

# The Reform Program: A Group Interview

**With Speaker Leonard Sawyer, former Chief Clerk Dean Foster and former assistants Dawne Freisen and Vito Chiechi conducted by Anne Kilgannon on September 2, 2004.**

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Today, we are here with Speaker Leonard Sawyer, Ms. Dawne Friesen, Vito Chiechi, and Dean Foster. We're going to talk about Leonard Sawyer's reforms that transformed the work of the Washington State Legislature, beginning in 1972, when he was Speaker of the House. Leonard Sawyer was a long-time legislator from the Puyallup area who then gradually worked his way up the hierarchy in the Democratic caucus and became Speaker in 1973. He served two terms in that office.

He had had these reforms in mind for quite awhile and this was his first opportunity to put them into place. He had a great team that helped him who are not all present here today, but we have a good representation of the people that worked with him.

Speaker Sawyer's main goals were to strengthen the legislative branch. The executive branch under Governor Dan Evans had been growing and developing considerably over these years and many legislators—certainly Leonard Sawyer—believed that the Legislature had been weakened in comparison and needed more tools and more structure to help it keep up with the executive branch. His other goal was to maintain a part-time citizen Legislature, close to people, responsive, but more effective. So with those big-picture goals in mind, we can turn to Leonard and he can tell us how he kept those things in mind and what he did in the Legislature.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Thank you, Anne. I think one of the first things that I want to talk about is, I've always believed that in the Legislature—or any kind of activity—the person with the best information is the one that prevails. And we never had any information as legislators. I always used to say we were fed pabulum because somebody else had digested the information and all we got was what they wanted to tell us.

**Vito Chiechi:** Whatever came over from the administration is what we got, because they had the staff to do it with. The Legislature didn't have the staff to go in and do the research that was necessary.

**Rep. Sawyer:** And it was really very frustrating most of the time to legislators and staff people, too. So our main thrust was we wanted to get information. We wanted independent information that we could rely on and wasn't colored. Before, all we got was information from the executive staff. We got information from the lobbyists. And quite frankly, they were probably more honest most of the time than the executive people because they didn't have quite the structures that they were trying to create. So this is where we started from.

There are three branches of government: there's the judicial, there's the legislative and the executive. Well, the executive had more staff than he needed, we always felt. We had none—to an extent—and what we did have was mostly part-time. We wanted people there all the time. And then the judiciary has always got very qualified staff, probably the most qualified of all. So we were the only ones without any permanent staff or any means of getting any independent information. So that's basically what we really started from.

**Dean Foster:** And part of it was the Legislature's fault. The Legislature really had two kinds of operations: one during the interim, which they called interim committees, which would start at the end of any session and disband right at the beginning of the next session. And there was no carryover from the information they received because many of the members of the interim committees were going to some new committee. And the staff may or may not go on to another legislative committee and it might not even be the same one. So the legislative hierarchy itself was not set up to help the legislators get information. It was more: what do you do during the interim and then come in during the legislative session. So part of this was to put the Legislature itself into a position of getting more information. And that's where the permanent staff started coming in.

There was, I recall, a lot of opposition to that, couched in the terms that "It's going to cost us so much money." But in terms of how much money the Legislature budgeted every year for the state, it was nothing. A tenth of one percent or something like that. And yet, finally, there was some competition with the information that the executive branch put out—legitimate arguments about how much money was coming in and how it was going out and where it was going to.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Previously, you'd had some staff, but they were patronage staff, I understood, but what you brought in was something very new: nonpartisan staff.

**Vito Chiechi:** Well, one of the reasons, too, that there was so much controversy over whether or not this would work or not—because the people were saying, "Well, the party in power would dominate the staff." Well, Leonard said, "No, we're going to pick the staff and we're going to have this number of Republicans on that committee and this number of Democrats." So the people had to be qualified to be part of that program research staff. And so we got some very good people because of that, because we didn't take any political hacks. We took the people who had legal backgrounds and it worked out exceedingly well. But you had to have that nonpartisanship actually hiring those kinds of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So that was the joint committee of Republicans and Democrats?

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes, the joint committee that we had talked about before.

**Dean Foster:** And the proof of that is when the Republicans took over control of the House in '81, not very

many of the nonpartisan staff were let go. I mean, they continued them because they had worked that balance and the Republicans knew that the nonpartisan staff—that was the first time the minority party had really had access to any staff. There was partisan staff, but they really hadn't had access to this caliber of staff. And it worked both ways.

And the truth is, thirty-some years later, there's still some of the same people on that staff. It's my understanding that Leonard's idea was that we would hire staff and they would be with the Legislature for a couple of years—four years or six years—and then they'd go out into state government or with other organizations and we'd be expanding this knowledge about government. Most of them stayed.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, they liked it.

**Ms. Friesen:** The Legislature became a little more institutionalized, I think, than Len's original concept envisioned.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I suppose they built up expertise...

**Ms. Friesen:** And security.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** ...security and relationships, and learned how it worked.

**Ms. Friesen:** Now, that's not to say that there wasn't partisan staff. This was the professional staff. It was the professional staff that was hired by this employment committee.

**Rep. Sawyer:** The other thing is I can say that I don't like term limits because experience means so much in the legislative environment. Because you have to look back, because so many things look really good unless you've had experience with it and you know, they present the bad and the good. You understand some of the negatives. So I wanted a staff that was going to be there and they would have the experience to back up their research. So I thought it was really important that we maintained this staff as long as we could. I didn't really think they'd last that long but they seemed to like the environment that they were put in and they stayed, which was all good. So it was a real thing.

And then as far as the partisan staff, when I was a minority leader, I had one person, half-time, I think. Maybe there was one person. And so I took him and divided his time—mainly I went ahead and hired a person out of our staff budget to do the redistricting thing. So we computerized it. Now, that was the first time that it had ever been computerized and that was my first experience with computers on that basis. And it worked so beautifully! We knew more about it than Senator Greive and his big staff and Swayze and their big staff. We could go through and take a plan and within two hours know the break-up. It would take them days. Now, Dean used to work on those kinds of programs and they were huge.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He was there at the paper and pencil stage.

**Dean Foster:** I was, absolutely. But I was now with the House, by this time. And yes, we were way ahead of them.

**Rep. Sawyer:** After we went through it, we ran it different ways and we didn't think things would stay—unless somebody got in there and went real partisan on it—that we were going to end up in good shape. We didn't particularly want a lot of change. And we kind of drug our feet all through the thing and luckily they couldn't put it together and the court came in and did it. And then after the court made the redistricting, a lot of our Democratic leaders and the labor people and all these people said, "Oh!" and were just horrified.

We ran it and boy, it was better than what we could have passed, because it was done very properly. So we were very thankful to the people that did that redistricting. But that's when I really got enraptured with computers, because I didn't know them too well before then.

The guy that did that for us is Graham Lammers. He was a young man working up at Boeing and I think Dean [Morgan] or Vito found him for us. He did it part-time, at nights and weekends, because Boeing wouldn't be involved in something partisan like that and this was purely partisan. So we paid him out of our small budget. He didn't get much compared to what he did.

**Vito Chiechi:** Oh, absolutely not.

**Ms. Friesen:** He was a jewel.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, and he was a genius, too.

**Vito Chiechi:** Anne, that was a time that if you had to interrogate the larger computer, you had a piece of equipment this high and it had telephone couplings and you put the telephone on there, on the coupling that went to the main computer in order to hold all the data. And then you could sit here with your computer and put the data in and it went to the main computer, to work it. And then all of a sudden out of the thing would come the paper; it would come banging out.

And Leonard brought the Senate in one time. They had a plan that was supposed to be good. And Leonard said, "Just a minute." He just got Graham Lammers to put all the information in and then Leonard looked at him and said, "Nah, this is not any good."

**Rep. Sawyer:** Right there in front of them!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They must have been astonished.

**Ms. Friesen:** We were all pretty astonished, initially.

**Vito Chiechi:** And Senator Mardesich just got mad and started calling him every name under the sun because he hadn't told them about that he had this computer.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** The “magic box?”

**Vito Chiechi:** That’s right, the magic box. That was the arrangement, the advent at least of being able to go from that telephone coupler to today, we’ve got it on today’s PC. Yes, it’s got a little teeny screen. Ask Dean, he worked on this last redistricting on a little piece of computer on his desk.

**Dean Foster:** But not much changed except the size. When the Court Master, Morrill came up with the new redistricting—I think it was in the spring of ‘72—and Leonard put in the new lines—whoever did it—put it into his computer, we knew right away, or we expected right away, that we were going to do real well in the next elections. You still have to campaign, you still have to have good candidates.

But what he [Morrill] drew—which was a totally non-partisan drawing—well, all the Democrats, Bob Greive starting, they got all excited. They thought this was a terrible thing that was happening and we were going to lose the election. We knew from the beginning that if we had the right kind of candidates, because of that data, we were going to win. And it turned out pretty well. I don’t know, we won fifty-five seats that year, I think.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Went from forty-three to fifty-five.

**Dean Foster:** And everybody was astounded. And we weren’t astounded at all. We knew it had to happen.

That was the beginning, in my mind, of the use of computers and then later we’ll talk about LEAP [Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program], which is really the great thing that was done for the Legislature beyond the structural changes. But the structural changes had to come first before you were able to implement the other kinds of competition with the executive.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, the things we were doing weren’t very glamorous. The press, nobody, in fact, most people didn’t pay much attention. But those of us that were in the Legislature all the time, and struggling and struggling, it was all pretty important to us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that’s hard now to remember how it was before and then how much you did change it. Let’s talk a little bit about what you did with committees because you made some changes there that—on paper—sound like, “Why is that so important?” but they actually made the committee structure quite different.

**Ms. Friesen:** Anne, could I make a preliminary statement here before you start that? I think that it’s important to understand that everything that Leonard was trying to do was very suspect. Because it was new—and it was change.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** People don’t like change...

**Ms. Friesen:** People in positions of power, however large, great or small the power, the fear is of the loss of

power and fear of change. And Leonard never was afraid of anything like that. He's kind of a visionary and sees change as opportunity. And that frightened a lot of people.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, I don't know if it was a good thing or not a good thing to say, but several times when people were talking about these innovations, they said, "This is the most change in eighty-four years." In other words, since statehood. So that kind of set it up as almost revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, which is exciting but challenging to people.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, one other statement that I want to make, because I feel so strongly about this is, when I was running the minority, they squeezed us off. They didn't give us any help. I talked to Senator Magnuson and he said, "A strong minority is helpful." And that didn't make sense, but then, the more I was in the Legislature, the more I would think, if you've got a strong minority, they're going to make it tougher for you to pass the bills through. But the bills are going to be better screened. You're going to have better legislation when you have a strong minority. And just because the minority is strong, if you can't pass something, it shouldn't be passed, is the way to think.

So when we went in, I think the Republicans, they said they were suspicious of what we thinking, saying all these nice things, but we really meant them because it was based on our experience. I'd been in there nearly twenty years and Dean had been in and around the Legislature.

I really believe in a strong staff. One of the reasons we were able to do as many things as what we're going to be talking about, I had a fantastic staff. I really did. And these people—we'll be talking about them later on—they all went on and did great, and were very successful people afterwards. And stayed in politics. And so did the Republican staff. So, it really worked when we made this staff.

The main thing is that Dean touched on a little bit—prior to that, the interim committees became little kingdoms, fiefdoms, and they were expensive. And nobody knew what they were doing and they were out there; there was no organization. Nobody knew when a meeting was going to be held—it was nothing—it was just whenever the chairman felt like it. And so, we knew that we were going to get an awful lot of pressure from the elder statesmen that we had to deal with in the Senate.

**Ms. Friesen:** Not all elderly!

**Dean Foster:** So that talks about the committee structure before 1972. Let me just give you some numbers. Both in the Senate and the House, there may have been twenty to twenty-five committees during the regular session of the Legislature. And members may have served on from eight to twelve committees. You never knew when a committee was going to be called. Prior to about 1967, most of the committees closed most of

their meetings. So you never knew when there was going to be a meeting. A chair would get up on the floor and call a meeting, and nobody would have any idea what was going to be done at the meeting.

What Leonard then did and he talked the Senate—Senator Mardesich—into that, is cut the number of committees to about ten or twelve.

**Ms. Friesen:** I think there were fifteen.

**Dean Foster:** Fifteen? And limit the membership on those committees to three or four per member. And then we set up a structure by which people would know when those committees were going to meet: three times a week, or two times a week, at a certain time. So you go from total lack of knowledge about anything and members on so many committees, to getting a subject down and then having the same named committees in each body so that you would know that a bill that might go to one of these committees would clearly go to the other one.

**Ms. Friesen:** Unless the person referring the bill thought it might not get a fair hearing.

**Dean Foster:** Right. But generally, what was then set up was some consistency and some knowledge about what was going to happen. That was terribly threatening to lots of people. They didn't want the public knowing when a hearing was going to happen. A chair didn't want the public to know that they were going to have a meeting.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They might come?

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, yes. And the press.

**Dean Foster:** And the press.

**Ms. Friesen:** We published a weekly schedule of when the meetings were going to be and where and what was going to be on the agenda. And that was available to the public and to the press and it was actually posted on the floor of the House. Not the agenda, but the times.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Give people a chance? Dawne, I understand that it was part of your role to coordinate between the House and the Senate and try to keep things moving. Build that relationship—for the first time.

**Ms. Friesen:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Was that hard?

**Ms. Friesen:** It was an extreme challenge! Yes. (Laughter in the room)

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, do you think that's an understatement? So, would you look to be forging a whole new way of working with people, and teaching them and coddling them along?

**Ms. Friesen:** Oh, coddling, yes. But the reason that I had that position was that I had worked for both the



Senate majority leader, Senator Mardesich, and Len Sawyer as Speaker of the House and so I knew how they operated. And I worked with them closely on the development of the restructuring—the reorganization of the Legislature.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did they both turn to you and say, “Make it work?”

**Ms. Friesen:** No, no, they turned to a lot of people to make it work. But I was able to facilitate some activity between the two Houses because of my familiarity with the leadership. There was a sort of “Super Rules Committee” that was composed of House and Senate leadership—the majority leadership—that met about once a week at some unholy hour in the morning and I staffed that. We determined at those meetings and other meetings what would be considered major legislation. Not that all legislation wasn’t important, but there were certain bills and certain issues that needed to be addressed during the session and we wanted to be sure that those were progressing in a positive way through the process in both Houses. That was one of my responsibilities: to track both major pieces of legislation and make sure that they were moving. That was totally new.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I gather that nobody before had looked at both houses and tried to coordinate? **Ms. Friesen:** Right. And I would work with the chairmen of both groups, and the House and the Senate majority leaders, and then the Speaker, to make sure that they got on the calendars and through the Rules committees.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It would take that kind of attention?

**Ms. Friesen:** Right.

**Rep. Sawyer:** She wasn’t the most popular person in the world because when she saw something, well, she’d go to Augie or myself and Bailey, whoever she could get hold of and say, “This bill is not moving.” And before that she’d have to go interview the chairman to find out why it wasn’t moving, and so forth. And so some of them didn’t...

**Ms. Friesen:** Didn’t appreciate that.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Didn’t want to share that information and so forth. And we didn’t do it to all the bills, just the bills that...

**Ms. Friesen:** ...we considered major legislation.

**Rep. Sawyer:** ...we decided were major legislation. We wanted to pass them or at least bring them up so they had a hearing on the floor.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand besides this ‘gentle’ oversight, shall we call it, that you actually expected more from your chairmen. You wanted them to know more about their own bills that were coming out of their committees and to come before Rules and actually stand up and describe these bills.



**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, they weren't too happy with that at times. But in Rules—I'd been on Rules since my second term, you know. And half the time, you don't know what's going on. You turn to somebody and you like him, and he asks you about a bill. What did we have? Five-thousand bills and how are you going to know them all? So, you always relied on friends. That's another thing Senator Magnuson told me. He said, "Pick your friends. Outside the Legislature and inside the Legislature, that's where you're going to get your information and you can call them." So that's the way you did it. Too much and it became a little bit of cronyism, but there was a reason for the cronyism, is what I'm saying.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, certain persons would be well-versed in education or transportation or whatever and you would probably look to their lead; you can't know everything.

**Rep. Sawyer:** So what we decided, we had them enlighten the Rules Committee a little bit, too. We were acting kind of blindly. And so that's when we decided we'd have the chairman come over and explain the bills in the open forum.

**Dean Foster:** They not only had to explain them. The other great advantage to this is the Rules Committee members generally were more senior members, the senior members in leadership. They'd had some experience. And they could, by having an opportunity to sit there and read the bills or listen, pick out problems, raise questions to the chair or to staff that early in the process could be corrected. These wouldn't necessarily be partisan questions, these wouldn't necessarily be policy questions, but they would just read the bill and say, "It doesn't say what you're saying it says." And so it was an early check on how well the committee had done and how well the staff had done. Plus, it forced the chairs to understand what the bills were, which was pretty threatening in itself. But it worked out because, by the end of the session, chairs wanted to get in there and get their bills moved and had a chance to practice before they went to caucus or on the floor about what the bill was about.

**Ms. Friesen:** So it was a good opportunity to fine-tune the legislation itself, too.

**Dean Foster:** It took a lot of commitment of time, because you think about, in a period of four or five weeks, how many bills come out of the committee and then having to sit in a Rules Committee for two or three hours with six or seven or eight chairs.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** But in the end, did you get better legislation? You put this work in up-front and in the end, isn't it better legislation that comes out? Isn't that the whole goal?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, I think it worked and was kind of important in the overall picture of the continuing legislative session, I think. Because, in September, in a period of ten days or eight days, we were all ready to

go. When they called us in, everybody was saying, “This wasn’t going to work.” Every one of them backed off of that statement because we had the legislation ready and the chairmen were well versed and everything. And it went! And you knew what you were voting on. And so we could really pass an awful lot in those days. And we weren’t just rushing legislation—it was legislation that had been well thought out, and only in a short period of four or five months, prior to the end of the session.

**Ms. Friesen:** The hearings had been held by standing committees during the period between sessions.

**Vito Chiechi:** And I believe the other thing that was important about opening Rules—before Rules used to meet in a room about this size. You know, just the Rules members. But what Leonard did, he had it moved into a big hearing room to where the public could be there and listen, too. And bills—before—would get into Rules and would die and somebody would say, “Well, why did it die?” And nobody would say anything. They all had their little cliques going and they just stayed right there. That way we opened up, again, the process. And that’s what I think he always was striving for—to open up the process.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Bring the public in?

**Ms. Friesen:** Couldn’t you still go into executive sessions for votes, though?

**Dean Foster:** No—couldn’t.

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, that was after public disclosure. But that was passed while he was Speaker.

**Dean Foster:** I thought all committees by the time Leonard became Speaker were open?

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, you’re probably right. I don’t remember.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was awhile ago! Earlier, Vito was telling me about another piece of this is that you worked with your chairmen and you would take them for lunch or dinner once or twice a month and really talk. And they would hear each other’s concerns and you would get the big picture. Do you want to talk about those dinners?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, we used the Tyee for that, out there, at least once a month, and we’d have dinner if we could. And then the chairmen all would get up—and, basically, it was their meeting. And so I had the leadership there and the chairmen. Now, this was just Democrats, completely. I thought it was a great thing, because I always figured it was the chairmen that were supposed to go back and educate their committee members as to what the idea was. But we got a better picture of the whole thing. And they weren’t in caucus where they had to wait to speak. Each guy had plenty of time and it was an informal situation. So that really worked well. Anyway, I thought it did, from my standpoint.

**Dean Foster:** Well, everybody knew what everybody else was doing and no surprises. So, not only was he working to get the public more involved, his members got more involved in a lot of the other issues. And

therefore, ultimately you had a stronger caucus, a more knowledgeable caucus. And more participation. This probably caused more work, but it allowed everybody to be more involved. And if it's called the legislative process—we probably used the word “process” more than a lot of folks—but we were able to include people in a lot more things than had been done before.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So maybe their old way of doing things wasn't actually as powerful as this—in a way—because they could be more involved?

**Ms. Friesen:** That's right. And I think what the chairmen came to realize was, not only did they have power, but they had knowledge, and then their power was therefore somewhat more justified—at least I would see it that way. I'm not sure that they all did, but, you know, they had more information, they had more knowledge, and began to learn how to use it. And then it was like an eye opener to them, too.

**Rep. Sawyer:** But the one thing, Anne, that we had a problem with—and I worried about it all the way—I knew we were going to put more strain on the legislator's time, because we just couldn't do the job within the period. But at least we had the information, that we could do a good job if we had the time. But that was one of things that the continuing session—that's the only reason that I can see—that they didn't continue it. It was a strain, especially on farmers and so forth, and people coming in. So it was something that we knew was going to be a problem and it ended up being a problem to a certain extent. But I don't know; I thought it was well worth the problem.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe you could tell us in more detail what the continuing session concept was. We keep touching on it, but we should discuss it more fully.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Okay. Well, the continuing legislative session: I happened to be reading advance sheets—being a lawyer—and I got this one where Judge Rosellini from my county had written an opinion and said that the main session could only last sixty days, but an extra session had no limit. That it was up to the legislators to determine. And he didn't quite say it that way, but when I read it, that's what I read.

So boy, I got down to Olympia right away and I went up to see Judge Rosellini and I said, “Is this what I think it says?” And he said, “What do you think?” And I said, “Well, I think it says we're on our own.” He said, “You're right.” And so, instead of adjourning, all we'd do—instead of *Sine Die*-ing—we'd adjourn and then we could call meetings any time we wanted.

And what we did—even though a lot of times we didn't call the Legislature in session—we started having regular meetings instead of interim committees meetings, we had regular meetings scheduled in which the whole Legislature was there. But it ended up being cheaper than the way we were running it before. And they were meeting and they were working on bills they were going to act on, or not act on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Continuity?

**Rep. Sawyer:** So Judge Rosellini was the leader in that. Because he'd been a legislator and he didn't like the way it worked and so they got that rule. I don't think they're using it, but it's the most beneficial rule for legislators I know.

**Dean Foster:** Well, they're not using it and there are probably two reasons. Leonard touched on the first one. It was a lot more work for the legislators. But that hasn't changed. They're not using it, but they're still working full time. A legislator's job now is full time.

What the real threat was, was to the lobbyists, because the lobbyists love having a defined time. They could kill a bill in a short period of time. But if there was the possibility of study and getting consensus in the Legislature and passing something—that did not work with the lobbyists who were generally opposed to things. And so they really started working the members, and the press and each other about how this was a terrible concept. It was a terrible concept because it was threatening to their ability to control things. So that's why I think that you're not seeing so much of it any more, because the lobbyists were able to put all kinds of stops to it.

**Ms. Friesen:** Good point! They weren't always enthusiastic about legislators being informed about what they were voting on.

**Dean Foster:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, independent information was what you were trying to get.

**Dean Foster:** It was very dangerous. Absolutely!

**Ms. Friesen:** It definitely diluted their power, tremendously.

**Dean Foster:** But nevertheless, now, even today, legislators think in a year-around concept. They have interim meetings all the time; they're thinking about the next session. If something comes up and there might be a special session, they're working on that right away.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Committee weekends...

**Dean Foster:** The fundamental purpose of this—throw out some of the details—the fundamental purpose: to have the Legislature more involved in policy making and more involved in understanding of policy, is a result of this.

**Rep. Sawyer:** That's why I was talking about the overall meeting. And if I remember right, Dean, at the end of March, we spent less money than the session before us in the Legislature.

**Dean Foster:** Well, yes, because what happened was we put people on a permanent payroll, and we didn't

have the interim committees traveling all over the country—or maybe all over the world. And there was a lot of continuity. So when you look at two or four years of costs, it ended up being less. Although it was a legislative cost, rather than hidden in the budget. And they got us a couple times on that, but in the bigger picture, what the cost of the legislative branch was ended up being less.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's rare!

**Dean Foster:** Well, it's less—and it is about one-tenth of one percent of the state budget.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A bargain.

**Dean Foster:** Yes, and it still is about that way.

**Ms. Friesen:** And more cost effective.

**Dean Foster:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You get more for it, that's for sure.

**Ms. Friesen:** Right. Are they still doing committee weekends?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** They're actually not there on the weekends.

**Dean Foster:** I forget what they call them, but they're during the week now. We called them committee weekends...they now...

**Vito Chiechi:** They start them on a Tuesday.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's just sort of a euphemism?

**Ms. Friesen:** I don't think they have the concept of the committee weekend as it was originally conceived.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, the reason I always did it on weekends is our people weren't getting hardly any money at all and they had to depend on their livelihood. And so the only time we felt we could steal from them was from their families so we did it on a committee weekend. But now they are being paid a little more, but not enough.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand you did try to raise their per diems and salaries a bit in this period to try to compensate for this extra work?

**Rep. Sawyer:** We wanted to more than we did. But we figured we were taking on a lot of people here with all these changes. I'm not a believer in having a big banquet and getting sick; I'd rather nibble at things. And I didn't think we could get all that done, really.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you've only got this much political capital...to use it up on the salary issue...

**Rep. Sawyer:** Anyway, in the House we had a fantastic caucus. They were on a crusade; they went right with us. And it was kind of a crusade. We thought, "By golly, we're going to change things!" And we had a strong staff, both independent and caucus. And so did the Republicans. I thought it worked out real well.

**Ms. Friesen:** We had to sort of pull the Senate along.

**Vito Chiechi:** We had some pretty good people on the Republican side who understood what you were trying to do and helped instigate this concept.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Definitely. Newhouse at first was very reluctant and so was Berentson and Pardini. And I don't know if Curtis ever came over...

**Vito Chiechi:** Curtis never did, no.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Because he was Party-oriented, more. But these guys wanted to get things done. They were frustrated. They were very talented people and they wanted to do something with their time if they were going to be down here. So it really worked well.

**Dean Foster:** And the difference between the Senate and the House is the same as it always has been and always will be. The House is generally younger; they're generally more wanting to do something. The Senate usually is a little older; they're laid back; they're in no hurry to do something. And so one of the brilliance of this is we got as far as we did with the Senate. Because their reluctance to move very fast is traditional in a Senate/House concept.

And the timing was perfect because Senator Mardesich had defeated Senator Greive, so you went from sort of the old way of doing things to a new way of doing things. But even with Senator Mardesich, he would look at Leonard or Dawne once in awhile and he'd say, "Could we go a little slower?"

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, he understood the process and didn't always buy it all, but the total process he agreed with. But he also understood his people.

**Dean Foster:** That's right.

**Ms. Friesen:** "We may have to slow this up a little for me to get people on board."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's all about people.

**Ms. Friesen:** It is. It's all people.

**Dean Foster:** That's right.

**Ms. Friesen:** And let's not forget the resistance of the administrative branch and the governor, who were threatened.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Could they slow this down in some way? This was a legislative initiative.

**Dean Foster:** There was a variety of ways to slow it down. You could badmouth it to the press and they could write something: "It was going to cost too much money. It was going to give too much power to Leonard or to Augie, or it was going to take away power from...." All that kind of stuff. You could...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Sow seeds of doubt?

**Dean Foster:** That's right. You could use the lobbyists to do the same kinds of things. You could be talking to individual members, if you were the governor, and raising doubt. That was why it was important to be including people in what it was we were doing and why—so they understood the theory behind it—not just have it thrown at them.

And I think we moved so fast that the executive branch didn't realize—very rapidly—and by the time we had probably gotten to LEAP, which was the fundamental threat to them, it was too late. They didn't have a chance and we had the data and that's where we had the opportunity to really move.

**Ms. Friesen:** Well said, Dean. Well said!

**Rep. Sawyer:** Dean brought up something. They attacked me and Augie all the time on being too powerful. And that's a horrible reputation to get. That's the start of any downfall. If you can get people thinking that “that guy's got too much power, and therefore he's going to abuse it” and so forth. And it was tough. But Augie, he had a tougher job than I did on the thing. But we had the impetus and they knew our caucus was strong.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think it's really important to acknowledge that relationship with Senator Mardesich. You had been long-time friends. I don't think a lot of this could have happened without that strong relationship.

**Rep. Sawyer:** In my second term, I got on Rules. And when I was on the Rules, I was kind of the tail-end of the thing and nobody was supposed to be on Rules that hadn't been there forever. And I got to sit right next to Augie Mardesich and then the Speaker and then on this side was the leader of the minority. So I'm right in the middle and I'm listening to all this conversation going on. And that's when Augie and I started our relationship. And then the next term, I became assistant floor leader and he was the floor leader. So Augie and I had worked together from my second term on, and we knew each other and we respected—I think he respected me, too—so it made a real working relationship. And luckily, Dawne had worked for both of us.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that is one of the beauties of this; these pieces falling into place where, if some pieces had been missing, this would not have gone as far as it did.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, the one thing O'Brien taught me was timing. “What you can do today, you might not be able to do tomorrow. What you can do tomorrow, you can't do today.” And the secret of being successful in the Legislature is understanding that and being aware that you've got to be patient and the things will start falling together and when they do, you better be ready. And that was the idea of our people having information. We were ready to pass legislation when the time was right. And I think that's important.

**Ms. Friesen:** I think it's also important to know that from the Senate and House standpoint, that Len had the



staff. He deliberately recruited staff and he's always been very willing to delegate to competent people. And on the Senate side, they didn't have that kind of staff. And the leadership there was not quite as willing to delegate and so that also slowed them up a little.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, and on our staff we didn't want just "yes-men." We hired...

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, you can tell?! [Everybody laughs]

**Rep. Sawyer:** We wanted strong people. At our leadership meetings, I mean, what we wanted was a consensus and we needed all the information we could get. And we got real excellent people and so that was the reason. It's a people thing. We just had fantastic people.

**Dean Foster:** I'd like to say something right here about a fellow who isn't here. He died recently, Dean Morgan, who had made about five reputations, but at least one of them was with Boeing. And one of them was with Dan Evans, running what was then called Social and Health Services or something like that. And he was a real important part of putting this together because, while some people were politicians and some of us were so young we didn't know what was going on, Morgan understood systems. And Morgan put together this whole sort of plan. He took Leonard's scratchings and his ramblings and put it into something that made sense. So he was able to help Leonard get a structure which Leonard could sell to everybody.

**Ms. Friesen:** Right, he was a process man.

**Dean Foster:** It was much easier to sell to the House Democrats because we were just newly in the majority, having been out of the majority for awhile and boy, they're ready to go when they're a new majority.

The Senate Democrats, however, were split. Augie had just beat Greive in a really, really ugly kind of... so Augie had to work that. We had ours going, but Morgan helped put it together for everybody. He ought to be acknowledged.

**Ms. Friesen:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** We almost should have another chair here to show his place.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Remember when I got nominated Speaker by the caucus? I got hold of Dean [Morgan] and I asked him—he was assistant to Sid Smith—but I told him—we were sitting there at lunch and I said, "Dean, here's what I want to do." And I told him the basic premise. And I wrote it out on a napkin.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, all of the best ideas are written out on a napkin!

**Ms. Friesen:** We used up a lot of napkins!

**Rep. Sawyer:** We were talking and he looked at it and he said, "Yes, that will work." And so I said, "I want to present this now, just before the session. And two, three weeks later, Dawne and he bring in this thing with the charts showing everything—

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, he did most of the work on that.

**Rep. Sawyer:** He had it all charted out so you could see it. People were sitting there, reading it and it was just beautiful. And as Dean said, I had this skeleton and he put meat around the bones. And he put it together and it was just beautiful. And then we got the LEAP. He was the main instigator of that.

**Ms. Friesen:** And Dean was the one that addressed the procedures that were implemented that you were overseeing. And that was an immense undertaking, too.

**Rep. Sawyer:** And so when you get all this new thing going on, and then we brought poor Vito in when Dean resigned, to take his place...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Dean Morgan was another Boeing man, and I understand, Vito, that you worked for Boeing, so maybe we should talk about that.

**Vito Chiechi:** That was a good connection, because we were capable of utilizing some of the Boeing trainers that were necessary in order to put the LEAP bill together.

**Rep. Sawyer:** That's right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So both the computer knowledge and the systems knowledge?

**Vito Chiechi:** The systems knowledge, yes. So we could reach into that organization and pull people that had total experience in both of those areas, which helped tremendously in putting the LEAP program together.

**Rep. Sawyer:** See, Dean [Morgan]'s the one that recommended that I hire him.

**Dean Foster:** So Leonard comes to me and I'm going to say that we keep forgetting what the real issue here was. He [Vito] was beyond Boeing at that time. He worked for Harley Hoppe. Now, Harley Hoppe was the King County Assessor, who all Democrats thought was just terrible! And I mean, Leonard said to me, "I'm going to hire Vito Chiechi, [mumblings] ...Harley Hoppe." I said, "Harley!" And so Vito had two strikes against him when he came to the caucus, because of this Harley Hoppe connection. But he was able to convince members of our caucus that he actually knew what he was talking about.

Not only did he know what he was talking about, about systems and computers, he actually knew something about property taxes which were starting to cause all kinds of political problems.

**Ms. Friesen:** That was one of the major issues.

**Dean Foster:** So he was able to—even though he had these two strikes against him—take from what Morgan brought and what he brought with Harley and make that the next successful part of the operation.

**Vito Chiechi:** But Anne, Leonard told me, "Okay, I'll bring you down to the Legislature, but you've got to get a couple of people to endorse you. Okay?" So he said, "Now, you go get Magnuson and Jackson to endorse you."

**Ms. Kilgannon:** No small order.

**Vito Chiechi:** But at that time, because I was working for Boeing, I had gone back to D.C. and had worked with Magnuson and Jackson, Norm Dicks and those folks back there. So, and Maggie was a hell of a guy, and I got a letter from both of them saying, you know, “He is competent,” and so forth and also, the state Democratic chairman, Neil Chaney. You remember? So when the caucus started raising hell, Leonard pulled out these... (laughs)

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Oh, “He’s alright,” sort of a certification?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, besides that, we wanted to know what the Republicans were thinking and so all we had to do was ask him, “Well, what do you think of this?”

**Vito Chiechi:** And you don’t know how many times he used to say to me, “Get out of here, you lousy Republican.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And you just had to take that?

**Rep. Sawyer:** I was only joking.

**Vito Chiechi:** Just joking, because I’d say, “You know, you don’t need that much staff.” “What are you talking about? We got to have staff.” And this is one I always love to tell, because I said to him one day, “Leonard, one legislator. We should be able to put more staff out there to give one legislator, I mean two... Two staff people could handle...”

**Ms. Friesen:** No, one staff person could handle two legislators.

**Dean Foster:** Right.

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes, one staff person could handle two legislators. And he said, “You’re crazy.” And he goes into the caucus and he says, “Do you know what this guy wants to do?”

**Rep. Sawyer:** Oh, we would listen to Vito in our leadership meetings because he had a lot of background and information we needed, but he was getting frustrated because we never took all his suggestions and so forth. So we took this to caucus and brought him in and almost had a rebellion! (Laughter) And from then on he never bothered, he still kept talking, but once we made our decision, he went with it. And that was the only requirement we had of him.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He didn’t stop making his pitch?

**Ms. Friesen:** No, no, you have to do that.

**Rep. Sawyer:** But once a decision’s made, you have to be loyal to that decision and loyal to the Democratic caucus. And he lived up to that two-hundred percent.

**Dean Foster:** Absolutely. But it was real set-up. There's no doubt about it.

About six years before that, the way the Legislature dealt with—in those days we called them secretaries—is there was a secretarial pool. We didn't have offices; we didn't have lots of things. And so it changed, so people had offices and then they started going from a secretarial pool to each having a secretary and maybe another aide. And that helped the legislators a lot. It hurt the budget but it helped the legislators a lot. So Vito was trying to help save the budget and almost got killed for it. Because they started falling in love with this much staff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Now, we've touched a little bit on your use of computers to bring you more information, especially budget information. You could really get those numbers right away and have more detail and get further down into the process understanding the numbers. At least that's what you've told me. Part of one of the things that bothered you was that the Legislature would pass bills and then you wouldn't actually know what the agencies did with those bills, how they carried them out. You didn't get that feedback of "then what?" So you wanted some process of discovering what was going on after you passed the bills. You wanted some accountability; you wanted some more information. So you gradually evolved a program which you called LEAP [Legislative Evaluation and Accountability Program] that came a little bit later in all these innovations.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Now, the word LEAP was Morgan's. He was great for acronyms.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** A good acronym can sell a program; if you'd called it something else, it might not have had that forward momentum. So maybe you could describe to me a little bit about what you were thinking there and how this came together.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, it basically came together. I think it was we were always digging trying to find a way to get our information and put it together. And Dean [Morgan] came up one day to me and he said, "You know Len, I think we could do some computerization here." And I said, "How's that?" And he said "Well, you know, I've been thinking of this ever since we talked the last year..." and so forth. But one of the main things is you're always comparing apples against oranges and grapefruit and different things when you're talking figures. And so it's difficult." So we needed a source of information. And that was the first thing we had to have was a source of information where everybody had the same. We'd all be using the same. And so he said, "Every expenditure ends up down in the basement here on a big wheel in computers." "Oh, does it really?" And he said, "So we ought to go down and use that and the only thing we'll be changing is the program."

I didn't know the difference between the basic data and the program, but I learned. So that's what it was. We were able to get a basic database which everybody had. And so we had the same information then that

the governor had. And so we could manipulate his information any way we wanted and we could sit there and take a different approach. So this was the main thing. And that's what made this work.

So Dean Morgan went up to, what's the name of the space group at Boeing?

**Ms. Friesen:** Aerospace?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Because his brother was kind of a property manager so he knew all these people. So then he went up and he started looking at what they were doing with computers up there. Well, they were so far ahead of anybody else in computers you couldn't believe it at the time. And they had this new program in which—it's hard for me to explain—but anyway you have a big box—and in the old days, every time you wanted to do a new program, or vary it, you had to bring in a programmer. And they had to program it and then you had that one thing and you'd slip it in the thing. All of a sudden, we just had these programs, a hundred of them all put together. And they were able to let those things interrelate so you didn't even have to go and get each program set up, so a staff person with some very limited information could work this. And all of a sudden computers became a real reality to me and I think to everybody. I didn't have any idea at all of this thing, and it really was beautiful.

So then—and we're talking about LEAP now and I want to tell this story because I think it's important—we were so proud of LEAP when we got it done, we couldn't believe what it was doing. So we were just running around and giving demonstrations wherever we could. And so I appeared—I went out in a snow storm and Morgan was with me because I made him drive and we went up in this snow storm to meet with—what's the inner circle of business people?

**Dean Foster:** The Business Roundtable?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes. And we went to one of their breakfasts, you know. So Dean said, "You know, we've got to have fun with them." And I said, "Okay." So we pulled out the University of Washington program, because their lobbyist was going to be there. He was always there, you know. So we pulled his program out, and lo and behold, there was flim-flam in that program, see. And I forget the details of it, but anyway, we went up there and we put the demonstration on and the guy was there and I said, "Hey, your budget's here, shall we look at that?" "Oh, yes." So I said, "Well, how come?" And a big smile...

That was the start. And so then some of the people out of there wanted to see this program. So we invited them down for a demonstration, down at the Capitol. And the president of Boeing, T. Wilson—great guy—he came down with about fifteen of these guys, the big business people, top of everything. And so we put on a demonstration and we'd bring in our person and he had been trained, but he was not a computer person.

But he knew how to work this machine. And we put on a real show and then T. Wilson asked the question, “Where did you get that kind of a program?” And I said, “Mr. Wilson, we got it from your company.”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And “thank you very much!”

**Rep. Sawyer:** They were just using it for computerization for very complex mathematical situations. And so Dean, again, he found us this young guy that was just starting his computing thing. We couldn’t afford one of those—we talked to somebody and they wanted over a million dollars or some horrible sum. And he was going to do it for \$250,000 or something like that. And he went in and between him and Dean, they put this together. And it was just unbelievable, in my mind.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, here was a new tool for legislators.

**Rep. Sawyer:** And that was kind of the background, but I always remember T. Wilson; he was surprised it was his own company that was doing it.

**Vito Chiechi:** I remember—you know when you said you were traveling around—we went to Alaska. Remember?

**Ms. Friesen:** I do, yes.

**Vito Chiechi:** We went to Alaska to do a presentation up in Alaska. Of course, when we got up there we had the computer guys, but you couldn’t get a telephone line.

**Ms. Friesen:** They were on satellite.

**Vito Chiechi:** They were on satellite. And we got on and then we were making the presentation and bang, it went off and you could never get the thing finalized. And I’ll never forget those people in Alaska saying, “What a great program,” but we could never get it finished.

**Ms. Friesen:** Couldn’t use it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Maybe they were used to that.

**Vito Chiechi:** They probably were. But Leonard, also, tell them what you did with it then after, here in the Legislature, how you carried it.

**Rep. Sawyer:** We went back and made presentations in different places because we were so proud of this thing. Nobody else—we were so far ahead. Florida had one, but they just got reams of paper. We had charts on the thing. So you didn’t have to go through a whole ream of paper, you looked at the chart and the chart would tell you a forecast. It’s like we had the forecast between grants and the medical—wasn’t it on the Social Security? Also our welfare. And all of a sudden the medical thing was going up like this (raises hand) and it went ahead of the grants.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So you could point and say, “I’ve got a problem here.”

**Rep. Sawyer:** So we reviewed it, and here is one of the samples. Basically, then we went back and made this presentation to one of the state government meetings in New York. And that time it didn’t pull out and so we gave them the whole shot. And then we started getting calls. Like, I was called by Colorado; the Speaker of the House there said, “Gee, we would really like to know more.” I said, “Well, I’m going through there. You want me to come in and I’ll make a presentation?” He said, “Okay, we’ll have a joint session of the Senate and the House.” And then he wrote a letter to a lot of members where he had heard this thing in New York, and I think they put it in and after that, I don’t know. And then people were coming out all the time for presentations by the staff, and ‘Baggie’ was putting presentations on. I don’t know, we must have fifteen, twenty states, didn’t we?

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You’re speaking about John Bagnariol?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, he was the chairman. And then, I talked to Senator Magnuson about it and he said, “Well, I’d like to look at that thing.” So I said, “Okay.” So we went back and he had the budget person there and people from the budget committee.

**Vito Chiechi:** Alice Rivlin [Congressional budget director].

**Rep. Sawyer:** So we went in and demonstrated. And they were worse than we were! They passed a bill and they didn’t know until three years later what it cost.

**Ms. Friesen:** Their budget information was two years old. That was frightening.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That’s really flying in the dark!

**Rep. Sawyer:** Oh, yes. So Dean went ahead and in about two days, he got hold of the head of the staff of Maggie’s committee—which was Appropriations—and they went ahead and gave us the information. So we pumped it into the computer for Maggie. And so we said, “Maggie, do you know some of the things you can forecast?” And he mumbles, so we put this little sketch on and all of a sudden this little line was going up like this and this little line was going down like that. And he says, “What are those little things doing?” (Laughter)

**Ms. Kilgannon:** “What’s happening?”

**Rep. Sawyer:** I said, “That’s how their expenditure’s going.” And we did that in his office and that’s when he called in Alice and the rest of them because he wanted to go with it. But I knew it was going to have problems back there, because you know why? Back there, the staff completely controls the Appropriations Committee because it’s too massive. And all of a sudden this would have simplified it so that people could actually know what they’re voting on a little bit. So, Alice was all for it. There were a couple of the other ones that were interested. I think they finally put in some version of it. I don’t know.



**Ms. Friesen:** And Vito was onboard by then, too.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Did you eventually go back to Congress?

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes, I went back there.

**Ms. Friesen:** He was with us on that venture, but Dean was on as a consultant.

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes, Dean was a consultant and I was on staff.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, reforming the state of Washington is one thing; reforming Congress is quite another. The scale...

**Dean Foster:** Well, and this is where we got into trouble with our own executive branch because they didn't want to give us the data that broke down. They wanted to give us big numbers. They are happy to say, "Pass the budget." But they didn't want to break it down to salaries and per diem.

**Vito Chiechi:** Each one of those little boxes, they didn't want to give us the detailed information.

**Dean Foster:** And that's what they recognized was the real danger. Because it's like the University of Washington example, you go inside there and all of a sudden a number doesn't make any sense. And somebody has to explain it and they can't. They can hide those with big numbers and so we, finally, I believe, had to pass a law that it was required that they give us the same information that they had with the same breakdowns. And when we got that, then we were really able to go in and analyze the budget.

**Rep. Sawyer:** And the thing is, when I was speaking to that group, the guy that was there, he didn't know what he was doing either.

**Ms. Friesen:** He was taking his staff's word...

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, he was just taking his staff's word, he had no idea how they were doing it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It was a revelation. Interesting.

**Rep. Sawyer:** So LEAP was something was really fun to work with.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And it still exists. There is still a LEAP Committee.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, one thing that I don't know, if you guys can tell me... We were building up our first term and we were working on just getting LEAP; then after that we started to work on programs on how to use LEAP. And one of the things we wanted to do, one of the favorite tricks of the departments is: you give them a two-year budget, so what they do, they don't spend very much until the last quarter of the budget, or last year of the budget, or less than that, the last six months. So then they go out and hire and pump up their staff and everything because they've got this backlog of spending that we don't know. Then they come back and they're asking for money. "Well, that's high." "Well, no, it's just meeting our present standards." And how do we argue against that? We don't know.

So we developed the program that we could monitor, not only what they were spending but what they weren't spending. So our chairman then could call people in and any time during the interim and say, "Hey, how come you're not spending the money?" Or, "You're spending too much." We were more interested in the money they weren't spending because that was the one that was knocking our budgets all out of whack. And so I don't know if they kept monitoring them...

**Dean Foster:** Oh, not only did they keep monitoring, they now have it so that they have an allotment by month and quarter.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Oh great!

**Dean Foster:** And so they're watching and so you can't play those kinds of games any more. The LEAP Program now is a fundamental part of the legislative process. It's so fundamental that people don't even know about it anymore. It's just there and it's something that everybody uses and everybody assumes that they'll use it.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So much a part of the environment...

**Dean Foster:** Right.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, imagine not having it. Imagine not having that ability?

**Dean Foster:** Well, you'd just go back to the old days when the executive had all the numbers and the Legislature wouldn't be a part of the system.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, it's like when you were passing appropriations bills without any fiscal notes.

**Dean Foster:** Right.

**Ms. Friesen:** Doesn't the present law require that the Legislature receive the information?

**Dean Foster:** Oh sure. I was just saying if you didn't have it would be a different story.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's quite a change.

There is one person also, besides Dean Morgan, not present that we wanted to include in the conversation, but who wasn't well enough, Don Clawson, your Communications Director, or whatever the title was in those days. What would have been his role in helping you pull this together and promote it?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Basically letting people know what we're doing, not what people wanted to say we were doing. And Don did a real good job. He's a very likeable person and he's well known in the press, he's well known among the legislators, so he was just our—

**Ms. Friesen:** Flak man.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Hopefully, anti-flak man.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** He would just be on-message and correcting the misconceptions and just always putting it out there?

**Rep. Sawyer:** He was another person that Dean Morgan brought on board, because he worked for the Department of Social and Health Services under Dean over there. So he had a basic understanding of government. He had a real gut instinct for the press.

**Ms. Friesen:** The press liked him. And he would call the press together...

**Dean Foster:** He had credibility.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** And get your story out?

**Ms. Friesen:** ...as a group, or talk to them individually, and try his best to get them on board.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, isn't perception half the job? If people think you're doing a good job and they understand your motives...

**Ms. Friesen:** Absolutely.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** What you're trying to accomplish, so they can get on board. But if they're being undermined...

**Vito Chiechi:** Everybody's perception is reality.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Occasionally, yes.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Perception, unfortunately, is reality too often.

**Vito Chiechi:** Yes, it is, isn't it?

**Rep. Sawyer:** May I make a political statement now? (Laughs)

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So he'd be a real key player?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Oh, he was.

**Ms. Friesen:** He was.

**Vito Chiechi:** Oh, absolutely.

**Ms. Friesen:** Low key—a low key man.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, you don't have to hit people over the head.

**Rep. Sawyer:** In fact, he just moved around. A lot of people didn't even know he existed but he was working all the time.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's what it takes. Is there anyone else on your team you'd like to speak about? Is this pretty much the core group here?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, Bob Charette was very important, too. He was a fantastic floor leader. He loved debating,

he loved the back and forth and the Republicans all trusted him because he was straight up. And it got pretty hot out there at times, but it was always, “Go out and have a drink afterwards. Go have dinner or coffee,” or whatever it was. So there was communication back and forth across the aisle. And I think that’s so important. And he was the best leader of that and then we had a real up-and-coming young assistant floor leader, Rick Bender, who’s now the head of the Labor Council. We had Marc Gaspard, who was new back then. We just had a lot of people, and we tried to use them all. Helen Sommers wasn’t particularly—I had her doing revenue. And these are all people—we picked them. We really tried to pick ability.

Now, everybody says that, but I think our record shows that the people that we picked—like Dean; he’s a perfect example of it. You know Dean, he worked for me, but people worked with him, but he was low-profile. So we were looking for a chief clerk, because of the turnover and so forth. Well, I don’t know, he just really impressed me and I said, “This young man’s going to do some good for us.” And so I called him in, and I said, “Dean, I want you to run for chief clerk.” And Dean said, “Well, aaaah....”

**Ms. Kilgannon:** You had some reservations, then?

**Dean Foster:** Well, I had said to the guy who was the assistant chief clerk, “I know you’re going to be chief clerk, I support you for that.” And all that kind of stuff. Because I hadn’t even thought about this as a possibility. I was just out of the military. I had worked with Leonard that last year on the campaign and I had no idea what was going on. I was proud that we had won an election. I hadn’t thought about what was going to be next.

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, Sid [Snyder] was going over to the Senate, wasn’t he?

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes.

**Dean Foster:** But Sid was going over to the Senate. So Leonard calls me in and I’m sort of in this box and, I said—well, I don’t know if I told Leonard; I think I told Leonard at the time what I’d done. And he said, “Well, he’s not going to get elected. This other guy is not going to get elected.” I said, “Okay, I’ll do it.” And so there was an embarrassing situation there that I never got over. But it was—once I took the job—I had had about eight years of experience in the Senate and I had really been interested in the process. John Cherberg had let me do a lot of things on the Floor when I was working there in the Bill Room. So I knew that end of it and Leonard was not into the kind of details that I was into and that worked out really well. Because it was mostly busy work—but important busy work.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that’s all the paperwork, keeping track.

**Dean Foster:** We had this whole bunch of people who were doing their own thing. And I always used this

example, “If people would just do their own job instead of trying to do somebody else’s, you’d have a lot better operation.” And that’s what we had. We talked every day to each other; we knew what was going on but there weren’t any turf fights going on.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, that frees up a lot of energy right there!

**Dean Foster:** It sure does. It sure does. So we were able to do a lot of that, so I was real lucky to be able to get started that way.

**Rep. Sawyer:** So, now you see why I selected you.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That must have been one of your great strengths—is finding the right people.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, he didn’t tell one part of the story that was kind of funny and I have to. We’re up there getting ready to go to the vote and the other person who was this assistant came in and said, “Well, Dean’s supporting me.” That’s the first time I knew of it. But anyway, I said, “Well, that’s up to Dean.” He said, “Dean doesn’t want the job; he wants me to have it.” And I said, “Well, I don’t really get that feeling from Dean, but I’ll check with Dean.”

So I called Dean and then he told me this whole story and I said, “Well, Dean, do you want it or don’t you? And you’ve got to go ahead and step forward and say ‘I want the job.’ If you don’t want the job, I can’t give it to you.” So...

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It’s a moment of truth.

**Dean Foster:** That’s the last time I ever made a commitment to somebody, boy, I tell you, because I was in a box. So I took it. It was the wrong thing to do—not taking the job, but what I had done. It wasn’t fair to the other guy, but it turned out okay.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I understand that he maintained his position as assistant chief clerk. That he wasn’t out of a job.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Yes, and he did a good job as assistant, but I needed something more than that and I saw that in Dean and he developed even more than I thought he would. It’s been a real pleasure.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** So, again, all the pieces coming together: the right people, the right temperament, the right talent. That’s what it takes?

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, and besides that, I can say one thing about myself, I had had the experience and I sat back and watched a lot. I wasn’t worried about making speeches; I was watching what was going on. I had a pretty firm idea of what it took to be successful.

**Dean Foster:** That word is vision. He clearly had an idea how the Legislature could operate better in the

environment of the Legislature/executive and judicial. And maybe there were some ideas that didn't work, but in the general big picture, he made that change. That was what was important.

**Ms. Friesen:** And the goal was to make the Legislature an equal partner.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Which we knew we'd never quite reach, but at least we made a dent in it.

**Dean Foster:** Well, I don't know. I've been involved in this business ever since that time and I hear every once in awhile, "The Legislature's too powerful. The Legislature has too much information." You hear that from the executive, you hear that from the press, you hear that from the lobbyists, but you also hear, "The staff is too powerful; the members are too powerful." So that's probably a good accusation! (Laughter)

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, that's good; that was the goal.

**Dean Foster:** That's right.

**Rep. Sawyer:** That was the goal and I guess I haven't been around so I don't know the follow-up and I was worried about that. And the other thing I was worried about was whether the staff would get too strong. Because, like they were back in Washington, D.C. where the tail wags the dog type-of-thing. And it wasn't happening when we were doing it, but I don't know what happened after...

**Dean Foster:** Well, in some cases it does happen. If you get a weak chair or a weak caucus, or a weak Legislature, the staff fills the void.

**Vito Chiechi:** And they have the experience...

**Dean Foster:** They know how to do it. But you get a legislator who's in there a couple of terms, who gets strong and understands the role, and they pull it right back. And the staff is smart enough to understand that that's the elected official.

**Rep. Sawyer:** Well, that's good. That was one of the worries I had and I hadn't known.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** With every change, there's always going to be, "What's going to happen? Will this go too far? Will it turn out the way we wanted?" But if you never make those changes, you know you're going to be stuck with these problems. You might as well at least try something new.

**Dean Foster:** And nowadays, you sit on the floor of the House or the Senate and almost every member has a computer open, and when a bill comes there, they can ask a question about, "How come this budget projection?" and all of that is because of what we got started. I mean, technology has changed a lot, but it's evolving and Leonard started it. That's what I think is his legacy.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Any closing statements?

**Dean Foster:** I just made mine.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** I think so.

**Rep. Sawyer:** My closing statement: I loved my caucus and I loved my staff because they were the ones that created it. You know, they kept saying that I was powerful—they were the ones that were powerful because we stayed together. And when you stay together, it's amazing what you can do.

**Vito Chiechi:** Anne, too, it was a fun experience. You know what I'm saying? Because you looked forward to going to work because you knew you'd come up with some nutty idea... (everybody laughs)

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Keeps you hopping!

**Vito Chiechi:** You had to go out and get it accomplished but that's what was the fun about it. And that's what I said about this legislative process, it's got to be the best game in town. If you've never been in the legislative process—or the political process—you don't know what you're missing. Because it's fun and you meet such great people and you accomplish something. And you get something. And, well, look at what is done! It's an accomplishment.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Yes, and it stands the test of time.

**Rep. Sawyer:** One thing that I liked, I wish Robert Charette was here with us because he was a very vital, vital portion of what we did. And so was Bagnariol, and Shinpoch was important and Helen Sommers—to a lesser degree, mainly because she didn't have the experience.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** She was quite new at that time. She's grown in time.

**Dean Foster:** She was elected in '72. She was a freshman—her first year.

**Rep. Sawyer:** So she didn't know the other thing. One of the problems we had with our freshmen there, they didn't know how it was before and so they didn't appreciate the changes.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** That's always the way, as soon as it's in place, it gets taken for granted.

**Rep. Sawyer:** It was fun. I enjoyed that very much. The most pleasurable time of my whole life. Doing something!

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, certainly almost everything you did, we still have today and it has transformed the Legislature from what is almost now unimaginable to what it is now. Of course, everything you did now has grown; so it's bigger.

**Rep. Sawyer:** That's great.

**Dean Foster:** I want to tell one last story about Leonard. Leonard didn't run for the Legislature; he was away from the process for I don't know how many years. And about five or six years after he left the process, there was some issue that was involving, I think it was involving lawyers and tort reform. Somebody hired Leonard



to come down to be a lobbyist. And here's what my point is, it being ingrained in your system. He had the Legislature bollixed up in about two days because he understood the legislative process. And he came down, I think he came down to kill something, but he knew how to manipulate and work the legislative process because he'd had so many years of experience doing that.

**Ms. Friesen:** He created so much of it.

**Dean Foster:** I'm not making a judgment about whether this was right or wrong, I'm saying people who understand the legislative process, know how to make it work. He knew how to make it work and he knew how to work from the inside. And that never goes away from you.

**Rep. Sawyer:** It's people management.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** It's people.

**Rep. Sawyer:** A people's game is what it is.

**Ms. Friesen:** Well, the Legislature's definitely all about people.

**Rep. Sawyer:** If I've learned anything from Magnuson it is that, he said, "It's a people's game."

**Vito Chiechi:** And tell her what Magnuson told you the first time as a freshman: "Sit in the back, keep your mouth shut, and vote for all bills."

**Rep. Sawyer:** Oh yes, he said, "If you're going to be a freshman down there—he asked me if I had any experience, and I said, "No, I've never been down there. I don't even know where the chambers are." And I went down there and he said, "Well, you sit in the back row or wherever they put you and keep your mouth shut. Because you've got to realize, when you get up and you speak on a bill, none of them are one hundred percent." And he said, "You've got to realize that the people that lose, remember. The people that win take it for granted and go onto the next issue. So by speaking so much, you can build up a real base against you." I've watched that one through the years and it's so true.

**Ms. Kilgannon:** Well, certainly you were learning from the master there. You couldn't get any more experience than Senator Magnuson. Let's close.