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BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

**The Honorable Tim Seip (D)**

125<sup>th</sup> District

Schuylkill County

2007-2010

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**Heidi Mays (HM):** Good afternoon.

**The Honorable Tim Seip (TS):** Good afternoon.

**HM:** I'm here today with Representative Tim Seip, who represents the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislative District, and that encompasses Berks and Schuylkill Counties. He served from 2007 and is getting ready to end his term here in 2010. Thank you for being here with me today.

**TS:** Oh, my pleasure.

**HM:** I wanted to begin by asking you about your childhood and your family life and how you feel that that prepared you for public service?

**TS:** Well, one of the things that happened to me growing up is my parents got divorced at a very young age. I was only two at the time, and I really ended up spending a lot of time with my grandparents. My mom was in a horrific car accident the last day in 1983 my freshman year of high school, and my grandparents, being retired, they really kind of kept their own schedule, and really, what happened was I became a pretty independent young man, you know. I used to get myself up for school all the time, managed my school work, and things like that. Really, you know, my grandparents weren't really equipped to help me a lot with school and with my academics, and I really just kind of became pretty independent at a young age, and I guess that was a good preparation for the Legislature where, you know, people will say to you, "Well, you know, what's it like?" And I'll say, "Well, it's pretty weird. You know, it's a job where you

don't have a boss." And people will say, "Well, what do you mean? You've got 61,513 bosses," and I'll say, "Well, sort of, but not really." I mean, it's kind of like college; like, you go to class, [or] you don't go to class, but if you don't do your homework and get good grades, they throw you out. And, you know, you don't know that, though, until it happens. So, it's kind of like college in that regard, so you have to be an independent guy, and I was pretty independent growing up.

**HM:** I was wondering if you could comment on your educational background and what career paths you've taken before you came here.

**TS:** Well, after I graduated from Pottsville Area High School – I had gone to eight years of Catholic grade school at St. Patrick's in Pottsville, and I went to Pottsville Area High School, and I graduated – and I went to Mansfield University, which is in the northern tier of Pennsylvania. I had a great time up there. I ended up shooting my first buck up there my freshman year, but I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do at first. I knew I wanted to help people, and I thought about getting into teaching, and I had an Aunt Janice in Florida, and she really discouraged me from going into teaching, so what I decided was I was going to become a probation officer. And one of the first interviews I had after college, I had gotten my four-year degree in criminal justice, and I was interviewing with this gentleman for county probation officer job, and I went in, and I had all my facts all straight, and, you know, "Hey, it costs 40 thousand dollars a year to keep somebody incarcerated in New York City, 60 thousand to keep a juvenile detention center in Baltimore. You know, we really, really have an opportunity to help people and reduce those costs and help guide them back into productive life in our society," and

he looked across the table from me, and he said, “Well, I don’t really know anything about drugs and alcohol other than maybe some personal experience with alcohol. I’m not a therapist or a counselor. What we do here is we watch people, and if they break the rules, we send them back to jail.” So, I thought, “Well, this is not going to be a good match,” and I, of course, didn’t get hired. And what had happened was then I went to work. My first job after college was putting shelves together at Hills Department Store for four dollars and 40 cents an hour, you know, on third shift, and, you know, at some point, you put all the shelves together, and then they asked me, “Well, you know, would you like to look for shoplifters?” And I said, “Okay,” and I did that for a little while, but it wasn’t very gratifying work. It was, you know, mostly, you’re catching young kids who are in trouble then, and their parents are embarrassed, and it was not pleasant work, so I ended up leaving that. I went to work in a warehouse for a while, and I learned more Spanish at the warehouse than I ever did in college. And then I landed my first job in the field; I worked in a boys’ group home at a placement called Cloud Home in Pottsville, and I worked there for about two years, a boys’ residential program. Then, I got hired as a children’s intensive case manager at the County Mental Health Office, and really, we really did everything with the child to try and make them successful so that they didn’t have a psychiatric hospitalization, or so that they were able to get discharged from an out of home setting back to home and be successful with their treatment, with school, with their health care, and we really, really followed them in all aspects of life and helped them support their family in managing their mental health issues and mental health disease, and I did that for about six years, and then I got promoted to the CASP Coordinator, the Child and Adolescent Service System Program Coordinator. I used to coordinate all the child serving agencies in Schuylkill County, and it was right in there that I decided I should really probably get my Master’s degree, and there were people who were going

to school while we were all working there, and I thought, “You know, I should do this,” and right around that same time, my wife and I were getting ready to have our first child, and it was a lot of juggling; going to school, going to work, getting ready for a family, but it, it all worked out, and I ended up getting my Master’s degree from Marywood University. I had 10 years between my Bachelor’s degree and my Master’s degree, and it’s called *2001: My Educational Odyssey*, and I got my Master’s in social work. I got my social work license, and then, I was in prison for two years at Frackville State Prison, as a social worker, though, not as an inmate, and I worked there in their mental health unit. [It] was an inpatient psychiatric unit for inmates that had mental illness, and I did that, and I also worked at the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, and I guess just prior to that I worked for a provider who only took referrals from the County Children and Youth Office, and our whole mission was to try and provide group therapy, anger management, parenting skills, and also help identify employment or housing or those basic needs for the family, so that they could complete their family service plan, successfully end their involvement with Children and Youth, and hopefully, avoid, you know, out of home placements and court proceedings and things like that. And sometimes we were successful, and sometimes we weren’t. That was a program I was a lead therapist for. It was called the Family Support Unit, and the hours were insane, though. There were times when families could only meet at seven or eight o’clock at night, miles away, and, you know, I had appointments that were, maybe, an hour from my house, meeting till, you know, eight, eight thirty, nine o’clock at night. I’m getting home at ten. I have a young daughter at home, and I’m thinking, “Geez, you know, I’m a social worker. I’m taking care of everybody else’s family, but what about mine?” So, that’s when I got a job at the hospital, then. They were looking for a geriatric social worker for a new program that was the Geriatric Inpatient Psychiatric Program at the, then, Good Samaritan

Regional Medical Center in Pottsville, and I did that for about two years, and at that time health care was a big issue. You know, certainly, we had already gone through President Clinton's [William J.; President of the United States, 1993-2001] term, and the Hillary Clinton [First Lady of the United States, 1993-2001; U.S. Senator, New York, 2001-2009; U.S. Secretary of State, 2009-present] attempt at trying to do something to change our health care system, and I just saw a lot of things that I thought could be different or better, and that's what really kind of convinced me that, that I should probably run for State Representative, and there was a couple different things that happened to me that brought me to that decision. One was that Congressman Paul McHale [State Representative, Lehigh County, 1983-1992; U.S. Representative, 1993-1998] from the Lehigh Valley came to one of our social work policy classes at Marywood. I went to a branch campus in Allentown. It was down at Center Valley, and as I said, the Congressman came and met with us the one day, and he was talking about his public service and what his interests were, and he pointed out to the students, he said, you know, "The one place where you can really run a campaign for not a terrible amount of money," you know, and this was in 1999. He said, "You can put on a real campaign for about five or ten thousand dollars, you know, and you can really hit door-to-door and meet people and really have an opportunity to influence public policy as an elected official at that level for, you know, again, not an overwhelming amount of money," although in 1999 a five or ten thousand dollar campaign did seem like a lot to me. Fast-forward to 2006, and my first campaign was actually about, it was probably about 35 thousand dollars, which, really, when compared to some of my colleagues who came in that year, was nothing compared to some of these races that were even, at that point in time, 150, 200 thousand dollars or more. So, you know, all of these different things are floating around in my head, and in working in the state prison, in the county mental health system, as a provider for

Children and Youth, there were many times when I said to myself, or I said to my supervisor, “You know, we should do this,” and I would hear, “Yeah, but the State’s paying for that.” I said, “Yeah, but this would be better.” “Yeah, but the State’s paying for that.” “This would be cheaper.” “Yeah, but the State’s paying for that,” and I heard that over and over in different jobs that I held, and one thing that really captured my attention was when I was working at the senior Behavioral Health Unit, the Geriatric Inpatient Psychiatric Program; if you were a patient who had had two psychiatric hospitalizations in 24 months or less, then you became a targeted admission, which meant that you could not go to a nursing home or go back to a nursing home unless you went through a rigorous evaluation, and I’m guessing it was probably very well-intentioned legislation at the time. They thought, “Oh my goodness, you know, people keep going back to the hospital. There’s probably a lot of cost involved. We really need to figure out why people are going back there. Maybe there’s something we could do differently,” but what happened was it created a lot of extra paperwork for me. I had to send that all into the County Area Agency on Aging. In Schuylkill County it was our Office of Senior Services. They’d send a caseworker over [who] would interview the patient, review the paperwork, probably do a whole lot more paperwork. Then, they would take that all back to their nurse at the County Office of Senior Services. Their nurse would have to review it, sign off on probably even more paperwork, submit that to Scranton, to the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and that patient was not allowed to go to the nursing home or go back to a nursing home until they got a letter from Scranton, which, again, I think was probably well-meaning, policy-wise, but in practice, what had happened was we had people who were ready to be discharged from the hospital, a locked inpatient unit, who wanted to be discharged, who wanted to go back to the nursing home. You had families who wanted their family member to go back

to the nursing home; you had the physician who was at the hospital wanting to discharge them; the psychiatrist wanting to discharge them; the receiving physician at the nursing home wanting to take the patient; the admissions director wanting to admit the patient, but they couldn't go back because they didn't have a letter from Scranton, and sometimes, this would take an extra, four, eight, 12, 24, 35, 42 days of locked inpatient care. So, we were paying about a thousand dollars a day for treatment that people didn't need or want instead of paying 250 dollars a day for nursing home care. So, I said to myself, "Geez, I guess the only way to straighten this out is become one of the policymakers," so that was one of the factors that, that made me run for the House.

**HM:** And that was your first experience in politics was running for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives?

**TS:** Yes. Yeah, it was the first time I ever sought elected office other than – I did run for freshman class treasurer in high school, and it was so unsuccessful there was no sophomore class campaign, and I was on the student senate. I was involved in some student government at Mansfield University, but to tell you the truth, it was not very competitive, and there were a lot of open seats and unfilled seats at the time when I was in school at Mansfield.

**HM:** Well, that's quite a jump from being a concerned citizen to becoming a Legislator, huh?

**TS:** It sure was.

**HM:** Well, what influences would you say shaped you to become a Democrat?

**TS:** I think just caring for people, and certainly, I've always been connected to and identified with labor movements. When I worked at the County Mental Health Office, I remember being there for about four or so years as a civil service Caseworker I, and there were other people who were getting hired at other county agencies as Caseworker I's who were starting at a higher wage than I was making after working there for four years. I thought, "Geez, this isn't right. We should get a union." So, I started to organize a union, and some other folks that I was working with, we tried to organize, and it seemed like it took forever. It was more than a year long until we actually went through the process and had card signatures verified and set up an election, and then, there were positions that were disputed, and things were drug on, and, you know, by the time we had the election, it seemed like a third of the people weren't even working there anymore, and we lost the election. We lost it by, I think it was like, four votes, and my dad had been a steelworker. He was involved in trying to organize a union at the steel mill he was working at in Reading, and he was also unsuccessful in trying to organize the steelworkers there twice. So, I think that just my own belief that, you know, the Democrats are really the Party of the people who can identify with just the typical person out there and, of course, my identification with labor, I think, has brought me to the Democratic side of the aisle.

**HM:** Well, could you talk a little bit about your first run for the House?

**TS:** Well, I want to tell you something. I was working at the hospital, and there was a book that I was using in the group therapy that I was doing and it was by Julia Cameron. It was called *The*

*Artist's Way*, and it was like a guide to life, and one of the things, one of the big principles in the book is that whenever you want to do something or you have an urge or an idea or a thought, the person who always stops you, or at least the person who first stops you, is you, because you say to yourself, "Oh, my goodness," you know, "what if I do this and it doesn't work out? I'll look foolish. People will think, well, who the hell does that guy think he is?" And, and you don't want that to happen, so you try and protect yourself from embarrassment or failure, and you stop yourself, and that was one of the big principles of the book, that I was doing therapy with these patients day in and day out. So, when I thought about running, I thought, "Oh, my goodness, you know, this is kind of silly, and, you know, what if it doesn't work? You know, people will say, 'Oh, who the hell does he think he is?'" And that kind of thing, and then I thought, "Oh, my goodness, you know, I got to follow my own advice. I've been doing these groups every day now for, you know, over a year, telling people that, you know, you have to not stop yourself before you get started." And you have to get by the crazy question, too, was another point in the book because, you know, even if you do get to the point where you're ready to proceed you say to yourself, "Well, this'll never work out. This is crazy," and I did answer the crazy question, and I said, "Well, you know, if I don't do this, you know, and it is probably a long shot, but if I don't do it, if I don't go ahead with it, I'll never know if I could have done it or not." So, I got past that, and I'm going to tell you this little funny story, too. When I was working at the hospital yet, I just had announced I was running for the seat, and one of my former bosses was at the hospital. I believe he must have been there to visit someone, and he happens into me, and the first thing he said wasn't, "Oh, wow, you know, good to hear you're in the race," or, "Wow, you're, you know, really putting yourself." Nothing like that; his first comment to me was, "Pretty ballsy," and I looked at him and said, "Yeah, it is pretty ballsy," because I had answered

that question a long time ago, and I was very comfortable in the fact that I was going to give this a shot, and, you know, you have to take your own advice. You have to be willing, because if you don't try, you never know what you might be able to accomplish, and I decided to do that. Now, it was a pretty crazy time in my life. I decided to do this probably around the New Year, over the Christmas holidays. I talked to my wife and I decided I was going to do this, and I had always been somebody to pay attention to the political process and who the county commissioners were and things like that because of, just because of my job. You know, what policies are the commissioners pursuing? What things are they trying to fund or not fund? And I always had an awareness, but I wasn't really politically active; I didn't go to fundraisers; I didn't back candidates; I wasn't involved in campaigns. And what happened, though, when I left civil service, and I was now working at ReDCo, that lead therapist for the family program, and then, at the hospital, I said to myself, "Well, geez, I'm not a civil servant anymore, you know. I can start going to these things and getting a little more involved in this," and what happened was there was an attorney who was running for district attorney, and he had been a guardian for some of the children in the families that I was working with, so I knew of him, and we had gone to court together and testified together on some cases, and I liked him. So, I wanted to help him on his campaign, and I certainly wasn't his campaign manager or his main, key person in his campaign, but I went to some events and helped him on Election Day, and it got me thinking, "Well, geez, you know," and, and putting together what McHale had said to me, Congressman McHale, about, you know, this is a place you might be able to have an impact, the this-and-that thing I talked about before, and this kind of all comes together, and I said, "You know what? I should do this." So, I was a member of the Pine Grove Democrat Club, probably for about one year, and I told my wife, "Now, I'm going to have to talk to this guy, and he'll probably have to

talk to somebody else, and they'll have to think about it, and they'll get back to me in a week or so." So, I go to their last meeting of the year, and I tell them – and I still don't know how this all exactly is or isn't, but I do remember the president of the club was Brian Tobin, and he said, "You know, we're looking for someone to run against Bob Allen [State Representative, Berks and Schuylkill Counties, 1989-2006]." Now, I don't know if it was, "We're for someone to run against Bob Allen," or "we're looking for someone to run against Bob Allen," but when I had mentioned to him, I said, "Hey, are you still looking for somebody to run?" "Yes, we are." I said, "Well, I want to do it." "All right, we're behind you 100 percent," and boom, you know, right from that moment, we were in a campaign, and we announced we were running. It was February 11 of 2006 and about a month or so after that, my wife gets news that she's going to be going to war. She had been in the National Guard for many years. She enlisted in 1988 while we were in college. We went to college together at Mansfield, and now, I'm thinking, "Oh, my, I'm in the middle of a campaign. Now, she's getting deployed. Now, is this something I can still do?" And we decided yeah, it was, and I was going to go ahead with it, and, you know, it was just a lot of juggling. My daughter at this point in time is seven, and, you know, people would say, you know, like, "Where's your mom?" And she'd say, "Oh, she's with the Army," and, you know, I don't think she really recognized the whole gravity of the situation, but my wife was in the international zone in Baghdad. She was at Saddam Hussein's trial, and she was, actually, the mayor of the Ocean Cliff section of Baghdad and was in charge of badging and background checks and a lot of security work; very important job. She was a medical service officer, and people think, "Well, she must have been, you know, working in a hospital or something like that," and she wasn't. She really had nothing going on that had anything to do with her medical training. She's a licensed dietitian and a licensed diabetic educator, but what

her job over there was more security and intelligence kind of work, and, you know, it probably was better that my daughter didn't understand what was going on. And just dragging my daughter around, and, you know, my family was very helpful, though, I mean, throughout the campaign. My sister-in-law, who lived about a mile and a half from my house, picked up a lot of responsibility for me and helped me with Elisa while my daughter was away, and certainly, my dad was very helpful as well. But, I do remember driving, and I think it was the night before the primary, and I'm, you know, still working my full-time job at the hospital, and, you know, when you have that kind of a job, it's not like making shirts or putting car parts together or something where, you know, if you don't put the shirt together or if somebody else puts the car parts together, the car parts don't care, but when you have a job where you're working with people and managing and their care and their treatment and their lives, it's a whole other kind of job, and it's, I think, anyhow, it's more demanding. So, trying to juggle those kinds of employment responsibilities, the family responsibilities, and now the campaign dynamic, it was very busy. And I do remember the night before the primary, I was running some signs out to someone's house, and I'm driving down the road, and I said, "Oh, Elisa, I can't take this anymore. We're always crunched for time. I always feel like I'm under pressure. I'm just getting tired of this," and my daughter, who's, I think just turned eight at the time, said, "Well, Dad, you're the one that wants to be State Representative." I says, "Yeah, you're right. *[laugh]* You're right."

**HM:** So, she gave you the perspective? *[laugh]*

**TS:** She did. She did.

**HM:** So, when was your wife officially deployed then?

**TS:** She actually left on Mothers' Day of 2006, and she had a school that she was working on on a reserve basis, but she wasn't going to have time to complete the school before she actually left on the deployment overseas, so they said, "Well, if you go to finish this up active-duty style, you can get the school completed before you leave," so she left on Mothers' Day, went to Fort Dix, completed that Army training, came home in Memorial Day; she was home, like, over Memorial Day weekend. Left then with her unit to go back to Fort Dix for some training before they went overseas, and she was actually over there in Kuwait and in Iraq at the end of June, early July of 2006, and she ended up coming home right here to Harrisburg, July 14 of 2007.

**HM:** So, you are running for the House, and you're running against an incumbent.

**TS:** No. Actually –

**HM:** Well –

**TS:** What happened was – yeah, yeah, in the beginning. But now this 18-year guy who nobody wanted to run against loses in the primary, and he loses to – Bob Allen loses to Gary Hornberger – a lot of issues swirling around the pay raise. People very in touch with the pay raise issue and very much angered over the whole thing, so there's a backlash, and Bob Allen loses the primary to Gary Hornberger, who was then the County Controller in Schuylkill County, and now, all of a sudden, people are like, "Oh, well, hey, who is this Seip guy? Maybe he can win," and, you

know, Congressman Holden [U.S. Representative, 1993-present] tells a story where one of my colleagues, Neal Goodman [State Representative, Schuylkill County, 2003-present], who represents another part of Schuylkill County, gets a call from Holden the morning after the primary election, and he says, “Neal, who is this Seip guy? Do you have a phone number for him? We got to get a hold of him,” and it really, really changed the whole complexion of the campaign when you’re in an open seat race as opposed to running against somebody who was the Chairman of the Labor Committee and was an 18-year Member.

**HM:** Can you describe the district and what challenges it presented as a candidate?

**TS:** You know, people, whether they’re at a hearing or a committee meeting, you know, they do an introduction of the Members, and they always say, “I’m, you know, Susie Smith, and I represent the 44<sup>th</sup> District,” and I’ll be very honest with you. I don’t even know where the 44<sup>th</sup> District is. If somebody said, “Where is that?” I wouldn’t know. I know a couple of them because I identify the people that are in them are friends of mine or people I dealt with legislation on, but I don’t know all the district numbers. So, whenever I would announce who I was and what district, I always say, “I represent the Cabela’s and Yuengling District,” and everybody knows where Cabela’s and Yuengling are; Schuylkill and Berks. But, in my opinion, I mean, it’s certainly not like Marty Causer’s [Martin; State Representative, Cameron, McKean, and Potter Counties, 2003-present] district that has pieces of three counties. I believe he has the biggest district, but my district is 67 miles from Klingerstown, which is in the western corner of Schuylkill County, all the way down to Leesport, which is really one of the suburbs of Reading, so it’s 67 miles. I think there’s really three distinct parts of the district. There’s the Cabela’s

part, which is the Berks portion. The Yuengling part, which is really Pottsville; the highest concentration of constituents is around the city of Pottsville, third-class city. And then, there's the pigeon shoot part, all that western Schuylkill County; Hegins, farm, ag[riculture], rural communities, and those are really the, the three parts of the 125<sup>th</sup>, and they're very, I think, distinct sub-constituencies. I think I've found the people in Berks County much more focused on legislative issues, Constitutional issues, very concrete types of expectations or inquiries on their Legislator. People in Pottsville and the Schuylkill County part really seek out their State Representative for all different kinds of reasons. I had people come in to me, and they said, "My kids ran away." "Okay, did you call the police?" "No." "Did you call Children and Youth?" "No, we came to see you," so I contacted the district attorney, my friend Jim Goodman, who I'd worked with before, and he got him involved, and he started tracking their email accounts and cell phones and so forth, and they found them up in New York City. I had people contact me because their relatives were being detained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. "Okay, let me contact Congressman Holden," and he got the State Department involved, and he worked on that issue for me. I've had people come in because they were denied health care insurance coverage. They reached their cap. "Okay." Again, I had, I had a social work student working for me at the time. She got in contact with Congressman Holden who got in contact with one of his colleagues out in Washington State, where the insurance company was headquartered, and we actually had her health care and her cancer treatment reinstated so that she could continue with her cancer treatment. I had a guy that I used to have study hall with in high school came in to see me. "I got a couple DUI's [Driving Under the Influence]. I can't get to work. I don't have a license. They want me to buy this thing I got to blow in. Its 15 hundred dollars. I don't have a job. I can't get to a job. Can you help me?" I contacted Chairman Markosek [Joseph F.;

State Representative, Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties, 1983-present], the Transportation Committee Chairman, and his committee folks got me some information on an interlock system that was about 250 or 300 dollars, so we got my constituent matched up with the people that provide that equipment, and he was able to get that put on his car. He now has a job, and he's supporting himself, and, you know, his situation's a lot better. So, people seek me out for all different kinds of reasons, and, you know, as a social worker, I think, I try to bring that social work perspective to the way I do my job as Legislator, and there really is no job description for State Legislator. It's whatever way you think would be best. It's whatever issues you want to try and tackle, whatever things that, that you want to try to pursue or help with, and I'm sure out of the 203 of us there's probably 203 different approaches to this job right now.

**HM:** So, you're a problem-solver with no handbook. *[laugh]* What wonderful stories, though. I bet you had a lot more of them as well, I'm sure. You probably could go on.

**TS:** We sure could.

**HM:** Well, I also want to talk a little bit about the makeup of your district is primarily Republican. Am I correct?

**TS:** It's about 43 percent Democrat, 57 percent Republican; very Republican district.

**HM:** Did people expect you to win?

**TS:** I'm guessing not the first time.

**HM:** Okay.

**TS:** And maybe not the second time and I don't think anybody knew what to expect the third time, but I guess the numbers caught up with me. There were just a lot of different factors, I think, involved in this last election. The 2006 Election was really a Democratic kind of wave or sentiment. The 2010 Election seemed to be more of a Republican wave or sentiment. It's just the state of the economy. People just angry in general, and when they seem to be angry, they want to do something different. And the other interesting factor, I think, in this campaign [*cough*] was the fact that the Governor-Elect, now, Tom Corbett [Pennsylvania Attorney General, 2004-2010; Pennsylvania Governor, 2011-present], had taught a year at Pine Grove High School, and he married a woman from Pine Grove, Sue Manbeck, who was very popular in Pine Grove, and I think a lot of people who came out to vote, and people who maybe hadn't voted in a couple years, decided to vote because Tom Corbett was running. They were coming out, and they voted straight Republican, and for me to win the election, I really had to do well in Pine Grove, and I had historically done very well in Pine Grove. My daughter going to school at Pine Grove, and I think just the whole Pine Grove School District looking to me as, you know, their hometown guy, always supported me very well, and in this election I won the Pine Grove School District, but it was really by less than 100 votes, and that was not enough to offset some of the areas that I didn't do well in.

**HM:** What an interesting set of circumstances for an election, huh?

**TS:** Yeah. There's a lot of factors that go into it that people don't always think about or pay attention to.

**HM:** Well, I'm sure you did. I'm sure you did. Well, I wanted to ask you about your first Swearing-In. We'll move, I guess, out of the campaigning, and we'll ask you about your first Swearing-In, and what was that like coming to Harrisburg, and was it a special occasion for you?

**TS:** Oh, very much so. You know, I tackled the crazy question and got past that and proved the "pretty ballsy" guy wrong, and yeah, it was, it was incredible, and actually, my wife was on leave from Iraq the day after Christmas. She had headed back to the United States for her 15-day leave, so she was here at the Capitol for my Swearing-In, which was incredible, and my daughter – now, when, when you get elected, In the class I was in, there was 52 freshmen came in, everybody wanting tickets for this thing, you know. Even though the Chamber is huge, it's still only so big, and there's only so many tickets. So, one way you can save a ticket is if you put your child on your lap, so I had my eight-year-old on my lap, and I'm in this row where Tim Mahoney's [Timothy; State Representative, Fayette County, 2007-present] on one side and me and John Pallone [State Representative, Armstrong and Westmoreland Counties, 2001-2010]. It's like the offensive line of the House is in this row, except John Hornaman [State Representative, Erie County, 2007-present]. He was next to me, and he wasn't as big as me or Mahoney or Pallone, but we're all in this row, and I have my daughter on my lap, and now, I'm sure you remember how crazy the first day of Session was in 2007. It was only a one-seat majority. Nobody even knew what was going to happen other than Tom Caltagirone [Thomas;

State Representative, Berks County, 1977-present], my Berks County colleague who absolutely, positively committed that he was voting for John Perzel [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-2010, Speaker, 2003-2006] for Speaker, who happened to be a Republican, even though Tom's a Democrat. And I'll tell you something else that happened that was pretty interesting; there was a guy who I knew who ran a nursing home in Tremont, and we had passed patients back-and-forth when I was at the hospital to the nursing home and vice versa, and he happened to be the Schuylkill County Republican Committee Chairman, and I went to college with one of his high school friends, and I knew him kind of casually, and after I got elected, he called me in December, and he said, "Hey, I have some, some things I want to give you, you know. How do I get a hold of you? How do I get this to you?" I said, "Well, where are you at?" He says, "Well, I'm in Tremont, but I have to go into the hospital." I said, "Okay." I said, "Well, I'm on my way to Pottsville now. I'll meet you in Pottsville." He says, "All right, yeah. Let's meet at Roma's." So, we're going to meet at Roma Pizza in Pottsville because I don't have an office open or anything. It's December, and things are still kind of in motion, and he gives me this petition. He says, "Well." He says, "Some people signed it that are involved with the Republican Party, but, you know, I don't care what you do with it. It's just asking you not to vote for Bill DeWeese [H. William; State Representative, Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties, 1979-present; Speaker, 1993-1994] for Speaker, but, you know, I'm really not that involved with this stuff anymore, and it's my duty to give it to you, but I just wanted to give you this, and so who do you think's going to win the Super Bowl? And let's eat some pizza," and so I'm eating pizza, and we're talking football, and also, Scott Thomas is with him. Scott Thomas is this young guy who was involved with the TARS, the Teenage Republicans in Pottsville, but we're eating pizza, talking football, and, you know, he's, he's always been intrigued with

politics. Of course, he's the County Chairman of the Republican Party, and he's kind of, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know if I want to say "impressed," but kind of intrigued, I guess, by my story; guy who never ran for office before, and here I am. So, we get done with eating our pizza. I buy the pizza. I go my way. He goes his way. The next day, I get this paper, the *Pottsville Republican*. "Schuylkill County GOP Chairman Serves Representative Seip-Elect Notice: Don't Vote for DeWeese or Else," you know, that kind of thing. I'm like, "What the heck is this? Are you kidding me? We just had pizza. We're going to talk football. 'Oh, I just had to give you this,'" and he just blindsided me. So, we fast forward to Swearing-In day. We know Tom Caltagirone is not going to vote for Bill DeWeese. He's committed to vote for Perzel, so nobody's really sure what's going to happen, and I, you know, know nothing about procedures of the House, never been on the House Floor before really at all, don't understand all the parliamentary procedures that are going on, and all of a sudden, Tom Caltagirone is on the other side of the Chamber – I don't know if you remember this – but he's on the Republican side, sitting, which was very bizarre, and I guess just as a quick aside; the day after I won the election, a couple days afterward, I came home from work from the hospital, and there was a fruit basket on my porch, and it said, "Congratulations on your victory, Representative Seip. John Perzel." So, I carry this, this basket in my house, and I call Brian Tobin on the phone, the guy who helped me with the campaign, the president of Pine Grove Dem[ocrat]s. I say, "Brian, I got this fruit basket you sent." He said, "What fruit basket?" I said, "You sent me a fruit basket, and you signed 'John Perzel,' and I thought that was kind of funny." He says, "No, I didn't send you a fruit basket." I said, "Oh, my God, John Perzel sent me a fruit basket." [laugh] So, now we fast forward to Swearing-In day, and I'm thinking, "Boy, this guy has pulled out all the stops. He sent me a fruit basket. He's got Tom Caltagirone sitting on the other side of the room. He's

something else.” Things progress, and poor Roger Nick [Chief Clerk of the House, 2005-2009]. I will never forget Roger Nick. The Chief Clerk is up there presiding – just a formality till they nominate a Speaker – and he’s going to sit down and take his place off the rostrum. Well, pretty soon, people are making appeals to the, to the Chair, parliamentary inquiries, and he’s interpreting *Mason’s Manual*, and he’s consulting the Parliamentarians, and he’s making more rulings than he ever thought he would make in a lifetime of being Chief Clerk, and he is put in such an incredibly unenviable position, and one of the things that happens is Bill DeWeese jumps up to his feet, and he says, “Mr. Speaker, with the votes not being as steely and unremitting as we had hoped, I nominate Denny O’Brien [Dennis; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980; 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2008]. Denny O’Brien,” and then, all of a sudden, Sam Smith’s [Samuel H.; State Representative, Armstrong, Indiana, and Jefferson Counties, 1987-present; Speaker 2011-present] jumping up, and he’s objecting, and he didn’t think the nominations should have been opened yet, and again, Roger Nick making more rulings and making determinations on what’s going to happen, and incredibly, Denny O’Brien becomes Speaker of the House. I vote for Denny O’Brien, not necessarily because Dan Daub threatened me with his petition and his story to the paper that was, “Oh, just some things I had to give you,” but it was kind of funny when I saw him weeks later, and I said, “Hey, Dan, I took your advice. I didn’t vote for Bill DeWeese for Speaker.” [laugh]

**HM:** [laugh] Well, that was quite an introduction to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

**TS:** One of the cool things, too, about Denny O’Brien, and I really, you know, have to say I didn’t know a lot of the other Members. I, of course, knew Neal Goodman from my home

county, and I had had some contact with Tom Caltagirone, who was sort-of on the other side or something or other now, and Dante Santoni [State Representative, Berks County, 1993-present] from Berks County, but by-and-large, I really didn't know a lot of these people, but one thing I did know about Denny O'Brien was that he was an advocate for people with disabilities, and he was very concerned about children with autism, and he was very much an advocate for fairness, and that was something that I certainly was interested in, and I was very happy to have voted for Denny for Speaker.

**HM:** Absolutely. Did things calm down after your first day?

**TS:** No.

**HM:** No?

**TS:** No, I don't think so. Then, it was, you know, we got to get an office. We have to get everything, you know. There's no manual, you know? Nobody tells you how to be a Legislator. It was just one big thing after another. Now, it's, you know, we, we got to get on committees. You know, I often think about my approach to this job and, and how I did things – and this is going to sound kind of crazy, and I love these analogies, so you'll have to bear with me – but, I often think about the Jamaican Bobsled Team, and I remember watching the Olympics, and they'd say, "Oh," you know, "you can take this turn like the German team. They always take it high, and they try and ride their line, and Great Britain, they come at it from the bottom, and they want to hug into the turn on the bottom, or you can just be like the Jamaican bobsled team and let

the turn take you,” you know, and I thought about that, you know, as I was moving into this job. You can try and plan your moves, or you can let the turn take you, and I had in mind what committees I wanted to be on. I certainly wanted to be on the Labor Committee. Coming from health care and now being the only licensed health care professional in the House of Representatives, I wanted to be on the Health and Human Services Committee. One of the big issues in my campaign was property taxes. I wanted to be on the Finance Committee, and certainly, one of the other big things that was going on was there was talk about an ethanol plant being put in in the Tremont area, so I wanted to be on the Energy Committee. So, rather than just kind of wait for my assignments, I find out who the Chairmen are on these committees; I talked to the Chairmen, I sent them letters, I went to their offices. I nagged them, told them how wonderful I was and what an asset I would be to their committee, and I ended up becoming a member of the Finance Committee, the Energy Committee, the Labor Committee, and I became the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Committee, and what is so funny about that is I introduced legislation. I want to make some substantial policy contributions in the health care realm. I have two, really, three bills that pass and go on to become law, which I considered health care bills. Do you know how many ever went through the Health and Human Services Committee? None of them. None of them. I had two bills that were to increase the prescribing authority for physicians’ assistants, one that dealt with the physicians’ assistants that were working under osteopaths and one for those that were working under medical doctors, the MD’s, and both of those went through Professional Licensure. And my other big piece of legislation, one of the first bills, the first bill I introduced, was the Pennsylvania Center for Health Careers. That ended up going through the Labor Committee, because it had to do with the health care workforce, but it did go through the committee I was on anyhow, not like the Professional

Licensure ones, and there's such an advantage when your legislation is going through a committee that you're on, so that you can either amend it yourself in committee or keep bad amendments off of it, but it's kind of funny how, you know, you don't exactly know how this place works until you get here.

**HM:** Well, you started talking about your legislation that you introduced and the ones that were enacted. Are those your most proudest pieces of legislation, or would you consider other ones?

**TS:** Very, very happy that the Pennsylvania Center for Health Careers was signed, and to be very honest with you, I never actually had a bill that I was the prime sponsor signed into law. The bills, for the scope of practice for physicians' assistants, those bills passed the House, went to the Senate. I get a call from the Executive Director of the Policy – or, I'm sorry, the Professional Licensure Committee – and she says to me, "Hey, they want to take your bill, and they're doing something with respiratory therapists. They want to take these bills for respiratory therapists and put them into your two bills so that we can get two bills out of the Senate, but really, it'll be four." I said, "Well, whose bills are they?" She says, "Oh, they're John Yudichak's [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1999-2010; State Senator, 2011-present]." I said, "Okay, well, let me check with John and make sure this is what he wants done." So, I talk to John. He says, "Yeah, go ahead and do that." I said, "Okay." So, I call them back, I said, "Go ahead and do it." Next thing you know, these bills are coming back from the Senate, but they're not Seip bills. They're Yudichak and Adolph's [William F., Jr.; State Representative, Delaware County, 1989-present] bills, so they took my bills, and instead of amending my bill with their bill, they took my bills, used them as their own amendments into those two bills, and

sent them back over here. So, Mike Sturla's [State Representative, Lancaster County, 1991-present] the Chairman of the Policy Committee – or, I'm sorry, Professional Licensure at the time – I go to him, I said, "Mike, what the hell happened?" I tell him the story how, you know, we talked about John's bills, blah, blah. He says, "Well, I guess they didn't want to give a freshman a bill." I said, "What do you mean 'they'? Who are 'they'?" He says, "Well, you know, the Leaders over there, Sam Smith and Dave Argall [David; State Representative, Berks and Schuylkill Counties, 1985-2009; State Senator, 2009-present] and Turzai [Michael; State Representative, Allegheny County, 2001-present]." "Dave Argall?" "Well, yeah, Dave Argall, the Whip." "Oh, really?" So, now I'm very upset. Now, Dave's from Schuylkill County. So, I'm thinking about this, and I'm not happy about it, and I'm talking to Dante Santoni, you know, trying to get some counsel, some guidance on it, and he says, "I'd go talk to him about it." I said, "You know what? I think I will." I walked over. Session was over, and Dave's standing there, and he thought I was just going to get into some small talk. He says to me, "Oh, I've given up on ever getting out of here for summer vacation or spending the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with my family." I said, "Dave, you know, I had these two bills on physicians' assistants to try and increase their prescribing authority." "Mmm... mmhmm... mmhmm." I said, "Well, Dave, you know what they did with those bills? They took them. They used them as their own amendments, and they amended Yudichak and Adolph's bills and sent them back over here. They stole my bills." "Well, who knows why the Senate does what they do? And you have a writer, and he'll be able to give you all the credit," and I said, "Dave, Sturla just told me they did it because you told them to." "Well, you could still get the credit. You could – you got a writer, and you could still put out your own press release," and I said, "Now, Dave, I have some spot appeal bills over there that I'm working on with Senator Rhoades [James J.; State Senator, 1981-

2008]. You're going to help me with those, aren't you?" "Mmhmm... mmhmm," he says.

"Mmhmm." [laugh] And later that term, I'm trying to move these spot appeal bills. They had both passed the House, one for Schuylkill and one for Berks. They go over to the Senate; they're in the Senate Finance Committee. And the reason why I offer these two bills is, a guy comes to my office one day. He said, "You know, I bought a house in Pottsville. My taxes were supposed to be this much, but what they did was they took my tax money that I was already paying, they hired a lawyer with my money, and now they raised my taxes with my money to get more of my money. More of my money," he said. And I listened to what he said, and I said, "Yeah, that's what they're doing. They're taking your money. They're hiring lawyers. They're pushing up your assessment to take more of your own money." I said, "Well, this isn't fair." I looked into it, and you could have houses that were very similar in the same block built by the same builder, the same year, same school district, same floor plans, same lot size, everything, but if this house was last assessed at 50 thousand and now this year you buy it – last assessed in 1994 at 50 thousand – you buy it in 2010 for 100 thousand. They'll say, "Well, you paid 100 thousand for it. We're going to double your taxes," and they'll appeal it just based on the sale price. That's against the uniformity clause in the Constitution. You cannot tax people differently for the same thing. So, I put these bills out, I'm working hard on them, I'm pressing as hard as I can. I put mine out in September. I tell the same story I just told you at a Chamber of Commerce event in January. Senator Rhoades picks up on this. He puts the two bills in in the Senate. Okay, well, hopefully, they'll move now. So, I go over, I talk to the Chairman of the [Senate] Finance Committee, Pat Browne [Patrick; State Representative, Lehigh and Northampton Counties, 1995-2005; State Senator, 2005-present]. I said, "I want to get these bills to move, you know. These are very important." He says, "Well, what we're going to is, I

think it would make sense if we move a Rhoades bill and one of your bills. Now, we're going to give him the Schuylkill bill, and we'll give you the Berks bill." "Yeah, but they're both my bills, both my idea back in September. The problem's really in Schuylkill County. I would prefer to have the Schuylkill bill." He said, "Well, then, we wouldn't prefer to move any of them." I said, "All right, whatever you gotta do." So, we moved these bills, they go through, and they get vetoed. The veto message on my Berks bill comes back to the House. The veto message on the Schuylkill bill goes back to the Senate. So now, I kind of laugh because, you know, if nothing else, now we have to go back to my Schuylkill bill and the Senator's Berks bill, right? I go over to Pat and said, "Hey, we, we have to move these bills now. We have them lined up in the Senate Finance Committee. I'd like to get," "Okay, well, what we're going to do is we're going to amend these bills. We've talked to our attorneys, and we're going to take out where it says 'Schuylkill' in your bill, and we're going to put in 'Berks,' and the Rhoades bill where it says 'Berks,' we're going to take that out and put in 'Schuylkill.'" I said, "You're going to hold this up and delay this so you can change the bills around again?" "That's right, or we're not going to move them." "Well, do whatever you got to do." So, they move and we're running out of days now; we're down to the very nitty-gritty. We combine the bills into one bill in the House Finance Committee. We get the bill out; it goes to Appropriations, and it does not move. I'm down to just a few days left in the Session, and I'm thinking, "Well, the only thing I can do is just override the veto on the Berks bill, which doesn't solve my problem, but at least I get something done." So, it becomes known that I'm going to be looking for a veto override. People are saying to me, "You probably really don't want to do this." "No, no. I want to do this." "Well, if you had people on your side," I said, "I got a list. Look, all these people are on my side." "Well, you probably don't –" And now, I'm getting worked up. Now, I'm getting

very emotional, and I said, “Look, I, I don’t want to make any decisions out of anger here,” and they said, “That’s good because we don’t want you making any angry decisions either.” I said, “All right. Let me think about it for a while, and I’ll come back,” and I thought about it, and I thought, “Well, they don’t want to do what I want to do. I don’t want to do what they want to do. We’ll just have to see what happens.” So, I went down, I talked to my Leadership, and I said, “Look, there’s no point in meeting with you. You don’t want what I want. I don’t want what you want. We’ll just have to play this out and see where it goes.” “Well, if you’re going to override the Governor, you should come talk to us.” I said, “All right. I’ll come and talk to you off the Floor, but please, don’t move to adjourn. Don’t try and pull the rug out from under me while I’m off the Floor talking to you.” “Oh, we would never do that.” So, I go off the Floor, we have this big meeting with the Leadership and they’re telling me, “You don’t understand what’s all involved here.” I said, “You’re right. I don’t understand what’s all involved. I don’t.” “Yeah, but we’re trying to lead. We, we have an agenda. There’s other bills that are connected to other things that you don’t know about.” I said, “You’re right.” “Yeah, but we’re trying to lead.” I said, “I know. See, that’s where you and I are in different places. See, you’re trying to lead. You have other considerations you have to give. I don’t have to give those concerns. I’m not burdened with leadership. I’m only representing the 61,513 people that I represent, and this is what they want.” I said, “I got, you know, Joe Smith here, who’s going to see a two thousand dollar property tax increase if I don’t pass this bill. Now, maybe that’s not a lot of money in comparison to a 28 or a 29 billion dollar budget, but to Joe Smith that’s a lot of money.” “Well, if you do this, you’re going to be making a big mistake.” I said, “Well, I guess I’m going to run out there and make a big mistake,” and there were some very unhappy people when we left, so we come back to the room. I’m planning on calling up special order of business

on House Bill 1439, immediate consideration of a veto override. I'm lining up my papers, and Bill DeWeese stands up, and he says, "Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn." What? I about hit the roof. I fly down to the front, and Keith McCall is standing there in front of, like, the Leader's desk, and he sees me coming, and he's like, "What? What?" He thought I was going to hit him, and I came at him. I said, "You know what. You just told me you weren't going to do that, and you did it anyway." So, now I'm walking back up to the middle; under our rules, if a motion to adjourn is made, it's debatable by whoever made the motion and the Leadership. Well, Leadership's the one who made the motion, so now I can't even talk on it. So, I look up at the Speaker, Speaker O'Brien, and I said, "Can I get recognized on this?" and he just gave me one of these, and I thought, "I'm done," so I went back up to where I was, and I'm drained, I'm fatigued, and I'm bitter. Andrew Ritter comes over, and I know Chairman Nickol [Steven R; State Representative, Adams and York Counties, 1991-2008] had sent him over, but Chairman Nickol, although he was the Republican Chairman of the Finance Committee, he was a gentleman in every sense of the word; very fair, honorable man, and he wants to help me. So, he sends Andrew over and Andrew says, "We're going to help you." I said, "Well, that's great. I could really use some help right now." So, a short time later, Sam Smith stands up, and he says, "Mr. Speaker, if we adjourn, does that mean we couldn't discuss other important business tonight, like, oh, I don't know, just for example, the override of a Governor's veto? Does that mean we could not talk about the override of a Governor's veto if we adjourned?" "The only thing that would be in order would be adjournment." And he says, "Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that this motion is so important we should have a roll call vote on it." Now, people from my side are coming back up to me. "Oh, you really don't want to do this. You really don't want to –" "I don't want to do this? Oh, no, no, no. Now? Now, I really want to do this now." "No, no,

no, you really don't want to –" "No, no, no, no, no, I do. I do." "Well, let's think about this. We could get your bill out, that bill that's in Appropriations. We could get that out. That's the Schuylkill bill. That's the one you wanted." "Wow, what a great idea. I wish we would have thought of this, like, three or four hours ago. Would have saved us all a lot of grief here." "We'll get the bill out." Now, Dwight Evans [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1981-present] is disappointed. He said, "I don't hear a thank you." I said, "Oh, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for working with me on this. Thank you so much." Went down, he had the Appropriations Committee. Boom, the bill comes out. We get the bill passed, goes to the Senate, and it passes. Goes to the Governor – now, this is an incredible piece of legislation that was worked on by a Democratic House Member, a Republican Senator, it is supported by the Farm Bureau, the Grange, the realtors, and the builders. Very unlikely combination of supporters, and the County Commissioners Association, and the Chamber of Commerce all supporting this bill, so I have, you know, the realtors and the Farm Bureau and everybody I can calling the Governor, inundating him with emails and as much contact as we can get to get him to sign this bill. He comes to Schuylkill County. He was going to really end up in a bad circumstance. He was having a press conference, and he was going to unknowingly go to a big Republican in my area's building and have this press conference, and I think he was going to get beat up. I spare him that. I divert this press conference to a nursing home that I had a relationship with. He ends up having his press conference over at the nursing home, doesn't get beat up, and I said, "Please, Governor, now, I helped you, you know. Please consider what you're doing with this bill. Please pass this bill." "Well, we'll look at it. We'll look at it," and he sits on it until the very last day, and I get a call from the Governor's office. "We're going to have to veto the bill." "Yeah, but you can't. I mean, all those reasons." "We're going to have to

veto the bill.” How can this be? He vetoes the bill at about three, four o’clock in the afternoon. The very same day, Senator Rhoades has a fatal car accident at about six or seven o’clock the same day, like three, four hours later. Just an incredible irony that the same day he vetoed the bill, Senator Rhoades has this car accident, and, you know, the Governor left me down a second time, and I didn’t get that legislation passed, and it was, you know, something I worked very hard on, put as much energy as I could into it, tried every angle, and then I came back this term, and I picked up where I left off. I started working with Gordon Denlinger [State Representative, Lancaster County, 2003-present] from Lancaster County and Mark Gergely [State Representative, Allegheny County, 2003-present] from Allegheny County. We had new versions of the bill. Had a package pass the House again, went to the Senate, and unfortunately, it hasn’t passed. So, the spot appeal issue won’t be remedied this term, either.

**HM:** What would you list as one of your greatest frustrations?

**TS:** That was it. I mean, getting that legislation passed out of the General Assembly twice and have it vetoed by a Democratic Governor. Twice. That was a, a big frustration.

**HM:** What do you think the hardest issue you faced as a Representative was?

**TS:** I think there’s two, two very difficult issues. This term, certainly, the pension crisis. Being a member of the Finance Committee, we had the administrators of the SERS [School Employees’ Retirement System] Fund and the PSERS [Public School Employees’ Retirement System] Fund come and testify, and, you know, their initial words of advice to the committee

was, “There’s no easy answer to this pension problem,” and they went through all the different scenarios and testified to what different factors were involved, but trying to find a solution to this pension crisis and trying to play, really, play catch up for situations that weren’t fully understood, I guess, at the time. When they waived the pension’s contributions in earlier years, when we had the attacks of September 11, 2001, and then this great recession, trying to compensate for that where, you know, I’m a social worker. I’m not an investment banker or an accountant or somebody who deals with investments on a regular basis, but my understanding is that you make steady contributions at a certain rate that’ll help you allow for the ups and downs, and when they chose to waive those contributions, when they chose to increase benefits, and when we had these natural, incredible market circumstances occur, it was just very, very difficult to try and offset those misunderstandings or mistakes. I think we did the very best we could with the pension bill that we passed. As I said on the Floor last night, you want people that are working in the prison. I worked in a prison. Verbal abuse is the least injustice that those employees have to deal with. I mean, there’s people throwing human waste on you, just horrific things occur that job setting, and you can say, “Well, they chose to work there.” Well, they did, but they chose to work there with the understanding that there was going to be a pension for their service, and, you know, we really had an obligation to make sure that that was secured and stabilized, and I think we did do that, and not to mention all the terrible property tax nightmares that would be created if this local school district had to make up for all those mistakes that were made along the way with, with the pension plans. So, I think that the pension issue has been very difficult to deal with. I think it was handled as best as it could have been handled, and the other really difficult issue is property taxes; there’s many different ideas. People want to hear that their problem’s going to be solved as painlessly as possible. That’s why I think the Rohrer

[Samuel E. Rohrer; State Representative, Berks County, 1993-2010] plan seemed like it was such a great idea if you, “Hey, you’re going to eliminate all my property tax on every property at every level. Great. Let’s do it,” but that was 15 billion dollars you had to come up with, and I’ve supported the plan because that’s what my constituents wanted, but my plan, the smart plan, sales tax modernization, addressing real tax equality, just focused on the home you live in and just school property tax, and I thought that the beauty of the plan was it built on existing mechanisms; the Homestead Exclusion, changing the property tax – or, I’m sorry, the sales tax structure that’s already in place. Building on those existing mechanisms to try and come up with seven billion dollars to totally eliminate the school property tax on their primary home, and you could fully fund the Homestead Exclusion as it exists now in the Constitution, giving you the maximum amount allowed in property tax relief at 50 percent of that average home in every school district. You could do that for three billion dollars, which you would have that first year off the sales tax changes I proposed, we would generate 5.1 billion, and at the same time, we would have helped Philadelphia County and Allegheny County with some terrible financial circumstances that they’re realizing, and that’s why I reached out to Philadelphia County at the time, initially, with this plan. We had a couple different things going on; we had a budget that was way, way overdue. We were just getting into the end of July, and I thought, “Oh, my God, I have to do something here.” Now, I’m a rank-and-file guy; I’m not on any of the conference committees, or I’m not in a Leadership position, but I’m a Member, I can offer legislation. So, I took the bull by the horns, and I put that forth. I met with probably more Senators than some of the Senators had ever met with to try and promote this plan, and I reached out to people who I thought would welcome and needed my help, particularly Philadelphia County when they were looking at going an extra penny on their sales tax. I said, “Wait. Don’t do that. I’ll help you.

I'll give you more money in three years than you get in five with your plan," and they said, "Well, the mayor said this plan's already lined up. We have to just go do it." "Yeah, but if you listen to me, you'll get more money in three years than you will with five of yours." "Yeah, well, we have to go do it," and I think that's the only way that things get done in Harrisburg is you have to reach out to different Members who represent different constituencies and try and help them solve their problems, because people in my district, some of them will say, "Well, the hell with Philly. The hell with Pittsburgh," but those constituents are asking those Representatives in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh the same thing mine are asking me. "What's this going to do for me? How's it going to help me?" And if you can't provide them with some kind of an answer that's going to be satisfactory to their constituents, then they're not going to help you. So, I would hope that a lot of my colleagues that are still here and some of the new Members that come in recognize the fact that there is a tremendous advantage to trying to get to know the other Members and their districts and their agendas so that you can help merge your agendas to really make some positive things happen for the whole Commonwealth.

**HM:** That's wonderful, you know, advice. Do you think that someone taught you that, or is that something that you as a person brought to the House?

**TS:** I think just being a social worker, being someone who had worked in either through family dynamics, doing family therapy or group dynamics. Doing group therapy was just one of the things, I think, that I kind of brought with me to the House, those social work skills.

**HM:** Would you say anyone served as a mentor or a leader to you? Is there anyone that you would look up to here in the House?

**TS:** There are incredible people in this House. One of the things that Dave Levdansky [David; State Representative, Allegheny and Washington Counties, 1985-2010], I think, alluded to last night, and I have heard him say before, and even when I would take these property tax proposals to him as the Committee Chairman of the Finance Committee, you know, he'd say, "Man, this is big. This is involved, you know. This is ambitious, and you have to know that there, there are people out there who" – there's really, in his view, there were two types of Members. There were people who were Members that were just happy being Members and just wanted to kind of not cause a lot of waves and just wanted to be Members. He says, "And then there's people like you that really want to do stuff, and you're one of those guys that wants to do stuff, and you'll push and prod and forge ahead with something that you really believe in," and I took that as a compliment. I mean, that's why I'm here; I'm here to do stuff for my constituents for the Commonwealth. And there is an amazing collection of minds here in the House, and people all, I think, on the outside, and even some of the people who work here, think, "Oh, they're all lawyers." They're not all lawyers. I had this discussion with Mark Cohen [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-present], our Caucus Chairman, and we went through, and we could only identify about 18 or 20 Democratic Members that were attorneys. Other people, you know, certainly, I mean, people talk about Pat Harkins [Patrick; State Representative, Erie County, 2007-present] a lot. Pat Harkins came in with me. He's a UPS [United Parcel Service] driver. I'm a social worker. I know Mark Keller [State Representative, Franklin and Perry Counties, 2005-present] is an auctioneer. There's people were in real estate. There were people who had

their own businesses, and not everybody's an attorney. You know, there's just a real collection of minds from different walks of life, and one of the Members who really, really has helped me, and I really appreciated his guidance and input on a lot of things that I've done is Chairman Santoni, and he's such a youthful guy, you know. He's 50; he doesn't look 50, and he has always been a great friend to me and someone who I could always run things by and ask him. And even when I first got here, if I got a bill or something introduced, you know, people have this misconception that, like, you just introduce something, and if it's a good idea, I guess, you know, people will vote for it, and it'll just go, but that's not how it works. You got to work; you got to go in there and convince people. You got to ask for hearings. You got to try and persuade people to get behind your idea, even if it's a really great idea. If you don't promote it or people don't have to pay attention to it, they're caught up in their own stuff, and that's one of the things that, you know, I really appreciate Dante helping me understand that, and I'd have to say Mike Gerber [State Representative, Montgomery County, 2005-present], who was the Caucus Chairman for the Southeast Delegation, he really helped me understand how to promote legislation and try and get hearings on bills and things like that, and it's pretty astonishing that Mike, who is – talking about ages, you know. It's kind of weird. You have older guys that are younger Members and younger guys that are older Members, and their age and their experience don't always match up. Mike, really being one of the Caucus Leaders, and he was only really here one term ahead of me, but he was the Caucus Chairman – or the delegation chairman of the Southeast Delegation and somebody who really helped move my legislative career along, I think.

**HM:** Would you say you have a fondest memory?

**TS:** Well, I have, as I said last night, I have three days that really, really stick out in my mind. One was that incredibly crazy Swearing-In day, which was just an incredible event to be part of. The other event, certainly, was having my wife returning from war on the Floor of the House kind of unexpectedly, or maybe expectedly. I don't know. We were still in Session on July 14<sup>th</sup> trying to wrap up the budget in my first year in the House, and certainly, that override, or almost override, situation where it was just so intense and involved, and I'm just very happy and proud that I was able to stick with what I believed in and promote something that my constituents really wanted, and I'm very comfortable in knowing that I did everything I absolutely could to get that done. You know, unfortunately, the Governor did leave me down twice on his end, but there was really nothing more I could have done other than get it out of the General Assembly, which is what I did. So, I mean, that, that was an incredible moment to be able to get that done, and the other thing that I just take in is, I look at all the people who did serve in the House and people I've never met and never will meet. Ben Franklin [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1751-1764; Speaker, 1764], certainly one of the coolest Pennsylvanians, probably one of the coolest Americans of all time; to be in the same legislative body that he was in is pretty remarkable.

**HM:** Well, I like to allow the Representatives to have the last word in their interviews, but I don't have any further questions, so I appreciate you taking the time to be here with me today, and, you know, again, I'll let you have the last word if there's anything else you'd like to add.

**TS:** I'd just like to say although I've only been here two terms, four years, I really feel like I packed a lot of legislative time and constituent service work into that four-year period, and as I

told you before, constituents came to my office for many different reasons, and maybe for a lot of different reasons than other constituents were seeking out their State Representative for somewhere else in the Commonwealth. And there were many times when people would come up to me, and sometimes, I knew them; sometimes, I didn't. But there were many, many times when people say, "Hey, can you help me with that birth certificate so I can get to my fishing trip up in Canada? You helped me with that driver's license problem I had. You helped me with" – and it could be something very, relatively uninvolved, and many times I got the credit for the hard work that my staff did. I had a tremendous staff. Brian Tobin was my chief of staff, and one of the cool things about this job is that you do get to meet incredibly interesting people. I met Jerome Bettis [Running Back; Los Angeles/ St. Louis Rams, 1993-1995; Pittsburgh Steelers, 1996-2005] and, you know some NFL football players and actors and performers like Mary Wilson [Singer, The Supremes, 1959-1977] from the Supremes, and you get to meet all these interesting people, and the staff that you have – one of the interesting people that I had a chance to correspond with was the defensive coordinator for the Pittsburgh Steelers, Dick LeBeau [Defensive Coordinator, Pittsburgh Steelers, 1995-1996, 2004-2014]. I wrote him a very complimentary note about winning the Super Bowl, and I love watching his defense. He did such a great job. He said, "I just call the plays, and I get out of the way, and the defense does all the work," and that made me think of my staff. You know, Brian Tobin was the Chief of Staff, and he's always been a great friend to me and has helped me so much in this job, and he kept the staff moving like a well-oiled watch, you know? Everything was always covered; everything always happened the way it needed to be, or it was fixed immediately, and unless there was some really big, weighty decision that had to be met, I just stayed out of the way. You know, I was like the, the defensive coordinator; I stayed out of the way. And I did have a great legislative

aide here in Harrisburg, Kristen Bernard. Kris was fantastic. She really knew a lot. She had worked for the Democratic Caucus for 14 years before she came to work for me, and she really, really understood a lot about this and helped me understand a lot about the job that I had in front of me. Jenn Laughlin, who, it's very funny that she ended up working for me. Years ago, when I told you I worked at the County Mental Health Office, I went to work as a new children's caseworker. The experienced case worker that was there was Jenn. She trained me to do my job there at the County. Now, many years later, we went full circle, and she worked for me, handling a lot of Human Service inquiries by constituents. Katie Dinger, who was very active in her local fire company, the North End Fire Company in Pine Grove, did a lot of constituent work, a lot of outreach to our fire companies; she was a great asset. Cory Knush, who was a part-time worker, really worked all the crazy hours. I would keep my office open on Thursday nights late till 6:30 for those people who needed to get their Legislator's office but couldn't do it during the typical work day. She would always work those crazy hours, working till 6:30. Heather Bixler, who was also someone that worked in my office part-time, worked once a week until seven o'clock up in Hegins, and Pam Hatter. Pam Hatter came to me with an enormous amount of knowledge and experience. She had worked for Representative Allen before she, thankfully, took a job with me, and she solved so many PennDOT problems and unemployment compensation problems for my constituents, just very remarkable the staff that we had assembled, and, you know, I think when people went to vote, you know, it's easy for me to say now, but they really don't know what they lost; the great staff that we had put in place that handled so many different things from international crises to, "Hey, I lost the, the title for my car," and everything in-between. The staff was just remarkable, and I just, I can't say it enough. There were so many times when I got the credit for the hard work that they did, and I just want

everyone to know that they were very hardworking, very knowledgeable, very conscientious, and they did a good job, and sometimes, I got the credit for things that I didn't even know about, and they were just wonderful. They made this job so much easier and so much enjoyable in regards to being able to help people.

**HM:** But you probably were the one that gave them the authority to handle everything, so I'm sure it all comes back to you, as well. And, do you have any last, parting thoughts for new Members that might be starting?

**TS:** Assemble a good staff. That certainly was the secret to many of my successes. Reach out to your constituents, you know? Don't be afraid to talk to people. Don't hide from them. Really, I mean, your job is to represent them, so if you don't talk to them, you don't email them, you don't call them, you won't know how to do your job. And the other advice I have is, reach out to those different parts of the State. Really get to know some of these other Members and what their concerns are so that you can work together for the betterment of the whole Commonwealth.

**HM:** Well, thank you very much for being here with me today. It was a wonderful interview.

**TS:** Thank you. I enjoyed it.