

**The Honorable Melissa A. Hart**  
U.S. Representative of Pennsylvania (2001–2007)

**Oral History Interview**  
**Final Edited Transcript**  
September 30, 2019

Office of the Historian  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC

“I think when you make the jump from senate issues—the state issues to the federal issues—it’s a big difference. Certainly, some of them are the same, but I think the larger sort of international issues are things that I had to really study. You know, being a person who was always interested in those things I guess maybe the jump wasn’t as much, but it still is a jump and there’s a lot to learn. So I knew that I had to commit. I was either going to really do it, go out whole hog, or just don’t do it at all. So I decided to do it, just jump right in. And have it being an open seat made it a little less daunting, I think.”

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## Abstract

Melissa A. Hart did not initially aspire to public service, but an upbringing rooted in civic activism set the stage for her political career at the state and federal level. In this interview Hart explains how the encouragement she received from several colleagues and mentors helped convince her to campaign for a seat in the Pennsylvania state senate at the age of 27. Considered a “sacrificial lamb” as a young woman running against an incumbent, Hart won her first election and went on to serve in the state legislature for ten years. She recalls how her time in the senate, as well as a law background which included experience drafting legislation, prepared her for the jump to Congress.

Hart describes the national attention her congressional race received in 2000 and how she campaigned and raised money under the public spotlight in a majority-Democratic district. Once in the House, Hart served on the Judiciary Committee. She discusses how the committee’s work drastically changed after September 11, 2001, and recalls the day of the attacks, including gathering with colleagues on the Capitol steps later that evening. From her first days as a Representative, Hart waged a campaign for a spot on the influential Ways and Means Committee. She explains how she won a seat on Ways and Means during her final House term and provides a behind-the-scenes look at the committee. An active member of the Republican Conference during her House tenure, Hart talks about the benefits of her unsuccessful attempt to serve in the leadership. She also discusses the relationships and alliances she built in her six years on the Hill through committee work, the Congresswomen’s Caucus, the Pennsylvania delegation, and as a participant in the Congressional Baseball Game. In 2006, Hart failed to win re-election to a fourth term. She reflects on that pivotal campaign as well as her attempt to win back her House seat in 2008.

## Biography

**HART, Melissa, A.**, a Representative from Pennsylvania; born in Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, PA, April 4, 1962; graduated from North Allegheny High School, North Allegheny, PA; BA, Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pa., 1984; JD, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1987; lawyer, private practice; member of the Pennsylvania state senate, 1991–2000; elected as a Republican to the One Hundred Seventh and to the two succeeding Congresses (January 3, 2001–January 3, 2007); unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the One Hundred Tenth Congress in 2006 and the One Hundred Eleventh Congress in 2008.

[Read full biography](#)

## Editing Practices

In preparing interview transcripts for publication, the editors sought to balance several priorities:

- As a primary rule, the editors aimed for fidelity to the spoken word and the conversational style in accord with generally accepted oral history practices.
- The editors made minor editorial changes to the transcripts in instances where they believed such changes would make interviews more accessible to readers. For instance, excessive false starts and filler words were removed when they did not materially affect the meaning of the ideas expressed by the interviewee.
- In accord with standard oral history practices, interviewees were allowed to review their transcripts, although they were encouraged to avoid making substantial editorial revisions and deletions that would change the conversational style of the transcripts or the ideas expressed therein.
- The editors welcomed additional notes, comments, or written observations that the interviewees wished to insert into the record and noted any substantial changes or redactions to the transcript.
- Copy-editing of the transcripts was based on the standards set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

The first reference to a Member of Congress (House or Senate) is underlined in the oral history transcript. For more information about individuals who served in the House or Senate, please refer to the online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov> and the “People Search” section of the History, Art & Archives website, <http://history.house.gov>. For more information about the U.S. House of Representatives oral history program contact the Office of House Historian at (202) 226-1300, or via email at [history@mail.house.gov](mailto:history@mail.house.gov).

## Citation Information

When citing this oral history interview, please use the format below:

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## Interviewer Biographies

**Michael J. Murphy** is a Historical Publications Specialist in the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. He earned his Ph.D. in U.S. history from Stony Brook University in Stony Brook, New York, in 2013. Before joining the Office of the Historian, he was Visiting Associate Professor at the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies at the City University of New York.

**Kathleen Johnson** is the Manager of Oral History for the Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives. She earned a B.A. in history from Columbia University, where she also played basketball for four years, and holds two master's degrees from North Carolina State University in education and public history. In 2004, she helped to create the House's first oral history program, focusing on collecting the institutional memory of Members and staff. She co-authored two books: *Women in Congress: 1917–2006* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006) and *Black Americans in Congress: 1870–2007* (GPO, 2008). Before joining the Office of the Historian, she worked as a high school history teacher and social studies curriculum consultant.

— THE HONORABLE MELISSA A. HART OF PENNSYLVANIA —  
A CENTURY OF WOMEN IN CONGRESS

**JOHNSON:** My name is Kathleen Johnson. I'm with my colleague, Mike Murphy, with the Office of the Historian. Today's date is September 30, 2019, and we're with former Congresswoman Melissa [A.] Hart of Pennsylvania. Thank you so much for coming in today.

**HART:** It's nice to be here.

**JOHNSON:** This interview is for a series of oral histories that we've done with women Members and women staff to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the election of the first woman to Congress, Jeannette Rankin. To start off today, where did you grow up?

**HART:** I'm actually from the Pittsburgh area.

**JOHNSON:** What role models did you have when you were young?

**HART:** Well, I mean if you're talking about elected officials, I was really fortunate. I had a neighbor who was a Republican Party state committeewoman, and she encouraged people to volunteer in the community. And when I was a teenager, I was kind of interested in public policy. She actually brought me along when I was a senior in high school to a couple of fundraisers for a lady who was a state representative, not in our district but the one next door. I got to know her and understand the process a little bit more, but as a student I was always interested in those things so that was a great opportunity to see things firsthand.

Then I had a little later on—my role models, some of them were men. Our governor [in Pennsylvania] when I was an undergraduate, a guy named

Richard Thornburgh, who eventually served as the U.S. Attorney General, became a very good friend of mine and very supportive and a mentor. When I was a young attorney, I got to be a local committeewoman in the party, and our state representative by then was another woman who'd been a professional real estate agent, managed an office, and then served on our town council. And then she ran for the [Pennsylvania] state house seat, and she became a very good friend of mine and was very supportive when at 27 I decided I wanted to run for our senate seat. And instead of being like, "Well, you're so young, why don't I run for that?" She was just wonderful, and her name was Elaine Farmer. She's deceased now, but what a great lady.

**MURPHY:**

And you said you were in the law before coming to the state senate. When you were growing up, what did you think about possible careers? What were the expectations about your role in society as a woman?

**HART:**

It's interesting. I grew up with two older brothers. We had a pretty traditional household when I was young. My dad went to work; my mom stayed home. We had dinners together most nights, and we would talk about world affairs at dinner when I was a young kid. I mean we're talking 10 [years old]. And we all were very aware of what was going on, and we would have discussions. My parents were not into politics per se, but they were civically active, so if there was an issue in the community—I remember very clearly when I was young there was a police and fire training academy that was built in close proximity to our community, the neighborhood where I lived, and their fires were really polluting the backyards. Like you'd end up with a film all over your patio and that sort of thing, and so the people in the community started fighting it. It wasn't necessarily political, but it was some governmental activity that they were interested in curbing and got involved that way.

So we were always taught to speak up and be involved in things. So nobody in my family was an elected official. My dad was a chemist/scientist. My brothers both went into science. I didn't. But I think if you would ask both my brothers today, they'll tell you that they see it as everybody's responsibility to be an active citizen, and they've both served, for example, on the local Republican committee.

In fact, my parents actually were both Democrats, just as an interesting point of discussion, because they came from a background where there was some union membership, and it was just more traditional for—they didn't come from much. My dad was the first person in his family to go to college; my mother didn't [go to college]. And they were—Republicans were rich people in their view. Both my parents [were] born in the '20s. But by the time times had moved forward my father switched parties when I was very young and my mom actually when I was in college, and I became very involved as a campaign volunteer.

I was a college Republican; I chaired the college Republican club at Washington and Jefferson College where I went to school. But I kept bugging my mother, and we talked about issues. "What do you believe on this? What do you believe on that?" And I said, "Mom, your profile is Republican." Eventually she switched, too. So it's funny when you think about it, a lot of people run for office because their parent did or whatever, but we just didn't have that in our family at all.

**JOHNSON:** So you talked about that early interest in politics. How did you make that jump to run for the Pennsylvania state senate?

**HART:** That's a good question. I got out of law school and—actually it was while I was in law school. I worked for a campaign. A very close friend of mine from

the college Republicans who'd gone to Penn State was a candidate against an incumbent state senator. I'm trying to remember if he was an incumbent yet. He wasn't yet. The guy had been an incumbent county commissioner. He was running against him, and the seat was a Democrat, but it's Pittsburgh, and everybody was a Democrat. It was the late '80s, early '90s where things were changing. Some mills had closed. There was some dissatisfaction with the way the Democrats were running things, and so there was a little bit of a bubbling of that voter sentiment that was a little bit anti whatever the Democratic Party was doing because they weren't succeeding. So this gentleman who was just a year older than me ended up running for the state senate seat, and I worked on the race. And it was my state senate seat. He failed, and the gentleman who won the seat then served a term, and I ended up running against him when the term was up.

I didn't plan to run for office ever. I was a double major, business and German. I went to law school only after I had an internship with a judge in Washington, Pennsylvania, where I went to college. So it was just not on my track. I just thought as a responsible citizen this is what you do. You go to work, right? But, ultimately, because I had been such a dedicated volunteer and met so many people in the party, that a couple of the young people that I was very close friends with who actually worked for the party had encouraged me to take a look at it. And so I did. [I] read all the demographics of the district, which, again, every district I ever ran in was Democrat majority by a significant margin. But it wasn't really the party then.

At that point in time there were just a lot of people who thought the Democratic Party was leaving them and were willing to cross party lines. And I think you'll find that that's the case a lot in Pennsylvania because we don't have an open primary. People will vote the way they're registered, and they

have to, but then in the fall you see all kinds of crossing because there's just no independent opportunity in a primary. So you judge the voter behavior more than the voter registration and that's—a couple of friends of mine were pretty good at doing that and they said to me, "I think you might be able to win this seat." And I said, "I don't know if I want to run." So ultimately, I'm just so interested in public policy, and I know that there's so much good that can be done that I decided to take it on against an incumbent in a Democrat district thinking—I think the party thought I was just a young woman, sacrificial lamb. But, ultimately, in the end we were victorious on the first try.

**MURPHY:**

When you arrived in this Pennsylvania state senate, we read that you were the first Republican woman elected to a full term in that body. How would you describe this experience?

**HART:**

I had a bunch of dads kind of—I think I was 28 when I was sworn in, and the next member in the caucus was 40, who I ultimately ended up serving with again in the US House. Honestly, I didn't know anything else. I think a lot of people are like, "Oh my gosh, you were a woman in this room full of men." I was a lawyer, you know. I'd been a woman in a room full of men, and I grew up with brothers, and my dad didn't treat me any differently. My mom didn't treat me any differently, and we were all encouraged to go on and do the best we could with our gifts. So I don't know.

I think in a lot of ways I might have had an advantage. My leaders were smart enough to understand that if the Republican caucus of the senate had a woman member who was willing to work hard, they weren't going to hold her back. Because my second term—or actually during my first term—I was actually awarded a committee chairmanship. That was really based on both the hard work and the fact that our caucus wasn't so big that we had a lot of members who were waiting to be committee chairs. And the committee I

wanted to chair was not one that a lot of people wanted because it was about taxation, and a lot of people weren't that interested. But I was, and so for me, it was a great opportunity.

But I tell you, I think more often than not if anybody gave me like a hard time it was more or less in jest, just teasing, more like older brothers or a dad would do, not the kind of issues that some women have spoken of, especially lately, with the harassment and that sort of thing. I did not have those issues to speak of.

**JOHNSON:** You mentioned your legal background that you have being a lawyer. How do you think that prepared you for a career in politics and especially when you came to Congress?

**HART:** It's funny. People joke a lot of the time that "Oh, Congress is full of lawyers" and "Oh, it's terrible," but every time they're in trouble they go to a lawyer for help. So I think it cuts both ways. You certainly want people from different backgrounds to serve in public life. For me, obviously, one of the courses I took in law school was called legislation. It teaches you how to draft a law and why it's so important to be very exacting in your language, that you have to tease out the details of the language as you're writing legislation. So I think, one, being a lawyer is very helpful, especially for what I would think of as the traditional lawyer who's a detail person. That's very important. And then the other side, depending upon what kind of an attorney you are—I worked at a small firm, dealt directly face-to-face with the client. I wasn't off in a back room doing research all the time, so learning to deal with people, trying to solve their problems. Everybody who walks into a law office doesn't necessarily have a problem but are often trying to avoid problems by seeing a lawyer. I think it's a really great background to have if you're going to be in public life.

**MURPHY:**

And how do you think your decade-long service in the Pennsylvania state senate prepared you for your time here in Congress?

**HART:**

I still think there's nothing better. The state legislature is basically very, very close to the people. As a state senator I did have about, I don't know, 350,000 or so constituents, so it was big enough that we had to figure out ways to get to the different regions of the district, and congressional districts are a little more than twice the size. So I think a lot of the skills and outreach, the skills and just measuring the concerns and actually tabulating where people stand on things, not necessarily by a computer or taking a vote, but just getting around to see that different regions are facing different things. In an area maybe where unemployment is higher, you have to balance the interests of the entire district. So I think that was a big, big help.

Whereas if I'd served in the state house where the districts are really small the transition would have been more difficult. And a lot of people are like, "Wait a minute, you'd have gone from house to house," but it's not really comparable because our state senate seats and our state house seats were based on population size. It's not like I got four counties or something like that. Like a U.S. Senator gets a whole state, so it's a lot more comparable. And just learning how to help people, how to identify priorities. When there's 100 problems and you really can only have the time and resources to solve 20, how do you determine which ones are the most important, which ones will help or alleviate the pain of the most people? You know, those kind of things. There's a lot, and I think a lot of it has to do also with finding how to get to people. Not everybody has time to call you or come into your office, right? So where do you go? Where would these people be? Community day, fire hall meetings, have town meetings in the towns all over the district, those kinds

of things. It's a lot of fun, to be honest. I mean, if you like people, and I certainly do.

But my staff and I—the indispensable people for any Representative are the people who your district people see every day, the ones who are back home in the district office—just vital to actually knowing what's going on day to day because a lot of times Congress would be marooned down here for a while, and you get back home, and a whole bunch of different things have happened, and you need your staff certainly to update you and keep you aware. We'd often have discussions, phone calls back and forth while I was in Washington. Because I was here for a couple of periods around 9/11 where we just were not home much at all.

**JOHNSON:** So after a decade in the state senate in Pennsylvania, you decided to run for Congress in 2000. Why did you decide to do that?

**HART:** My first chief of staff when I was a state senator was a gentleman named Phil [Philip Sheridan] English, and Phil English left my staff in 1994 to run for the United States House. I'm still to this day a very close friend of Congressman English, and we talked all the time, and he urged me to run. His district would have been the district just north of the district that I ran in. So we wouldn't have been competing against each other. But he encouraged me to look at it several times. There had been some redistricting that made it, I thought, a little more friendly to someone like me to run. There were some issues with the Member at one point involved in one of the scandals here in the House. He ended up leaving and then was replaced by another gentleman, and that gentleman decided to run for the United States Senate, and so it was an open seat. It was going to be an open seat in the election of 2000. And so, of course, I got a call from Congressman English and he said, "You ought to think about this."

And so I started looking again, like I did the first time I ran, at the demographic and the counties that were in the district. Several of them were already—people knew me already because of the senate seat in that district. And serving 10 years in the state senate I felt that I had achieved a lot for the people in the communities that I represented, so I thought maybe I could do more, obviously, for a larger group of people and then, of course, some different issues that were very important to the people in the communities—economic growth certainly. We had issues, and we're still seeing them now with the trade war, but where we had a lot of manufacturing and the competition from overseas was just not appropriate. There was no fairness involved. Our trade people weren't doing what we thought back home that they needed to be doing. So I came up here largely to work on some of those issues.

I think when you make the jump from senate issues—the state issues to the federal issues—it's a big difference. Certainly some of them are the same, but I think the larger sort of international issues are things that I had to really study. You know, being a person who was always interested in those things I guess maybe the jump wasn't as much, but it still is a jump and there's a lot to learn. So I knew that I had to commit. I was either going to really do it, go out whole hog, or just don't do it at all. So I decided to do it, just jump right in. And have it being an open seat made it a little less daunting, I think.

**JOHNSON:**

You mentioned Representative English. Did anyone else recruit you or encourage you to run as well?

**HART:**

Well, yes. Once he got a fairly positive response, I came up to visit with—like every new candidate does—you come visit with, if you're a Democrat you visit with a Democrat campaign committee. If you're a Republican you visit with a Republican campaign committee outside of the official House

Member environment. And they were extremely encouraging. But I also had an opportunity to meet Members who were close to Phil.

It was kind of a little sister adoption. Rob [Robert Jones] Portman, Senator from Ohio now, very good friend, served in the House with him. It's interesting because the people around—because I'm from the western part of the state so a lot of work done with Members from Ohio. So that relationship, which started even before I got elected, we worked together a lot when I was a Member—other Members from the Pittsburgh area. It was very interesting because they're mostly Democrats, but they were very nice. They were people I had worked with before, and some had been retired and that was very interesting talking to some retired Members. Bill [William Floyd] Clinger [Jr.], who was a wonderful Member. But, you know, there weren't any women. We had a very interesting time, my campaign staff and I, when we went around the state trying to raise the resources.

Being a candidate is hard work, and I think a lot of people having that kind of support from Members who say, "I've done this, I think you can do this, too. I've seen you do what needs to be done." That's very helpful because it gives you the confidence to go out and ask people for the support that you need to actually be able to affect a good campaign and one that's going to be a victorious campaign.

**MURPHY:** So you mentioned this—the political demographics of the district. Democratic majority—you're a Republican candidate. What did you try to do to convince voters that you were the best candidate in that first race?

**HART:** The first congressional?

**MURPHY:** Yeah, in 2000.

**HART:**

I was fortunate in that I had a record of success as a state senator serving some of the communities that were in the district. And, of course, in the areas that I wasn't as familiar I talked about how I was able to work and work across party lines to be able to effect change. I was a state senator—for nine of the 10 years I served, I served in the majority. For a half a dozen of those years I had—is that right? Yes, I had a Republican governor. That helps being able to move your policies through. And then I was a committee chair and able to work with other committee chairs to make sure that we would address each other's priorities and give the full senate a chance to vote on those things. So the skills that I had acquired as state senator, I certainly talked with people about deploying those here in Washington. And the other issue, I think, with a lot of people, is the new blood issue.

But I was a state senator for 10 years. How do you establish that you're new blood? Well, I was a 38-year-old woman. It's still new blood when you look at the delegation that had served our area for all those years. All of my lifetime it was always men. We'd also had a very interesting thing happen in—when I won my senate seat there was a lot of turnover. There were a number of younger Republicans who had run for office around that time. Rick [Richard John] Santorum had won the congressional district in 1990. That was the year I won my seat. And then there was a young man, Dan Anderson, who'd won the state house seat—again, ousting Democrats. But the positions that we had taken on issues were not particularly different than the positions that the Democrats had taken on these issues. The difference was that—I think I had mentioned it earlier—I do believe the Democrat Party started to lean hard to the left.

And when it came to welfare reform and issues where people were paying high taxes and they weren't seeing a return, they weren't seeing trade being

addressed, they weren't seeing issues regarding opportunity for their kids or maybe even in some cases the school districts weren't great or there were other issues. Some of those maybe weren't federal issues, but some of them were. Or some of them were combination issues. I think just talking about them, eliciting people's opinions about them and the energy of young people running for office really did help, and we've seen that over and over again. I don't want to say that all the Democrats were bad because to be honest with you a lot of us were together on things. There was a lot more cooperation across party lines. But people liked that. And when I ran as a Republican, they didn't really care so much that I was a Republican because they saw me talking about the things and having succeeded working on things that they cared about. And so the timing was really good.

The gentleman that actually was on the other side in my first congressional race, he had been a state representative. His name is Terry Van Horne. Unfortunately, he's departed but was a friend of mine. We worked together on a lot of things in a part of the district that was economically in decline, and it was his home area and he was very committed to it. He actually educated me a lot about the community that I did not live in. So when we had our congressional race, it was actually a pretty friendly race until the end when it started to—it gets to crunch time, and then everybody starts with I'm better at this, whatever, and this is what I've been able to accomplish in 10 years in the state senate, what have you done in 20 years in the state house? That kind of thing when you get to the facts.

We ended up winning, but I do think that it does have a lot to do with laying out that—being very clear—laying out that agenda and also presenting your credentials. I had been an attorney, and I had been practicing, and I had been involved in different things, and I was on some volunteer boards, and so I'd

built ties outside of politics as well as inside. With the bar, I was on the ballet board and some other groups that were able to assist me. But I also was on a veteran's leadership program board for about 20 years—actually even when I wasn't a Member—and what that group did was it helped veterans to basically transition from being in the military to being out. It was actually started by some gentlemen I knew who were Vietnam veterans, and they asked me to be on the board. So we're seeing that repeat of those kinds of problems now, which our group continued—I'm not on the board anymore, but that group continues to exist. But all the people that I worked with there also helped.

So I think having a broad background is really important, and when someone has served in politics for a really long time and that's what people know them for and that's all they've done, I don't think that's helpful. I think that the broad background really helped me to transcend the challenge that I would face as a person who was at a big deficit registration-wise.

**JOHNSON:** This first campaign received a lot of national attention back in 2000. The Majority Leader at the time, Dick [Richard Keith] Armey, said that, "This is the most important congressional race in the country." Were you surprised by all the attention that this campaign received?

**HART:** I was, and actually my campaign manager told me to ignore it. He said, "It really isn't the most important. What's most important is for you to be out there campaigning and raising money." That's what they tell you. Dick Armey was great. I've got to say as a human, never spoiled by this place. His feet were always firmly on the ground, and he gave me a lot of advice.

But I think what he was talking about when he said that this was the most important was, again, an area that had really only sent Democrats to

Congress except for Rick Santorum, that area had a reputation, I think, of being more hard line, the heavy union membership. And I'm talking private sector unions, not public sector unions, because this is a very—it was a heavy industry area and very different, I think, than a lot of people are familiar with today. It's all I knew growing up so I think when push comes to shove a traditional mindset, an area where people are just living a more traditional lifestyle, more church going, a lot of the things that would lead them to be a little bit more conservative. And you know, Republicans had the message and the Democratic Party, I think, at that point in time didn't really have a clear message. That was one of the problems, and the other was that some of the most outspoken or the most-covered Democrats nationally were much, much more to the left, and it wasn't appealing to the people in communities like mine.

It's different now, but is it? I think when you look at what people really want, it's security. They want to have financial security, they want to have a safe environment, they want to have—I think the environmental issues were always important, and in the communities that were industrial we were fully aware of that and one of the issues that I worked on very, very hard was brownfield redevelopment because we had plants that had closed. And I had worked with Carnegie Mellon University because they had a brownfield redevelopment institute, and so I was very well schooled on the things that needed to be done in order to redevelop these. People were really interested in that because if their town had a mill and the mill was closed, the last thing they wanted to look at every day was a mill, unless it was going to open again. And so we were successful in working on brownfield redevelopment issues both on the state level and on the federal level. Those are things that matter in towns that I represented.

And I don't think—like again it goes back to when I wake up in the morning, do I think, “Gee, is the person who represents me a Republican or a Democrat?” No. Is the person who represents me addressing the issues I care about if they're even thinking about that at all? So we were out there talking to people about it and reminding them about it. But I think if you don't know who your community is and you're spending all your time in Washington or you're spending all your time in your state capital you're not going to get the chance to address them. And even when you do spend your time back home, like I did, you can still lose in a bad political environment. But I think all strikes are against you if you really don't learn the district, especially in an area like ours where I think people are just parochial, I guess is the word, and some people use that as a negative. I think people care about their home and they care about their home community and they're committed to it, which is different than a lot of other places.

**JOHNSON:**

I wanted to go back to Dick Arme for a minute because you said he provided a lot of advice. Was there anything that was more memorable that really stands out in your mind?

**HART:**

He was a country music guy. There was a song that was a big hit. And it's a saying I think people have known for a long time. “You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything.” He's like, “You're a Republican, don't forget that. You stand for these things and your people do, too. Don't have any hesitation in talking about it.” Then the other thing as a group, once I was elected, being unified, not being afraid to try to change things. Don't go along to get along because that's not really what this is about—which I really appreciated because there's a lot of people who come up here, and they're from districts that they're comfortable in, and they're not challenged every day because maybe you're a Democrat from a Democrat district or you're a

Republican from a Republican district. I was never a Republican from a Republican district. So the effort expended had to be more. It just did and that's the reality of the community.

And Dick was always very encouraging of us because his responsibility is to keep us in the majority, but it's also to make sure that we use that majority for something. He always, always had a reason for being in the majority less than just to be in the majority, and I really appreciated that. He wrote that book, *Armeys Axioms*, which is very thin, and I think every legislator should read it. There's a couple of books I recommend. There's that one they should read and the Tip O'Neill *All Politics is Local*. They're very, very important, almost manuals for someone who is wanting to serve, I think, in public office. It's about the grittiness of it more than what some people see as glamor, which I always tell people, "No."

**MURPHY:** So you said you had some support from Majority Leader Armeys. Did other Members of Congress or the NRCC [National Republican Congressional Committee] offer support in your campaign, and was something like fundraising a barrier for you as you started your campaign?

**HART:** I don't see fundraising as a barrier. Fundraising is always a challenge. It doesn't matter whether you're their number one target, which I wasn't, I don't think, but I was certainly one of the, I don't know, eight or 10 that they had really focused on, seats that they could flip. And I do recall—Tom [Thomas M.] Davis [III] chaired the NRCC, the National Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, at the time. A brilliant guy, okay. Talk about understanding everyone's district and knowing everything about the district.

He continues to this day to be an amazing person. I had lunch with him not too long ago, talked about that. So smart guy running the NRCC says to the two candidates that they really saw as similar, one was a guy named Mike Rogers who was from Michigan, he was a state senator running for a congressional seat held by a Democrat, and me in Pennsylvania doing the same but as a state senator. Boy, they were smart. They pitted us against each other. I would get a call from one of the staff and they'd say, "Hey, Mike Rogers had a fundraiser where he raised \$50,000 yesterday. What did you do yesterday?" And then I'm sure—well, I actually found out during the campaign when Mike and I went to do an event together, I said, "Are they beating you over the head about me?" And he said, "Ugh." Actually it was funny because we initially were like, "I don't like you. I don't like you because they're telling me you're better than me." They were just making us work harder, and they did a great job of it, I'll tell you. Mike and I became very good friends once we were here, but it is a very, very wise thing for—people who run. They're obviously competitive, and we were quite competitive, and it helped us both, I believe, to egg us on to do better, do better, you can always do better. Just when you're tired of making phone calls and it's maybe 5:30 and you think everybody's left their office, call a couple more, leave a voicemail—or you might get them. Or if you have their cell phone number, they're probably driving home, give them a call. Those kinds of things.

It's pretty smart, and it worked well—very, very good campaign committee. Very well run and very—what's the word? Very professional. It's not something that I dealt with so much on the state senate level. It was very different. Just when you think you can do it all they tell you, "No, you're not very good at that; you need to do better."

**JOHNSON:**

You were a young woman running for office in Pennsylvania where not a lot of women had been elected before. So was gender an important issue for you in that campaign, especially in your first campaign?

**HART:**

I would say no. I just never really looked at it as I'm a woman running. I've always been a woman, so like it doesn't mean anything to me. I'm just the person who's here. Did people say that to me? Oh, yeah, all the time. And I did have like groups of women who had offered to help me because they wanted to see a woman be elected just because I was a woman. Some were disappointed later when they found out that I was a conservative woman. They wanted me to be—check off more of the NOW [National Organization for Women] type boxes, which I thought I was checking off by being a woman and a trailblazer, but I'm pro-life. That wasn't popular with some of them, but on the other hand, it was really popular with some of them. So we had—it was an interesting issue when it came to that.

And I was always a person like when someone would say, "Where are you on women's issues?" Well, I'm for a strong economy, I'm for opportunity, that's a women's issue. If economics isn't a women's issue I don't know what is, especially when—in a period of time when more and more women were becoming heads of household and were responsible for making sure that things were running, whether they were married or single with kids at home. And I believe that when we worked at breaking down barriers for opportunity that that's more important, like getting an education.

I worked with some people back home who had started an organization that was a network for—it was women welfare recipients and women victims of domestic violence. I think it started with domestic violence victims who had fled, and they started working with women in shelters to help them become economically independent. Because at the time a lot of battered women

would stay in a relationship. They probably still do, too, because they're economically dependent on the partner, on the batterer. So I worked with these organizations that were the safe house, crisis centers, that sort of thing. How do these women become independent? What do we need to do? And I was on the community college board. We worked with them to help make sure that we could do in some ways a condensed training program where a woman could get enough training to get a job that paid a family-sustaining wage.

One woman was unbelievable. She ended up being a forklift operator. She made a lot of money every hour, but she had to get her training done quickly because she needed to get out, and then within maybe a year or so she was in the news because her husband, ex-husband, had been stalking her and had staked out her home. And the police had to go, and they arrested the guy. They found that he had just murdered his current girlfriend, and he was after her. God bless her to have escaped that, to have created a home for her family, and then this guy came back. She was really strong, but, hey, she could have been the victim had she not been able to extricate herself and then be able to be independent of this guy.

So we took that program and actually helped fund it statewide, and then when I came down here we worked with the Department of Labor, and we actually helped establish opportunities for some funding for victims of domestic violence. We also did, I think nationally also, it was applied to people who would qualify, and they were also women welfare recipients who were trying to move off of welfare and into independence. Because those kinds of things are what people want. I want to be able to take care of myself and my family. And I saw those as things that could be addressed through some changes in policy, some pockets of funding here and there that weren't

even huge amounts of money. But in the end when you talk economics with the people who don't want government to fund everything, the return is much, much higher than it would be if that person would end up continuing to need public assistance. So we won pretty much hands down when we would talk to our colleagues.

When I say "we" I'm always talking about my staff and me and also my colleagues who would jump onboard and co-sponsor to get enough votes to support it, and we were successful with that. But a lot of initiatives—I did get a lot of women to come and be involved and support for those kinds of things. I'm real glad that they got involved because a lot of them just weren't involved at all before. They just thought it was distasteful because politics, people yell at each other and they're rude and whatever. It's true, they were, and they still are. But women needed to be involved more than we were, and I think we still need to be more involved than we are.

**MURPHY:** So you were the first and still the only Republican woman elected to Congress from the state of Pennsylvania.

**HART:** Yes, terrible.

**MURPHY:** What did this milestone mean to you?

**HART:** I was hoping that it would mean the dominoes were falling and there would be a whole bunch more. Now what it means is you better get on the stick. Not enough women run now on the Republican side. We've seen a groundswell of women running on the Democrat side who now on the eastern part of the state have won a number of seats. Certainly that was by design, the Democratic Party to run women for those seats. But there's a lot of very talented women who ran as well, and I think the Republicans need to learn from that. It's also the issue of women not being afraid to do it. What

do you believe in, what do you stand for, do you understand the issues, can you articulate your positions well, are you a winner? Are you going to be able to win this? Do you have the confidence in your ability to bring people along with the ideas that you have in order to do it? And it's hard, I think, for people who were previously not involved and for people who were, I mean as a committee person or whatever it is, to actually make that jump, to actually be a candidate.

Now we have a lot of women in the state house, state senate, Republican. I'm sure many of them are being encouraged to take the jump this coming election season for 2020 and beyond. And I'm hoping that a lot of them will take that opportunity, but it's hard, especially if you are in a position of having kids at home. And invariably parents help each other out, but it's harder still for the woman to be gone as much as you have to be away from home if you're a Member of the House. Now from Pennsylvania it's not as bad. Hop on a plane, you're home in an hour. So I think we're going to be able—I think we'll be successful in getting more of them to run, but it's a pretty toxic environment right now, and I think that's pretty off-putting as well, for men and women.

**JOHNSON:** When you came to the [U.S.] House what were your impressions of the Pennsylvania delegation?

**HART:** Wow, that's a good one. When I came to the House, the Pennsylvania delegation was obviously heavily male. I think Allyson [Y.] Schwartz and I were here. I thought that there were a lot of really smart people with a lot of experience. There were also a number who'd been here long enough that they were considering retirement or should have been considering retirement. I remember Bud [E. G.] Shuster was still here for five minutes, and then he didn't want to stay because he was term limited out of being the chairman of

Transportation, but he didn't know that when he was running for re-election. So he won re-election.

We had the reorganization after, so I was down here for all those votes, and one of the things we voted on was a rule change. I was very fortunate to be here and help them change the rule on the Republican side of the House where there is a rule that doesn't exist on the Democrat side of the House where after six years as a committee chair, you're done and it's someone else's turn. What a great thing. So, you see, guys like Bud Shuster who decided, "I was a chairman; I don't really want to be here as a rank and file Member." And so he decided to leave, and that allowed for new membership. Now, it turned out to be his son [William (Bill) Shuster], who also did the same thing, retired when he couldn't be the chairman anymore. But I think that's good, and I think it allows for more turnover not for a bad reason, that you leave on your own terms.

I was given the opportunity to be a chair of a committee in the state senate, which is something that most Members of Congress never get an opportunity to do. I didn't, and I would have loved to have been a committee chair, but once you've had that opportunity you shouldn't own it. And I, personally, I believe now that we've seen it in place for a while where those committee chairmanships have turned over. That's one of the best things that we did in the Republican Conference here in Washington in the House is to make sure that that does turn over. Because when you look now at the Democrats in the majority and who chairs the committees, a lot of them are not at the top of their game, and I think that's a disservice to the people. I think it's a disservice both to the Democrats now who are rank and file and to the American people. Because you want people who are at the top of their game to be able to chair those committees, to be able to move things along, to be

able to build coalitions and not carry with them baggage from 30 years ago that is just irrelevant today. And you don't see that as much when you have that kind of turnover and I think it's really important.

**JOHNSON:** Did any of those Members of the delegation—Pennsylvania delegation—serve as mentors for you or offer you some good advice?

**HART:** Oh, definitely. Oh, absolutely. Well, Phil, he'd be number one. Phil English was and is just a fabulous human and a brilliant person and a good friend. Advising on everything from procedure and things that you need to focus on as a person who, again, Phil never represented a Republican district as a Republican. People from western Pennsylvania have that experience. We all shared that experience, and I think that was important. And then some really interesting Members. It's interesting because I was actually friends with some of the Democrats who I'd served with in the state, and then they came down here, too. And unfortunately, some who ended up making mistakes and who left under circumstances that weren't so good. But Chaka Fattah was a wonderful Member of the state senate, a good friend, came down here, and he was really trying to work very hard for the communities and unfortunately left under bad circumstances. But good friends and it's unfortunate.

I think when you look around though most of the Members of our delegation were here for a while, and Rick Santorum, I will say, was a longtime and very good friend who was a very helpful mentor as well. Rick and I were both elected to our first office together, and we were young Republicans together. He's four years older than me, I think, and I'd known him since I was an undergraduate. So there's a lot of friends you make through politics, and some of them are great helpful friends who work hard and are very supportive and those two especially, Phil and Rick.

**JOHNSON:** You had mentioned Allyson Schwartz. We had the opportunity to interview her, and you were only together for one term, but what were your impressions of her?

**HART:** Oh, but we were together for a long time back home. She and I were elected to the state senate together. When I came down here Allyson was not particularly helpful. They were in the minority. They had just gone through this ridiculous exercise of counting chads when I knew I was coming down here to be a House Member. I didn't know who my President was going to be. So that was pretty weird. And so that really helped to divide the House a little bit more. But I can honestly tell you that I didn't really have much of a relationship with her here.

I think the relationships that I had with Democrat Members were based more on similar districts that we would have represented. One of the women that I worked with the most was a woman named Melissa [L.] Bean, who was from suburban Chicago, and she was elected as a Democrat from a Republican district. I think because we were similar in our personalities and not just our first names, but we had a lot in common and worked together on a number of issues. They were mostly dealing with transitional districts, going from one type of an economy to a more service-oriented or technology-based economy, that sort of thing. But she came in after I did.

But as far as women go, Nancy [Lee] Johnson was the one who I really counted on the most as a mentor here as women go. Wow, there were a number. I mean Deb [Deborah D.] Pryce was fabulous. She was in leadership. That was something that was not really expected. There were a couple of older women Members aside from Nancy who were just really fabulous: Judy [Borg] Biggert, from Illinois, Anne [Meagher] Northup from Kentucky.

And then I was a classmate with Shelley Moore Capito, and she and I were good friends and worked together on a lot of things because West Virginia and Pennsylvania obviously had a lot of issues in common. A lot of similar concerns with the people in an industrial base. And just were friends, we just got along great. It was nice to have classmates who were women. I didn't have that when I was a state senator. There were a lot of good, good people here at the time. But I would say as far as mentors—Judy, she was just wonderful, too. I would say Nancy of all of them because I really aspired to be on the Ways and Means Committee because I had chaired the tax committee in the Pennsylvania senate. We did taxes and pensions on the state level so obviously coming down here that was a goal, but as a freshman you don't get on the tax committee [Ways and Means]. In fact, some people told me, "You'll never get on it," and it was very interesting. So more on that later.

But I think with my background that helped. But being on the Financial Services Committee was really great. And I actually got to be—Carolyn [Bosher] Maloney, who was a Democrat who was on the committee, and I got along quite well and worked together on some issues in the Financial Services. So again, it's Democrats, Republicans. Some of the women just got along. Some of us knew each other from the gym. That's a helpful thing. I think a lot of people say, "Why do you have a gym?" Well, gosh, if we were working from like dawn to midnight, and we have no time—it's actually, I think, helpful to our mental state and our ability to do well here. And it was only a little room to be able to work out a little bit, and that helped, I think, build some relationships, to be honest. I think the men would tell you that, too. But yes, there were pretty good, strong, very bright women here.

**MURPHY:** So you found a lot of camaraderie among the women in Congress? Did you feel that the House was a welcoming environment for women legislators?

**HART:** Yes and no. I want to say I didn't ever have any trouble with my leadership. In fact, I think I had opportunity because of my position as a female but also somebody who had had a significant experience in public service before I came to Washington. When I asked for something, they tried to work with me, but then they asked me for things.

The Speaker asked me to serve on the Ethics Committee. Nobody wants to serve on the Ethics Committee, but he thought I'd achieved enough of a status here and that I was—as an attorney especially. Again, it's going through the evidence and trying to determine whether we should move forward on a complaint against a colleague that you don't want to do. Nobody wants to judge their colleague, right? But it's something that has to be done, and he thought that I'd be able to do it. That said a lot, I thought.

Also, I mentioned earlier that I wanted to be on the Ways and Means Committee, like from the first day I got here. And, of course, I went to see Bill [William Marshall] Thomas who at the time was chairing it and he's like, "That's nice. You're a freshman, that's nice." But I still put it on my list when the committee that's set up to choose, to assign Members to committees is there they're like, "No, you're not going to be able to get on Ways and Means, so what do you want?"

But you have to ask and if people know, you make what you'd like to do here known, it's helpful. And then I asked Chairman Thomas what I should do, and he said, "You have to prove to me that you'd be a good member of the committee, so when we're arguing a bill please come on down to the floor. All the Members will get an opportunity to speak, and if we have time left

over we'll let you speak." So I would come every time Ways and Means had a bill on the floor, and I would listen to the argument, if I wasn't in another committee. It wasn't every single time they had a bill on the floor because I did have responsibilities on the committees that I was on, but I would come down and he'd let me speak occasionally on a bill. When it came time during my second [term] to pick committees, Bill actually asked for me to be on the committee. That is a very encouraging leadership. That's a very encouraging committee chair. It was fair. And I think a lot of women think it's not. I've heard women say they didn't think it was fair, but maybe before I got here. I think it depends on the chairman, but Chairman Thomas was definitely supportive. Mike [Michael Garver] Oxley chaired Financial Services when I was there. He was very encouraging. What a great guy. I didn't find being a woman was a handicap at all here and I was really pleased for that.

**JOHNSON:**

Were you involved in the Women's Caucus? Did you work closely within that organization?

**HART:**

Closely, it was probably you're required to be part of it. I think it was important for us to make sure we were there to help each other because if some of us were more successful at getting what we wanted and others weren't it's probably important for us to know about it and help them. I would speak up on behalf of a junior Member who was looking to try to get something or move forward with a committee or whatever it was, or even to work on legislation.

We actually did across the aisle—it's kind of interesting, but Debbie Wasserman Schultz and I, before she became part of the Democratic [Congressional Campaign] Committee [DCCC] structure, this is when she was a Member and really focused on her work in the House—to try to move forward with legislation that we tried to find some common ground. We

found a little bit. We found some things. They were completely nonpartisan issues that we wanted—that were important for our committees to work on together. And I think it's important that women do that. I don't expect women to all agree on an issue. I don't expect men to all agree on an issue. So anyone who would go in there thinking that Women's Caucus is going to be unified with an agenda is just—I think it's unrealistic because you have women from rural areas, women from the East, the West, cities, whatever. You're going to have different priorities as a Member if you're representing your communities. But the ones that we could find common ground on, yes, I was very happy to find those and with Members who were very different from me and from very, very different areas.

**JOHNSON:**

You just referenced a few minutes ago the gym and then the Lindy [Corinne Claiborne] Boggs [Congressional Women's Reading] Room, you were talking about that a little bit. So were there opportunities for you just to get to know your women colleagues, maybe even just behind the scenes, and get to know them a little better and then be able to work with them?

**HART:**

That's absolutely the benefit of those things, yes. And that's why Carolyn, I think, and I actually were more friendly than we would have been otherwise—Maloney, Congresswoman Maloney, from an urban area, huge city, New York, not likely to have similar problems, but we were both interested—I was on the Financial Services Committee for four years, and so we shared those four years as an interesting time because we went through that whole issue with Sarbanes–Oxley while I served on the Financial Services Committee, and we had a lot of issues to address.<sup>1</sup> So we spent probably a lot more committee hours than normal during that period of time. And so, yes, there were a lot of things that we were looking at. Pittsburgh, even though it's not a massive city, had been and still is historically a headquarters city.

There's a lot of corporate interests there and certainly the restructuring of how reporting is done, and all these other issues were big and very important. And, of course, everybody knows auditors, and so whether it was the Big Eight or the Big Six or the Big Four as far as accounting firms go, those people were all involved. You could be in New York City, you could be in the middle of Missouri, but you're going to still have those interests because every corporation has to do its audit. They've got to meet certain new, more difficult, requirements, and when you place those requirements on a corporate entity, it's a burden and the question is, is it a burden that outweighs its benefits or not? In a lot of cases there's been some adjustments made, for example, for the smaller companies that can't meet the expense of doing some of this excessive reporting that the larger companies probably should be reporting more as their failures can affect more.

It was really interesting as far as the whole reporting process. I learned a lot about it here, but I'd also served on an audit committee for my college on the board of trustees, so I learned a lot about those things, too. I think with a lot of things in legislation the balancing act is an important item because anything you do that's going to cost individuals money or corporations money, you have to make sure you're doing it wisely and that it's going to actually bring more positive than negative. And I don't think government does that all the time. One of the issues that you've heard about a lot, I think, is this move to say let's test—this regulation, what's it going to cost? It's got to be costed out before we actually approve it, or maybe we shouldn't do it because it might cost more than the benefit—had a lot of that happen. I mean, under Dodd–Frank we've seen a lot happen regarding banking.<sup>2</sup> I serve on a small bank board now, and when I say small, I mean small, and there's just so many things that they have to comply with that are just too costly for a small institution and kind of silly. They were not involved in

what happened with shaky financial instruments and how so many banks failed. We can't have that, right? So it's a very interesting process to determine just the right balance when it comes to such a wholesale change in the way any particular industry has to respond to increasing government requirements.

You've seen since that was passed there's been a number of changes to deal with what they call the small bank, and it's important. It's important that Members are in touch with that, and if they don't have them, small banks, then listen to the people who do. When Jeb Hensarling was chairing the Financial Services Committee was when a lot of this was happening, and I had served with Jeb. There's all these Melissa ties. His wife's name is Melissa, so we had to be friendly because he has to be nice to all Melissas is what I told him. But we needed to fix certain things. And I wasn't a Member anymore, but I would talk to him about them because I think that they were important for the reality of communities, because not every community is New York City with the huge banks, right? In fact, and he acknowledged as well in the communities that he represented, it's the Main Street bank that makes the difference for the economy. Everybody knows their banker. Why? Because they need to borrow money to expand their business and guess what happens? They hire more people, and the economy gets better, and people connecting all those things is really good. It's a lot of fun to work with other Members when you learn about the challenges in their communities, especially when you're on the subject matter committee, because there's so many things that you can do to hurt them if you don't think about it, but there's also so much you can do to help them. And hopefully that's what most Members are looking at when they're here. But we had a lot of fun trying to solve problems around those issues, but there was a lot of burden placed on a lot of good people who are just trying to do their jobs, too.

**JOHNSON:** We're about an hour in. Do you want to take a break?

**HART:** I'd like to, yes.

### **END OF PART ONE ~ BEGINNING OF PART TWO**

**MURPHY:** So you were speaking about your legislative interests in terms of regulation and other issues. Another important debate, especially linking to our discussion of the Women's Caucus, the pro-choice/pro-life debate has caused a lot of division across the country. How much of an impact did this issue have on women Members and their ability to work together here in Congress, in the House?

**HART:** Well, obviously there's going to be a divide. Unfortunately, I don't think there's a way around that if you feel a certain way about that issue, and that was a hurdle, I guess, to some degree—fair to say. While I was here we moved forward with a lot more pro-life legislation than I think they ever did before because we had majorities and the President [George W. Bush], and the President was very committed to doing what he could to protect life. We had the partial birth abortion ban that we debated and passed.

So I was always speaking out on these issues, very, very much on the pro-life side and so was occasionally the object of derision. And I'm not—can't really mince words there because I remember after an argument walking down the aisle from the podium out the middle back door of the House, and there were three pro-abortion female Members who if looks could kill I would have been dead. And it was really shocking to me, to be honest. I have every right to take the position that I have taken on this issue, and to be really stared down to the point that it's almost like I'm some kind of a villain for trying to

protect life and actually having words with a couple of them. It's unfortunate, but bullying doesn't help {laughter} and they're not going to bring me over to their side by doing that. And that was really disappointing, to be honest. But I can say I actually worked with one of them on other things. Never worked with another one on anything. I probably wasn't a woman in her eyes. You get that sometimes, some people who are so extreme on an issue. But I would try to work with everyone, and it wasn't always successful.

**MURPHY:** And how did that shape relationships within the Women's Caucus? Was that topic discussed?

**HART:** No. When organizations that were women-oriented would meet, I would be involved with them if that wasn't an issue because invariably if it was an issue they would fall down on the side of pro-abortion, and I wouldn't want to be involved in the group.

When I was a young attorney, we formed a Women's Bar Association. I think I was a lawyer for five minutes, and I joined this group. It was brand new, and I was excited to be part of it because the bar was notoriously male-oriented, and judges in our county were notorious for not treating women fairly, and I knew this from hearing friends of mine who had been practicing already. I joined the women's bar, and at the very first meeting they were trying to move forward with a few things that we wanted to work on as a Women's Bar Association, and one of the women stood up and said, "I think we need to crusade for the right to choose." And I stood up and said, "I think that's not relevant to what we do as attorneys, and I am pro-life, and I disagree with you, and I don't want to be part of a group that is going to divide us on our first meeting." Everyone agreed to stay out of it, and I think that's the best way. If you're a woman and you're a professional, then you should be able to find other issues in that case relating to your profession.

As a House Member you're going to disagree on all kinds of issues. I found it very disappointing when I would just be written off by people because I was pro-life. Because I never wrote off people because they were pro-abortion or pro-choice. And I do see that more from one side to the other when I was here. I don't know what it's like now, but I can tell you it's tough as a female pro-life Member among some of the more rabid pro-choicers. It just was. That's probably mostly why I didn't have a great relationship with Allyson Schwartz. She came out of a—that was her professional background was a women's clinic. So we didn't really start off on the same plane. It was funny because we both came into the senate together, and people tried to make, "Oh, these two women." Like, not really. Yes, we're breaking barriers, sure, but we're not going to be working together. And when I chaired a committee, she didn't ever respond to me well. Walked out of a committee one day. We're just, you know, we're not friends. But there's guys I'm not friends with, too, so it's not really a bigger deal because we're both women.

**JOHNSON:**

Lots of passionate issues that you cover in Congress, for sure.

**HART:**

I got yelled at by Jack [John Patrick] Murtha [Jr.] once. That was fun. Oh, I think he had an issue with women, too, to be honest. He actually [yelled] at the top of his lungs one day because I disagreed with him about something. It was about being involved in the wars post-9/11, and I had said something in the media that apparently his staff had brought to his attention. And it was between votes. Everyone was there, around, and I was out in the Speaker's Lobby in a stairwell, and he just let loose and Members were stunned. Everybody with their big wide eyes were like standing around looking at it. Then after everyone kind of mulled away people came over to me and said, "Just ignore him, he's losing his mind." I'm like, "Come on, he's just mad." But it was late in his career, and Jack may be one of those people who stayed

here too long. It's unfortunate, but he was really effective as a Member during the first couple decades, but I think there's a real energy behind people who are term limit fans for that reason. A guy who really should have ended up his career in a very positive light, but a lot of people didn't. And the women, they seem to know when to leave.

**MURPHY:** So in terms of other legislation, I was looking at your legislative record, and I was just, you know, for being here three terms you did pass several bills that were not just post office bills, right? Can you describe your work on the Unborn Victims of Violence Act? That was one that stood out to me. How did you get involved in this legislation?

**HART:** That was a continuing effort that I started from when I was in the state [senate]. There was a gentleman who was a state senator when I was a state senator, and when I say gentleman, I mean it. This is a really great guy, a "Greatest Generation" guy, whose daughter was my age, and his name is Ed Helfrick. He was from the central part of Pennsylvania, and he had introduced a similar legislation on the state level and when it came to argue the bill on the floor, Ed wanted to talk to me. And he said, "I'd like you to lead this even though it's my bill." And the discussion that ensued was regarding, people see, you don't just hear the words, but you see the delivery, and you see who's delivering the message, and he said, "I think it'll help to get this done if you lead it." So we worked together, and I ended up actually being the main spokesperson on our floor debate in the senate to get this passed.

So the Unborn Victims of Violence Act is a way to deal with especially the perpetrator of a violent crime against a woman. Oftentimes, unfortunately, it's motivated by the fact that the woman is carrying his child or that the woman is carrying the child of someone else, and he's a jealous person or

whatever the issue is, but that often, unfortunately, that unborn child is the reason for the violence. And that often that unborn child is a victim of the violence. Sometimes that unborn child and the mother end up being homicide victims. And sometimes only the child ends up being a homicide victim or only the mother in some rare cases where the child will survive. It's just all horrible crimes, unspeakable crimes, right?

We were able to pass that. It was pretty popular legislation in Pennsylvania because when you hear these really horrible stories you wonder why in the world the law doesn't further punish someone who's so obviously angry regarding the child. So we also moved forward down here with similar legislation. Now, not everybody is going to be covered by federal criminal law. That's a much more narrow area. And I think most of the general public isn't really familiar with it if they've never been charged with a crime. Good for them if they're not familiar with it. But most crimes are state crimes, so state law and the prosecution is more on the local level of Attorney General's office, DA's office.

But the one thing that seemed to escape from that would be any federal property. If you're in the military, for example, that's probably the best example I can think of, that federal law will apply. And in whatever instance where federal law would apply then that same protection wouldn't exist. You wouldn't be able to prosecute that crime of homicide or that crime of assault if it was an unborn child. It would be as if the unborn child didn't exist. And so what we wanted to do, after having the experience that I did and a couple of my colleagues on the state level who had come down to Washington, wanted to make sure that we were able to give that same opportunity to law enforcement to prosecute.

And we also looked around the country, and there were a number of states that were moving forward with this kind of law. But, again, we hadn't done anything on the federal level. So we enlisted the help of a lot of Members who were from states that had already passed an Unborn Victims of Violence law on the state level because it was overwhelmingly popular nationwide to recognize obviously the child as a victim of crime as well as the mother.

**JOHNSON:**

We wanted to switch gears a little bit now and talk about your time on the Judiciary Committee. And you served in 2001, which, of course, was 9/11 and then everything that came afterwards. So, how was that experience being on that committee, and how busy were you, and what do you remember from that time?

**HART:**

It's interesting, thanks for bringing that up, the idea of having served on a number of different committees. Because I don't know if I hold a record, but I feel like I probably do as far as having served on the most committees at one time. Because when I came here, I was on three committees and on each committee, I had three subcommittees. So I had three committees and nine subcommittees. I wasn't Superwoman. It was tough to do. Of course, when 9/11 happened we were pretty much focused, and a lot of the other things like the Science Committee wasn't as active at that time. We had a lot to do in Judiciary. We had to deal with the Patriot Act. It was drafted and introduced and passed while I served on the Judiciary Committee. Part of the challenge for us, because we weren't the intelligence sharers, we had to study the current situation to determine what happened. I think there's a lot of people who read the *9/11 [Commission] Report*, and there were some other things that were put together afterward, but beforehand we didn't wake up in the morning thinking we've got to make sure that the FBI is sharing intel with Defense intel and CIA and like every American intel agency needs to do

this. Or we have to make sure that now with the new technology, with cellular technology, we need to make sure that people can monitor conversations because the law really doesn't allow for that because it's talking about tapping and it's all about lines, and so we have to make the language different.

There were so many aspects of the—it was failure by intelligence, but it was a failure of sharing intelligence. Barriers that existed under law that weren't intended to be, to inhibit law enforcement from carrying out what it needed to do or intelligence agencies from carrying what they needed to do in sharing. They were just things that seemed normal to those who worked in the field because they were always siloed. I think it's funny now because everybody uses that term, that if only Defense Intelligence is only talking to Defense Intelligence then they might need to know something that they don't know that maybe somebody else in a different intel agency knows. And so I know that the Intelligence Committee and our committee worked on basically breaking down the barriers. With us it was mostly the law enforcement issues, and it was the taps and it was all the information and being able to share that information, too, from federal to state to local—a lot of cooperation. There was the immigration. It was all the laws surrounding that. It was a whole lot of issues. And that's really—immigration enforcement and a lot of things that came up as a result of how we knew the perpetrators of 9/11 were here, some shouldn't have been here anymore, those kinds of things, needed to be addressed.

Again, when we're talking about priorities, how do you determine what the priorities are, in the case of a national emergency, times of war, things change and, boy, they certainly did after 9/11. My first nine months of being a Congressman were normal. When I say normal, I mean we had the priorities

that we had, problems that we needed to solve within the country. I wasn't on the Intelligence Committee or Foreign Affairs, so I was working on issues that were domestic. Well, one day later we were given a crash course on what's going on in the Middle East, having intelligence briefings like every other day. We had BlackBerrys then. So leave your BlackBerry with the committee staff and then you are allowed in the room. These briefings were very much classified. They were all constantly changing information as far as updates and that sort of thing. So we were in these meetings all the time for quite a while after 9/11. So it was all during Patriot Act, working on the things that we needed to change—a significant piece of legislation. And, again, part of that experience was everybody dropping their partisan issues and saying, “Wow, we just had the most horrible thing in our lifetime really happen to us, and we need to protect this country and we need to do our duty here.” And everybody did their duty.

You were talking about building relationships? A lot of people across the aisle, people who had background in intel or background in military or background in maybe just academia where they were experts on the Middle East. Like one of my colleagues at the time had actually taught in Iran, Bob [Robert William] Ney from Ohio, he spoke Farsi. I mean, is this amazing? So this is a person who obviously had a lot of things to share because he had personal knowledge. And other Members who did were very willing to do that, and on both sides of the aisle. It was all really interesting, but it was a pretty frightening time, too.

We had a lot of moments where, when the anthrax then happened after 9/11, I had a young man in my office who had experience with the mail with the white powder, and so he had—his parents were worried that he was going to get sick and had to get on an antibiotic to try to make sure he wasn't going to

be affected. There was a lot of fear around here, and Members were really impressively professional in addressing those issues—steely, as you better be when you're dealing with those kinds of challenges because we didn't know what was going to happen.

That first couple of months leading up to the vote on sending troops and a lot of the things that happened, people were very, very bipartisan and very, very focused. We were driven to do what we were supposed to do and trying to learn as much as we could possibly learn in a compact period of time. Especially, like I said, the people that weren't on Intel and that weren't on Foreign Affairs and that weren't dealing with those issues directly—or defense. I wasn't on Armed Services. So everybody had to become something of an expert, and then we had to go in and vote and do our best to protect the American people, protect the country, to make sure our military were prepared, and then make sure we could avert future issues when it came to those kinds of attacks. Probably more than I'm even stating, but it was all consuming for sure.

**MURPHY:** What was your experience that day on September 11? Were you in the chamber already?

**HART:** No. It was a Tuesday morning, and we weren't supposed to have votes until Tuesday night. I had come down here the night before because I was part of a group that our Speaker [John Dennis Hastert] had appointed informally to meet with and kind of bring the concerns of the House Republican Conference to the White House. So I don't remember the exact number. I think there were eight of us who were appointed to do this. That morning we had a scheduled breakfast at the White House with the gentleman who was President Bush's liaison, a gentleman named Nick Calio. He was the Secretary for Legislative Affairs or whatever that title is, that the President

sends to the Hill.<sup>3</sup> There were six or eight of us at breakfast, and we didn't know anything happened while we were eating breakfast at the White House and talking to Nick about the priorities that our conference had really been focusing on.

So our goal in the group was to make sure that this President, who's our President, is going to make sure that the caucus in the House is able to move forward with what our priorities are. We had a pretty innocuous meeting, pushing some of the issues that maybe the President wasn't as interested in, that a lot of our Republican colleagues were more interested in.

And then when it was over, it was a beautiful sunny day. I had driven to the White House and parked in special parking because they knew we were coming, and so we were standing by our cars and we didn't know anything about the attacks. We were just talking after the meeting, "Do you think we emphasized this or that enough," you know, like we should have in our normal conversation. Nobody in our group knew anything was amiss by the time that meeting ended. It was an early breakfast meeting.

So we get in my car—actually, Paul [D.] Ryan and I got in my car to go back to Longworth [House Office Building], which is where our offices were—and driving down Pennsylvania Avenue we both kind of ducked a little because a plane flew over our heads. We didn't know at the time that that was the one that hit the Pentagon. By the timing, it had to have been. I mean it was just too low. Paul, right at that time, was picking up messages, and he said, "Oh my God." I'm like, "What?" And he's like, "Turn on the radio." And the drive from the White House to Longworth is not very long, so he said, "Oh my God, it's an attack." And, of course, we just shut everything down and listened to the radio for the rest of the ride, and I pulled onto the street by Longworth, parked the car, and we both ran up to our offices.

Capitol Hill had not yet been evacuated. Trying to remember what—it was before 10:00 a.m. I wasn't in my office very long. I was trying to account for my staff who were just—some of them weren't even there yet or were attending meetings outside the office. I was trying to make sure everyone was where they needed to be because we knew, of course, what was going on, and the Capitol Police shortly thereafter evacuated the Hill, and so they came to the office. And, of course, by then the Pentagon had been struck, and if you live in Virginia you know that getting from Capitol Hill to Virginia, you couldn't go that day. It wasn't happening. The Pentagon was on fire, bridge was closed. My staff came to my apartment, which was approximately this big, and I'm not kidding, shoebox, above a one-car garage—behind one of the little town homes behind the Library of Congress. You know those little old, very old—so it was a carriage house, I guess, that I lived above and there was barely enough room for all of them to line up and sit on the day bed watching the television, and that's what we did for the rest of the day pretty much.

My landlord was a guy who commuted, who lived in Illinois and had a place here because he did a lot of work here, and he joined us, and we just watched as everything unfolded. And I had my beeper, but a lot of Members weren't in town yet. But I listened to the beeper later in the afternoon. They had opened, I guess, access, and so the staff was able to go home.

But I didn't go to sleep that day. We got called by the beeper, and I think it was very late at night when we were called, and the only place that was deemed safe for us to meet as Members—because they didn't really know what the status was—we knew that we were attacked, we knew that there was this group called Al Qaeda—but we needed a Member briefing. So at the time FBI Director [Robert] Mueller and some of the other people from the

administration met with both the Senators and the House Members who were in town at the Capitol Police Headquarters. That's where they told us was the only safe place to be, for us to meet as a group. And so that's where we went. Spent a couple of hours there asking questions, getting a briefing. It was probably—I bet we were there for at least an hour and everything else was closed down.

I think most people who were here in Washington that day can remember everything like it was yesterday, all the detail. You know, who spoke up in the meeting, who jumped up on a table—Barbara Boxer—we didn't know a lot, "They're not telling us enough," that kind of thing. It was very interesting because we, again, everybody was stunned, everybody spent the whole day trying to figure out what was going on. We were not even close to having all the Members in town, and many were not going to be able to get here because no planes were going to be flying.

We all went with our beepers back to where we needed to go—to our apartments—and I was up all night watching coverage trying to calm down, trying to figure out, "Oh, my gosh, what are we really going to be able to accomplish. Is more going to happen?"

I had a neighbor who was an FBI agent. Next morning as I'm trying to figure out where I need to go, because they said we could go to the Capitol, we were called to the Capitol, he's running out with his big gun case strapped over his shoulder. They got a call that something was alarming, and he got called to go address it. And he said, "We don't know what's happening." He said, "Our instructions are just to be on call" and that was the way it was. And anybody who was here in Washington will remember that everybody was on edge for quite a while. We stayed on edge because, like I mentioned earlier, the whole anthrax scare.

But I was one of the Members—and I think that kind of went down in sort of the lore—because I know on 9/11 again this year they sang “God Bless America” on the steps, but I was in that group that met on the Capitol steps and sang that song because I was here. And they called us to meet there. We couldn’t go into the building, but we could meet outside the building, and we had a discussion with leadership, and it was bipartisan, and somebody just kind of started singing and everybody else kind of went along. It wasn’t like they said, “Let’s all sing “God Bless America.”” No. We just kind of did.

And it was an interesting time. And then, of course, if you flew to Washington you couldn’t get home because you couldn’t fly. We were there for pretty much the rest of the week, I think. I had driven here because, again, I didn’t live that far away. Fortunately, that week I had driven and had come in early for that White House meeting, and it was Friday, I think, by the time they were able to fly again. I remember driving home just trying to reach everybody. It was hard to reach family on 9/11. It was hard to reach anyone because cells were just overloaded. That was a disturbing day, but I think it really did fire us all up, too, to make sure that we were going to try to address everything that we needed to address. And you don’t know exactly what you need to address because this has never happened before.

The other issue, too, and one that I think is discounted too much today, when our executive branch, Republican or Democrat, is criticized for how they’ve handled the Middle East, you’re fighting a war against an enemy that is not really a nation. This is the first time that we’ve dealt with attacks not from another country. Who are these people? Who speaks for these people? How do you know that these people are good for their word? And again, you can see it. We’re still having trouble dealing with it because there’s really no framework. And so I’m slow to criticize those who are involved in the

diplomacy trying to, for example, deal with the Taliban now. What do you do? Who really runs Afghanistan? Those questions are valid questions. I've been to all those places, and the leaders are just not the same as what you would think of as standard world leaders. They don't really live within much of a framework. Their leadership opportunity is fleeting. They're just more rogue than I think anything that we've dealt with as a country. And when you talk about foreign affairs and all the different challenges, I think all the old rules really have evaporated, and it's really tough for those who are in charge of those things now.

**MURPHY:** You mentioned that—this event really changed your first time, right? But when you started—

**HART:** Second term, third term.

**MURPHY:** Right. And when you started in January of 2001 you said you really wanted to be on the Ways and Means Committee, right from the beginning. Eventually what argument did you make to win a spot on this influential committee?

**HART:** Well, my argument was that I went to see the chairman early and I said, "This is my goal. I really want to be a member of the Ways and Means Committee, and will you tell me what I need to do to do that?" And like I said, Chairman Thomas was really helpful there and he told me to come down to the floor when they were making the arguments, stand up on those issues, if I had a bill to introduce or whatever, something that I could talk to him about it. It was good. It was a really, I think, a merit-based system when it came down to it. They were not just going to award this person a committee because this person is from a district that needs it, or this person has seniority, or this person has whatever, that it was based on, I think,

partially the chairman recommendations, leadership recommendations, of a person that is a competent Member for the committee, somebody who's going to work hard on this committee. Some subject matter committees are more consuming than others and, of course, I think most of the general public isn't aware that Ways and Means is an "A" committee. If you have Ways and Means you only have one committee, and the reason is because Ways and Means touches basically on every aspect of the government. So you have to know a lot. You have to spend a lot of time and the subcommittees are really busy, and there's just so much to do.

But like I said, I was really, because of my background and experience and interests from, of course, home, being interested in trade issues even though agreements were all voted on on the other side of the Capitol, we had input and had a lot to do. But the taxation balance, entitlements, a lot of the health care issues that became—they came to the forefront really while I was in the state, but they percolated quite a bit while I was a Member here. They also touched us. When you're dealing with entitlements, whether it's cash or whether it's health care or any other kind of assistance, you're in Ways and Means.

So, I think the way to get on a committee—I don't think it's just Ways and Means—I think, is to show that you will be a good Member and how do you do that? I think it was because I did go down to the floor when I could, I did stay on top of their issues, I did talk to the chairman. I mean ongoing, not just once. I was in his face. He probably got annoyed with me after a while. But if you have an enthusiastic member of your committee, I think, as a chairman it's something that you want.

When I was in the state senate and I chaired the state senate finance committee and I had a member who really wanted to be on the committee, I

would go to leadership and say, “I think this person would be really good.” I would get the person on the committee. They want committees to work well, everyone does. Some people just want to check off that box, “I’m on Ways and Means” and not really do the work, and you have to prove that you can do the work. I think I did, so that was good.

**JOHNSON:** You had talked about Nancy Johnson earlier, and we were wondering because you served on Ways and Means together just your impressions of her and how you worked together on that committee.

**HART:** Now, talk about doing the work. I never saw Nancy Johnson not prepared for her day, whatever was going to come along. She was always a person who knew background. She worked hard to learn the background of things. You know, how do we get where we are today and would study the intricacies of the bill. Other people would never—they’d maybe read the bill, read it over if it was a small bill, but like a lot of bills, you could read the legislation. It doesn’t really help. You have to compare what’s being changed in a law. Where does it come from, what’s the section of this particular code, what does it mean, what does it do, what is it actually changing? I think a lot of the public thinks that you read a bill, it just tells you exactly what it’s going to do. That’s not what it does. A bill is the actual legislative language, so a lot of a bill says, “strike blah, blah, blah, line this, line that,” and it’ll have the number of lines that are stricken. Well, you don’t know what’s necessarily stricken until you go back and reference the actual law. Nancy would know these things. She would spend the time. I’m sure her staff was very good, to understand, “Okay, this is what we’re taking out, this is what we’re putting in.” And that depth of understanding, I think, made her actually one of the best Members in our conference to get support or to get opposition for

something that she was for or against because she was very, very well informed.

Phil English in a similar way—very, very well prepared, very, very well informed. But among the women she was committed to a lot of the same issues that I was. So obviously I paid a lot more attention to the things that she was doing. I had mentioned Ileana Ros-Lehtinen who was very committed to the Foreign Affairs and a lot of those issues who I actually utilized her as a resource. She was a wonderful resource on those issues because they weren't my thing, and everybody has a—one thing, it was hard, I think, to do as a Member—because I was a state senator, and so I had to know everything—was when you come to the House you know you can't do everything. And senior Members, some of the advice I got from the senior Members was you need to specialize in something. You think, "Well, what? But I'm responsible for all this stuff, right? I've got to know everything." That's right, you do, but you've got to specialize in something if you want to be a force to get something done, something that's important to the communities you represent.

And so for me those issues were big. A lot of the tax issues and—it was interesting because we did the pension reform while I was here to, and it was a private sector pension reform. A lot of the pension concerns were related to companies that were not doing well, and a lot of them would have been the old mills, the steel companies or other manufacturing companies that were trying to renege on promises that they'd made to retirees, that kind of stuff. I knew that stuff. That was my specialty, my understanding. And so when I was involved, even though I wasn't on the committee that did that, that came out of Labor, but I was involved.

And I think a lot of Members—not a lot—I think most Members when they come, they realize that they need to do that because you can't be all things to all people. There's just not enough time. But when you're on a committee you have to know enough to know how to make a vote, which vote to make, support your vote, convince other people to come along with you if you really believe in something. Nancy is a great example of that, I think, among the women Members that I served with. And Ileana I would bring out as the other one who really stood out as far as background knowledge, subject matter, and they were just great Members all around.

**JOHNSON:** I think we should move on.

**MURPHY:** Yeah, okay.

**JOHNSON:** We read that you ran for a leadership race in your second term. Why did you want to be part of a leadership team?

**HART:** I was nuts, I think. Honestly, I don't know that I really wanted to be, but everyone thinks they have something to offer. I didn't think we were communicating very well, as I don't communicate very well [joke]. I think one of the most important things for a group of legislators to do is to be able to communicate from within with each other, and to be able to unify, and to be able to speak as one voice. I didn't think we were doing that. In fact, I knew we weren't doing that because I was a deputy whip, and so I dealt with my colleagues all the time over issues, and I thought the one thing that the leadership needed to do was to broaden the group. It was all men at the time and then Deborah [Pryce].

But we had, and it wasn't even really based on the fact that I was a woman as much as I think I'm just more comfortable with the communication side of things. I also, being a Republican from a Democrat district, was concerned

that some of the way we came across was just too rigid as far as our “Republicanness,” and that really our job as a Republican Caucus isn’t to be Republican, it’s to address the concerns of the public better than the other side is doing it and to address the issues that are—I mean the issues that are priority are our priority because they’re important to people, not because we’re Republican. And so that was my angle. I thought we needed that more. I don’t think people were going to support me because I wasn’t here long enough, but it was worth doing because I think I—a couple of things I did by doing that: I did get a chance to meet with Members individually—Members I didn’t know very well. It gave me an opportunity to actually deepen some relationships. It was very, very helpful in the long term even though I didn’t win.

And then the other issue is that my message, I think, came across to some degree with the people who did end up in leadership. And I think that’s helpful, too, because even though you run for something and don’t necessarily win it within a conference you’re still part of that team, and that team—there is no I in team—part of that team is that we are a group of people trying to accomplish something for the American people. So I don’t know, but I’m hoping that it made a difference. I think with some people it did. I was asked to do a lot of national media on behalf of the conference as a person not in leadership, which I thought was part of a recognition of that, which I thought was important. But when they signed—I’ll never forget this—they signed a partial birth abortion ban, I think the President, when he signed the bill, the photograph that made it to all the media was the President and a bunch of white guys.

I was on a tirade after that. I’m like, “What are you doing? Do you think that bill passed because of you guys? What about the rest of us?” It just was too

narrow, the group that they would move forward was like the chairman, it was the subcommittee chairman, and it was the bill sponsor. Well, what about all the other people who advocated for it or whatever? And there was just—they just needed to be more aware, and it was not just me. There were a lot of newer Members, some of whom were female, some weren't.

I'll tell you one who was a really good agitator who was in my class and who actually ended up serving in the [U.S.] Senate, too, was Mark [Steven] Kirk, who unfortunately didn't have a good ending, but he was very bold in his insistence that we do better when it came to our communications as a conference. And he was right. He was a "Main Street" guy. He was much more liberal in his views, and that's fine, but his points, again, if we're all on the same team we want the team to be successful and I think that helped.

That always happens though. I think when there's an older more established group that is the leadership there's a younger group that comes in, or newer, not necessarily in age, just newer Members, that I think they always have something to offer. They're closer to the general public, the American public. They spend less time in Washington, and it's always important for smart leaders to listen to them, and I think ours pretty much did listen to us.

**JOHNSON:**

I just wanted to ask one quick question because I know we're nearing the end, but the leadership races are so behind-the-scenes and it's elected officials and then also running for something within your own party. What is it like campaigning for a leadership office? How did you approach that?

**HART:**

Honestly, I had more experience campaigning for other people for leadership offices than I did even for my own. Even though I did it I kind of knew going in it wasn't going to happen. But I want to use the [John Andrew] Boehner example maybe as a better example because I was one of the small

group that supported him to replace Tom [Thomas Dale] DeLay. It would have been—yes, Roy Blunt was the deputy and there was this, are you for Roy, are you for John kind of thing. And I was not as close to Roy, but I thought we needed a different person there, not one that had been DeLay's guy because it just wasn't working anymore that way. And I was very close to John. We're Ohio/Pennsylvania. That helps, right? It's always good to have somebody in leadership from your neighboring state.

But my point anyway is that as a Member, Virginia [Ann] Foxx, who I was very close to, and I decided to link together with the supporters for John Boehner. There were like six of us. We spent our whole Christmas break on the phone to Members all over the country. That's how you run for leadership. You have you running, but you also have a bunch of other Members who other people like supporting you. And I think other people liked us. I know they liked Virginia because she was like everybody's grandma. She was an awesome lady, and still is an awesome lady. But at the time you have somebody from the South, you have somebody from the Midwest, his colleagues from Ohio, there were just different people. Somebody from California or someplace in that group where we were able to appeal to our colleagues to ask them to do something that was not expected. Because it really was expected that Congressman Blunt would have just taken over because he was the Deputy. But how do you overcome that?

You work really hard, you find a good coalition, and you move forward, and you win. I think that change is really hard to come by. Once leaders get their heels dug in they don't want to leave. It's just like committee chairman, right? Same kind of deal, and it's hard to get people to take a chance on something different because that's what they're doing. I think the argument that's made is look, we're not doing that well, or maybe we lost a seat, or

maybe we ought to address something in a different way, or maybe we should have chairman term limits or whatever. Some people wanted to go back. After we instituted the Republican chairman term limits there were a whole lot of Members who wanted to go back. It's hard to say what a different leader would have done, but that wasn't going to happen. That was really interesting, the whole dynamic of Membership. It doesn't matter whether it's state senator—because I ran for leadership there too and didn't win, but it was fun because you get people to think in a different way or you challenge them to because sometimes they don't know. But when you challenge them to think in a different way then it's not foreign anymore and then sometimes it's gradual, sometimes it's overnight.

You see the Dems going through it now with this struggle with Speaker [Nancy] Pelosi and this really outspoken group of young Members. It's really interesting to see that the change is probably going to be gradual as far as who their leaders are despite the fact that the loud people are demanding these different things. It's kind of interesting. Now, ours was a little more mellow when we were dealing with it. But it was surprising, I think, to a lot of people, ultimately.

**JOHNSON:** Want to jump in?

**MURPHY:** You can do the first.

**JOHNSON:** Okay, here's something for you to look at and go down "Memory Lane."

**HART:** It's beautiful. She's so young.

**JOHNSON:** So that is a baseball card of yours that's in—

**HART:** Thank God they weren't this big.

**JOHNSON:**

That's in the House Collection. So to start with, how did you get involved in the Congressional Baseball Game?

**HART:**

So I love baseball, and I like sports, and I played sports growing up, so when I heard there was a baseball team I just wanted to play. I was very close and am very close friends with some Members who played. Mike [Michael F.] Doyle actually played, and Mike's district and mine border on each other. I'd known Mike forever because he actually was staff in the state senate when I was a state senator before he ran for Congress. And it just looked like it was a good cause. It was a nice fun thing to do, a way to distract you from your everyday worries as a Congressman, but also to build relationships.

I also was kind of interested in seeing how good of players that these old guys would be. I played softball as a state senator. We had a softball team that did a similar thing where they played for charity, and I think the team that they played against—it wasn't against, at one point they played against a professional group of softball players, and at the other point it was the Democrats versus Republicans. It was always a lot more fun when it was the Democrats versus the Republicans. Because you're all out there practicing in the mornings, and you're trying to figure out who can actually throw the ball fast enough to actually confuse people, and the answer is no one.

That's why the highest-scoring games, when you look at those. They got worse after I left. We won most of the games, by the way, when I was playing, and I definitely got on base at least once. I caught some balls in the outfield. We had a lot of fun. But anyway, I think it was a team-building exercise. Anybody who works in corporate America knows that team-building exercises are good. They break down barriers, that kind of thing. To this day some of the people I keep in closest touch with are people I played baseball with. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is a very good player by the way. Shelley

Moore Capito, very good. And then Loretta Sanchez? No, Linda [T.] Sánchez played, and she was really good. We had a blast. And I think we raised money for charity. We got to know each other as people; I think that does help.

People make the argument that Members shouldn't go home. They should all move to Washington because there's this camaraderie that they build because they're living in the same town and all that, and I think that's a decent argument, although I needed to go home because I needed to maintain the district. I needed to know where people were, and they needed to see me. If you want to do the job you actually have to be in the district, and I'm a fan of going home, but I don't live in Hawaii, you know. I think it really is a logistical issue for some people, moving here, but you don't have to live here to play on the baseball team. You get to know people and staff, which was also, I think, really important. Some of the staff volunteered to come out at 6:00 in the morning because it was fun, and they got to know Members. Probably some job opportunities were created for them by doing that as well just because they got to know people. And it was a good thing.

And, obviously, when they had the shooting, that morning [June 14, 2017] I was actually driving to my office in Pittsburgh, and when I pulled into my parking space I had the radio on, and I heard what was happening. I think I sat in the car for like an hour just listening to the report, and I was stunned because that was a joyful experience for Members and to have something like that happen and—at the time we didn't know that Members could have died. I was sitting in the car just really disturbed by the whole thing. I was making calls to a couple of my former Member friends, saying, "Did you hear this?" And that, I don't know if it forever changed the way those practices are done, but we really didn't feel like we were ever in danger of

anything. It was like we were all young and carefree because we were out playing baseball, which is why everyone loves the game. Yes, that was really—it was a great opportunity to bond with Members, but boy, that really changed it, I think, probably for a lot of Members.

**MURPHY:** In your 2006 campaign how did that differ from your other bids for Congress?

**HART:** I remember standing up in conference in like February of 2006 and telling my colleagues that we were in big trouble. The reason that I knew we were in big trouble is because I started to be harassed everywhere I went at home. The opposition was following me around. It was a different vibe from a normal campaign. It was more of a—it was really an organized paid disturbance. It's more like what you see now. It wasn't a traditional campaign year at all, and we found out pretty shortly thereafter for sure, what we already suspected—that there were these organized groups that were paid for, MoveOn.org and whatever else, and they were dispatching people to basically follow the Member's moves. Everybody who was targeted, and they were going to do everything they could to make you look bad, challenge you at every turn. And even just scream at you for no particular reason, which I had happen throughout that year, and it was not—it wasn't the other party, it was these other groups, and it was a different type of race.

Campaigns are forever changed now with the way these outside groups have influence. They started to have influence before that, but that year was the first year where they seemed to merge with the party. It turned out my opponent was tied into that even though they aren't technically allowed to be. And the message became the same, and the dishonest commercials that were run like incessantly and just all the aggressive and dishonest character assassination and all that kind of stuff, that wasn't typical for a campaign.

They used to be about what people would want to vote on like where do you stand on this, what do you intend to do if you win, those kinds of issues. Nobody cared about issues. It became a screaming character assassination, and, I mean, I've never seen so much money dumped into negative campaigning. The figures, I think, when you go back and you look at the numbers for the amount of money that was actually dumped on my race, and other people who would have lost that year, they were staggering. So that's why it was different. {laughter}

**JOHNSON:** Why did you decide to run again in 2008, and was it a similar experience for you?

**HART:** No, in 2008 it was not a similar experience because they didn't think I could win, and they were right. The atmosphere, because of the presidential election, was a continuing roll of the support for the other party. And so my race was pretty quiet in 2008. I decided to run again because I knew that the person who was in there [[Jason Altmire](#)] wasn't going to do the same kind of work that I did. Ultimately his voting record was pretty close to mine, and ultimately he ended up voting against the Obamacare, but that's not the way the party was going. When you're a member of a conference in the House you could disagree with everything that your party wants to do, but you're not going to effect change. So, I still believe that the agenda of my party was more similar to what the people in the district wanted to do, and I thought I could help if I ran again, but it was not a good year to run. It was clearly not a good year to run, yes. There was just really not—it just didn't catch fire.

**MURPHY:** So now thinking kind of retrospectively, there are a lot more women in Congress now. There's 131 women in Congress in the House and the Senate. If we're looking forward, how many do you think would be in Congress after

another 50 years after the 100th anniversary of Jeannette Rankin's election, and how might that come about?

**HART:**

I think more of them need to run, I think still. I think more women who are interested in public policy, who develop an expertise, who have a lot of substance on an argument for, "We need to do this, we need to do that," need to be involved in the process. I don't believe in running just because you're a woman. I think you should run because you're a good candidate. And so there are more and more women who are developing into good candidates, so I think you'll see the number go up.

I see it around my area. There's a young woman who serves now in the state house who again came up through working on different races. She got into a profession, just has—there's a lot of there, there—just like your standard male candidate. That's what we need. I don't think there needs to be a different path for a woman who runs for office than there is for a guy who runs for office. And the problem that we've had is that I think you do have women who run just because they're women sometimes. There's more to it than that, and I don't think there's anything wrong with some people running when they're younger or when they're older. I just think that there ought to be just more behind it.

Don't vote for me because I'm a woman. I think if anybody ever utters that they should not run for office, that there has to be more there. And when other women say, "Vote for her because she's a woman" I'd be like, "No, wait, stop. That's part of it, but what is she going to do that is important that she serve?" And if we don't have that as women, we won't have more Members. I've seen over the last few years some women get behind a candidate because she's a woman. There's been more of that than I ever saw before actually. They didn't even do it for Hillary [Rodham] Clinton, to be

honest. And I've seen it happen since Trump got elected. Maybe because of him, I don't know, probably.

But I think over the long term for women to be not a novelty, but for women to be the majority of people who get elected, then women need to be substantial and a person who has accomplished or has an agenda that is more impressive, ideas that are problem solving, that are better. Then I think we'll rack it up because women do have a lot—in general—I'm not saying men and women are the same because they aren't. They communicate differently, there's a lot of things that are—they network differently in a lot of ways. And that's fine, it's good. It could be a strength. So use those and move forward as a person who's the best person for the job, and then I think we'll probably have more women than men in office at some point.

**JOHNSON:**

We've kept you here a long time. We've asked you a lot of questions. Thank you for being so patient with us. I just have one last question. For your three terms that you were here what do you think would be your legacy or the thing that you had the most impact on if you had to look at it? And I know that's a difficult question, but if there's one thing that comes to mind.

**HART:**

If you're talking about legislation it's really hard to say because there have just—the kind of things where I was very focused on sort of practical things, whether it was brownfields or whether it was training for—I want to say domestic violence victims because that's really what it was focused on—to just sort of solve these problems that are solvable. I would say that's probably what it is broadly. That I would find ways to get things done that made sense, that weren't necessarily partisan things. But as far as being a woman Member and a woman Republican Member, I kind of hope my legacy is that like you don't have to be a Democrat to be a woman who gets elected and to have a successful tenure. That I do know young women today who think

that's the case. And it's just like, what? I kind of look at them and like why would you think that you have to be a Democrat? Because for some reason they're convinced that the Republicans aren't friendly to women.

Actually, if you look at the Pennsylvania state legislature before this last election, I think for many, many decades there were many more women Republicans elected than there were female Democrats. I think the reason behind that was that the parties were very controlling, and the Republican Party was less controlling as to who got nominated. The Democrats had the guy who was next in line, and they would push him forward because he'd paid his dues, and he was the next in line, so he'd get the nomination. Whereas there was more opportunity, especially in Pennsylvania, for women to be elected as Republicans.

If you look at statewide elected officials there have been so many more female Republicans than there have been Democrats and it's because of that, I think. I think that's true nationally. When you look at the party national chairs, the Republican chair is a woman, and she is a very articulate, very accomplished person. Our national Republican committeewoman from Pennsylvania is also very active in the CEOs organization because she's been head of her family-owned company before she had sold it recently. So there is this avenue that I think is open for people on both sides. And one of the arguments that I always make—and I speak at colleges often as part of the Former Members Association. I try to do those as much as I can. They're always looking for a Republican and a Democrat, and if the Republican is invariably a white man that doesn't help the cause. Not that there's anything wrong with white men, but I would like there to be more of that—just an example of if you like this and you want to do this, then you can do this because I did it, for young women.

I'm really involved in my college. I went to Washington and Jefferson, which is a small liberal arts college in Pennsylvania but very old and very established and high academics, and so I love going back there because there's a lot of young people in general who are interested in public policy. This is liberal arts so they have to know things in that side, but I'm happy to say that I had an intern from there who served in the state house, and it helps, I think, just to see the person. So a lot of it is just being active. I think a lot of former Member females, if they're not doing it, I would encourage them to do it because we're not where we need to be. As long as people still say, "Oh, you're a woman who did this," then we're not where we need to be, right? And just when it gets to the point where, "Wow, your résumé is really awesome, you did this, that's really cool, or you should do this because your resume is really awesome," not because you're a woman whose resume is really awesome. I'd say that would be, if there's a legacy at all, just do it. You're good at it, you're interested in it, you want to serve the public, you like people, you care about them, then run. If you don't like them and you don't care about them, don't run. That's a biggie.

**JOHNSON:** Did you have anything?

**MURPHY:** It's good.

**JOHNSON:** Okay, great. Thank you so much for coming in today.

**HART:** It was fun. Thank you.

**JOHNSON:** We appreciate it.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Signed into law in 2002, it was named after its sponsors, Senator Paul Spyros Sarbanes and Representative Mike Oxley.

<sup>2</sup> Enacted in 2010 in response to a major financial crisis, the legislation bore the names of its sponsors, Senator Christopher John Dodd and Representative Barney Frank.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Calio served as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs under Presidents George H. W. Bush and George W. Bush.