

THE SENATE LEADERSHIP

Interview #4

Thursday, August 30, 2007

RITCHIE: I wanted to ask you what life has been like after the U.S. Senate and how your new position has developed?

HOAGLAND: The new job, probably like most people after having left after similar lengths of government service, has been a transition, an adjustment period that most people would go through. My new position is as a policy director for a company called Cigna, which is involved heavily in health insurance and dental and vision, and other types of insurance programs. So most of my work has been very heavily involved in health insurance, which is topical today. Challenging, but similar in some way to the Senate work dealing with budgets: What are the cost drivers to health care,? Issue important both to the federal government in terms of its large health care programs, but also issues critical to the private sector.

It's been challenging making the adjustment. I find that corporate America has its own set of rules and procedures and its own bureaucracy. I also find that I'm learning that there are politics in corporate America as there are in the political environment on Capitol Hill. I like to say that at least on Capitol Hill I knew where they were coming from. Sometimes in corporate America you're not always exactly sure where the political winds are blowing. But it's been fascinating. It's been helpful to me to learn a lot about the private sector and particularly health care. I'm writing a lot and informing a lot of the managers of this large company, plus doing a lot of presentations out in the country related specifically to health care reform and the budget process and how they all interact. So it's almost a continuation of the same work that I was doing here.

I do miss the Senate. I do miss the Hill. From time to time I get nostalgic for the Senate, but when I go home at night and turn on the TV and see them in session at midnight or so I don't feel quite as nostalgic. But it's been an interesting transition.

RITCHIE: Well you're not far away. Cigna has its office six blocks down the bottom of Capitol Hill. Have they been in Washington for long or is this something new that they're doing?

HOAGLAND: Well, Cigna, as I'm learning, used to have a large operation in Washington, a large governmental affairs operation. Cigna went through a downturn back in about 2000 and they scaled back and basically eliminated the office here in Washington as they reorganized. They eliminated almost all of their jobs. They kept one person in Washington and she was a young lady who, in fact, worked up here on the Hill with Senator Spector and is from Philadelphia where the corporate headquarters is located. She stayed on—Kristen D'Amato—through that transition. They scaled it all back just to one person, and that's an awful lot being asked of one person for a very large company dealing with a very big issue. So they brought me in and basically tripled the size of the office now, because I brought in an assistant to help Kristen out and we are now a three-person office. It's still rather small, but Cigna did not have a major presence since 2001, and I think what they've identified, which everybody has identified, is that this domestic issue of health care and health care coverage and insurance and access to health care is going to be a major political battle. It is already and will continue to be in the 2008 campaign. They felt they needed somebody to represent the organization and provide management with updated, current information on policies impacting the health care industry.

I don't like to be referred to as a lobbyist. I don't consider myself a lobbyist. I have the luxury of *hiring* lobbyists to work for Cigna. One, as an example, former Senator Don Nickles has a small firm and he has some very good health care people that had worked on the Hill. So one of the first jobs I did was to hire Senator Nickles' firm to be an adjunct to our operation and to handle those kinds of issues of lobbying, which I do not want to do. It's balanced out in this town, since I think it's important that corporations be as nonpartisan as possible, by another counsel on retainer, Heather Podesta. So we have both ends of the political spectrum represented here. I think it's worked out real well. It has been a challenge for me, personally, as I learn how to work in this environment. How to work in the private sector and use these resources effectively.

But I find most of my work is educating—educating management and keeping them informed. A major bill that will be debated here—it has already been debated and will be on your agenda in September—will be the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP. Interestingly enough, a private sector corporation has interest in a bill like that because it does have some ramifications as to coverage of insurance. Also, one other aspect of this job is state health care reform, so as a large company we have

coverage in places such as Massachusetts and California and nearly all the states. We're having to follow what's going on at the state level, particularly in California, where major reforms are underway. So it's fascinating. It's interesting. It keeps my brain cells working and I think that's a key to any job, that you keep active and involved and interested in what you do.

RITCHIE: Historically, whenever the states become active and start driving policy, they tend to do very different things—there are very conservative states and liberal states—and pretty soon corporations face fifty different sets of rules. The impulse then is to suggest that the federal government do something so that we have a national standard on that issue.

HOAGLAND: Right, and I think that's why you're seeing states taking the lead, such as former Governor [Mitt] Romney in Massachusetts, although he now in the presidential campaign is not necessarily associating himself with the Massachusetts program that began, in fact, became effective on July 1st in terms of mandating insurance coverage. But you see California has taken a slightly different approach. You're right. What you'll see here, and I have already seen, is a great deal of activity at the state level that eventually will require, at some point, some standardization. Eventually, it will require some sort of federal coordination. And maybe what we're seeing—here I'm telling you, you're the historian—what you're seeing basically is the states as the great laboratories. The laboratories of experimentation are out there that will eventually may lead to some sort of federal standards. I'm not saying the states shouldn't have their own health care programs, but something like this requires probably a little bit more standardization, particularly as it relates to the private sector. You can't have fifty different kinds of rules and regulations. It adds to the complexity, adds to the cost, adds to the administrative, and makes it much more difficult for the consumer. So you're right, the states are major players right now, and will lead policy changes at the federal level.

RITCHIE: Do you find that there are any major misconceptions that people outside the government have about the way the Congress works or the Senate works that you've been able to help them with?

HOAGLAND: Oh, well, immediately I was asked to schedule meetings on Capitol Hill with members of Congress, both House and Senate, for my CEO, my Chief Executive Officer, the chairman of Cigna, Ed Hanway. We have done two now. In fact, I have a third set of meetings scheduled for later in September. I'm not sure that there's misconception as much as there is frustration with Congress. "Well, why can't they do this?" or "Why does it take so long?" "What's so complicated about this process?" When you're a CEO of a large corporation you snap your fingers and it happens. I've had to educate the corporate executives about how that's not the way Congress operates. It is a deliberative body, particularly the Senate. And these are difficult decisions. So, maybe there are misconceptions about the way we operate, but they are more along the lines of trying to educate people I work for, who may not have had government service, as to the complexities and beauty of the legislative process.

I have done work with the management of this company in the area of regulations issued from the executive branch. I have tried to bring the various pieces of the puzzle together and educate as to why it takes so long to get any decision made even after legislation has passed. I guess the one thing I can say—it's a little discouraging to me and a little bit down heartening, maybe I should have checked this out before I started to work for an insurance company—but a recent ABC/Wall Street Journal poll, just a couple of weeks ago, asked people about their confidence in certain institutions. The military is very high and Congress is very low, but it turned out that health insurance companies were even lower than Congress. In fact, they were the lowest. I guess I'm a little bit discouraged that I didn't realize how little respect there is for insurance companies.

They have a role to play. There is an issue here. The unfortunate circumstances in dealing with health insurance both here in Congress and in the private sector is understanding what are those factors that are driving the cost of health care. And unfortunately it's the insurance person at the end of the pipeline, after the doctors, and the hospitals, and everybody, that shows you the bill. So you take it out on the insurance company not realizing that, in some ways, it's the costs that are coming on down from higher in the stream. And you can see that. You can see that in the political process up here, that the doctors and the hospitals have a stronghold, but the insurance companies, oh, they're the bad guys. I guess this is a challenge, but at the same time being in the Budget Committee, as we discussed, was not popular either, so it's just my...what I'm doomed to be in life is to work for companies or institutions that people don't like.

RITCHIE: Well, whenever journalists ask me about why Congress ranks so low in those polls, I point out that journalists rank even lower.

HOAGLAND: [laughs] That's good. That's good.

RITCHIE: But, I suppose for the average citizen, the insurance company is the institution they have the most direct dealings with, just like with the government the Congress is the part of the government that citizens are going to deal with more directly—their members as opposed to the vast executive bureaucracy.

HOAGLAND: Particularly when you're sick and you go to the hospital and you want the care and you don't really worry about what the bill's going to be until the bill comes, and then who gets the bill is your insurance company and that's when I think then you're healthier now. "My gosh, I didn't realize it was going to cost this much and how much are my deductibles." And things of that nature. So it is a challenging area of business that requires a lot of attention. But it is also a major domestic issue. There's no question that somehow we have to find a way to lower the escalating costs of health care. Back to the budget, Medicare and Medicaid will just consume the entire budget by 2050. Twenty percent of GDP would be expended on Medicare and Medicaid. Well, that's the size of the federal budget today, about twenty percent. It will squeeze out everything else and that's a challenge.

RITCHIE: Let's go back to the fact that the Congress doesn't work the way people on the outside think it should work. It's slower and it's more frustrating and it has more steps to the process. I wanted to ask about your last position in the Senate, with the leadership. You spent most of your Senate career with the Budget Committee, but spent your last several years in the majority leader's office. How different does the Senate look from a majority leader's office than it does from a committee? What are the kinds of problems that a majority leader has to deal with?

HOAGLAND: Well, while the last four years of my career here in the Senate was spent with Senate majority leader Bill Frist, I will say that by the nature of what I had done before on the committee I had interactions with leadership and the leader's office, going back to my first arriving on the Budget Committee and working with the then majority leader Howard Baker. That's largely because Senator Domenici was the

chairman and he and Senator Baker worked together very closely. Budget was a key element of the leadership. It set everything. So I was very fortunate over the years, whether it was Senator Baker or Senator Dole, even when Senator Mitchell was majority leader on the Democratic side, all the way up to Senator Lott and then to Senator Frist's time. I even worked with Senator Daschle and his staff.

Because budget played such an important role across the board, we had ample opportunity to work with the leader's office on helping to set the agenda or the budget, and the budget then drove policy down to appropriations and final legislation. The difference I saw, at least with Senator Frist—and every majority leader's office operates probably a little differently than the previous one—was some majority leaders, and I'll go back to the beginning with Howard Baker, tended to give a lot more flexibility and discretion to the committees. Over time what I saw was more of a concentration of authority and power, in the leader's office. I did not have a good appreciation for the need for that when I was on the committee as I did when I was in the majority leader's office.

In the United States Senate, there are one hundred *prima donnas*. They all think that their issue is the most important issue. It *has* to be considered *right now*. Your heart goes out to the majority leader trying to set an agenda in this kind of an environment, the proverbial herding cats situation. So I developed a greater appreciation out of the majority leader's office for the difficulty that office has in trying to manage the great deliberative body. While I still think that the committees are critical to the basic functioning of this organization, and of getting the process started, I do have a better understanding for the challenges facing the leadership.

In the area of fiscal policy over my career, there was a tendency to set up task forces out of the leader's office. Now some complex issues might require that kind of a structure, an ad hoc structure of a task force where you took somebody from maybe the Budget Committee and the Energy Committee and the Commerce Committee because the issue is cross cutting. I think those task forces may not have been as successful because they didn't have the same structure, they didn't have the same authority, that a committee structure had. I'm not being critical of Senator Lott at all, because he had a number of problems that he had to deal with, but such things as setting up a Department of Homeland Security had many cross-cutting issues and many different committees of

jurisdiction. How do you bring those committees together and how do you bring about a proposal unless you somehow develop, as I say, in an ad hoc manner a new structure to the committee, which sometimes in its staid way may not have been the best structure for these major cross-cutting issues.

Senator Frist established very early on—and I was managing it at the staff level—something he called a “five and ten group.” We called it “nickle and dime.” It was bringing together, on a bipartisan basis, with not a lot of publicity given to it, groups to talk about issues. It ended up basically being just Republican members, but there were some young members and some of the older members. Senator Ted Stevens had been around for some time, Senator [Susan] Collins as an example, Senator [Norm] Coleman. Senator [Jon] Kyl at times. It was a mixture of senators, some freshman, some veterans, to try to come together on a monthly basis in a dinner setting for two hours without any cameras or staff involved (except myself to help organize it), to discuss the institution and what we thought it should look like five or ten years out into the future. Was the committee structure appropriate for the institution’s dealing with complex, challenging issues? Was it set up in a way to address those challenges that we expected to be coming and facing us in the future? It evolved into discussing what those challenges would be, whether they’d be immigration, energy, technology, the clash of civilizations issues, and other things. We would bring in outside prominent speakers. We brought in Alvin Toffler one time, the futurist. We had frank, off the record, hard discussions.

Once again, we ended up talking about the issues. We never got to the point of taking those and bringing them back and saying what does this mean for this institution? But I will give Senator Frist credit that he was thinking about the future of this institution in that context. At least it challenged some of the traditional thinking. Senator [Robert] Bennett was a member of that organization and was very thoughtful in thinking about issues in the future and what that might mean. So there were opportunities in the leader’s office to think outside the box. But unfortunately it was too infrequent because of the workload and the agenda just prevented you from having the time to spend I these discussions.

RITCHIE: It’s very interesting what you said about the task forces because that was essentially the way they dealt with the immigration bill this year. That’s a way of getting around maybe potentially obstructionist personalities on a committee, by creating

a task force of like-minded people. But Senator Specter gave some very interesting talks on the floor about how if they had followed the regular order and they had done it in the committee, they would have addressed a lot of the problems and amended the bill before it got to the floor.

HOAGLAND: Yes, right.

RITCHIE: As a result by doing it through the task force route, there were hundreds of amendments that were introduced that could perhaps have been accommodated earlier on in the committee.

HOAGLAND: I agree with you. I think that you've said it much better than I have. There is a reason why you have committees and if you try to go outside the committee structure it ought to be for very unique reasons. In this particular case, with the immigration bill, I concur. I think that the expertise was there to work it through the committee. You're not going to avoid the great deliberative body at all. You're not going to avoid those amendments, but at least you can follow the regular order to the maximum extent possible. In the long run, I think it always turns out to be better to try to follow regular order. Now, again, there are unique situations and I'm sure there are times when you can't do that. But those times should be unique and you should lean in the direction of the committee work product most of the time.

RITCHIE: Senator Lott was a creative leader in part because he had been a leader in the House. It's rare that somebody held a leadership position in the House and then came to a leadership position in the Senate. He seemed to be trying to import some of the House mechanisms for getting things done a little more efficiently: fill the amendment tree and things like that. Did you get a sense that he was different than Baker and Dole and Frist and others?

HOAGLAND: Oh, yes. I'm not so much sure about Frist, per se, but definitely when you think about Senator Baker and Senator Dole, particularly, both of whom I worked with for some time. Both of them were of this institution. Senator Dole, I believe, had been a member of the House, too, but only for a brief amount of time. But staff would—some of the older staff, and I guess I fell into that category—would from time to time say that former House members are trying to make the Senate more like the

House. It was obvious, I think, in some cases. And I can understand the frustration that Senator Lott and others would have with this process, but they were reflecting the ability to have a Rules Committee to move legislation quickly and get it done and out of the House and move it on. But some of the more senior, the older senators, who looked at this maybe from a different perspective saw that the Senate had a specific role here.

Again here I am talking to the historian who knows all of this more than I do, but I always used to say in my discussions with some of the younger staff: Don't you remember the story about Washington and Jefferson and the cup and the saucer, that we were the saucer to cool the hot passions of the House. Some of the staff will step back and they'll say, "You know, that's right." If you wanted it efficient and to run on time, you wouldn't have structured it the way you did. But that was not necessarily the goal. The goal, as I see it, was to be inclusive and democratic, and an opportunity to get in this environment as much input as possible to make the best decisions. You work it out eventually. But, yes, there were times when it was clear that former House members yearn for the days when the process would be similar to the House and its ability to truncate and cut off debate, move fast, limit the amount of amendments, and restrict, in fact, the amount of activity on the Senate floor.

It is an issue that I do think needs to be discussed, as to whether or not there are ways to change the process here in the Senate. Of course, in my area where I'm most familiar with was the idea of maybe some sort of a biennial budget. In one of the last interviews we discussed ways to change the process and the idea of some form of biennial budgeting and appropriation process that might free up more of the time could be one way to stay within what the founders thought was necessary for debate, but at the same time give more opportunity for members to debate broader issues rather than being forced into just a limited time, which meant from time to time not getting things done.

RITCHIE: You mentioned these dinners that you would have on looking at the future. Did you get a sense of frustration on the part of the senators? Or did they sort of accept the fact that this is the way the system works and we have to make the best of it?

HOAGLAND: I didn't get a sense of frustration. I got a sense of, first of all, appreciation—which was that we don't do enough of this. We don't, in an informal setting, step back and have an opportunity to think about the future. We're worried about

this bill or that bill or this next week or this campaign fund-raising event and we don't have an opportunity to look out into the future. So the first thing I took away from these was an appreciation for that opportunity they did not think they had in the current environment. In terms of frustration, yes, there was some. Very early on, Senator Stevens made a speech to the younger members about how when he was running for majority leader he made a speech about restructuring the committees to address the new world and the issues that we faced. He said he ended up failing miserably to win the position of the majority leader and he always thought it was because he had proposed restructuring. He said there's a lesson to be learned here, too, for leaders: You don't do this easily. Change comes with a price.

So there was that frustration. And in some ways, I guess, the failing of the "five and ten dinners" was that we never closed the loop. That's the problem of the future as it relates to energy. Should we have an energy commission? Do we restructure it? Should we have a joint committee? How should we approach this? We never really got back to thinking about the institution and the structures here in the institution to address what most of them agreed and, quite frankly, probably most people even that were not participating would agree were the challenges that faced the future: health care, the changing demographics, education in this country, our competitiveness position, the growth of China in the world market, security issues. These cultural issues, particularly these issues of a changing civilization, "clash of civilizations" issues, all of these things were there and that they discussed over this period of almost three or four years. But we never closed the loop. So what should we do here differently that we're not doing now? That's the frustration. Yes, that would be the frustration.

RITCHIE: Well, during the years that you were with Senator Frist you also had a Republican administration in the White House with its own ideas as to the legislative agenda. What kinds of pressures does that add to a Majority Leader when it's not just his majority party but it's also his president and his president's agenda that he has to deal with?

HOAGLAND: Every situation has its own peculiarities, and I believe that in this particular situation with Senator Frist as the Majority Leader having fallen into the position after Senator Lott was removed, the perception was, correctly or incorrectly, that Senator Frist owed his leadership position to the White House. That and his being

someone who never really held a leadership position before, and never was a chairman of a committee. Particularly for Senator Frist, it meant that he was dependent upon the advice and counsel of the White House.

I can only relate to the things that I was directly involved in. I was frustrated with some of the fiscal issues early on with the Bush administration—issues that I worked on. And I sometimes would let my frustration be known. Unfortunately, a couple of times it made it into the press. Interestingly enough, Senator Frist would get phone calls directly from the White House, whether it'd be Josh Bolton or others. Josh would have been OMB Director, I believe, at that time. Or Karl Rove. They'd call Frist directly to complain about Hoagland again. I thought, "Well boy, now I'm going to get the boom laid on me." And Senator Frist wouldn't do it. He said, "No, he has a right to express his opinion. He's loyal and I don't think a diversity of opinion is necessarily wrong on some very complicated issues." My mistake was that what I said should never have made it into the press, I guess.

So I think Senator Frist—you're asking me a hard question and I'm not filibustering here—but I think Senator Frist took a lot of direction from the administration. Over time, when he finally showed some independence on stem cell research, something he knew a lot about, I was extremely proud of him that he would show that there is a separation and that there is an independence here. But in fairness, I think he probably was overly dependent and that made my job a little bit more difficult because I wanted to be more independent of some of the policies from the administration. I think it added to his frustration. I think it became, for some people, it became: He's just in the back pocket of the administration. I don't think that's entirely true, but I can see how it developed over those years that he was there.

RITCHIE: I would think it would be a lot harder to be the majority leader if a president of your own party was in office. It was probably easier, in some respects, for Senator Lott when he was the majority leader to deal with President Clinton than it was for Senator Frist when George Bush was president. To some degree, when Senator Dole was the Republican Leader in the minority, all he had to do was to prevent the first President Bush's vetoes from being overridden.

HOAGLAND: Right, right.

RITCHIE: That only requires forty one votes and as long as you're obstructing something or objecting to something, you can actually be more cohesive and effective than if you are trying to do something in the Senate.

HOAGLAND: Absolutely.

RITCHIE: It's much more difficult to have a positive agenda.

HOAGLAND: In my career up here, as we discussed previously, there were low points and there were high points. The high point was probably the 1997 Balanced Budget Agreement, and that was a divided Congress and White House. The ability to give and take and to trade off forced compromise. It was a little bit easier—I say easier, but it allowed us to work together in a framework as opposed to just being a partisan taking whatever the president says. So yes, you are absolutely correct. It is much harder to be a majority leader when your president is in the same party, in some ways.

RITCHIE: It must have been frustrating for you on the budget side of it because this was a period when the government was going from surplus to deficit. We had war spending but we also had tax cuts going on at the same time. Did you think that there were alternative ways of dealing with some of these things?

HOAGLAND: Yes, and that is what caused some of my bosses to be frustrated with me at times because I still believe and will continue to believe that deficits do matter. I worked very hard with Senator Domenici, we tried our best to get to a balanced budget. We got there and then all of the sudden after a few years it goes back into deficits. It was frustrating in that sense. Now I will also say that I can rationalize the decisions that were made. We sometimes forget that when George Bush was running for President in 2000 that it was not only George Bush, but it was Al Gore who were basing their policies on a projection that had surpluses growing as far as the eye can see. I did agree that if that truly was the case that the surplus was really going to grow as was being projected at that time, about \$6.1 trillion over the next ten years, that there was a reason why there should be some reduction in those taxes. At the same time I think that the lesson to be learned from budgeting is that you should be flexible in policy projections when it comes to these numbers. They can change rather rapidly, as they did.

The rationalization again is I ended up working to help pass that first Bush tax cut bill because we had these projections of surpluses. But we also were going to spend money on prescription drugs out of that surplus. Then, of course, nine months after we had an attack on the country, and the bubble burst, and the economy turned, and those revenues dropped off, and we went from the largest surpluses to the largest deficits.

It was frustrating to have worked so hard to try to get to a balanced budget and then to see us back into the red. But then to continue after that, even to this day, to say that all we have to do is just keep extending more and more tax cuts on. I don't like taxes. Nobody likes taxes. But I don't know of any time in this country's history, correct me if I'm wrong on this, that we've had a major war that we haven't somehow sacrificed by paying for that war. When you add the fact that we now are close to—the numbers I looked at last night for the current activities in Iraq and Afghanistan is something close to \$750 billion, close to a trillion dollars. The president is requesting more here in the month of September. One would say maybe we should be sacrificing as those brave men and women are sacrificing and putting their life on the line over there are. We have the responsibility to fund this activity and not pass this debt onto future generations. So it has been frustrating, particularly in the last three years in the leader's office when I was not totally in sync with the policies of both the administration and the caucus.

The caucus also here turned conservative in the sense that tax cuts were the answer to everything. I guess it was a good time to leave the Senate maybe. I'm not proposing tax increases. I'm just saying you have to weigh these trade-offs and I think we should pay for what we're expending.

RITCHIE: That's the old guns and butter argument.

HOAGLAND: Sure.

RITCHIE: Of course, everybody thinks they could have both, but there comes a point when you have to make some decisions between them.

HOAGLAND: Right.

RITCHIE: You mentioned the Republican caucus. What's the role of the caucus in the leadership? How responsive is the leader to the caucus and how much does the caucus drive the leader?

HOAGLAND: The policy lunches that they had every Tuesday were an opportunity—quite frankly, I'm critical of the policy lunches because you would think they were going to talk about policy. But at the end of those policy lunches there would be from time to time, a particular issue and it would evolve into a Republican Conference, and that's basically where an issue was placed before the caucus. What I saw in that was that the leadership did listen to the caucus and particularly if it was put to a vote in the caucus, sometimes literally you could see that they did not want it to go to a vote in the caucus. But I think the leadership was receptive to and cognizant of the caucus. After all, they were there because the majority of the caucus had put them in that leadership position. So yes, I think they were. I think Senator Frist and Senator McConnell were always cognizant of and careful to listen to the conference and the positions it'd take.

I think my frustration with both policy lunches as well as conferences was that lots of times those particular senators who had a strong feeling about an issue and knew that it was different than where the majority was wouldn't even come. They wouldn't even show up and basically blew them off. You couldn't get the dialogue. You couldn't get the interaction. Also, by the time an issue got to the conference or the caucus, maybe the members had already made up their minds and there was no way to change them. Very few times can I say that I could see where there was an attitude or an issue where a conference may have changed a particular senator's position. If anything, the conferences were opportunities for senators who really hadn't made up their mind to listen. But you would come out of the conference and you wouldn't know whether they had changed their minds or taken a position. So they're useful dialogues; more interaction, more information, more exchange of ideas, but I believe to the extent that they took a position and were willing to take a position and you could hear it, then yes, the leaders would follow the conference caucuses pretty closely.

RITCHIE: Plus you had within the party you had the hardliners who wanted to push ahead. They were the same people who had objected to Senator Hatfield and rewrote the rules of the conference. Did you still have those sort of pockets of senators who wanted to go faster and further than the leadership was willing to go?

HOAGLAND: Yes, you had, during those four years that I was here, you had very strong feelings of Senator Santorum, Senator Kyl, Senator Sessions. The Steering Committee seemed to have a lot more input into this. I'm still, to this day, not clear where that organization gets its power. But the Steering Committee basically became the conservatives, but then people thought well I should attend that because that's where the decision's going to be made, whether they were conservative or not. So yes, all of those, there were some very strong conservative voices both in the conference and in leadership, and I always thought more conservative than Bill Frist was by his nature, but drove him, again, to follow the conservative line.

RITCHIE: Yes, it's hard to be a leader if you're not going in the same direction with the rest of the pack.

HOAGLAND: Yes, and these are very forceful individuals. Also if you are a young leader, and new to it, never having held a leadership position except for the Senatorial Committee, he recognized that he had to be more of a follower than a leader when it come to the caucus. Which is unfortunate because I think Senator Frist had a lot of intelligence and a lot of skills, but I don't think he could exercise them quite as much as I would have liked to have seen him do.

RITCHIE: There's one other piece of the puzzle: the leader of one party has to deal with the leader of the other party, because the rules of the Senate have always given the minority a greater voice than the rules of the House have. How did the Republican leadership deal with the Democratic leadership when you were there?

HOAGLAND: Well, I think that Senator Frist and Senator [Harry] Reid had a good working relationship. There were times, when pushed, that Senator Frist created problems for Senator Reid and there were some hard feelings. But overall I think Senator Reid respected Senator Frist, particularly respected him as to his medical background and his knowledge in medical issues of science and health. They would meet regularly meet to discuss the agenda and to schedule the issues.

I even recall that I was invited to a dinner, a social event, with the two of them. Senator Frist was a hunter. Kind of hard to believe, but he was a duck hunter. He and Senator Domenici had a duck roast from some of the ducks they had shot, ducks and

geese that they had hunted on the Eastern Shore. They came back in the spring and at Senator Frist's house had a dinner where they roasted their game. I was kindly invited to attend. Senator Reid came with his wife. Senator [Dianne] Feinstein came, Senator Lugar and Senator Domenici. I'm trying to remember who else was there. So on an informal basis they got along fine and that helped.

In fact this dinner, now that I think about it, this dinner was occurring right at the time—Marty Gold's stories will have to tell you more specifically—but this happened right at the time that Senator Frist was thinking about the “nuclear option,” changing the handling of judges. That was an issue that probably caused as much consternation and division as any between Senator Reid and Senator Frist. But overall, they met, they exchanged. I never heard a hard word between the two of them in any of the meetings that I was ever involved in. I'm sure there were disagreements, but both were gentlemen and respected each other. That was uplifting, at least to me. Now you go out and you engage in the battle and afterwards, may the best man win. As I said, most of the time I think Senator Frist was being pulled by his caucus one way and Senator Reid may have been pulled the other way. Had the two of them been left to their own devices they probably could have solved a lot of differences. But they both had to respect their individual members' wishes.

RITCHIE: You've mentioned a couple of social engagements for senators. Do you think there are enough or do you think that's one of the problems of the Senate these days, that they're here from Tuesday through Thursday and they don't socialize as much as they might have in the past?

HOAGLAND: It's a sad state that they don't have that opportunity to get to know one another more on a personal level and to interact. Time is so limited. I agree with your totally. Part of the “five and ten” dinners was a little bit of a hope to get more social interaction with both Democrats and Republicans. As it turned out, only one or a couple of dinners had Democratic participation. But it was a forcing activity. I wish it would be a lot more informal and a lot more of unplanned activities. But you're right, there should be more of that. But with the fund-raisers and campaigns and voting and in and out, I just don't think they get to know one another at the personal level like maybe it used to be in the old days when you didn't jump on a plane Thursday night to get back to your district.

RITCHIE: People have told me that sometimes the best socializing is when they go on a congressional delegation overseas, because at least they spend a little bit of time together and it's not always business.

HOAGLAND: Right, they have to. And usually their wives are with them too, which helps break the ice too. But it would be nice if there was more of that. Now with the new ethics rules they may not be able to. That may also restrict that kind of activity

RITCHIE: You've had over thirty years experience with the Senate. How different was the institution by the time you got to Senator Frist's leadership office than when you started? What kinds of changes did you really see over time?

HOAGLAND: The obvious one was first from a very macro level the polarization, more partisanship. A lot more driven by the policy committees, the party committees structure having more say, and driving the two parties apart. And the amount of money, the amount of campaign fund-raising activities. Maybe I wasn't directly involved in it early on when I first came here, maybe there was more of it, but it just seemed to me that as the years went on every evening you had to plan around these fund-raising events. There is more money involved in trying to run for office today than thirty years ago.

The structure—more policy decisions are driven by pollsters as opposed to substantive, analytical work. Press secretaries tell us what we should be doing. How does it play in the press as opposed to is that the right decision or not. I was critical of the leader's office that we had more press secretaries, speech writers, pollster-type people than we had analysts, tax counselors and budget analysts. Over time I saw a growing number in staff structure. It was not the MBA or not the person who had some practical experience in the operation of the IRS or the tax code, but I saw the offices—particularly the personal offices—tending to shift more and more toward the press secretary type. How do we spin it? I saw that change and it seemed to be a big change over time.

Communications. No question about it. When I first came here there was no such thing as computers. There was no such thing as email. People wrote the memorandums and used white out and typed over if you were sending out a memo. A Selectic typewriter is something that's just unbelievable to still see around here.

RITCHIE: Only in a historical office.

HOAGLAND: So I think that there's a lot to be said about how technology changed things. The other thing that changed dramatically was going from the squawk boxes and just having the sound on the floor versus the TV. The one thing that maybe Howard Baker and I would disagree with, I'm still not sure to this day that was the right decision [to televise Senate floor proceedings]. It's too late now. You're never going to turn that back. But what it did was on the floor more than anything else it seemed people were playing for the TV. So now you have these chart shows on the floor, all these charts. When I went to school you used a chart to educate and you didn't use it for props. Clearly, I don't think we would have had pictures of Katrina on the floor of the United States Senate, literally pictures, they weren't charts, they were pictures, on the floor before TV.

I accept that that's the way it's going to be. BlackBerrys constantly in touch, tethered to you. You're always on call, 24/7. No time for yourself. I don't know how I made it with raising two young children while I was up here. They're grown now and they're out on their own, and they're doing fine, so I guess my wife had a lot more to do with it than I did. But you see it's for a young person up here now. A person who doesn't have family commitments and is not as involved in their community. Not their church or their local community. This is their life. You are the Senate life. And I must admit that I was pretty subsumed by it too. But all this activity and things, over time, I honestly can't say I don't know if the legislative outcome, the legislation as it developed, was it any better quality-wise than it was when we didn't have all of this technology and activity?

Let me be fair, there are good things about technology. The ability for a lot of the work in the budgetary world, I'm so thankful for the technology and the computers to be able to tabulate and display quickly as compared to the old days when the budget arrived, it was this nightmare. All night long and all the way through with white outs and changes. So there are positive aspects to this but at the same time I'm just not totally convinced that the product is that much better or more thought through today than it was before all of this came about. Time goes on and I'm sure it will be fine, but those are the changes that stand out in my mind.

RITCHIE: Sometimes the technology becomes a substitute for the substance rather than an enhancement of it. People get caught up in the means of communication and less in what message they're communicating. You mentioned about press secretaries and I wanted to ask you: you were working in the middle of where everything was happening. When you went home at night and watched the news or you read the newspaper the next day, how good a job did the media do in covering what was happening up here?

HOAGLAND: I used to get home by the time the news was over with, so I didn't get to see it that much on the TV. In fact, I hardly ever watched the evening news. Oh, the other thing that's changed is TV now in your offices...C-SPAN is running or Fox News or CNBC all the time in your offices. So basically the news is right there, you don't even have to wait. You don't have to go home at 6 o'clock at night. It was there all the time in your face. But I used to kid my wife that if you make the news you don't have to watch the news.

But generally I'm not critical about the state of the news. I think that they have a tremendous amount of responsibility and a very, very difficult task to pull together some rather complex issues. Sometimes, in fact, I would say, "Darn it, I wish I had said it that way." They could take, by having to compress it down to making it intelligible in a short amount of time to the average viewer out there, I think they did a good job. I was more critical of the spin-off industry of all the various advocacy organizations. The flyers and the short newsletters which would present clearly their advocacy position. As was one who always was saying, "There are trade-offs here. Don't you see you have to provide both sides of the argument," Those kinds of operations have their job to do and they have their advocacy work cut out for them, but those are the kinds of pseudo-press activities that I found most frustrating and not very accurate and not telling the whole story. I'm not a big fan of lobbying activities, I guess. Recognizing the First Amendment that's absolutely everybody's right. Now that I work for a company, I should recognize that I have a right to petition my government. But I still have faith in the American public that they can see the two sides of an issue when it gets down to it.

RITCHIE: Were there any particular publications or journalists that you thought highly of?

HOAGLAND: Well, interestingly enough, I developed in my career up here a liking for two particular publications. I hate to say it but probably neither one of them would necessarily be considered American: *The Financial Times* and *The Economist*. Because of my background and because of what I did, both of them, I thought, did a wonderful job of reporting. Sometimes it's better for somebody outside the country to look in and you can get a better perspective. But to this day, I continue to get my *Financial Times* and *The Economist*. *The Financial Times*, particularly—there's a story, I don't know whether to put it on the record here, but if it's okay—I was invited to a conference—I never got invited very often—but I went to a conference in Berlin, Germany. It was put on by *The Financial Times*. In fact, they were going to pay for my wife, too. We arrived and were picked up at the airport and whisked off to the Avalon Hotel right there next to the Brandenburg Gate. I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's a beautiful old hotel. It was destroyed during the war and rebuilt. I thought, well this is a lot more than normal for a Hill staffer. I concluded that *The Financial Times*, which was putting this on, thought I was Jim Hoagland [the *Washington Post* columnist] instead of Bill Hoagland, because he writes a lot on international affairs.

When I was speaking to Martin Wolfe, who writes for *The Financial Times* a lot, I said, "Boy, I love this newspaper. And I love the fact that I don't have to turn from one page to another to finish a story." I don't know if you've ever seen *The Financial Times*, but you don't have to go from A1 to A16. It's all condensed on one page. He said that that has been an ongoing issue with *The Financial Times* for many, many years. You keep your article on one page so you don't have to flip back to A6 or A7. I guess I didn't realize it, but that's why I like that. And I think they do a great job.

Obviously *The Wall Street Journal*. Yes, *The Washington Post* and the *Roll Call* and *The Hill*, basically I tried to get through as much of that as I could. Now *National Journal* and *CQ*, I don't know how a Hill staffer can survive without the *National Journal* and *CQ*. We eventually got to *Congress Daily*, which I think is from *National Journal*. That one was essential that we saw at least that daily. And I dealt with many of those journalists, and I thought they did a good job. A tough job. A thankless job. But they did a decent job of presenting what the issues were and what was going on.

RITCHIE: There's an old saying in the press galleries that reporters love Congress and editors hate Congress, because a reporter can't walk through the building

without picking up a half a dozen stories, they can't sell most of those stories to their editors because the editors think they're too parochial. They're too focused on the institution and they don't appeal to a broader audience.

HOAGLAND: Interesting. Well, the audience, though, for that *Congress Daily* is really right here.

RITCHIE: The media has sort of divided up the audience so it knows who it's speaking to and therefore you get the specialized publications. Well, there's one other group I wanted to ask you about. I've seen you at the Wilson Center on some occasions where you've been invited to participate in conferences with political scientists and historians in discussing issues about Congress. I wondered what was your take on the scholarly community's view of this institution? Do they have a realistic sense of how Congress operates.

HOAGLAND: Well, some do and some don't. How's that? [laughs] I don't know where you draw the line on the scholarly and non-scholarly. I'm obviously not in the scholarly category, but organizations such as the Brookings Institution or the Woodrow Wilson Center—Don Wolfensberger does a great job, but he is what I would consider both knowledgeable, having worked here for those many years in the House, and has the academic background. Mr. [Tom] Mann over at Brookings, I think he has an understanding.

In the couple of conferences you and I were involved with—I thought the political scientists had over-thought the issue. This is snide on my part, but I don't think the professors of political science should qualify as professors of political science if they're going to talk about the federal process, without having had an internship in this institution somewhere. I'm not saying they don't. Probably many of them do. And I'm not saying they have to spend thirty-three years here either. But I think that this is a unique enough of a place that you can't really just read it in the *Congressional Record* and understand what's going on, without having some practical experience around here. My straight answer is I think some do a wonderful job and I think some of them just need to spend a little bit more time in the trenches up here with the rest of us to get a better appreciation for what's actually happening.

RITCHIE: It's a hard place to quantify or to come up with an equation for something that is as fluid and sometimes as contradictory as it is.

HOAGLAND: Yes it is, that's very good.

RITCHIE: I would think, given all the different pressures coming from all so many different directions, that to predict the way a particular leader is going to operate is not a feasible task.

HOAGLAND: I agree. But I will say I'm thankful for people wanting to study government in this day. Thankful for anybody to teach and educate. I always tell students, whenever I meet with them, to do something in your career that gets you involved in public policy, whether it's at the local level or at the state level or at the federal level. Even run for office, as a dog catcher, but have some public experience, because I think that's what we all owe to this great country. I've paid my dues, I guess. As I said at the outset here, I miss it, too. I will always owe my entire career to this institution, the United States Senate, and the great people who I've had the opportunity to work with over these many years.

RITCHIE: Are there any people we haven't talked about that you wanted to mention? Any of the senators or the others that you wanted to put into the record?

HOAGLAND: I can't think of any, Don, that I haven't already mentioned. There's so many that I'm afraid that I would leave somebody out. Obviously, Senator Domenici was critical in my career. Senator Baker, Senator Dole, Senator Nunn, Senator Lawton Chiles. Senator Frist, obviously. Back in January, just before I left here, I sat down and wrote notes. I think email is a little informal when it comes to this. I wrote at least eighty notes to senators. It was during the holiday break and I slipped them under their doors and hopefully they got the notes. There were just so many senators that I had worked with on both sides of the aisle, in leadership and out of leadership, that I came to respect. I came to understand that they had their constituent and they had their responsibility. I may not have always agreed with them, but I respected the fact that they had been elected by people to represent them. I mean, it was just about every senator that was still here at the time. They were all good to me. At the end of the day they were all fair. Some yelled at me at times, some of them chewed me out at times, but at the end of

the day I have a lot of respect for the position that they hold. I wouldn't want to start down the list any more than that.

RITCHIE: Is there anything that I should have asked?

HOAGLAND: I think you've covered it all. You've done a good job of pulling stuff out of me. I'll probably think of something later on that should have gone into it. But no, not now. I think you've covered it.

RITCHIE: There's always room for more and if you think of anything else we can add it as an appendix. We'll also have a photograph taken.

HOAGLAND: Thank you for a wonderful interview and helping me to recollect the time I spent here as staff in the U.S. Senate.

End of the Fourth Interview