

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable William Russell Robinson (D)

19th District

Allegheny County

1989-2002

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Transcribed by: Erin Miller

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1 **Jesse Teitelbaum (JT):** Good morning.

2

3 **The Honorable William Russell Robinson (WR):** Good morning.

4

5 **JT:** I am sitting here with William Robinson, a Democrat who served the House from 1989 to
6 2002 representing the 19th District in Allegheny County. Thank you for being with me here
7 today.

8

9 **WR:** Thanks for the invitation. It's a pleasure.

10

11 **JT:** Great. I'd like to start out by asking you about your background. Tell me about your
12 family life, your childhood growing up, and your education.

13

14 **WR:** Well, I grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the Hill District community. I still live
15 there. I have two children, William Russell Robinson, II and Nyota Namibia Robinson. My
16 mother Annie Kemp Robinson is still alive and well. My sister Barbara Ponder is still there and
17 I have some nieces and nephews all in the Hill District community. I went to Madison
18 Elementary School, Heron Hill Junior High School which is now – it was Milliones Middle
19 School – it is now University Prep, soon to have another name, and I graduated from Schenley
20 High School in 1960, and that was back in the day where you had neighborhood schools, where
21 there were lots of people in the neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, and I just had a great childhood,
22 some great childhood friends there. I always say it, “All roads lead to the Hill,” and it's right in
23 the center of the city of Pittsburgh within walking distance of downtown, within walking

1 distance of Oakland, where most of the major universities are, and it was just a great community
2 to grow up in, and I had lots of fun.

3

4 **JT:** Oh, that's great. Did you have anyone in your family that was involved in politics?

5

6 **WR:** My Uncle Hubert. We used to meet on Saturday mornings and have breakfast and talk
7 about politics, even before I decided to run because he loved politics, and he was one of the
8 founding members of an organization called the Allegheny County Colored Democrats, and this
9 is an organization that existed before the various ethnic organizations were brought together
10 under the banner of the Democratic Party, and he had a little pin that he showed me from time to
11 time. We talked about old-time Party politics, and then a little-known secret is that my
12 grandfather on my mother's side was a Republican down in a community called Rush Run, West
13 Virginia. He was a pretty big man in that town. He was a committeeman and he was one of the
14 few people in the community, black or white, who had a car, but the car wasn't kept there. You
15 had to get on, literally, one of those railroad things and go up to Thurman, the big city, and the
16 car was in a garage up there, or you could take the train, but the train didn't travel real regularly.
17 So, once I found out about my grandfather's interest in politics and my uncle's interest, it spurred
18 my interest, and so those are the two people who, sort-of, interested me in politics. Other than
19 one other person, my aunt Elizabeth Robinson, who's deceased now, over in Columbus, Ohio.
20 She loved politics and she loved Ohio State football. I'm a graduate of the Ohio State
21 University, 1964, and was on the track team; I lettered. And as I'm older and more mature now,
22 that means more to me that I was in big-time college athletics; I got a letter, I got a jacket, I got a
23 sweater, I actually won some medals. But getting back to my Aunt Liz, she always talked to me

1 about politics, and she was a Republican, and she was the first person of color that I knew of
2 who was a Republican who tried to convince me that the Republican Party had the best interest
3 of people of color at heart, and it was hard for me to absorb that. My parents were Democrats. I
4 grew up in a Democratic county and Democratic community, but there were a lot of prominent
5 African-Americans, people of color, who were Republicans in Columbus, Ohio, in the state of
6 Ohio, more so than here in Pennsylvania. And so, we had some interesting conversations about
7 politics and political activities. I was a student. She had been involved in politics. She worked
8 for the state. She had friends, high-powered friends, both black and white, who were
9 Republicans, so I got a greater appreciation at an early age about bipartisan politics.

10

11 **JT:** Wow. What was your career before running for the House?

12

13 **WR:** Right before I ran for the House, I worked at the Human Relations Commission in the city
14 of Pittsburgh. I was an investigator, a field investigator, and it was a job I did not do as well as I
15 should have, and I owe that job to two women, Alma Fox and Connie Wellons, who went to bat
16 for me with Mayor Richard Caliguiri [Mayor of Pittsburgh, 1977-1988] to help get me that job.
17 They were loyal friends, they knew I had a family to take care of, and they helped me. I had a
18 political history, which was holding me back. I was on Pittsburgh City Council from [19]78
19 through [19]85. Outspoken, opinionated, progressive, and I guess from time to time, a pain in
20 the rear end for some people, and so the fact that these two women would step forward for me
21 has always meant a lot. Both of them are still alive and well, and I thank them publically every
22 time I get a chance for keeping me going and really putting me in a position to run for the
23 Legislature. And like I said, before I went to the Human Relations Commission, I was on a

1 sabbatical, and I took an opportunity after I left Pittsburgh City Council in [19]85 to relax. I
2 didn't work for a whole year. I didn't have health insurance for a whole year. My family had no
3 health coverage for a whole year. We survived. No major financial catastrophe, no major health
4 catastrophe, and I just took that time to enjoy life; to sleep in, to read, to go out and touch the
5 buildings. When David Lawrence [Mayor of Pittsburgh, 1946-1959; Governor of Pennsylvania,
6 1959-1963] was mayor of Pittsburgh, one of the things he would do oftentimes is at night,
7 literally go out and walk through the streets of Pittsburgh and touch the buildings to get a real
8 feel for the city that was his charge, and I remember leaving office, City Council, and being on
9 my own and touching buildings. Literally going out, and I had time to stop and talk to people,
10 but I found myself sometimes in the evenings touching buildings, and I think I got an
11 appreciation of what it was he was doing; that connection that you want to have with the city that
12 you love.

13

14 **JT:** Right. That's really neat. Tell me about the steps leading up to running for the House of
15 Representatives.

16

17 **WR:** The 19th District had been represented by Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy Irvis; State
18 Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988] for many
19 years before I ran, and I always said I would never run against him, not that the opportunity
20 presented itself, but people would always say I was preparing myself to run against Leroy Irvis,
21 and I couldn't understand why they would say that. I had bigger dreams, to be real honest. I saw
22 myself as possibly the Mayor, or a Congressman or County Commissioner, and I had no reason
23 to run against Leroy Irvis. I had no selfish reason. I had no political reason. I had no reasons of

1 ambition, but when he announced that he wasn't going to run again, I felt I was obligated, one,
2 because I admired him so much and respected him so much, but also, as I said, I wasn't doing as
3 good a job as I could have done at the Human Relations Commission, and I felt that I needed to
4 move on, and I needed to try something else, and I thought about all the things I wanted to do,
5 and I said, "Other than be a player in the NFL [National Football League], I can't think of
6 anything else other than continuing my political career," and so I set out to contact people about
7 running, and put my shoulder to the wheel, and in 1988 I was successful.

8

9 **JT:** Great. Did you enjoy campaigning?

10

11 **WR:** Yes. I always enjoyed campaigning because I had a chance to get out and shake people's
12 hands, another version of touching the buildings, of getting out, shaking people's hands, talking
13 to them, and following up on my career in city council. I worked hard. I was innovative. I
14 created the first alternative budget in the history of the city of Pittsburgh when I was on city
15 council, and I just really felt good about offering myself to the public. I knew I'd work hard. I
16 knew I was qualified. I knew I had a passion for it. I knew I had the fire in my belly, and so
17 campaigning became a part of my life, became a part of my every day.

18

19 **JT:** Did you have a lot of help from family and friends when campaigning?

20

21 **WR:** Yes. My mother gave me a significant contribution. Of all the contributions I've received
22 over the years, my mother has given me two of the largest. She's not number one. There is
23 someone who's number one, but my mother gave me two huge contributions, and I've built on

1 that. I had about eight thousand dollars left over from when I was on city council, and I kept that
2 money intact, and so when I got ready to run for State Rep[resentative], I had eight thousand
3 dollars already in the bank, and I built upon that, and believe it or not, the money that I raised for
4 State Rep[resentative] is still in the bank today when I'm a County Councilman, and I thank God
5 that that opportunity presented itself because, like I said, I speak my own mind. I got my own
6 way, and that's not necessarily the best way to try to raise funds for a campaign, but I had family
7 and friends who believed in me, and we worked real hard. I was a fresh, new face, and there
8 were those who respected the fact that I served on city council.

9

10 **JT:** Right.

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12 **WR:** And they wanted me to continue in some capacity, and the opportunity presented itself,
13 and, like I said, it was a godsend that I was able to campaign, to bring together family and
14 friends, and then be successful.

15

16 **JT:** Did campaigning get easier with every term?

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18 **WR:** For me it did because I didn't have a lot of opposition.

19

20 **JT:** Okay.

21

22 **WR:** Ultimately, I think that worked to my disadvantage, because I don't think I prepared
23 myself as well as I should have. I should have been preparing for war in a time of peace. I don't

1 think my political skills were as good as they should have been. The governmental skills, the
2 oratorical skills and things of that type, I could do that; I had my staff well-organized. But, I
3 think in terms of really building the political base, I did not do that, and that came back to haunt
4 me, and when I really needed it, it wasn't there. But, the campaigning, it never was a problem,
5 except I didn't build that base. If I had to do it all over again, I would build the base. When I
6 ran for county council, I took all the lessons I had previously learned, and the constituency's
7 twice as big, it's over one hundred and ten thousand people, and I organized a little better. I
8 organized like I was running for my life. I organized like I had to win an office that was paying
9 nine thousand dollars a year, three thousand dollars in expenses, and no personal staff. I ran just
10 like I was running for State Rep[resentative] again, and man, did I feel good. *(laugh)*

11

12 **JT:** *(laugh)* Good for you. Describe for me the 19th District in both geography and constituents.

13

14 **WR:** The 19th District changed during my last campaign.

15

16 **JT:** Okay.

17

18 **WR:** That worked against me as well. There used to be a lot of public housing in the 19th
19 District. It had more public housing than any district in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It
20 had the highest concentration of public housing of any major city. Ethnically, people of color,
21 people who look like me, represented most of that district and most of the people in public
22 housing. Maybe 50 percent of all the people of color lived in public housing, and most of the
23 public housing was in my district. So, I had a district where the people looked like me, for the

1 most part. It was 60-40; 60 percent people of color and 40 percent others. But, I had this real
2 concentration right where I lived, literally. It has changed now. It's more spread out. The
3 population of the city of Pittsburgh has dwindled, and when I was kid, we had 600,000 people in
4 Pittsburgh. Now we're down to probably 325[000] or less, so as the population decreased, you
5 had to spread the district out, and there was a concern that you had to have two minority/
6 majority districts; one would be the 19th, one would be the 24th. And so, I found that the district
7 starts stretching further west, further southeast, and a little bit further north. One of my current
8 friends and associates, Don Walko [State Representatives, Allegheny County, 1995-2010], was
9 affected, because on the north side it forced him out of the city with his district so that I could
10 have more, and then in the west end, Tom Petrone [Thomas C. Petrone; State Representative,
11 Allegheny County, 1981-2008] was affected, and over in Hazelwood, Dan Frankel [State
12 Representative, Allegheny County, 1999-present], who's still here in the House, was affected.
13 And the district, it looked like an amoeba, and it was just very hard to campaign in it. I was
14 unfamiliar with it, a lot of new people in it, so it's the district that exists today. Now, that's
15 going to change again when the 2010 Census comes up. That district is going to dramatically
16 change, because the population of the city has dropped, and if you're going to have two districts
17 that are predominantly African-American, you're going to have to really be creative because the
18 African-American population isn't like in Philadelphia, where you have back to back to back to
19 back districts that are represented by people of color. We don't have that in Pittsburgh. So, you
20 may find some of the other Representatives more out in the suburbs than they are now and,
21 literally, leaving the city and Wilkinsburg to whatever minority representation is elected.

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23 **JT:** What were some of the issues that were big with your constituents while you were in office?

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WR: Employment opportunities, educational opportunities, a lot of major construction occurred in my district.

JT: Okay.

WR: Two new stadiums, a convention center.

JT: Right.

WR: And there were people who felt that they should get a piece of that action, people of color, very frankly, and so that was a big issue: job training and education. One of my great concerns was how could the community college of Allegheny county be effectively used to educate and train not only the constituents I served but the constituents that my colleagues served. And I was fortunate enough to serve on the House Education Committee and be the Democratic Subcommittee Chairman for Higher Education, and so I had a lot of opportunity to work on this community college issue, and today I serve as the vice chairman of our community college board back in Allegheny County, and I love the community college. I love the community college system, the concept, and so that was a great concern. I served on the Education Committee. Here I served on Veterans and Military Affairs, Health and Human Services, Urban Affairs, and perhaps the real biggie was Appropriations.

JT: Right.

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WR: And I learned a lot under the tutelage of Chairman Dwight Evans [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1981-present]. Many of the things I do today as Budget and Finance Chairman at Allegheny County Council I trace back to the teaching that he gave to me and just watching him operate, and oftentimes on the record I mention his name and thank him. I think I wrote him a letter once and thanked him for, one, selecting me for that committee. Two, for allowing me to learn it at his feet, so to speak, and also because I was smart enough to absorb what he had given to me and now was using it in a very positive sense.

JT: Wonderful. I'd like to get into your committee work in a bit, but prior to that, when you first came to the House, do you remember your first Swearing-In Ceremony?

WR: Oh, yeah. It was on a day we had one of the worst storms in the history of Pennsylvania in 1989. Man, oh day, it was terrible. Family and I are driving back around three o'clock, we didn't get back to Pittsburgh till around 10 or 11 o'clock at night. I mean, it was so slow on that turnpike that you couldn't drive five miles before you had to stop your car, get out, and take the ice off of the windows and stuff. It was terrible, and there was five or six cars. A lot of people came up, and that's the one thing I remember. The other thing I remember is one of my very good friends who's deceased now, Clyde Clark, performing a heroic act. That was the year that Penn State – I'm sorry, West Virginia and Notre Dame played for the National Championship. They played the day before Swearing-In. Notre Dame won the game, and the next day, two of my good friends, Noah Roach, Clyde Clark, who had come up a day in advance, and I went to breakfast with Bill DeWeese [H. William DeWeese; State Representative, Fayette, Greene and

1 Washington Counties, 1979-present; Speaker, 1993-1994]. Had breakfast someplace and had
2 good conversation, what have you, and we'd come over for the swearing-in what have you, and
3 my family's not here, and I'm saying, "I told my brother-in-law to get the van." I put it all
4 together, and we are going on to the House Floor. I didn't have flowers on my desk, my family
5 wasn't there. Bob Robbins [Robert D. Robbins; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1983-
6 1990; State Senator, 1991-present], who was in the House then, had gotten two bouquets of
7 flowers, and he was wondering, "Who's this belong to?" And then he finally looks down and
8 sees my name, and he brought them down to me, so I felt a little better. And I'm looking, and I
9 don't see my mother, and I don't see my sister who had the Floor passes. So I said, "Well, I'll
10 have to go on without them," and just when the ceremony was supposed to start, I looked to my
11 left, and there's my mother and sister standing there, and so I really felt good. Well, the other
12 part of that story is when my brother-in-law finally got there, he let my mother and my sister out
13 of the van in the front of the Capitol. They literally ran up the Capitol steps, came up those steps
14 right there in the Rotunda, and the doors were getting ready to close to the Chambers for the
15 ceremony to start, and my friend Clyde Clark was standing there, telling them "Come on. Come
16 on." This is back in the days when cell phones weren't very popular, and he's telling them,
17 "Come on. They're getting ready to shut the doors." He runs in, and they're behind him. He
18 said, literally, "You can't shut that door. These women have to get in." He said he got in the
19 doorway so they could run past him. I said, "Well, what were you going to do if they shut the
20 door?" He said, "Man, they weren't shutting that door." He said, "No, your mother and sister –
21 they're not going to shut that door," and we laughed about that and, and we had a lot of good fun
22 that day, and I remember the little parties that the Members would have, and I remember just the
23 camaraderie. The flowers on the desks and it was just a great, great day. It was like, for me, a

1 rebirth; to replace Leroy Irvis and to be able to serve in the oldest legislative body of its type in
2 the world and my family there, I just felt great.

3

4 **JT:** What were your first impressions of the House Floor and even the Capitol Building in
5 general?

6

7 **WR:** I had been up before for orientation and seeing things on TV or read about in the paper. I
8 was kind of awestruck. The architecture, I mean, this is the finest Capitol anywhere in the
9 United States of America, and I've seen a lot of them, and I knew the history. I even went up to
10 the Speaker's platform one day in the House when nobody was around. Just stood there and
11 looked out. You know, I just felt great that I was a part of this. So, I was just was looking at the
12 architecture, I was looking at the Members. I vowed when I came here the first year I wasn't
13 going to say anything, almost literally, and so I sat for a whole year in the House and learned. I
14 was fortunate to sit down in Leadership row. I sat right next to Ivan Itkin [State Representative,
15 Allegheny County, 1973-1998] at one time and Mike Veon [State Representative, Michael R.
16 Veon, Beaver County, 1985-2006] at another time, Mark Cohen [State Representative,
17 Philadelphia County, 1973-present] at another time. So, I learned a lot about Leadership. I
18 learned about their struggles. I learned about their successes, and very frankly, I learned about
19 some of their failures, and I'll never forget one day Bill DeWeese coming over to me. I'm sitting
20 there with the newspaper open reading it and, I think this was before the House was on
21 television, and he comes over, and he says, "Wow, I heard about you." He said, "You are
22 different." He said, "We're here debating an important bill, and you're reading the newspaper,"
23 and I said to him, "What's wrong?" He says, "Well, shouldn't you be paying attention?" I said,

1 “I’m voting the same way you are,” and he just smiled and walked away. I said, “I’ll vote the
2 same way you vote.” I knew that much about the system. (*laugh*)

3

4 **JT:** Speaking of learning things in your first term, was there anyone in particular that you saw
5 as a mentor that you kind of latched on to?

6

7 **WR:** I spent a lot of time watching Dwight Evans, talking to him, understanding the process,
8 because at a point I wanted to be on Appropriations, not because of the extra revenue or the
9 perks, but I really had an interest in finance, and little did I know that one day I’d be the
10 Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee for Allegheny County Council and responsible
11 for almost an 800 million dollar budget, but I spent a lot of time with Dwight and talked to him
12 about a lot of different things, and so he’s probably the main person. I had a positive experience
13 with Mike Veon and Bill DeWeese. I learned a lot about politics from them. They’re two of the
14 best politicians I’ve ever met. They were very helpful to me legislatively and, believe it or not,
15 Matt Ryan [Matthew J. Ryan; State Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker,
16 1981-1982 and 1995-2003] and I developed a great relationship. He was the Republican Speaker
17 of the House for a period of time when I was here, and Matt and I developed a good eyeball to
18 eyeball relationship. And I’ll never forget one time Matt promised me something, and when it
19 came time for the promise to be fulfilled, I brought it to his attention. He said, “I don’t
20 remember that,” and I told him where it occurred, and he stood there, and Roger Nick [Chief
21 Clerk of the House of Representatives, 2005-2009] was standing next to him. He was his long-
22 time aide, and he said, “You’re telling me I told you that?” I said, “Yes, sir, yes you did.” He

1 said, "I'll take your word." He said, "Roger will have it taken care of in a half an hour," and
2 within a half an hour, Roger called me and said, "It's done," and it was done.

3

4 **JT:** Wow.

5

6 **WR:** That was probably the most positive experience I had here in terms of getting things done,
7 working the other side of the aisle where someone forgot –this was something important – where
8 someone forgot what it was they promised you, and they did it, and I'm going to tell you what it
9 was; he promised me that he would appoint me to the Board of Trustees at the University of
10 Pittsburgh as a Commonwealth Trustee, and he did it.

11

12 **JT:** And he did it.

13

14 **WR:** Man of his word.

15

16 **JT:** Wow. That's a great story. That is. You mentioned earlier about the different committees
17 that you had served on; Education Committee and Urban Affairs Committee and Appropriations
18 Committee. Was there one in particular that was your favorite?

19

20 **WR:** It was a toss-up between Appropriations and Education. In Appropriations, there's a lot of
21 Party-line voting, but I learned a lot about finance. There was a lot of meetings.

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23 **JT:** Yeah.

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WR: Some of them were boring, some were tiring, some were exhausting, but there were more meetings for Appropriations that actually got to the heart of the matter around here, which is money, and so I enjoyed that to see how you formulate a huge budget and take into consideration all the various things. Next would be Education, because I have a great passion for education, particularly higher education. Those are two assignments that I aspired to when I got here. While the other assignments were meaningful and I enjoyed them, I spent most of my time concentrating on Education and Appropriations.

JT: Great. Tell me about some of the major pieces of legislation that you were involved with, either the prime sponsor or just something that was important to you that you felt you needed to get involved.

WR: Cornerstone for me was the introduction of identity theft legislation. Pennsylvania, up until the time I introduced the legislation, didn't have an identity theft law, and I worked very diligently with Democrats and Republicans to get that done, and finally, again crossing the aisle and working with Republicans, I made an arrangement to have my identity theft concept in an amendment attached to an agriculture bill that was coming out of the Senate. And some of my Democratic colleagues were surprised that Republicans were voting for my amendment, because it passed almost overwhelmingly, but they didn't know I cut a deal. And I'll never forget going to a signing, a bill signing, over in the Governor's Office. Tom Ridge [Thomas J. Ridge, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1995-2001] was Governor then. I walk into the office there in the reception area, and everybody started looking at me like, "What's he doing here? This is about

1 agriculture,” and I went in, and I forget which Senator it was, and he’s looking at me, because I
2 don’t even think he knew the bill was amended. We sit down, and the cameras are clicking, and
3 we’re talking, and Tom Ridge is sitting there talking to me. People didn’t know what he was
4 talking about. Tom Ridge was talking to me about school vouchers trying to convince me to
5 support a school voucher program in Wilkinsburg, which wasn’t in my district back in Allegheny
6 County. We’re sitting there, we’re talking with him, and he signs, I signed, the Senator signs,
7 and I got a picture in my office back home with the pen I used, and the bill, and the three of us at
8 the table, and I always smile. It’s an agriculture bill and people say, “You weren’t on the
9 Agriculture Committee.” I said, “It’s a long story. I’ll tell you about it.”

10

11 **JT:** *(laugh)* Nice. You also were involved with legislation surrounding rent to own, as well?

12

13 **RW:** Yes. Again, Pennsylvania did not have a law that governed rent to own, be it TV, VCR,
14 whatever the case may be, and I got very much involved in that, helped shape some legislation
15 for Pennsylvania. It became sort-of like landmark legislation because there were other states that
16 wanted to get involved. You know, these are the kinds of things I like to do is the cutting edge
17 things, things that other Members weren’t doing. Sometimes you make friends; sometimes you
18 make enemies when you do that. Probably the biggest legislative effort I was involved in here
19 was a package of bills that Representative Andrew Carn [State Representative, Philadelphia
20 County, 1983-2000] and I worked on. He was from Philadelphia, called Carn-Robinson I, Carn-
21 Robinson II, and it dealt with the building of major sports and recreation facilities in
22 Pennsylvania.

23

1 **JT:** Okay.

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3 **WR:** And how that should be done. Some people thought because we were African-Americans
4 that our concern was minority involvement or getting opportunities for minority contractors.
5 But, the legislation never spoke to that. Andrew and I didn't speak to that. It was about whether
6 or not the state should grant or loan money to entities that wanted to do business with us to build
7 these facilities. In Andrew's case, there was a proposal to build two stadiums in Philadelphia. In
8 my case, there was a proposal to build two facilities in Pittsburgh, and Carn-Robinson I and II
9 spoke to how the Commonwealth's portion of that financing should be handled, and I never
10 forget Governor Tom Ridge when the financing bills, finally passed – without Carn-Robinson I
11 or II, because we were not successful in getting that in. We were successful in changing the
12 grant to what, some people called, a groan; a hybrid of a grant and a loan – and he said that Carn-
13 Robinson I and II was very much instrumental in changing the way the Commonwealth was
14 going to fund major stadium projects, and while none of our legislation passed, the
15 Administration did decide to change the process for making that money available. And so, that
16 was probably the biggest and best legislative effort, because there's a lot of politics, a lot of
17 horse trading, a lot of back-and-forth. We had some of Republican support. I'll never forget
18 talking to Bob Casey, [Robert P. Casey, Jr.; State Auditor General, 1997-2005; State Treasurer,
19 2005-2006; US Senator, 2007-present] who was then the Auditor General, and Barbara Hafer
20 [State Treasurer, 1997-2004], who was the Treasurer, about their help in this regard in terms of
21 utilizing Commonwealth money, and Andrew and I traveled all across this state talking to
22 people. There must have been 10 or 12 bills in each of those packages, Carn-Robinson I and II,
23 and I felt very good about that. And that, in many respects, probably highlighted my interest in

1 spreading the wealth, spreading opportunity, and I could really relate to President-Elect Obama
2 [Barack H. Obama, President of the United States, 2009-present] talking about spreading the
3 wealth. I know exactly what he's talking about; creating opportunities for other people and
4 making sure that we're leveraging public dollars to their maximum use.

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6 **JT:** Wow. Another issue that we found that you had addressed several times was on urban
7 blight. Was this a problem in your particular district, was it constituent-based, or was it
8 something that you just thought was necessary to address?

9
10 **WR:** My district had a lot of vacant, vandalized and abandoned properties, and I felt that one
11 thing I could do is follow up on the interest I had when I was on city council. That is, take
12 vacant, abandoned, vandalized property, turn it over to individuals or community groups and
13 organizations for a dollar, a minimum fee, and help them rehab[ilitate] it, and so I saw a great
14 opportunity here at the State level to help communities all across the state. In the process of
15 doing that and working very hard on blight reduction legislation, I ran right smack dab into
16 eminent domain; this whole concept that government can come in, take private property for
17 public use. I learned more about eminent domain than I knew I could learn. One, I learned that
18 one of my predecessors, the Honorable Homer S. Brown, [State Representative, Allegheny
19 County, 1935-1950] who was the first African-American in the Legislature¹, had worked on this
20 issue and had put in place essentially the eminent domain law in Pennsylvania that affected what
21 was going on in Pittsburgh around the building of the stadiums and some other things, and I
22 wrote a article with the help of Mike Herzing here in the House called "Redevelopment Redux,"

¹ The first African-American man elected to serve in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives was Harry W. Bass of Philadelphia. He served from 1911-1914.

1 and it was like a history of this redevelopment law and this impact in Pittsburgh and what I was
2 trying to do, and then I suggested that we change the eminent domain law in Pennsylvania –
3 which has been changed. Kathy Manderino [State Representative, Philadelphia, Montgomery,
4 and Bradford Counties, 1993-2010], I believe, is still here in the House. She worked on this
5 issue to change the way governments take private property, and my position was government
6 should not be allowed to take your private property so that a Walmart or a Home Depot can have
7 a parking lot. If these companies want to go into business with you, that's what they ought to do.
8 They should not be able to use government. It wasn't necessarily a very popular idea that I was
9 promoting, but across the country there was this interest in trying to make the eminent domain
10 laws more user-friendly for people who had private property that might be taken. There's a court
11 case that relates to Daniel Webster, a great attorney, former attorney, and it relates to Dartmouth
12 College in New Hampshire. And, he won a case before the United States Supreme Court, I
13 believe it was in 1803, and his position is of what good is it going to be for the state of New
14 Hampshire to take over Dartmouth College, and he won the case. He said there was no good
15 public use, and I went back to that case and learned some history about eminent domain and how
16 it has historically been used and tried to find a way to update our eminent domain laws here in
17 Pennsylvania, and that was a great, great learning experience. I talked to a lot of smart people
18 about it, and I believe that what we do now in Pennsylvania around blight reduction, in some
19 measure, relates to my efforts here in the Legislature.

20

21 **JT:** Great. Minority issues were also important to you during your term. Why do you think
22 having an Office of Minority Health Affairs was necessary?

23

1 **WR:** This was something that the late Representative David Richardson [State Representative,
2 Philadelphia County, 1973-1996] had worked on. He was out of Philadelphia, and Dave always
3 felt that if we were going to reduce the incidence of negative health in the communities across
4 Pennsylvania that we need to look at those communities where these incidents were very high,
5 and unfortunately, they were very high in communities of color. And I looked at some other
6 states who had attempted this, some states that had put something in place, and I thought this
7 would be a great thing for Pennsylvania, and worked diligently to make it happen. Under my
8 watch it did not happen or under Dave's watch, but I still believe this is a valid way of zeroing in
9 on the health concerns of people of color in this Commonwealth who, unfortunately, have some
10 of the worst health conditions of any population group, but these are health conditions that can
11 be addressed, problems that can be solved, but I think we have to concentrate resources, we have
12 to concentrate people, we have to concentrate money in getting that done, and so I dedicated
13 myself to that, and some of those negative indices were in my legislative district, so I had a
14 personal interest in terms of the people that I served.

15

16 **JT:** How was working with Leadership, whether with the Leadership or when you had to go
17 against the Leadership, and did you ever think about becoming a Leader?

18

19 **WR:** Never thought about becoming a Leader. I was concentrating on trying to become a
20 Chairman, committee Chairman. When I came here, Bill DeWeese and Mike Veon and others
21 were in the process of really building their career in the House in terms of Leadership. Jim
22 Manderino [James J. Manderino; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989] was
23 still the Speaker at that time. Bob O'Donnell [Robert W. O'Donnell; State Representative,

1 Philadelphia County, 1973-1994; Speaker, 1990-1992] was, I believe, the Majority Leader, and
2 Ivan Itkin, Mark Cohen, Jeff Coy [State Representative, Cumberland and Franklin Counties,
3 1983-2004] were some of the people, and Dwight Evans were in that Democratic Leadership,
4 and I worked very well with them. My voting records probably would indicate that like most
5 Members in our Caucus we voted with our Leadership. I'll never forget Leroy Irvis telling us
6 something when he left the House, and he spoke to the Democratic Caucus. He said, "On
7 procedural matters, follow your Leaders. On matters of conscience, vote accordingly," and he
8 said, "That's the only advice I'll give to you new freshmen Members," and I found that to be
9 good advice and always used that on procedural matters, what you might call Caucus matters,
10 where we're trying to drive a Caucus agenda, I always supported my Leadership, but on matters
11 of conscience I voted accordingly.

12

13 **JT:** How do you feel about the seniority system?

14

15 **WR:** It was working to my disadvantage when I got here, and before I left, it had not worked to
16 my advantage. I'm figuring if I was still in the House I might be ready to be a Chairman now. I
17 came here when Democrats were in the majority. Half the time I served, half of those 14 years,
18 Republicans were in the majority, and half that time Democrats were in the majority, so I never
19 moved up very much. I came in a very big class, class of about 28, 29 Republicans and
20 Democrats. My last name begins with an R, and there were a lot of people in front of me, and
21 my class on the Democratic side whose names began with letters that came before R, and then
22 you had all the people were here before you got here. So, the class of [19]89 probably might be
23 just coming into its own, but you got to be here 18, 20 years to get a chairmanship, and I was

1 very appreciative of the hard work that Members have put in to become Chairmen and why some
2 Members stayed as long as they did, but I almost got there, but not quite.

3

4 **JT:** What obstacles do you think you came across when trying to get some of your legislation
5 passed, whether it was in the committee or on the House Floor or even in the amendment
6 process?

7

8 **WR:** Not being able to convince Leadership on my side that my bill was a priority. They
9 usually had their priorities. They usually worked their priorities through the Caucus, through
10 other chairs. There's a lot of issues. You figure in any given year 4-5,000 pieces of legislation
11 are sponsored, and I was a sponsor or co-sponsor of a lot of that legislation, but a very small
12 portion of it ever gets onto the Floor, much less passed. And so, trying to get Leadership, get
13 Republican or Democrat to support what you want to do is difficult. You've got to really spend
14 some time on it. I saw several Members become frustrated with the slow pace in the House, and
15 they stayed one or two terms, and they went and did something else. Ken Lee [Kenneth E. Lee;
16 State Representative, Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties, 1991-1994] came into the
17 House, I believe, when I came in [19]89. He stayed one or two terms, and he just said, "I want to
18 go back to being a lawyer. I can't get anything done here." I never felt I couldn't get anything
19 done. I knew it was going to take time to get it done. I knew you had to wait for your
20 opportunities, and I also knew that the amendment process sometimes was your best way of
21 getting something done, which was the case for me with the identity theft law. There's the
22 identity theft law a-growing and germinating in an agriculture bill because I was able to make an
23 arrangement across the aisle to get an amendment passed.

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JT: Right. Do you think it was – I don't want to say easier – but was it better or even more fun, I should say, to do more work in the committees or to actually be on the House Floor during Session days?

WR: For me on the House Floor. I liked the excitement. I liked the debate. Like I said, I sat down in Leadership Row, so I was sitting down there with the Leaders, so I got a little different perspective than others. I was hearing and seeing things that other Members, certainly on the Democratic side, were not hearing and seeing. The committee work was kind of tedious. It was thorough – we had great staff, worked with some great staff people that made us all look real good, and never had a bad piece of legislation drafted; the Legislative Reference Bureau. We're very fortunate in Pennsylvania to have the people who work up there, the lawyers and the clerical staff and Leadership up there, and so I found the House Floor to be more exciting, even when I didn't have an amendment. I learned a lot more in the committees about legislation and what Members would support and how you draft legislation.

JT: Was there a typical Session day when you were on the Floor, or were they all different?

WR: I think most of them were different except the days when we had the big issues like abortion, tax increase, pay raise, things of that type; tight budget years. But other than that, it was kind-of routine. I mean, you had a long list of legislation, and a lot of it was held over. I know in my present capacity on county council I oftentimes suggest to our President if there's a bill he's not ready to move, pass over it. He just looks at me like, "What is that?" And then he

1 says, "I don't think I can do that." I said, "Sure, you can do it. You're the presiding officer.
2 You have the gavel. If you don't want to bring a bill up for consideration, it doesn't come up."
3 And so, I saw a lot of that; bills that got onto the agenda but for whatever reason they didn't get
4 worked on the Floor. And I think a lot of that had to do with Leadership's agenda, and if I had to
5 come back again, I would work Leadership on my side a lot better, and whatever contacts I had
6 on the Republican side for those burning hot issues.

7

8 **JT:** Yeah. Not necessarily you were specifically involved with, with regards to sponsorship, but
9 what do you think was the most difficult issue before the Legislature while you were there?

10

11 **WR:** The abortion issue.

12

13 **JT:** Was it?

14

15 **WR:** And it was amazing how it was processed. The men on both sides, Republicans and
16 Democrats, let the women on both sides take the leadership on the issue, and the House was
17 basically split between Republican women and Democratic women, and they basically took the
18 lead on either side of the issue. I found that Members literally did not change the position they
19 originally had, and we went on and on and on and on and on. I'll never forget Steve Freind
20 [Stephen F. Friend; State Representative, Delaware County, 1975-1992] standing up on the
21 Republican side and giving a nice speech. He was one of the few men that ventured out into that
22 area, and the rest of us were sitting there, and I remember Frank Gigliotti [State Representative,
23 Allegheny County, 1991-2000] saying, "Why don't we just vote? Nobody's position's going to

1 change. Let's vote. This is real contentious," and I looked at him, and I said, "There's only one
2 issue that's more contentious than this." He said, "What?" I said, "Integration." And finally
3 when we voted, there were about 30 that voted against the Abortion Control Act that Governor
4 Casey was pushing, and that was the same 30 that started out. Others went ahead and supported
5 it, and that probably was the most contentious issue, even more contentious than some of the
6 budget votes, and I guess it's because Members knew how personal it was, how inflammatory it
7 was, but I thought it was interesting that the men sort-of decided to let the women handle it.

8

9 **JT:** Yeah. Did you see many changes in the House during your time there?

10

11 **WR:** Yeah, one of the things that Bob O'Donnell did I thought was really, professionalize our
12 staff. He took them to a new level of accountability. There was a gentleman by the name of Al
13 Cawley, who's deceased now, who had responsibility for a lot of the administrative work in the
14 House. Al was a great guy, and he would help you work through what Bob O'Donnell, as
15 Speaker, in particular, wanted to do, and I think that's Bob's lasting legacy is he took us to a new
16 level in terms of computerization, in terms of personnel, in terms of the kinds of support systems
17 that Members needed that made sense that we could afford. I think in terms of how we managed
18 our finances in all the Caucuses – and to some extent when Bob raised the questions of pension
19 benefits and a pay raise, some Members felt he was being disloyal to the Democratic Caucus,
20 and he wasn't reelected Speaker, so Bill DeWeese was elected Speaker on the Democratic side,
21 and I'm sure that hurt Bob a lot, but he did a great service to the people of this Commonwealth
22 by professionalizing the House of Representatives.

23

1 **JT:** One of the changes that we see today is the technology advancement. There are laptops on
2 every table. There's the continual video feed of the Sessions. Do you have an opinion on if
3 that's a good thing?
4

5 **WR:** I think it's great. Every legislative body I've served in, Pittsburgh City Council,
6 Allegheny County Council, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, has gone through a
7 technology change while I was there, and that main change has been more information and
8 getting on TV; letting our constituents see us. And there's always this apprehension that if
9 people see us somehow they won't appreciate us, and I always felt that we needed to let people
10 see us. We needed to do the people's business in public. If you're sitting there reading the
11 newspaper, as I often did, have a good reason, but there's no reason to pretend that all the time
12 we're spending here is serious. Sometimes it's not serious, and sometimes we make mistakes,
13 and the fact that you make them on television probably is no big deal. And I found that most
14 Members, wherever I've been, they get comfortable; they get back to taking care of business.
15 They don't say anything they normally wouldn't say or do anything they normally wouldn't do
16 on most occasions. But, the laptop when I was here, laptops were just coming in.

17
18 **JT:** Yeah.
19

20 **WR:** And right before I left, you know, you have this laptop here, and you're working through
21 it. When I was on city council and, now that I'm on county council, we don't have and did not
22 have that readily available. You can get a laptop on Allegheny County Council, but it's not
23 plugged in officially to your work there at your desk. Members don't bring their laptop if they

1 have one, and all members don't have them to the desk there at work. We have computers in our
2 offices, but some Members either don't want a laptop or don't feel it's necessary. But, I think
3 here in the House that was just a great, a great move and again, a tribute to the Leadership on
4 both the Republican and Democratic side that they wanted the legislators to be able to serve their
5 constituents better.

6

7 **JT:** Yeah. How was your relationship with the media, specifically in your own district?

8

9 **WR:** I thought it was good. I thought there was one paper that didn't treat me very well, but I
10 didn't expect them to, okay. I had been at odds with them on a couple issues, but I gave every
11 media outlet the same opportunity to interview me or get information from me. The New
12 Pittsburgh Courier was particularly open to me writing a weekly column called "Bill's Book,"
13 and Mike Herzing on the staff here in the House, worked with me every week on that. I did a
14 radio program. Bob Kline and others here worked with me on that. I did a television program
15 twice a month right here in this studio, and so I got out to the media. I got out to the public. I
16 was always sending out press releases. I'll never forget in the campaign one of my opponents
17 accused me of only sending out press releases. I told him, I said, "I'm building my archives in
18 advance."

19

20 **JT:** There you go.

21

22 **WR:** But, I thought I had a very positive relationship with the media. I had infrequent press
23 conferences. I didn't want to waste the media's time pumping my ego, but I sent out a lot of

1 press releases, but I used the media center to have press conferences occasionally. Carn-
2 Robinson I and II, we used it extensively, and occasionally I came up with some of my
3 colleagues on some other bills.

4
5 **JT:** Great. What would you say was your favorite aspect of the job here at the House?

6
7 **WR:** My favorite aspect of the job. I think that my favorite part was being on the Floor and
8 being able to vote and being able to vote my conscience of knowing that my constituents had
9 confidence in my judgment and that I could vote whatever way I wanted to, that I wasn't really
10 constrained by Leadership. I wasn't part of any clique or anything, and that I could be very
11 thoughtful and deliberative and really look beyond the 19th Legislative District and look to all the
12 people in Pennsylvania. So, I relished those opportunities to be on the Floor and to reach out and
13 push either that red or green button and then look up and see my name lit and to know that I was
14 doing something beyond myself for people who I would never know and never see.

15
16 **JT:** Did you have a least favorite aspect?

17
18 **WR:** Probably in the latter years the travel back-and-forth. It began to take its toll. Getting up
19 early if I was flying, driving home into the sun sometimes driving west, the grind of maybe
20 having to come back for committee meetings and other things, and it got to the point where the
21 perks and the compensation, all that –

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23 **JT:** Yeah.

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WR: – wasn’t balancing out on the wear and tear physically and, and mentally, and so down at the end I could honestly say that the travel back-and-forth was my least favorite.

JT: Yeah. I’d like to ask each of the Members when I talk with them if they have a specific or interesting story that they’d like to share, whether it be funny, happy, sad, something that, that not many people would probably know about what happens.

WR: Well, I have two.

JT: Okay.

WR: One relates to my last speech in the House of Representatives, the speech that’s in the record book, the speech that’ll be here for all ages; my farewell address. And I’ll never forget getting up in front of the House, it was in late November. In fact, it was the day I was physically leaving the House, and I got up, and I looked out at all my colleagues, and Ron Marsico [Ronald S. Marsico; State Representatives, Dauphin County, 1991-present] and I both had attended The Ohio State University at a different time. We were probably the only two Ohio State Buckeye fans in this part of Pennsylvania, and I got up, and this was the year that Ohio State had done very well. It was on its way to winning a national championship, and I got up, and I looked out at the crowd and before I said anything else I said, “How ‘bout them Buckeyes?” (*laugh*) And then I went on with my speech, but at the end of that day there’s something that occurred that most people don’t know, and I’ll tell you about it; when I left my office, said goodbye to my

1 secretary, and we packed up everything, and things had been sent back to Pittsburgh, and I was
2 going down to take my last ride, my last official ride, in a State vehicle out to the airport to catch
3 a plane back to Pittsburgh, and going down the steps from the third floor in the – what is now the
4 K. Leroy Irvis Office Building, it was the South Office Building then – I cried going all the way
5 down the steps because I just hated to leave, and it hurt so bad, not necessarily because of the
6 way I was leaving, but that I had to leave. I just loved being here, and by the time I got outside,
7 my eyes were dry, and I was gone. The other story that I thought was real good was the story of
8 friendship and trust and honesty. Then I got one more. Matt Ryan and I developed a
9 relationship. Matt and I had a very interesting conversation once on the House Floor that wasn't
10 too pleasant, and I thought, "Oh, my goodness, this is going to signal a bad relationship." But
11 subsequent to that, we came to a situation where I asked Matt Ryan to appoint me to the Board of
12 Trustees of the University of Pittsburgh, and I also asked him would he give me another
13 appointment, too. He said, "Yes," and I worked with him on some things that he wanted. Well,
14 I got appointed, and it was time for the second appointment, and I saw Matt one day in the men's
15 lounge, and he was standing with Roger Nick, his trusted assistant, and I mentioned it to him,
16 and he says, "I don't remember that," and I told him exactly where we met, told him what he said
17 he was going to do, that he would allow me to recommend someone to him to be appointed in
18 addition to myself. He said, "I'm going to trust you. If you say I said that, [I'll] take your word
19 for it." He said, "Roger, take care of this within a half hour." Within a half hour, Roger Nick
20 called me and said, "It's done."

21

22 **JT:** Wow.

23

1 **WR:** And it was done, and I really appreciated that, because I think sometimes people don't
2 believe that politicians can be trusted, and even though we were statesmen here, at home we
3 were politicians, and our word was our bond, and I appreciated that that he was able to do that.
4 We could shake hands across the aisle and do something that we both had agreed. The other
5 story is kind-of funny. When I first came here, Bill DeWeese and Mike Veon took me under
6 their wing, and one night we're sitting around, and we're discussing the helmet law. As you
7 know, Mike Veon was a great advocate of bikers and I didn't know at the time he rode. And he
8 and Bill liked to smoke cigars, and so we met in DeWeese's office one night. We're talking
9 about the helmet law, and they were trying to convince me that this was a good bill for me to
10 vote against, because they didn't want helmets. And they explained to me all about it and the
11 groups that were supporting it. They were making a lot of good sense about letting people ride
12 without helmets if they were adults and et cetera, et cetera, and we're sitting there, and they
13 opened this box, and they each took a cigar, and they handed one to me. It's about nine o'clock
14 at night. It's quiet, it's dark and the lights are outside the Capitol, and we all light up, and I
15 looked at them, and I said, "You know, I've heard about smoke-filled rooms, and now I'm in
16 one."

17
18 **JT:** That is great. Speaking of, you know, the different Members that you got along with, how
19 was the camaraderie among the Members both on and off the Floor?

20
21 **WR:** I found that it was very good, very positive, that when we had our differences on the Floor,
22 they pretty much stayed there, and you always had people that you would hang out with or be
23 more friendly with than others. That's just human nature.

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JT: True.

WR: But I found Members to be cordial and to be friendly and to be human. Everybody had a story. There were times when Members were hurting. There were times they were very joyous, and it wasn't always a fun time for Members, because they had family obligations. I was here when Jim Manderino passed. I was here when Dave Richardson passed. I was also here when new Members came to the House with their eyes wide open. I was here when there were Members who wanted to change things and make things better, and that was a great experience to see this mix of emotion, this mix of personalities. I remember when Angel Cruz [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 2001-present] came and brought his own Latin flavor to the House. Republicans and Democrats, it was just a great experience to see Members, male and female, come and go. I remember Pat Vance [Patricia H. Vance; State Representative, Cumberland County, 1991-2004; State Senator, Cumberland and York Counties, 2005-present] oftentimes being allowed to be the Speaker by Matt Ryan. He gave her an opportunity to do that. I began to appreciate the significance of a woman presiding over the House, if just for a short period of time.

JT: Now, obviously you're still involved in politics.

WR: Yes.

JT: Serving in, in Allegheny County. Do you still follow state politics?

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WR: Oh yes. The last time I was Sworn-In I was Sworn-In on a Bible that I received as a Member, and I was Sworn-In here, too, and I remember saying that this Bible represented my connection to the House of Representatives, that I was still a part of the House of Representatives in Harrisburg, and I was connecting it to being a part of a new and budding institution, County Council, which is eight, nine years old, and there's an institution in Harrisburg that's almost 400 years old that I was a part of, and I just felt so good about it. This Bible was the connection. I follow all the politics; the good, the bad, and the ugly. I follow the Members. Sometimes I see former Members back in Pittsburgh, and it's a unique fraternal organization for those of us who have been in the House. Very few people in this Commonwealth have had an opportunity to serve here, and it's very sobering when you get your two minutes, and you get your two minutes when you're deceased, and the Speaker informs the House of your demise then we have an appropriate resolution, and then there's like that moment of silence, and then we go back to business, and occasionally a Member will say, "Who was that person? Do you remember them?" And sometimes there's no one there that served with them, and sometimes there are those of us who have served with someone who passes in office, but it's a solemn occasion, but it's the highest tribute that we can pay to former Members is to give them that moment of silence.

JT: Absolutely. How would you like your tenure in the House to be remembered?

21

WR: I'd like to be remembered as a guy who really wanted to do the right thing, who was willing to work with anybody, willing to work with everybody, who was full of life. A legislator

1 who actually wanted to make a mark, who wanted to make a stamp, who wanted to leave a
2 legacy, who wanted to do some big, great things, not just for himself but for the people of
3 Pennsylvania. That he wanted to do well by his district. That he wanted his constituents to say
4 he worked hard, he had our interests at heart, and while we may have disagreed with him on a
5 number of things, we respected him, and we know his service in Harrisburg was honorable and
6 that title Honorable is one that he earned.

7

8 **JT:** Any regrets or issues that you didn't get a chance to cover while you were here?

9

10 **WR:** Wish I could have stayed a little longer.

11

12 **JT:** Yeah?

13

14 **WR:** I figured maybe one or two more terms, then I probably would have been ready to go. If I
15 could have made 20 years, which would have been three more terms, maybe I'd been a
16 chairman, but I just wanted to stay a little longer. Probably would have liked to have left office
17 winning an election. I left office after losing an election. That hurt, but other than that, no
18 regrets. I had a great time here. I served well. I served honorably. I'm just glad I was a part of
19 this, and I'm just glad that I met so many nice people here, staff as well as Members, lobbyists. I
20 had a great experience with them. They were very helpful.

21

22 **JT:** Final question for you: what advice would you give to someone who's interested in
23 becoming a politician, or specifically, even someone who wants to be a Representative?

1 **WR:** I would say that what they really need to do is ask themselves, are they willing to commit
2 24/7 to being a politician, to being an elected official. Are you willing to go to all the
3 community and neighborhood meetings? Are you willing to keep a smile on your face? Are you
4 willing to absorb not so kind comments? Can you refrain from retaliating against people, getting
5 angry with people, being selfish? Can you stand the grind because it's 24/7? How long can you
6 stand it, because it's going to take its toll? And, is this something that you truly love? I think the
7 most successful politicians and elected officials love what they do, and when you stop loving it,
8 it's time to leave it if you have that opportunity. So, I would advise them to do that first and then
9 to prepare themselves, not so much in knowing all the issues, but prepare themselves around
10 their own values, their own morals, what you will and will not do, areas where you need to grow.
11 My motto is "Cooperation with others, competition with self," and, "When the going gets tough,
12 it's no quit and no excuses."

13

14 **JT:** Nice. Representative William Robinson, I want to thank you very much –

15

16 **WR:** Thank you.

17

18 **JT:** – for participating in our Oral History and for sharing your stories, and good luck in
19 everything.

20

21 **WR:** Thank you very much.

22

23 **JT:** Thank you.