

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Phyllis Mundy (D)

120th District

Luzerne County

1991 – 2014

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Transcribed by: Jessica Zook

Jesse Teitelbaum (JT): Good morning.

The Honorable Phyllis Mundy (PM): Good morning.

JT: I'm sitting here with Phyllis Mundy, a Representative from the 120th District, Luzerne County, who served from 1991 to 2014. Thank you so much for being with me today.

PM: My pleasure.

JT: I'd like to start out by asking you about some of your background; tell me about where you grew up, tell me about your schooling, and some of your first jobs.

PM: My family was originally from Evansville, Indiana. My dad's family were farmers in Princeton, Indiana and my dad went to business school, couldn't wait to get off of the farm and all the hard labor involved and ended up being the manager of a furniture manufacturing company in Evansville. When I was about twelve, my dad changed jobs and the family moved to Kingston, Pennsylvania. My dad ran Nelson Furniture Manufacturing Company in Kingston. So, you know, most of my formative years were spent in a very traditional, middle-class family. I have three sisters and my mom was a stay-at-home mom, active in our church and did some volunteer work but mostly a stay-at-home mom who took us to dance classes and music lessons and all of those types of things. [I] went to school in Kingston; it was the Kingston School system at that point, Kingston High School. I graduated from there in 1966; it was the last Kingston High School graduating class before a merger, which became Wyoming Valley West

School District. After graduating in 1966, I went to Bloomsburg State College and graduated from there with a degree in Secondary Education and French in 1970. I taught very briefly. There really weren't very many jobs available in my field at that point; languages were on the decline in the high schools, and so after my regular teaching job – which was in the Blue Ridge School District; it was such a rural community, there really wasn't much for me, a single, young woman to entertain myself after school – I got married and moved back to Kingston. I had a son shortly after I got married, about a year later, I was the mother of a toddler, a little boy, Brian, who is my only child, and I did some substitute teaching while he was little and my mom took care of him. Then when he was in kindergarten, I stayed home with him because it was a half day and the logistics were just too difficult. So, [I] didn't like staying home – that was not me. I needed to be more active. I did get divorced, probably about 1979, and then, of course, had to go find some full-time employment so I worked a variety of different jobs until I finally landed at Injection Molding Corporation, a plastics manufacturer, injection molded plastics, and kind of was the Girl Friday in the office. [I] ended up managing the whole office as the company grew. It had been a start-up, a very difficult start-up, because those were the years when interest rates sky-rocketed on all the capital equipment, so for the ten years before I got elected, that's what I did. I managed all of the office affairs; the purchasing, the accounting, the personnel, the unemployment, the workers' comp[ensation], all of that. So, [I] brought all of that experience of ten years' worth of manufacturing to my legislative career. So, as the tenth year of my manufacturing career was in full swing and the company was doing fine, it was a great job, good benefits, and as difficult as it was at times with all of the difficulties in manufacturing at that point, we were doing quite well and I enjoyed the work. It was a very small team of owners and managers that I worked with, we were very close, we spent worlds of time together. So, here I

am sitting in Injection Molding Corporation and I get this call from some friends who said, “You know, Scott Dietterick [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1987-1990] is under indictment, we’re looking for a Democrat to run against him and we want you to consider it.” These were mostly women friends, politically active women friends, but not in positions of authority or power by any means. So, I said, “You’re crazy, what do I know?” I would backtrack a moment to say that I had always been, once I became an adult I had always been active in volunteer work; the Junior League of Wilkes-Barre, the League of Women Voters of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Area. I was actually president of the League at the time that this is all taking place. Really, the League was booming; we were doing great things, we were taking kids to the courthouse every year to teach them about county government and I got to know a lot of local elected officials – county and state and local. So, I suspect that that’s why people were looking at me as a warm Democratic body to run against this very popular incumbent who was under indictment for insurance fraud. But, my first reaction was, “You’re crazy, you know I have no political aspirations at all; I enjoy my work with the League of Women Voters, because it’s about public policy and what makes good public policy about the environment and education and the things that I care about. But it’s not politics, what do I know about politics?” So, I rejected the idea and people kept talking to me about it, you know, all through I guess 1989 and the beginning of 1990. Well, four days before the filing deadline for that election cycle, I got a call from Kevin Blaum [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1981-2006], who was my neighbor in the Wilkes-Barre, I think it’s the 121st; he was the sitting state Rep[resentative]. He called me and said, “The Democrats need someone to run. We would like you to put your name on the ballot. We’ll teach you everything you need to know and if you work hard, we’ll give you as much support as we possibly can.” So, in four days, my friends and I got our nominating petitions filed. That

election was really interesting, because there were four people running against the incumbent, Scott Dietterick, who was under indictment at the time. One was a woman. So, a five-way Republican Primary, one was a woman, and quite frankly, some of the Republican women were trying to convince me that there was no way I could win and that I really shouldn't run. Well, you know, don't tell me I can't do something. So, I decided that I was going to stay in the race and as it turned out, all of 1990, Scott Dietterick was under indictment and then the trial actually took place, I believe it was October, before the November election, and don't you know, he was convicted of nineteen criminal charges; I believe two of which were felonies, which meant that he couldn't sit as a State Representative; the law prohibits that. So, he couldn't be seated as the state Rep[resentative] even if he won the election, so the Republicans in Luzerne County attempted to get him off of the ballot, but the absentee ballots had already been mailed. So, the courts ruled that he was not allowed to get off the ballot. But in the meantime, they had attempted to replace him with not the woman who came in second in the Republican Primary, but the man who was the County Commissioner, Jim Phillips, who came in third and overlooked Anne Vernon, who came in second. Well, the women were outraged. And so, I think I got a lot of Republican women support as a result of that, what they considered, a betrayal; here the woman comes in second and is overlooked in favor of a more politically connected man. The women were not happy at all and I think I kept a lot of that Republican support over many, many years.

JT: Good.

PM: So, here I am as a state Rep[resentative], sort of having been in the right place at the right time and the circumstances, because truly, I never would have won in a race against Scott Dietterick had he not been convicted. I probably would not have won. So, my first reelection was really the one everybody said, “Oh, she’s only going to be one term. There’s no way that Republicans are going to vote for her; it’s still a Republican district.” So, here I am in 1992 now, running against Keith Coslett, and it was a very nasty campaign; very nasty. The radio talk show host at the time on WILK Radio just blasted me day in and day out for my support of public education, you know, he was brutal. But, I was working hard, I was going out and meeting people, I was going to every event I could possibly find to get to know the people of my district and I was working hard here in Harrisburg. I got a seat on the Education Committee and I was working hard at those issues. So, 1992, I won in a landslide and really have won my elections ever since; twenty-four years’ worth, twelve elections.

JT: Nice. Going back a little bit, what would you say were your, or who would you say were your influences to becoming a Democrat?

PM: Oh, well, my family in Indiana and my extended family, my aunts and uncles and cousins, are all staunch Republicans.

JT: Oh my.

PM: And my mom and dad had been Republicans. When I decided to run and called my father and told him that I was considering it, he said, “Well, you’re going to run as Republican, right?”

And I said, “No, Dad. I’m going to run as a Democrat. I switched parties back in 1985.” He said, “Oh my gosh, so did I, “ which came as a complete surprise to me because we never discussed party politics. My dad and I had always discussed public policy but it was always in the context of what’s good public policy, what benefits the middle class, how did we arrive at this middle class that we think should prosper? So, that was our discussion. It was never about Republican versus Democrat. It was always who’s going to do the right thing for the country, for the state, whatever. So, he was surprised that I had switched; I was surprised that he had switched. But, the reason that I switched was Ronald Reagan was President at the time and was engaged in, what I believed, was trickle-down supply side economic policy which I disapprove of, I disagree with. I don’t think the notion that you just take care of the wealthiest among us in the hopes that they will give the rest of us jobs with good salaries and benefits; I don’t think that works. Just recently on Facebook, I saw a post that I totally agree with: “corporations don’t create jobs, consumers do.” So, you know, I just totally disagreed with that economic policy. The moral majority was rampant at the time, trying to impose their moral values and views on everyone in the country, which I also disagreed with. And so, back in 1985 I switched to Democrat, because I believed that the Republican Party no longer represented my views and quite frankly, I still believe that the government should only do for people those things that they cannot do for themselves; not those things they will not do for themselves, they refuse to do for themselves. I believe that was the Republican philosophy back when I was a Republican and somehow, the Republican Party has become so extreme that I could just no longer be a part of it. So, I voted with my feet, as it were.

JT: You touched a little bit on campaigning; was it easy at first or did it get easier from campaign to campaign?

PM: It never got easy.

JT: No?

PM: I would say for twelve elections, the Republicans were determined to take the seat back and put it back in their column. I'm not sure why they always felt that they needed to come after me. There were very few elections where I didn't have an opponent or I didn't have to get somebody off of the ballot for bad petitions – I did that twice; I had people removed from the ballot because their petitions were bad - but, I had very nasty elections in many, many of my races. I think part of that is because I did not hesitate to speak my mind about issues. I really felt as though if I was going to take a position, I need to explain to people why and I think some people took offense to that. I could never be the kind of elected official that just went along to get along. I was not here just to collect a paycheck; I was here to do what I believed was right and let the political chips fall where they may and they did fall. Over the years I had many knock-down, drag-out battles: BlueCross surplus, medical malpractice, and many, many other issues. But, I think the people of my district always could see that I was trying to stand up for them, for the average middle-class person, and try to do what I thought was right for them and for the benefit of all of society, not a particular group because they're powerful or connected but for everybody, especially the most vulnerable. I just believed that you just can't cast those folks aside.

JT: Right. Were there certain aspects of campaigning that you really enjoyed?

PM: There was one campaign that I thoroughly enjoyed. There were a group of students at Wyoming Valley West High School and a couple of students from Wyoming Area High School who formed a “Students for Phyllis Mundy” committee. That was so much fun and really, I enjoyed that so thoroughly. They did their own press releases, they organized their own events; we passed out balloons at the football stadium one night, or a couple of nights, I guess, at the Wyoming Area and the Wyoming Valley West football stadiums. I took them with me on door-to-door efforts, canvassing, and, you know, the teacher in me I think, was in the forefront at that time because I really was trying to show them what politics should be like and what it is like and I know, especially, there were a couple of newspaper articles at the end of the campaign in two of our major newspapers and I wrote letters to the kids pointing out the difference in how the articles were written, because they were part of this and I was being criticized for having involved them in the campaign. The articles were really, in some cases, misinformation and not really portraying exactly what happened, and so I wanted to point that out to them that, you know, this is how journalism is. If you’re looking to be a journalist, this is what you should avoid; be more diligent in how you interview or how you gather your facts. So, the whole thing was, I thought, educational for them and I did get some really, really positive feedback from the parents who really appreciated the kids’ involvement and I had a blast. That was the only fun campaign I ever had.

JT: Great. Tell me about your district, both geographically and the people.

PM: Well, geographically it is the west side of the Susquehanna River, across the river from Wilkes-Barre city. It stretches, well it stretched all the way from Kingston down to West Pittston and up around the bend in the river up into Exeter Township, Harding. And then there were some back mountain communities and over the years it changed somewhat. In the beginning it was gerrymandered to be a Republican district and over the next two reapportionments we made it more compact, more contiguous, and really brought together the communities of interest in the district. There are four school districts: Wyoming Valley West, Wyoming Area, Dallas, and Lake-Lehman and, in the end, I only represented one community from each of Dallas and Lake-Lehman and the bulk of my district was in Wyoming Valley West and Wyoming Area. So, tree-lined streets, pockets of poverty, but generally, middle-class, hard-working people; a lot of elderly citizens, really salt-of-the-earth folks who work hard every day, a lot of veterans who served in World War II, and Korea, and Vietnam; just really, really good people who are working hard every day.

JT: Were there certain issues with the people in your district that would be considered unique compared to some of the other areas in Pennsylvania?

PM: I don't think really unique; I really don't. You know, as state Rep[resentative]'s office, we are closest to the people in the state legislature and because we have district offices, people bring us federal, county, state, local government issues all the time. If somebody walked into the district office, even though they might not have been my constituent, we tried to help whatever issue it was whether it was. We tried not to jerk people around by sending them hither dither and

yon or asking them to call so-and-so; we would try to solve their problems. I think the issues there pretty much is issues state-wide. We do have, I think, some under-employment, but I don't think that's terribly unique to our district. There are a lot of issues I think that are – property taxes, because of the elderly population is probably a big issue but – just in general, I think, the issues of my district are the issues of the people of Pennsylvania.

JT: So, in 1991 you're elected for the first time; can you tell me about your first impressions of Harrisburg, the capitol, [and] your Swearing-In Ceremony?

PM: It's a blur, it's a blur. That first Swearing-In – I'm sure I brought people down from home who participated in my first campaign, but I really don't remember much of that day; it was really overwhelming, really overwhelming. The magnificence of this building, all the flowers on the House Floor, and people jam-packed onto the House Floor to support their friends was really a blur.

JT: Yeah. Was there anyone who took you under their wing? Any mentors?

PM: I have to say that the Democratic State Rep[resentatives]s that surrounded me were very helpful, very helpful in the beginning. Tom Tigue [State Representative, Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Monroe Counties, 1981-2006], Kevin Blaum, mostly, I would say. I would ask advice of them and they gave me some very good advice and helped me avoid, I think, some pitfalls early on. So, yes. Over the years, my roommate in Harrisburg, Kathy Manderino [State Representative, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties, 1993-2010], and I were very simpatico

even though our districts were quite different – she was from Philadelphia and has since retired – but, we were together as roomies for eighteen years and spent a lot of time together as you can imagine after session. So, I don't know that I consider her a mentor; I guess we mentored each other. And, Dwight Evans [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1981-present], I would have to say, has been extremely helpful to me when he was Appropriations Chairman and a good friend that I could always go to for advice. And, there have been many, many other people that I look up to – Bill Lloyd [William; State Representative, Somerset County, 1981-1998] comes to mind. But, many, many colleagues who I looked to mostly, you know, depends on which issue you're looking at at the time.

JT: How was your first office setting? Did you share an office? Did you have your own individual office?

PM: I did; over the years I shared office space with Pat Carone [Patricia; State Representative, Butler and Lawrence Counties, 1991-1998], with Steve Stetler [Stephen; State Representative, York County, 1991-2006]; I had several officemates over the years. Now, of course, having served what, eight years as a committee chairman, first in Aging and then in Finance, I have had my own big office with office staff attached to me.

JT: So, big changes?

PM: Yeah. You know, being a committee chairman is a huge responsibility. Especially, in fact, you would think the responsibility would be the greatest in the majority, but I've felt an even

greater responsibility in the minority, because we were kept in the dark until the last minute. We would find out a week or two before a committee meeting that we were going to be voting on a bill, a very complex matter, we'd never had a hearing on it, had no idea what was coming up, what amendments might be offered, and to inform the members of my minority side about what the issues were, what the controversies might be within the bill, I saw that as a tremendous responsibility. And really, as a majority committee chairman, I was majority committee chairman for Aging; we did some good work. I think my biggest accomplishment there was my Assisted Living Licensure bill. Well, I worked with Pat Vance [Patricia; State Representative, Cumberland County, 1991-2004; State Senator, 2005-present) – Senator Pat Vance – in the Senate and we got that done. They had been working to try to get assisted living licensure for twelve years and had never been able to accomplish it. The interest groups were just at war and finally we did accomplish that when I was majority chairman of Aging. And, we did a lot of good work, but it was always at our own pace and honestly, you know, I like to think that as a majority committee chairman I was more courteous to my minority members by giving them as much advance notice as possible by having hearings on issues that were controversial or issues that were complicated, so that they had a better understanding of what it was they were voting on which I was not afforded in the minority, I'm sorry to say.

JT: Well, speaking of committees, you had served on as you mentioned, Education and Professional Licensure, Aging, Finance –

PM: Appropriations.

JT: Appropriations – a number of them throughout the years.

PM: Right.

JT: And then of course, chair of a couple of them. Were there any that you would say were your favorite or that you were able to accomplish the most?

PM: I think my favorite was Appropriations.

JT: Oh, okay.

PM: Probably because that's where – if you sit at the Appropriations committee hearings day in and day out for the two to three weeks that they are conducted, you have come before you every state agency. You get to listen to all kinds of questions asked by other members that give you a tremendous understanding of state government; how it works, what the fiscal issues involved are, how the agencies spend their money, what kind of programing is available for constituents. It was, well I think I was on it for ten years, I'm not totally sure exactly how many years I served on Appropriations, but Dwight Evans would I think maybe – I don't think I'm embarrassing him to say he might get a little bored sitting there day after day, so he would task me with sitting next to whoever the majority chairman of Appropriations was and kind of – so I was really stuck there all the time, day in and day out, but it was a tremendous education in state government.

JT: Oh, I'm sure. Some members have said in the past that it's in the committee that a lot of the work gets done. Do you agree with that?

PM: Well, I had to laugh – in this past election, my friend Eileen Cipriani was running against a Republican, Aaron Kaufer [State Representative, Luzerne County, 2015-present], and at the debate he suggested that why should legislation be written in committee or behind closed doors; it should be written on the full House Floor. I'm thinking that would be impossible; it's hard enough to try to amend a bill on the House Floor, but to craft legislation on the House Floor? Clearly the young man has a lot to learn. Yes, the work of the committees is crucial and as majority chairman of the Aging Committee, I took that so seriously. We would get to committee and find that there was an issue that we hadn't thought about, so we would pull the bill for another week or so. We would meet with the minority side, with any interest groups who had problems with the language, and we would try to refine it and try to come to consensus about how the bill should look, make sure there were no unintended consequences. Many committees don't do that and they don't do that the way they should. We would hold public hearings to make sure that we got a lot of input as to what some of these unintended consequences might be. I was very diligent, I must say, as a committee chairman, especially in the majority and in the minority, I would raise issues about language in the bill. Often, I mean just recently in a Finance Committee meeting, this was just within the last month or two, we got to the committee meeting, we're supposed to vote and my staff and I had uncovered a potential unintended consequence having to do with the funding of the Philadelphia School System and so, right there in committee, we suggested a verbal amendment which had to be agreed to by both sides and it was. So, that's the work of the committee. That could have gotten to the House Floor and gotten

totally thrown off or maybe never even brought up for a vote to solve the problem that was in the underlying bill because of that unintended consequence. So, the work of the committees is crucial. People need to be really engaged in their committee work, get as much input as they possibly can from the interest groups, and you know, that brings to mind something that people talk a lot about and that is special interests. Every single person who ever walked through my door in Harrisburg or back in the district office has a special interest in whatever issue they're bringing to me. There are legitimate special interests and you need to listen to all of it. Then, it's our job as legislators to sort through all of that, to figure out what makes good public policy, what is the best thing to do here? I really get frustrated with some of the framing that goes on. Special interests are legitimate. The trial lawyers have an interest in medical malpractice and physicians and patients and nurses; everybody has an interest. People who work within any healthcare system and the general public all have special interests involved in that legislation. And again, you know you listen to all of it and then you have to do what you think is right.

JT: Would you say that a lot of the bills that you personally introduced were constituent-based?

PM: There were many of them that were constituent-based, yes. Some of them I had put into law through the amendment process that will never have my name on them and probably very few people will ever know that I had anything to do with it but yes, constituents would bring me issues and I would offer legislation or try to amend another bill to address it. But, I have to say that some of the legislation that I am most proud of and felt most passionate about had to do with preventing problems that I see that are preventable. I would offer as an example is my Ounce of Prevention bill; nurse home visiting for at-risk mothers about to give birth. Nurse home visiting

is a registered nurse or a home visitor – a qualified home visitor – versed in early childhood and pre-natal and birth and 0-3 benchmarks, goes into the home and mentors a young mother and her family. Maybe she's married, maybe she's not. Maybe she has a significant other that is part of the situation. Maybe she lives with her parents. But, the nurse home visitor, the home visitor, goes into the home and mentors the family and that has proven in all the studies that have been done to be so preventive; it prevents child abuse, it prevents dependency in a lot of cases, it's an investment in the future of that child, because 0-3 is where the brain is wired. Your intellectual capacity is formed in those years. And the poverty situations and the disadvantaged situations that occur leave children coming to kindergarten and first grade not ready for school and they never catch up. So, the longitudinal studies have shown the remarkable, remarkable results of programs like that and it's in our law now. My Ounce of Prevention bill did become law, not the way I wrote it – there were significant compromises – and it's a budget line item that we have to fight for every single year, but it is the law and hopefully we can build on it. Other issues that I feel very passionately about had to do with foster children, kids who are removed from their family home through no fault of their own, many of whom, because of the situation they were living in, have a lot of baggage, a lot of negative deficits, and making sure that they get the best care possible, that they get the services they need to become productive adults. Again, it's about prevention. You know, we can spend all the money we want on incarceration, all the money we want on drug and alcohol treatment – why not invest in trying to prevent those kinds of problems? But, most of those are new investments and there aren't a lot of interest groups built up that have power around those issues and so it's been an uphill battle, but it's worked and I'm very proud of, and I would say of all the issues I've ever dealt with, even though I don't serve on Children and Youth, even though, you know, those were kind of outside of my so-called areas of

expertise with my committees, it was the work that I was most passionate about and cared about the most.

JT: Great. How difficult is it to get a bill passed? I know it's a pretty broad question.

PM: Well, you know, I find that on these discussions about the size of the legislature are interesting. On the one hand, it would address what you just asked me; the legislative process here in Harrisburg is very cumbersome. With two hundred and three members in the House and fifty state Senators and the bills of course having to pass in identical forms to get to the Governor's desk, the process is very cumbersome. And with a smaller legislature, it would be less cumbersome. But, the people of Pennsylvania, in our diversity, the urban areas like Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Allentown, Harrisburg, York, and then all of the rural areas in between, they would not have the voice that they currently have because their legislator is more concentrated in that area. On the other hand, the constituent service aspect, if we were to go to a part-time legislature, very few part-time legislatures have district offices at all. Legislators go to their state capitol for a month, a few weeks, maybe periodically through the year, but they don't go back into their districts and serve constituents. That's left up to the bureaucracies.

JT: Right.

PM: One of the very important things that I think we did in our district offices for people was to get right to the heart of the matter, cut through the red tape, go right to the person who can help solve that problem for a constituent, and I think it's why we have one of the fewest or lowest

number of public employees per capita as any state in the nation. It used to be the lowest – 50th – but I think it’s now 49th, something like that. But that’s why, I think, is because your district office does the work for the constituent; we are their advocate. Sometimes the answer is “no,” but we do our best to try to get to the heart of the problem and by doing that, it exposes issues that need to be dealt with legislatively. So, it’s very informative when constituents come to you with those kinds of problems.

JT: Yeah. Getting back to some of the items that you were most proud, the hoarding of excess surplus in BlueCross; how did that come about and how did you get involved with that?

PM: Well, I noticed that BlueCross was raising their rates in the double digits year in and year out while at the same time, there were lawsuits –

JT: And this was in 2005?

PM: Oh, don’t pin me down on the year, please. But, that was when I first got involved. It actually kind of evolved over several years and was a major focus for me over those years but, they had more surplus than they, I thought, were entitled to. At the same time that they’re raising rates in double digits and they’re non-profits; especially established to be non-profit insurance companies. And, at the same time they’re raising rates, they’re hoarding surplus, they also established a multimillion dollar foundation using rate payer funds to give away grants within the region. Well, that’s BlueCross of Northeast PA, anyway. So, you know, I’m getting calls and letters about people not able to afford these increases, so I began to delve into the issue

and worked with some of the lawyers involved in the class-action lawsuits, started reading the financial forms that have to be filed with the IRS and state and federal government and the more I learned, the more I was aghast at what was going on. So, I did work on that for many years and it was sort of a David and Goliath kind of – and again, people were saying, “Oh BlueCross, they’re coming after you,” and [I] couldn’t just sit there and not do something about what I thought was wrong. So, in the end, the Insurance Commissioner of Pennsylvania did cap the surplus in the sense that she said at this level of surplus, nothing happens; this is appropriate. At this level, you cannot include risk and contingency in your rates. At this level, you’ve got to reduce your surplus. So, that was one outcome. But, another outcome was, I think as a result of my op-ed pieces, the testimony that I provided in different areas, I think BlueCross felt somewhat the need to start negotiating with the Rendell Administration and did then fund adult basic using two percent of their premium funds, because they don’t pay the premium tax that other insurance companies pay.

JT: Right.

PM: But that agreement with the Rendell Administration expired, so then adult basic went away under the Corbett Administration, but I’m not sure that would have happened if it hadn’t been for some of the work that I did.

JT: Good. Another big issue in Pennsylvania now is Marcellus Shale; how has it impacted your district and if it has, has it led you to introduce legislation?

PM: Well, there is no active drilling in my district. But there are a lot of leases that had been issued in my district in the back mountain area. And you know, you try to get ahead of an issue but it really kind of, I think, it got way ahead of the legislature in the sense that these land agents – I can't remember exactly what you call them – but, they would go out and try to get people to sign these leases so that at some point in the future they might drill. I mean, I'm looking at my map and I'm seeing all these leases around the drinking water reservoirs owned by the water company and I'm thinking, the buffer just is not adequate; I mean, what if there's a spill, what if there's a puncture, you know, the drilling punctures the side of the reservoir – this could be very dangerous. So, I offered a piece of legislation that would have put a moratorium for a year until we could get a handle on it – moratorium on new permits being issued for a year. Well, of course that was going nowhere because people were already making money. Landowners were getting royalties and the Marcellus Shale industry, of course, is making lots of money from – and really, the northern tiers where most of the drilling is taking place, but my district is impacted in a sense that our drinking water is threatened, I think, and the buffers are not adequate around the reservoirs and for me, it was an issue of environmental quality; air, land, and water. So, I proposed numerous pieces of legislation to deal with the regulatory issues and really fought hard to get them incorporated into law. And, the severance tax; the issue of a severance tax where the Marcellus Shale companies, the drillers, pay an extraction tax for the privilege of taking Pennsylvania's natural resources. It's galling that for – I mean, my house is heated by gas and my gas bill includes a severance tax from wherever that gas came from for all the years before they started drilling the Marcellus Shale and to this point in time, I'm sure I still get gas from Oklahoma, Louisiana, [and] Texas. We pay their extraction tax but we Pennsylvanian's don't get the benefit of a severance tax and extraction tax and we should. We're going to be exporting

the Marcellus Shale gas, natural gas; ports have been established to do that. They're going to liquefy it and ship it overseas in addition to piping it all over, New Jersey, New York, and other places. So, I believe that Pennsylvania should get its share of those funds and we certainly need the new revenue.

JT: Sure. In 2006, when the Democrats gained the majority, you were elected Caucus Secretary and then some things had happened and Dennis O'Brien [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980, 1983-2012) was elected speaker.

PM: A Republican.

JT: A Republican, correct. And then you stepped down from that leadership position. Can you tell me about that?

PM: Well, I sort of got pushed out, because everybody moved back one. You know, Bill DeWeese [H. William; State Representative, Fayette, Green, and Washington Counties, 1975-2012) was supposed to be the Speaker and then Mike Veon [State Representative, Beaver County, 1985-2006) was supposed to be the Majority Leader and the deal was that we would keep all of our Committee Chairmanships in the Majority and Denny O'Brien would be the Speaker. So, you know, Dwight Evans always used to say to me, "Phyllis, you're a leader in spite of yourself," and unfortunately, I think he's right because he's the one who encouraged me to be a part of the leadership team and I ran somewhat reluctantly because I really enjoyed my committee work and as a member of the leadership team, you don't serve on committees. I knew

that I would miss that a lot. I mean, public policy is my forte, and frankly I'm not sure there should even be Secretaries in the caucuses; we really serve no specific function. You know, many Secretaries have kind of crafted their own mission, but we don't really need a Caucus Secretary. It's more pro forma than anything else. And it gives one more person that opportunity to be a part of the team, so I must say that's when I became chairman of the Aging Committee, which I thoroughly enjoyed my Aging Committee chairmanship much more than I would've enjoyed being Caucus Secretary, so it wasn't such a hard thing to step back.

JT: So you had no plans then of running for another leadership position after that?

PM: There were many discussions of people who wanted me to run because there were no women in our leadership team and I sort of felt an obligation to try to represent women in that sense but, I really, for my own personal perspective, the public policy work again was what I wanted to do, was what I enjoyed; sorting through all those special interests, sorting through the legislation, crafting legislation, trying to make it, refine it, and make sure that it does what it's supposed to do and that it's a good thing. So, no, I really never aspired to leadership beyond that.

JT: Okay. With regards to seniority in the House, did you find it that it affected you one way or another, whether you were just starting out as a freshman in your first years or even later on when you were part of the seniority?

PM: Well, obviously your seniority makes a huge difference as you become a committee chairman, because we actually have a House Rule that says you can't ignore seniority when you select committee chairmen. So, I was very pleased. I mean, it took me eighteen years to get to be a committee chairman, but really, seniority is helpful because of your institutional knowledge. Having been here for twenty-four years, I have seen an awful lot. I have worked on an awful lot of issues; I've served on many, many different committees – Appropriations, as I said which is enormously helpful in terms of knowing this institution. So, you know, that's the work I have enjoyed and without seniority, would I ever have been – I would have been a committee chairman, I'm pretty sure. I think, actually, I really enjoyed my Aging Committee very much and thought I was very productive there. And, when Dave Levdansky [David; State Representative, Allegheny and Washington Counties, 1985-2010] lost his election, Frank Dermody [Francis; State Representative, Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties, 1991-present] came to me and said, "Phyllis, would you take Finance?" I thought, "Oh, Finance" – never been one of my favorite topic or, you know, tax policy, which is the mission of the finance committee as opposed to Appropriation, which is the budget and money in, money out. Finance, tax policy; I obviously have opinions about it and know quite a lot about it, but it was never my favorite thing. But, I delved right in and took up the issue of tax fairness both from the property tax perspective and corporate taxes. And I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed being Finance Committee chairman. It would have been nice to have been the majority Finance Committee chairman. I think people don't realize the importance of who is in the majority. It's been interesting to me there is a group of people back in the district who are just incensed over property taxes and rightfully so, but one of the leaders of that group keeps really haranguing me about the fact that I did not cosponsor House Bill 76, which was a bill to switch from property to

sales and income; it's basically a property tax elimination bill. And he was incensed that I would not cosponsor that bill. Well, the bill was horribly crafted and left a huge funding gap in terms of the money that we would be losing in the property tax and the money that would be replacing that property tax with sales and income; that was a huge gap of over a billion dollars. But, I totally acknowledged that that is a huge problem – property taxes – and I wanted to do something about moving the issue forward, so I voted against tabling the bill in committee, but it was tabled by the Republican majority with some Democratic votes, yes, but the Republican majority offered the amendment, or the motion I should say, to table it and then it came up on the House Floor as an amendment to another bill this session and was overwhelmingly defeated but I voted for it. And the guy is still furious with me because I didn't cosponsor the bill because that's more important than voting for it. And you cannot convince them that though the people in the majority are the people who control the legislative agenda. Even if I was the biggest proponent in the whole wide world of House Bill 76, I am powerless to bring it up to a vote. I think people don't understand and frankly, it's interesting to me that they overwhelmingly elected Tom Wolf as Governor and then literally tied his hands with a super majority of Republicans in the House and Senate. But, I think it's indicative of the fact that they just don't understand the power that the majority party in the House and Senate have to completely control the agenda.

JT: Speaking of which, during your time in the House, did you have a good relationship with members of the Senate or even the Governor's Office?

PM: Well, during the Casey years, I had a good working relationship. I butted heads with the Ridge Administration over subsidized child care which they cut dramatically at one point and again that was a crusade for me. I just couldn't see how it benefits anyone to have low-income working women have to quit their job and go on welfare because they can't afford child care. So, I went on a crusade to get him to reverse that decision and ultimately he did restore some of those cuts, but it did not go back to where it had been. But he and I really and his Secretary of Welfare and I butted heads over that issue repeatedly, term after term, until he reversed it. So, you know, I had my issues with the Ridge-Schweiker Administration, and then I have to say my favorite administration to do business with – then of course keep in mind that now I'm more senior, more knowledgeable and able to work the system a little better – but I loved the Rendell Administration and the wonderful agency heads that he surrounded himself with. People who were really, truly concerned about the environment. Truly concerned with good public education, and those were the hallmarks, I think, of his administration were the wonderful state agency heads that he appointed; really knowledgeable, hardworking people who were there to solve problems. The Senate, there are, as I said, I worked with Senator Vance and we tried, my committee, Aging Committee was the counterpart of her Aging and Youth in the Senate, so we worked closely together on several issues. The Assisted Living bill we worked together on and actually got that done together. I worked with Senator Pat Browne [Patrick; State Representative, Lehigh and Northampton Counties, 1995-2005; State Senator, 2005-present] for the whole time I've been here – the whole time he was originally in the House and then moved to the Senate and we worked on early childhood education issues, we formed the Early Childhood Education Caucus which is the largest caucus in the House and Senate. It's bicameral, bipartisan and the biggest caucus and you know we break up into different interest caucuses. It's the

largest one and I'm very proud of the work that we've done to bring in the partners that we worked with: Fight Crime: Invest In Kids, Mission Readiness, the military, Early Learning Investment Commission, the business community to bring all the partners together, the childcare providers, the people interested in early childhood like Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, and Penn AC, brought all those people together to work on those, on the early childhood education issues. So, Pat and I are very close in terms of working together and trying to accomplish our goal of moving the early childhood agenda forward.

JT: Good. Did you have a good relationship with the media both in Harrisburg and in your district?

PM: You know, I had an excellent working relationship and they called me very frequently and, again, because I have a big mouth and I wasn't afraid to say what I thought. I think that's one reason why they would call me a lot because they knew that if, especially if they caught me at a time when the issue was hot, that I might say something slightly provocative, which is probably one of my political downfalls, you know? Leave it to me to bring gasoline to the fire as it were. But, I did have a good working relationship with the media. I can only point to one time where I felt ill-used and that was not a local paper, actually, that was the Harrisburg Patriot News that quoted me as saying "the people just don't get it" out of context. And this was after the financial meltdown, global economic meltdown where we were struggling to craft a budget and my constituents were asking me for more money for this and more money for that and don't cut this and don't cut that. And, we had no revenue. So, there were proposals out there to raise the

personal income tax for a short period of time to get us past this economic meltdown and the point I was making to the reporter was people don't understand that there is no more money.

JT: Right.

PM: And that if we're going to put more money into any of these line items, we'll have to raise taxes somewhere. But, I certainly wasn't promoting that notion at that point in time, I was simply stating the fact there is no money, if you want more money for X, then it's going to have to come from new revenue; it can't come from existing cuts. And, the way he placed my comment in the article, it made it sound like the people just don't get it, we have to raise taxes. Well, that's not what I said. We were inundated in my district office – well, more in Harrisburg, in my Harrisburg office, because the radio talk shows here in Harrisburg picked it up and were telling people to call me. But I must say that in all my twenty-four years, I did not feel ill-used by the media except for that one instance.

JT: Good. Currently, Pennsylvania ranks 38th in the country in terms of women in state legislatures; about eighteen percent of Pennsylvania's legislature is women; why do you think it's so low and can anything be done to increase female representation?

PM: Well, there are a lot of organizations that support women candidates. I have to say that I do believe that there is gender bias in the voting population. Some women see a slate of candidates and pick the woman to vote for; some people ignore gender and vote based on the issues and the stance on issues that people take. I have to tell you that from my perspective, I

don't see very much difference between the men and the women on the Republican side of the aisle when it comes to public policy; they all line up like soldiers and vote the same way. It's rare that one will break ranks on what I consider to be a woman's issue. So, I wish voters would concentrate on issues and what they think is good economic policy, good public policy for all of Pennsylvania, as opposed to whether they vote for a man or a woman. Because, again, I don't think that matters as much when it comes to public policy. And, I'll point to one issue that, it's never been the most burning issue for me but it's pay equity, where the notion that men make more cents on the dollar than women do for doing the same work. We, as you know, there is a Woman's Caucus – Ladies of the House or some such thing – and I think there has been an effort to try to work together to move that issue forward but in the end, I don't see the Republican women being willing to tell an employer, you have to pay a woman the same amount that you pay a man. So, where are you going with the issue unless you do that? I really kind of don't get it. And I don't, I'm not sure that there are many issues that we can really work together on when it comes to things like that, because there is this basic ideological difference between the R's and the D's. The majority of minimum wage workers are women, but I don't see an effort on the R's side to raise the minimum wage. So, it's problematic and so I support organizations that promote women that I have policy similarities with.

JT: Do you think that women have made strides though over the twenty-four years that you've been here, specifically in the Legislature?

PM: Well, the Republican women have increased their ranks; we haven't so much as Democrats. And there, I think that the fact that we're full-time and a lot of women have young

children or elderly parents that they're caring for back home, women still do the majority of the housework. I think, you know, family circumstances and jobs, the kinds of jobs that a lot of women have don't lend themselves to campaigning full-time or being able to raise enough money now to campaign.

JT: You mentioned about the policy differences on either side of the aisle; is it difficult to work with the other side of the aisle in terms of not just trying to get things done but even, you know, camaraderie and friendship, or does the policy really dictate that?

PM: Well, where I've been closest working with my Republican counterparts has been on my committees. And as I said, I worked very hard to give my Republican members, when I was a majority chairman, the time to raise issues, step back, work together, reach consensus to try to move an issue forward. Tim Hennessey [Timothy; State Representative, Chester and Montgomery Counties, 1993-present] and I who, he was my Republican Chairman when I was Majority Chairman of Aging, we used to laugh a lot about the kumbaya moments that we had, because we frequently would vote unanimously on a bill at the end of that process. Then you get to the House Floor and it would be no problem at all to get it passed unanimously. Again, because we had worked so hard to do it right. Then we come to Finance. Kerry Benninghoff [State Representative, Centre and Mifflin Counties, 1997-present] is my Majority Chairman on Finance. I've never been Majority Chairman of Finance. It started out that I was very annoyed at the lack of lead-time that we would get on a bill, especially a complex bill or controversial bill. You have to be prepared to offer amendments in a certain timeframe in order to have them considered at the committee meeting. And, it was almost as though they were deliberately

letting us know at the last possible moment so that we couldn't offer amendments; we didn't have time to come up with amendments. And I remember actually having to stand up on the House Floor one day to ask Kerry Benninghoff publically what are we going to be voting on at this meeting that you're calling off of the House floor, because I hadn't even gotten the courtesy of a heads up so that I could tell my members what to expect let alone have the opportunity to read the bill, try to amend the bill, or anything else even though what was in a bill that we would be voting on – I had no agenda for this meeting whatsoever. But, I think House Bill 76, Kerry and I and other Republican members of the Finance Committee kind of bonded over that issue, because we were being lambasted by the statewide property tax groups who wrongly believed that I was one-hundred percent opposed to the notion. There was actually this photoshopped photo online on their website, these statewide property tax people; I was Ma Barker with a Gatling gun and a raid behind me were Mike Turzai [State Representative, Allegheny County, 2001-present; Speaker, 2014-2015), Kerry Benninghoff, Eli Evankovich [State Representative, Allegheny, Armstrong, and Westmoreland Counties, 2011-present], and Seth Grove [State Representative, York County, 2009-present]. Seth and I still joke that, you know, he's one of my boys; Ma Barker and her boys. And, I mean, the notion that I would be the leader of these four people, a raid behind me, is just laughable because we haven't agreed on very much over the time that we've been on the Finance Committee. But, I do think that things improved as a result of that. We bonded as, sort of in recognition that we were all being tarred and feathered, rightly or wrongly for, you know, having a difference with this one group. So, we laughed and joked and I think Kerry – and because again, you know, I would come to committee meetings and raise valid points and Kerry would then sometimes actually pull a bill and we would reconsider it but that was an evolution process; it was something that evolved, not something that we started out

doing. So, I think in the end, Kerry and I had become better friends and worked together better and now of course I'm retiring and so he actually called the committee together to wish me a farewell which was very nice.

JT: Very nice.

PM: It's tough. We are so ideologically – people are so polarized today, the Republicans and the Democrats. I think the Republicans have gone so far to the right that it makes even the moderates among us, and I consider myself a moderate, I'm downright Libertarian in some respects, but I'm perceived as being a liberal, a left-wing liberal, and really, I'm where I was back in 1985 when I switched parties. Do you know what I mean? I still find quotes from Dwight Eisenhower that I totally agree with, warning us about the military complex and its dangerous aspects. So, it's been distressing to me to see how far right the Republican Party has moved and I think it's pushed the rest of us to the right as well.

JT: Do you see anyone on the other side as an antagonist or an enemy almost during your time here?

PM: There have been a couple of people who, when I would stand up on the House Floor and offer comments about a bill, for or against, would literally stand up and ridicule. “The lady from Luzerne doesn't” – whatever, I can't be too specific at the moment. And I did take offense at that, because my remarks were never, in the beginning – then I would have to fight back of course – but, my remarks in the beginning were never personal; it was always about public

policy. I never had any intention of vilifying a person on the other side of the issue. But there had been people who've done that to me and who I then would feel adversarial toward when they would stand up and make a comment that I felt was not true, that's not what the bill said, that's not what the bill did, that I would feel the need to kind of fight back and I did.

JT: Good. Did it make it difficult to have friendships after hours because of the differences between the two on the floor?

PM: Yes. There are people that I avoid like the plague. Yes, I would say that's true. And there are people, you know, I want to just touch on the issue of caucus for a minute, because people who attend caucus on a regular basis and truly listen to the legislative staffers who are presenting the details of a bill – I always worked hard to be in caucus, to ask questions, to have input, especially when we were in the majority, and frequently, they would pull a bill back to you know think about it some more or to maybe offer some amendments when we were in the majority and controlled when bills were voted on. That is a very important function of a member of the legislature, I think, is to be active in your caucus; to present points of view that they might not be thinking about, awareness, I guess, about other points of view. That's where perhaps women can be really instrumental in crafting legislation and I've always been very diligent about being in caucus, listening carefully to what bills were being talked about, offering my views, opposing bills that I thought were bad public policy and you know supporting, maybe pointing out – I remember particularly just very recently a member standing up and talking about a bill related to public utilities that we were going to be considering, which was really correcting some problems with legislation we passed several sessions ago. This was a new member and wasn't here then,

so he didn't like some aspects of the bill. I had been very instrumental in working on that bill back then and offered amendments and actually some of my amendments were added in the Senate – they were rejected in the House, added in the Senate, and then we concurred on the Senate amendments so that's how they got in the bill – but, I stood up in caucus and pointed out to him that these were corrections to mistakes and it actually made things better for people and that he really, you know, should rethink whether he's opposed to it or not based on that. So, again you know, that institutional knowledge having been here over a period of time, having worked on these issues, it does seem as though a lot of candidates, first time candidates, talk about fresh ideas and I find that the ideas are only fresh because they're brand new to the process. A lot of these issues have been around for decades, we've worked on them for decades. The property tax issue is not new. There are no new ideas; it's just a question of bringing the diverse interests together to find a solution. And, the ballot questions that have been defeated about property taxes, if some of those had passed we might not be where we are today. And, if we would offer more money at the state level with regard to the budget for education, if we would fund it better from the state level, we wouldn't be pushing that burden back on the local property tax payers so much. But again, this fresh ideas notion kind of makes me laugh because we hear fresh ideas constantly from the lobbyists, from constituents. There are no dearth of fresh ideas and some of the ideas, as I said, are only fresh because the people are new, the legislators are new, not because the ideas are new.

JT: Speaking of new legislators, as your years got later, did you see yourself as a mentor to any of the new legislators that came in?

PM: Sure. You develop an expertise in various topics and I find that yes, people would come to me and ask me questions or just recently there have been a number of candidates for Democratic leadership who've called me up and asked me for advice. So, yes, I'd like to think that I was the kind of legislator that could be respected and that people valued my opinion and yes, I tried to be, especially to the people who served on my committees when I was chairman of the committee, yes, very definitely.

JT: Good. Now that you're finishing up your final term, were there any particular issues that you fought hard for but [were] unable to get through, or ones that you haven't even been able to touch yet?

PM: Well, tax fairness I think is a huge one, closing the Delaware Loophole through combined reporting. We are desperate in Pennsylvania for additional revenue; we've cut the fat, we've cut the muscle, now we're into the bone. And there are infrastructure issues that are going to come home to roost. You have to invest in order to reap the benefits. We have cut, cut, cut and now we're at a point where I just don't know what you're going to do without some new revenue. And it simply is not fair, in my view, that so many corporations pay nothing in state taxes. We educate their workers; we provide the infrastructure to get their goods and services to market. There are a lot of functions that state government performs that they rely on and there are many, many services that we provide to businesses through various grant and loan funds; workforce development, and many, many other services that we provide that are paid for out of the state budget and there are major corporations – wealthy corporations – that pay nothing in state taxes. So, that burden falls back on individual taxpayers and I think that is very unfair. And, we need

to reduce our too high corporate net income tax [CNI] because those few people, those few companies that do pay it are paying far more than they should because too many don't pay anything. So, you know, we need to lower the CNI and you do that by closing those loopholes that allow tax avoidance of some of the wealthiest, biggest corporations in America. And, the other thing that I would point out is my early childhood education piece. We've laid the foundation; it's a strong foundation, we've gotten the partners together but that is going to require a new investment. That is not something that we fund at high levels currently and it is so preventive. They say you save seven dollars in future costs for every dollar you invest today in early childhood. And, we just haven't moved very far in the twenty-four years I've been in office and fighting and pushing and trying to move that issue forward. Pre-kindergarten, the zero to three age group, you know for especially for at risk families, absolutely crucial in terms of preventing problems later on. So, you know, there are a lot of things that we can do to help the elderly, family caregiver legislation that I did manage to get passed, but it doesn't go far enough and it so saves money say in nursing home costs and assisted living costs paid for through Medicaid. So, again you know, that would be very helpful to our state budget if we could invest in providing better supports for family caregivers who are caring for elderly loved ones at home.

JT: Yeah. I have a few questions to wrap up with regards to some general ideas and thoughts about your time in the House; do you have a fondest memory or story, whether it was on the Floor or off the Floor?

PM: Oh, the fondest memory; not really. You know, I've really enjoyed Floor debate; there are some YouTube examples of my Floor debate that I'm really quite proud of. Fondest memories?

I've been very close to some of my staffers. Louise Steppanick and I were very close and she was like a sister to me in many ways. There were many, many fond memories with her. And, my committee work, you know, fond memories of being in the majority and able to actually move an agenda forward and accomplish something. Fond memories in terms of my constituent work, some of the problems that we managed to solve for people, some of the projects that I brought home to my district: the lands at Hillside Farms, I got a million dollars to help them buy that property to establish that nonprofit and do the work that they're doing which is really remarkable. The Hoyt Library, when the roof collapsed because of snow, I was able to bring home a capitol budget line item for them of a million dollars. There are many, many as I look around my district and think about all the little league fields, all the different projects, composting projects, recreation, parks, trails; there's so many projects that I brought back to the district that might not have ever been funded if it hadn't been for money that was available through grants. So, a lot of the ribbon cuttings and interaction with constituents, there are many fond memories but not one that I would single out as being the best.

JT: Any disappointments or regrets?

PM: Only in terms of what I have not been able to accomplish; some of the work that I've pushed for and worked so hard on that did not get any traction.

JT: Sure. How would you like your tenure to be remembered?

PM: I would like to be remembered as somebody who worked hard, who did what I thought was right and let the political chips fall where they may and somebody who tried to be fair to all the members of her committee. I actually got a very lovely email from George Dunbar [State Representative, Westmoreland County, 2011-present] who serves as a Republican on the Finance Committee; just kind of pointing out that he really appreciated the fact that I would always come to my committee meetings in the minority prepared, make good points, allow him as a majority member to hear an opposing point of view, but in a respectful way. So, that's how I want to be remembered; as somebody who worked hard, tried to make a difference in a positive way and try to do what I thought was right and let the political chips fall where they may.

JT: Do you have any retirement plans?

PM: Oh, sure. I've already joined two book clubs, I've been kayaking a couple of times, which I never had the time to do before, and I'll be joining some volunteer boards back in the community; maternal and family health services, I've already agreed to join. I got elected to the vestry of my church a couple of weeks ago which is kind of a surprise, actually. But, there are lots of volunteer opportunities and things to do back in the area that I look forward to. Some of the leaders of the Early Learning Investment Commission have suggested that I might want to try to get an appointment to that, so that would be continuing my work on a state level with early childhood. And, my ninety-seven year old dad needs me and I'm sure I'll be able to see more of him now.

JT: Do you see yourself ever returning to the political realm?

PM: I hope not. I truly hope not. You know, as I said in the very beginning of this interview, I was sort of, in a way, dragged kicking and screaming into political life. It was never something I aspired to and quite frankly, the campaigning has been the most difficult part of my tenure. An election every other year, nasty name calling, misrepresenting my views, misrepresenting my votes, misrepresenting who I am as a person. I was always grateful that my family didn't live anywhere near me because they didn't get to hear that. So, that has been the least favorite thing that I've been involved in and I was really, really looking forward to stepping back, being local, not caring so much about what was going on at the state level, because now that's somebody else's problem. With my attitude at the moment, probably not, but I in a way also felt called to do what I've done for the last twenty-four years. I am deeply religious and I believe that God calls you to do various things and I think I was called to do this. And will he call again? Who knows?

JT: My final question for you is: for someone who is interested in the political life, what advice would you give them?

PM: On coming out of an election where I was very disappointed in the voters; I was disappointed that they elected Tom Wolf and then tied his hands in terms of who they elected to represent them in the legislature, and I was deeply disappointed in the outcome of the election in my district, of the person to succeed me. So, it's probably not the best time to be asking me for advice, because with the political backstabbing on the part of my fellow Democrats that went on back in my district this year, I am not going to be encouraging any of my friends to put their

name forward. It's just a very difficult life, a very difficult life. You're under attack as a person, as opposed to what your views are and that's hard, it's really hard. I think it's especially hard, you know I look at Eileen Cipriani, who was running in the election to succeed me, her mother, her husband, her two children – her two boys – had to listen to these lies about her put forth by the other side. That's tough, it's really tough. It is a calling, I think, but it takes an awfully thick skin, which frankly I never developed. So, I'm frankly, today at this moment in time, I'm not in the mood to encourage anybody to put their hat in the ring.

JT: I understand. Well, Representative Mundy, I want to thank you very much for giving me some time and your answers and your honesty and I wish you nothing but good luck in your retirement.

PM: Thank you. I appreciate it.

JT: Thank you.