

The nature of conventions has definitely changed over the last several decades. I think before it was really about the party. And now it's really about marketing and kind of branding opportunities for the nominee. And I think from even a time standpoint, they've really pushed the conventions back closer to Labor day and made it closer to September when more people are paying attention. Not like us people who are in the industry and have been following it forever. But I mean once people start to tune it and make it a real opportunity for the stretch, the last 60 or 90 days for people to really focus on the campaign and on the nominee. So the nature has really changed, it's not about activists; it's really about Mitt Romney and Barack Obama this time. This is their opportunity, particularly for Romney to announce his vice presidential pick, to consolidate his base and really have a one on one sprint to the election heading into November.

The modern era with new technology, new communications, I think they're in some aspects more necessary than ever. I think the TV coverage isn't what it used to be. When I was growing up I remember that we'd always rent VHS tapes for a week because my parents couldn't stand watching CBS ABC and NBC basically doing a blackout from 8 o'clock to 11 o'clock Monday through Friday during the week. Now it's essentially C-SPAN and maybe the nominee and their VP nominee gets an hour on the Wednesday and Thursday night of the convention and that's it. But now there's so much footage out there that can be put out by the campaigns, by the Republican National Committee and the Democratic National Committee that can be put on YouTube, can be posted on Twitter, posted on Facebook, you know there can be different web videos. So there's a ton of – in some aspects there's a ton of coverage you can have in the digital age because it's not under the control of the networks.

I do remember as a kid, vaguely, watching the convention because again it was the only thing on, and remember this was before cable, so if you didn't have a VCR to watch videos you were stuck watching whatever the programming was. And it was all these unnamed people over and over again. And you know my greatest memory was, even though Ronald Reagan was very popular in Massachusetts, my parents still voted for John Anderson.

And then you know, as I got more involved in politics as I was working through the Governor's office, working for Governor Celucci, I was lucky enough to attend as a staffer the convention in Philadelphia. That was

2000, that was the year that Bush and Cheney were running for the first time, and it was Philadelphia it was the cradle of liberty, it was a great place to have history made, outside of the outskirts of the Washington bubble. And Andrew Card who later became the Chief of Staff to the President, Massachusetts born and bred, served in the legislature here in Massachusetts, was very close with Governor Celucci, was actually the director of the convention. So we had great access for that. Governor Celucci was very close with Governor Bush at the time. We had great access to the campaign and his staff and folks like that. So it was a incredible experience, very hot down there in Philadelphia in the summer. But that was a good experience. And so then going into 2004 we were in New York. And that was a little bit of a different feel, for a number of reasons. For one it was post 9/11, Giuliani still kind of had a big hand in things. You know, it was Rudy Giuliani's New York and Bush was coming there. If you'll remember, post 9/11 New York there was the whole speech that Bush gave from the bullhorn. And that was one of those images and memories that was played over and over again while we were down there that it was almost a mandate like Bush wanted to come back to New York and wanted to make sure there was economic vitality and business and that things had rebounded.

The only reason to have a convention as an incumbent running again is because your opponent is having one. It's kind of you getting a jab back at them. And where the incumbent party goes last, they really have the opportunity to change their script at the last minute if necessary, depending on what happens by their opponent going first. So it definitely shows the incumbent advantage. But it's always a challenge, you know the incumbent, you're not running as an outsider anymore. Everything that happened in the last four years, particularly with Obama and the economy now, he really owns that. And I think for a lot of candidates, it's a lot easier to campaign than to govern.

The incumbent advantage is significant for multiple reasons. Number one is that you already have a donor base, you have a number of folks that have already donated in the past and you can go right back to them. Particularly this time, you know Mitt Romney was raising the most amount of money of any candidates, unfortunately he was also probably spending the most as well. It seems like it was like flavor of the week, Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, and then people coming back from the dead like Newt Gingrich. And in hindsight, you look at a guy like Tim Pawlenty who dropped out so early

after a straw poll, you know, I'd assume he looks back and says, "I could've been the guy." So Romney did spend a lot of money and in the meantime Obama has really been able to stockpile his money over and over again and didn't really have to do that much. And he knew that Romney was going to be the nominee and basically had a little Chihuahua attacking his ankles and he could basically take a potshot Romney every time and weaken his standing in the Republican Party. And it made Romney a little bit uncomfortable because he knew that he had to move to the middle for the general election, but he still had to deal with the right during the primary.

During the convention, other than the Vice President and President, which are really the highlights, the last two days of the convention, the keynote is really a very desirable spot for a speaker. Not necessarily to introduce the President or Vice President, but really gives someone an opportunity to get on the national stage. And this is something you see over and over again by party insiders at both the Democratic level as well as at the Republican level, to really launch someone's career that was a state senator that made his way big into Illinois politics and really used that opportunity to launch himself and now he's the President, running for reelection. And even in 2004, you look at what Rudy Giuliani did and he was already well known and he was a heralded hero for what he did on 9/11 but he used that 2004 convention to sell New York and sell himself as a leader so he could run in 2008. We know that that campaign didn't go as expected but it'll be interesting to see who the Democratic Party and who the Republican Party really embrace as their future leaders – is it a Scott Walker-type, is it a Paul Ryan-type on the Republican side. And for the Democratic side, who could be the next President of the United States? I don't see Joe Biden being a viable candidate for President next time, but who's waiting in the wings in either party to really be that next leader?

So in the 2008 convention out in Minnesota, there wasn't originally much news heading in, it was Obama was way up, he was basically walking on water. And just to see where there had to be a game-changing plan, they later made a film about this, and it was the Sarah Palin pick. And I would say of all the political tricks that I've seen, this was probably the greatest one. That going into the selection, out in Ohio that nobody knew who the Vice Presidential nominee and to see Anderson Cooper on CNN and the folks on Fox and Friends just really frustrated about not knowing what was actually going on. But to hear rumors that in the middle of the night a plane

had taken off from somewhere in Alaska and had landed somewhere in Cleveland. And to hear other misinformation about who the nominee was going to be and really not have any confirmation from the campaign until Sarah Palin walked on stage, it was really one of the closest held secrets in politics, which really doesn't happen in this business.

If you look at the electoral map, and you count off the states, we've got fifty some of the states are red and blue, Democratic Party and Republican Party. But the notion of that has really changed, you know we look to our neighbors to the north up in New Hampshire and New Hampshire was such a staunch state going for the GOP and now it's a toss up, and you've got Mitt Romney who owns his own home up there in New Hampshire and has really had to campaign there. You know if you look back historically, he should have been able to spend no time in New Hampshire and go to other important states. Now you look at what's happened to Pennsylvania the last several election cycles, Ohio, and now even a state like Colorado that's gone red to blue or blue to red depending on how you look at it, but a lot of people have used the color purple as one of those colors to really make an analogy about what the map looks like. So you know, after the convention, you move on and what's the electoral map look like? The election really comes down, for good or for bad, to a handful of states, maybe eight states. Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Hampshire and Colorado.

Well technology in the election has really changed. If you look at the election going back to Bush for 2000 or even 2004 it was really all about keeping paper records and using computers to print out lists. I think now we're in the digital age, if you look at how Obama was able to target his voters and give his campaign workers smartphones or iPhones and put an app on it, knock on Mrs. Smith's door and ask if she'd vote for Barack Obama and if she said yes she'd get a postcard a week later. So that tech has definitely changed from a campaign standpoint but also from a messaging standpoint. This will really be the full Twitter convention for either side. I think before, Twitter was considered more of a fad at the last convention, didn't have many users, and now also with Facebook, you know now its not going to be just the political geeks like myself, its really going to be mainstream. You know, when people wake up the morning after the nomination, their Facebook is really going to be flooded with comments, for good or for bad, about either candidate. And that's really going to change the way news is handled. I find so many producers and so

many news people are getting ideas for stories out of the Internet, which is a really interesting way of doing things. Instead of just a campaign sending out a press release or pushing a story, it's really going organically and the Internet is a huge part of that.

Its really important for people, for students, really for anyone of voting age, to get involved in politics. If you look back at the elections that I was involved in, 2000 and 2004, every vote counted. You know, we hear every November about these small town elections for selectman or Mayor where it comes down to one vote, they found out that the spouse of the candidate didn't vote. It's really a crime, when you look across the globe about people fighting for freedom and fighting for their independence. You know, we take it for granted here every day. It's really a shame we don't have more folks turning out to vote, more folks trying to change things, and more folks trying to make things better in this country.