

The Honorable Paul E. Kanjorski **U.S. Representative of Pennsylvania**

Discrimination in the Capitol

Representative Kanjorski discusses race relations at the Capitol during his Page service.

Interview recorded October 26, 2011

Well it, it was actually very interesting because it was culturally significant. It was a time when language was quite different than it is today. If you remember 1954 was *Brown v. Board of Education* case, which changed segregation in the United States. So at that time it was a very white cloakroom. I think there were just one or two Members of Congress that were black, and they weren't well treated between the Members. As a matter of fact, I think back, of Martin Dies from Texas, who was very flamboyant as a Member of Congress. He was Chairman of the Un-American Activities Committee, and I guess he thought he had special forgiveness to do anything. He would sometimes go onto the floor and making a blistering speech, probably using the N-word in its full context, and just in its most ugly ability to refer not only to the fellow Members, but to ten percent of the American population. And then, when he would finish his speech, he'd make that famous motion to revise and extend his remarks, so what he said for a half hour or whatever time he spoke, completely disappeared from the *Record*. But those of us that were in the chamber—I was astounded by it, because you have to understand, I came from Pennsylvania, I was a northern boy. I never shared that idea or that experience of separation. When I came to Washington, I couldn't share a hotel with a black person, I couldn't go to a restaurant where a black person lived. There weren't any blacks in our class. I mean it was really a segregated city and that was shocking.