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WEBINAR

A CONVERSATION WITH  
REPRESENTATIVE ROSA DeLAURO ON  
PRIORITIES FOR CONGRESSIONAL APPROPRIATIONS

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Keynote Remarks:**

THE HONORABLE ROSA DeLAURO (D-CT)  
Chair, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives

**Discussion:**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HUDAK: Good afternoon, every -- good afternoon, everyone. My name is John Hudak. I'm a senior fellow in Governance Studies and the deputy director of the Center for Effective Public Management, here at the Brookings Institution. It's my privilege to welcome all of you, virtually, to Brookings, and to today's panel, which is a conversation with Representative Rosa DeLauro, the chairwoman of the House Appropriations Committee, about the -- her leadership on the Appropriations Committee and vision for policy over the coming two years.

As is often the case with the busy schedules of members of Congress, Representative DeLauro is running a little bit late. We expect her to be with us in the next five to 10 minutes. But for today's panel, I'm also welcomed by my colleague, Molly Reynolds, who is a senior fellow in Governance Studies. She is our Congress expert, at Brookings. She is the go-to person for all of our questions and all of your questions about Congress. She's also the author of the book, "Exceptions to the Rule: The Politics of Filibuster Limitations in the U.S. Senate." Molly, thanks for joining me today. Thank you, too, for being patient with the unpredictable schedules of members of Congress.

So, while we do a little two-hander to kill a little bit of time and preview the panel, I'm going to first talk a little bit about how excited I am to welcome Representative DeLauro and to talk with her about what is really is a historic chairmanship. The House Appropriations Committee is one of if not the most important congressional committee, and her leadership is historic in nature. She is the second woman to hold this post, and I think, by any metric, the most progressive individual to hold that post, and the power that the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee has to translate his or her vision into policy is pretty significant, and I'm excited to hear from the congresswoman, today, about how she intends to do that. Molly, what are you looking forward to, hearing and learning, in today's event?

MS. REYNOLDS: Yeah, John, thanks for being here to have this conversation with me and with the congresswoman. I think the things -- so, as a person who watches Congress pretty closely, and there are a couple of things that I'm really watching, pretty closely, in the appropriations process, this year, and I'm really excited to hear more from the congresswoman about. One of them is this notion that we are, for the first time in a decade, operating in a little bit of a different budgetary environment than we

have been.

So, in 2011, Congress passed what's known as the Budget Control Act, which set caps on the amount of discretionary spending. So, that's the spending that the Appropriations Committee controls, caps on discretionary spending for defense and for non-defense. And since then, in the last decade, we've gone through a sort of series of Congress looks at those caps, thinks they're too restrictive, undertakes high stakes negotiations to raise them, and naturally set the table for what the appropriations process looks like. So, we've had that -- that stage where we decide how big the pie is going to be, and then the Appropriations Committee comes in and decides how it's going to divide up the pie.

The Budget Control Act caps expire, at the end of fiscal 2021, and so, we're going into this new, next year's -- the appropriations process for next year, without this kind of structure shaping the negotiations, and so, I'm really curious to hear what the Congresswoman thinks about how that will change, how, if at all, how the appropriations process works, especially because many, many members of the House have only ever been in the House, in this environment.

And so, what does that mean? What does that mean, going forward? I'll also be curious to hear more about kind of what she expects for the timing of the process. Do we end up with a short, temporary continuing resolution to take us past the start of the new fiscal year, on October 1st? Do we need a series of those? Do we end up with a big high stakes on the bus, in December? Just, again, questions kind of around what to expect there. What about you? What are you really interested to hear her talk about, today?

MR. HUDAK: So, there's a couple of topics. Before I jump into those, I'll just remind our viewers to send in questions. We're going to leave about 10 minutes, at the end of the conversation, for questions from the audience. You can send those in on Twitter, using the #Approps, A-P-P-R-O-P-S, or send them by email, to [events@brookings.edu](mailto:events@brookings.edu).

So, I think this is going to be a great conversation, Molly, and a couple of the issues that I'm interested in hearing from Rosa about, first, is earmarks, the return of what's now called congressionally directed spending. This is an issue that has been contentious in Congress. It's been

effectively banned in Congress, for about a decade. And to your point about operating in a new budgetary environment, most of the House of Representatives, and most of the Senate, has not served in Congress during a period, in which earmarks was part of policy, and so, in addition to putting the system back into place with new safeguards, getting members used to a practice, that, for a lot of them, they heard about in history, they have heard about typically vilified, and how that process is going to get started again.

The other, I think, that's important is to understand just what the divisions in Congress are going to look like, and what's that -- that's going to mean for appropriations. So, our tech people are telling me that the congresswoman is here, which is exciting, and we're about to put her into the room. I'm going to take a quick moment to introduce her -- and let me just check. Here we go. Sorry, guys, the nature of -- there we go. Good afternoon, congresswoman.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sorry to be late, I apologize.

MR. HUDAK: No, it's totally understandable. The schedules of members of Congress are unpredictable. I'm going to take a quick moment to introduce you. It's great to see you. And then we'll jump right into your remarks, if that's all right with you? Excellent. So, everyone, it's my privilege and honor to welcome Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, from the third district of Connecticut, my home district growing up. Rosa, as everyone -- anyone who's met or worked for, you don't call her Representative DeLauro, you call her Rosa, and so, my apologizes to our audience for being a little bit casual today.

Rosa has served in Congress since 1991. She's the co-founder of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. She's served as the co-chair of the Democratic Steering Committee, the Democratic House Steering Committee, and now, starting in January, became the chair of the House Appropriations Committee. Her district is in south-central Connecticut, representing 25 towns there. Her district includes, of course, includes the Aircraft, Yale University, as well as the best pizza in the world. So, if you haven't been to New Haven, you haven't had good pizza. And Rosa's public service dates back well before she was in Congress. She served as the campaign manager and chief of staff for Senator Chris Dodge. She was the executive director of Emily's List. And she comes from a political

family.

Her parents both served as members of the Board of Alderman, in New Haven, which, for those of you not from Connecticut, the Board of Alderman is essentially the city council. Her mother, Louisa, who I remember, served for 35 years on the city council, the longest serving individual to serve in that post, where she was a voice for women, for the underprivileged, and for voiceless, in New Haven and around the state, and Rosa has powerfully carried on that tradition. So, Rosa, it's great to see you again, and it's my pleasure to welcome you today.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Well, thank you so much, and I'm delighted to be with, and I say good afternoon, really, to everyone. Thank you for having me be here today. John, thank you. Thank you for the introduction, you know, deputy director, the Center for Effective Public Management, senior fellow, Governance, it's -- Governance Studies at Brookings. But, you know, near and dear to my heart, you know, as also one of my constituents, many years ago, a graduate of the University of Connecticut, and a former intern, in the office, and I hope that was a good experience, you know, you can just -- anyway, you did, probably, a lot of schlepping, too, so that that was -- you know, but again, it's so wonderful to see you.

I just want to just say about, John, for a moment, you know, in -- when it comes to questions that explore the balance between political control and bureaucratic expertise in delivery of public policy, John knows his stuff. He has written extensively on how presidents capitalize on their discretionary funding authority, how they target federal dollars to swing states in advance of presidential elections. John's other work examines how agency staffing, expertise, and institutional structure facilitates or hinder a presidential power and influence, and his work posed an extremely relevant question for today's discussion, asking, and I quote, "Why the first branch should bring back earmarks?" and, in his book, "Presidential Pork: White House Influence Over the Distribution of Federal Grants."

John, you correctly point out that removing the power of Congress to use what I call community project funding does not make them go away. It simply transfers that power, from the legislative branch to the executive branch. So, I thank you for that work.

Molly, let me recognize you, as well. A Senior Fellow in Governance at Brookings,

leading expert on how congressional procedure affects our domestic policy outcomes. Molly is the author of a detailed analysis exploring the creation, the use, and the consequences of the budget reconciliation process, and other procedures that prevent filibusters in the U.S. Senate. And I think this is particularly timely, and you could probably give me some great advice, as Chair of Appropriations, and as you know appropriations is always, you know, left out of the reconciliation projects. But that isn't deterring myself or the Subcommittee Chairs. We are making our weight felt, in that process.

But -- and Molly also supervises the maintenance of Vital Statistics on Congress, Brookings' long running resource on the first branch of government. I also -- and I did when I was at Brookings, not that long ago, with EJ, and I know Molly you were there. John, were you on the call that day, as well?

MR. HUDAK: Unfortunately, I wasn't.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: It was a wonderful -- it was a wonderful experience for me. But I want to acknowledge all of the experts at Brookings and those who have joined us today. What you do is you bring together leading experts in Government, academia. The analysis covers a full range of issues, foreign policy, economics, development, governance, metropolitan policy, and, really, just very sincere. I really stand in awe of the groundbreaking and in-depth research that you do because what it does, for those of us who are in elected office, and hopefully being policy makers, that research leads to new ideas, for helping us to solve the problems that we face, as a society, and whether those problems are local, or national, or international. So, I thank you for all of that, and giving us an underpinning for the public policy initiatives that we try to move forward on.

You might say my motivation stems from my conviction that government's role is to make opportunity real for people, to work for the common good, and that the Federal Government does have a role to play. And, last year, I was honored to be elected by my colleagues to Chair the House Appropriations Committee, and honestly, I mean, it may sound corny to some of you, but serving in this role is one of the greatest honors of my life and my professional experience because the committee's mission is to shape the \$1.4 trillion in annual discretionary spending, that goes through the 12 Appropriation Subcommittees. The task is to make government work, for working people, for the middle

class, for the vulnerable, and not for the very rich, or corporate interests.

Now, the U.S. Constitution says, and I know both of you have quoted this, "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law." And that's our mandate, our mandate to transcend gridlock and polarization, to make government embody our values, to work for every ordinary citizen, and to make sure America is more equal and just.

When I took over the appropriations of the gavel, I found out how opaque my colleagues, just not the newly elected, but more senior members, how opaque they found the process, and I understood that the process needed to be reformed, must be more transparent to members, who must be able to influence what is important in their districts. You know, after all, each member of Congress represents vastly different districts, that each face very unique challenges. Members needed to see the full potential of the Appropriations Committee.

So, a process is underway to help every member participate in the appropriations process to ensure that their constituents were being met. So, I am actively working with soliciting input, from each of the subcommittee chairs, to ensure that our work across all of the 12 subcommittees, you know, is consistent and transparent. I'm looking at soliciting input from regional delegations, on their area's appropriations needs, and to take the recommendations on specific regional and social impact.

You know, I came to that, when conversations -- when I ran for the office. My colleague, Benny Thompson, who is from Mississippi, when I went to Benny to ask for his support, he said to me, Rosa what does the Appropriations Committee do for my part of the country? A very legitimate question. So, I went back, went back to the staff, and we're able to demonstrate, and I went back to him, and I said, you know, here's this memo to you about what we do in your area of the country, and what it means.

And I think that that's critically important because we don't talk about the appropriations process in a narrative way, about what the consequences of appropriations are, on people who are living in specific areas, north, south, east or west, or in a specific district. So, on top of the regular appropriations process, the committee, as you know, is called upon to address unforeseen crises, through emergency supplementals. So, this requires reforming the development of emergency supplementals, working with the leadership, working with the subcommittee chairs.

A clear process needs to be established for members to ensure communication of supplemental appropriations needs are, in response to the disasters that might occur in their area, flood, a tornado, hurricane, wildfire, and this includes the security supplemental we're currently working on, which we're going to move forward on, in the next few weeks, to address what happened on January 6th and with the insurrection. And I'm committed to it, in this regard, and I just had this conversation with staff this morning. Because, I think, Molly, in an article that you wrote, you talk about what's going -- what has happened, you know, in recent years, a kind of top down, rather than bottom up, and so, but -- but I am committed to making sure -- what I've already done is, with the security supplemental, is that the subcommittee chairs, all -- there's six that are intimately involved in these budgets.

The first thing I did was a hearing, Democrats and Republicans, I did chairs, ranking members to deal with the agencies, and to talk about how they could work together in these efforts. Now, the subcommittee chairs, we did a briefing for the full appropriations subcommittee, and I'm committed. Before we go to rules committee, before we do anything else, is that we are -- I'm going to have a briefing, and probably this Monday, with those six subcommittee chairs and the entire caucus, so that people can know what's going on, ask their questions, before we take the bill to rules, and then take it to the floor. And that also involves conversations with the Senate and with my Republican colleagues, as well.

So, also trying to strengthen the committees historical oversight function. You know, our first most priority is oversight. And we need to ensure that we are good steward of taxpayers' dollars. And lastly, with appropriate guardrails and input from members in the caucus, I have announced, and our committee will accept community project funding requests, or as they are more commonly called, earmarks, and that is for this upcoming year. We made the announcements. The closure of the database was on Friday night. We have -- it's a critical reform. I think that we'll make Congress more responsive to people because I believe that members of Congress do have that granular understanding of what is going on, in their districts, and what their community needs are, particularly now, with regard to the pandemic.

And I think that this process restores balance on important decisions of how and where to



spend taxpayers' dollars. It, again, draws on that unique knowledge and experience that members have, in the process, and I believe, and I think my colleagues have believed, that Congress has seeded to much of its Constitutional Authority overspending to the executive branch, to make decisions on about how and where to invest taxpayer dollars. So, I believe a rebalance process with community projects will allow members to utilize their knowledge and experience.

But I also -- we've been very careful, in terms of this process, to look at what the guardrails are. Because we know, from the past, that there have been abuses of the process. So, with that, we've said, we only accept from every member who wants to participate, up to 10 projects. You have to acknowledge or just indicate that there is no financial interest that you or your immediate family have. We are dealing with one percent of what discretionary spending is, in terms of, like, cap on what the spending is. We will be looking to vet projects by the GAO.

And so, we took the advice, by the way, there was the committee -- there still is the committee on the -- an bipartisan committee on the modernization of Congress. It was very, very good suggestions to move, and we've taken some of their advisement on where to go on this. So, look, you know, yet, with all of this, we face gridlock in the Congress, on a number of issues. You know, we are united in our desire to care for those who are suffering, or have lost loved ones to the virus, to stop the spread of the pandemic, to help create an economic recovery, deliver results for hard working families, to address what has been systemic racial inequities that have been so exposed during this pandemic, to make this country more just and equal.

And these are the priorities that are guiding the appropriations process. It's a unique time, I think you all would acknowledge that. It is -- we are trying to recover from the greatest public health and economic crisis in a generation. Community of colors continue to face the systemic racism. So, we need bold proposals that rise to the challenges and improve the lives of millions of Americans. And I will just say, and again, with regard to appropriations, we have seen a period of disinvestment, but we also need to take long-term investment, and in my view, not a return to austerity. We have to make sure that taxpayers get their money's worth, and that's -- you know, and, you know, that the rich, and not the middle-class, carry the burden of taxes.

So, in partnership with the administration, which made clear, that inaction is simply not an option, our goal is to work together to reach some light at the end of the tunnel, and so we can move forward. We have worked with the administration, \$1.9 trillion to the American Rescue Plan, long overdue investments in vaccine production and distribution, financial relief to working families, the \$1,400 per person payment, expansion of UI unemployment benefits, to help people with their rent, food, healthcare, and direct funding to keep our schools open, and to get a childcare industry back on its feet because we are not going to recover, if families do not have a safe place for their kids to go.

And we are trying to help people be able to return to the workforce, and I'll just mention, just very, very, very briefly, an issue that I've championed for two decades, and that's the Child Tax Credit, so, you know, where we can provide a lifeline to the middle-class, the working families, as well, cut child poverty by over 55 percent. So, this is, you know, for kids under six, it's a \$300 a month per child. To kids six to 17, it is \$250 per month per child. So, and, we know the myriad of expenses that this can cover.

So, we need to make it permanent. President knows where we're coming from on this, and we will write the bill, and -- because the bill originates in the House, and Chair of Ways and Means, Richie Neal, is committed to writing the bill, that will make both the child tax credit and paid family and medical leave permanent. So, it great.

You know, look, and I'll end in a minute, okay, so. You know, we need to be thinking big. Eighty-six years ago, Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act. All the citizens in retirement have the promise of social security against poverty. So, I think, we owe our youngest the same promise and the same protection. So, you know, I'm going to be working, as Chair of the Appropriations Committee, to advance the investments that the President is calling for, and I quote, "A Care Infrastructure" along with a, you know, a Jobs Plan, in terms of infrastructure.

So, we are looking at Child Tax Credit, paid family and medical leave, paid sick days, all trying to establish, again, that architecture for the future, so that we have national paid sick days, national family and medical, you know, leave for people. In the jobs effort, my God, we need to continue to build, at looking at infrastructure, writ large, with airports, with internet, with broadband, with the whole nine

yards, and so, I think, that, together, these policies are a roadmap for a path forward, and then really recognize significant steps to protect workers and their families and to create a more resilient economy.

I'm going to conclude with this. Today is a new dawn, really. And we can choose public policy, that, in fact, will create jobs and defend and protect children, families, and communities. You know, in this realm, I'm off it because the issue of inequality is always uppermost in my mind, and I often quote Joe Stiglitz, who said, that, you know, "It's not globalization and technology that have caused inequality in the United States, but it is the public policy choices that we make." We now have an opportunity to really, you know, latch onto, and pass these public policy initiatives, that can lift the American people up, so that every person, no matter their background, has the opportunity to contribute and the opportunity to succeed. So, I thank you. Thank you, so much for letting me be with you today, and I'm excited to join our conversation. Thank you.

MR. HUDAK: Great, Rosa. Thank you so much for those powerful comments. Molly and I are going to tag team some questions for you, and we have some audience questions that have been submitted.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Okay.

MR. HUDAK: I'll remind our audience at home, you can submit additional questions, on Twitter, using the #Approps, A-P-P-R-O-P-S, or by emailing them to [events@brooking.edu](mailto:events@brooking.edu). The first spot I want to -- the first question I want to jump in with, Rosa, involves a lot of what you just talked about, a lot of the spending, a lot of the support that has come out of Congress, in the time of the pandemic. Trillions of dollars, over the past year, in addition to regular appropriations have been spent, and part of the job of your committee, in addition to authorizing spending, of course, is to oversee that spending. Can you talk a little bit about how you see your role and your committee's role --?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MR. HUDAK: -- in the oversight process, and how you plan to work with subcommittees chairs and your colleagues, in the -- on Senate Appropriations, to make sure that that oversight is done effectively?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Well, thank -- and thank you. I really mean thank you

for the question because, as I said in my remarks, I think that's a primary function. We -- \$1.4 trillion, they're taxpayer funds, we have an obligation to make sure that they are -- that the dollars are -- are well spent. And to be honest, look, I -- you know, let me give you a couple of examples.

In the ag area, you know, we went through, you know, the suffering of farmers, etc. We put into place agricultural resources, and as we began to investigate, what I find out is that, you know, let's say, over \$100 million of that money has -- went to a company in Brazil, a company called JBS, which cornered the market on pork products, you know, and this is a company that has been in violation of our Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. They have been cited in Brazil and here, for their corruption in the industry, run by these two brothers. Why in the hell -- excuse me. And we find that the money is going to these big agriculture efforts, and not to the small farmers, who need the money.

That is something that we need to oversee, to look at, and why, when the money was obligated -- the money was obligated to make sure that our farmers, our ranchers could survive this pandemic. And when Secretary Vilsack came up before the committee for his budget hearing, I asked him that question. And I'll work on looking at how we turn that around, okay?

The other one of the other examples is, with regard to these influx facilities, that house our -- the unaccompanied children who come across the border. And for a while, and not now, because we've had the surge, and I have a problem with influx facilities, but if we have to deal with this surge at the moment, I just want to make sure that the standards of care are being provided for children.

But not that long ago, these were facilities that were empty, not one child, and yet, we were paying, you know, millions of dollars for these contracts for these facilities, why? Why is there is something of a clause, in what we're doing, that safeguards the Federal dollars that we are using. So, I want to use the committee, and to be very honest with you, this is an area that I am really beginning to get into. We have an Appropriations, a Surveys and Investigations Subcommittee, and when I have looked into it, in order to get any report or anything done, you need what they call the four-corners. You need the Democrats and the Republicans saying, yes.

Well, let me just tell you, it can be hard to get to that, yes, as you know. I want to, and I'm going to figure out how we can, as an Appropriations Committee, build that oversight function, that

allows us to look into these efforts, without having to make sure that we have -- look, to be honest, I wanted to look into -- there was a report written about a barter, where biomedical research gets done and to the market, and in fact, we found, or at least it was reported, that the money that went for these -- for advanced manufacturing, or whatever we needed in this space, was being moved to other areas. Some included the refurbishment of the offices. I wanted an investigation. Well, I couldn't get, you know, agreement in the way that this process, currently, is structured.

So, it is my goal. I'm going to find out what happened. I'll figure out a way to do that, through a hearing or some other opportunity to do it. But that's a place where I want to get to because I think it's critical, if we're to build faith in what this Appropriations Committee does and the resources that it expends, that that is an obligation that we have. So, I know it was very long, but I want to describe to you, you know, some of the places where I -- I'm not where I want to be yet, in that, in that space.

MS. REYNOLDS: So, I, actually, Congresswoman, have a follow up, while we're on the topic of oversight --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sure.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- and so, so, if we kind of look back at the last -- particularly the last two years of the Trump administration, when Democrats controlled the House, we see a lot of examples of it being really difficult for House Committees to get the information that they needed from the administration. And so, I'm curious if there are sort of particular lessons that you learned from those last two years, that you're taking forward, as you just described, plan to continue to do vigorous oversight over an administration of your own party?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Well, you know, look, I think -- let me just put it in this form if I can. If we control the power of the purse, if you can't get answers, if you can't get the information that you need, I don't know of a more powerful lever that we have to say, you know, give us the information, or, you know, it -- the dollars are not going to be forthcoming, or we will reserve the right to be able to hold back on funds, before we get the information, you know, that we are -- that we are looking for.

You know, you never want to go to a nuclear option, you know? But that is the arrow in

the quiver here, in my sense. I don't know if you agree, or -- and I would welcome thoughts on, you know, how best to do that. You know, look, I think I asked for -- and I'll tell you what I did do about this, with the new administration. We provided \$16 billion to the Strategic National Stockpile, okay? I wrote and I asked and wrote and asked, over, and over, and over again, the prior administration, what was in the Strategic National Stockpile? What are we purchasing? I know -- God only knows how much money we spent on hydroxychloroquine. You could never get an accounting.

So, again, when Secretary Becerra came before the Committee, not that long ago, I asked, and, you know, said that I was going to pursue an accounting of what is in -- in that, the SNS. So, but, again, I'll give them a chance to get to me, but I have, you know, no problem saying, you know, stop, the dollars stop, unless we can get the information that we need in order to go forward. But I would welcome any advice you have, Molly, on other ways in which we might be able to get at this stuff.

MS. REYNOLDS: No, I mean, you are -- you are absolutely correct, that, you --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- as Congress, have the ultimate power to say --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- to the executive branch, there is -- there is no more money coming your way for this priority that you have.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Right.

MS. REYNOLDS: Last week, I was with your colleagues, your colleague, Mr. Yarmuth, and --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yes.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- the members of the House Budget Committee, talking about this very issue. So, I'm glad to hear that, again, from you, that this is -- this is something on your minds. John, I'll --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yes.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- turn it on over to you.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yes. Yeah. Yeah. You know, look, I've got to tell you

because of what's important to me here, personally. You know, I ran for this office, and it was a real campaign. I mean, this was not, you know, okay, you know, hey, God's in this Heaven, all's right with the world. No, it was a real campaign, and, you know, colleagues would ask what are -- what, you know, what are you going to -- what are you going to do? You know, and I spoke, you know, about this.

So, I feel obliged, you know, to, you know, to go down this road. And I also feel obliged to be able to -- and, look, it -- for me, this new administration is like being able to breathe again, you know? I'll just say that honestly because, you know, of what we're able to try to do, which we were not able, you know, to do in the past and all the stumbling blocks. But, nevertheless, you know, you trust, but you verify, you know, and you ask the hard questions, no matter where they are. And I think that that's just my obligation, as chair in this committee.

MR. HUDAK: Rosa, I'd like to follow up on your discussion in your opening remarks about community project funding --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sure.

MR. HUDAK: -- or as you said, our viewers commonly know them as earmarks.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MR. HUDAK: You talked about the safeguards that were put in place. I testified before the House Modernization Committee on this issue and talked about specifically this, the need for safeguards. And I think that what a lot of Americans don't appreciate is that this was to bring these back, to bring this spending back. This was not Rosa DeLauro's idea. This was not Nancy Pelosi's idea.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: No.

MR. HUDAK: This was not Democrats' idea. This was a bipartisan bicameral interest in this practice. I mean, I remember, during the initial earmark ban discussion, one of the most powerful supporters of continuing earmarks was Jim Inhofe. And I assume there --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sure.

MR. HUDAK: -- is not a lot that you and Senator Inhofe see eye to eye on, but this is one of those issues to show that it isn't a liberal idea, it's not a Democratic idea, that this is -- this is a powerful idea to bring money back to the districts.

And so, can you talk a little bit about -- a little bit more about how you see this process playing out, how engaged your colleagues across the aisle have been on this? And to include in that, we have, actually, a question from one of our viewers, Jack Fitzpatrick, who asked a little bit about how the process works, in terms of how specific project funds are included in the appropriations bills, whether the buck stops with you, whether there's rank and file influence from the Appropriations Committee, or how that inclusion actually works?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah. Well, let me start where you did. There was really overwhelming sentiment on both sides of the aisle. There had been a discussion in the last session of Congress, and I've wanted to try to move forward. But there wasn't the real timeframe. It is a lengthy process, if you're going to vet the projects, etc. So, it -- we weren't able to get it into the last -- in the last cycle, into the appropriations bills.

So, and again, when I -- when I was running for this position, just overwhelmingly, from my colleagues on the Democratic side, was, will you move to bringing back the, you know, earmarks? And I said that I would, and that -- and I was going to solicit ideas from the caucus, I was going to look to the Modernization Committee, I was going to look to what David Obey and Dan Inouye did in the past, here. I was also approached on the floor of the House by my Republican colleagues, asking me to -- to go down the -- this road, and so, which is what we did.

And -- but we -- again, many conversations, on both sides of the aisle, and you -- you know that there was a ban. The Republican Conference actually had a ban. So, in order to be able to apply for these community projects, that that -- in the Republican Conference, they had to vote to overturn the ban, which is what they did. But we were very careful. One of the things -- several of the items, again, from the Modernization Committee, it was that they would be community projects, that they had to have community support. It was a one percent cap on the amount of discretionary spending, and that one percent, in terms of where we've been on discretionary spending, translates into about \$14 billion.

There was also -- but we had -- Obey-Inouye had done this already, that we banned for-profit entities from being able to get any of the projects. So, we were -- we wanted to put a limitation on it, on the number of requests. So, we put that at 10, so that we would have, especially after 11 years, I'm going



back here, that we wanted to avoid any -- anything that would be ethically questionable in what was occurring. Transparency, all of the projects are -- every member has to lay out all of the projects, the 10 requests that they have put in, and that's -- that happened. The cutoff date was April 30, last Friday. They also -- it's on -- we have a general website, in which every member and their requests are listed. And when we go to the markups, to the subcommittee, when we introduce the bill, the member, and the request, and the dollar amount will be listed, so, as we go to subcommittee, full committee, and then to the floor of the House. So, that is about transparency. No financial interest from either the member, and we extended that to immediate family. And that was something new we put into place. And then, the GAO will randomly vet the projects, so that they will know that the money is allocated and being spent in the way that it was determined to be spent.

We also -- there is a check with the agencies because we want to make sure that we are not out of sync with the scope of the legislation or the accounts. We also, by the way, went to the subcommittee chairs, to all of them, gathered what accounts they would have available, so that not every account is available, and so that members, then, knew that. We provided guidance. I think we did well over, maybe over, 20 group sessions, and, if you will, training members on how to do this. It's now probably over 3,000 staff, including -- and staffs and then members. We did a training session for all of the district directors because they were going to be on the ground talking to the community groups.

With regard to community support, you have to have either a City Council resolution, or newspaper accounts about this project, or a plan, you know, a regional plan that was in place, or so forth, but something that is really letters, etc., that were demonstrable, that are demonstrable, about the community support for this project. And it's not something that Rosa DeLauro came with -- came up with, you know, and that -- that's what we were put in. So, now, and we gave people until April 30th to get the - and so, the database is up, by the way.

Everyone's database, personal database, is up to website, is up. We went -- I've had continuous conversation with my Republican colleagues and my Senate colleagues. The long and the short of it, the Republican Conference overturned that ban. They are following the same guidelines that we are, and there are Republican, you know, projects that have been put into the database. I've talked to

the Senate. I've talked to Senator Leahy, Senator Shelby, Senator Schumer. Now, the Senate Republicans, they had the same ban. They decided not to overturn it, but, in fact, it's not binding in the Senate, so that they will come forward, presumably, with projects that they care about. And with the Senate Democrats, I anticipate, within the next couple of weeks or so, that they are going to come out with what their guidelines are. But I wanted to make sure that we were in the appropriations process, which the subcommittee and full committee markups will be in June, and we will be on the floor in July.

Now, I'll take another second on this because I know what scrutiny is going to be, with regard to these projects. They are being carefully vetted. First, the staff will look at them, in terms of errors, you know, or something that is not right, so we can get back to the member and talk through that with the member. Vetting also with subcommittee chairs, and then the decisions will be made based on the substance and the merit of the program. And every member is surprised that while you had -- can put in 10 requests, no one was going to be getting 10 requests. There would be, you know, just a few of the requests that will be met, so.

And again, all of the projects are now listed. My 10 projects are up on my website and part of a general website, you know, where I'm asking for money for Saint Martin de Porres School, which deals with disadvantaged kids, and we have the letters to do that, a project that is a road in an intersection, in Branford, Connecticut, which opens the doorway to economic development. So, but, really, we have impressed this, and I think members are very excited about it. Members on both sides of the aisle are very excited about this, one, because it answers the issues for some of their -- the constituent needs, their community needs. And the other side of that, you know, I think you wrote about this, Molly, it gives you a stake in the bill. It gives you a stake in the bill, at what you're doing. That's important. That's important.

MS. REYNOLDS: Absolutely. I mean, members need to feel like they have a way to get things done for the people who sent them to Congress.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: That's right.

MS. REYNOLDS: And this is -- this is one of the ways to do that. You actually answered what was going to be my next question --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Okay.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- at the end of your remark, which was going to be about kind of the planned timing for the --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- unfolding of the appropriations process. So, I'm going to -- I'm going to come back to something you talked about in your opening remarks that came in also as some -- an audience question, which is about the plans for the security supplemental.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yes, sure.

MS. REYNOLDS: So, we know that of the many sort of very troubling things, that January 6 revealed to us, one of them is that we need to do more to protect the physical safety and security of you and your elected colleagues and of the tens of thousands of staff members who work --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Right.

MS. REYNOLDS: -- on Capitol Hill. So, can you just talk a little bit more about kind of where that process is?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sure, sure, I would be happy to, and we have been. As I say, I held the first hearing in January. January 6, I won't go into detail. I mean, it literally was an insurrection. The goal was to overturn the government. If you don't count the ballots, etc., you would just nullify what happened in the election. So, I think we have to understand that I was in the gallery and evacuated from the gallery, so, during that period of time, did not see what was happening, and only, you know, afterward, watching the footage, and even now, watching the footage is startling, as to how close we came, but.

But with that said, I held the first hearing. We met with all of the agencies that were involved, whether it was the architect of the Capitol, Capitol police, the Secret Service, park police, the whole nine yards. The Democrats, Republicans came together, of the six subcommittees of appropriations that deal with this issue, to ask the questions. And it was really -- and we did this, by the way, we did it without press. I know most of the other hearings -- but why? Because I wanted -- I wanted members to feel engaged to ask what they wanted. I wanted the agencies to speak freely about what,

then, what we would need to do, as a result of this, and it was excellent. I would say one of my Republican colleagues said that, that day, we had all the information that we needed, but we chose not to do anything about it. We had the information and the intelligence, which was startling, you know, so.

So, we began, then, to look at -- I asked the chairs of those subcommittees to look at what, in discussions with the agencies, what we needed to include in the supplemental. The speaker, as you know, asked General Honoré to investigate it, which he did. I spoke to him. Several of the subcommittee chairs spoke to him. And then we had a briefing, several conversations with what the Honoré report came up with. Subsequent to that, there was an inspector general report that talked about some of the prior recommendations that were made, that were not carried out. We talked to Capitol police extensively, and I will just tell you right at the moment, which is why we need to move and we're going to -- to move quickly.

So, now, we have put all that information together. We have touched base with our Republican colleagues. We've touched base with the Senate. The focus, the focus on this, because you know about supplementals, supplementals can become Christmas trees, and that we're not going to do. I know the speaker does not want to do. And what we are going to do is to keep -- to narrowly to what happened on January 6, so that we look at what were the needs of the Capitol police, that were have -- were not met, and how can we do that? Do we -- you know, increasing force, training, their intelligence analysis and capabilities, where we felt short, their equipment that felt short. We found out that those shields, etc., at the time, had expired, all of that.

Then, you take a look at the complex, itself. What do we need to do about a hardening of the windows, of the doors? What do we need to do about fencing? What kind of fencing, retractable fencing, etc? Because what we want to do is to maintain a balance between accessibility to the Capitol, as well as safety. Then, there is -- because it's just not members, as you rightly pointed out. There is staff. There are employees, etc. And by way of staff, you've got a lot of young people who are staff there. And imagine the trauma of their families, never thinking that the Capitol would be breeched, putting their youngster in a -- in harm's way, so. But what -- what can we do -- are we doing to safeguard? And we've taken the recommendations, I might add, from the Honoré report and the

recommendations from the inspector general's report.

Then, you get to the security for members, both in Washington, in their homes and in their offices, because you may recall that a number of members were threatened and had to have security, and then it's members in their districts, and their homes, and their security. So, again, taking the recommendations for what kind of security measures we might implement. So, that's the bulk of where we are. It's my hope, and I want to exact it within the next couple of weeks, that this is going to be front and center. We do have to, you know, vet it, so that, you know, members know exactly what's there. There are other conversations with our Republican colleagues and with the Senate going on, you know, right now, and that's what the commitment is to get this done and not to put something that somebody, some blonde or something, didn't happen, you know, at a prior time, that now this is a convenient vehicle to do it, no. We are trying to avoid that like the plague, just not deal with that, so that you have the integrity of the process and what we need to deal with, in terms of security, is critical.

MR. HUDAK: So, Rosa, I think we have time for one more question --

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Okay.

MR. HUDAK: -- if you'll indulge me.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Sure.

MR. HUDAK: The political and policy conversations across America have transitioned, particularly over the past year, on -- around issues of race, equity, justice, and opportunity. This has been a central cause for decades, for progressives like yourself.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MR. HUDAK: What ways do you see your ability, as chair of appropriations --?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Yeah.

MR. HUDAK: -- to help advance those causes, through committee, through your leadership role, and as a member?

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Well, one, I'm very, very proud to say I think it -- absolutely. We knew, you know, some of the -- these inequities existed in the past. Okay. Did we know there was child poverty in the United States? Yeah, we knew that, you know? Did we know that there

were health disparities? Yeah. Economic disparities, educational? Yes, but what this pandemic did is to really focus in because we've seen where the systems that were in place to try to address some of the issues have almost collapsed, you know, with -- where you take a look at health, which being able to distribute PPE, the -- to being able to, you know, get into underserved communities, with what they need to have, is -- and now we're looking at, you know, a distribution system, with the, you know, with the vaccine. When you've got a -- and with that -- but I would tell you this is from the top, you know?

The president made a determination. We are going to get this vaccine out to everywhere, into underserved communities. I went door to door, in two of my neighborhoods, with the volunteers, signing people up for a vaccination. You've got clergy engaged now, and they're -- their houses of worship have become places where people can go to get the vaccine. The FEMA truck on the New Haven Green set up to, you know, to do this, so that, you know, the inequity's discovered, and now we're working on them.

And my particular subcommittee, Health, Education, Human Services, Health and Human Services, and Education, again. And I was proud to say that, over the years, that the Labor HHS Subcommittee has focused in a number of ways on the disparities, the racial disparities. When you take a look in education, at what we have done with the HBCUs, the minority serving institutions, the tribal colleges, that -- you know, those things have been in place, you know, for a while. When you look at -- in terms of health, I'll go back, and it's probably -- it was not as fulsome as it needs to be or where we're going now.

I sat on this subcommittee with Lou, Louis Stokes, from Cleveland, Ohio, and I can hear Lou Stokes, and I was just a freshman member on that, not -- no, I was just a junior member on the subcommittee, where he kept talking about the underserved populations, so, in many instances, and the environmental disparities that existed for environmental justice, in some of these areas, so that -- so, some of these pieces have been focused on.

Now, the light's shone on it, when I get -- you know, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, Bonnie Watson Coleman, from New Jersey, Barbara Lee, from California, Katherine Clark, in Massachusetts, etc., where the focus is on what are we doing to address the issue of maternal mortality,

which impacts African American, Black women, more than any other ethnic group. What are we doing about mental health services, writ large, in some of these communities? So, yes, I can do that, with having the chairmanship and having the gavel.

Again, an issue on gun violence and the prevention of gun violence. You all know that for 20 years we were not able to direct any research at the CDC or the NIH for gun violence prevention research. It's not that it was outlawed, but it was -- the chilling effect was the dictate -- his name just went out of my head. There was, you know, Weldon, and the amendment -- J. Dickey, with the amendment that you said if anything led to gun control, that you couldn't do the research. So, it put a chilling effect on that.

Today, and what we have found, in terms of my committee and reaching underserved communities, we know where there is gun violence. And, you know, I know a newspaper reporter said to me, you know, "Congresswoman DeLauro, in the subcommittee, in the hearing you had on gun violence prevention, you said you were going to add it to the -- put it into the budget. You know, how are you going to do it?" And I just -- I said to her, "You know, I'm just going to put it in the budget." But that's what I said to her. What I said to myself, how am I going to do it? I'm the chair of this subcommittee, I can do it.

And so, subsequently, we now, for the first time in 20 years, we have -- it's now \$25 million focused at NIH and CDC to do research on gun violence prevention. That's what you can do. That's what you can do about lifting people out of poverty. That's what you can do with mental health. That's what you can do, as to give young -- if we increase the dollar amount of the Pell Grant, the way that the -- the president's budget and what we want to do on our subcommittee, you give people the opportunity for an education. You do stuff on the apprenticeship programs, that's minorities, that's women, where, you know, 70% of the people in this country do not have a four-year college degree. It's nice if you want it. It's nice if you can get it. But it's not the end of the world if you can't. You deal with apprenticeship programs, internship programs. You work with community colleges and with industry to create that pathway to a career for people. All of that, all of that, comes out of the Labor HHS Subcommittee of Appropriations.

MR. HUDAK: Well, Rosa, thank you so much. And on behalf of Molly, it's really been an honor and a pleasure chatting with you today. We look forward to what will be a busy two years, at least, as chair of the committee, and we both look forward to seeing how you manage what is a politically contentious time with a lot of politically contentious issues.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: And if I might just say one -- one more thing. You know, you sit on appropriations, when I said the process was opaque, not only opaque to the public, but to members, but what -- if we don't start to talk about what comes out of appropriations, in a way that people understand. Instead, you talk about, you know, \$2 million above the president's budget, the enacted budget, \$4 billion below, and nobody cares. Nobody knows what that means. But if you say that we are going to increase the opportunity for your child to be able to go to childcare, and not talk about it in terms of slots, but of people, or that -- you know, that's what we have to do, is to communicate what that \$1.4 trillion does to make lives better for the people of this country. Thanks for giving me this opportunity. I appreciate it so much. Thank you.

MS. REYNOLDS: Thank you for coming today to start to have that kind of conversation about what the work that the Appropriations Committee does means for Americans. And thank you, all, for -- our audience, for joining us today.

CONGRESSWOMAN DeLAURO: Thank you. Thanks so much.

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