

Interview with Illinois Governor Jim Edgar (1991-1999)

by
Alan Rosenthal
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Jim Edgar, Governor of Illinois from 1991-1999, visited the Eagleton Institute of Politics in December 2010 and spoke with Professor Alan Rosenthal in front of a class on State Legislature. Rosenthal had recently completed writing a book on governors, The Best Job in Politics. He had previously interviewed Governor Edgar for the book.

PRELIMINARY CONVERSATION

Professor Alan Rosenthal: I guess, the thing I find interesting-- correct me if I'm wrong -- You were asked by the second President Bush to run for a Senate seat in Illinois, a US Senate seat that was becoming vacant. And you declined to run for that seat as a Republican candidate. You wouldn't say this, but I would say that Edgar, had he run for that seat, would have won that seat. When he left the governorship, he was very popular. He, actually, still is popular in Illinois. He didn't run for that seat. Who was elected to that seat?

Governor Edgar: Some State Senator named Barack Obama.

Professor Rosenthal: Barack Obama was elected to that seat. And, that's what history hinges on. Had Edgar run, I don't think Barack Obama would have had a chance. And without being in the United States Senate, it's unlikely that Barack Obama would have run for or been elected President. So all of these contingencies, all of these ifs, all of, ...

Governor Edgar: Yes, I mean, you never know. After he made that speech at the convention, I'm not sure I could have beat him. But I used to have a lot of people call and complain to me when Obama got elected President, saying, "If you'd have run..." And I said, "Well, if I'd have run, Hillary Clinton would have been President." And that used to work with the Republicans until about the second year of the Obama term. And then, they said, "Well, we think we'd rather have her than him." But for a long time, I could get away with it, because the alternative was Hillary Clinton. And most Republicans didn't like that. But now, they would take her, I think, over Barack Obama.

Professor Rosenthal: But if they had Hillary, they would have been...

Governor Edgar: They would have been ready, Yes, for...

Professor Rosenthal: ...pushing for Barack Obama.

Governor Edgar: Yes, right. Oh, Yes.

Professor Rosenthal: Right. Right. You Republicans are never satisfied...

Governor Edgar: That's right.

Professor Rosenthal: ...Are you?

Governor Edgar: No.

MORE FORMAL START OF INTERVIEW

Professor Rosenthal: Okay. Jim Edgar is here for a meeting at Eagleton, which will take place later today and into tomorrow morning. And he was kind enough to agree to come to this class. It seemed appropriate since this class is on governors, legislatures and policy making.

When I was thinking about writing a book on governors as policy-making leaders, the first person I talked to, I went out and visited Jim in Champaign, Illinois, where he is currently on the faculty of the University of Illinois in the Champaign campus. And I talked to him, interviewed him, about governors and their policy agendas and their budgets and what have you. And had a very long conversation. ...And since that time, I've been interviewing and surveying other governors and reading memoirs. And I asked Jim if he would just kind of, respond to the points I'm making about legislatures. And then, particularly, about governors, but also, about legislatures, since he was in the legislature. And he, obviously, saw the Illinois legislature from close hand, when he was Secretary of State and when he was Governor. And I wanted him to put in his two cents or five cents or more on some of the points I'm making.

So I thought what we'd do is spend, maybe, about an hour. , with me, kind of, summarizing about legislatures and about what I think the problems are that legislatures are facing today and, Jim would add his perspective which is a heck of a lot better than mine. Then, we'd take a break. And then, we'd come back and talk about governors, in the sense that I would love Jim to respond to my findings. .. And I think he's likely to agree with much of what I say. I know that from our interview and what I found out from other governors. But I think it would be useful to get his perspective on my meanderings. So, that's basically-- is that okay?

Governor Edgar: That'll be fine.

Professor Rosenthal: Is that okay? Well, if you look at what the public thinks of legislatures and some governors, certainly. But legislatures is institutions, the public assessment of legislatures is very low. The fact that 19 or 20 states, I think, the public passed term limits on a referendum under an initiative process. The fact that that many states' majorities of citizens voted to limit the terms of legislatures is not an endorsement of the first branch of government, the legislature. When people are asked ... whether they think it would be a good idea if people - if citizens - voted directly on the issues, more people think citizens should vote directly than think that's not a good idea.

In other words, if people had their way, they would, pretty much, get rid of legislatures and have popular referendums. I mean, going further, probably, in those states that have the initiative and referendum, such as California, Oregon, Arizona, and others. So there

isn't much confidence today. And this has been going on for some years in state legislatures. And we've been through a lot about state legislatures about representation, about advocacy by interest groups and lobbyists. And I think, basically, I want to summarize here by asking the question how well do legislatures generally work?

Generally, you've got to look at each legislature differently. And you've got to look at each legislature separately and at different points of time. But I'm trying to generalize about the system generally. How well do they work at what I consider to be their major jobs? Would you agree that the major jobs of legislatures are representing people? That representational job. And there are two aspects of that job, I think, Jim. One is what I call serving their interests. And that means identifying with them, giving them access. Listening to their beefs, doing casework for citizens, getting around, connecting them with government. And getting projects for the district, protecting the local aid formulas. And satisfying those interests that people have and districts have. The second part of representation, I think, is that of, basically, expressing their views. Expressing the views of people in the district. Now, on most issues that legislatures deal with, people don't have views. I mean, they're under the radar issues. They're narrow scope issues. And people don't think about those issues. But on the big issues, taxation, capital punishment, abortion, pretty much, people represent the view of those people in the district. And I think that's largely because, Democrats elect Democrats and Republic districts elect Republicans. And there tends to be some commonality in views. So representing is a first job. Would you say that's true?

Governor Edgar: Oh, no. Let me go back a little bit. There's no doubt that if you ask people about government, in general, they have a low opinion. I don't think they have any lower opinion of the state legislature than they do of Congress.

Professor Rosenthal: No?

Governor Edgar: In fact, they might not have as-- they don't think about state legislatures as much as they think about Congress. So it's not quite as low. But the interesting thing is for state legislators and a great extent for Congressmen, if you ask them about their own legislator, they have a higher opinion, because they have dealings. But if it's just something about this institution or government and they had to pay taxes or something like that, they don't like. So there's no doubt there is that kind of negative attitude. But I think, an individual legislator, if he or she does their job well, they can be pretty well thought of, at least, in political terms. I mean, it's very difficult, short of redistricting or a major landslide or shift in the country's attitude, as we had in this last election [2010] for incumbent legislators to lose. And I think the same is true for Congressmen. Now, we saw some lose this last time, both at the state and federal level. Because this was a major shift in public opinion. You have to go back to '94 to see, I think, as big a shift, at least for Republicans in a positive sense. So there's no doubt people do have a negative attitude.

I'll never forget when I left the legislature. And I always wanted to be a legislator. I thought, gee, this is important. , people really ought to look up to me. And all my friends came up and said, "We're so glad you got out of that job." , and I went to work for the

Governor. And I was really surprised. But people, I have to say, don't hold legislators on the pedestal up as I thought they did. But back to your other point about...

Professor Rosenthal: Representation.

Governor Edgar: ...representation. Legislators, to a fault, do representation. In fact, I think, if there is a shortcoming among state legislators is that all they do is represent what they think their district wants. Not necessarily what their district needs. I just spoke to the new members' orientation conference about two weeks ago in Illinois. And every two years I do that. And I always remind them. I say, "You are a state legislator. Now, true, you've got to represent your district. You get elected by a district. But you also have to keep in mind what's best for the entire state. And that I think is the biggest stumbling block for legislators.

Professor Rosenthal: See, what I would argue is that legislatures and legislators do a splendid job of representation. And, in letter terms, I'd give them an "A" on representation. But on responsiveness, on being responsive to what the people back home want and what is in their interests. But on responsibility, and I think responsibility's a kind of a clashing value. They're more responsive than responsible. So in trying to make everybody happy, states as well as the federal government have built up a massive debt. Because you want to keep taxes down and you want to keep services up. And legislators just are inclined to want to make people happy. I think it's partly that's the way they get reelected. And it's partly they just, sort of, have that mentality. , you, too, would want to make people happy, rather than people angry. So one of the major problems, I think, with legislatures today, and that includes Congress, is that there's greater responsiveness to what people seem to want than there is this kind of responsibility for future generations, for the nation as a whole, for the state as whole.

Governor Edgar: I don't think there's any doubt. In fact, all politicians want to be loved. I mean, that's why we're in it, to some extent. Now, we also want to change the world, maybe. But we also have egos. Now, it's not the only profession that has egos. But politicians have pretty healthy egos. And you want people to like you. You want people to think you're good. Not only to get reelected - which is very important in the eyes of most politicians. But it's just in their nature. It's just, kind of, in their DNA. That's the kind of people they are. And so it's really hard for politicians, elected officials, to tell people no. And as a result, if you don't tell people no -- that's why we have a lot of these budget deficits in states. They didn't want to make people mad. So they didn't want to tell them no. And they also didn't want to raise taxes to pay for what they just gave the people. And so that's a real challenge. But I think that's one of the real problems with most people in politics is it's just tough for them to do things that are going to make people mad.

Professor Rosenthal: Well, I mean...

Governor Edgar: One last thing. There's an old saying about politicians having thick skin. That's not true. I've never met a politician with thick skin. We all had thin skin.

That's, kind of, because we want to be loved. We don't like criticism. And so you don't want people out there upset. I don't know how many times, as Governor, I'd go to legislators and say, "this bill, you've got to-- before this. This is important." And he or she would say, "Oh, no. I'm going to make these groups mad back in my district. I just don't want to listen to them." And that's part of the dilemma.

Professor Rosenthal: But the interesting thing, and we'll get to this later, maybe, is that governors are also politicians. But they tend to be more responsible. And they tend to be more responsible, I think, because they're one. They take responsibility because they are the statewide elected official that's supposed to initiate policy and what have you. Whereas, legislators, can take responsibility for their districts. But for the product of the legislature, they share responsibility with, a lot of people and in a lot of different ways. So the difference between, I think, individual responsibility and what you might call collective responsibility. And I think that means-- and governors just-- I'm not saying all governors-- have not resorted to devices to temporarily balance budgets. But they've tended to want to deal with these problems more than legislatures have.

Governor Edgar: Well, part of that is...

Professor Rosenthal: Even though they want to be loved.

Governor Edgar: Oh, Yes. But part of it is they're the ones where the buck stops. I mean, legislators, there's usually dozens, if not almost over a hundred of them in every state. And so it's hard to pick one out and say, "You're the reason the state budget is in deficit." And they, kind of, go home to their district. Whereas, the governor used to tell legislators: "You guys are coming up with these screwy things. Then, you're going to go home. And I've got to try to make sense of it." But the governor is, I think, because he is the-- or she is-- the governor, they're the ones, if the state doesn't work that's who the public's going to blame. And that's the one who has the responsibility. And also a governor has a statewide perspective if they're doing their job right. And so that's going to be a lot more of, I think, a diverse point of view than if you're just very parochial representing a legislative district.

Professor Rosenthal: Well, okay. So, basically, I would say when you look at representation and catering to people and helping people and providing access. And, doing what people want and really reflecting their views. I mean, all legislatures are pretty good. The second job of legislatures and, the job we all think of, is making law, the law-making process. And that's much more difficult to, kind of, calculate. And I'm going to ask Jim in a minute to describe how good a job he thinks the Illinois legislature does at law making - from the point of view of having been in it for a couple of years. And also, having worked with a legislature and watched a legislature for almost 20 years, from the executive branch. But it seems to me, for law making to be done well, what it requires is sufficient study. That 's what you're doing. And not on all issues, but certainly on the major issues, on a lot of issues. It requires sufficient study. There's got to be-- study's got to go into it. And that's usually done by committees. Not always, but usually that's where study takes place.

Secondly, I think it takes deliberation. And deliberation is, kind of, a back and forth argument for different points of view trying to convince one another. And deliberation entails listening to one another. Not just yakking at one another, but there's got to be genuine listening going on. Deliberation, it seems to me, is different than negotiation. , so you need the deliberation. You need the study. Negotiations, obviously, take place. Strategizing is always going on. And it's all part of building majority votes. What you need to come out with a majority in the Senate, a majority in the House. And then, you've got to get the governor to sign on, or at least, not veto the bill that's passed.

So that's a process that involves individual legislators. It involves standing committees that should be expert in different policy areas. It involves the party caucuses and they role they play. It involves leadership. And when you, think about it in terms of giving a grade, "A," "B," "C," or "D." I give the New Jersey Legislature a "C." Okay? And I'll tell you why, very briefly. I give the New Jersey Legislature a "C," because they're not on task long enough. They don't work at it much. They spend most of their time in their districts, very little time in Trenton. The committees meet for too short a time. The New Jersey Legislature is more interested in the outcome than the input. So deliberation study is less important than getting the votes to pass what the Democratic caucus, the majority party caucus wants passed. So I think a lot of the deliberative parts and the study parts of the process are sacrificed to the results. They may come out with legislation that, all the Democrats or all the Republicans like or whatever. But it isn't a process that I think does what a legislature should do. Now, with that, as by way of introduction, how would you look at Illinois over quite a few years?

Governor Edgar: Well, I'm going to have to look over quite a few years. I mean, the last few years, Illinois state government's been a disaster. I mean, with our two governors, one in jail and one on his way. And we have really, probably, proportionately the largest budget deficit. We're probably worse than California. And I blame the legislature, along with the governors on that. But one of the problems-- and I'd give them, at best, a "D" right now. Because they are-- and one of the reasons, one of the big changes from when I was a legislator 30 years ago.

And even from when I was Governor, which started 20 years ago, things are much more partisan in the legislature. So back when I first went over to Springfield, as a legislative intern in the late '60s, very few issues were partisan. And I think that's true of most state legislatures. So you didn't have things being driven just by whatever party was in control. And everything had to, whatever the leader decided that was the political thing to do. More things were dealt with on individual basis.

And committees are important. But more important to me than committees, you've got to have two or three members in the legislature who are really experts in those areas. And back when you had a part time legislature, you usually had experts. But they had a huge conflict of interest, because the bankers who were in the legislature did the banking legislation. But they knew it. I mean, they knew what they were doing. But there was also that possible conflict of interest.

Today with full time legislatures you don't have as many who, have a full time job someplace else. So they rely a lot on lobbyists. And there's nothing wrong with relying on lobbyists, as long as you just don't let them write the bill. But that provides expertise that maybe members don't have because they now are full time legislators. So I think the legislative branch of government could do a pretty good job if the partisanship didn't dominate so much now. Because when it didn't, there was a give and take. There was a dialog or, you knew you had to compromise.

I'm a great believer that the best pieces of legislation come about from a compromise or from consensus. No one person usually has all the answers, no matter how smart they are on an issue. And you need to take time to get that input, whether from other members or from lobbyists. And the lobbyists, they represent people, too. It's just they don't represent them geographically. They represent them, usually, on a financial interest or a professional interest. So all that input, I think, is important. Too often today it's purely a partisan vote. The minority party doesn't have much input because it's going to be a partisan roll call. Whereas, 20, 30 years ago, I don't think that was as prevalent as it is today. And, to me, that is one of the reasons I give the Illinois legislature, I think, legislative bodies in general, a lower grade. Because I think it's driven too much by partisanship on issues that shouldn't be non-partisan. I mean, most issues should not be partisan, particularly in a state legislature. There's not that much ideology involved in most of these issues. But they become partisan just because of, maybe, who the sponsor is or whatever. And I think that's unfortunate.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes, I think Jim has hit on a major change that's taken place in American politics. And you can see in Washington, and you can see it, certainly, in the large two-party competitive states. You don't see it as much in some of the smaller states or some of the one-party states. I'm going out next week, right after your exam, to Wyoming. And in Wyoming, you don't have this problem. And the reason you don't have the problem of partisanship in Wyoming is that there are very few Democrats in the legislature in Wyoming. And when there's very few of one party, they're not challenging the other party- it doesn't matter. They're never going to win power. They're never going to take control of the legislature.

In Maryland it's okay to be a Republican because there are so few in the legislature.

And there are a few states like, Utah, where, they can, tolerate Democrats in Wyoming. And a number of states where they can tolerate in Massachusetts, where there are so-- But in the states where the parties are competing, you've got a situation where the stakes are high, ideology is more important today than it used to be. The parties are purer. Even the party basis, the people, the citizens, are divided along party lines. It's not just party leaders who are inflicting ideology on people who want to be in the middle. The Tea Party is an example, not the only example. So you've got competitive politics. Either side can win. The second thing that goes along with that-- well, there are a number of things that go along with that. One is you've got partisan staffs. And the partisan staffs in legislatures just accentuate the partisanship. They find partisan issues where Jim might

not find partisan issues or I might not find partisan issues. But they can see partisanship where it might not really exist.

Governor Edgar: Now, my experience, and I came up through a partisan staff, and we had them in Illinois 35 years ago. I don't think that added to the partisanship in Illinois.

Professor Rosenthal: Okay.

Governor Edgar: I think the partisanship probably came more by the leaders wanting to make sure they had control of the chamber. Because being the speaker is a lot better job than being the minority leader. Now, 35 years ago, the minority leader was still important. Today, because of this more partisan, where it's going to be our way or no way, you don't want to be the minority leader. So you'd spend all your time crafting all your legislative proposals to how can you get to be speaker. And again that's a little different than I'd-- so I don't think the staff's brought that on, at least, in Illinois.

Professor Rosenthal: What about this, that the...

Governor Edgar: Actually, the staffs, we used to party together. Now, today they wouldn't. They wouldn't be seen together. But back in my days, there weren't all that many staff. And we all got together at night and, _____...

Professor Rosenthal: I think the staffs did it. And I studied Wisconsin, the partisan staffs, the creation of partisan staffs. A political science article tried to actually measure the increase in partisanship. And it came out there was an increase in partisanship. I'm not saying it happens everywhere. The other point about partisanship is the nature of elections to the legislature have changed. Thirty, forty or fifty years ago, elections used to be run outside of the legislature by the state or county political parties, by individual candidates. In the period, probably starting in California with Jesse Unruh, the Speaker of the Assembly and Willie Brown, the election became the responsibility of the leadership. The leadership in the legislature took control-- took responsibility for getting their members reelected. And the members expected the leadership to do that. And the leadership was expected to raise the money and allocate the money to the competitive, to the marginal districts, and what have you. And along with that you, then, get the leaders and the caucuses playing a role, in posturing. To, have advantages in the elections, in the legislature.

For example, I don't know about Illinois, but in New Jersey, if you're a minority party member, if you're a Republican in the New Jersey Legislature. And you're in a safe district, and if you can't be beaten, you'll be treated well. , you'll get your bills passed and all of that. If you are a minority party Republican in a competitive district, you will get nothing. Because anything you get may help you in your reelection. So, basically, the election becomes part of the process. If you're in the minority, you want to get the majority voting on certain issues that might embarrass them. And it's a lot of jockeying in

partisan terms. Add to that, that if the election becomes important in the chamber, what you're doing is you're identifying people on the other side of the aisle who you're targeting. The majority is targeting minority members, and the minority is targeting majority members. And that makes for more partisanship. Because it's not only partisanship on issues, it's getting to be partisanship, on whether you retain your career in politics or your seat.

Governor Edgar: In Illinois, I'd say Republicans, whether you're in a safe district or a swing district, have difficulty getting a bill passed. It's become that kind of...

Professor Rosenthal: That bad.

Governor Edgar: That bad, in a lot of ways. Now, there's no doubt, particularly, they might go after a certain member, because they think he's vulnerable. But I'm not sure that no matter what bills you pass have all that much bearing on whether you're reelected.

Professor Rosenthal: No, no, no. But members want to get their bills passed.

Governor Edgar: Yes, but the point you made about the leaders, that again, is a-- to understand how legislatures work is that leaders do raise most of the money now. When I first started out, and I worked for Senator Irvington [ph?], who was the Jesse Unruh of the Illinois-- I mean, he brought the legislature to run on time. But one of the things he did was he created the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, was the first of any of the caucuses that did that. And he raised, not a huge amount, but he raised a pretty good amount. And that, no doubt, gave him more leverage when it came time to who are you going to vote for leader. If here was a guy that you had to rely on to get your funding, chances are you're going to vote for him again when he ran. And also, if he told you to be for a bill or be against a bill, if you're going to go against him, you thought long and hard about that. Because you knew your next campaign you needed some campaign.

So there's no doubt that's given the leaders a lot more control. And it's a lot easier for a leader to raise money than it is for an individual member. Because interest groups want to make a leader happy. One member, maybe, that's out of 150 members. But there's only four leaders. And you want those guys on your side. So there's no doubt that has become a change in the process. Where leaders have so much more control over what happens in elections. And members know that and so members are much more beholding to the leader. And I think that adds to why you don't see individual members on a lot of issues, maybe, vote with somebody in the other party if the leader is opposed to that. And things are much more partisan roll calls now, almost like it is in Congress, than it used to be. I think that has a lot to do with it. .

Professor Rosenthal: In Illinois, the standing committees were never very significant, as I recall.

Governor Edgar: In the Senate, they used to be... But for the most part, you're correct, Yes.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes, and I don't know quite why, but that was the case. But what's happened around the country, in the large states and the competitive party states, is that standing committees are less important than they used to be. And caucuses, the majority party caucus and the minority party caucus, are more important. And what that means is, when you are in a standing committee, usually, it's not a partisan operation, even in New Jersey. It tends to be minority party members can have influence. They may not get their names on bills. But they can influence the discussion if they don't get credit for it. And so that committee situation is a bipartisan situation, the two parties are represented. The majority party as more members of the committee can dominate. But the two parties are represented. Once you move your bills from committee to caucus, you're dealing with a partisan situation. And the partisan elements become more important than the substantive elements, very often. Or they can become more important. Does that make any sense?

Governor Edgar: No. I would agree with that. I think, again, many pieces of legislation that really have nothing to do with ideology, they don't have anything to do with much of anything. All of a sudden, they become partisan, much more than they used to. And you don't see the compromise or working together as much in committees. In Illinois, I mean, maybe, 90 percent of the pieces of legislation were not partisan. So the leaders never interfered with what happened in committee. And even on the floor, the roll call would be split. I mean, you wouldn't be able to tell the Republicans from the Democrats by the roll call. That has slowly, at least in Illinois, changed. To where now almost every bill, the leaders staff comes in and says, "These are the ones we're for. These are the ones we're against." And individual members, if they vote against their leader's wishes, they do it at their risk. Because, again, they might not be as supportive the next time they run for reelection. Or they may not get the committee assignment they want or the staff help they need. I used to always tell members-- this was when I was Governor, not when I was the aid to the Speaker, when I was trying to get them to vote the way the Speaker wanted-- was that "In the end, though, the leader needs you to be reelected. And he needs you to win your district." And so...

Professor Rosenthal: He's got to give you the money.

Governor Edgar: Yes, they've got to. But there is this natural fear. You don't want to make the leader mad, because the leader can do a lot of important things for you. And it's just some bill that you don't care that much about, maybe.

Professor Rosenthal: And you can see this, in Congress. But I think, if you look at Congress, there are some ideological issues that really divide the parties.

Governor Edgar: Yes, there's more so there.

Professor Rosenthal: This is not just made up. I mean, the partisanship is based upon, not only each party wanting to win power. But it's based on some really principle differences between the parties.

Governor Edgar: But there's been a dramatic change in the two-party system in this country. When I started out, I always thought the genius of the American political two-party system is here are the two parties. We overlapped. I mean, we never, I don't think, had liberal Republicans. Moderate Republicans were acceptable. And you had conservative Democrats. And those conservative Democrats were more conservative than moderate Republicans. Back when I was growing up, you had the Southern Democrats, who were in control of Congress. And they were really conservative. But the two parties overlapped. And so ideology was not as clear between the two parties as they are today. And as a result, 20, 30 years ago, you had more coalitions of Republicans and Democrats. I mean, the Civil Rights Bill passed with Republicans supporting Northern Democrats. I mean, Everett Dirksen, who was, viewed from Illinois as the Republican leader at the time, a very conservative guy. He provided the key votes for the Civil Rights Bill. You wouldn't see that happen today. It just would not happen, unfortunately.

Professor Rosenthal: Well, nationally, the major change was that the Republican Party gained representation in the south. And that all of the conservative Democrats, who represented the south, were replaced by Republicans. So, at least, in the Democratic Party, you got rid-- I mean, there was, a kind of abandonment of those conservative Democrats. And you had, many more Republican conservatives coming in to represent the south. Now...

Governor Edgar: The other thing I want to...

Professor Rosenthal: But what about in Illinois? Is there an ideological shift in Illinois or in New Jersey, as well? Or is it just part of the national ideological shift? But I agree with you. It used to be nationally that there would be an overlap between the two parties. Was there also an overlap in Illinois? Yes.

Governor Edgar: Oh yes. Oh definitely.

Professor Rosenthal: But now there's less, right?

Governor Edgar: There's less, much less. And part of the reason, I mean, to me the big, you understand, at least Illinois politics and state politics, national politics, you've got to understand, primaries is where most people are elected. And unfortunately, a lot of folks don't vote in the primary. Who vote in primaries? Kind of the extremes; the true believers as I call them. In the Republican primary, the far right, disproportionately shows up in a primary. And they're going to have more influence on their members in a general election would warrant. And some extent in the Democratic Party, it varies, but I think , so then you have, in the general election, a lot of folks in the middle just shaking their heads, "I don't have a choice," ? So but for most elected officials, State Legislators, particularly now that you have districts that are pretty Gerrymandered and you have safe Republican districts and safe Democrat districts, they just worry about the primary, and

the primary is usually greatly influenced by the extremes in their parties. And so, even though these elected officials may not be that extreme, how they vote often reflects that.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes you want to ask a question?

Student: I just had one question: What's the implications of partisanship on responsibility in the legislature. Is it make it more effective or is it really an obstacle?

Governor Edgar: I think it makes it much more difficult to get the Legislature to do the difficult things because politically, this is not something they want to do. And the other problem is, to do the tough things, like raise a tax, cut spending, no one party wants to take all the blame. In Illinois, we never could do it with one party, and we always were pretty evenly divided; not quite as much in the last few years, but pretty evenly. And we'd always what we called a structured roll call and you would sit down, the Governor would sit down with the four leaders, and you'd work out what had to be done, which maybe was a tax increase or , cut these programs. I mean spending money and cutting taxes, you don't have to work too hard to do that, but to do the opposite, you have to work hard, and , there would be on the Democratic side, they'd come up with their members who had safe districts, and could vote for it, and the Republicans would come up with their safe members and they could vote for it. And both parties kind of shared the blame, but they didn't put their targeted districts on the line on that. Now today, because there's so much more partisans, the minority party says, "Hey you guys are in charge, you never talk to us, you never give us any input, so you guys go do it." Well, the majority party is sitting there, even if they wanted to do it, they probably can't get all their members to do the tough votes, because they think it's political suicide, so that has caused I think a lot of legislatures not to do what they need to do, particularly in these tough times. I know that's very true in Illinois. We have not had two parties work together for a decade, and the state's in bad shape.

Professor Rosenthal: The only way you can get tough decisions made, I think is if both parties go into the tank together.

Governor Edgar: Yes, exactly

Professor Rosenthal: They've got to share responsibility, so neither party can get a electoral advantage in the next election, so there has to be a truce in order to, and that's the idea, the deficit reduction commission, that was appointed. It isn't going to work, apparently because well at the very least, the Republican Congressional members aren't going to sign on. But you've got to have that, you've got to have that happen, otherwise, what you will see, or what we are seeing particularly in Washington, but I think in the larger states as well, is the minority party plays the role of opposition and the function of the minority party, like the function of the British minority party in a Parliamentary system is to become the majority. That's the major job of the minority party. Not to cooperate, not to pass bills, not to do what maybe has to be done, but to become the majority party. So it's an electoral strategy, blame the majority party, and we'll go into the next election and win. If that continues, and if that happens, what we're going to see is a zig-zag in

control of government at the national level. The Democrats will be in but they won't be able to produce, the Republicans that come in, they won't be able to produce and it will be a- , I agree with you of course that it would be pretty tragic. <laughs>

Governor Edgar: Yes, and again, I guess the big negative ramification of these more partisanship legislatures is that they won't do the tough things they have to do and you look across the country right now, most states are in really bad shape, and it's going to take tough decisions that most people aren't going to be happy with out there and I'm afraid we're just not going to see them. Again, at least in Illinois I know that's been the problem we've had.

One party control, and that one party, the Democrats haven't been able, for a variety of reasons, to do things and Republicans attitude is, "Well, hey you guys are in control, we're not going to bail you out," , we're not going to give you votes for a tax increase and things like that. So, that we have basically a grid lock of just not doing anything. And that I think is unfortunate, and that to me is the biggest problem from this shift that we've seen. I'm not a great fan of Parliamentary government. I mean again, I've always loved what about our system when we had this overlap, because if you had a shift, if the Republicans won of the Democrats won, you didn't see the country take a big lunge to one side or the other, we kind of kept going down the middle. We maybe moved a little bit, but there was more stability and I'm big on stability.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes I totally agree. It's just a personal predilection but you can't keep reversing policy, it doesn't pay. I saw this in watching a couple of states over the years and policy reversals, let's take education. And this wasn't as a result of partisanship.

In Florida, the legislature had a tradition of rotating leadership. Each top leader came in for two years and was leader for two years, and then the tradition was that the Speaker Designate took over, the next guy who had the votes took over. And in Florida, in both Senate and House leaders really had took responsibility for education. So every leader who came in had a major education initiative, and governors are a little bit alike this, we'll get to this, had a major education initiative. And consequently, you'd have a major education reform act passed, two years later you'd have another major education reform act passed. Two years later, you'd have another major reform act passed. And legislation accretes, it doesn't get off the books unless it's taken off the books. And what you had would, the school people, the professional school people, the Superintendents of Education, the Principals, the Teachers, they didn't know what to do; none of this made any sense because it was constantly changing and they couldn't constantly change, they were a little bit more like aircraft carriers, they just, took them a while to come about. But that's what could happen with , Democrats for two years, Republicans for two years, you could get major changes in policy which can't be absorbed by the public or by the agencies that have to implement or administer policy. And I think it does make sense, particularly in the implementation stage is to kind of, you work with it, you tweak it, you keep it going, you maintain the course. Because whatever the policy is, it isn't going to work in one year or two years, I mean if you have education reform, you've got to give it years if you can hope that it's going to work.

Governor Edgar: And the other thing is, no matter how good a proposal is, if it's a major policy thing, you're going to have to go back in a few years and make some alterations. And that's a tough thing to get legislators, or, particularly if you're the sponsor of the bill to say, "Gee, my great piece of legislation, there was a couple of flaws in it." They don't like to do that. Legislatures back thirty years ago started putting sunset provisions in the legislation and that was one of the arguments is that you had to review it or it went off the books. I don't know if that's ever been all that successful but...

Professor Rosenthal: Very unsuccessful because legislatures don't work by the numbers, they're not just going to do it that way.

Governor Edgar: And my experience wasn't I don't know, they just kind of renewed everything.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes Yes, they didn't want to bother.

Governor Edgar: Because it was established at that point.

Professor Rosenthal: So basically, do you have any suggestions for how you get out of this, no? Yes?

Governor Edgar: Well, I think one of the problems, I'll go back to primaries, we have got to get more people voting in primaries. We've got to get normal people voting in primaries, ordinary people voting in primaries because we're letting the process be taken over by the extremes in both parties. And they are idiots [ph?] and they do view a difference. And God Bless them, they get out and work hard, and rain or sn- primaries usually are, at least in Illinois, primaries, we have an early primary. I used to try to move it to the summer, because who cares in March in a primary. I mean, you care about basketball in Illinois in March, you don't care about a primary election, but those people who are very committed, almost fanatical, they will show up, they will work. The average citizen just doesn't pay much attention to that, and they don't go vote in the primary. Now some states like Illinois, you've still got to declare what party, and that is public record, and we have got a lot of folks don't want to be known as a Republican or a Democrat because it hurts their business, so I think if we could some way open up, get more people to vote in the primaries, I think then we might come up with candidates who are a little more representative than the general population than maybe the extremes of their parties. And I think that would maybe kind of slow down this ideological thing that's taking over state legislatures much as Congress has been already taken over by, which I think is unfortunate because most pieces of legislation at the state level are not based on ideology. They're just kind of common little simple things that have nothing to do with being a liberal or a conservative.

Professor Rosenthal: Let me ask you, does it matter, this may be more related to civility than partisanship but partisanship and civility are tied together. Partisanship is

likely to make for less civility in legislatures, but if you think back to when you were in the legislature or when you working as a staff guy to Russ Harrington. Did members get together socially more then? Did they get to know one another across the aisle? When you get to know one another as people, you're less likely to be extremely partisan. You're more likely to be able to put yourself in that person's shoes and get his or her point of view. And those were the days, when lobbyists took legislators out to dinner, Republican legislators and Democratic legislators, that doesn't happen any more in most states because of various ethics rules and restrictions on gifts. That was a time when legislators did more drinking, it was a time when they did more card playing, it was a very different era. Now they do more working and less drinking and probably more solitary then they are collegiate.

Governor Edgar: They do more working but they do it separate. There's no doubt, in fact, a few years ago, Ray LaHood, who was a Congressman from Illinois and is now Secretary of Transportation, he was one of the Republicans I guess that Obama put in his cabinet.

Professor Rosenthal: The retreats.

Governor Edgar: The retreats, they were sponsoring these retreats to try to get at the Congressional level, Republicans and Democrats and their families together and get to know each other because in the old days, they used to all live in Washington. Nobody lives in Washington now, they commute and they're always in their caucuses or whatever and they're never on the House floor. They don't sit on the House floor, they only come in and vote. The state legislature, members sit on the House floor, the Senate chambers, but they're divided by parties. In the committees was where we used to have the interplay. I remember I used to sit in committees and I'd usually sit by Democrats, just, and you get to talking to them, because you get bored listening to all the rhetoric in committee and you'd get to know them.

The other thing in Illinois we used to have were called Legislative Commissions and when the Legislature was not in session, which was a lot of the time back then, you had a joint committee between the House and the Senate, or Republicans and Democrats and they would meet, usually around the state, which meant they were overnight someplace together and they would socialize and in Springfield, back years ago, I didn't drink, or I didn't play cards, so I wasn't a very good Legislator back then, but there was a lot more at night, guys would go out and socialize. They'd be at the same bar, and then they gave them a per diem and they could all afford to buy a condominium and they just stayed in their condominium, but before they used to all live in a hotel together. And that sounds kind of like it's not important but that's very important, because if people and you socialize with them, you're going to be less apt to misunderstand them, or you're going to be more apt to be able to work together and that has disappeared at the state level, at least in Illinois, considerably over what it used to be and they only kind of spend time with other Republicans or other Democrats and that's all they hear, that's all they know, so when these guys on the other side of the aisle get up and say something, want to do something, they say, "Well that doesn't make sense, I don't, I'm not going to do that."

So I think that's a real problem, and I think there ought to be more attempts, I'm not saying we go back to go out and get drunk at night together or whatever, but there needs to be some way to get the two parties together. I'm a great believer, the seating arrangements are very important. I'd love somebody to do a study sometime of where people sit in a legislative body and how that affects the output of that legislative body. I'm not sure you can ever get the Republicans and Democrats intermingled on the chambers, but in committees and I'd move people around all the time, so you're forced to get to know other members in the Legislature of your own party or of the other party even. Because we always sit in the same spot, and again, that might sound like a minor thing, but in the state legislatures, you sit for hours in your seats in the chambers. And the people around you, but you may not know the guy two aisles apart, or two rows from you very well, and so anyway, when I had power, which was limited, like at Secretary State, I was head of the Secretary of State Association, I used to make sure every time we had a meeting, we had different assigned seats, so you had to sit next to different people. One of my gripes with the Governor's Conference was, you go to the Governor's meeting, and you would always sit by the way your state was admitted to the union, so I always sat between Indiana and Maine. And I- eight years, that's who I sat by, and we spent hours in those meetings and a lot of talking between us, but I never got to sit by the guys from the other states.

Professor Rosenthal: Did you ever tell Ray Scheppach [then Executive Director of the National Council of State Legislatures.] about that?

Governor Edgar: Oh I did; I used to complain all the time about it.

Professor Rosenthal: Well he'll be here, complain again.

Governor Edgar: I will. But those little things I think are things that you might be able to somebody pay attention to and it might help begin to... I was a great believer in the state legislature, the national groups, of course I like to travel, the junkets. But I think they were very important, because you get around other legislators from other states, you learn what's going on there, you would see the similarities, you'd pick up some new ideas, but perhaps the most important thing was when we'd go to these meetings, Republicans and Democrats from the Illinois legislature would go to these meetings, they'd be out of state, they'd be from Illinois, and this was this comradeship that developed that didn't develop back in Springfield, because you were partisan then, you were split up, you were too busy, but when you'd go to these national meetings, you'd be together, often you'd sit together at dinners, might be the only time you ever sat with a Democrat from Illinois was when you went out of state and to this day, there are people in the Illinois legislature, there's still some left, here in government, who I used to go to those meetings with, like John Cullerton, we used to go to Council of State Government things, when I was a Governor and he was a Legislator, but we'd get out of state, and we were Illinoisans, we weren't Republicans or Democrats, so those kind of things sound minor, and you think, "That really shouldn't enter into public policy," but I think they're

important in trying to create a little more togetherness among legislative bodies that we've lost in the last few years.

Professor Rosenthal: All politics is personal. Just continuing this for a minute, you take these annual meetings, these national meetings of different legislative organizations, it's a great idea but fewer and fewer legislators are going because it's politically dangerous to go. Particularly if the meeting is in a nice place like San Diego or San Francisco, because then the fact that they went will be used by the campaign opponent against them.

Now let me just give you one story, I don't think you've heard this story but, some years ago there was a legislator in New Jersey, Bill Schluter and he was a maverick Republican. A very do-gooder type, who was punished by his party, and given the Chairmanship of the Joint Ethics Committee of the New Jersey Legislature because nobody wants to be on the Ethics Committee and Schluter liked it and by virtue of being on the Ethics Committee, he was a member of the national organization, COGEL. Council of Governmental Ethics Laws. And these were people who did ethics, one way or another, who were on commissions, or in investigative agencies, or in the Legislature and one year, the ethics, COGEL was meeting in Honolulu, and this is years ago, they had a meeting in Honolulu, and I happened to be talking to Schluter on the phone and I said to him, "Bill, are you going to the meeting of COGEL in Honolulu?" And he said, "Oh, no, I couldn't go, I can't use state money to go there." Legislators used to get a travel allowance to go to a national meeting of an organization that was relevant to their work. "I can't use state money to go there, no, no." I said, "Well, Bill, why can't you take it out of your campaign account?" In most states, Legislators have campaign accounts that can be used for anything, loosely connected to their campaign or to their office. It can't be used for buying a car or paying off your mortgage, but it can be used, so he could have used. He says, "No, no, no, I can't use my campaign account, it would look bad." And then I finally said, "Well, Bill, you've got money, why don't you just take it out of your pocket, pay and go to Hawaii." And he said, "That's a good idea." And then he said, "No, I couldn't do that, it would look bad."

The point is, the public doesn't want to see you going anywhere that they can't go. Whether you're paying out of state funds, out of a campaign account, or it looks bad even if you're paying out of your own pocket, so it's very difficult. I was at the NCSL annual meeting in Louisville, just this past season, and I got approached by a camera crew for NBC. And I was trying to explain, and they were doing some story and I knew whatever they were doing was going to be bad, and I tried my best to explain why these meetings were useful. And they came out with their usual piece about how people are not attending the meetings or doing this or, and they had as an event, they had something at Churchill Downs, so they had a lot of camera stuff at Churchill Downs, and those events are awful, I mean, just they're terrible, nobody would want to go. But, people seemed to be having a good time, so that's all they had to get, they were having a good time, and the implication is nobody else is having a good time. So it's very difficult to get people together, Governor Edgar mentioned that Ray LaHood along with a Democrat, David Skaggs had started this retreat for new Legislators, or for all Legislators.

Governor Edgar: All Legislators.

Professor Rosenthal: All Legislators, and I was talking to Skaggs the other day and Skaggs referred to it as a modest success and hearing what had happened, I would call it a modest failure. Some members turned out the first year, fewer members turned out the second year, and hardly any members turned out for the third year. And these were , retreats that they, they didn't want to go. Or, there wasn't enough incentive to go, they were happy not to know their colleagues, particularly their colleagues in the other parties.

Governor Edgar: There's just too much emphasis on if you're going to climb the ladder, it's going to be a partisan ladder and you're going to, it doesn't do you any good maybe to get along with the other guys, it might hurt you and again that's a change from when I started out forty years ago in this business and I think at the state level, particularly, it's unfortunate because I don't think it's necessary, maybe at the federal level, it's a little different, but at the state level, most of these issues, there's not a Republican or Democratic side on this issue, shouldn't be, and unfortunately too much of that's become that way.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes let's not overdo this, this doesn't happen in all states, it tends to happen in the large competitive party professional legislature states. It happens, well let's just name the states where it happens: It happens in New Jersey, it happens in New York. It doesn't happen in Massachusetts because there are just so few Republicans in the Legislature so it doesn't have to happen. It doesn't happen in Vermont because there are Republicans, but Vermont is different, probably because it's a small state and it's not a professional, it's a very citizen legislature. It happens in Texas, right?

Governor Edgar: Yes, now because back when I was NCSO, it didn't happen, because there-

Professor Rosenthal: Because it was one party.

Governor Edgar: Yes, you had Republican..

Professor Rosenthal: Now it's competitive. So in the..

Governor Edgar: Probably Ohio.

Professor Rosenthal: It will happen in places like Michigan, it will happen in Illinois, to some extent it started to happen in Ohio, more recently than in the other places. In Pennsylvania, certainly. So maybe in about a third of the states, this is really going on, but it's certainly going on in the nation.

Governor Edgar: With two-thirds of the state population.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes a third of the states, with two-thirds of the state population. Anyway, so you don't think that the Illinois legislature does a great job in making public policy?

Governor Edgar: I don't think...

Professor Rosenthal: We'll get to the job of Governors, later.

Governor Edgar: Yes I don't think they have recently because of this partisanship and the one party rule has not been the norm in Illinois and so I don't think they've quite figured out how to do that. We always were very evenly divided and it's shifted much more to the Democrats and they just haven't. And of course part of it has to do, you have to have strong leadership coming from the Governor's office to do some of these things, and that hadn't happened so there's a tendency with the Legislature, it's harder for them to organization themselves to do what has to be done without the Governor being part of it, and that's I think has added to it. We've had a bad run on Governors here. Not my time, I was a great Governor, but since then, we've had a bad run on Governors. And I think that's impacted the Legislature's ability to do their job too.

Professor Rosenthal: Let's get questions, particularly for Edgar or for me, basically on the Legislature and it's role, because then we'll take a break and we'll come back and spend most of the time on Governors because I've got all sorts of results that I want to , kind of bounce off Governor Edgar and I think that would be also interesting because Governors are the prime movers as far as policy is concerned in our states, just as the President is the prime mover at the national level. So any questions before we take a break, Yes?

Student: When Professor Rosenthal, after you had would resolve the partisanship and you had mentioned voting in the primaries, could you just elaborate a little bit on that, like how that...

Professor Rosenthal: Well part of the problem is in the primaries today, at least my view of it, and I'm more familiar with the Republican primaries than the Democratic primaries. You've got this, the Tea Party, you've got the Religious Right, you've got these what I would view much more conservative than the average Republican voter, who are very involved and they get out and a lot of folks don't vote in primaries, but they do, and for a lot of Legislators in particular, that's where their election is. Their district is, the general election is a forgone conclusion; whoever wins the primaries is going to be elected. So what they worry about is the Primary. And they worry about who votes in the Primary. And so you have a tendency I think in both parties that you have the what I call more the "true believers," the really kind of hard line, this is the way it's got to be kind of thing. They're very important. So that makes it more difficult for that Legislator who's elected maybe to reach across the aisle and work on a compromise because they're concerned about this small group, but a group that's very important in a primary, that doesn't want to see compromise. I mean it's kind of like, Sarah Palin's comment about Republicans weren't elected to go work with President Obama, they were elected to oppose him. Well that attitude is kind of growing in the State Legislatures than used to be. I mean, the attitude, all right, you're in a minority, but most of these problems aren't Republican/Democrat problems, well today, it's being viewed much more partisan than it used to be and I think it's driven by these idea-logs on both sides that really don't want

compromise, and that's fine, I mean, they're entitled to that and I respect their determination to be out there and be active, I just wish people in the middle, where I think most folks are, who would like to see compromise, who don't think things ought to be all black and white or red and blue I guess is the colors we now use about the two parties, but they don't vote in the primaries, so their points of view is not as important, even though there might be more of them. So that's why I think more participation in the primary would I think, help maybe, it's not going to completely turn us around, but I think it would slow down this kind of polarization that we're seeing in American politics which I think is detrimental. I mean, again I have always thought one of the geniuses of our system was this overlapping and , we weren't polarized as much. I'm a believer in the two-party system, mainly because I think you ought to have a check and balance and voters ought to have a choice on election day. I'm not so much that we ought to have two points of view as we ought to have two different candidates and I've got to tell you someone who has ran for office, was pretty successful, I worried about, I knew they were going to run somebody against me, so I better watch myself, I'd better , not do something that was going to be questionable, so I think the two party system is very important, but I think we've got to the point now where we've polarized and Congress has happened I think earlier, particularly in the House; the Senate now too. One of the reasons I didn't want to run is I didn't want to put up with that I mean I'd been around it long enough, I just wanted to, if it'd been to club, when the US Senate, didn't matter if you were Republican or Democrat, they all went after session and had a drink together and kind of worked things out, I might have gone then. But now it's so partisan in the Senate like it is in the House, and that is unfortunately, as I've said has spread to the state legislatures and again I think the primaries are one of the ways maybe that has happened and one way we can get around that if more people would vote in primaries.

Student: You mentioned before how a lot of state legislatures have a, if you associate with the other party members how you're often, that that's a taboo, is that like universally applied, does that happen to a lot of legislators?

Professor Rosenthal: No, I mean if you go out and have dinner with them, they're not going to throw you out of your caucus, but you just don't think about doing that. Now if you vote with them a lot, then you're going to run into troubles. But even if you vote with them a few times. There was a bill up in Illinois legislature last night, I was, at the airport I got a call from a state Senator who used to be my Chief of Staff and who lost the Governor's primary by 170 votes. If he'd have got- he'd be the Governor, after January if he'd have won that Primary, but anyway, there was an issue up and he was going to go against his party, basically. And there were going to be two of them, but he'd promised me and I was, it's not a partisan issue, but it's one of those issues that has become partisan, but , <inaudible> Oh Yes, the issue was Gaming, and Horse Racing. See I would have excited to build a Churchill Down, I'm a big horse racing guy, but it wasn't, it's not, a lot of Republicans are voting for it, but their leader was trying to hold it up to get a trade off on something else, which I understand that too, but they do that on every bill now, and so what happens, nothing happens. And , in this case, if this hadn't happened, doesn't happen, the industry, the horse race industry in Illinois probably won't exist in another year or two. So, and it's not a great bill, I mean it's a lot of flaws, but it's better

than nothing and the problem though is, if you might really feel strong about this, but if your members in your caucus, if you do that very often, than you're going to get ostracized. Again, thirty years ago in most state legislatures today where it's very partisan that wasn't true. You saw , split votes, I mean, Republican/Democrats would be on both sides on a lot of the issues like that and you don't see that as much today.

Governor Edgar: Look at the Health Care bill in the United States Senate and just look at Olympia Snow. Or actually look at there were about, oh I guess about eight Republicans in the Senate that were willing to kind of look into the Health Care legislation and that were working on the finance committee to kind of craft something that would be satisfactory to the Republicans as well as for the Democrats. Olympia Snow, being one of them, and basically they kind of agreed that if they couldn't stand together, none of them could go and when they went home, to their districts, to their states, during that course, they heard from people back home, so that was the first- they heard from people back home and several of them, Grassley for example, from Iowa broke off; others broke off. Snow, Olympia Snow from Maine continued to kind of tantalize the Democrats with the possibility that she would agree, and they kept doing whatever she wanted, they kept, agreeing to her requests for this, for that, for the other thing, but finally she too, couldn't go ahead. She couldn't go ahead because she would be the only Republican out there, and she couldn't do that. I'm not sure whether she would have faced real opposition among Maine Republicans, I don't think they're quite as vehement or conservative in Maine, but she certainly wouldn't have been, made her colleagues in the Senate happy, so it happens. I don't think it happens on many occasions in many places- it doesn't have to happen often, because if you're a member of a party, you don't want to alienate your party colleagues, . There are no great incentives to do that.

Governor Edgar: That's something else to understand. The power of the caucus, it's not just because the leader has got money he can give you, there is this feeling that I want to be part of the group. I mean I don't know how many of you, most of these people are very reasonable folks and they go off to the State Capital and it's kind of like going off to college and getting in a fraternity. You do some goofy things when you all get together and individually you're pretty good. But there's this feeling that I want to be part of that, I don't want to be an outsider in my caucus, I want to belong, and I used to have problems when I was Governor with Republicans in the Senate, their leader, who was much more conservative than I was and I'd go to these members and they really agreed with me, in fact, in their District it made sense. But they, and it wasn't so much their leader was going to withhold money, they just didn't want to go back to their caucus, which was their club, and say, "I'm not with you guys." I mean that's just, really bothered them and so that influences a lot of what happens; particularly in State Legislatures, I can't speak for Congress, but State Legislatures, it does influence what they do and today because those caucuses are more powerful, they meet more often, it's more your, it's the club you belong to, it's not the Senate or the House, you belong to the House Republican Caucus, kind of, and you don't want to, let those people down, you want to be, I'm sure you have done that yourself on things. And that attitude, has a lot to do with why things happen in legislative bodies. It's not again, it's not something you necessarily read in the text book, but that's why it happens. One thing, we've been kind of negative on State

Legislature; they do play a very <laughs> positive role, I mean, you can have a terrible Governor and you need a Legislature to keep him in check as we saw in Illinois. You also, a Legislature does represent their constituents. And folks ought to be represented. People ought to have their point of view. Now, they might be wrong, and that shouldn't prevail as public policy, but they need to represent them, and I think legislatures do that and I think they are very important check on a rogue Governor. It's just, I think their potential is a lot greater than what we've seen the last few years.

Student: As we were talking earlier about representation and legislators representing their constituents' interests, would you say-- and that they want to be liked, and they want to, they more or less represent what they want, . Would you say in Illinois, or in your own personal experience as a legislator, were you advocating for them as a trustee, or as a delegate?

Governor Edgar: It's been a while since I remember the definition of a delegate and a trustee. , I think part of-- I was from that district, so I shared a lot of their values, and so a lot of things were natural. There were certain things. I mean, I was rather-- I was peculiar a little bit. As a down state Republican, I was pro choice. I was pretty sympathetic to Chicago. a lot of things not typical for a down state, that's a rural, basically, area of Illinois, Republican. But on the majority of the things, people could relate to me that, hey, I grew up in this district, and I was, family man, all these things that they kind of cared about, so they let me kind of wander on some issues. And I have a definition. We're not in to talk about leadership, but my definition of leadership is convincing folks to go where they don't want to go. So you're representing them, but there are times you're going to have to kind of lead them to an area maybe they don't really want to go, but they need to be there. It's best for them long term. And maybe that's more true for an executive position than a legislative position, but I think even legislators, if they do their job right, if they represent their folks, then they've got a few votes they can make that maybe their district might say, "Well, I don't agree with that, but I agree with most everything else he does, and he's a good person. I'm not going to"-- you're not going to lose over one vote. I mean, even voting for Illinois where a third rail in Illinois politics has always been perceived as being for an income tax increase. I don't think that's ever beat anybody in an election. You cannot prove to me that ever beat anybody, particularly a legislator.

Professor Rosenthal: In a general election you're talking.

Governor Edgar: Yes.

Professor Rosenthal: What about the primary?

Governor Edgar: A primary I still can't find anybody that lost in a primary.

Professor Rosenthal: Because of one vote.

Governor Edgar: Yes, Yes. Now, one of the things that affects legislative races today that didn't, they call them mailers, and one thing you've done, all of a sudden you'll see these mailing, because used to be, you'd run ads in newspapers, on radio, television. Today direct mails are much more used, and also with cable and all, you can kind of zero your message in. And there's more money, so you can spend more money on advertising, and it's much more negative. So members do worry about, some votes, that they're going to just get inundated. But I, again, I still don't believe there's ever been one vote outside of maybe back when I was a legislator, we had a legislative pay raise passed after the election, about two weeks after President Carter put a wage price freeze in the United States.

Professor Rosenthal: And you voted for that.

Governor Edgar: I voted for that, but I'd campaigned for that. I'd said that. Now, I did leave the legislature about two months later. They never got a chance, but there were some legislators that got beat, about three around Peoria, because the Peoria paper.

Professor Rosenthal: Pay raise is very bad.

Governor Edgar: Yes. Peoria paper, that's the only time, though. We did a lot-- the Peoria paper ran their pictures for the next year and a half, until the next election, everyday on their editorial pages. "These guys had voted for this pay raise." And now I went in and saw it, because I got appointed Secretary of State a couple of years later, and I went in there, and they said, "Now you voted for that pay raise." And I said, "Yes, and you looked." And I said, "Before the election I was for the pay raise." They didn't say another word. But, that's the only thing I can think of. Now, if you do that several times, then I think you might have a problem. I mean, you can't use up, but I think

Professor Rosenthal: The major point is that there aren't that many times when legislators are out of synch with their districts.

Governor Edgar: No.

Professor Rosenthal: A pay raise is a little different. Those kinds of issues, yes, but, in terms of the big issues, the hot button issues, they generally, they think the way the majority of their constituents who had voted for them think.

Governor Edgar: Yes. I mean, they believe that.

Professor Rosenthal: They believe.

Governor Edgar: Now, there are some times, though. Unfortunately, there's more times than they probably should, they'll go against their conscience, because they're worried about, not so much getting beat, they just don't want to be harassed, because they go to these meetings and people, sometime legislators will get excited to get three phone calls on a bill. Now, today you get emails, but emails, you get millions of emails,

but, still, if some-- they get-- somebody stops them at a function and says, "Hey, I don't like this idea." , they don't get that many personal contacts on a variety of bills. I mean, when I was a legislator, I might have only got contacted on less than five percent of the bills I voted on. And of that five percent, probably there's only five or six I got more than twenty pieces of mail on. Now, that was before email. Today it's a lot easier. You get emails. They can, send them out. But I would remember, when I got letters on, I'd remember, particularly if somebody grabbed me at an event and said something about a bill. At least you made sure you knew why you were voting against what people maybe wanted back in your district, if you were doing that. But for the most part, most of these issues don't generate that much of an interest on the part of the electorate, and unfortunately, a lot of them become partisan issues that shouldn't have been.

Professor Rosenthal: Alright. Why don't we take a ten minute break, and we'll come back and really get into governors, which is, where Edgar spent eight years, and where I've spent the last year and a half in a different capacity. The way I'd like to do this is to sort of, kind of get out the results of my study of governors which, I'm just finishing up. And when I started, when I decided to write about governors, I immediately called up Jim Edgar, and he was kind enough to talk to me for a full day about his governorships in Illinois. And what I think would be useful is, let me just say, what I'm going to lay out here is the governor and his policy leadership, and how governors succeed at being policy leaders. And what I mean by policy leadership, I mean leading on public policy initiatives that governors have, and on the budget, which is the major document, that has to be enacted into law, and then annual or biannual basis, depending upon the state, and the budget is where resources are allocated. I'm going to talk about-- let me just see if I-- okay. I think the best way to do it is to talk about this in terms of the chapters that I'm going to be presenting this material in. And I'm going to start out talking about the essential powers that the governor has, the constitutional and political situation that governors in different states have. Secondly, I want to talk about what governors find when they get sworn in, the situations with which governors have to deal. Thirdly, I want to talk about what governors bring by way of personal experience and personal assets to policy leadership, the characteristics of governors, the personal qualities that feed into success. Fourth, I want to talk about how they formulate the agendas they come up with, how they decide what they're going to push for and what they're not going to push for. Fifth, I want to talk about how they get what they want from the legislature, what they do by way of campaigns. And then sixth, I want to talk about what they accomplish. And seventh, I want to talk about why governors have a record of success. Alright. Let's just start with the powers that the governor has, and, what the governor's advantage. It seems to me that the major advantage of governors over legislatures is simple, and it's the fact that governors are one, and legislatures are many. There's one governor. There are two houses. There are, forty members of the assembly, eighty members of the senate. There are Democrats. There are Republicans, the majority and a minority, but the governor is one, and being one means that the governor decides. The governor consults. The governor listens, the governor studies. The governor does all of this, but then the governor decides, and that is the governor's program. Now, the governor can change the program as he or she goes along. The governor can compromise, but the governor has the initiative. The governor has the initiative. The governor has the

initiative, constitutionally, but I think physically, by being one the governor has the initiative, but also constitutionally by constitution specifying that the governor shall deliver messages to the legislature, constitutionally that the governor shall, formulate the budget, as the governor does in about forty out of the fifty states. So basically, the governor has this power, the initiative. Now, when I surveyed governors, sent them a mail survey, M A I L survey, there were seventy-five former governors who responded. I'm basically looking at the modern governor, so what I've been doing is looking at governors who served in office in the fifty states since 1980. There are about two hundred and seventy-five of those people who are alive today, who have served. I didn't try to interview sitting governors, because they are very difficult to get hold of, and, .

Governor Edgar: They don't tell the truth anyway.

Professor Rosenthal: They-- Yes. What they say would be suspect, because they've got, they've got too much riding on not saying, saying things. So there were about two hundred and seventy-five governors. Seventy-five responded to this survey. I've interviewed another twenty-five governors, and I've read memoirs and biographies of probably another twenty-five, or so, governors. So I've touched upon, one way or another, about a hundred and twenty-five governors who have served, in most of the states. I didn't get-- oh, Yes. I got a governor from New York, but I touched about probably on governors from virtually all of the states. In this survey, I asked governors about initiation of policies. And I asked them, , who initiated, you or the legislature, policies that were the major policies passed in your state during your administration? You got to recognize there may be some exaggeration by governors and, there's no way to discern that, but I don't think it's too much. Basically, seventy-two percent of the governors responding, said that they initiated all or most of the major policies that were passed during their administrations. Only twenty-four percent, about a quarter of the governors, said that the legislature and the governors initiated about an equal number of the major policies, and about four percent said that the legislature actually initiated most of the major policies. How does that strike you, the kind of initiation thing, the major policies?

Governor Edgar: Again, I mean, as far as Illinois, I would say that at least ninety, ninety-five percent came from the governor, and that's not to say that we got everything done.

Professor Rosenthal: No. That's a different question.

Governor Edgar: Yes. But they came from us.

Professor Rosenthal: But the point I'm making is the governor being one, the governor initiates the major stuff. Not only is the governor one, but the governor has the constitutional requirement to initiate. So, yes, the governor initiates. Another power of the governor is that the governor can reward and punish legislators. And I guess the basic, punishment that the governor has, it's not only a punishment, but it's a tool, is the veto. The veto and the line item veto, or the conditional veto, but to be able to veto a bill

is to really, and to have that veto, it can only be overruled by a two-thirds vote, that is a very significant weapon. The threat of a veto, threatening the veto, gives the governor the advantage in bargaining. I mean, wouldn't you say the veto was a?

Governor Edgar: It does. It's not, I mean, probably if it's a important piece of legislation, you're probably not going to veto it or sign it just because you're either happy or unhappy with that legislator, but that legislator knows you've got the final say. And it's amazing how nice they get to be to you once they get the bill passed, and they know the only thing between them having this bill that they can say, "I got it done," is you. They're a lot nicer to you. Now, in Illinois, it's the only state in the Union where the governor not only has these veto power, he can rewrite the bill. He has an amendatory veto power, which is-- we've used it far out of what was the intent, but we've had it upheld in court. You can take a bill and rewrite it, and so the members know you have that option, too. Now, interesting, they don't usually care too much, because they just want a bill, but the veto is a power. I wouldn't say it was the main leverage I had.

Professor Rosenthal: No, no.

Governor Edgar: But in this day and age, when you don't have jobs anymore, you can't give out contracts that easy anymore, it is one of the things you do have that fortunately they haven't taken away from you.

Professor Rosenthal: But, I mean, there are other, the other powers, too. I mean, the power to appoint people to boards and commissions. Legislators want to get appointments for constituents, for important constituents, for deserving constituents, and the governor in Illinois, and in many states, has many appointments. In New Jersey there are sixty million appointments. And that is a power to reward, and it doesn't take much to ingratiate yourself with legislators. An appointment would be fine.

Governor Edgar: Appointment-- back on the veto, I forgot really the most important power, leverage I had on them, not when I was going to sign the bill, but they wanted a bill signing ceremony. Because that gives them publicity, and that was the biggest leverage we probably had with these guys, because they really had to be nice to us for me to do a bill signing ceremony. And if they really were nice to me, I would go to their district. Now, I was a legislative liaison for Governor Thompson. I remember the legislative session got over, and all the bills were on his desk, and I reviewed them all. I mean, all of a sudden, legislators who wouldn't talk to me during the session now became my best friends, because they knew I was the guy that was going to talk to the governor, not only what he'd veto or sign the bill, but more importantly in many cases would he do a bill signing ceremony, or would he even come to their district, because that gave them that publicity that was so important. So the appointments, Yes. I mean, they'd have somebody that was important to them. Sometimes you had to worry about being their brother-in-law, something like that, but, that helped him out. And the governor, the appointment power of the governor, I think, is one of the most important powers that probably doesn't get much attention when people look at how well has a governor done, . What do you expect from this governor? I mean, look at who he appoints, because a

governor's only as good as the people around him. And the folks he appoints, whether it's to his staff, or to these boards and commissions, who have a lot of power. Many of these boards and commission, they run universities. They have huge economic powers, very important appointments. And the kind of people the governor names to those boards and commission I think is a good indication of what kind of governor you've got, whether the governor's a good governor or not. But, you don't name, just because some legislator wants you to name somebody to something, you don't do it unless the guy's qualified. But there's a lot of people qualified out there, and so if a guy's qualified, and you can pick up a favor from a legislator, you probably would do that.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes. I had mentioned here you get recognition. You can bestow recognition and attention. That's the bill signing. That's visiting the district. That's doing any of that stuff. Campaign assistance. Governors can come to fund raisers. That helps, and many other things, but governors can-- they primarily reward. They don't have to punish, because people, know that they have the veto, and the line item, or the amendatory veto.

Governor Edgar: The campaign thing for me was probably the best leverage I had on the legislature. Fortunately, when I was governor, my approval rating was always pretty high, and in many of their districts, particularly Republicans. I didn't go and do any Democrats, but in Republican districts, my name recognition, my approval rating was usually higher than the legislative, and that gave me leverage with them, because they wanted me to come and do a fundraiser for them, because if you get the governor in, people with money will show up. They also wanted me, more importantly, they wanted me to do commercials for them, because, again, I was more popular in many cases than they were, better known, because you're the governor. So that was a very important tool I had to kind of keep them in line. Many times I don't think they liked me, but they knew that people liked me more than they liked them in their district, so they had to get along with me. And I always felt, as governor, I had an obligation to help members of my party, but I would be selective. There were times when I would just tell the leaders, "No, I'm not going to help that guy, ." I'm just-- definitely going into a fundraiser, that was very selective on that. That's my time. But doing the commercials, my last year as governor, I wasn't running, and they came to me with a list of people they wanted me to do endorsements, do commercials for. I had more fun. I just marked off about five of them. I said, "No way. Those guys have lied to me. They've never been there. I'm not doing a commercial for them." And I have to say, I didn't get quite that bold until I was leaving, because I always hoped maybe if I did it, maybe they'd get a little better. But at that point, they couldn't do any good for me, and I'd put up with them for so long. But what this all revolves around is the governor is so visible in the state. People know who the governor is. Most people don't know who the legislators are. We have Speaker Mike Madigan, who's been Speaker now since.

Professor Rosenthal: Twenty-five years.

Governor Edgar: No. More than that.

Professor Rosenthal: At least thirty years.

Governor Edgar: See at least, Yes, thirty years, about thirty years, longest-- most powerful guy really in Springfield. His daughter is now the Attorney General. Her name's Madigan. Most people, if you say "Mike Madigan," they think you're talking about the attorney general, who's not-- attorney generals aren't that big news items, but they're bigger news items than the Speaker of the House, who's been the longest speaker forever, most powerful guy by far in the legislature, but still people don't even know him. So the governor, even if you're a bad governor, people know who you are. I can assure you, Rod Blagojevich had great name recognition in Illinois, and he was the guy, that tried to sell the senate seat. I mean, he was terrible, but he's the governor, and that's what people think of when they think of state government, and that visibility that Alan was talking about earlier, is huge for a governor, more important than his constitutional powers, really.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes. And this gives the governor being one, being statewide, being visible, gives the governor the bully pulpit. I mean, the governor can get through the media. No legislator can get through the media as easy, can command the attention of the media. So when the governor is pushing an issue, whatever the issue, the governor has that ability to get through to the public, to get through to various groups. The governor, as an individual, can lead a campaign, not to go over the head of the legislature, not to go around the legislature, but very often just to support a position in the legislature that the legislature wants encouragement for. So the governor, as one, can lead the campaign. The governor can bestow favors. The governor can threaten. The governor can make life happy, make life miserable. The governor's advantage is, that I've seen, since I've been, studying legislatures, the governor's advantage over the legislature is just enormous, enormous.

Governor Edgar: I'd much rather be governor than a legislator. The bully pulpit thing, it is a huge tool. And often I would go to the public, and I could go to the public because if the governor shows up in any city in Illinois outside of Chicago, you're going to be the lead story on the evening television. You're going to be the front page story in the newspaper. Now, in Chicago, it's different. There it's the mayor, and the governor's second. But if you're in a fight with the mayor, which I often was with Mayor Daly, because I told him, "No," and he just didn't understand that, you would get coverage. But by far you're the most visible person in state government, and many times I would go-- I would want to do something, raise a tax, or make a change in something, cut a budget. My first year I had to cut billions out of the budget. And I went to the public through the media, because I could command the media, and kind of forced the legislature to go along with me. The media is such an important tool because if you get to the media, and the legislators know you've got the media. You're in the media. They know their constituents are hearing your message, they're going to be much more apt to follow you, because they, in the end, it's their constituents. And if their constituents are listening to the governor, and the governor is connected on his message, then the legislators are not going to keep fighting the governor. So it's a very important tool to the governor to be successful in the legislative process, that he or she gets that message out and goes to the

public. Now, there are times, the legislature, once you do that, because they want to be for something, but they want the public to know that you're pushing it. You're for it. And also you get the blame if they don't like it, they'll vote for it. But also, I have to say, more times than not, we went to the media to force the legislature to finally follow, because they're very reluctant, particularly on tough picks. As I said, the first year I was governor in 1991, the state had the biggest deficit it ever had in the history, and then we had a recession hit, and all these things, so I had to just cut and cut and cut. They weren't used to that. Republicans didn't like it anymore than Democrats did. And I had to raise a tax, but I went to the public after I had every lobby group in the state outside my office protesting. I had demonstrators, I mean. But I went out around the state, because wherever I went, the media gave me coverage, and told my story. In the end, my story prevailed, and I got pretty much everything I wanted in the cuts, in the tax increase in that year, and I was a freshman governor dealing with a Democratic controlled legislature that was not happy that I was the governor, not because I was a Republican ideology. It was because they had a redistricting map they had passed, and they knew I was going to veto it, and I did. But, again, just cannot stress enough that bully pulpit, how important that is for a governor, and for a governor to be successful, he has to use the bully pulpit. If he fails to use the bully pulpit, I don't think he can really be that successful on bringing about major change in public policy.

Professor Rosenthal: So, okay. So we start out with the enormous advantages that the governor has. The second thing let me confront is, what governors bring with them personally, what attributes, do they have? I mean, some governors, have won elections by wide margins, and they can, claim that they've got a mandate. Other governors won by narrowly. They may claim a mandate. I think what is most important is the-- and let me put it this way. Most governors, not all of them, are very able individuals. You don't get to be governor without being able. I mean, you're screened out along the way. These are competent people. I mean, I've talked to any number of these people, and they are very sharp people, and there are, there are some who aren't, but they are exceptions, not the rules. So you start out these are able people. The second thing about them is most of them are pragmatic people. They're not the ideologues, most of them. They're not to the left. They're not way to the right, but they want to get things done. They want to make a record. So you've got the pragmatism. You've got the general skills and abilities, and most of them, have had electoral office, which helps. Not all of them. Half of them, about half of them, have come from the legislature, and that advantages them. It's no guarantee, but it advantages them. What disadvantages them is coming-- some big city mayors are disadvantaged when they get to the legislature, because they're used to being the chief exec-- when they get to be governor. They're used to having a very weak city council, and I'm thinking of William Donald Schafer in Maryland, as an example. You have a weak city council. You've dominated the city council. You get to Annapolis, and you're going to run roughshod over the legislature. Not a good way to start out. The other, kind of bad experience for governors, I would say, is being a prosecutor, a U.S. prosecutor, a state attorney, but to have that orientation that you're right. Everybody else is wrong, indict, convict. An example of a prosecutor as governor, and it is not the right mentality, but, he seems to be working it, is Chris Christie, our current governor, very able prosecutor, but has taken that mentality into his dealings with the legislature, rigid, a

bully, and what have you, according to my findings generally, Chris Christie should not be successful, because if he maintains this course, it just shouldn't work. Now, maybe he will be the exception that proves the rule. Maybe he'll change course, or maybe my rule, what I see as a rule, was wrong. So far Chris Christie has been successful in his leadership of the legislature. But to be a legislator, what you've got is you understand issues. You're familiar with issues. You're familiar with state government. You get to familiar and if you're on the budget committee, you're really familiar with state government. You understand the process. You make friends. You've got friends in the legislature. That helps when you want to deal with the legislature. And mostly, not all, let's say Jim Florio, maybe not others, that I can think of, you gain respect for the legislature and the legislative process, . You may be critical, but you gain respect, and I think it's important for governors, in terms of them succeeding, to have that kind of basic respect. Some do it without it, but mostly it seems to help. So you've got this sense of respect. You recognize that the legislature is an independent branch of government. And you recognize also you take responsibility. And, I found this out by talking to them through the surveys, but as a governor, you take responsibility for leading. Governors think they should initiate. That's the role of governor. Very few governors, and I can think of Harry Hughes in Maryland, really think that it's the legislature's job as the first branch of government, but most governors think that they should initiate. And then finally, in terms of what they bring to office, most governors bring very able staffs to office. They may not be large staffs. It depends on the state.

Smaller states, governors have smaller staffs. But governors usually bring to deal with the legislature people who were former and respected legislators, or people who have been on the staff of legislators. Jon Corzine made a mistake. He had no legislative experience, and he brought to office, at the beginning, people who didn't know the legislature. Later on he brought in people who did know the legislature. But most governors, even if they are former legislators, bring legislative sophisticated people to be their legislative director, their legislative liaison, or whatever it's called in the various governors' offices. So my argument would be that-- and you've met governors, governor to governor. My argument is that these are very able people, and they're generally pragmatic, and a lot of them have the advantage of knowing the quote enemy, as it were.

Governor Edgar: I thought, when I went to my first NGA meeting, the National Governors Association, and we'd sit, particularly we'd sit in private, I thought it was the smartest group of people I have ever been with in my life, myself excluded. I didn't think I was quite up to all this, but small state, big state, I think you're a hundred percent right. I mean, folks who get to the governor's chair, for the most part, are very competent, very bright people. And I found that at the NGA. I mean, I used to marvel at how bright these folks were. Didn't agree with them all the time. Got tired of listening. Some of them talk all the time. Some of them love to talk a lot, but they all were very bright people. The governor's office, the comments you made about the governor wants to get things done, you do, because if you don't, you're the guy blamed for it. I mean, you're responsible. The legislature kind of, as I said earlier, they wander off home and you're the governor. People know who the governor is. They don't know who the legislators are, but they know who the governor is, and you're the one if paychecks don't get sent out, if there's a

disaster, whatever, you're the one responsible. And so you've got to make sure the state government continues to function. You've got to make sure that the budget's done properly. You've got to make sure agencies are run by competent people, and if not, you're the person held responsible. So I think just the nature of people who run for office, get elected governor, they're doers, but if they weren't, they'd better be, because if you don't, you're going to be in big trouble. One of the advantages the governor has once they're there, to get to be governor, in most states that's a very visible race, so even if you haven't held an office before, by the time you're elected governor, you get sworn in as governor, people know who you are. Now, I had the advantage, because people like to have a feel about the governor, not so much is he a liberal or conservative, or even a Republican or Democrat, just something about him as a person, that still drives most people in their opinion of elected officials, is what kind of person is he. And when I ran for governor, I'd been Secretary of State for ten years in Illinois. In Illinois the Secretary of State's an elected office. You're the motor vehicle administrator. Anybody to get a driver's license, you come to the Secretary of State's office. You don't go to someplace in the governor's. And it's run pretty well, because my name was plastered all over the place, and you wanted to make sure people had a pretty good experience, a license plate, State Library. It's a very visible office, so for ten years I had been Secretary of State, so people kind of developed an opinion and a feel for me as a person, which I think is the only reason I won the election, because I shouldn't have won that election. It was not a Republican year, and I won it barely, but I won it, and I was for a tax increase, which was kind of a crazy thing to do, but was the right thing to do, but politically it was kind of crazy. But the fact that they knew me, and they had an opinion of me, overcame partisan objections, or whatever. I'll tell you this one other story, just if you ever run for office. Also the ten years I was Secretary of State, traffic safety was my big issue. It's when we were doing drunk driving legislation and a group called MADD had been started. And I was very much in the national forefront on that. But as a result, there's this radio program on, the biggest radio station in Illinois, in the Midwest. WGN. A guy named Bob Collins and he had me had on his program, probably that ten years I was Secretary of State. This is no exaggeration, I was on over 100 times. And he was morning drive time, primetime. Always listen to a guy in the Midwest. Wouldn't talk political, but he wanted to talk about traffic safety, drunk driving and issues like that and we'd talk about other things. I mean people thought I was a regular. I thought maybe it was a Collins Edgar show. But what happened because of that, particularly in the northern part of the state where I wasn't from and the suburbs, which is hard to campaign in, get to be known, people would listen to me on this show every morning. And this guy was extremely popular and he was my friend, he had me on. People got to know me and to this day, most people who know me in Illinois, in the suburban area at least, where I'm not from, they know me because of this one radio program. Because they got to know me as a person, they know my grandkids.

There's a joke in Illinois that they call my oldest grandson Coyote, his name is Dakota, but this disc jockey, radio personality, used to joke and call him Coyote. So to this day, I'll run into people who'll say, "How's Coyote doing?" Well Coyote is now 15 years old and she's doing fine. Again, that's something I had a chance to – it wasn't political, but people got to know you. It just underscored -- I always thought the key to my success politically

when I was on that radio program. Not television, radio program. They got to know you. And they didn't want to know you as politician, they didn't care about this liberal conservative stuff like most. They just wanted to know, what kind of a person are you? Do you have kids? What do you think about this and that? And that carried me through a lot my eight years as governor. I'd be on this program and they'd just say. But that carried me through a lot of controversy, unpopular proposals I would make, people knew me and trusted me and they knew me because they got to know me on this radio program.

So again, that's something that I think any governor has the opportunity to get that kind of visibility and he needs to connect then with the public in a personal way. And that personal connection really will go a long way in getting support for you when you're out there trying to get things done that aren't that popular. So last point you talked about governors' bring good staff. I think I said earlier, you're only as good in an executive position as the people around you. You've got to have good folks. No governor who's successful can micromanage. Anyone who tries is going to fail. You got to be able to delegate. But you got to delegate to folks you trust, the people that are competent. You have to set the parameters. But the day-to-day running of the state agency is by these directors. And I was fortunate, I had good people, but one of the reasons I had good people was at least in a large state, people kind of want to work for the governor. It's considered a prize job. I went through about three different chief counsels, my main lawyer, and I got high quality attorneys out of Chicago who would come and serve because it was great for their resume to say that they had worked for the governor. So as governor you have the ability, I think, to bring in some of the best and the brightest. And you want to bring them in. You need their ideals, you need their enthusiasm. But you also have to set the parameters, not micromanage. So I think all the things that Alan has talked about are correct. The one expectation I'd have to say, in Illinois at least, my predecessor, Jim Thompson, was a US Attorney who send politicians to jail. And people were really, "This guy's going to be uh." And he'd never been in elected office. He was a natural at politics. I mean, too much. In fact, he liked it too much and I think he cut too many deals that he shouldn't have cut just to cut a deal. He was not adversarial, if anything, he over gave to the legislature. So it was different than what you've seen here. I think if he'd been that way, I don't think he would have been successful. I agree with you on that point.

Professor Rosenthal: I think Sonneberg [ph?], but then he was a US Attorney in the Justice Department and he came in and he wasn't chummy with legislators when he was elected, but he managed. And he sent a couple of them to jail.

Governor Edgar: Yes, Thompson was more chummy with them. Almost to a fault. I will argue a little bit-

Professor Rosenthal: You can be chummy or not chummy, it works either way.

Governor Edgar: Yes, but one of the things I would argue. A legislator coming into Executive branch, it's good to have that legislative knowledge, but it's completely different being in the executive branch than being a legislator. And the person who succeeded me, George Ryan, who's unfortunately in jail, he was still a legislator as governor. And that's not the right attitude. I mean, he loved to cut a deal. He didn't have a clue what the deal was, he never did when he was speaker either. But he just liked to make -- I mean that's kind of a legislator. And he wanted to make everybody happy and that's what got him in trouble. But sometimes a legislator mentality is the wrong mentality as governor. Now the knowledge of the legislature is very important and the relationships. But you got to shift, some legislators have a hard time shifting to being a chief executive. Also, I might say businessmen have a hard time. CEO's have a real hard time coming into government as a governor and adjusting. First of all they've got to deal with the legislature, they've never had to deal with them. Their board of directors are nothing like a legislature. Like a mayor has a little bit of trouble too. And then everything's public and they're not used to that now. Now CEO's are maybe getting used to that but it's just a completely different environment. And I'll stop, I'm rambling here.

The last, you hear people say, "We got to run government like a business." You can't run government like a business. They have different bottom lines. Government's bottom line is to provide service. Business bottom line is to make a profit. Now they are things in business, they are techniques you can put into government, but you can't run government like it's a business. They are just different things. And I get so tired, I hear guys say, "We got to run this like a business." And I said, "Well you run it like a business and it ain't going to function." It's not rational anyway. And you've got to adapt. Now there are techniques of business you can use. There's no doubt that there are some managerial skills and things like that, but in the end, you can't run government like a business. You're there to provide services, a business is there to make money. And if you start running a government like it's to make money, then you're going to not provide the services or folks are going to slip through the cracks and some are going to die. Even for Republican, I want to throw that in. [laughs]

Professor Rosenthal: Okay, so on the second dimension, the personal qualities. These governors are pretty able people and if they've been through the legislative process, they've got a lot of useful knowledge and maybe some friends. So they've got an advantage. Now, thirdly, and this relates to their pragmatism, is that they immediately adjust their agenda, what they hope to accomplish. And their agenda comes, and we'll talk about this, from any number of things. But they immediately adjust to what I would call, the political realities or the economic realities of life. And the most important reality is the economy. The economy. If the economy is bad, if revenues aren't coming in, that's going to shape or help shape the kinds of agenda items they have. They won't be able to spend if the economy is terrible. So you look at governors today, you look at the new Republican governors coming in, what they do is going to be dictated largely by economical circumstances. Now, connected to that, at least in a small way, and it's interesting, and of the governor's that I surveyed, about 80% of them had been governor either under bad economic circumstances or mixed economic circumstances. There were only maybe 20% who said that they have been governor maybe for four years, even for

eight, where the economy was generally good. So governors are going to have to relate to what the economy is like and what they have to do by way of their budgets. The second thing is that probably two thirds of the governors indicate, and I believe this because of the way life goes and governors go, that they come in and they're handled a deficit by their predecessors. Governors in their last years tend to spend down and so the new governor comes in. Not only does he have to get a budget together very quickly, but he's generally left with a deficit. So right off the get-go, a lot of the governors' agenda is shaped by the deficit that he or she inherits and the economy. And the second major thing that the governor finds is whether his party is in control of the legislature, whether the other party is in control of the legislature, or whether the legislature is a split legislature. Now, my argument is being pragmatism, being political -- I think what's not recognized is that we're not dealing with things that sit. This process is always taking place. You think of a governor's agenda being announced in the State of the State address. I don't buy that. I think the agenda is always in formulation. And it depends on circumstances and other things. Two of the major items that go into the agenda are the economic situation, the deficit situation and party control of the legislature. If you have your own party control of the legislature, you might have someone with a different agenda than if you've got what Jim Edgar's has to deal with a Democratic legislature. So governors start shaping their agenda depending upon political and economic realities. So they're not just going to shoot for pie in the sky, they shoot for what is politically obtainable, for the most part. I'm not saying they never try for something they can't get, they do. But for the most part, they're going after stuff that seems within their grasp. Respond.

Governor Edgar: Well first, and again, I agree with most everything you said, because you said it first when I (crosstalk).

Professor Rosenthal: I'm glad you listened.

Governor Edgar: You were hoping I listened.

Professor Rosenthal: Because I bought you dinner that one night.

Governor Edgar: If you hadn't bought me dinner, this would be entirely different.

Professor Rosenthal: That's right, I understand.

Governor Edgar: When you run for office people ask, What's your big vision? What's your vision? Visions are the funniest things I've ever seen in a campaign. You think of visions that keep all the pundits happy and everybody because as Alan said, when you get elected governor, what you do is react to one crisis after another. I was Secretary of State, I know it's a big office, I could kind of pick and choose. I could fight a war on drunk driving, every time I create a literacy program. I didn't have to deal with crisis. As governor, I dealt with one crisis after another. Now in the campaign, everybody wanted to know. What's your vision? What's your vision? And as I said. And we would have campaign rhetoric, we'd talk about things at election.

You get in office, that all goes out the window. First of all, nobody talked about when I ran for office, the state was bankrupt. We didn't know it until I got in and looked at the books. We were bankrupt. So it didn't matter if I had a vision, we couldn't do anything but try to keep the ship afloat. The budget, which is the most important thing that you deal with. The other big issue that I had to deal with the first year, the first term I was governor, we had the greatest natural disaster we had ever had in the history of Illinois. We had huge floods on the Illinois and Mississippi river and contrary to what the media said, the President's not responsible for dealing with a disaster, it's the Governor. And if the Governor doesn't respond, then things are really messed up. And we had to respond to that. Now, we didn't talk in the campaign about what are you going to do about getting a bankrupt state solvent again, which mainly is cutting. We didn't talk about how you handle natural disasters. But that's what I had to deal with, the most two important things I had to deal with, the first three, four years I was governor.

Professor Rosenthal: Even legislatively, you were dealing with it.

Governor Edgar: I had to deal with the budget, Yes. It was huge. I had a legislators who had never said no to anybody. That's why we were in the problem. This is before the recession. That's why we were in the problem we were in. We had a governor who was going out of office, who was tired of fighting, he just agreed to everything and I want to point out for the record, in case I don't get a chance, when I left office eight years later, I left the largest budget surplus in the history of the state to my successor, who promptly spent it all in the first year and the state did go into deficit. But anyway, so we had to deal with those crises. And the other thing about a governor to me that's critical, and that's the why this vision thing, I used to just really get mad about. The governor has to manage. And now, people say, "We want more than a manager, we want a leader." Well let me tell you, if you'd manage, you can't lead. And I think again, too often, in a campaign or the media's looking at candidates and people are talking about it, they don't think about "Can this guy manage?" "Can he run the state?" He might have great ideas, he might have all kinds of great ideas that aren't going anyplace. He can't afford. But can he manage the state? And that to me is the most important skill. Now if he can manage, hopefully he can also lead too. He can convince you to maybe do some things, and he has some intriguing new ideals or whatever, but first he's got to manage. And too often we overlook that. And I think too often the governor never manages and everything, no matter how well he talks and how many visions he has, things don't happen. Last thing about the legislature. I had a Democratic controlled legislature, I had a Republican controlled legislature, and I had a split legislature. The split legislature was the best. Now the Republican legislature was all right for a short time, because there were about four or five things I wanted to get done I never could get done, like Chicago school reform. Because Chicago Democratic legislators never allow school reform because the teacher's union is so important to them. Now, privately they agree with what we want to do, but they wouldn't vote for it. Even Mayor Daley who now takes credit for it, came down and opposed it. But secretly wanted to pass it. And we had passed that. Well two years later I wanted to raise taxes again for education. I couldn't have done that with a Republican controlled legislature. I had a split legislature, and it took me awhile, but I finally got it done. So each type of legislature gives you a different opportunity, and as I've always

said, you can't do all things that you want to do. And you can't be all things to all people. You've got to prioritize. And also you've got to have timing. Timing is critical. There were certain things I could do with a mixed legislature, and there were certain things I could do with an all Republican legislature. I couldn't have done the tax increase, I couldn't have done some of the things I wanted to do with an all Republican legislature. I couldn't have done the Chicago school reform with a mixed legislature or a Democratic legislature. So you got to prioritize and timing is critical. The first four years, I couldn't do anything, but try to keep the state from going bankrupt. I didn't have to deal with the flood. The next four years, I got re-elected by the largest margin in the history of the state after the first time barely winning it. So I had a little more of a mandate, but I got to tell you, that lasts for about 30 days. And then it doesn't matter if you won by a billion or what. You're the governor and they don't like you and they're going to give you a hard time. But you pick your time and place. So timing is very important too. It's a tough one. But don't spend so much time worrying about the governors or the candidate's vision, try to figure out, can this guy manage anything?

Professor Rosenthal: Yes, and most of the governors that I've studied, they have policy ideas. These people have been in politics for the most part and even if they haven't. So they come to office with policy ideas. But most of them are also pragmatic and they kind of organize those policy ideas, so that they can get them through, depending upon the situation, the economic, fiscal and political situation. I'll get to you in a second, okay. So it's not that they're devoid of policy ideas, they have values, they have policy ideas, and they want not work on education, they want to work on transportation, or whatever it is. The other thing that goes into the formulation of their agenda is they consult. I mean, very often what they do is they establish advisory commissions or blue ribbon commissions, partly to come up with ideas and partly to sell the ideas that the governor already knows that they're going to come up. So the campaign gets underway as the kind of agenda is in the formative stages. Governors consult with legislative leaders. They consult with leaders who have the majority in the legislature, and the leaders will tell them, "This will fly, this won't fly." They may not go by that or very often they come together with common agendas. That there are things that they agree on, but they listen, they consult, they listen and their agenda comes out of that too. And then they subject whatever they have to staff analysis and Dick Thornburgh in Pennsylvania was very good on that. He said any ideas that he might want to ship out, he sent them to the legal staff to see if they were constitutional. He sent them to the political staff to see if they would fly politically. He sent them to the media stand to see if they would be. He sent them to the legislative staff. So they are pragmatically developing their agendas. Yes.

M2: You said that being able to manage is often more important than the vision, but as a citizen, I was just watching the news. How can you tell how is the best manager?

Governor Edgar: Well I think first of all, as a state spending within their budget. Are services being delivered? We talk a lot about legislative policy and what goes on and that's important and that's fun. But an awful lot of what the governor does is manage those state agencies. It's not so much creating policy as it is delivering services. And that's where most people come in contact with state government. They don't go down and watch the legislature. They go to some state agency to get a driver's license or they

need help, maybe they're on public aid, or there's a public health issue, whatever. They go to those agencies. Or they drive on roads and then you need to make sure the roads are good. So that to me is how you -- now, I have to say, the media doesn't spend much time looking at that, until maybe there's a crisis. But even sometimes amidst the crisis. I just think those are important things to look at in measuring how successful a governor is. Now, you've got to have some ideas. I will say that I don't think many governors have any original ideas and there aren't any many original ideas. We get them from each other and that's fine. But, and timing again is very important, but as I'm saying it, for a governor vs. a legislator, that ability to manage and make sure he has managerial skills and he's got people out there, and the agencies are doing what they're supposed to do and their services are paid for. That to me is extremely important in how successful a governor is. You had a question earlier too.

Professor Rosenthal: Let me just hold on, we don't have much time. She had one a long time ago.

Governor Edgar: Okay, okay. Go ahead.

F1: Okay, I just wanted to get back to what you were saying about a veto sort of as his weapon. And I was wondering how often governors would veto a bill and would that obviously hurt their approval rating.

Professor Rosenthal: No, no. They veto a lot of bills, but these are minor bills that they just don't approve of. So they do veto a lot of bills, but many governors, because instead of vetoing a bill, they call a legislator in and say, "I can't sign this bill unless you change it this way." So some governors maybe veto more than others. There was a governor in New Mexico. Gary Johnson, he vetoed half of the bills passed. But he was very out of sync with the running of government. That's the way he ran it. I think other, the more successful governors, use the veto judicially. Governors who have an opposition legislature are more likely to veto.

Governor Edgar: You try during the legislative process to get them to change the bills so you don't have to veto a bill. You don't want to veto a bill but if they don't. You got to veto every once in awhile because that sends a message. You will veto. And I remember, and there were some big bills. I had to veto the one for eight, for parochial schools and I'm a big public school person and the Cardinal called me from Chicago and talked to me. Fortunately, I wasn't Catholic so I didn't have to quite worry too much about the Cardinal. But he was a friend of mine, we talked. I said, "No." and I vetoed it. I don't know if it hurt me or the Republican committee but the Cardinal didn't talk to me for 10 years. He now talks to me again. But that's because he didn't like the last governor, so he's talking to me again. But no, you try not to have to get into the position where you have to veto. You much rather change the bill before it gets to you. But if you do veto it, you do send a message to the legislature, even if its oppositional party controls it, they don't usually have enough to override you on a veto.

Professor Rosenthal: So basically in formulating a agenda or budget, governors are pragmatic, they take into account all things. It's kind of interesting, when I ask governors the kinds of issues on their agendas during their 10 years as governors, 92% of the governors and basically their agendas are generally limited. Most governors concentrate on no more than three or four or five issues in any legislative session. So if they serve over the course of eight years, maybe 20 issues that are on their agenda, other than their budgets, which are always agenda items. So they're focused, they have to focus, they believe in focusing. Now Mario Cuomo in New York never focused. Mario Cuomo would have 200-300 items on the agenda and very few of them got anywhere because the legislature didn't know what was important or what was unimportant. But most governors recognize you focus. And when I ask governors what were on the agenda and we coded them by different policy areas, 92% of the governors all had education as a priority item. Okay, listen. 69% of the governors all had the economy and economic development as a priority item. And 47% had environment and energy as priority items. So what we're dealing with here, particularly in economic development and education, we're dealing with the bread and butter items of state government. Education, first of all, it's important. It's important to economic development, it's important in its own right. It's a popular area in terms of what the public thinks is important. It's where all the money goes, or most of the money goes. So it's important. It's visible, so it's important. It's what I call bread and butter. Economic development, if you don't grow the economy and you don't provide jobs, you don't have jobs for people getting out of schools and out of colleges and you don't have revenues coming in to provide for other state services. So these are two obvious areas where governors focus. So what you have here, and what was never mentioned, were the hot button issues. No governor who responded had abortion or right to life on his or her agenda. None of them had civil unions or gay rights. None of them had capital punishment. I think there were two mentions of legislation having to do with guns, but that's as close as it got to them. Those issues arise, but they arise from the legislature. And then governors may back them or make it, have to get involved because of those issues get to their desks, they either sign or veto them. But those issues come from legislative initiatives, not from gubernatorial initiatives. Governors do the bread and butter stuff of government. Where the money is and where the needs are. This is really business of the state. It's not sexy stuff. But it's obviously the important stuff. Now am I crazy about this?

Governor Edgar: No, in fact, one thing I tell students at the _____ when I talk to them is good government is not exciting at all. That's why the media doesn't cover good government. They usually cover bad government. But good government is somewhat dull but you've got to keep your mind on it. Education, definitely. One of the reasons is state government is responsible for education, it's not the federal government, even though they're a lot more involved than they used to be and it's not really local government because global governments the creature of state government. And it's also very popular with people. Now, I have to correct you a little bit.

Professor Rosenthal: Go ahead.

Governor Edgar: Most of all the money is going to education these days. It's going to health care. Something called Medicaid. And that's unpopular. And that's not something you go out and win many votes talking about. I mean, you spend most of your time trying to figure out how we can stop spending so much money on Medicaid so I can spend more money on education or some of these other things. But education is a priority and it's also very popular with the people. So whether you're a conservative Republican or a liberal Democrat, education's usually your number one priority. But I have to say, you have to spend almost as much time now on healthcare, particularly Medicaid funding issues. Economic development. Again, that's a popular thing. Everybody's for job creation. I think state government's a little limited on what they can do on job creation. You're at the mercy of, particularly large states like Illinois, you're at the mercy of the national economy to a great extent. I think the best thing you can do for economic development as governor is run a good state. Yes, do the basic things a state, education, transportation, public safety, quality of life, those are things that will attract jobs and people are going to hire, because one of the things CEO's used to tell me. We don't get so hung up about the tax rate as we do the education skills. So the workers. We try to recruit people into Illinois, we've got to have a place for them to live that's safe, they've got good recreation facility, not that they're going to go out and spend a lot of money on recreation facilities, but all those things are important, I think in economic development. Just as important as giving tax breaks that usually go to companies that will run the first time they get a better offer from another state, but that's kind of my bias showing through. But I have to tell you, there's only issue, really to me. The number one issue is the budget. And particularly the day and age we're in now, that's got to be the number one issue for the governor. Because if the governor doesn't take care of the budget, nobody's going to. It's just not in the nature of the legislature to keep a budget in line and make it. So all these other things are important and some of them are fun to talk about, but the budget is got to be the major concern. At least, that's how I viewed it. And the legislature kind of knew that I cared about it. They'd trade off with me.

Professor Rosenthal: And governors, at least the governors told me, that I surveyed and my interviews, they pretty much control the budget. I mean, they get most, if not all, of what they want in the budget.

Governor Edgar: You had to struggle to do it though.

Professor Rosenthal: Yes. And the legislatures back on the budget is very large, very much around it. So governors, okay, just to sum up, because I've got to let the governor go. The governor will go, we'll stay for 10 minutes while I get your papers and you can ask me any questions about next week. Basically to sum up, in looking at what governor, how successful governors are on the budget or on policy. And the definition of success is they get pretty much what they go after. Not when they solve the problems of the state, because no governor solves the problems of the state. Not successful in terms of doing what you like or what you like, because different people like different things. But do they get out of the legislature much of what they go after? And the answer is, they get extraordinary, just like Edgar in Illinois and I'm not putting down Edgar in Illinois, but other governors do well too. They get an extraordinary amount of what they go after.

And they get an extraordinary amount of what they go after in the budget. This doesn't mean that they go after solving the fiscal problems, but they get what they ask for, a lot of what they ask for. The other question is, is what they ask for the right thing. So governors are successful. And they're successful because they have the inherent power, it's the nature of the office because of the skills they bring to the office with them. The able staffs they have. They're successful because they're pragmatists and can take into account circumstances. And they're successful because they get into the day-to-day campaign and strategizing that gets the last few votes, if necessary, for things to go through the legislature. They're successful because they're dealing with policies that are important and there's going to be some resolution in the legislature. So, I concluded governors may not be world shakers. Maybe you would disagree with this, but I think of governors and this is a compliment. You may think of it as a compliment too. As caretakers, rather than as people who transform government. I see their role as they do it, and probably in my eyes as they should do it, as taking care of the state for the next generation or the next governor. And taking good care of it and putting it in shape for the future. The caretaking, is to me, important. All the vision and razzle dazzle is less important. And the title of my book is going to come from your remarks and the repetition of your remarks that I heard since talking to governors, and the title is "The Best Job in Politics: How Governors Succeed as Policy Leaders." You get the last word.

Governor Edgar: Well I look forward to reading the book. [laughs] And being a governor is the best job in American politics. I mean, you get something done. You don't have to kill yourself to get there, like I think running for president is just insane. You can have an impact on people and to me, that's why you go into public service. And you don't have to be governor, but you can be just working in a state agency and have an impact and maybe make a difference on someone's life. But as governor, it's multiplied 1,000, a million times. So it's a great job. The one thing that I would say, the governor is successful, but the governor is only successful if the governor recognizes he's not getting 100% of what he wants. The key is to know when you've got to give a little and that was hard for me sometimes. , just know when to give and when not. Like it is for any governor. But the legislature's got to have a little input. They've got to have a little bit. I used to always put an education budget and always had it a little low, because I always knew they were going to add to it. That was all right, because I had always had a little money in the back because I knew I had to let them add to it. If I had started out at the top, they still would have added to it. So I'd always start out a little below. And you got to recognize that you're going to get most of what you want – 75% of what you want. If you hold out for 100%, you may get nothing. So I think a good governor understands. I mean, governor has to respect the legislative institution and the rest of the governmental institution. Be a local government or whatever. Governor can't get too carried away with his job approval rating or how he won the last election, because that can all change pretty quickly as President Obama has found. It can change overnight almost. But again, it's a great job, it was a great opportunity, and I think governors are successful and I hope you're all successful at whatever your dreams might be. It's good being with you.

Professor Rosenthal: Okay, thank you. [applause]