

TRANSCRIPT: CONGRESS: THE WORLD AS THEIR PLAYGROUND

BY JASON HESCH  
PRODUCED BY JOHNATHAN WELLEMEYER

HOST LEAD:

THE US CONGRESS HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE MOST EXCLUSIVE CLUB IN THE WORLD. BUT WITH ONLY 535 MEMBERS, THE US CONGRESS IS MORE LIKE AN EXCLUSIVE PRIVATE SCHOOL. THERE ARE CLASS RIVALRIES, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, A GYM, A CAFETERIA. AND THE WORLD IS THEIR PLAYGROUND. JASON HESCH GIVES US THIS COMMENTARY FROM CAPITOL HILL.

TRACK:

JUST AS BELLS BRING AN UNRULY SCHOOL YARD TO ORDER, IN THE HALLS OF CONGRESS THEY BRING LEGISLATORS TO THEIR SEATS ON CAPITOL HILL. BUT BEFORE LEGISLATORS GETS TO SIT AT THEIR DESKS, THEY'RE THROWN INTO A TIME HONORED FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL RITUAL—ORIENTATION. CONGRESSWOMAN DEBBIE WASSERMAN-SCHULTZ SAYS THE CAMARADERIE OF ORIENTATION WAS SHORT LIVED.

SHULTZ: THE MOST INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE WHOLE ORIENTATION PROCESS IS THAT IT WAS THE ONLY B- PARTISAN THING WE DID MY ENTIRE FIRST TERM, AND THEN AT THE END OF THAT WE NEVER SPOKE TO THE REPUBLICANS AGAIN.

THEY MAY IGNORE EACH OTHER IN THE HALLWAY BUT ALL MEMBERS ARE STRIVING TO BE THE BIG MAN OR WOMAN ON CAMPUS. AND HOW DO THEY DO THAT? LIKE SCHOOLS EVERYWHERE, THERE ARE POPULARITY CONTESTS. BUT CONGRESS CALLS THEM "OPINION POLLS". AND WHETHER YOU'RE A FRESHMAN CONGRESSMAN, JUNIOR SENATOR OR SENIOR MEMBER THERE IS NO GETTING AROUND HAVING TO START AT THE BOTTOM.

SHULTZ: I'M A FRESHMAN, THIS IS MY FIRST TERM. SO I AM THE BOTTOM RUNG OF THE LADDER.

CONGRESSMAN DAVID PRICE SAYS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ARE ALSO AN IMPORTANT.

PRICE: I THINK AT LAST COUNT SOMETHING LIKE 350 HOUSE CAUCUSES.

AND CONGRESSMAN ADAM PUTNAM SAYS THERE IS A CAUCUS FOR EVERY INTEREST.

PUTNAM: I'M CHAIRMAN OF THE SPORTSMAN CAUCUS, WHICH IS THE LARGEST CAUCUS IN THE CONGRESS, BUT I'M ALSO ACTIVE IN THE SPECIALTY CROPS CAUCUS, AND THE BEACH CAUCUS AND THE GULF OF MEXICO CAUCUS.

REMEMBER BACK IN COLLEGE WHEN YOU ONLY HAD CLASS 3-DAYS A WEEK. FOR CONGRESS IT'S A COLLEGE SCHEDULE EVERY WEEK. AND DURING A MIDTERM RECESS CONGRESS HAS THE FEELING OF A DESERTED CAMPUS DURING SPRING BREAK. CONGRESSMAN PUTNAM EXPLAINS HOW ALL THIS DOWN TIME CAN BE A RECIPE FOR PROCRASTINATION.

PUTNAM: YOU GET TO THE END OF THE SESSION OR THE END OF THE SEMESTER AND YOU GOT A LOT OF THINGS YOU PROCRASTINATED ON AND YOU GOT TO GET THEM DONE, SO YOU END UP WORKING LATE TO WRAP THEM UP.

BUT SCHOOL IS ABOUT CHANGE AND EACH YEAR IS DIFFERENT. THE GROUP THAT WAS POPULAR LAST YEAR MAY NOT BE POPULAR THIS YEAR, AS THE RECENT ELECTIONS HAVE SHOWN. BUT THE TRADITIONS OF THE WORLD'S MOST EXCLUSIVE SCHOOL HOUSE WILL CONTINUE.

FOR INTERN EDITION, I'M JASON HESCH.