there were a handful. It wasn't common, but there were a handful. I can remember being the only female page for the Senate Republicans for a while. There were still things that the females couldn't do.

Scott: Like what?

Letchworth: The marble room, which is sort of the relaxing lobby behind the lobby. We weren't allowed to go in there and check because members could be back there. This was actually the case when I became the first female cloakroom assistant. There was a big debate within the leadership, not a big debate but a little bit of debate, should she be allowed in there all the time? Back then, this is going to sound weird, especially the older senators, if they wanted to lay down and take a nap they would take their pants off. They wanted that nice crease. So they might take their pants off and fold them over the back of the chair and sit there and read the paper. Of course, that would have been really awkward for a 15-year-old girl to walk in on. Now of course that ended very quickly. But at the beginning, there were a few places that they didn't want females to go. I simply would ask a boy page, "Can you go check the marble room, I'm looking for Senator Goldwater." You ask a Democrat or a Republican, anybody would help you. A guy would walk through there and say, "He's not in there." "Thanks a lot, bye." It was a tag team system for the few places they didn't want you to go.

Scott: When you worked in Senator Scott's office, you quickly moved into this legislative correspondent role.

Letchworth: Right, there were dead times obviously. You know, as with any office, especially back then when they did a lot of the legislative correspondence, they would give me what I'm sure were the simple issues. Teach me how to research it, where the senator was on the issue. I would craft two or three boiler plate letters to answer to these folks: "Thank you very much for your recent letter to the senator on the agriculture issue. Please be assured he will keep your interests in mind."

Scott: They weren't complicated policy issues.

Letchworth: It was literally the lowest intern/legislative correspondent position. And then as the Senate stayed in late at night, the leader's offices were more, back then, places for members of the Senate to go and have a drink. To sit around and talk about, "How long are we going to be in session?" "Boy, wasn't that a horrible session?" They would kind of unwind. I started serving drinks and passing out the peanuts. The leader's

office back then became a little bit of an open bar. I assisted in that way and cleaned up afterwards. You can just imagine whatever an intern would do. I would help him pack up and archive his office when he retired. From there I moved into the cloakroom.

Scott: When you were in Senator Scott's office, who did you work with frequently? Who did you often talk to when you had a question about how to handle something?

Letchworth: Margie, who ended up marrying Senator Pearson, was the office manager and she might have had the role of the AA also. She would give me the marching orders if I ended up, on any one particular day, without much to do. Otherwise there was a little bit of a schedule to what I did. I did the page routine, made sure the other office was okay with whatever needed to go back and forth. They did have a mid-day run, a morning run. Of course you got into situations when you needed stuff quicker. I know it's hard to realize—why didn't you just e-mail it to them?—there wasn't that. There was a little bit of that to the schedule. I did have a little bit of a desk. It was more like a table. The legislative folks would put some letters on my desk to try to answer and I'd find out where the bill was, whatever the question was. There was always something to do. By four and five o'clock when the normal day was slowing down, a couple of members would come in and say, "Is the bar open?" I'd go open the bar for them and they certainly didn't want to talk to me! But you gave them a drink and put the peanuts out and before you knew it a couple of members of Congress were back there. I'd just ease out and poke my head in every so often and make sure everybody was okay. Keep that running.

Scott: Who were some of the senators that you remember coming by?

Letchworth: I do remember Senator Pearson. Of course we now know why he came by so often! Senator [Robert] Stafford [R] of Vermont, I remember him coming in. I can't remember others off the top of my head.

Scott: These open bar sessions, were they discussing policy? Were they telling personal stories?

Letchworth: No. I remember a lot of it being analysis of the day and decompressing or strategizing on maybe what the next day would be. But they weren't so partisan that if a Democrat were to walk in, the drink would [not] have been had for him. It wasn't that kind of thing. It wasn't like a caucus, it really wasn't. You didn't get the impression that there was a lot of partisanship spoken. It was like decompressing for the day.

Scott: Like going to a bar.

Letchworth: Right, and, "How was your day? Mine was horrible." And, "What's your weekend going to be like?"

Scott: What were some of the defining qualities of Hugh Scott's leadership? Did you get a sense for that? I know you were working at a very entry-level position but did you get a sense for what kind of leader he was?

Letchworth: I didn't basically because I got there so late and was kind of learning everything else. So I don't want to comment on that because I think I would be just sort of guessing.

Scott: He was very accessible to you.

Letchworth: Yes, and I don't know if that was typical—I just don't know. By the time I showed up, yes, he was very accessible. It's almost like he wanted to teach. He wanted to pass something along.

Scott: Is it because he's leaving? Or because that's the kind of person he is?

Letchworth: I don't know.

Scott: When he left, you transitioned into the cloakroom?

Letchworth: Yes.

Scott: How did you get into that position?

Letchworth: The question was asked to the then secretary for the minority, Bill Hildenbrand. Of course, he was a Hugh Scott staffer at one point. He saw me all the time. I, of course, was not a Hugh Scott staffer. I probably had never been to Pennsylvania at that point in my life. It was just one of those relationships you build. I guess he thought it being a little natural for me to move from that spot over into the cloakroom. But there was some debate—should a girl be in there? Is the cussing going to offend her? Not that I even remember cussing, honestly I don't. But those type conversations came up. And believe me they did not spend a lot of time figuring out whether this girl should be in the cloakroom or not, I can tell you. But concerns were raised. They basically said the time

has come. What foul language she might hear is probably not as bad as she would hear on the school yards at that point. You have to remember this is late ’70s, early ’80s.

Scott: The world was changing.

Letchworth: The world was changing. Actually it was like, “Let’s give it a try.” I can’t say that I felt like there was a trial. But I was definitely told, let’s give this a try and if it doesn’t work we’ll see what else might work, whether he would create something in the office. It went off without a hitch.

Scott: At that point Bill Hildenbrand is your supervisor.

Letchworth: Right.

Scott: What kind of duties did you do as a cloakroom assistant? What was a typical day like?

Letchworth: A typical day back then was trying to figure out the attendance, which was done at 9:15 by the hotline system. Personal secretaries called in and said that the member of Congress would be there or not be there for the day. By 9:30 or 10:00 you could give to the party secretary, who at that time was Bill, and he could go into the 9:45 or the 10:00 staff meeting with the majority or minority leader with an attendance card saying if you want to have votes today your best time to have them is between whatever the scenario was. He would then disseminate what the schedule was going to be like. Basically legislative assistants [LAs] came in the office and called the cloakroom for that day and said, “What’s the day going to be like?” That directed their day. As the day changed, as the bills on the floor changed, as the action on the floor changed, we knew it first. We became the hub to letting everybody else know. Of course, now you have the Internet and all of that, but back then you just had the squawk boxes and if you didn’t listen to the squawk box all the time you had to talk to somebody that sat on the floor or you called the cloakroom. So the cloakroom had to stay on top of what was going on.

Scott: You must have been in constant contact with Bill Hildenbrand.

Letchworth: Exactly.

Scott: He was updating you so you could tell the LAs when they called what was going on.

Letchworth: Back then you almost had one of the cloakroom assistants' prime responsibility was to listen as close as you could to the squawk box. You told everybody else, "Hey it looks like we're going to be moving to senator-so-and-so's amendment next." They would know that. Also another responsibility which helped define the next role I had which was the legislative scheduling office is, under the minority leader or majority leader, whichever role you want to talk about, was a position and I don't remember what Oliver Dompierre's position was called, but he handled the mark calendar for the leader. As his career got toward the end, he liked to go to lunch. He liked to stay at lunch. He would hand me the mark calendar maybe as early as 11:30 and he might come back at 2:00, sometimes he didn't come back. He told me that if anybody called and wanted to put a hold on a bill or take a hold off a bill, mark it down here on the calendar. That became my added responsibility because I was a girl? Because I wrote neater? There's no magic to it. It wasn't that I had this brilliant look on my face. I don't know why he handed it to me. I can't tell you why that happened. But I became the keeper of the mark calendar.

So if Senator Baker at the time, or Bill Hildenbrand at the time, they wanted to shift gears to another bill, it got the point they would come to me and say, "Elizabeth, go look at calendar number five and tell me how much problem do you think it would be if we moved to that?" By then I had sort of garnered all the knowledge because I was taking the phone calls and I could say, "Oh boy, you could probably get that done in no time." Again, accident, who knows, but that helped create what then became in 1980, when Senator Baker became the majority leader, when he created the legislative scheduling office, that took that mark calendar aspect and moved it to S-123 in addition to the presiding officer's. That's why that whole office was created. The leader seemed to think, and it made sense, you don't want to have all of that in the hub of the cloakroom. First of all, members of Congress might be leery of going into the cloakroom if they were going to be nabbed to sit in the chair. The cloakroom's become a little power hub for leaders. If they are well attended and people sit in there a lot you can buttonhole people, twist the arms a little bit. If people are afraid to come in there or they don't want to come in there—He rightfully thought, let's move some of this out of there so that the cloakroom remains sort of a relaxing place to go and a place to strategize. So it made sense when he created the legislative scheduling office to move the mark calendar down there.

Scott: You just followed it, really.

Letchworth: Basically.

Scott: It's a remarkable amount of responsibility that they had given you. You are all of 18 or 19 years old at this point.

Letchworth: I think I was 17 at the time. Again, it could have started out because I had neat handwriting. I have no idea. But I must have remembered it well. When they barked questions at me I must have been able to answer crisply and with some assurance. I guess I didn't lead them astray or they would have taken it away from me. Dompierre retired and they never recreated that spot. That spot was created when we created the legislative scheduling office.

Scott: How many other assistants were in the cloakroom?

Letchworth: At one point it was five, and I was the fifth, the fifth wheel. Typically, though, it was four.

Scott: Is that the minimum amount you need to handle all the information?

Letchworth: Typically about how many you have, really for no other reason than the space you have. You are elbow to elbow anyway. It's a bank of phones. It's almost like operators sitting shoulder to shoulder. Typically it was four, sometimes I was the fifth. More than likely was the fourth. And usually the leader had one from his state. Maybe the whip had one, a lot of times they were done sort of in a patronage type of way. Or it was somebody that worked in their office and they caught on to how the legislative flow worked and they would be good in the cloakroom because they could spit back out what was going on. It's before the Internet. If you were a legislative guy or gal sitting in the office, if you weren't glued to the squawk box, there was nowhere else to check in the middle of the day other than the cloakrooms.

Scott: We've had a lot of people mention in their oral history interviews that before the days of television you really had to learn the senator's voices so you could know exactly who was on and who was off.

Letchworth: That's true. I can recognize them now. I can have the TV on and be in the kitchen and know that's senator so and so, without having to see them. I guess that was training. You definitely had to learn them.

Scott: You had a close seat to one of the best shows in town. Here they come into the cloakroom to relax and talk. Did you interact with them much?

Letchworth: Yes, you do and that is really a special role. They are even more themselves than in the office because they aren't surrounded by the staff. It's them. And they may sit there waiting to offer an amendment, having finished reading the paper,

having made a few phone calls, and sit down and say, "What's your life like? How's it been?" You learn that their daughter is having problems or their son is a great baseball player. You really get to know them because there are no staff around them. It's just one-on-one with you and the senator. If you do get this rapport with them they want to tell you what their schedule is going to be like. "If you have any influence to make a hole in the schedule from 3 to 4 so I can slip out and see my son play his t-ball game…" They'll be willing to tell you that, thinking that you may be able to influence the schedule a little bit. A lot of times the cloakroom assistants can because schedules change during the day. A good leader will want to double-check the cloakroom by saying, "Is it okay if we scheduled a vote at blah, blah, blah," and of course the party secretary will double check. "Has anybody heard of anybody leaving the Hill that isn't on the attendance card?" "Oh yes, so and so is going to go Christmas shopping."

Scott: You would get that kind of detail about someone's day?

Letchworth: Sure. Absolutely. They, the member of Congress, doesn't want to miss the vote and be responsible for the leadership having a failed vote. They still do feel the responsibility of letting the cloakroom know when they are going to be off campus for any amount of time.

Scott: Did you interact with your counterparts on the Democratic side?

Letchworth: You don't really. You do off hours, just commiserating on what your day was like, but you know trade secrets. You don't want to trade those trade secrets. And you obviously don't want to trade attendance records and what not. You could typically talk about who's been a brat today, which senator was a brat in the cloakroom or whatever. There were brats on both sides, you can imagine. But you typically didn't tell the inside scoop.

Scott: Who were your favorite senators that you talked to?

Letchworth: Ones that warmed up to me in my early years: Senator [Jesse] Helms [R-NC] was wonderful. He loved to take an interest in the pages. Senator [Wendell] Ford [D] of Kentucky, I guess because of his role as the whip, was on the floor a lot. It wouldn't be at all unusual for one or both of them to just grab a couple of pages, take them around to the lobby and just kind of tell them about what life was life in Kentucky. Senator [Strom] Thurmond [D/R-SC] had ice cream with the pages.

Scott: Regularly?

Letchworth: Pretty regularly. He would always ask permission. He would come to the party secretary or the assistant secretary and say, "Can I take five?" And they'd say, "Boy, I wish you wouldn't." Or, "Sure you can." He would take them down to the dining room and have ice cream with them and talk with them. There were a fair amount of members of Congress that did that. I don't think they do that so typically now. It's a time restraint thing, it's not that they are not any more personable than they were back then. It's a time restraint thing, I think.

Scott: What would you talk about with Senator Thurmond? Did he talk politics and policy? Or would they be talks about personal stories?

Letchworth: More personal things with Senator Thurmond. He liked to talk about his children. He had page-aged children. Actually all four of his children were pages, I'm not sure of that. I know two or three of his four children were pages. He would tell them what his kids were up to and find out what we were up to. Where were we from? You know, go around the table. "Where are you from? What were you doing in high school before you got this job? What do you look forward to going back to?" He really took an interest in your life.

Scott: How much time did you have to talk to the other pages or the other assistants? Do you get to know one another fairly well?

Letchworth: You do. Back then the pages did not have the page dorm like they do now. They stayed in what was called Thompson Markwood Hall or the Y. Some of them stayed in rooming houses that various people around Capitol Hill pledged a room to. It was worked out through the senator's office. But it was basically someone's basement apartment. The pages were more on their own. As a result of that my parents didn't want me having a lot to do with a lot of the pages after hours because they could get very wild. Here was a 16 year old in Washington, D.C.! My time with them was literally at work. I went home with my mom typically. I can remember being allowed maybe two or three times to come back into Washington Friday night to go over to someone's house. It was typically a teenage party and my mom knew it and I'm sure she sweated BBs the whole time. I did not have a lot of interaction off hours. But during the work hours—all the time. You talked a lot about school, your assignments, how do you get through the assignment. Talked about the Senate work, how would you divide this up, especially if there was a big run to all senators' offices.

As antiquated as it is, the Senate cloakroom used to be open on Saturday, from 9 to 12. You know what we did? We came in and delivered the whip notice. Doesn't that sound so antiquated? A cloakroom assistant had to come in, had to open up the

cloakroom and the pages came in, sorted this three- or four-page notice of what the next week was going to be, stapled it, folded it, stuffed it in envelopes. We divided up the buildings: you get the Russell, you get the Dirksen, you get the Hart. Run around and if we got done early we could leave early. If not, we had to wait until everybody got done. It was 9 to 12 every Saturday. There was no e-mail blast. Monday morning, or if a serious staffer came in over the weekend, we slipped it underneath the door, was the schedule for the next week as best you could tell it. There you go.

Scott: It's a six-day week.

Letchworth: Again, that probably sounds so antiquated but that was the best way that you could do it.

Scott: You mentioned briefly the hotlining process. We often get calls in our office about the origins of hotlining. Can you describe that a little bit? How it worked?

Letchworth: The hotline system is a lot better than it was at the beginning. Basically, there was one button on somebody's phone in every senator's office and he or she designated where it was going to be. Maybe you could have more than one button. But it was the designated button and somebody in each office was designated to answer that at all times. It was basically what we would call now an e-mail blast. But it was a verbal blast. There was a little saying, I don't know if it's still in the recording booth, that said, "A word spoken is an arrow let fly." I would sit there and read that right before. You didn't get do-overs. You picked up the phone, you dialed a series of four or five numbers and whatever you said went out. You couldn't say, "Whoops." It's not like a voice mail—"If you are pleased with this voice mail press one." It's not like that, or it wasn't like that. So you typically put out the attendance or roll-call vote, or the leadership would like all members to meet in blah, blah, blah, for whatever the scenario was. Pretty antiquated nowadays.

Scott: But at the time it was pretty advanced.

Letchworth: It was state of the art.

Scott: The entire time that you worked in the cloakroom, you were using the hotline. It predated your arrival?

Letchworth: Yes, the hotline system was still there pre-beepers. The next stage was then a beeper that beeped. You entered the cell phones and all that.

Scott: That would have been nerve-wracking. I'm terrible leaving the voice mail message, I always have to go back and re-do it. Did you have any slip-ups? Any moments that you thought, "Oh I wished that wouldn't have happened?"

Letchworth: I remember Senator Hatfield talking to me on the floor. He didn't like the way I said "Oregon." I apparently had said it for whatever reason: "We are voting on Senator Packwood's amendment from Oregon," and he corrected me. Other than that I really don't remember.

Scott: I'm from Seattle originally and since I've moved out here I've realized that a lot of people out here don't know how to say Oregon.

Letchworth: Exactly. I apparently butchered it. He wasn't mean. But he wanted to set the record straight that it is not OR-I-GON, it is Oregon.

Scott: Did you ever have a moment or moments when you first started, either as a page or in the cloakroom, when you got nervous working with the senators? Were you ever concerned that you weren't behaving in the right way or that you weren't doing something right?

Letchworth: No. Not that I was the perfect page. I don't mean that. It's more intimidating to think about it than to actually do it. They are men and women just like you and I. They are somebody's mom and dad and they are just human beings. And even ones that appeared to be gruff were not at all. I think I had a unique position because they weren't surrounded by the staff and the press. There was no image to keep up. They are in the cloakroom, this little hub where it's just them. And a lot of times they would sit in there for a long period of time and get bored.

I can remember that Senator Goldwater taught me how to sew. Not that I didn't know how to sew but he must have assumed that I didn't. He did teach me an extra way to do buttons and I became the sew lady. When senators had buttons they needed—I kept a sewing kit in my desk to sew buttons on. Democrats and Republicans came in. I have a picture of me sewing Senator's Quayle's button on at [Richard] Nixon's funeral. We got off the plane and his button came off and I don't know why I had my little sewing kit. There's a picture, I actually do have that.

Scott: Old habits die hard.

Letchworth: I guess. I was looking at that the other day. My gosh, I was sewing his button on. I remember where it was and I could remember what I had on.

Scott: That's really interesting. What was Senator Howard Baker like?

Letchworth: He is and was an absolute sweetheart. A wonderful leader to work with. Tried to cross the aisle as best he could, tried to be the compromiser, but really could crack the whip when he needed to. Senator [Ted] Stevens [R-AK] was an absolute delight. I can remember when Senator Stevens' first wife died in the plane crash and I can remember specifically the morning it happened and getting word and I was working that day, we were in recess. I was working in the cloakroom that day and got word as to what happened and made the executive decision that I'm going to transfer the phones down to his office. We all went down to the whip office and manned the phone. Back then that was the only way to learn what had happened. His office, whip office, the phones were ringing off the hook: What had happened? Who had died? You didn't have the e-mail and you didn't have the BlackBerry.

Scott: You didn't have the Internet. You couldn't check all the news.

Letchworth: Right. I remember getting word from his office in Alaska as to what happened and I can remember thinking, well, there's no point in us sitting in the cloakroom. Let's just send all the phones down there. So we manned his office for a couple days to try to help them out with that.

Scott: Why would you have been in during recess? What kind of tasks would you have been doing?

Letchworth: The pages still run, they still have the duties. You do a skeleton crew, the cloakrooms are still opened during the recess. They are a skeleton crew, but you still have questions. What are we going to do when we get back? When's the first vote? The pages still have runs to do. Cloakrooms are 10 to 4. That was one of those scenarios. We were in with a skeleton crew and I just thought, we're not doing any good sitting down the hall from where the phones are literally burning up and there was no one coming in to answer them because they obviously had other things to do.

Scott: You did work with Senator Stevens—

Letchworth: Absolutely. Both Senator Baker and Senator Stevens at the end of grueling sessions would have the cloakroom staff and the floor staff come down to the office for a celebratory end-of-session drink or soda, whatever. You decompressed. You did the high fives and the atta boys, or said, boy we should have done this better or we could have done this better. They both were very good about that even if it was midnight

or one in the morning, either one of them or both of them would say let's have a little celebration in my office. Everybody had different roles, whether you are talking about the floor staff or the cloakroom staff. But we could all kind of decompress and say, boy that was tough. Or, boy that was fun. That helped bring the whole thing back into perspective. It was nice.

Scott: A team building exercise.

Letchworth: It really was and I don't know if that is done so much anymore. I know even 2000-2001 we did that a little bit. That's a function of the time. As soon as the Senate's out, people want to get home. So I don't know if that's done so much anymore.

Scott: Senator Stevens was known as an irascible character around here. But it doesn't sound like that's the experience you had with him.

Letchworth: No, he really was not. He was a teddy bear instead of a bear. He couldn't have been nicer to me. He really was delightful to the floor staff and to the cloakroom staff. We loved him.

Scott: You followed the mark calendar and established a new office?

Letchworth: Senator Baker, in 1980, when it was obvious that he was going to be the majority leader, now all of a sudden the Republicans were going to have to schedule the presiding officers. I remember being in meetings with Senator Baker talking about, "I don't think I want that in the cloakroom," again for the reason we talked about a few minutes ago. "I want the cloakroom to be open. If they think they are going to get nabbed or ambushed to do a job, they won't come in. I need that power hub." So he found one of the Capitol offices, one of the very precious Capitol offices—S-123 was a great location. It belonged to Senator Javits. He obviously didn't run again, he was defeated actually, and it was his Capitol office and it took us a while to get him out. He took a while to move out.

Scott: Longer than the 60 days?

Letchworth: A lot longer. We were in the hallway and in part of the office and then other part of the office. As he would move his boxes we would move them closer to the door. We put an extra chair—there was a little bit of respectful tug-of-war there. It went into March or April. He wanted to keep coming in. Bless his heart. So we had a little respectful tug-of-war until he finally vacated. We made it what it was supposed to be, the vision of Senator Baker, where we would schedule presiding officers, where the

personal secretaries would call and schedule their bosses. If you had a hold on a bill or wanted to be notified on a bill, you called that office. It made it all separate so the cloakroom could remain a gathering place. A strategic place. But you didn't get beat up on information and you didn't get beat up for other tasks, so to speak.

Scott: This office becomes a clearing house for scheduling?

Letchworth: It did. That's where the scripts for the leader were when he would want to call up bills and needed to follow a script, sending amendments to the desk, that's where the scripts were all typed. That office became, well we named it legislative scheduling but that's where it all was put together. Even the scripts for the day, when the leader would come in, that wasn't done through the leader's office. That wasn't done through the cloakroom. That was done downstairs in S-123. When he came in and opened the Senate, a script was handed to him so he would know that today we are going to debate whatever. It was the cheat sheet. We created the cheat sheet for him.

Scott: This is his invention.

Letchworth: He created it. In some ways it mirrored the Democratic Policy Committee. The Republicans organized differently and always have organized differently. Republicans specifically did not want the Republican leader being head of the Policy Committee. We have a separate head. You know the Democrats, it's sort of the same. This was his way of creating that. He was the head of the legislative scheduling office. Technically it was under the payroll of the party secretary.

Scott: At this point, let's say after 1980, when the Republicans gained majority, you are out of school, you have graduated. Did you think of attending college?

Letchworth: I tried college. College was not for me. I tried doing community college, I took classes along the side and at night. Nothing grabbed me. The Senate kept tugging at me and tugging at me. As the majority became bigger and bigger and the responsibility became bigger and bigger, and scheduling of bills became bigger and bigger, that's the first thing that went.

Scott: It strikes me that even if you had gone into a university environment and perhaps decided to major in political science or something, you'd be learning about things that you were literally doing.

Letchworth: I like to say my college was on the Senate floor. That's where my university was. I'm very blessed to have had that opportunity. Especially when you start as early as a page, you literally know every aspect to how a law is made.

I can remember being a page when the blue papers were missing. The blue papers are the official papers between the House and the Senate. I can remember that that actually stalled the Senate from taking up a piece of legislation because they had to pass a resolution to recreate them and the resolution to recreate the blue papers had a temporary glitch. Interestingly enough, that time frame was enough to get some problems worked out. It was like having a hold on the bill. The end of this story is that by the time the person that was ready to take up the bill was ready, the blue papers miraculously showed up in inside mail (if you remember what inside mail was like) the day before all of this was going to happen. After that the clerks instituted that you had to sign in and out if you were to take the blue papers. A staff director could typically borrow the blue papers, especially if he or she wanted to construct what the conference would look like or what the committee needed to work on. But if they disappeared, literally the Senate was out a law. And this particular set of blue papers disappeared. I remember learning that interesting fact. Boy, you could do a lot of damage if you just threw away a bunch of official papers. How Neanderthal that sounds, but it is what it is. The Senate had to create a resolution and ask the House to recreate them, pass them in both the House and the Senate and the House had to recreate the official papers.

Scott: This took days.

Letchworth: It took days. Literally by the time they were ready, the compromise was hammered out. The blue papers ended up coming back to their original clerk's office, the secretary of the Senate's office, in inside mail.

Scott: When was this?

Letchworth: I want to say 1978-1979.

Scott: I'd like to ask you about the watershed election of 1980. The Democrats had been the majority party for more than two decades. In 1981 people think of it as a fresh start. Did you have a sense for that in the position you were in? What was the atmosphere like?

Letchworth: It absolutely was a fresh start. Even in my little world, it was a fresh start because here I was going to be able to put together this new office, this new concept. I bought into the whole concept. It was all fresh. The idea that Republicans

could sit in the chair! You had very senior members of the Republican Party wanting to sit in the chair because they had never done it. They had never done it! Now it's a burden. But back then that was such a unique experience. They all wanted to do it. Even setting up the staff to start the presiding officers, that was all easy and we set up a seniority system even for that. The more senior ones only had to do one hour a week. And then the next class had to do—I don't remember what it was. You can imagine. We had a huge freshman class so we had a huge pot of people to pick on. We sort of figured out, let's make them have four or five hours a week. All of that was fresh. All of these members who had been in the minority party for so long now were going to be chairmen. They get to set the agenda. They get to call the witnesses. The excitement was unbelievable.

Scott: Do you remember where you were on election night?

Letchworth: I do. I was in Senator Baker's office and the party secretary's office. There was a sort of combined party between the two. Of course, it went into the wee, wee hours of the morning. The next morning Senator Byrd wanted to come in and congratulate Senator Baker. I can remember being one of the first people in the office and trying to figure out, going to the staff of Senator Baker's office, when do you want this meeting to occur? Presumably we're going to be taking photographs of the two shaking hands. There was a little bit of coordination. What time can you be in? Logistics. The passing of the mantle that was going to be the first ceremonial passing. They didn't literally pass anything to each other, but it was about the "congratulations" and "I look forward to working with you in the next Congress."

Scott: That happened right away, this didn't wait until January.

Letchworth: No, it did not. If it wasn't the next morning, it was the following next morning. Senator Byrd called and said, "I want to come and do a congratulatory and sit down with Senator Baker in the front office in front of the fireplace, that whole setting and do the congratulatory." "Anything I can do to help you" kind of conversations took place. You definitely felt it right away.

Scott: Did your workload skyrocket right away? Was there a lot of concern about getting things scheduled and get things moving?

Letchworth: Yes, it did. When you think about it, it's easier to be in the minority. All you do is lob hand grenades. You just say no to whatever. It's easier to find one person to say no. But think about it, when all you've had to do for years and years is to find the Jessie Helms of the world, or I'm going to say Senator DeMint because he's the most recent example, find a Senator DeMint to say, "Over my dead body." Okay, you've

made one phone call, you've checked that box, now you can say, "We can object." But in the majority you've got to make sure the chairman can be there, can the bill manager be there, can the first two amendment offerers be there? Does this work for the leader's office? You've got to check, let's just say fictionally, six or eight boxes and make sure all of those players work. Now you've got a time, now you've got a specific time you want to take up this bill and you give it to the minority party and they find one person to say "Nope, not going to happen." Yes, the work load is extremely, obviously much more convoluted and a lot more detailed in the majority and that happened right away.

Then add on to that that you have to make sure someone is in the chair. Presiding officers. Your leadership has to be there more often or somebody guarding the floor has to be there more often. It tripled, literally, overnight. Then on top of that you have a brand new freshman class. A lot of these men and women were certainly not career politicians. For a lot of them this was brand new to them. And you had to do more than show them where the bathroom was. You really had to teach them. There isn't a real good orientation program for how to be a Senator 101. So there was a lot of that, also.

Typically I think in years past, you could rely on the more senior members to do that. The senior members now are getting to be chairmen and they are learning how to be chairmen and hire this staff and the staff directors and move their office. "Oh my gosh, I've wanted this agenda forever. Now I get my agenda of agendas." They didn't have time to teach these almost 20 brand new members how to be a Senator 101. That fell more to the floor staff because we could teach them. A lot of them were willing to sit on the floor and that was the beauty of running the presiding officer's office and the legislative scheduling office, too, because you could encourage them: "You know what sir, you asked me a bunch of questions on how to be a Senator 101, let me throw you in the chair for three or four hours. You can learn it a lot better." It was pretty easy to get them to do that after they got over the intimidation. Letting them know the parliamentarian was right there and they are not going to let them stumble. "If you really want to listen, you can listen to me talk, or you can get the on-the-job training. Let me throw you in the chair."

Scott: That's interesting that they'd call your office and ask those kinds of questions. Did they not know who to call?

Letchworth: A lot of them brought staff from their states who wouldn't know, and again the more seasoned staff that might be in the office buildings, those people now are going to be staff directors or they are going to be legislative director to a senator that now is a chairman that had never been. Everybody's job was like on steroids overnight. Somebody like a junior floor person like I was that could answer all the questions, it

wouldn't be the logical person to think of, but if you kind of tried one or two people and heard, "I can't do it. I'll call you later," and never got called back, you thought, "Hey I remember this girl on the floor who seemed to have her act together." Before you knew it, yeah, you held these little impromptu, "How to be a Senator 101" sort of sessions.

Scott: In a recent interview I did with Dick Baker he talked about the fact that on the Democratic side they had big freshman classes in '76 and '78 so they started their own orientation program precisely for the reason that you are talking about. Huge classes coming in and none of them knew what to do and who to contact. So they try to formalize this procedure so they don't have people calling all over the place.

Letchworth: This happened to us all at once. We became chairmen and then you had this huge class. Everybody all of a sudden was on steroids for their jobs. And then you have this huge class of people who didn't know what to do. Nobody had the time to teach them. I shouldn't say nobody had the time, but certainly they had a lot of other things they needed to do so it was harder to find the time to teach these guys. You definitely built a rapport with them. The simple things: "How do I vote? What do I do when I come to vote?" Again you didn't have C-SPAN recordings over and over. You couldn't YouTube it. You couldn't click on a YouTube video and see it. You have to remember it's back then. You definitely needed somebody to tell them how to do all of it.

Scott: When someone would call you with those kinds of questions, you'd say, "I can answer them or I can put you in the chair and you can do it." What kind of prep would you give them before they would go out in the chair? A one-on-one session?

Letchworth: Sure. You'd have a one-on-one session with them, a lot of times in the lobby. The newer members would say, "Sure, I'll sit in the chair but not until somebody tells me a little bit." We created a little bit of a cheat sheet and we laminated it. But again, as long as you let them know almost right away, the parliamentarian is literally a handshake away from you. He or she is not going to let you flounder or just be a complete boob. It's not going to happen. Once you assured them of that, and you gave them some boilerplate lingo to throw out, it didn't take them long. You sit through a couple of days that seem to be boring. But you learn to take off quorums, put on quorums, get recognition. It didn't take that long.

Scott: Were most of the members eager to sit in the chair and have the opportunity to take it?

Letchworth: They were once we explained to them that that was the best OJT [on-the-job training]. I can remember a couple of them being really apprehensive and you

had to push them in the direction. But once you got them up there and they got their feet wet, they were fine. Again that was a function of the fact that they didn't want to make a fool of themselves, or make a mistake or hurt the leadership in some way. It didn't take long. And the ones that really wanted to learn quickly almost volunteered for the chair. Of course it made that function of the legislative scheduling office that much nicer. We had to create an award for those that sat in the chair. So we had the Golden Gavel and we created all sorts of stuff like that.

Scott: So that started with your office?

Letchworth: There may have been other awards, but yeah, we created the Golden Gavel. We would have the vice president come and give them when he could. I have a letter from George H. W. Bush. I had invited him to come and give the Golden Gavel at some particular time and the answer back was that he couldn't because his schedule didn't permit it. He had some grandkids coming up who would soon be page age, could I keep them in mind to be pages? It was a cute little letter. I don't know if you know, but he is famous for his personal letters. When the vice president was in town, we'd have him give them out. You had "atta-boys" in the public policy luncheons. We would give cheat sheets to the leader so that during the policy luncheon he would say, "Hey, did you know that so and so sat in the chair for x hours last week?" If you are a freshman senator and you haven't accomplished very much and your name gets mentioned at the policy luncheon, that can go a long way to get that guy or gal right back in the chair the next week. We constantly were encouraging the leader to talk about the good that you could do in the chair and how important it was. Senator Byrd was wonderful. He did more of the teaching the responsibility of it. You can imagine the professorial part of it—he did a lot of that. Senator Baker was more, atta boys, this is a good thing, you really need to do this for the good of the country and for the good of the party. You are going to learn.

Scott: Did they respond well to his leadership?

Letchworth: They did. Absolutely.

Scott: How big was your staff in the legislative scheduling office?

Letchworth: At the high water mark? We had four, including myself. I basically stayed on the floor. We had a direct line from the cloakroom down to 123. There was a gal that did the scheduling every single day. That was her sole responsibility. The other two, whether it was one or two, took the phone calls and the hold letters and updated me with the calendar so that I literally walked around with the calendar. At any given moment, if the leader wanted to pivot to another bill, he would find me, or the party

secretary would find me, and I'd give them my best case scenario. This is going to be a problem or not a problem.

A funny story: We misplaced the mark calendar one time. This was a huge problem because at that point we hadn't thought about keeping a duplicate. It was a Monday and I realized that the mark calendar had been missing. I tried to retrace it and I couldn't remember it from Friday afternoon. We called the sergeant at arms' office and had them halt all the trash leaving the United States Capitol. We had pages going through all the trash. This was an APB of epic proportions because we couldn't reproduce it. We honestly could not. Of course, we didn't want to tell the Democrats that we had lost our secret weapon of sorts. All our secrets were on this document and it was missing. So there was a little bit of a covert operation going on. Pages going through the trash and whatnot. Senator Baker was late that Monday coming in from Tennessee. As he came in he called myself and I think it was Howard Greene down to his office.

Scott: Because he had heard about it? He knew the calendar was missing?

Letchworth: As we got down there, he says, "Sit down. How was your weekend?" I don't want to waste time with how was your weekend. I'm having a cow that the mark calendar is missing and I want to go dumpster diving at this point trying to find it! He's agonizingly telling us about his weekend and asking how was your weekend. He sort of ceremoniously unsnaps his briefcase and pulls it out. He had swept it up in his papers or his staff did that Friday. He was the last person to speak on our side, they had collected all of his papers and thrown it in. He knew he had it.

Scott: [Laughing] He was just playing with you!

Letchworth: He was watching us for a couple hours literally have a meltdown because we had lost it. Anyway, the moral of that story is from that day forward we made a Xerox copy of it and that was kept under lock and key. We never lost it again.

Scott: That's a great story! Was he a prankster? Did he like to joke?

Letchworth: He did. He had a staffer by the name of Jim Miller who was/is a wonderful writer. Jim Miller was actually commandeered by President Reagan to do several very personal interviews with the Reagan family. Senator Baker had weekly meetings and daily meetings. Every once in a while Senator Baker would be leaving on a Friday and he'd tell Jim in the morning, "Do me a favor. Write me a story about this morning's meeting." Jim would basically write a sitcom about the morning staff meeting. I would read them and be rolling in the aisles! He would give personalities—everybody

has a personality. He would exaggerate the personalities. It was a little sitcom. It could have been a daily sitcom. He loved to laugh. He was a prankster at times.

Scott: This story would be distributed through the staff?

Letchworth: Yes, through some of the staff. Baker would be the first one to read it. I guess he would read it on the plane going home and laugh about it. Jim is very talented. He liked to laugh and he was a prankster.

Scott: It sounds like it was a fun working environment, though it must have been very stressful. There is a lot of legislation moving down the pike. You had a lot going on. What are some of the major legislative challenges that you remember in terms of scheduling?

Letchworth: I can remember when Reconciliation was first created. Jim Range was one of the first ones—he's now deceased—that had thought about how to manipulate the budget process a little bit. I'm going to be honest—I can remember that being a huge, huge ordeal. What comes to mind also was President [Ronald] Reagan being shot so early and what a whirlwind that put the Senate in, throughout the whole country, but especially the Senate for a while. How disruptive and horrible that was. I remember the days and the day of and where we were with all of that. Getting some budgets through was a real challenge for Senator Baker. A real challenge at times.

Scott: Within his own party?

Letchworth: Yes, within his own party. The balanced budget amendment was a real challenge. He had some real challenges from the very beginning. And again, not to mention, was it March of 1981 when President Reagan was shot?

Scott: Yes, it was right away.

Letchworth: There were a lot of speed bumps and a lot of firsts very quickly.

Scott: In those early days was there a sense of urgency? A need to get things done quickly or a need to learn quickly on the job because many of these jobs were new for people?

Letchworth: I wouldn't say urgency. I remember '94 when you had the Contract with America and you had the 100 days. We didn't have anything quite like that where you had 100 days to change the world or however you want to characterize it. There was

a real sense of, “Let’s do this right. Let’s learn how to do it and let’s do it right.” So there was a little more plodding along. Let’s get this right. There were members of Congress that were thrilled to death to get this role having been in the minority forever and wanted to hit the ground running. But the leadership for the most part wanted to get it right from the very beginning. There wasn’t this sense of, “We’ve got to pass 10 bills within a certain period of time.” There really wasn’t that kind of thing.

Scott: How long did you stay in the legislative scheduling office?

Letchworth: It still exists. I was there until I became the party secretary in 1995. The titles changed a little bit, it became floor assistant. But that’s where I hung my hat. That’s where my office was.

Scott: You always worked out on the floor?

Letchworth: I was always on the floor.

Scott: That must be where you got the training to become the party secretary?

Letchworth: It is. The floor of the cloakroom is sort of an extension of the floor because staffers aren’t there with them. You get to know the members as members. Their thought process is their own because the staff isn’t there to tell them what to say and do. You get them in an insular kind of way and you learn the personalities pretty quickly and how to work with the personalities pretty quickly. If you build rapport, members of Congress are going to want to notify you of things going on in their life because they don’t want their problems or issues or timing to affect the leadership. Heaven forbid that you went out and did something that you had already prescheduled and forgot to tell and the leadership lost a key vote.

Scott: How do you keep track of all that in the pre-Internet digital era? How does it work? If someone calls you and says, “My son has a baseball game this afternoon. I want to be gone for two hours,” what do you do?

Letchworth: You had two basic bible documents that you walked around with and the party secretary walked around with or his staff, which in a lot of cases was me. The mark calendar, which had everything on it as far as legislation. There’s a mark calendar for the executive calendar and the legislative calendar. So at any moment if the leader or the party secretary wanted to know what’s going on with executive calendar nomination of whomever, you could say (because I typically took most of the calls, or the cloakroom typically took most of the calls) [they could] regurgitate whatever it was back

to me so that I could hand write it on the calendar. I had the best flavor as to how that process would go if they wanted to call up that bill or that nomination. The second thing that you walked around with all the time was an attendance check card. That thing changed a lot. Remember that the cloakroom's day begins—I said it was 9:15, it may still be 9:15—where by 9:30 you could tell the leader what his attendance was going to look like at any given moment. You can't vote between 10 and 12 because 6 people are going to some conference in Vienna, Virginia. But after 12 you can. But it changed all the time.

Scott: It seems like it would be changing on the fly—people not being able to come for whatever reason.

Letchworth: Sure. And you did get to know members' of Congress's baseball schedules. Literally. You had to, it wasn't that you were prying. Because you did build a rapport with them on the floor, they were very comfortable telling you: "By the way I can't be here for the next hour. I have a root canal and I can't put it off any longer." I can remember telling members of Congress, "You can't have your root canal. Sorry. Here's some drugs"—not literally, but—"go take some meds. You are not going to be able to do that. The only time we can schedule this crucial vote is this time."

Scott: In some ways I see this process as unworkable. You have the members in your party all with individual schedules and individual commitments, personal as well as professional. It seems like getting enough people to the floor for a vote at any given period of the day would be incredibly difficult.

Letchworth: It is incredibly difficult. That's where the leadership comes in. That's where the leader commands that this be your first priority. And when he loses, that is when the wheels come off the wagon. Occasionally I remember a leader losing that. It didn't take much. Especially if you are in very close ratios, the 51-49 kind of situation, it didn't take much for one or two senators, I call them "brats for the day" collectively. You would kind of look in the back of the chamber and if three or four of them were sort of sitting together and plotting, you would go to the leader and say, "I don't know if you want to stick your head in that little pow-wow. They may be deciding to band together and leave to stop votes." If you had a couple of them that didn't want to finish the bill for the day, they could simply all of a sudden, all four or five of them, leave, and one of them will call you and say, "Elizabeth, I hate to tell you this, but five of us are not going to make the next votes. You better tell the leader." Whether he liked it or not, his day was done. Well, you couldn't have votes and lose. So whether he wanted that bill to get finished, or get past a certain part of the bill, if several of them decided they didn't want that to happen for whatever reason. So there is a constant placating of that. The floor staff and the cloakroom staff sort of get a feel for that. Are there rumblings going on? Are

there problems going on? You let the leader know. Maybe not directly, but the cloakroom staff would tell the party secretary and the party secretary would say, "You want me to check on this? I'm getting some weird feelings about…" All of that is constant. It's all constant. But again, if the leader commands the respect of the party loyalty, that the Senate floor comes first, "Sorry your child's birthday is going to have to come second. I'll carve out something for the birthday party but it can't be from four to eight, it has to be from six to eight. You have to compromise." You do all of that.

Scott: And senators would call you directly? Not the office?

Letchworth: Typically, yes. That becomes the role or the personality that you give off to them. I can handle this, I will handle this.

I used to leave the office at the end of the day, as the party secretary especially, thinking I did the best job for the majority leader or the minority leader if he was able to stay in his office and play minority leader or majority leader. If he came down to only have to put out fires if they got bigger than something I could deal with. But if he could stay down in his office and not have to come out and do a lot, then I felt like I handled the situations as best I could for him.

Scott: This is while you are in the floor assistant, legislative calendar role?

Letchworth: In part, yes.

Scott: It sounds to me like you'd be working hand in hand with the party secretary all the time.

Letchworth: Sure, you work hand in hand with all of them. You become an extension of them. The party secretary will want to be in the meetings. I'm going to say for example, Senator Dole having meetings on welfare. The party secretary is going to want to be in that. So who's going to be on the floor to learn that someone's got a birthday party? Who's going to be on the floor to learn that, "I'm supposed to do this in Vienna, Virginia, at four"? And the more consistent you were of always being the face on the floor, the more they know that, "I can go tell Elizabeth, she's always there. She'll be the one that I can tell. The leader knows to double check with her." You didn't have to be super capable, just almost like the most reliable person. I used to laugh and say I'm the mystery person. The person that, when you open the refrigerator door, the light bulb comes on. I'm always there. You don't know how that happens but it works. I always thought I filled the role best if people thought of me that way.

Scott: At this time are you still living with your parents in Virginia? Or have you moved out on your own?

Letchworth: At this point, I've moved out on my own at this point. I'm not sure what year we're talking about.

Scott: By the time you are in the director of the legislative scheduling office. Are you on your own?

Letchworth: Yes, I'm on my own. I was living in Northern Virginia and the suburbs of Maryland doing the apartment thing.

Scott: Did you have more time to go out with people that you worked with at that point? Or were you still mostly geared toward work?

Letchworth: I liked to say that if a movie came out in the '80s or '90s I probably didn't see it. I don't know the music of the '80s or '90s, really. My sole focus was work.

Scott: When you hired the staff for this new office, what kind of qualities were you looking for? Did you need people who were already well grounded in the Senate as an institution? Or could they be people from the outside coming in and getting that first entry level job?

Letchworth: Basically, an awful lot of the people who worked in the legislative scheduling office came from other offices. Lynn Grant, for example, was the lady that was hired to do the presiding officer. She was wonderful.

Scott: Where did she come from?

Letchworth: I want to say one of the committees, I want to say policy committee. She just had incredible organizational skills. She's the one who came up with the schedule. The freshmen would serve five hours a week. She made that whole thing work. She was very diligent. Every morning the presiding officer would get a schedule. When he or she sat in the chair she knew who was going to replace her. Five minutes before, if he or she didn't see, they would call the page who is right down below them. The page had the schedule. The page would call the cloakroom and say, "Can someone call whoever was supposed to be next. They are not here." That person would call down to legislative scheduling and Lynn would get on the phone and say, "Where's your boss?"

Scott: Did you ever have trouble with that?

Letchworth: Sure, sure. You had members of Congress that had to get out and so and so is late. Some of them would threaten to get up. "No, no sir. You can't get up." "I've got to! My governor's going to meet me in my office." Sure, you would have to run around and find someone in the cloakroom. "Can you go do this for five minutes. So and so in on their way, but he has to leave." You found people in the dining room. I can remember bribing members: "I'll give you a crossword to do. I'll give you the *New York Times* crossword if you'll do this for 10 minutes." They would threaten to behead you if they got stuck in the chair. "I can't be here more than 10 minutes." That was a constant battle. You can imagine, people are never really on time. The fact that we had the cheat sheet in front of the presiding officer meant that he knew who to look for. A lot of them would start asking the pages 10 or 15 minutes before, "Is he on his way? Has he left yet?"

Scott: Eager to get out of the chair.

Letchworth: Yes, eager to get out. Clearly Lynn set this system up so that the right people knew, had these sheets and you could start checking the boxes and making sure it ran as smoothly as it did, given that everyone's schedule was crazy.

Scott: The other staff members, what kind of tasks did they have?

Letchworth: It was a lot of secretarial work. Typing things, but being very thorough.

Scott: They generally came from other offices as well.

Letchworth: A lot of times from offices where people liked their performances and liked the jobs they did but for whatever reason their term was up, their time was up, they were going to be replaced with somebody else. But if you need a young person who could do the hours, she or he is great.

Scott: Were they more frequently women in your office than men?

Letchworth: They were almost always women, and I don't know why. But they were almost all women.

Scott: It strikes me that from the time that you came to the Senate in 1975 until the time you retired in 2001, it's a very different institution in terms of the number of women who work in positions of power or even in other positions. Did you have a sense for that as you were working in the Senate?

Letchworth: You did get a sense for it. Every once in a while you'd stop and pause and say, "Geez, the secretary of the Senate is now a woman. Ten years ago, I never would have thought that. The assistant parliamentarian is a woman." Senator Lott did something, I can get you the date—I can't remember off the top of my head—he had a women's day. A woman senator opened the Senate—I have a picture of it.

Scott: I do too!

Letchworth: We didn't pass a resolution to allow National Geographic to take a picture. I think somebody took a picture of the Senate from the TV. A woman senator, I believe it was Senator [Susan] Collins, Elizabeth McDonough was the parliamentarian. Every spot on the rostrum, every spot on the floor was a woman. And there was Senator Lott making the announcement. It was pretty neat.

Scott: It is pretty neat.

Letchworth: I remember he thought of that one night sitting in the office. We were puzzling through—He was talking about the rostrum and how the face of it had changed even in the short time that he had been there. He asked, is there a way it can be all women? He and I walked through all the steps and said, "Yes, you can put a woman in every one of the positions. Let's do that one day." I don't remember why we picked the day. We picked the day and set it up so for five minutes nothing but women in the Senate. That was pretty neat.

Scott: What do you attribute that to—the entrance of more women into positions in the Senate. That has really happened since the mid '70s.

Letchworth: I think women tend to be more organized. If you look at the Senate from the outside, it looks so disorganized. For it to have any kind of function or organizational skills, you need people who can give it whatever organization it can have and women tend to do that better. They just tend to do that better. I don't know what that says about us. To me it became obvious to the people in power that—if you think about it, I would have to say that the majority of the senators have women personal secretaries and they are the ones that organize their day. Think about it now. You have Lula Davis who is the secretary for the majority. I think it just became obvious more and more. If I have a woman in my office organizing my day, why wouldn't it make as much sense as possible to have women in and around the floor that keep it as organized as possible. It is a disorganized creature by virtue of the fact that all 100 senators are equal in so many

ways, so it can't be as organized, but as organized as it possibly can, I think women tend to do that a little bit better.

Scott: We've had other people tell us about the changing dress codes for women in the Senate. When you came in for example, there was a skirts only policy. And that continued up into the '90s.

Letchworth: I can remember having to tell a Republican woman senator that she couldn't be sleeveless. Sitting in the chair like that was risqué. I can remember her looking at me like, are you crazy? You are nuts! And scampering around looking for a blazer to give her. She had come in with a conservative dress on, but it was sleeveless. It was probably July, I don't remember. But I can remember thinking this is going to be a little awkward. Yes, I can remember pants were sort of okay on Fridays there for a while for women to wear. Now, gosh, it's pants all the time. Obviously it's come of its age. It's finally come around. I can remember it being very awkward. I can remember some of the doorkeepers coming up to me asking me, "Could you tell Senator So and so," because they were men. But basically the sergeant at arms had a rule to let them know that they needed to put the jacket on.

Scott: You work in this legislative scheduling office, on the floor, right up until 1995 when you became the party secretary. What are some of the milestones in the changes that come to that office during that time? Are they mainly technological in terms of the way that you can distribute information because of the new technologies?

Letchworth: A lot of it is technological. That's a huge part of it. The holds are still done the same way. You still have the communication. You want that communication. You don't want somebody saying Senator So and so is putting a hold on it. You want to say, well how serious is this hold? Is he going to throw his body in front of the train? Or does he just want to buy a couple of days? That makes a difference as to how you regurgitate that to the party secretary and/or the leader. You still have a lot of that personal. I don't see that ever changing where you could send some kind of form in by e-mail or something. You really need that communication. A lot of that communication is done on the floor. A lot of it is done member to the party secretary during roll-call votes or whatever. Remember, he or she is planning, especially if they are in the majority, the next move. A bill is pending now but you've already gotten the marching orders from the leader: what's next, what's next, what's next. As that bill is chugging along, the floor staff are trying to make the bill process along and meanwhile you, the party secretary, might be working on the next bill trying to get a time agreement or trying to work out who can be where, when, why. That part of it I don't ever see really being part of this new technology wave.

Scott: About the holds and the degree of seriousness to which they are submitting a hold. Are these things that you want to understand to be able to pass along to the leader?

Letchworth: You want to be able to say, "He's not going to budge until Thursday because of something that is going to magically happen on Thursday." You learned all of that. You learned to probe without probing but ask more questions maybe than he or the staff might give you. You also sort of, as the keeper of the holds—I can remember using a little reverse psychology on a member or two, knowing that they had a lot of holds. Did you want to exploit that and bring up what I call the "hog factor" or the "pig factor?" "Okay, Senator, you have holds on FIFTEEN bills. How about letting one of these go?" Whereas the majority leader or the minority leader wouldn't necessarily know that. You could tell that to the majority leader but it's just sort of easier for me to do it.

If you knew that one of the members of Congress was a little more humble than the other guy you might say, "So sir, we're going to work on a time agreement. Can I put you down for 30 amendments?" Shame them into thinking, "I don't want to come across as being a pig here." You know they wouldn't necessarily say that but you could kind of see that in their head. "No, Elizabeth, three or four would be good." I was shooting for two or three to begin with but I probably couldn't have gotten that if I'd started out with, "Can I put you down for three?" "No, I want ten."

But you could only learn that by knowing the whole big picture. That was the beauty of having the mark calendar and keeping it. Really the party secretary still has a good hold on that. It's not that it's such a high-falutin' part of his or her job. It's the knowledge base that you garner from that. You get the flavor of a little bit of everything. The two party secretaries work so closely in trying to bring the civility to the chamber. The two leaders do, too, but the party secretaries know the nitty-gritty of what they said. Is that even possible to be able to get done? The two party secretaries can share, without details, "I don't know if we are ever going to be able to give you that kind of agreement." If I shared that with the other party secretary she or he would go back to the leader and say, "We're never going to get one that's going to be five hours. How about trying ten hours?" The leader may have to go back to the guys and gals that wanted the five hours. You sort of rebrand whatever it is in an effort to try to get something moving. Because they have more of the inside scoop, again by virtue of the roles. It's morphed into that.

Scott: You're talking about a job that has really transitioned over time.

Letchworth: It really has. You have to remember that the beginning of it was Oliver Dompierre going to lunch for too long and handing this ragged calendar marked with a red pen—he actually gave me the pens that I had to use—and saying, "Mark this down." It could have been because I have good penmanship. From that to where it is now is fairly amazing. But it is the keeper of how the Senate floor is going to operate. If you wanted to try to crystal ball anything and get a good perspective on how it was going to work or how it was going to play out.

Scott: You have to understand procedure and you had the chance to learn all that before you get to these positions. But it strikes me that you have to be a quick read. You have to learn about individuals relatively quickly and know how you can talk to them.

Letchworth: That's true. Senator Lott probably paid me the nicest compliment and it wasn't paid to me, it was paid to my secretary who then told me. Senator Lott knew my secretary, Pat Wade, from years earlier. He bumped into her in the hallway one day and said, "I am so lucky to have Elizabeth. I have never met anybody who can read the Senate as well as she can. It probably comes from her being there as young as she was." And that's it. I'm not clairvoyant. I really am not. It may be the function of being wedged between two boys. It could be a combination of something that simple. How to resolve problems or how to read and get answers quickly because you had a brother on either side of you fighting over the same teddy bear. You know, I can't really say. But you are right, you do have to be able to assess really quickly and hopefully your assessment is correct because you are going to encourage the majority leader to act on that assessment. He may know something completely different that you don't know. He'll add all that into it and he may make the assessment as to a combination of this knowledge and that knowledge. They don't want to come out on the floor and be wrong over and over again. "We're going to finish this bill at four." Five days later, they lose credibility. Of course they are going to lose the respect of their members. You've messed up everybody's schedule. They need to be as accurate as possible trying to predict what 100 men and women are going to do at any given moment. That's tough.

Scott: So it's in their best interest to let you in on whatever information they may have in order for you to figure out how to move forward.

Letchworth: Yes. And the party secretary the same way. Only when asked though. You don't want to pelt the leader with nonsense. To him it's going to sound like nonsense. It's a need to know basis, in other words. "Leader, what do you want to do next?" And then you regurgitate what you think that next would be like in his life. How does he want the next to play out? And you let him know that's either going to happen easily or that's going to be a struggle. How much have you put into this? How much have

you invested into that being next? Especially if you have the White House. The Bush administration for example, the White House and the majority party and you want to sing off the same song sheet. If the White House has said Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday is going to be education week because the president is going to be hopping all over the country talking about education. The majority leader says, "Elizabeth, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday is going to be education week." "Whoops, that's going to be a tough lift. And this is why. But I think if you do this right and that right and that right you can make it a good education." Or, "That's not going to work at all, is there any way we can make it something else?" The leader wants to be correct in how he predicts how the floor is going to look, how the flow is going to go. You don't want to make false promises or idle threats. A leader that makes idle threats over and over, pretty soon it's like the person that cries wolf. Every Thursday saying we're going to be in all day Friday and you never are, people are going to start making their reservations for seven o'clock Thursday, doesn't matter if he's said it ten times. If enough people take that seven o'clock Thursday flight, it's a *fait accompli* so you figure that out, too. The leader wants to be as accurate as he can be trying to predict what 100 men and women will do at any given time.

Scott: And that is pretty unpredictable.

Letchworth: It can be. Which is why I believe Senator Lott titled his book, *Herding Cats*.

Scott: I think this has been a fantastic interview. I'm so happy that you were able to come by and I look forward to working with you again. I think we'll end there so that you can get out of here on time.

Letchworth: That works. Thank you.

Republican Party Secretary

October 22, 2010

Interview #2

[This interview was conducted via Skype. Both the narrator and interviewer used webcams for video and audio delivery. Scott used a digital voice recorder to record audio from the computer speakers. Letchworth was in her home office in Florida and Scott was in her office at 201 Hart Senate Office Building.]

Scott: Welcome. It's good to see you from afar. Happy that you are able to do this even from long distance.

Letchworth: This is interesting and I'm enjoying it.

Scott: Good, I am too. I'm learning a lot.

I thought we could just start off today by asking if there is anything that we didn't cover last time that you'd like to mention?

Letchworth: I don't think so. I was going through what we talked about the last time. As I said I am probably three-fourths, two-thirds of the way through. I don't think so. I think we chronologically did it pretty well and leading up to semi-modern times. I don't think so, but thank you though for offering.

Scott: Ok good. Let's just start with—One of the things I noticed as I did a little research leading up to your position as party secretary is that your predecessor Howard Greene and the current Republican party secretary David Schiappa, the three of you all followed virtually the same path in the Senate, which I thought was interesting. A little bit of time as either a page or cloakroom assistant, then becoming floor assistant, and then becoming party secretary. I wonder if you could say something about how that works? It appears to be a kind of apprentice system and I wonder if that's intentional, or if that is just the way things work out?

Letchworth: I guess you can't say exactly that it's intentional, but it's the nature of the job. If you look at the Democrats' [party secretary] Marty Paone, he started out I want to say, with the parking office and then went to the cloakroom. Lula was the same thing. Lula was the secretary in the Democratic Policy Committee and then moved her way up. Because of the nature of the job, because it's not a job where you can learn from reading books or going to classes, it is the epitome of on-the-job training. It is the epitome of learning on the job. If you start out especially in the lower positions—of

course, a page is the lowest position—but even a low position like the cloakroom, you learn almost all the aspects of it. Literally from what the staff is looking for when they are calling the cloakroom, what members of the Senate are looking for when they are calling the cloakroom, and how to best serve them to how the whole process works. So it makes sense. I guess what I'm saying is a good party secretary needs to have come from the bottom up. That's not always true with a lot of jobs but very true in my view with that job.

Scott: What about the role that relationship building can play in that process? Is it important that you are someone that people have seen around on the Senate floor for a period of time?

Letchworth: Absolutely. That's very important. One of the most important reasons that is so key is because if you think about it, the party secretary is the majority or minority leader's eyes and ears on the floor. When members of Congress, when members of the Senate especially, are speaking to the party secretary they know they are speaking to their leader for all intents and purposes. So they have to be able to trust this person. They can be telling you a very personal story, something about an illness in the family and they are not going to be there for a week and "I know you need to know this for planning of vote," but of course they don't want that out in the paper. Maybe it's a cancer screening that he or she is doing. You can imagine how confidential that can be. When they are speaking to you, they know they are basically speaking to the leader because this is going to get funneled to the leader on a need to know basis. In the case of somebody talking about some cancer tests and maybe he or she is in a close election and of course you don't want that out. I wouldn't necessarily go busting down the hallway and bust into the office and say, "Guess what? So and so might have cancer." It would be when we talked about when we are going to schedule votes. "Oh by the way, we are going to be missing Senator So and so for this period of time and this is what is going on. You might want to call them and tell them you are thinking of 'em," kind of thing.

Having said all of that, you're right, it is a whole process of feeling comfortable telling you that. The more you know, the more the leader knows, the better he can serve the party as a whole and the better he schedules things, the more accurately he schedules things, and gets things done. The worst you can do for a leader and I always felt I didn't do a very good job that particular day is when a leader got completely blindsided. That's a function of the person wanting to blindside the leader in some cases or just not having that good rapport, just not having a good rapport with that particular member or group of members and they don't feel comfortable enough to let you know in advance and that doesn't serve anybody very well in my view.

Yes, the relationships are very important and of course you build them in the cloakroom.

Scott: As the legislative scheduler you were doing a lot of the things that you just mentioned were the responsibility of the party secretary?

Letchworth: Sure.

Scott: As the floor assistant for the legislative scheduling office you were doing a lot of those things. What is the …Where is the dividing line between that legislative scheduling role and the party secretary as it applied to you in your job?

Letchworth: I think it still applies, as far as I know it still applies. The assistant secretary and the other people that work in the legislative scheduling office are also the eyes and ears for the party secretary. Remember, the eyes and ears of the party secretary are there for the leader. It's almost like if two or three members of the Senate want to let the leader know something, obviously he's tied up. What if the party secretary is tied up? Then you go to the assistant knowing that, me as the assistant, will get it to the party secretary and the party secretary will be in the meeting when the information is needed. It's sort of all rungs of the same thing, all communication to the leader, basically.

Scott: Howard Greene was the party secretary from 1981 up until you took the position in 1995?

Letchworth: That's correct.

Scott: Did you learn a lot from him in that position? You would have been dealing with him all the time.

Letchworth: Ok, when you say we spent a lot of time together and we learned, you knew we were married?

Scott: I did.

Letchworth: Yes, to answer your question you do learn a lot from each other. Obviously you learn work habits, you have to adjust to people's various work habits. You have to—you want somebody under you to be very detailed. Someone that will remember a lot of detail and also someone that doesn't shoot from the hip. To me that's one of the most dangerous things anybody can do when reporting this kind of detail in the fashion that you have to for the leader. You can't make it up, you can't assume, you can't

presume. It's literally, you have to know for fact and not say, "Well, I think they are going to be back." No, it's not "I don't think." What time will they be back? Absolutely, you do learn. At all levels of this you are learning the process.

Scott: You said you don't want to be with someone who is shooting from the hip. How did you in your job assure that you knew the answer to the question?

Letchworth: Basically, ask it until you got a firm answer. Members of Congress typically like to be vague. That is the nature of the beast. It's hard to pin down a senator and it's hard to pin down a House member. In this job you have to be very respectful but you do need to pin them down especially when you are doing vote counts. Members of Congress don't want to be pinned down but the leader needs to know, am I eight votes short or two votes short? You can't give one of these "I don't know" answers. You have to give them the best concrete answer you can. That all comes, also, from relationship building. They have to be able to trust you, know that whatever they would tell me wouldn't be exaggerated or used in a bad way, obviously. All of that, again, goes into the relationships that you build to get the proper answers for the information for the leader.

Scott: Okay. Howard Baker, the leader who established your office, retired at the end of the 98th Congress. How did your job change under Senator [Robert] Dole's leadership, if at all?

Letchworth: It did. Obviously, their leadership styles were completely different.

Scott: Maybe you can talk about that. How were they different?

Letchworth: Senator Baker, he was very hands-on. He wanted to know—for example, I can remember working on a very complex crime bill agreement. When I say crime bill agreement, it was multi-pages, 20 or 30 amendments were going to be in order. Describing what each one of them was and how much time they were getting. He wanted to know, I can remember particularly, almost a daily report from me specifically on how that agreement was going and who was giving me fits or who was working well or who wasn't working well. It wasn't at all unusual for him to say, "Elizabeth is there anybody that I can talk to?" You didn't really have that with Senator Dole. He was more, "Work it out." That was his saying. Work it out. He expected you to work it out. That isn't to, I'm not going say that if you went to him and said, "Sir, I've reached a wall. I can't get past two or three different senators for various reasons." When you reached out to him for that, typically what he did is, "Elizabeth, I'll set up a meeting." And then he would kick off the meeting and maybe leave. But at least he would be facilitating.

The difference in the leadership skills, if you take that same scenario, Senator Baker not only would have set the meeting up, he would have arbitrated or moderated the meeting. It's a really different style, that's all it is. Senator Dole would more likely have three of those going in his office at the same time and pop in all of them. Senator Baker more than likely [would] have them one at a time and he wanted to be the moderator. He would want a report afterwards, sometimes, as to how the meeting went, a decompression of sorts. Different. Senator Dole would just move on to the next meeting. You might not talk to him about what you thought the results were for another day. It's just different. Different ways to legislate.

As far as the office changing, I think the function of the office basically was the same. The hands-on as far as the various leaders helping with [things] when you got in binds, with presiding officers or something, that was completely different. Senator Baker was more amenable to making that plug in the policy committees or urging members, explaining to them, "This is really important that you guys sit in the chair. We really can't struggle to find presiding officers." Senator Dole hated that kind of stuff. If I think about it, I think it was more because he felt he was wasting a favor or wasting a chit on something. We knew right away that you don't go to the leader for that. You only go to the leader when literally that's the last resort. You had exhausted all other ideas before that. Whereas Senator Baker was much more open about, as I said, almost doing some of the recruiting himself. Because his class, the 1980 class that came in, there were so many of them and they were so new and they weren't career legislators, it really did take some coaxing to get them to do it. Maybe that's why Senator Baker was better at it because he had to start out being better at it because he had this brand new young group. Whereas, by the time Senator Dole became leader I'm sure his thought was, "What's wrong with these guys? Just get in the chair. It can't be that big of a deal, why do I have to beg you?" That kind of thing. I guess in that respect there were certain things you knew that one leader was more apt to do and the other leader wasn't.

Scott: Did you know Senator Dole quite well before he became leader? Had you worked with him much?

Letchworth: Yes. He was chairman of the Finance Committee. He was a cloakroom rat. He hung out in the cloakroom a lot. There are certain members that are cloakroom rats and there are certain ones that aren't. That's a term of endearment, believe me. They like to make the phone calls in the cloakroom. They'll do a lot of their work in the cloakroom. Some of them just breeze in and it's just not their thing. It's not a good thing or a bad thing, it's just some of them like that sort of camaraderie that comes with the cloakroom. Senator Dole was one of those.

[Phone rings in Scott's office].

Scott: Sorry.

Letchworth: Do you need to grab that?

Scott: No, no.

Letchworth: So, yes. The cloakroom in general knew him very well. That's always nice when the new leader that gets elected is somebody that the cloakroom—you breathe this sigh of relief that there isn't going to be this upheaval. You obviously knew he was comfortable with you before or he wouldn't have hung out in the cloakroom. Yes, we all knew him very well. How he ran a main office we weren't as familiar with because, of course, the Finance Committee was over in Dirksen [Senate Office Building]. It's not like he had been in the leadership before and we knew what he was like as the whip. That was a little intimidating at times, especially at the beginning. You really have to learn things, how long does he like memos? You know, is a memo a page long? You want to learn the cheating crib notes, he won't read anything past a page.

Scott: Well, how do you learn those things?

Letchworth: You do learn them. You learn them by giving him a three-page memo and he gives it back to you and tells you "I—[audio break]

[Recording ends]

Scott: One page memo—

Letchworth: And tells you, "I only read a page." Or if you are lucky one of the staffers will tell you in advance. I can remember when Senator [Trent] Lott became leader I did try to find out just basic stuff like that and I remember asking him basic questions: do you liked to be briefed in the morning? Do you like decompressing at the end of the day? Just to get his mood. Senator Dole liked decompressing at the end of the day. He would sit down with the staff and talk about how the day went. Senator Baker, not so much. [They] just [had] different styles.

Scott: How did those different styles differ on the floor in terms of scheduling? Doing things on the floor, being down there as a floor assistant. Did it change much for you?

Letchworth: It really didn't other than—again two different styles. Senator Baker, you were able to get him to do more on the floor without really having to push him. I'm not saying that very well. I can remember going to the leader, Senator Baker at the time, when there were issues with a consent agreement he was going to propound and being able to tell him, on the side, "You might have to move this around, you might have to change it." And he was fine with that. Senator Dole wanted it all spelled out in advance, almost go over it. Didn't like the surprises. Who was quicker on their feet with it, it has nothing to do with the capability of being able to talk on your feet. It's just the ability to sort of puzzle through what was going on on the floor. Senator Baker got that pretty quickly, and Senator Dole too, but just in a different way.

Scott: We had one person recount in their oral history interview that Leader Dole would often be found in the cloakroom with a yellow legal pad scratching out a compromise. Even after he became leader he was still often in the cloakroom working.

Letchworth: Again, he was a cloakroom rat. He liked the cloakroom. And he knew that's where a lot of the negotiations could take place, would take place. You're right. It would not be at all unusual in the middle of a bill, where let's say, we got stuck in the mud because we had two or three issues that were just jammed up. He would plop in the cloakroom and say "How's this going? What's going on here? How can we un-lodge this, how can we get this moving?" And be the force that would reenergize a dead meeting. He was also good with the jokes. Especially with a meeting that was getting tense, and you can imagine that many of them would, he could break the ice pretty nicely with a joke that would get everybody to pause, rethink, and get back to the drawing board. It was always wonderful to have him, when he would pop in in situations like that.

Scott: You mentioned in our last interview the desire of the Senate when the majority also has the White House that the White House and the Senate want to sing from the same sheet, so to speak. I did want to follow up and ask you when your party is in the White House and has a majority in the Senate, does it increase the pressure to move legislation through more rapidly? Did that complicate your job in any way as a legislative scheduler?

Letchworth: Absolutely. I wouldn't say that it made the leadership have to move it more rapidly. . . [audio break]

. . . because the White House literally was pressuring you, daily, or at least weekly and sometimes hourly. So, yeah, there was a lot more pressure especially if there was a big agenda item, if the president was making this the theme of the week, the theme of the

month, sure. In a lot of ways we tried to downplay that because we knew that Democrats in certain cases would be stuck . . .

. . . [audio break] on a bill and say "You know what, if we don't finish it it's not that big of a deal, we can go on to something else," and almost downplay that. Although behind the scenes the pressure was incredible to get things done. Sometimes publicly we wouldn't acknowledge the pressure as much because we wouldn't want the Democrats to use that pressure against you.

Scott: That makes sense. Are there any bills in particular, you can think of, where there was a lot of pressure?

Letchworth: I'll have to really think about that. Yes, I'm sure. I can picture them, I can feel the pressure but I can't think of the names of them.

Scott: You can cover that in another interview, maybe, when we've had a chance to think about it.

What was the most challenging part of your job in the legislative scheduling office? When you worked as a floor assistant, what do you think one of the most challenging parts of your job was?

Letchworth: I think probably keeping all the information straight and accurate. When I say that, if you remember we talked about the mark calendar. Basically one of the roles of one of the assistants typically was to keep the mark calendar accurate so that at any given moment the leader or any senator, Republican senator, wanted to know the status of a bill you could regurgitate it. And regurgitate it well and accurately. That meant taking accurate notes. That meant keeping the calendar up to date at all times and committing it—not quite committing it to memory, but almost. You really felt like at any time if someone asked you something about a calendar item, that you could almost, probably, recite all the problems it was going to have or would have.

Also in part because you are constantly working on those bills. You have to remember that a staff director that just reported out a NASA authorization bill, for example. They start working with you immediately to try to figure out how can they get it pending, how do they get it on the floor? They start asking you the issues, "Who has problems with it, who has notified the leader they have problems with it, where can I start negotiating?" If it gets to the level where the leader wants to call it up, he'll ask, "What is the status of that bill?" I guess that was the constant pressure was to be as accurate as

possible and obviously not forget a hold, not forget somebody offering an amendment. That's an awful feeling.

We created, the legislative scheduling office created, its own checks and balances and it literally was checks—red checks on pieces of paper versus black checks on pieces of paper—to make sure that this note got transferred to this calendar. When a hold got removed, it got removed. We created sort of forms, if you will, they were literally forms that we created so that if somebody [who] answered the phone in legislative scheduling took a hold or took an amendment request, you had forms that they filled out and then whoever put it on the calendar had to initial that it got put on the calendar. That got filed. There was a file for every single bill on the calendar that included all the correspondence from the senators wanting to hold it, to offer amendments to speak on it. It also included the report requirement. If you remember, all bills that have reports, the reports have to be available for a certain period of time before the leader has the ability to call it up. So we had to log in, one of the functions of the legislative scheduling office is to log in the times and the dates of all those reports coming in. So every bill had a file . . .

. . . [audio break] when the ultimate question was asked by a senator or the leader "What is the status of a bill?" I could give them the best most accurate information.

Scott: Ok. I guess that must create a whole new problem, which is that you are inundated with paperwork all the time. Did you have a big file system in your office?

Letchworth: Yes, it was. [audio break] . . . calendar, business calendar. I basically carried around a notebook that had the calendar in it. The long form of what the calendar had on it is in the file cabinet. The letter to the leader may say: "Dear leader, I want to put a hold on the bill because …." And it may be six paragraphs long. The only thing that would get translated to the mark calendar was a hold by so and so and I might put something, one or two words to make me remember what it is. The mark calendar was the cheat sheet for the whole file cabinet, if you will.

Scott: Did you also on your mark calendar note something that you brought up last session which was how serious that hold was? Did you keep track of that or was that more of a mental note?

Letchworth: It was both. I had a way of writing the holds on the calendar in my own cheat-sheet kind of way to give me an indication that this person was serious. He was going to lay his body in front of the train so to speak as opposed to a lesser one that really only wanted to be in the process. Just included in all the meetings and all of that versus somebody who was going to do everything he or she could to stop it. I had certain

ways that I wrote those holds differently so that I could then translate that to the majority leader in the most accurate way possible.

Scott: Did you keep more than one mark calendar? You mentioned [in the] last interview something like somebody was asking you to look at calendar five. Did you have more than one version?

Letchworth: No. We had the one version. Remember—We kept a duplicate mark calendar after the incident—remember when we talked about Senator Baker took the mark calendar home?

Scott: Right.

Letchworth: Right after that, within a week, we instituted a Xerox of the mark calendar. An intern or somebody every morning would take the mark calendar and Xerox it so that there was another one somewhere in somebody's desk somewhere. Otherwise the one that was being updated constantly was the one that stayed on the floor, usually in my hands or somewhere in the desk or around the desk. A lot of this communication happens during votes for example. Senators will come into the chamber to vote and all—

. . . [audio break] fine with it, take my hold off. That document was changing all the time.

Scott: How often were you keeping the legislative scheduling office appraised of the changes that you were making? Was that at the end of each day?

Letchworth: It depended. Sometimes in the middle of the day, sometimes at the end of the day. We had forms, almost pad-like forms—

[Phone rings in Letchworth's office]

Let me grab that and get rid of it. Actually, I'm not, I'm just going …

We had forms that we would fill out, releasing the hold, putting the hold on, that we kept in two to three places in and around the chamber so that if we got spoken to in the middle of a vote, a pad was either in reach or you would write yourself a note and within 20 or 30 minutes, ideally, you would write the note and have it taken down to the page, have a page take it down to the office, and then they would file it. The ideal system was that the file cabinet file of that bill reflected exactly what was on the calendar, just in longer detail.

Scott: This is all new, right? You instituted these programs with the advent of the office, that wasn't a procedure that they used before?

Letchworth: That's correct. That was not the procedure. If you remember, Dompierre one day handed me the calendar and went to an extended lunch and that became the norm. It all got [audio break] ever changing now as it needs.

Scott: Do you need to answer something?

Letchworth: No, no I'm fine.

Scott: Senator Baker retires at the end of the 98th Congress. Senator Dole is the majority leader for the 99th. With the 100th congress the Democrats gain the majority. I wonder how your position as a floor assistant, which was new to this Republican majority, how that changed when you became the party of the minority? Did it change?

Letchworth: It did. We've talked about this a little bit. The difference between the minority and the majority in these positions is huge as far as the amount of work you do.

Think about it. Let's just take scheduling a bill. You being the majority, first of all the majority has to give you the time slot. Then you've got to figure out can the chairman be there? You know there is going to be three or four amendments. You call those three or four amendment people and make sure they can all be there. Because as the majority you are not only going through the motions, you are making this whole play, if you want to call it that, or movie, occur. You have to bring the players along. You have to make sure that the movie moves along with the amendment people offering all of that. You can imagine that just to get a bill scheduled for a Monday, any given Monday, that could take several hours on the phone with people calling you back, and this, that, and the other. Let's say that you were successful in getting a particular bill scheduled for Monday at noon. You give the request to the Democrats that basically says I ask consent that Monday at noon the Senate turn to the NASA bill and all he or she has to do is find one big no, they make one phone call, they get a no, she puts a big X on it and gives it back to you and says, "No, it's not going to happen."

The workload is completely different. Your mindset is completely different. For the most part you are stopping everything whereas the year before you were driving everything. The role reversal is astounding when you have basically the same function. It

looks like the same function, the job looks the same, but actually you are doing the exact opposite of what you did in the majority.

Scott: One thing that often fascinates and confuses people at the same time when they look at the Senate is the filibuster. I want to ask you about your experiences with it. As a legislative scheduler and as party secretary, how does the filibuster look to someone in the positions you've served in?

Letchworth: To me it always made sense because to me it always said that the Senate was designed not to pass things by bare minimums. You needed bipartisanship and the parties that do the best are the ones that do have bipartisanship. I can remember Senator Dole had a lot of friends on the Democratic side by virtue of him being the chairman of the Finance Committee for so many years. He just made a lot of friends through being the chairman and member of the Finance Committee. Senator Lott crossed the aisle very easily, for example talking with Senator [John] Breaux a lot and obviously they are friends because they now have a business together. You need that. You need to be able to reach across the other aisle and at least take the pulse of the other aisle even if you can't get the votes. Senator Breaux was always very good at doing that for Senator Lott. If we were confused as to whether something was going to go nowhere or how far it might go, Senator Breaux was pretty honest in talking to the leader and saying, "You know, if you did this it might go a little further," or "If you didn't do this it might help." Leaders that tend not to do that at all are going to struggle.

I think the filibuster represents that. If you choose not to do that and jam it through, 60 votes is a lot of votes to get. It is a lot of votes. If you think of welfare reform, that was 70-something to the 20s. The Medicare prescription drug thing, I'm thinking of the last big things that they did, they're all [audio break] so the filibuster to me has always been a good thing. What it says to people, what is says to members that have bills and legislation, we always used to tell them, you are smart to try to get a couple of Democratic co-sponsors. If it looks too Republican, then obviously you are going to have trouble ever getting that 60 if ever you have to go to that level. We always told members just assume that everything you do it going to need 60 votes. Look at it from that point of view when you are constructing it, when you are considering what it is going to include, when you are considering having a hearing, all of the steps, consider that this vote is going to need 60 every step of the way. How do I do that without compromising the issue, whatever the bottom line issue is?

Scott: How do you, as a legislative scheduler, how do you deal with a filibuster? If there is one, what do you do?

Letchworth: I guess it depends on if you are in the majority or minority. Obviously if you are in the majority you try to overcome it assuming that the legislation is something that you are pushing. Overcome it means to try to figure out what is the biggest problem with the bill? Is there a way to change certain provisions to get a couple more votes here or there? Drill that down. In the minority you might want to continue to sustain the filibuster and in that case you make sure that nobody is drifting over to the other side. It depends. But the roles are completely different. One is preserving and one is to strengthen it.

Scott: As a legislative scheduler what would have been your role in, let's say when you are in the majority, trying to overcome the filibuster? I don't imagine you'd be speaking directly with Democratic senators. Would you be speaking with the Democratic Party secretary, how would that work?

Letchworth: The party secretary to a certain extent. It depended. You might have the chairman of the committee talk to them and say, "Where do you think we could pull a couple of Democrats?" Whatever the case may be. A lot of times the chairman or the bill manager will have a good idea. The staff director, who is the eyes and the ears of the bill manager, a lot of times he will know because he is getting ideas from the Democratic staff director who is working the bill on the other side of the aisle. A combination of all three or four of those positions if they get together and talk, more than likely they will figure out that there are one or two provisions that would bring one or two more senators or whatever you are working on. If you want to bring them over to the right side or if you want to make sure they don't go there. That's how you figure it out because they are the core of what is going on with the bill.

Scott: Would you be in on those meetings or would that information just come to you after the meeting had occurred?

Letchworth: [Audio break] . . . more to it than you a lot of times send somebody like the assistant secretary or in my position in legislative scheduling, somebody to get the feel of it because then you want to be able to report that back to the party secretary so the leader says, "How's it going?" And the party secretary has the best idea saying, "It's going well. The meeting went well," or "It didn't go good at all." You also find out in the leadership that the chairman or the bill manager typically tells you what you want to hear and that gets confusing to a leader. The reason that a bill manager or a chairman typically will tell a leader what they want to hear because—the leader has a certain time slot for example, for a certain bill. If he comes to the chairman and says, "How's it going," and the chairman honestly tells him, "I'm stuck in the mud and I'm never going to get this bill done in five days like you wanted," the leader is going to consider doing something else.

The more logical thing for a bill manager to say would be that it is going well, "I'm doing well, we're chugging along." The leader more than likely will find the party secretary and ask, "How is it really going?" And the party secretary would tell you, "It's going horrible. We may have to figure out what you want to do for plan B." This is all in an effort, not to discredit the chairman, but you also don't want the leader blindsided in five days, he hasn't done anything and he promised somebody else something in five days. There is a lot of that going on. The more meetings that a party secretary can go to or somebody from the floor staff can go to and get the real scoop because the chairman is going to tend to tell the leader more what he wants to hear than what sometimes the truth.

Scott: One big change that occurs in the Senate during the period that you are in the legislative scheduling office is the introduction of television into the Senate Chamber. We usually ask people about this as part of our interviews because there was a lot of controversy at the time when it was proposed, about the impact that it may have on the Senate proceedings, collegiality, and things like that. From your perspective as someone who had been there before the introduction of television and someone who was there long after, what do you think of it? Did you notice a lot of changes as you were moving about on the floor? Did it create new scheduling challenges for you for example, because members wanted to have so much time during a certain period of the day when they could get up and talk?

Letchworth: The scheduling conflicts didn't seem to be that different. There didn't seem to be a lot of time differences as far as floor time. The quality of the speeches—I remember a lot of debates, especially in the cloakroom, about people worrying about the quality of the speeches. That they would go down or that they would change. Initially, I thought—I didn't think that either would happen.

In hindsight, looking at it, the whole quality of the Senate changed to a certain extent. It changed in a real simple way. A quick story. It used to be that you could sit on the floor and learn just about anything you wanted to learn about a specific state if you listened to enough of the morning business speeches. You would learn about the Boy Scout group from this little town or something from this little town. You got the flavor of all 50 states. Slowly that stopped happening. I think it was because staffs, in part, press secretaries, staffers, decided that if members of Congress were only seen as the small town guy that only talked about the Boy Scout group, that he couldn't be taken seriously. They had to latch onto bigger national issues because a bigger national issue got you on the news. If you stood up on the floor and started talking about the Russians doing something, you would probably end up on the news. If you stood up on the floor and talked about your Girl Scout group, you probably aren't going to end up on the news. It didn't take long for staffs to encourage members, "Don't talk so much about the Girl

Scout group. Why don't you start talking about Russia more?" Obviously, we're making that up. You did lose the flavor of the real member of Congress to a certain extent.

From there you ended up having spin machines created. If a senator realized he got some big press with a speech he made on the floor, then he's going to tend to do that more. Before he knows it, he's going to forget that he had a Girl Scout group in his home town. Now his sights are bigger. It did that. Whether that was the intention or not, clearly that wasn't the intention. The intention was to move into the 20th century, but that was the fallout. I don't know how you could have avoided that unless we restructured the day so that there could be a certain amount of time where it was okay to talk about the Girl Scout group, that's what you were expected to do. But we didn't do that. Morning business was morning business and the ones that made fire and brimstone speeches are the ones that got on the news. Therefore, those speeches started showing up and you lost the quality of the speeches.

Scott: There were many more props too, on the Senate floor, with the introduction of television?

Letchworth: Absolutely. The chart wars and all of that became a whole underground business, making the charts. Again, that also created the spin machines that now existed in offices that didn't use to. You have professional press, PR, media people that work in these offices now. They wouldn't have spent five minutes in a senator's office back in the day. There was no need for them [and] now their staffs are stacked heavily that way. That is all due to TV. I don't know how you could have avoided that. And then you add on to that the 24-hour news cycle and just about any member of Congress knows that at any given time if he gets on the floor and wants to say something outlandish, he'll make the news.

Scott: Oh yes, for sure.

Letchworth: It's almost like TV and Congress has become the prop for them to a certain extent. They learned how to manipulate it.

Scott: Do you think it has been a good thing overall? What's your take on it?

Letchworth: I think basically it's been a good thing. I think it would have been nice to foresee some of the issues like the one we just talked about. What happened, in my view, when members of Congress stopped talking and stopped reporting on the little town stuff, we as the American people started to feel [unintelligible], we started to feel a little, "Well, he doesn't care anymore because he used to talk about the Girl Scout group,

and he used to do this. But he doesn't do that anymore, he doesn't care." That started this disconnect, which I think is so huge now.

So if we could have addressed, and again, you know how the House has their one minutes? Their one minutes are always at the end of the day, nobody pays any attention to them, but that's typically where you can learn about a Cub Scout group or a Little League baseball team. I almost wish the Senate would have done something like that so that we didn't lose that disconnect. You could become a hero of sorts if you participated in those nightly. Instead, now, if you were to come over every night and talk about your Little League team, at some point people would start laughing at you. That's a shame. But they really would. I wish we could have created something like that, a period in time—I don't know what you would have called it—where that would have been its sole focus. Maybe folks would have tuned in earlier and been more encouraged about members of Congress. Actually that's not something you couldn't institute now [unintelligible] to bring that disconnect back. It used to be that members of Congress went home and the way you knew them was through town fairs and parades and all of that. Now you know them on TV and you feel like you don't know them at all because they don't talk about the little stuff anymore.

Yes, it's been a good thing. It was something that had to happen especially, you know, the European Parliament was about to do the same thing, so it had to happen. I just wish we could have—you know, hindsight is always 20-20 but I wish that we could have thought of a few things like that—the disconnect wouldn't have occurred in such big leaps and bounds, in my view.

Scott: There was a trial period before it went live. It was closed circuit right here in the Senate. That's when Senator Dole was the majority leader. Was there any talk in the cloakroom, or anything, were people really concerned? How did people feel about what was happening? Was there a lot of talk about it, or did people just feel like it is inevitable?

Letchworth: Everyone had pretty much decided it needed to happen. The biggest concern was, will it be done fairly? There was a lot of concern, will the cameras zoom into my bald spot? Will they show an empty chamber when somebody's talking? Obviously the camera has the ability to paint whatever picture the cameraman wants to paint. It needed to be as nonpartisan, as apolitical as possible. An awful lot of the debate was on that.

An awful lot of—or some of the debate was about how is it going to look? What does the backdrop look like? It was, I can't remember how many years later, they

changed the backdrop. It used to be just yellow walls and then it became something with some pattern because it looked like they were standing in front of a prison, somebody said at one point. There was a lot of talk about that. But not really, "I don't think this should happen. This is going to be the ruin of the Senate." That really wasn't the theme. I don't remember that necessarily happening at all. Everybody just assumed.

Scott: Senator Dole supported it. He thought it was a good idea.

Letchworth: Yes. I think most people realized it was what needed to happen. Let's just make sure we do it right and we do it correctly. And really, for not having much guideline, I think they did a fantastic job. Because C-SPAN has been pretty right on from day one with how it's all been handled and how it's all been displayed. Every once in a while you would have a senator or two call into the cloakroom and complain about the camera angle or complain about this. And we'd have to call down—the cloakroom had a direct line down to the recording studio at one point, I don't know if they still do. We would call down and say, "They are saying that you shouldn't …" or whatever. But that actually lessened pretty quick. There was a little bit of a flare up every now and then but basically that didn't happen very often. I was very impressed that they did it right from the very beginning. As far as I can tell it's been pretty much right ever since then.

Scott: Abby Saffold talks about, in her oral history interview, she talks about the fact that once people started watching C-SPAN it created this whole new audience of people who were avid C-SPAN watchers. They would often get calls in the cloakroom: "What are you guys doing? I thought you were bringing this bill up, when's my bill coming up?" Some of them were concerned citizens, some of them were lobbyists, people who had interest in the things that were coming to the floor. Did you notice that type of uptake in interest and in calls to the cloakroom?

Letchworth: Absolutely. You knew—it was almost like it was the birth of the political junkies, only it wasn't the birth of them, it was the awakening of them. Now they could watch it in action. They wanted to know what was going to happen, too. They wanted some education. They wanted some Senate 101 or House 101. There was a lot more of that pretty quick. That, of course, also evened out. But initially, yeah, there was a lot of that. It was interesting, it was really interesting, especially when you find out that this little old lady had been doing what she could to follow Congress all these years and now she loves it and she's in Oklahoma. It's just interesting to see how much the legislative process is very interesting to so many people that you just never would have guessed.

Scott: And it created a whole new host of challenges for some Senate offices because they had to try to explain this process to people who were watching it on TV and uncertain about how some things work. Like the filibuster, for example.

Letchworth: Exactly. And defending, I mean, it's a lot of defending it. If you didn't do it correctly you could leave a disgruntled constituent even more disgruntled. A lot of offices tended to flick those kind of things to the cloakroom. I don't know if that's because they thought we had all the answers, necessarily, other than they knew that we answered them often and we had a better pat answer than they would. A lot of offices got in the habit of sending those type of questions to the cloakroom. Also the caller felt like he or she was—this was a big deal. "I'm Miss Big Britches because I got to talk to the floor." I can remember hanging up from a couple times thinking, I bet that is going to be their dinner conversation. "You're not going to believe who I got to talk to today." So it was kind of neat in that respect.

Scott: That is really cool. It's a real connection with people.

Letchworth: Exactly.

Scott: What are the circumstances that led you to become party secretary? What happened in 1995?

Letchworth: I think I know. I could ask Senator Dole, I guess, but I think I have a pretty good idea. The Brady bill was one of the defining moments in his mind about me. There were a couple of other instances like that where the Senate was really stuck in the mud. We were stuck in the mud over one particular thing or the other and we were just not getting anywhere. I gave him an answer that he liked or gave him an avenue that got him out of the problem. I can remember him specifically talking to me afterwards, especially on the Brady bill, for example. In another example, we created what is now done a lot, a correcting resolution because a bill that we wanted to get done had some problems in it and we couldn't pass it the way that it was. But it was a conference report and you couldn't amend it and how could we get past that so that we could declare the victory by passing the conference report but clearly there needed to be changes. I came up with "Why don't we do a correcting resolution." We—

Scott: What is that?

Letchworth: That would be a resolution—it's a concurrent resolution which is the little bit of the challenge of it. It basically corrects the enrollment of the bill. So you pass a Senate concurrent resolution that says in a particular bill we are going to change

the first five lines to mean this and you pass it. You wait for the House to pass it and therefore the enrolling clerk has changed the bill. Now you pass the bill in the way it needed to be changed. That was one of my brain childs that I think put me a little more on Senator Dole's radar screen for this position. There were a couple of instances like that over the years. It wasn't anything that happened at one particular time. I think it was several instances like that over the years. When it came time for him to appoint and choose a party secretary, I was lucky and blessed that he called and chose me.

Scott: Did you have to think about it at all?

Letchworth: I did. He called the house and I didn't believe him. I shouldn't say I didn't believe him. Basically I almost said, "I don't believe this, you'll have to tell me this in person." He said "Come in the office the next day." I did. I came in the office the next day and he formally offered it to me. Now it wasn't quite that harsh, but I basically said I want to see it come from the horse's mouth. So I did. I came in the next day and we had a meeting and he laughed and said, "I didn't think I had to tell you in person but I guess I had to tell you in person!" It was a little comical.

Scott: You had been working together for some time at that point. You had really gotten to know one another.

Letchworth: Exactly. It was almost in jest but I really did want to hear it from the horse's mouth. That's what happened and it was a wonderful experience.

Scott: Maybe you can say something about the challenges of the Brady bill.

Letchworth: I'm going to have to go back and do a little research on that because I can't remember the provision that stuck us so badly. There was a particular—and if I'm not mistaken. I will go back and research this. It had something to do with registration, the timeline of the registration.

Scott: Maybe we can talk about this next time.

Letchworth: Ok, that sounds like a plan.

Scott: He asked you to be party secretary. Then you're elected by the rest of the party caucus.

Letchworth: During the leadership elections, which are occurring this year on the 16th, typically they occur in the middle of November. After they go through the

leadership election, they go through the party secretary nomination process. Typically it's whoever the leader wants. He'll make a brief statement as to why he thinks this person is good and it's almost like a pro forma vote. And then, of course, the full Senate votes on it. But again, it's almost a pro forma of sorts. You do have a resolution passed electing you. But I don't remember any scenario where there has been a party secretary elected that the leader didn't want. Nor was there ever really a challenge. It's really sort of a *fait accompli* once the leader appoints you or asks you, then the rest of the Senate follows suit.

Scott: Right. But it's a great honor, particularly because you are the first female Republican Party secretary.

Letchworth: That's correct. It is a great honor. To me it was a huge honor having been the first woman. It was a big deal being the first woman in the cloakroom, although that didn't make any waves with anybody. It was a big deal for the cloakroom to handle that at the time. This was not as big of a deal for the whole Senate to handle because Abby had been a party secretary and there were more female senators, but it was a big deal. I felt it to be a real honor, especially for Senator Dole to have asked me. I really felt like that was a huge honor.

Scott: How would you describe the role of party secretary?

Letchworth: I have to say that it's probably one of the most unique insider jobs that nobody knows anything about. You fly so underneath the radar and it needs to. It really needs to for the obvious reason, and we talked about this earlier, that personalities that you would have to deal with but with the responsibility but also your relationships. You need to have very secure relationships with as many members as possible. And as many as you can across the aisle, which is always helpful in the Senate in general. If you appear to be somebody that is in the news all the time or appears in press releases then the obvious leap or thought process for a member of Congress is: "I better not tell Elizabeth because it might end up in the press."

I always had a very strict rule that I didn't talk to the press, at all. Not even about what the schedule of the Senate would be. I didn't ever want to be quoted, even something as mundane as, "The Senate is going to be in at two o'clock on Monday. That's what the Party Secretary Elizabeth Letchworth said." I didn't want my name attached to something as simple as that or as basic as that because I was afraid members of Congress would think, "She is getting pretty comfortable talking to the press." And then make that leap that whatever they would tell me might end up in the press and therefore they couldn't share that with me. The less they told me, the less the leader knew

and the less the leader was educated and could be blindsided and that didn't seem like a good thing for the leader or for the [unintelligible]. It's probably the least known job in Washington with the responsibility that it carries.

Scott: I agree. The most famous example is Bobby Baker, Lyndon Johnson's party secretary, and he only became famous when certain things came out about his activities. It is one of those roles that has incredible responsibility in terms of moving things through the Senate. And yet, you're right, few people know anything about it.

Letchworth: Right. Again, it's the nature of the job that it stays that way. I would worry if you got a party secretary that did end up on news programs on Sunday. I would think that party secretary would not be a good one, would end up not being effective at all, for all those reasons we just talked about. They need to be as anonymous and as behind the scenes as—I think we talked about it in the first interview—the guy that turns on the light in the refrigerator. You never know who it is but you rely on it that it always comes on. That's what I see the party secretary as being. It always gets done, you don't know how, it just gets done. Of course the leader is the how and the leader is the face. You do have incredible responsibility and there's a lot of reward to it. There's a tremendous amount of reward but it's a personal reward. Obviously you don't go out and celebrate with the bills that are being passed. Rarely are you invited to that kind of thing, and you understand it, in part because once a bill is passed and there might be a celebration party in such and such office, you're back on the floor moving the next bill. It just keeps going for you. It just keeps going and going.

I thought it was a wonderful job. I think the position is incredible. Even though it has changed and evolved and morphed, it basically is still the same [unintelligible] that it was designed to do when it was designed 50, 60 years ago.

Scott: I think a theme through our conversation so far has been the demanding nature of the jobs that you've held. You are there first thing in the morning and you often don't get to go home until the very last person leaves. This brings up the question: How do you manage, how do you schedule a personal life outside of the Senate when you have such an unpredictable work schedule?

Letchworth: It is very hard. Basically, it's next to impossible. You need a very, very understanding spouse. If you've got children you need very, very understanding children because you are going to miss just about everything that could possibly occur in a child's life. Obviously the Senate hours are so crazy. It's very difficult. You tend to live for the recesses. You tend to try to go back to some normalcy during the recesses. Which is why when Senator Baker instituted the three weeks on, one week off, that was so

welcome. You at least had something to look forward to. If you think about it, too, if you work on the floor and you are confined to the floor hours, doctors' appointments can't even be made. The washer and dryer can't break. You know what I'm saying? They literally can't. So all of that gets crammed into the recess time. That is where you reconnect with the world, with your family.

Scott: I thought it was interesting that both you and Abby Saffold, the first two female party secretaries, your spouses were also Senate staff. I wondered if that helps in some way because at least they understand the schedule and the demands of the institution.

Letchworth: It does. To me it helps a tremendous amount. If you have children involved, then you've got orphan children. That wouldn't be a very good thing. Seriously though, it is very helpful. Also the recesses are different. If you think about it, a lot of the recesses are around holidays but some of them are around nothing. Who gets a week off for Columbus Day? Not the average person. But if the husband and wife do then you can take a pretty nice vacation. You know if you say Veteran's Day, nobody gets a week off for Veteran's Day but the Senate would typically. You see what I'm saying? So it's helpful for that reason too.

Scott: But even in that way, would you really, as party secretary, be able to take and enjoy a weeks' vacation like that? I would think that you have things going on that you are attending to.

Letchworth: You do, but you'd be surprised how slow the job is once the Senate goes out. All the players go away. If all the players go away, it depends on the leader. With Senator Dole he didn't tend to travel as much. He tended to be around a lot during recesses and tended to call meetings. Senator Baker not as much. Your recess was your recess for him, to a large extent. Senator Lott, a little different. It just depended. You could easily take several days off and it would be completely understandable. You have to understand that you were always a phone call away from anybody. That was ongoing all the time, especially as you got closer to recesses and as you got closer to coming back the phone would be ringing more at night: "Do I have to come back the first day? Can I steal an extra day? What if I try to—? " You started to get all of those kinds of things. As long as you could take the phone calls and get the answers, nobody seemed to have a problem if you took two or three days off, or took a week off.

Scott: Okay. How do your responsibilities change when you become the party secretary? It seems like you've been doing a lot of these things already in the different

positions you've held. Is it just times 100 when you become the party secretary? What changes?

Letchworth: It is times 100 and all the responsibility is on you. It is definitely times 100 and then the responsibility and all the blame all comes on you. You may still run around and get a presiding officer because the staff can't find somebody. You may end up pulling somebody out of the dining room. But the responsibility of having that chair filled is now completely yours. The leader is not going to go find your third assistant. The leader's going to find you and scream at you if there's nobody in the chair. The person in the chair is saying, "I'm going to walk out" and you need to adjourn. It's something as simple as that. The party secretary also has an added responsibility that the other staffs typically don't do. They may help in a small role, but really it falls on the secretary and that's the committee on committee assignments.

Scott: Good, let's talk about this. This is interesting.

Letchworth: That, again, is a whole function of communication between members of the party, your party, and all to the leader. It's a letter function where the party secretary sends out a letter with a time sensitive time frame attached to it that basically says you need to let the leadership know, this office know, by a certain date and certain time what committees you want, if you want to keep the status quo, if you want to move around. Those are all timed in the office. Again, another book of sorts is put together with all that data. So that when the leader says, "How many people want the Ag slot?" you know. The letters sometimes can be detailed: "I need it because I've been a five generation farmer." Or, "I ran on it my whole campaign." Again, the majority leader or minority leader can't keep up with all the campaigns so he can't possibly know that might have been your theme. Another way is to put it in this letter and then when the majority leader or minority leader asks the party secretary, "What's the story?" you have—again, it's all about data, it's all about information. For him to put people on the best committees to serve them the best, to serve him the best.

Of course a lot of it is done by seniority anyway which is just plug in the slots with the members. You start from the very beginning, you start from the most senior member and you have to ask him, get from him or her, "Are you okay with your current committee assignments? Do you want to move?" Usually they are fine, but every once in a while you might get someone: "I don't know, what do you have open? I'm kind of sick of where I've been for the last 15 years. What's open?" It's all a function of that. That really falls on the party secretary. I don't remember doing hardly any of that work for any of the party secretaries that I worked for other than just secretarial work. I might have logged in some letters, or sent out the letters. I can remember constructing the letter and

sending it out, but otherwise, no, all that data is really kept by the party secretary and that's ongoing meetings between the majority leader, the committee on committee chairman, the party secretary, until you fill all the holes, fill all the slots.

Scott: There are certain committees that everybody wants to be on and certain committees that are harder to fill, right? There are going to be broken hearts along the way. How do you deal with someone who doesn't get that assignment that they are pretty eager to have?

Letchworth: That's another whole category that I used to keep track of: people who got turned down. How bad did their assignments end up? I would try to make sure the leader knew towards the end of the process, especially if there are a couple decent B committee assignments which are the lesser committee assignments, but yet some of them are pretty nice. If you were a small business person, you would want to be on the small business committee. But then there are a lot of people that wouldn't care at all and would have no interest in being on that. I would try to keep track of members that especially didn't get any of their first pick, second pick, third picks. They just didn't get—nothing went right for them for a whole host of reasons and let the leader know: "You know, so and so just didn't get anything he needed. Is there any way you can give him something extra?"

The leader also thinks about the committee assignments as to the agenda too. If the leader is forward thinking, and all the ones that I've worked for have been forward thinking, you think about well, if we are going to have the first six months of this Congress deal with education, let's say, then let's make sure the education and labor committee, or HELP [Health, Education, Labor and Pensions] committee, put a lot of senior members on there that know what they are doing. You think along those lines, too, and that's, again, another bigger picture than just plugging in names. Although it is data information, just putting together a bunch of data and information for the leader, there is a lot of that thought process before you just plug names in.

Scott: How long does this process take? When do you start and when would you more or less be finished in a typical congress?

Letchworth: I can remember it taking 'til Easter.

Scott: Wow.

Letchworth: Yes. You also need to know that this resolution is a resolution, so it is debatable. In theory it is amendable. In theory you need 60 votes because it is filibuster-able. Now, that typically doesn't happen, but it could happen.

I can remember the ratios have to be decided first and that is between the two leaders. Typically the two party secretaries will do memos to the two leaders as to what former Congresses ratios were when it was a 55-45, or 56-44, or whatever. Those two leaders are now armed with past data. They then meet and decide basically between the two of them what the ratios will be. That is just a pure numbers game. When you figure out the ratios, then you have to figure out, then you have to do the same ratios for each committee. If it's a two-seat margin, then it's got to be a two-seat margin for all the committees. Occasionally you will have a leader that needs more than a two-seat margin. He needs more seats, he needs the committee increased, especially if he has a big class and a third of the new class all campaigned that they were going to be on the Finance Committee. The leader hates that because now he has to fulfill this campaign dream and it really puts the leader in a real pickle because he has to go to the other leader and basically give up something to get these slots. I can remember being able to cash in on a couple of really sweet deals for the Republicans because the Democrats were in such a pickle and they needed extra slots. In other words, they mathematically didn't deserve them. So in order for them to get them they had to give us something that we mathematically didn't deserve.

Scott: Would that usually be about committee ratios, too, you would trade up on one committee for another?

Letchworth: Yes. At that point, when that kind of thing starts happening, you have to go to the chairman and you have go to the ranking and clue them in on this whole scenario and say, "This is what they want us to do. Do you think you can live with this?" And then of course the chairman has got to figure out what he or she was going to do in the committee the next two years. "Well, I was going to do these bills, that bill, that would work great for those bills," or "No, that would kill me if I tried to do …." If this person thought they were going to have three Supreme Court nominees and it was Judiciary why would they stack it? That kind of thought process needs to go along. Once you figure those numbers out, then you start plugging in the names. Typically it starts between Thanksgiving and Christmas. I can remember working literally Christmas Eve on it. I can remember working well into January on it. I do remember one time that it took almost to Easter. That's because the two leaders couldn't agree on ratios. They were struggling with ratios. If you get the ratio scenario worked out early and without many problems, the other part of it, as we've talked about, is basically in a large part just plugging in names and numbers. Names and assignments.

The 50-50 congress was a whole different scenario. Maybe we should talk about that on a different day.

Scott: Yes, I was hoping we could cover that next time because there is just, I think, so much to talk about.

Letchworth: There really is.

Scott: I wanted to ask you, though, about when the decisions had been made and you make the members aware of their committee assignments, what kind of response do you have, if any?

Letchworth: Again, you can get disappointed members. You clearly can have disappointed members. You've got to remember when you have a large class you have a lot of members that are of the same seniority. So they start out literally drawing a number out of a hat to figure out what their seniority is. If you think of some guy that draws the last number, he's going to get the last pick of everything. That guy has basically had a pretty bad day all the way around. But there's nothing you can do about it. They take their lumps as they can get them. If you really feel like somebody just got a raw deal on so many levels, or just—there's nothing you can do about the circumstances, it's just the way the cards fell that day, I tried to let the leader know so that he can do something and reward them in some way. I can remember Senator Dole tried to create a position or two for one or two of these. That is an ad hoc leadership type position for them because they just got the raw end of so many things. There are things like that the leader do[es] to try to make it up to them. You don't want to start off a brand new congress with a completely disgruntled member. You'll be disgruntled for the next two years with him or her, if that happened. Clearly try to iron all those things out as best you can, as early as you can.

Scott: Because you kept notes about how these assignments went and people who may not have been happy or who may have got a bit of a raw deal because of the way they drew their name or whatever, then maybe for the next Congress you would take those things into consideration when you are doing these assignments again?

Letchworth: Yes, exactly. I would keep notes from one Congress to the next especially for that reason. And it wasn't that unusual for a leader to say, "Remind me next time…" so that they could do something, or maybe not do something for them. "Remind me that he got everything that he wanted." I can remember having that kind of

statement made to me so that I had to make a mental note this person got everything he wanted so he doesn't need to do so well next time around. You do typically do that.

Scott: Did you hear from senators who were pleased with the assignments they received?

Letchworth: Yes, you do. You get an "atta boy" or a thank you. Yes, you do. They understand it is a process. It is not a personal vendetta. It's very hard to manipulate the system. You really can't for the most part. You still got a lot of praise when they got good assignments. Sure.

Scott: You were party secretary for Senator Dole for a relatively short period of time because he resigned his position in order to run for the presidency. Senator Trent Lott becomes the majority leader. What was it like to work with him? Did you know him already? Had you worked with him already?

Letchworth: I had and we had a pretty good relationship because he had been in the leadership and worked as the whip. He and I had become personally friendly through a series of things, one of which was the page program. He ended up wanting to have several pages and one of them was a very dear friend of his—son of a very dear—

Anyway, yes we ended up working very well. That was definitely a trial period. I can't say that he actually said this would be a trial period but we kind of understood that this was going to be a trial period. Obviously it worked out well. I loved working for him. But it was definitely scary initially because I had only been the party secretary for a short period of time. I learned when the rest of the world learned that Senator Dole was resigning.

Scott: Oh, really?

Letchworth: Oh yes. There were only two people that knew in advance. It was the best kept secret in town. It was a real shock for all of us to learn that, needless to say. But it worked out well. The learning curve between myself and Senator Lott was quick. He was very honest with me right up front as to what he expected and how he expected it. We got those rough periods over with right away. For example, a rough period for me was that I had a difficult commute because I lived very far away. I had the challenges of the 395, 95 traffic every day. I was very up front with him. "That's an issue with me." Senator Dole understood that and he didn't see me until 9:15. That was okay with him. "You need to know that that is probably going to be the way it is because I can't move, I'm not moving." He understood that. We ended up having wonderful morning calls. I'd

be in the car and the first thing he would say is, "How far out are you?" And then we'd start our day. We got through all of those things that could have been speed bumps for any kind of working relationship. We got through those very quickly. I appreciated that from Senator Lott and I think he appreciated me being very open with him from the very beginning.

Scott: Where were you commuting from?

Letchworth: Manassas. Actually, a little south of Manassas. It was 395 the whole way and northern Virginia commuters understand what that means.

Scott: Yes, that's not pretty. You said there was perhaps not a formal trial period but there was an understanding that Senator Dole had asked you to be the party secretary and now there was a new leader, that maybe things wouldn't work out.

Letchworth: Right, right. I can't say those words were actually said but there were conversations like, "So, let's see if we can make this work." Those kinds of statements, several times. I knew that. It was very understandable. I wasn't a Lott person, but yet I wasn't a Dole person, I wasn't a Baker person. I was a Senate person and Senator Lott needed to learn that about me and he learned it very quickly. But if you don't know that initially, you are going to assume, well, she was a Dole person, or she was a …. Anyway, he did learn that very quickly and everything ran wonderfully. But there was definitely a trial period for both of us.

Scott: What was his leadership style like, as compared with the other two that you had worked for?

Letchworth: He liked to be very involved. He liked to know all the idiosyncrasies. He was probably more detailed than the other two leaders as far as wanting to know all of the detail. He liked all of the nitty-gritty. He liked all of the personalities. He liked the personality struggles. He would get right down in the middle of it. He really enjoyed that. He liked the one-on-one personality issues and would try to solve them. He was very good at asking advice for how to solve them. Not that I was the end all and be all of knowledge, but he knew by virtue of what I did that I did know more of the personality of the whole issue. Not because I was the smartest person on the block but by virtue of the positions that I [held]. He didn't have a bit of problem saying, "Elizabeth what do you think, how do you think this is going to end up? Where do you think I'm going to end up?" If I told him where to end up, he used his own negotiating skill to know where to start to know where he would end up. I thought we worked well

together doing that kind of role. Obviously he must have thought so too. So things worked out pretty well.

Scott: What was a typical day like for you with Senator Lott as majority leader?

Letchworth: He liked to start the morning with "What is my day going to look like?" Again, a lot of that happened on the phone. I was either stuck on a bridge or almost there. So he accepted getting that by phone. But if I were there I would try to go down and bring him the opening script and talk about—He would read it and then he would say, "What is the day really going to look like? How bad is it going to be? How many amendments? There are six amendments on this list. Are we going to have to go through all—"

Scott: Elizabeth, can you hear me? I just lost you. I'm going to hang up.

The Unusual 107th Congress

December 1, 2010
Interview #3

[This interview was conducted via Skype. Both the narrator and interviewer used webcams for video and audio delivery. Scott used a digital voice recorder to record audio from the computer speakers. Letchworth was in her home office in Florida and Scott was in her home office in Maryland. This interview picks up where the previous interview left off: What was a typical day like for you with Senator Lott as majority leader?*]*

Letchworth: It could be long and it tended to have bottlenecks in all sorts of different places. A lot of times Senator Lott would arrive in the office much earlier than me, to be perfectly honest, and want to know where I was and how soon I could get there. Basically because he liked to know what his day was going to be like, obviously, like anybody does at the beginning of their day. Typically at the end of the day he would decompress with me. We would talk about how it ended, did it end well, or did the floor situation end up a little, in a little bit of a mess. And then there were times when he would send me home or send staff on their way cleaning up a little bit of the problems, potentially being able to. So there was a lot of time, there was reason to report something new to him even though it may have looked like nothing could have happened between the close of last night and the beginning of the day. A lot of time there could have been a resolution. He would want to know, how did that get resolved? Or, a lot of times, things needed over night to percolate and free themselves. That happened, all in an effort to make sure that he knew the floor schedule, he knew basically what he thought the floor was going to look like so he could plan what he wanted to do next, especially if the White House was of the same party, as we were talking about at one point, you kind of wanted to have the same theme of the week. It was just all more of an effort to keep him informed, keep him in the personalities, make sure he understood the flavor of the floor and how the flow was going. He wanted to hear that a lot of times before the floor opened.

At the chamber, typically, the Senate typically came in at 9:30 or 9:15. I may be barely coming in, sort of flying in the door or not quite there. I would try to do as much as I could of that, with that, with him on the phone. And then of course, once I got there, be able to give [him] more detail as to what was going on. Again, all in an effort for him to open the day, he liked to open the day almost every day with the floor schedule, as you see most leaders do, and then give a little talk or just a snippet of what the floor would look like. You have to remember members are calling him potentially at the very

beginning of the day wanting to know when they can go home. They want to know how to plan their day also. The more he knew without getting into all of the details, the bigger the picture he could explain to other members as to what the day would look like, the better he felt he did with members. Of course, he wanted to give them as accurate answers as he could.

Scott: That opening day schedule that the majority leaders often give, is that really for the other members? What is the purpose of that?

Letchworth: It is for the other members for the most part, for them to plan their day. They have just as hectic of a problem as obviously any other leader or any other member of the Senate does as far as what does the day look like? Are they going to be able to attend the things they need to attend at night? Is their committee meeting going to be interrupted by votes? If you are a chairman and you want to get through a certain stage of your committee meeting, you might want to listen to what the chamber is going to do in the morning to find out if your committee meeting is going to be interrupted. If so, maybe you want to move around witnesses coming in at your committee meeting. Maybe you want to get the hardest part done first, that kind of thing. So there were myriad reasons why the leader would want to be the one to give the program of the day. Also, it obviously shows leadership, shows control of the body. Again, having said all of that, he also wanted to be as accurate as possible. He liked to get a second report from last night, a newer one, in case something had changed in the morning so that when he hit the chamber he had the most up to date and could be as knowledgeable as he could possibly be on what the day would look like.

Scott: When you had a debriefing with him at the end of the day, you just mentioned he would often send you home with maybe a task, something you needed to resolve later. What kind of tasks, what would that entail? Making a lot of phone calls?

Letchworth: It was typically a lot of phone calls. It might have involved, maybe by the time the chamber concluded for the day, that they were stuck on a particular amendment because we couldn't get a time agreement. Maybe it would be helpful if I let those tempers cool and call a couple of them, a couple of the members later on that evening and find out what if we had a meeting in the morning and what if we tried to work out a time agreement, would you be willing? Sort of let them think about the options overnight, too. It's just another way to further agreements and further more action and more ability for the leader to get more stuff done. It was typically phone calls and because my commute was long, I generally could do them in the car so by the time I got home my work a lot of time had been done. Yeah, there were typically follow-up phone

calls or set up meetings for tomorrow to try to resolve things that happened right before they went out.

Scott: It's striking to me how much work gets done for you in the car. You have this long commute and you are able to do it because of cell phone technology. What were people doing before they had that ability?

Letchworth: I remember working in those circumstances where you didn't have the cell phones. You waited until you got home. I can remember, to be honest, a lot more late night phone calls than when you had the cell phones and the e-mail and the BlackBerry, you didn't need to do that. You could do that on the fly. In some ways it didn't extend the days. In some ways it shrunk the work day ever so slightly because you could do things without having to wait to get home to get to a landline.

Scott: Last time we talked you mentioned briefly, in the conversation we were having about committee assignments, the challenges of the 107th Congress. We decided that we would put that off until we had another interview because there is so much to talk about. I wonder if you can tell us a little bit about your role in hammering out that power sharing agreement, that historic power sharing agreement of the 107th Congress?

Letchworth: Sure. It basically started right before the Christmas holidays. Senator [Tom] Daschle came to see Senator Lott. They had a very private, one-on-one meeting on, "When do you want to start negotiating it and how do you want to start negotiating?" Just getting the logistics down. But before that meeting was over, Senator Daschle handed Senator Lott a wish list of what he would like to see that power sharing agreement look like. If I remember correctly, within about 10 or 15 minutes of the two leaders—Senator Daschle came to Senator Lott's office for logistics, for no other reason than I just remember that and of course several of us were sitting outside the office wishing we had a glass to the door—Senator Lott made a copy of Senator Daschle's requests and handed it to me and said, "See what you think of all of these." If I remember correctly there were 10 or 12 different provisions. He wanted a memo on what was wrong or what was right, what was fair with all 12 of them within a certain period of time. And this was all around the Christmas holiday.

You had laptops back then and he had a fax machine. I took my laptop, what work I needed to do, faxed it to him. I had a fax at home, obviously. Faxed it to him at home. He would go over it, mark it up, fax it back to me. Even with some questions. I can remember two or three times, I can remember talking to him on Christmas Eve with version number three having been marked up a little bit and he wasn't quite sure what I meant with respect to one item or the next, trying to go over, basically trying to give him

all the information I could as to what was wrong or what was right or what was okay to give up and what wasn't okay. And if it wasn't okay, why wasn't it okay. What scenarios would that come back and really get him in trouble if he gave that power away. There was—obviously you were talking about a huge situation which really hadn't ever been done. So giving up any power at that point was huge. If you remember the scenario, Senator Daschle was the majority leader for about 15 days.

Scott: Right, right. Until President George Bush and Vice President [Richard] Dick Cheney were inaugurated.

Letchworth: Exactly. So you are talking about the 3rd or the 4th of January when the new Congress convened to the inauguration of the new president, for a 50-50 Senate, whichever party the vice president resided in. There were about 15 or 20 days when Senator Daschle could have made life very difficult. I'm not saying he threatened to, because he didn't. But he made it clear that he had the power to do a certain number of things and that he hoped that Senator Lott didn't push him to the point where he might have to use some of that power. That was the premise for, "Let's get this resolved and let's get it resolved quickly. Let's not make it ugly because everyone is going to have to live"— you know, 50-50 is not a wonderful scenario under anybody's circumstances, chairman or not.

Of course you had a second leg of this whole problem which was in some ways almost as big, which is how do the chairmen and how do the ranking members work this out? It starts with just the basics, the office space. Who gets the big chairman office? Then it kind of goes down to, okay, if you resolve that, you can't obviously split the office space. You have to resolve that. Then the money. There is a huge difference between chairman and ranking. In some cases percentages like 70/30. How do you resolve that? Shouldn't it be closer to 50/50? Well, not really because the chairman has to do so much more work than the ranking, but then how much more work? All of that was spinning around. In other words, you almost had 10 or 15 of these minor little negotiations going on behind the scenes like the Lott/Daschle negotiation was going on.

Chairmen and ranking of committees, some of them were cutting their own deals which were, in some ways, taking some of the power away from Senator Lott. He behind the scenes also tried to control some of those private deals that were being cut, let's say between the chairman of Judiciary [Committee] and the ranking. If they were off cutting their own deal, then that could potentially undercut Senator Lott's big global deal with Senator Daschle, especially if it dealt with, and it ultimately did deal with, the committee ratios of money. So he tried to discourage that, but that was hard to discourage because obviously if a chairman and a ranking felt like they had a really good working

relationship why shouldn't they be able to work out their own deal? But you can also see the reason why the majority leader and minority leader didn't want them doing that because they wanted to have the whole power of the whole package to be able to sell. That Christmas was very interesting. Lots of negotiations, lots of phone calls, not a lot of Christmas time for me that particular Christmas. We all knew it was just going to be one Christmas, so it was different. Then of course trying to get the two leaders to sign off on these various scenarios was difficult but then they both had to go lobby their own Conference to sell it to their own Conference. That's [when] a lot of the real heavy lifting came into play.

Scott: From everything I've read, Senator Lott's book *Herding Cats* as well as Senator Daschle's book, as you said it was a heavy lift, but it was a particularly heavy lift for Senator Lott because the Republicans had something to lose and the Democrats were gaining in this case. How did that work out? How did he get them to come together to agree to this organizing resolution?

Letchworth: I think the most important thing was we had a couple of very high level, very command performance meetings in the Library of Congress, in one of their ceremonial meeting rooms where Republicans still meet today when they have agenda meetings and retreats, where we really had to sell the whole picture. There was a plea by the majority leader. There was a plea by some of the other leadership. There was a plea in a much smaller role by myself as to why this was necessary. And then the chairmen had their own forum within that same meeting peppering all of us, "Well why do I have to give up 'x'?" Or, "Why can't I do 'y'?" And "Why can't this and why can't that?" And it all came down to, "We want to get things done. We want this new Republican Senate with this new president to be able to actually get things done." This was pre-9/11. We didn't know 9/11 was going to happen so shortly thereafter so we were eager to start getting things done and the idea—and it wasn't an idle threat—but the idea that Senator Daschle and many of his old chairmen, now soon to be ranking members, had said that if they thought the deal wasn't fair enough they were going to hold up things. Holding up the committee ratio resolution, holding up the committee appointment resolution, holding up all of that got nowhere. I was asked to do a report, for example, when was the latest that committee assignments were done in particular committees and found out, sometimes in the early '80s it was Easter, way back into April and May before anybody had committee assignments. That was something that nobody in the room wanted to see happen. But yet you didn't want to give up the farm to make sure that didn't happen. So there was really a fine line.

But the plea to get a lot done, we need to get a lot done, little did we know we needed to get a lot done because the world was going to change after 9/11. But there was

a real sense of, let's try to get a lot done, let's try to hit the ground running and we don't need to spend the first six months of this administration of this new Republican Congress, Republican Senate, for example, stuck on the logistics that the American people would not understand. They would not get why are we spending time on who gets the big office for the Foreign Relations Committee. That would seem petty to them. So there was a real sense of trying to be the bigger person and figure it out.

Scott: Senator Lott in one of his floor speeches about the power sharing agreement says, "I wouldn't say this is my preferred result, but I think it is a reasonable one with a serious dose of reality." Which I think nicely summed it up, that there was an unprecedented event that these two parties were going to have to work through.

Letchworth: Exactly. Again, because it was 50-50 you could have scenarios where nothing would get done. Nothing would get out of committee. Literally nothing. Well you can imagine. One party would almost have the power to cripple the Senate at any given time. So there needed to be a level of cooperation that hadn't existed for a long time, not for a long period of time. You had snippets of cooperation obviously throughout many Congresses in the past. But this one, you really saw the need for this to be around a lot. You needed to tap this level of cooperation a lot just to get the basics done. That's what Senator Lott was trying to say by it wasn't the best scenario in the world but under the circumstances it was pretty darn good.

Scott: It looks like one of the demands that Senator Daschle made early on was something about recognition, as in recognizing the leader on the floor because that obviously is so important in terms of controlling the legislative agenda. How did you guys handle that behind the scenes in order to eventually come to a resolution?

Letchworth: That was a big non starter from the get-go. That was a big one that Senator Daschle wanted and I think a lot of people understand the need or the real advantage to getting the right of recognition. It went from a lot of scenarios. It went from, it going back and forth, to one day one leader might have it, and that just wasn't workable. You needed one leader; you needed one leader to be able to drive the agenda. After all, somebody had to be the leader of the Senate. So that was basically a non-starter from the very get-go. There were some members though, that took a little negotiating to let them understand how important that was to hold on to because people were saying, "Why don't you just"…that almost looked like something Lott was keeping for himself and he was maybe throwing a chairman's option out the window. I can remember having to talk to a couple of chairmen, to let them know this is not some little pet project for the leader, how important it really was. Obviously, how important it was, it was number one

on Senator Daschle's list, the sort of dual right of recognition or going back and forth right of recognition.

Scott: Those chairmen wouldn't have been able to move their legislation if they didn't have the right of recognition, right?

Letchworth: Exactly. But I think because a lot of them, or a few of them, had felt like they had got such a good working relationship with their ranking member that that wasn't going to be a problem, they would be able to get their bill out of committee, they would be able to get it on the floor, you know, forgetting that just because two men or two chairmen and a ranking work well doesn't mean the entire Senate is going to work well around it. That's the difference between being a committee chairman and being in the leadership. Your world is your committee, to a certain extent. The leader has to think of the world as a bigger world, the world of getting the legislation through in the United States Senate. That was a real tough one, in a lot of ways, for Senator Lott to get through to several of the chairmen.

Scott: How did the committee assignment process work out in that particular Congress after the power sharing agreement is reached? Was it more difficult? Your role in terms of this particular Congress, how different was it?

Letchworth: It was a lot different, because a lot of the members believed that majority was majority. Therefore, they should get a lot more and a lot more should be coming to them. When they basically figured out that it was sort of the same old seniority system that gave them the same old committee assignments, there were some that thought, well, I thought there would be more. I thought it would be different. That was a little dose of reality, also, because we didn't get huge ratios on any given committee, obviously. Just hearing that you are in the majority is one thing. But when you really think of the nuts and bolts as to what it actually boils down to in your world, say a chairman or a ranking, it can be a rude awakening after the champagne has been popped and after the thought process settles in. It was a little more difficult because people felt like—the Republicans felt like they should have gotten more. We couldn't have given them more; there were so many slots to give. But there were some that felt like we could have gotten more.

Scott: What was the final resolution in terms of committee assignments? It was 50-50, 50-50 staff and 50-50 office space?

Letchworth: No it was a little different than that. I'd have to look up the actual ratio. It seems to me it was an odd ratio. I'll look it up for you so that I don't error. It

wasn't exactly 50-50. I want to say 48-52 or something like that. I'll look it up and get back to you.

Scott: So you finally agree to this unprecedented power sharing agreement and then not too long after that Senator Jim Jeffords decides to declare himself an Independent and says that he'll caucus with the Democrats, effectively giving them the majority. What happens in your position as party secretary when you hear this news and the ensuing scramble after that?

Letchworth: We had some head's up that this was going on. Senator Lott, as a matter of fact, was good friends with Senator Jefford's personal secretary. There were some inside pleas. There was some negotiating going on behind the scenes to try to make sure that Senator Jeffords did not in fact do this. We actually called a meeting of all the chairmen and had them meet with Senator Jeffords off the floor and had them talk about the fact that they hadn't been chairmen, they would never have the chance to be chairmen again. "This is my one chance in the sun. Don't take it away from me." Give their own personal plea to him as to what this would do to their agenda, for example, of every single major committee. We had a couple of days to lobby him, if you want to call it that, before this happened. When everything failed, there was a lot of hope at each stage that this pleading or negotiating with him would result in him deciding to stay with the Republicans. When it didn't, ultimately we knew it wouldn't. We had the whole recess, the upcoming I believe it was Memorial Day, wasn't it?

Scott: I think so. Before he makes the—

Letchworth: He had turned in the letter to the Senate, which was supposed to go to the vice president. He turned it in right before the adjournment of the Senate for, I believe, Memorial Day, and made it effective when the Senate reconvened. In other words, we had that 8, 10 days, to try to figure out what that meant. But yeah, that was another complete scramble, sort of flip-flopped the agreement over to the other side. But at that point I think Senator Lott looked a little more like a hero because he didn't get the farm, but he didn't have to give up the farm in that respect. But then there was a lot of, how did this happen? How did Senator Jeffords feel so left out or disgruntled, or whatever adjectives you want. I think there have been a lot of stories told about what led up to that, but it was pretty devastating. Talk about take the wind out of your sails, it was pretty devastating. But enough time to be able to deal with it because he did let us know right before the recess and then we had basically the recess to regroup and figure out how to move the deck chairs again around.

Scott: There was criticism at the time that the power sharing agreement was reached, and especially after Jeffords left the party, that Senator Lott had given away too much by agreeing to this power sharing agreement, which basically said if anything changes, then this agreement can be rewritten and redone. One party can gain an advantage if anything changes in the Senate makeup. Do you think that that criticism was warranted?

Letchworth: No. For the most part, no. I think what people did not believe or did not have a picture of, and because I had seen past Congresses where they couldn't get anything done until the committee assignments were done and the ratios were done, how useless that Congress was. How absolutely useless it turned out to be. It set a tone for almost the entire Congress. If you look in history at Congresses where it took until March, April, May to get the committee assignments done, that Congress really didn't have a lot of flair or a lot of bang to it after that. It was kind of a struggle. That is the one thing that Senator Lott did not want to do, a) to the Congress, but b) to this new president. He didn't think that was fair. He felt like he owed more to the new president than to scrap around again for it to look like we were fighting over who gets the bigger chair or the bigger office or the office with the window. That's the way we thought it would look like to the American people for the most part because basically we were able to drive our own agenda. Which was really the most important part, because the real estate, although it is, there's a comfort level, you know how it works, so it was important. But the bigger picture, he felt like he got a good deal for the bigger, the greater good. He felt like he got the best deal.

I thought that was a little unwarranted, but not unusual for the Senate. It really was not and probably still is not. There's always sort of griping behind the scenes and, "If I were there I could have done it better," or "If it were my job I could have done it better." But for the most part, most people were happy. Now, with Senator Jeffords jumping, that sort of reenergized that whole feeling again. Whether it was warranted or not, almost doesn't matter. It gave it life. You know how that works. It gave it life. So you had to struggle through all of that all over again.

Scott: As party secretary and the eyes and the ears for the leader, do you tend to hear a lot of that griping? If there's griping going on, are you generally privy to it? You want to be privy to it I would guess.

Letchworth: You do. I would say that you are privy to probably two-thirds of it. There's probably a third of it that, a) they don't want you to know for obvious reasons; and, b) that maybe the gripers just want to let off some steam. So you almost don't want to know that because you don't want to have him overreact or have us overreact to it.

There's some natural griping that you want to let that occur and let the pressure cooker let off some pressure. When it reaches a level when it's not just noise, that it really is true pressure that can affect the floor, then you do obviously want to be included. Typically the senators that are doing the griping will let you in at that point. They'll let you know, "Elizabeth you are going to have a problem," because the overall picture in any party, whether it be Republican or Democrat, is that you want your problem solved, but you don't want your problem to become a whole party problem if it can be solved. So you have to let somebody know to try to solve it. At some point you do get brought in.

Scott: Did Senator Lott have some fires to put out after the power sharing agreement was reached? Were there cases where he did have to step in because things rose to that level, or were people just grumbling under the surface?

Letchworth: There was mostly grumbling under the surface, for the most part. I can remember a couple of fires with a couple of chairmen that he had to literally go sit down, have meetings with. I would have to sit down at the same time with a staff director, their staff director, and explain, "This is why we are in the situation that we are in and this is why this had to be done this way. Please try to understand it." What you did in that case was you painted a scenario that could easily happen if you hadn't taken care of whatever the situation was and how that could harm them in one particular way or another.

Scott: That's interesting that you brought up the staff director. How much of your efforts at making sure everyone is happy have to filter down to the staff level and not just—

Letchworth: It definitely starts with the staff director. If the staff director can sell it to the rest of the staff, that is three-fourths of the battle. A lot of times, to be honest, if the staff director can get it in a clearer picture, he or she can sell it to the chairman or the ranking member. To a large extent he or she typically does work together on all the bills. That chairman and staff director relationship is not that different from the leader and the secretary. A level slightly below that but the same sort of thing. The staff director knows all of his or her member's committee. Knows what to expect. [Unintelligible] That kind of thing. So it's sort of a smaller [unintelligible] of the big Senate floor picture.

Scott: How well did you get to know the staff directors?

Letchworth: You get to know them pretty well. You meet with them almost on a daily basis. Remember, the bills that they report out of the committees are very important to them. They may not be as important to the leader, but to them [unintelligible] lobbying

for them. [unintelligible] It's constant. They wanted to know what their problems were [unintelligible] and ask them [unintelligible] whatever the situation was. So it's constant communication with the staff director.

Scott: Are those generally, the staff directors you worked closely with, are they generally people you had known? Staff directors tend to also stay in the Senate for many years, so they were people you probably had worked with for years.

Letchworth: Exactly. A lot of them I had grown up with, if you want to look at it that way. We might have started very early. I remember them being an intern or I remember them starting out at a lower level, as did I. Sure. That all goes back to that ability to have relationships, to make good strong relationships where as they grew and you grew, you know, you each kind of grow up together. You're right, in most cases staff directors don't just parachute in from middle America. They have done all of the levels and all of the rungs of the positions leading up to that. Typically I knew most of them very, very well.

Scott: How did things change after Jeffords jumped?

Letchworth: Well it changed pretty drastically right away. It really did. There was a little bit of a feeling of we're in control now and we're going to do things our way. Although obviously and typically you couldn't do too much different because the Senate was basically still 50-50 for all intents and purposes. It really was not—the membership didn't really change. One person changed to make it change but the members were still the same. So it was a lot of almost hot air to a certain extent. But there was a lot of trepidation that it would change drastically. But when it came right down to it, literally right down to it, it really didn't change that much. Of course 9/11 made it change drastically for a whole set of reasons. There really wasn't a tremendous amount of time between Senator Jeffords leaving and then our whole world as we know it changing. So it was a lot of "I'll show you" conversation until oops, everybody is having to get along for the sake of the country.

Scott: It really was just a few months, I think the next organizing resolution was in June of 2001, so it's really just a few months later.

Letchworth: June 6 is when I was elected minority secretary. I was looking on the wall to check the date of the resolution, June 6th.

Scott: Okay.

Letchworth: Of course, 9/11 is 9/11. You got to remember you are out all of August. So you're right, we really had a little bit of June and of course they took off for July and so you probably had, I can look it up. It was probably four to six weeks. It was not a long time at all.

Scott: Where were you on 9/11?

Letchworth: I was heading into Washington, D.C., to clean out my office, to be perfectly honest.

Scott: That's right.

Letchworth: Get some last minute books and boxes, all of that.

Scott: Because you retired in July, right?

Letchworth: Actually my last day was August 31.

Scott: Okay.

Letchworth: So 11 days before 9/11. I had basically done most of the office cleaning but I was heading into the office to get the last leg of the moving when I got a phone call from our daughter-in-law that said basically, "Aren't you planning on going into the office today? Don't. You need to turn on your TV."

Scott: What did you do? Did you continue? Did you go back?

Letchworth: I turned around and went back and called my staff, who had been my staff up until 10 days ago. I found Dave Schiappa, the new secretary for the minority, asked him where he was, and he told me where he was and they had hunkered down in such and such a place and that everybody was accounted for. And where was the leader, and all of that. We stayed in contact the whole rest of the day, really out of concern for these folks that had been my staff for many, many years. And concern for the whole country, obviously. But in my little world, it was kind of the folks I knew at the time.

Scott: What made you decide to retire?

Letchworth: I think a lot of members of Congress will tell this kind of story. It's the inability, to not be able to plan, to not be able to plan your day, your evening. To not be able to make any kind of plans in the evening, any kind of family time during the

week was just—it's almost impossible to try to plan and the more you plan the more you disappointed whoever you planned. At that point I was married with some teenage children, step-children, that were in our house and we were raising and I just didn't think it was fair to them, I didn't think it was fair to my husband and I wanted a shot—after all I had been there for 26 years—I wanted a shot to be a mom and to be a wife and to have a normal—I'm not necessarily saying I wanted a 9 to 5, but a little more certainty. I think if you talk to a lot of members of Congress, it's the uncertainty that really drives them crazy. That hasn't gotten too much better.

Scott: No.

Letchworth: If anything it's gotten worse. That, to me, will drive away a lot of good talent because I saw it drive away a lot of good talent. I can think of five or six senators off the top of my head that left because that was a frustration of theirs. Anybody that is a time management nut or is just very conscientious about using their time wisely will find the Senate a huge waste of time. I think you've heard that with the freshman class—they're not now freshman but with what used to be the freshman class, I guess they now would be the sophomore class—especially on the Democratic side echoing this over and over and over.

Scott: Yes.

Letchworth: They are very frustrated because they don't understand why so much of this is just sit around and wait. If you work on the floor, and I did for 26 years, I spent 26 years sitting around and waiting! I felt like it was time to do something else where I could control a little more of my time and give more of my time where I wanted to give it instead of having broken promises all the time that you'd be at different things. So that was the defining factor. I had made the decision before the 50-50. My—

Scott: Oh, okay. So in 2000 you had made the decision that you would retire the next year?

Letchworth: Yes, and I had actually planned on going down to see Senator Lott after the election in 2000, visit him in Mississippi and let him know that this was my plan. Let him know that I thought Dave Schiappa would be a great replacement and let him know that I thought everything would work out fine. Of course that didn't work out very well. You had the 50-50 and you had that crazy election where the Supreme Court had to step in and all of that. So that smooth little passing of the baton didn't work too well. My plans didn't go off as planned. I didn't make it down in November because there was too much in flux. I believe it was in the middle of November when then

president-elect Bush came to meet with Senator Lott in the office. He met with the leadership and I was lucky enough to be one of the staff to meet with him. It was still in a state of flux. I think most people believed it would eventually be resolved but it was still in a state of flux. Was the inauguration going to go off as planned or was that going to be moved around? All of that was still up in the air. The whole time I'm in all of these meetings, I have to tell the leader at some point I'm leaving because I still had in my mind leaving in 2001. But I wanted to let all of this settle. Let his life as majority leader settle. That threw my timing off a little bit. It obviously worked out fine.

Scott: Did the presidential election, the uncertainty over the presidential election, did that affect you in the Senate at all? Your job or Senator Lott's position as majority leader? How much were you just bystanders or were there things that you had to do?

Letchworth: We were definitely very interested bystanders. Very interested because that decided who was going to be in the controlling party. We couldn't do anything about it, other than just plan. So we planned almost for both scenarios, putting more emphasis on being in the majority, but also realizing that if we're in the minority we'll be a strong minority and we can push for this. You almost had two tracks going.

Scott: Was President George Bush the first president that you had met?

Letchworth: No. I had been lucky enough to meet all of them, going back to President Nixon. I had been able to meet them all in various scenarios and in various situations. I can remember meeting him [George W. Bush] the first time, Andy Card was with him when he came to the leader's office. The presumed leadership was sitting around in a greeting oval of sorts. He came around the room and said hi to everybody and the staff, we were holding up the sides of the walls, as I like to call it, and he came and shook each one of our hands and asked us, "What do you do? What are you going to be doing?" He was doing that kind of thing. I remember asking him how his girls were. He said they were very mad at him because they had shut him out. They weren't answering BlackBerry or any of his e-mails. [Scott laughs] It upset him. It honestly seemed to upset him.

Basically he was planning for being the next president, waiting for everything to fall in place and gave us one of these: "I look forward to working with all of you. This will work out well. Everything will work out. Dust will settle and we need to be ready to hit the ground running." That really empowered Senator Lott to stick with what he had always wanted to stick with, which was we need to produce good products from the very beginning. We can't have a session or a Congress that is stuck in the mud from the very

beginning. That reinforced the whole idea that we really needed to get the power sharing agreement done and get it done was quickly as possible.

Scott: Were you working with President-elect Bush's transition team to…were you thinking about legislation already? Were you working closely with any folks on his team to envision what you would be able to accomplish in this new Congress?

Letchworth: Once the Supreme Court came down with their ruling, then yes. Those type meetings started to happen. They started to happen more at the staff level on the committees. In other words, staff directors would be starting to have that kind of thing. The party secretary isn't necessarily involved in every one of those but you also ask and request to get a briefing on how the meeting went and what that particular staff director thought the level of interest was for his or her agenda. Does the White House like a lot of their agenda? Are they going to like a lot of their agenda? Are they going to want to do it early or late? You wanted to try to get another answer to the same briefing from someone from the White House to make sure the stories matched. [Scott laughs] You have to think about it. The chairman or the staff director a lot of times might color the story a little more towards their favor, it's just human nature. So you wanted to double check and make sure that everything you heard was in fact the feeling of everybody in the meeting. I guess that's really what you were doing. All of this is not a veil of suspicion so much as you want the best information you can get for the leader. So you did start a little bit of that after the Supreme Court results. All in an effort to hit the ground running to start getting a new agenda unveiled and for that Senate to start working with the president.

Scott: Was it an exciting time?

Letchworth: Very exciting. Extremely exciting. In part because it took so long to get over election night. For everybody it did. It was either very exciting or very disappointing for basically most people in the country. I think there were a lot of people who always felt like it was—they were robbed a little bit, so to speak. I think that led to the disgruntled-ness toward the Bush administration that started out so strong and that never really let up. It's almost like he could never do anything right. If anything went wrong it seemed to be blamed on him. I think that whole mode started from the way he actually got the presidency. That's the way our system worked. I felt that a little bit on the floor at times.

Scott: Oh, really?

Letchworth: I can remember almost from the very beginning listening to Democratic senators, either actually in speeches or on the floor, not in necessarily private conversations but in conversations between one or two or three, that you might walk by and hear or they may actually sort of include you in it: "This lame duck president. He lucked into it." Almost like he wasn't taken completely seriously and I think that wounded him from the very beginning.

Scott: Did Senator Lott ever mention anything about that? Did that weaken your agenda in any way?

Letchworth: [It did] not. Not at all. I never heard that from Senator Lott and I didn't hear it from most Republicans. There were a few Republicans that you might hear that from but mostly from the Democratic side of the aisle. You can sort of understand them. Al Gore was their colleague for many, many years. It was like their side of the aisle had one taken from them. So there was a little bit, maybe a little more personal, as far as that was concerned, with some of the senators on the Democratic side of the aisle.

Scott: Do you think, getting back to that point you made about the uncertainty of a Senate schedule, especially if you are on the floor as the party secretary, is there any way to change that? Do you think that is inherent in the Senate as an institution? Do you think that things could be changed to make it a little easier on people?

Letchworth: Senator Baker, when he became majority leader, tried. That was one of the first things he tried to do was to implement a little more certainty. He really tried to make the Thursday night be the late night. He tried to stack things up so that the latter part of the week was more of a late night. So if you wanted to do the fundraiser, or the dinner with your wife, or the soccer game with your child, Mondays or Tuesdays or maybe even Wednesdays you might be able to get away with it. He tried that. For the most part it can work. But you can't live by it, literally live by it, and that's the frustration. The reason you can't live by it is because that gives the minority, or somebody that wants to object to your agenda, power.

Remember you have 100 senators that in theory have the ability to stand up and block something at any given moment. If you know that Tuesday at 7:00 is the bewitching hour and that the leader has pretty much said every Tuesday we won't go beyond 7:00, you have a goal. If you can just talk beyond 7:00, you can stop whatever it is. So that gives you extra power that you wouldn't have. The leader has to know, "I can live by this to a certain extent but I can't die by it because I can harm the agenda by sticking with it too vigorously." So that's why there will always be that level of uncertainty. There always has to be. If you literally stick by every Tuesday at 7:00, there

will be no more votes, then anybody who wants to stop anything knows they'll just have to talk until 7:00 on Tuesday and they've succeeded.

Scott: So in every Congress is there always one senator you think who is willing to do that? You can't get everybody on board in this new family-friendly Senate structure?

Letchworth: Exactly. There seems to be somebody to fill that role pretty much from every Congress. I'm not sure that's a bad role to have filled. It does serve as the check and balance for all included. You hope that that person is reasonable. You hope that he or she doesn't pull the stunt, if you want to call it that, over and over and over, that they reserve it for really important measures. But it is almost looked at by the leadership as, "I've got your back." In a strange kind of way it is. It's a love-hate relationship. There are times you love the guy or gal doing it because it might have gotten you off the hook. Of course there are times when you are really angry at the person for pulling the stunt. Sometimes more often than not you are secretly very happy that that position is being filled and that it's being filled by somebody who might be a friend of yours more so than you want to publicly say.

Scott: That problem eventually leads to you deciding to do something else with your life. You were honored with a Senate resolution. You were honored for your service and Senator Lott mentioned that you had plans to start a golf course with your husband.

Letchworth: We did. We moved to South Carolina and ran a golf course. Bought a golf course. It was an 18-hole golf course with a big club house and I thought we were just going to enjoy that and for the most part we really did. But I found out very quickly golfers [can be] very protective [of their golf course]. They can be very territorial. It quickly turned into a situation where I was trying to please a bunch of very, very, um, old-fashioned golfers. Trying to please them like you would senators. I can remember several times in any given week seeing current members of this golf course having issues with something we did or didn't do and sort of equating them, "Well you sound like Senator so and so and you sound like Senator so and so."

I can remember talking to Senator [Bill] Frist pretty soon after I left but came back for an event and he wanted to know how things were going. I said they were going pretty well but I didn't think that golfers were going to be that hard to deal with. He said he had talked to a friend of his that owns a big country club in Tennessee and he said that he thought that the head of the country club in Tennessee had a tougher job than he did as far as trying to please people. [Scott laughs] You know at that point I agreed with him. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. We ran into some issues, really just with the

whole logistics of everything. It was very much a full-time job. One that we loved but one that I found out I didn't want to do for the rest of my life.

Scott: [Laughs] How long did you do it?

Letchworth: We ended up keeping the club for two years and sold it and moved to Central Florida where I started picking up on doing a little more of the consulting back in D.C. I had done some of that early on at the club. I had taken on a couple of small clients, a South Carolina client, the Peach Council. I had done some work with them, for example. I kept my hand in the Senate and how the Senate was doing and the personalities and what not, even though I was running a country club in the South. So that when we decided, let's move on and do other things, it was natural to beef up that end of what I had already been doing on a part-time basis anyway. That's where we ended up where we are now.

Scott: I wondered especially with 9/11 happening so soon after you had officially left, that must have been incredibly difficult to know what your former colleagues were going through and yet not be a part of that environment anymore?

Letchworth: It was. It was difficult knowing that they were going to have to make huge decisions, hoping, praying that they could come to agreement on, you know, just everything that was in front of them. Knowing that they were scratching each other's eyes out within a couple of weeks beforehand and certainly at the beginning of that year, really at each other's throat in many, many different ways. It's amazing how well they did come together. I remember that picture of all of them on the Capitol steps singing God Bless America. I can remember feeling every inch of that, every minute of that, saying that is real. They are feeling that. Please let them continue to feel that feeling and they did. Obviously they did for, some people would argue was it six months, was it a year, but they got a lot done. They created Homeland Security, that huge department, for example, [and] the TSA [Transportation Security Administration], which we love to hate right now [both laugh]. The TSA was created then. All of that took a huge bipartisan agreement to get that done. Obviously that was not what Republicans, traditional Republicans, had wanted to do, was to grow government and certainly not grow it that large. Certainly not grow it overnight. But they had to come to the realization that maybe we do need to grow it. I mean there was a lot of give and take.

It was pleasant to watch, even from afar. You went away having watched the TV maybe for the day—Interesting enough this country club in South Carolina, obviously it was a golf course so it had many TVs going. One of them always had the United States Senate on. [Scott laughs] Most people came in and didn't know why we had it on. Most

of them were looking for the golf channel. But this particular golf course almost always had one TV on which had the Senate. In other words, as the golf course would close for the day and the TV would get turned off and I would be monitoring what the Senate was doing there was typically a smile on my face that boy, they really are getting through a lot of this and it's tough but they were getting through it all for the benefit of trying to keep us safe and keep another 9/11 from happening.

Scott: Did you have a difficult time, or was it easy, to transition from that constant schedule with the Senate to a different kind of day?

Letchworth: It was very easy. It came just so natural. I was so pleased that it came that naturally because if you think about it, ever since I was 15 years old I had been dependent on somebody else's time clock. I didn't have my own time clock. I then transitioned into a country club's time clock which is from dawn to dusk. It was already a long day and then if you add in an hour or two on the end of the day once it got dark, it made for a long day. But we loved the business. We loved being around the people for the most part. Knowing that the day was going to be long, it's different when it's your day. It's different when it's your day versus somebody else's ability to affect your day. I guess it's the same pride that everybody takes that owns a small business. You work extra hard when you know it's your business and this was our business. So it wasn't that hard at all. I was surprised at myself that it wasn't any harder than it was to transition away. Again, it's all I had ever known.

I think that was my sign that I was ready. I can remember sitting on the floor listening to some of the tributes which were all wonderful and listening to the resolutions that were being done and I remember this little voice in my head kind of saying, "Elizabeth you should be crying your eyes out." I'm one that cries at parking lot dedications. [Scott laughs] I wasn't even getting weepy. The take away from that to me was that I was ready. I was probably more ready than I knew I was because it was wonderful, it was warming my heart, I was loving hearing it, but I was ready obviously because it wasn't tearing me up to do it. It was a pretty natural transition.

I was so grateful to be able to tell Senator Lott that I thought Dave Schiappa would be a great replacement. You always, you know anybody wants to be able to do that when they leave a position, especially one that they love, the people that they love, you don't want to leave them high and dry. You don't want to leave them in a lurch. I had a real positive sense as far as that was concerned too. That made it easier.

Scott: One thing we haven't talked about, another historic event during your time as party secretary, is the impeachment trial of President Clinton. I wonder what your role might have been in that whole process?

Letchworth: That was a very interesting time to say the least. The historic part of it, that is what it is. But trying to make sure that the Republican leader, the majority leader at the time, remained the majority leader in a situation where he wasn't even really allowed to speak was sort of tough. It started out when it became very apparent that this was going to make it from the House and that we were going to have this document basically in front of us in January and they came in, if you remember in January, they had a lame duck session. The Senate did not that year. So the lame duck session for them was to deal with the impeachment proceedings and we were not in. So when we came back in, that's what we had facing us. So a lot of that Christmas holiday was spent going to meetings. It was spent going to meetings learning about what the last impeachment trial looked like. It did not have TV cameras, did not have anything, and very little history. Very little history as the background as to what it really looked like in the chamber. You had to picture it in your mind.

A very important role for the leader was that the Senate still remain in his eyes as far as he would be in control as majority leader. Yet that was a difficult role to try to create for him because he was a juror and jurors weren't allowed to speak. In order for them to speak they had to actually submit their questions on little cards to the counsel. They had to write them down and the counsel would read them. Yeah, so that inability to speak—you try to tell a lot of Republican senators or 100 senators that they are not allowed to speak in a chamber that they spend all of their life in, that was sort of a tough order. We spent a lot of time in meetings learning about the other impeachment trial, the last impeachment trial of Andrew [Johnson] was about and how it sort of played out. And then how we could orchestrate, how we could have a role in this without breaking any kind of tradition.

We decided that he would open the Senate's day, outlining the Senate, there wouldn't really be in the impeachment proceedings but they kind of would be. There would be that fine line, almost like this in an introduction to the impeachment proceedings although we never actually said that. He said, you know the Senate—he would outline the day and go through a normal, if you want to say, leader-type opening remarks and then sit down and that was the chief justice's cue to say, "Now the proceedings have started." But we didn't have any formal words to that effect.

There were definitely some negotiations between Senator Lott and the chief justice as far as how the day was going to look like. I've got several pictures of me

talking to the chief justice outlining what the day was supposed to look like as far as the majority leader. How much did he want to get done? At what level did he want to stop? That was very interesting. Typically, a couple of times during any given day, the leader would call me over and I reverted back to my page days. I would huddle right next to him as if I were a page and he would say, "Why don't you check with some of the older senators and see if we need a bathroom break." [Scott laughs] There was no other way of learning that.

Scott: That's right.

Letchworth: So I would huddle over to a group of senators and say, "Do you think we should—?"; "How about if we take a break in an hour?" maybe somebody would say. So I'd come back with sort of a collective, "Maybe we should try to break for an hour." I would then go up to the chief justice and say, "What do you think of breaking in about an hour?" Now he had a back issue, an issue with his back. And we had already had several meetings with his staff and actually with the chief justice himself about the fact that this back issue was going to cause him some problems. He wasn't going to be able to sit for long, long stints of 8, 10, 12 hours. We needed to know that up front and how was he going to cue us as to whether he felt like he needed to take a break. We created a little bit of a behind-the-scenes system and one of them was me sort of crawling around on the floor, not literally but almost, taking the temperature of several members, finding out who was ready for a break and checking with him and then he would announce that we were going to take a recess, that the impeachment trial would be in recess, just as a judge would do.

But then we sort of created a new role for the leader, when we came back out of those, into those impeachment proceedings, Senator Lott would then announce again. We would be back in the Senate for that little two-minute time frame and the leader would be able to announce what the Senate was going to be doing, how far along we were going to get for the day. He would sit down and that would be the cue for the chief justice to say, without announcing, that we are back in order. It was assumed that the impeachment trial was to resume again. That was very different obviously, because control of it was under a completely different set of circumstances and set of rules. But Senator Lott was very emphatic that he stayed in control of it as best he could.

So there were a lot of meetings behind the scenes on how to cut deals, on how to get certain agreements, on how much time we should spend on this evidence and how much time should we spend on that evidence. If you remember, there were several consent agreements on how all of that worked out. That was done basically under the helm of Senator Lott, basically with me in the middle of it. But I'm not a lawyer. Senator

[Donald] Nickles [R-OK] hired a lawyer and Senator Lott hired a lawyer for that purpose. It was the three of us, the two lawyers and myself and the staffs that worked behind the scenes as well as, if we came up with something we thought that would work we would bounce it up to the senators to see if they thought that was something that was workable. Many of them had been lawyers, had been trial lawyers, so a lot of their trial lawyer old role came out in them. There were a lot of meetings in the cloakroom over these consent agreements. A lot more senators were involved personally in these consent agreements that typically were normally not involved in consent agreements of the past, even if it was their bill. In other words, if it was their bill and something they had written and something that they had pulled all the way through committee, they still relied on the staff to do the intricacies of the consent agreement, but not this. They wanted to get involved. I can remember many senators sitting in the cloakroom that normally would have been the roles of the staff, they played their staffs to shepherd and make sure the agreements were what they thought they should be.

Scott: Do you think they were so closely involved in this case because of the—

Letchworth: Historic nature of it?

Scott: The fact that this was historic in itself and they were very invested in doing things the right way. Why do you think they wanted to be more personally involved?

Letchworth: I think that for the most part. I think they all believed and they all felt that this was a duty above and beyond. They need to take this so, so very seriously. You didn't hear hardly any griping. You didn't hear hardly any complaining about, "I've really got to get out of here. I've got to go to 'x, y, z,'" which you typically heard during any given day. That's sort of the grumbling that's going on on any given day because you've got 100 men and women that have 100 different personalities and different schedules and different wants and needs. I guess I shouldn't refer to it as griping so much as just letting people know that you've got issues with the timing. You rarely heard that during this whole proceeding, which I thought was a special tribute to how much they did take this role seriously. That the child's soccer game or the dinner with the wife or whatever was coming second and we didn't have to hear it. We didn't need to hear it, it wasn't important. What we were hearing was important.

It was also helpful that we were able to have food brought into the two cloakrooms so that they didn't—We purposefully tried to make sure that they didn't drift very far. They didn't have to go off campus to get lunch or dinner for example. We would try to have food available in the cloakrooms. Just more logistics to try to keep this all in the best frame of mind, easiest for everybody to deal with because it was very

cumbersome for how many days was it? I could go look it up. I'll put it in there, I don't remember. But that was a lot of days when you literally saw them from bell to bell. You saw them from breakfast to dinner.

Scott: Which is very unusual.

Letchworth: Extremely unusual. Again, you didn't hear hardly any griping and you saw a lot of personal participation.

One of the most unique circumstances that I remember surrounding the impeachment trial was when Senator Lott decided that we needed to go into a special session and that the cameras were going to be turned off. The chief justice was going to be asked to leave. The managers, the House managers and President [Bill] Clinton's lawyers were going to be asked to leave. Basically the senators talked about the severity of what was going on. And how they were processing it. That was a lot, without going into a lot of detail, that was a lot of this discussion. The microphones were off. People walked into the well and started talking. It was a lot like the House of Representatives. Walked down into the well and just started talking. Somebody else would get up and say "I agree with you" and they'd walk into the well and sort of follow. It was probably the most unique time I remember of the 26 years I was in the Senate was that time. A lot of it was personal reflection and I say that as in conversations like, "Boy I've screwed up before. But for the grace of God this isn't me." Those kinds of stories. Obviously nobody was saying they were president and nobody was saying—

Scott: Right.

Letchworth: But they were all saying we've all been, or a lot of us have been in very precarious situations, remember that. There were a lot of heartfelt speeches made at that point too.

Scott: Why do you think Senator Lott thought that was an important thing to do?

Letchworth: I think he thought it was necessary. I think he thought it was necessary to let the steam out at that point. I think he believed at that point that the debate was getting, not the debate so much as the proceedings, were getting too partisan. People were starting to be able to get in that protected politician kind of mode where, "This is my president. I need to protect him. This is all about politics." He needed to bring it back to, "No, no this is about breaking the law. This is about right and wrong. This is not about what political party anybody—" So he decided, let's all talk about us being us. Us being men and women, maybe in politics, but we've been whatever we've been in our other

lives and just let it go at that. I think it was helpful to bring it all back to this is a role we have to play that should be outside of politics. It should be void of politics.

Scott: Were those consent agreements easier to reach than normal consent agreements about legislation, for example, because people understood the solemnity of the event? They understood how important it was?

Letchworth: What some of the Republicans wanted out of the consent agreements were not easy to get done and I think that was in part because obviously President Clinton's counsel wanted the best scenario they could paint. They were able to find one or two Democratic senators that would carry that water. We knew we could only push so far on some of this stuff. One for example, I don't think I'm talking out of school, was to have Monica Lewinsky testify. If so, would she come in the chamber? If so, would she be by videotape? How would you do the videotape? All of that kind of …

Then what is the visual of that going to look like? Did President Clinton's lawyers think that would be too over the top for the American people to deal with? You had a lot of that swirling around which I was not familiar with at all. All of those intricacies I was not familiar with. That's where Senator Lott's lawyer and Senator Nickles' lawyer went in and negotiated it. They would bring me back into the picture when it came to, "Okay, this is what we think the Senate will look like, what do you think about the Senate?" It was almost like you had dual roles. You had to continue it as a trial, because of course that's what it was. But yet it was very important for the leader, both for the right thing to do but for the history aspect of it to make sure that the Senate didn't get tainted as to it becoming a carnival, a dog and pony show, a he said-she said. That was very important for Senator Lott to make sure that did not happen.

Scott: There is always that concern, especially in the case of the impeachment of a president, that someone can appear to be—that the whole process can appear to be too political. It sounds like everyone was very conscious of that.

Letchworth: They were trying to. As I said, I think by the time Senator Lott called this closed session it was teetering on becoming too political. It was teetering on people hunkering down and getting back into the old political clothes where I'm a Democrat or I'm a Republican, I need to protect my base. I think he tried to shake that cloth that everybody was so comfortable in putting right back on. That's why I think that one meeting, which if I remember correctly, lasted more than an hour, several hours, there were several speakers.

Scott: We've also heard about the famous meeting with the Democrats and Republicans in the Old Senate Chamber. The doors were closed and I think some staff were allowed to come in the meeting. Were you in that meeting?

Letchworth: I was, yes.

Scott: What was the nature of the meeting and why did Senator Lott want to do it that way?

Letchworth: That was again another one of these let's try not to bring politics in on this. We have a higher calling. You need to get rid of your political cloak, whatever it be, Republican or Democrat, or red or blue—I guess we didn't have red and blue so much back then [Scott laughs]—and remember that this is your constitutional duty. He gave a little bit of history. I think I can talk a little bit about that. And then there were obviously a few other senators that gave some history. Senator Byrd gave some history. The leadership in general talked about that they understand that this is a role they have to play. Although, for example, the Democratic leadership, it was obviously their Democratic president but that didn't matter. That needed to go out the window. It was a little bit of that. It was a little bit of frame it so that people understood, don't let your constituents, or you know, your polarized constituency that might be screaming at you "Hang him from the highest tree," or, "Let him off because it was nothing but a private matter." You need to block out that noise. You are now jurors. Senator Lott also explained their role, explained to them … and I can remember looking around the room at a few senators and this light bulb going off. I'm not going to be able to speak? That was a nuance that hadn't sunk into some people until he went through exactly how he could picture any given day going and reminding them that they typically were not going to be able to stand up on the floor and speak. That became a bit of a surprise to some members.

Scott: How did you get a sense for the history? The Andrew Johnson trial is more than 100 years before, about 130 years before. Where did you go to, where did you send people to get information in order to figure things out?

Letchworth: The sergeant at arms had done a wonderful job in trying to put together a history behind how all of it worked. He had hired a couple of people to do basically a black binder cheat sheet book on what the past history looked like. How did the days start out, as best you can piece them together? In other words, how did the chamber start out? Even went to the ceremonial aspect of the House managers walking into the building, I mean walking into the chamber from the House side. We went over every aspect of it and tried to mirror it as best as possible and taking into consideration

modern conveniences. [unintelligible] all of that kind of thing. I can remember literally days and days and days, several weeks of meetings basically sponsored and basically put on by the sergeant at arms office to make sure that we did understand how all of this was going to play out.

When it finally did start, there was almost a sense of relief. Phew, finally this show is going to start. I don't mean it as far as a show, I mean it more that we wanted the production of it to go well. After the first day, the opening day, and it going basically the way we had talked about it going, there was a real sense of okay, let's get down to business and get the actual trial over, get it started, the necessary stages of it done. There was definitely a lot of preparation for that. There was this huge sense of we don't want to screw this up, we meaning everyone behind the scenes. We want the Senate to look the best that it possibly can. It may be another 100 years but this will be the first one and the only one that people will be able to look back on and say it needs to look like this because that's the way they did the Clinton one.

Scott: Do you recall anyone who had been in the Senate in 1974 talking about the early preparation for what they thought might be a Nixon impeachment trial?

Letchworth: I did talk to a couple people that I knew were there and asked them, how far did they get in thinking or puzzling through it? They didn't get all the way through picturing it on the Senate floor. They could tell me more of what they expected would happen if it went to a committee or if they had to have some kind of policy luncheon, they had outlined a little bit of that. They would have policy or Democratic caucus meetings about it. But I could not find anybody who had ever taken it to the point of what it would look like on the floor.

We were flying blind, literally. We were creating this as we went along with the history behind it trying to make sure that we mirrored exactly everything that needed to happen for a procedural matter, but also trying to bring it into the 20th century and to try to take politics out of it because this was a role they were not familiar with, for the most part, senators are not. You do an impeachment of a judge, but basically the committee takes care of it, you listen for an hour or two, you have a vote, you don't know the person unless they happen to be a judge. You know what I'm saying? This was a level that they had never, ever, ever been to. Or expected to be to. So it was a whole new role for everybody involved.

Scott: Well, too, the idea that you would need to talk to them about trying to leave politics at the door here, this is a different kind of event, must be difficult for

people who live in a political world and who are constantly worried about the politics of particular situations. To be able to leave that at the door has to be incredibly difficult.

Letchworth: I think it is, and I think it was, but I think the Old Senate Chamber meeting helped start that whole thought process and really kicked it off in a wonderful way. Hats off to the leader for thinking of that and putting that together and knowing that it needed to be ratcheted up to a level that there wasn't a single senator that I'm sure when he or she decided to run ever would be in this situation. You're right, all of them are political creatures by nature or they wouldn't be where they are for the most part. So to tell them to take that hat off and put it in a closet for a week, 10 days, and don't even think about politics.

You can think about a completely clearheaded view of how you judge another American in a role that you've never been in, what is a daunting task but one that they needed to really wrap their arms around. The meeting that the leader called was a great way to get them to think about that. I was amazed at how little griping, how little the normal politics of the world came in. "Well he got to speak, how come I didn't?" First of all, you didn't have any of that. [Scott laughs] But even separate from that, they just created it—they took the job with such, they took on their responsibility of the job which with a real sincere sense of I've got to do this for history but I've got to do this. Many of them read that black binder I told you about that talked about the history, many of them had that type of black binder that we gave them so that they knew what they were up against or what was expected of them.

Scott: How do you think the whole thing turned out? And I don't just mean the acquittal but in the sense of you working behind the scenes to make sure that this production goes along smoothly? Do you feel like things went the way you hoped they would?

Letchworth: I do. I was very pleased. I think the leader was very pleased, literally, with the production of it. To me Senator Lott looked like he was in control at all times. And that was important. The chief justice looked like he was in control when he was supposed to be in control. They didn't step on each other's feet. One didn't lessen the other's role. They worked hand in hand very well in a situation where really the leader technically wasn't supposed to be in the role at all. So I thought it went very, very well. I do know that the leader thought that for the most part it went well.

He was pleased to get it off his shoulders and to move on to other things. It had occupied the leadership's time for such a long time. We had even had meetings before the State of the Union leading up to that, whether to go to the State of the Union, whether to

sit down, do you clap? What was that going to look like and then we're going to turn around and have an impeachment trial? We even had … it affected even that kind of daily activity leading up to the impeachment trial. It was something you wanted to get done just to get it done, just to get back to the Senate being the Senate. But you also wanted to do it right. There was a real sense of, "Wow, that is done." It could have come out, obviously, a different result for most, for a lot of people on the Republican side of the aisle. But that is what it is. I think for the most part people were pleased that the production of it went off well.

Scott: What do you think about the acquittal? Do you think that was the right thing?

Letchworth: Personally, I was surprised at the final vote. We had puzzled through it being different. There was a surprise or two and one of them was Senator [Arlen] Specter with his creative way of voting. I'll put it like that. That was a bit of a surprise.

Scott: How was it creative?

Letchworth: He quoted Scottish law. It was Scottish law as a way to vote. [Not proven, recorded as not guilty.] It wasn't yea or nay, it was some in between kind of thing that he created just to be different to a certain extent. I can remember when he did it, Senator Lott said "What did he just say?" [Scott laughs] And I had to repeat it to him and we looked at each other like, I don't know what he means. We kind of knew, but we kind of didn't know. It was like, where did that come from? Senator Lott did have a whip count with him, he had a whip card with him where he thought everybody was going to be. Obviously he was as surprised at that Senator Specter's what was it? I can't remember what it was called. As soon as we stop talking I'll remember it. His statement was a bit of a surprise.

Scott: So he was keeping a vote count just as he would for any other piece of legislation?

Letchworth: Yep, he was.

Scott: And some of those votes changed unexpectedly?

Letchworth: That one was very unexpected. There was a period of time where Senator Lott thought that Senator Byrd might be a supporter and obviously learned that he would not. There was a period of time when Senator Byrd was on Senator Lott's whip

count to be a supporter and was not. So it was an ongoing whip count, but yes, he definitely had one. In that respect just like it was a vote cast, a bill passing. I sat next to him during the vote and watched him check off the yeas and nays. It almost came to me what Senator Specter said.

Scott: I'll have to look it up, we can enter it later.

Letchworth: I'll look it up too, you'll find it interesting.

Scott: In the case of a vote count like that, let's just put aside the impeachment, this brings up a question I'd like to ask you about just keeping counts of votes. Would the leader, would Senator Lott ever approach senators after if they surprised him with their vote and ask them why?

Letchworth: I can remember all leaders that I worked for doing that at some point or another. Not in a confrontational kind of way, but sort of like, "Gee, I had you in this category and you ended up in that category. What happened?" A lot of time it was the result of something that happened to the bill towards the end, something good or bad. And most times the conversation was, "I understand, next time let me know. Don't blindside me." They got a little bit of a lecture of, you know, "It's helpful if I know this in advance." Typically, especially if it was a tough one, especially if you lost by one or two. Sure you went to the senator as cordially as you can. They respect everybody's vote. Everybody has the ability to vote their conscience. You understand that it's a learning process. If you understand what flipped them at the last minute, then you'll understand, maybe I can watch out for that to see that it doesn't happen again. It's twofold. One, you as the leader want to make sure you didn't do anything to cause the problem. And if you didn't, learn what the problem was, if it turned out to be a problem for you, to try to make sure it didn't happen again. That is not that unusual. I can remember every leader I worked for doing that and I never remember it being a real confrontation, you know, jumping them and saying, "Hey you just left me in the lurch, why did you—?" I don't remember it being that at all.

Scott: That wouldn't do anybody any good because then you'd have two people angry with one another right?

Letchworth: Hey Kate, I'm going to have to quit at 3:45, is that okay?

Scott: That's okay. I was just thinking that this is probably a good place for us to wind up. I'm going to turn it off.

Letchworth: Okay.

Life after the Senate

December 8, 2010
Interview #4

[This interview was conducted via Skype. Both the narrator and interviewer used webcams for video and audio delivery. Scott used a digital voice recorder to record audio from the computer speakers. Letchworth was in her home office in Florida and Scott was in her home office in Maryland.]

Scott: That's right. [Laughs] How are you doing?

Letchworth: I'm good how are you?

Scott: I'm great, how's your husband?

Letchworth: He's doing okay. The report we got last week wasn't as great as it could have been because the chemo[therapy] they had him on isn't working so they now need to switch. So we are in the middle of learning what the switch will be. But anyway—basically, day to day he is doing pretty good. Thank you for asking.

Scott: Good. How are his spirits?

Letchworth: They are pretty good, considering. I have been pleasantly surprised at his courage. You never know what people will do in these situations.

Scott: Sure.

Letchworth: You assume, you know, all sorts of stuff, but until you actually get in it I think a lot of people are wowed. I have been absolutely wowed. I think I have more roller coasters with it than he does.

Scott: Well, that's very nice. Are you going to get to see the kids for the holidays?

Letchworth: We hope so. It will depend on when they want to start this new treatment. The new treatment is really supposed to knock him for a loop. It's the "mack daddy" of chemos. It depends on when they want to start. We are trying to figure that out, waiting for doctors. So I may have to grab a call. If I do, I'll—

Scott: Oh, sure.

Letchworth: Okay. The only call I have to take would be the one from the doctor. You know if they call you got to take it.

Scott: Of course, absolutely no problem at all. I'll be here so if you need to go we can always reconnect whenever it's convenient for you.

Letchworth: Okay. And again, I'm going to have to jump off at 3:30.

Scott: Sure. No problem.

Letchworth: Good, perfect.

Scott: Good. I wanted to follow up with a question about your retirement decision. You had been married to Howard Greene when he was the assistant secretary for the minority and majority. Basically I feel like you two grew up together and you had a life in the Senate as well as a personal life together and I wondered if your second marriage made you think at all differently about your job or made you approach your job in the Senate differently?

Letchworth: That's a good question. Did my marriage to Ron make me approach the job differently? I would have to say it did a little bit because it was more normal, real life. It wasn't 365 days a year, 24 hours a day Senate. There was Little League. There was ballet. There was a chance to be a little more in the real life than married to somebody who was a career Senate employee. All of our friends, Howard and our friends, were career Senate employees. That's a little bit of a bubble. We can debate whether it's a good bubble or a bad bubble. But it's definitely a bubble. Meeting Ron, meeting his friends, family, all of that, [who] weren't so Senate oriented, it did make me look at it from a little different perspective. I won't say that's either good or bad. It was definitely different though, you are right. A different perspective.

Scott: When did you get married to Ron?

Letchworth: In 199—Oh gosh, I'm going to have to correct this. It's either '97 or '98. I can't remember.

Scott: I won't tell him that you couldn't remember. [Laughs]

Letchworth: [Laughs] Please don't.

Scott: That's really interesting. It's something I wanted to follow up with you about because so much of your life had been in the Senate and I wondered about that change.

Now maybe we can switch gears and talk about all of the things that you've been doing since you left the Senate. You have been incredibly busy. It seems to me that you are still deeply involved in politics and I wanted to talk to you about your decision to found GradeGov.com. When did that happen and what made you decide to do it?

Letchworth: I don't think there was a real "ah-ha" moment where it just clicked in my head. I can tell you for probably the last 10 years, easily, the last 10 years of my Senate service I could see Congress, I could feel Congress, I could see the Senate, I could see the senators, changing. It was a function, in my view, a lot to do with the fact that times were changing. Technology was changing. The world as we know it on a day-to-day basis was changing. Just like you and I talked about before. How did we live before BlackBerries? How did we live before cell phones? That really made legislating change. What I think it did to legislating in a nutshell was take out the personal aspect of it. Members of Congress have so little time to actually do the personal aspect of it. It's a combination of having no time. I think we talked about how TV in the Senate and Congress in general took the personal out of it a little bit. You know, members of Congress don't want to typically go on the floor and talk about a little town item because they are afraid they will be buttonholed into, "Oh he can't possibly be a global guy, or a main media guy because all he talks about is this little town." That started a disconnect, in my view, and then the lack of time [with] the 24-hour news cycle and having to debate and having to fund-raise all the time. We the people sort of got left behind. I think also when you had 9/11, I think so many in Congress, rightfully so, there was such an obvious number one intention to protect the American people. But it's almost like the little stuff got left behind to a certain extent.

The disconnect started happening more and more and more. Disconnect to the point where it used to be members of Congress talked about going home, you know, right before recess. "What are you going to do during recess?" That kind of conversation. You quit having that excitement about going home. That connection from the legislator to the American people was slowly going away. It just dawned on me. That's dysfunctional. That's dangerous. That's not good for the American people. It's not good for our system. The more I got out into the real world, being married to Ron, living in Manassas, going to soccer games, the more it was obvious to me that the American people—and literally in the last 10 or 15 years I'm talking about, in the '90s—really felt like, "They don't care about me anymore." That feeling to me got louder and louder and louder and louder.

So it became obvious that there needs to be a good way for the American people to connect to members of Congress. It can't be bothersome for them. It can't take up a lot of their time because time is precious. But it has to be real in my view and both parties have to believe that it's real. The member of Congress has to believe these are real people speaking their mind. And the people doing the talking have to believe that the member of Congress will pay attention, will hear them. So it dawned on me. Why not do something that allows that connection and if Congress takes it seriously it really will solve this dysfunction that I believe is so, is badly needed. I remember, of course I'm sure you know this, all members of Congress have a day or morning or afternoon where they meet with their press team and they learn about, "Okay, how am I doing in the local paper? What does the big paper think of me?" They get the down low on the press and all of that. My goal for GradeGov was for the member of Congress to say, "Okay, how am I doing on GradeGov this week?" And if the staffer said, "You have a 'C'" [the member would say] "What do you mean I have a 'C'? I had a 'B' last week! What's going on?" The staffer or the member of Congress can say, "I've been on the site and I see letters from my constituents that say I'm doing this wrong or that wrong. Let's fix it."

It was interesting. After GradeGov was launched the one thing that members of Congress said to me over and over again was that when the letters were written they wanted to see their constituent mail first. So I had to revamp the system because if you remember, if you go on the website and you find a member of Congress's page, right under his or her face are all the letters. When the site was originally launched anybody's letter went there. In other words, you don't have to write your own member of Congress. You could write whoever you want. But why does a senator from, I don't know, Tennessee want to read somebody's—He may want to read somebody's comments from California, but he wants to read his constituent comments first. So I reversed that. But that I thought was an easy thing for me to do. It wasn't necessarily cheap, but it was an easy thing for me to do. People think websites just change miraculously. [Scott laughs] Imagine how people think that. I get letters all the time: "Why don't you add this? Why don't you add that?" Sometimes the suggestions are wonderful but I really have to bite my tongue to say, "It costs money to do all of that!" But anyway, the suggestion was a good one, I thought. I thought it would help them watch the site more, pay attention to the site more. So I did it.

I also heard, really interestingly enough, not a lot of people use GradeGov for constituent services, but some people do. I was surprised. I did not design it for constituent services. "Can you help my child get in the Naval Academy?" Or, "Can you help with my social security check?" It wasn't for that. But anyway, people use it for that and I have heard that people have had results. Members of GradeGov that have heard

from a member of Congress, their staff, and they had tried all the other traditional ways, whether it's a social security check issue, or an immigration—they tried everything imaginable and got nowhere. But they got an answer on GradeGov.

I feel like it's still young. It still needs to grow. A lot of the new members are familiar with it. I think some of the old members haven't been as thrilled with it. But it'll grow. It will grow with every new member of Congress and as more members of Congress use it. I also would like to have the member of Congress—and I tried the Senate Rules Committee and I tried the House Administration and I'm still sort of struggling with them, I may eventually get it—to have the ability for the member of Congress to comment on his page. Just one time a day, just like each constituent can. He can spend it talking about specific letters. He can do an "atta-boy" to himself. He can [do] whatever he wants to do. That will help keep him involved. Of course, we know a lot of them in most cases, the staff will do it. But I'm trying to get that kicked off. As you know, that takes a lot of hoops jumping through the Rules Committee. It would greatly disadvantage me from doing any kind of advertising, which I'm okay with. Because you see, you wouldn't want to get into all that advertising bit. I'm still working on that. That would, I believe, keep members of Congress more interested and more of them would watch it. More of them would read the letters. That's all it's about. All it's about is a communications effort.

Go ahead.

Scott: I was just going to ask: It's another way to enable constituents to talk to their representative, which is really interesting because there are a number of other ways to do it. Why do you think GradeGov is particularly effective in this respect?

Letchworth: Because [with] the other ways to do it, you're never clear whether it's going to a member of Congress. If you use the member of Congress's website and write them a letter, so much of that is sent to a reporting system, as you know. The member of Congress will get a report that says you got seven letters on health care today. But is your health care letter ever really written, I mean, read?

The other ways are, of course, town hall meetings. But you know, in a lot of respects, and I'm not being disrespectful, but members of Congress have taken those over. They used to be ours. They used to be the American people's. You and I would go to them, Kate. We wouldn't invite the members of Congress. You and I would go and we would talk about the member of Congress. We'd talk about our problems. And then over time, and I'm not blaming this on any one party, it's just an evolution of things, over time members of Congress started going to them because it became obvious that's where a lot

of their constituents would be. Like one-stop shopping. Now they are run by the member of Congress. The agenda is written by the member of Congress and a lot of times you have to win a lottery or win some kind of draw system to even get in the room. That's a little backward from what it started out. Even those kinds of ways to communicate aren't the same anymore and people are feeling the frustration.

I also thought that GradeGov, by the virtue of the fact that the letters stay on the site, that it's like being able to write a letter to the editor without an editor having to approve it. You can't be disrespectful or ugly or the letter gets taken down. But if you are concerned and you are respectful, your letter is going to be there for all time or until the site for some reason would come down. It's there. That's also a sense of—it lets a little bit of the steam out of the frustration coffee pot for the constituents also. That's why I think it is a little different. The other ways are you're not sure you get heard. And you're not sure you really see results. I think they feel, members of GradeGov feel, like they are at least being heard, they are at least being seen. Sure they're still, they may still be ignored. We can't make people listen and do exactly what they want. But at least they are being heard.

GradeGov is different because it's attached to personal e-mail accounts in the Senate and the House. It's not attached to—you know, a lot of people don't like that. A lot of people in Congress are not thrilled with the fact that these go to personal e-mail accounts. I've had several members of Congress ask that we funnel them through the e-mail system and I've respectfully said that I wasn't going to do that. The e-mail accounts are public knowledge. That is also a difference. People know that they do end up in someone's e-mail box. I can't make them read every word. And you can certainly delete it. But that's the next best thing to having somebody stand in the office and make a phone call.

Scott: I did want to ask you about the back-end in terms of how you have coordinated these responses with the offices. Has that been a formal communication between you, GradeGov, and individual offices? How does it work? Do people contact you first, in terms of the members, or do you reach out and talk to them?

Letchworth: A little bit of both. I would say probably one quarter of the members of Congress have called me at some point. Obviously, not the member of Congress—I've heard from very few members of Congress—their senior staff [call] and they'll say, "Can you redirect the letters here? Or actually you have them going to a press secretary and she would like them to go here. They are better served if they go here." I've gotten a lot of that, which is helpful. Basically what I did in setting up the system was go through 535 members of Congress, go through their office, figure out who their LD

[Legislative Director] was or one of the top senior aides and put the e-mail system to their account. I'm sure that I was incorrect in a lot of instances. A couple of dozen instances I sent them to places where they shouldn't have [gone]. In a lot of cases, that member of Congress's office would call me and ask me to move it somewhere else. That's fine. I don't have a problem with that. The more people watch and look at the site and they go to the right place, of course the more successful it will be.

Scott: Have you watched the number of people reaching out and writing letters? Has that increased over time?

Letchworth: Absolutely. You know what was interesting? I guess this was me being lazy. I was up there and I had talked to a friend in Senator Bennett's office. This is Bob Bennett [R-UT]. We were just talking about different things and he let me know, this was way back in the middle of January [of 2010], maybe earlier than that, that the senator might be in trouble. Of course, I'm [saying], "Oh, no, the senator can't be in trouble. You're kidding me." This was going on his fourth term. His dad had been senator. Senator Bennett is a wonderful person, that can't be true. And he said, "No, no. I really think that we've got some issues." And we talked a little bit about other things. As soon as I got to the point where I could, I checked GradeGov and Senator Bennett was getting a 'D'.

Scott: Really?

Letchworth: The letters from his Utah constituents were clearly not letters of praise. They were very upset with him. So I started watching the site more for the early primaries and GradeGov batted an absolute perfect 1000 for every single primary. The first time it made me take notice was when I noticed that Senator Bennet was doing badly, and then as it got closer and closer to his, remember his wasn't actually a primary, it was a party convention I think is what they call it, as it got closer to that I kept watching and thought, "Boy he's still not doing well. As a matter of fact, it's getting worse." And sure enough we know what happened. That made me take notice as to the other ones. Literally every one where they were, where somebody was facing an incumbent, in other words so that I could track it on GradeGov because the incumbent was there, in every instance, GradeGov was exactly right.

Scott: Wow.

Letchworth: It really just basically reaffirms what it's supposed to be, which is the voice of the people. Another thing that I'm very proud of is that it is pretty equally represented. About every three or four days I look in the membership and see what the

ratio is from Republican to Democrat and Independent. It's high 40s typically for the Democrat and Independent and low 50s for the Republican. So that is fairly even. It just gets out on its own. I do some TV and radio when I can. I do some radio for GradeGov. But typically it gets out on its own.

Scott: That was going to be my next question. How did you get the word out? When you first launched the site what did you do?

Letchworth: I did some TV, Fox News a couple of times, MSNBC, various radio [programs]. I then started to do a weekly radio show. Now I have a twice weekly radio show of my own and then a Wednesday night radio show with a local radio talk show host. All of it is talking about Congress and how you can use GradeGov, you know, the ABCs of Congress. Typically on the Monday show—

[Phone rings in Letchworth's office.]

Letchworth: Let me just peak at this to make sure it's not—Okay, I don't need to get it.

The Monday show typically talks about what Congress is going to do for the week, the schedules of the House and the Senate. And believe it or not, Kate, people care more and more about that. I mean the average guy in the bowling alley is a little interested as to what the Senate's going to do. Now, they are not political junkies. They don't want all the down-low. They don't want to know about cloture votes, and all of that. But they do generally want to know what their Congress is doing. Friday on the show typically I recap the week and talk about whether Congress did what it said it was going to do. Did the Senate do—why didn't they get that bill done? Why didn't the House get that bill done? That listenership has built and I think it is all part of the GradeGov, the Tea Party, the "we the people," whatever you want to call all of this where people have woken up to the fact that they need to watch Congress and watch what's going on in Washington more and more and more.

Scott: Do you think that's out of a sense of distrust for their elected officials? Where does that feeling come from?

Letchworth: I really do believe it started with the slow disconnect, with the slow of members of Congress not being able to connect as often as they used to be with their constituents and not at the level that they used to. We talked about whether they talked about the Girl Scout group or the Boy Scout group. If they stopped talking about that, you as the constituent are going to, at some point, think, "He doesn't care about me anymore.

He's forgotten me. Does he ride in the parade anymore? Does he come home as often?" I think it's a little bit of that. I think it's also a little bit of everybody gets so busy. With everything being so busy I think it's a combination of all of that. Of course with that comes the mistrust and the doubt. One thing feeds off the other. To me it's very unhealthy.

Scott: It's interesting to me what you said about the members and television and the fact that they tend to not talk about those local events as much as they talk about the more global, bigger picture, national things. It would work against their best interests, I would think, because they are technically state ambassadors. They are supposed to represent the interests of the people in their state.

Letchworth: I don't know if that is more staff driven. I think in a way it's slightly staff driven. Think about it. If you're the staffer that ends up working for the member that gets to be the rock star on whatever issue, then you are kind of the mini rock star. I say that because I can remember in the early '80s a senator's press staff was one or two people. A lot of times it was an editor of a medium-sized newspaper from the state that was willing to move his or her family up here, up to D.C. and take on the job. Now they are media mogul machines. Now they've got a Twitter person, they've got a Facebook person, they've got a YouTube uplink guy or gal. You know what I'm saying? It's this whole media machine. So I think some of that is staff driven. I'm not saying it has an evil intent or anything like that. It's just a sign of the times. If someone is going to be relevant you've got to be on TV "x" amount of times. Why would I put you on TV if you are talking about your Girl Scout group, is really what they are thinking.

Scott: That is really interesting. The more ways they have to communicate with their constituents, the more detached everyone feels. It doesn't seem logical.

Letchworth: It doesn't seem logical if you think about it. It doesn't make sense. But then if you think about it with the egos and the whole power thing thrown in, well then it starts to make sense.

Scott: Did you feel that over your time in the Senate? Did you feel some of that changing at the staff level?

Letchworth: I did. I felt it at the staff level. I felt it at the member level. I can remember being very young and talking to senators about—Two senators that come to mind are Senator [Jesse] Helms, who before a recess, especially if it's a day or two before a recess and it was slow because we were waiting from something from the House maybe, and there were lots of phone calls, it was nothing for him to sit in the cloakroom

and talk about going back home and opine almost about what he was going to be able to do and the fun things he would do. He called it "God's country." "I can't wait to get back to God's country. Have you ever been to North Carolina?" he would say. "You really need to come." He was almost like being Mr. Chamber of Commerce for his state. Senator [Wendell] Ford, for example, was another one. I knew more about Owensborough, Kentucky, than I ever knew about any other place before I went there. Now I've since been many times. But I can remember senators talking about their states, really glowing and really being warm. And they couldn't wait to get back there, Kate. That got less and less and less. Going home almost became a little bit of a hassle. "Oh, I'm going to have a bunch of constituent meetings!" That became pretty obvious over time. Again, it didn't happen overnight. But if you look at one, from one—[audio break]

Scott: So you were talking about—

Letchworth: We were talking about the disconnect that happened between constituents and the members and why did it happen and did it happen overnight? Of course the answer is no to all of that.

Yeah, I could see it. You could see it almost from one year to the next. CODELs [congressional delegations] increased. Again, I'm not going to sit here and demonize CODELs because boy, I've been on a bunch of them and they were wonderful. But that became what everybody talked about what they did for the recess. I've started playing back in my head. Five years ago nobody was talking about doing CODELs, they were talking about, "I'm going to do this parade." Or, "I'm going to do this town hall." It was just sort of that general conversation slowly shifted from one to the other. Again, having the fortunate ability to be on the floor with the members, you heard real conversations between them. It wasn't buffered by staff. It wasn't buffered by—nobody had to guard their words. This was just talk they had sitting in the well, or waiting around for another vote. So I guess what I'm saying is that it was true conversation, true, honest conversation. Definitely, clearly from one decade to another, you could see that that disconnect was getting worse and worse and worse. As a result GradeGov seemed like a way to stop that disconnect. It worried me. It still does worry me. It's not good, it's not healthy, it's not good for our country. If there is a way to resolve it, great.

Scott: Is there a generational component to this disconnect, do you think?

Letchworth: I don't. No. You know at one point I thought that, but if you look at the—Let me take GradeGov, for example. I think GradeGov is a small, tiny microcosm of the whole issue. The membership of GradeGov is across the board. The majority of them are 40 and over.

Scott: Interesting.

Letchworth: Yeah. The only reason I think there aren't a lot more young people is the way the site is set up, there is nothing exciting about it for a young person. And it was purposefully set up that way. If you make it flashy like some new Facebook page, then an older person won't navigate. So in other words, an older person can navigate this, a younger person can also much easier. But it's not exciting to them so they are not going to go on it as often as they would say, a Facebook page, because there aren't videos flashing on them. To say there is a generational—I don't think so.

Scott: I was actually thinking more about generational [meaning between] the members and their disconnect with the constituents.

Letchworth: In other words, are the younger ones doing a better job of connecting with the constituents?

Scott: Well, maybe the opposite. Are the older ones, like a Jesse Helms, keeping a stronger connection to their constituents than maybe some of these newer folks coming in?

Letchworth: I think it's a purer connection. A deeper connection. Maybe I should just say that, a deeper connection. I think the younger ones, their connection is more face time on Facebook, tweeting on Twitter. There's nothing wrong with it.

Scott: It's a different connection.

Letchworth: It's clearly not as deep of a connection than if you have coffee with them at a coffee shop. Obviously, the younger you are, the more you realize you can get more people involved with Facebook than going to a downtown coffee shop. But is the quality of the downtown coffee shop [audio break]

To answer your question, yes, I think it is as far as that is concerned. I don't know that you ever can really do much about that.

Scott: No, I don't know. Maybe what will take shape now will be something new that people of that generation can see as a real connection with their members and I don't know.

Letchworth: Maybe that is video conferencing, only it would go out over your TV. Nobody would have to be completely computer savvy to get it. I don't know. I'm sure somebody will figure that part out. I am adding something to GradeGov which might help a little bit. When all the elections were going on and, of course, prior to the elections, people started inviting GradeGov in general. I don't know who they think GradeGov is, and it didn't really matter. But they thought that GradeGov should know about their political events. So they invited GradeGov to every political event, Kate, that you could possibly think of. If you were ever to go to Oregon and want to go to a Tea Party event in Eugene, Oregon, I can tell how to go right to it, where it is, and I can give you a Google map.

[audio break]

GradeGov should know about these. So I'm adding to it a political directory where you in theory can go to GradeGov to find almost any political event you can think of for any political party, whether it's the Libertarian Party or the Green Party in whatever town, if there is something going on, all over America. Which I thought would help give more strength to GradeGov. I also bought [audio break]

So I hope to do something with them ultimately if GradeGov's brand gets as strong as I hope it could be. Then I would launch, let's just say for example, GradeGovVirginia. And that [audio break]

I'm hoping to almost franchise those out because I clearly can't do all 50 states. The issues, I don't know the—There is going to be, I believe, somebody like a Drudge, someone like a Matt Drudge, who will want to do that. They will rent the space. They have to keep certain brand rules, just like a franchise. It would have to be run so you don't taint the brand. Let them run with it, let them do their whole site on their whole state and let the governors and the state legislatures also be under the same scrutiny as GradeGov members of Congress are at this point. That's the future of it, I hope.

Scott: How do you make money right now? What's your revenue stream?

Letchworth: It doesn't. [Both laugh] That's a little bit of a thorn in both my side and my husband's side. Right now all we do is just pay the bills. It's a matter of being patient. It's still a basic matter and in my mind it was the right thing to do and is the right thing to do. It's time will come. I am not interested in ever getting into heavy advertising because you would have to worry about whether it's a Republican ad or a Democrat[ic] ad. Unless it's a vacuum cleaner that has no political persuasion, then I'd have to be balancing it constantly. Ultimately, I'm hoping that the political directory will be able to

make some money. Hopefully I can charge for somebody to upload whatever their event is. I did create something during the election that I was going to hopefully make money on. Kate, I ended up—I guess this was the Senate employee in me—I ended up giving it away. [Scott laughs] We named it POW "Political Opponent Web Servicing" but basically it was API, which means if you are running against a member of Congress, a sitting member of Congress, I would offer to you a link on your site and basically, a picture of your opponent and his or her grade from GradeGov and click on it and it would say, "click more to read about my opponent." And basically you would be telling everybody what people think of me, if I'm a member of Congress, without saying it. I was going to charge for that. But then some friends were running some campaigns and asked me, "Would you give it to me for 30 days free and let me try?" Anyway, the bottom line is, I probably had 100 POWs out there and they all ended up being *pro bono*.

Scott: [Laughs] You're going to have to change that model!

Letchworth: I know [audio break] I do know that incumbents have a huge leg up on people running against them. This little bit, if it could be helpful [audio break]. Most of them stuck them on their home page. Most of them kept them as a little postage stamp. Some of them put them on a donation page, for example. But most of them, somewhere on their home page was the postage stamp of their opponent and their grade that you could click and it would go straight to in real time. A couple of them made it the size of a deck of cards, especially if their opponent was constantly getting a "D" or an "F."

[audio break] but most of them had just a small [audio break] in an effort to bring more awareness about their opponent, about their campaign, just all of that information.

Scott: Elizabeth, if you don't mind, I'm going to try to call you right back. My Internet connection on this side is terrible. And your voice is coming through very garbled at times. I want to try to get a cleaner connection. Do you mind if I just call you right back?

Letchworth: No.

Scott: Sorry about that.

[Ringing]

Letchworth: Whoa, that seems loud.

Scott: Yes, it does. You're right.

Letchworth: I didn't touch the volume, did you touch the volume on yours?

Scott: No, I didn't.

Letchworth: That's okay though.

Scott: Well, the connection is much better. Thank you for bearing with me on this. This is a trial run to try Skype for interviews and I can say that it doesn't always work very well.

Letchworth: I think weather has something to do with it. I don't know what it is doing there, but I have seen, I have used Skype a few other times, and if one of the locations is having questionable weather, for whatever reason, it can have some issues.

Scott: Are you having strange weather?

Letchworth: No, it's a little cold for here, but no. I mean, we're not having a tornado or anything like that.

Scott: That's good. I wanted to ask you about your column in Sunshine News.

Letchworth: That's an online a.m. publication, just like Washington gets the *Congress Daily* and *Roll Call*, only it's all Florida news. It's all Florida politics. When they launched, they reached out to me, we have mutual friends. They said, "Would there be an interest," or did I think there would be an interest for them to have something about Washington? And of course my thought was, "Yeah, absolutely." Now people in Florida aren't as interested in Washington but they still want to feel like they know. Even if it's a snippet, even if, having a cup of coffee—it goes back to the same people who listen to my radio. These aren't Washington political junkies. But they still want to know, generally, what are my guys and gals doing this week up there? What are they going to do to me or what are they going to do to my business? Is this something I need to worry about? As the relationship continued with the founders of Sunshine State News, we all came to the conclusion, why don't you write the article? And because I have to stay in touch by virtue of my work at Covington, I already know the information anyway. It's almost like being an advanced cloakroom assistant. I always know what's going to happen so why not put it on pen and paper and let folks that want to read about it, read about it. So I typically do a Monday and a Friday column there, and it's the same thing as the radio. What are they going to do? And then Friday, what did they do?

Scott: What I thought is interesting, reading the last couple that you've written, is how much it sounds like a floor schedule: "Here's what we're going to be doing," except you've got the week view instead of the daily view.

Letchworth: Exactly. Again, maybe that's the floor assistant in me. I found out more—you know, I don't think 15 years ago a column would have gone like this. I don't think a radio show would have, my god, it would have been the biggest yawner in the world. But I think because people have woken up to wanting to know about their legislators and what they are up to, that's why I think it is going as well as it is going as far as the interest. You're right, I do write it as if it's a write-up for, the recording, as if I were making a recording for the end of the day in the cloakroom. I do try to make it simple. Most people don't want to delve into cloture and all that. Calling it a 60-vote procedural vote is good enough for them. As you and I know, that means cloture, but they don't need to know all that, it's not important. So that's how that started. Every once in a while, if there is an issue that either I know really well, or I can provide some background history-wise, I'll do a daily column. I've done a couple on cloture. I've done a couple on the filibuster. I've done—anyway, pieces like that where I can give a little bit of background, provide a little bit of history, I'll throw out to the daily column. But most of the pieces, you are right, they sound like a legislative schedule.

Scott: Well, they are more fun. There are some editorial comments in there, things that you wouldn't hear on the Senate floor, so it's fun.

Letchworth: Hopefully I give a little history sometimes about why they are in a pickle, or whatever the situation is. Again, it's all in an effort to let the people know more and more about what their Congress is doing for them.

Scott: What is your job with Covington? You work as a legislative advisor, is that right?

Letchworth: Senior advisor. Really, I've made a nice niche that I hope that they appreciate. I thoroughly enjoy it. I am the eyes and ears for the firm on the Hill for issues. Also [I take] a pulse on the Hill for what is going on. Not literally the bills so much as, what is the flavor? What is the mood? What is likelihood of x, y, or z? As you know, for client purposes, that can be very time saving and therefore save a lot of money if you can advise the client one way or the other in the proper way. Typically I don't go up to the Hill with a client. I haven't been up to the Hill with a client in years and that's fine. I've very happy with the role I have and I think they are too. It also affords me, it allows me to keep talking to my friends all the time. But you know, I'm not really asking much of them. I get to ask some general scheduling questions, but I'm not asking something of

them. It allows me to keep my friendships, you know, find out about the children, following everybody's life. It's really a nice niche. I really enjoy it.

Scott: How often do you make it up here to Washington?

Letchworth: Typically I go up about once a month and I stay the better part of a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday; Monday/Thursday, depending. And that works out really well to keep people thinking of me every so often. But of course I'm on the phone so much of the time and most people don't realize I'm not there all the time. If you think about it, if you can go two or three weeks and not see somebody, the assumption isn't that they are in Florida, the assumption is that you've just been busy and they've been busy. [Scott laughs]

Scott: Do you use a lot of video conferencing and things like that?

Letchworth: I do a little bit with clients, but most of it is conference calls. And if you are just very careful not to ever talk about the weather or the traffic, then it works out pretty well. [Both laugh]

Scott: How did you come into that position? Through connections that you have, or did they approach you?

Letchworth: It was a little bit of both. There was definitely a need that Covington had to fill. I knew I wanted to keep doing this. I had done this while we owned the golf course in South Carolina. I had done this for a couple of clients when I was down there. Then we sold the golf course and moved to Florida and I wanted to keep on that end of it, but I didn't want it to mean relocating back in D.C. So meeting with the Covington folks was a little bit of an ask on their part. I'm not a lawyer. I want to do something that they've never done before. I want to do it from Florida. And by the way, I've owned a golf course for the last couple of years. It was really strange for them, I think, at first. But once they thought about it, it made sense. It's been a good marriage as far as I'm concerned. I think they think that I love the firm. They are wonderful to me. So I'm happy and again it affords me the ability to stay in touch with all my friends and keep relevant on the Hill and keep getting the inside information. I share it with clients but then I also share it in this other way with the other outlets like the radio and Sunshine State News.

Scott: You and I had a scheduling—we pushed back one of our interviews right after the midterm elections because you were busy, I think advising in some capacity

these newly elected members to Congress. What kind of role have you played with members and staff on the Hill? It sounds like you still have a lot of ties there.

Letchworth: I do. A lot of it is helping to navigate, helping some of the new members navigate. They want to know what is going to happen, how the committee assignment process will work, what's my best shot at getting "x" committee or "y" committee? If I can let them know, boy, you are wasting your time or you're wasting your chits asking for Appropriations if you are a brand new member. Or, do you want to paint yourself as a victim? Do you want to ask for the moon and get nothing and have people feel sorry for you and get more? Is that where you want to go? Do you see what I'm saying?

Scott: Yes.

Letchworth: There is a lot of behind-the-scenes strategizing if they know how to strategize. It's obviously nothing to do with their intellect, it's just knowing how to navigate. Several of the new members of Congress have staffers that I've known for years so they've reached out to me for help. If you help them understand what is going to happen, how it's going to happen. I know you know this. Your committee assignments can, obviously, make or break you, as far as a career in the Senate. And if you pick wrong, and you have to keep moving around until you sort of pick the right one, you can waste a lot of years, a lot of seniority. I remember Senator [Ted] Stevens had been there, I have to check on the dates, I want to say he'd been there at least two terms, before he found the committees that he really wanted. And he had wasted 12 years of seniority bouncing from committee A to B to C until he finally found the ones that he liked.

If you can find them initially, and that takes some doing on your part, it takes some homework on your part as a member of Congress, but if you can also find somebody like me that can help you traverse that, you can save a lot of time and you can get places very quickly if you navigate the beginning of it.

As you know, the beginning of being a member of Congress is very overwhelming, and this class is the biggest class they've had in modern history. In 1980 they had 12, this is 13. You can't possibly, the floor staff, the party secretary, can't possibly educate every one of those members to the level that they need to be educated. It's just not possible. There aren't enough hours in the day. I remember when Fred Thompson [R-TN] became a senator, and because I had known him personally as a Baker staffer and a friend, we had a couple of meetings, sort of pre-meetings, before he was having to pick his committee assignments, about what would be best for him. And he and I talked probably for an hour and a half: "What is your vision? What do you want?" And

he clearly did not want Judiciary. He did not want that whole image of "what did you know, when did you know it?" As a staffer, he didn't want to constantly be reliving that. He wanted to establish himself as his own man. Even though everybody was tugging at him to come to Judiciary, as a sort of legend, or rock star, he didn't want to have to go through all that. So the bottom line is we found he could really have a deep love for Government Affairs, so he got on there, which at the time people thought was kind of a lame pick. But gosh if you look at the history of it, within six years he was chairman. I think that was precedent setting for someone that young, I don't mean necessarily in age, but for someone of the Senate to have risen that quickly in a committee. And that really came down to picking well when his committee assignments were offered to him. It's that kind of [advice] that a seasoned senior staffer can really help a new member with. People reach out to me all the time and I'm happy to do that. If I can help people make the transition easier, that's wonderful. I'm happy to do it.

Scott: Do you speak to the members-elect directly, or do you tend to speak to their staff?

Letchworth: Both. In the case of Marco Rubio [R-FL], I've spoken to him a couple of times, but I've also spoken to his staff. A little bit of both. In some cases, the member will want to speak to you first I think to get a comfort level with you. Usually my tie to them is because they have taken on a consultant or a friend of mine or hired somebody that knows me and knows that I would be good inside information for them. Sometimes it works out on a trial with them, and I don't mean that in any kind of formal way, but you know, chat with me for a few minutes and then the rest of it will be, "Oh, by the way, check with Elizabeth before we make this decision." So I'll get a quick call. It won't be necessarily long and involved. Just want to make sure I'm not really stumbling over the wrong thing. And I'm happy to do it, I enjoy it.

Scott: What do you think has been the biggest change in the Senate as an institution during your 26 years?

Letchworth: Obviously the TV for all the reasons that we've talked about. That was probably the biggest change. The partisanship has gotten so much worse. I'm sure that is a lot to do with the 24-hour news cycle. It has a lot to do with the function of TV being part of the Senate and the House because as we've talked about you can quickly become a rock star overnight if you want to be. I'll use Alan Grayson, Florida congressman Alan Grayson, as an example. If you wanted to be on the nightly news, just go say something exculpatory. He figured that out and did that a handful of times and then it became YouTubed and then it became viral. I think that kind of politics, if you want to call it that, creates people being really, really divided. That is probably the most

dramatic [change] that I've seen the Senate go through. The politics being so polarized. In part, it's TV but in part it's just a function of no time. No time for members to really get to know each other anymore.

I think the third leg of it is that the [Senator John] Tower [confirmation] debates changed the United States Senate. When they hung one of their own out to dry I think that ultimately had a huge, huge effect on the Senate. I'm not sure they have ever gotten over it, and they may not get over it. There was an instant distrust because basically friends threw him under the bus. I think before, that people would have said the Senate or in the House for that matter, that would have never happened. But when they threw him under the bus and ultimately defeated him, there was a lot of looking over the shoulder. I even remember hearing from members of the Senate that the wives weren't as close. All because if a wife is a confidant with another wife and says [something] about some flaw in the senator and what if the senator is in two years trying to be a cabinet member? So you had all of that which made it very real very quickly. Of course, that happened very quickly. Beforehand people would have thought that would never happen. There was a feeling that the Senate is a club, that they protect their own. And that clearly showed that that was not the case. You could feel it almost immediately after that.

Interestingly enough, very soon after the Tower debate and Senator Tower's nomination was defeated, the administration sent up another former senator, [Jacob] Chic Hecht [R-NV], to be an ambassador. And the members of the leadership really circled around him. But more importantly, or as importantly, they became very paranoid that he would get "Towered," that that would happen again. I was contacted, I'm going to exaggerate a little bit, but almost hourly: "Elizabeth what do you think about the clearance process? Do you think this is going to happen? What's going on with it? Are you going to be able to [confirm] if not, why?" I was constantly being asked, "How is it going trying to clear him? Why can't you clear him?" Because they were afraid it would happen again. Again it created a level of distrust that was not there beforehand, and I don't really think it went away. I think there is always this feeling of "I don't want to get too close to you because I might tell you something, your child might tell my child, or my wife might tell you, or my husband—" See what I'm saying? "That's going to come back to bite me. It could end up on a YouTube video and end up on the news. Therefore I can't really afford the friendships that I think are necessary to try to get over the bipartisan, or partisan, bickering." You know, a lot of partisan bickering of the past was resolved through families, through lives, through relationships. Kids played together. Therefore, how you could hate the dad or hate the mom if their child is over at your house when you come home? And you really don't have a lot of that. Not nearly as much as you used to. Again, it's a function of time. Families aren't up here like they used to [be].

Scott: Right. A lot of members don't bring their families to Washington.

Letchworth: And I'm hearing 15 to 20 percent of the new group are not [bringing their families]. That's high. That's high. I think typically it runs around 10 percent. Apparently it's going to be a little higher. There you are going to have, again, another whole group that won't have that extra way to reach out across the aisle. Kids don't know whether they are playing with a Democrat or Republican, you know?

Scott: Right. That brings up an interesting question that we haven't touched upon. What is the role of a party secretary in the case of nominations?

Letchworth: Basically the same role as in the clearance process in the orchestration of the passage of a bill or the stopping of a bill. It's the exact same thing. You arrange the speakers, you arrange the people that are going to—of course they are not going to offer amendments in the case of nominations—who is going to do the debating and what are you going to bring up, and all that. It's basically all the same thing. The nomination clearance process goes through the same process as a bill. It gets hotlined. The concerns are then put together in meetings, if that's helpful. Whatever is helpful to move the process along. It's all basically the same thing.

Scott: Is that the most contentious confirmation case you can remember, the Tower case?

Letchworth: Yes. It definitely was the most contentious. Even at a different level for me than Clarence Thomas, or [Robert] Bork, for example. My mother worked for Senator Tower. I had been to his home. I knew his wife, his first wife. I knew his daughters. All of this became personalized. As a matter of fact, the legislative scheduling office, when it was down on the first floor, S. 123, was used as sort of a war room for the Tower family when the vote was getting close to hitting the floor. The girls, the three daughters, used the office and used it as sort of a base to make phone calls. They did their own personal lobbying. I'm talking about his daughters. They went around and met with members saying, "My dad is not what you think he is." Or, "Can I tell you what my dad really is all about?" It was very personal for me. Robert Bork of course was very contentious. Clarence Thomas was, well you know, was very contentious. That was very personal for Senator [John] Danforth [R-MO], for example.

Scott: How so?

Letchworth: It was a personal friendship, and I don't remember how they knew each other. But isn't Clarence Thomas from Georgia?

Scott: I don't recall.

Letchworth: I think it is Georgia. Anyway, I'll look it up. It became very personal for Senator Danforth. And he went back to the leader over and over and over again with various different strategies as to how to keep moving it along and moving it along. And if it wasn't for him, I don't think that the nomination would have gotten through.

Scott: Interesting.

Letchworth: Yes. He was very persistent. And you know what? Senator Tower didn't have that. Because he'd been a former member, he didn't need that. Why would he need that because these were his former friends? And literally he had served with every single one of them so they all knew him. So you would think he wouldn't need sort of a lobby that someone else does. Of course, now the White House for a cabinet member, they usually assign, a lot of times it is a former member that they assign for that person to help the process along. Clearly Senator Tower didn't think he needed that.

Scott: Maybe the case of Tower taught the White House a lesson.

Letchworth: It could be. It could be. But that was one of those things that kind of spun out of control. It was the spin machine that got out of control. And nobody came to his rescue and everybody thought everybody was going to come to his rescue. And that is the funny part. Many of the Republican members that did want to come to his rescue sat back waiting for somebody else to do the work. And nobody did the work and it all of a sudden started piling up and it was almost like, "I'm not going to get into it now, it's too much of a tar baby." It was a little bit of that too.

Scott: How did Senator Tower feel about it? Did you ever talk to him about it?

Letchworth: I did. To say he was bitter, no. He was probably one of the most surprised of anybody. And it happened so quickly. He was sorrowful, he was sorrowful for the Senate. Obviously, we can't ask him the question, but I think he saw what it did to the Senate and what a scar it was going to be on the Senate. It really, really is. And not that a Republican nominee got—it wouldn't matter who it was. It was the fact that a former member was treated that way by other members so quickly. It was interesting toward the end when Senator Dole was trying to salvage it. I don't know that this is a part of any kind of record. But he actually proposed, after we figured out that the nomination was probably going to go down, he proposed something that had never been proposed to

my knowledge out loud—I don't think it had been proposed before him—which was make him secretary of defense on a trial basis. In other words, make him secretary of defense for, I want to say it was six months, it might have been longer. And we'll revisit it.

Scott: It would still require Senate approval for that interim basis?

Letchworth: Yes. It would require Senate approval but then it was almost going to—we tried to construct some kind of mechanism so that it would require another Senate approval whenever the time period was up. I can go back and look it up. I think it was six months. Which sounds kind of bizarre, if you think about it, it's a little odd. Who would take him seriously if they knew he might not be there, you know what I'm saying? There was a little bit of that thought process. But the level of desperation the leadership went to to try to save the nominee because, of course, the leadership believed he would be a good secretary of defense. And all the stories and all of this out-of-control media frenzy was all just noise. That if you just go back to the basics, this was the best guy to be secretary of defense, obviously, or the president wouldn't have picked him. But it didn't work and Senator Dole didn't get an opportunity to try the other alternative and of course we know what happened.

Scott: Elizabeth—

Letchworth: I think—

Scott: Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Letchworth: I think to sum it up the three things: the disconnect, the TV—maybe four things—the lack of time, people just losing control of their time, you know how that goes, and then Tower creating this complete distrust amongst members, all have created a perfect Petri dish for partisan politics to thrive. And it does.

It was interesting, Senator Baker realized how crazy the time schedule had gotten. I want to say it was in the early '80s. He saw Senator [Dan] Quayle [R-IN] as an up-and-comer and asked him to start, I think they call it the Quayle Commission to study the committee assignments. Do they have too many? Are we trying to do too much? And we're not doing anything well. We're doing too much. And basically that is what Senator Quayle came back with. Senators had too many committee assignments [and] they couldn't do anything real well because they were spread too thin and we should shrink them and all of that. Of course within a couple of years the Republicans lost control and

so much for that. It just fell by the wayside. But that was also a realization by the leadership that time is getting away from everybody. What do you do about that?

Scott: What [was] your happiest memory in the Senate? Or one of them?

Letchworth: I would have to say the passage of welfare reform. That was such a big victory because it was such a long victory. It took so long to get. I can remember Senator Dole having meetings after meetings after meetings, but nobody necessarily knew about the governors, trying to lay the groundwork, trying to write the best bill that he could. There was just so much work put into it by so many people. And so many people believed wholeheartedly in it.

[Phone rings]

Let me take a peek at that.

I'm going to grab this Kate.

Scott: Okay, I'll call you right back.

Letchworth: Okay, thanks.

[End of interview]

Welfare Reform

January 5, 2011
Interview #5

[This interview was conducted via Skype. Both the narrator and interviewer used webcams for video and audio delivery. Scott used a digital voice recorder to record audio from the computer speakers. Letchworth was in her home office in Florida and Scott was in her office in 201 Hart Senate Office Building.]

Scott: Welcome back.

Letchworth: Well thank you. Happy New Year to you and your family.

Scott: Happy New Year to you and yours.

Last time we ended with a question. I asked you about one of your best memories of your time in the Senate. You were talking about the final passage of welfare reform, and what a long process, but rewarding process that had been. I wonder if you would like to say a little bit more about that.

Letchworth: Sure. I think really, if I think about the best memories, that's clearly one. Another one was the passage, and this was with Senator Paula Hawkins [R-FL] that didn't get a lot of fanfare but I think it's a big deal now, and that was the, I'm trying to remember the actual real name of it, the child abduction law, basically setting up that whole hotline and setting up that whole nationwide group system. In different states they call it different things, like Amber's Law. Or the Missing and Exploited Children, basically that act, so that now all the states—well, you know, now all the states all over the country, they talk to each other when a little boy or little girl is missing. It goes on this national database. They have recovered so many kids. That was super, super rewarding too.

And really both, for [audio break] Congress in general working, in my view, the way it's supposed to. There were committee meetings and also private meetings with industry leaders and private meetings with law enforcement. I'm thinking about the missing and exploited children for example, in that case. How does it work? How would it work better? If you could make it work better, what would you, you know, if you had your dream, what would you have at your disposal? Really, the same thing was done in a much larger scale when Senator Dole was creating the welfare reform bill. We talked about how he would have governors come in.

It was funny, I got involved several different times, just sort of by accident, being at the right place, or you might say, wrong place at the wrong time, having to go down and see him because of a floor issue and he would be in with one governor and I would play secretary and move one governor from one room to the other and don't let this governor see this governor because they are not supposed to know they are together, they're not supposed to know they are there. Basically, Senator Dole wanted everybody to think that they had their own—and they did—their own private meeting with him and he had their undivided attention. And they did. He just didn't prefer them to know that five minutes later he was going to do the same thing with another governor and the same thing with another governor. So we played musical chairs and doors, shuffling one governor in and one out. But [that's] the way you are supposed to legislate, the way that Congress is supposed to work. You're supposed to hear from the industries and hear from the people that know or don't know [and] people that have good ideas. Air them and discuss them, have debate on them, all of those. Both of those bills did that. To me they are sort of the "A+" of a way that legislation should pass. A litmus test on how things should be run. I just really enjoyed both of those processes very much. Of course the end result of the bills [was] good too, and that's always helpful.

Scott: It seems too, in that process that you just described in terms of hammering out the compromises, it has to be a long process, doesn't it? Just to speak with all those people and to take into account all those opinions, it requires a lot of work.

Letchworth: It does. In both of those cases, welfare reform, it was brand new. In other words most of the programs there had never been tried, not on the federal level. Obviously a lot of them [had been] on the state level, that's why Senator Dole picked a lot of them because they worked in various states. But they were new programs. Writing new programs, that's difficult. I notice, and I notice this more and more, I don't know if it's the level of the legislators, I don't know if it's a time issue, I think it's a little bit of both, but the bills they pass now are so vague. They leave them up to the agencies to write the details. You know the old adage, the devil's in the details. That's dangerous.

I remember Nancy Pelosi, and I'm not saying this in a critical way because she was being completely honest, everybody took it as a bizarre statement: "We have to pass the bill to find out what's in it." Do you remember that statement? That was the health care issue. People thought, a lot of people turned that around to mean it's all about not reading the bill. Remember that campaign. Really, she meant it has to be passed and it has to go to the agencies and the agency heads have to write the programs before we know what it's about. That's really what she was saying. And I'm not sure that's what legislators should be doing. Obviously, that's my little opinion.

But going back to those two bills, they didn't just give it to an agency and say "You figure it out." Legislators figured it out. You figured it out from hearing from all sorts of experts and the ones who are in the field and the ones that have been in the field and the ones that have seen things work and not work. It was, and it is, a long process. But you know Kate, isn't that the way Congress really is supposed to operate? They are not supposed to stick their finger in the air and see which way the wind is blowing and react, especially the Senate. Of course the House has a tendency by its design to do that a little more. But then it's supposed to come to the Senate and the Senate is supposed to debate and listen and do all of that. I think that's why both of those come to mind. And they really do bring a smile to my face.

Scott: Well we have covered a lot of material over the course of our interview. I want to thank you so much for giving us your time and taking the time out to put this in the record. I have learned a lot. You have added a lot to our collection in terms of filling a big gap that we have in our historical record of the history of the Senate. I wonder if there is anything else you would like to add to our record here? If there is anything else you would like to mention that we haven't had the chance to discuss?

Letchworth: I agree that it seems like we have discussed a lot. And it has been a ball for me, Kate. It really has been a blast. To be honest, I'm going to look over the whole thing, but I think you did a great job in posing the questions and I think the combination of the questions and the answers and our back and forth a little bit, I think it did cover an awful lot and I hope it has been, will be, educational for a lot of people. So I'm going to leave it at that. I'm going to leave it at that. And say that it has been a blast and I look forward to reading it and hopefully others will too.

Scott: I think they will. Thank you so, so much. You've made the process so easy for me. This is only my second interview and I've learned a lot from you and I feel like we've had a really great back and forth which has been a lot of fun for me too. So thanks again.

Letchworth: You are welcome.

Senate Page Program

March 21, 2012

Interview #6

Scott: Welcome back. Thank you for being here.

Letchworth: Thank you, it's good to be here.

Scott: I wanted to end our interviews by going back a bit to ask you to describe your role in establishing a separate school for the Senate page program.

Letchworth: Okay.

Scott: How did you get involved in that project and why?

Letchworth: The Senate page board used to consist of the secretary for the majority, the secretary for the minority, the sergeant at arms, the secretary of the Senate, police chief, maybe?

Scott: Doorkeeper, maybe?

Letchworth: I'm talking about the Senate side. The House had [its] own page board. Almost immediately, we're talking about early January of '95, we convened one of these page boards. The first thing I asked was how can we get them separate from the District of Columbia? It was just that we were the redheaded stepchild of the District of Columbia. Not that they didn't want us, but we were this unknown entity that they had to give teachers to. We did our own thing, obviously meeting from 6:30 to 9. We met in the Library of Congress. They didn't have anything to do with us other than they did have to supply us teachers, homework assignments, and whatnot. The curriculum, so to speak, went through them. There was always, I don't want to say a tug of war, because I wasn't a teacher. But it seemed an awkward fit. We had some really smart kids. Believe me, I wasn't one of them, but I can remember being a page and being around some kids that I thought were really "wow" in the wow factor as far as smart. They were running circles around that school. It was a joke as far as—especially when you would talk to them and they would almost chuckle and say, "Boy this is kind of nothing compared to my high school." Then I would hear all the stories of the kids that went back and struggled to catch up. I remember thinking over and over, that's unfair to them. They got an unbelievable experience, as you can imagine, being the page but then to make the catch-up of schooling so hard on them. It seemed unfair. One of the first things that we talked about was how do we get this separated from the D.C. school system formally. They had,

the page school had been accredited by the Mid-Atlantic School District [Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools].

Scott: It's an accreditation program?

Letchworth: Right. But we never pulled the rip-cord on it. We had continued our accreditation but we hadn't gone solo with them. It was time to do that. We took immediate steps to do that and I want to say by July the dorm was finished. It was revamped completely. Of course, that was the, what was the old funeral home called?

Scott: I've forgotten.

Letchworth: Of course the page dorm and school is Webster Hall, but the old funeral home on the corner is where they are now. I remember the sergeant at arms really needed funding to really revamp it and really make it into nice dorms and a nice school area. We had the cabinet shop, which was ready, willing, and able to make the beds and the desks and all of that. The funding was a little bit of a problem. He met with Senator Stevens and said, "What do you think of this idea?" Asked me if I wanted to go and [I] said, "Well, if you get stuck with him and you need some backup, I'm happy to go." They went over there and looked at it. I think they made a lunch out of it, went to 116 and the next thing you know, in the legislative appropriations bill was enough money to finish it. I want to say the dedication and everything was the summer of '95, so that the fall of that year was the first year. Ever since then they have had, what you call a headmaster or headmistress, and dorm people that are there all the time—

Scott: And security.

Letchworth: And security. And it is a curriculum that almost any school could be proud of. They go the extra mile, as you know, to work with the other schools from all over the country, whatever their curriculum is. That's what was always hard, being in the D.C. school system, because the teachers from the D.C. school system are great, but you can't expect them to understand what Idaho needs from you. Or what Utah might need from you, on and on it would go. It was hard for them to meet all of those curricula. This school is designed exactly to do that. I do know it's a lot of communication between the two schools constantly to make sure that the page doesn't fall behind and it's not a problem [for] them when they go back. That was one of the things I was very proud of doing. I was the only former page on the page board. When I said it was necessary, everybody believed it was necessary because it was coming from experience. I don't remember it being that big of a deal. It was the final push and my election as secretary of the majority that ended up helping make that the final push. I do remember a couple of

meetings, one especially in June or July making the last—whatever it took to get it done. As I said, the first year I believe was the fall of ’95. The rest, as they say, is history.

Scott: It’s a wildly successful program.

Letchworth: It is. If you think about it, it was almost like the charter school before charter schools were cool. Before they were the thing to do, before the District, for example, glommed on to the idea. Of course we had a little different purpose than just a regular old charter school. I think it’s worked out great. From what I understand, the students get a lot out of it. It keeps them on track and their page experience is worth its weight in gold. It turned out to be a good thing all around.

Scott: They have such a unique schedule. They really do need a program that is tailored to fit the very few hours that they have to devote to school every day and to keep them up with their own programs back home at the same time.

Letchworth: Exactly.

For example, back in the day before it was its own school, for example, I think we talked about in a previous interview where if the Senate was in past 9:30 was the homework rule. If it was in past 10, no school. You had to ask the teacher to give them the extra work, or help them make up the work. Otherwise the work was blown off. Think about it, a D.C. school’s teacher wasn’t required to come in on Saturday. That’s over above and beyond. That was hard to ask and I don’t even know if we had the right to ask to be perfectly honest. Just being part of the D.C. school system, why did we have the right to ask a teacher to come in on Saturday and teach 15 or 30 Senate pages, a class that they were ready to teach them in the middle of the week. When it’s your own school, so to speak, you can ask the teachers, “They missed three days this week because of crazy Senate sessions. They need a Saturday work day.” It’s much easier to do it when they are “your teachers,” so to speak. So that was another reason that it was clear. The cloakroom staff to some extent would try to do study halls with them when they missed the work, and all of that. But we weren’t teachers. The cloakroom staff aren’t teachers per se. Study hall is study hall. I don’t know if they are studying or not. They could fall behind pretty easily and the teacher not even really know it until they went back home. It solved a lot of problems that the old system inadvertently created and it just seemed to work the best for the kids. So far, it’s chugging along and doing well.

Scott: As the party secretary were you closely involved in managing the pages? Or does that go to the cloakroom staff?

Letchworth: It goes to the cloakroom staff. If it was a disciplinary issue, some of the final disciplinary issues fall to the party secretary. That would mean sending somebody home.

Scott: From the program?

Letchworth: From the program. A lot of times that was bad grades. A lot of times it was absenteeism that you can't really explain. Why didn't you get out of bed? Why didn't you come to work? How many times could you have a cold? Just typical kid, the dog ate my homework. If someone was doing that over and over again. You know, you talk to the page and you tell them, "You are getting close to being in the bad territory as far as being sent home. You need to shape up. You need to do this." The party secretary is the last straw before they get sent home. In the meantime the cloakroom is the one that monitors it on a daily basis, as far as getting on them. Why didn't you show up for math? You get on them. If you need a higher level, it's sort of like, "When your father gets home he's going to give it to you." That was maybe what the party secretary was supposed to—

Scott: It's like the principal treatment. You've talked to everybody else. Did that happen often that you'd have to get to that point with somebody?

Letchworth: I'd say a handful of times. You are talking about 15 to 20 kids, four or five times a year, so several hundred. No, in the big scheme of things, no it didn't. But enough to, I clearly remember it. At the end of each quarter the party secretaries got the grades. You could see everybody's grades. If you had the opportunity and somebody's grades were really slipping, you might, when you sent them on an errand, say, "How's the math going?" Just to let them know that you cared and you knew, not to rub it in their face or anything like that.

As you know, these kids are here on their own.

Scott: At 16.

Letchworth: Right. You also want, in my view, I wanted them to know a lot of people were watching them. Not that they wanted to get away with anything, or get over on anybody, but the more times you let them know that you knew their grades and you knew if they missed school. Plus, you are their boss. You don't want to mess up with your boss, either. You got involved as far as that was concerned. The actual grades and all of that, the teachers took care of that. You got the overall report from them. Sometimes the principal would call and say, "I'm having problems with a certain student.

How is he or she doing at work?" A great worker, or not so good? What's your issue? You might compare notes and find out that there is an issue, there is an underlying problem there. Maybe try to figure it out. But if one is falling down and the other one is doing well. Their work is doing well but their school work is—or vice versa, you try to work it out with the school to try to figure out, how do we improve them both. Because you don't want something really bad to happen to the student as a result of being here. The experience is supposed to be a great experience but they also need to keep up with their school.

Scott: Do you know how the lead page is selected every year, or every semester?

Letchworth: It used to be selected by the cloakroom as far as his or her work. If she was the most responsible one, had shown the most interest, had shown the most leadership. You also have to take into consideration the way they fit in with the other pages. Do they seem to be the leader of the group? You can tell that. You can tell that, you know, if they are in a recess and they are all sitting in front of you in the cloakroom, who is being the leader and saying "Okay, it's quarter of four. Let's clean up the cloakroom, we need to leave." Who jumps up and does that just out of a leadership role? Or are they all going, "I'm not going to do it, you do it." You can figure it out. That's how it's done.

Scott: They are here a few weeks before they are selected?

Letchworth: Usually. This happens sometimes, more often than not, they all come together and then you just have to figure out who looks like they can be the leader. Sometimes you don't pick anybody right away until a leader emerges. In my experience, a leader does emerge. Someone feels more comfortable than someone else in the role because they are more comfortable where they are in their point of life.

Scott: The House has recently decided to end its page program and we've been hearing a lot about that over here. We've had some questions about whether, as an institution, we could ever [imagine] a time when the Senate may not have a page program. I wonder if you have thought about that. What is the Senate page program to this institution?

Letchworth: It's huge. It really is. Even to the senators that are one time removed. They see the history, in my view, they see the history. I think I talked earlier about how it used to be that the senators took more of a personal role. I remember I told you Senator Thurmond would take them in the Senate dining room for ice cream. Senator Helms would always tell us about what it was like being at home. There is still some of

that, even as busy as senators are. The senators get to see them in a pretty personal role, up close and personal because so many of them are on the floor all the time. They see the benefit of the program and how it really is an unbelievable mentoring program. Having been a former page, I'm part of the alumni association and all of that. When the action last August happened, it was catastrophic, as you can imagine. The e-mails flew. We formed a little committee/coalition to try to save the House pages. How can we raise money? Then we saw how firm the writing was on the wall. It was a Speaker [John Boehner] and a [Nancy] Pelosi move. It was in concrete they were going to get rid of it. In my view, yes the House pages, a lot of them were working the cloakroom but because there are 435 of them there isn't this personal of a daily get to know them kind of thing. See them on a daily basis. See them in the lobby, all of that. It was a little easier for them to sever the program than I think the Senate would.

Scott: With fewer members it's easier to establish relationships.

Letchworth: Sure. To say never say never, I can't imagine. Right now there is still a lot of money invested. A lot of money, that's a relative term. It's very relative. The Senate page dorm is a lot to be proud of. The school is a lot to be proud of. They have got a lot of gold stars going for them. I would hope not, let's just put it that way. I would hope not. And I'll be the first to lobby against that. Are there any sitting senators that are still pages? I think Chris Dodd [D-CT] was one of the last.

Scott: I think so, we've had this question recently and I think that's right.

There are still a number of folks around on staff that were pages.

Letchworth: And you have House members still, but the House members there would not allow that to happen. But they didn't or couldn't fight the leadership to save their program. I'm not sure there is a sitting senator that was a page.

Scott: I don't think so, not anymore.

Letchworth: That doesn't mean that the former senators wouldn't come back and fight for the program.

Scott: Or even that the current senators wouldn't appreciate the value.

Letchworth: That's right. I feel like they do. I know when I was the party secretary, having a page patronage was still a pretty big deal. I know now, talking to Dave Schiappa, that having a page is still a pretty big deal. There are a number of

senators that like that page patronage, that covet the fact that they have that patronage. I think we talked about every senator has some patronage of some sort. They trade it from time to time, when they have need. If they have a need for something else, they'll trade it. It's hard to get them to trade pages a lot of the time. They like the program, they like to establish the program in their office and keep it going year after year, maybe move it around from big high school to big high school in their states. Once they get it firmly established, they like it.

Scott: How do they get a page patronage position? Is it seniority, typically?

Letchworth: It's seniority. Under Senator Lott in the late '90s he made sure that every Republican senator had some sort of patronage. It used to be that only the more senior ones had patronage. We ended up taking all of those possible jobs and chopping them into enough slots so that every senator had patronage of some sort.

Scott: What other types of positions might fall in that category?

Letchworth: Doorkeeper, for example, is one. Do they still have elevator operators?

Scott: Yes.

Letchworth: Elevator operator is one. Those are the key ones. There used to be some post office positions. Not sure they have those now that the post office is not as functional as it used to be. But that, for example, was one. So there were three or four slots where you could put college age, usually college age [people] and the pages are, of course, high school age. As I said, the page slot was a more plum patronage slot. Once senators got it, they tend to keep it. It's also a good way to pay tribute to your constituents too.

Scott: It's a great constituent outreach program.

One of the criticisms, or some of the perhaps unfair criticism that was leveled at the page program, is that the folks who serve here tend to be from a privileged group of people, that they have some kind of connection. That hasn't been our experience when we meet the pages. The pages are generally from little town wherever and—

Letchworth: And they are the top kid in that town. That could be because they won the Girl Scout prize or the Boy Scout prize. I don't remember it being kids of privilege either. I remember it being kids that excel just because they are good kids. They

are smart kids. They worked hard kids. They were the top Girl Scout or the top Boy Scout, or the 4-H club person. Generally speaking it would be the one that excelled because they tried the hardest. It had nothing to do with their privileged status, generally.

Scott: They are stand-outs.

Letchworth: They are stand-outs, exactly. I remember one page friend in particular did not stand out at all in his high school. He didn't do anything that was of rock-star status at his age. He knew that Senator Percy's mother lived around the corner and played bridge with his mother. That's the only connection. He wrote her a letter and got in that way. There are all sorts of stories like that. Typically, they are not from pure privileged status. They are not the governor's daughter, or some state senator's daughter. Rarely do I remember them being politically connected at all. Usually it's because they are top of their class in their high school or top of something in their high school, maybe it's for sports, maybe it's for volunteerism.

Scott: Did Senator Lott have a page?

Letchworth: He gave his page slot to his chief of staff at one point. His chief of staff had a couple of people from their local towns and cities as pages. That wasn't necessarily one from privilege either.

Scott: Senator Baker and Senator Dole, did they also?

Letchworth: Senator Baker had some pages. I don't remember Senator Dole having pages.

Scott: I wondered if that was a tradition for the leader.

Letchworth: I don't remember a Kansas page. I hope I'm not forgetting someone really special.

Scott: [Laughs] Who is going to be broken-hearted when they read this!

Letchworth: I just don't though. He was always very interested in the page program, don't get me wrong, but I don't remember him having a Kansas page, per se. Some of the leadership really wanted their mark on all of those spots and roles. I don't remember Senator Dole thinking that was necessarily a place where he needed to make his mark. However the page program ran, he let it run. However the cloakroom ran, he'd let it run. Some leaders, as I said, would want to make sure a cloakroom assistant was

from their state. Senator Dole, that didn't matter to him. It wasn't as important to him. But for other leaders it was. That's neither a good thing nor a bad thing. That's how they viewed that part of the leadership offices. Technically the floor staff is, in a stepchild kind of way, it is part of their office. I can remember Senator Lott wanted to make sure there was a Mississippian in the cloakroom, which was fine because we had a slot and there were a couple of good people that I had met in his office. It was easy to put a Mississippian in there. As time went on, we had several Mississippians. And then there are some leaders where it doesn't matter to them.

Scott: Of the leaders with whom you worked, how many of them took an active role in the page program in terms of mentoring or setting time aside to talk with them? Did they have a chance to do that?

Letchworth: They did, and do. I would say all of them in their own way. I think you and I talked about [the fact that] Senator Scott had, because I met him later in his career and because I was page age, although I was a staffer of his, I was page age. He a lot of times in the evening would sit with me and talk to me about what he did as a senator. He liked to talk about China because he was one of the first that started doing those visits. It wouldn't be at all unusual if another page was with me and he'd sit down with both of us.

I can remember Baker talking a lot to the pages. His hobby, as you know, is photography. Senator Baker would come in on weekends and take pictures of the Capitol. If there was a page in the picture he would tell them what he was doing and all of that. Senator Dole, the same thing, talk about farming in Kansas and all of that. Senator Lott too. So they all do because they are around them a lot too. They are one of the senators that are on the floor an awful lot, or in the cloakroom an awful lot. The pages are brushing up against them all day long. They do get to know them, almost a little better than most other senators who aren't on the floor all the time. I would say all of them take an interest. It never took any kind of pushing or prodding to tell any leader that I worked for, "This is the last day of this page group." "Oh, get me their names. And get me a funny anecdotal story." And they'd read it in the *Record*.

Scott: Right, you always find at the end of the session a tribute to the pages.

Letchworth: And it never took any—it took more prodding to try to get a senator to sit in the chair sometimes than it would to praise the pages and wish them luck and give them the "atta boys." I would have to say without exception that they all took an interest in making sure they had a good time, making sure the program ran well, but also acknowledging them. A lot of times we, meaning the two party secretaries, would carve

out a little period of leader time to make sure that they did do that. Never got a groan. Always ready, willing and wanting to do it.

Scott: Did you typically do a farewell celebration or party at the end of the session?

Letchworth: Sometimes the cloakroom would do something. It depended on our schedule. If the last day was going to be midnight, crazy hours, no. But if we limped out of session, sure, you would do a little something. We would do cake, cookies, ice cream, in the cloakroom. If it was really late they didn't even want to be in the cloakroom anymore! We'd all seen enough of each other. It just depended. That would be something that you would do. I can remember doing it up in the office sometimes. Try to do it at the end of a summer session sometimes. It depended on the Senate schedule. As the staff you tried to do that at the end of big chunks of time: before the Easter recess, back in the day when they did budgets right before the Easter recess and those last weeks were brutal and vote-o-ramas. You tried to do a little bit of a celebration after that. Maybe before the August recess when you went out, you tried to do something like that. As a matter of fact, the two cloakrooms would sometimes do something together.

Scott: Oh, really?

Letchworth: Not any big long drawn out thing, but just "Phew. We made it and aren't we glad? What are you going to do for August?" Or, "What are you doing for Easter?" Just compare notes, a way to decompress a little bit. They still try to do that, depending on schedules and how tired people are and sick of being with each other.

Scott: Where was your office located when you were party secretary?

Letchworth: It's always been in the same room, 337, of the Capitol, which used to be part of the Supreme Court at one point. It's always been that room, literally since the party secretary was created. Once it was separated from the sergeant at arms office, from everything I remember, it's always been in that room. There is a second room, it still has the room number of S-337, but technically it was a second room at one point. It is now the administrative assistant, or the secretary's secretary. That's technically a second room but now it's all one big suite. That got added and I don't know when.

Scott: While you were there?

Letchworth: No, that had been there since the ’70s. Sometime before the mid-’70s that was added in and I can only presume it was a private office and it was too small. Maybe it was a hall closet. It’s a pretty small little part of that office.

Scott: With the same entrance?

Letchworth: Yeah, you go in the same entrance, but there are actually now two entrances. You typically lock the one that goes into the party secretary’s office so they have to go through. It in effect now serves as the reception room for the party secretary and that was at one point a separate room. But basically, the Republican party secretary has always had that room.

There were times, especially when Senator Lott first became majority leader, he wanted to do a major room renovation of the Capitol. He had plans on moving a lot of the Capitol space. There were a lot of senators that came in the office and walked off the office space and made recommendations, whether the whip’s office should be up there. Or maybe the secretary of the Senate should be up there. There was a lot of jockeying. But when it was all said and done, basically everybody stayed where they were. A few offices changed but basically everybody stayed where they were. I think you probably know they made a pretty nice suite for the chaplain. During that time is when I’m talking about. People eyed the party secretary’s suite, but as you know, nothing ever really happened. It was during that time.

Scott: Was there pushback and that’s why it didn’t move forward?

Letchworth: I certainly didn’t push back. I didn’t feel like I had the standing to push back. I did a lot of praying that it wouldn’t happen. I would lobby against it, “This is a horrible spot. It takes forever to get up here. It’s a really lonely corridor.” I can remember sort of tongue in cheek making some remarks about it not being the greatest place to be. But I didn’t have any standing to push back. Basically the room maneuvering was going on whether I was able to do anything about it or not. With some luck it didn’t happen.

Scott: One last question for you. Are there things about the Senate that you miss? You’ve been out for more than 10 years. It’s been almost 11 years now.

Letchworth: The camaraderie, but I’m not sure it really exists like it used to. I hear—of course I keep in touch with a lot of old friends—that doesn’t exist like it used to. Can you put the genie back in the bottle? I hope so. We have the greatest deliberative body there is. Our form of government is wonderful. It is almost on a self-destructive

mode at times. When you watch it and you think that's not the way it was created. Part of the reason why it self-destructs or doesn't function as well, in my view, is because you don't have that camaraderie. How do you get that back? I know we talked about this. Senator Frist tried it when he was leader and before he was leader, having social dinners. Several senators have tried it over the last decade or two to try to recreate that. Has time taken that away? Have our schedules made that impossible? I don't think anything is impossible. I'd like to see that come back. I miss that, but if I were to come back it wouldn't be there anyway. You really did make some real, true friends. A lot of them are still very good true friends. Not that you can't make true friends now. But the schedule is so hectic, it's so partisan, that you are almost demonized if you do become a friend of the other side of the aisle. Even if it's a function of your children play together. Or your spouses are buddies. You don't want to tell a lot of people. That's a shame. That really is a shame. I would have to say the friendships, the friendships and the camaraderie and the feeling that you are really doing good, for the good of the country. Now I feel like there are a lot of zingers that fly around and there is a lot of "they did good for the party, for the message." But is it good for the whole? I don't know. I think that's what I would like to see if I came back. Or that is what I miss the most but I don't know that that exists anymore anyway.

Scott: It's a different institution.

Letchworth: It's a different institution and I know the House side is different as a result. Again, how do you put the genie back in the bottle? Cable TV, the 24-hour [news] cycle, all of that, I don't know that you can. These different forms of gangs of six, the bipartisan group of "fill in the blank," they try. It seems like they are able to meet on their own, they are able to do all of that without any criticism but once they go public, they get demonized. So their work product gets demonized before anybody even opens the page on the work product.

Scott: It's like the product isn't even the story.

Letchworth: The fact that the Gang of Six have been meeting for three weeks behind closed doors. The Democrats have been talking to the Republicans and the Republicans to the Democrats. That must be awful. The product must be awful because they are talking. You're right, the work product barely gets a look. The whole story becomes that they have talked. That's a shame. Do you have something like that [and] then you punt the work product to another group? Maybe that's how you have to try to put the genie back in the bottle. That would be an interesting think tank thing to puzzle through. Surely there are ways to do it. But in the way that the institution is viewed right now, I'm not sure there is.

Scott: I want to thank you so much for taking all the time that you have to spend with us to put this in the record. This is a great addition to our collection and you've been such a treat to interview. Thank you.

Letchworth: You are quite welcome. It has been wonderful.

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