

Record Group CT1 / Series 2758

Robert Allison interview with Therese Murray, Senate President, 2007-2015

Interview date: 2017

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Allison: Well thank you for joining us, Madame President, Therese Murray, who was president of the Massachusetts State Senate, actually was the first woman to be president of the Massachusetts State Senate, but I know there is much else to your resume that's worth talking about. So, I was hoping you could tell us a bit about what brought you into politics?

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Murray: Well I grew up in Roxbury and Dorchester, so if, if you grew up in the city at that time then you were involved in politics. Whatever politician came down gave you little cards to pass out at the polls and when we were little kids we thought that was pretty cool, so. I started very young. My uncle ran for office, he also, in Allston. He also worked on JFK's campaigns and was head of a veterans group of, disabled veterans group when he came back, so he kind of, got the bug from him a little bit because he would say, "What are you doing for the summer?" when I was twelve or thirteen, and say, and when I was fourteen he says, "You're going to work for Ted Kennedy. This summer." So I'd go down to Washington Street and be on the phones dialing, in those days they used the telephone book. You went from A to Z on the telephone book calling people saying, "Will you vote for, give Ted Kennedy a vote for US Senate?"

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Allison: Wow.

Murray: It was quite an experience.

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Allison: And so, it was, you start, did start very young. And what brought you to Plymouth?

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Murray: I got married and could only afford a house in Plymouth. We started here and went all the way down the South Shore and, but we have the G. I. Bill, so we were able to put five dollars down on a house, a new house, under the G. I. Bill and that's how I got to Plymouth.

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Allison: And then what led you into becoming a candidate for the State Senate?

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Murray: I had been Director of Mitigation for Mass Highway for a number of years, and when Weld came in and Kerasiotes came in they moved anyone with a "D" next to their name out, so I was without a job for a short period of time, and people said, had asked me for many years to run for office, and I said, "I can't afford it, you know, I can't afford that salary." And then when I didn't have a job, I said, "Hey, an opportune time." I ran and I won.

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Allison: So you, can you tell us a bit about your career before that? You were Director of Mitigation for Mass Highways—

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Murray: --for all the major construction projects, started out with the reconstruction of the southeast expressway. That was my first project.

Allison: That was a big project.

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Murray: That was a big project. The Braga Bridge in Fall River was another one. The CANA Project which was the prelude to the artery. That was a Charlestown piece that the, that the governor's office deliberately cut off from the rest of the artery project because they knew it was too big a number and too complicated. So once they got the Charlestown piece done, they went for the rest of the money for the artery project and it was smooth because the Charlestown piece was on time and under budget. Obviously not the case with the central artery project, and then they moved me over as Director of Mitigation for that project also.

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Allison: Ok, ok. So what governor was it who cut them off, you said?

Murray: It was Dukakis.

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Allison: Dukakis, ok good. Now what about the State Senate? Or can you tell us a bit about what life would have been like in Massachusetts at the time you became a member of the Senate and then about the time you became president?

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Murray: Well, I had been through two recessions here. Before I became chair of Ways and Means, when I became chair of Ways and Means we had a pretty good recession. And it was like people congratulating me saying, "Wow, you know, you're chair of Ways and Means, and it's like getting a first class ticket on the Titanic, you know." Because then we, we dropped pretty rapidly. So when I became, when Senator Travaglini left and I took over in 2007, that was the beginning of the end of the housing bubble. And of course by 2008 we were in crisis, but we had a healthy, we had three billion plus in our rainy day fund, thank god. And, but the Republicans had tried to get us to securitize our tobacco money that came in and tried to get us to spend that, thank god we didn't, we held on to that money. And we walked through those bad years. But 2007 we were at the peak, but by July and August we knew something was going wrong. And of course by January, even though we did our projections and everybody said the money was still going to come in, the House put out their budget just as the floor fell. So their budget was a billion and a half, I think, over. So I had to put out a, the Senate had to put out a realistic budget and kind of shocked the House when we did it because we cut a billion and a half dollars out of our budget. So, and there was no wiggle room then, they had to go with what we did. And then within two

months, by that October we had to cut a total of three and a half billion dollars. So state government was decimated in a lot of places, a lot of programs went away, never came back.

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Allison: Yeah, those weren't good times to be in the State House.

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Murray: They were very tough times. People here whose spouses worked in other places lost their jobs, people here lost their jobs. We had, under Trav, he started the layoffs, and we had to consolidate the, what is now room 42— was it 428 was the old document room. We closed, there were people in there, we were still doing paper, paper bills and paper, you know, hand-outs and we had all those people went. We tried to relocate them as best we could if we could hire them somewhere else, but some people lost their jobs. And of course outside this building, everyone was losing their jobs.

Allison: Yeah, yeah.

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Murray: And it was difficult and we had to increase the unemployment, the amount of weeks you could collect. And then the feds finally jumped in and then it was a year you could collect, and then it was two years you could collect. I mean there are still people that never came back to where they were. So during that time we had a little friction with the governor's office who wanted to raise some massive taxes and we just couldn't see doing that to the working and middle class, that they couldn't handle those kinds of tax increases.

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Allison: And can you talk a bit about your path to becoming president of the State Senate? Now a number of the other folks who've interviewed either were chair of Ways and Means or talked about how important that particular position is in the running of the Senate, as well as of the state government. Can you just talk a bit about how you become president of the State Senate?

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Murray: You make friends with your colleagues, and you work with your colleagues across the aisle too, they're not very usual, they're not included in the initial vote, but I was the first Senate president to receive a unanimous vote from the body when I became president.

Allison: Wow.

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Murray: So, you know, Ways and Means is a very important position. Every, you speak to every single member, at least two, three times a year they sit with you, tell you what their priorities are, what they need for their district, and you, you know, you try to do the best you can.

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Allison: Ok. How would you go about setting priorities then as president of the Senate, and how would you determine what would be the areas you would focus on?

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Murray: Well under Senator Travaglini we passed the Affordable Care Act here and Chapter 224. So when he left, shortly after that, we had, my role was to, 'ok, now we've discussed access, we've increased access, now we have to figure out how to pay for it.' So I did the next two healthcare reform bills that related to the cost of healthcare and that's really where we've been, where the state has been ever since. We've like 98% coverage for insurance, but you know some people pay a great deal of money because they don't have group, a group insurance plan, but it was, that was the beginning, so. It was, and then after that I had a great staff, great chiefs of staff, great policy people, and we'd put together a policy book in January on the things we wanted to accomplish for that year. A lot of it was healthcare related. A lot of it, the children's, the things I did before I became Senate president was the children's trust fund for, catastrophic trust fund, for families whose children have chronic, catastrophic illnesses and can't, don't want to bankrupt themselves, so we still have that fund that goes. Children's Hospital's part of that and works with the Commonwealth on putting those together, so we have a panel you can go in front of, and if your child has some kind of spinal issue or other issue where they can't, you need modifications done in your home there's an ability to do that also. We are the only state besides New Jersey, and I modeled it on New Jersey, to do that. The newborn hearing test before you leave the hospital I passed as a sophomore, junior senator. So you got to work with people in the House with that, you got to work with your other colleagues. We fought the medical industry who did not want us to do that, but it has saved the Commonwealth millions and millions of dollars for developmental delays because you didn't know the child had a hearing loss. And you know, the money is put up front but no child leaves the hospital today unless they have a hearing test.

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Allison: Very good. Now what did you hope to achieve as the, you mentioned you take office at a time of financial catastrophe and what were, and so I guess keeping the Commonwealth afloat is-

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Murray: Keeping the Commonwealth afloat was extremely important. All, most of the other states were really in bad shape. California I think almost went bankrupt. And they've cut, and part of that's their ballot question initiatives, you know that're crazy, put twenty, thirty, forty ballot questions on it, that's how you're going to govern? So yeah, we had to make sure we kept the programs that kept people safe and healthy and put the money into the places that we could best afford to do that. It was very painful times.

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Allison: Now was there more, were there other things you hoped to achieve aside from crisis management or keeping the lights on and keeping people working?

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Murray: Keeping the lights on, keeping people working was important. Priming the pump, getting the federal government through the, what is the name of the program that they did? Where they gave us money? They gave the states money to use. It was extremely important to work with the administration during that time to do some bricks and mortar work, to get the trades back into work because they were all, they hadn't, some of them didn't work for two years or more, so it was really important to create, try to create some kind of economic opportunity for people. And frankly, a lot of people didn't get it.

Allison: Yeah, yeah.

00:11:59,110 --> 00:12:26,760

Audience: Life sciences.

Murray: Oh life sciences, yes. The life sciences initiative we did with the governor, a billion dollars over ten years and we very creatively financed that, so it was what is left at the end of the budget session so we weren't taking money from something else and it's worked. Wow, take a look at the cranes in Boston, take a look at the property values. It's all related to the life science initiative that we did here.

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Allison: Right. Now you had a chance to observe and work with a number of different presidents of the Senate, then when you become president yourself, was there anything that surprised you?

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Murray: Everything. (laughs)

Allison: Really, ok.

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Murray: How much work there is, I think that's the first thing Stan said to me is, "You didn't tell me how hard this was" is everything. You're responsible, not only for your own staff, you're responsible for the Senate's staff. You're responsible for things that come up that will really surprise you that members under my, unfortunately, tenure, three of our members had to leave the Senate and two of them went to jail. It was a very painful time because, in particular, for Senator Wilkerson was such a bright, talented, amazing individual and works hard for the people in her district and that was a terrible shock to the body.

Allison: Yeah, yeah.

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Murray: A very big shock to the body.

Allison: How do you account for it? I mean, not to get into her personal story, but—

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Murray: Well her personal story has a lot to do with it. She's the matriarch of the entire family, when they were all sick they all went to her for money, she was expected to care for her, the extended family's children and come up with funding for that. I think she, her dad was sick, I

think she was just was being squeezed on all sides, and unfortunately, reached out in the wrong way because I think people could've helped her if she hadn't done that.

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Allison: Yeah, yeah. That is really sad, what happened to her and to others.

Murray: Yeah.

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Allison: Now how do you go about choosing a staff? You've mentioned your staff, how important they are and—

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Murray: They're extremely important. You're only as good as your staff, and I made some mistakes in my early hirings in other offices that I held here, so I didn't want to make those mistakes again. Most off the staff I had in Ways and Means, my chief staff manager, Seth, came up here with me. And then we add, obviously had to add. I appointed Alice Moore too as the first woman to hold the position of Senate Counsel, which was nice to have a woman in that position. Very qualified woman in that position, by the way. And my chiefs of staff were always outstanding because they had to keep up with me, I'm a high energy, type-A personality, as they all know, they're laughing, but it's, you know, when I wanted, when I want something done, I want something done. It makes me crazy now, all these boards I'm on and people just sit around and talk, I say, "Well let's do this."

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Allison: So what was, you have begun describing your leadership style. Could you say a little bit more about it, you know, your method of leading?

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Murray: I watched the previous Senate presidents very closely. Senator Bulger was my first Senate president and he scared the hell out of us I'll tell you that when we came in. He was, always a smile on his face, you know, always very cordial and gentlemanly, but, man, if you were on the wrong side of that, and we had some caucuses in here and Senator Wilkerson was at the head of one them trying to get local minorities hired on the garden project at the time, and it was a, and I, very innocently coming from transportation said, "Oh yeah we can do that. There's a way to do that." And it was like, whoops! shouldn't have said that. And with the women's, I joined the women's caucus, which is bipartisan, and was told by the majority leader at the time that that wasn't necessary, I should not be joining that, that there are Republicans in that. And I said, "Yeah but they are all women and there's so few of us here, I think it's important that I'm —"

Allison: How many women were in the Senate?

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Murray: Lucile Hicks, Jane Swift, Sprague, me. Well when I came in, five women came in with me, so it was the most they ever had. And I think there were ten of us, nine or ten of us, at the

time and then it went to twelve. But I mean across, it's House and Senate women have the caucus.

Allison: Yeah, ok.

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Murray: So and they pick a priorities, those priorities were not for those, for those in the hierarchy of the leadership at the time who were from a certain religious belief, we were very threatened. They were very threatened by what they thought we might pass or try to do for legislation.

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Allison: So did you remain in the women's caucus?

Murray: Of course.

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Allison: So then what about, and you mentioned Bulger scaring the hell out of you, now what about Tom Birmingham who is his successor or Travaglini as Senate presidents? What would you say about their styles?

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Murray: They, every one of us has a different style. Bulger was very quiet, but you know, if, he got things done. But there wasn't a lot of, only the people at the top really got things to happen. So we started, we started actually putting a little group together that said, you know, we represent the same amount of people of all these other people here and we should be heard on the arch so that, I don't think that had been done in a while and we were all women so it was, I think scary for them. In fact, we didn't have a women's bathroom here for the legislators, for the women senators. We would have to leave the chamber during roll calls if we needed to use the restroom, run down the hall, to the public bathroom and the lobbyists would come in. The women lobbyists and try to lobby you while you were in there. And they just didn't think there was a need. That door that says senators only, women didn't go through that door until 1996, because that was the men's bathroom and locker room. We didn't even have lockers.

Allison: Wow.

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Murray: So when Senator Creedon was leaving I said to him, Jane Swift and I were still here, and said, "How much would it cost to put a bathroom there?" He didn't know, he just told us, "42,000 dollars." So we put 42,000 dollars in the budget for the women's bathroom in the Senate and now we have a bathroom and women can go through the door.

Allison: Wow.

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Murray: Yeah, pretty amazing, huh? The women in the House got their bathroom a year before. And they wouldn't hold the roll calls. No, so you could miss a roll call.

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Allison: Wow. It's amazing, it seems like a small thing, but it's actually a very big thing.

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Murray: It's a very big thing if you never missed a roll call, never miss a vote.

Allison: Yeah, yeah. Wow.

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Audience: And you were the first woman to wear pants on the Senate floor.

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Murray: Yes. Senator Bulger had some clothing restrictions. Women, it was really, it was never said, but women weren't expected to wear pantsuits or, and were expected to wear long sleeves. So I was the first woman to wear a pantsuit on the Senate floor and they got over it pretty fast.

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Allison: What would you say would be the biggest, I mean, you've already talked about some of the biggest challenges you faced, but could you tell us more about other challenges you faced either in the Senate or as Senate president?

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Murray: I think the change, the change in how people look at government changed while I was here, and once email, once email became anonymous and more frequent, you were just barraged with the uncivil, the lack of civility, the way people addressed you. I spoke at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast, the Senate president, the speaker, the leaders all speak one month a year. I think mine was March or April, and it was when Hillary Clinton lost to Barack Obama and somebody asked me a question because they knew I was with Hillary. And I said, "Well, it does disappoint me because I don't believe I'll see a woman president in my lifetime." You know, and now I know I won't. So I got this email from this fellow who sent it from his office. This young guy from some financial firm, and berating me for saying things like that, and how would I know, it was so amazing I wanted to respond, but my staff would never let me respond to anything. Tweet, they wouldn't let me tweet, they wouldn't let me email, which is what somebody else should be, being stopped right now. So I waited and then I had them, I waited like a month and a half and then I waited and sent it back to the firm it came from saying, "Gee I received this from this young man," and he was immediately, they went crazy because they had, they had accounts with the treasurer, with the state government, and they thought that that could have been a problem for them and they said they would teach him how to use email the proper way and that would never happen again.

Allison: Ok.

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Murray: But people sent terrible, well you know, I mean horrible things they'd say about you. Terrible things. I mean my own newspaper used to have a speak out column, they don't do it

anymore, you have to put your name on the letter, and people would say, "Good, I'm glad she's leaving the Senate, now her son won't be driving around in that car with that House, with the House plate one number." First of all, I don't have a son and I never had the plate number one. So they'd just put anything out there, people believe it and--

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Allison: That has been a big change with the rise of the internet and all the anonymity.

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Murray: Social media has really, people don't talk to each other anymore. At all. We used to have great debates, really long debates. We used to have 24-hour sessions, we changed that after Bulger. Because they'd keep you here. He'd go home and take a nap. I don't know if he told you that, he'd go home and take a nap, and we'd be sitting there, nodding, waiting for the next vote to come up because you couldn't, you were afraid to leave.

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Allison: So when did that change? The 24-hour sessions?

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Murray: We changed the rules after, and we changed, we put in term limits after that.

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Allison: Could you, I mean this gets us into how the legislative process shifted in your tenure. Could you speak a little bit more about that, you know shifts in the way of doing business or procedures?

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Murray: Well there's always a tug of tension between the governor, the speaker, and the Senate. It's just the way it's always been. As long as I've been doing work around this building, before I came in this building, that's the way it works. The House because they have more members, has more clout they would say. So they rightly feel that they run the show. Senate never agreed with that, we are a smaller group, but we are more policy oriented in the Senate than in the House. We like to get policy changes, so there's always that tension, of course the governor's office they have their agenda. It depends on the party. I was here with Republican and Democratic governors, and one is not easier than the other. They have their, and they're looking at their political futures, and you have members that are looking at their political futures, so they like to, you know, get recognized on certain issues and you want to give them recognition on certain issues, but it's sometimes how you go about it.

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Allison: Ok. Now would you say, were there any other like policy shifts or procedural shifts in the Senate in your time? You mentioned term limits, and you mentioned no more 24-hour sessions. I wonder if you could, if there were any other things that happened?

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Murray: Yeah we voted not to go past like a certain time at night, you'd have to get a roll call to go past a certain time. We still have a very antiquated system here, when the bills get passed actually on the floor, they still have to go to what is called the Engrossing Division, which means that the people up there have to read every single word on every single line of every single bill before it comes back for the final vote, and that clogs up the mechanics at the end of the session all the time.

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Allison: Is that part of the Senate or is that a separate grouping?

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Murray: No it's House and Senate, they have to read the bills.

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Allison. Ok, so it's not the conference committee, it's the Engrossing Division.

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Murray: No, no, it's once you're passed that, you've already got, you've already got those other things done, and the House would prefer to get rid of the Engrossing Division, but it's important because when you're passing bills and you're at the end of the session and you're passing a lot of things, it's really important not to pass something with the wrong language in it.

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Allison: Are these members of the House or the Senate or--

Murray: No, they're staff.

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Allison: Ok, yeah, and then you also have the third reading. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

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Murray: Bills in third reading. It's a place where things can go and move or it's a place where things can stay forever.

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Allison: And who decides whether they stay or whether they go?

Murray: Pretty much the leadership.

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Allison: Ok. What kind of relationship did you have with, and the Senate have with the governors during your tenure as president?

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Murray: It was different. You know, each governor is different just like each leader here is different. You know, when Sal was here, he was, I think the Globe magazine said he was "King of the Hill" at the time. You know he was, he was the leader. So the governor kind of took a little, a little bit of a back seat to that, but he came in, you know, of his own once the gay, once we passed gay marriage. I think that he had a bigger following, more people who were very supportive of his agenda.

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Allison: Ok and what about other governors that you've, I mean it is as you said a kind of tense relationship between the Senate, the House and the governor, and it is the way the system was designed, and you said it doesn't have much, it's personality with some of the governors as opposed to they're "D" or the "R." I wonder, were, some you said were easier to work with than others?

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Murray: They were all a challenge. Whether you're with them or like them, they're in the same party, you're not in the same party, it's always a challenge. Those who came in from outside from, not from government, thought that we, in fact it was expressed to me by Romney that we, that he's the CEO and we're the Board of Directors and we carry out the CEO's, of course, mission, and I explained to him that we are all elected officials. All of us and that this isn't a company, this is government and we're elected just the same as he was and we're not his Board of Directors. But we met, you know, we would meet every Monday. We kept those meetings.

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Allison: Ok and what about your relationship with the House as president of the Senate? What's the relationship like with the other branch of the legislature?

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Murray: It can be very difficult sometimes, and it can be great sometimes. Like I said, it's a natural, it's a natural tension. We, the Senate is the more liberal body, the more progressive body, more policy oriented body, so frequently members want to work on big things, you know energy programs or health, or, they're doing transportation now and there's a couple of other things they're going to come out with, health, some healthcare bill. This, the House is more, what's going on and you know we'll do this. Because they have 160 people they have to rope together to agree, you know to get something passed. Where we have forty, it's a little easier to count numbers here than it is there.

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Allison: Why do you suppose the Senate is the more progressive body and the House is less so? Is it just because of the size or is it something else?

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Murray: I think size has a lot to do with it. You have people from all regions of the state. Now, we have one senator for the western part of the state that can cover, you know, thirty-six towns.

They might be this big, but that's a lot of place to cover, and you can come from a very liberal part of your district to a very conservative part of your district. The House, those numbers, those members cover 35,000 people, so if you get your pocket of conservatives and you are not going to vote any other way except for those constituents who are conservative. So they have, they've got to get over that, plus the minority party, both here and there, have their own agenda and will vote against a sitting Democratic governor, you know they don't want his or her policies, it's his pretty much, passed. So there's always, there's moving dynamics, and there are progressive Democrats and there are blue dog Democrats, and there are people who like to make their decision more like an unenrolled, on their own, depending on the issue and who's the issue, but partisanship has not, and when Newt Gingrich was in the House in Washington, partisanship here got really bad. It has changed since then. It is, we always work across the aisle, we don't always agree with each other, but, Brian Lees, Richard Tisei, Senator Tarr have always, I consider them very good friends.

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Allison: Well actually your predecessors have said the same thing about their, the minority leaders. Can you talk a little bit more about that relationship with the minority party? They're usually a smaller number, so they're not going to pass anything, but how are they part, how do you keep them as part of the Senate, keep the Senate functioning with less of the bitter partisanship we see in Washington or other places?

00:30:59,070 --> 00:32:13,860

Murray: Well I, when I became president I scheduled a meeting with Senator Tarr every single week, so we met every week, so he was apprised. I never surprised him with pulling something out. He knew what we were, he may not like what we were going to do, so he would spend, and he's a very hard worker, he would spend his whole weekend going over minute, line by line, to try to figure how he could affect it or how many amendments he could file to make it stop, and he's very good at it. He's very good at it, and he's an attorney also, so he's got a good background. Richard was, you know, Richard was very easy to deal with. Richard was here when we did the gay marriage vote. That was, living through that two years here was pretty hellish. You know you walk outside and there'd be one group of people on one side of the street, there'd be another people and you were hoping they weren't going to kill each other. And the correspondence. My god, we got some very interesting correspondence from people. A lot of hate. A lot of hate mail.

00:32:13,860 --> 00:32:16,360

Allison: Wow. Were there other big issues? I mean that seems to be the big one.

00:32:16,360 --> 00:32:29,000

Murray: Well and that one, I mean, as a Catholic, going into church and hearing priests, depending on where you were talking about, talking about you, and some of our members were actually asked to leave their parishes.

00:32:29,000 --> 00:32:35,380

Allison: Wow. Were there any constitutional conventions during your tenure?

00:32:35,380 --> 00:33:14,690

Murray: Yes. Many. I was the first woman, while Senator Travaglini was still president, I was the first woman to run a constitutional convention. And then the biggest, the next constitutional convention was gay marriage. Well, it was 2007, I had met with the cardinal, he asked me if I'd take a vote the day I was sworn in. I said I would, I gave him my commitment that I would take the vote. And of course the vote didn't go in his favor, but I met with him many times after it, and I said, whenever he asked me to do something, I'd say, "I'll do it. I told you I'd take a vote." He said, "Yeah, but I didn't like the way that came out." "I didn't like the result of that vote."

Allison: Yeah.

00:33:14,690 --> 00:33:27,050

Murray: But when I came in, the Catholic Church was very much in control of the agenda here for social issues and that totally has changed.

00:33:27,050 --> 00:33:33,980

Allison: Now it's interesting though because you're a Catholic, and the Church, as you said, sets, has an agenda, and sometimes—

00:33:33,980 --> 00:33:38,020

Murray: But I'm a pro-life Catholic.

Allison: Ok, so how do you reconcile that?

00:33:38,020 --> 00:33:41,179

Murray: I do it every day.

Audience: Pro-choice Catholic.

00:33:41,179 --> 00:33:44,080

Murray: I'm sorry, what did I say?

Audience: Pro-life.

00:33:44,080 --> 00:34:19,360

Murray: Oh, I'm a pro-choice Catholic, excuse me. Yeah, I've had that discussion with Senator Bulger a few times because, of course he's not, but when we did welfare reform he was afraid that people would go and get abortions. I said, "It's going to be just the opposite. They're not going to get pregnant because we're going to give them tools to help them out of poverty." And he went along with it, but he did take the floor when we did welfare reform against I think the final bill I'm not sure, and he lost. I think it was his first loss as Senate president.

00:34:19,360 --> 00:34:24,580

Allison: Could you talk a little bit more about the welfare reform bill that you shepherded through?

00:34:24,580 --> 00:36:56,040

Murray: Well we were told by the Clinton White House that they were going to do welfare reform and we wanted to get out in front of it so, because when the federal government does any of these big bills, the way they fund it is they'll tell the states, ok, you can, the states say give us more control because it used to be controlled on the local level. It used to be controlled on the city level, and the town level, and then it became the state, and then it became the federal government, so we wanted to see if we could get some of that control back without the federal government coming in and cutting. We wanted to create our own program and we were convinced, we were told that they were going to do it. And they did some of it, but they gave, we lobbied for the block grants and the block grants were what saved a lot of the programs and that we were able to fund a lot of the pregnancy prevention programs, teen living centers, places like Saint Mary's where people can be protected and their children can be protected while they're learning skills or going to school. We changed the way, you know you didn't get a check. The federal government's program was you could be fourteen years old in some of these states, pregnant, they would give you a housing voucher, and they would put you in a place with your kids, well every wrong choice guy that comes through your life is going to affect those children. And that's, it was cyclical, so we were trying to break that cycle and say we're going to continue to support you, but you're going to be in a protected environment. The teen living centers, they learn parental skills, they learn, they finish their school, and we kept them until they were twenty or, if we could, older, and they, some of them finish school also. But at the time you could go to, I think it was up in Greenfield or maybe up in Amherst, not Hampden. I went to a hearing because we had hearings all over the state, and there were women there that lived together communally, pooled their food stamps, and had already gotten advanced degrees from universities, but didn't feel that they should have to, they weren't getting the right position at the university, so they weren't going to work. So they continued to stay on welfare and live in an environment, this environment that wasn't good for their kids or them. We had given them advanced degrees.

00:36:56,040 --> 00:37:01,410

Allison: So what happened?

00:37:01,410 --> 00:37:24,830

Murray: We changed that. We changed that. You know, we tried to keep education as a part of it, but there's a work requirement. The federal government has this no second child requirement which is hard if you make bad choices in your life. But it's the children, we were going to protect the children and stop the cycle.

Allison: Yeah.

00:37:24,830 --> 00:37:50,840

Murray: And it started with Ven-, Claribel Ventura, it's a name it'll be forever in my head. When she took, she was the twenty-third member of her family to be on welfare. Her entire family was on welfare. None of them worked. They were all in public housing and they all supposedly had the same illness, which none of them had. And she, I don't know if you remember the case, she put her child's hands in boiling water—

Allison: Oh, yeah, yes.

00:37:50,840 --> 00:37:57,800

Murray: -and held them there so the flesh, I mean it was, was fused. It was kind of, she was the poster child.

00:37:57,800 --> 00:38:22,960

Allison: Wow, wow. How would you, let's change the subject, it's a fascinating story and that is one of the big things that you were able to accomplish here and it did lead the way to the, Clinton's welfare reform in the 90s. Let's talk a bit about your relationship with the media, with the press. How would you characterize that?

00:38:22,960 --> 00:38:27,350

Murray: Not good. I really don't like dealing with the press.

Allison: Why is that?

00:38:27,350 --> 00:39:11,321

Murray: I don't think anyone did, anyone in this business does, because they're very cynical. I mean, you could do something that you thought was really good, they'll come up and give you 10,000 reasons why, why did you do that and it was wrong and try to explain it. It doesn't matter, you can sit with a reporter for hours and go over something, and then you read it, his editor decides to take something and put it up there that has nothing to do with it, and they'll say, "We have no control over that," but it makes it look like it's a negative when what you did was a positive, and you've spent all this time with them to walk them through it. So it's a "gotcha" kind of mentality with them.

00:39:11,321 --> 00:39:12,740

Allison: So how would you and your staff interact, I mean you talked about—

00:39:12,740 --> 00:39:21,900

Murray: Oh, they tried to make me talk to them. I did, I am not talking to them, so they'd tried to pounce on me when I came out the door.

00:39:22,900 --> 00:39:28,810

Allison: Wow. What would you say is your biggest accomplishment in your time in the State Senate?

00:39:29,810 --> 00:39:38,849

Murray: Oh, I don't know. Healthcare is a huge one. But we did so many things, accomplished a lot of things.

00:39:38,849 --> 00:39:43,220

Allison: Could you talk a little bit more about the healthcare debate here? You mentioned it earlier.

00:39:43,220 --> 00:40:41,310

Murray: Well the conference committee was the longest one they've ever had, it was like nine months. And Senator Travaglini's wisdom put me on the conference committee and I was chair of Ways and Means, so it was a lot of work to do. Senator Lees was on it with me, Senator Moore was the Senate chair, and Senator, Rep. Walrath was the House chair. Very contentious between the two leaders. So we would go and work for hours and come back and one would say, "No, I'm not doing that." And the other one would say, "No we're not doing that." And you'd go back to the drawing board. But we got it done. We got it done and there was that big ceremony down in Faneuil Hall where lots of people who had nothing to do with the bill got congratulated. And the rest of us who actually did all the work were in the back, Senator Moore was in the way back.

00:40:41,310 --> 00:40:46,850

Allison: Wow. Do you want to name names about who was congratulated, who didn't do any of the work?

00:40:46,850 --> 00:40:49,460

Murray: Look at the picture.

00:40:49,460 --> 00:40:55,270

Allison: Yeah, ok. So that's certainly one there, and keeping the Commonwealth afloat during the recession is the other.

00:40:55,270 --> 00:41:36,700

Murray: Yeah, and the two follow-up healthcare reform bills dealing with the cost of healthcare, the cost of medication in healthcare, and putting a three percent on what could be growth in any given year, no more than three percent unless, or they'll have to come in with a pretty good argument and so far they've been able to keep that. Other states you've seen a twenty-seven percent increase in some of these states in one year. So that's something we really kind of put in, it's in the rules, it's in the law so, but the cost of healthcare is going to continue to go up until we can fix this.

00:41:36,700 --> 00:41:46,599

Allison: Yes, right. What could you tell us, if you have one, the biggest disappointment or regret about your time in the State Senate?

00:41:46,599 --> 00:43:01,200

Murray: The probation persecution. And I'm going to, that's the word I'm going to use, I know my lawyers will say not to use that, but that's what it was. I mean, we when I came into this building and before I came into this building, constituent services was always most important. If a constituent came and needed a job, you try to help them get a job. Now all of a sudden that's illegal, you can't do that anymore. Go back to Tip O'Neill, go back to Washington. They helped their constituents find jobs and get healthcare, we were told, "Oh, you can't help, help

somebody get healthcare.” That’s what we were elected to do. People expect to still come to you and have you do that, and to be told that we, there was a rigged scheme, there was no rigged scheme that I knew about, you know, I barely knew Mr. O’Brien, he’d come in once a year for his budget. Senate never gave him what he wanted because we knew the House would and that’s the way we set things up, you know. So to have my name included in that and some others was, and still, and the hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal fees from that.

00:43:01,200 --> 00:43:06,470

Allison: Now what do you think motivated the prosecution or persecution?

00:43:06,470 --> 00:43:23,570

Murray: I think it was politically motivated. And the governor had mentioned both to myself and the Speaker DeLeo at one time that we should get to know Ms. Ortiz because, you know, she'd be a great governor. This is after my name and his name is-

00:43:23,570 --> 00:43:25,800

Allison: Yeah.

Murray: -out there, and it was like—

00:43:25,800 --> 00:43:28,839

Allison: Wow.

Murray: Wow.

00:43:30,839 --> 00:43:32,690

Allison: Now, you had thought of running for governor-

Murray: No.

00:43:32,690 --> 00:43:34,859

Allison: -or your name had been proposed as running for governor.

00:43:34,859 --> 00:43:39,220

Murray: I have, had no interest in running for governor.

00:43:39,220 --> 00:43:42,220

Allison: So where does it come from when you don’t have an interest in it but your name is floated?

00:43:42,220 --> 00:43:43,930

Murray: Oh, that’s the media.

Allison: Ok.

00:43:43,930 --> 00:44:02,050

Murray: And it's the rumor mill, or I call it moo—"mooville," the lobbyists will hang out there in the 21st and make things up and they become real and then they get in this rumor mill and swirl around.

00:44:02,050 --> 00:44:09,640

Allison: Wow. Well thank you for not running, I mean (laughter) I think you would have been a great governor, but so that's a disappointment the, what happened with John O'Brien about--

00:44:09,640 --> 00:44:11,859

Murray: That was very cloudy, you know, it really clouded my entire career.

00:44:11,859 --> 00:44:20,869

Allison: Yeah, which is, it's too bad and it's too bad for the people who were then prosecuted under it and all—

Murray: Yes, and it's not illegal.

00:44:20,869 --> 00:44:35,260

Allison: Yeah, yeah. What advice would you give to future Senate presidents or future members of the Senate about how to get along?

00:44:35,260 --> 00:45:19,410

Murray: It's all relationships. People will say it's money with lobbyists, it's all relationships. It's how do you get to know somebody and how do you get to work with them and how do you get to work together with them. I made sure that any senator who had an issue that they were interested in, like Jamie Eldridge had this water infrastructure issue, you know Jamie was more on the left than I am doesn't stop me from wanting to support what he wanted to do and what we could. So we did, we put that together and it was a big win for him. Some of the other more conservative members, you know, we could give them some, up to some of what they wanted, but the social stuff is really important to the Senate.

00:45:19,410 --> 00:45:24,320

Allison: Good, very good. Is there anything you'd like to add? Or other issues that you'd like to talk about?

00:45:24,320 --> 00:45:56,390

Murray: I'd, just that when you said what's the hardest about telling people this, I started to say, you don't only have your own staff, you have the entire Senate, you have the Senate's staffs, you have the court office's, you have the business office, you have the people who take care of part of the building, you have a connection with the State House Library as, you're a caretaker while you're here for this institution, so I felt very strongly in protecting the Senate as an institution.

Allison: That's good, very good.

00:45:56,390 --> 00:46:09,609

Murray: And I cleaned these brass things that I wasn't supposed to. They were, they were black, you didn't even know that they were there, and I, a guy, curator came in, he was thrilled that he could do them, he did them for free.

Allison: They look great.

00:46:09,609 --> 00:46:16,790

Murray: I think they look great, but they say you're not supposed to polish the brass.

00:46:13,790 --> 00:46:27,046

Audience: I wonder if you want to talk a little bit about the role you carved out in the international relations, since previous Senate presidents didn't have?

00:46:27,046 --> 00:47:14,450

Murray: Yeah, I did a lot internationally working with, in Northern Ireland and Ireland on the west to cross the borders. And getting some funding to Letterkenny Institute which is on the border with Derry, and getting more of the Catholic kids into the university, Magee University in Derry, and made an agreement with the two prime ministers at the time, Martin McGuinness and Peter Robinson, that if I, if I could bring this in, that they would open those doors for the kids, and I did and they didn't. But we've slowly dwindled away. I got the Diaspora Award that the President of Ireland gave me for my work there.

Allison: Wow, congratulations.

00:47:14,450 --> 00:47:23,400

Murray: And spent eleven years with the Senate, with Senator Rosenberg going to China. We have the baby project that we—

Audience: Russia.

00:47:23,400 --> 00:48:58,000

Murray: Oh, I'm sorry Russia, went to China last year. The baby project we did in Pskov, Russia so that we changed the, we had them institute adoption, they never did adoptions within their own, with their own people before. We brought them money and clothing and materials actually for lots of hospital equipment for the first years we went and then afterwards we just came in and funded them for their peer to peer program, their, because they only, they don't do contraception education there, abortion is their contraception, so we talked to them about that, we instituted that. We instituted the Thursday's child like we have here, or Wednesday's child, for adoption. We facilitated a lot of international adoptions outside Russia into other countries and equipped the hospitals because you can turn over a child in Russia from zero to three years old, you can just leave them at the hospital. They'll try to get you or some member of the family to keep you, but otherwise you just go in and if you're not in the adoption track, you go to what they call the children's buildings, and you stay there until you're eighteen in a room with thousands of other kids and buildings, and then at eighteen, you just, they open the door and there you go. So, we did a lot of work on that.

Audience: Privately funded money.

00:48:58,000 --> 00:49:31,520

Murray: Yeah, we got a lot of private money, and USAID when Clinton was secretary, helped us, and then of course they stopped the adoptions to here because of our policies there. Which they've gone backwards and closed a lot of the hospitals and consolidated. And the work in the world, the connected health in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Finland, I don't know where else?

Audience: UK.

00:49:31,520 --> 00:49:37,130

Murray: Oh, UK, right.

00:49:37,130 --> 00:49:42,569

Allison: Now what brought you into that particular issue of adoption in Russia?

00:49:42,569 --> 00:50:38,829

Murray: We, I went with Stan the first time to go there and the guys were all taken to see the prisons and the sexy stuff, transportation projects, and there were only two women, myself and Ellen Story, Representative Story, and they brought us to the daycare centers and the hospitals and we were shocked. Shocked. The hospital had one atom-, in the orphanage, in the abandoned children's hospital they had one atomizer that the children shared who had asthma. Of course you're sharing everything, you're sharing every disease that comes through there. They had no bassinets, they had babies in little boxes, plastic boxes. They had a band-aid and two aspirin in another hospital and they were proud to show us that that's what they had. It was shocking. Yeah, I said, I told him, and Ellen and I both agreed, I can't leave here and not do something.

00:50:38,829 --> 00:50:51,240

Allison: Wow. Now I know you've also been involved with the commemoration of Plymouth, the Plymouth 400 group. Can you talk a little bit about that? Is—

00:50:51,240 --> 00:51:13,650

Murray: It's thirty months away. We started eight years ago, ok, and nothing's been done. The governor, Patrick, whose very good friend was Peter Gomes, the late Reverend Peter Gomes, Peter came and insisted that he put this commission together, so we filed a bill, we formed the commission, Peter was head of the commission, he finally appointed Peter, and finally got it off the ground and Peter died.

00:51:13,650 --> 00:51:15,010

Allison: Yeah.

00:51:15,010 --> 00:53:40,390

Murray: And that was the end of it. I didn't know until I left the Senate, January 2015, that he had appointed me as chair of the commission. So I sat with Baker's people and they said, "Well, you—" I said, "I don't want to be chair of this commission. I, you know, I have to earn a living." So I did not. They set up the commission, Dusty Rhodes is the head of it, he met with them last

Thursday here, but they haven't really moved on anything. The local Plymouth 400 has. We've got a lot of things set up, a lot of things in place, but we don't have infrastructure, we don't have money, we don't have the support we need from the hierarchy here in the administration, as well as the federal government, there's been no federal commission bill filed, there's been no coin bill filed, these are things that should have been done years ago. When Jamestown did their celebration, they got eighteen million dollars from their state and eighteen million dollars from the federal government. We've received nothing. How do you put together a celebration when you're inviting the Queen of England and people from the Netherlands, in fact people from the Netherlands and Plymouth, England, are here for this whole week trying to work with us. They have put up eight million dollars that the British government gave for their celebration in the Netherlands, and we've got nothing. And Plymouth is America's hometown. Massachusetts should be promoting this and it's going to be very interesting with the security issues, especially with, you know, what happened in Vegas today. The security is going to, the cost of security for this is going to be enormous because the Pilgrim Society, the Mayflower Society, as they did on the 375th, there were a 134 original passengers, they will be, they want to swear in 134 people to become citizens that day. The, you don't who's going to be looking at that from what point of view. You could get somebody from the far right, and we don't know who this guy was that did the shooting was or what his motivation was, but it's going to require a lot of effort and work, and it could be wonderful. It could be great, but we need, we need somebody to pay attention.

00:53:40,390 --> 00:53:45,040

Allison: Right, yes. Now what made you want to leave the Senate? How was, how did you make that decision?

00:53:45,040 --> 00:53:53,010

Murray: Well, we have a, we have a term limit for eight years for Senate president. The House did too, but they got rid of theirs.

00:53:53,010 --> 00:53:55,102

Allison: But you didn't want to stay on as a senator.

00:53:55,102 --> 00:53:57,460

Murray: I think eight years is a lot.

Allison: It is, yes.

00:53:57,460 --> 00:54:27,430

Murray: It's an awful lot to deal with, the stress is an awful lot to deal with. You have, if you have a family, there's no family time, you know especially if you're not a Boston legislator here. At least if you're in Boston you can go home, you can see people. It's 24/7. And it's, it's a lot of strain and people are angry right now and they like to take it out on you.

Allison: Yeah.

00:54:27,430 --> 00:54:33,170

Murray: And there's no privacy, no matter where you go, what you do. There's no privacy.

00:54:33,170 --> 00:54:38,790

Allison: Any final thoughts? I mean—

00:54:38,790 --> 00:55:29,680

Murray: It's a wonderful job. It's a wonderful institution. I think, you know, that if you put your effort into it, you can get a lot accomplished here. I know I've got reams of things that we've done here and books that we, and we put out at the end of the, every year all the things that the Senate accomplished and what we accomplished with the House, but sometimes the House doesn't go along, so there's a bigger list hanging out there. But sometimes it takes years to get things done. You know once the initial idea comes up people are like ooh, but they get used to it. Things change. People's attitudes change, like with the gay marriage. You know, first it was civil unions, nobody wanted civil unions, then it was no we don't want civil unions, yeah we want full rights. I mean, that happened in a blink of an eye.

00:55:29,680 --> 00:55:33,030

Allison: How do you account for that, that change in public opinion?

00:55:33,030 --> 00:55:58,609

Murray: I think it was younger people, I was at my niece's wedding when we were going to have the first constitutional convention the next week, and my cousins were saying to me, "You're not going to vote for that, are you?" And I said, "Well, yeah." But all the younger generation, my daughter, my nieces, my nephew said, "What's the big deal?" And you know, they were right. What is the big deal? Definitely generational.

Allison: Yeah.

00:55:58,609 --> 00:56:09,809

Murray: But you know, you evolve, as a Catholic school girl and a Catholic school upbringing, you evolve. Who would've thought?

Allison: Yeah.

00:56:09,809 --> 00:56:15,619

Murray: Things change.

00:56:15,619 --> 00:56:21,089

Allison: Very true. Well thank you, this has been very interesting, very and I hope we covered everything you wanted to.

00:56:21,089 --> 00:56:23,380

Murray: Hope I covered everything you wanted.