

Well national conventions are composed of delegates who are elected or selected by voters in primaries and caucuses in all the states and other places like territories and the District of Columbia, all across the United States. Now these delegates, the elected representatives of the voters, assemble every four years for both the Democrats and Republicans in cities that the parties select to cast their vote and select a nominee for their respective party. Those delegates are selected through a process. The delegate selection process in the Democratic Party, the one I'm most familiar with, is a very involved and detailed process; it's a process that's evolved over time. So for example, in 1968, when Hubert Humphrey was the nominee of the Democratic Party, he was elected the Democratic nominee by a convention of delegates even though Vice President Humphrey did not participate in a single primary or caucus. So it was kind of a – of course, Senator Kennedy was assassinated at the end of that process in 1968, there was a lot of turmoil over the course of that year but after 1968, the Democratic Party got together and said, "Listen, we really want a different nominating process. We want a nominating process where voters pick the nominee of our party. Not insiders, not people who control delegations from different states like governors, or other people, important in the party as they may be; nevertheless they didn't reflect the expressed sentiments of voters." So in beginning with the 1972 presidential campaign, when George McGovern was the nominee of the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party began a process of reforming its rules. And that rules reform process continued all the way through the 1980s and those reforms really changed the way that we picked delegates. The delegate selection process in both parties – because the Republicans began to follow some of this – really became a process driven by voters. And voters participating in primaries and caucuses really got more and more power. And insiders, their power was somewhat diminished. We've tried in recent years to achieve a balance between more insiders participating and voters still controlling, and that's kind of where we are today.

Well the first convention that I worked in, in 1980 – my friend Tom had hired me and I worked as a delegate tracker, someone who was in charge of coordinating the delegates from groups of states – my states were Texas and Utah in 1980. But when we got to the floor of the convention in 1980, there were very few elected officials –

senators, congressmen, governors, and other elected officials who came to that convention. That's because the rules movement of the '70s had really eliminated these individuals and forced them to compete against their own constituents and in primaries in order to be elected delegates themselves. And that could be a real risk for a politician. So that was 1980 and the Democratic Party put together one of their groups to reform the nominating process, the Hunt Commission, chaired by Governor James Hunt of North Carolina. And the Hunt Commission decided that it would be better for the Democratic Party to have more delegates who are elected officials involved in the process. So they created a special category of delegates that was technically called Party Leader and Elected Official delegates but is popularly known as super delegates. And these super delegates are these people who become delegates not through being elected in the primaries and caucuses, but because of their status as party leaders and elected officials.

Well, in 1980 I was a delegate tracker. And that meant I was in charge of coordinating the delegates of two states – my states were Texas and Utah in the national convention. So I would spend every day getting up and getting on the telephone and calling twenty to twenty-five of these individual delegates; I had about 180 delegates that I was responsible for. The reason I got those two states, Texas and Utah, is not because they're next to each other in terms of geography, but they did sit next to each other in terms of the geography of the convention. When we were going to organize the convention, we divided the convention into clusters; fourteen clusters of states. And those states each had a person like me, a delegate tracker, who was responsible for coordinating the delegates in that cluster.

The conventions are about – from the perspective of campaigns – are about controlling things. Remember, in 1972 when those reforms that I talked about earlier were implemented, people were selected to go to the convention, and they went there to support George McGovern, we had a pretty raucous convention in Miami, in 1972 as the Democratic Party. As a matter of fact, Senator McGovern gave his acceptance speech at 2:30 in the morning. Now that's not ideal. The acceptance speech is the big moment when the candidate gets to talk directly to the country, and present themselves and present their

message, and talk about what they want to do as President. And when that happened, because of all these procedural delays, and fights on the floor and things like that, I think people realized that we're really losing a great opportunity to win the election if we have conventions with such chaos. So what we try to do with convention management, and certainly what we tried to do in 1980 and '88 when I was directly involved in it, was to make sure everything was very precise, we had a timetable – we knew exactly what we were doing minute by minute, even second by second, believe it or not. And we kept that timetable in place, and if we found ourselves falling behind because a vote took too long, we would take something out, move it to the next day, move it around, so that when we got to the time that voters would be watching the convention, we made sure that we stuck to a precise schedule so that our candidate would speak during primetime and we'd achieve the maximum audience available for our message.

Both political parties – major political parties in the United States – have platforms. Those platforms are the position that the party takes on the major issues. It's sort of their agenda of what to do if they happen to be elected President and run the government. European democracies – I've done a lot of work in Europe and other places around the world – they have party manifestos. And those manifestos are even more powerful. Because in, for example, where a party may get elected in the House of Commons and have absolute control, then you can go in with absolute control and just lead it into law, en masse. And they can do that. With our political parties, the platforms tend to represent the positions we take on big issues. So they're important in terms of the campaign. We have a different system with a Congress and an executive so they don't all get enacted, but they nevertheless represent the positions parties take.

The major parties, both – even though they have different names for them – have three major standing committees; these are permanent committees that have to do with the proceedings of the convention. The most important, I think, and the most prominent, is the platform committee. That is the committee that writes the platform for the party and that platform becomes sort of the public manifesto of the party, the party's position on a broad range of issues. But the parties also have two other committees, which are very important. One is called

the credentials committee, and the responsibility of that committee is to approve the credentials of the delegates and make sure that the delegates who have been elected at the convention have been elected in accordance with the rules of the Party. And if there's a question about credentials, those delegates will not be able to vote at the convention and we saw in the 1960s, for example, whether or not delegates from states like Mississippi were elected properly and there were big fights over credentials at conventions. That credentials process has pretty much settled down. The other committee, which is critically important, is the rules committee. I've actually been a member of the rules committee from my home state of Rhode Island in 1972 when I lived there and also from Virginia where I live now, in 2004. And the rules committee responsibility is to set the rules of the convention proceedings; and to make sure that the call to the convention, which is the public notice that the party gives about the convention proceedings is taken and put in place in terms of rules and procedures for the proceeding of the convention itself. And the rules committee will decide how the convention is going to proceed. So if you have a contested convention, as we did in 1980, that rules committee can be very very important in terms of how you order things and whether or not – for example in 1980, the binding rule was going to be in place, that was going to bind delegates to vote for a candidate for whom they were elected and then later some of them maybe didn't want to vote for the same candidate. So those rules are very important to a convention. But those committees are the three committees that both parties have.

When you're putting together a campaign, you go out and you're trying to find the right people for the right positions. And my background by the time we were going into the '88 campaign was in this very particular aspect of presidential campaigns: the delegate selection process. And so people were looking for someone to be their delegate guy, their delegate person. And particularly after 1984, where there was so much infighting. I mean we were able to beat Gary Hart in 1984 in large part because we understood the process better than his campaign did; we exploited the opportunities; we avoided the pitfalls. And so campaigns understood that and they needed somebody who gets this stuff, and it's so, you know, inside that you really have to find the right person. So I became a popular person. So I got to meet with both Senator Biden and Congressman

Gephardt. And listen, I had great opportunities to sit and meet with them. And I met with Biden in his office, I had lunch with Gephardt in the House dining room with Bill Carrick who was one of his advisors who went out to do what I do, which is make television ads. And for Mike Dukakis, I went up to Boston, which for me in many ways was like coming home; I went to law school there. And I met him on a night that he was going to campaign in New Hampshire. And I remember it very well because outside the Governor's office there, that corner office, there's a big foyer. And that night was the night that the funding bill had passed to fund the harbor tunnel. And at the time it was only \$10 billion. Okay, but it was a lot of money. But it was quite an event. But so the press was of course very interested that they had gotten this gigantic piece of legislation through the Congress. And they're all reacting to him. And I was slated to travel with him the next night up to New Hampshire; he was going to go to a couple of house parties. And I'll never forget that, when he walked out of the Governor's office – and I had never met him, in person before. He walked out of the Governor's office and there were all these reporters with their cameras and I could see that he looked at me across the room and he said, "Hi Tad." And I knew – I said, "Boy, this guy is so well-briefed." It's incredible, I mean I've never met him before; he's about to do this huge press thing, and I'm going to travel with him and he said hello to me across the room. And then I got in the car with him; we were in the backseat of the car and he did something else. And it's funny how little things lead to big decisions in life. And he got in the back of his car and he put his seatbelt on. Now this was 1987 – and he had just passed legislation about seatbelts, which saved – I can't tell you how many lives were probably saved for the fact that he was a leader on an issue like that and at a time when people were, "Well in the front seat, maybe I use a seatbelt but do I really need a seatbelt in the back seat?" That was kind of the thinking in those days. People just weren't as conscious – they smoked a lot, they didn't wear seatbelts. And he got in and he sat down, and here's the governor of the state, and he puts his seatbelt on. And what it said to me was, here's a guy who is really sincere; this stuff for him is not a show; he really believes it. And it just made an impression on me.

After the '80 Hunt Commission rewrote the rules of the Democratic Party, one of the rules they rewrote was the binding delegate rule.

They wrote a new rule, 11H of the delegate selection rules. The new rule, 11H says that “Delegates shall in all good conscience, fairly reflect the expressed sentiments of voters who participate in primaries and caucuses.” That’s something that I spent a lot of time with, obviously and I remember very well. So the standard changed from a binding standard, which would’ve replaced a delegate who voted against for whom they were elected, to a conscience standard; “in all good conscience fairly reflect” what voters express in primaries and caucuses. So we didn’t have a binding provision anymore, we had a provision, which allowed delegates to change their vote if they wanted to, although they were held to a standard of conscience. And there was a rule in place but there was no mechanism to replace them. What that meant was, that if a candidate dropped out, like Gore or Gephardt, their delegates were in play and other campaigns could go and try to woo them. And we developed an operation, and I was in charge of this for Governor Dukakis, to go, to identify the delegates who we might be able to persuade and to figure out how to persuade them. Now we did it in what I would say was a very friendly, very collegial, political way. So, for example, Governor Dukakis would talk to Senator Gore, and I remember once, believe it or not, Kitty Dukakis was actually having some surgery over at Mass General and I knew that Mike was over while Kitty was having the surgery. And I got a call that said, “The Governor’s on the phone; he wants to talk to you.” And I thought, “Oh god, I knew he was at the hospital but...” So I got on, I said, “How’s everything going?” He said, “Oh great, Kitty’s doing great. Listen, I just talked to Gore, and there’s these five guys over in Tennessee.” He said, “They’re ready and why don’t you go over and talk to him, etc.? Okay great.” So there was a lot of communication between the principals and then they would be conveyed into the staff. And they would go out – I actually had an operative, a political operative, who believe it or not used to go visit Gore delegates in the south. I mean it was a guy who had worked on the campaign with us. He’d stop by, say “Hi, I’m here, and I just wanted to introduce myself and you know, if you ever want to talk to anybody, please get in contact with the campaign. And he just thought that in certain places that was a better way to do it. Now if some guy from Providence calls you on the phone, forget about it. But for a guy that grew up in Tennessee, he’d stop by their house, let them know he’s the contact guy for the campaign and how to get to him. And it made them feel

comfortable in terms of stepping over to our side and being part of our team, so we wanted to make that as easy as possible.

Listen, we left the convention with a 17-point lead. And I remember a lot – I'll tell you one moment I remember vividly. Because in 1980, the balloon drop was supposed to happen and if you I don't know if you remember this, but the balloon drop got screwed up at Madison Square Garden in 1980. And in many ways, the fact that balloons couldn't drop from the ceiling was a metaphor for the Carter campaign; that it just wasn't working well. And so by the time we got to 1988, the balloon drop – and we knew the press would say, "Oh, the balloons won't drop and they make deal about it. And I was sort of in charge of making the call and I went to the top of the podium. So there was a podium where they all stood and on top of that was this gigantic stage. And I had a walkie talkie, as that person. And as we put more and more on, I said, "Okay, ready...now!" And we dropped the balloons. And I'll tell you, my heart was in my mouth when I said it because if those balloons didn't drop, and everybody heard me in that audio system, that I was the one ordering this thing. And I knew I was going to get blamed even though I had nothing to do with those balloons. And about 5 seconds later, the balloons fell, just at the perfect moment and for me that was just the greatest moment – personally –of the convention. Everything had gone exactly as we'd planned, right down to that precise little detail: the balloons dropping at the precise moment we wanted them to.

Well, you know politics matter so much in our country because the outcomes of elections affect everyone. They affect the lives of people, the policies that we pursue, war & peace., our economy, our economic policies, whether or not someone is going go on vacation, if you come from a family that can't afford it. Outcomes – the results and consequences of an election are incredibly found. And I've found that during the course of my career – you know, I can't think of anything more important than being involved with politics and campaigns and government and public service.