



**GEORGE W. BUSH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT**

**INTERVIEW WITH NICHOLAS E. CALIO  
WITH  
DAVID W. HOBBS, JOHN W. HOWARD, AND ZIAD S. OJAKLI**

March 14–15, 2013  
Charlottesville, Virginia

**Participants**

*University of Virginia*

Russell Riley, chair

Barbara Perry

*Rhodes College*

Michael Nelson

*U.S. Naval War College*

Stephen F. Knott

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**Riley:** This is the Nick Calio interview as a part of the George W. Bush Oral History Project. We're very grateful for your coming to Charlottesville for the sessions. We had a brief conversation before the recorder began about the ground rules; the most important one to reiterate is the basic rule of confidentiality, so you should feel free to speak candidly to the record.

This is an interesting experience for us because we don't have just one interviewee but a group of folks. I'm going to ask everybody around the table to identify yourself and say just a few words as an aid to the transcriptionist. I'm Russell Riley, I'm the chair of the Presidential Oral History Program here at the Miller Center.

**Perry:** I'm Barbara Perry and I'm a senior fellow here at the Presidential Oral History Program at the Miller Center.

**Nelson:** I'm Mike Nelson, I teach at Rhodes College in Memphis and do a lot of work with the Miller Center.

**Knott:** I'm Steve Knott, I'm currently a professor at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, but I worked for six years with Russell Riley here at the Miller Center.

**Hobbs:** I'm David Hobbs. The first two years of the Bush Presidency I was the House Deputy.

**Ojakli:** I'm Ziad Ojakli, also known as "Z." I was Deputy Assistant for the Senate for the first three years of the administration.

**Howard:** I'm Jack Howard, and the first two years of the Bush White House I was called the Inside Deputy, which is kind of a nefarious-sounding title we can discuss later.

**Calio:** I'm Nick Calio and I was the Assistant to the President for the first two years of the Bush administration.

**Riley:** We're delighted to have you. As I said before, I think our contacts go back at least to 2003 when we were trying to recruit you.

**Calio:** I can't remember if it was you or someone else going back to Bush 41 where I never got my act together to get down here. I regret—always too busy, something going on.

**Riley:** We may talk a little bit about that. It would be nice particularly to get some comparisons from you since our mission is to do these things across administrations.

**Calio:** We did look at the questions and tried to bone up a little bit. There are things I'll offer if you ask those questions because there were significant contrasts.

**Riley:** We like to start out with a little bit of biography. Nick, tell us a little about your background, where you're from and a bit about your education, your experiences, and originally getting involved in politics.

**Calio:** I went to undergrad at Ohio Wesleyan University where I'm now on the board. I went to Case Western Reserve Law School in Cleveland. I went to Washington, which I'd wanted to do since the seventh grade. I was a real-life practicing lawyer, the first associate in a small firm with a very good practice, which meant I got to do a lot of things that most young lawyers don't get to do.

I left the firm after three years to go to a "conservative public-interest law firm," the Washington Legal Foundation. Because I was leaving they made me "of counsel" to the firm. I made more money for 15 or 20 hours a month than I did as an associate, which was a good thing early on. Then I got stopped on the street one day by a guy I had done work with on product liability law reform, Dirk Van Dongen, and he offered me a job as head of government affairs for the National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors, which is kind of like the middle class of business and all the little trucks you see all over.

The constituency was largely homogenous in that it was almost all Republican—because they were small businesses at the time. We got heavily involved working with the [Ronald] Reagan administration. I got offered a job in the Reagan administration twice but thought I was making too much money.

I worked on the '88 campaign for President [George H. W.] Bush 41 and then went in the administration as the House Deputy for the first two and a half years. I left in July of '91, got asked to come back to head the office when Fred McClure left at the end of December of '92, spent the following year working hard to lose the election. Jack and I were discussing that last night. We were together for Bush 41.

**Howard:** It did take a lot of work.

**Calio:** It did take a lot of work, took a lot of time, but we got there. *[laughter]* When we lost the election I started my own firm with Larry O'Brien, a Democrat whose father had been the chairman of the Democratic Party and the NBA [National Basketball Association] commissioner. Had a great firm, a great practice.

**Riley:** You were Deputy in 41, who was the principal?

**Calio:** Fred McClure.

**Perry:** What caused you in seventh grade to want to work in government?

**Calio:** My father was an insurance salesman at the time and he won a trip to Florida. We drove through Washington, D.C., and I was fascinated by the monuments. I had an interest in politics already, and I just thought it would be a great place to work, I wanted to get involved with government.

**Howard:** I'm from New Jersey originally, had a similar sort of experience. We took a couple of family trips to Washington, thought it was really exciting to see all that sort of stuff. We came and met our Congressman and our Senator, Harrison Williams, who later ended up having to go to jail. *[laughter]* We thought that was pretty cool, what did we know? So that may have whetted my appetite a little bit.

I went to school at Gettysburg College, about an hour north of Washington, and they ran a couple of internship programs. I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do when I graduated, but I did take a couple of internships and worked in Washington for a Congressman and also at what they called the National Republican Congressional Committee. This would have been probably 1977, '78. That is when I got bit by the bug. I thought it was really cool, I liked it down there.

Until I could figure out what I wanted to do for my career I thought I'd come to Washington and work for a couple of years. When I graduated I was hired by a Congressman from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, name of Bob Walker. He had no reason to hire me whatsoever. I wasn't from the district, I didn't know anything about the issues he hired me to handle, but he took a flying leap and hired me.

Bob developed a reputation as being the House floor watchdog. His job every day was to come in and figure out some way to tie the Democratic majority in knots, drive them to distraction with all sorts of procedural things. I did a lot of the staff work, and for a kid who was 23 or 24 years old this was great. All we did was roll hand grenades out there and watch the Democrats basically blow themselves up.

I eventually became his chief of staff, but in the course of all the floor activity and antics that Bob engaged in, I came to the attention of the Republican leadership, for the good for the most part, though a few times there were things Bob did that drove the Republican leadership crazy as well. But in any event I came to the attention of Trent Lott, the House Republican Whip at the time. He wanted a lot of that sort of floor activity in *his* office.

So I went to work for Trent Lott as his floor assistant for a couple of years. That's where I really started to understand the broader nuances of how the House actually works from a procedural standpoint. He was the Whip so he did a lot of vote counting and strategy. That is where I really took a liking to that. Unfortunately he ran for the Senate in 1988. He had grand designs. He wanted me to go to the Senate. He was going to shake up that institution and I was like, "I don't really like the Senate too much, I'm not so sure I want to—More power to you, you're a freshman Senator, I'm sure you're going to be great, but as a staff person I just don't think I'm suited for the Senate." Too many egos, especially at the staff level. That's the thing that got me. It's one thing for the Senators to have the big egos, it's another thing entirely for the staff to have big egos too.

Bush got elected in 1988. They offered me a job in the Legislative Affairs operation on the House side, working with Nick. That was terrific too. You still stay associated with House Republicans. We were in the minority.

**Riley:** Permanent minority.

**Howard:** Pretty much, although there was a growing movement within the conference to do things drastically differently than they had in the past. We had a great four years. In the Legislative Affairs operation pretty much all we did was veto things, that's all we could do. Every once in a while we'd work out some kind of a deal. At the end of four years, that's pretty much all we had to show for ourselves, our veto strength, which didn't convince enough of the American people to reelect us. So we lost our jobs. I decided I wanted to go back to the Hill.

Some people thought I was crazy for wanting to do that, but I went back to the Hill. Newt Gingrich was the Whip at the time. He offered me a job. I thought, *This is great, I'll go back to doing what I really like doing in the Whip's office, vote counting, all that kind of stuff.* Newt's idea was he was beefing up his policy staff so that when he became Speaker, in his mind, two years from then, he would have a Speaker staff in place.

I thought, *I don't know about that part.* We were in the permanent minority. Great for you, you're going to be out there talking about being Speaker and things like that, but if this is what it takes to get me back on the House side, OK. I did that for two years and then lo and behold, Newt was right and we did take over in '95. The next thing we find ourselves in the Speaker's office doing the Contract with America and all that sort of thing. I stayed with him until the bitter end.

He got thrown overboard basically in 1998. Then I actually worked for Bob Livingston for about a month until he quit. I started thinking, *There's sort of a pattern here.* Then Denny Hastert took over. I had come to like and respect Denny Hastert. By that point I was figuring I had to get out of here. Hastert said, "Look, I have no idea how to be Speaker, I don't know how the office functions. I don't really want to be Speaker. Would you mind sticking around for a little bit and helping me?"

I said, "I've got nothing else to do, I don't have a job either. I'll help you for at least a little bit." I stayed for about six or nine months; I can't remember exactly. Trent Lott was Senate majority leader at the time. Every time he came down to meet with Hastert, or Newt for that matter, he'd come down the little back hallway. He'd say, "When are you going to come over to the Senate and get a real job?" That would drive Newt crazy. "He's got a real job, quit talking like that." Then I finally got to the point of thinking I was kind of at the end of my career on the House side. There's a lot of turmoil; maybe I will try to work on the Senate side.

I always thought if I worked for anybody, it would be Trent Lott. So I went to work for him as the deputy chief of staff for almost two years. I had no burning desire to go back into the White House. Bush got elected, that was a close race. I never really had factored into my thinking that I'd go back to the White House. I figured I had done my time.

I get a call from Nick, who says, "Are there any circumstances under which you'd want to come back to the White House?" When you get that call—up to that point I was very dubious and

skeptical. It's time for new people to come in. Then Nick talked to me and I heard about some of the people he was bringing in and I saw the team and thought, *That could be a lot of fun*. So I ended up doing that for two years.

Then I left. My kids were getting ready to go to college. I had to pay for college and things like that. So now I'm a lobbyist in downtown Washington.

**Riley:** That's terrific. Z?

**Ojakli:** Gosh, where did it begin? I'm from Brooklyn, New York, and went to school at Georgetown [University]. I still have my boxes to unpack. I got the fever. Never thought I would get into politics. When I was a kid I liked to memorize the Presidents and statistics, Martin Van Buren. Who was the 13th President? Millard Fillmore, little statistics here and there, kind of weird stuff.

**Riley:** January 7, that's Fillmore's birthday.

**Ojakli:** Very nice, I'm in the right place.

**Knott:** You're among nerds.

**Ojakli:** I feel in good stead here. Never thought I'd get involved in politics. I actually wanted to go back home to New York, but I got involved my sophomore year with an internship for Jack Kemp and started working on his political action committee. This is when he was thinking about running for President. One thing led to another. The PAC [political action committee] became the exploratory committee that became the Presidential campaign. I stayed on for three years and did just about every job that you could do in the campaign to where I became a volunteer coordinator, and my job was essentially running around to every campus to compete against the monolith, the Bush campaign and the [Robert] Dole campaign, and try to pull in volunteers, college kids, to man the jobs that all the other campaigns could pay for. We would try to get all the young people in the D.C. area to come work for Jack Kemp.

I did that through college, went out to Iowa and really got the bug, knew that's what I wanted to do. When I graduated, I wasn't sure what I would do after graduation, but the chief of staff to Jack Kemp was a guy named Dave Hoppe, and he was the new chief of staff to the new Senator from Indiana who was appointed to fill Dan [J. Danforth] Quayle's spot, Dan Coats. I called him on a whim and said, "Do you have any jobs?" He interviewed me and the week after graduation I started as a legislative correspondent so I started writing letters. Boy, that was an interesting job. You learn from ground zero what people are thinking, what's on their minds.

**Calio:** We could have put you in charge of that, correspondence.

**Ojakli:** Should have, you missed your chance. I was darn good. I did that for a while. Because Dan was appointed he had to run twice—in '90 and then in '92 for the six-year term. I got sent out in '90 to work around the state. It was the big budget mess of 1990 if you recall. I went through many of the 92 counties. I would go everywhere I could and talk about Dan Coats and basically talk about his record. So I got sent out, got to learn Indiana for three, four months and campaigned. I really got to like campaigning.

I came back, was an LA [legislative assistant] for a few years, did every issue under the sun, kind of topped out doing the issues. I left there, went briefly to the National Restaurant Association, and lobbied for them. Four square meals a day, great job, access to the finer restaurants in D.C. You could always get your reservations to the top of the line, made a lot of friends. But it was right around that time that the Republicans took back the House. In the Coats office, the person I sat next to, Mark Souder, was the policy director and not someone you'd ever think of running for office.

**Howard:** Which is saying a lot, considering some of the Members I talked to.

**Ojakli:** But he went home and ran and won, so he asked me to be his chief of staff. I left the Restaurant Association and I was his chief of staff for his first three years. Then I went back over to the Senate. I was asked by Senator [Paul] Coverdell of Georgia to be his policy director. I spent a couple of years as his policy director and then as chief of staff in his leadership office. In between policy director and chief of staff I went down to Georgia. He had a tough campaign in 1998 and I spent some time living in Georgia, working on his campaign, which was an incredible experience. I worked for him through 2000. He became then Governor Bush's liaison to the Senate and his job was to round up all the endorsements he could, a job he did marvelously. But unfortunately and very sadly, he passed away in office.

After wrapping up the office I went over to the RNC [Republican National Committee] and ran Congressional relations for what they called Victory 2000. It was a two-person shop: me and another person from Senator Coverdell's office. We basically took Member requests, everything from Senator Orrin Hatch wanting the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to play at the inaugural if there was one, to just passing messages back to the campaign. We did that for a couple of months, actually just passing back what was going on in Congress.

After the election I wound up going over to the transition out in McLean. It was just an empty building and you watched how it was just floors of emptiness and a few chairs. Then the chairs became little modules and desks came in and offices were set up and it just mushroomed and filled in. It was neat to watch that happen over time.

In the transition I was the Senate liaison, same job ultimately that I had at the White House. Went through that and then when Nick came in—we were talking about this last night—one day over at the Library of Congress I was standing around minding my own business, and Nick came over and did me the honor of asking me if I'd come serve in the White House and be the Deputy for the Senate. I was honored to do that for three years.

In the White House, I had three kids under three. I had twins who were born right after the election, during the whole court battle. We were joking if one of them was a boy, we were going to call him Chad. It was a tense time because you didn't know—

**Howard:** Happily they were girls.

**Ojakli:** It was a very tense time. Having three kids under three, after year three it was about time to look for something more reasonable in terms of schedule, so I picked a cakewalk of a job at Ford, in the auto industry, going through the economic downturn and everything else.

**Riley:** David, how about you?

**Hobbs:** I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but moved to Houston at a very young age. I think I wanted to be a lawyer when I grew up. I don't know that I was that interested in politics but somewhere along the way I got interested. I went to the University of Texas and majored in government and then came to George Washington for a semester and wandered into the office of my local Congressman, Bill Archer, and said, "I'd like to volunteer." They said sure. My classes were mostly later in the afternoon so I could work in the morning. As Jack said, that's kind of where the bug bit me.

Bill later became the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee but a lot of good experiences there, really enjoyed watching the legislative process. We were watching it then because we were always going to be in the minority. So I went back to the University of Texas and graduated. Then I thought I wanted to go to law school, but I worked for a year in between for Ron Paul in his district office as a field representative. I drove all around the 22nd District to smaller towns, and I think the highlight might have been awarding some Jaycee award in a prison. I decided that wasn't where I wanted to be.

I went to graduate school, got my master's in public affairs from the LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] School [of Public Affairs], very interesting, small school at the time, only about 25 people in the class. Barbara Jordan was my graduate advisor. It was me and Bill Hughes, who these guys know, became the Speaker's policy director at one point. We were the only Republicans in the school.

After graduating from there in '83, I came to Washington and worked for Ron. That was a very interesting process. Ron Paul is Ron Paul. He's a good man and I suspect that 200 years ago he was probably the idea that the Framers had in mind for a Member. It used to really rankle me that he was always voting no. I thought he was right on the issues but it was always no, no, no. So in 1984 Dick Armey was elected and I went to work for Dick as his legislative director. He started out just like Ron Paul and earned the moniker "Dr. No." Again it was kind of like, "Dick, if we could just give a little, we could be more relevant and start accomplishing things." One story is that as a sophomore Member of the minority party, not on the committee of jurisdiction, Dick passed the base-closing initiative, the BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure Commission] process. To me the sign that Dick had arrived came when they used to write the politics and policy page on the back of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Jeff Birnbaum wrote, "Texas GOP [Grand Old Party] Member changes tactics, starts accomplishing things in the House." I think he probably would regret it, but I think he's a rival in terms of a legislator.

I was fully infected so I moved back to Texas to start a foundation, the Institute for Policy Innovation, but I really wanted to be back in Texas so I could run for Congress. After a couple of years I ran for Congress in 1992 as these guys were throwing the Presidency away. [laughter]

**Calio:** Not throwing away, we chipped away at it consistently.

**Hobbs:** It started out well. That was the year that H. W., 41, was at 92 percent in January and I'm sad to report that I outran him in Fort Worth, Texas, and got 38 percent. I knocked on 10,000 doors and spent pretty much my entire life's savings, but I lost 40 pounds in the process, so that



was good. I went back to the foundation and then the miracle of miracles happened, the Republicans took the House.

I moved back to Washington. Dick had been elected majority leader and for four years I was his policy coordinator/senior floor assistant. Jack was there, Newt had grand visions and Newt kind of wanted to run the world, and running the House of Representatives should be delegated to other people, and he started a tradition that sort of exists. The Speaker is the Speaker. He delegated a lot of responsibility to the majority leader to schedule the floor and to work with the Rules Committee in terms of what amendments—so for four years I really enjoyed that process. You got to know the Members, all of them, and the ebb and flow and the dynamics of it. Then in '98 when Newt left, Dick's chief of staff, Kerry Knott, left as well, so I became the leader's chief of staff in '99 and 2000.

Then Bush won and Nick was very nice and asked me to come to the White House. I thought about it long and hard. I wasn't sure I wanted to do it. He had Andy Card call me and he had John Boehner come by. I've thanked him for it many times since. For some reason, fate or whatever, I decided I'd go. So for the first two years I was the House Deputy with these guys. Then after Nick left I took his job as Assistant to the President and did that for two years. In the meantime my wife and I—we had been in the adoption process for a long time—were blessed to adopt a newborn from Pennsylvania during my last year. I remember when the President got elected and went to the Reagan Center he said, "Hobbsy, you have to stay one more year."

I said, "Sir, I have an eight-month-old baby at home. I'm 46 years old, I'm not going to get too many more cracks at this and I don't see him awake Monday through Friday. So I appreciate it, let me think about it." I decided to move on to the more lucrative but considerably more boring lobbying world. That's what I've been doing since I left the White House in February 2005.

**Riley:** Terrific. Anything you guys want to pick up on?

**Nelson:** I'm thinking you probably had some encounters with George W. Bush in Texas, is that right?

**Hobbs:** Not really. In '92 I was running for Congress against Pete [Preston] Geren who later became a Republican. I went and visited with Governor Bush and I remember calling up and saying, "Can I come by?" and he says, "What's going on, how can I help you?"

I said, "I'm running against this guy in Fort Worth, Pete Geren, and I'd really like your help and support." He said, "I'd do everything I can for you except that his best friend is my business partner in the Texas Rangers. So good luck, buddy."

**Nelson:** Nick, did you have any encounters with him when you were in the first Bush White House?

**Calio:** Yes, I did. If I could just add one thing since I didn't say I was from Cleveland, Ohio. One thing I should have said, the whole point about the wholesaler's job was, we did a lot of work with the Reagan administration on all those big economic issues, the budget, led the coalition on tax reform. That's where I honed my vote-counting skills, did a lot of work with Jack and with Trent Lott's office. So I met him on the first campaign.

I actually started out working for Dole. When the campaign was getting up and going, Lee Atwater came to me and my boss and asked us to both work for H. W. [George Herbert Walker Bush]. This was in '87. With all the tax work I did, I had a good relationship with Dole, who was behind by about 30 points in the polls. So my boss said to me, "It occurs to me that probably you ought to split it up. One of us ought to go with Bush, one of us ought to go with Dole so we're covered." I said, "Yes, that makes sense."

He said, "You probably have a better relationship with Dole." I said, "You sign my paychecks, I'm going with Dole." So I went with Dole. That campaign was a model of organization and efficiency and any effort to bring organization to it, which I tried to do in terms of contacts and setting up state and local groups, didn't work out too well. Once that was over I got asked to go over to the Bush Congressional relations campaign. That's where I first met W, in passing. He was always around the campaign, confident to the point of being cocky, really funny, very friendly. But it was only in passing. I'd see him occasionally around campaign headquarters and then at the convention some.

After that I didn't have a lot of contact with him while I was the House Deputy. When I became the Assistant, he called on a number of occasions about issues and what was going on. It wasn't a lot; I didn't know him well at all.

**Howard:** We used to see him around.

**Nelson:** He called you in what capacity?

**Calio:** Son of the President, sometimes troubleshooting for his father.

**Howard:** Yes, he did a lot of that.

**Calio:** And did it, I would say, increasingly as time went on.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** Particularly he did that the first three years, and that last year he became increasingly involved.

**Howard:** Yes, that's when you saw most of him. You would see him in the hallways, in the West Wing, just walking around. Not frequently, but you'd see him around. I thought, *Just a member of the family; it's not that unusual to see members of the family*. You'd see Barbara Bush all the time. He was very involved, like Nick said, in the last—particularly when things were starting to spiral out of control. I think just in loyalty to his father he felt he needed to jump in and try to right the ship.

**Riley:** Is it fair to say he wasn't somebody that you might have thought of as an elected official at the time? Somebody who would run for office?

**Howard:** I don't think so, I don't think he did either at that point, was entertaining those notions.

**Calio:** This is total speculation on my part, but I think what happened throughout '91 and '92 to

his father is probably where he started thinking about it. He came to the Governorship with very clear ideas about what not to do and how he would not operate, which he transferred to the Presidency pretty clearly.

**Howard:** I agree with that. I don't think he had a notion that "If I'm ever President I'm not going to do it this way," but I think a lot of what he learned and saw in '91 and '92 he applied to his White House and basically how *not* to do things.

**Nelson:** For example?

**Calio:** How you communicate, you don't make everything all gray, it's not very nuanced. When you want to make a public statement it has to be black or white. It's his opinion. You can probably carry that to an extreme. Putting our staff together, the conversations I had with him about whether I would take the job or not were all based on my experience in 41 and my background and what I did in business, in my firm, how you organize a staff, how you operate it on a day-to-day basis. It had to be a contrast, otherwise for me it wasn't worth taking the job.

I had decided I wanted to go back in because you get that bug, you can't resist when the call comes. But the two White Houses operated in very different fashions.

**Howard:** One of the things he consciously got away from was having a strong, very visible Chief of Staff. John Sununu was Chief of Staff with 41, with whom we got along great, we had a terrific relationship, but he was a dominant figure. Pretty much everything went through Sununu. I think 43 decided, "I'm not going to have that kind of Chief of Staff. I'm going to have somebody who is lower profile, not as controversial, much more collegial than Sununu was."

**Calio:** In going down to talk to him, it started out I didn't have a lot of involvement in the 2000 campaign except for raising money. I went down to an event in Austin at one point and got a big hello from across the room and then a big hug afterward. I was a Sherpa in the transition and one of the Sherpas for Mitch Daniels. First Rob Portman called and said, "Everybody says you'd be the best guy for the job, but everybody says you won't take it, so I'm calling to find out whether you would consider it because they don't want to call you if not."

I said, "I'd consider it." About a week later Andy called. It was right before Christmas and he said they needed a center for the White House basketball team. It is a story that dates back to Bush 41, where I got a call because Bo Derek was down in the Press Office so I should come down. You know, she's flat-out gorgeous. She's radiant. I walk in and Andy says, "Oh, Bo, I want you to meet Nick Calio; he's the center on the White House basketball team." So I turned this color. The joke was on them because she says, "Oh, that's not nice." She comes up, grabs me, and gives me a hug.

Anyway, then nothing happened for a week or two—

**Riley:** With Bo Derek?

**Calio:** No, with Andy. At any rate, Andy called and said, "Would you be interested in coming and talking to the President?"

I said, “I would be but, Andy, I want to get certain things clarified. This is not just to go down and say yes.” So I went down, I guess it was January 2, January 3. I went to the mansion. He and I met in the dining room. There was a lot of kerfuffle going on because they were going to announce [Karl] Rove, [Karen] Hughes, and [Joseph] Allbaugh that day for their positions.

So we talked. I wanted to know how he planned to operate the White House and the White House staff. I said, “To be candid, I learned a lot from your father’s administration.” I thought in 41 the President was insulated and isolated. We loved Sununu, we got along great with Sununu, but he did a really good job of isolating the President. Almost no one got in. The way the Legislative Affairs office was operated I think there were people on staff who it may not have been Fred’s choice to put there, but they were put there for certain reasons. As a Deputy even, I gained more and more access to the President, but not a lot because almost nobody did. It wasn’t a good thing.

For instance, on vote counts, on issues—as a frontline person everything you said, everything you would relay was put through a filter and you were never sure it was going through the right way, what arguments were made back if people said no. I don’t think that’s a good way to work. I told the President that. He said he was going to operate in a very different fashion, that he knew the problems with his father’s White House, that he thought he was too isolated and that caused him problems, that there were too few inputs into the President. That’s not the way he operated as Governor, and that’s not how he would operate the Presidency.

We talked about strategy. He said, “I’m going to use the issues that I ran on, that I campaigned on, as my agenda as President to start.” We talked about being in on the ground floor for strategy. I said, “I’m not going to be on the outside. I’ve seen that with businesses where the government affairs people or the legislative people aren’t part of the strategy. The strategy is made up, and there are all these government impediments or obstacles so the strategy doesn’t work.”

He said that it would not be that way, that Legislative Affairs would be in all the decision making. I also said that I wanted nominally access for myself. Obviously I’m going to operate through Andy, I’m not going to walk in all the time, although he did have a fairly open office as it turned out. But I wanted access for my staff too. I’m going to be very heavily involved in everything, but I’m not going to sit there—there will be people on staff who are always going to know more than I do. They ought to be in the meetings. You can have all these policy people and all these other—I don’t want to call them hangers-on, but everybody wants to be at the meeting.

As Andy used to say, “It’s not a matter of wanting to be there, it’s a matter of needing to be there.”

**Howard:** The President used to say that himself, “I don’t want all the straphangers around.”

**Calio:** But he didn’t consider my folks straphangers, he liked our staff. I said, “For the Legislative Affairs staff, the coin of the realm and the credibility comes from speaking for the President. They have to know that I am speaking for you and that I can speak.” He said, “They will know that you are speaking for me.” I said, “But for my staff, if it is known that they see you, that you know them, that gives them so much more credibility. All of this leads to the fact

that we will be able to do the job better for you.” We agreed on that.

I said I wanted to be able to hire all the Assistant Secretaries for the Cabinet. I said, “There are going to be some Cabinet Secretaries who won’t like that. We’ll have some fights over that, but we’ve got to have that input because in your father’s administration, and in *every* administration, to be clear, some Cabinet Secretaries are outliers and they hire their own people who have loyalties to the Cabinet Secretary, which in a sense it should be, but they all work for the President. You don’t need to be finding out that you’re speaking with three voices.” He agreed to that. That included the other White House offices, National Security, Council on Environmental Quality, and input on the Vice President’s.

I said, “We’ll all be part of one big staff, we’ll all work for you and if anybody is starting to stray or you reach a decision and somebody strays from it, we’ll be the first to know.” And you know what? That worked in any number of instances where the Energy Secretary or somebody else decided something different would really work better. We knew and cut it right off at the head.

It was a good conversation. We agreed to do it and it went on from there. He also talked about communicating and how you need to communicate. He didn’t think that the Bush 41 administration did a good job on communications.

**Nelson:** Public communications?

**Calio:** Public communications. Probably internal as well. Then we talked about issues. That’s when he told me we were going to go on the issues that he campaigned on. We talked about the tax part and had that famous discussion—of course I started getting legislative right away on him. He just leaned across and said, “Nicky”—actually he called me Slick at first. I said no.

**Howard:** Why not?

**Calio:** We’re not going there. He said OK. So he started calling me Nicky, which he still does and Mrs. Bush does and Condi [Rice] does, which oddly enough is my legal name, which nobody knew at the time. Thank you, Mom.

At any rate, in the discussion about taxes, he leaned across the table and said, “No. We’re going to say 1.6 trillion, 1.8.” I said, “People are going to get irritated with you and they’re going to get pissed off at us, but we’re going to keep saying it. We might move, but we’re not going to move until we really have to and we’ll get a lot more of what we want. That’s the way we’re going to operate.”

We talked about hitting the ground running, outreach to Members a lot. There was the rancor from the campaign. I think he had pretty much made the decision, or we had collectively made the decision, that we would run like we had a mandate.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** Between that and the outreach it would throw people off balance. That’s how we proceeded.

**Hobbs:** Also started, not necessarily, with tax cuts but with something more bipartisan.

**Ojakli:** Education.

**Howard:** There was a lot of, not pushback from people on the Hill because I was on the Hill actually when they were talking about a lot of this stuff. But the Republican leaders' advice to the President was, "We need to start small. You have such a narrow majority; we need to prove that you can actually govern. We just need a few small legislative victories and then we'll move on to the bigger things."

Whereas the President decided, "No, we're going to start big and then we'll get to the other stuff later. We're going to focus exclusively on the big stuff until we get it done."

**Riley:** Nick, let me ask a question again about the contrast between 41 and 43. Looking back on them, one of the big differences would have been that with 41 the foreign policy agenda was so dominant at the time as opposed to what you expected of 43, at least in January of 2001. It turns out very differently, but was that a factor in your discussions or not?

**Calio:** Not really. I think as a Governor and based upon what he had run on, which was education, taxes, Medicare, defense, and Social Security, which we can talk about later. These guys can really talk about that one. No, foreign policy wasn't—it was focused on the domestic agenda.

**Riley:** Part of the question was whether the sense of isolation for 41 might not in part have been the fact that he was kind of sequestered with Brent Scowcroft and with the foreign policy folks. At least the perception from the outside was that because he was focused on that, Sununu was charged with "Take care of all the rest of the stuff while I'm piecing the world together."

**Howard:** There might be something to that. There's no secret that 41's sympathies lay more in the foreign policy—I think that's where he felt very comfortable, given his background. Also the issue matrix at the time with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, those tended to be the dominant issues, which was different from 43. For the first six months or so, there weren't any major foreign policy crises. At the time it was the economy, the economy was going down.

Larry Lindsey, the President's economic advisor, was advising him that we were going into a recession. He campaigned on tax cuts. We had a surplus and things like that. That really was the focus at the time.

**Perry:** Could you talk a little bit about the President's rationale on starting big and not taking the strategy of "your mandate is small so let's do little things"? Does that come from his personality that you talked about as being, "cocky" is the word you used?

**Calio:** I said almost cocky.

**Perry:** Almost cocky, to correct the record.

**Calio:** In a good way.

**Perry:** Is it that force of personality, is it political strategy? What is it that has him say, “No, we’re not doing what people are recommending on the Hill; we’re going this way”?

**Calio:** It’s a combination of factors. I think it is his personality. I think he ran for President for a reason. He wanted to get things done and thought it was possible that you could operate as he did as Governor and reach out to people and work together as two parties. But in the transition—as short as it was—we were doing what became our infamous issue briefs, where you put your strategy on one piece of paper. It was never a question that we were going to try and start with all these big domestic issues and push them, but it did become a strategy that you couldn’t start small or you’d never get anywhere. It was a conscious decision, at least on our part, that starting big, doing *all* this outreach, and I’ve got numbers on how many Members we had in the first week, and that never really stopped. We had meetings every week. He made himself very available.

We kept going, we had to just get past it, otherwise it was going to consume us and the agenda. So his personality was perfectly well fit to that. The election was in the past and we had to move on.

**Howard:** It was a real test of his leadership. He could have easily succumbed to the conventional wisdom of “OK, let’s start small.” In a lot of ways that’s how Bill Clinton started his Presidency. He had a lot of advice from people that we ought to do welfare reform and this, that, and the other thing first. He decided to do health care.

My impression of Bush—Nick knows him way better than I do—he is intuitively a very smart guy, in some ways in contrast to the public perception. I think he knew most Presidencies you’ve got a narrow window, six months, nine months of your first term where you’ve got to get it done. Look back at Reagan. Reagan got his economic program through in the first eight months. That window shrinks rapidly. He intuitively knew that we have to start big, start fast, and jam as much as we can through the system, whether the Members liked it or not.

**Calio:** Jack makes a good point because in terms of what so much of the public never realized, he was so intuitive and we would make recommendations on issues—I can’t tell you the number of times. We’d be sitting there, talking points, this and that. He would come up with one line that made everything so understandable. I want to point that out, you juxtapose that with what I said about communications earlier. It’s not just that it is black and white. You had to say things people could understand and relate to. He was very good at that. There may have been times where he faltered on that during his Presidency, but on a day-to-day basis he was really good.

**Howard:** He drove the process by sheer force of personality and discipline. We had all these meetings, I don’t know how many hundreds of them, but there were consistent themes in every meeting. “We’re moving fast, we’re moving big, we’re not going to compromise until we have to.”

**Calio:** If you go through this briefing book and look at the first six months and onward, there was consistency of message. Our notion was you had to have consistency of message and you use the messaging and the meetings to create unity, enforce discipline, and drive process. He was great in the meetings. He had an uncanny ability to know Members’ names.

**Howard:** As I said, it goes back to discipline. He was relentless, to the shock of the Members. I remember we'd get feedback, blowback from Members, leaders, "We're moving too fast, we can't get this budget done in time." The President says, "No, you're going to do it. You're going to have that budget off the floor by March, you're going to have the tax bill done by May." They were like, "You've got to be kidding. We never move this fast." He kept driving the system and he got it done.

**Ojakli:** I agree with everything said, it was speed and big early on, but also just a laser beam focus. It was almost like there were two big issues. It was focusing back on the campaign and making sure—you had a window to get to the campaign promises. One was a soft issue. What we would say would be textbook today—education reform. That's where everybody is on board. You have [Edward] Kennedy and Boehner. Looks like perfect compromise. Then you have a harder lift in a big tax-cut bill. So you had those two big pillars coming out of the box and trying to get those done early on.

I remember a meeting that, Nick, you pulled together with our whole legislative team. The President came in and outlined all our priorities. I remember him saying specifically after walking through each of the big items he wanted to get done early, "You know what? Sometimes when you want capital you have to spend some capital."

**Howard:** I remember that too.

**Ojakli:** That was a perfect crystallization of his philosophy early on.

**Hobbs:** When you spend capital you get more capital.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Calio:** We had a meeting in the Roosevelt Room of our entire staff including the staff assistants. By that time the entire staff was together, and between these three guys and everybody else we put together it was a rock-star staff.

**Riley:** I want you to park on that for a little while and tell us how you thought about structuring, whether you did anything different than you had seen before and what you were thinking about as you were trying to put the staff together and how it would function to serve you and the President.

**Calio:** I think my private-sector experience and the experience in the first Bush White House led me to certain conclusions. In one sense I didn't organize it any differently than we had in Bush 41, which was a change back from Clinton because they had all sorts of legislative people who didn't really have legislative experience and they wanted it heavy on policy. That just doesn't work. The Legislative Affairs office is a vote-counting machine. But you don't just count votes, you have to get votes and you have to know the policy and persuade people. There is the famous Bryce Harlow "ambulatory bridge across the constitutional gulf." We were back and forth all the time, we're always up there.

I wanted the three deputies. Jack was my first call because we had a long history together. Jack is very quiet and has no ego. I called him my shark in the first Bush administration.



**Howard:** I had my ego drummed out of me a long time ago.

**Riley:** By?

**Howard:** Working in the Legislative Affairs operation in the first Bush White House actually.

**Calio:** He is also a good writer. So that Inside Deputy is critical, which I knew from Bush 41. We had Rob Portman as the Inside Deputy when I was the House Deputy. Then when I came back Rob had left and there was another person who really was not good at directing traffic. Wasn't good at anything. I had to push him out the door and it wasn't easy; it was like a corporate negotiation. I got Josh Bolten to come in as my Deputy. Even in '92 he made me look like a genius every day because he was selfless, faceless, and quickly made a name for himself. He was hard to pry out of USTR [United States Trade Representative], I had to use Carla Hills and a whole bunch of other people to call him, kind of the same thing I did with David.

There was a Senate retreat before we took office. Z had been working with Candi [Wolff]. When I had my own firm, for each client we'd put on paper what the issues were and what the approach to each issue was going to be. Everybody who had a context—I think it is really easy to get lazy. So it drove people crazy. We had a small firm, but we were so much better prepared than the other consultants because we considered who were our allies, who were the opponents and all that. Then Z, as I said, was doing these little strategy papers. I combined the two of them and they became our infamous issue briefs, which the staff hated but I think really, if you look back at them, I told these guys, self-serving, we were good. We had stuff down the line about how we were going to drive things, what the messaging had to be, what the bumps were going to be along the way.

When we put the rest of the staff together you wanted people who were really good. You get people you can trust and the more trust you give them, the better they will do. That was part and parcel also, giving exposure to the President, to the Cabinet Secretaries and that. People feel more fulfilled and go on. They'll do a great job and make you look like a genius. People knew it. I was involved, but everybody had their head. They could make the call. We were very collaborative; we had a great team. It had to be a team. "If you don't want to be part of a team," I would tell people, "you don't belong here." We worked like crazy.

We also had fun. I instituted something called "mandatory fun." With any White House, Republican, Democrat, whatever, it is very easy to become infused with your own importance. "I've got to be here, I can't do that, we can't take time off." Every time I said, "OK, get rid of the Blackberries and the pagers, we're going out. We're going to have some drinks, we're going to talk, not about business," it created a really good bonding. That served the President well because we were up on the Hill, we had better information, we knew everything that was going on. Members accepted us as equals.

The other thing was what you wanted counting votes. I wanted everybody on staff to have the ability to talk to Members face-to-face, not the staff-to-staff thing.

We treated the staff well. In some cases, we or I rankled some of the staff because they thought that they weren't being dealt with at an appropriate level, which was not true, because we dealt with them as equals too. That was probably what rankled them. We talked to the Members

because the Members vote. So it was trying to put together a staff that would be organized, disciplined, and independent, and drive the process. Our staff was able to drive the process.

In July of '01, just before the recess—I can't remember what was going on, but everybody on the Hill was really tired, they didn't want to hear about it. We were pushing TPA [trade promotion authority]. We talked at our staff meeting and I said, "We can drive this process, we can pick everybody else up and drive it forward."

Everybody said we couldn't get it done and we did. It was Legislative Affairs writ large with the Cabinet Assistant Secretaries. We just blanketed everybody and kept at it. We did get it done. Probably the most difficult, interesting, and at the end of the day fun but crazy vote I've ever worked. We did some horse trading on that one. Some of the stories are just unbelievable.

**Riley:** Don't tease us.

**Hobbs:** We had Solomon Ortiz's vote.

**Calio:** It was difficult because if you went back this time actually to '91 and then called fast track, we had on our target list, I think we had 248 Democrats maybe at the time?

**Howard:** About that, yes.

**Calio:** We had 92 Democrats on our target list, legitimate targets to vote for trade promotion authority. We set up ad hoc Whip groups with [Daniel] Rostenkowski and Sam Gibbons and people like that. That's how the House operated. We had probably 15 to 20 Republicans that we had to worry about not might vote for it. In this instance we probably had a group of 45 to 50 Republicans we had to target and work because they didn't like it. When it came to the end of the day we probably had a list of legitimate targets of 20 Democrats. It became clear to the Democrats involved that they were important, so they wanted things. We got that famous bridge down in Texas, which three years after I left the White House I'm still getting calls about, "Did you really make this promise?"

**Hobbs:** You did and we couldn't—the long and short of it is we could never honor it because it violated a U.S. and Mexico treaty that said we couldn't build a bridge to Mexico. The Mexicans had some say in it.

**Calio:** Because it is relevant to this particular discussion on getting the votes, the one thing that we did, and I've always tried to do, was stay in touch with not quite everybody but almost everybody and treat everybody with the same amount of respect. Even if you weren't going to be with them or they weren't going to be with you, let them know what was going on. You drop by, it's not one off. The President brings everybody in. We stayed on top of them, always kept visiting them. It paid off on this. Like with Solomon Ortiz and Luis Gutierrez. I was going office to office.

**Hobbs:** Rod Blagojevich.

**Calio:** Yes, indeed.

**Hobbs:** You can see how he ended up in jail.

**Calio:** He wanted something big, we didn't get there. I'm going office to office and I'd say yes or no. "We'll try to do that, let me see what I can do." If there is a fairly big ask like [Robert] Marion Berry from Arkansas had first \$300 million worth of projects, then it grew to \$500 million. Then it was more. But I go see Luis Gutierrez, and he's got a really good education program in Chicago that wasn't going to be funded.

Luis says, "I appreciate your coming to see me because Dick Gephardt comes in here, he grabs my tie like this and he says, 'Luis, we need your vote.' I say, 'I'm worried about this.' He says, 'We'll look at that' and then nothing ever happens." I said, "How much are you looking for?" He said, "Five million dollars." You remember the scene in *It's a Wonderful Life* when there is a run on the savings and loan—"I need my \$217" and the little old woman says, "Can I get \$17.62?" Like Jimmy Stewart, I wanted to lean across the counter and kiss him and say thank you.

That just kept going on. We were horse trading. Dennis Moore wanted a letter that if we didn't get TPA, or this may be the second one, that we would sign the letter saying we'd still go for Worker Adjustment Assistance. I didn't want to say yes to that because I knew it would cause some people heartburn, but at the end of the vote the President was making all these calls to people. I'm on the cell phone with the President. He's calling people. I'm on a hard line in the Rayburn Room, we're getting down to it. Marion Berry is on the phone. He's on the House floor, he says, "I don't know how much of my project—" I said, "We'll give you the projects." He said, "Dick Gephardt just offered me a seat on Appropriations." I said, "He can't give you one; he's not the majority leader." See you, Marion.

Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer were trying to grab Dennis Moore, and I actually had my leg around his leg. I said, "You've got your letter," and he voted yes. The next day the Treasury Department had a heart attack.

**Howard:** Do you want to talk about Mitch Daniels and his view of all this at the time?

**Calio:** Mitch wasn't real happy. Andy runs the senior staff meeting and Mitch was there every day. You go around the table and Andy says, "Mitch, what do you have?" He's looking around, he says, "I just want to let everybody here know how good I feel about being Nick Calio's banker." [laughter] So we won the vote. It was staying in touch with people who really helped us at the end of the day. We had some credibility. We were around when we weren't asking for something and we stayed around. It's the way to do business. I mean this as a clinical statement, not as a partisan, only it is partly critical. If you look at what is going on with the so-called charm offensive right now, how does it take that long to get there?

**Riley:** This is President [Barack] Obama going to the Hill.

**Howard:** The other thing too, it is kind of implicit what Nick is talking about in terms of assembling the staff. That was the deciding factor for why I went back to the White House, when I saw the quality of the people. I knew Nick, I knew what kind of operation he ran, but I had crossed paths with these guys. I'd known Z on the Senate side. David and I worked together in the House. I knew a bunch of the other people coming in.

I thought, *These are high-quality, competent people*. I also knew the nature of the personalities. I think we can do this job—do it well—but also have a lot of fun in the process. So that’s what convinced me to go back. But I also think—going back to talk about the structure of the White House and the kinds of people we hired. We were also known quantities on the Hill before having gone to the White House.

**Calio:** Yes, that’s a good point.

**Howard:** There was a level of trust. The Members knew who we were, knew our backgrounds, our capabilities. They felt very comfortable dealing with us, yelling at us, and venting their frustrations. We got a lot of that.

I used to tell the new people coming to Legislative Affairs, “If you’re the kind of personality that can’t handle getting yelled at a lot for things you had nothing to do with, then this is probably not the right job for you.” The real challenge of these kinds of jobs is to take that tension out of the system. Members know that they can vent their spleen. Then when they get to the President—

**Calio:** I was just going to say—“You, Calio, you—” finally you give them something meaning, “You look good, Mr. President.”

**Ojakli:** He just had the briefing paper, again, with the Oval Office—gee.

**Howard:** We would have warned the President beforehand that this guy was apoplectic and blah, blah, blah and then he comes out and says, “He’s the nicest guy in the world.”

**Ojakli:** It was great. You have this little hum in the back of your head that you could turn on when a Senator would yell at you and give the whole business to the President. “You tell the President that there is no way I’m going to vote with him, I’m never going to do that.”

**Howard:** One of the challenges is to understand the Members well enough to know when they’re yelling at you just to yell at you and they’re just mad, or are they really mad.

**Hobbs:** Most of us came from leadership offices. I know later when I was hiring people I always wanted people from leadership offices because they were used to saying no to people other than their own boss. If you were on the floor all day or in the Speaker’s office or a leadership office in the Senate, a lot of people—“Hey, I want this bill on the floor, I want this amendment.” You’d say, “Sorry, that doesn’t fit the message. No.” Sometimes they got mad at you, but you were just used to it.

I give Nick great credit. Z and I were talking about this last night. I think there is a level—it’s been six years, I knew all these Members on a first-name basis and had done favors for them and ticked off a lot of them too, but you were still a staffer.

Then at the White House—and it didn’t take too long—where you realized in many instances because of what Nick alluded to earlier in terms of being in the room and hearing the President say, “I want this” and seeing how he said it that you knew. We would hear, “We’re going to do—” And respond, “No, you’re not.” Or, “We’re going to do this—” And we’d say, “No, the President wants this. I talked to him, he wants it, we’re going to get this done.” That kind of

leadership.

I was going to interject at the time, but that type of being involved in the process was also great in the White House because there are a lot of people in this White House, or in any White House, who want to go around saying, “The President doesn’t want that.” We would say, “Really? I just left the Oval Office and I heard him say he did.” And hear, “Well, uh ... uh.”

**Howard:** It’s amazing how many people speak with the President’s authority.

**Hobbs:** Right. But in terms of that relationship. As he said, you just knew. Frankly, even legislative bodies wanted to be led. Education—Z mentioned it was kind of soft. It was a softer bipartisan issue, but it was really hard in the sense that maybe not as conservative as today, but the House is a conservative body. The leaders didn’t want to do No Child Left Behind. But for the fact that we’d had Clinton for eight years and they’d been out in the wilderness and they were so happy that George Bush was now President, they probably never would have accepted and put through No Child Left Behind except at that opportunity. Obviously I think it was good because it was big, bipartisan, and it wasn’t a tax cut.

The Democrats could tell that the conservative Republicans were a little ticked off and a little miffed. I think that helped set up tax cuts in a spirit of bipartisanship. With George Miller and Ted Kennedy and Boehner and others, it was a pretty significant—

**Riley:** You were agreeing with this and I’m wondering if we can take No Child Left Behind and do a start-to-finish on it as a way of dealing with some of these issues we’re talking about.

**Calio:** It was a softer issue, but what struck me in going through some of the old papers was the fissures were there right at the beginning, which I largely ignored. I was floating at the higher level, dealing with Kennedy and Miller and Boehner and such, but the Republican leadership did not like the bill, the conservatives did not like the bill from the start. There were liberal Democrats who didn’t like things—and in some cases for the same reasons, just from a different angle.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** We pushed it. To jump forward, the President kept insisting, “No, this is going to be a bipartisan bill.” He was going to work with everybody. But the leadership at one point—and I can’t remember exactly when it was—requested a meeting with the President and tried to scuttle the bill. So it was the President, the Vice President, me, Andy and then Hastert, DeLay, and Armey. Boehner was late. They were making a very effective attack on the bipartisan nature of the bill, saying, “We can pass a Republican-only bill. We’ve got people very unhappy; it’s going to be very difficult.”

They were starting to make a little progress, so I jumped in and said, “Mr. President, we’ve gone bipartisan this far. I think if you turn around people will start questioning your sincerity on a whole range of issues. You have to do this.” Then John showed up, happily. We were already past the point, the President said he agreed with that. I remember afterward Andy Card saying, “That was the right thing to do.”

I said, “Did you see DeLay? I have a target on my forehead. It won’t take three days.” And, boy, within three days there was some nasty-ass article about me in *Roll Call* and how arrogant I was. “Unnamed Republican staffer.”

**Howard:** But it is a good contrast. I don’t mean to speak ill of the Obama White House, but there was a profile the other day on the new Legislative Affairs head. I assume it was intended as a puff piece because it was in the Style section, but it is chock-full of quotes from people on the Hill saying, “We don’t recognize this guy, we don’t know who he is, what he does, where he comes from.” I don’t see how you do your job with that kind of article out there, that sort of reputation. That goes back to the point Nick was making in terms of bringing people on who are visible and known.

**Calio:** When it came to No Child Left Behind, clearly the President wanted it. He was very articulate about it and the reasons for it. The outreach that he did with Kennedy and Miller, with the conservatives, with the liberals. You go through these briefing papers and you see all the different meetings we had to bring people in. Larger-scale meetings where he talked about education as one of the issues, along with taxes and some of the other things. Just education meetings alone, then the one-on-ones that he had. It made a difference. The issue kept moving forward, and we hit bumps. It was funding because funding was a big issue. So we’d keep going back and Teddy would say, “Nick, we’ve got to—”

I’d say, “We’re not going to do that, we’re not going that far. We can’t do that; we won’t be able to get the votes. You’re in the Senate, you’re a Democrat, we’ve got all these Republicans. We couldn’t do it.”

We’d walk out of the room and he’d grab somebody and say, “Nick just agreed to \$19 billion, I think we’re there.” So we’d settle on a number like \$3.5 or something and then the next conversation he’d pick up the phone, he’s so good, he’d say, “So we’re starting at \$4.6.” Then things got bumpy for a while and almost went into a deep sleep for a couple of months because of other issues, September 11. Then we picked it up and it all worked. That was a really good experience. It couldn’t have been done without Kennedy and without George and Boehner. Everybody toed the line in terms of trying to drive to a conclusion on it.

It was a good example of how to operate where you’re going to take votes from both sides and realize you’re going to give up some number of votes within your party. That’s the way we started, that’s the way we kept it. At some point we ought to talk about the policy apparatus in the White House and the way that was structured because that was, I think, the success. That is what underlay the success of the first two years and so many things we did because it was a very consistent process. Everybody had their say. And that’s also why you never saw any leaks.

**Howard:** The other thing I just want to mention on that, I think Z alluded to, goes to the point about the contrast with Bush 41. One of the first things that 43 did was sit down with the entire Legislative Affairs staff in the Roosevelt Room, and he ran through his agenda. We got a real sense of his personality. Most of us hadn’t had much dealing with him. I came away thinking, *Wow, this guy is sharp. He’s on the ball, he knows what he wants, he knows how to get there.* I had no frame of reference whatsoever. He is very shrewd in the sense that he also wanted to know about us.

I think he knew that a good chunk of the success of his Presidency hinged on us. So I think he wanted some sense of confidence that we knew what we were doing, who we were, our backgrounds, things like that. We never had any meeting like that with 41.

**Ojakli:** It's interesting because now that I've seen life in corporate America, when I look back on that meeting I see a CEO [chief executive officer] who set clear goals and clear objectives, and, "Here are your marching orders, go do it. And I want to understand you too."

**Howard:** Right.

**Ojakli:** "Because I've got a lot riding on this. Go, I empower you."

**Calio:** That's exactly right. We knew. "Here are the goals, the objectives, here is the point I want to get to." Then it was up to us to create the strategy and figure out how to execute it.

**Howard:** And it is one thing to read about him or watch him on TV, it's another thing entirely to be in a room, not a whole lot bigger than this, with the sheer force of his personality. It was pretty clear, not in an offensive way, but very determined.

**Riley:** Do you recall in that setting any discussion of partisanship or bipartisanship, or was that in the realm of things that he was going to leave to you, you figure out how to get the votes that you need?

**Calio:** No, I think in setting objectives his clear goal was to take Washington by storm in the sense of reaching out and trying to be bipartisan.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Calio:** It worked, in some cases it frayed around the edges. You could have the leadership on both sides wanting to do it and the rank and file, and it was a very different Congress then from what it is now, but the rank and file would start to pick around at the edges. We talk about 9/11, that's the best object example of what happens when you try to be bipartisan on a consistent basis and do things the right way because it was the rank and file that actually started to cause—after that three-week garden period—

**Howard:** In the early months there was a conscious—it surfaced in all the internal meetings we had with the other White House staff. The President had a good working relationship with Bob Bullock in Texas, he was the Lieutenant Governor. Bob was somebody he could trust and deal with and get things done. There was a lot of discussion internally in the White House, "We need to find that kind of person."

That's why he started working with Kennedy. Some of us would say, "Ted Kennedy is not quite Bob Bullock, but we get the idea." There was a real conscious effort, up until 9/11, to try to find who is that Democratic dealmaker out there that I can work with?

**Calio:** We put together these lunches and breakfasts once a month where we'd have the top two leaders, the Vice President, the President, me, sometimes but rarely Andy, just to talk about the issues.

What Jack was talking about before, how shrewd he was and the force of his personality. I can't tell you the number of times I'd have people come out of a small meeting with him, including people who didn't like him, who'd say, "God, he is really smart, and he's funny. He's *really* funny."

**Howard:** And engaged. That was the other, it's interesting, it just popped into my head.

**Hobbs:** The press portrayed this image that he underpromised and overperformed. I think based on that—you don't go to Harvard and Yale, be Governor—but it was also he'd talk to you about sports or your kids. I think they could tell he really cared.

**Howard:** Yes, but I remember the difference in 41 when we'd have Members down in the Cabinet Room, leadership meetings, pretty much the way they went the President would make a few opening remarks and everybody would go around the room and make their speeches.

The first couple of meetings we had with 43 were much different. He would make a few opening remarks, and the Members thinking, *This is the way it used to be*, would give their remarks only to find out the President would challenge them. If some Member would say something about one thing or another he'd get into it with him. You could tell by their body language, "Whoa, we're not used to this. There is somebody actually listening to what we have to say and challenging us on a lot of these points."

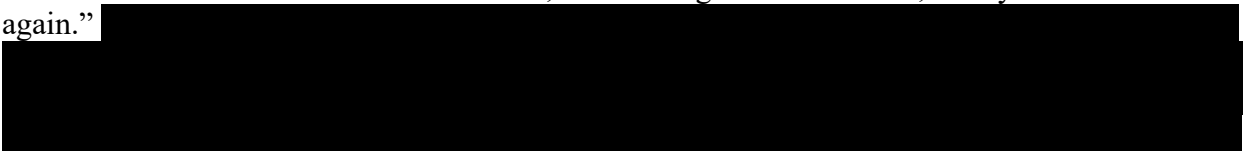
So he early on created the impression that, number one, he's very smart, on top of his game, and willing to engage with Members directly and take them on.

**Hobbs:** And he was on time. After the Clinton years, we were always so late. We'd call a meeting at 9:15, we wouldn't even leave until 9:15 because we knew we were going to be kept waiting. When Bush calls a meeting at 9:00 and everybody shows up at 9:10, the meeting started at 8:50.

**Calio:** We're sitting in the Oval Office; the briefing is done five minutes early. He says, "Let's go." I said, "Mr. President, it's not nine o'clock yet." He said, "Fine, fine." Then I've got people in the outer office and in the hallways doing this relay—"Is everybody here?" and people weren't there. He said, "It's three minutes after nine. Let's go."

**Howard:** And he was not happy.

**Calio:** So we went. The Members came in, the meeting started. He said, "They won't be late again."



**Howard:** To David's point, meetings never started late. If anything they started early.

**Calio:** You learned you had to be there.

**Howard:** Particularly for the staff preparation work. You didn't have the luxury of thinking, *I've*



*got until 9:30 to get this done. You knew there was a chance that you'd get a call saying, "OK, the President is ready" 20 minutes early.*

**Ojakli:** And the door might be locked.

**Howard:** "Come on in." You'd go and—

**Riley:** The door might be locked?

**Calio:** Working on the briefing memo or whatever. He locked Colin Powell out once. He did. He said, "Lock the door, lock the door." Everybody is sitting there and you hear this [fiddles with doorknob] and it's the Secretary of State. You don't keep the boss waiting.

**Nelson:** Something I wonder about. Here you have a Vice President who had been a leader of his party in the House and a White House Chief of Staff and who is known to take an interest in a lot of things. What was his role in any of the things we've been talking about up to and including the most effective way to relate to Congress?

**Calio:** That's a big sweeper.

**Riley:** Think about it, I owe you a break.

**Howard:** Start with how you put the staff together, in terms of integrating the Vice President's staff.

**Calio:** Remind me to start there because it all flows from there.

[BREAK]

**Calio:** I don't think I ever finished the story about you, Z.

**Ojakli:** Which one?

**Calio:** The day you came on staff because Z and Candi Wolff were doing a lot of things together. So the Vice President, Z, and I were at this Republican retreat. The Vice President pulls me out in the hallway and says, "So you're staffing up, I'm staffing up. I hear you might be interested in Z and Candi. Who do you want?" I said both. He said, "No, you get one."

I said, "I'll take Z." So I got Z but the Vice President and I had talked. I had known him 20 years maybe. A lot of people asked me when I took the job, and a lot of people speculated not just to me but in the press, "The Vice President is going to run Legislative Affairs, he'll be on the Hill all the time. They'll have no control." I'm not going to say we had strict ground rules, but we had ground rules. He wasn't interested in being a Legislative Affairs staffer by any stretch. I think there have been some articles that talk about his influence over the President that were totally sourced by his own staff, at that point current and former, which were just BS [bullshit] because

the relationship was very clear.

The way it operated, first of all in terms of our staffing, Candi then became the head of Legislative Affairs for the Vice President.

**Ojakli:** Nancy [Dorn].

**Calio:** Yes, Nancy Dorn, then Candi went to work for Nancy.

**Ojakli:** As the Senate Deputy for the Vice President.

**Calio:** But we operated as a single staff, and the Vice President's staff came to our staff meeting in the morning, asked that each one of the offices, CEQ [Council on Environmental Quality], National Security Council, all their Legislative Affairs people essentially reported up through the White House Office of Legislative Affairs.

**Howard:** And it wasn't just staff meetings either. Nancy would come over to our offices all the time in the West Wing. We'd see her, she'd see us. It was about as integrated a staff as you could get. Going back to the contrast with 41, we knew Dan Quayle's legislative people, but what they were doing? We never had any idea what they were up to.

**Ojakli:** Also Candi was the Vice President's Deputy Assistant for Legislative Affairs in the Senate. The Vice President had an office in the Senate, and we would work out of the Vice President's office there. It was very seamless. We worked hand in hand with the Vice President's people.

**Calio:** The other way it operated with the Vice President was—and this was part of the policy process that I mentioned earlier—everything was seamless because it was made clear that we were all one staff. We were integrated. We would all be pointed in the same direction at all times. The policy process was concocted by Andy and Josh, and I think probably largely Josh, but there were a certain number of people around the table right from the start of every decision-making process. That was the President, the Vice President—when we reported in.

At one of those meetings you'd have the President, the Vice President. There would be, depending on the issue Margaret [Spellings], Larry, Karl, Karen, later Dan, me, Scooter [I. Lewis] Libby usually. You had the same group. Then you would expand the group as the decision-making process moved on. Everybody had their say, but throughout that it was always clear. The President is the President, the Vice President is the Vice President. He was very deferential. They talked in private. They had a very give-and-take relationship. I think that the notion somehow that [Richard] Cheney ran the Presidency is totally out of sync with the facts.

**Howard:** All you had to do was be in the same room with them when the two of them were together, and it was very clear who was President.

**Hobbs:** I totally concur with that. I think Cheney was very loyal.

**Calio:** Very loyal.

**Hobbs:** There were difficult issues and on issues that maybe he disagreed with he was still ultimately the good soldier. Later in intelligence reform and some things where he had very strong feelings that were opposite the President's, he still toed the line.

**Howard:** He was a real asset for us in Legislative Affairs.

**Calio:** I was just going to say that. People would say, "Aren't you worried?" I'd say, "Are you kidding? Given his background, I've got a good relationship with him. He's a huge resource." We used him very well.

That's the other thing. People say, "Why would you take the job? You only have a six-vote margin in the House, it's a 50-50 Senate." Where I came from the last time, we had 158 Republicans in the House and 43 in the Senate. This is a *dream*.

**Howard:** Cheney was very cognizant of that too. He did not want to interfere in a lot of Legislative Affairs.

**Knott:** This perception that Cheney perhaps did have inordinate influence on the President you believe was fed in part by the Vice President's staff?

**Calio:** Yes, and if you know Dick it would never have been fed by him.

**Howard:** No.

**Calio:** Whenever we were doing something he would always tell me what he was doing, where he was going. Particularly if he was going to the Hill, like for policy lunches. He would report back on what was going on. It was very collaborative. We'd tell him what we needed, where we needed him—which we did a lot, particularly that early part because we had to have him in the chair in the Senate on 50-50 votes. It was a very good relationship. He, particularly early on, given his background and given the fact that he was one of those people Jack talked about, the meetings and Bush 41 people would go around, everybody would say everything. The number of times I heard a Member say, "Everybody has already said what I'm going to say, so I'll be brief," and then they'd go through the whole thing. The only time I ever saw something different was when we had this meeting and people were going around the table, and the President says to Cheney, when he was the House Whip, "Dick, what do you have to say?" He said, "Nothing, already been said." Really?

**Howard:** He was very secure in himself and his role.

**Hobbs:** I also want to point out that obviously it was the leader of the Senate, on tie votes, but they gave him an office, H208, right off the floor on the House side, the old Ways and Means office. He was there a lot. He was always an asset and always part of the team.

**Nelson:** If staffers leak stories saying the Vice President is really running the show once, that's one thing. If it happens twice, then the Vice President is tolerating it, right? Did you have a feeling that the Vice President is enabling his staff people to go out and give a false impression of how things really work?

**Calio:** I may be stupid, but I did not think so. I think it also says something about the President, who would just shrug it off. It wasn't reality and he didn't care about that kind of stuff. He would tell you he didn't read the paper, which I don't think was true. But he just didn't care. They had a very good relationship. Cheney was a resource and he was used as such. He had great experience. Very deferential. Sometimes he would disagree, but that's the thing about all those meetings I was referring to. We would have very vigorous discussions about it, but it was always the President's call which way we went on something, *always* at the end of the day. Everybody toed the line whether you agreed or disagreed.

**Ojakli:** I think it's also the laziness of the press corps. It's like the myths of George Bush. They just keep repeating it. There's probably a shrug of the shoulders from the Vice President as there was a shrug of the shoulders, I'm sure, from the President on some of the stuff that was said about him. This stuff just keeps winding its way back and back and nobody cares to correct it.

**Riley:** Was there any way in which the Vice President's experience on the Hill miscued him or was dated because there had been a fair amount of churning in the interval since he had left the Hill?

**Hobbs:** No, he was a conservative. It's not like it is today where there are 355 Members with districts with PDIs [reports from Political Data Inc.] of plus five or greater. Republicans have always been dominated by conservatives and the Democrats by liberals. So he came out of that. The dynamic doesn't change much. The personalities do. I think he was very comfortable even if he didn't know all the freshmen and things like that.

**Howard:** They knew him.

**Riley:** Of course.

**Howard:** He was able to use that reputation to his advantage.

**Calio:** He would give Members their deference. That's their call. We talk about taxes, we can talk about one situation where it cost us part of the tax cut maybe because he wanted to give the Senators their head and the Senators got their head, but then they didn't produce necessarily. So all in all, the Cheney thing was a real positive from our point of view. There are those myths that have built, like Shirley Anne Warshaw, whom I'm sure you know—

**Riley:** Gettysburg.

**Howard:** For hours I tried to talk her out of her—

**Calio:** “Why would Condi have told me this? Shirley, think about it.” My daughter went to Gettysburg so I got to know Shirley. We couldn't talk her out of it to save our lives.

**Howard:** She was going to write her book come hell or high water. I kept trying to tell her, “Shirley, this is just not right.”

**Riley:** Stanford published it.

**Howard:** She was convinced—

**Calio:** I know. I have a lot of respect—she wanted me to give a quote, I said, “I can’t do this.”

**Howard:** David Addington basically ran not only Cheney’s operation but the entire West Wing. It was the whole controversy over signing statements and things like that. Shirley was all worked up over signing statements, how David Addington writes these signing statements that basically have the effect of negating anything Congress wants to do. David Addington has a clear field; he can do whatever he wants. I said, “Shirley, those things came across my desk all the time. I made changes, I edited them. Some were OK. It wasn’t like he was out there by himself.” But, no, she was convinced that David Addington and Dick Cheney were the Rasputins running the whole place.

**Howard:** Based on what we could never figure out.

**Riley:** Nick, you did make an interesting comment about the Vice President recognizing the prerogatives of the Members. The general perception out there, particularly when you start thinking about Addington and this theory of the unitary executive and the notion that—and most of this admittedly is post-9/11, or the success of it is post-9/11, but your characterization is fascinating because it is at odds with this external perception of the Vice President’s role as somebody who was constantly trying to push the limits of Presidential power.

**Calio:** That he was.

**Howard:** Yes, he was.

**Calio:** Those are two different things.

**Riley:** OK, tell me.

**Calio:** I think that, pretty clearly, I don’t know what he said when he came back, if you guys haven’t seen this picture.

**Riley:** He didn’t say anything. We had a nice lunch and talked shop but nothing about the 43rd Presidency.

**Calio:** His view of the executive branch power once he got out of the legislative branch was that it needed to be expanded. But the President himself had very distinct views about the nature of Executive power versus legislative power and the constitutional tension between the two. The President thought that the pendulum had swung back way too far to the Congress and was committed to recapturing Executive power and Executive prerogatives.

**Nelson:** Before we leave No Child Left Behind I want to ask you a broader question. That’s an area that he had worked on a lot as Governor of Texas and had worked with the Texas legislature across the aisle. That seemed to translate pretty well into his Presidency. Were there things about being Governor of Texas and dealing with that kind of legislature that turned out to be the source of misperceptions when he was President? Thinking he knew how to deal with the legislature and maybe finding out through experience that it was different with a legislature like Congress.

**Calio:** I think it was a process. I don't think it ever fueled anything. He knew it was different. I think he would have liked to believe it could be that way. You start with one issue and build up on another issue and you'd have this trust and it would be like the old days. You could disagree all day but then you could go out and get a drink at night. When I say it was part of a process, it became clear over time that it just wasn't going to work that way. You had too many different Members to deal with. The ingrained partisanship going back to the [James C., Jr.] Wright Speakership, building on Republicans, Democrats, alike.

**Howard:** It was also the bitter nature of the election itself.

**Calio:** It was too much.

**Howard:** For the better part of the first part of the first year, he was trying to find who is that Bob Bullock on the other side of the aisle that I can actually work with? We ran through a whole list of candidates and with the passage of time and evolution he came to the conclusion that this is just a different—

**Calio:** Different model.

**Riley:** You mentioned Kennedy. Who else was contemplated as maybe being the Bullock?

**Calio:** [John] Breaux, and Breaux was great, he was our go-to guy. Particularly with the combination of Breaux and Lott we were able to get a lot of stuff done. Breaux had great influence over the other Democratic moderates. Both he and Trent Lott know how to cut a deal.

**Hobbs:** Also the Lieutenant Governor position in Texas has more power in many respects than the Governor has. If you don't have it you should get the story on background of how Bush and Bullock came together and have that color. Ted Kennedy was powerful because when you cut a deal with Ted Kennedy you have the Democrats, and nobody could impeach him. Bullock just had more institutional power to decide what was going to move and what wasn't. It wasn't necessarily philosophical. Different legislatures, institutions, and dynamics at work. But like Nick said, I think he probably would have liked to have it, but it just doesn't—they're different. I think he knew that from his father's Presidency.

**Calio:** And the target field was larger. It is relevant to everything we did because with all that outreach that I keep referring to, we had our target lists going before we took office of who—and it was a broad target list of people we could potentially work with on various issues. Knowing we couldn't get them on each issue, but it included Dianne Feinstein and Evan Bayh.

**Ojakli:** Then there was Zell Miller. People who clicked with him personality-wise. Zell Miller loved his personality, loved his decisiveness, and was a fellow former Governor. He was the one who helped deliver the tax cut, for example.

**Calio:** Yes, so it was Miller and Breaux and Ben Nelson. The President spent a lot of time reaching out to them, had Breaux to dinner more than once. Between us we lived in those offices, and they would say so too. We were all, between [Max] Baucus and Nelson and Breaux and some of the other people we were like plants, just kept showing up.

**Ojakli:** Identified in pictures as “staffer.” Nelson’s staffer.

**Calio:** Yes, that did happen once.

**Riley:** For Z or for you?

**Ojakli:** For me.

**Perry:** Go back to the quote that is so interesting from the President about spending capital to get capital. Can you define the spending of capital? Define the capital that is in that sentence?

**Hobbs:** His view was that you think big things and you have big aspirations and you go out and achieve them, and then by achieving them you gain more capital.

**Perry:** But what do you spend? What is the currency that you’re spending? Some of it you explained, when you said the fellows said, “I need \$5 million for my—”

**Calio:** That’s a minor part, that’s not what I’m talking about.

**Perry:** What else?

**Hobbs:** It wasn’t the spending, it was like you get something done and then you have capital; now you spend that capital, that good will, that achievement, that accomplishment. From the press, to the Members and others. Now you use that and invest it in another initiative.

**Ojakli:** You don’t waste it on small ball. You take it and go to the next big initiative.

**Calio:** I think Barbara is talking one step back. I think the capital that you spend—

**Perry:** At the outset.

**Calio:** At the outset is your stature, your good will. You’re willing to put yourself out there to define the issue and fight to get it.

**Ojakli:** From the beginning.

**Calio:** From the beginning.

**Ojakli:** Your reservoir.

**Calio:** One of the toughest things in any of these jobs is you’ve got your plan, your strategy, you go for it. Then inevitably, because it is such a big Congress and there are so many diverse people, somebody comes back and whacks you on something. I automatically start thinking votes and maybe we should look at this and look at that. He wasn’t like that. He would just say, “No, for right now we’re here.” He’d go back at people and discuss it with them and argue with them, but he would put himself out there all the time. The theory was, if we won, then people would have more respect for the Presidency and for him and then we’re going to move on and get this issue done.

**Howard:** And part of that was what did he say about polls? He didn't even care about polls, snapshot polls, which is in contrast to the Clinton White House where apparently everything was decided by polls. He took the long view on a lot of those things and figured the polls eventually would come around. But for the moment he wasn't going to make strategic decisions based on what the latest poll says.

**Hobbs:** And he wasn't afraid to be bold. I remember the tax cuts in 2003, and it was, what is he going to announce? A rare leak that said something like, "He's going to ask for dividends relief and it's going to cost \$350 billion." I remember some policy time he would kind of bristle and he said, "I haven't made up my mind." A few days later he came out with a plan that cost double that. It was like, "Screw you."

**Calio:** He went out of his way—

**Hobbs:** "If you think you guys are going to define what I'm going to do, you're not. We're going to ask for it all." Whereas the meeting is, "We have this much money, it spins out this way, what can we afford, how do you get the most bang for the buck in terms of growing the economy?" And then whoever leaks it out, somebody trying to get an outcome, and he's like, "Oh, yeah?"

**Hobbs:** "I'll show you."

**Howard:** "I'll show you; we're going to do everything on the list."

**Calio:** Leak that!

**Nelson:** I remember him being quoted as saying during the initial tax cut, "I'm not going to compromise with myself."

**Howard:** Yes, I heard that a lot.

**Nelson:** Can you say more about that?

**Calio:** It goes back to that first conversation I had with him in Austin where he leaned across the table and said, "No, we're not going to argue with ourselves, we're not going to compromise. We're going to keep saying 1.6, 1.6." At one point in the process I was able to get agreement that we were going to go to 1.375 with enough Democrats that it would have worked. The President said, "You think it's too early?" I said, "No, I don't think it's too early. I'm not sure we'd get any better from this."

Cheney was there and the Vice President said, "What do our Members say?" I said, "Candidly, they're not convinced that we can't get more, but we're coming up on Easter and I'm not sure where the time is going to be or where they see the movement coming from. I would take this deal now. We lock in 1.375, maybe there's some way to get it more." The President just looked at me and said, "I think we've probably got to go with our horses up there for now." As I'm walking out he said, "Nicky," I turned around and he said, "Don't wobble, 1.6." I said, "Yes, sir."



**Nelson:** You ended up with 1.35.

**Calio:** Yes, but not until the Easter recess break where all of our allies who said we'd get more than 1.375, and things were kind of dribbling along and then the jet fumes started to take over and we're sitting in the Vice President's office and either Phil [William] Gramm or Don Nickles stuck his head in and said, "We've got 1.1!"

**Howard:** And they think that's a good deal.

**Calio:** OK, you've got them out of town. This is after we refused the 1.375, the numbers started going backward. We only got to 1.35, what was it, \$250 billion I think we came up with.

**Howard:** Rebate?

**Calio:** No, we cooked it up with Breaux.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** But there was \$250 billion we tacked back onto the 1.1 later that got it up to 1.35. Anyway it was a good thing. With just sticking to the 1.6 and not compromising with ourselves, as he put it—we were talking about this last night, in going through the papers you see the development where all of a sudden you've got a Democratic plan that's \$400 billion so you know you've got a tax cut of at least \$400 billion. Then it goes to \$600 billion, then it goes to \$800 billion. We're all sitting around going, "This is getting better and better. We've already won."

**Hobbs:** He wasn't afraid to compromise; he just had a sense that he wasn't going to do it early.

**Howard:** Right.

**Hobbs:** Surprisingly, in a lot of negotiations on the Hill people do compromise too early.

**Calio:** That's a good point.

**Hobbs:** It's kind of I've got to get home, they want to get out of town and there are various elements. I think the President, again, was never afraid to compromise to win 60, 80, 90 percent. But you just don't do that early. There's a time to do it and now is not the time.

**Howard:** Part of that falls to the function of the Legislative Affairs operation because you will get a lot of Members, Senators, who want to cave early because they think they get as good a deal as they can get. So part of the challenge is to push back on them and tell them, "No, you have to hold out for 1.6" or whatever it is. Then when the time is right, you compromise. But if you do it too early—

**Calio:** And telling them no or pushing back in the right way, which was a constant struggle. Personally I also spent a lot of time with the moderates. When the President told me, which I mentioned before, he said, "People are going to get pissed off at you and us." He was right because they did. Without going into names, some of them were just not happy. You talk about

getting yelled at and having to take it. There were some who made a specialty of it for weeks at a time because they were unhappy with the position they were being put in. We could have accepted less and maybe we could add this much money for this program or that program that would take away from the tax cut.

**Howard:** I think there are still Members mad at us from stuff we did in Bush 41.

**Calio:** Minimum wage.

**Knott:** Jack, you mentioned earlier that Bush 43 was determined not to have a strong Chief of Staff. That he had seen the Sununu example as some kind of warning.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Knott:** Could you talk a little bit about Andy Card's attributes and weaknesses? In other words, what was Andy Card's portfolio?

**Calio:** Andy's portfolio was everything. If I can make the distinction, I don't think it was that the President didn't want—Jack included “visible” in his description. He didn't want somebody who was going to be the center of attention or detract from what you were trying to accomplish. If you know Andy, he is the ultimate loyalist, team player. He is very smart about people. Andy took on a lot of difficult jobs in terms of organizing and getting things done, but also in terms of being the bearer of bad tidings, which you never want to have to be on a consistent basis. But it is not the President's job, so the Chief of Staff would deliver bad news to people on a lot of different occasions.

**Hobbs:** He was strong. Look, you had Karl and Karen coming in.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** I don't think Jack was intimating that he was somehow weak.

**Howard:** No, not at all.

**Hobbs:** Bush put him there because he wanted Karl and Karen and others to be involved but they weren't Chief of Staff.

**Howard:** Ultimately Andy was through and through a Bush family loyalist.

**Calio:** He ran the staff. If people were getting out of line, he'd yank them back in no uncertain terms in his own fashion. He made sure that everybody was cooperating and pulling together, but that worked naturally because we all liked each other. It was the best two years of my life professionally. We had so much fun on that staff, we laughed like crazy at senior staff meetings, in with the President who—most people will never get to understand or know his sense of humor, but from the sublime to the ridiculous in terms of his sense of humor. I was trying to brief him once and he wasn't taking me very seriously. I'm standing in front of his desk. He's got a bottle cap like this, he's putting it in his eye, looking at me like—I wouldn't laugh. He just kept it up. His wit is like this.

Andy was very good about that in terms of making sure that the staff was operating the right way, that people were serving the President, that people got in. Andy himself was very accessible. Based on his vast experience he knew when people had to get to see the President and when the President needed to hear something directly. It was an open White House to begin with because that's what the President wanted, but I think Andy helped make it more so. We could get Andy anytime, anywhere.

This is a good example of how we did operate. A Member would call. They'd always rather talk to the Chief of Staff or the Vice President than the head of Legislative Affairs, let's be honest, if they can. They'd call and Andy's first words would be, "Have you talked to Nick yet?" or "Have you talked to Z or have you talked to David?" That would kind of put Members back. The Vice President was up and getting a lot of information on his own, but he was like that too. The President appointed me and Mark Weinberg from Treasury as the two leads on the tax bill, which really rankled Bill Thomas because he didn't think—I had a good relationship with him, Mark had an even better one, but he was now chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Basically, we're two piddly staffers who are going to be negotiating the tax bill for the White House.

At one point he insisted on a meeting. He wanted Cheney there. So we go to this meeting in Lott's little back office. Before Thomas can even say a word Cheney said, yes, he was here, he can only stay a short time and as long as everybody understood that Nick and Mark were going to be handling this, the President has full confidence in them, they speak for the President and he can't get involved in this. This is what the President decided. Is there any kind of problem with that? That was the end of the meeting. We started talking about issues and the tax bill.

**Howard:** But Andy, just by the way he did his job, inspired a lot of loyalty among the staff too. He made you feel like you wanted to go the extra mile for him. He was lower key than Sununu was—

**Ojakli:** He has no ego.

**Howard:** Right, he wasn't on the Sunday shows, he wasn't trying to make all the decisions in the White House, he wasn't imposing his will on people, he was very collegial. As Nick alluded to, he didn't force the rules, we were going to be inclusive.

**Ojakli:** It wasn't uncommon to come back to your chair at night and find a note card on your seat from Andy saying, "Congratulations on this victory. I know you've worked hard these last couple of weeks. Just a special thanks." You're thinking, *My gosh, where does he find the time?* Here is a guy who comes in at four o'clock in the morning and leaves at eleven o'clock. Those little niceties were a hallmark of Andy.

**Calio:** He and the President were a lot alike in that way. After the tax bill vote the President called me up and said, "Nicky, round up your troops and bring them all in."

**Howard:** I remember that.

**Calio:** "Bring them into the Oval, we have to meet." We rounded everybody up. Christine Burgeson was at home that day for some reason or other. She was all sweaty working. She got in

in 45 minutes. He had the entire staff in with the Treasury staff to thank everybody, tell them how nice it was, chitchat for a while, get pictures with everybody.

**Howard:** The point Nick was making before about the whole tone of the White House in terms of being collegial, we had fun. We were all under an incredible amount of pressure. If the pressure gets too much you can burn out really quickly. But if you get a sense, we're taking our jobs seriously but we're not taking ourselves too seriously. It makes it a much more fun work environment.

**Ojakli:** And you set the tone when you have a Chief of Staff like that, I remember him saying. It was almost right off the bat. One of the things Andy believed in was "Serve ethics first and then you're serving the President best" or something to that effect. You have to pay attention to that. He was a real tone setter from the very beginning. I think everybody was inspired by that and the way he conducted and comported himself.

**Calio:** If you look at his experiences, and he was deputy to Sununu, he had a very acute or intuitive sense of when something might be going off rail, reading people's body language. He had his own way of stepping in and making sure it didn't happen.

**Howard:** He had a good way of dealing with people. Z talked about the notes. I'd be sitting in my office and rather than get called to get down to Andy's office right away, Andy would come up and see me about some problem.

**Knott:** He was good at making sure alternative views were allowed.

**Calio:** Very much so.

**Knott:** One of the criticisms, I think you had mentioned before, the stories about the President supposedly not reading the newspapers and so forth. There was this kerfuffle about whether he was really hearing alternative ideas.

**Calio:** That gets back to the policy process. So you start the policy process at the staff level, the President having set direction. We'd all go back and forth and debate. Hopefully you can come to a conclusion. Then you go to the President. Sometimes we couldn't, so there is a split in the staff and you'd then present it to the President. He wanted to have the differences aired out in front of him. He also would ask a lot of questions. Sometimes he's fairly impatient. He gets it. People on the outside don't realize how much he actually knew about economics and economic theory and how businesses run and all that. So the economic team—if you were doing a briefing you had to watch him. If you were giving him too much information or he got it, you could move on to the next point. The economics team never quite got it.

He'd be sitting there like, "Yes, yes, I know, I know. Next." They were like insurance salesmen sticking to it.

**Howard:** It was awkward for the rest of us because we knew it was not going well.

**Riley:** What are the telltale signs?

**Howard:** Just the body language.

**Calio:** Body language, the looks he's giving.

**Riley:** Tapping his toes?

**Howard:** Tapping his toes, looking at other people in the room, kind of smirking.

**Calio:** Yes, smirking. One particular thing, I don't want to name the staffer but the President is going, "I get it, I get it." Then the staffer corrected one of the things he said about some kind of economic impact. He said, "That's not actually how it is probably going to work. It's going to be such-and-such." The President said, "That's probably true." Then he was going like this.

**Riley:** Rolling his fingers.

**Calio:** Which really meant "move on."

**Hobbs:** I remember he also tried to treat everybody really well. Between meetings one time, it was me and Andy, it had been a long time. He was bitching at Andy, "You're bringing too many people into these meetings. There are too many people in here and I'm the one who has to make everybody feel at ease." He wasn't beyond—

**Riley:** Sure.

**Hobbs:** If you got yelled at, it was almost a sign of "OK, I'm part of the family." But he wouldn't be rude to some economic staffer or some young specialist.

**Howard:** Just to go back to Nick's point about the collegial nature and making sure all the views were represented. There was some meeting I was in. You were probably on the Hill, so I was filling in for you. I didn't arrange the meeting but it was some issue, there were six or seven of us in the Oval Office. The President said, "Where's So-and-So?" I'll just use Mitch as an example, "Where's Mitch?" Somebody said, "We didn't invite him." The President said, "OK. You're all dismissed. We'll continue this when Mitch is invited back."

That's a pretty awkward feeling too because you're all sitting there ready for your meeting with the President, and 30 seconds in you're being kicked back out again because somebody didn't invite someone. That's a lesson that spreads around too.

**Nelson:** You were talking earlier about the President's agenda items from the campaign and so on. We haven't gotten to 9/11 yet, so we're still on that part of the first year. Sometimes Congress takes the initiative like with the patients' bill of rights.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** How was your operation different when you're responding rather than following through on a strategy and initiative that came out of the White House?

**Calio:** We played pretty good defense for a while. We were resistant. We were engaging on the

issues with the Congress, but we clearly didn't want the direction that they were headed. We scrambled really hard to put together a proposal that could be acceptable and pass the House and be more acceptable to us. It didn't please everybody but it was a long-term, actually a very abbreviated campaign once we got past the tax bill.

**Ojakli:** Weeks before, it was really the House that saved the day for us. When Jim Jeffords switched, this was Tom Daschle's first thing out of the box. Before coming to the White House I remember, in the Senate, probably for about four or five years on the Republican side, we had successfully kept, through Don Nickles mainly, a "patients' bill of rights" at bay. It hadn't moved out of the Senate. Tom Daschle wanted this to be his first piece of legislation out of the box. John McCain and John Edwards and Ted Kennedy were successful, amendment after amendment. Republican amendments were going down, the Democrat amendments were passing and there was nothing that we could do to stop the juggernaut through the Senate.

**Hobbs:** The leadership never wanted the patients' bill of rights. It was something that they had fought [Charles] Norwood and other moderates on. It was a Democratic play. It was one of the more salient issues at the time, so the Democrats were pushing it. They had 15, 20, 30 Republicans, Norwood was the leader. It reached the point of critical mass where he could have defeated it or changed it so we had to negotiate with them. Ultimately they, why you said the Senate couldn't do it, the Senate blew it up at the end. They never ultimately—

**Calio:** The way that worked, we were playing defense. It was 2002 though, right? Not 2001.

**Hobbs:** Both, I think.

**Ojakli:** I think it was both. It started moving right after the switch.

**Calio:** When did we pass the House bill? In 2001?

**Howard:** Yes.

**Ojakli:** December maybe. The end of 2001.

**Calio:** We cut the deal with Norwood in July. That was the result of very intensive lobbying between the Legislative Affairs staff, and Josh Bolten got very heavily involved in it and we brought Norwood up to sit with the President. We thought we had him. We kept thinking we had him, but we couldn't quite get him to sign on the dotted line. Finally we got him there and he said he wanted to go back and confer with his colleagues. We wouldn't let him leave, we had him trapped in Josh's office.

**Howard:** Then brought in the cameras.

**Calio:** Then brought him to talk to the President. Then brought him out in front of the cameras to announce the deal.

**Howard:** Locked the deal.

**Calio:** Locked it.

**Hobbs:** Staffer was sitting in the West Wing lobby.

**Calio:** Ultimately it was the Senate that blew it up because frankly we had resisted, we didn't like the economic damages and the punitive damages and we argued those ad nauseam. So the Senate had where it was going. I went to Kennedy. He kept telling me, "Nick, we're making good progress." I said, "Teddy, we're not making good progress. You and I talk and it's all great. Then the staff goes back and they can't come to agreement on anything. It's going on forever."

Then he said, "OK, I have an idea. Here's what I think we should do. We need to sit down, by ourselves, and try to figure a way through some of these issues." So he put together a series of breakfasts every Sunday morning at his house that nobody knew about with me and Josh and first just him and McCain. We were making really good progress. Then about the third weekend he said, "This is John Edwards's issue. I have to respect that; I have to bring him into these discussions."

I said, "I don't think that's going to work. If we want to deal, if you bring him in we're not going to do it." He said, "I really can't end run him, I don't think the caucus would stand for that. He'll be fine."

Edwards came and I'll leave this one on the record. If he told us one more time about the little girl in the swimming pool I thought I would throw up, but we made no progress after that. We were this close to a deal. We had language on damages, fairly complicated language. We had a near agreement on punitive damages, and we just couldn't get anywhere. And that did blow up and killed the bill.

**Ojakli:** But the momentum was Jeffords switched, Daschle moves it, the Norwood piece slows it down, and then it ultimately blows up because of John Edwards.

**Howard:** To go back to your point about priorities, the first six months it was taxes and education and budget. We had several Cabinet Secretaries or other people in the White House internally who kept trying to make other issues a priority, like the TPA bill. How many meetings did we have in Andy Card's office with Bob Zoellick, the USTR head at the time? Kept making this—

**Calio:** "Go now, go now."

**Howard:** Absolutely. "We've got to do legislation now." We pushed back and said, "No. You can go talk to all the Members you want and staff you want and this, that, and the other thing, but we're not moving legislation until we get the tax bill and the education bill."

**Riley:** Is he pushing because that's in his portfolio or because there was some external clock ticking?

**Calio:** No.

**Howard:** It's just his own personality.

**Calio:** We had to do it and the bigger point of not doing it was not only did we not have the

bandwidth, the Members who were working on these other issues did not have the bandwidth and it was going to be unfair. It was going to be a really difficult vote. Bob is one of the smartest people I've ever known or worked with. However, and he wouldn't like me for saying this, he is not a vote counter. We were not even close. He'd come back from meetings with Members and say, "I've got him." He came back. He called me up one night at nine o'clock and said, "I want you to know I just met with Charlie Rangel and it all went well and I think we've got him. I think he understands." I had gotten off the phone five minutes earlier with Charlie Rangel, who told me that if I ever sent Zoellick to his office again he would never consider voting for TPA.

**Howard:** He caused a hell of a ruckus inside the White House, kept pushing, whatever forum he could.

**Calio:** He accused me of stiffing.

**Hobbs:** When you say "bandwidth," it's tough to get Members to vote on three, four, five really tough things within a—they kind of hold back. "You just killed me on the last one, I'm not going to go out on the line for you on the next one." That's why, in terms of timing, if you're trying to get No Child Left Behind done and tax cuts done, maybe it's not a good time to do a trade bill.

**Howard:** We'd go in with our little calendars. We put together calendars for the first six months showing how full all the different weeks were with hearings or markups on taxes in the Senate, the House, budget reconciliation, education. "Just look at the calendar. There are no days for Congress to actually consider your legislation on TPA."

**Nelson:** I was thinking, those of you who were in the Bush 41 White House had a lot of experience playing defense.

**Howard:** Oh, yes, we got quite good at it. The problem was when we had to switch to offense.

**Nelson:** It sounds like that skill set wasn't required very often during Bush's first term at least.

**Calio:** I think it was.

**Howard:** It wasn't as visible.

**Calio:** It wasn't as visible. I think we were probably more agile because we were all together and we would discuss it. There weren't the rings of influence like there were in Bush 41 where people weren't talking to each other and you couldn't get everybody to buy in. The patients' bill of rights is a good example. It had real saliency, as David put it. It was getting a lot of our people nervous, so we attempted to make it a virtue and tried to cut the best available deal.

If the truth be told, on the Department of Homeland Security we were originally resistant. I assume we're going to talk about that later. We made that a real virtue, to put it mildly. The same thing on the 9/11 Commission. We didn't want that, to be honest, to begin with. As things progressed, we tried to exert the greatest amount of influence. I remember a guy I had worked for, Dan Popeo at the Washington Legal Foundation, gave me this cartoon. It said, "Sorry if you're being run out of town. Make it look like you're leading the parade."



**Howard:** So we got out ahead of them and led it.

**Riley:** Let me ask you a corollary question. What was it, six years in before there is a veto?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** That was a Hastert problem. It wasn't a Hastert *problem*; it was a blessing and a curse. Denny was a great supporter of the President. He personally thought that any time a bill would have been vetoed it would have been a reflection of poor leadership on his part. There were times that we tried to tell him, "Look, we just disagree on this. This would be good for you and good for us if we vetoed this bill." Probably the prime example in the first four years was the transportation bill. Denny wanted a big \$400 billion transportation bill and the President wanted a much smaller one.

He had gotten out a little too far and Denny really pushed him. It was a source of great angst to the point where we had to have a one-on-one meeting in the Yellow Oval where the President had to apologize and say, "I'm sorry that I might have put these numbers out earlier, but I've changed my mind and we're not going to do it." So a lot of angst, but that's it in a nutshell.

The blessing side of it was in omnibus bills and things when the *whole* Congress is working against you, the appropriators, Republicans, Democrats, bipartisan, bicameral, he was the last guy standing and the President would say, "OK, here's my 302A. You can't beat that number; it will be above that number." Again it would have been 400 to 35 and 85 to 15 if they voted on it, but Denny Hastert would say, "I'm not going to schedule that bill, I won't recognize you for that." So we *always* won on those types of issues.

Now I would say we learned this with Clinton, Presidents win big battles and never lose or rarely lose big battles, Congress writes details. The President could say, "You're not going to spend more than \$500 billion," but they could write the details the way they wanted it. But Denny never—he was always there. That was the blessing part. Again, the curse side was there would have been times when it would have been better politically, better for the President, better for us, better for them if the President had vetoed it. Like Reagan did. A water resources bill. He vetoed it and when it got overridden 410 to something, it still created that perception that he was a fiscal conservative.

**Riley:** Were there internal discussions often about whether the President wanted to exercise the veto power? It's just striking—

**Ojakli:** The farm bill.

**Calio:** Yes, the farm bill, you just took the words right out of my mouth. We had *vigorous* internal debate about vetoing the farm bill.

**Howard:** It was too late.

**Calio:** It was too late.

**Howard:** The House had already passed the bill. We didn't like it.

**Hobbs:** We didn't like it but I think we also kept others from putting the veto threat out on it.

**Howard:** Yes, we did.

**Calio:** We did originally, but then the President called on Sunday morning because we had kept saying, "There is this little kicker in this bill. It is pegged at this much money, but the minute you sign the bill it is going to be another \$16 or \$26 billion." He said no. Yes, it was right. We talked. He was thinking seriously about vetoing it. Frankly I was fueling it all day long. I assume it was Karl who at the end of the day the President called and said, "We just can't do this because we're too far along in the process."

**Howard:** A bunch of guys were already strung out voting for the bill.

**Riley:** I see, but it is striking given the President's temperament and his operating style that he wouldn't occasionally want to—

**Hobbs:** We weren't losing anything.

**Calio:** It's David's point—

**Hobbs:** Everything that we wanted to win—as you all know, Presidents are rarely defeated on some macro issue. You go to the surge or something later when he was unpopular. Sure, have at it, I'll veto it. If you can override, do it. Again, we lost a lot of little battles, but we didn't lose any big battles that we wanted to win. Of course we couldn't push everything over the finish line, but the things that did come over the finish line were acceptable to what he wanted.

**Ojakli:** We just never had the big public spectacle of a veto showdown.

**Nelson:** Earlier you referred to signing statements as a story that had been sort of overtold, but that was, maybe not an innovation of the Bush Presidency, but the extent to which signing statements were used to register Presidential objections to pieces of legislation, certainly more of that happened under George W. Bush than any of his predecessors.

**Howard:** Oh, yes.

**Nelson:** How did that strategy come about and how did you decide when to use it and how to use it? How did that become a part of Legislative Affairs?

**Howard:** It was a gradual evolution. The guy behind it was Dave Addington, who was Cheney's counsel at the time. But both Cheney and Dave had a very expansive view of executive authority. Dave would comb through bills looking for things that he thought were encroachments on Presidential authority.

**Calio:** I do think it was an evolution that—

**Howard:** It started slow and it sort of—

**Calio:** Creeped over time. I remember one circumstance, which, my bad, I get called down to the

Oval and the President says, “Nicky, did you read this signing statement?” I’m standing there with it in my hand and I honestly did say, “I meant to.” Who the hell knew he was reading all the signing statements? I left that to him.

**Howard:** I probably read it too but my eyes glaze over.

**Calio:** He said, at that time, I can’t remember what the issue was, it had something to do with [Patrick] Leahy. He said, “We didn’t agree to this. We agreed to the following and now we’re going further.” I said, “Let me check into that.”

**Howard:** They just kept pushing the envelope, there’s no question about that.

**Hobbs:** Like in so many instances, for a long time, Congress never pushed back.

**Howard:** No, they didn’t.

**Riley:** If you weren’t vetoing things, were you threatening to veto?

**Hobbs:** Of course.

**Howard:** There are these tiers, the President will veto on pro-life or Cuba issues. Then there are senior advisors, the Secretary, all in the SAPs [Statements of Administration Policy]—

**Riley:** And you guys are involved in negotiating—

**Hobbs:** Oh, yes. They come out of OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. There is a lot of incoming that comes at you, from the appropriators and others, that says, “You’d better not threaten to veto this,” or “I don’t want to see this in the SAP,” or something like that. So there is a lot of informal negotiation before you get there and that’s one of your weapons. It’s kind of like, “We’re going to point that out. We’ll potentially threaten to veto.”

**Howard:** There is also a lot of debate over what kind of veto threat to issue. We went through the Cabinet—basically you had strongly oppose, Cabinet-level veto, senior advisors’ veto, and then Presidential veto. Cabinet-level veto doesn’t really mean a whole lot—

**Calio:** Nobody takes it seriously.

**Howard:** Although they looked good. Some Members did. I remember a couple of times in 41 I managed to convince some Members that a Cabinet-level veto was better than a senior advisor and he bought it. He didn’t know who the senior advisors are, he didn’t know who this Cabinet guy is. But they get rolled all the time.

Senior advisor was next to an actual Presidential veto, which was pretty rare because you never want to box the President in. You always want to leave a little wiggle room. But senior advisor was the more important. A lot of Members didn’t know that.

**Riley:** Is there any utility in the variations on these things?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** When you tell somebody—again, they get it after all—but “If this legislation is presented to the President, the President will veto it.”

**Calio:** Right.

**Hobbs:** That’s no wiggle room, that’s done.

**Riley:** That I understand.

**Hobbs:** Senior advisors, as Jack said, that gave you, “We’re probably going to veto this.” It is a tool to influence the process. So it was pretty serious too.

**Howard:** We did a lot of that in 41. Like I said, we were in the minority, pretty much all we did was veto things. There was a lot of debate internally what level—

**Calio:** We were being sent bills in 41 for the object purpose of making us veto the bill.

**Howard:** Absolutely. Part of the calculation on whether to do senior advisors was that internally we knew that was something we would actually have to do. Cabinet-level we can probably wiggle our way out of, language changes or something like that. But if it is a senior advisor’s threat, then we’d better be prepared to veto it and be able to sustain it as well.

**Knott:** David, I was surprised to hear you say that when the President did issue these signing statements he tended not to get a lot of Congressional pushback. Did I hear you correctly? Maybe that comes later.

**Hobbs:** I think it comes later. Certainly when the Democrats take control of the Congress in 2006 but—

**Howard:** I don’t remember anybody—

**Ojakli:** Later on the Senate Judiciary Committee started paying attention.

**Howard:** You got Leahy and [Arlen] Specter starting to look at it a little more seriously.

**Knott:** Charlie Savage from the *New York Times* starts to make a big—

**Nelson:** *Boston Globe*—

**Howard:** I don’t think most Members or staff, at least initially, understood the significance of the signing statements. It wasn’t until, as Z said, the Judiciary Committee people, the lawyers started paying more attention, it became more controversial, which I think Addington knew once he realized he could exercise a lot of authority here.

**Hobbs:** Did you see his testimony before Congress? They called him up and it was priceless.

**Ojakli:** It was worth seeing.

**Hobbs:** Addington. These Democrats grilled him. “Did you do that?” He said, “I did.” They

said, “Why did you do it?” He said, “That’s my prerogative, that’s the Presidential prerogative.” They said, “Blah, blah, blah.” He said, “You’re wrong.”

**Ojakli:** It was so worth it.

**Hobbs:** It was just antagonistic, right back at you. You’re an idiot. Funny.

**Riley:** We’re trying to schedule David but it hasn’t worked yet.

**Howard:** [REDACTED]

**Nelson:** I bet the interview won’t take long.

**Perry:** We can schedule half a day.

**Hobbs:** The Vice President again ultimately was very loyal. Having said that, there are degrees. If the President said, “I’m for this and we’re all going to be for this” then the Vice President was. There is a lot of gray area. David was very adaptive, very nice. He’d sit at the staff table at the Mess every day.

**Howard:** Oh, yes, very pleasant guy.

**Hobbs:** He’d say, “Hey, can I help you?” I’d say, “Can you help me on this?” He’d say, “Oh, yes, sure.” A couple of weeks later you realize somehow you probably shouldn’t have mentioned it. Everything kind of got undone. It dawned on you that he’s really nice but he was a good operator behind the scenes.

**Howard:** [REDACTED]

**Perry:** I have a question about Congress as an institution. Probably if we had all your years of experience we’d have a century or more but we hear so much, especially in political science literature, about the changes in what the Members do and how they do it, the shorter workweeks in Washington, the more time spent at home raising money, fewer of them basing their lives and their families in D.C., instead keeping their homes in the district or the state and just having a little apartment. Did you see that change? How did that impact—?

**Hobbs:** I think we made that change. When we took over in 1995 we had the Contract with America and we had a very aggressive hundred-day—I think we did it in ’93 or ’94. We worked Monday through Friday.

**Howard:** We also had the family-friendly effort. On a separate track. Never quite got around to that.

**Hobbs:** My God, you’re killing us. We have to be here Monday. If we were on the West Coast it

means we have to leave at ten o'clock in the morning on Sunday and then you're keeping us until Friday and we miss the last plane. It doesn't make sense to go home. I haven't seen my family. So again, they all bought it for the Contract. But then this family-friendly movement came. Bipartisan. So we had decided there would be no votes before two o'clock on Monday, which became three o'clock, which became four o'clock, which became five o'clock, which became six, which became 6:30. Then the getaway time on whatever the getaway day was, Friday, it was going to be OK, it was going to be five o'clock and then it was four and then it was three and then it was two.

We had tools that the Democrats never had—obviously more politics and stuff. I think the Republicans taking over kind of compressed, the whole family-friendly effort established—look, so what's the difference if you come in at 6:30 and you vote on eight suspensions or you come in at ten o'clock and there's really nothing to do. So I think what the Members were saying is there is a more efficient way to prioritize this. So we're going to have these votes. There was a lot of sitting-around time in the old days. In the Senate it used to be that Senators would joke, "I go home and I'd tell them this week we voted on—" and name one thing. That's what they did all week. They had one vote.

**Calio:** They can still do that.

**Hobbs:** Sometimes yes. So I think it was kind of melding of technology and the press and Members' needs and desires to do more political things back in the district. But that whole family-friendly effort shaped this Monday through Thursday, Tuesday through Friday. Then it has been expanded by every third week. We used to experiment with different things, but every third week they get to go home except in June.

**Calio:** Now you have this—not this year I don't think, but the last Congress the bizarre scheduling where the Senate and House were in on different weeks, which made it virtually impossible to get anything done.

If you were an outside person, not a staff person inside the Congress, it made life miserable because you were two weeks with the House and two weeks with the Senate but never off.

**Ojakli:** I think it has really changed the tenor of Congress with Washington being a dirty place to live and you have to go home. I think it's easier to blast your colleagues when you don't know their names when you're there for a compressed period. A lot of Members don't really know their colleagues.

I had dinner with John Dingell last year, and he was saying how different it was years back when many of them would live near each other, and their kids grew up together, Democrats and Republicans. Their kids played together, they dated each other, the Members knew each other, they worked together. It's very different now when you just come in to vote. You come in, you do your committee work, you leave. You do your press conferences, you go home.

**Calio:** That is a larger problem. Since David likes to point out that I'm old, I am old but I came into the lobbying business at a time when there was the permanent Republican minority. So if you were outside and you wanted to get things done, you made friends with Democrats. In my case, my best friend was Rostenkowski who was a mentor and actually recommended me to

Bush 41 for the White House job. But in those days they would tear each other's throats out during the day on the floor and then they'd all go out drinking and eating together at night.

**Hobbs:** One night when Rostenkowski drove the carpool in a station wagon with—

**Calio:** Drove home every week.

**Hobbs:** Very different from today.

**Calio:** It was a very different way of doing business. Of course then the younger Republicans at that time said, which Jack alluded to, "These guys are too cooperative." It built up over time, I think with the advent of cable TV. I really believe that was the defining moment. I was talking last night about the First Gulf War. The breaking point in my mind—you know I referenced fast track earlier, those ad hoc Democratic groups working with Bush 41 to pass a trade bill. We did that on a number of different issues both to kill things and to work with, but it was always the "old bulls" in many ways.

So we're going over Labor Day 1990 to look at the buildup in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. There are two planes, one Senate, one House. I'm on the House plane obviously because I'm the House Deputy. But we have this mixture of young and older Members.

Newt was on the plane but Bob Michel, Rostenkowski, [William] Broomfield, Dante Fascell, I think Dingell was on the plane. The delegation was headed by Gephardt, who at the time was majority leader. It's a 15-hour flight. We're going to stop in the Azores but we have dinner served on the plane and all the younger guys separate, go off, read books, go to bed. The older guys set up a card table at the front of the plane, proceed to play cards and drink all night long. I'm hanging out there, just listening to these guys.

So the conversation is banter and this and that and then, "What are we going to do about this, we probably need a resolution. Foley and Gephardt already signaled that they're going to be against it." These guys just, as they did on so many issues, started talking back and forth about what they would do. When it came time for the vote we worked with Fascell, we worked with Rostenkowski, got a lot of these older guys to pass the resolution. It is a little-recognized fact that for the Second Gulf War resolution we got a lot more Democratic votes than we did the first one, despite having that big coalition. But that for me was almost the breaking point. It became increasingly rare to see that kind of cooperation across the aisle.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** By the time I came back in 2001, the Republicans were very adept at passing bills solely with Republican votes in the House.

**Hobbs:** Z and I were talking about this. One of the interesting things going through two years of this was juxtaposing it with the environment that we live in today. You can't help but go through two years of weekly reports and see how much regular order there was. There were 13 appropriations bills moving, each with their individual problems. Each of them went through the House and through the Senate and then a conference. Of course TPA and the patients' bill of rights. And dozens of other things moved with regular order.

**Calio:** Right, and if you look at it, it is remarkable. I thought the very same thing. We talked earlier about the big issues and our focus on that. But there were 20 other issues moving regular order through subcommittee, through committee, moving up to the floor for consideration. You don't see that anymore.

**Howard:** There are a lot of different layers to your question. As I said before, I worked on the House floor in the '80s. There was a lot of back-and-forth on the floor between Members. Republicans had their side of the aisle, Democrats had their side of the aisle, but there was a lot of mingling back and forth.

Now, if one of the Democrats comes over to the Republican side it's like, "Holy—what's he doing over here?"

**Ojakli:** "Break it up, break it up."

**Howard:** "Why is he over here?" and vice versa. Back in the '80s they had two lunch stands in the back room, one on the Republican side, one on the Democratic side, right off the House floor. It was fairly common for Democrats to come over to the Republican lunch side and have lunch and nobody thought anything of it. Now it would be like being taken hostage.

**Ojakli:** "What's going on here?"

**Hobbs:** [John] Murtha had his corner in the—

**Ojakli:** And you could just kind of see it, the dynamics.

**Howard:** The Republicans would go hang with Jack Murtha.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Howard:** It was much more back and forth.

**Ojakli:** To that point, on the floor, I think it was PEPFAR [President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief] in '03, I remember Senator Kennedy being so happy coming off the floor at 2:00 or 2:30 in the morning because we were doing that bill really late. He was so excited because, with the Senate in so late, he had a chance to catch up with all his colleagues. Everybody was on the floor for like 12 hours, nobody was going anywhere, and everybody was voting and hanging out.

**Howard:** That's another thing.

**Ojakli:** Everybody was out, the cloakrooms are on the floor.

**Howard:** That's part of it too. I'm not going to pass judgment on our current campaign finance system but we, and a lot of Members, spend a lot of time with Senators in breakfasts, lunches, dinners. There have been a couple of times where I've seen a guy at breakfast and I'll see the same guy at lunch and at dinner. They do that all day long, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, it's just a relentless pace of fundraising.



So you start to wonder, rather than hanging out with people like us—lobbyists—shouldn't they be having lunch with some of their colleagues? It's just the way it is.

**Calio:** If we sound wistful it is because I think we are. I personally think the system is broken. Somebody asked me about six months ago, "Do you ever miss being in the White House?" I said, "Yes, sure, you always do, you always want to be in the middle of it. But if I were in a Republican White House working with this Republican Congress, they would have hung me by now."

**Howard:** That's a good point too.

**Calio:** I cut deals, we cut deals.

**Howard:** My most fun experience was in 41. We kind of laughed about all we did was sustain vetoes, but that meant we had to work with a lot of moderate and conservative Democrats every week. Some of those guys became some of our best friends. Mike [Paul] Parker, Sonny [Gillespie] Montgomery. We used to spend as much if not more time with those guys than—

**Calio:** Which the moderate Republicans complained about.

**Howard:** Yes, that's right. Somebody was giving me flak internally in the White House. "Why are you hanging around Sonny Montgomery so much" or something like that. I said, "Given the choice between"—I shouldn't say it, she's dead—"Sonny Montgomery—"

**Calio:** I know where you're going.

**Hobbs:** "And a liberal Republican woman from New Jersey."

**Howard:** Given my choice between those two, I'll spend all my day with Sonny Montgomery, let's leave it at that.

**Hobbs:** It's kind of a catch-22 that as leadership takes—with the loss of comity and bipartisanship, then leadership looking for an outcome takes more control. We certainly did this with Newt and DeLay. We took more control of the process. But there was still a lot of regular order. But when you lose the ability to work together in committee and on various initiatives to drive that process, then leadership has to drive an outcome. It probably tends to become more partisan because look, if you guys on the Judiciary Committee can't figure it out in some kind of bipartisan way, we're going to look stupid if we don't pass the Violence Against Women Act.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** So you know what? We're going to do it.

**Howard:** We'll have to do it for you.

**Hobbs:** We'll do it for you.

**Riley:** What about the Senate and the gridlock there, the reliance on holds and so forth? Is that a

piece of the equation too?

**Calio:** It wasn't for the two years that I was back in the White House. I think it probably is now and Z can probably speak to it better, having spent most of his life there. But it certainly appears to be broken. I wouldn't want to work there.

**Ojakli:** It is more of a problem now, but it's still useful in some ways because it is an early vetting system. It gives you a signal where the problems are so you can start resolving those behind the scenes. It is overused. I think there has to be some way to rein it in.

The big problem we dealt with, and I think this was the beginning of partisanship, where the wheels started coming off, especially post-9/11, was judges. It was really—I won't even say the end of bipartisanship, but the beginning of the end, was when Tom Daschle went after Judge [Charles] Pickering. You look at Judge Pickering. Here was a guy who had been confirmed before. He was Trent Lott's pick, right? Trent Lott, I'm pretty sure, was his paperboy as a kid.

**Howard:** He was adamant about it.

**Ojakli:** Trent Lott was very adamant. You had Tom Daschle, the majority leader, picking a fight with the minority leader and the President. That's when I think things got out of whack in the Senate.

**Hobbs:** The other judge too.

**Ojakli:** Miguel Estrada. Those two things really changed things in the Senate and polluted the Senate in my opinion.

**Nelson:** Answer this charge: The White House screwed up the Senate by allowing Jeffords to cross the aisle.

**Ojakli:** False.

**Calio:** Well—

**Hobbs:** We could have a lot of fun at Nick's expense, but none of it would be true.

**Ojakli:** What happened?

**Hobbs:** I mean in terms of what happened.

**Calio:** It was a process that probably people should have been more on top of including me. It never occurred to me, I had actually hired as one of—We had Dirksen Lehman from Jeffords's staff because we wanted somebody to have outreach to that section on a regular basis and watch it. There had been little flare-ups of occasional rumors about his disenchantment because we wouldn't give more money to IDEA [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act] and some of the conversations we had, which did get pretty pointed, about the shape and the contours of the tax bill. But really we didn't have a clue until Olympia Snowe called Andy on that Monday and I think he defected on Thursday. It was really too late. Did we get him down to see the President?

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Calio:** It was pretty clear that he was gone. So it was too little, too late. If you're looking for responsibility, it is probably the frontline responsibility of the Legislative Affairs office, but there were a lot of people complicit in it including his own colleagues. He felt disaffected and to be really honest about it he got a better deal. Harry Reid is a smart guy. He is very transactional. He got Jeffords's button; he knew which button to finally push to get him over the top. It was a bad time for us obviously because it meant a huge change because we no longer controlled the Senate calendar, the committee hearings, what got brought to the floor. As much as you can stop things in the Senate, you're in a much better position in the majority than you are in the minority.

**Howard:** That gets overlooked a lot. Even though we lost control of the Senate early on, we still managed to get stuff done.

**Calio:** We did.

**Ojakli:** On IDEA, the Jeffords thing had been building for a while. I remember when I worked for Senator Coverdell, Coverdell was tasked by the leadership with leading on education, which was very difficult because Jeffords was the chairman of the Education Committee. So we had to tiptoe around him. Paul was very sensitive about it. It had been building up because Jeffords felt very disenfranchised in the Republican Party. Over time that just built and built.

Jeffords felt very strongly about IDEA full funding. He actually passed an amendment on the budget resolution to fully fund IDEA. There was a meeting over in Trent Lott's office where Senator [Peter] Domenici, who can be a little bit cranky at times, was sitting and didn't realize there was a Jeffords staffer in there. We were talking about different amendments and somebody asked what to do about the Jeffords amendment. Senator Domenici basically said, "Throw it over the side."

The Jeffords staffer reported back. That fueled the fire even more. Harry Reid is all the time working to pull Jeffords in. There was a last-ditch effort to get Jeffords back on board by giving him some kind of a deal on IDEA. There was a strong belief, and I believe, that he signed up to a deal. This was when all the king's horses and all the king's men in the administration basically sat down with Jeffords and worked out a deal on IDEA funding that got him almost to where he needed to be, Jeffords signed on the dotted line, and in our judgment he reneged on the deal. He decided to switch anyway. He had a lot of other influences within his office, we could go on forever on this subject, but he decided, as Nick said, he had a better deal in being the lead on the Environment and Public Works Committee. I can't remember if it was Max Baucus who stepped aside for him to be chairman. He signed on the dotted line to get almost everything he wanted on IDEA and that was all negotiated his way. But he decided to go the other way.

**Howard:** Somewhere along the way we also—he was pissed off about not being invited to the Teacher of the Year.

**Ojakli:** I think that one was fed by Pat Leahy's staff. He was added—

**Howard:** His conspiracy, "everybody is out to get me" kind of thing.

**Riley:** Were you in conversations between Jeffords and the President after all this was breaking?

**Ojakli:** The meeting with the President was one-on-one. I went up with him. I talked to Senator Jeffords a number of times when he was thinking about going over to the other side. One of my classmates from school was his press secretary. It was just the two of us sitting in the Roosevelt Room. I'll never forget, while we were waiting for Jim Jeffords to come out of the Oval. It's like, "Can you believe we're sitting here and waiting for the puff of smoke? What do you think is going to happen?" But there was no moving him.

When he came back there was an intense effort and there were a number of Senators who were all in the Vice President's ceremonial office. They were all doing their best—these were all the old bulls who were going to lose their committee chairmanships. They all took one more run. There was [John] Warner and [Charles] Grassley and a few others. Warner came in and told me in the Vice President's other office in the Capitol, "We tried." There were people in tears, they were very emotional. They did everything they could to try to get him to stand down and stay with the party, but there was no moving him. Senator Grassley worked him hard because Grassley and Jeffords came in the class of Watergate—

**Hobbs:** In the House.

**Ojakli:** In the House, they came in together. Nobody could move him. The one thing, and Nick would be better to confirm this story, but I remember Nick and I were out on the steps when Jeffords made the switch and the President called Nick. And the President, rather than worrying necessarily about the turnover and what it meant to his agenda, asked what would happen to the staff, what would happen in turnover. He asked that we call over to the committee chairs and make sure that everybody knew that folks who were losing their jobs would have a home in the administration. I always tell that story as an indication of his character.

A lot of people would think about their agenda and what it meant to them. He thought about the people who would be out of work. It says a lot about him.

**Nelson:** Either before Jeffords or after, did you think about potential Democratic Senators to try to persuade to switch?

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Talk about that.

**Ojakli:** Zell Miller.

**Nelson:** That's what I was thinking, but I didn't want to throw a name.

**Riley:** Did you get close?

**Ojakli:** Zell Miller and Ben [Earl] Nelson at one point, but not as serious with Ben Nelson.

**Nelson:** Keep talking.

**Ojakli:** Zell Miller, after it was apparent that the party wasn't in sync with where he was—his chief of staff was our legislative director for Paul Coverdell. We were very close and I was very close to Zell Miller as the successor to Paul Coverdell. Alex Albert and I kicked it around, went back to Zell. We had a few conversations to see what he would be comfortable doing or whether he would actually be interested in coming to the administration at some point.

He was interested in entertaining but never—

**Riley:** Coming to the administration meaning that he would vacate his seat—

**Ojakli:** A new Senator would be appointed, and there was a Republican Governor.

**Riley:** I thought that was the subtext.

**Hobbs:** You would know better than I, but I always got the impression that he would be like, "I'm the President's Democrat. Anything you want I'll do it." But he couldn't bring himself to switch parties. He had been a Democrat for so long.

**Ojakli:** That's it, he couldn't do that. But what was more serious is the thought of maybe helping out in some capacity in the administration. I think that was intriguing to him to help the President, because he had a lot of respect for the President. I know that was very mutual.

**Nelson:** Who was majority leader when you talked to Miller and Nelson? Was it still Lott or was it already [William] Frist?

**Ojakli:** I'm pretty sure it was Frist.

**Hobbs:** Because Lott left but only after—

**Ojakli:** December '02.

**Nelson:** As Nick told it, Harry Reid helps put together an enticing offer for Jeffords to switch. Were you the only one talking to Miller, or was this coordinated with the Republican leadership in the Senate to again make an offer that you hoped he wouldn't refuse?

**Ojakli:** I don't think anybody from the Republican leadership was talking to Miller.

**Hobbs:** Isn't it also fair to say that Miller moved into this position that, "The Democrats don't represent me or my views anymore." So when Jeffords switched, I don't know if he had made the transformation yet. Over the next year or two it was like, "Man, this is not my party anymore, screw them."

**Ojakli:** At some point, probably '02, '03, he stopped going to the Democratic policy lunches. He'd just kind of stick on his own. I think he joked one time he didn't go so they could all talk about him in their own conversation.

**Riley:** OK, we're due for lunch. We should break anyway with Nick out.

[BREAK]

**Riley:** I want to ask a question and it is not specific to the 43rd Presidency, but it is one I hope will spark some recollections about the 43rd President and that is about the tools of the trade. How do you go about convincing somebody to adopt the President's position on something? You can take that from the most abstract all the way down to the items of preferment that you use, like Air Force One and cufflinks.

**Calio:** Starting from the most basic level it is obviously having a plan, a strategy on an issue and an objective within range and then putting a strategy and the execution of the strategy behind that, which is where I go back to the issue. We would talk about who were our natural targets for this or that particular issue, based on our knowledge of the players. To do the job the right way—this is what I always tell young people who want to be lobbyists—there is so much scut work involved if you want to do the job the right way. It certainly isn't the way it used to be with all the lunches and everything, which was great and all that. But really you had to do the work. You have to know the district, know the state, know how they voted, why they voted that way, what the crosscurrents are, religion, everything like that. It all goes into a matrix.

You look at your target list and then you start to reach out and try to provide them an education in the issue that speaks to something that they might be able to glom on to. It could be the overriding public policy, it could be it's good for your state, it could be good for your district, it is necessary because of the following national security reasons or economic reasons. Any range of things. You try to bring people along that way.

That should be underlying, hopefully, a certain amount of credibility and a constant kind of contact where you're in talking to people or in touch with people, providing them information where you're not just asking them for something. There is nothing worse—when I got to Citigroup I found that all the time, these bankers would fly into some foreign country and drop in on the government and think, *We're here for one day from New York, give us your business*. It took a little more, particularly in some of the emerging markets. That is what underlies a really good lobbying effort at any point.

Before we go on to the little preferments—how about you guys?

**Ojakli:** I'd say all of the above. You try to get inside the head of, say, the Senator, walk a mile in their shoes. What's motivating them, what is it like back in the state? Why would it be in their interest to vote with the President? I would always say, to Nick's point—this is President Obama's problem right now with his outreach—it's always good to do outreach, but you have to be consistent and keep doing it over time because you have to build trust. You can't be there just once and ask for the vote and airdrop yourself in. You have to be there over time and become the trusted source. You have to give the Senator or Congressman both sides of the issue.

“I understand where you're coming from, Senator, I understand you have this going on back at home, but here is why I think it is important for you to consider X.” You make your best case, but you make your best case in the framework of why it is in *their* interest and understanding where *they're* coming from, not necessarily try to ram it through. And, come from the

perspective that they know you, you've been around, you're not just bringing yourself there at the last minute to drop yourself in and tell them how to vote.

**Calio:** At the wholesale level you want to create an atmosphere that works in terms of the issue and why it needs to go forward. For instance on the tax cuts, where I thought we did a good job of consistently driving that message of why we needed to cut taxes. It went from the campaign, which was really "Give the money back to the American people" to "The American people need the money and, by the way, the economy needs it too because we're in a recession." Then combine that with grassroots where you have other people. You create an echo chamber for your message with constituents both in D.C. and back home and have the Members work that way. You get other Members talking to them, you bring in Cabinet members. You keep pinging from different directions depending on what the vote is and how hard it is. You have a whole bunch of different buttons you can push, and you always want to push those. If you can do favors along the way too that certainly helps.

**Ojakli:** And build them some support for the position that they can ultimately come to.

**Calio:** Support and/or cover.

**Howard:** It goes back to the strength of the relationships. It goes back to how Nick put the office together. As I said before, each one of us was a known quantity on the Hill in some respects. That goes a long way to establishing that relationship right off the bat. One of the things we used to have to do early on in the Congress was courtesy calls with Members when we didn't have anything to push. "We just want to introduce ourselves; we're going to work together." We did that for Republicans and Democrats. It takes a long time to build that kind of relationship so that when you get to the point where you really need their vote, if there is a benefit of the doubt in their mind they're inclined to give it to you.

It works the other way around too. Part of the job inside the White House with a Legislative Affairs operation is to try to tailor the policy or position so that it is in sync with wherever your base of support is on the Hill already. We spent a lot of time in internal meetings in the White House where we'd say, "We can go ahead with this proposal or this idea, but it is going to land with a thud on the Hill. Or we can tailor it, change some features, not get away from the basic principles or anything like that, but if we do that and create some ownership with some people on the Hill we'll get a much more receptive audience."

**Calio:** And it is very much back and forth. Sometimes it is a matter of only providing as much information as you need to for that particular moment to bring somebody a little bit further this way. "Tell them we're not going to do this" and then at the other end it is, "You tell them we're going to do this; they have to do this." It is constantly trying to bring people toward a position where you get your magic number and you have a policy that is still in sync with what you wanted to accomplish to begin with.

**Hobbs:** There are different motivations and motivators. Some people want to be all philosophical and you have to explain why this policy is the right policy. Some want earmarks and executive decisions or campaign events, trips on Air Force One or things like that. As Jack said, I think we all were a known quantity. You build up a trust. You go to somebody and say,

“You need to vote for this, this is the right thing. I know the travails you’ve been through and you do too. I’ve never led you down the wrong path. You need to do this.”

**Howard:** And you have to have enough judgment to know there are some votes, some Members that it’s not even worth asking because you know they can’t get there. If they were to get there it would put them in a bad position, so you just go find another target.

**Riley:** So you’re not starting with 535 every time.

**Calio:** No. Depending on which Congress it was and which President it was, there were times you would start with a legitimate target list of 30 to 90 Democrats, in some cases more, that’s in the House. In the Senate, I think I mentioned earlier or I might have said this at dinner last night, for the tax bill and the budget we started with a target list in the Senate of probably 15 to 18 Democrats who we worked assiduously. We’d hit them, they’d hit them, the President had them at meetings, the Vice President would go in to talk to them. On that, particularly on the budget as it went down the line, we would just sit in the ceremonial office.

The Vice President has two offices. He has the ceremonial office right off the floor and then across the hallway he has his “working office,” which was actually our office. He rarely went in there. We’d sit there and bring Members in. We’d bring them in groups and talk to them based on what was said. Then we’d go out and try to round up individual Members and—I can’t remember where I was going with that.

**Hobbs:** My macro theory is you play the cards you’re dealt. In the House you’re dealt a majority and the House is going to work one way. In the Senate if it is 50-50 you have a different audience. Two years later it was 55. Then clearly you didn’t go looking for 20, you went looking for six. So it differs by the time.

**Ojakli:** Some of the Senators I would just keep asking for their vote but in a nice way, not really pushing. There were some I knew would never vote with us, but I knew there was one time that they might. Over time it built up. Like I would think of Senator [Lincoln] Chafee, with whom I had a good relationship, and I thought, *If I just keep asking, at some point he’s going to do it.*

**Hobbs:** You got [Mark] Dayton or [Russell] Feingold on something.

**Ojakli:** Senator Dayton.

**Hobbs:** It was kind of out of the blue.

**Ojakli:** It was just the law of averages. You kept being respectful and listening to them and to their concerns and at some point you might get lucky.

**Calio:** In terms of the other more visible things, in terms of the Presidential chum like cufflinks, we tended to give those out before the fact to potential friendlies and then afterward as thanks to people. The trips on Air Force One, there was a range of reasons why you put people on. They needed to talk to the President, you wanted to reward them, you wanted to convince them on a particular vote.



The Kennedy Center box we used infrequently. Meetings with the President, we had Congressional hour—

**Howard:** Congressional hour, that's the best one. You have to explain that.

**Riley:** Everybody is wincing. We're getting very vivid facial expressions on "Congressional hour" and lots of laughter, so please explain.

**Calio:** You have Congressional hour. It's Members who want to bring in their constituents, they want to bring in a quilt—

**Ojakli:** Or the biggest ball of twine in America. *[laughter]*

**Calio:** You think it's a joke? You say no a lot more than you say yes, but sometimes you just have to run this through. Then it is, "What are you doing here?" We did one, these people had this quilt. It turned out to be the biggest quilt in the world, it could have covered the entire Rose Garden. It was comical the way it kept unfolding in the Oval Office. You get some really goofy things, Jimmy Quillen, oh, God.

**Howard:** I remember the first time we did a Congressional hour. I don't know if the President didn't focus on it or what, but you got a call right before our staff meeting in the morning. The President wanted to see you immediately after the staff meeting.

**Calio:** Not a good sign.

**Howard:** So Nick kicks off the staff meeting by announcing that this will probably be his last staff meeting. People's jaws drop. "Is he being fired?" We just moved on to regular business.

**Calio:** It was about the Congressional hour. He looked at it and said—

**Howard:** "What the hell are we doing?"

**Calio:** "What are we doing?" As nice as he could be, but when he wanted to, he could ping you so hard and make it so uncomfortable. That also included Congressional hour, but like bringing him up to the Republican Conference or the Democratic Caucus. Those were things that got Members' attention and they liked.

**Howard:** Went to Camp David one year.

**Calio:** Yes, took the whole leadership to Camp David, a huge, never-heard-of thing that worked out well. We tried to bring him up to the Democratic caucus and our conference.

**Howard:** I remember the Camp David thing. Every chance he got the President kept reminding the Members, "You're leaving here tomorrow at noon. Let's get clarity on that."

**Calio:** We showed a movie and had popcorn in the theater after dinner. We brought him to the retreats, got him to go to the Democratic retreat the first year. He generally didn't like doing those things that much because the same kind of people take the microphone usually and often

ask not-so-intelligent questions. The one time we really thought we had to get him to the Democratic caucus, I went in and asked. We did a Schedule Proposal. It went through. He said no. I went back and talked to him. He said, “No, I’m not doing that.” I kept standing there. He said, “What? What?” I said, “I was thinking. I could keep annoying you now or I could come back and annoy you again later.” He laughed and then said, “OK, fine, tell me again.”

I told him again, “We really need to do this.” So he said yes. Then man, we’re going up there the day the meeting was going to happen. He liked to keep the Presidential limo warm and I get warm very easily. He’s in there with Andy waiting for me, not good either. He was leaving early. I get in the car and I could just tell. Andy is like this, moving over this way. The President says, “Tell me again why I’m doing this.”

I explained. He said, “I don’t believe it. They’re going to do this, they’re going to say this, this is going to be terrible. This was a dumb idea. I don’t know why I’m doing this.” I’m breaking into a sweat. We go up there and it turned out great. There is a picture of us walking out of the Cannon building, which I didn’t realize I had done at the time. I let out the biggest sigh. I was scared to death.

He laughed, put his arm around me, and said, “I told you we should have done this, I don’t know why you were so resistant.” But those kinds of things you do.

**Hobbs:** More often than not though, he said, “I told you we *shouldn’t* have done this.”

**Calio:** That’s right. Then bringing him down for a smaller meeting with just him or just with a couple of other Members is how you bring people—they know he’s invested. Or when he makes a phone call and how you use phone calls. That was another area that when you’re the head of the office you say no a lot more than you say yes because you’re on the line, you’re involved. We need the President to call this person, and it’s not right, it’s not timely, it’s not going to produce a result. The result of that was a lot of times the President gets really lousy, crappy calls that he has to make.

In many cases the President didn’t like making calls, but man when he got on and he got on in a big way he’d be calling saying, “Who else, who else?” Like on TPA. He stayed on the phone from about eight o’clock at night until three o’clock in the morning making calls to people, running them down.

Have we missed anything?

**Howard:** Yellow Oval reception. The Yellow Oval Room.

**Calio:** Upstairs in the Residence.

**Howard:** Especially the balcony on a nice day, sitting outside, or inside, just a nice intimate reception where Members would come. That was fairly frequent.

**Hobbs:** We’d set out periods to do the whole Congress in a period or to do 300 or something. We’d have 15 to 20 down at a time.

**Calio:** He would do movies as well.

**Howard:** All pre-9/11.

**Nelson:** Why pre-9/11?

**Howard:** The movies stopped.

**Riley:** Just because of time pressure?

**Howard:** There was one movie I remember when Ted Kennedy came down, it was a documentary on President [John F.] Kennedy.

**Hobbs:** *Thirteen Days*.

**Nelson:** I wanted to ask you, 2002 being an election year and the President was extraordinarily active in raising money and campaigning. He campaigned against Daschle in South Dakota. In other words a big move was being made on the Senate that year in particular by the President. Does that affect your work with Congress?

**Calio:** [*laughing*]

**Hobbs:** When you're trying to get Ben Nelson's vote on a tax bill and you think you've almost got him there and then commercials run against him and it is kind of like, "You're killing me. You want me to help you and you're killing me."

**Calio:** If there was ever a disconnect between us and the Political Office, it was over that. We needed the votes. Usually the communication was pretty good but sometimes you'd just get whacked. You're working somebody on a vote and then we're running ads against them or we're doing a fundraiser for their opponent, which as a matter of timing was not very good.

**Ojakli:** Absolutely. Ben Nelson and Max Baucus are the two examples I'd use. It made it very difficult. Any number of times Ben Nelson, who is a good friend, would just rip my head off about what was going on. "You tell folks back at the White House—"

**Riley:** When you say, "Political Office," that's Karl?

**Calio:** Karl and Ken Mehlman. By the same token, they were such good allies of ours because when we got going—we were saying last night we all did have fun, we all worked together and everybody was pulling together and you knew that if you were down one day somebody else would pick it up. With the Political Office, I called Mehlman "Killer Elite." I'd say, "Ken, we need to get pressure on So-and-So back home." They were good. Ben kept saying one time, "God, call this off, you're trying to get my vote, all these people back home."

**Ojakli:** It was to the point with Ken and Karl, Ben Nelson would be at a Nebraska game and we'd have his best friend sitting next to him ask him a question: "So how much are you going to go for on the President's tax cut?" It would drive him nuts, all the time. It was so micro, the way we could get to various Senators. We used the political operation a lot on nominations.

I remember Chris Dodd was holding up one of our noms [nominations] and we knew he was going to be down in Miami. We called the political operation, and like a light switch they flip on a rally right outside the fundraiser and they go after Chris Dodd. They just lit up a rally outside, trying to free this nomination. They were really good. Whenever we needed them to do something or help us they were always there.

**Calio:** Baucus did get mad. He was a good friend of mine going back years, and he was extremely helpful on the tax bill in the face of a lot of pressure within his own caucus. The people who were thinking about voting with us got beaten to a pulp in their Tuesday lunches and as a general matter. Baucus hung very tough, wrote a good bill. He's a very good legislator so we were very grateful.

The story is in here, we kind of turned the other way. Somebody brought a little video camera into the signing ceremony and he got to put ads up. Then of course we ran the campaign against him, but it was cooked already. We knew. He was in great shape in Montana.

**Knott:** I have another tactical question. Earlier this morning you talked about Congressman Norwood.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** Charlie Norwood.

**Knott:** Where you basically locked him in the room and then paraded him out in front of the cameras. That strikes me as somewhat heavy-handed.

**Calio:** It didn't appear as heavy-handed as it sounds. It was just we were also engaged in good discussions and couldn't let him out of there. *[laughter]*

**Hobbs:** We wouldn't let him out, but it wasn't very heavy-handed. Just when he tried to leave we said, "You can't."

**Knott:** Is that a rare tactic, that kind of nuclear option?

**Calio:** It wasn't nuclear at the time because we were having a great time.

**Knott:** Parading him in front of the cameras.

**Calio:** They're there as you walk out—

**Hobbs:** We didn't force him, he wanted to come down. We had some Members who wouldn't come down. The President got him where he needed to be and then rather than lose the opportunity and let him talk to his staff and his colleagues on the Hill, the President took him out in front of the cameras.

**Riley:** What *are* the nuclear options? Can you recall instances where you were really bearing down on somebody or playing real hardball with any of the Members?

**Hobbs:** I can remember a few. An unnamed Member who was on Medicare prescription drugs, which was a three-hour tough vote and wasn't going there, was no, no, no. Karl called up his biggest fundraiser and said, "You're dead to me if you don't vote with us." I remember seeing him, "Are you with us?" It was like a—and he voted yes.

**Riley:** That was an extended middle finger. These visuals don't work very well on the transcript.

**Calio:** Let the record show.

**Hobbs:** As Denny Hastert would say, if you can nod, don't say it and if you can—

**Riley:** OK, you can redact your middle finger if you wish.

**Hobbs:** It was very rare but you know what, nuclear doesn't work. There might be the one time like the prescription drugs bill where it is so important, there is so much invested in it that you make a calculated judgment that OK, we're going to do nuclear, but it is the exception not the rule because nuclear will come back and haunt you.

**Calio:** Yes, haunt you.

**Hobbs:** You'll make martyrs out of people. I would say respectfully that what is going on in the Republican Conference when they take committee assignments away from people who don't help is a big mistake because all you've done is create enemies, they'll never be with you. They'll lead the charge against you. So nuclear doesn't work.

**Howard:** I totally agree with David. I remember so many times having to walk outside because I'd be so pissed about a vote. But you couldn't take it personally. Your credo had to be "live to fight another day."

**Calio:** You think about it all the time.

**Howard:** You still have the next vote.

**Calio:** It is often very unproductive. In Bush 41 Jack and I exercised what we thought was a nuclear option at one point. We took the Kennedy Center box away from somebody who used it a lot, was never ever with us but was a friend of the President's. Of course he went right to the press and the President was *really* unhappy. So it didn't work, didn't do anything.

In other cases, again you like to think about the nuclear option. There are things you can do. You have a sliding scale that you keep all the time. If you've got three people asking for the same thing and one is always supportive, who are you going to give it to?

**Howard:** There are ways to deliver the message more subtly.

**Calio:** Without any fingerprints. The ideal way to do it is, in one way or another—and I don't mean this quite the way it sounds—make their life miserable where they're denied things but have no fingerprints on them.

**Howard:** Exactly. Put some distance between the vote and whatever the—

**Riley:** But they're aware—

**Howard:** Yes, they get the message.

**Knott:** Is there a particular language that's used in terms of when you feel you've got a commitment from somebody, or is it just depending on who you're talking to at the time?

**Calio:** We counted votes on a scale of one to five. One you're with us, two you're leaning, three undecided, four leaning against, and five no. Our rule was it had to be a firm yes or a firm no; we wouldn't necessarily abide by the no's, but we would also keep after the yeses, but it had to be from a Member, it had to be face-to-face with one of us, because when you count votes you hear a lot of people say, "I think he's there, we're going to get him, he's good, he's with us" or "She's with us."

**Howard:** Or "We want the President to be successful, I really want the President to win." Well, that doesn't mean—so do we.

**Hobbs:** You'd make a great majority leader.

**Calio:** It's pretty simple language, it's yes and no.

**Knott:** I assume there might have been occasions when you thought you had a yes or no and it turned out you didn't, or is that rare?

**Calio:** That's pretty rare.

**Hobbs:** The Whip is doing a Whip list and you're double-checking or maybe doing your own, so you have this list. At the end of any tough vote there are going to be four hell-no's and 12 lean-no's and 14 undecided. After a while you can look at this list and know OK, that no is not going to vote no because he never votes no. This undecided is always going to vote no. It was rare that you had too many kind of shake hands, "So I have your vote."

**Knott:** In those rare circumstances would you follow up or is that one of the instances where you step outside and—

**Hobbs:** You mean they screwed you and lied to you?

**Nelson:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** I think you'd go to them, and Nick created this term and I'll clean it up a little but I think when you're the special, 98 percent of the job is eating crap and saying it tastes like a Fudgsicle. When you're a Deputy it is 95 percent, and when you're the Assistant you have a little more latitude. The general rule is you're always fighting for the next day but there are times, as you get more responsibility, that it is your job to say, "Hey, you lied to the President. You told us you were voting for it."

**Howard:** It is important to make sure they know.

**Ojakli:** Absolutely.

**Calio:** The reason it happens more rarely than you might think is that it is a problem for them too. We're always working in conjunction with the Whip organization in the House or the Senate. So we're all double counting, going back and forth and working on people together. If somebody comes up a yes and then switches without telling anybody, that's a double breach of trust. You have to live by your word.

**Riley:** Were there people that you dealt with who famously wouldn't stay stuck?

**Calio:** It depended on the vote. There are always people—the peregrinations some people went through—cut one hamstring and they're walking these tight little circles trying to make up their mind.

**Ojakli:** Or late voters. I can think of a couple of people who would be, "I'll be with the President if he needs me." Boy, 98 Senators having voted, here comes the pillar of strength.

**Nelson:** You mentioned earlier that you were in on the appointment, in fact close to the final say on the appointment of the legislative affairs people in all the departments. I guess any executive agency that had a legislative affairs person?

**Calio:** It only went so far. We were more focused on the Cabinet departments. Probably EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] actually.

**Nelson:** How did that work out in practice? Did you find that they were as much a part of the team as the people working with you in the White House?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Were they effective?

**Calio:** They had to report in every week.

**Howard:** We'd have meetings with them. Not only our own Legislative Affairs greater team but inviting all the Legislative Affairs people from the executive agencies. I think with one or two exceptions they were all on board.

**Calio:** Then, depending on the issue, we'd bring them in as part of the team. In Bush 41 a lot of times they were sitting out there on their own and were never asked in.

**Howard:** Or freelancing.

**Calio:** That was part of it. Want to name names?

**Howard:** No.

**Calio:** Good.

**Howard:** They're still alive.

**Hobbs:** Tommy Thompson's people at HHS [Department of Health and Human Services] were in our core team.

**Howard:** The other thing too is, if you bring them in and interview them before they get the final job, they feel some degree of allegiance to the Legislative Affairs people. So while they're trying to represent their boss, their Cabinet Secretary, you've built enough of a relationship with them so that—in my case I'd stay in touch with all the Cabinet Secretaries on a regular basis. I'd get some of them who were like, "I don't want my boss to find out about this, but you need to know what he's doing."

**Calio:** Right.

**Howard:** Then I'd factor that back in to the White House.

**Calio:** That did happen on a number of occasions. That's what I referred to very early this morning, we were able to cut it right off at the head when that was going on because if you've found out, you can't go ahead and do it.

All of this stuff, if you're doing it the right way, builds on itself. We made the Assistant Secretaries like part of our staff, showed a lot of respect. They showed a lot of respect back. It was also of benefit to their boss. Like Brenda Becker when she was working for [Donald] Evans at Commerce always knew what was going on. Evans was close enough to the President that he knew too but the Secretary would have a constant flow of information about what we were doing and how it was developing so they felt more included. And when it came time to call on them to make a call—

**Howard:** Exactly.

**Calio:** They were far more ready and felt far more part of the team.

**Howard:** It also helped to manage the overall workload. We talked about the priority issues before. The White House is going full bore on taxes, trade, and things like that. We used to use the Cabinet Secretaries to focus on those second-tier issues. "You go lay the groundwork, talk to as many people as you can, and when the time is right the White House will get engaged."

**Riley:** [Donald] Rumsfeld let you do this at the Pentagon?

**Calio:** No.

**Howard:** That was a different situation.

**Calio:** That was very different. Let me start by saying this. I think Don Rumsfeld is a great man and I like him a lot personally. He had his own very strong views and in his particular case he brought in his own Congressional Affairs person. That's the one thing as I was going through I thought didn't work in that case. It was a constant nightmare. It was Republican Members, Democratic Members complaining about the office and running roughshod. We couldn't get him



to toe the line.

**Hobbs:** I remember having a fight with him outside the halls of the Appropriations Committee on the Crusader, which is an artillery piece. The President puts out a book when he's running for election and he identifies one weapons program that he is going to cut, the Crusader. So they're marking it up. Then there is this person and they're arguing for the Crusader. It's like, "What part of this don't you get? The President of the United States doesn't want it." "Well, we think that—" We said, "No. There is a whole book. One weapons program. I don't care if you keep the weapons program and call it the Defender, but we are not funding the Crusader." That's just one of 20 examples.

**Nelson:** Did that reach the top? Did that have to be resolved—?

**Hobbs:** We got rid of the Crusader.

**Nelson:** Did that go to the Chief of Staff? Did he intervene in a situation like that?

**Calio:** Yes and no. A lot of people didn't want to engage Rumsfeld on that kind of basis. I did once early and got run over. I'm surprised I'm still standing. But yes, you had to. It was causing problems. I think we worked it out more or less over time, but the thing about Members of Congress is that they vote and you don't. They have a set of prerogatives that you have to show a certain amount of deference and respect for. When you feel that you don't need to provide them the information they're due to vote, which happened once on Iraq where we had spent a long time building up good will and briefings, and we had just a *horrible* briefing. I wasn't there but, man, the flak—

**Howard:** We heard it—

**Calio:** It was buzzing out of my pocket about what was going on. We had to go in and try to rebuild it and clean it up. Boy, did I get an earful from a bunch of Members, screaming at us.

**Howard:** The other dynamic on managing the Cabinet Secretaries and Legislative Affairs operation was that it created the image that we were all speaking with one voice on the Hill. Members are notorious for forum shopping. If they get the answer they don't want from Legislative Affairs, they'll call the Attorney General and get an answer from him. They'll just go right down the list until they get the answer they want. Then they'll use *that* on the Hill.

**Riley:** I was going to ask about the flip side. We spent a lot of time talking about your efforts up on the Hill. One of the things that we've often heard about in talking with CLs [Congressional liaisons] before is the problem of being perceived as going native. People in the White House think you're carrying water for folks on Capitol Hill. I'm wondering if this was in fact a problem for you and if so, if you remember any examples.

**Hobbs:** Yes, I think it works both ways. We all came from the Hill—here are your buddies.

**Calio:** Not all.

**Hobbs:** At least in my case. Here are your friends that you've gone through these battles with.

Then you're at the White House so you're selling the White House line. Then back at the White House they're like, "You're just trying to take care of the Hill." That is the ambulatory bridge across the constitutional divide that Nick referred to earlier. I think we found ways to manage it.

One economic person was convinced that they knew how to negotiate on the tax bill better than we did. We set up a meeting with them and Bill Thomas. Then they come back from that and if you've ever dealt with Bill Thomas, he is a very smart guy, very capable, but he has his own very strong opinions. You can tell Bill Thomas, "This person thinks A, B, and C." Then they go up there and the meeting doesn't go so well and they're like, "That was terrible, I don't know why it went so badly."

**Howard:** That's a very valid point because that's a risk, particularly for those of us who came from the Hill. You have to constantly be aware when you're inside the White House and make sure that you're advocating for the President's position as opposed to Congress's, but there is a kind of a blend there.

**Calio:** And you have to represent both sides if you're getting your job done. Trying to bring people along. It is more of a problem for some—it was never a problem for me. I'd say candidly it was a little problem for David, who had just come out of the House leadership. He was reluctant to take the job. We went out to dinner with a bunch of couples for New Year's Eve and I'm nicely beating him up at dinner about coming to the White House. We're going to Morton's in Georgetown and then we're going to Martin's Tavern waiting in line. I'm talking to him.

I remember Brenda Becker saying, "David, are you *crazy*?" But he was close to that House group because there was such a tight bond. So you have accusations going. Then people on the White House side would sometimes—but I don't think it was a huge problem. I think the way we fought it and the fact we always had a strategy about where we were going, the direction was pretty clear. With all the other activity, it was, for the most part, a baseless claim. When we were doing it, and maybe subject to it, it was because we needed to bring our side over to get to the point where we could get—

**Howard:** It was more perception. I don't mean to minimize it, but it was really more perception than anything else. I worked for Trent Lott. In the early days Lott thought I was his guy in the White House. In fact he used that. I said, "I'm not your guy. I'll help you where I can, but I'm not your advocate inside the White House. I'm now with the White House staff."

**Hobbs:** The policy process that Nick alluded to was so good from the ground up in terms of having Legislative Affairs involved that from our perspective in most instances you could explain, "That's not going to work." I think they reflected that. There were times though that people would say, "Why don't you do this?" Then I think that success—I think they started trusting us more. It's like we can't do that because So-and-So doesn't like that and that's going to hurt this. Mostly because the President got it intuitively.

I remember Zoellick saying, "Why don't we do so-and-so?" Everybody is signed off and the President said, "What do you think?" I said, "We're about to have this big vote on something else. Maybe we should wait a week." He said, "Oh, yes, good idea. Let's not do that before." He intuitively knew.

**Howard:** A big part of the job is to develop the trust inside the White House that we are representing the President. For the new White House staff, us, it just took time for people to understand that we're trying to get to a win-win for both sides.

**Ojakli:** The neat thing is the empowered way that Nick set it up, with exceptions because every once in a while somebody in the White House would go off. As David said, there would be somebody from econ or I can think of a Homeland Security person who liked to set his own strategy and then got kicked out of the leadership office. The lines were so clear and there was so much trust. You could sit in a meeting and feel like you were the translator. I'm the translator for the Hill. Because we were creatures of the Hill and we were the translators from the White House: "Here's what the President wants."

**Calio:** The lines were clear. People rarely strayed. People also suspected that Karl would be all over the place, and I think on a couple of occasions he probably was, near the end of the first two years. But it goes back to that process where we had a legislative strategy, everybody is involved and putting their two cents into the strategy. And you take it or leave it. You don't just take every suggestion. Everybody had their part of the job to do. That was very different from *any* other White House I've ever seen.

**Hobbs:** As Nick said, Andy enforced that, "Stay in your lane. That's not your lane." So we were valued that way.

**Riley:** How did you spend your time? Where were you most of the time?

**Calio:** That's a good question. People ask that a lot and I've never been able to answer it adequately. It depended on circumstances. I would split my time between the White House and the Hill. Some Assistants like to stay at the White House, which I think is a mistake. I think you very quickly lose the pulse of what is actually going on day to day, and you can't get a real feel for it. Plus I like being up there, that's the most fun in the world, particularly if you're working a vote.

I would get in every morning about 6:00 to 6:30. I had my briefing book done by a guy named Mike Conway. It had the schedule and behind the schedule were tabs for every meeting, relevant newspaper articles, everything like that. Then I'd go to senior staff meeting. Then we'd have our staff meeting. The way Andy ran the senior staff meeting and the way I tried to run our staff meeting, both were interactive. You weren't just dumping stuff out there. You'd report, but you'd discuss things as well.

Then it depended. If there were policy meetings on issues that I needed to be at, I would go to those with the appropriate people, the rest of the people from my staff who were involved. Jack covered a lot of meetings. If there were Members coming up you'd obviously be there. It was a constant back-and-forth between the Hill and the White House, depending on what was needed that day. No two days were ever the same. It is very much a judgment call. You can't be two places at once. In this particular case, where did you have to be?

For instance, if there was a meeting at the White House that you knew was going to be fairly contentious, you wanted to be there at the expense of being somewhere on the Hill. If not, and you needed to do something on the Hill, then you'd go to the Hill. But it was a lot of running

back and forth.

**Howard:** Fortunately we had a car service that would get us back and forth. From my standpoint I was in the White House. The Inside Deputy means you stay inside.

**Riley:** Tell us why you need an Inside Deputy and what the virtue is of that.

**Howard:** I don't know about the virtue. Basically, you're focused on making sure the Assistant has what he needs in terms of preparation for different meetings and things like that, what meetings he can go to, which ones he can't go to, if he can't go, who should fill in, all that sort of thing. Trying to provide as much support as possible to him.

By the same token you're trying to keep track of what is going on in the House and Senate on a real-time basis. I spent the vast majority of my day in various internal meetings, communication meetings, scheduling meetings, all sorts of things where—the Legislative Affairs input tended to drive a lot of decisions inside the White House. I had to keep up with what these guys were doing so that I could factor that into whatever internal decision making was going on. By the same token I had to stay on top of what was going on inside the White House so that I could keep these guys up to speed on who was meeting with whom, what Members are here, what internal decisions are being made. It's kind of like an internal traffic cop.

**Calio:** It is the internal traffic cop. Also, as I said, Jack is a good writer. There's a lot of paper to manage. There are the weekly reports to the President, which—he said earlier, "I got to put your name on it," so he would say anything. Harriet Miers so regularly objected to what we put and how we phrased things in the report. The President loved them because they were funny. They read really well. He did a great job with that. That was also a way for everybody to keep up with what was going on because everybody had to write up their little thing. Then Jack would compile it.

The other mechanism we used to help keep up was what we called "night notes." At the end of every day I needed to know what everybody had been doing, so these poor folks would have to write out what they had been doing all day, not in any great depth, but what the hot button items were, where they had been, what issues. Actually, Christine Ciccone, Bob Woodward in the one book—he is so convincing. I was told to talk to him. I gave him a view of the night notes and he quoted Christine about Rumsfeld, and this was after we were out of the White House. And oh, my God, somebody called me and said, "You'd best stay out of her way, she is going to kill you." I didn't even think.

But the night notes were a great mechanism to keep everybody informed about what everybody else was doing because the way we were organized also was the three deputies, we grew the number of House Special Assistants to five from the traditional four and Senate from three to four. They all had their committees and their Members who were under their jurisdiction or within their responsibility. But everybody had to keep up with everything that was going on because when things got hot we all converged on an issue, not just the person who was handling that issue.

**Riley:** Was geography the decision rule in terms of the portfolios or was it issue?

**Hobbs:** We split it up in the House two ways. One—and there was some overlap—but one by issues. Somebody wanted to do banking or education or whatever. Then we split it up in terms of Members. With the original four, everybody had about 105, 110 Members, a proportionate number of Republicans and Democrats. Then when we got the fifth person you got fewer.

**Ojakli:** We did it by committee basically and then we had special attention Members.

**Howard:** But there is a relentless stream of paperwork. Nick alluded to it, it just keeps churning through the White House and it ranges from some of the most obscure—we talked a little bit about signing statements, proclamations, all the way up to internal decision-making memos, documents, speeches, and things like that. We had to get our people to sign off on all that stuff, particularly as it relates to Congress, because the last thing you want is the President making a speech and misrepresenting what is happening on the Hill. And it never stops.

**Hobbs:** We had to sign off on a bunch of stuff that was not totally in our zone like NSC [National Security Council] stuff. It was full time. They call you on Saturday, you need to come in and sign. There's no not doing it.

**Howard:** Also you have to make sure the right Members get invited to the right meetings with the President or whomever or the right Members get included on Air Force One. You have to make a lot of decisions not to include Members. But they all carry their own significance. If you do it right it all feeds into how we're going to move the President's legislative program forward.

**Perry:** This was very much of a side point that you raised. Are you able to tell us who told you to speak to Bob Woodward?

**Calio:** Yes. I had talked to Bob about one other book and he is really such a good reporter, he just ingratiates himself. He makes you so comfortable. Woodward said, "Maybe I'll come over to your house one Saturday, we'll have coffee, we'll go to lunch, come over, drink some wine." He does that kind of thing. (I had been told by the White House Press Office that I should talk to him.) So he walks into my office at Citigroup. He starts off by saying, "So you know you're allowed to talk to me" because I can be fairly tightlipped with the press. I say, "Yes, I understand."

He says, "I've talked to everybody else." Then he says, "So on such-and-such a day you're in the Oval Office, and you tell the President—" and he quotes me. Well, the only people in the room were me, the President, and Andy. If that wasn't the clearest message—I don't want to let down my guard, because I was still guarded with him, but it sent a signal. He was writing a history of what happened in terms of the development of the war and that's how I knew who told him. I trusted both of them. I'll put that on the record: Andy and the President, I trusted them both.

**Riley:** Did he get it right?

**Calio:** Yes, I think he did.

**Riley:** His account is reliable?

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Nelson:** I can't remember the exact time, but were you still in the White House when Lott made his statement about [Strom] Thurmond and that became so controversial?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Right toward the end.

**Howard:** We talked about that last night actually.

**Nelson:** The impression we got reading about that was that the President wanted Lott out and also wanted Frist in in the aftermath. Can you talk about what you saw happening there?

**Calio:** We talked about that last night, we weren't sure that would come up. I would just say that I first met Lott when Jack was working for him in 1984. We developed a relationship over the years that became a close personal friendship. But beyond that the professional relationship that I was able to share with him and Z and that the President for those two years—Trent Lott was probably the best majority leader of all time. He was incredibly patient. We'd come up with our plan. We'd sit in these meetings with the same number of Senators every day and I'd say, "OK, let's go, we've got to come to a decision. Drop the hammer."

He would say, "Nick, the Senate is congealing." This from the guy who when he first went to the Senate his wife would call me on Sunday mornings for the first two months and say, "Could you talk to him? He hates it, doesn't know why he did it." He was miserable. But he was so good. All of a sudden we'd have the same meeting we'd had five times, six times, seven times, eight times, and he'd say, "OK, we've come to a decision. That's great."

**Ojakli:** He was great about that.

**Calio:** He gets up, everybody gets up and walks out smiling. I'm like, "That's exactly what we said yesterday." Z and I were at the Thurmond birthday party. I didn't think anything of it at the time of what he said. It was a slow time. I can't judge whether the President wanted him out and wanted Frist in. I do think there is probably somebody in the White House who did. But I'd say from a Legislative Affairs perspective we were not very pleased with what was going on because he had been so effective in helping to move the President's agenda—that first of all I didn't think it was fair what happened.

Number two, I thought it was going to have an impact on the President. I was on my way out the door too, but I thought it was going to have an impact on the President. I think it really did, by far. We were telling all the old war stories last night about being engaged with other Members of the Senate. If you recall, Harry Reid had had some difficulties before that and his caucus stuck right by him and defended him and a lot of people cut and ran pretty quickly.

**Ojakli:** They sure did.

**Calio:** The media was relentless on it. It was just not a good situation.

**Ojakli:** I'd have to put that as the top one or two most heartbreaking things I've seen.

**Nelson:** Z, maybe you're in the line of fire there because surely Senators are wanting to know what's going on here and where is the President on all this. Do they call you?

**Ojakli:** I have to go with what Nick said. I think there may have been somebody within the White House who may not have been fond of Trent Lott.

**Howard:** We internally in the White House tried to stamp it out.

**Ojakli:** We did everything we could until the day he left. We were very close to Trent Lott, to the point where I was sitting in the office with him and his team. We were trying to do everything we could to help them work it through. In the first two years, the greatest impact on the Presidency was first 9/11 but second would be Trent Lott.

**Nelson:** Really?

**Ojakli:** Because he really helped move legislation. Nick described it perfectly because he would let everything come to a boil, and he knew *exactly* the point when all the Senators had their say and then it was time to move. He did it time and time again. Even afterward—and Jack would know this much better than I—but Trent is the kind of person, he was the cheerleader, he can't help himself. Even though he was so angry at the administration, *spitting* mad afterward—

**Howard:** And hurt.

**Ojakli:** He always told me, “Now you're going to have to come to me on every single vote.” And he wasn't mad at me, but he said, “The President is going to have to ask me for every single vote.” Still when we came to tough issues like prescription drugs, he worked his head off. He worked Olympia Snowe for an hour and a half trying to get her vote. Even though he hated that bill, he told me time and time again, and still tells me, that was the worst vote he ever cast. He could have killed the bill on a budget act point of order. But he was a team player.

**Calio:** In December, whether advertent or inadvertent, the White House probably—not probably, come on—sent a signal. We were going up to Philadelphia for the faith-based event. I get on the helicopter and the President says, “We're going to have to put out a statement about Lott.” I said, “What is it going to say?” He told me and I said, “If we put that out, everybody is going to think we've just thrown him overboard.” He said, “I don't think people are going to read it that way, it's just we have to do this.” I said, “The words are there and it will be interpreted that we have thrown him overboard. Does he know about this?”

And he didn't. In one of the greatest reliefs of my life the President turns to Andy and says, “Call him before I speak.” Andy had to and did. Others may have interpreted that and gone their way because out of our office we tried to work it. I was on a phone call with 10 Senators. I brought up Harry Reid and how his caucus had stuck with him. Word was sent back that I had way overstepped my bounds. Who did I think I was?

**Nelson:** Word came back from whom?

**Calio:** From a Senator who was on the call that basically I was calling them out. It was painful.

**Howard:** It was very painful. Just to pick up on Z's point, even after all that, he still established himself initially as an informal advisor to the leadership. He continued to jump into issues and try to help strategically move things forward and work his way back into the leadership.

**Hobbs:** Yes, don't forget, he was the Minority Whip in the House and then he goes over to the Senate and inside of six years' time he is the leader.

**Calio:** Yes, became Whip after what, four?

**Hobbs:** He leaves with all that turmoil and then works himself back in four years later. It is pretty incredible.

**Nelson:** It does sound to me like this is an example where having everybody in the White House staff on the same page didn't happen.

**Calio:** We were not—Z was on the front line, he probably doesn't want to talk about it, where he got caught out telling a reporter, "No, it's not true" and then he got a call back from someone senior to you—

**Ojakli:** I was in Lott's office and they asked me to rebut a reporter who asked about White House involvement, doing something behind the scenes against Senator Lott. I said, "Absolutely false. There is nobody involved." I was going to be quoted as a senior White House source. The reporter was good with it and wasn't going to run the story. Then about a half hour later the reporter called back and had somebody more senior who confirmed the story.

**Knott:** Might this be an example of where perhaps you all were seen as a little bit captive, whereas the political folks in the White House were thinking of the damage that—it was quickly turned into—

**Calio:** That's right. That's a very good question.

**Howard:** Something to that.

**Calio:** That's very good insight and the answer is probably yes.

**Howard:** By whoever was putting those thoughts into the President's head.

**Nelson:** But then you have to start over, right? Because Frist then *is* the leader and—

**Calio:** [REDACTED]

**Riley:** [REDACTED] D

**Calio:** [REDACTED] I thought that Bill Frist would not be an effective majority leader. Take patients' bill of rights. He was going to be the big player and all he did, he consistently sent Susan Collins and Judd Gregg out



of the room because he was not a good listener and he couldn't read the other Members. I just don't think for the most part he was particularly effective. You guys could judge better than I could.

**Howard:** No, he wasn't. Lott brought all that kind of institutional memory and experience and leadership. He was the Senate Whip, and he put all that to use as Senate majority leader.

**Calio:** When he was Whip he created the modern vote-counting system that we use. It required detailed knowledge of every Member and their district and how to read them. He knew that about every Member, where they were, where they had been, what was on their mind.

**Howard:** Right.

**Calio:** You just don't get that overnight and if you want to get it overnight you really have to work at it. You have to realize that it is something you need.

**Howard:** Frist just didn't have the experience. I'm not passing judgment at all; you can't do on-the-job training in the job.

**Nelson:** Surgeons aren't known for patient listening. *[laughter]*

**Howard:** That's a very good point.

**Knott:** How did the President react? Do you recall when you told him that he will rue the day?

**Calio:** Not a bad reaction. The President liked Trent a lot and they are good personal friends today; they stay in touch.

**Howard:** Trent, having been leader, knew the right time to call and the right Members to call. So they continued to have a relationship even when he wasn't leader. He provided insight.

**Perry:** I have a question about media. Every now and then as a related point to another story you've mentioned media, but media and communications, how did you use it or did you use it to put your points out?

**Calio:** Absolutely. If you were to read some of our issue briefs, a lot of them are heavy in what we need to do with the media and communications and the message we need to drive and how we need to drive it. We had really good communications people inside the White House. I keep getting back to that process. When you're trying to move an issue, there were all these multifaceted parts moving together. It's not like we built a legislative strategy without thinking about communications or politics or the Political Office or the Intergovernmental Affairs Office. It was put together like that.

Most of the time we took the view that they knew their trade a lot better than we did. Z is the master at the press behind the scenes. But, yes, of course we did that. It goes back to that point about creating the atmospheric, about the need for a tax cut, the President is trying to push this for the middle class, it's going to be better for the economy and jobs and all that. It is that large kind of thing. That message gets sent again at a retail level and it also gets made at a wholesale

level, in speeches, in events.

**Ojakli:** What we'd do a lot in the Senate is before the policy lunches on Tuesday we'd make sure that the press corps would have the right questions for Senator Daschle. When he came out and did a stakeout right after the lunch, we'd provide reporters a line of questions to ask him. Also afterward they'd come up and do a little bit of a backgrounder after hearing what Senator Daschle had to say.

The other thing during that period, particularly when the Senate Democrats were holding up our nominations, we'd use Ari [Fleischer] at the beginning of his morning briefing. He was good about always mentioning, especially with national security nominees, that "The President wants his nominees confirmed and we're asking the Senate to move them quickly." He'd say something about, "We have five people at DoD [Department of Defense], six people at State Department, this critical person at Treasury." It was helpful with some of the pressure. We'd do some of that stuff.

**Nelson:** That was becoming a big part of the job, wasn't it? In the past you probably could almost take for granted sending down nominations, especially for executive branch positions and then having to work them instead of—

**Ojakli:** It was an increasing time hole. Even worse, Senator Daschle would, which is fairly unprecedented, send the nominations back at the end of the recess period. It was a pain in the neck because you'd have to resubmit all the paperwork at the beginning of the new session. So we spent a lot of time and there was a lot of wheeling and dealing to try to get your nominees cleared on the last day, otherwise they'd be sitting there languishing and the positions open.

**Howard:** There is an internal process too. It is not only the time you spend on the Hill, but then there is the time trying to align all the elements inside the White House. It could be what they're shaking you down for, a commitment on a policy matter that you don't want to make, dollars that aren't forthcoming, some philosophic—how many noms did we get for Greg Jaczko at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Tradeoffs. Having to go internally and say, "This is Harry Reid's guy and we're not going to get any noms done until we do. We're going to give it to him today for 50, we're going to give it to him a month from now for 50, three months from now for 50, but we're not going to get anybody done until Greg Jaczko is on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission."

Then that process going through the White House with PPO [Presidential Personnel Office] and Karl and other people who would say, "No, we can't."

**Calio:** Alberto [Gonzales].

**Howard:** Then it was kind of like, "Great, we won't do any noms until you give in."

**Ojakli:** One time we had about 30, 35 nominees that Harry Reid was holding up. It was over money that had to come out of OMB for some project in Nevada. We finally got it through Mitch Daniels. This is like 12:30 at night. He agreed to it. It wasn't enough for Harry Reid; he wanted a receipt. I said, "Where the hell am I going to get a receipt for \$400 million at 12:30 in the

morning?”

We called over to OMB and sure enough somebody was there and they had OMB stationery and \$400 million for this project. The nominees were free.

**Nelson:** Was it just the leadership that was doing this or had every Senator—

**Howard:** Every Senator. There were the usual suspects, but it started mushrooming. More and more started looking at holding to get something.

**Hobbs:** It’s like earmarks, they start small and then they explode.

**Nelson:** Time to talk about 9/11, are we ready for that?

**Riley:** Can each of you tell us where you were?

**Calio:** I think probably all of us remember it in vivid detail. I missed the senior staff meeting and my own staff meeting that morning because I had had a knee operation 10 days before. So I went to the doctor, got my knee examined, and then my allergist, whom I hadn’t seen in forever, was upstairs so I thought, *While I’m here, I’ll do that*. I walked in and the receptionist had this little black-and-white TV and said, “Oh, Mr. Calio, you’ll be interested in this.”

I told these guys last night, I still have no idea why she said that to me. She said, “A plane flew into the World Trade Center.” I just turned around and walked out. I went back to the White House. As we pulled up to the back gate—there is a back gate, then another gate that you had to go through—there were uniformed Secret Service agents. It looked like they were chasing tourists and waving them. I said, “Boy, that’s strange.” Meanwhile I’m thinking it’s a gorgeous day, it’s the Congressional picnic, we’re finally doing an outdoor event where it’s not going to rain or be 400 degrees. That was all great.

As I was pulling up to the second gate I saw these very large men all dressed in black with very large weapons, and I get a call on my cell phone and it’s Andy. He says, “Nick, where are you?” I said, “I’m on my way into the White House.” He said, “You have a decision to make.” I said, “Looking around, Andy, I don’t think there’s any decision at all. We cancel.” I knew exactly what he was talking about. “I think we probably have to cancel, right?” He said, “I think that’s a good decision.”

Then I went inside and a bunch of staff people were coming downstairs because they were evacuating everybody to the basement, to the White House Mess.

**Nelson:** Was this based on one plane or after two?

**Calio:** This was after two.

**Perry:** How did you find out about that?

**Calio:** Going into the White House. I’ll probably be a little fuzzy on the time but I’m pretty sure it was after two. When I found out what was going on I started to go upstairs because I wasn’t

convinced that these (my) guys wouldn't be up there doing photocopies or whatever else they were doing, thinking they needed to get the work done. Then I went downstairs. A week before that I had been given a classified briefing on reopening Pennsylvania Avenue because I was a vocal advocate, too vocal for the Secret Service, about reopening it. They gave me the briefing on the vulnerabilities. I changed my mind pretty darn quick out of self-interest.

Carl Truscott was there with Hector Irastorza, who was head of administration. Carl was the head of the President's detail, but he was actually in Washington. I said, "What are we doing?" He said, "We're getting everybody down here." I said, "Carl, based on that briefing last week, are we just going to do this so more crap can fall on us?" So we made the decision to evacuate and everybody went out to West Executive Ave. (between the White House and Old EOB [Eisenhower Executive Office Building]) and was going up, and I'm sure you have all seen the tapes. Everybody was going out and then all of a sudden the agents started to yell, "Everybody run! Don't walk, run. Women, take off your shoes and run!"

**Howard:** They were swearing at them, the women, "Take off your goddamn shoes and run!"

**Calio:** In my own moment of vanity I was running and limping terribly. I saw the cameras. If you look at the videotape I'm the only one walking, everybody else is running. Then we cleared out. They had told us first to go over by the Blair House. I told our staff and everybody else, "Take off your passes."

You know, you react to things and you don't know why you did it. Why was I telling people to take their passes off? I said to go all the way to H Street. Of course everybody is trying to call and there was no cell phone service. There is a restaurant right down the block called Equinox and I knew the owner and chef. I went in there and said, "Can I use your phone?" which I did to call into the White House. Not much happened. I'm a little fuzzy on this, but then we split ourselves up and went to my old office at 1350 I Street and then across the street at 1401 I Street to try to at least be somewhere we had phones and some level of contact.

We all then went over to 1401 to the Chrysler office because there were other White House people there and better communications. At one point, we went up on the roof to look at what was going on. It was a mob scene, people trying to get out of town. There was a Clinton administration person, Tim Keating, who was representing Chrysler at the time. He had been in Clinton during Oklahoma City. We started to do a checklist of everything we needed to think about. This is still on limited information although there were TVs on at the time. So we got a checklist, we've got to contact X, Y, and Z and do this. We've got to be thinking about all these different things that we could do, flying totally blind. Then after, I don't know how long it was, word got to us that five of us were supposed to go downstairs. We would be picked up and taken over to the White House. It was me, John Bridgeland, Larry Lindsey, I think Josh Bolten, and if I had one of those pictures in front of me I could remember who was the fifth.

We went down to the PEOC [Presidential Emergency Operations Center]. The Vice President was there, Condi was there, Norm Mineta was there, which was remarkable. He was working two phones and had a screen, which I am now much more familiar with, with about 7,000 dots on it, and he was calling down the planes.

I should say when we came downstairs, which may have been two hours later, to be taken back to the White House they sent three guys to walk us over. You could have stacked me twice to be as big as these guys. We went back over there and there was all this activity, but the town had cleared out totally. There was yellow tape everywhere. The White House was totally empty. So we were down there and we were figuring out more to do.

The Vice President was there. Nobody knew where the Members of Congress were. There is a system in place that certain of the leadership get scooped up in any kind of emergency like that and taken to an undisclosed location, which we all became intimately familiar with over time since one of us had to be there every day.

**Riley:** Did you know about that in advance or you came to learn about it subsequently?

**Calio:** I came to learn about it subsequently.

**Hobbs:** Yes, we didn't know about it.

**Calio:** So then we were sitting down figuring out what was going on. Part of that was where was the President and when should the President come back? What kind of reports were we getting in? I was able to find out because I had somebody's phone number, one of the Assistant Sergeants at Arms in the House, where the Members were and where the leadership was. We arranged a phone call for the Vice President with the leadership asking them to please stay put because they were getting antsy and wanted to come back.

Found out that the other Members were mostly holed up at the Capitol Police Station at Second and D Northeast. So we went through out during the course of the day doing all this stuff and trying to—Karen was not in the office that day. She came in. We decided we needed, in the absence of the President, and talk about getting antsy, he was really antsy, we had to go out and make a statement so people would know we were on top of it and feel better.

She and maybe Dan—we wrote the statement. They went over to the Justice Department, made the public statement. Then at one point the President said, "I don't care what the Secret Service says, I don't care what you all say. I'm the President, I need to be in Washington, I'm coming back and I'm coming back now." So he came back. They let us go back to our offices, the limited number of us who were there.

We were going to have meetings the next day and I was told I could bring a maximum of three people back in so I got Jack, Kirsten Chadwick, and Bob Marsh, who was a special on the House side working with David, but he was good with Governors and the inter-government people were not to be found. I brought him in so he could make those kinds of calls. We started making calls to tell people what we thought was going on, that there would be meetings. We wrote the briefing papers for the meetings. About midnight I went with [John] Ashcroft and [Robert] Mueller, who I think was in his second day on the job if I'm not mistaken.

**Howard:** I think that's right.

**Calio:** Went up to talk to all the other Members at the Capitol police station. To the degree that it could be, it was positive in the sense that people were so concerned, wanted to know what they

could do, what was going on. We could tell them only a limited amount because we knew only a limited amount, but in between we had met with the President, we'd had a senior staff meeting to make further determinations about what we were going to do, where we were going to move the very next day, about getting all the different government agencies and departments on the same page.

We were talking before about how shrewd and intuitive the President was. One of the most remarkable things about that day is still what he said so quickly. At one point I asked him how he was doing. He said, "I'm good, I'm ready. You need to be ready; we all need to be ready." He told us all, "We're at war. It's a different kind of war. In three weeks, or four weeks, or six weeks, rest assured, people are going to want to forget about this. They're going to watch the World Series; they're going to want to watch football games. They're not going to want to think about this. We're going to have to stay on it. We're going to have to keep harping on it and we're going to have to watch because our number-one job is to make the United States and its citizens secure."

He did his TV address that night. I got home at 3:30 A.M., back at 5:30 A.M. to the White House. I told Jack last night, I hadn't watched any TV—we were too busy to watch TV. That's when it really struck home, when it happened. My son was at Gonzaga High School at the time, which is right there near the Capitol. I had no way of communicating with my wife or anybody else. So I gave one of my former partners a note and said, "You've got to go get Nick out of there for me." Which they did. My daughter was at Gettysburg [College], so finally, I guess it was four o'clock, my wife had *no* idea where I was and I was able to get on a landline and call her.

If you ever have any doubt, if you like big government, you don't like big government, it doesn't matter, but what started to happen very quickly, based on the President's direction, was you'd see the arms of the federal government coming together. And he said, "Kick down the doors, if anybody is stalling, anything bureaucratic. Our job is to get this done." For the life of me I can't remember the name of that group Josh Bolten headed, but it had all the relevant Cabinet Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, certain people from the White House, trying to figure out what we were going to do and how we were going to do it.

The next day we started with the meetings. This gets relevant pretty quickly. All these plans for the [USA] PATRIOT Act [Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act of 2001], money for New York, money for Pennsylvania. Figures were being bandied about, \$20 billion for New York was the right money. So we're in the Oval Office with Senators [Charles] Schumer and [Hillary] Clinton. The President is being very comforting, they're being very comforting back and forth. He talks about, "We're going to do \$20 billion." I can't remember which one of the Senators said, "Mr. President, I'm told we're going to need \$40 billion." The President said, "You have it." Just like that.

So we went out and met with the New York and Connecticut and Pennsylvania delegations—

**Howard:** New Jersey.

**Hobbs:** And Virginia.

**Calio:** Yes, the room was packed. Had a very good meeting. Things sprang forward from there. It was like there was no night, there was no day. The \$40 billion became relevant because by Thursday, the night before we were flying up to New York to visit Ground Zero, I was at Gonzaga for Parents' Night. George Tenet was there as well. He got called, I got called. We had to go back. A meeting had been going on for an hour and a half in Hastert's conference room, and Don Nichols and Phil Gramm were blowing things up on the Senate floor insisting that no, the President only said \$20 billion, he meant \$20 billion.

I came in, I'm listening to this. I said, "I think it is \$40 billion." They got Mitch Daniels to come up. Mitch was saying \$20 billion. This went on for hours. Bob Byrd was there. I'm listening, because I don't want to cause too much of a ruckus. Finally, after I don't know how many hours but it was pretty early morning, I walked up and whispered to the Speaker, "We need to talk privately." He said, "Nick, the discussion is going on." I said, "We need to talk." We go in his office. I said, "Denny, I don't want to get in trouble with anybody and I really don't want to blow anybody up, but the President specifically said \$40 billion." So he called Daniels in and I said, "Mitch, the President told us \$40 billion." The President didn't just say it at the meeting. They didn't want to put all the money out there.

Things progressed from there and we got over that but I don't know, you guys, you had different experiences that day.

**Ojakli:** I was at your regular staff meeting and probably Jack ran it.

**Howard:** Actually, I forgot about this until we talked about it last night, but I must have gone to senior staff that morning because you weren't there and then ran our staff meeting. I was on the way back from that, it was over close to nine o'clock or so. Looked up at the TV, saw the towers burning. Thought, *Wow, there must have been some kind of accident.*

**Ojakli:** We had the Peace Corps nominee in our office, Gaddi Vasquez. He had just had quadruple bypass surgery and I remember thinking, *Please, dear Lord, don't let anything happen to him.* After the first plane hit we were all watching—we heard that right after the staff meeting and we went back to the office where we had Gaddi Vasquez. Then the second plane hit. I was on the phone with Dave Hoppe, the minority leader's chief of staff. We were talking about how the recommendation was obviously going to be to call off the Congressional barbecue. Then I got on the phone with Mark Childress, the main go-to guy for Senator Daschle, majority leader. He was standing next to Senator Daschle.

At that point Secret Service were coming in. I was one of the idiots still at his desk, thinking it's just a precaution that they're evacuating the White House.

**Howard:** We thought—at least I thought at the time—this is still not a Washington, D.C., event.

**Ojakli:** Right.

**Howard:** This is still a New York City thing.

**Ojakli:** I'm just gathering stuff because I think I'm going to read—

**Perry:** You didn't feel threatened?

**Ojakli:** No, I just figure I'm going to read on the sidewalk or right by my car or do stuff in the car while they sort things out and then let us back in. As I'm talking to Childress, Secret Service again says, "You have to get out of here." So he says to Senator Daschle, "Sir, they're evacuating the White House right now." They had no plans at the Capitol, they had no idea what to do. Afterward it created a big deal at the Capitol that they had no plan.

They started moving in the Capitol. Finally Secret Service came in. I didn't even know where they had these guns, but they had these big guns.

**Calio:** The wall opened up.

**Ojakli:** The wall opened up and guns came out and they said, "Sir, get out now." So we all started going out. We went to the same building, 1350 I Street. We started there. Then we went to the hotel next door and then we wound up going up to Christal's [West] house, David's assistant at the time. There were probably six, seven of us maybe?

**Hobbs:** More, maybe ten or 15.

**Ojakli:** It was a whole group of us from the House and Senate. We all hooked up there. We watched and made phone calls and checked in with the rest of the team. Then I think we left and went our separate ways a little later in the afternoon.

**Hobbs:** Yes. Our staff meeting, I first went walking past—there's a TV right at the press room when you're coming to the West Wing to go through the Rose Garden. I think several of us stopped at once, the second plane hit, we saw on that TV. I remember going back to the office and talking to Scott Palmer, the Speaker's chief of staff, and having the same conversation. We canceled the picnic. Then as they recounted—we knew the uniform Secret Service guards outside because we'd see them 10 times a day.

They came back. Again, unlike anything you're ever taught, it's like, "RUN, RUN, RUN!" So we all ran. We stopped right at the old Riggs Bank across the street from the White House. It was this beautiful morning. We kind of caught our breath and we're like, "What should we do?" Then I think you could see the smoke from the Pentagon coming and it dawned on us, "We're still pretty close to the White House." So we moved into that hotel—

**Calio:** Hilton Garden Inn.

**Hobbs:** They had a big TV and we watched it on TV. Then we all hoofed it to Dupont Circle.

**Calio:** The turn of events and how quickly things turned around with the address, and right away there was an agenda. The aid bill, the Patriot Act, all these meetings with Members doing not just a lot of outreach but a lot of planning, taking in views, having negotiations. The leadership of both sides was in lockstep with the White House. I like to say bipartisanship is a garden that needs a lot of tending because as we started to move down the line, the rank and file started to get really restless.



The Democratic leadership was being accused of giving the White House and the Republicans everything they wanted. The Republican leadership was being accused of giving the Democrats and the White House everything they wanted, and we were being accused by both sides of taking everything we wanted or giving away too much. Things started to fray around the edges, but it was an extraordinarily productive time because people came together, for obviously very good reasons, and drove some controversial legislation through. That led to the stimulus in December—

**Howard:** There was a period there where we couldn't write legislation fast enough and get it passed by the Congress.

Just to go back to the day itself in terms of color commentary, I remember being in the West Wing that morning. There was no internal alarm system. The message to gather in the Mess was delivered by a Secret Service agent who was literally going door to door saying, "They," whoever they are, "want you to gather in the Mess." I recall thinking, *That's kind of odd. This is a New York City thing. Why are they going to do that?*

So we all went down to the Mess and sat there. They had a big-screen TV and the next thing you know another agent stuck her head in the door, "Now you have to evacuate." Just the way my mind works I guess; I stopped and got a cup of coffee on the way out.

**Calio:** What's wrong with that?

**Howard:** By that point—

**Calio:** After you ran, did you stop and have a smoke?

**Howard:** I had this bad notion this was going to be a long day and I wasn't going to go through it caffeine deprived. I was running out of the West Wing—I remember the TV cameras. I remember this thought flashing through my mind, *This could be the last my kids see of me, but at least they know I've had a cup of coffee.* We all just milled around Lafayette Square trying to figure out what to do. We had no plan.

**Calio:** Some people were very calm; other people were hysterical.

**Howard:** I remember going back in the White House that night, and it was really eerie because we were the only ones there for the most part. I remember Karen was walking around yelling out, "Hello? Is anybody here?"

We were putting briefing papers together. We talked about the paperwork process, that didn't stop. You would think if there were any extenuating circumstances under which you didn't have to fill out forms and paperwork that would be it.

**Calio:** Like the President really needed talking points.

**Howard:** One of the sections was, "Purpose of the meeting." Well, the purpose is to talk about the terrorist attack. But the thing that struck me in terms of the atmosphere, and Nick put it very well in terms of the day itself, it was kind of a blur. But it was the aftermath. It was those days

and weeks afterward when you weren't quite sure whether there was going to be another attack. This is where some of the pressure got to people.

For one reason or another, our people had to come to work in the middle of other Secret Service people and security people dressed in biological warfare outfits. A couple of the people from the East Wing called over to me, a little rattled. "We don't have biological warfare suits, should we have them?"

**Calio:** The 13 assistants all got gas masks and stuff, which, OK, great.

**Howard:** We went through that whole thing too with the Cipro.

**Ojakli:** We had the anthrax incidents. Some of us who practically lived in the Breaux office, we were right next to Daschle's office, which received an anthrax-laced letter.

**Calio:** I happened to be in Daschle's office, we got on Cipro. You know, John Angell is still impaired. He worked for Max Baucus at the time. It totally screwed up his joints, he walks with a cane still.

**Perry:** The side effects of the Cipro.

**Riley:** The Cipro did it, not the anthrax.

**Howard:** People were on edge and the younger people in particular were kind of rattled by the whole atmosphere. There were a couple of times we looked out the windows and we'd see the people in the Old Executive Office Building were evacuating. They were running out in the street, and nobody had told *us* to evacuate. But it turned out to be a false alarm. For some reason the word got started in the Old Executive Office Building that they needed to evacuate. Our people looked across and said, "Didn't anybody tell us to evacuate?"

**Ojakli:** Jack, remember the trip to New York?

**Howard:** Oh, yes.

**Ojakli:** Jack and I were with the Members with the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut delegation to New York.

**Calio:** That was the 14th.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Calio:** Friday. There was a memorial service at the National Cathedral and then we went up to New York—

**Hobbs:** Three planes? Two planes at least.

**Riley:** That's the day the President went up or is that the day after?

**Ojakli:** That was the day the President went up.

**Calio:** That was the bullhorn day. We went up and you could—We were on helicopters, actually, I thought. No?

**Ojakli:** I was on a plane.

**Hobbs:** We were on a plane, like a transport.

**Ojakli:** We had a bunch of Members with us.

**Hobbs:** There had been a meeting and we couldn't get everybody on one plane so the President said, "We'll take two planes."

**Calio:** We flew into New Jersey, right?

**Hobbs:** I don't know.

**Calio:** We flew into New Jersey.

**Howard:** You flew into New Jersey and then you took helicopters from New Jersey.

**Calio:** That's what it was. That's the only thing that makes sense.

**Howard:** We did LaGuardia.

**Calio:** The smell was so unbelievable, it was like you were sitting inside an electrical fire, and that was from New Jersey.

**Howard:** Yes, smoke was still coming up out of the ruins.

**Calio:** When we got there the streets were covered, there was still this much ash and the devastation was incredible. There were all these crowds. I remember Bob Marsh literally picking up a Member from New Jersey who is a good friend of mine, and putting him back behind the rope line and saying, "Now you *stay there*."

**Howard:** Keep the Members out of the way.

**Calio:** The President got up, the whole fire truck thing. Then he wanted to go visit with the victims' families. Typically, Curt [Wayne Curtis] Weldon, he was big with the firefighters. He was trying to go with the President, "Who did we think we were." He told me he was going to have my job. Who did I think I was, keeping him out? "Those firefighters would want me in the meeting." I told him, "You can talk all you want, I wouldn't talk to the President about this right now."

The President stayed three hours with the families. I tell you, he was just—from what I understood he went person to person until he saw everybody and talked to everybody.

We flew home really late. He went directly to Camp David. It was quite a day. That whole period, there were more things going on at one time with more players and fewer impediments to doing something than ever.

**Hobbs:** There was a real spirit of bipartisanship. You remember the scene when they came together and sang “God Bless America” on the steps. I can remember a lot of meetings in Hastert’s conference room, again bicameral, bipartisan, where we did a lot of issues. So that spirit of comity, of working together, bipartisanship, lasted a good month or so. Then it started to fade.

**Nelson:** Did bipartisanship simply mean Democrats in Congress going along with what the President wanted?

**Calio:** No, that was the charge and the charge from the other side was Republicans just going along with what the Democrats wanted so we could get this stuff done because the President wanted it done. My view always was, if you’re getting hit from all sides like that, you’re probably doing something right. Seriously.

**Hobbs:** It was probably a little of both.

**Calio:** Compromise, right.

**Hobbs:** The Republicans swallowing \$40 billion that they didn’t want to, Democrats swallowing—

**Calio:** The Patriot Act.

**Hobbs:** I was going to say provisions of the Patriot Act that they’d been opposed to and the leadership on both sides basically forcing it through.

**Ojakli:** I think on things like the Patriot Act—and this was indicative of the time period—the Democrats were fine with the President having the tools, they just didn’t think he’d use them. They were fine with a lot of these tools. If you look at some of the other pieces of legislation, I just don’t think they thought he would use all the tools.

**Nelson:** I’m not sure I understand what you mean.

**Ojakli:** All of the provisions of the Patriot Act.

**Perry:** The powers and authority, they weren’t worried that he would use them?

**Ojakli:** They went along. There were some concessions within the Patriot Act. I thought it was an incredible piece of legislation to have Hatch and Leahy on the same page and have something go 99 to 1.

**Riley:** I want to dig into that a little bit, but the first formal action would have been the AUMF right? Didn’t the Authorization for Use of Military Force precede—

**Howard:** The authorization? Yes, it preceded the Patriot Act.

**Riley:** I’m wondering if I can get you to talk a little bit about the development of the authorization, who was involved and what the key issues were.

**Howard:** That was first out of the box.

**Calio:** Tim Flanigan, the deputy counsel, and me, negotiating—help me, this was 2001.

**Riley:** Patriot Act is October 26.

**Calio:** Different story the following year on Iraq.

**Riley:** The President signs the authorization on September 18, a week—

**Howard:** That fast? Really?

**Hobbs:** I think the House guys moved that quickly, it was pretty straightforward. That was the one that only Barbara Lee voted against. I can't remember exactly who wrote it, I'm sure that we played a role in it, but it moved pretty fast.

**Howard:** I think John Yoo was in the room. We had Childress in the room. I think I remember the same thing, the House did it and then we were all sitting in the room and had Flanigan, you were there, I was there, and Childress.

**Riley:** Which room?

**Howard:** Somewhere in the Capitol.

**Riley:** So you're hammering out the language up there?

**Howard:** And Daschle had some problems per Mark Childress's aide with some of the language being, in their words, "overly broad."

**Knott:** It was the joint session as well. I don't know if you want to get into that, but the President's speech—

**Nelson:** That's the 20th. The House had already passed it, did you make concessions?

**Calio:** I have to be careful; I mix up this one with the year following. I don't think we gave much and I think the House had basically pulled the rug out from under the Senate. They wanted to, if I recall correctly. Who was mad at whom about saying that they weren't going into session?

**Knott:** I think the House left and the Senate went into session. So the House was mad at the Senate.

**Calio:** Because the Senate—there was a big discussion, the two sides had agreed that they would both go into session or they would both leave because that was the smart thing to do. Then the Senate went into session after agreeing with the House, and the House bipartisan guys went nuts. So that laid the groundwork for "OK, the Senate wants this." "No."

**Hobbs:** In my opinion, his address to the nation was the best speech that he ever gave. I remember being on the floor and everybody was totally caught up in it. I remember looking up and seeing Tony Blair right above me in the gallery. I was there for six of Clinton's State of the

Union addresses and a lot of other things, but I think it was the best Presidential speech that he ever gave in terms of uniting the nation.

**Calio:** One other thing, which is just anecdotal but touching. On the 14th when we were leaving as he was done with the families, we were coming back down toward Wall Street and the streets were lined with all of these New Yorkers with candles and flags. Just remarkable. Two weeks before that he would have mostly gotten the “middle finger salute,” as he was fond of saying. It was really touching.

**Riley:** The one piece of the AUMF that I’ve heard was debated was the suggestion that the reach—

**Calio:** Could go beyond—

**Riley:** Inside the United States as well as abroad. There was a decision taken to remove that language, I think because the Senate objected to it.

**Calio:** That sounds right.

**Ojakli:** I don’t remember how it was fixed. There was something fiddled with. It started moving very fast. The resolution got a head of steam and before anybody knew it, it was done. It seemed like it was going to be put on hold a little bit in the Senate. All of a sudden it got a head of steam and moved through the Senate pretty quickly.

**Riley:** It is primarily a White House—drafted—

**Calio:** Yes.

**Riley:** —provision that Congress accepted. That’s one week, that still surprises me looking at it on the timeline.

**Perry:** Before we move to the Patriot Act, do I remember correctly watching television on 9/11 and seeing Mrs. [Laura] Bush on the Hill? Had she not gone up?

**Howard:** She was with Judd Gregg and Ted Kennedy. No Child Left Behind.

**Perry:** She was going to testify.

**Ojakli:** She was in the Russell Building.

**Perry:** Had you coordinated that?

**Ojakli:** One of our folks had.

**Perry:** When would there be a decision to bring the First Lady into that kind of work?

**Howard:** When she wanted to do it.

**Perry:** She would come to you?

**Hobbs:** Yes, at least I don't remember ever asking the First Lady to get involved in a legislative effort that she hadn't proposed first. On some of the AmeriCorps things that she was supportive of, I remember using her name and saying, "I'm going to use the two most dangerous words in Washington on you: 'Laura Bush.'" In terms of Members, "The President's spouse wants this. You have a spouse too and you know how much pressure you're going to get at home, so you need to give us this \$150 million" or something like that. I don't remember using her.

**Ojakli:** I think there might have been an element where Senator Kennedy and Senator Gregg wanted her. That's where that one came from.

**Perry:** There was also a passage in the briefing book that sometimes Members would be brought down to the White House to meet with her. Is that correct?

**Hobbs:** You know, Ralph Regula was a friend from the old days, from 41 days, but she would do some Congressional spouses' things, which sometimes, that same kind of dynamic, I think some of these Congressional spouses are like, "This is the way we're going to do it and this is how it's going to be done." The First Lady would come and say, "This is the program." They would get mad so there was some tension there as well. But I don't ever remember them asking—

**Calio:** No, neither do I.

**Perry:** That would be inaccurate then in the book.

**Riley:** Any recollections specifically about drafting or selling the Patriot Act?

**Calio:** My recollection is blurred and that's because it happened in a blur. The negotiations were going on fast and furious.

**Howard:** Around the clock.

**Calio:** Both on the Hill and at the White House. It was one of those things where, and I mean this with respect, the staff got involved in terms of really starting to nitpick certain issues.

**Riley:** This was on the Hill. When you say staff, which staff?

**Calio:** The staff that were doing the negotiations. From our point of view it was the Hill staff that was nitpicking; they may have had a different view. We brought everybody up to the White House to meet in the Roosevelt Room to try to kick start it. It eventually got there, but it just really, it was going on 24 hours a day, boom, boom, boom. Heather Wingate from our staff was heavily involved, I don't think we had anybody from the House side involved.

**Hobbs:** Henry, I think.

**Calio:** Of course.

**Ojakli:** We had a good process at the beginning. It was all moving so fast. Just as thoughts were coming out of the Justice Department in particular, you could figure out quickly what was

salable, what could be carried up to the Hill and included in a package. The other thing I remember, This is another instance where Trent Lott decided there was a moment in time when a deal needed to be done because everybody was wordsmithing and picking over the document. Everybody had one more thing they were trying to do. At the last minute, the staffs were over in the LBJ Room and they were trying—one more thing Leahy wanted to do, one more thing Specter wanted to do, one more thing for Hatch. Trent Lott called time and just wanted to move the ball along, getting everyone to closure. Got Daschle to move and say, “This is it and get it all done,” got him to move.

**Riley:** Let me pose the question more generally. The conventional portrait is the nation is attacked, the country rallies around the flag under President Bush’s direction. He is forthright and strong. The White House is proactive, pieces together the authorization, the Patriot Act, and so forth, rallies the country to the war in Afghanistan. Congress by and large is an active participant but is a following institution, “Yes, sir, Mr. President, we can only have one leader at a time.” You had this rocky period before 9/11, some accomplishments but his position had begun to deteriorate a little bit. From your perception on the inside, is that a relatively accurate picture? You already indicated that you felt it was only about a month by your account, which to me seems a little sooner than I might have thought from an outsider’s perspective, that the picture began to deteriorate, that you began to see something of a return to politics as usual.

**Calio:** I would say that Congress was an active participant. I do think that the President was providing the leadership and the direction because he had a very clear idea of what he thought needed to be done to prosecute the War on Terror, and it did all come together very fast. I think on these major national security-type issues is not where the fraying started. I think it was on more peripheral issues dealing with things like the stimulus and where Daschle initially agreed that we do something on depreciation to try to—and then started to back off because he was getting grief.

It wasn’t like a big falloff; it was on more traditional issues rather than on the things that were more centralized and related to what happened on 9/11. Think that’s right?

**Howard:** That sounds right to me.

**Hobbs:** I think that some of the Patriot—and privacy and big government, some of these issues were left meets right. If you had very liberal Senators and very conservative House Members, [Frank] Sensenbrenner, some of these issues, that’s where there was some disagreement with the mainstream and with the powers that we wanted. Again we had clear majorities of both Democrats and Republicans. But there were issues. I remember having some pretty big fights over some of those and some small disagreements in the White House too.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Could you give an example?

**Hobbs:** I could think of a couple, but I don’t think they’re suitable for print.

**Riley:** You can always take them out.



**Nelson:** Nick, can you—?

**Calio:** No. I was not informed by my staff. *[laughter]*

**Nelson:** I should have thought of this before but it is a September 14th question. Did you personally witness the bullhorn moment?

**Calio:** I was about this distance.

**Nelson:** What did you see at the time, before it became an iconic moment? How did it come about?

**Calio:** The President wanted to say something to all the assembled firefighters and first responders, and we were looking for a place to do it. I don't know who saw it—

**Howard:** It was so spontaneous. I saw the whole thing.

**Calio:** He had that jacket on—

**Howard:** Karl went to find a bullhorn because the President wanted to say something, but you couldn't hear him. He got the bullhorn and I remember standing there thinking, *I can't hear him with the bullhorn either*. For some reason the bullhorn was just not loud enough or not carrying or something like that. That's when one of the firefighters—

**Ojakli:** There were these firefighters sitting on a truck, three of them across—

**Howard:** Yes, off in the distance saying, "We can't hear you." That's when the President, for some reason all of a sudden you *could* hear him.

**Ojakli:** He was fiddling with it, he tried it and then it was the second time because he tried it and one of them yelled, "George, we can't hear you." He's fiddling with it and then it was the second time. It was so spontaneous it sent chills down your spine. I remember on the bus ride back to the airport, I was sitting next to Anthony Weiner and he said, "Boy, that just sent chills down my spine." That was one unbelievable moment.

**Calio:** It did, it really did.

**Ojakli:** All of them were talking about it.

**Howard:** I couldn't hear him either and I was 20 feet away from him.

**Calio:** There was that older firefighter up there. "We can't hear you." What did he yell back—

**Howard:** "They're all going to hear us."

**Perry:** "I can hear you," he said.

**Nelson:** Did you think at first that this was turning into a disaster? That the President was trying to speak and there were firefighters shouting at him, that things might spiral out of control? Was

there a second before he makes the adjustment and it happens that you think, *This is going—*

**Howard:** It went so quickly. I didn't at all. I just thought he was doing the best he could with what he was working with. I didn't get the sense that it was—

**Nelson:** When it happened did you think, *This is going to be the moment of the day; this is going to be an iconic moment?*

**Calio:** Actually, yes, because it was really—you got chills.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Perry:** When they said, "We can't hear you," he said, "I can hear you."

**Hobbs:** Soon the whole world—

**Riley:** The people who did this.

**Perry:** "And soon the people who did this will hear us all."

**Howard:** I think it's because it was so spontaneous, you couldn't have scripted that out if you tried.

**Riley:** Why don't we take our five minutes now and come back and finish off our afternoon session?

[BREAK]

**Riley:** Afghanistan. Does the emergence on the national agenda of national security issues in any way diminish your service to the President or does it enhance it?

**Calio:** Oddly enough I would say it enhanced it in that it was all legislatively driven. For what he wanted to accomplish you needed legislation in many cases. We weren't providing advice on Afghanistan on what to do. It might have been a good idea actually.

**Hobbs:** I saw you studying the maps of Afghanistan.

**Calio:** These guys over here, these guys over here, and then the mountains in between. No, it did. Afghanistan was not even an issue really. We passed the resolution and it happened and everybody applauded and that was it and we moved on to other issues.

**Riley:** So most everything then was in the secondary issues where you were beginning to see some reemergence—

**Calio:** The normal political climate.

**Hobbs:** Not necessarily in the war because the country still supported getting the terrorists, but then the normal politics started taking over on other issues.

**Calio:** As a natural course, it was what the President said on 9/11, the further we got away from September 11, the more people would question what was being done to wage the War on Terror. That is an area where the President never faltered either those first two years or subsequently, at least as far as I was concerned as an outsider.

**Howard:** And with the passage of time. I don't want to say it the wrong way, but the raw emotions were starting to fade. Members of Congress started to reassert their—

**Hobbs:** They started to micromanage. In the spirit of—

**Calio:** Not to be judgmental.

**Hobbs:** Never let a good crisis go. The President wants this much more in resources, well, if you're a defense appropriator this is my opportunity.

**Ojakli:** Right.

**Hobbs:** Then the battles would be not an overall funding level for the war, then we had supplemental, year after year to pay for it. Then it became, "What are these defense supplementals—we're going to fund the troops, we're going to fund the war so what else can we put in here?"

**Howard:** Right.

**Hobbs:** Cattle relief.

**Calio:** Wasn't it a supplemental in July when we put in the airfields in Kuwait and all that stuff? Do you remember?

**Hobbs:** Probably. I remember there was a livestock one. They put in \$4 billion or \$3 billion for livestock relief.

**Nelson:** What was your view of earmarks when you were working in Legislative Affairs? Did you think of them as a tool to be used or an evil to be scourged?

**Hobbs:** Obviously Congress writes earmarks. Generically I understand their perspective, but I think the administration generally doesn't like to be told how to spend money. I remember almost the first earmark we did in the majority; it was for Jay Dickey from Arkansas. I think he got a million dollars or something, and it was almost unheard of that he got this special earmark. He was in a tough district and we needed his vote and we were trying to prop him up. Then they exploded exponentially.

In the first year or two of earmarks it was like—figuratively you could count it on one hand with fingers left over. Three, four years later Jay Dickey was back. "I don't need \$700,000; I need \$442 million for these 17 projects." Then, "If Jay Dickey is getting them, I have a tough district

too.”

**Calio:** To be more precise, it’s not that earmarks started with Jay Dickey, they had been going on for years within a certain domain of people. Bob Byrd and Dan Inouye and the appropriators, earmarks were there for a long time. It wasn’t a widespread practice. I don’t think we liked it. I can’t remember exactly what this was, but sometime early we tried to—I might be mixing up administrations. McCain was making a lot of noise about them so we cut back on all of these earmarks or programs. A number of the people were saying we should do it, got hit and it really hit the fan. In terms of did we view them as a tool, to be honest, yes. We didn’t propose a lot of them, but they came in handy as we were trying to round up votes. We were not allowed to engage in it full time because we had a very fastidious director of the Office of Management and Budget. He stood over it and guarded very carefully, but sometimes we had to and sometimes the President was willing.

**Knott:** To go back to the national security questions in the months after 9/11. To what extent did you gentlemen have to deal with any of these controversial issues that emerged later about warrantless wiretapping or enhanced interrogation techniques? Were the briefings that were given to the intelligence committees handled entirely by the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] legislative liaison?

**Calio:** A lot of those issues occurred or came to the fore after I was gone. In terms of intelligence briefings in general, depending on what the issue was, we were involved, particularly when we got to the Iraq resolution. That was our show, putting the briefings together.

**Knott:** In terms of general briefings of the intelligence committees, is that a separate—

**Calio:** That’s separate. That’s the national security apparatus.

**Hobbs:** Where I’m reading briefing materials, there was a leak and the President wanted to limit it—

**Howard:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** I think the materials reflect that Nick suggested that was a bad idea. It was later rescinded.

**Calio:** Yes, it was five days of hell. I had to go up and tell [Daniel] Bob Graham and the other key people that they were the only ones who could get briefings. There was one other condition on it. The President called me down and he was with Andy and he said, “Here’s what we’re going to do. I’m not going to have these leaks. You go tell them, deliver this message.”

I did say, and Gonzales brought down the document I was supposed to take to them—I said, “This is not going to work out very well. There is going to be a huge reaction to this.” I got my marching orders; I went and did it. The reaction was predictable. I was back and forth to offices.

**Riley:** Who were you meeting with on the Hill?

**Calio:** The heads of the Intelligence Committees.

**Howard:** It was Shelby and Graham.

**Calio:** Their staffs on the House side.

**Hobbs:** Porter Goss?

**Calio:** Porter Goss. It wasn't [Nancy] Pelosi, was it?

**Howard:** Might have been.

**Calio:** I think it was. But even worse were the people behind that who were then all going to their leadership and saying they were entitled to this; they were members of the Intelligence Committee and they couldn't be cut out like this. You know the end of the story, we had to back off.

**Howard:** Structurally, even though we didn't get into the substance a lot on the CIA briefings, we knew they were happening. Our CIA Legislative Affairs guy kept us pretty well up to speed in terms of what they were doing and with whom, things like that.

**Ojakli:** Stan Moskowitz.

**Calio:** He'd been head of the Israeli station for a while, so he knew his stuff.

**Riley:** I'm assuming that you did not have a lot of interaction with Condi Rice before 9/11?

**Calio:** Oh, no, a lot.

**Riley:** You did have a lot?

**Calio:** Yes, there was—

**Hobbs:** Andy's Anonymous. Strategy.

**Calio:** Andy's Anonymous, this meeting that nobody was supposed to know about. Strategy.

**Howard:** Staff meeting.

**Calio:** Staff meetings. A ton.

**Riley:** Beyond the general staff, are you working with her on issues related to the Hill before 9/11?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Riley:** What were the major sources of interaction with the national security apparatus before 9/11? I'll ask the same question for after 9/11.

**Calio:** I'll ask these guys to kick in. I'm trying to think what it was before but the interaction, the National Security Council legislative person was considered part of our staff, so we always knew

what they were up to, what was going on. I don't remember any kind of large-gauge issues. I can't remember, for instance, when the Millennium Challenge group got put together. We started looking at that in terms of what we were going to do in Africa.

**Howard:** I think that was '02. The only real controversy we had was the Chinese plane incident. It required a lot of briefings and things like that, explanations as to what was happening, what wasn't happening.

**Hobbs:** I remember some export control—

**Howard:** Yes, stuff would surface, the Defense Authorization bill or something like that.

**Perry:** I'm noticing in March of '02 it says the President signs the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act.

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Perry:** Roles in that particularly since we talked before about the impact fundraising has had on Members and their schedules and where they spend their time.

**Calio:** We had a lot of people really unhappy with us. So we got to play the spear-catcher in that regard. We internally argued vociferously on behalf of the folks on the Hill who didn't want the bill to happen. The President's view was that money was like water seeking cracks in plaster and people were overplaying what the impact was going to be, and we weren't going to stand in the way of it any longer because it wasn't worth it.

**Howard:** We were getting a lot of pressure from Senate Republicans in particular to issue a veto threat on the bill. The President just wouldn't do it.

**Hobbs:** Clearly when he got elected, McCain and [Russell] Feingold were pushing it right away. It gathered a pretty decent head of steam in the Senate. On the House side Chris Shays was the moderate Republican leading a group of 30 to 50 Republicans. The leadership didn't like it, whereas the leadership on the Senate Republican side didn't like it. It risked becoming the issue du jour on the domestic front while we were trying to push No Child Left Behind at the beginning.

I remember going to Chris Shays and saying, "Look, the President just got elected. It has been a long time since we've had a Republican. We're trying to do this No Child Left Behind. Clearly McCain is pushing you very hard to introduce a discharge petition on the House side to have it taken up. It risks becoming very controversial and taking us off our message on No Child Left Behind. Would you back off?"

He said he would think about it. He came back the next day and said, "OK, I'll give you until—" I can't remember the exact date but it was May something. "I promise you I won't start a discharge petition or join with McCain. I'll give you a chance to get No Child Left Behind firmly underway."

**Ojakli:** This was the sign that we were back to life as we knew it with a Democratic majority in the Senate. On 9/11 we had this blast of bipartisanship, Patriot Act and Use of Force and all the related legislation. Remember, you have May where Daschle comes in and rolls the Republicans on Patients' Bill of Rights. Then you have a lull for a bit. Then you have 9/11 and the spate of legislation. Then the beginning of 2002, right?

**Perry:** Yes.

**Ojakli:** That's when campaign finance reform starts moving and Daschle is back to driving the Senate's agenda and driving it in a way that fits what the Democrats want. So it moved back to regular order in that it matters to be the majority leader.

**Hobbs:** I think it created some tension. As Nick alluded to, we didn't have a really strong position. I don't remember threatening any vetoes.

**Calio:** No, they wanted the veto. We kept saying, "He's not going to veto it." It was one of those, "You've got to tell him he has to veto it." They weren't shy about talking to him about it either, but we mainly ran the flank in keeping people away from him on it.

**Howard:** We also got into a big internal controversy of how we were going to sign the bill.

**Calio:** Oh, boy.

**Howard:** A lot of pressure from people to have a big public signing ceremony and this, that, and the other thing. We figured we'd already rubbed enough people the wrong way by even signing the bill so we tried to do a quiet, just sign it like a regular piece of legislation. Everybody went berserk over that too.

**Ojakli:** Yes, including McCain.

**Howard:** Exactly. It was just the kind of thing you have to get over with.

**Perry:** Friday afternoon, that kind of—

**Howard:** Something like that.

**Nelson:** I know this is jumping back and forth in chronology, but I wonder, there was an issue that the President chose to deal with through executive action that was very prominent, and that was stem cell research.

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Nelson:** Was there a Congressional aspect to that in terms of what you were hearing and what maybe Congress wanted to do?

**Calio:** It was pretty clear that a lot of Members of Congress wanted to allow stem cell research.

**Howard:** They were pushing legislation on it.

**Calio:** Yes, they were pushing legislation. The parallel path on that was the internal study I would call it, a study, analysis, debate, bring in an ethicist, physicians. The President really put himself through the paces to try to come to any reasonable decision on this. This went on for months. Not because he was at all indecisive but because he wanted to make sure that he made a decision that he felt was both right and comfortable.

I think he probably made a decision that he was uncomfortable with, but he thought it was right. That's just how he operates. So yes, we were trying to fend it off on the Hill. You remember Nancy Reagan got involved and Orrin Hatch was pushing it. This was pretty well split; it was both sides of the aisle. He finally came to his conclusion about how to do it.

**Hobbs:** Jay Lefkowitz ran the process, did a good job.

**Calio:** Very good job.

**Hobbs:** That was pre-9/11, right?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Did that preempt the issue as far as Congress and the President were concerned?

**Hobbs:** I think it did. Subsequent riders in appropriation bills came up, but I don't know that it ever—

**Howard:** I think it bought us a little time.

**Hobbs:** Yes, it took a lot of the steam out of it.

**Knott:** Some of you spoke earlier about a very positive tone in the Bush White House, a fun place to work, happy place. Any noticeable changes in the tone or tenor after 9/11?

**Calio:** After 9/11 the tone was a lot more serious. We were going 24/7 literally. There was a sense of purpose. With that sense of purpose and given what had happened, it was somber.

**Howard:** It was a sobering kind of thing. We weren't joking around as much as we had been before, but we also saw what the President was doing. It was very inspirational. A lot of people in the White House, their spirits were down too.

**Ojakli:** It also bound you tighter; made you quicker. In a nine-month period you felt like you had gone through three years.

**Calio:** It was sobering because we didn't know what was going to happen. We were pretty clear that we could be a target and with all the things that were happening with anthrax and the mail and all of that, so we stopped getting mail. Email was not quite as huge as it is now. I'd get letters four months after they were sent.

**Howard:** And radiated.

**Hobbs:** Yes, they were being irradiated, so they were all brown. If someone sent you a picture it



looked like sepia from the eighteenth century.

**Howard:** The atmosphere was, like we were describing before, we had security people dressed in chemical warfare suits, biological warfare suits, all stationed around.

**Calio:** You get one of those crazy—which you got sometimes at home. I called the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] because I got a couple of letters and I couldn't figure out who they were from or what they were about. Then I left my car open on West Exec Drive and somebody put something in it, which turned out to be fairly innocent, but I took it pretty seriously because I didn't know what it was.

**Riley:** What was it?

**Calio:** It was a package from a friend who didn't bother to tell me they put it in there. You couldn't tell what it was.

**Knott:** What about changes in the President? Nick, you saw him on a fairly regular basis. Any noticeable changes in the President himself?

**Calio:** Yes, I think he was far more serious. There was a set about his face and in his eyes. I think he figured out early on what was going to happen and that somebody needed to keep driving and people were going to start not to like it as much, but it's not at all that he grew up. I don't mean it that way. I'm searching for the words I want.

**Howard:** He rose to the occasion was the way I saw it.

**Calio:** He was changed, it was just different. He was ready for it and he was so *totally* focused all the time. He certainly looked at other issues, but his main mission from that point on—

**Ojakli:** Was protecting the American people.

**Calio:** Which is always what he said, that's what a President always has to do. "This is a changed world. When people do these kinds of things we have to take measures to make sure that nothing happens again."

**Howard:** Right.

**Riley:** That may have been the President's chief mission, but when he took office in January, because there was no openly perceived threat, that could hardly have been a galvanizing mission for somebody coming into office. If you look at his public statements and the debates and so forth, you couldn't make a very accurate assessment of what most of his Presidency was going to be about because the circumstances were so different then.

**Howard:** He had no way of knowing. I don't want to go too much into this but I do remember, it wasn't like he was searching for a purpose—we started off so fast. We got the tax bill done so far; we were well underway on education. Got trade promotion authority done. I remember starting some discussion at the Deputy level. "OK, we've fulfilled our major campaign promises here, so what are we going to do next? What's the next step?"

**Calio:** If you look at the headlines on September 10, 2001, there was talk about the lockbox, Social Security being raided, a whole set of issues that almost disappeared, at least at that period of time.

**Nelson:** That was one of the issues you mentioned that he ran on, Social Security reform. Was that being teed up prior to 9/11?

**Hobbs:** No, we were putting that one off.

**Calio:** We were putting it off, he wasn't, he wanted to do it. David could really speak to this because the President would come in, he'd talk to the House leadership about it at these meetings. You'd get not a word of response.

**Howard:** Or even afterward you'd get all this bellyaching. "You've got to quit talking about Social Security."

**Calio:** So we'd relay that back. "No, this is going to be a good thing." David in particular would say, "These guys aren't going to do it, they don't want to do it, they don't want to hear about it, they don't want to talk about it." I remember this distinctly.

**Hobbs:** I was at one meeting on Medicare and he said, "This is what I want to do." I said, "They're going to hate it, they don't want to do it, they want to run from it." There was a policy meeting in the Roosevelt Room. I remember he said, "We're only here for a short time. Shouldn't we try to do the right thing?"

I remember my ears burning. I knew I was right, that they were going to hate it. The next day we had a leadership meeting and they all said, "This is terrible. No way we're doing this." But when I look back on it, it is a fond memory because of—it was his view. "We're only here for a short time, let's try to do the right thing."

**Howard:** How are you going to argue against that?

**Calio:** Pre-September 11, remember the Mexican President was coming in and we were getting very close to what we thought was a good policy on immigration that we were going to push. That went totally by the wayside for all the obvious reasons.

**Riley:** You get No Child Left Behind in January. Is there anything more you want to say about the preparation and the sales job for finally pushing that through after September 11?

**Howard:** That languished for a little bit. After the 9/11 stuff, that just meandered around. I don't think we really got back into it until toward the end.

**Calio:** November.

**Ojakli:** The Democrats felt they had seized on the issue of funding; I think it was Title I funding. They saw it at the time, it was in a time of surpluses. If there's room for tax cuts, there's room for education funding, so fully fund Title I. It's what you were saying earlier. Kennedy's number kept changing. Once we could lock in on the Title I number—And with all the other so-called

controversial issues on either side resolved, a deal could be had.

**Hobbs:** The conservatives still didn't like it. It got launched because they were so happy to have a Republican President and then I think it got finished because it was the end of this era of good feeling.

**Riley:** What caused it to rise to the top in that environment?

**Hobbs:** John Boehner had been working really hard with Kennedy in getting a conference agreement and selling it. We had a lot of wins in there.

**Calio:** Concessions.

**Hobbs:** A lot of concessions too we couldn't get.

**Ojakli:** Like choice, that was a big one, that was a concession. I think Judd Gregg did a nice job as well in being able to sell it in the Senate.

**Perry:** How about the contrast on the signing of that piece of legislation as opposed to campaign finance?

**Calio:** It was a commonsense difference in that it was a signature item of his campaign and of his Presidency, which we wanted to celebrate, whereas campaign finance reform—

**Howard:** We just wanted to get over with. *[laughter]*

**Ojakli:** Look the other way.

**Howard:** Education, didn't we set up a road show?

**Hobbs:** It was in Ohio.

**Howard:** Is that what it was?

**Riley:** The bill signing was in Ohio?

**Howard:** I think so.

**Hobbs:** No Child Left Behind.

**Nelson:** What was the role of your office in bill signings? Who was there and where he did it and—

**Hobbs:** It was one of the good things and bad things. It's like the President going someplace. His first five trips he went to Atlanta, which was a real disaster for us because you only had five or six seats on the plane. So if you didn't invite Cynthia McKinney and John Lewis—

**Howard:** That's a good point. We kept flying to Cynthia McKinney's district.

**Hobbs:** The first five trips it seemed like the President took, it was like, “We need to go somewhere else.”

**Howard:** Nick talked about the interaction with the political office because I remember going to Ken Mehlman and saying, “Ken, we have to stop—there must be some district we can go to other than Cynthia’s. This is getting really old.” It got to the point where if we didn’t invite her, she’d put press releases out accusing us of being racist.

**Calio:** I flew with her.

**Riley:** How was it?

**Calio:** Great conversation.

**Howard:** But she’d accuse us of being racist if we didn’t take her.

**Hobbs:** I stiffed her once—we didn’t fly her—and her chief of staff called and said, “The Congresswoman wants to know why you didn’t fly her.” I gave some excuse. “OK, and I’m really sorry to bother you, but what’s your title?” I said, “My title is Deputy Assistant to the President and I’m in charge of the House legislation.” He said, “Hang on a second.” About five minutes later, “I’m really sorry but that’s not good enough. She needs to hear from Andy Card.”  
[laughter]

To your question, all these bill signings were—

**Calio:** Who is going to be on stage?

**Hobbs:** Who is going to be there, that was a big issue and a big question.

**Ojakli:** And where they’re going to stand.

**Howard:** Oh, yes.

**Ojakli:** I remember one famous one, the tax bill signing ceremony where we had everything perfectly choreographed and Senator [Robert] Torricelli who was in a little bit of a pickle at the time, and who had voted for the tax bill, made his way front and center. Somebody had to explain that he just—

**Calio:** He was shuffling around trying to get—

**Ojakli:** Over on the other end.

**Calio:** To answer it succinctly we had a lot to do with the bill signings and who came and who didn’t. It was one of those things again, you recognized your friends. If somebody hadn’t been particularly helpful, you did not put them on stage—

**Howard:** Or even which bills to do a ceremony over. That was very much our—

**Hobbs:** I remember we signed some pro-life piece of legislation and I’ll take responsibility for

this, but I think we asked Deborah Pryce and a couple of other women and they turned us down. So there was this signing photo—

**Calio:** Oh, God, it was all men.

**Hobbs:** So maybe a month later NARAL [National Abortion Rights Action League] sent out this political flyer and it had the signing photo and it said, “What do seven old white guys know about women’s reproductive health?” So as a good lesson I have the jumbo from the White House and I put that political mailer on it in terms of the significance of who you picked and who you didn’t, because that was a mistake.

**Nelson:** This occurred to me when you were talking about Daschle starting to get more partisan and so on. It’s an election year and both the House and the Senate are very closely divided. I wonder about the extent to which you were aware, as the year unfolded, how that was affecting your ability to do your job? It also occurs to me when you talk about after 9/11 the President focused on that like a laser beam that no President in history has every campaigned more ardently than President Bush did in terms of number of public appearances, fundraising events. So it’s an essay question. Discuss the effects of 2002 being an election year and the President’s relationship with Congress—

**Riley:** Are you consulted?

**Calio:** We were consulted. I was thinking about this the other night in terms of what we did, and I think it was an anomaly in the sense of—because of the way we arranged and handled issues both on an aggressive basis and on a defensive basis, it didn’t affect us much in terms of our ability to get things done if you look at the legislation that was signed in 2002. But I’m thinking of all of these trips to Atlanta. I put Saxby Chambliss on Air Force One so many times it was almost ridiculous because every time the President got on the plane there’s Saxby Chambliss who is running for the Senate getting off the plane with him.

If you look at the Homeland Security bill and the way we did that and announced it. There was a bill already moving. We decided to go our own direction and the way we did it was we pulled off a surprise, on purpose, on the 9/11 Commission and then the way the debates all structured themselves throughout the course of the year leading right up to the election. It all worked out very well. In some cases it helped us get votes, in other cases it didn’t. Then people paid a price for it too.

**Riley:** You mentioned Homeland Security and the 9/11 Commission once before, so maybe we ought to start with the inception of the idea for doing something on Homeland Security and tell us the story of how that gets translated into reality against your preferences.

**Calio:** Almost immediately after September 11 the President created the Office of Homeland Security in the White House, and we all got heavily involved in the day-to-day on that. I would say affectionately that Governor [Thomas] Ridge brought a lot of admirals and generals with him and that was going to be not a problem, but the political acuity was not at the highest level because they were professional military people and area experts on terrorism rather than the guys who really rise to the top. But I’m getting way out of my field here.

There was disagreement because some people on the Hill, notably Senator [Joseph] Lieberman, believed that we needed a department to house Homeland Security and it should be a new function with a new focus. We originally did not want that, we wanted it operated out of the White House. As time went on, it was getting traction on the Hill and in the White House, but we wanted it on our terms.

I think you have it somewhere on the timeline but one day in April, June, I got called down to Andy's office and he said, "You need to start clearing your calendar, you're going to be part of this group that is meeting down in the PEOC and nobody is to know where you are and what you're doing." So I'd disappear for four to six hours at a time with nothing on my schedule.

**Ojakli:** We thought you were having mandatory fun.

**Calio:** Yes, mandatory fun by myself.

**Howard:** Little did we know you were creating a new Cabinet department.

**Calio:** I went down to my first meeting and it was a very small group, six or seven of us. The three policy guys, including Joel Kaplan who had taken it on initially, had done all this work. There were all these charts with all these various agencies and departments and the overlap and this and that. I always think it is a good idea if you don't know what you're talking about, you don't know what has been going on, keep your mouth shut and just listen.

So I listened for a while to what was going on and I could see various problems with what the Hill was going to think about this, with the conflicting jurisdiction and all that. In terms of the secrecy I remember saying—because people kept looking at me. I think they thought that I was going to start throwing up, "You can't do this, you can't do that, the Hill won't accept this."

I said, "I think you throw it like a massive sucker punch and then you just keep moving very quickly because they'll be off balance, they won't be expecting it. I think what we're doing is the right thing to do if we can resolve everything." Sorting through it was the easy part as a strategy—but sorting through all of the issues was certainly not endless because we did it very quickly, but looking at all the different departments, who would have jurisdiction over what, what the cultural difference would be. Knowing the Defense Department after 40-plus years was finally starting to meld was something that never occurred to me before. I just didn't have that frame of reference.

So we worked through all the issues. The discussion at times was fierce about what should be done. The President was kept informed. Andy did a good job running it. But everybody played a role. Then the group expanded out one more time, but it was amazing for how long it was totally secret—it was totally secret until the end, but how many people were not involved in it. Under normal circumstances on a major issue, Karl and Karen would have been in at the inception and there was none of that. It wasn't viewed that they had a role to play. So we kept it very small. I think we moved through the issues fairly quickly, came up with a plan that we thought was acceptable.

The night of the Congressional picnic, I kept my entire staff waiting on the steps of the North Portico to have their picture taken in the polo shirts that I made them buy, which said "Office of

White House Legislative Affairs” but you had your choice of white or black. The President and I met with Hastert and Lott up in the Residence and we told them what we were going to do, that we were announcing it the next day and nobody else knew about it, nobody. I ended up meeting with them for a considerable period of time and then the President went down to take the picture.

Denny and Trent walked out to the picnic knowing what really only a handful of people did. People were surprised the next day. Some were—not angry—but we clearly had glommed onto an idea and made it our own. It is not as simple as that because I think it was floating around, but people on the Hill got ahead of it and that started to drive the debate.

Some of the difficulties that we hadn’t anticipated started to arise because immediately the affected departments were, “Whoa! Not us.” The employee unions right away, the Democrats, the committees of jurisdiction, the free-for-all started pretty quickly and we had to sort through that. It actually went pretty well because there were people who were willing to be allies and work through the problems in a reasoned fashion, which happened pretty quickly. I think this was a carryover of 9/11 and the need to do something because the idea did make sense. Rather than having all these disparate—because it just wasn’t working.

**Howard:** We were getting a lot of pressure from the Hill, particularly on the Senate side. Byrd was doing all sorts of procedural things, putting holds on nominees, bills, until we agreed to do some kind of legislative thing.

**Ojakli:** The way this moved was interesting because after we decided to move—the way I remember it Lieberman moves his bill out of committee and then they move their bill to the floor. We didn’t like the way Lieberman had his bill constructed so we decided to do something. Remember how bizarre this was? We worked with Senator Gramm and Senator Miller to create a complete substitute to the bill that was on the floor.

**Riley:** Which Gramm?

**Ojakli:** Phil Gramm. It was a complete substitute to the underlying bill. We were, in essence, rolling the committee chairman, completely substituting his bill for—

**Howard:** Fred Thompson too.

**Ojakli:** Yes, we were working with Fred Thompson. He was the ranking Member of the committee. The irony of it all was, Senator Lieberman is such a good person, chairman, in the end after we passed it postelection because the bill was hung up on the union issue, unionizing TSA [Transportation Security Administration] workers. After we won, postelection, he was happy as a clam and took credit for it with us.

**Calio:** And should have.

**Ojakli:** And should have because he was the initial inspiration behind creating a Department of Homeland Security. It really was the unionization issue that held it up and that elected Senator Chambliss. I’ll never forget, coming out of the markup of Government Affairs Committee, Lieberman was doing his markup and Max [Joseph Maxwell] Cleland was a member of that committee. I knew him from Coverdell days and I said, “Senator, there is going to be a vote in

the committee on that issue. Will you be with us?” Basically against the unions and with us. I’m following him out. There was a roll call vote on the floor and he said “No, I’m going to be with the unions on this one.” I think he regretted that vote. It was one that Saxby Chambliss used against him in that election.

**Nelson:** Was there a political calculation here? In other words, thinking two things. One is we in the White House really don’t think there needs to be a bill, but if there is going to be a bill or it is going to be an issue then we need to get ahead of it. Two, it would be nice if in this bill there is a fight we can pick with Democrats—that we can take to the voters?

**Calio:** I’ll answer that. Unequivocally no.

**Howard:** I’ll second that, absolutely not.

**Calio:** The development of it was, it was just not an issue that we wanted to get out, it is an issue that actually after creating the office it was something that we were considering. Then Lieberman got out ahead of us, and we did not like the shape of what was coming together.

**Howard:** After all, it would be an executive Cabinet department. We felt that we should have some role in actually designing it.

**Calio:** Yes, we wanted to design it, we wanted a bottom-up review of everything with no holds barred and I think that was one of the directives, “Don’t consider what’s doable, consider what’s right.” Actually, my memory is good on that, that was what was to guide us. Forget about this jurisdiction, forget about that. We did and we put it together. As predicted, a lot of the committee chairs, ranking Members, everybody started looking at their turf, but we put that super committee together, a select committee with membership from the different committees, to take a look at the issues, which I thought was not just clever, it was substantively sound, to try to handle the predictable debates because people had to give things up to do it.

We expected the union issue. Did we want it as an issue? No. We wanted it to go away because we thought that if you had people with a national security function, they shouldn’t be allowed to strike. That was just common sense and it applied in a whole bunch of other areas. But it got to be a big fight so we had to take on the fight. It would have been better if everybody agreed early with our view and we could have passed the bill earlier. The way it worked out, that didn’t happen.

**Ojakli:** But it wasn’t one we asked for.

**Howard:** No, it wasn’t our—

**Ojakli:** It was brought to us.

**Riley:** When you were brought into the group the clear understanding was this is for legislation, for a department.

**Calio:** Yes.



**Riley:** So the decision had already been taken, we're going to do this. This was an effort to craft the contours of the bill.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Why do it the way it was done? I know this wasn't your call, but why do you think the decision was to develop something from scratch within the White House rather than engage with Lieberman and do it through negotiating with him?

**Calio:** Because we made the decision correctly that if you tried to do it that way you could not control the process and you could probably never get there. Remember, we didn't just keep it secret from the Hill, we kept it secret from the Cabinet members who would be affected. What was predictable, if you brought all them into it, you're not going to get that clear start from scratch, build a department that will work, recognizing that however we built it from scratch to work, it was going to have its own problems in coming together because of all the different cultures, the different uniforms, different functions, the overlap of the functions was extraordinary. The amount of money wasted—forgetting the money, more importantly, without result. Things weren't happening.

I believe sometimes secrecy is a good thing. It was necessary here. We *never* would have gotten it done, and we certainly wouldn't have gotten it done in three months in terms of developing the department. It was actually one of the most exciting and satisfying things that I've been involved in.

**Hobbs:** To your point, even when we rolled it out there was some private back—

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Hobbs:** Some Cabinet agencies were trying to go to Congress and say, "Oh, you don't really need to move this or that."

**Calio:** That's another place where the legislative assistants came in, we're finding out.

**Riley:** Do you recall any critical decisions that you had to take in the committee? I can't remember, the committee had a name—was that Andy's no-name?

**Calio:** No, Andy's Anonymous was—

**Hobbs:** Andy's Anonymous was for planning two, three, four months out. Then you'd sit there and say, "The President is going to be traveling here. What Members should we see, what public events should we do?"

**Calio:** "What message should we drive?" No, this was—

**Riley:** This was too anonymous to even have a name.

**Calio:** It did not have a name. I don't think this one did have a name.

**Riley:** Do you recall any critical junctures where you had to make decisions, forks in the road or whatever, among your group? Was there contention at all among those attending about—?

**Calio:** There was about different ways to approach things. You would look at the various decisions that had to be made on the departments and how to put things together and what was the best way to go. For me it was a little difficult to divorce from what would happen and how to do it. But again, that melded right back into the secrecy and taking people by surprise where they would be off balance and then try and move quickly to get it done.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Calio:** I don't think anybody in that room thought that we had a patent on what was absolutely the right way to do it. But we thought that the way we were doing it would produce a better result than going the normal course of business on Capitol Hill and asking for it to be developed on the Hill or sending a bill to the Hill and not letting them—

**Nelson:** Going to the 9/11 Commission and how that came to be and how you all were involved in that.

**Howard:** Oh, boy.

**Knott:** We would be especially grateful if you tell us some stories about Philip Zelikow.

**Riley:** Philip was director of the Center here before he went to—He is no longer here.

**Hobbs:** He was close with Condi and he was staff director of that. We had—you know the President named an internal commission with Chuck Robb and—

**Calio:** Right.

**Hobbs:** Some others to report. So we didn't really want it. The Speaker was particularly opposed to it.

**Calio:** Adamantly.

**Hobbs:** A blame game commission. It percolated around for a while and we ended up—

**Howard:** It was a public thing. I remember the families were engaged.

**Calio:** Somehow I got put in charge of dealing with the families along with Jay Lefkowitz.

**Riley:** Oh, really?

**Calio:** Yes. It was mainly Jay, but then I got involved. In one of the greatest setups of all time—we had an event at the White House. I was talking to Senators Shelby and Lieberman and it was another one of those cases. I said, "It would be better if we could just talk about it and try to lay everything on the table."

Joe says, "I think that's a good idea, we'll set up a meeting." So they set up a meeting and Jay

and I were to go up there and talk to them about the commission. Pelosi was going to be there and Shelby. I remember seeing Shelby downstairs and I said, “How are you doing?” He says, “Good, how are you? I’m not going to hurt you too bad, don’t worry.” *What the hell is that about?* He can be a little—

**Howard:** Very.

**Calio:** Hard to read.

**Riley:** Cryptic.

**Calio:** To make a long story short, we go up to Lieberman’s office, to the media room, we walk in and all the families are there. Jay and I get seated and at one point they all stood up around us holding hands, just saying, “Why? Why won’t you let there be a commission? This is terrible.” It was a pretty awful situation. But clearly the call, the desire for a commission was growing. We were worried about the subpoena powers, it being a distraction, a blame game.

While there were a number of Members who wanted it, there was a whole other set of Members who really didn’t want it at all. But it was something that we had to control to the degree we could but we had to give in on.

**Ojakli:** This is one instance where the Vice President became so invaluable. Quick story. Jay Lefkowitz and I were in Senator Lott’s office when the deal was finally being cut. We decided to put it in the Intelligence Authorization Conference Report, the language for the 9/11 Commission. Then at the eleventh hour, and this is late at night, we find out that there is something called a classified veto threat on the bill.

**Hobbs:** I remember that.

**Ojakli:** So we asked, “What the hell is a classified veto threat? I’ve never heard of that.”

**Howard:** How are we supposed to deliver that?

**Ojakli:** We’re running around, called everybody, called Jack, called Nick.

**Calio:** We certainly would have used it before if we knew about it.

**Ojakli:** I’m calling Stan Moskowitz at the CIA. He’s back home at the headquarters. We’re trying to track him down. So Candi Wolff and I, and I think it was Dan Keniry over in the House, we’re running around trying to figure it out. The Vice President was over in Statuary Hall at a farewell dinner for Phil Gramm. We asked to have him pulled out. We explained the issue to the Vice President. We said, “We don’t know what it is.” We’d asked Andy too and Andy is trying to find out, he’s calling Tenet. “Nobody knows what this is.” We explained it to the Vice President and he says, “I know, I get it. You’re going to have to explain to McCain after all of this that you can’t do this tonight because there is a classified veto threat on the bill. He’s going to go through the roof.”

Long story short, he goes to Porter Goss, Chairman of the Intel Committee, and finds out what it

is, we work it out on the staff level and the bill goes that night. It was one of those things that is just comical. You're just running from place to place trying to find—knocking on this door—anyone know what this is about? Anybody in here?

**Knott:** What is it?

**Riley:** What was it?

**Ojakli:** It was classified. You can't tell what it is about. So what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to solve this?

**Nelson:** What is the thing itself? Not what this one was about, but I've never heard the term classified—

**Ojakli:** It was on the bill. There was language in the bill that was unacceptable to the CIA and they were trying to work it out.

**Hobbs:** They couldn't fund something or they were trying to—

**Ojakli:** We got it worked out between the House and the Senate and the CIA. They all worked it out. The Vice President helped directly by getting—

**Hobbs:** We didn't know what "this" was, we didn't know what to work out, because it was classified.

**Riley:** It's like an SAP?

**Howard:** Yes, I suppose it probably was.

**Hobbs:** But nobody had seen it. We would knock on the majority leader's office door; they hadn't seen it.

**Howard:** The veto threat explains why you're vetoing the bill. *[laughter]* A classified veto, there's not much you can do.

**Riley:** David Addington was not behind this one?

**Howard:** No.

**Hobbs:** The 9/11 commission, to bring you back to Zelikow, became very important. A couple of years later when we did intelligence reform and some of the recommendations that were in the 9/11 Commission, Phil was right in the middle of those too.

**Calio:** Then there were all the negotiations, which we were heavily involved in, about how many people share subpoena power and all that. With the appointments of the chairs I think we felt somewhat comfortable with it.

**Knott:** Fears that some folks in the White House fear—did they come to pass? Was the perception inside the White House that this commission became something of a club to use

against the administration?

**Calio:** I don't really think so.

**Hobbs:** I think there was a lot of politics in it. Obviously tough emotional issues, largest loss of life in American—the families. So, yes, on some of these it made it harder to have a more rational discussion because there was so much emotion surrounding it. Once that kind of PR [public relations] movement starts driving it, then you kind of lose control legislatively about what is going to be in there.

Eighty percent of it we probably thought was good, helpful, and constructive. I'm not sure I could point to a detail where we didn't—

**Knott:** I remember Condoleezza Rice's testimony got pretty testy. There was fairly aggressive questioning about August 8.

**Calio:** Yes, and the point of getting her to the testimony table was very contentious.

**Riley:** And you were involved in those discussions?

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Hobbs:** And she did a great job. She took a lot of the emotion out of it. She was spectacular.

**Calio:** She really was.

**Hobbs:** She changed the whole tenor of the thing.

**Calio:** We didn't want her to testify because there was, and I think is, a legitimate concern that if you're providing advice on certain types of issues to the President of the United States, you have a right to keep those between you and the President, otherwise you might not be giving your best or most candid advice. It is a slippery slope too. We had fought that on a number of occasions on different issues where they wanted people to testify and we didn't think it was appropriate for them to testify.

**Riley:** There is a more general question about investigations. The sense is that the investigatory climate from 41's time to 43's time had dramatically improved. There was no longer the independent counsel statute and so forth. Does that comport with your perceptions or your recollection? I would have thought if you'd served 20 years before you would have spent a much higher percentage of your time dealing with—

**Howard:** Congressional oversight?

**Riley:** Yes, negotiating Congressional oversight. Maybe I'm wrong?

**Calio:** I think that's accurate. We had a host of issues.

**Howard:** We just didn't have anything that rose to the level of the Clinton White House, like Whitewater.

**Hobbs:** New administration comes in, you're staffing up. You don't have everybody there; you're not making a lot of decisions. Then 9/11 comes along and you have some sort of period. In 2002 you win the House and Senate. When your own party controls you have less oversight.

**Calio:** Right.

**Riley:** Got it. Makes perfect sense. So it is more the partisan climate than it is the more general investigatory climate?

**Ojakli:** I think that is generally what drives a lot of oversight.

**Perry:** When do you first start hearing about Iraq? When does that pop up on your radar?

**Calio:** It popped up on mine maybe in June '02. Condi asked me to feel out Members on certain committees and did I get a sense—She started out by asking if I had heard any Members on the Hill talking about Iraq. I said no, I had not. Then she asked if I could feel out quietly what some people thought about what was going on over there and what might happen. It became pretty quickly clear that the next logical step was about to take place.

When did they constitute the White House Iraq group?

**Perry:** September of '02.

**Calio:** We went through August.

**Howard:** I think Cheney made a speech somewhere in August that raised everybody's—

**Calio:** Awareness.

**Nelson:** He did, to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars].

**Howard:** Is that what it was?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** Yes, in the middle of August '02.

**Howard:** Is that where it was? I sort of remember it.

**Calio:** Yes, it was in July also—some people were starting to become aware that something was afoot. I talked to some of our Democratic friends like Ellen Tauscher and Jane Harman about what they thought about possibilities in terms of what might be going on in Iraq. It was all very general so you couldn't even tell what we were asking in a sense.

Then there was the speech and then they constitute the group and again Andy says, "You're going to be part of this group, meet down in the Situation Room." I didn't even tell this to Bob Woodward, but I go down for my first meeting and look up at the clocks and it has got New York, London, Tokyo, and Baghdad.

**Howard:** Connect those dots. *[laughter]*

**Calio:** I'm a terribly insightful guy. I said, "OK." So we were looking at where we were and what the intelligence was telling us and it was a matter of what were we going to do. We were going to pursue a resolution because the President felt it needed—if this was going to happen there needed to be a vote, there needed to be a debate on it. I think the Vice President was arguing that we really did not need to get a new resolution to move forward and the President did not agree with that, he thought that we had to do that.

**Riley:** Don't let me interrupt your train of thought on this, but his, "We don't need a new resolution because the UN [United Nations] resolutions from the First Gulf War were sufficient" or was there something else?

**Calio:** No, if I recall—

**Howard:** It was use of force.

**Riley:** AUMF was sufficient?

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** The question was, what do we have to do about it? The strategy was put together. How you would do it in terms of what you would say to the public, what would you say to Members. Then we started putting all those briefings together. That was a blur. I have the numbers here, which I could look up. At the end of the day I think we offered briefings to 350 or 400 Members. Most of them were briefed—I think all hundred Senators except maybe one and I can't recall who that was.

**Ojakli:** Lott.

**Calio:** Yes. How many House Members were briefed, and most of them were briefed twice? We had what the French were saying, what the British were saying. They were initially very low key, very straightforward. John McLaughlin, the Deputy at the CIA, was doing a lot of the briefings. In my view he was attempting to be neutral to the point of underselling what we understood the case to be. I talked to Tenet about that and I said he needed to get more involved, which he did. And he was better at convincing Members.

We were talking last night and all of these briefings, which we sat through endlessly—

**Riley:** The time frame for these was?

**Calio:** September, October mostly.

**Riley:** '02?

**Howard:** Right.

**Calio:** No one ever questioned whether there were weapons of mass destruction, everybody

assumed it. You have to look at the context in which many people were looking at it, which was in '89 and '90, '91, we were convinced there were no weapons of mass destruction and got there and found out that there were actually. Everybody assumed that they were still around, so it wasn't pushing on an open door because some people were concerned. But really not that much.

People had concerns so it was a matter of piecing the votes together again. The President went to Cincinnati to give that speech, Colin Powell went to the UN.

**Howard:** There was also thinking, particularly on the Democrat side, that they were on the wrong side of that vote.

**Calio:** In '91.

**Howard:** They weren't going to let that happen again.

**Nelson:** All the Democratic Senators who were thinking about running for President voted for the use of force.

**Calio:** Right. Gephardt, when we were trying to put the resolution together, we did a draft and took it up to the Hill and met with—ironically—Dennis McDonough represented Daschle. Steve Elmendorf and someone else in Gephardt's office represented Gephardt, but Gephardt was very cooperative, wanted to go. So was Daschle initially and then stylistically, as often happened, he started backing off.

Meanwhile we were negotiating with McCain and with Lieberman—

**Howard:** And Bayh.

**Calio:** And Bayh. [Joseph] Biden and [Richard] Lugar came out with their own bill, which we didn't think went far enough. So we pooh-poohed that basically and didn't give it much attention except to tell people that it didn't work and we didn't like it. Meanwhile we just kept moving forward because when we got the votes we were going to go. So we put a time limit on it. We had meetings in the Cabinet Room with the President. We were pretty clear with people about where we were going. We told them we were going to go sooner rather than later.

It is all pretty well laid out in some of these books. For me, it was clear early on this was not a matter of if, it was a matter of when. We needed to move forward and get the votes. When it started—I can't remember what drove it—but Gephardt agreed to the language on the resolution. That left Daschle hanging out there. He couldn't quite get himself there. At one point I said, "We're getting ready to go, so you either come or the train is leaving the station. We're at the point where we don't have to make any more accommodations." I don't think we made many really.

We hit that critical mass that one day and had the Rose Garden ceremony the next day. The fact that you had Lieberman there and McCain there and all the rest of them was pretty significant.

**Riley:** If you go back to the initial set of meetings you were involved in, were you questioned about Congressional receptivity to the idea or is this a meeting where a decision has been taken



that we're proceeding along this path and at this point you're there to absorb the case that is being compiled in the interest of helping to sell it and market it later?

**Calio:** I think both. I think the decision had been taken to move forward. The planning session was there to put the plan together in a way that would obtain both the votes and a public receptivity to it. That's what the planning was about. It was up to us to figure out how we were going to get the votes and what we had to do to get there.

**Howard:** That was my sense too, it was more a question of we're going down this path. It's *how* are we going to get Congress to go along with us?

**Riley:** You were there for the First Gulf War?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Riley:** So you had the experience of securing the votes then.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Howard:** We were talking about this last night. That was a harder vote to get the votes for than it turned out the Iraq one was. I kept waiting for the Iraq one to get much more difficult. There was a point where we almost lost the vote in 1990.

**Calio:** What happened on the buildup to that one was Gephardt had taken Torricelli off the Intelligence Committee or denied him a seat on the Intelligence Committee. Bob was just ripped and ripe for the picking. After one meeting in the Oval we went into the Roosevelt Room with Torricelli, [Stephen] Solarz, me, Scowcroft, and I can't remember who else, and basically Torricelli and Solarz drafted out a resolution that became the baseline for the resolution we offered. They, along with some of those old bulls I mentioned earlier, started working with us on this. Jack is correct, the 2002 resolution, a lot of people did not want to get caught out like they had the last time. There was the belief, based on the briefings, that there were weapons of mass destruction although some people did ask questions.

Also initially in those early years—remember, we got the classified briefing first before we were asked to do anything. Then it was just a matter of building it. In looking at this timeline, it seemed longer, but it was actually very quick. We did have people working with us, people like Jane Harman and Ellen Tauscher, Gephardt—

**Hobbs:** Rob Andrews.

**Calio:** It was a good bipartisan group trying to get this thing through. Congress was supposed to recess on the 18th for the election, I think. We wanted to get the resolution done before that.

**Perry:** I think you referred to this this morning, but since we're now in chronology, can you talk a little bit about that September meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld briefing Members of the Senate and that it didn't go so well? Here you had done all this work and tried to prepare and you felt like you were moving in the right direction and then—

**Calio:** We were moving in the right direction, and we were trying to give Members as much information as possible in these classified briefings. I don't remember how that briefing came about. I think the long and the short of it was simply that Members were not given any new information. They felt like they were being patronized. I was not there, but as I understood it afterward from some of the Senators, the body language when questions were asked was dismissive and sometimes it wasn't just the body language. The result was predictable, people were angry and upset.

**Perry:** How did that make you feel and what did you do afterward?

**Calio:** Kind of the *de rigueur*, I guess.

**Howard:** Kind of disappointed but then we just figured out—

**Calio:** Got the shovels and the brooms out.

**Howard:** Pick up the pieces.

**Calio:** We started going office to office to say, "Keep your eye on the bigger ball here. We'll get another briefing for you and you can ask all the questions you want. If you have a question, we'll either bring you down and we'll hook you up with the right person to talk to or we'll arrange a larger briefing." We just went on from there.

**Ojakli:** I wonder if that was around the time that we were doing those smaller briefings, the Senators with Condi? There were four or five Senators at a time in her office. Those were pretty effective. We did four, five, six of those.

**Riley:** Could you characterize how these meetings went? Either the more general ones that you talked about before or these specifically? Walk us through an example of what would be discussed, who would be making presentations, the back-and-forth. I'm sure they weren't all the same, but there must have been some template that you were following.

**Hobbs:** Like with McLaughlin doing the—

**Calio:** Yes, in general terms, because—

**Hobbs:** We'd bring down 25 or 30 Members, say, in the Roosevelt Room, and McLaughlin would lead a discussion and he had charts and—

**Riley:** You would select the membership? Is there an art to getting the chemistry in the room right?

**Hobbs:** Oh, yes. We wouldn't lie down with blue dogs. We'd put together multiple—it could have been 17, it could have been 13, of these groups.

**Riley:** OK.

**Hobbs:** I remember some smaller ones too. We did a couple in the Roosevelt Room with the

President and maybe a smaller group of Members, six or seven, and then with a group of Senators as well. Lindsey Graham and some others.

**Howard:** It's not like we tried to rig the meetings. We'd try to get a balance of people so you don't end up with a whole group of people you know are going to be problems so that the briefing goes horribly. You try to balance it out with people who might be with you, neutral, might have problems.

**Calio:** It's like any good meeting, you try to seed it with supporters so the discussion doesn't run away from you.

**Howard:** Exactly right. And just create bigger problems. From the briefer's standpoint, the challenge is to tell the Members just a little bit more. You can't tell them everything because you have to start with the presumption they're going to leak whatever you tell them. You need to tell them just a little bit more than what is in the papers. As Nick said, one of the reasons the Rumsfeld briefing went bad is because they felt that they had read all this in the *New York Times* already. So they get insulted by that.

The good briefers are the ones who are able to give just a little bit more subtlety and nuance so that Members feel like they actually learned something but didn't learn enough so that they become a threat to national security or anything like that.

**Knott:** After the poor reception to the Rumsfeld briefing, do you recall the President ever remarking on this or did you ever discuss with the President when it occurred?

**Calio:** Didn't have to.

**Knott:** Did you ever hear him talk about Secretary Rumsfeld in terms of his—this reputation emerges fairly quickly that he is alienating a lot of folks in Washington. There is always this question as to why President Bush stood by Secretary Rumsfeld for so long.

**Calio:** I can't speak for the President on that and I don't remember him ever saying—I would hear him joke about Rumsfeld's personality sometimes. He respected Rumsfeld and did stand by him. In terms of that particular briefing, as I said, it was de rigueur to a certain degree. The notion that you would ever raise that to the President's attention didn't rise at all. We just went on.

**Hobbs:** There is an inherent problem with any briefing, you're not telling them what they already knew.

**Knott:** But it was also body language and in some cases even verbal insults.

**Hobbs:** Ashcroft and Rumsfeld had done some earlier. I think Rumsfeld had a good following on the Hill and many good friends, but I think collectively he rubbed a lot of people the wrong way.

**Riley:** By and large you're not encountering any resistance in these meetings?

**Calio:** No. People had legitimate questions. There was concern about what might happen. But the one question that never reached any kind of fever pitch was whether there were actually weapons of mass destruction. It was the degree to which they had them, and were they old? But it was pretty widely accepted. It didn't make it an easy process, or it wouldn't have taken as long as it did and we wouldn't have had the number of briefings that we did.

**Riley:** Sure. Was there still in the air the notion that if you ratchet up the pressure you might be able to get Saddam [Hussein] to do something short of war? Is that a part of what is going on at this point or not? Is it just everybody clearly understands that the guy is—

**Calio:** I don't know the answer to that myself.

**Howard:** There was speculation about that, that was kind of the hope. But there was also a very realistic appraisal of the situation.

**Hobbs:** It's a twofer. Maybe he changes, and if he doesn't you're preparing on the ground for where you might need to go.

**Perry:** Did people focus on the aftermath? Did lots of Members from the Hill say, "I believe you; there are weapons there"? "Yes, this is a bad man; we need to take him out"? What comes next? What happens after you remove him?

**Calio:** There were some questions on that, and the Defense Department had the view that everybody would link up once we got there and welcome us if that happened. The oil would start to flow and candidly it was a pretty rosy scenario.

**Perry:** That was painted by the Defense Department at these briefings?

**Calio:** Yes. It sounded good.

**Nelson:** Did you ever hear talk within the White House about what if one or both Houses of Congress don't pass this resolution?

**Hobbs:** I think you live in the moment, and it didn't ever feel in jeopardy. You kind of know and—

**Ojakli:** The closest it was in jeopardy was what Nick mentioned, which was when Lugar and Biden were teaming up. There was a moment there when there was a legitimate concern that if Biden could hold the Democrats and Lugar could hold a couple of moderates in the Foreign Relations Committee, we could have a problem. But it was working with [Jesse] Helms and making sure that all the Republicans stayed together and having—I think it was Bayh who was on Foreign Relations at the time, everybody stayed together, we were able to hold back Lugar, Biden.

**Riley:** What was their option?

**Ojakli:** I can't remember, but it watered down what we were trying to do.

**Calio:** Right, we were talking about that last night. Unfortunately I can't remember—

**Riley:** Was it to go back to the UN for more offers?

**Calio:** I don't know.

**Ojakli:** I can't remember, but I know it was a threat.

**Perry:** Was the Vice President ever in these briefings and if so or even if not did you deploy him in any way to make his case with individuals or in small groups with Members?

**Calio:** He may have been in some of the briefings, but I can't remember whether they were just the internal meetings or otherwise. But did we deploy him? Yes, in terms of this. Because he was very respected on national security issues.

**Riley:** I'm trying to recall; your term ends before—

**Nelson:** January '03.

**Calio:** Yes, I was there for the resolution but not the start of the war.

**Riley:** You, Jack, were there for the start of the war.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Riley:** Nick, do we have permission to ask a couple of questions about that?

**Calio:** Sure. I think probably had I been there it would have gone a lot better. *[laughter]*

**Riley:** David, do you care to respond to that?

**Hobbs:** It's a good legitimate question but I don't know—it happened. America is at war. You're watching it on TV. Everybody wants a quick, casualty-free situation. Everybody was just kind of for it and hoping it went well.

**Riley:** How are the Members kept informed as hostilities begin? Are there special efforts made to bring information to the Members or are they just working through the usual channels to get information?

**Hobbs:** Do you remember doing notifications?

**Ojakli:** I think just the standard way we did them, which was leadership, armed services, intel, foreign relations.

**Hobbs:** I'm not sure we got a lot of heads-up. I don't know that we expected it and I'm sure a few key people were notified that something would begin in hours or something, but I don't remember communicating—

**Ojakli:** It might have been Condi—

**Calio:** I'm sure it probably was. I don't know what you all did afterward, but in the First Gulf War we had generals and national security people up on the Hill briefing people about the progress and what was going on, but actually Rumsfeld was on TV every day.

**Howard:** That's right.

**Hobbs:** Doing a morning—

**Calio:** Briefing about what was going on.

**Riley:** It was probably the peak of his public popularity, wasn't it? He was a folk hero.

**Howard:** More of the stuff was the briefings in 407 that were ongoing. They kept going on. That was more of it.

**Hobbs:** We did a lot of those too. I think we did the whole Senate. I remember one with Hillary Clinton.

**Nelson:** I know the war is overshadowing everything through the fall and early winter, but an election takes place. Now the Republicans will once again have a majority in the Senate. While all this war preparation is going on, are you all thinking in terms of what can we do? What can we move legislatively now that we have a Republican Congress?

**Hobbs:** There is a rhythm to an elected leadership retreat and then a Member retreat and then there are some bicameralers before that when they're talking about it. So, yes, the talk immediately turns to budget resolutions, reconciliation, new agenda items, and things like that.

**Howard:** The first thing was Homeland Security, because we did that lame duck.

**Hobbs:** In December, right?

**Nelson:** Yes.

**Howard:** Senator Dean Barkley who put us over the top in his 15 minutes of fame by breaking the impasse on unionization of TSA.

**Nelson:** I'm guessing the State of the Union preparation is going on as well. Are you all involved in the process of contributing to what is going to be in the State of the Union address on an annual basis?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** How does that work, how do you all fit into that?

**Calio:** Obviously it starts with the President and what he wants to say, but there is a process that—at least to my experience—spans every administration where different offices are trying to feed ideas in that they would like to see addressed.

**Nelson:** This starts months before, right?

**Calio:** Yes, usually. Issues that they would like to have addressed in the State of the Union that they think ought to go in. Members of Congress have all sorts of ideas about what ought to go in. Cabinet members have ideas about what goes in, which is why you see sometimes the speech—oftentimes actually—ends up being a laundry list without an overarching message. The Legislative Affairs office, the Political Office, everybody is involved with it.

**Hobbs:** And you're reading multiple drafts.

**Howard:** And the speechwriters are trying to protect their draft from all the rest of us.

**Nelson:** What is the contribution you all are making? Is it to convey ideas that you're hearing on the Hill?

**Hobbs:** Sometimes it's terminology, like "Don't say it that way. That is going to mean this to the guys sitting here in the chamber. That may be your idea, you want to do it, but that's not going to happen."

**Howard:** We don't want to get involved in some of the really logistical things. I remember one of the first things we tried to decide was what color the coversheet for the State of the Union is going to be. That was a huge debate with the communications people.

**Calio:** That's true.

**Riley:** Color was a lot—?

**Calio:** There was something, they didn't want to make it blue for some reason or other.

**Howard:** Oh, yes, we had several meetings in Andy's office over that.

**Perry:** Was it a blue state, red state issue?

**Calio:** Then the big question every year, how soon will we give the speech out to Members of Congress.

**Howard:** Yes. Or will we. Do we want them flipping pages?

**Calio:** There is just no good resolution on that.

**Howard:** No, it never got resolved until the President was literally standing in the House chamber giving the speech.

**Calio:** There were last-minute changes. Then people have the wrong version. It was not good.

**Howard:** That would go on for weeks.

**Nelson:** You only come in on the process toward the end? It sounds like you're reacting to drafts and then the event itself. You're not involved at all in the formation process?

**Calio:** No, more at the formation there would be meetings about ideas and what would be

covered. Then it became collaborative. Again it starts with the President. If there is something he wanted to say sometimes there would be a draft or an outline, guarded with everybody's life.

**Hobbs:** The policy times, like leading up to tax cuts in 2003. Clearly he was going to talk about that. The need to get the economy growing again. So there's the whole tax reform process going on. That starts at the deputies' level and then you have the NEC [National Economic Council]. Then you have a couple of policy times with the President. So you know he's going to do something on taxes. You may not know exactly what his final decision is and how he's going to say it until you read it a few days later. That has happened on multiple issue areas. That's not to say that he might not come up with a litany of "I'm going to do blah, blah, blah."

**Howard:** It also got completely out of control the days or week or so leading up to the State of the Union. Then there are all sorts of rumors floating around of what's in, what's out. So we bore the brunt from Members and staff, either angry that they're hearing there is something in there they don't want in or still trying to make a pitch to get their Members—

**Calio:** At the end of November or early in December we had the big discussion about the contours of taxes and what we wanted to do. I'm trying to think, was that before or after Larry and O'Neil left?

**Hobbs:** I don't remember but that's the one where again he was kind of like, when the leak happened, which I mentioned earlier. He said, "Oh, yes, I'm going to ask for both of them then."

**Riley:** Does it serve any useful purpose for you guys or is it just a pain in the ass that you have to—

**Howard:** What?

**Riley:** The State of the Union.

**Calio:** There is a very useful purpose because the entire staff gets to fan out to Statuary Hall and listen to Members go to their various corners and say, "Hit the ball out of the park."

**Howard:** We put an end to that, in the second one. In the first one we had to do that. That was preposterous. We'd literally stand and listen to Members being interviewed and take notes on what they were saying. Then we had to write a report to the President—

**Calio:** It could have been useful because then for—when Clinton became President we could have handed the Democratic remarks to the Republicans and the Republican remarks to the Democrats and they wouldn't have had to think about anything.

**Howard:** It was agony. We'd be up till three or four o'clock in the morning trying to write a report that the President could just as well get a sense from watching C-SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network]. In fact, the last two years I tried to convince Fred, "Why don't we just change the date on our report? They say the same thing every year and we can all go home. Or how about we write the report early because we already know what they're going to say?"

**Hobbs:** We had the mandatory fun after—



**Howard:** Literally.

**Calio:** In 2002, was that the axis-of-evil speech?

**Howard:** It must have been.

**Ojakli:** It wouldn't be 2001.

**Hobbs:** Did he put a dollar figure on PEPFAR when he announced—

**Nelson:** I think so.

**Riley:** I think so, that was part of it, it was not an insubstantial—

**Hobbs:** No, it wasn't, it was a lot of money.

**Howard:** My own personal opinion is that it evolved into kind of a circus.

**Calio:** Yes, to answer your question directly, did they serve a useful purpose, I don't see one really. Not the way they go on for years and years.

**Hobbs:** I think it is an opportunity, done correctly, to try to outline your major themes.

**Riley:** This is embedded in a bigger question, which is a subject of endless discussion among political scientists, about a President's ability to go over the heads of Congress to get something done. We have colleagues who have written books and done elaborate statistical studies. What is your own sense as professionals about a President's ability to move Members of Congress by—

**Hobbs:** Depends on the issue. Gun control? You can give great rhetoric, but given what happened in '94 I think that they'll be lucky to get background checks done, let alone assault weapons. The President can try to go above their heads but he's not going to change any votes. But there are other issues that I think they can. I think that successfully on the tax issue, the wealthy should pay their fair share. That's a pretty easy theme to sell. You should pay more because you're not paying enough.

**Howard:** It's hard to generalize. To go back to the start of the second Bush Presidency—the President's travel schedule was relentless. We had our target list of 14, 15 Senators, and all he did was travel to those states. I don't know how many times he went to Georgia. He didn't go anywhere else. Yes, to that extent there is probably some value to it. There is no substitute for hands-on dealing directly with Congress. You can't do one without the other. But by the same token I think it can also be overused.

**Ojakli:** The State of the Union is just—I think it has to be used differently. It has to become less of a laundry list and more of a statement of vision, statement of purpose, statement of the goals. I don't think it is effective in trying to speak to the people. I think people tune it out these days.

**Perry:** Including the Reagan-launched principle of having people in the box stand up, heroic people—what are your thoughts about that?

**Howard:** It's all so predictable. What moves people today in social media and everything, everybody has moved so on. I don't know who watches the State of the Union anymore. Other than us.

**Riley:** We do.

**Hobbs:** Those in this room. I felt that I had some obligation or duty. At the end of it, it's kind of like I'm not really sure what he said. Maybe some applause on immigration, blah, blah, blah.

**Riley:** I can go you one better. I watched 15 minutes and then waited for the transcript to read the rest of it.

**Hobbs:** Yes, I fell asleep.

**Howard:** What's worse is being tasked with the response.

**Nelson:** Let me get back to where we were when I got us off track. Coming out of the 2002 election, did you think, *What are we going to do with this Republican majority? What are we going to do to make next year on Capitol Hill a successful year for the President?*

**Perry:** As a setup to 2004 perhaps.

**Nelson:** Not even about that. Did you have an agenda of items that you were planning to present to Congress that maybe you wouldn't have had, had it not been for the successful results of the election?

**Hobbs:** It was also the economic times. The economy is hurting. That was the heart and soul of 2003, trying to get that accelerated tax cut through. That was domestic agenda items one, two, and three. Continue to successfully prosecute the War on Terror on the foreign affairs side.

**Nelson:** Prescription drugs?

**Hobbs:** Prescription drugs, obviously we worked on it a lot. It culminated, at least in my experience, the three-hour vote, the toughest thing I have ever lived through. But yes. Then setting that up through the conferences. Remember, we had the early battles with Don Nickles over whether there was going to be a five-year budget resolution or ten. Obviously that would affect the length of the tax cuts.

**Howard:** Right.

**Hobbs:** Whether to use reconciliation or not. So some of those domestic tactics in terms of trying to get something done.

**Riley:** I notice that you have some notes here.

**Calio:** I cued my notes off of these questions.

**Riley:** Why don't you take a quick look at those notes? I want to make sure that we get to things that you wanted to talk about that we haven't gotten to. I have two or three of the generic, off-

calendar things for us to still go to.

**Calio:** I don't know that there is anything we haven't covered. We've got the 9/11 Commission, we've got Jeffords, how we approached the tax bill. I think we did that, didn't we?

**Riley:** We never exhaust everything you can possibly talk about.

**Calio:** I think we had Kennedy and Baucus.

**Riley:** What are we missing?

**Ojakli:** Sarbanes-Oxley. The only thing I was thinking—we always think about the world blowing up in 2008, but the world also blew up in 2002 with the WorldComs and the Enrons—we faced that then. We tried to do something through Harvey Pitt and SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission]. We tried to do all this by executive action but to the Hill it didn't go far enough. That's where Sarbanes-Oxley [Act of 2002—named for sponsors U.S. Senator Paul Sarbanes and U.S. Representative Michael G. Oxley]—

**Calio:** To be fair, the issue was dead in the water in June.

**Ojakli:** That's when WorldCom came in.

**Calio:** Yes, WorldCom happened and we had three weeks to get that bill done. We had a big signing ceremony and everything. Insurance was the same thing. That was a fascinating process where we got ourselves a little bit askew of some of the Republicans. That was partially my fault because I told two of my staff that we were drawing a line in the sand on the damages issue. I did that intending them to tell people that, but not quite meaning it.

**Howard:** They missed the nuance.

**Calio:** We had actually drafted a letter and again I was just doing that for them to see it, and they took it to Sensenbrenner's staff and DeLay's staff. Frankly in the negotiations we had already moved on that and we got involved in that. When I was a real live lawyer I did a lot of punitive damages work, which surprised one of our staff members, Brian Conklin, couldn't believe I was a lawyer. I said "Really, Brian? Good, that's a great thing, I would just share that with everybody." So we were getting letters. Daschle was again the big hang-up. Mark Childress, who is now a Deputy Chief of Staff at the White House—they had the trial lawyers and they just went by. We tried every iteration.

I went to someone on Harry Reid's staff. Don wanted to get a deal done. Then Schumer came in for a while. We finally hammered out the deal. We hammered out the deal basically with Reid, unbeknownst to Daschle. Got it done and provided some protection. That bill is fairly complicated in terms of how it works and where it kicks in and the cap on damages. But it worked. We got that done right before the election, right? That was days and days of all-nighters and some shouting matches. Most of it was done in the Vice President's office, right? Not the ceremonial office but the small one that we worked out of.

**Riley:** Anything else?

**Ojakli:** Just a minor issue but in the Senate it kind of changed the flavor of things, the death of Paul Wellstone.

**Howard:** That's a good point.

**Ojakli:** It was his funeral and Nick and I went to it. It was when Trent Lott went out and pretty much the whole Senate was out there. He was booed when he sat down. It changed the mood.

**Hobbs:** Didn't [Walter] Mondale or somebody give kind of a campaign speech?

**Ojakli:** Mondale, over the top.

**Perry:** It became a pep rally.

**Ojakli:** It was in a basketball arena. They had the kind of rally music on. It was way over the top.

**Riley:** That had an effect on the Members who were there?

**Ojakli:** Yes. It was so inappropriate, and I think it changed the mood among the Senators and the public, to some extent.

**Nelson:** Did that carry over into anything?

**Ojakli:** Yes. I can't remember when he died.

**Nelson:** In the fall of '02.

**Ojakli:** Right before the elections.

**Nelson:** Then Mondale took his place—

**Ojakli:** Mondale took his place on the ballot.

**Perry:** And lost.

**Ojakli:** Lost to Norm Coleman. That was one of the strangest times.

**Calio:** Flying out there, the whole mood of it was very odd. In a way, from the holiday in the back room before people went out—then they became somber, but there was a lot of inappropriate and incorrect behavior for the occasion. I don't mean people laughing and talking in the back because that's fairly normal at any funeral. I'm talking about booing Lott and then some of the comments that were made and using that as a springboard for a campaign. It was pretty bad.

**Riley:** I keep waiting for Barbara to ask about judges. We didn't talk much about the appointments process other than at the very beginning. What about the judicial appointments? You didn't have a Supreme Court nomination on your watch, right?

**Calio:** No.

**Riley:** But you have all the other stuff going on. What can you tell us about that process and how much of your time did that occupy and was it a problem area for you?

**Calio:** It was a problem area. He can speak to this part better than I can because—I don't want to say I fobbed it off, but nominations usually have somebody who is a specialist and devoted to it because it takes up so much time. The judges issue did get bollixed up pretty quickly because there was resistance and they wouldn't let judges through.

What normally happens on judges is you do cut deals so you package. We had the deal early on in the Sixth Circuit. We were going to get how many judges for six—From our perspective and our experience in Legislative Affairs, this was a really good deal. We could get a lot of what we wanted. We had to give very little and Al Gonzales said, "No. We'll get a better deal later. We're not going to do this. If we start doing this now they're going to misread us and then they're going to want to cut deals and all this." We're thinking, *Exactly*.

**Howard:** That's how it works.

**Ojakli:** We were so guilty of letting the perfect be the enemy of the good early on. First of all there was a judicial selection process that took place in the Roosevelt Room. We were represented. Heather Wingate, who was one of our specials who would represent—I did the first part of it and then turned it over to Heather when she came in.

**Riley:** This again is on compatibility?

**Ojakli:** Al Gonzales would run it and run through the various selections.

**Calio:** You'd have a binder with all the different selections and all the background materials so you could make a decision.

**Ojakli:** The issue is on some of them we were doing things that were not going to happen—there was an issue of blue slips, informal procedures where two Senators will informally say, "We're OK with this pick." A lot of deference is given to the blue slip.

**Howard:** Home-state Senators.

**Ojakli:** Home-state Senators, sorry.

**Nelson:** Regardless of party?

**Ojakli:** That both support.

**Hobbs:** This gets into where I'm sure he's going.

**Ojakli:** We got to a place where we were sending up some judicial nominations that were not supported by both Senators. Senator Hatch was giving the blue slips some weight but not entire weight, and the Democrats didn't like that. They thought the blue slips should be given entire

deference. We got to a point too where we were sending some judges—we were thinking of some things that were maybe a little too creative. For example, in the Fourth Circuit there was a seat that was traditionally a Maryland seat. We didn't want to send a Maryland judge; we were going to do it as a Virginia judge. Our counsel was, "You can do that, but Barbara Mikulski is going to have a big problem with that and Paul Sarbanes is going to have something to say." So we can do that but the Virginia judge is going to languish and we'll never, *ever* be confirmed.

**Nelson:** Was it [J. Michael] Luttig?

**Ojakli:** No, it wasn't. I can't remember who it was. They were a great team, but they were just really hardcore across the board.

**Riley:** Hardcore?

**Ojakli:** In terms of—

**Riley:** Ideological conservative—?

**Ojakli:** Very strong in the path they wanted to move. We were trying to inject a little bit of—"We like everybody you pick, but we're saying this just can't be done in the Senate." That was some of what we were going up against internally. Then the whole thing with the Hill—as we were talking earlier. Charles Pickering was the first, Miguel Estrada was another one. You could just tell from some of the first meetings. I remember sitting in on a meeting with Chuck Schumer and one of our nominees, and you knew that this was going to become a conference strategy of the Democrats. They knew Miguel Estrada was Supreme Court timber and he is. Then there was another woman from Texas.

**Riley:** Edith Jones?

**Ojakli:** Not Edith Jones. Priscilla Owen. I remember her meeting with Senator Schumer and he was doing his level best to be so nice, but no way in hell was he going to vote for her. He was going to slow the path down. But it got to be such a mess when they basically changed the standard and decided to filibuster these judges. Later the Senate wrestled with whether to go with the nuclear option and make it a 51 standard.

**Nelson:** Didn't you inherit some of this from the Republican responses to Clinton nominees, slow-walking them until the clock ran out?

**Ojakli:** There was some slow-walking toward the tail end of the administration, but this was kind of midterm. This was almost, you could argue, from the get-go. These were, to a person, well qualified. It created a new standard. I thought about this. I wouldn't use it in terms of creating partisanship, it really polluted the place. People were very angry. Trent Lott had a sign in his office right over the fireplace. It was "Remember Pickering" or something like that.

**Perry:** Why the change on the part of the Democrats?

**Ojakli:** I don't know. I think they just saw it as an issue. They were pushed by some of their own groups. It may have been part evolution to gradually get to this point. But it went full bore and

started with Pickering and moved on.

**Nelson:** How did you adapt to that, knowing resistance was going to be there?

**Ojakli:** We looked for deals where we could get them to try to get the up or down votes. Sometimes there seemed to be an opening and we'd clear a few off the calendar. We certainly did everything we could working with our political operation, press operation, trying to build the heat as best we could, particularly on the press side. We had coalitions; we did everything we could to build some support. It was tough to get anybody released.

**Nelson:** Did you find that something worked? Like in the selection process if you chose this kind of nominee you'd feel pretty confident they would get through, whereas if you chose a different kind of nominee that person wouldn't get through. Most did get through.

**Ojakli:** Some did get through. It was more where there was—in some states, in some circuits there was more of a working-together atmosphere between the Senators. They were used to Republican and Democrats working together. That's where we were able to get ones cleared off the calendar, but in places like the Fourth Circuit, or if we were doing something creative, they were going to sit on the calendar for a while.

If it was a good nominee and they were Supreme Court timber, they weren't moving. Certainly a well-qualified Hispanic judge wasn't going to move. That's a sad commentary.

**Riley:** Did it have an impact ever on the selection process? In other words, does the backup then get communicated back into the decision-making meetings with Gonzales or his successors so that they begin to moderate their expectations for who they can put forward? Or is it just full speed ahead?

**Ojakli:** I think they better understood what was possible. I don't think we changed the qualifications or the type of person who would be sent up.

**Hobbs:** Maybe more willing to deal?

**Ojakli:** Yes, that's true.

**Hobbs:** Appreciating that—

**Ojakli:** That was the only way we were going to get them confirmed.

**Riley:** We understand that there is a process of keeping evergreen files on potential Supreme Court nominees also. Are you involved in that process at all?

**Ojakli:** Not me. We had two people who worked on some of that—Heather and then Wendy Grubbs.

**Calio:** Although in putting the list together, that would have been the Counsel's Office.

**Riley:** Of course. But because you're building a file, is there any prescreening at that time for

legislative salability or does that happen at the end of the process?

**Ojakli:** I don't remember doing it, probably after I left.

**Hobbs:** I never remember being involved in the process that said, "This person is not qualified."

**Calio:** The President would have relied on the Counsel's Office to provide that. I don't think our President would have considered the political salability because that was supposed to be built into the qualifications.

**Perry:** We haven't talked very much about Karl Rove. Given his force in the political world, is there anything that we should know about him or that you want to comment on?

**Calio:** There is one thing definitely that has to be on the record in this oral history. It was hands down that in the senior staff meeting I was far funnier, on a far more consistent basis, than Karl could have ever hoped to be, period.

**Riley:** OK, that's registered.

**Calio:** Karl played a huge role in the Bush Presidency. From being the architect of the campaign—he played such a large role that in many cases I think he got credit for being involved in places where he wasn't and for being this master puppeteer behind everything. That was not the case. He had his fingers in a lot, far more than most people did. But we had a good working relationship.

At least while I was there, he rarely ran out of his lane although there were times. With Karl you could have vigorous discussions and disagreements and really get into it. But I think at the end of the day to a good result because we're all part of the same team. He was a good colleague. He was a good strategist, a good tactician, very loyal to the President. One of those fallacies I think involved who was in charge and who led whom. Karl had his role, but the President was the President.

**Perry:** What would these heated discussions be about?

**Calio:** When I said before that we'd go over legislative strategy or we would have policy discussions. Take your pick. He had his views. A lot of times Karl would get on what I would call a Karl roll. It would be, "This will be this, and this will be this." The President would turn and say, "Karl, no."

**Hobbs:** People think of Karl as this political mastermind and he was, but he was also very versatile, very varied, in the conservative movement. He spent a lot of time at it. He was studying issues. Nick refers to policy discussions, he knew his way around. There were times he might clash on whether it was time to cut a deal or not, but not very often. I agree with Nick. Karl was a force in everything, and there were probably a few times that I thought he got involved in Legislative Affairs stuff that I wished he hadn't, but generally he didn't unless we asked him.

A lot of other people in the White House who thought they had a good understanding of



Congress and could lobby Congress, as soon as a Member would yell at them they'd cower. Karl wouldn't. He'd say, "You need to vote for this." They'd say, "No, no." He'd say, "Oh, yes, we did three fundraisers for you, the President—I went out and did this for you. What have we asked you for? All these other guys will vote for—you have a far tougher district. You need to vote for this, I'm not taking any of your crap."

**Howard:** He always had his facts lined up.

**Hobbs:** Oh, yes.

**Calio:** Encyclopedic knowledge and recall on all things political from micro-targeting, where I think frankly the Republican Party has fallen down. Of course he is trying to do something about that now, but he is a brilliant guy. He is funny. He has deeply held beliefs and he was good with—he'd know the Congress too. He'd argue with people. He could be a great resource. He built that political machine.

We talked about strategy a little bit, but that was his idea, to put that together because you'd get too involved in the issues of the day. So we'd get removed for a period of hours with no cell phones, in a secure location in the OEOB [Old Executive Office Building], where our incredibly insightful conversations could not be monitored or electronically eavesdropped. It was a good idea. You could look to spot trends. You could see how things were going to fit down the road depending on how—at least in our view—the legislative calendar was likely to play out and move. A huge asset.

**Hobbs:** He was right. I remember too, from the campaign, he would lay out, "OK, here is what is going to happen when they don't have a nominee. We're going to be down and then they're going to nominate—" I would say within one or two points throughout a yearlong process he called the election beforehand.

**Ojakli:** Just a tremendous asset. There were so many times when you'd exhausted all of your avenues to try to convince a Senator, and then I'd ask Karl. There were several Senators who just really grooved on getting the straight political argument. "Here is why it is in your best interest." He would not hesitate to pick up the phone, no matter what it was, and really give the strong pitch.

**Riley:** But normally not freelancing? He's doing that—

**Ojakli:** No.

**Calio:** No.

**Howard:** He was pretty good—

**Ojakli:** He was really good about it.

**Howard:** I found him easy to work with, much more so than I was expecting. Coming out of the experience of Bush 41 where there was a lot of internal tension and hearing—I didn't know Karl before the White House. I knew of his role in the campaign. I thought, *Here we go, he's going to*

*come in and just stomp all over us.* But he couldn't have been more cooperative, especially in the early days.

**Calio:** A lot of Members liked to talk to him because of what David said, that political knowledge was invaluable. I remember in one specific case Karl buzzes me and says, "By the way, Roy Blunt called me. Here is what we talked about" and all that. So he was really good.

**Howard:** I got into it a few times with him on different things. Our staffs—he didn't like the way things were worded. As David said, he could be a real policy wonk. Or speeches—there were a lot of times in the White House where some of the speechwriters and senior staff really wanted to take a whack at Congress. So I'd push back and say, "No, you can't be that explicit about attacking Denny Hastert," that kind of thing.

There were a lot of late-night conference calls. I would be on; Karl would be on. He'd be making his case; I'd be making my case. More often than not we were able to resolve it and resolve it without yelling at each other. I think Karl felt that as long as you stated your case and made a good case, he was willing to be flexible.

**Hobbs:** The announce process—I mentioned [Gregory B.] Jaczko. "Look, we're not going to get these 50 people done." He would be the last problem. It would be like, "Come on, Karl." He'd say, "I won't do that." We'd say, "We know that, but we're announcing a stop to all nominations until you give in on this." He'd say, "OK, OK."

So again, I think you had to be on your toes in your arguments.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Howard:** If he got a sense you didn't know what you were talking about then he'd run right over you.

**Perry:** I wanted to follow up on what you said about sometimes in a meeting though the President would—if Karl would be going down a certain road the President might say, "No, no." Would that be on an issue position or a strategy or both?

**Calio:** I think the President knew—it would be on strategy, it would be on issues—the President knew when Karl was selling. Sometimes when he was extending his remarks, so to speak. He always knew his facts, but sometimes he was selling and he started to like his position and he would go. The President always knew when that was, "Karl, no."

**Nelson:** Where do you think he got his understanding of Congress since he had no background?

**Calio:** He was a political system junkie.

**Howard:** Going back to teenage years probably.

**Riley:** I'm going to ask a question that never occurred to me before. How was he like or unlike Lee Atwater? Can you compare the two of them?

**Calio:** I never worked directly with Lee. I knew him around the periphery. That is an interesting question.

**Howard:** He wasn't as rough as Lee.

**Calio:** He was certainly not as rough as Lee.

**Riley:** Rough meaning unpolished or rough meaning hardball politics?

**Calio:** Hardball politics.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** I think Lee was more intuitive. That's not to say Karl isn't intuitive, but Karl was intuitive and fact-based.

**Howard:** I don't think Lee was anywhere near the policy wonk that Karl is.

**Calio:** Like on the stem cell research, Karl got so deep into that—

**Riley:** No kidding?

**Calio:** Oh, yes.

**Howard:** The other interesting dynamic I found was watching Karl and Karen Hughes in the same meetings. They represented two wings, I guess you could look at it. Karl was much more aggressive, not in a threatening kind of way. Karen was a little bit softer. Between the two of them they were usually able to resolve whatever differences they had in a way that worked well for the President. It was always interesting to watch the back-and-forth between the two of them. They could talk about anything—where to send the President, what to say in a speech, what's going on on the Hill.

**Riley:** Rove on stem cells, I'm not sure I've heard that before. Is he educating himself at the same time the President is on these issues?

**Hobbs:** On every issue. Really, when he got named Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy, the buzz was, "Oh, my gosh, what does Karl know about policy?" Everything. He is just as good at policy and spent just as much time it seemed as on politics. So, yes, I think that he probably worked closely with Lefkowitz in terms of—

**Calio:** Actually, if I remember correctly and I could be wrong about this so you would have to check with other people, but I remember it as Karl actually setting up, taking the initiative to set up various meetings and setting the course for the learning process or for the process of coming to a conclusion and then putting Jay in charge of it.

**Hobbs:** It probably made sense in terms of inviting the outside ethicists and scientists and others.

**Riley:** Mike, have you heard this?

**Nelson:** No. It makes me wonder how stem cell came to occupy so much of the President's and Karl Rove's attention. What put that on the agenda? It hadn't been a campaign issue. Where did that issue come from?

**Calio:** There was a move in Congress to try to legislate that you were allowed to use stem cells. We were going to lose.

**Hobbs:** [Michael] Castle was leading, it might have been a discharge petition even.

**Riley:** One other question related to this. One of the conventional positions in the White House that has developed over time since at least the [Jimmy] Carter administration was a Public Liaison operation. We get the sense that in this White House it was diminished a little bit. In fact, somebody told us recently that there wasn't supposed to be an Assistant to the President for Public Liaison at the outset, that because of personnel issues that actually did happen.

My question is about your relationship with the interest group community. In particular because there was so much made of these, what was it the Grover Norquist Tuesday group? Were you guys involved in that Norquist network?

**Ojakli:** I used to go every once in a while depending on if there was an issue—it was more rare. I'd go on judges or something like that just to let everybody know what was going on, especially during say the Estrada nomination.

**Howard:** But it wasn't formal.

**Ojakli:** It wasn't a formal thing; Grover would invite me and I'd give the group an update.

**Riley:** What were the meetings like? What would happen at the meetings? Who would attend?

**Ojakli:** A lot of information being passed out. It is kind of a hundred different groups all assembled. Various people get up. They usually have an agenda of several folks who ask to speak and present. Then it is anybody who has other stuff to let everybody else know. They all pass out materials on whatever they're trying to get done or want people to get done.

**Riley:** Was it helpful to the White House?

**Ojakli:** Usually we wouldn't take part formally. We'd have somebody, Tim Goeglein was the one who would be over there all the time, who was Public Liaison.

**Riley:** So there was a Public Liaison?

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Riley:** Were you actively involved in trying to generate interest group support for your work out of Congressional Liaison or was all of that within a separate operation?

**Hobbs:** I think if some trade group wanted something, they knew in terms of legislative input and potential changes that we probably were in a better position to influence it than Public

Liaison was. So we certainly got lobbied a lot on various issues. We employed them to help us when our objectives were the same.

**Calio:** Without asking them to lobby.

**Howard:** We did that.

**Riley:** Of course. Can you recall any specific instances where you were actively working with outside groups to try to push forward?

**Calio:** Sure, the trade bills in particular. The tax bills.

**Hobbs:** NFIB [National Federation of Independent Businesses].

**Riley:** I think we've done extremely good work today. My guess is when you go have some mandatory fun now that you'll probably think of a few other things that we have forgotten to talk about, and we hope that you'll bring your best stories and share them with us. We'll take advantage of your generosity tomorrow morning and run from 8:00 to 9:00 and get these last few stories on the record. As I expected this has been terrific fun for us.

**Calio:** This has been great. As I mentioned to you downstairs, we've talked before about we all ought to get together some time and talk about different things. While we still have our memories we should just tape record them and just start talking. To have this as a resource just for personal history—my son-in-law saw this book and said, "This would be great for the grandkids." I said, "If you think you can get my kids to read it, I think it's great."

## **March 15, 2013**

**Riley:** We're back with Nick Calio. Let me begin by asking if there is anything that occurred to you guys after we left yesterday, where you thought, *I wish we had talked about this*.

**Ojakli:** Maybe the energy debate.

**Hobbs:** ANWR [Arctic National Wildlife Refuge].

**Ojakli:** ANWR was something that we were looking at as votes were building in the Senate that we had maybe a shot at winning.

**Calio:** Go for it.

**Ojakli:** Just as we returned to a Republican majority in the Senate, it looked like there was an

outside shot at winning ANWR in the Senate and pursuing a robust energy reform. But it proved elusive, as it has for the last 10 years or so, to get some kind of comprehensive energy reform. We had energy reform on the floor for weeks in and weeks out, and we never really got comprehensive reform, we never got ANWR.

The ANWR debate played out, the CAFE [Corporate Average Fuel Economy] debate played out, several other debates, renewable fuels, several of these things, but we never really got to the point where the votes were there.

**Nelson:** What made you optimistic and then what didn't happen that you hoped would happen?

**Ojakli:** It was a renewed push from the Senators from Alaska and a feeling that the change in the vote dynamic, new Senators who were voted in in 2002, the switch-out of Chambliss for Cleland. I can't remember some of the other new folks in the class of '02. There were the hopes of Coleman coming in for Wellstone. I'll always remember seeing Norm Coleman coming over from the subway eating a piece of Alaska salmon and thinking, *Aha! This is good. There is a good chance here.*

**Calio:** Was he holding it in his hand? I'm fascinated by this. Like a bear?

**Ojakli:** He was on his way back from Ted Stevens's office. There was hope in the recalculation of the votes with the new Members, but it proved elusive once again.

**Hobbs:** When did we do ergonomics, was that 2001?

**Calio:** That was June or July 2001.

**Hobbs:** It was one of the first Congressional Review Acts.

**Calio:** Nickles ran the show.

**Hobbs:** Then the balanced-budget agreement. Actually, the bill that opened up the government again after the shutdown with Clinton.

**Ojakli:** In '96.

**Hobbs:** Yes. So we put the Congressional Review Act in over the objection of [Leon] Panetta, who wanted to take it out, but Clinton had already stood up and said he was for the agreement. Then the first time it was used successfully was to overturn the ergonomics relatively early on.

**Howard:** Yes, I think it was 2001.

**Riley:** One of the things we didn't talk about yesterday was Executive orders. Is that something that you routinely would be in the mix to try to determine—particularly in the pre-9/11 era—whether it is wise to use an Executive order because of the potential blowback from Capitol Hill?

**Calio:** I don't remember much.

**Howard:** They all came across our desks. We talked yesterday about the internal paperwork.

Executive orders come across our desks. I looked at them. I didn't see anything particularly controversial.

**Calio:** No.

**Ojakli:** There was a grouping, the first-day Executive orders. Those were really worked on during the transition so that Day One—it seems kind of typical, first day you reverse the ones that were reversed on the first day of the previous administration, among others.

**Calio:** Didn't we reverse logging somewhere, one that would allow roads to be built to log, wasn't that one of them?

**Ojakli:** Probably was.

**Riley:** Mexico City.

**Ojakli:** Mexico City policy.

**Calio:** Of course.

**Nelson:** Something you hear about, at least in the rumor mill, is when the Clinton people left they left the White House in pretty bad shape.

**Hobbs:** They took the Ws off the computer.

**Nelson:** Was any of this true?

**Hobbs:** Not in our suite.

**Howard:** No, you're right. In the first week or so, there was a lot of that churning around internally but then people started looking around. It was like, "No, we don't really see anything here," anything more than maybe what the janitors might have done. Then an internal message went out: "Drop this, there's nothing to it. We're looking foolish."

**Calio:** Chuck Brain was my immediate predecessor and an old friend of mine. He used to work for Rostenkowski. He put every speed dial number on the phone to his new number as a joke and left me a personal note, a stapler, a scissors, Scotch tape, and a pen.

**Riley:** Which is more than most people get, right?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Riley:** You could read this and think he was slighting you but—

**Calio:** No, it was pretty funny. The speed dial in particular.

**Howard:** It is interesting. When you go back in a second time. The same furniture was there. I remember the same drapes were in my window from eight years before. The same chairs, the same worn-out upholstery, and the same beat-up old desk.

**Nelson:** You mentioned Sarbanes-Oxley yesterday as another issue you all dealt with. Can you talk about that? That was an issue that came out of Congress. So this was one where you all had to respond. How did you go about doing that? How did the administration's position take shape?

**Ojakli:** The way I remember the timeline is it was moving as an executive matter in response to Enron. Harvey Pitt at the SEC was charged with coming up with some kind of solution. He was on point. We were going down that tack and then WorldCom hits. Then legislation comes rapid fire.

**Calio:** Actually, the legislation started earlier.

**Ojakli:** It started earlier but that's when it picked up steam.

**Calio:** It got a head of steam, then simultaneously we hit the pause button, people on the Hill also hit the pause button to take a look at what they were doing and it languished for a while. Then WorldCom hit and we all were negotiating our hearts out for three weeks. Everybody was all for it, it was done.

**Howard:** We were for it.

**Nelson:** I was thinking about this in comparison to the Homeland Security Department, where an initiative starts in Congress but then essentially you preempt it. Why wasn't that—?

**Calio:** This was more of a joint venture in response to what had happened.

**Nelson:** So this was really bipartisanship at work?

**Calio:** Yes, I think so.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Perry:** I have a question about Social Security reform.

**Hobbs:** That was bad.

**Perry:** Several times yesterday you mentioned that as something that the President, early on in the first term, kept saying, "Let's do this." But you tried and it wasn't going anywhere. Did he finally drop it? I know that it was picked up again after his reelection, but did he continue to mention it during the first term?

**Calio:** Yes. In the first few years while I was there, at least three times with the Republican leadership he raised the need to do it. As I said yesterday, David would shake his head every time. The leaders would just sit there and basically go—

**Howard:** Didn't we set up some commission or something?

**Calio:** I think so.

**Howard:** I think we set up a commission and gave it two years to report. That took a little bit of



the steam out of it.

**Hobbs:** Wasn't [Richard] Parsons the chair of it?

**Howard:** That's right. The commission was going to report at some point and we were going to have to deal with it again somehow.

**Knott:** Nick, you had a smile on your face when that name came up.

**Calio:** No comment.

**Perry:** The first head of the commission.

**Riley:** In a more general sense, did President Bush like dealing with Members of Congress?

**Calio:** Yes, he did.

**Howard:** For the most part.

**Calio:** For the most part. Not always.

**Howard:** There were a few guys who got under his skin.

**Riley:** Who got under his skin?

**Howard:** I'd say Byrd right off the top of my head. He just hated sitting in leadership meetings and getting lectured by Byrd on constitutional prerogatives and whatever.

**Riley:** Roman history.

**Calio:** Roman history. If we could get a copy of those blue books we all had with the weeklies, you'd enjoy those too.

**Riley:** Love to have one.

**Calio:** He did the Roman history; Jack's weekly report was hysterical.

**Howard:** He'd get the Constitution out of his pocket and wave it around like we've never seen the Constitution before.

**Calio:** He was rude. He did that all the time. Off point, interrupt. He was so prickly. But the President in general liked dealing with Members of Congress. They were some of our best allies. Like Rob Portman, who thought that the President needed to have X number of really good, close friends in Congress. I can never get it right exactly how he used to say it, but he'd say, "I need to be friendly with Congress. I don't need to be their best friend."

**Riley:** I'm sorry?

**Howard:** "Be friendly but I don't need to be their friends."

**Riley:** Who were the people he got along best with?

**Calio:** Lott.

**Ojakli:** Judd Gregg.

**Howard:** He liked Hastert.

**Riley:** Why Judd Gregg, what was the connection there?

**Calio:** Old family ties.

**Riley:** Is that right?

**Ojakli:** Same kind of wit. Judd Gregg is a very witty, sardonic—

**Calio:** Dry.

**Hobbs:** I think it is probably fair to say that Judd Gregg had more private dinners with the President than anybody else.

**Calio:** He did.

**Hobbs:** I think if he was reaching out, “Hey, Laura and I want to have some people over,” he probably reached out to the Greggs.

**Riley:** It is striking, his father served in Congress.

**Howard:** Yes, that’s a good point. It was a different kind of relationship. His father had really close personal friends from when he was—Sonny Montgomery and—

**Calio:** Rostenkowski, who he would have up all the time. His father didn’t like to ask them for votes.

**Howard:** Yes, he felt uncomfortable, it was like crossing the line.

**Calio:** If 43 initially didn’t want to make calls, when he got going, he just kept saying, “Give me more.” He was good at it; he had a good way. He puts people at ease. He has an uncanny ability to remember things about people.

When I went down to Austin once, before the time I went to talk about the job, I didn’t frankly think he’d remember me. He does. He learns something about you. The Bushes were very nice and very considerate about the staff. One of the times I went to Camp David with my family the Greggs were there. Just to watch him with the kids—he still calls my older daughter Gettysburg. Her friend from high school was at Gettysburg for the weekend. She hadn’t come the 20 minutes from Gettysburg to Camp David because she had been drinking the night before and was going out drinking with her friend. She regrets it to this day.

My other daughter was, I don’t know how old at the time, Jessie [Calio] would have been 10,

maybe 11. She was nervous. We were sitting there watching TV. The President sits down next to her, Mrs. Bush on the other side. He takes his leg and he keeps knocking my daughter's leg, making faces at her until she settles down. Mrs. Bush was really nice there. Then the President took my son over to watch the Ohio State game—we're Ohio State fans. The whole weekend, they would make you feel comfortable. You'd have these big family dinners. They'd have a big group of people. It's things like that all the time for the staff, and then the little notes.

**Riley:** You said the Greggs were there. So they were also—

**Calio:** The Greggs were there, Mel [Melquíades] and Kitty Martinez were there, Andy and Cathy [Card] were there the one time we were there, Condi was pretty much always there. It would be a big diverse group from throughout the administration. Sometimes some old family friends as well. There is a big living room and big dining room with a big round table served family style.

**Riley:** According to the press reports and I guess by the numbers, he really didn't care for formal activities like state dinners.

**Calio:** No.

**Riley:** Was that a problem for you? Were there people on the Hill saying, "It sure would be nice if we could get an invitation—"

**Hobbs:** People were always looking for something like that. "How about I get an invite?"

**Calio:** It wasn't a flash point because people knew he didn't do it.

**Howard:** They knew the nature of his personality and didn't push the matter. He had other ways of doing it. He used to do tee ball games. We'd invite Members to that on the South Lawn and interact with them there. We found different ways.

**Ojakli:** But what I heard about the state dinners was it made it all the more special. Under President Clinton there were tents on the lawn. It was a cast of thousands. When President Bush had a state dinner it was a very small intimate group, so it was that much more special to be invited.

**Hobbs:** But like Congressional picnics. He was always very generous with his time, pictures with everybody.

**Ojakli:** Christmas.

**Hobbs:** White House Christmas parties.

**Calio:** I could go on the record for Mrs. Bush and say yes, we did sneak staff in or I did sneak staff in, which she thought was true, but these were people who really helped the President. We didn't do that much of it.

**Riley:** Sneak staff into—

**Calio:** The Christmas party. Because they had been invited in previous administrations and these were the people who were carrying a lot of water. There is such a thing as too much staff, but you also have to realize that staff promotes and advances your agenda.

**Riley:** Sure.

**Calio:** The first Christmas party we tried to suggest a way to do the pictures because everybody wants their picture in front of that tree.

**Howard:** It's a mob scene.

**Calio:** We were rejected on how to do it.

**Hobbs:** We suggested the way that Clinton did it. By way of background, Clinton would have—you could hardly move. I got invited to many Clinton White House Christmas parties, which meant they were inviting a hundred staff members and their spouses. They had figured out this really good way to do it after six or seven years. You'd come in and get a ticket with a time on it because otherwise people kind of milled around but soon they get in line and you have an 800-person line and it's ridiculous. So you'd get this ticket. It would say 9:15. Somebody got 10:00, somebody got 8:45.

**Riley:** Like getting on the Matterhorn at Disney World.

**Hobbs:** So we suggested that and the social office rejected it.

**Calio:** It was a low point. So people start lining up almost immediately. We have people watching the line, giving names. There are the military people who take people's names and then announce it to the President. My wife and I are first so we can watch what is going on, but quickly realize that there is a problem. People are getting angry and upset.

**Riley:** These are important people.

**Calio:** They're important people, not nearly as important sometimes as they thought relative to their Christmas pictures. It's taking forever. Near the end, I could tell, Mrs. Bush was *fried*. She was so angry.

**Howard:** This is late, 11:00, 11:30.

**Calio:** I'm sweating. We're trying to move people in and out of line and then I'm waiting right where the entrance is near the end so I can cut the whole thing off. I come in and they're putting Purell on their hands. She says, "Nicky, two hours and 53 minutes. This is *not* acceptable. There were too many people here. I am *not* happy."

I'm pretty short as it is, but I felt about this big. Meanwhile the President is behind her going like this [making faces]. We then went out for mandatory fun. But, boy!

Then if I can tell one other story. The night of the picnic when we did the meeting with Hastert and Lott about Homeland Security, we come out the back. The President crosses the little tarmac

road, hits the grass, and is mobbed. Everybody's waiting. There are people with babies, everybody wants this. As a staff person you wait and you try to help clear the logjam, so if he wants to move around and visit with people. He wasn't moving, just standing there.

I go down and I see Mrs. Bush. She says, "Where's the President?" I said, "He's up at the entrance on the grass." She said, "You tell him I'm ready to eat, please." So I go and I tell the President, "Mrs. Bush is ready to eat." He said OK. He just keeps talking. I'm waiting there. He looks at me. I said, "I think Mrs. Bush is waiting for you." "OK." Just keeps talking.

So I wander back down. She says, "Did you tell the President I'm ready to eat?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, he can't quite break away." She said, "Would you go please tell him that I'd like to sit down and eat?" I go back up to him. You can't win here, right? He says, "I heard you. Tell her I'm not ready." I'm not telling her that.

I went back down and I said, "He just can't break away." So she sat down and ate, but—What raised that in my mind was David's point about how much time he took with people. It is what you'd say, he took a real liking to my son. He always remembered stuff, always asks about people. He'd meet a Member of Congress once and he'd always remember their name, remember something about their family, ask questions. Those kinds of personal touches. Plus, up close, he could be funny in all sorts of ways because he is very witty, very quick.

**Ojakli:** Yes.

**Calio:** Just very funny.

**Hobbs:** I mentioned yesterday about how he felt a personal responsibility to make everybody feel comfortable.

**Riley:** Yes.

**Hobbs:** I think with Members of Congress it extended all the way through.

**Ojakli:** I thought it was nice, the personal touch. On the first day in the White House, it was very intimidating to walk in, to smell the fresh paint, see the White House symbol on your computer screen. And there was a coffee-table book inscribed to each White House officer from the President and Mrs. Bush, a really nice touch.

**Hobbs:** And a real note welcoming you. The Christmas cards get mailed out when you are a commissioned officer and you got a big version of it. They were always personalized, "To David and Gretchen [Hobbs]." Every year. Then there were other—

**Calio:** The inaugural speeches, a book. I got two books that were signed. Then when they took out the floor of the Oval Office and replaced it, he took pieces of it and had a picture of the Oval Office with a personal letter to you about your service, all framed and everything. It was a remarkable gift.

**Ojakli:** It was the most amazing thing. After I left, I thought I was getting something from HR [Human Resources] or a benefit package delivered to my house. I open it and there's a

handwritten note from the President, “Thanking you for your service.” I thought, *This is the coolest thing*. It is one of my most treasured possessions. What a nice touch.

**Calio:** When I left they had a going-away party and Lott and Breaux were the two guys from Congress who spoke at the party because the three of us did all that stuff together. When I asked Lott to speak, he said, “I’m not too popular with a lot of people, you sure you want me up there?” I said “Yes, you’re my friend. That doesn’t stop.” But the President also came and spoke. I had gotten a really nice note from him earlier but then when I got back to my office after the party—I was fairly emotional—I found this two-sided, handwritten note that was very personal on my chair. I’ve never shown it to anybody, it’s just really special.

**Riley:** Was he a note writer in the same vein as his father?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Riley:** That’s interesting.

**Hobbs:** He was. This kind of goes to the war too and Amo [Amory] Houghton was thinking about not voting for it. So he wrote this very thoughtful letter. It was like, “Mr. President, you know I’m really concerned about going to war. I know also as a CEO that sometimes a CEO has to make a decision and so I respect that.” He used to be the CEO of Corning. Amo was a good friend of mine, for a lot of reasons—

**Calio:** Golfing at Augusta.

**Hobbs:** He was a member of August and Cypress Point.

**Riley:** He’d be my friend too.

**Hobbs:** So he gave me this letter and said, “Would you give it to the President?” I remember seeing him on the stairs and I had this letter. I said, “Sir, this is a letter from Amo Houghton.” He said, “What do you want me to do?” I said, “I’d like you to read it. It’s on the war.” He said, “What am I going to do with that?” I said, “You might want to read it.” So he snatches it kind of in a huff and continues off to a briefing.

About 30 minutes later I get this call that says, “Come down and get this note.” I didn’t know we had legal-size White House parchment paper. There is a two-sided answer. “Look, I know this is really a tough question for me.” This handwritten thought process of why he thought it might be necessary to send American troops in. But in terms of the personal touch he was doing a lot of that.

Sometimes you’d sit there and be briefing him and he’d be doing the “uh huh, uh huh,” and he’d slide stuff across the desk.

**Riley:** Signing as he was—

**Hobbs:** Signing stuff and throwing it. You’d be kind of going on.

**Riley:** Did you see 41 around the White House much?

**Calio:** Yes. He was around a fair amount. It was always special. At Christmastime he was there. I have this one great picture; he was at the White House. I saw him in the Oval, it was always big hugs. He'd keep his arm around you. I got a note from him with a picture from the Library. "Thank you for all you do for 41 and 43" and a bunch of other stuff. I was only one of the retreads who were there. He was around, always low key.

**Riley:** How did you manage to bridge the two? What distinguished your service from others so that you were unique or close to unique in being with both of them?

**Calio:** I don't think I was unique. Joe Hagan, Andy Card—

**Hobbs:** Yes, a lot of people came back.

**Calio:** Jack. A bunch of us came back. It's a great family, it really is. They all have certain traits. They're very considerate, very kind, very witty, fun to be around, and they all have a real sense of purpose.

**Howard:** I always thought 43 was much more like his mother in terms of personality than his father.

**Calio:** Yes, very much so.

**Perry:** How so?

**Howard:** In terms of a real quick wit. She's a very funny woman too, but very down to earth, same sort of personality, whereas the father—I have tremendous respect—a little bit more reserved, especially in public. A tremendous sense of humor too but just different personalities. Jeb [John Ellis Bush] is much more like his father, I think.

**Calio:** I think that's correct.

**Riley:** And the relationship between the son and the father during the Presidency is—from your perspective is exclusively a father-son relationship or were there times when he was tapping his father's knowledge of Congress or—

**Calio:** I can't speak to that.

**Howard:** They kept that very private. My guess is there was a lot of it, but I never heard anything.

**Calio:** If you look at the way they both have handled themselves post their Presidency. I think they probably feel it is inappropriate for them to be making public statements on public policy issues.

**Howard:** And 41 felt strongly that he should not be, at least publicly, intruding at all or even trying to defend his son publicly.

**Knott:** You saw no indications, these stories that were reported of the father being skeptical of the whole Iraq venture?

**Calio:** No.

**Knott:** Some of the father's team speaking out against it?

**Calio:** I remember Brent saying something, but I would not relate that back to 41 because it would be totally unlike him to say anything.

**Howard:** Way out of character.

**Riley:** So it is more likely that there was space between Scowcroft and 41 than there was space between 41 and 43.

**Calio:** That would be speculation on my part, but—

**Howard:** That's probably right.

**Riley:** This is not a legal proceeding.

**Calio:** I'm a long way from being a lawyer.

**Howard:** I just think the last thing the father would want is for any kind of perception that there is any difference between the two of them.

**Calio:** I do know that he said on a number of occasions that the criticism hurt, to see his son criticized.

**Knott:** I don't remember the timing of when Vice President Cheney told Senator Leahy to eff off.

**Hobbs:** No, go eff himself. I believe it was 2003.

**Ojakli:** Yes, wow. What was it?

**Knott:** It was a photo opportunity, correct?

**Hobbs:** No.

**Ojakli:** It was on the Senate floor.

**Hobbs:** He had been criticizing him on—

**Ojakli:** It was Halliburton.

**Hobbs:** His severance package at Halliburton or something like that.

**Ojakli:** Around that time, there was an amendment that was going after the Vice President on



Halliburton and there was a challenge to him. The Vice President hit him on the floor. That's when I think it was. I remember we were rounding up—that's when we got [Mark] Dayton because he voted the right way by mistake.

**Calio:** You had laid the seeds for that.

**Ojakli:** We got him in it regardless. It was a really bad amendment trying to make the Vice President look bad on that, and he was rightfully pretty ticked.

**Knott:** Did you get any pushback from other Senators, saying, "Hey, this is out of line"?

**Hobbs:** Just the opposite.

**Ojakli:** Exactly the opposite. Leahy is a particularly sensitive person who wants to be loved by everybody. I think it really hit him.

**Calio:** Sensitive one sided.

**Ojakli:** Sensitive one sided.

**Calio:** He's sensitive, but what he says and does about other people not so sensitive at all.

**Ojakli:** That's exactly right. If it was anything, it was the other side that had a comment. He was way out of line.

**Nelson:** When you all were talking about dealing with the Senate yesterday it seemed pretty clear that Trent Lott was the go-to guy. Was that the case to the same degree with Hastert in the House? The public perception is that Hastert is, at best, a member of a troika with Armey and DeLay and again the public perception is that maybe he is not even the most important member of the troika.

**Hobbs:** I spent years being Dick's chief of staff and working for Dick. I knew Tom DeLay from before he went to Congress and Denny has been a friend for years. Just coincidentally I participated in about four or five hours of an oral history project on the Hastert Speakership a few weeks ago.

**Riley:** Really, where is it?

**Hobbs:** The House historian is doing it. But the Speaker is the Speaker. You know, as my boss, the former majority leader, used to say, Speaker trumps leader. So Denny was a different type. Newt was a very big thinker, big pronouncements.

**Calio:** Strong personality.

**Hobbs:** A coach. He was the longest-serving Republican Speaker. There was a lot of speculation that Tom DeLay was holding the strings on Denny Hastert. I would reject that. I think that Denny—coach is the best way to describe him. He kept Dick Armey close and he kept Tom DeLay close and he made things happen. Yes, Trent Lott was a great ally in the Senate and later

Frist was very helpful too, but just because of the rules of the House and the Senate, the House has the Rules Committee. So if the Speaker of the House wants to help you, he can deliver almost instantly, whereas the Senate, they may want to help but you have to get 60 and that takes a while.

**Calio:** The notion that somehow Tom was pulling the strings on Denny was a little bit like the story of Cheney pulling the strings on President Bush.

**Howard:** I was going to say—

**Calio:** Denny was a very strong leader. He didn't have to say much to let you know where he stood. He's a big presence. He ran the House very well. In a nuts-and-bolts way he kept everybody in line. The troika idea, that leadership was close and they did deliver.

**Hobbs:** I would also say in the Senate the majority leader has about 90 percent of the power. So let's take the Republicans. [Addison Mitchell] McConnell has about 90 percent. Even when it comes to Steering Committee, it is his pick for Finance or any committee, then it is seniority. His pick, Finance. So a lot of the power is centered in the leader's office. The other leadership offices have about 10 percent.

In the House my observation or belief after years is that the Speaker is the Speaker. Let's say he has 50 percent of the power and the leader has 25 percent and the Whip has 15. So yes, you need the whole team, but that's just kind of the institutional differences and how the power shakes out.

**Riley:** Nick, you indicated yesterday that you might want to talk about some of these final retrospective questions. I wonder if there are any of those in particular that you wanted to tangle with. I have a specific question or two I could pose.

**Calio:** Let me do that first.

**Riley:** Mine retrospectively is to get you to reflect and think about the overall relationship between the Presidency and Congress during the period that you're there. Within the popular accounts there is this notion that the Presidency was transcendent. Either the Congress took an inferior position because of the nature of the issues or, if you wanted to push it, there was a sense of disdain or even contempt for Congress among the senior members of the Bush administration.

**Calio:** If that was there, I missed it. I don't believe that to be true. We had a good partnership with the Congress. In some sense we did exert ourselves and the President exerted the executive prerogatives much more so than had been the case in recent history. With the turn of events it became more necessary and that may feed the perception. But I think the relationship with Congress was a good one; I don't think it is one for which we got credit.

David can speak to the second two years, but the first two years would always—not being defensive about it but the record of legislative accomplishments and large-gauged issues, big pieces of legislation, was really significant and pretty remarkable and mostly done on a bipartisan basis. If you judge that by the number of Democrats, you get 15 Democrats on that first budget, then 12 on the tax bill itself. Go down the list of major pieces of legislation. It was a period of accomplishment that the media missed because they were focused on God knows what

else.

**Howard:** That's a good question. Just to add a bit of subtlety, in the first two years there was not a contempt or disdain, there were a lot of people who came into the White House staff who were on the campaign, had no experience dealing with Congress, came out of Texas and things like that. So there was an attitude in the first few months of the White House of "We'll just do this and Congress will go along," or "The President has decided this so that's what the Congress is going to do."

Part of our challenge early on was to try to educate people inside the White House that no, you just can't unilaterally—it's not like we're running a campaign anymore where the President just decides something and it happens.

**Riley:** Nick, you're nodding.

**Calio:** Yes.

**Howard:** We have to bring our guys in and educate them. Then at the right time the President can announce whatever initiatives you're going to announce and then we'd get an echo chamber on the Hill. But there was an attitude among some of the people who had no experience—"Why do we have to meet with those people? All they do is cause trouble" and things like that. It never bubbled up to the President's level.

**Calio:** To anybody who was making a decision.

**Hobbs:** I think there were personalities—Don Rumsfeld may have been prickly, but then Don Evans on the other hand. It's human nature. We're all wired differently.

**Ojakli:** But look at the data. I'll just use the current President as a reference point. You have two elections first term, ours came out of a roughly divided country and a mess of an election. President Obama beat Senator McCain decisively. Yet in our first term you had decisive accomplishments that were done on a bipartisan basis. You had Democrats joining Republicans, particularly in the Senate. In the first few months, you had 12 Democrats joining on a major tax cut bill. You had a very bipartisan education bill.

President Obama, health care law, which is his signature, was passed on a partisan basis. You had a lot of outreach in coming out of a very divided country. I'd say it was not a contempt but a real willingness to try to work together. It is too bad that the spirit of 9/11 didn't keep over time. It dissipated some.

**Riley:** In relative terms, how much heavy lifting was required in your shop to get these things through the agenda? That may not be the right way to characterize the question. Were you operating in a relatively receptive environment for the kinds of things the President was pushing on? I guess you could divide it pre- and post-9/11.

**Calio:** Some yes, some no. Any piece of major legislation generally requires a heavy lift. The Legislative Affairs office is the front line for that lifting. We worked votes hard, working votes you're not just counting, you're figuring any way possible to persuade people. We would come

at it from 12 different directions. Knowing the Members of Congress, what their proclivities are, what their particular needs are in terms of the politics back home. It was all a matrix and how you did it. So heavy lift, yes.

**Howard:** Yes, it was a heavy lift, but I think we drove the process inside the White House and quite candidly on the Hill. We got a little bit of blowback from some of the committee chairmen that we were moving too fast. We developed a very strict schedule for the first six months in terms of when bills needed to be introduced, when hearings needed to be held, markups, when budget needed to be done, when the tax bills needed to be done. It was a very aggressive schedule.

**Calio:** Yes, it brings to mind actually, now that you mention it, I got criticized in the press by largely Republican staffers for pushing too hard sometimes.

**Howard:** Particularly since—

**Calio:** What are you going to do?

**Howard:** The year before we took over the White House, the Congress really hadn't done much. So you're really kick-starting the legislative process to go from zero to 120 miles per hour overnight. That was culture shock for some of the guys on the Hill who said, "Whoa, give us a little bit more time and we'll work this out." We said, "No, just go, we'll work it out as we go along."

**Hobbs:** There is a natural inertia. Everybody talks about getting stuff done, but too few people are focused on getting things done. I think that is what the Office of Legislative Affairs did. It's our job—somebody yesterday said, "The translator." We know what the President wants to do, we know how the Congress operates, and we translate back and forth, but we're also there pushing and prodding. There are certainly the marquee issues that we've discussed some of, but there were dozens of budget resolutions that happened at two o'clock in the morning or were won by one vote. Or amendments that would have increased spending that we worked—So, yes, it was a nonstop—

**Howard:** We thought that was our job, to keep pushing the envelope.

**Nelson:** With the tax cut bill you said you had 12 Democrats, coming down from 1.6 to 1.35. Did you ever find yourself making a calculation about well, if we're content to get one more Democrat than we need to pass the bill and we can get 1.5 billion we'd rather do that than find the bill with the broader—? Did you find yourself wondering how far do you go to get enough Democrats to make it be bipartisan as opposed to passing it by as narrow as possible a majority and getting more of what you want?

**Calio:** We didn't want to do that, number one, and the 1.35 ended up being a resting point that took care of a number of Democrats as well as a number of Republicans who didn't want to go any further. It was a natural process to end up there. We never put into our calculation how much we could get—500 million more or whatever and lose six Democrats for that much more. You weren't going to get anything more—if you got 500 million more you weren't going to lose a lot of Democrats but—

**Ojakli:** I think it broke at well over 60. There was like a group of four that broke at well over. It was a natural resting point.

**Hobbs:** The 2003 tax cut was more like that than 2001. Probably 50 Democrats in the House voted for the 2001. As Nick alluded to yesterday, they went to four and then six and then eight and then everybody was kind of there. If we'd lowered it to 1.1 could we have gotten 70, or if we raised it to 1.6 would we have only gotten 45?

**Nelson:** I also have a Jeffords question. This is really about how you responded to it when it happened. Did you worry about this spreading, to maybe Chafee, maybe Snowe or Collins?

**Calio:** Yes.

**Nelson:** This might start a run.

**Calio:** Yes, we did.

**Nelson:** What did you do in response to that concern?

**Calio:** I said yesterday that I spent a lot of time with the moderates. I'd have lunch once a month with Arlen Specter, Olympia Snowe, I think Susan and Chafee. We were in contact with them all the time. I think we became more careful about the contact in the sense of looking for signs that something was going on. I would say candidly also we didn't know what else Reid had to trade in terms of committee chairmanships that would get somebody over the top. The counter to that was we had been looking at people like Ben Nelson for some period of time. Lott was assiduous about courting Nelson; the President was as well.

**Riley:** Was there any second-guessing from the President or anybody else in the White House about the internal operations of your shop after Jeffords? I could see where you might be nervous about whether people in the White House are holding you to blame.

**Calio:** I never felt it inside the White House, but we sure got some from the Hill and the press.

**Howard:** Going back to my impression of the President, just from the first two years, when things really went to hell in a hand basket he was at his best. That was when he would go out of his way to buck people up and say, "This is going to be all right, don't worry about it." He wouldn't turn on you and say, "You screwed up."

**Knott:** Yesterday some of you described the President as engaged, shrewd, smart, relentless, committed—

**Calio:** Yes.

**Knott:** I'm asking you to speculate here, but why didn't this translate—I don't know if public is the right word, but that's not the standard description that one hears of President George W. Bush. Any thoughts on why you saw such a different person than the public?

**Calio:** I think sometimes he was different in front of large crowds versus small crowds. I might

not be objective about this, but the press had formulated its opinion and the press is a little lazy. They put things into their own box rather than trying to plumb what was going on. I defy anybody who knows him or who has worked with him ever, who wouldn't describe him the same way. He is very resolute.

I said yesterday there is a point you could argue that resolute can spill over into stubbornness and it depends on how you look at it. But in the prism of 9/11, which I think did define the Presidency and everything he did from that day on, when people look back it is my hope and my belief that they will look at this period of having set up the structure to deal with terrorism in a way that is ongoing. We are still there. People don't like to think about it, but look at the crap that happens every day and so far so good. We've been safe. It is only because the fortitude was there to drive the process, to set up a framework or mechanisms to keep that engagement going.

When people would criticize him, I can't say whether he cared or not. He would say that he didn't. But it didn't slow him down. It was his job and he was going to do it the way he thought he had to.

**Howard:** He was who he was. He cultivated that image of the Texas good old boy. He never really featured the other side that we saw all the time. He was intuitively smart. He got people, he read issues. He understood situations instinctively. One of the things that really struck me was how much a student of history he actually is. He used to have a contest with Karl about how many books they would read a year, it's just staggering. He'd read like a hundred books a year. That's two a week. I can't read two books a week. I don't know where he found the time.

But he was a real student of history, [Abraham] Lincoln, read a lot about Lincoln. He read a lot about Harry Truman. I think in a sense he modeled himself after Truman in particular. Used to hear a lot of those analogies about how Truman left office unpopular but with the passage of time he is now one of our greatest Presidents. He looked back on previous Presidencies and studied them, much more so than he ever got credit for.

**Ojakli:** He's so secure in himself. I can think of any number of politicians who don't have that same security and at the first hint of press reports that would paint them as stubborn rather than resolute, they would have their press secretaries all over it and painting them the other way. He never directed them that way.

**Calio:** And worse, when some leaders would get criticism from their colleagues about a particular stance they would start to waver immediately. He would not do that. Jack makes an interesting point because he did sometimes feed the country bumpkin image. I said yesterday that I thought Tom Daschle always underestimated him. He worked that pretty hard too.

As a best example we were going into one of those leadership breakfasts that I talked about. I'm briefing him on the issues, he's read the briefing papers, "Here's what they're thinking about this and that." I can't remember exactly what the issue was, but Daschle starts off the same way, "We've got this going on, that going on." He starts off the same way, "Oh, really? I didn't know about that." Very sincerely. I'm like, "We just talked about it." So I look like the dummy staffer. It was OK, I knew exactly what he was doing.

**Nelson:** What was he doing?

**Calio:** Making Daschle think he was kind of dumb.

**Nelson:** Why would he want to do that?

**Calio:** Well, look at the results.

**Perry:** So they would mis-underestimate him.

**Calio:** Exactly.

**Howard:** I was always struck by how assiduously he did his job. He was very disciplined in terms of how he managed his time, his schedule. We talked a little about it yesterday, but he did his homework every night.

**Calio:** He did. He took these massive briefing books home.

**Howard:** Yes.

**Calio:** He is very disciplined about his sleep, but my big shock came with the signing statement. You can't read the amount—you can't conceivably, I couldn't read the amount of paper that came through, and he did because it was his job. At the same time he didn't focus too much on the things that didn't matter. He had his priorities. He knew his stuff, he was always ready for every meeting, which is why *you* had to be ready.

**Howard:** A very disciplined schedule. He had dinner; he'd work out. Then he would start doing his briefing book at eight o'clock at night and by 9:30 he was done and in bed. There were times when for one reason or another we couldn't get our briefing memo in on time. I'd talk to the staff secretary at 8:30 or nine o'clock and say, "OK, we have one more memo." We'd hear, "No way. We're not taking that over to him. He's going to bite our heads off for being late." That instills a discipline in the staff to make sure you get whatever paperwork you need to him early.

**Hobbs:** And the reason he did that with Nick in that instance is that he didn't really negotiate with Congress. In the sense that we negotiated, the White House negotiated with Congress, but he didn't think so. This summer we were flying somewhere and he told this executive, they asked him how about dealing with Congress. He said, "I never negotiated with Congress. That was Hobbsy's job." He could go up and say, "What are you all thinking? Here's what we're doing. What's your best offer?"

Then he would bring the best offer back to me and I'd say, "Let's get a little bit more." If it was me—

**Calio:** Actually, David, that is a very good point because he established that early on. I would do the negotiating and that would give him room. We would keep that separation. I can't believe I didn't think about that because that was one of his primary strategic or tactical positions on legislation. You'd be out front and he'd back you. If he gave you the authority you could make a decision, he'd back you, but it also kept a separation between him and what was happening so there was a little more maneuvering room.

**Hobbs:** It's a good negotiating strategy, but it works best when you have a President of the United States who is above it all in a sense. It's kind of like, "No, I want more." I'd hear, "I thought you said this was your deal, David?" I'd say, "The President wants more." They'd say, "OK, we'll give you a little more." It was a good way to get more from Congress by having him off behind the curtain.

**Riley:** Chuck [Brain] and others talking about Clinton said that they were always terrified when he would get involved in the negotiations on exactly this point.

**Howard:** It's an interesting perspective. When I was working for Newt Gingrich it used to strike terror in our hearts too when we found out there was a late-night conversation between Newt and Bill Clinton. We're like, "What did Newt give away?" Put the two of them together—

**Riley:** No telling what they'll cook up. We promised we would get you out at nine o'clock. Any last words you'd like to add?

**Calio:** Just thank you for this opportunity, it was great.

**Howard:** Wonderful.

**Calio:** Great for the four of us to get together. This is something we've talked about doing. I think this is a great project, I can't tell you how happy I am that we did this, that you gave us the opportunity. Just a lot of fun.

**Riley:** For us it has been terrific fun but we learned a lot. More important, we're going to have a record that people long after we're gone can come back and come to understand this Presidency in a way you can't get from reading the newspapers, and the books that are relying on the newspapers and other accounts just won't have this kind of inside information.

**Hobbs:** That's why it is such a privilege for us to do it. Because we were there and saw him. We all love and respect him, so it's a great opportunity for us to in some cases set the record straight.

**Howard:** We'd read a lot of the media commentary too and get frustrated because we know that's just inaccurate.

**Calio:** Ten years out or 12 years out, focusing your memory and refreshing it in this way—we were just sitting at dinner, certain things all of a sudden come back that you hadn't thought about for years. We have this record now ourselves, which is just awesome.

**Riley:** We're happy to help. If you go through this and it prompts additional memories, feel free to type up a quick appendix, a couple of pages if you have any stories or additions.

**Howard:** Likewise if you have more questions or things come up, let us know.

**Riley:** We'll sure do that. Thanks, guys.