

## Tina Tate

### **Effect of Televised Proceedings on the Reporting of Congress**

Overview of the impact of live televised House proceedings on the reporting of Congress.

*Interview recorded August 28, 2008*

That actually has been fairly dramatic—the reporting of Congress—because you didn’t have televised hearings, you needed to be there. So a member of the press needed to sit in the chamber and listen to the speeches. Now we kept a running log, and we would alert people when major things were happening. But you had much more—in the early days, in the ’70s and ’80s, you had a House producer and a House reporter for every major network. And they were assigned to the House. You had other outlets that had someone who covered the House all the time. Newspapers had people who covered the House or the Senate or both all the time. Now there are very few reporters—broadcast reporters—on the House side. CNN still keeps a reporter. MSNBC has a reporter. But it’s mostly producers. That doesn’t sound like it’s a big deal, but it is. Because if you’re trying to get one of the 22 minutes of a newscast on a national network, you have to sell a story because you’ve got such a vital story. So for the national networks—the broadcast networks, not the cable networks—for the broadcast networks, you don’t get the chance to get on air unless you’ve got a reporter who’s going to be on air [who] is invested in getting that story on air and convincing his editors here—the desk in Washington, the desks in New York—that this is worth the 80 seconds it may get on the evening news or the morning shows.