

Record Group CT1 / Series 2758

Robert Allison interview with David H. Locke, Senate Minority Leader, 1989-1993

Date: 2017

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Robert Allison: Thank you Senator Locke for joining us,

David Locke: Glad to do it.

Allison: and for talking a bit about your experience in the Legislature.

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Locke: Well I'm happy to participate and it's great to be back here in the State House.

Allison: I'm sure, I'm sure.

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Allison: Can you tell us what brought you into public life?

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Locke: Well, I think if I think about it, it's when I was in college, and not having any real idea what I wanted to do. I lived in a home in Wellesley on a hill and my father practiced medicine, had his office in the house and we were right on the main street, Route 16, and the big trucks, truck after truck trudged up that hill and made a terrible racket and so we, those of us in the neighborhood, tried to consider whether there's a way to ban the trucks and we went out and took traffic counts so we had some statistical data and we eventually were able to come into the Legislature, file a bill, and get them to pass a law that said that trucks of a certain weight could be banned on the streets of a town so long as it was an alternate route. In our case we had an alternate route, they could go on 128 and Route 9 without going on Route 16. So that as a part of that project I was deeply involved and I think that sort of sparked my interest in politics. I ran for Town Meeting and in those days you had to be 21 to vote and so I was elected when I was 21. I was still in college and at the time I reputedly was the youngest of the Town Meeting members and so I served there for a number of years and then I served on some committees, served on our Advisory Committee, I served on the Board of Selectmen, and then I decided I'd take a shot at the State House, and so I ran for election as a Republican. We had two Republican representatives in the district and the one I thought I would defeat was not the one I defeated, I defeated a veteran of some 26 years, and so I then ended up in the House of Representatives. I had no plans to make it any lengthy career. I never joined the retirement system and after I had been at it for 8 years, Senator Cutler from Needham, which was in my district, she retired and I ran for that office. And then I joined the retirement system and I served another 24 years in the Senate. The point is that as I began I had no preconceived notion of spending any length of time. By the time I left the Legislature I'd spent half of my life. I was, left at 65, age 65, I'd spent 32 years in the Legislature, so half of my life had been spent in the Legislature.

00:03:43,880 --> 00:03:57,840

Allison: Wow. So in the time you were working to get the law passed about the trucks, you were also finishing college, going to law school, along with being elected to the Board of Selectman, elected to the Town Meeting, and so on.

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Locke: Yes, Yes.

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Allison: And where did you go to college?

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Locke: I went to Harvard.

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Allison: Okay, and then law school?

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Locke: Law school at Harvard as well.

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Allison: But you weren't really thinking about becoming a career politician then?

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Locke: No, no at all. I didn't know what I wanted to do. And when I got out of college I went into the real estate business and I walked, I met a friend of mine in our senior year in college in the Harvard Yard, and in those days if we each had a dime we could go have a cup of coffee and it turned out we did have, and I walked with him, he was going over to file his application for law school. I'd been in Cambridge at that time for four years. I didn't know where the law school was. And so I went with him just to keep him company. We went and had coffee and then while I waited for him to file his application I picked up the catalogue and I looked at it and I began to get some thoughts of maybe applying and I was way late and the exams had been given and so forth, I wrote away to some schools. I wrote to Princeton asking for their catalogue and they wrote back and thanked me but said they didn't have a law school, that's how little I knew about it, and so I did apply at Harvard. They reported that the class was closed, did I want my name on the waiting list? And I said, "Nothing ventured, nothing lost, sure" and I got a call late in the summer that there was a vacancy and I had to have a 50 dollar deposit in by Monday if I wanted them to hold a seat, which I told them to do, and that's how I got to law school.

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Allison: Wow. Okay now when you were elected to the Legislature it was a different body then it is today, can you tell us a little bit about?

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Locke: Membership in the House of Representatives was 240 members. And I went in there in 1961, elected in 1960, as Senate President later Senate President Bill Bulger was, he and I went in together with many other members who later became distinguished in different areas.

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Allison: Did you meet each other at that time?

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Locke: Oh sure, sure and we became good friends. We were both young, both had growing families, and both were lawyers, and so we did become friends and have remained friends ever since that time. Although we had some very bitter debates and so forth but that was our job. So there was a movement supported by such reform groups as the League of Women Voters and others who were proposing to reduce the size of the House and that became a celebrated battle. And I was in favor of reducing the House and took part in the debates and the battle over that and that finally was passed, and it was cut by a third. They eliminated 80 members and ended up with a House of 160 members, which I think in retrospect was a good move.

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Allison: But you had supported it at the time.

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Locke: I had supported the reduction and the size, yes.

00:07:17,240 --> 00:07:19,060

Allison: Now what was the rationale for it?

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Locke: Well I think it was number one it was too big, it was cumbersome, had more members than it needed. I think if you go back to its origins, it was probably more the theory of having representatives from every community. And of course in Massachusetts we had 371 cities and towns so that the number of 240 wasn't exorbitant. In some states, I think in a state like Vermont every little village or every town has a representative. So I think that that was probably the origin, but as time passed and transportation became so much more readily available you didn't need that same number. And I felt that it would be much more efficient and more, less expensive and hopefully more transparent to have a smaller body, still big enough, 160 members is a pretty good sized legislative body, and so I supported it and it eventually was approved.

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Allison: Ok. What can you tell us about Massachusetts so when were you elected to the Senate?

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Locke: I was elected to the Senate in 1968 and came in here in 1969.

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Allison: Ok.

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Allison: And what was Massachusetts like generally at that point? I mean, what can you tell us about the?

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Locke: Well, it was more of a bipartisan state. The Republican party was stronger in terms of numbers in those days. When I came into the House, I think there was something like 105 Republicans. Today I gather it's down to 20, high 20s perhaps. In the Senate when I came in I think there were perhaps 14 Republicans and now there are 6. So that in those days the makeup of the society in Massachusetts I think was more bipartisan.

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Allison: How do you account for the change? How do you account for that?

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Locke: I think what produced the change in large part is the development of the independent voter. It became fashionable and you could hear people say, 'I don't vote the party, I vote the man, or the woman, the candidate.' And so there was a big surge in, not membership because the independents are not organized, but nevertheless the rise of the independent voter I think contributed very substantially to changing the whole political demographics of the Commonwealth. Independents today control every election. There are more independents than there are in either of the major parties and whether that's a good development or not is for perhaps the historians to determine. I think there is virtue in party organization. I think that if you have parties you can stand for principles on either end of the political spectrum. With the rise of the independent voter, not given to either Republican or Democratic philosophy, each of the two parties move closer to the middle in order to attract the independents. And consequently, you reach a stage where the question is what's the difference between the two parties? And I don't think on many issues there is any difference. And you end up with a system where the parties are or the members are so anxious to preserve their position that they, they water down if you will their political philosophy, again, to attract the independents. You can't get elected, no Republican can get elected anywhere with just Republican votes. Democrats, I think on the other hand, have maintained much greater power probably mainly from the result of the cities where many or most, I think a strong majority in most every major city are Democrats. People coming into the country new for whatever reason seem to go more to the Democratic Party. Minority groups, clearly the colored population, people of color they generally go to the Democratic side despite the fact that the liberation was done by a Republican president. So it's one of those anomalies that is hard to explain but I think it's fairly clear how it came about.

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Allison: Now what brought you to become a Republican? Was that a matter of choice?

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Locke: I don't know the answer. I think my general philosophy, if it can be called that, and that would be much too dignified a term, but my political leanings were far more conservative than they were liberal and the Republican Party was more attractive to conservatives than the Democratic Party was. It wasn't any lifelong dream of being a Republican but I think I found when I got to an age where it made a difference that almost like a religion you tend to drift to one rather than the other, and so for that reason I suppose I became a Republican.

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Allison: And you stuck with it.

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Locke: Stuck with it and intend to continue that way.

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Allison: Now what led you to become the leader of the Republicans in the State Senate? Can you tell us a bit about your path to becoming the?

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Locke: Well I was elected in '68, I came in in '69, there were about 14 Republicans. The Republican floor leader in those days was Senator John Parker from Taunton, a distinguished long time senator, very popular on Beacon Hill and certainly in his district. And after I served one term in the Senate, Senator Parker appointed me as his first Assistant and I didn't give it much thought at the time, but in retrospect it was a very high honor to be selected after a single term. I was serving with other members of the party who had been here much longer than I had, and he selected me, and I served as his Assistant for 18 years which probably my guess would be a state record for serving as an Assistant Minority Leader. So I worked with John and under John for many, many years and when he finally retired, I was sort of the choice only because I had been the first Assistant for so many years and so I then became the Minority Leader in 1969. I'm sorry, in 19...what was it?

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Allison: '87.

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Allison: Or '86.

Locke: '80, '80.

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Allison: Mid 80's.

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Locke: Yeah, late 80's, late 80's, yes.

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Allison: Now being the leader of the minority party, that and the Republicans last I think had controlled the State Senate around 1950 or so. So you have a different role to play there as being the leader of the 14 or so Republicans in a body where there are 40 members. So can you tell us a bit about how you would set the agenda?

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Locke: Yeah I subscribe to the, I think Winston Churchill may have put it best, "A loyal minority." I felt that my job as a leader of the minority party was to challenge the majority and if they were not challenged it would go unchecked. And so I always felt that my role and the role of the members of our party was to make the two party system work. And I think we're much better off with a two party system than we would be with a single party system. I think one of the problems we've had is that the majority party has gained such overwhelming control that it literally is a one party legislature. They've controlled both the House and the Senate since I was very young, I served my entire career in the minority, and I think the minority has a sort of a special obligation to test every proposition, to try and control, not control, because we never did that with votes, but by testing every proposal I think the results were far better than had they not been contested. I think the downside was that in the minority, the majority party controlled the body so clearly and tightly that there was a tendency to just throw in your hands and figure it's going to pass anyway, why fight it? And I think it suffered in reducing the level of debate. And many, many issues were not debated. They were more in my time than I think they had been since. When I was here we had some very exciting and I think meaningful debates on many, many issues. I'm not sure there is that much debate going on at the present time.

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Allison: Now what were some of the major issues that the Senate considered during your tenure?

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Locke: Well, run the whole gamut of everything we did, tax programs, the Convention Center became a major debate in its day. That was brought into the Senate by the Senate President late on a maybe a Thursday afternoon, hidden in a stack of papers, nobody knew it was coming. I don't know how I caught it, but I did see the bill before it was brought before the body and it piqued my interest immediately and I read it rather quickly and I opposed it at the time. I opposed the lottery. Now the lottery is another major issue in its day. I opposed it because I felt that it would ultimately hurt the people least able to afford lottery tickets and I think the evidence is clear that that's the case. I think if you were to trace a sale of lottery tickets you will find in every major city, and then if you go further honestly witness or wait until the day welfare checks come out or pension checks and the sales just boom.

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Allison: And they do actually advertise around those times too.

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Locke: Absolutely, I got a box one time delivered to my office, a cardboard box, I opened it up and it was a, it was stuffed with losing lottery tickets and the fellow who sent it to me I didn't know who he was I think he came from western Massachusetts, he wrote a letter that would bring tears to your eyes. The gist of it was that he had spent all of his savings, every penny, never won a single thing, and you could just see him as he wrote it throwing up his hands and saying I don't care anymore, I'll go on welfare, and that was it. And it was pretty dramatic evidence at least in that case of someone who had squandered far more than they could afford to do and so that was a major issue, there were many others as we went along but those are some that come to mind.

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Allison: So it does seem like it's a struggle, you are advancing really reasonable objections to things that are going to pass, how do you and the minority members maintain your commitment to these things?

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Locke: Well I think the answer is that we felt, and I say we meaning other members of my party, and of my membership in the Senate, we believed in our view of government. And so I think that caused us to question many issues. Now lots of issues have no political consequences, if we name bridges and highways and streets, things of that nature, there's no political consequence. But on major issues, tax policy, on the growth of government, the ever increasing bureaucracy of government, those to me are issues that have political implications. And so I think our job was to try and keep the majority party in check. Now I always felt and I still believe strongly the minority has a responsibility not just to oppose but to propose, and so we on many occasions we developed programs of our own and most of them were rejected out of hand. As an example, one occasion, and I remember it so well in my last term in the Senate, was the issue of operating under the influence and in those days a brand new device came out, it became known as the interlock and for people who had been convicted of a, the offense of operating under, the court could order an interlock installed on their car and the gist of that was that the interlock, the mechanism, was one that they had to breathe into in order to start the car. And it was designed if a person had been drinking and could not blow into the interlock and had too much alcohol in their system the car wouldn't start. And I remember conducting a major press conference on the State House steps, right down in front of old Joe Hooker on his horse and we had a car brought in with a professor of some form of science to demonstrate the interlock. And I pushed that hard, I thought it was a coming thing in trying to control the crime and the offense of operating under the influence. It was opposed of course by the majority party because I as a Republican had proposed it. And that was defeated. 25 years later it's in force, and has been for some time. So that many of the proposals we made were defeated out of hand and yet later were adopted, they changed the name, they changed the name of the sponsors, but the ideas were ones that had come and I think this is not unusual to Massachusetts, I think it's happened all over the political system.

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Allison: Now how would the minority party develop issues they wanted to focus on, or priorities, or an agenda for a session?

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Locke: Well, again, in every period of time there are issues that develop whether they develop and some issues incidentally become issues because they're made issues. They wouldn't be issues if nobody put the spotlight on them, but there are in every period of time, today included, issues that need attention politically. And I noticed the Governor as recently as yesterday has proposed increasing the penalties for the sale of opioids that result in death. Now that's, the opioid crisis today is one of our major problems. 25 years ago, anybody asked you about the opioid crisis, they'd wonder what land you came from, they didn't know anything about it. Today it's front page news. And so that's an issue that now has surfaced because of the frightening number of casualties and deaths that have resulted. Once that is addressed and hopefully resolved, we'll move onto another issue. What it will be, you can't tell at the moment, but you can be pretty sure there will be something surfacing as the issue of the day.

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Allison: And much of what the minority party would do has been reactive. I mean you mentioned the Convention Center, that is something the majority or the Senate President is trying to slip in and you have to respond to that. How does that work? I mean how do you scrutinize things or endorse things?

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Locke: Well I found out ahead it had some features and it's so long ago now that I don't feel completely aware of all that I recall at the time, but as an example, all of the members of the Convention Center Authority, which was a new body, a new bureaucracy that was created, were as I recall it appointed by the majority party in one form or another. The Director of the Convention, it was a lifetime job. I've never heard of that other than in the judiciary. The Director couldn't be fired. It had features in it that were, perhaps as extreme as any new agency that was ever created and those things caught my eye and there had been other issues like that. As I say, I have always felt the minority had to do more than just object. They had to come up with something better and I think that's clearly the case today on the national scene as well as the local scene. The Republicans in Congress and the Democrats just seem to be at loggerheads, they get nothing done and are so intent on winning their side of the issue that the public be damned and very little is accomplished. The President now boasts of being the most active and successful President in the first six months. Other than having appointed a Supreme Court justice, I don't know that he's got a legislative accomplishment. And so I think the minority party or whichever party it is at the time has a positive role to play in a positive sense, rather than just negative.

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Allison: Now can you talk a little bit, I don't mean to bring you to discussing personalities, but you did mention President Bulger who's a friend, by the way when we interviewed him he also

said that you were a good friend, he spoke very highly of you, can you talk a little bit about the relationship with the Senate President as a?

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Locke: Well he and I had been personal friends since we came into the House together, personal because we had so much in common, we liked each other. We shared growing families, all that sort of thing. Our political roles were very diametrically opposed obviously he was a leader of his party and I at the time was leader of mine, so that we tested each other on all of the issues, and we had some debates in there that I think were very meaningful and I think in some cases were quite effective. But we always maintained a personal friendship and a very valued relationship between us personally, but that did not prevent us nor interfere with our taking opposite sides on any public issue.

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Allison: And what about the Senate as an institution or as a body and how it relates to the House, to the governor, to in the constitutional system?

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Locke: The House is a much bigger, I call it a rowdy body, compared to the Senate. The Senate is more refined if we can call it that, that doesn't mean the members are necessarily more refined, but the body itself is. It's much smaller in size, I found when I came from the House, which I enjoyed thoroughly it's a wonderful body, that I couldn't adjust to the Senate. It seems so much different much smaller, much more limited. But as I served in the Senate I then began to enjoy that far more than I had my experience in the House. They're two different bodies in their makeup, in their functioning, they do the same job in terms of considering and passing legislation but they go about it from different perspectives. So I found the Senate was, the debate in the Senate was very meaningful. It was in the House as well and I don't mean to indicate it was not, but you were one of a great big body, as compared to one of a considerably smaller body.

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Allison: Now when you said they have looked, have somewhat different perspectives, I wonder if you could tell us more about what the perspectives might have been?

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Locke: Well I think one of the differences were we represented different sized districts. In the House every member has a relatively small district. And they can hew to whatever the climate is in that district. When I went into the House, I was one of two representatives representing four communities and that continued through my House service. When I came into the Senate, I represented far more districts. At one time I had a district that ran from Wellesley in the north down to the Rhode Island border, I had four communities on the Rhode Island border and as a result of that the makeup of the various communities I represented was very different. What would be an issue in a community on the Rhode Island border would be quite different than what it might be at the northern end of the district. So that you had to have a somewhat

broader perspective it seems to me in servicing your district for sure, and probably that was reflected in positions that you took on issues.

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Allison: And so every two years you do have to go out and ask these people to vote for you again?

Locke: Yes, Yes.

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Allison: So how would you appeal to different towns you had not engaged before?

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Locke: Well, that was a problem clearly. Particularly when the towns, in some cases, were so disparate in terms of their makeup. You'd have to go out, shaking hands and doing all of the requirements of a campaign. Raise money, which is in my view, the curse of American politics today, the awful burden of getting elected, the cost of it. And I think it's the cancer if you will of the political system and I think it's something that is going to have to be addressed, we give lip service to it, but it's interesting, every time you develop a program somebody else develops one to eliminate the one you just created, and money is controlling politics to a very dangerous level and I think until we address that and find a way, whether it's by public funding of elections or whatever the device may be, we've got to reduce and hopefully someday eliminate the tremendous influence that money has on politics.

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Allison: Can you tell us, I think you've alluded to some of the big challenges you've faced, or the Senate faced, during your time. I wonder if you can discuss any more, any other big challenges that you know looking back you think that was?

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Locke: Well, there've been so many. Redistricting was always a major issue. They created a district for me on one occasion which I used to say in debate, "Abraham Lincoln couldn't have won running unopposed." It was a district that contained my home town, they couldn't take that away because I lived there, but it contained parts of the city of Boston. When I was defeated, the candidate who opposed me and won election ran on a campaign that 'it's time for Bulger and Locke to go', we were among the senior members, and so her campaign was founded on the theory that we were a couple of old fossils, been around too long, it's time for us both to go.

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Allison: She was running as a Democrat or as a?

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Locke: Running as a Democrat. As a result of that, I went but Senator Bulger did not. When my opponent, who was successful in the election, was elected he immediately made her the first

year Chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, and she had a very celebrated although somewhat abbreviated career in the Senate. She left after a number of years, but the point is that although she ran on a campaign of opposing the Senate President, it's time for him to go, she benefited tremendously from his tutelage and the positions that he appointed her to.

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Allison: This was at a time, early 90s, when there was a?

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Locke: This was early 90's, '92 I think was known, at that time, some called it 'the year of the woman.' There were many women elected that year, George H. W. Bush and I, we went down to defeat the same time. That was not, in his case, not because of 'the year of the woman,' but nevertheless we were defeated in the same election.

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Allison: And part of that was redistricting and part was other things?

Locke: Yes, Yes.

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Locke: Yeah, the districting, the makeup of the legislature, the legislative districts, is done by the legislature, and with one party in power, the primary goal is not to represent the people, it's to cement the control of a district by whoever is the incumbent at the time. And so the districts have been made up with that in mind. When I was defeated, my successor, again who defeated me, on the theory that I'd been around too long, one of the first acts she took was to divide the Senate district. And for the first time in the history of Wellesley and Needham they were now split into two different Senatorial districts, never happened before. I think that's a bad development because they'd always been sort of the anchor of the Senatorial district. Now, all of a sudden, they were, parts of them were peeled off to make much more difficult the election of a Republican. And today Wellesley has a Democratic representative. When I served as the representative from Wellesley as an example, there had never been a Democrat that held that office, now it is held by Democrats. The Senate, Democratic senator, represents half of the town, and so those things, again, are the result of one party control. And I think that we're much better off with a vibrant two party system than we are with a system where one party overwhelmingly dominates the other.

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Allison: By the same token, I mean the Legislature has become overwhelmingly Democratic, but the people of the Commonwealth have elected Republicans as governors, is that part of this check? An attempt to check this?

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Locke: It is part of the check, and I think it's been fortunate that it's worked out that way. When I was first elected, Governor Volpe was elected after a series of Democratic governors. And he served for a period of time, was succeeded by Frank Sergeant who was a Republican, and then

the Democrats took over with Governor Dukakis, and he served I think longer than perhaps any governor. I think he served a total of 12 years interrupted by one term by Governor King. But then Governor Dukakis came back, and after that we've had Governor Weld, we had Governor Celluci, and we now have Governor Baker. So it is almost an anomaly that a overwhelmingly Democratically registered state elects Republican governors. And I think it's worth noting that not another single constitutional office is held by a Republican. They're all Democrats. Every member of the Massachusetts congressional delegation is a Democrat. Both our senators are Democrats. So other than the brief time when Senator Brown won in a special election, the Democratic Party has controlled our congressional delegation.

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Allison: Why do you suppose it's easier, I mean why do you suppose Republicans can be elected governor but not to other constitutional offices or the Senate, or Congress, or even to the Legislature?

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Locke: I think the answer is the office of governor sort of stands out by itself. The office of Secretary of State, or Treasurer, nobody for the most part knows who they are or really cares because they're not politically oriented positions--

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Allison: We'll correct that so he won't be saying that nobody cares who the Secretary of State is, just for the record.

Locke: (laughs) Yeah, that's good.

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Locke: --but I think a governor can be elected because the office gets a certain focus all by itself where the other constitutional offices do not. They don't have political issues in the same sense. And so I think a strong candidate running for the office of governor has been successful. Weld did it, Paul Celluci did it, certainly now Governor Baker is doing it.

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Allison: Good. And what about the Legislature? Is it because of the nature of redistricting? Or is it not wanting to focus on the Legislature that the number of Republicans in the Legislature has fallen since your tenure?

00:40:43,140 --> 00:41:35,560

Locke: Well I think it's a combination, one is the districts. The district is designed to protect the incumbents. And the incumbents for many years now have been members of the Democratic Party. So that when redistricting comes up, they draw the districts, and they decide who's going to stay and who's going to go. And I think that's a major factor. I think added to that, the Democratic Party has been much more successful in registering voters. They far outnumber the Republican Party. The balance of power is always the independents. And the problem with that

is you never know where they stand politically, so that you begin to erase or diminish the political difference between the two parties.

00:41:36,300 --> 00:41:40,280

Allison: Does the press, media play a role in this as well?

00:41:40,780 --> 00:42:14,980

Locke: Well I think the press does, clearly. My general view of the media not said to political motive, but more analytically they seem to be far more liberal than conservative. That's the press here and certainly the press nationally. Now there are exceptions to that but I think that it's perfectly clear and well documented that the media, if we could take them as a whole, and if we would look at their political bent, I think it would lean liberal far more than it would conservative.

00:42:16,920 --> 00:42:27,620

Allison: Can we talk, do you recall any constitutional convention debates during your tenure in the Senate and can you tell us a little bit about your role in?

00:42:27,620 --> 00:43:50,580

Locke: Yes, we had constitutional conventions every year, there were always certain issues that were on all the time, weren't going to go anywhere. But other major issues would come up, the size of the House was one of the major ones when I was in the Legislature. I don't remember all of the others, but they are major conventions in the sense that you're attempting to alter the basic framework of our government. Our constitution is the oldest continuous constitution in the world, I think historically. It's a very dramatic and a very important political document, so that when you change it, you better have pretty good reason to do it. I think we should have a mechanism for changing it because as times change, the requirements of government change and so I think the constitutional convention is a critical sort of reevaluation on a yearly or biannual basis of our, in the foundation of our system. We've changed it a number of times and we'll continue to do it I expect.

00:43:51,560 --> 00:44:06,940

Allison: Now can you tell us as the Minority Leader in the Senate, what kind of a relationship you might have had with a governor, would it be different if the governor were a Democrat or a, would you have a relationship with a governor if he were a Republican or a Democrat?

00:44:06,940 --> 00:45:01,120

Locke: Well, I think much more in my case, when we had a Republican governor I was one of the members of the Legislature who established the Monday meetings between the legislative leadership and the governor's office. And I think that now is very much an accepted practice. I think they still do that on a weekly basis. I think that was very valuable because it gave us a chance, off the record, to discuss issues, to determine what needed to be done. When I first came in, I don't think there were any such meetings. It could have been on a critical issue, but

not on a routine basis. When I was here, they established the weekly Monday day meeting between the governor and the members of the leadership.

00:45:01,120 --> 00:45:04,660

Allison: So, which members of the leadership would be included then in the meeting?

00:45:04,660 --> 00:46:02,459

Locke: Well, the Senate President, the House Speaker, and then their top aides. Some of the top aides of the governor. When Governor Weld was the governor, Governor Baker now was his head of A&F. So that he would be at those meetings and they were valuable meetings in my view for giving some give and take between the branches of government. I think that it's illustrated with the present administration on the national scene, a lack of legislative experience. You get something by serving in the body that you don't ever get if you haven't served in the body. And I think some of our presidents who have not served in a legislative capacity have suffered from the lack of that experience.

00:46:03,400 --> 00:46:11,720

Allison: Now what about relationships between you as the Minority Leader and the Senate President? Can you, did you have regular meetings? Or was this left to chance?

00:46:11,720 --> 00:47:11,200

Locke: I'm not satisfied I'd call them regular meetings. We'd have meetings when the Senate President wanted us to. If we felt, on the minority side, that we wanted to bring an issue up, we could request such a meeting. The Senate Presidents I served under were very accommodating in that regard. We had a very good relationship in terms of trying to cooperate on the public issues. That did not mean that we didn't do battle, as we did on many issues. And I think that should continue. I think to stifle debate would be a serious mistake. I think the freedom of debate in the Legislature, the Massachusetts Senate, and the House as well, are among the greatest deliberative bodies in the political system I think, clearly. And I think that's a good thing.

00:47:11,300 --> 00:47:28,100

Allison: Can you think back about your relationships with different Senate Presidents during the time you were in the State Senate? I mean, President Bulger of course was here for the last years of your tenure when you were the Minority Leader.

00:47:28,100 --> 00:47:31,140

Locke: Yes.

Allison: But then previous to President Bulger, can you?

00:47:31,140 --> 00:49:12,040

Locke: Yes, I served under Senate President Maurice Donahue, who succeeded John Powers, and Senator Donahue and I became good friends. He is a fine public servant. He came from western Massachusetts, at that time the Speaker of the House was David Bartley, and he came

from Holyoke, so western Massachusetts was well represented at that time. Then Kevin Harrington became Senate President. And we had some political issues here that resulted in a terrible result for several members of the Senate. And two of them were convicted of a crime, and one of them was I think clearly going to be the Senate President. And once he was removed, then Senator Bulger rose to the top and he became the Majority Leader, and then when Senator Harrington left, Senator Bulger became the Senate President. And he was a very strong president and I think a very accomplished president. He knew how to use power and as long as he used it the right way it was great. If, and of course the right way is perhaps the way you look at it, it's in the eyes of the beholder, but he was a very strong Senate President.

00:49:12,040 --> 00:49:16,320

Allison: Can you think of examples of him using power the right way or the wrong way?

00:49:16,320 --> 00:50:18,420

Locke: Well, I thought as an example, a bill like the Convention Center bill, and I use that only as an example, bringing that in unannounced, if I had not happened to catch that, and I say happened because that's about what it had amounted to, that would have gone through without debate. As a result of that it became highly debated over a period of time, and of course the Senate President won on the issue. Clearly he had control of the membership. There became sort of an attitude in the Senate, among the leadership, the Senate President and his leadership, that, 'Let the Republicans talk, we've got the votes.' So they let us talk, they didn't care what we said, it didn't make any difference whether we were right or wrong, they controlled the vote. And that would be seen on the outcome of many, many issues.

00:50:19,900 --> 00:50:27,740

Allison: What would you say is your biggest accomplishment as a member of the House of Representatives, the Senate as the Minority Leader?

00:50:27,740 --> 00:51:18,140

Locke: Well, I don't know that I had enough accomplishments to remember them. One of the issues during my time was whether to televise Senate sessions. That was when television was first being proposed in the House and in the Senate. I was a strong supporter of that. I felt that we should be transparent. We should open up the system. So if people were interested, they could see what was going on. And that became a heated debate. And eventually, it passed. It became televised for a relatively short period of time. I don't know whether it ended because of lack of interest, or what happened to it, but there was a time when they televised the sessions.

00:51:20,540 --> 00:51:26,140

Allison: What would you say is your biggest regret or disappointment in your tenure in the Legislature?

00:51:26,860 --> 00:52:06,300

Locke: Well, I don't know. I enjoyed serving here, it's a unique body, I think my biggest regret is having been defeated, and that's probably true of all members who end up that way, you go out

on your shield rather than with it, and so that always left a kind of a bitter taste when it was over, but that's the system, that's how it worked, I got elected by defeating an incumbent. And so I was replaced by someone defeating an incumbent.

00:52:07,600 --> 00:52:17,200

Allison: Now what kind of advice would you give to someone looking to a career or looking to public service, or looking to, or a member of the Senate now thinking about?

00:52:17,200 --> 00:53:42,540

Locke: Well my view of public office has been that it's a very important role in society. You ought to be prepared for it. So if I were to advise young people, if somebody comes to me and says I want to be governor or I want to be president, or I want to be in the Legislature, what should I do? And I would tell them start at your local level. Run for local office. Run as a town meeting member if you have it, or city council, school committee, planning board, whatever it is available in your community, so you begin to understand the process of government. And then when openings occur you're prepared. Rather than just come on the scene as many do and run for U.S. Senate never having served in the town meeting of their community. I think public service is sufficiently important so it deserves preparation. It deserves training. And I think those who have served at lower levels, worked their way up the ladder, generally, are better equipped to serve in office than those who just, because of their name or because of some other activity in their life, may be able to win an election, to do something they've had no background for at all.

00:53:43,710 --> 00:53:51,700

Allison: Any other questions you'd like to ask Mr. Locke? Is there anything else you would like to, other issues you'd like to talk about?

00:53:51,700 --> 00:54:26,020

Locke: No, I'm delighted you're doing this project. I think it's critically important to preserve what's happened. Someone was saying about if you don't study history, you'll make the same mistakes all over again. So I think that the opportunity to study the activities of this body and put it in perspective over time will be very meaningful, and I strongly support it.

00:54:26,029 --> 00:54:47,180

Allison: It does remind me, I mean you mentioned and President Bulger mentioned the big scandal that led to him becoming actually Majority Leader and the change, and I wonder, how would you characterize the members of the Legislature, the members of the Senate, in terms of, I don't know, character, integrity, these other issues?

00:54:47,180 --> 00:56:32,519

Locke: For the most part, they're remarkable people in my view. They've been elected in the Senate by a good segment of the population. They run in districts which are big, often times they're quite different in parts of the district, so that when somebody gets to the Senate, they have been tested at least on the political stump. They've been elected. And to get elected,

they've had to present themselves and be subject to pretty severe scrutiny. So my view of the member body as a whole, a membership, they're a group of very talented people. Many in different ways. Lawyers used to dominate the legislature, historically, I think. Today that's not necessarily so. Far more women members now, which is a, I think a positive development. When I became the Minority Leader, my first appointments to a staff I appointed my associate Senator Paul Celluci, I appointed Senator Peter Weber, and I appointed the first woman I think to serve as a member of the leadership in the Republican party, Senator Padula, and the press soon caught on to the gang. They called it, "Peter, Paul, and Mary," because that was a popular musical group at the time but they were top notch members and served very well and with great distinction.

00:56:34,080 --> 00:56:38,880

Allison: Well very good. Well thank you very much Senator Locke, this has been a really riveting discussion.

00:56:38,880 --> 00:56:40,040

Locke: Glad to, glad to participate.

00:56:40,040 --> 00:56:40,480

Allison: Thank you, thank you.