

The Honorable John Dingell, Jr., of Michigan

Experiencing Government Firsthand

Description of the Page program as a unique educational opportunity.

Interview recorded February 3, 2012

I think the Congress is one of the greatest educational institutions in the world. And a bunch of kids had the chance to participate in that. And if they study history, and read—and of course, I was always a tremendous reader—they could learn. And they could add the learning that they got by reading, to the learning that they got by watching, seeing and listening to debate and reading the papers. And so, it, it, it made a remarkably educated bunch of Americans. And not only did it do that, but it, it gave them an understanding and an appreciation of the ideals and why and how the question was, or how the country was created. For example, we used to go down to the Archives and look at the Constitution, and the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. How many kids have the chance to do that? And we'd see all of these buildings. When the President come up, make the State of the Union, we'd see it. When the President come up for his Inauguration speech, we'd see it. When Roosevelt was, was buried, we could see, we could see some of the ceremonies associated with that. When, when the debates on important bills were going on, the Declaration of War or the other events that were associated with that, or the extension of the draft, or the American Firsters' or, debates on any of the issues there were when I was a Page boy. Or more recently the debates, you know, when the Pages were still here. They had a chance to learn and see and...and, and, and, and, it had a life and a meaning to it, that you don't see if you're just taking this in a course. And, you know, the, the teachers of government, they do their best to put it into understandable ways, and to describe it as it should be described, about what is going on when this happens. And how's a bill move from committee to the, from the hopper, to the committee, to the floor, to the President's desk. But there you'd actually see it work, and you'd get a feeling of what is happening here. Something that you don't get out of looking at a book.