

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WILL THE NOVEMBER ELECTIONS HELP MEND
THE BROKEN BRANCH?

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. DIONNE: I want to welcome everyone here today. It is a tribute to Tom and Norm and Vin to have such a large crowd here.

Vin is a good free market Republican. So I want to make clear that we too support the free market by saying that books will be on sale at the Brookings bookstore out here. I am told that the book has sold out of a lot of Washington bookstores, and although they didn't tell me this, I presume, Tom and Norm will be happy to sign books for anyone who would care to have them signed.

It is a really great pleasure for me because these are three of my very, very favorite people in Washington. All of you, I think, in this room are familiar with the problem that you never want one person you really care about to be at all negative on other people you care about. And so, for me, it was a great joy that Bob Kaiser of *The Washington Post*, one of my personal favorites in journalism, reviewed Tom and Norm's book. I won't read you the whole review, though I commend it to you, but let me just go through a few words:

"Cogent, forceful, the authors are members of what sadly may be a disappearing breed in Washington, independent-minded, knowledgeable experts whose concern for process is stronger than their desires for particular outcomes. They are means guys in an age dominated by ends."

He quotes Tom and Norm from the book: "For us, Congress has always been the first branch" — which explains Vin's visit with us.

"Their conclusions are scathing but difficult to dispute."

At the very end, I will just read the last sentence which could prove to be prophetic: "If, as Mann recently predicted in the Post Outlook section, Democrats win control of the House in November, this book will suddenly be useful to both parties — that is always really helpful for sales — to the Democrats, as a cautionary tale and a useful blueprint and to Republicans, as an insight into where they went wrong."

I am sure Tom and Norm are going to be very reluctant to say anything about either of those questions today.

I also want to say Happy Halloween to everyone. You saw folks at the desk. I was thinking of wearing a Bush-Cheney button and putting an Obama-Clinton or Clinton-Obama button on Vin just to scare everybody, but we decided not to do that.

What we are going to do is Tom is going to speak first, followed by Norm, and then Vin will give a brilliant critical, friendly, highly thoughtful response to the two of them.

I don't need to introduce any of these people, but I will just say Tom is the W. Averell Harriman Chair and Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at Brookings. He was the Executive Director of the American Political Science Association. Tom could easily run for President. He was born in Milwaukee. He earned his B.A. in Florida. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan.

That is already a lot of electoral votes right off, key states. He is the author of many books, my favorite, given the obsessions of everyone these days about predicting the outcome of this election is a book he published in 1974, I believe, called *Unsafe at Any Margin*, and it is about calling and looking at election results.

Norm Ornstein; and it should be said one of the things I love about this book is that Tom and Norm are friends going back a very, very long way, and this book could be seen as a love letter to Congress if Congress were actually more lovable at the moment because I don't think anyone has studied Congress more closely than Norm and Tom.

Norm is a Resident Scholar at AEI. He has served as an election analyst for CBS News, although my favorite job — I am not sure it is on here — he was the Polling Director for Comedy Central, and he may share some of his work for Comedy Central with you today. I mean since so many people now get their news from Jon Stewart, Norm was way ahead of the curve among Washington think tank types. There are so many things he has done. He is a Senior Counselor to the Continuity of Government Commission. He is Co-Director of the AEI-Brookings Election Reform Project. I assume Tom is the other Director. He has done work on lots of issues including election administration and the budget and what would happen in a transition in our government in the event of a catastrophe. He is a member of the boards of PBS and the Campaign Legal Center, and he was

elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2004, of which Tom is also a member.

Now, Vin, however, is an amazing guy. I once described him, and then I decided it was unfair to both of them. During the years when Newt Gingrich, before he was Speaker, a friend of mine said Vin is the thinking person's Newt Gingrich, but that is actually unfair to both Vin and Newt. Newt is the thinking person's Newt, and Vin is very much his own person, but he has emerged as every Democrat's favorite Republican. Now if you were some squishy — but if Vin were some squishy moderate liberal Republican, you would say, okay, that is to be expected. He is actually an authentically conservative Republican, and he is still every Democrat's favorite Republican.

He is Managing Partner of Clark and Weinstock's Washington office. I think that makes him a lobbyist, but that word doesn't appear anywhere here. He is Chairman of the National Endowment for Democracy. He is — see, this proves my point — he is a Senior Fellow at the Hubert Humphrey Institute at the University of Minnesota, a man of fine judgment, both Vin and Hubert Humphrey. He is one of the most successful strategists in the Republican Party. This is unfortunate; he served as the Bush-Cheney 2004 Plain States Regional Chairman. He is sought after for political — maybe that is also why, never mind.

Before he opened Clark and Weinstock's Washington office, he was President and Co-Director with Jack Kemp, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and Bill Bennett of

Empower America, a public policy advocacy group. He was a member of the House from 1981 to 1993, representing Minnesota's Second Congressional District. He was on the Appropriations Committee. He was a member of the House leadership. He was Campaign Manager for Senator Rudy Boschwitz. And I never knew this; he was Co-Publisher of the *Murray County Herald*, so that Vin also belongs to that very unpopular group in America, journalists.

It is a great pleasure to have you all here. Tom will kick it off by describing what a wonderful job, what a heck of a job our Congress is doing. I give you Tom Mann.

(Applause)

MR. MANN: Thank you, E.J.

Thank you, Melissa and her team. I mean don't you think the Halloween décor is good for the Brookings' image?

We are going to have a contest to see what Norman is dressed as today, but E.J. gave it away. He mentioned the Comedy Central pollster role. Immediately, I remember Norman's first display of expertise as the Comedy Central pollster many years ago. That was back when they had the call-in responses and you paid 75 cents and that allowed you to express your opinion on important issues. So Norman was launching this and decided the first thing to test with the public was whether members of the public would be willing to pay 75 cents to express their opinion on a particular issue. Sure enough, thousands of people called in

response to that, and the results were 85 percent said they would be unwilling to spend 75 cents. I thought it got him off to a great start as a Comedy Central pollster.

Listen, we are delighted you are here, that you care both about *The Broken Branch* and the November 7th elections. Norman and I have been traveling around the country, and we felt it important to acknowledge the critical assistance that we have gotten in writing and marketing this book. Our thanks, first of all, to Denny Hastert, he has made a major contribution. Mark Foley has done his best. But probably the greatest thanks go to Tom DeLay; I think he has done more to help us in both writing this book and calling it to the attention of a broader community.

Our session is entitled: "Will the November 7th Elections Help Mend the Broken Branch?" We are going to talk about that, but we are also, I think, going to talk about: Will the broken branch be at least partly responsible for the November 7th election results? Part of it is kind of backward looking, part of it is forward looking.

Norman and I never expected to write a book with such an inflammatory title. As E.J. said, we love the Congress, at least in theory, and for many years, actually did so in practice. We came to Washington together about 37 years ago on the same program to work in the Congress for a year and have been since then observing and writing about it, speaking about it, occasionally engaged with it in

various reform efforts.

We have vigorously defended the first branch of government in the face of what we thought were egregiously unfair attacks. People think its members are paid too much; we think too little. People think their terms should be limited; we think that is a terrible, terrible idea. People think Congress should be less contentious, more consensual; we said, impossible. Indeed people thought Congress should be more efficient; we said that would compromise its essential character and comparative advantages. So we are not disposed as some of those who do Congress-bashing for a life to denounce the institution.

We believe it really is the linchpin of American democracy, that the framers knew what they were doing when they made it Article I, the longest section of the Constitution, the one that took the most time in Philadelphia to craft. It is indeed a remarkable institution which, if operating properly, helps to keep the entire Constitutional system in balance in a way that protects our freedoms and allows us, when necessary, to mobilize public and political support to deal with threats to our well-being, domestic or international.

Not that it is always been a well-functioning institution; we don't imagine a golden era of Congress. We are all too well aware of its history. I think we appreciate its rough and tumble times in the 19th Century. We know the divisions that tore it apart as it tore apart our country for a while. We know there have been partisan eras in the past, over-centralization of power, autocracy in the leadership,

kind of ugly partisanship. It is a long, colorful, and checkered history. I don't think we are either sort of goo-goos who don't appreciate real politics, and I don't think we romanticize a past.

Having said that, however, we have seen changes occur during our many years of Congress-watching that have now picked up in frequency and intensity and extremity that we think renders Congress a shadow of the institution that the framers had in mind. Congress is indeed broken. It is evident if you look at its essential characteristics — to represent, to legislate, to check and balance — in each of those dimensions, Congress has become very, very disappointing. The representational link is weakened by uncompetitive elections, permanent campaigning, non-stop fundraising, intense partisanship, and a set of ethical and occasionally legal violations that suggest members all too often are listening to people other than their constituents, weakening the human link that is so important to Congress.

On the legislative front, Congress is not a parliamentary body. It doesn't ratify decisions made elsewhere, and yet that is precisely what has happened in recent years. It is designed as a transformative legislature that engages in genuine deliberation, in committees, on the floor, in conference. It is all about talk. It is about real talk, informed talk, serious talk, and talk with consequences that leads to spirited debate but ultimately negotiation and compromise. We see too little talk.

We see a Congressional schedule that starts at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday and ends at noon on Thursday.

We see perfunctory subcommittee and committee hearings and markups in which there is no new information taken in and no open discussion and debate in markups, for the most part. We see bills move to the floor without any possibility of amendment. The one guaranteed sacrosanct, called the Motion to Recommit, has been turned by the majority party into a procedural vote. You are to vote for this like you vote for a rule, not for a substantive measure, and therefore eliminating all possibility of any genuine minority party involvement.

As for the committees, if they surprise everyone or report out something that wasn't orchestrated in advance, you simply report out of the Rules Committee a self-executing rule, which is done now with greater frequency, that replaces the committee product with one written by the leadership. The committee product disappears. The leadership package is on the floor; no amendments; desultory debate; passage; and it moves on.

Well, that is just the start of it. That is one chamber. Duplicate that under different rules in the Senate. Go to a conference, and there you see a conference process that we all thought we understood is nowhere to be seen. Of course, we have always had informal meetings working out arrangements and agreements, but now it has become an embarrassment. You have a press availability for 15 minutes to introduce the members of the conferees. They then adjourn and never

meet again. You put together votes on the filed product, basically with proxies.

You routinely violate the rule that says: Items that haven't been approved by either the House or Senate legislation in conference cannot be added. You add earmarks; you add amendments; and sometimes you add entire bills. Then you put that all together in a thousand-page package, and you waive the rule requiring a layover period, so someone might actually be able to read what is in the bill because that could be disconcerting. Move it to the floor, so debate begins in the late afternoon. Votes begin preferably after midnight. Fifteen-minute votes become thirty minutes or sixty minutes or two hours or three hours. I take it back. We have never had a three-hour vote. We had a two-hour and fifty-seven minute vote on the Medicare Prescription Drug Bill.

Basically, there is no, no conception that there is a regular order, and it shouldn't be automatically, routinely waived. Thomas Jefferson said a legislature without rules that are adhered to produces anarchy or autocracy. Jefferson's manual is a critical document for the Congress to follow. Nowadays, it just doesn't matter because the ends justify the means.

Let me say this did not begin with the Republican Congress in 1995 or with the unified Republican government in 2001. The origins of the demise of regular order rest clearly with the Democratic Party. Near the end of their forty-year reign in the house, they squeezed down unfairly on the minority in various ways to try to achieve some objectives, and ironically, Norman and I worked very hard

with the minority party and David Dreier at that time to try to deal with some of these problems. So it began earlier, and its roots are deep and intertwined going back to broad changes in the external political environment. But after a couple of years of returning to some form of regular order, the Republicans have now pushed it well beyond anything the Democrats did with it, especially with the unified Republican government in which the leadership of both bodies have identified themselves primarily as lieutenants of the President and champions of the majority of the majority in the case of Speaker Hastert in the House.

The third element is the checking and balancing. Sure, under unified party government, there is an incentive for the majority party in Congress to go a little easy on their President and not to needlessly embarrass him. It has gone well beyond that. This is an Administration that has had the most dramatic, ambitious, aggressive assertion of Presidential power, executive authority, in my lifetime, arguably in American history, more so than Lincoln and, frankly, Roosevelt. That is okay. Madison anticipated that; ambitious politicians working in their institutions to exert authority, but he also anticipated that the Congress was there with the same set of incentives to resist that grab for executive authority. But this Congress has found itself more moved by party and ideology than by institutional interests and responsibilities. As a consequence, we have had way too little oversight and engagement and challenge.

All of these things have consequences, not just for people like us who care

about the rules of the game but for policy, for the quality of policymaking, for the quality of the implementation, for the possibilities of mid-course corrections. Our book is littered — I am sorry — with examples in which We, the People, suffer as a consequence of bad policy.

As I said, the roots are deep. They really go to the ideological polarization of the parties and then after 1994, to a position of parity in which a swing of a few seats could make the difference between a Republican or Democratic majority. That has led to a further development of the permanent campaign to lots of symbolic message politics and basically to a lot of, if you will, sort of intellectual dishonesty in the absence of real serious talk about policies.

Now, let me conclude my remarks by saying I would argue in answer to my second question that, in fact, the broken branch, as I have described it, has contributed to the likely outcome of this election. I think the War in Iraq is dominant, and Congress was missing from action in a way that the Republicans might have helped their party to avoid this by asking difficult questions in a timely fashion and preventing some of the decisions that were actually made and proved harmful. I think competence is an issue. Once again, Congress' failure to think through and deliberate on the Department of Homeland Security, creating a behemoth that proved extremely ineffective, has hurt the President. I would argue the broader sense of entitlement and even arrogance and a culture of corruption that now is enveloping the Appropriations Committee in the House and that began

in some ways with Jack Abramoff and Duke Cunningham, has contributed to a broader sense in the public that this institution has gone awry.

So, just to be clear about it, I believe there is a huge national negative referendum on this government that will very likely, almost certainly produce a majority for the Democrats in the House with gains of 30 or more seats now increasingly likely in the Senate. Democrats have a chance — my colleagues may put it a bit below 50 percent, I probably put it a little bit above 50 percent because of the tipping effect of a wave — to win six or indeed seven seats necessary to hold a majority. In any case, it will be a very evenly divided Senate.

The question is: Will that kind of a result begin to change the Congress? Answer is: Not easily, not quickly, but it is the first point. It is a necessary but not sufficient condition. There is no way to change this Congress without the team in power being shown to be held accountable by the public. If they are tossed out, the Democrats are on record as running things differently. We shall see. They will be held by others to account for their behavior. It is conceivable they would be bounced out after two years if they don't, in fact, deliver on their promises and begin to mend a broken branch which then allows the whole American Constitutional system to regain a sense of balance and direction and purpose and raise the spirits of Democrats and Republicans alike.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. ORNSTEIN: Thanks. Happy Halloween, everybody. Like Melissa, I was going to come in costume, but I decided to leave my Denny Hastert mask at home. I didn't want to scare small children today.

Actually, E.J.'s suggestion that Tom might run for President has an eerie parallel with the reality. The latest news from the 109th Congress is that Duncan Hunter has thrown his hat into the Presidential ring, of course, doing this in part on his role in the major accomplishment, maybe the only domestic accomplishment, using the term accomplishment loosely, of the 109th Congress which was just celebrated with a ceremony the day before yesterday, the 701-mile fence along the Mexican border. There was a celebration held by people 702 miles out as well.

But we did have a couple of interesting announcements related to that today. The Department of Labor announced that by its estimate, using legal labor, it would take only 27 years to build the fence, but the contractor, Halliburton, said that they could actually do it, they think they can do it in 26. So it will take a little extra money, but that ought to work just fine. You need a laugh these days, given where we are.

We had a recent survey, just a week ago, the CNN survey showed 16 percent of Americans approving of the conduct of this Congress, leading one to ask: Who are these 16 percent and what meds are they on?

I am particularly pleased to have E.J. moderate. He is one of our favorite

people, of course. Having been here as a Minnesotan, I have known Vin for a long time and known him as a product of the Minnesota political culture and one of those that we have always prized around Congress because he cares about institutions. There are a number of such people, but unfortunately, a dwindling number inside Congress itself and unfortunately, we may have fewer of those after this particular cycle is over, and we prize them.

As Tom suggested and E.J. intimated, we came here 37 years ago in the Fall of 1969. It was a tumultuous time in Washington, dominated by tension over the Vietnam War. The tension crackled. There was violence on the streets at times, even inside Congress. One of my most vivid memories is being on the floor of the Senate when George McGovern, referring to the chamber's culpability in Vietnam, made a statement that caused an absolute shock in the crowd. The walls of this chamber reek with blood, he said.

A short while later, Bob Dole, then a freshman Senator auditioning at that time for his next role which was Chairman of the Republican National Committee, perfect timing, just as Watergate hit. I think he kind of regretted that. But he took to the floor and just ripped the bark off of McGovern. I thought, boy, it doesn't get worse than this. Well, we yearn for what that typified actually because before our first year was out, I saw McGovern and Dole walking together arm in arm in the Capitol. They had actually built a friendship that persists to this day over their common interest in dealing with the problems of hunger, coming at

it from different perspectives but being able to forge alliances at a time when the watchword was still: Just be careful; your adversary today will be your ally tomorrow.

Well, we now exist in a political environment where your adversary today is your enemy tomorrow and forever after, and your goal is not to stay just on this side of maintaining a civil relationship; it is to crush him into the dust, to make sure that he cannot arise again because they are evil in contrast to us. It is a level of partisanship which has gone to the verge of tribalism and which is extraordinarily unhealthy in our politics. Frankly, you can't look at any campaign out there now and not see the results of it and see it continuing through at least the next week which will make recovery a little more difficult. Some of it is driven, as Tom suggested, by the growing and sharp ideological polarization between the two parties.

I will often say to audiences that when we first got here, if you took all the members of Congress, put them on buses, and drove them about a mile and a half due east of the Capitol to what was then our football stadium, RFK — now the, well, not any longer, the home of Alfonso Soriano but perhaps again — now our baseball stadium. But if you took those members and said go down on that football field and place yourselves where your general orientation, your world view would make you feel most comfortable, and you went in the pressbox and looked down, you would see a human representation of the bell curve, the normal

distribution, the vast majority of the members between the 35 or 40-yard lines, a lot of add mixture between the two parties and just handfuls trailing off.

If you took today's Congress, repainted the lines on the football field, drove them to RFK, and performed the same exercises, from the pressbox, you would look down on a human representation of the classic bimodal distribution — call it bipolar, depending on your mood — where the midfield area is barren and there are lots of people clustered around each 15-yard line and a whole lot behind each goal post and not a few floating in the Anacostia River at this point.

Of course, the other change from when we first arrived, and when we got here the Democrats were 15 years into what became a 40 consecutive years' chokehold on power in the House of Representatives ending only with the Newt Gingrich-driven 1994 election, and 26 straight years in the Senate. Every one of those elections after the first couple, this was from 1954 on. From 1958 on, there wasn't a single election leading up to 1994 where there was any question in anybody's mind as to who would be in the majority the next time around, even elections where we saw swings of 30, 40, or 50 seats. The Republicans had a glass ceiling, actually, 192 seats, and they got here twice, but that meant that Democrats never went below a 25-seat majority in the House. So everybody kind of accommodated themselves for a significant amount of time to that reality.

Of course, the fact is you can't hold power, no set of human beings can hold power for 40 consecutive years without developing an extraordinarily high

level of arrogance, of condescension towards the other side of a belief that you have a God-given right to be there, and a highhandedness that follows; and no group of people is going to serve in a minority for 40 years without having a decision to accommodate yourself to taking the scraps off the table that a majority is willing to give you to becoming unhappy and then frustrated and then shrill in your responses. We have replaced that now with an era that has gone on for what, by American political history standards, is an extraordinary time and shows no sign of abating — a dozen years of virtual parody between the two parties at almost all levels.

Now, we can see in some of the results now, obviously, a bump-up for Democrats. There is no sign that is a permanent step-up. If you look at the country as a whole, perhaps the best indicator of where we are politically is in the state legislatures. Of course, 49 states that mirror Washington with a State House and State Senate, Nebraska with its unicameral legislature, 99 chambers, just under 7,500 legislators elected in different ways at different times, until just four months ago — since then, we have had a string of special elections that have changed it slightly — 3,656 were Democrats and 3,658 were Republicans. Now, you have about 25 more Democrats as the political trends have shifted, but that means it is basically 50.1 to 49.9.

When you are into an era where in every election, the majority could change with just modest things happening, something at the margins, it alters the

whole set of behaviors that surround an institution. If you have an inclination as a member to work with somebody on the other side, recognizing that in doing so you might give them a little more traction on an issue that is controversial or a little bit more armor of protection against a wedge that could be used against them, your colleagues will see you as sleeping with the enemy and that will drive that behavior out even for those members who have an inclination to work across the lines. Plenty of people who would situate themselves on the 10 or 15-yard line are very much willing to work across those lines but we are not in a climate where it is doable.

Now, you put all of those things together with the dynamic of the last decade or decade and a half, including, of course, the reality that for much of that 40-year period the Republicans did hold the White House. They not only had a foothold on power, even as their Republicans in Congress were in perpetual minority status, but they had the most significant foothold on power and then in 1992, they lost that and were faced with, for the first time in 12 years, the Democrats having all the reins of power. If anything would unleash a frustration level among Republicans in Congress, it would be that. We went through an interesting dynamic the first two years of the Clinton Administration with Republicans voting in unison against the budget, joining together to block other things; then a divided government that turned sour; got a little bit better and then turned particularly sour; and then Republicans taking over all the reins of power.

Through that dynamic, over the last decade and a half, we have seen, in our judgment, the serious deterioration of the institution that led us to call it the broken branch. It is, as Tom has said, now especially with Republicans barely clinging to power in the House, doing just better than that in the Senate, with a President who came in under the most adverse set of circumstances imaginable, reflecting that parody in the 2000 election more stunningly than anyone might have imagined. Keep in mind, that Presidential election was decided in the end by one electoral vote after 36 days and by probably 1/300th of one percent of the votes in Florida, with a party losing seats in both houses of Congress winning the Presidency and losing the popular vote. It also left us with the closest Congressional margins in 70 years, including a tie in the Senate.

It has led us to a situation where for the majority in Congress, the ends justify the means approach has taken over leading to the collapse of the regular order, that web of rules and norms that govern any institution, especially one that makes decisions, and to the virtual disappearance of any semblance of a deliberative process, one that actually goes through two bodies in multiple stages, subcommittees and committees, hearings, markups, give and take, back and forth, debate on the floor, amendments offered. Now, it is thousand-page bills presented with nobody having seen them, nobody having a chance to vet them, no hearings held, jammed through in the middle of the night — a collapse of an institutional identity and pride where legislating takes a backseat to almost

anything else.

Consider this year in the House of Representatives: What will amount to in the end less than 100 days, barely 90 days in session at all, but 25 of those being days when there were no votes before 6:30 p.m., and half of those were pro forma sessions of 11 minutes or less. They come in, bang the gavel, maybe have a procedural vote, and leave. Sixty-five days in session. How can you legislate, have any deliberation, or have any sense that you are doing your job in Washington by making that happen?

Of course, to any of you, many of you do spend time kicking around Capitol Hill. On those days when Congress is in session, members are not on the floor or even in committee very much. They are racing off the Capitol grounds to get to the safe houses where they can make fundraising phone calls, not just for themselves but for their leadership PACs and for the team to try and preserve power or get back in power. It will tell you an awful lot about where we are in terms of the attitudes of members of Congress that when Rahm Emanuel was trying to make sure all of his members would contribute an appropriate amount in dues to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the stick he had to offer was to say to the members: If you don't contribute the appropriate amount, you can't use our headquarters to make your fundraising phone calls — a very, very tough threat to offer to them in these days.

Along with that, a culture of corruption that Tom talked about that we have

seen all around us is, by any standard, I believe worse than we have seen in 35 or 40 years at least, some of it driven by the utter collapse of the ethics process which did not begin in the last few years. It began a decade or more ago with a truce between the parties, taking any outside groups away from being able to initiate an ethics investigation and having an agreement among the parties that they wouldn't initiate against a member on the other side. But then when we did get an investigation and a committee that actually did its job, we saw the one episode that I find to be the most shocking and troubling of all that we have seen, when Speaker Hastert fired another institutional patriot, Joel Hefley of Colorado, from his role as Chairman of the Ethics Committee and fired two conscientious members of that committee, Kenny Hulshof and Steven LaTourette, because they did their job, looked at the findings and evidence that they had accumulated against Tom DeLay and issued three rebukes unanimously in the committee. Then we saw a committee that was effectively blown up. If there is no ethics process, frankly, the standards among all the members decline.

If we all knew that in the District of Columbia there would be no traffic cops giving out tickets or stopping you if you went through red lights, sped, or did any of the other offenses that occur around here, what is going to happen? First of all, you are going to have 5 percent of the population who will say this is great and go 120 miles an hour, zooming in and out of lanes and on the wrong side of the road up Massachusetts Avenue. Then you are going to get 50 percent who,

driving along that road, might go with the flow of traffic which would be 50 in a 30 zone and, instead of saying oops, better slow down here because I might get stopped for speeding, will just keep going along. There will be lots of people who will decide to go through that yellow light or the red light because there is no danger involved there. Eventually, any sense that rules exist that you are supposed to stop at red lights or maintain a reasonable speed, not make a U-turn or shift lanes will go away entirely.

We have seen an erosion of that with a casual attitude towards travel and sponsors, with earmarks and with a whole explosion of other processes and a deliberate attempt made through earmarks and others to preserve power and to gain status and, in some cases, comfortable lives and finances just by virtue of being in power and using it to preserve oneself in power; then, of course, the collapse of oversight almost entirely, as Tom talked about eloquently, and a lack of any willingness to stand up to an Executive Branch out of a belief that what matters is not the Congress but being field soldiers in the President's Army.

All of this has led us to reel back and look at an institution we have come to revere and believe is there as the first branch of government for a reason, having lost its moorings. It is not just those of us who follow the process who suffer. This bad process has led to bad policy, and it has led to a wave of disgust, and that will lead to a wave in the election that very likely will, as Tom said, change the majority.

Now, what happens? Well, let me say, along with Tom, that this is an opportunity to recapture some of that sense of regular order, of deliberation, of oversight, of a new and significant role for the first branch, but it is no sure thing. Nancy Pelosi has said and means it that if she is Speaker, she will be Speaker of the whole House, not, as Speaker Hastert has been in his self-declared way, Speaker of the majority of the majority, and she will reach out to moderate Republicans to try to create bipartisan coalitions. Of course, the first problem is if she is Speaker of the House, there will be no moderate Republicans left. The Main Street Partnership will be Mike Castle caucusing in his bathtub, practically speaking. So the challenge of finding the ability to work across party lines will be extraordinarily difficult.

The second difficulty is Democrats are clearly not on the same page, at least not all of them. Large numbers that we have talked to have been revulsed by what has happened to the legislative process, and some Republicans have as well. Consider the reality that when ethics and lobbying reform came up, first with a rule for a bill that was a sham bill that did not allow any amendment, 16 Republicans voted against the rule, an extraordinary display of independence, given the lockstep unity in which they found themselves on most issues, and this was a procedural vote, but a number of Democrats voted for the rule, thereby keeping the bill from being amended to make it stronger during the formal legislative process.

Tom mentioned the sham that we have with the Motion to Recommit with Instructions that has become a procedural issue, and so they have rejected them all routinely. Twenty Republicans voted for the Democratic alternative, a reasonably strong lobbying reform package and a modestly strong ethics package, twenty Republicans, but four Democrats voted against their own party's package, thereby killing that reform — one of them, John Murtha, candidate for Majority Leader who *The New York Times* informs us did so in exchange for getting more earmarks from Republicans. If that is what we have to expect from the Democrats if they take a majority, then this branch stays deeply broken, and they have some thinking to do in the meantime.

You have other Democrats who would love to have a situation where they can simply turn the tables on Republicans and show them the kind of pain that they have felt for the last 12 years, except ratcheted up to a higher level. There are others who are going to say: Hey, to the victor go the spoils. They got them, and now it is our turn.

So the strongly held views which we believe are there for Nancy Pelosi and for a number of other seriously institutional figures that it really is time for a change and not in just who has the reins of power but how that power is exercised — and the same with the Senate — if they can overcome that challenge, we have an opportunity. The first weeks after the election and the first day of the new Congress convening become critical points for it.

There are changes needed in rules, but it is important to emphasize that the decline or demise of the regular order has not been because the rules are defective nearly so much as it has been because people have been willing to bend them into pretzels and throw out all the norms to strain the process and make it a fixed one, in effect. If you get a pledge from leaders that is held to, that they will restore the regular order, bring back reasonable debate, be willing to lose from time to time under those circumstances, allow amendments, not necessarily on everything — a majority has to have the chance to govern in some respects — but on many things. One suggestion, for example, that comes from David Skaggs, a former Congressman and another institutionalist from Colorado is perhaps to do on many issues what they do in Colorado which is let the minority chair debate in the committee of the whole. It doesn't mean you are going to radically change outcomes, but it provides a level of fairness and an opening to creation of a different style of debate and of leadership. The same kinds of things apply in the Senate.

Now, some things do require rule changes including meaningful ethics and lobbying reform and including making sure that the earmarking process no longer gets out of control and many other ways of handling debate. We will have more to say about specifics as we approach the election and the immediate aftermath to try and provide a blueprint for those kinds of changes. It will take a commitment on the part of whoever is in the majority and some willingness on the part of those

in the minority to join in this process as well. It won't be easy, but we are at a crossroads in this country, and if it isn't done, we are all going to suffer.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. WEBER: Thank you, one and all.

Norm, as my fellow Minnesotan, I was surprised when you started out talking about imagining what it would be like with no traffic laws in the District of Columbia. I thought you were going to end up by saying: You don't have to imagine much; it is like that every time it snows here.

It is a pleasure to be with everybody today, particularly E.J. Dionne. I have finally figured out how to counter E.J.'s introduction of me as the thinking man's Newt Gingrich. When last we were together, I said, I remember: I have known E.J. since I first came to Washington. When I first met him he was at *The New York Times* trying to move that paper to the center, but for the last many years, he has been at *The Washington Post*, trying to move that paper to the left. I am sort of where I have always been, but you have moved a bit.

It is a pleasure to be with Tom and Norm. I finished the book this morning at Starbucks which means I have given it about as much consideration as the average conference report gets these days. So I will be glad to give all of my thoughts.

Let me surprise everybody by saying right up front, I agree with almost

everything in the book. I have a difference in emphasis on the past as the historical analysis which shouldn't surprise you a whole lot. In fact, Tom and I were on an NPR call-in program the other day, and that is about the only point I tried to make, that having been there, I maybe put a little heavier emphasis on the abuses when the Democrats were in control during my 12 years there. That doesn't contradict their analysis. They do mention it in the book. I just make a point of that.

I have been asked a lot by E.J.'s colleagues in the news media over the last year to talk about the so-called K Street Project, and I always say the author of the K Street Project was Jimmy Quillen. In my 12 years in Congress, the Republicans got more frustrated every year at Jimmy's tremendous success — pardon the language — in shaking down the business community for contributions and placing Democrats in the employ of corporations that most Republicans thought should be backing Republicans all the time. I don't think he did anything wrong-wrong, at least in that project, but when you think of why Republicans like Rick Santorum and Tom DeLay emphasized as much as they did, trying to cultivate K Street too excess to our own detriment, it really had its roots in what was done in the 1980s when the Democrats, I would argue, in their last 10 or 12 years in power, took so many of these practices to the abusive stage.

Then, indeed, as Tom and Norm point out, we got into power. We intended to change them. I know that Newt Gingrich and the people around him who

formed the leadership of the House in 1995 really, truly did come in, intending to change many of these things, but they didn't or at least they didn't for very long. Then we saw some further excesses in the course of the Republican rule.

Why did that happen? Well, most of it has already been said, but let us just rehash it a little bit; mainly because of the extreme competitiveness of the House, as Norm so correctly talked about a few minutes ago. I also tell people it is not just that in my time in Congress, we never took control of Congress. It is that we never went into an election thinking there was any chance we would take control of that Congress. That is a very big difference. Every election since 1994 has been an election in which both sides could plausibly claim to have a chance to take control of both bodies. About the only exception might be the White House for the Republicans in the 1996 election in which Clinton was the prohibitive favorite, but certainly with the Congress, it was just a reasonable argument that the Congress could have gone either way.

And so, after 12 years of that or so, every decision becomes politicized. There aren't any votes that you can give to the other side. There aren't any decisions where you shouldn't err on the side of maximizing your advantage because, after all, if you play it out and this one goes wrong, it could be the one decision that causes control of the body to slip to the other side. At least most of these folks had been in the minority for some time, remembered what it was like, and didn't want to go back again. I emphasize that because when we start talking

about how the next Congress can change things, regardless of who controls it, it is likely to be not changed in the fact that this will still be a competitive political environment.

I should emphasize, by the way, one of the things I am not going to do today. I have appeared with Tom and Norm many times, and I always enjoy it. The last time we did right before an election was before the 2000 election when we were invited up to the University of Rochester for, I think, their 150th Anniversary, and it was really fun. We had to, at the end, make predictions about the upcoming election, and I predicted that the Republicans would win the White House and both Houses of Congress, and they didn't. So I was right. Now, if you remember that election, I was right.

MR. MANN: With an asterisk, okay.

MR. WEBER: Okay, but I was right. So out of deference to my friends, not wishing to cause them further embarrassment, I won't predict the outcome of this election.

Let us just say that if some of these people that are projecting that the Democrats take control of at least the House of Representatives are right, they will face much the same competitive environment. I know Nancy Pelosi. I like Nancy Pelosi. I do not agree with the demonization of her that my party is carrying on right now. I think she will be as effective a Speaker as her party will allow her to be. She is a competent person. She represents a liberal district, just

like Tom DeLay represented a conservative district, but she is a competent, smart politician. She will be a good leader, but she is going to face the same realities that we have faced for most of these last years which is even if they have a decent margin, people are going to say: The next election is a Presidential election. It is going to be determined largely by who wins the Presidential election whether, and the House will swing one way or the other. So every decision will once again become highly, highly politicized.

However, this competitiveness is the overriding environment, and we agree on that, but it is not the only thing. There are some small matters, and I think it is important to emphasize some of these small matters that can be changed because that is where you can most likely affect change. Both Tom and Norm correctly talked about the fact of the schedule. I thought the schedule was bizarre when I was in Congress. It is so much worse now that language fails me. It would be nice to see that changed.

But I would add one more point to that, and I know these folks agree with this. Part of the reason it is hard now to change the schedule is because of a broader problem that we have, which is members of Congress don't live here anymore. I still remember when I first came to Congress after the 1980 election. I remember we had a bipartisan orientation group and Bill Frenzel from Minnesota, a Brookings fellow of Tom's, came and spoke to the bipartisan group and gave us a bunch of very practical advice. The one I remember very clearly

was he said: Unless you live within an easy commuting distance of the Nation's Capital, buy a home in Washington and move your family here.

He gave a whole lot of practical reasons. It is not a bad investment. You would have your only semblance of private life, ironically, when you are in Washington because when you are back home, you are the doctor who is on call 24 hours a day. The final reason he gave, I thought was very important, and that is it is about the only way you will establish some non-political relationships with people across the aisle. You know you might argue during the day, but at night, you are at your kids' Little League games together or hockey games together or something like that. The wives will get together or today it would be the husbands maybe. The point being your peer group in Washington would be members of Congress of both parties, not just Republicans, not just Democrats.

Well, along about the middle of the 1980s, that began to change, and I do remember the election. I am sure you guys do, too. What began the change most of all was the name in the papers this last election cycle of a guy named Rick Santorum who ran for the Congress against Doug Walgren in Pittsburg. In the ad that he ran very effectively against an incumbent Democrat said, Doug Walgren represents Pittsburgh, but here is where he really lives, and they showed a big picture of his house in McLean. Doug Walgren lost that election to Rick Santorum. Other candidates emulated those candidates since then, and today look at the newly incoming members of Congress. Most of them do not move their

families to Washington. It changed profoundly the whole dynamic that exists in our Nation's Capital. It has made it hard to enact the kind of schedule changes that we would all like to see happen because now it is not just: I gotta get home and talk to my Rotary Club or campaigners or whatever. It is now: I gotta get home because my family is there. Everything is there.

The notion of social interaction with people on the other side of the aisle has basically ceased to exist. So those are all important factors.

Other factors that I think flow into this that we are going to have a hard time changing: the 24-hour news cycle, the constant and immediate feedback on decisions that shortens the decision-making time that members of Congress have, all this feeds into kind of the negative atmosphere that we are talking about.

Technology has changed the some of the way that Congress works. In the book, Tom and Norm reference the pay increase that Jim Wright was supposed to protect the pay increase for members of Congress. The procedure was set up so if he just did nothing, we would get the pay increase. He had in his office, a relatively new technology for members of Congress at that time called a fax machine. Jim Wright kept going back into the back office, looking at the fax machine everyday piling up with these vicious, nasty, venomous pieces of mail to him, calling him every name and obscenity in the book because hw as allowing this Congressional pay increase. He finally gave up on it.

I use that only as an example because there is no more deliberative period

in which members of Congress can consider decisions right now. They know immediately. They are asked immediately by Fox, CNN, and MSNBC. Every issue is polled by somebody within 24 hours of the issue arising. Then, of course, emails, they don't even have the time for the Pony Express to deliver the mail. They immediately know what all sorts of angry people in their district are thinking. This contributes to a very negative, negative environment. All that is just to talk about the problem.

Having said all that, maybe we have reached a point — this book being a big help — where some real change can be made. The only thing I say in the event that the next Speaker is from San Francisco as opposed to Illinois is that it is hard to affect this kind of change. The difficulty of it, as much as you may want to, is that you really have a short-term versus long-term interests that can conflict. It is clearly that everybody's long-term interest is to reform this institution in ways that Norm and Tom have talked about in the book, but at any given moment, the decision on the table for today probably is different and the short-term interests of the party in power probably could well be in conflict. You can't ask party leaders to do the impossible. You can't ask them to sacrifice their self-interest.

So I think the most important thing is for, if she is the next Speaker, Nancy Pelosi to do a few easy things that will set a different tone, things that don't sacrifice her self-interest at all like, for instance, immediately consulting with

Denny Hastert or if it is after the Republican leadership election, whoever the leader is on the other side, and talk about basic things, just consult about changing offices. She doesn't have to do what they say. Consultation has broken down in the congress. If you talk to anybody on either side of the aisle, even the level of consultation that existed when I was there simply does not exist anymore.

I would go a step further than that, and I would say we are going to have regular bipartisan leadership meetings of the elected leadership of both caucuses. Regular could be weekly. It could be biweekly. It could be monthly. It could be whatever. The agenda could be as limited as the majority wants, so you are not giving anything away, but just the notion of getting people in the same room to talk to each other would change the tone a whole lot in the Congress of the United States. I think that is important.

The schedule changes, if we could get her to announce a schedule change, that would be tremendous. I have already talked about why I think there will be a lot of pushback on that.

Then a couple of things that the Congress could do quickly in a relatively bipartisan manner might help. The lobbying reform package, I think, would be one. She has indicated that would be an early item for consideration. My guess is Republicans would feel like they had to support it, not that they wanted to support but they had to support it. If indeed they lose control of the House, it will be partially because of that issue. Republicans are not going to go over there and

cast their votes against a lobbying reform package that is likely to pass anyway because the other party will be in the majority. That is pretty good.

But I would bring another thing up pretty easily that I think can get some bipartisanship, and I think this is in the Democrats' interest more than the Republicans, immigration reform. I mean Bush's immigration reform bill is more popular with the Democrats than it is with the republicans. If I were Speaker Pelosi, I would say, all right, let us do that; prove that we are going to cooperate with this White House on something. The House Republicans, my friends and former Congressmen would be the ones that would have to really squirm when that happens because the bill would come up with their President's support. If they didn't want to support it they would have to be standing in the way of bipartisanship.

A few basic little things like that to start the process which we used to call confidence-building measures, if you will, in our dealings with the Soviet Union. I think you can't ask for dramatic change overnight. You have to ask people to do things that are in their interest and move slowly down that path. It is clearly in their interest to do these things.

One of the things that has always struck me is when Gingrich and I and the rest of us were beating on Bob Michael and the Republican leaders to not be so accommodative of the Democrats, it was precisely — as I think Tom mentioned — because we thought that was helping to consign us to permanent minority

status. It always puzzled me why when we got in the majority, we didn't do the same thing, but we didn't. It is easy for the majority. It is in the majority's interest to try to co-opt some people in the minority. I am using language that might appeal to the majority here. If you are in the minority, you say they are engaging in honest bipartisanship. If you are in the majority, you say we are trying to co-opt some members of the minority because it helps us govern.

Whatever works, I think we do have an opportunity now, but we need to put it in the terms of very practical solid political advice or the moment will be very, very fleeting.

(Applause)

MR. DIONNE: I always like to imagine distorting headlines on what public figures say, and so I was thinking Vin's remarks could be: Democratic Control of House Could Lead to Great Reforming Era. I appreciated that.

MR. WEBER: Or not.

MR. DIONNE: The other thing is Vin had his nice line about me, and it occurred to me as he was talking that Vin came to Washington to move the Republican Party to the right of where it was. I suspect he is actually now moving to the left of where it is, and he hasn't changed at all. You can contemplate what that means.

There are a lot of people in this room who want to get into the conversation. I will not ask about self-executing rules which sounds like replacing the death

penalty with mandatory suicide. We won't go into that.

I just want to ask a kind of contrarian question to Norm and Tom, and I would like to Vin to come in. Tom and I have talked about this before. Especially in the 1960s when Congress, except for the two years 1965 and 1966 where it had a really strong liberal majority, Congress was effectively under the control of a conservative coalition. A lot of liberals at the time said what we really need are more centralized rules to override some of these conservative Southern committee chairs. When you look at the reforms, and they were called reforms that Newt Gingrich brought in, they were actually designed to help the majority work its will and pass legislation.

Now, we are at a different point where you and many others are saying well, now, the majority has too much power and is abusing it. Yet, it seems to me, especially if, say, the Democrats take the House with a narrow majority that will be hard to discipline, it is going to be very hard for them to allow sort of a great loosening of the Republican rules because they too are going to want to work their will on what they see as legitimate legislation.

So how do we get from liberals saying we need more centralized rules to now saying we need less centralized rules, and will that survive the results of a Democratic victory in this election?

MR. ORNSTEIN: That is an interesting question that does not give one a short or easy answer. Part of it is that the reforms that liberals implemented after

this era were not simply centralizing power once they took the majority of the majority. They actually did a complicated series of things that very sharply decentralizing power away from autocratic committee chairs to the subcommittees while also creating somewhat more power in the hands of the Speaker to help to create an ability to govern when you wanted to and giving some control in the overall caucus over who the committee chairs would be. So it wasn't a sinecure without any hope of removal or any ability to influence things. It worked a little. It was not perfect. But it was not an attempt simply to grab a central control and exercise it with an iron fist.

When the Republicans took over, they changed that to some degree and created more power in the Speakership, some of which Newt took himself because of his unique position at the time, including handpicking some committee chairs and moving further down the ladder which, given the circumstances, the first majority in 40 years, still a relatively narrow, it was perfectly understandable and it brought a fairly high degree of discipline — not anything that I think any of us would shrink back from as horrific. There is nothing wrong with a majority wanting to govern as a majority and finding some small set of key issues where, in fact, you will restrict amendments and you will ask for party unity. Every majority should have the ability to do that.

The problem becomes when you take this and move it to an extreme where one, it operates every issue including those that have nothing to do with party or

ideology which the Republicans in the last few years have done because they can. The second is when you decide to abandon the rules and the norms to make sure you can prevail no matter what under all circumstances. A third is when you basically decide that preserving your power at any cost is the rule of the day, and that is where you get into allowing earmarks to go crazy, trying to remove an ethics process or an oversight process where you create a level of embarrassment that might cost you a little bit. It is all a matter of degree. What has happened is we have moved well beyond any reasonable degree of balance in this process.

MR. MANN: Let me just add a word. I agree with Norm's analysis.

I like to think of it, of Congress has a trio of building blocks, of individual members that have standing, as a result of their own election and their constituencies, committees and parties. The challenge for Congress is to figure out how to set up an appropriate balance among these various blocks.

What we have discovered is at different periods of Congressional history, there have been imbalances. There have been times when individuals were dominant and it produces a pattern of freelancing and parochialism that is really quite harmful. That problem was apparent actually in the 1960s and a bit after that. We have had times when committees have become too independent and their chairs too autocratic and cut out the input of individual members or the steering of the parties, and we have had times when the institution has been too centralized through the political parties, denying any opportunity for genuine

deliberation or for members to exercise their appropriate responsibilities.

And so, what we are looking for and what I think they should be looking for is to re-jigger the balance. Committees need a little looser reins but not complete freedom. Individual backbenchers need an opportunity to participate in the process to the extent they haven't been able to.

On other point, my view is that Democrats simply can't govern strictly with their own troops in this new Congress if they are in the majority. You still need super majorities in the Senate, and you have a President with a veto pen at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue. Or I would argue if they hold their majorities and win the Presidency in 2008, given the kind of issues they face, the idea that they can pass those major health reform, energy reform, fiscal policy, social insurance programs, national security, the idea that, say, like a tax cut, you can push that through with your own party is ludicrous. It can't happen. So both in the immediate term, this next Congress, and after an eventual victory and a unified Democratic Party, whenever it comes, it seems to me the Democrats need to create an atmosphere within the institution in which some Republicans would feel free to come over and vote with them on minimum wage, on student loan policy, on a host of other things. That is where Vin's confidence-building measures end up being very important.

MR. WEBER: I wouldn't add a lot because I do think it is a matter of balance and finding sort of the center, if you will.

I would only say from the standpoint of somebody who was in the minority, if you are interested, I am serious about what I said that a good tactic for the majority would be to figure out not how to freeze out the minority but how to co-opt the minority. You only do that through a vibrant committee process. If all of the caucus or too much of the power is invested in the caucus, obviously, the minority has no voice whatsoever, and that will encourage further partisanship. That is, frankly, what we were talking about in the 1980s. We wanted, as Republicans who thought we needed to shake our way out of the permanent minority status, we wanted people to think more about the caucus because they were getting co-opted by the Democrats in committees. Well, again, that is smart politics for a governing majority, to figure out how you do that appropriately, but you only do it through a pretty vibrant committee process.

I will ask one follow-up and then go to the audience. We have a couple of mics, right, going around? Great.

The follow-up; let me paint two scenarios. Speaker Pelosi gets elected, and she is sitting down with you guys, and she says: All right, all this reform stuff sounds great. As soon as I create an open process and I lose a vote, the press will be all over me as Pelosi's weak leadership and they will be contrasting me to the strong Tom DeLay and, boy, I don't know how to make the trains run on time — scenario one.

Scenario two, unlikely we think now: How in the world would the

Republicans govern the place with a two-seat majority which seems about the best, even according to the most optimistic Republicans I know, about the best they are going to do?

Could you take both scenarios? Then I will go to the audience.

Do you want a two-seat majority, Vin?

MR. WEBER: Yes, I think and hope that regardless of who wins and certainly we have a two-seat majority, it is going to be in the White House's interests to seek much more bipartisanship than they have in the past.

The problem is after this election, we are not going to have two parties in Washington. We are going to have three, the Administration and two Congressional parties. There is a certain degree to which a Presidency can resist this notion of lame duck status but dominance of the Congressional majority or Congressional party is really not one of them. You get to the last two years, and they know the President is not going to be on the ballot again. Especially if they are in such a very narrow majority situation, the Republicans in Congress are going to be much more independent about doing their own thing.

I do think that the Bush Administration will have a little different attitude. They are going to be concerned, as every President is, about his "legacy." That becomes a nasty phrase. People demean it. I don't think there is anything wrong about a President worrying about how he is going to be viewed in the history books in his last couple of years.

I do think there is potential for some things to happen. You mentioned them. Energy is a definite possibility. Entitlement reform, I would argue, should be a possibility, although I don't know that the Democrats will see it in their interest. I think it is in their interest. Then there are some other things too. It has to be led by the White House. The question is will either Congressional party find bipartisan cooperation to be in their interest?

MR. DIONNE: Tom or Norm?

MR. ORNSTEIN: What I would tell Pelosi is, first of all — we have said as much — start in two ways. One is a strong ethics lobbying reform package that effectively you force your caucus to support that has real teeth that passes the test of outside community, and a lot of Republicans will sign onto it. That is a victory to start with.

Secondly, begin with issues with broad appeal that now have some natural Republican support but didn't go anywhere because of the agenda control of the Republican Party. A minimum wage increase is obviously one of those. So you start with those. You get off to a good start.

But then you tell yourself in advance, I can live with a loss. If you are not willing to ever tolerate a loss in going to the floor, then it is hopeless because you will immediately revert back to practices like three-hour votes and the like. You have to be willing to lose and simply say, we lost this one.

MR. MANN: I guess the first thing I would say to Pelosi is: Look, don't

worry if that happens. E.J. will write a column saying it is not really bad at all.

MR. DIONNE: Quoting Tom Mann; somebody will find this transcript and attack me.

MR. MANN: I don't underestimate the challenges that Pelosi will have. Frankly, if the Democrats win the huge majority by today's standards, let us say they win 50 seats, it will be awful for her because the left will be transcendent; the blogs will be going nuts; instead of looking like a San Francisco Democrat, she is going to be fending off a horde of people on the left.

MR. DIONNE: I thought he was going to say Caracas Democrat.

MR. MANN: At the same time, you are going to have 15 or so moderates coming in, and whatever your majority, they are going to say, we hold a balance of power here too. The problem you have got when a majority is relatively small, even when it is a little bit bigger, is that everybody holds the balance of power. Democrats do not have a culture of putting the unity of a party ahead of their own individual interests, in some cases, their own selfish interests.

I have said before, when the 2000 election was finally settled, I believe that almost every Republican woke up the morning after, in the House, the House Republicans, and said: You know if we all hang together, we can really make something happen and actually keep ourselves in power as well.

The morning after this election, 50 Democrats are going to wake up and say: This is great. I can blackmail them for anything.

How she copes with that is going to be a very interesting challenge, but she is going to have to find ways to pick a small set of issues that really do become the party issues and the rest let have a little freedom. Working across those lines makes a lot of sense.

Let me just add a couple of things. A Republican majority of two is a disaster for everybody in Congress. The only people, I think it would make happy are Democrats running for President in 2008.

What worries me a lot now is the tone of this campaign, a last ditch, desperate effort to keep majorities in Congress. You have the President out there in Georgia the other day saying, Democrats win, the terrorists win. How do you go from the campaign where the basic theme is traitor, traitor, traitor to the next day saying, we can do some business here on immigration and social security? It doesn't work very well. Of course, that was preceded by John Boehner saying that the Democrats were more interested in protecting the terrorists — he framed it as a question — than protecting Americans. The way this campaign has gone and the tone it has taken will make it much harder to find those interstices.

I think a key to a lot of this is going to be Josh Bolten who understands and I think will try and convince the President that legacy is significant, that do you really want to go through two years where you veto 100 times when you vetoed once in your first six years, and basically all you have got is bitterness and gridlock. It is not a good way to go, but it is going to take some convincing to

move that side of Pennsylvania Avenue in that direction as well.

MR. DIONNE: I want to go to the audience.

I will throw out one idea which you can comment on later. I have been thinking it would be interesting if the Democrats won the majority, to take a couple of sympathetic Republicans. Take Mike Castle out of his bathtub, to go back to your reference, and, say, Jim Leach, and give them subcommittees, chairmanships, to just sort of begin to create. Partly, to me, it is in Vin's terms. It is the process of converting moderate Republicans into Democrats, but even if they stayed Republicans, it would also be about creating a broad governing majority.

MR. ORNSTEIN: I had also suggested that Joel Hefley who is retiring be put in charge of the ethics caucus.

MR. DIONNE: Oh, that is interesting.

Please, the gentleman right here because I saw your hand first, sir. Just wait for the mic, if you could, and if you wouldn't mind identifying yourself.

QUESTIONER: David Renaldo.

What really causes me pain about the Congress and everybody else is that there is a lot of opposition to the War in Iraq, and everybody just, on a voice vote, votes on the budget every time. The other thing there is an overwhelming number of Americans that are against illegal immigration, and yet the Congress just vacillates. I mean why doesn't the Congress listen to the polls?

MR. WEBER: Well, that is interesting.

MR. ORNSTEIN: That is very interesting.

MR. WEBER: Who wants to take that?

We are off our topic a little bit here, but I will be glad to respond. I am not one of these people who believe that you win by losing. I don't want my party to lose. It is, on balance, much worse to lose than to win, but there are a few benefits. If the Democrats take the majority, they are going to have some of the problems that go with the responsibilities of governing, and you have just cited two of them.

A big, big chunk of the Democrat base in this country does not just a better strategy in Iraq. They want out of Iraq. The Democrats are going to, if they take the House, have control of the purse strings. They will have the power if they want to end the Iraq War very quickly. When they don't do it, there are going to be a lot of really angry Democrats at the grassroots level.

That goes to the question that Norm raised about the left wing blogs and things like that and to the point I tried to make. I think Nancy Pelosi is going to be as good a Speaker as her party will allow her to be. But they are going to have some of the responsibilities of government, and we will see.

The immigration issue, I think, is also one where I don't go too much on this. It is one thing in the polls, but I also don't like when I have heard my party say, for instance, for the last year, the voters don't understand how good the economy is. I always say to them: I would hate to run for office, saying the

voters just don't get it.

There is one issue where I look at the polls and I say I think you don't just get it, and that is immigration where the Democrats have an edge over the Republicans but it is probably because they think they are going to enact a more restrictive immigration law than we have right now. That is not the case. And so, they will have to deal with that as well when they get in.

I don't know where that leaves us other than to say governing ain't easy.

MR. DIONNE: Just a pet peeve of mine: One step toward bipartisanship is to pronounce the Democratic Party's name properly.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I am Sabrina Eaton from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

I wanted to get back to Norm's bathtub caucus. Why do you think so many moderate Republicans are facing difficulties this year, and if folks like that lose, what will it mean to the next Congress?

MR. DIONNE: Great question.

MR. ORNSTEIN: Well, I think there are a couple of reasons. Certainly, one of them is that many of the competitive districts tend to be those in which moderates reside and that is for Democrats and Republicans. A lot of them just leave voluntarily, but in other case, you have districts that might lean Democratic but have elected Republicans because of the force of their personality, their effectiveness in governing, but you are always going to be vulnerable to a particular election moment, and that election moment comes when a tide occurs.

All you have to do is look at *The New York Times* editorial endorsing Diane Farrell against Chris Shays, saying we have endorsed Shays in every election. He has been a great representative. He has done wonderful things. We strongly endorse his opponent because there is one thing we don't like; he will vote to organize the House for the Republicans.

In districts where you have a wave of unhappiness with the Republicans in charge or cases where you have Democrats who voted for a Republican because they like the individual, this is a bad time to be running. Of course, the redistricting process is such that it tends to make a lot of moderate places, the only place where you have some level of competition, but it is going to cause a problem.

The interesting thing on the Democratic side is Democrats have gone out because they desperately want to win, at least in this case, and recruited in some of these swing districts, moderate and conservative candidates, something they never would have done before. So we may actually have a slight increase in moderate Democrats even as we see a significant reduction in moderate Republicans.

MR. MANN: Actually, Gary Mitchell made this point at a session yesterday. It is almost certain that at the election, the center of gravity in the Republican Party will have moved right, and the center of gravity in the Democratic Party will have moved the same direction but toward the center

because a substantial number — I believe it is a majority — of Democrats running in the Republican seats most at risk, say the top 40, are prime candidates for membership in the Blue Dog or New Democratic Coalition or both. So it really will have that effect, and it has everything to do with what Norman said; it is the underlying partisan structure of districts. It is those in which there is a rough balance that you get competitiveness and turnover, and the kind of candidates who can succeed in those districts have to be more moderate than those in lopsided districts.

MR. DIONNE: Vin?

MR. WEBER: Well, just to repeat, I agree with that. The center of gravity in the Democratic caucus will move closer to the middle

MR. MANN: Right.

MR. WEBER: It is not at all clear to me that is true at the grassroots Democratic Party. I submit myself everyday to the self-flagellation of reading the leftwing blogs, and I noticed the other day, Ellen Tauscher —

MR. DIONNE: You get years off Purgatory.

MR. MANN: What about the rightwing blogs? Do you read those too?

MR. DIONNE: You get more years off.

MR. WEBER: Yes, they are not as hateful as the left these days.

I listened to Ellen Tauscher the other day say a fairly sensible thing about the Democrats not going off the left edge of the Earth or something worse.

Immediately the leftwing blogs or some of the most prominent said we must have a primary opponent for Ellen Tauscher in the next election, must. I remember reading it. I read the story. I have never been so angry in my life. Because Ellen Tauscher said the Democrats shouldn't move too far to the left; that is what some of these people are going to face.

MR. MANN: It is true, but I have been struck by the pragmatism of even MoveOn.org. You are right.

We were out in San Francisco. I did some radio, the Pacifica Radio, and all the calls that came from the locals were attacking Pelosi for being such a wimp for calling off impeachment, for selling out to the moderates, for not representing her district. I always knew this intellectually, but to be there, you begin to appreciate what a politician has to do when they are Speaker of the House and have to represent the caucus but represent a district that really is the most liberal district in the country.

MR. ORNSTEIN: Ron talked about the diversity of that district. You have a number of people who want to impeach George yesterday, and there are others who are willing to wait until tomorrow.

MR. WEBER: Ron Dellums, when he represented the neighboring district

—
MR. MANN: The People's Republic of Berkeley.

MR. WEBER: Ron is a good friend of mine. He always used to tell me, he

said: Vin, what you guys don't understand is I am the most conservative person that could ever get elected.

Nancy is sort of in that position.

MR. MANN: Exactly.

MR. DIONNE: I do say real quickly on that point that I think there are two problems that Republicans have. One is they have governed so much as this majority of the majority thing, what the majority has actually done is well to the right of where any of these moderates are or any of the people who elect them are. Suddenly, the issue of who controls the Congress, not an issue that is usually on the minds of voters, is very much on the minds of a significant chunk of voters in this election.

The other is just a kind of rationalization of politics we have seen where Presidential voting is more and more in line with Congressional voting. The Republicans took the first big rationalization step by sweeping the South, and now you have the lagging realignment in the North where a lot of places that were moderate to liberal Republican are just slowly changing and it is happening at the level of the electorate as well as the level of the member of Congress. I think it is one of the big stories in the last 20 years.

The gentleman in the back, right near Korin?

QUESTIONER: Hi, Jim Mullo with Voice of America.

Just talk for a minute, if you would, about the cross currents public opinion-

wise in this election related, of course, to the broken branch. Is this about Congressional reform? Do people just want to throw one party out? Is it anti-Bush, anti-Iraq? Is it a combination?

MR. DIONNE: That is a great question. The way I would phrase it, and I had written the same question down because I didn't want to give the both option because everybody always goes to the both option. If you were going to ask is it primarily Bush and Iraq or is it the Congress, how do you tilt it?

MR. MANN: The answer is it is both, and it is very much

MR. DIONNE: You give it anyway.

MR. MANN: Sorry, it is very much like 1994. I thought the Republicans did a brilliant job of sort of ripping the bark off Clinton, starting early in the year but building on the sequence of events, starting with the House Bank and the Post Office and Rostenkowski's indictment, and the corrupt Congress became an important element in that, and it all came together as the need to reject the party of government. So it brought together the animists towards Clinton and what he didn't get done and what he did badly and the Congress itself, a majority party, and the abuses.

What is fascinating is that is exactly what is happening now. What didn't exist back then was a War in Iraq, a very unpopular war, which is clearly the dominant factor in this election, but it is now being wedded to this critique of Congress. Not the rules; no American, normal, good sense American would

understand anything about the Motion to Recommit or the self-executing rule, but instinctively, they think these guys care only about power and maintaining their power and they are not stewards of their own institution. That is where the page thing took on a special meaning.

MR. DIONNE: I was thinking: Tom Mann for Congress for Congress; He Will Stand up for Regular Order.

MR. MANN: That will do it.

MR. ORNSTEIN: First, if we are setting a hierarchy here, Iraq is number one on the list. Dissatisfaction of Iraq, the bad news everyday, the sense that the wheels are coming off drives so much of what is going on here, but it wouldn't work alone. It takes an interactive effect that becomes a kind of synergy.

Tom is right; this has a lot of parallels with 1994. Keep in mind, you have got one party controlling all the reins of power and people know it. People who don't pay much attention to politics know one thing, the Republicans have got the reins of power. They see the wheels coming off in Iraq. They also do not believe that this economy is working for them. This is not just people in power who are concerned about only power. It is also people in power who have fond ways to insulate themselves from any of the difficulties that exist out there or from any of the punishments that come with bad behavior.

That is why you get at the same moment Jeffrey Skilling getting 26 years in prison, a minimum of 22 to serve, for white collar crimes that, at another time, we

would have said, put him on parole. Now, when you get the Abramoff scandal followed by the Foley scandal in the sense that all they care about is covering it up and keeping anybody from having to suffer a penalty. You have Americans out there worried that they are going to lose their health insurance. They see Enron, where a company goes poof overnight and they don't have pension benefits anymore. They see people in Congress. I think one the most potent things the Democrats are using out there but it is dangerous is he voted against the minimum wage 10 times while he voted for his own pay increase 6 times. It is demagogic, but it is effective because it plays into this.

Let me add; the danger here is, as we see it, every populous moment that discontent builds to a point where the demagoguery really does take over and it is a real danger, I think, in 2008, if we are not careful that we could get something that we saw with Ross Perot, Ralph Nader, and Pat Buchanan, all united in a set of themes across the political spectrum that are not healthy ones.

MR. MANN: I agree with everything except the last point, I think, is really important. You talk about things that I see coming that are really not good, and I am not one that thinks if the Democrats win, everything goes to hell in a hand basket.

I think there are some things I do worry about, and that is the dynamic on this whole set of issues that you might relate to globalization, whether it is trade or foreign investment, immigration perhaps, other issues as well. When Clinton

was President, you saw the Republicans in Congress slipping, in my judgment, on those issues. They didn't go wholesale protectionist, but they slipped. A lot of Republicans were not going to vote to help Bill Clinton on trade agreements, things like that. Of course, as soon as Bush becomes President, you did see the pretty Democrats pretty much go wholesale in that direction. They certainly weren't going to help a Republican President disappoint all their allies and unions and things like that.

Well, now we are going to have, if the election goes as we are talking about here, a Republican minority in the Congress that is going to say: We like Bush, but he is going to be gone in two years; we are going to think mainly about how we are going to regain the majority. The Democrats, they aren't going to feel any great sense of loyalty to help a Republican President in his final two years in office. You can really see some bad movement on America's role in the world, internationally and competitively. That is a big concern that I have.

MR. DIONNE: I can't resist just saying I am less worried about the populism because I think what this election is in part about is a push-back against globalization, not one that will lead to massive protectionism, but it is the revenge of those who have done badly under globalization or who say, you promised us a lot and you haven't delivered anything. I think that is a legitimate anger. I think it is going to be a very interesting challenge to the Democrats to try to figure out what plausible policies are there to lift up the people who have been hammered in

this economic process.

MR. MANN: I think your last point is right. What plausible policies are there? I agree.

MR. DIONNE: Sir?

QUESTIONER: Nobody has mentioned Afghanistan. You have commented on Iraq. In fact, of course, if Bush had stayed the course in Afghanistan, we might be having an entirely different election. Is there no sign of disquiet about the destabilization going on in Afghanistan?

You could say Bush cut and ran from Afghanistan. Is that not playing in this campaign? Do you see any sign of that in your travels?

MR. MANN: Yes, I think it contributes more generally to a belief that the post-9/11 international initiatives have not proven successful, and there is an underlying concern that things, if not utterly falling apart, are going to require years and years of military presence and economic assistance from us and our allies. What it does is reaffirm the views of those who think Iraq was a great distraction and reinforces their view that had we made greater and concentrated focused investments there for a more extended period of time, our overall position in the world and in the War Against Terrorism might be stronger. But I think it shows up in the Iraq dimension, rather than specifically Afghanistan.

MR. WEBER: Iraq is just sap-support from the Administration on a whole range of issues. I don't think, by the way, this is logical but it is clear to me. I

mean it is somewhat borne out by polling and a lot of it by anecdote. If you talk to people: Why is Afghanistan not doing well? It is because we are distracted by Iraq.

What about these problems in North Korea? It is because we are distracted by Iraq.

What about the lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli problem and Hamas? Well, the Administration is distracted in Iraq.

How about Ahmadinejad and the problem with Iran? Well, the Administration is distracted in Iraq.

MR. DIONNE: And the problem with this is what?

MR. WEBER: Every problem in the world is being blamed on Iraq. At some point, we are going to realize we have got some problems in the world that are not caused by the distraction in Iraq that will not be solved, no matter what happens in Iraq.

MR. DIONNE: Can I see all the hands of people who would ideally like to come in? Oh, good, we are going to be in good shape. We have 10 minutes. I might bring in a couple at a time at the end just to get everybody in.

You have the mic, right?

QUESTIONER: I do. I have a question.

Is there still an opportunity to fix Congress if, on the off chance, the Republicans keep control of both Houses, especially with McConnell taking over

in the Senate and then possibly a leadership shake-up in the House?

MR. WEBER: I will answer first. I think Republicans if they hold onto the Congress will have gone through a near death experience because their demise has been predicted for months and months and months now. I think and hope that there will be some substantial desire to change, probably more on some of the issues than others, particularly earmarking. The real anger from grassroots Republicans is on the spending side. The average Republican on Main Street or in the countryside really is a fiscal conservative and really doesn't like what has happened in spending, and that is, more than anything else, what Republicans are hearing from the angry Republican voters this time. This is not why we are Republicans, and we want you to do something about it.

I would guess that they will come back with a desire to prove their fiscally conservative credentials. Whether or not there will be any desire to reform along some of the lines that Norm and Tom talked about in the book in terms of restoring some institutional integrity, I just don't know.

MR. MANN: I think it would be very unlikely. History suggests that parties change, new leaders come in, new approaches to governance happen after electoral defeat, not after victory. If they hold on, it becomes more difficult to change that leadership. Vin is right; at the margin, with some things where there are core conservative Republicans who are very unhappy with the way things are going, you might see some changes.

I really think it would take a complete change in the leadership, people like Jeff Flake and others moving up and promising to run the institution in a very different fashion, and I think the odds of that happening are slim. I really do believe that no significant change inside Washington occurs without a very clear signal outside, and I think that means changing the team. Without that, I would look for incremental changes.

MR. ORNSTEIN: Here is the difficulty; if Republicans lose 30 or 40 seats, there is a pretty good chance that there will be a clean sweep in leadership. I can imagine a team moving forward — Pence, Shadegg, and others— saying these guys have made a hash of it; it is time for a change in a Republican Party that has a history of throwing out leadership when they have bad elections.

MR. DIONNE: They throw out leaders sometimes when they have decent elections.

MR. ORNSTEIN: Yes; if they hold the House somehow, it is a vindication of the leaders. If they hold the House, if Denny Hastert is not caught up in his own ethical dilemmas which are considerable, then he will want to come back as Speaker. It will be an argument for keeping the team in place but also for saying, what we did worked. Of course, Hastert as Speaker with Pelosi as Minority Leader continues the poisonous relationship that is there.

John Boehner actually has the potential for building some relationships, but he is not likely to be there if it is in a minority status.

On the Senate side, there is no question that whatever happens, there will be a better relationship between the parties and leaders. Mitch McConnell and Harry Reid can work together in a way that Bill Frist simply couldn't either with Tom Daschle or with Reid.

The question there is if the Republicans are in the majority, then I think it becomes an issue of the President and what strategy he uses. If he takes a narrow Republican majority in the Senate and decides to push for confrontation on judicial nominees and we get another nuclear option episode of some sort, it will poison the well on a whole host of things.

If you don't acknowledge that the Senate on critical issues takes 60 votes; try and find some norm there and then work it in the House so that you actually have a legitimate process, not a bait and switch as we have had so often on some of these bills; get it through the Senate by whatever means necessary and then take out all that stuff in a conference where you strip some people out of it — if you don't see a change there, then we are going to have a very rocky time.

MR. DIONNE: I see three hands. All right, here is what I would like to do; if all four or five of you could be very brief in your questions, we will start with Mr. Mitchell and let us just move the mics around, so everybody can get in. Then the panel can promise not to evade a single one of these questions.

Mr. Mitchell?

QUESTIONER: Thank you; Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report.

I want to pose a question raised by re-reading the other author up on the stage there, Mr. Dionne, from his book: *Why Americans Hate Politics*. He says 15 years ago, quoting Bill Kristol: You can only beat an idea with another idea, and the war of ideas and ideologies will be won or lost within the new class, not against it.

It leads me to ask this question: There is a lot of talk about whether the election of 2006 is going to be like 1994, 1980, or 1974. It seems to me that in the case of 1994 and 1980, what you had was the opposition representing ideas in the form of the Contract with America and Reagan, I think, pretty successfully convincing people that there were three things that he believed in.

This election, it seems to me, no matter how it goes — one house, two houses, slim majority, larger majority — will have nothing to do with an idea that came from the Democrats or the opposition party. What difference is that going to make in the broken branch, particularly, moving forward for the next tow years and beyond?

MR. DIONNE: Hold that answer. That is a great question.

The gentleman in the back?

QUESTIONER: I wanted to see if any of you could answer the question with regards to the frustration that citizens feel at having no power to really rise up and object to the fact of, for example, the problem with the Ethics Committee when both parties colluded to destroy its effectiveness. That was hugely

frustrating to any citizen to see that occur. There are many problems in Agency behavior, the FCC, for example, when Mike Powell got in, and what is his name had to go off the TV on the NOW show, Bill Moyers. Could any of you address the question of citizen oversight and effectiveness in helping?

I am nervous. This is the Brookings Institution. I have never been in here before. It is humbling.

MR. WEBER: That is the way I felt the first time I was here. That is because I was a Republican.

QUESTIONER: The question is: How do we empower citizens to have a little more oversight and power in correcting some of these inadequacies of the broken branch?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you, sir.

Then two more, let us see. Let me just do two more. I am sorry. Some other hands have gone up. This gentleman and this lady who I saw early, and I apologize to the others because we are going to go way over time if I don't.

QUESTIONER: Mark Twain said: Suppose I were a Congressman; suppose I were an idiot; but I repeat myself.

I am wondering what your impression is of the caliber of people who are elected to Congress and in your 40 years of being here in Washington, if you have noticed any changes or trends?

MR. DIONNE: Thank you.

Then lastly, and I apologize to the other folks, but we are already over time.

QUESTIONER: William Galbraith.

My comment is back on the issue of institutional identity or the lack thereof or inadequacy of that. In going back to that, my second point was about the public and the electorate and its role in all of this. Half seem to be interested in politics as a bloodsport and would have Bladensburg declared Dueling Oaks again or caning on the Senate on the side, and many of us are just feeling frustrated and unempowered.

MR. DIONNE: So we really have two citizen power questions here. We have: No ideas from Democrats? No power for every citizen? No high-caliber people in Congress? That is to oversimplify a bunch of good questions.

Do you want to start, Vin?

MR. WEBER: Okay; I am not going to be of much help to the frustrated citizens. I believe in the institution, notwithstanding all the problems we have talked about today, and I believe in representative government and the way citizens do have an avenue, which if a lot of the predictions we are hearing now are going to be held out, is going to be proven in another week from now. The avenue for citizen action is to get involved in the political process and change.

I would say further, and this is something we didn't talk about today. I am a believer in political parties. I do not think political parties are evil. I think political parties are the better of the political actors on the stage these days. Get

involved in a political party and try and change things. If you look for an avenue other than that, I am afraid you lose me. I believe in representative democracy, and I think that is what a citizen's responsibility is, to get involved in their representative democracy and try to seek change that way. I think that you can do it.

In terms of the caliber of the Congress, the Congress is a representative institution. It has a group of brilliant people but not the majority, just like the real world.

MR. DIONNE: He is not talking about this room, of course.

MR. WEBER: It has a group of scoundrels just like every community that I now about, but they are not the majority either; and it has, by definition, a lot of average people. Most of them come there wanting to be better than that. They come wanting to do well. I do believe in the institution, despite all the problems we are talking about.

One of the things I think, as Norm and Tom could tell you about me, is I don't have a lot of people up there that I hate — Democrats, Republicans, anybody. I can pick out a handful people, just like I can in every town I lived in my life that I really didn't like. Most of them, I think were good people, trying to do the right thing. What we are talking about today, in my judgment, are some of the perverse incentives that cause good people to not succeed in doing good things. But by and large, I think the Congress still is a pretty good representative

body with people that are fully capable of doing the right thing if the incentives are right.

MR. DIONNE: Norm?

MR. ORNSTEIN: Let me start with the citizens.

MR. WEBER: You are right; there is no Democratic idea there.

MR. ORNSTEIN: On the citizen element of this, I have a couple of things to say. The first is we have a process now that I believe is driven more and more by the parties and almost everybody else catering to the wings that are out there. Cable television does it, and the parties do it.

One of the things that we have concluded in looking at this process that could make it better and add to the role of citizens would be to move to mandatory voting. If everybody voted and you knew that it wasn't a question of whether your base got excited enough or frightened enough at the alternative that they would turn out in slightly larger numbers than the other side, you would have a different dynamic and different debate in the country. You wouldn't have a dozen of the 65 full days in the House set aside to deal with Constitutional amendments to ban same sex marriage, to stop the epidemic of flag burnings that has been sweeping the country, or to make sure God is in the Pledge of Allegiance. Knowing none of them is going anywhere, you would focus on issues that people care about.

Now, you still have to get that level of intensity. The fact is on the ethics

issue, one of the reasons that Denny Hastert felt empowered to fire Hefley at all was the belief that nobody was paying attention, and he was right. It has accumulated into an explosion, but at the time, the press corps paid little attention. Frankly, we have had a bunch of stories about Murtha in the last few days that don't even mention the ethical issues. I think it is wrong on both sides. If people don't know about it, they are not going to get indignant about it. So that is one element of this.

On the caliber of members, I disagree slightly with Vin. A lot of very good people, a lot of very smart people, but we do not have a process now that is recruiting out there enough of the kinds of people who, frankly, are good politicians. You can get elected much more easily now if you stand up and say, I am not a politician, because of the disgust people have with the process. Instead, we get a lot of those who come in because they are on an ideological crusade. They don't care that it costs a lot of money or that they get their bark stripped off in a campaign or that they come to a dysfunctional institution because they have another set of goals. You will get others who are in it for the naked ambition. You can come here and use it a springboard for something else.

I just see many fewer people who come here with the idea that I am going to spend some time, and it may even be 20 years or more, because my goal is to make an institution function, so that we can make policy that will make the country better. One example, one of the people I got to know when I first came

here was Bob Kastenmeyer, a very good member of Congress from Wisconsin. He devoted 20 which soon became 30 years to working on things like patents and trademarks. He became the leading expert in a boring topic that nobody much cared about that is critically important to the economic health of the country and was willing to do that. It didn't have much to do with his own district.

I don't see a lot of people who will focus on those kinds of issues which are really significant anymore, and the country loses as a consequence. The campaign financing system, the bloodsport in the campaigns, and a public that looks at every negative ad and believes it and rewards it is a significant part of it.

On ideas, we shouldn't hype the Contract with America as a force that drove the elections. It did bring an agenda, and it gave them something to talk about in saying: When we get there, we will know what we are doing.

There actually is an agenda that could move forward for Democrats. Some of it Pelosi has talked about. It hasn't gotten much attention. Whether it is the minimum wage, it is bringing Medicare into negotiated pharmaceutical prices or reimportation of drugs, implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, various things like that, energy conservation, some of those areas, and immigration and dealing with the uninsured and medical technology are places where you can find common ground between the two parties and actually make positive change in policy. That is the challenge. If you do that, then you have a record to stand on to hold the Congress in two years.

MR. MANN: Like Vin, I believe in representative government. I think parties and strong parties are critical to our democracy. I think we have gotten caught, though, in a point in which healthy party differences have tuned into a form of tribalism that has been counter-productive. I think citizens' real power is the power to throw the rascals out, to demand a change, and that exists. If our system is too rigid to allow that to happen, even when significant numbers of voters feel that way, then we know we have a broken democracy at large. So we are going to learn a lot about that a week from today.

I actually think there is a connection between Gary's questions about ideas and the question about the caliber of members. First of all, I would argue there is almost no mid-term election that has been decided on ideas offered by the opposition party. When you have a strong national tide, it is almost always a retrospective judgment on the performance of the party in power. That is the best form of democratic accountability.

Presidential elections provide you opportunities to test competing ideas. Mid-term elections do not. Democrats would have been foolish to have been snookered into offering detailed proposals for Iraq or any other set of issues or problems because they were in no position, even in return to the majority to enact them.

In addition, ideas aren't in and of themselves great things. There are good ideas and bad ideas.

MR. DIONNE: That is a good idea.

MR. MANN: You might actually argue that fealty to one's ideas and a rigidity to hold to them, even though they are clear and compelling, but if they have negative consequences, what we need is not those ideas but we need some capacity to take in new information, make adjustments, and absorb the very qualities that Norm is talking about. In fact, there are some important dimensions that go to an individual responsibility versus socializing risk. That is a fundamental choice that the parties ought to be debating and playing out. Democrats are on the latter side. Republicans, for the most, are on the former. This has everything to do with what we do with social insurance, healthcare, pensions, and the like. It seems to me those ideas are out there and will grow in importance as we move along.

On the caliber of members, the problem is I think too many members these days come in with too rigid, ideological world view and not enough of a willingness and capacity to learn from new experiences and from their colleagues, and that is what is missing in terms of the individual membership of the Congress.

MR. DIONNE: I just want to close with three quick points and a thank you.

I think campaigns have gotten so nasty that a lot of good people are walking wires. I mean that is what campaigns have come down to, and I think it is really ugly. I teach at Georgetown, and I love people who run for office and I love to

urge them to run for office, and yet I wonder what I am suggesting that these good kids and young people are actually going to do.

Second, I think we ought to have \$50 vouchers or tax credits for everybody to contribute to campaigns as a way of democratizing political giving.

Further, I think politics has to become more fun, and politics is too disconnected from the normal social life of people. I grew up in Massachusetts where Mayor McGrory once said, every baby born in Massachusetts is born with a campaign manager's gene. But there was a lot of fun and a lot of social life built around politics. I think there is less and less of that. While that may sound a sort of trivial thing, I actually think it is very important that we disconnected an awful lot of political activity from normal sociability. The web might help us.

The last point on this is Barney Frank. You can tell he is from a safe district. He was once getting a lot of grief at a town meeting, and he looked out at the crowd, and he said: Look, we politicians are no great shakes but you voters are no day at the beach either.

I want to thank Tom Mann, Norm Ornstein, and Vin Weber, and all of you for a great discussion.

(Applause)

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