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State Government Oral History Program

Oral History Interview

with

CATHIE WRIGHT

California State Assemblywoman, 1981-1992
California State Senator, 1993-2000

December 20, 2001, March 7, 21, April 4, May 2, 16, 30, June 6, 2002
Simi Valley, California

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Cathie Wright, Oral History Interview, Conducted 2001 and 2002 by Susan Douglass Yates, UCLA Oral History Program, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

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[Session 6, May 16, 2002]

[Begin Tape 7, Side A]

YATES: Good morning again, more formally. Let's see. Today what I'd like to do is continue discussion about your experiences serving in the assembly. And the first thing I wanted to start with was talk about the Commission on the Status of Women, which you were appointed to—I have in 1983. Now, how did you end up being appointed to the commission?

WRIGHT: Well, in 1982 Deukmejian was elected.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And so he was sworn in January of '83, of course. And at that time the commission was an odd commission, in the fact that it was basically one that was politically motivated when it was put together. And understandably, you know, they were trying to attract more women and the variations of opinions within the women's world, and to get them, get more involvement. It probably was a good time. It was done towards the end of the 1970s, I believe.

YATES: I think there had been a more informal group, right, prior to that? But it was during the [Governor Jerry] Brown administration that they formalized it.

WRIGHT: Yeah. Right, towards the end of Brown they did. And so naturally the makeup of it was definitely for the ruling party, whoever it may be, to have control. And so you had. . . . There were seven appointments from the governor and a fifteen member board. That's pretty close to the majority, then. And then you had the senate appointing and the assembly appointing members of the board. So you know—you were really—you had the party. There was no way of having a commission that wasn't going to be politically charged.

YATES: And plus there were a couple of other appointees, is that right?

WRIGHT: Well, yeah. Which, again, we're back to the governor's appointments, because of the fact there were these two agencies that had representation [the superintendent of public instruction and the chief of the Division of Industrial Welfare in the Department of Industrial Relations] there. My concern with the whole thing was the fact that it should have been the person who was in charge of the agency should be the one coming. But they always sent some representative.

YATES: I see.

WRIGHT: Always with the story that they had fully informed the chairman or the commissioner or whatever he or she happened to be.

YATES: When you joined the commission in '83 who was on the commission? That you remember, approximately.

WRIGHT: Well, of course, there was Maxine Waters as representing the assembly. And Diane Watson. It was the fact that at this point the speaker could appoint. . . . And Pat Nolan had put me in touch with Arlene [Merino] Nielsen, who had been a Deukmejian [Inaudible]. . . . Deukmejian appointment. Because at one time they didn't even have enough people on the darn thing to have a meeting. So with that they wanted more, well, Republicans appointed. Naturally. So Deukmejian was appointing women and Arlene, of course, was one of the first ones he appointed.

And then it came to me, and Pat Nolan went to Willie to make sure that Willie would appoint me, because he figured I was tougher than the other ones. They were a little upset—as I think we said in the last go around, when we were talking about it—with Marian Bergeson, because she had not gone along with the caucus. Oh, neither had Marilyn Ryan, of course, and they did want to put a woman on. The new women in were Marian La Follette and myself, and they felt that I was the tougher one of the two. And so he wanted me on there.

I was getting my marching orders, you know, to try and keep Maxine Waters and Diane Watson at bay if at all possible. I went in with the idea that I wasn't going to discuss anything that I didn't feel was truly an important issue at a state level for women, so we got into that, but. . . . The first couple of meetings—because it was meeting every month—I dreaded going, because

it was nothing but Diane Watson and then Maxine Waters trying to. . . . By procedures. They were trying to lead you to believe that they were following the procedures. Just simple things like you couldn't add an issue to the agenda to talk about. You couldn't take anything out of order. The way it was printed up, that's the way it had to be. Well, that's crazy. You don't do that. Well, you get into a whole argument about her making a motion and she'd always make sure it was when all the Democrats were there and there were maybe some Republicans missing who hadn't caught their flight or whatever to get to the meeting. And it was just. . . . You know.

So then I start throwing my little fireballs. And when she'd want to bring something up I wouldn't let her do it. Of course that didn't make for wonderful working conditions. But I mean if you're going to do it, it has to be straight. It has to be for everybody. Not "I want to do it my way." And that's what it was. And of course Maxine Waters, being with Willie, she had quite a bit of power she was wielding there.

YATES: You just mentioned your marching orders. Where was that coming from?

From the caucus, basically?

WRIGHT: Yeah, basically from the caucus. And being new in the legislature and everything—I'd been there two years—I was still going along with them, but I just didn't like a lot of the different things they were doing.

YATES: So what do you think at that point early on were the main philosophical

differences? I mean I can guess. But when you went in there what did you think the commission should be doing? And what did perhaps the other party think the commission should be doing?

WRIGHT: Well, for myself I felt, yes, there was a growing need, because we had more and more women who were not employed. Especially I was looking at single mothers, because I was starting to get a kind of feeling—just from my contacts, one, at the city council and then for the two years I was in the assembly at that point—that there seemed to be a problem, as far as women were concerned, being able to support themselves. And I was looking more to seeing that they got training, education, and there were no lines drawn where a man would get training for a program instead of a woman, if she was capable of doing it. Everything created on an equal basis. And that's where my focus was. I thought that was something that could be a state issue. But it never got to the issues because it was always this constant battle. You'd spend three or four hours at a meeting and not accomplish anything. Just arguing about what you were going to listen to and what you weren't going to listen to. So that's where I was coming from.

Of course, all I was told as far as the caucus was concerned—my so-called marching orders—was the fact that not to do anything that truthfully would embarrass Deukmejian, since he had the majority of the appointments on the commission. And what always has been a litmus test, it appears, for

Republicans but never for Democrats was of course the position on abortion. Why keep bringing that up, to nail us on the abortion issue? And to me it's always been. . . I had my own personal feelings. I am against abortion. But the courts have spoken. They've already challenged it, it still continues to be there on the books. So as a state or even a nation wide issue, it's a moot issue.

I used to get sick to my stomach to think this was the only thing we were going to argue over. Because I just didn't feel it belonged in the commission. Not if you want to accomplish anything. If you just want to have a forum to bash Republicans, or Republicans want a forum to bash Democrats. . . . It gets tiring after a while. It gets to be old story. If you want to accomplish something then you've got to pick issues that you think you can make a difference in. That's a step forward. And so that's where I was coming from.

The support. . . . Because of course then Pat [Nolan] and those guys would get a report back from Arlene or some of the other women who were there that would say whether I was doing a good job or not. They all liked me. They all thought I was a spitfire, which I guess I am. [Laughter]

YATES: Let me see, how do I phrase this? You just talked about the things that you thought should be on the table for the commission. I mean, I know structurally what the commission is about. But talk about the relationship of the commission as a commission to the legislature.

WRIGHT: They had really no relationship.

YATES: But what about pushing policy? How did you see that things that were being discussed in the commission might manifest themselves?

WRIGHT: Well, it appeared to me in the beginning that what was happening was Maxine's and Diane's positions and what pieces of legislation they were carrying. They were always constantly trying to get the commission to be in support of their legislation. There were other pieces of legislation that maybe didn't have a gender attached to it, but would still have an effect on women in the work force or women at home, for that matter, more than it would the men. There were issues out there. They were just hell bent on it being their way. And that's what the biggest problem was. If they would have come to the table with the idea. . . . Well, you didn't like the idea of being outnumbered. That's basically what it was.

You know, as I saw it, you come in to the legislature as a Republican, you have a Democratic majority in the assembly, a Democratic majority in the senate, and for two years at least, while I was in there, you had a Democratic governor. Then it was to try and work with incremental steps of what you wanted to accomplish while in the legislature. You couldn't have any major big controversial issue and think you were going to get it pushed through, because you didn't have the votes. You just didn't have the votes. So you had to do it in incremental steps, as far as I could see.

YATES: Well, you know, I saw in looking over some of those articles in the *California*

Journal about the commission, that in the early eighties—and this is before you actually joined; it was a 1981 article¹—the criticism of the commission was that it duplicated services offered by other women’s organizations like NOW [National Organization of Women], etc. What would be your response to that?

WRIGHT: Well, you know, you can say that a commission that dealt with doctors. . . . Well, why? The doctors have the California and also a national medical association, so why would they need to have a board to oversee and basically monitor what doctors do? Why dentists or funeral directors, for that part? You know? They all have their own associations, and NOW to me is an association, and it’s more a Democratic association than it is Republican. Republican women. . . . You have Republican women in NOW, but they don’t seem to be the spokespeople for the NOW organization.

YATES: So the commission can play a different kind of a role?

WRIGHT: Oh, definitely. Definitely they could. Would things be different now if it didn’t exist? I don’t know. I don’t know. Towards the end, even though I was still a member, I didn’t attend meetings. Except if I found out that they needed a quorum or they needed some votes to be taken, then I’d make sure

1. Michele Wilens, “Precarious Status for the Commission on the Status of Women,” *California Journal*, Vol. 12 (June 1981): 213-14.

that meeting would be the one I would attend. But previously I just religiously went to them and sat through the whole thing, giving up appointments and everything else that I would have had, because I thought the focus was to get it on track as to what it was supposed to be doing and trying to keep as much of the political out of it as you possibly could.

YATES: Well, that sounds like the other thing I read from the late eighties. The criticism was that the focus of the commission was on structural issues rather than policy issues, and that sounds a little bit like that's what you were saying.

WRIGHT: To a certain extent it was, because, you see. . . . Amada was her name?

YATES: Oh. Yes, I believe so. Yeah, who was . . .

WRIGHT: I know one of these papers here, there's a picture.

YATES: Yeah. There's an article about. . . . That included. . . . Almada.

WRIGHT: Yeah. Her problem was not that she wasn't capable. . . .

YATES: Margaret Almada.

WRIGHT: Almada. Yeah. It wasn't that she wasn't capable.

YATES: She was executive director of the commission.

WRIGHT: But it was the fact that she came with her label. She was appointed by Deukmejian. So definitely she was a Republican. Had to be a conservative, a strong conservative Republican. That was what they didn't like. Because the previous one they had started out with—I don't even know who she was, because I never came in contact with her—she was a Democratic appointment,

and so she was very much a liberal feminist. And so that was the difference.

As you see, the commissions on the status of women throughout the different county commissions, they vary in their political appearance, in the fact that all the counties. . . . You know, counties are different. So if you have fifty-eight commissions on the status of women, you're certainly not going to have fifty-eight solid Democratic liberal or fifty-eight solid Republican conservative. Not going to have it. So they function much better than the state was. To hear the way Watson and Waters went after Almada was. . . . No woman should have had to sit there and take that.

YATES: This was actually at meetings?

WRIGHT: Oh, yes.

YATES: With the members there.

WRIGHT: They challenged everything she was doing. So the structure. . . . You know, it was hard to keep people working for the commission. Cutting the budget. In fact, when I sat on the Budget Committee I got the ire of my Republicans, because I did not vote to eliminate the commission. That would have taken a piece of legislation. So as long as it was there and there was money, you could argue as to how many dollars you were going to give them, but the point of eliminating the commission, that would have been through legislation, because they were established by legislation.

YATES: I saw in fact that I guess in '85 you carried a bill to restore, it says, \$119,000

to the commission's budget. So I know at that point there was a lot of talk about eliminating it, cutting the budget. So talk a little bit about that.

WRIGHT: As I said, it was a legal commission. There were moneys that had to be invested in the support of the commission, or if you wanted to eliminate it. . . . Basically, the fact that they had a majority of Republicans, it would be nice to give them a shot at seeing how well they could run it as compared to the Democrats, because the Democrats had been very controversial. So that's why I carried the piece of legislation, in order to push it, so that they got their funding. Then if they didn't succeed and accomplish anything, well, then you would know we were no better than the Democrats, and I probably would have been prepared to carry the legislation to eliminate the commission.

YATES: So what do you think the commission was able to accomplish over those years? The 1980s, basically.

WRIGHT: Well, it was hard to say. You can't get too many issues. I kind of felt that the one on child care would have been a good issue to carry through, simply because we had to get our mind set on the fact that women in general have to work. Whether it's because they want to pursue a career or because it's to keep money for a household budget, they basically have to work. It's very few women that can find themselves that they don't have to do anything and everything will run smoothly. So that if you have children you have to have a means of taking care of those children. And for the very poor, who are on

limited funding, if you don't want to pay for them to sit on welfare with their children, then certainly you have to help them be able to go to work with a clear mind, knowing that their children are being cared for.

YATES: So what specifically could the commission do in those cases?

WRIGHT: They could have pursued, at that point before it got into the discussion as to whether they had a right to lobby or did not lobby or whatever. . . . But they could have done what they were doing towards the end of my status with them, which was reviewing pieces of legislation and saying whether they supported or did not support and why. All dealing with what would be considered women's issues. That was a good point for them to do.

YATES: So they did start to do that?

WRIGHT: Yeah. Because they were basically the spokespersons for women in general. They could glean from the commissions around the state what their position was on different legislation and then pursue them within, then, at the state commission. Any more than the [American] Medical Association did or any of the others.

YATES: Towards the end you left the commission, when you went to the senate. That's about 1992. What were the dynamics like at that point, when you think about what it was like when you first joined the commission versus when you left? Or near when you were leaving?

WRIGHT: When I first joined the commission those over there had. . . . I think one of the

women's name was [Gloria] Godell, that was. . . . God, she was more liberal than liberal. With her issues, you know. As far as I was concerned, coming from my point of view. But they had been there quite a long time. And then of course right after Deukmejian you had Pete Wilson. And Pete Wilson's appointees were more to the moderate view. And it seemed to work out. They were trying to get into a position where there were major issues. Plus the fact they should have been—which they were doing then at that point, because their budget was not the one that was being pounded all the time—a place where women could pick up the phone and call and ask for information and get some support and be focused in the right direction if they needed help in a certain area.

YATES: It almost sounds like it's evolved. Like the eighties were a time of trying to come back and regroup, because now you had more of a mixture. It was less Democratic.

WRIGHT: Right.

YATES: You had more varying. . . . It sounds like extreme points of view, maybe. Very liberal, right? And more conservative. As you said, that's your viewpoint. And then your mentioning now there's a few more moderate Republicans. But it also just sounds like it sort of reflects the times. So then it went into the nineties, and I take it that's been another period for the commission.

WRIGHT: Right.

YATES: OK. Did you have anything else you wanted to add about the commission that we haven't covered?

WRIGHT: No. It was just. . . . It was like trying to get one upsman on the other guy, you know.

YATES: Right. I wanted to ask you about some of the legislation you carried. And of course, as I was saying to you earlier, we can't cover everything, unfortunately.

WRIGHT: Oh, I don't know why not. [Laughter]

YATES: But, of course, the one area that you became very involved in became known as the children's Systems of Care. And I believe I have down that you introduced legislation in 1983 regarding that. So why don't you talk about how you became interested in the subject? What it is, etc.

WRIGHT: Well, first of all, you can't be in an elected office and claim to be an expert on everything. You kind of have to narrow, if you're going to be an expert, really know what you're into and what you're talking about. And of course going into the legislation my first thought was local government and especially what we called the no tax cities—and now they are called the no's or low's—tax cities, and how they're affected by the government. And so that was my first goal. But because I had carried some legislation, one in particular for correctional peace officers—

YATES: Oh, right. I remember you mentioning that.

WRIGHT: And in doing so was able to get a piece of legislation through that everyone said I couldn't because of the opposition to it, but I did. It was then the probation officers from the county of Los Angeles, which of course I represented a part of, came with an issue in regards to children. And I have a soft spot in my heart for children. Having been one once a long time ago. [Laughter] But anyway, there were youngsters that were coming into the system—and that's the criminal justice system—that it was obvious there were problems with, and I think it was the beginning of seeing that we don't have all perfect families. And so these youngsters for one reason or another would get into trouble and then they'd come into the courts. And the judge was very supportive of what the probation officers were talking about, giving the judges more ability to require certain things, such as if they thought this child had an emotional or mental illness problem or some such, that they could get an evaluation of the youngster before they determine what they were going to do with him, since he was now in the court system. And I thought this was. . . . Yeah, that made sense to me. So I carried the piece of legislation. Started out, that bill. . . . I should remember the number, it's [A.B.] 37 something, I think the number of it was.¹

1. A.B. 3920, 1983-1984 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1474 (1984).

YATES: When you first introduced it?

WRIGHT: Yeah. The whole idea of the piece of legislation was to give the judges in the juvenile justice system the opportunity to have an evaluation made of the youngster, so they could determine what was required, rather than simply either they were going to go to the [California Department of the] Youth Authority or they were going to go back out on the street again. That's basically the choices they had. I thought, "Terrific."

I carried the legislation and our original wording on it was that the judge would have the right to require an evaluation before making a determination as to what the proper punishment or care was for this child. I thought everybody would be in support of it. Got ready to go to committee and I had opposition coming out of the woodwork. All children and family groups. Because you'd pinpoint a child that had to be evaluated and it was up to a judge to make a determination, and they just said he didn't have the expertise, the judge didn't have the expertise. How would he know? What was his experience that could say he could. . . . And it was just. . . . I didn't have a vote on the committee. I didn't have a vote on the committee, so I didn't take the bill up.

So I got in touch with Dr. [] Fleming, who was head of mental health in Ventura County, and he in turn put me in touch with [Randall] Randy Feltman, who had basic children's programs. But it wasn't mental health, it

was like social services children's programs.

YATES: This is, you said, at the county level?

WRIGHT: At the county level. We start talking and he said that—as Randy worded it—by the time the child got to a point where he was going before a judge he was already a lost case. There were other signals along the way and a pattern of behavior by these youngsters that could be picked up sooner, and they could be turned around. He honestly believed it. And I did too. I said, “Gee, I didn't think of it that way.” I was focused on what I was being told here at this point. So we went round and round and round and round and round and round, and that's how it was born. And that first piece of legislation, the whole front page of the bill was all amendments. We were amending it constantly, constantly, before we took it to committee.

YATES: And this is still in '83 or . . .

WRIGHT: It ran '83 and then into. . . Well, '84.

YATES: OK. So it started as one piece of legislation, then you amended it at that point.

WRIGHT: And it was amended and amended and amended and amended. . .

YATES: Sure.

WRIGHT: Yeah, and it just kept. . . As we built up support for it and had I think every mental health director in the state say that's what we need. We need to have everybody talking.

You have a youngster in school, the youngster's having problems all the

time. Either he's irrational, he's a troublemaker, there's something. Or he just doesn't pay attention or he doesn't do his work. There's always something, and you can pick it up. Well, some of these children, nobody knows how to handle him, he ends up in special ed[ucation]. So now you've got the youngster in special ed. But nobody with a mental health background—a psychologist, a psychiatrist, a psych tech—none of them have ever come in contact with this youngster. Or you pick him up on the street and he's in the criminal justice system. But nowhere along the line has anybody said this youngster should have been in treatment and the treatment failed.

YATES: So what was the. . . .

WRIGHT: So the basic thing, and we called it then the Ventura [demonstration] project, and it got to be called the Ventura project, simply because I got Ventura County picked as the. . . . And there were reasons for picking Ventura County over. . . .

YATES: As a test site?

WRIGHT: Yeah. What they call a pilot program.

YATES: Pilot, right.

WRIGHT: As for using Los Angeles. . . .

YATES: Well, just for a second, when you realized that giving judges the option was not the way to go, it was to start earlier, what specifically were those things

going to be that would be done earlier on?

WRIGHT: Well, that was where the amending and amending process was coming in, because we'd sit down and we'd throw out ideas, and finally it was Randy who said you've got to have everybody together. You have to have—
Somebody in school sees a problem with this child, you don't just throw him into special ed.

YATES: So basically, what you were just saying, the idea is to get varying people involved earlier on.

WRIGHT: That's right. So that one child maybe would need to be put into a foster care home or into a group home or maybe into a mental institution in the beginning, right off the bat, but it would be a determination that would be made by everyone who had the expertise in all the different areas. So you were sitting people down and you had a sort of commission where you had representation from every one of the services that would touch a child. And then it was the determination, it was an evaluation basically, of what the child needed. One child may need counseling, another one may need removal from the home. Which they were basically on that vent but then you knew what the problem was and you treated the whole child. So the child got. . . . If it was treatment, if it needed counseling, if it needed tutoring, if it needed some phase of special education, you had it all grouped together.

YATES: So talk about the pilot projects then.

WRIGHT: So the pilot program. . . . Then now you've got the idea of what we're going to do. Well, you're not sure that it's going to work. You couldn't go statewide with it, it would be millions of dollars you'd spend. So we had to narrow it down to selling a pilot program.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: Now the pilot program, by all reasonable ideas it should have been the county that first brought the problem to me that would be the one that would be the pilot program. But Los Angeles, it costs something like ten million dollars for a pilot program. It's so large. So the only other thing was then Ventura County. One, because Randy had been working on the program with me. Two, it was a good cross section of what most counties looked like. Population wise, we had a mix in population. We had a mix in the economy—we had some high tech, we had some farming, we had federal jobs. It was just a good mix that you could take it and get a good reading on it. So that's how Ventura got chosen. Plus Randy said they were ready to go, because they had been knocking and kicking things around, trying to find out what they could do for these youngsters.

So with that understanding, the next thing was the cost. So then we had to get Duane [Essex]—he was another one that sat with us—and he had to work the figures. We got down to the point where we could start out for about \$200,000, because that was at the point at which you could get just a blanket

approval of your piece of legislation, as compared if you went into the millions, where then you had to have the governor make the determination. But we ended up with doing a program that the legislation would be passed, it would be signed by September, it would take effect in January. And you'd have a preparation period for this budget, then, so that we could even reduce the amount, because you were only talking about funding it from January until. . . .

YATES: Through June, or

WRIGHT: Through June. And then the commitment was there that the budget would go on. It would basically be a three year program. And that's how we were able to get the funding into the budget and it make sense. So even though normally it would take you about six months to set up a program. . . . With everybody knowing it was going to happen, why, it started in January but they were up and running and doing investigations of some youngsters and evaluations of youngsters as early as April of that year.

YATES: Now, when you were carrying the legislation for this, who did you find was supporting you on it, and who was opposing you?

WRIGHT: Politically Democrats supported the idea, Republicans opposed it.

YATES: So it followed pretty much party line. What you might expect.

WRIGHT: Yeah. And I was. . . . Something had gotten around. In the meantime I had gone off my rocker evidently, because I was into this sort of thing. Mental

health. Nobody wanted to discuss mental health. But I just. . . I could see what our problems were. The amount year after year of out-of-home placement was just going through the roof in costs. So there's more and more children being taken out of the home. And one thing the program did was to include the family, so it wasn't just this isolated youngster, it was the whole family. What were the conditions at home and that. It was just the whole ball of wax.

YATES: Now, sorry if I keep coming back to this, but OK, you have this amount of money. Now where does it go? And what is it doing specifically that wasn't being done before?

WRIGHT: It was basically having the departments sign off on a program for a child, so mental health knew what was going on, criminal justice system knew what was going on, social services knew what was going on, special ed knew what was going on. They were all involved. They were all involved. That was the important point. So it wasn't a case. . . . OK, special ed would go to the legislature for more money for special ed, because they have this growing amount of troubled youth in their system, without the child ever being treated for the real problem. This way you were treating the child. You knew. And some of the older ones, you had them signing contracts saying they were going to study, they were going to do this and this. And then they had someone that they could really talk to with their problems. Then if some

medication was involved, you had a doctor involved. So you had everybody involved with the child.

YATES: When did you first learn something about the effectiveness of this pilot program?

WRIGHT: When Randy said. . . . “You know, it’s just amazing,” he said, when you have everybody working together, how great it gets to be. So I thought, “Great.” In 1987, having started the program in ’83. . . . Actually in 1986 it would have been a three year program. It would have been a program that would have terminated in ’86 if it didn’t prove itself. We felt we had to have an independent audit of what was going on in the program if we were going to sell it. We had to prove that we were right in what we said. In 1986—my God, the statistics were fantastic, we couldn’t believe it—we turned around and we had the University of [California] San Francisco. . . . And in reality if you want to you could contact your people up in San Francisco and they’d tell you. Again, I’ve got all that . . .

YATES: The boxes in your garage. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: I wish. . . . It would have been so easy if we were doing this while I was still in office. And I’d say here, we’ll pull out the file. But. . . .

YATES: So how were they involved?

WRIGHT: So the University of San Francisco did an audit on the program, came down and everything.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And their report was right on with what we were saying. But we were afraid that we wouldn't be able to sell it to the legislature, go statewide with this program.

YATES: Why, if things looked positive?

WRIGHT: Because again, it was the makeup of the legislature. Mental health was not—as it was the last couple of years—on anybody's radar screen. You know, if you had a committee on mental health, a standing committee in the legislature on mental health, you wouldn't have anybody that wanted to serve on it, and the reason was there was no way to get any money for campaigns. It was an issue that was always mixed in with health and at the bottom of the pile. If you were going to cut, you cut mental health, you didn't cut any of the other services that government provided. And so we really had to prove ourselves if we were going to go statewide with this program.

YATES: So what did you do?

WRIGHT: So, armed with the University of California, S[an] F[rancisco], we went back to the legislature and decided we wanted to do one more year and see that it wasn't a fluke. Well, the only way you could do it was we had to get support from the counties, and believe it or not we had counties of California who gave up some of their mental health money in order to provide another year of the Ventura project in Ventura.

YATES: Wow.

WRIGHT: They were that . . .

YATES: That's irony for you. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Yeah. Right! Because they could see what it was doing. And they were really sure of it.

YATES: And it would mean diminishing their own services for a period.

WRIGHT: Yeah, but it was. . . . I guess the hardest sell on it has been because we made the [California] Department of Mental Health as the lead agency. And you had to do that. Because mental health was not trying to prevent youngsters from going into special ed. In other words they weren't saying give me the money, because I'll spend it and then to heck with those other people. They were all involved. But mental health seemed to be the most neutral of everyone involved in it that could be the oversight. And so it was mental health.

YATES: What were the results after this next year?

WRIGHT: After the year?

YATES: That's how you funded it then, was through the counties.

WRIGHT: It was something like a hundred thousand dollars more or something that we needed to. . . . I forget the exact amount. I get in, we pass the assembly, no problem. I get in the senate and Barry Keene opposed the bill in committee. Oh, my God, and we're getting close to budget.

YATES: Which committee is this?

WRIGHT: Health. It was the Health [and Human Services] Committee.

YATES: In the Health Committee.

WRIGHT: “Oh, my God! What am I going to do?” So I called Randy. Randy said, “Well, I’ll just get in touch with the different counties. But more so than just the counties, every organization that supported children in Barry Keene’s counties called him. I mean, his phone was ringing off the hook over something he thought he was having some fun with me about because I was so passionate about what I was presenting.

YATES: I was going to ask you why do you think he held it up?

WRIGHT: Well, that was it. It’s just one of his quirks, I guess it was. He was just going to make me sweat it out, you know. Well, within a day or two the bill went out of committee and went off the floor and the governor signed it.

The way in which we got support from Deukmejian was the fact that our commitment, and this was like in 1987. . . . That’s how positive we were about our numbers then, that the money saved in out-of-home placement, criminal justice system, and special ed would be what would fund future counties coming on board. So it wasn’t going to be one lump sum and you were going to put fifty-eight counties on board. You weren’t going to do it. Well, the money that we had saved in Ventura County’s region alone in special ed, in the Youth Authority, in out-of-home placement, funded three more counties to

start up.

YATES: So that happened in this next year?

WRIGHT: This happened in 1987. So I had two pieces of legislation that year.¹

YATES: Got you. So you had four pilot programs going then. . . .

WRIGHT: No. We wouldn't call them. . . . These were not pilot . . . Because the legislation I carried in 1987 was to go statewide with Systems of Care.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And it would be based on the moneys available, which with Deukmejian's commitment, as long as we took and could prove. . . . We kind of had to do what I would call a spreadsheet. You had to show. . . . Here's where we were spending in mental health, here's what we're spending in special ed, put it all down the columns. And then show what you spent in the year for the money you put into mental health. It was no guarantee that you were going to reduce the cost of mental health. You weren't. But you're going to get basically more bang for your buck, because Ventura County at that point was showing a flat line in out-of-home placement, where all the other counties were going this way.

YATES: Up.

1. A.B. 377, 1987-1988 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1361 (1987) and A.B. 3777, 1987-1988 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 982 (1988).

WRIGHT: Up, up, up. Youngsters coming into the juvenile system was slowed down. Special ed was showing a savings. So it was that money and with Deukmejian's understanding of that, that's how we got three counties started. The next three counties that were started were the ones that could do it. They were ready to go because they'd been monitoring and been very supportive of Ventura to start out with. And that was Santa Clara County and that was San Bernardino and Riverside. Those were the three counties, they were the next three counties. Now the idea was the future savings in this realm of four counties would then bring more counties, and that's the way it would work.

YATES: So you'd build on it from that.

WRIGHT: Yeah, build on it. So that in reality what you would have been spending in mental health was three times saved in the other areas. And every county that has been on the Systems of Care for more than three years shows a flat line in out-of-home placement, shows a reduction in juvenile justice, and shows a reduction in special education. But because it's all separate departments you don't show it. You show they're spending this money in mental health.

YATES: Right

WRIGHT: And mental health is the one that is a throw away when it comes to budget discussions.

YATES: Right, and we'll come to that. Hold on a second.

WRIGHT: OK.

[End Tape 7, Side A]

[Begin Tape 7, Side B]

YATES: OK, so you have funding for another year, though, right? To get this thing. . . . I don't want to say going, but to continue.

WRIGHT: There was no funding in the bill that established a state wide program. The language in the bill was "with the moneys made available from the Systems of Care." And that's how it got to be the Systems of Care, because you couldn't call it Ventura project anymore.

YATES: So what happens then, after that next year?

WRIGHT: Well, we had the three come on board. Actually, they came on board in '88. So '88 it was the funding for those two. . . . Well, four counties now were being funded. There's additional money put in so that Ventura County's people could go into the other counties and act as advisors and help them set up their program, because we're the ones that were doing it.

What was so nice about it was the fact that if you had something that worked with this child you could do it. You weren't restrained that you had to go and talk to the head of the mental health department or the director in the county and he had to talk to the board of supervisors. It was understanding that when you signed on to this program you had the flexibility to try to improve what we were doing. But there was also oversight. The Systems of Care program, I can honestly tell you, is the only program in the State of

California that has oversight, that has been audited to death to prove that it works, that has full support of all the directors, all fifty-eight counties, and that has shown better results than any other program in the State of California. Now, what more could you want?

And we're turning youngsters out. . . . For a while I followed a couple of youngsters in Ventura County that I knew. We had a young woman who spiked her hair, when they were wearing it spiked, and the chains and everything else. She was running away from home all the time. She was going to end up. . . . She was going to really be a lost cause. That's when she was sixteen. Today. . . . And I haven't. . . . I shouldn't just say today but . . .

YATES: Recently, you mean?

WRIGHT: Well, by the time she was in her early twenties.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: By the time she was in her early twenties she had graduated from high school, she had gone into training to become a beautician, and she owns her own shop now. At least she owned her own shop at that point. By the time she was twenty-five she had a shop of her own, a youngster that could have ended up in the juvenile authority and then who knows what after that.

Another young man that was. . . . A little boy that was considered to be. . . . He probably wouldn't have lived, he was so detrimental to himself. And through placing him in Phoenix—he was going to what was called the

Phoenix School out at the Camarillo Airport, where they do the special education for the kids within the Systems of Care program—with the counseling and commitment with the family and everything as to what his problems were, within three years he was turned around. Because when I first saw him they couldn't get him to sit still in a classroom. He was always disruptive, and he'd gone from failure after failure to a B+ student before he left the elementary school.

YATES: Right. At what point were you able to get. . . I assume this is legislation passed that now had all the counties involved.

WRIGHT: That was in '87.

YATES: That was '87, OK.

WRIGHT: And then my commitment to Deukmejian that it would never be a drain on the budget, that the moneys that were put into mental health would show the commitment for the other departments and you would see a reduction. If every county would take past experience in their major departments—mental health, special ed, out-of-home placement, group homes—they would see the drop in their costs there. Now if I'm sitting in. . . Maybe the costs are going up in those areas just because cost of living or whatever, or population switches between counties or whatever. But if they would look at what they had before they would see, and especially in the out-of-home placements.

In fact I have the paperwork, the charts out there, that show that Ventura

County and the other three counties that then came on board, the four counties, were flat line on out-of-home placement, more like it was the border for those three counties than it was the jagged graphs. They're flat. There was a drop in special ed and there was a drop in the juvenile justice systems in those counties.

YATES: So you've got this program going, it's very successful. What happens now, once you're in the 1990s?

WRIGHT: Well, the first hit was it was stalemated. Because the first hit was with the budget shortfall in '92. And it was to hold on. . . . The minute Wilson was sworn into office I had an appointment with him, and I went through and explained the whole program to him and everything else. "Oh, yes." And I said, "You should just keep tabs." I said, "Just talk to the departments."

And then the fellow who was head of the finance agency knew the program and agreed, had gone down and seen it and knew everything about it. He [Thomas W. Hayes] was very supportive of it. But again his boss was the governor. And Wilson. . . . Even though he talked a good game to me I just didn't feel comfortable. And I had the right to feel. . . . Because he did not increase that budget whatsoever. It was a constant struggle, to a point when I was sitting on the Budget [and Fiscal Review] Committee and we were in the conference committee for the budget, that our caucus leaders. . . . And I was in the senate at the time, so it was after '92.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: That caucus leader for the Republicans came over and said to me, “What would it take?” For me to vote for a budget. And I told him Systems of Care.

YATES: Who was the leader at that point?

WRIGHT: Oh. Orange County.

YATES: We can look it up.

WRIGHT: Yeah. Yeah, Orange County.

YATES: I should have it, but I don’t. . . .

WRIGHT: Young man.

YATES: Anyway, so he [Curt Pringle] was supportive of. . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah. And I said Systems of Care. So they came back and said they were going to give me two million dollars. “You’re out of your cotton-picking mind,” I said. “You’re not giving me more than I already have. I’ve got that. I want more counties on board. It’s a statewide program.” And I said, “We don’t even have twenty counties on board. I said, “There’s money in the budget to spend for all this silly pork that everybody wants around here. You give me Systems of Care.” And I wanted seven million dollars. And I got seven million dollars that year. So they put more counties on board. And that was in ’94, ’95, I think it was.

It just went on from there. Every year I fought for money. Nobody wanted to give it, you know? Nothing galled me more. Because I said I would not

leave the legislature until Systems of Care for children was fully funded. And now we had term limits. I knew I was going to be out of the senate in the year 2000. I probably, if I had known what was going to happen, would have gone back to the assembly, even though I hated the idea of doing it, just to keep Systems of Care afloat. But Burton in the budget before I left totally made the commitment to see that it was totally funded. So it was John [L.] Burton that got it totally funded. And now here I am two years later and [Governor Gray] Davis is wiping it out.

YATES: Just for the record why don't you explain? You just learned today that it's not part of the governor's budget.

WRIGHT: Oh, it's part of the governor's budget—to eliminate over \$35 million, which is the complete elimination of the Systems of Care for children program.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And, see, my concern is because I know the Republicans will go along with it. But I'll bet you any money that Ross Johnson will have his \$200,000 for his dredging of [the Back Bay of] Newport Beach. This is the kind of thing. Or somebody that wants some statue some place, or whatever they want. That is things in type areas that we can do without. I never asked for pork. I never asked for pork. When I was asking I'd list something, but I wouldn't fight for it that much, because to me the most important thing was this program. And Ray Haynes, Senator Ray Haynes, I mean he got me. . . . I want nothing more

to do with that man. He insists that this is my pork. And yet his two counties, Riverside and San Bernardino, came on board in 1987 because of my legislation and they would kill him if he eliminated the program.

YATES: So what happens now, in terms of trying to get the funding reinstated as part of the budget?

WRIGHT: Well, as the subcommittees of the budget will go back into session, I'd like to go through and see what changes have been made. They don't necessarily have to accept what the governor. . . . But my concern is when the five get together, what they call the Big Five, I know the Republicans would have no problem in supporting. . . .

YATES: Davis on this.

WRIGHT: Yeah, supporting him because they don't understand it. Unless they've had some child, or know of some child, that's been turned around. Because in the subcommittee on the budget in the senate [Wesley] Chesbro called me and told me that he had mentioned, "Where's Cathie Wright when we need her?" Haynes sits on that committee and he moved to eliminate the program. So fourteen Republicans sitting there, you know damn well that most of them are very conservative, that they have no idea what a savings this program has been to the State of California.

Why, when you hear Systems of Care throughout the nation? In fact in Florida, University of [South] Florida, they have a whole program down there

based on a grant fund in which they're tracking Systems of Care throughout the nation. One of the people that is working down there was one of the original fellows that was here in Ventura County and left. His name is [Mario Hernandez].

YATES: Well, that's tough.

WRIGHT: It is tough. They spoke of Systems of Care in the Subcommittee on Health, of Congress. And Randy Feltman was the one that went and spoke on behalf of Systems of Care. You hear Systems of Care. . . . They throw the words Systems of Care around like for everything now. Integrative services, integrated services. That's Systems of Care, integrated services.

YATES: Right. And this did expand to an adult of Systems of Care, correct?

WRIGHT: I did. . . . The same year, in 1987, I started a pilot program, where we had three counties involved in the pilot program, because there were variations to see which would work the best. When you hear them talk about the Village down in Long Beach? That is an adult Systems of Care program. That's how it started. Because the framework is the same as the children's program, except it has the three added components. One is housing, one is job training and one is transportation.

YATES: OK. Well, I know this is an important subject to you. Is there anything else you want to add about it?

WRIGHT: Sometimes I feel like I'm blowing in the wind. Because it's difficult, and with

term limits. . . . When Darrell Steinberg was elected he was elected on a mental health platform, what he was going to do, and he started out with this grandiose idea of the program that he was going to. . . . And thank God I could talk to him and explain to him that all he had to do was get the funding for Systems of Care adult program. And of course he was a Democrat, and with a Democratic governor he got the money. And it was just tremendous, because I had that program statewide that wasn't picked up yet.

We did the pilot program and that was it. One was where they have housing and all their services, and they can go out to work and come back and the whole thing. That's what the Village is. So you had that. Then we had the one tracking with families who want services for the youngsters—you know, their adult children—to keep them at home, and they want to be able to pick who. . . . It's almost like a managed care program, I would call it, because they have a right to pick out who their tending psychiatrist or psychologist will be with this youngster, and the funding to put him on a program. But it's all tied in.

And there's a variation where it's a county program. Ventura County was the one that was using their. . . . And the Systems of Care money in the county of Ventura established what everybody talks about. . . . Casa. . . . I know I'm getting old. [Laughter] But the housing program they have—La Posada—is for adults. And they have. . . . A housing coordinator was part of the program.

And why Ventura blew the whole thing was they fired their housing coordinator. They didn't need it, according to [Pierre] Durand, who was the head of the health department, because the health department was over mental health, and so consequently he was grabbing the money where he could get it. So they destroyed the program.

YATES: Well, let me shift here, if that's OK. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: OK, let's. . . . Sure! Do you think we've talked about. . . . I could give you. . . . In fact, I'm going to look and see if I can't find it and pull it out. Just give you. . . . It's two pages, and it's kind of a thumbnail of the system.

YATES: That'll be great. Because what I'll do is add that to the files.

WRIGHT: I'll try and find that thing. I know I've got it out there.

YATES: Well, I wanted to just touch at least briefly on a couple more committees. I identified them primarily because you served as vice chair, and one was the Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee, which I believe you mentioned having been on some kind of committee of that subject throughout your tenure.

WRIGHT: There was some issue that had come up, and Willie Brown established a. . . . Which he could do with the vote of the legislature. He got the vote naturally. He established a standing committee on toxics.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And it's changed its name over the years. And so has the one in the senate, for

that matter.

YATES: Yeah, because you were first on the committee, the Consumer Protection and Toxic Materials Committee, so this next. . . . The one I just mentioned then is basically the same committee but a different name?

WRIGHT: Yeah, it's the same committee.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: Any time you see the word toxic or hazardous, it was the same committee. That was always included, but they varied.

YATES: Now, you were on that from 1985 to 1992, I have down.

WRIGHT: It should have been before that.

YATES: Well, no, I mean as the Environmental Safety Committee.

WRIGHT: Oh, OK. Yeah.

YATES: Yeah, and before that it was Consumer Protection.

WRIGHT: Yeah, because I think that was established in 1981.

YATES: So talk a little bit. . . . I think you touched last time on at least when Sally Tanner was chair of that committee.

WRIGHT: She chaired the committee until she left the legislature.

YATES: Oh, she did, OK. Maybe you could expand a little bit more on the role of that committee and the types of issues you were involved in at that point.

WRIGHT: Well, it was strange starting out, because you had a committee and you would have a meeting and you really had no bills before you. And so it was always

these oversight hearings we were having constantly.

YATES: Now, why were there no pieces of legislation?

WRIGHT: Because, first of all, it was getting the legislature and the members of the legislature focused in on this being a separate issue. Because if you were talking about hazardous materials, and it was in terms of handling the materials and the fact that people became sick or diseases were showing up or something, it was like a health issue. So it's hard to pull legislation that focused on the substance. . . .

YATES: Because it touched on so many different areas, OK. So it sounds like an education process at that point?

WRIGHT: Yes. And so that's what you were doing. You were having all these oversight hearings on the different agencies and that. And of course one of the biggest issues was the establishment of the state EPA [Environmental Protection Agency]. In which I voted against it.

YATES: Why did you vote against it?

WRIGHT: Because the way the governor was putting the moneys together.

YATES: This is Deukmejian?

WRIGHT: No, this was Pete Wilson.

YATES: Wilson. Oh right, right. OK. Sure.

WRIGHT: The EPA.

YATES: So early nineties.

WRIGHT: Yeah. Because what he was doing was taking money that was being paid for by people who dealt in the substance. You know, almost anything today can be a hazard. But whatever you were dealing with you were being licensed for, and you were paying these fees and these fees were to go on to better your particular area. So what was happening was he was pulling money from here and he was pulling money from there in order to establish the EPA. And to me it was establishing another piece of bureaucracy at the expenses of people that happened, good fortune or bad fortune, to be involved in that economy. I just felt it was the wrong thing to do and so I voted against it.

YATES: Were you against having an agency per se? Or just basically because of the way it was going to be funded and organized?

WRIGHT: I thought because they were pulling in from the agriculture departments and all the different departments, and I just felt that it really. . . . And of course he was in a very hostile environment, because he was dealing with a Democratic senate and a Democratic assembly, and so he was trying to pursue something. And I don't know exactly what was his commitment that he felt he had to do at the time, but I just didn't think the timing was right and I didn't think the funding was right. And so I voted against it.

But it was established, and it's had its ups and downs. I served on several special committees in the organizational time, but. . . . Now—which is like maybe ten years later—it's functioning well, but it still has some problems.

But it is functioning a lot better than starting out it was. It was murderous.

YATES: So what else did the committee focus on at that point? Mid to late eighties?

WRIGHT: Gosh. I know some legislation that I carried. I carried quite a bit of legislation in that area. Naturally, being on the committee, I carried quite a bit of legislation. But one of the things I carried was coming from a business point of view. You have a substance and it's condoned, it's hazardous. But it's a necessary substance. So the point is how do you handle it? And what volume do you handle? And it's so easy to take. . . .

Like mercury. You can take mercury. Mercury is a hazardous material, but it's vital in so many areas that are health related. When you talk about x-ray machines and scanners and everything else, they all. . . . Mercury's involved. So, too, a doctor's office or a dentist's office, that substance is used. It's a very minute amount that's used, and for them to have to go through a situation of storing it and getting rid of it and being responsible for it didn't make much sense, because it became too costly to a point where they wouldn't be doing it, and then it would be detrimental to the people as a whole. Because it's part of a process. You go to a dentist you expect to have x-rays, you expect to have your teeth taken care of. You go to the doctor. And to have them be interested in all these. . . .

And that wasn't the only substance. It was a fact that you were paying the same in fees to the State of California if you had a thimble full of stuff, if you

had a twelve ounce amount, if you had a hundred pounds. Which didn't make sense. The fellow was netting. . . . His net profit was \$50,000 a year. Why was he paying a \$20,000 fee? It didn't make sense. So that's how we got involved and worked out what we called tiered permitting. It was permitting, they still had to have a permit. But they could have an exempt permit. The permit was going to be based on the volume rather than the substance. So you could be involved with nitrates. That's used in explosives. But if you're using a thimbleful why would you be. . . . What was the necessity of having you licensed the same as an explosive company would be?

YATES: So were you successful in getting that legislation [Hazardous Waste Treatment Permit Reform Act of 1992¹] through?

WRIGHT: Yes. Yes.

YATES: Did you have any opposition? Particularly?

WRIGHT: Environmentalists. They don't want anything. They were the biggest. . . . And in that committee that's why I used to have fun with them, because they were the biggest. . . . I had the one fellow who represented the. . . . Oh, come on, the most important. . . . This is terrible, I get embarrassed at times. I can see his face and the organization. . . . Everybody sooner or later belongs to them. Terrible.

1. A.B. 1772, 1991-1992 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1345 (1992).

YATES: You're not talking about the Sierra Club, are you?

WRIGHT: Sierra Club. Yes. That's it. [Laughter]

YATES: OK. I'm always afraid to jump in, because I usually don't remember myself.

WRIGHT: Yeah. It was the Sierra Club. That's the one that was the biggie. And the one [Michael Paparian] who represented the Sierra Club was in there supporting legislation that would curtail the use of automobiles, that would cause the cost of gasoline to go up. I mean, it was just ridiculous what he was supporting. And so I just point blank asked him, "How'd you get to the capitol today?" He said, "What do you mean?" "Where do you live?" "Well, I live down in Fair Oaks." Some place. "OK, so how did you get to the capitol?" "I drove." "Oh! You drove. And so are you curtailing your driving? Did you try to hitch a ride? Or take the transit or do something to get here? Why'd you ride in your car? You, you don't make any sense. What you're causing is, you're trying to have eliminated or reduce the use of what you use." So that didn't go over too well with him. But I mean it was just situations like that I tried to expose.

There has to be a balance, otherwise people can't survive. And I know I have a dog and I know people love pets and everything else, but let's face it, which is the most important animal in the universe, if it isn't man?

Slash. . . . I should say man/woman. [Laughter] What is? And it's your survival, and your survival has to be that you have to get. . . . You have to eat

and you have to have shelter, and you have to have some income in order to provide you with the shelter and the food and everything else. So you have to have balance.

I just can't see this. . . . My daughter all of a sudden has gone crazy, because she hears about Rocketdyne up here. "That thing's been going on," I said. "I was involved with it for fifteen years, twenty years, I was in the legislature. Yes, they tested." In fact, when we first moved in here I was waiting for my husband to come home and there was this terrible roar. And my only thought was "Oh, my God, they're bombing Los Angeles!" [Laughter] Because the roar and the flashes and everything else, that's what I thought it was. It sounded like planes flying over. I thought, "Oh, my God!" It wasn't, it was Rocketdyne testing. And that was in the seventies.

YATES: Your daughter's upset about that now? Is that what you said?

WRIGHT: Well, because they're talking about run off and pollution and everything else, and that all the soil up there is polluted. There's a certain amount of pollution was up there but, God, they've done so much cleaning up there in the last fifteen years. You know, when you were doing things for a war effort in the forties, no one at that point in time was thinking about anything that was detrimental to your health. It was survival was the key there. So years later you find out there's problems. Well, correct it, then, but you can't go back and correct the 1940s. That's passed. And that's what was happening up

there. Yes, there were problems up there, there was an explosion and several people got killed. There was one division up there where, yes, a number of people came down with cancer. And it was felt it was what they were doing.

So there's protection, because they still handle it. I mean you go into any laboratory that's making any kind of experiments and testing in regards to what's going to save us and make us live longer, and you'll see them all covered up in hoods and everything, because they're using substances that can cause severe problems. But that's what we live with.

YATES: Sounds like you had fun with people when you were . . . [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Oh, I did! I did! Because I hated hypocrites!

YATES: You probably weren't their favorite person.

WRIGHT: No. No, I wasn't. In fact, when they thought that I was going to be on a committee or I could be a deciding vote they'd roll their eyes. "Oh, God." But I tried to make sense of it all.

Even with our educational system, we're making a mess out of it. We're throwing money into education, throwing money into education. We try a program. Take a child who's gone into school in first grade—we won't even talk about kindergarten—in the first grade, and graduates in twelfth, and find out how many separate programs he's been in for the same purpose? We tried it, and then it doesn't work, or we drop it, or we just keep funding it and then we try something else on top of it. You've got the schools basically. . . . What

are they teaching youngsters today? They're teaching them how to pass the tests.

YATES: Yeah. Well, the whole testing thing is another. . . . Well, let me shift. . . . [Laughter] Sorry. [Laughter] Let me continue, I should say, with the committees. I at least wanted to touch on you also as vice chair of Utilities and Commerce [Committee], I guess just for one session, is that right? I have '87-'88? So is that two years basically?

WRIGHT: No, I was there in '90.

YATES: Oh, OK.

WRIGHT: Maybe the name was changed.

YATES: Maybe that's . . .

WRIGHT: That's one of the things you have to watch, is whether they've been changed. Just like I talked about being on Ways and Means and then sitting on the Budget [Committee].

YATES: You were on it, but I didn't have you down as vice chair. But yes, you continued on Utilities and Commerce. So anyway, tie in a little bit, same types of questions. What were the types of things you were getting interested in and involved in on that committee?

WRIGHT: Well, it was a simple thing for me to get involved in the utilities and that, being involved in cable. Cable television. That was a biggie in those days. And it was interesting, because I was the only person in the legislature that

had ever worked for a cable company.

YATES: And what were the problems with cable at that point?

WRIGHT: Well, it was regulation, trying to regulate them. And then over regulating them. Because you had Pacific Bell [Telephone Company], which was a telephone company in general. A few of the smaller independent companies were concerned that cable was going to overshadow and take away from them, and wanted them regulated the same ways the telephone companies were. I fought that, because I understood what it was. A telephone had become a necessity in the home. Like electricity is a necessity, gas is a necessity. You couldn't live without them in modern day. But you can still live without cable television. It was a choice.

When we moved into this house, my husband the first thing that he did was connect the TV set. We could hear voices, but we got snow.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: Where we were living before he could just have the antenna on the back of the TV. So then he went out immediately. . . . We're still moving in, now, we don't have the bed made yet, but he goes to the store to get an antenna to put outside. He's still getting snow. The next day he gets a friend to come with him, so they can put it up on the chimney, so they can get it up higher. He's still not getting anything. And then we finally find out you have to have cable. What the heck is cable? Well, if you want TV you have to have cable. So I

find it was Clarity [Cable] that was the cable company here. Private company here in Simi Valley. We called them, they came out, and we got twelve channels. You didn't get channel one. You got from two to thirteen. We got our channels. We got TV. God, we were living, right? And we had to pay for it.

Well, that was the whole thing, was the fact that's what cable was all about. And believe it or not, this tract of homes cannot get pictures on their TV, could not get it without cable.

YATES: I can believe that.

WRIGHT: But you did not have 100 percent saturation. There were still homes that you could not sell cable to. One house had an antenna so far up I swear the house could go over, with the antenna. And they only got two channels, but they were satisfied. Well, it was choice. Cable was choice. So anything that you could choose, if you didn't like the idea, then don't buy it.

YATES: So since you had more of an understanding about what the issues were with regard to cable, how did that affect your role on the committee in terms of discussing these issues?

WRIGHT: It caused poor Gwen Moore, who was the chair. She was saying. . . . I bothered Sally Tanner for a while, then we got to be good friends. But I bothered her for a while. She'd roll her eyes if somebody told her she was going to have Cathie Wright as her vice chair on the committee. God, she

was. . . [Laughter]

I just believed that in order to represent people you had to take into consideration all the people in your district. You had to know you couldn't please them all. Because today one would be your friend, tomorrow they'd be your enemy on some other issue. And you had to do the best you could, try to know as much about what you were voting on as you possibly could, and then make a decision and vote. And then take the consequences of it. If I was so bad, I would have so many people against me that I would have never gotten elected again. And that was OK because I could get a job. Matter of fact, I did get a job. Right now I'm having a hard time getting a job. [Laughter]

This age thing.

YATES: Yeah, I'm afraid that does exist. Now talk about being on Ways and Means.

WRIGHT: I loved that committee.

YATES: OK. Well, talk about what does it mean to be on Ways and Means.

WRIGHT: Well, at that point Ways and Means was a combination of legislation going through both houses. But also it was budget. And to be on Ways and Means you were dealing with budget, because then there were all the subcommittees. I served at one time on five subcommittees of the budget on Ways and Means, because nobody really wanted to be on them. But I enjoyed it. Now the whole idea, now, from a political standpoint, oh, you wanted Ways and Means.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And it was because . . .

YATES: Money.

WRIGHT: Money. Because if there's something going through, for or against some group out there, and it had a price tag on it, it was going to be in Ways and Means. That was it. I never raised as much money as some of the other guys did on Ways and Means, because I wasn't interested. I was interested in getting enough money in the till so that I could run a halfway decent campaign next time up.

YATES: Well, explain what you mean by that, that you didn't bring in enough money. What were you supposed to be doing?

WRIGHT: Well, in reality, usually what happened with those who served on Ways and Means. . . . And then they got away from it for a while, because guys just weren't doing it. But you had to commit so much money to the caucus in order for them to bring in new people into the caucus. You know get into a campaign where they can beat the Democrat. And then they'd want to fund. . . . And a person just running against an incumbent would have a hard time, because they wouldn't be able to raise the money. Unless he was independently wealthy. Why, that was the whole thing. So you had to.

But me, with an accounting background, I liked working with numbers. I enjoyed it. I served on Ways and Means, and budget too, if I was in

legislature now and then the assembly, if it was possible to do both. But you had to kind of spread the wealth around, so if you serve on one you don't serve on the other.

YATES: Now, you became vice chair of Ways and Means.

WRIGHT: Yeah, that was a fun time.

YATES: Were you the first female vice chair?

WRIGHT: Mmm-hmm.

YATES: Tell me, how did you become vice chair? [Laughter] Oh, it's that good, huh?
[Laughter]

WRIGHT: Well, see, we had. . . . Pat Nolan was the. . . .

YATES: Minority leader?

WRIGHT: Minority leader. And. . . . In 1986? When did I go on Ways and Means?
Was it '86-'87? Or was it '88? Around there.

YATES: I have it '89-'90. But, you know. . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah, it would have been the '88 election.

YATES: Does that make sense?

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: OK. But wasn't Pat Nolan. . . . Wasn't the minority leader at that point Ross Johnson?

WRIGHT: Ross Johnson. But starting out, Pat Nolan was still. . . . So for that campaign.

YATES: Oh, right, '88. Right.

WRIGHT: The '88 campaign.

YATES: And '89 is when . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah, '88 was when Pat Nolan was still the leader and lost seats. You know, he had quite a few seats there. And we lost seats, we didn't gain. Well, that was a natural thing for a leader, if you lost seats. . . . Pffft!

YATES: It's over.

WRIGHT: You're over. Somebody's going to take your place, because they're going to show that they can do better than you. The main thing for the leader is to be sure that he at least keeps his caucus.

YATES: Doesn't lose it. Doesn't lose seats.

WRIGHT: Doesn't lose seats. So Pat just naturally stepped down. Oh, and he gave us this wonderful speech in caucus about how he hadn't fulfilled his obligation to the caucus and therefore he was going to step down. But it was already decided that Ross Johnson was going to take his place. There was no battle, nobody came talking to me. It was just Ross was going to take his place. So Ross became. . . . And Ross to me was lazy. He did a good thing, he made Hansen caucus chair.

YATES: Bev Hansen?

WRIGHT: Yeah, he made her caucus chair. And she was being a little bitch, she really was, with everybody in the caucus, because she had the power thing. Sometimes it goes to your head. But anyway, so now it was the fact that I did

not agree with them in what they were doing. It was crazy. It was always this “How do we get the other guy?” Let’s prove that we’re better leaders, as far as I was concerned.

YATES: It sounds like, from things I’ve read, that the caucus was really having problems in the eighties.

WRIGHT: We had caucus lunches in which you came out with a headache. Who was shouting at who. Nothing was being accomplished. It was these real “pure conservatives.” And there’s no such thing as pure. There’s not a pure politician in the world. I wasn’t pure. I think I was 99 percent pure, you know, but . . .

YATES: You’re not biased, though, right? [Laughter]

WRIGHT: No, no, not biased at all. But that’s what it was.

YATES: So there was in-fighting.

WRIGHT: And there was in-fighting all the time. But no one could put votes together to dump Ross. And Paul Woodruff, who was from the San Bernardino area, I mean he was just heartsick with what was going on, and he wanted change. And so that’s what was happening, he was trying to change the leader. And he came to me and he thought I could do it, and I said I’m not going to run for leader. The last thing I want to be is the leader of this caucus. I’m not going to, I didn’t want to.

So they tried and they tried and they tried, and finally they came down and

I said, "All right. You have to put the votes together. I'm not going to do it." So he went around, and believe it or not I was a vote short, and the vote was a woman. The vote was a woman, I'm not going to tell you who. She knows who she is. [Laughter] And she could not vote for me for leader because I was against abortion. But the best part was that Paul Woodruff was anti, but she would vote for Paul. She ended up voting for Bill Jones, who was also against abortion. [Laughter] So it was just a woman thing, I guess.

But anyway, when he was putting the votes together I said, "Well, look, you're putting the votes together and you want to ensure the votes. I'm telling you right now, I'm not voting for anybody unless I can get Ways and Means vice chair. I want to be vice chair of Ways and Means before I leave here." And Bill Jones said, "Yep, you can have it." Yep, I voted for Bill.

YATES: Interesting story.

WRIGHT: Yeah. I was just sick and tired. I mean from the very beginning I was never given anything from my caucus. When I got appointments to committees it was Willie that gave me the appointments.

The best part of it is I never did anything for Willie! Oh, they thought I did everything for him. No. Even that year that they had it all lined up as to how they were going to do things, they were going to put up one of the gang of five. It was the gang of five of the Democrats, one of those guys was going to be put up for speaker against Willie. And we were going to give the caucus

vote to whoever that was, and then with their five they were going to make it. Got news for you. Couldn't make it with those five. And they couldn't decide which one of them they wanted, who was going to make it to be the speaker. They couldn't, between the five of them. It wasn't until the last minute that it was [Charles M.] Calderon that was put up.

I didn't want anything to do with this. I'm talking about never voting for another Democrat for speaker. I'm not going to do it. Walking in on the floor I told them I wasn't going to do it, I just couldn't. I was sick to my stomach. I couldn't do it. And I sat there on the floor of the legislature and I did not vote. And Calderon hadn't voted and Willie Brown hadn't voted. And they were one vote short on the floor or something. Again, I'd have to start remembering. I know who voted one way or the other. Because Felando turned around and said to me, "Cathie, vote for Ross Johnson for speaker." I said, "It's a lost cause." He said, "Yeah, but then you get out of this battle. You're not voting for the Democrat." And he said, "We'll look good." So Felando, Statham, and Sunny Mojonnier voted for Ross Johnson. I didn't vote.

So the three were up. They had Ross Johnson. Because Ross wanted it. He got up and made a speech about taking his name off, he didn't want his name on it, you know, and everything. They said no, the rules of the house. And Willie's running the show, because he is the speaker up until the point he

gets voted in or out. So he wouldn't. He said, "No, the rules are that the majority. . . . And you have been dutifully nominated and seconded." So the vote goes. So there were three votes for Ross Johnson. There's Calderon up, with the idea that with Calderon they'd get the Hispanic vote in the Democratic Caucus that would put . . .

YATES: Willie out.

WRIGHT: Put Willie out. Well, [Peter R.] Pete Chacon, he could never have been elected in the first place if it wasn't Willie that raised money for him, because Pete couldn't raise money. So he owed his life, his political life he owed to Willie. And then there was Lucille Roybal-Allard. Willie helped her. Why would she vote against him? She was going to get a chairmanship. Now Willie can make promises and keep them!

There was all this going on. It wasn't just the caucus that I could. . . . As it was, when you come to committees and that, it was the minority leader that would suggest to the speaker who he wanted on the committees. So I never got anything from those guys. But I was on Rules Committee, I was Ways and Means. And I loved Rules, because I loved even challenging the guys that were doing all the analysis of bills. If I thought a bill shouldn't go to a committee I'd pull it, and have a discussion on why they'd want to send it to one committee or another.

YATES: Hold on, we're near the end.

[End Tape 7, Side B]

[Begin Tape 8, Side A]

YATES: OK, so it sounds like you're setting the stage for what the dynamics were, then, between you and your fellow Republicans, and what was going on in terms of your committee assignments, with especially . . .

WRIGHT: And so the whole point was we were not. . . . When Willie went back in, when Willie got the votes. . . . First of all, I even had Republicans, my own caucus and Ross Johnson as leader at that point, showing that I was the one that made Willie Brown speaker. My one vote made. . . . And I didn't vote! Usually, if you have four votes and you need five, and somebody doesn't vote, that doesn't give you the fifth vote. So how could my vote. . . . But they had drummed it up that I had done it. I had elected Willie Brown. It was my fault. Because I didn't vote for anybody. So starting out they only had seventy-eight votes, because there was one fellow who had died, Curtis Tucker. So, yeah, we were short a person on the floor. And Willie got his forty-one votes. But every time they called the roll, and they started down and called the roll, Calderon then voted for himself. Then it went through and he still didn't have the votes. And then Willie Brown voted for himself and Willie had forty-one votes.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And Lloyd Connelly was out of the country or something. He wasn't even

there. And so even without Connelly, who was a Democrat, Willie had forty-one votes, and he knew he had forty-one votes. So my vote didn't mean anything. But they insisted. So . . .

YATES: So tell me what happened within the caucus when they tried to remove you from the Rules Committee, then. I take it there's a connection between all of this.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. Because, see, then they. . . . Before they took the vote for speaker they took a vote for Rules Committee.

YATES: Now, what year was this?

WRIGHT: This would have been. . . . It had to be. . . .

YATES: Was it '90-'91? Before then.

WRIGHT: No, it had to be before that. It had to be the '88 election.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: It had to be the '88 election. So it would have been '89, it would have be that first day on the floor in '89. It would be for the '89-'90 session, when all this was going on. And so Willie has his votes.

Now, I know that. . . . Because you'd write in, and you had to send it to the speaker and get a copy to your minority leader, of the committees you wanted to serve on. Well, I wanted to stay on Toxics. I enjoyed that committee, I felt there was real meat there. And I felt I was the rational member of that committee, because I was looking at policy and I was looking at balance.

Always the balance. So there was that committee. I wanted to stay on Rules. And I wanted Ways and Means. And I got on Ways and Means Committee.

And right along Bill Baker was always the vice chair. And Bill, he always did such a wonderful. . . . He'd make it he was working so hard for the Republicans. He was cutting deals left and right with Maxine Waters. So you'd get a little tidbit, but Bill got everything he wanted, sitting there, and then he'd complain about the hard work and how he was so tired of being vice chair of Ways and Means and then doing all the budget and everything else. So I said to him, because I loved it so much, I said, "If you want, I'll take it and give you a break." Because then we weren't talking about term limits or anything else, you know. "I'd love to take it, give you a break, and then when you feel you're ready to come back and do it, I'll step down and give it to you. That's my commitment." Boy, you'd be surprised how fast he perked up that he still wanted to be in Ways and Means as vice chair. I knew it.

But I would sit there. I would sit there with this A and B roll call. Well, A, B, and C. B roll call was all the Democrats voted for it, so the bill went out. A roll call was everybody voted for it and the bill went out. C roll call was where Republicans voted for it and the Democrats voted against it, so it got killed. So it was ABC. But see what happened was that the guys would come down, like Pat and all the rest of them, they'd march down into Ways [and Means]. On and off during the day they'd march down into Ways and Means

and get themselves on the roll. So once they were on the roll you had a quorum. Then you could have three people sitting there, and you'd be going A roll call, B roll call, you know, just running through the bills. And I wasn't about to put up with that stuff. That's not the way it should be run. So consequently I called for a roll call vote. Or I'd get the messenger for the guys to come down. What the heck?

Ways and Means was, like, you could start at eight o'clock in the morning and be there till midnight. And I'd sit through that whole thing. I'd clear everything else off to cover that whole thing. And I'd know what these bills were and everything else. I just. . . . That's the way I worked. So I got to discuss. . . . So I wanted to be the vice chair.

So I got. . . . The lead appointed me. Because to Willie, anything that could stick in Ross Johnson's eye, he was willing to. . . . They had this whole thing, they were so sure how they had it all laid out, and they were going to dump Willie. Well, they never dumped Willie. Too many of the members of the Democratic Caucus owed their life to Willie. So OK, so I was willing to support Jones, but I wanted to be the vice chair of Ways and Means. And so I got it.

And then I had Rules. Now Rules was a different situation because, one, you had to have a vote in your caucus. And so when the leadership said, "Well, this is the person that's going to serve here," there was never any

challenge really. I was going to be the one. So I got Rules and then went out on the floor of the legislature. Now the vote on the floor of the legislature. . . . If you're going to dump me, you've got to get a vote against me on the floor.

So what happened was that I go in a caucus not even knowing that they've decided they're going to dump me off of Rules because I didn't go along with the caucus decision on who the speaker was to be. See I had voted against. . . . I didn't vote against, I just didn't vote. So they're going to dump me off of Rules. So Tom Bane was the chair and so that we'd gone into this caucus. . . . It was horrible to hear them talk about me, and I'm sitting there listening to them: What I did was unconscionable, I had to be eliminated. . . . And so Dennis Brown makes the motion for me to be removed from Rules. And they vote there in front of me. I thought all these people. . . . I thought it was supposed to be. . . . And here they were, working behind the scenes to get me dumped. Going to all the different members of the caucus.

OK, so when they go to Willie and inform him that they are going to remove me from Rules, Willie says you can't do it. There's no vacancy on Rules. You have to have a vacancy. So now I'm supposed to resign because they don't want me....To heck with them. I wouldn't resign. Thirty days. Every day in that month of January the Republican Caucus had a caucus to

dump me. And every day I didn't go to the caucus. I said it's much easier for you guys to talk about me all you want to without me having to sit there and listen to it. I am not going to resign. Now you've got to get a vote to dump me. And you've got to get a vote on the floor. So the caucus voted to have me thrown off Rules. But I wasn't about to do it.

YATES: So it didn't go to the floor?

WRIGHT: Wait a minute. Yeah.

YATES: OK. Keep going then with the story. [Laughter] Sorry.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. They had it all set. Marian La Follete was supposed to take my place. Well, she'd made a mistake. She didn't line up any votes. She just thought she would say she was going to be on Rules and the guys would go along with it and she would get it. Well, then, Phil Wyman was running for Rules. So now they've got two in the caucus that want to be on Rules. And I'm sitting on Rules and I'm not giving up my seat.

So this day after—towards the ending of January, this is now—as I come in the back door from a Rules meeting. . . . We used to meet off in Willie's room right off the floor. So we'd have a little meeting in there and we'd come in. And I'm coming through and Ross says to me, "Well, I want you to know," he said. "Cathie," he said, "you can resign from Rules now." He said, "Because we've got somebody to take your place." I said, "Oh, that's nice. Who?" "[Robert C.] Bob Frazee is going to take your place on Rules." "Oh. But I

have to resign?" He said yeah. "I told you I'm not going to do it, I'm not going to resign, so forget it." He said, "We're going to take a vote on the floor today." I said, "Be my guest." Because Tom Bane had said he wanted me on Rules and Tom Bane was the chairman of Rules. So . . .

YATES: Sounds like a lot of fun. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Oh, God, you know. . . . Now, that's when you feel like you have power.

Power of being in control of something where you have everybody bowing to you and doing, that's not power. Power is when you as one person can make difference. That's power.

So I sat there. I know there was some letter I had to have for resignation, but I don't remember what it was, and I gave it to Willie sealed. And I'll have to think about exactly how that was. What the procedure was. It was a procedural thing that I had to do. Oh, I know what it was. The letter was saying that I was not resigning. In other words, that they had motioned for me to resign, but I wasn't resigning, I intended to fulfill my obligation on Rules. So Willie takes over the chairmanship of the floor that day, and Ross Johnson raises his mike and he's going to speak on condition of the file. I think it's under condition of the file. And he wanted them to know that the Republican Caucus had met and their decision was to remove Assemblywoman Cathie Wright from the Rules Committee and to be replaced by Assemblyman Robert Frazee.

Willie said, “Well, I’m sorry, but I have no letter of resignation before me. There is not a vacancy on Rules.” He said, “You’re going to have to take a vote on the floor. Assemblywoman Wright is on Rules on the basis of a floor vote, so you have to take a vote.” So Ross Johnson very proudly announces the fact that he moves to have me replaced on Rules by Robert Frazee. And Willie says, “No, you can’t do that. You have to first remove the candidate and then bring a candidate forward.” So then he moves to have me removed from Rules. And I mean the gallery is filled with people, right? And I’m sitting there. “Oh, God, here we go again.” So I’m sitting there and they take a vote.

But before they take a vote Willie instructs his Democratic Caucus that this an internal—what was the word he used—dissension, or something like that, in the Republican Caucus, and he doesn’t feel that his fellow Democrats should be involved in it. [Laughter] So the vote is taken and not one Democrat votes. And since the Republicans don’t have a majority they can’t do it. So I’m not removed from Rules. And I have the vice chairmanship of Ways and Means besides.

YATES: It doesn’t sound like the Republican Caucus is doing much for itself at this point.

WRIGHT: No, and that was the whole problem. That was the whole problem. They weren’t interested. . . . If they had stuck more with policy and picked issues

that they could win on to sort of fortify the position that they could. . . . Unitedly they can do something.

YATES: I know this happened in '91, I have written down, and of course you did end up going to the Senate not too long after that . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah, because we didn't know what was going . . .

YATES: What was your relationship with the caucus after that?

WRIGHT: About as good as it was before. [Laughter]

YATES: It didn't have any more negative impact, or . . .

WRIGHT: No, because they couldn't do anything. They couldn't do anything. The only thing they could do is what they did do. On Ways and Means, as vice chair of Ways and Means, I tried to bring all the information to the caucus that I could, especially with the budget. And they just. . . . I think Pat Nolan must have sat watching that budget committee all day long. The things they picked out that I had done wrong. . . . And they were constantly doing that.

So I had Vasconcellos, who wasn't too happy to have me there for the simple reason I just didn't let it go through. When we were going through the budget. . . . When you're on the budget conference committee you have a book in front of you and you're going down the issues. And I'm not just blankly going to say, no, yeah, no, yeah. And I'm like "Wait, wait, hold it. You're going too fast." And being my first time on the conference committee I figured I could do that. And so I would question, because if it was a

committee I sat on I knew. But if it was a committee I didn't sit on, the subcommittee, I didn't. And so I would question and that would. . . . I had seen Vasconcellos put his hand over his mike and you'd be surprised the language he used on me, because of the fact that I was holding up the process. He just wanted to run through it, get it done and over with, you know. No, it wasn't going to happen that way. And I wasn't trying to be antagonistic, I was trying to make sure everybody understood what we were doing. Because now we're being televised. Anybody wants to sit and watch a budget conference committee should know what the devil was going on. So I was asking questions on things that I was concerned about, and voting against things that I thought they were doing wrong.

And then I'd go back with all these reams. . . . I had my poor staff going crazy giving them work to do so that I would have something to take to caucus. And how would you like to walk into caucus with all this stuff trying to help them and have someone stand up, one of your caucus members who happens to be the state senator now, [Tom] McClintock, stand up and ask for a vote of confidence in me on the Conference Committee.

YATES: Well, knowing that the dynamics were the way they were, as you've described them, what compelled you to keep trying to work with your fellow . . .

WRIGHT: They were never going to come back to me and say that I didn't cooperate or that I wasn't a Republican.

YATES: OK. OK. So you still felt that sense of loyalty.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah.

YATES: To the Republican Caucus as an institution.

WRIGHT: Yes. It was the institution I was abiding by, not the . . .

YATES: Personalities.

WRIGHT: Makeup of the personalities. And plus, with my constituency, my constituency was a mix, but I also had people who relied on what I was doing and believed in me, and I wasn't going to change that.

YATES: Well, why don't we wrap up today by talking at least about the last assembly campaign, which is 1990.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah, with Hunt Braly.

YATES: And talk about what happened in that election and the dynamics. Because I think from what I've read this also sets the stage for when you decide to run for the senate. And then next time we can start with the senate. So talk about 1990.

WRIGHT: Well, first you have. . . . Before you talk about 1990 you have to go back to 1986.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: In 1986 there was the run for the senate seat, and that's U.S. Senate. And Bobbi Fiedler had decided that she wanted to run for that seat. I think she was doing an excellent job as a congresswoman and the fact that she battled an

incumbent Democrat in a Democratic district—the way that the congress[ional] district was laid out, it was leaning towards the Democrats. And she had battled. And so therefore I felt compelled. . . . I knew her from her battles from when she was on the school board [Los Angeles Board of Education] and I supported her.

And then Ed Davis jumps into it. And so the fact that Ed was into it. . . . I thought, “This is crazy.” And then the real rub came when he turns around and he charges her with bribery in the campaign. And I was watching, because when you’re starting a campaign you start here, and the perfect campaign will take you all the way and you just keep moving. And the night before the election you’re on top of the heap.

YATES: OK. Just for the record, because you can’t see this on the tape recorder, you’re starting at one, the basic ground level. Basically is that what you’re saying? OK.

WRIGHT: And watching Bobbi Fiedler, she was moving up. There was a good chance that she could have been the candidate for the senate seat. And Ed Davis, I don’t know what he was thinking of. You know, running. But he was in there, running, running, running. And so he was not raising money, and she was doing a pretty good job. And so at the ending of January of the election year he makes charges against her. And as the district attorney in Los Angeles, who’s a Democrat. . . . Even though Ed Davis had gone to Bradbury

in Ventura, because Bradbury and Davis were buddy buddies, so Bradbury was supposed to, but it was a hot potato for Bradbury, so he transfers it over to Los Angeles—these charges, in other words.

Of course it hits the papers and everything else. Well, what happened to Bobbi Fiedler is she's dead in the water. She can't raise money, her money's been shut off. She's not going anywhere. And she's got a tough battle to keep this momentum going. Of course Davis didn't have any momentum, so he's in the same fix. And so we called it murder/suicide, what he did. Because there was no basis for it. What the true story was, was there were rumors all over the place that Ed Davis couldn't get his campaign off the ground and he was considering dropping out. So some people that were loyal to Bobbi Fiedler talked to people that were loyal to Ed Davis, and said look it's not going to do him any good to be sitting there and end up being in debt. We can make some contacts for you and see if we can't help you out of debt, and for that you'd endorse Bobbi. Now, he said it was that she'd offered him money to drop out of the race. It wasn't. If he'd dropped out of the race, because everyone was aware that he would, that's what they would do to help him. Well, it killed her.

But because I supported Bobbi, they were sure that I was going to go after Ed in '88. I thought, well, he's old, sooner or later he's going to drop out. And I like where I am now, so I'm not going to. But I let that simmer out

there, you know. It was kind of fun to make them think that I'd take on Ed Davis running for re-election in '88. But I didn't. And I knew I wasn't going to do it.

But another problem with Ed was. . . . Ed called us. . . . Marian La Follete and I, we were his girls. And it was OK if we did a lot of the hard work, but he would take the credit. Because sitting there as senator you always ended as a senator first. So if it was some issue that you all had been involved in, he would take the glory. Like the opening of the off ramp on the 5 in Newhall there into the center, when they had that, the Old Road. We called it the Old Road. It was the off ramp from the freeway. Well, when that went in I did more of the work than anybody else, but Ed took the credit, because when he was introduced he was introduced first, at the ribbon cutting. And when he got done it would be that what you'd be saying is "Yeah, I agree with the senator" or "We were involved." It was like there was no place for you to turn around and say what you had done. He took the credit for it. So stuff like that.

So he was sure that I was going to go after him in '88. And of course I didn't go after him in '88, but he still held that kind of a grudge. So they got Hunt Braly, who was Ed Davis's assistant.

YATES: You're now talking about the 1990 . . .

WRIGHT: Election.

YATES: . . . election.

WRIGHT: So they got Hunt to run against me. And of course in the meantime my daughter isn't doing too well with traffic tickets.

YATES: Yes. That comes up in several articles I've read in the *California Journal*.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. There was nothing to it. But Bradbury, that's why I loved him so much. He made a mess out of it. He really, really did. Now, what had happened was, my daughter was going through an emotional state with the boyfriend, and she wasn't getting to work on time, and she had to drive over into Thousand Oaks to get to work, and. . . . Speeding tickets. She was getting speeding tickets. I said, "For God's sake, you're going to end up losing your license and then I don't know how you're going to get to work."

So what got me was one particular day she'd gotten two tickets in the same day. In Simi Valley, Simi Valley police. So I did go to the chief and I said, "What's this? Isn't one ticket sufficient to let her know that she was speeding? Two on the same street? I wish you got. . . ." "Well, there was nothing to it." I said, "Well, I just wish you'd be a little careful. Because I'd love to see you tear up some tickets." I said, "When they're like this. . . ." It was conversation, basically. Well, it came out that what I had done was I had tried to have her tickets voided. Which was not true, I had not. But I knew what was coming down the pipe, she was going to lose her license.

So I called the DMV [Department of Motor Vehicles] and I'd asked them.

And [A.A.] Pierce was the head of the DMV at the time and I said, “Do we have any system in which. . . .” I said, “I am in Sacramento. I cannot drive her to work.” And she lived here at the house. Couldn’t drive her to work. I said, “She’s got to have the ability to get to work. And there’s no transportation between here and Thousand Oaks, so she’s going to have to drive.” I was looking for a restricted license for her, to get her a restricted license. And of course I also pulled her records, which. . . . Over a couple of years she had been getting tickets, as teenagers do. But in getting her tickets, what they were. . . . She had them pretty well spaced, so she never got to the point where she lost her license. But this time she was going to lose her license. And so I wanted to get her a restricted license.

It all blew up into the fact that I had something to do with tampering with the tickets, and of course the tickets are numbered, and if you did something like that, that’s a felony. I would be out of office. They would have me thrown out of office before the 1990 [election]. But instead what they did was they made some beautiful headlines to hit me—hit pieces.

YATES: This is Braly?

WRIGHT: Braly, yeah.

YATES: Is that how you pronounce it?

WRIGHT: Braly.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: Hit pieces. My integrity, you know? I was fixing tickets. The whole business, I never touched anything! She paid for every one of them. And when she didn't have the money I paid them.

YATES: Well, and also part of this story that I read was that Willie Brown got involved in this. Is that also part of . . .

WRIGHT: How Willie Brown got involved. . . . Because I was talking to somebody and I was saying, "Oh, gosh, I don't know what I'm going to do. I know she's going to go to jail." And she had called me from court and they told her that if she didn't get herself an attorney she was going to jail. That's what she was told in the courtroom. The prosecuting attorney there, or whatever the devil it was—because I wasn't there—informed her that they weren't going to take up her case until she had an attorney. Willie was standing close by and he said, "What's the matter?" I said, "God, my daughter has to have an attorney for traffic tickets. Have you ever heard of that?" I said, "I don't know who to get." He said, "I'll let you know." Now, that was the extent of it. And it was Jack O'Connell who knew an attorney that was in the local area that would go to court for me with Vicki. And so that was it. That was the amount of it.

When she went to court she got a probation. So she really didn't lose her license, she got a probation. And of course she got a ticket, and blew this whole thing up and the probation meant nothing. And the judge who happened to have been the one in traffic court that day was [Herbert] Curtis

[III], who was a black man, and so that was what it was, sure that Willie did it, because of Willie and Curtis both being black, you know. And the insinuation that I had given Willie the vote previously for So it was just . . .

YATES: Sounds messy.

WRIGHT: It was very messy. But twenty-eight days of headlines to which I did not respond. Even to the point to where they came and took a picture of my house. And because they supposedly had heard a telephone conversation on my phone, they had it as though we were dealing drugs out of this house. I mean, it was a mess!

YATES: So what did you decide to do, to deal with this bad publicity?

WRIGHT: I just didn't deal with it at that point. I was going to wait and see. What did they have? Headlines. Thanks to Bradbury. And even when Bradbury spent overtime on district attorneys. I mean they did everything possible to try and nail me with something. They had nothing. And when it came time for him to issue his report, because after all he was talking to the press almost every day, I didn't even get to see the report. He'd had the press conference with the reporters. Then I had the reporters calling me and I said, "No way can I respond, I don't know what he said."

And when you read the report—and that I do have available, so if you want to go through it. . . . But his report, in the very end he basically said they couldn't. . . . He could have charged me with this, but there wasn't this kind of

evidence. He went all through, pages, and at the very end he said they were not going to file any charges, but let the voters of the Thirty-seventh District make the determination whether I was guilty or not. [Laughter] If that wasn't political I'll quit. But it was enough to get me some beautiful hit pieces in my 1990 election.

And of course Davis was helping Hunt Braly, and Hunt Braly had attorneys from down in San Diego that were giving him money and everything else. But I won.

YATES: So why do you think you were able to win after getting that kind of negative publicity?

WRIGHT: And so close to the election. Basically I had made a reputation here in the district. There wasn't anything that went on where I was invited that I didn't go. I was down every weekend. I never spent time in Sacramento unless it was being on the Budget Committee, being on a Budget Committee and having to work on a Saturday morning or a Sunday.

YATES: So your record spoke for you.

WRIGHT: That's right. Anybody who asked me, I told them the truth. And I was known for telling the truth in the past. And they know that I always gave my true feelings. Because sometimes I'd get angry. . . . Like with Systems of Care I'll just go on ranting about this whole thing, and I'm so passionate about it and everything, and they'll say, "Now, Cathie, why don't you tell me how you

really feel?" [Laughter] You know it was that kind of thing.

Did I worry? Oh, yeah, I worried. I was on the phones calling people to go out to vote right up until the polls closed at eight o'clock that night. But then I had my just rewards, because two of the reporters were from the [Los Angeles] *Daily News*. They would follow my daughter into the store when she was going to work, so that we had to let her manager know when she would be there, so the manager could walk her into the store. They were going through her line, because at that point sometimes she would help checking out, for checking out.

YATES: This is a grocery store?

WRIGHT: Yeah. And so they'd go through and buy an apple or something, trying to talk to her. Trying to take pictures of her and everything else. They made her life miserable, absolutely miserable.

YATES: OK, well. . . .

WRIGHT: But we managed.

YATES: Yeah. You won the election. Why don't we close for today?

WRIGHT: [Sees the time] Oh, my gosh.

YATES: Yeah, we've gone a long time and next time we'll get into the senate.

WRIGHT: OK. The senate.

[End Tape 8, Side A]

[Session 7, May 30, 2002]

[Begin Tape 9, Side A]

YATES: Well, let's get started.

WRIGHT: OK.

YATES: It's going to be a hot day today. Hopefully we'll stay cool through the morning. So the plan for today is to begin with a discussion of your running for the state senate, which is 1992, and it was the Nineteenth Senate District. I'd like to begin with asking you why did you decide to run for the senate?

WRIGHT: Well, my thoughts, once I had gotten into the legislature, were that if I could serve a dozen years—I was looking at a dozen years in the assembly, and you know you're running every two years—I thought that would be a nice accomplishment. Twelve years, I could probably really accomplish something. So I had that in the back of my mind, and then I thought when the senate seat opened up then maybe I would. But I was perfectly happy to be in the assembly for that length of time.

Well, we had the term limits, this passed in 1990.¹ So I saw Senator [Ed] Davis as getting old and probably that he was going to retire. My thoughts were that the perfect thing for me was to serve the six years. Because 1990 was like a clean slate as far as the term limits were concerned, so that I could have served my ten years and then gone and served another six. That would have been great, so that's what I thought I would do. And then if he left office in 1996. . . . Why, he couldn't run in '96, because he would be serving two years under term limits, from 1990 to '92, and then running for re-election in '92. He couldn't run and pick up that other two years in '96. So I thought that would be perfect.

YATES: And then you could serve two terms and . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah. I thought, "Hey, that would be pretty good." So that was in the back of my mind. But in the meantime I had this thing with Bradbury, who didn't particularly like me, because I wouldn't kowtow to him. And he was always. . . . I mean in '82 he went after me for not showing the true source of my income.

YATES: Right, I remember you mentioning that.

WRIGHT: And then it was in 1988, I think it was—'89, because it was for the election in

1. Proposition 140 (November 1990), limits on terms of office, legislators' retirement, legislative operating costs.

'90—that again he'd come down on me, because he was going to prove that I had committed a felony. I had tampered with the traffic tickets of my daughter. Which I hadn't done. So I knew he and Ed Davis were really close, because that was obvious in what they did in '86 to Bobbi Fiedler. They always call it the murder/suicide.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: So that was in the back. . . All of a sudden there's a rumor that in '92. . . . Because when we did reapportionment, although the Nineteenth [Senate] District had part of the Santa Clarita Valley in it, it did not have where Ed Davis had his residence in the Santa Clarita Valley. He would have had to move to the west across the I-5 freeway into the other section in order to basically be able to run and represent the Nineteenth District. So the rumor was that he wasn't going to bother to move, because he was looking at moving up to Morro Bay, so with that he was going to not run in '92. So old smarty me, I decided, well, if he's not going to run I'll go over and talk to him, see if he'll endorse me. He wouldn't do it, you know, because . . .

YATES: What did he say to you?

WRIGHT: I went over to ask him and he said, well, yes, he was, but he wanted to see all the ones that were running for the senate before he made his determination whether he would run. Or whether he would endorse anybody or not. I said I thought I'd ask anyway.

In the meantime Marian La Follete. . . . It was all within that week. In the meantime Marian La Follete, who was in the Thirty-eighth [Assembly] District and in 1990 decided not to run because her husband was quite ill with. . . . He had cancer, and since then of course died. And then, because of where he was in the hospital, down in Orange County, why she moved into Orange County. So she was kind of off the page to me because of that. But I find out that she gets contacted by Ed Davis to run. And so the very next day, then, he announces that he's not running. The very next day she's up in Sacramento. . . . She didn't come into Ventura County to do it, and she didn't do it from Orange County, she did it from the state capital.

YATES: You mean filed.

WRIGHT: Secretary of State's office. She filed.

YATES: What's the time frame roughly for when all these various things happened?

WRIGHT: Well, that was a June election, so it would have been around January or February you would have had to have filed. We were in session, so it had to be around the ending of January. So now, "Uh-oh, I've got opposition. Hmm, Marian La Follete." Well, I didn't care. Because to me, she had her tough moments on certain issues, but she just didn't seem to be as tough as I was. And plus the fact she always had this air about her that she deserved it. Because in the Women's Caucus, when we were having these monthly dinners, one time she was sitting at the table and she said, well, she was going

to be the next senator. I said, "How did you figure that?" She said it's only right that she should have it. I said, "Really?" I said, "I've got news for you. You're going to have competition." So then, when it all came into '92 and she filed, I thought, "Well, then, there's going to be a nice little battle going on in the primary," because I was going to run.

YATES: Well, obviously that didn't discourage you from running. But what, if anything, did that have in terms of an impact on how you campaigned?

WRIGHT: Well, it was the fact that I really had to raise money and campaign, because then also. . . . He was the mayor of Fillmore.

YATES: Who?

WRIGHT: Here we go again with these names. I can see him.

YATES: Well, that's OK, go ahead. We can come back to that.

WRIGHT: Well, he was running too.

YATES: Oh. I've got the names here, I'm sorry. Here, for the primary.

WRIGHT: Roger Campbell. He was the mayor at the time of Fillmore.

YATES: So those were the three. You and Marian La Follete and Roger Campbell were the three Republicans.

WRIGHT: He of course wasn't raising very much money. But he was getting some support from in and around the area. Marian, on the other hand, she was picking up endorsements. Like Senator Davis endorsed her, and of course McClintock, my dear friend McClintock, he was on the other side. So I had to

raise money, and that was the only thing there. Because she did. . . . Well, she was comfortable and therefore she could use money. She had her own money that she could throw into the campaign.

YATES: So how did you raise money?

WRIGHT: Fund-raisers. On the phone. Call, call, call for money. And in the end I think we both had about the same amount. I think it was about \$500,000 or \$600,000 for the primary, that we spent.

YATES: I assumed that's more than you had ever raised before on an election.

WRIGHT: For a primary? Well, actually for any of my elections, I would say no. I would have to pull out the files. That's another box I have to get into. In 1990 I think we raised around that amount with Hunt Braly, because when Hunt ran against me, why he had turned around and he had contacted every classmate he had when he went to law school. He was getting money from San Diego, he was getting money from all over the state. I was just getting money from my district, and then of course the companies that were represented in Sacramento. When you had the fund-raisers in Sacramento I was getting money there.

YATES: Well, tie the campaign into maybe a discussion of the district, in terms of how the district was different from your assembly district and what those differences meant in terms of campaigning. Because I believe it went out more to the coast, right?

WRIGHT: Well, in Ventura, yeah. See what happened was we had the . . . The Thirty-sixth [Assembly] District and the Thirty-seventh [Assembly] District is what made up the Nineteenth Senate District at that point, but then the numbers changed.

YATES: Right, right.

WRIGHT: So in 1990 the numbers changed. And also the reapportionment. . . . The Assembly District I was representing in 1992, or in 1990 as compared to after the reapportionment in '92, is different too, because with the wild reapportionment that Willie did in 1980 that stretched me up into Lompoc . . .

YATES: Right, I remember you said . . .

WRIGHT: So that was my district. Then the district that Marian represented at that time was Thousand Oaks and a little smidgen corner of Simi Valley. And then she went into the [San Fernando] Valley and other areas as I came across the top. My connection then in the Valley was whatever it took to get me to connect to Santa Clarita, to get me out to Lancaster and Palmdale.

YATES: Well, what about the Nineteenth [Senate] District?

WRIGHT: In 1990 one of the selling points for the Republican Caucus to support Pete Wilson, because Pete Wilson was a moderate compared to the makeup of our caucus, which was heavily conservative. . . . But he'd already run for U.S. Senate, and so he had a good hold on going running around the state, because he'd done this two years before. And so our guys decided that they'd bite

their lip and support him for governor. But he had to make a commitment, and his commitment was that we would get a fair reapportionment. Because if he won in 1990, why he would be the one that would be in the throes of the reapportionment. Which he did. He vetoed it, and threw it into the courts. And so we had a good reapportionment plan in 1990, there's no question about it.

Now, previously, as I had told you, the Thirty-seventh [Assembly] District that I represented as the assembly seat had bits and pieces. I had Ken Maddy coming down from Santa Maria, that had a part of my district as a senator. I had the person who was out representing down the division between California and Arizona, that senate district there, so I had a different senator in Lancaster. And then I had Ed Davis. And then I had the district that had that little part that came up and took a corner in the Knolls. So I had about, I think it was four or five senators, and it was designed that way because it made it difficult for you to run against the incumbent, because you would only have a little corner of the district.

But with the 1990 reapportionment it went back to the way it was in 1980, when I had run in that. It was consolidating the districts and you had two assembly districts for every senate district. So now we had about three quarters of Ventura County in that Nineteenth [Senate] District, taking part of the Thirty-seventh Assembly District, and now it was the Thirty-eighth which

had Simi Valley in it, and then going on into the San Fernando Valley and up into Santa Clarita. But you didn't have all of Santa Clarita. You only had Santa Clarita on the west side of the I-5.

YATES: So how did that change your constituency? Or any other aspects of . . .

WRIGHT: It didn't too much, because first of all when I was elected in 1980 I had Moorpark in my district. So I had Moorpark in my district for two years, until '82, when we ran in the new districts. Then I didn't have Moorpark. But you knew just being a Republican and these communities being basically Republican. . . . I knew a lot in Thousand Oaks. Because of the fact I knew the women's Republican organizations, I knew Thousand Oaks. So that when this new district shows up to be the Nineteenth Senatorial District there wasn't anything in that district that I either had not represented or at least I knew the people. So it was like Oxnard, Thousand Oaks. I was very comfortable with Thousand Oaks, because I'd been there a lot.

YATES: You had also Port Hueneme, right? That was added.

WRIGHT: That's why I said Thousand Oaks, I had never represented them, but I had close ties with the people in Thousand Oaks because of my local government, so I was involved with them on county organizations. So we crossed paths all the time. So I knew the people in Thousand Oaks. I knew people in Camarillo, I knew people in Oxnard, I knew people in Port Hueneme. And when I lost Ojai it didn't matter, because I didn't need them in my senate

district because they weren't in the senate district. And Fillmore was in the senate district, and I'd always represented them.

YATES: Well, in the race leading up to the primary how did you distinguish yourself from Roger Campbell and Marian La Follete?

WRIGHT: Well, I basically ignored Roger. He was a nice guy, but really in trying to run he was kind of out of his league for the state. And Marian. . . . I just ran my campaign. So I wasn't exactly ignoring her, but I didn't let her get anything over on me either. So she'd make some of her sly remarks and I'd whack her back.

YATES: Well, what do you think made the difference in terms of your being able to win the primary?

WRIGHT: Well, there were two things at that point. . . . Now it doesn't seem to matter that much, because McClintock is representing the Nineteenth [Senate] District and he isn't living there. He's got an apartment. I don't even know if he has furniture in it. In fact I believe his computer for his campaign is in that so-called apartment that he has. He lives in Sacramento, and his wife works in Sacramento, his children go to school in Sacramento. You never see him down here.

YATES: But in terms of this race?

WRIGHT: In terms of this race, people were still sensitive about having their representative live in the district, and so we did a thing on Marian, because

what she had done then, she turns around and gets an apartment in Thousand Oaks and she doesn't even have furniture in the apartment. She has a telephone and no furniture.

YATES: But she had been living in this area.

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: Until her husband became ill.

WRIGHT: But it's just like everything else. When you're in office everybody knows you. The minute you're out of office you don't have the same. . . . You seem to just get covered up. That's why many times it's very hard for people having left office to come back and run for the same office they had been in before, because people just kind of forget. And plus the fact this is a growing area, so you've got new people coming in all the time.

YATES: So what was the second thing? You said there were two.

WRIGHT: We had the point of her not living in the district and took a picture of her place, where she didn't have any furniture. I don't think we used the pictures, though, but we had it ready to go. The other thing was the fact that she had retired on her own. So here she was, she had retired from the assembly and now she wanted to run for the senate, and that didn't set too well with some people. So she had a lot of endorsements from that section that I never really represented, even though I knew the people. Because you knew the people just from being Republicans in Ventura that I knew.

And it was kind of funny because there was Levins, Carol Levins or Carolyn Levins, that when I called her I found out that she was endorsing Marian La Follette and yet Carolyn was very much a choice person, you know, for women's issues. She was pro-choice. Marian was pro-life. And so I was classified as pro-life too. So, you know, what was the distinction then between us? And she said that Marian was more understandable than I was. I understood their positions and wasn't going to do anything to alter that.

Actually, as far as voting is concerned, there were only two issues that I voted on that were strictly anti-abortion. And that was the fact that I really believed that a young woman in high school that. . . . She could get a leave from school, an excuse to leave school, and go have an abortion and come back and have her parents not even know about it. Well, in the same instance you had to sign to give her an aspirin at school. She had to have parental approval for any medication or anything at school. Or for anything else. If she fell and broke her leg you couldn't do anything about it until the parent came. But for something like a medical procedure such as this she could go and do it without her parents knowing about it. And the thing that got me was the fact that if there was anything, any after problems, how would the mother know what was wrong with the girl? Suppose she started bleeding, couldn't stop, what would Mother do if she didn't know anything about it? So to me the parents had to know. It had to be the same thing. Or else eliminate the

necessity for parental approval for any kind of medication or if there was an accident at school. Just eliminate that. So I voted for that.

YATES: Well . . .

WRIGHT: And I voted against constantly just turning around and like a free hand, you could have three, four, five, six, seven, eight abortions. I think everybody can make a mistake once, and that's fine. But after that they should learn that there are other alternatives to an abortion. Don't use abortion as a method of birth control. I thought it should be. . . . As much as I was against abortion, but I don't have any right to tell somebody else what to do in their private life, that at least they shouldn't be able to get any more than two. Especially if the state was paying for them under Medi-Cal.

YATES: But this, in terms of. . . . Your stance on abortion, though, you're saying was not dissimilar from Marian La Follete.

WRIGHT: No.

YATES: Well, you won the primary. So then tell me about the campaign from that point on till the general election.

WRIGHT: It was a breeze. Because the fellow who was running against me. . . . What was his name?

YATES: I have Hank Starr was the Democrat.

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah.

YATES: And then there was the Libertarian, Richard [N.] Burns.

WRIGHT: Yeah, I know. He just was no. . . . He didn't raise money.

YATES: Wasn't a strong candidate?

WRIGHT: Wasn't a strong candidate. So the primary was the biggie. It was just doing some mailing and that for the general election. So I pretty much had it.

YATES: Well, you win. So tell me about that transition, leaving the assembly and going into the senate.

WRIGHT: The biggest was that I got to get my Diet Dr Pepper.

YATES: What does that mean? [Laughter]

WRIGHT: In the assembly—well, in the houses—they have the legislators' lounge. And they have cold drinks, and they'll have some snacks there, and then they'll turn around and on the days of session they'll have muffins or something like that. If you're going in the morning then they'll have food brought in. There will be cold cuts or something like that, if you're any length of time on the floor. You're well taken care of, in that you get fed. There's no question about that. But in the assembly they didn't have Diet Dr Pepper. They had every other drink but Diet Dr Pepper. And on several occasions I asked about whether they were going to get it and they ignored me. OK.

So I go to the senate and one of the first things they do, the sergeant over in the senate, they come and take you in and show you where everything is. And so here's this big cooler and it's just jam packed with cold drinks. And he said, "If you want to take a drink they're here for you. Take them any time

you want.” I said, “You mean I can take them up into my office?” He said sure. I said. “Do you have Diet Dr Pepper?” He said, “No, we don’t.” I said, “Oh, darn.” “How about Diet Coke, Diet. . . .” “No, no, no, you have to understand that I drink Diet Dr Pepper or I don’t drink anything. I just don’t. No substitutes, because I just don’t like any other cold drinks.” OK. That was it. About two days later I get a call to go down to the lounge. I go down to the lounge and they’ve got a twelve pack of Diet Dr Pepper in the lounge.

YATES: So real power there. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: I had the power.

YATES: Well, I know that first term in the senate you were named to the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee. Let’s turn to that right now. How did you get on that committee, first of all?

WRIGHT: Maddy. Because, see, I was on it in the assembly.

YATES: Right. The Ways and Means Committee.

WRIGHT: Yeah, Ways and Means Committee before they split it. They split it after. Yeah, so I got on the Budget Committee.

YATES: So that was a given, basically, if you had been on Ways and Means?

WRIGHT: No. No, it wasn’t.

YATES: But it made sense.

WRIGHT: But it evidently made sense. Ken Maddy was just a peach of a man. And of course we always kind of butted heads.

YATES: He was always more of a moderate, right?

WRIGHT: Yeah, he was a moderate. We butted heads when I was in the assembly because he didn't believe in local government. He said, "That's why I stay away from it. I don't go to local governments." So when it came to nos and lows tax cities, I was there. Because I knew what we had to put up with. Boy, I went over one day and I just chewed him up one side and down the other. And he said, "Now I'm going to get you, in my caucus." At the time he was the leader. So he put me on every damn committee. Because in the assembly I'd say which committees I would like to serve on and then they'd pick out the couple they were going to give me.

YATES: Well, take a minute. . . . I want to come back to the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, but talk a little bit about what the Republican Caucus was like in the senate when you first arrived, compared to your experience previously in the assembly.

WRIGHT: Well, in the assembly, first of all, there were more people to chatter in the caucuses.

YATES: Yeah, because there were more people, right?

WRIGHT: There were more people. And there was more bickering. I mean, God, they just fought all the time. Sometimes you went in and you got a headache. If I thought there wasn't anything of importance, and certainly if I didn't have anything to give to the caucus, like when I was on the Budget Committee and

that. . . . But I tried to give them as much as possible. They just ignored it.

Because I had done the unconscionable thing, I had voted for Bill Jones to be the leader.

YATES: Right. But what about the senate?

WRIGHT: But the senate. . . . The senate was a whole different ball of wax, because what you were looking at was here were legislators that have four years. Not two. Because with two years, you win your election in November, you're sworn in the first Monday of December, January you start. Now, for instance, if it was 1990-1991, you're into session. But before '91 is over you're now running for re-election in '92. With the senate you had four years, so you had time to delve into issues that you'd want to get more material on, if you were looking at a piece of legislation you wanted to carry.

YATES: So it allowed you to focus on policy?

WRIGHT: It allows you to focus more on policy. And they are much more courteous to each other in the senate. Much more courteous to each other.

YATES: What about the leanings in terms of. . . . I think you've described the assembly Republican Caucus, at least during the eighties, as being fairly conservative.

WRIGHT: Extreme conservatism.

YATES: What was it like in the early nineties—well, I guess towards the mid-nineties—in terms of the Republican Caucus? Maddy's a moderate.

WRIGHT: Maddy's a moderate.

YATES: What about other members?

WRIGHT: Bill Campbell, when he was there, he was a moderate. I'm trying to think of who. . . . You know, they've changed. All of a sudden I'm looking at the seats there on the floor and they're all different people.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: Because another thing they had, I think we had fifteen. . . . We had Marian Bergeson. On some issues she was conservative, on others she was moderate, but it was in terms of the fact of where she came. She was involved in education. You can't be a rip-roaring conservative and serve on education or try to put an educational agenda up. You just couldn't do it. And then, of course, given the district that she served, Rebecca [Q.] Morgan. She held that seat. And then when she retired and Tom Campbell took her seat, he was a moderate. Fiscally he was conservative, but on social issues he was a moderate so he won that district. When he left to go back to Washington [D.C.], I think it was the politics in the caucus got to him. Why Byron [D.] Sher won the seat, a Democrat, that's the kind of district it was, so he represented his district just as Rebecca Morgan represented hers. It was a little strange, and yet it wasn't, for Marian Bergeson to be representing from Orange County, which was a stronghold of conservatism and still have some very moderate views in regards to education. But she did it. So there were those. There was. . . . Golly, all of a sudden. . . . Isn't that awful? Trying to

think of who all was in there.

YATES: Yeah, I forgot to bring a list of who the members were at that point.

WRIGHT: Again, I have the little books I could. . . . But they're in another box, I have to pull them out. I'm trying to think. . . . Again, when I was elected there were four of us. . . . Oh, [David G.] Dave Kelley, Dave Kelley came over into the senate with me. It was myself and Dave Kelley and there was Teresa Hughes and Tom. . . . Come on, [Jane] Fonda's husband.

YATES: Oh, Hayden.

WRIGHT: Hayden. I wanted to say Haven. It wasn't Haven, it was Hayden. Tom Hayden. We were the four that were elected to the senate that year.

YATES: That year.

WRIGHT: Otherwise it was like re-elections of most of them.

YATES: Well, let's return to the Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, because that's a significant committee. And maybe, if you can do this briefly, talk a little bit about just how the budget process works, because I think it's a very complicated and a difficult thing to understand.

WRIGHT: It is. And the best part of it is that it's been made worse—by this idea of the Big Five.

YATES: Well, talk a little bit about how it's supposed to work and how it actually works.

WRIGHT: OK. The process for the budget is this: The governor by the tenth of January

presents his budget. And it's his call. It's his administration and he's trying to lay out his priorities. That budget comes in a nice big folder. You get a summary like this and you get the budget itself, which is about three inches thick.

YATES: When you say "like this," the first time you said it was like an inch, and then you said three inches. OK.

WRIGHT: Yeah. The summary is the inch, the other. . . . That's done and then the next process is for the legislative analyst, who's supposed to be non-partisan. . . . But there are tendencies. You can tell sometimes by some of the analysts—it used to be he [A. Alan Post] and it's now she [Elizabeth G. Hill]—had definite thoughts about different items in the budget. And so they go through and they analyze the budget. And they'll come along and they'll give you their report, and of course their report is a nice heavy book, but it's not as big as the summary or the budget itself, it's a little thinner than that. And they go through it and they analyze what the governor is spending the money for and what he's doing and all that.

And the main focus, which people don't understand. . . . And we're talking about billions of dollars in budgets. Right now I think the budget is \$56 billion, and it's made up. . . . It's not just one pot of money that you're working with, you have special funds. You have, for instance, transportation. That money comes into the budget and that goes into transportation, and you

can't take it and say, "OK, well, we're going to take money over here." We have to take a vote on the floor of the legislature in both houses to take transportation money and use it for something else, and it has to be a borrow. It isn't just taken and then forget about it. You can only borrow it and then you have to put it back. And it's the same way with pension funds. There's certain pieces of legislature—I'm trying to think offhand—in the health agencies that have special funds. And of course education gets some of the special funds, even though it's. . . . You're saying, "Oh, yeah, it's education, it's all education." But there are special funds.

Then you have also your commissions, your boards and commissions. And, oh, it's a great thing to say you're going to eliminate this commission. Spending too much money. Well, when you add it all up, it isn't. I think there's about \$8 million that was in support of the commissions and boards at that time, because most of the boards and commissions are not. . . . The people that serve on them are not salaried. They're appointed, and they get their expenses, so when they fly up to Sacramento for a meeting they get their round-trip ticket, they get their meal, they get their hotel paid for. But they don't get a salary. So if you want to serve on a commission you want to serve on a commission that gets a salary. So that's another portion of the budget.

Then you get into the different agencies and departments. And you have some departments that in reality they get federal money, so you can't take that

federal money and spend it for general fund purposes unless you can tie it into some of the general fund money, for the simple reason that it is an on-going state program. So the state pays so much and the feds pay so much. See, of all these pots of money. . . . And then the big thing is that general fund, because that's the money. . . . That's the free for all. You know, you spend it first come first serve. It goes. Now, what we do is we have our subcommittees. In the assembly there were five subcommittees. I'm trying to think of the senate. I think we only had four in the senate. There was . . .

YATES: I have Subcommittee on Education.

WRIGHT: Education was number one.

YATES: Then there was one [subcommittee] on Resources, Environmental Protection, Judiciary, and Transportation.

WRIGHT: That was two. Health and human services was three.

YATES: Ah, yes. Health, Human Services, Labor, and Veterans Affairs [Subcommittee]. Those were the three?

WRIGHT: There's four.

YATES: Four, I'm sorry.

WRIGHT: There's four. And the fourth one I think is. . . Oh, criminal justice.¹

1. The fourth is the Subcommittee on Legislative, Executive, Public Safety, and General Government.

YATES: That could be. I don't have that written down, but that's . . .

WRIGHT: I served on three committees. Of the five committees¹ of the Budget [and Fiscal Review Committee] in the senate, I served on three.

YATES: At that level, then, you're really looking at the issues surrounding those specific areas.

WRIGHT: Those particular. . . . And you're not paying any attention what's being spent any place else.

YATES: You're just looking at that.

WRIGHT: You can really come into having some expertise in all the different formulas and everything for money being. . . . Because some of the formulas, I'll tell you. . . . How they were thought up, this is the way we're going to divide up the money, it's funny. But of course with education you have Prop[osition] 98, which tells you what you have to do with education, how you're supposed to fund education.² And that is so restraining.

That's why I'm totally opposed to initiatives on the ballot. In the beginning I thought they were a good idea. Prop. 13, when it was passed, to me was the last good initiative that went on the ballot, because it withstood the

1. During the 1999-2000 session the fifth is the Subcommittee on Energy, Executive, Public Safety, and off-Budget Fiscal Issues.

2. Proposition 98 (November 1988), school funding.

challenges of the court. Every challenge on Prop. 13 has been unsuccessful. So it stands alone. Plus the fact it was people frustrated. I can remember in the early seventies that as you saw your property tax going up, up, up. . . . I think I even told you, the house up the street. . . .

YATES: Yeah, you did. You did talk about what was happening here.

WRIGHT: It wasn't your individual house. It wasn't your individual house's worth, that isn't what you were looking at. It was whatever the house sold for on the street. So as property went up, yay, great, it went up. But you were paying higher taxes and you hadn't done anything to your house. And you sure weren't going to sell it, because you needed a roof over your head.

YATES: So why do you think the initiative process after that. . . . I know it became used much more.

WRIGHT: Well, here's what happens. Like anything else. . . . You get the computer, it comes out, you've got all these different computer businesses. OK. Initiative. That was the last true initiative, because a group of people got together, Jarvis and what's his face.

YATES: Gann?

WRIGHT: Gann. The two of them got together and they worked out this plan. And they didn't have to. . . . There was no blitz. There was no millions of dollars spent to try to convince you that you should vote for it. There were people going door to door explaining to you what they were trying to do and whether you

wanted to support it or not, and that's how it was. It was a true initiative as it was meant to be. [Governor] Hiram [W.] Johnson, when he set that in motion, that was his idea, was that. . . . You go to the legislature, and so from 1971, '72, for something like I think six years, you're going to the legislature and you're asking them to do something about this. And every legislator that's running tells you they're going to do it. Just get me back there, I'll really fight the good cause for you. And then it goes off the table. They get re-elected and it's off the table. So total frustration on the part of your constituency. They passed Prop. 13 and it withstood court challenges. So that's a good initiative.

Now if every initiative was like that, then I'd run with them. But then they decided to do something else. And the first thing you know you've got consultants that do nothing but initiatives. It's a business. And so with that approach, if you've got a couple of dollars and you've got something you'd like to get changed, they'll add a whole program for you. So the first thing you know it isn't somebody going door to door for signatures. You see them in the malls, you see them all over. Well, those people that are sitting there all day to collect signatures are getting paid to do it. And you, if you've got this issue and you have the money, that's what you're going to do. So you pay for signatures. And they don't have to explain it to you. They'll just say, "Gee, don't you want to sign on? Because, you know, we're going to. . . . We're

going to help the schools. Here, sign for the schools.”

And then we get blitzed with mail and TV and everything else, and you’re spending millions of dollars to proceed with this, to prove that this is a good initiative. Then you get the initiative and then there’s parts of it that aren’t right and they’re thrown out, and the first thing you know what you’re left with is not what you thought it would be.

YATES: So you really saw this in terms of specifically Prop. 98 having an impact on the budget process.

WRIGHT: Oh, sure. And, yeah, I’m for education, but you should show proof of your competence to get that extra money. See, I don’t think the educational community. . . . I can tell you that Vicki had good teachers and she had bad teachers. No question about it. But at least if I didn’t like how she was being taught I could take her out of the school. Today it just seems that if we have this program that’s not working, OK. The program is still there, now we start another program. Vicki, in her turn in school, she got three different approaches to the same subject. How the hell do you teach that way? I think it’s very demanding on teachers. No question about it.

But the teacher’s union now has got to a point where they want to control everything. Then you have California Correctional Peace Officers [Association], they want their piece of the pie. And so they’re willing to run and pay for initiatives. The teachers are willing to run and. . . . Teacher’s

union, not individual teachers, but the teacher's union. They're willing to do that. And the first thing you know you've got all this money being spent.

Then when you come down to sit with the budget, now I've got to get legislation passed and everything else to prove that this particular program doesn't work. Let's put it on hold and do something different, and give it a certain time frame, make it accountable, do all the things that will really make it a good program, and then eliminate that other one. We don't do that. So you've got money tied in to different programs that. . . . You just can't change it. You can't give them less.

So what happens then, when you've got a tight year like this year, you're going to cut money. You're not going to cut these, because you don't want to fight with teachers. Teachers union. I shouldn't say teachers. Teachers union. You don't want to fight with them on this. And you don't want to fight with the Correctional Peace Officers over here and you don't want to fight with. . . . So the first thing you know you leave them alone. So what's left is health and welfare. And that's what gets clobbered. Absolutely gets clobbered. And so then you wonder why there's people on the streets.

[End Tape 9, Side A]

[Begin Tape 9, Side B]

YATES: OK, you were talking about the budget process and how the funding works for different areas.

WRIGHT: So now this is what you have. You'll see that the budget may be \$40 billion. Of that \$40 billion maybe about \$25 billion will be strictly general fund money. And then maybe there's another \$15 billion that is transportation, it's special programs that you can't touch, or federal mandates that come down that you have to adhere to. So you're working with a different pot in what you see as budget.

You're working with this pot of money. The governor's given you his proposal. By around the first of March you now have the leg[islation] analysts opinion of what that budget will do or won't do. Even to the point where they'll make some suggestions as to what should be done with it. And then you go into your subcommittees. Now your subcommittees will run until that May revise. And why the May revise? Why can't you just go with what you did in January? Because it's all guesswork. The May revise gives you a better idea of what your income is going to be. Because April is drop dead . . .

YATES: Tax season. [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Tax season. Almost everything is decided by the end of April. So when you have that, then in May the governor now has a new idea of how much money he's going to have that he can deal with, and then he starts shifting that around.

So you're going to work on a subcommittee. Like myself, I was working on three subcommittees in the senate. You'd be on these subcommittees. So

you make the decision on Education. And our committees were small. Like the Education [Sub]committee was three, two Democrats and one Republican. I was the Republican. So I was the one that was yakking all the time about whatever I didn't like in that, but still there were points where we came to agreement. But the chairman of that committee, and it happened to be Jack O'Connell. . . . Before that it was [Nicholas C.] Petris, but now it was Jack O'Connell the last couple years, after he won his seat in the Eighteenth Senatorial District. Jack does what he wants to do, because the other guy that's sitting on the committee is going to agree with him.

Now, the only thing is that if it's really important to my caucus they are going to. . . . I'm going to hold them up. They're going to have to get my OK. Otherwise there are not going to be votes on the floor for them. Especially when they need those votes, because there's a two-thirds vote on the budget. That's why any minority caucus is crazy if they don't require a two-thirds vote on the budget. Or any spending program, really. Anything that's . . .

YATES: That's the only way you're going to have some say in . . .

WRIGHT: Well, that's. . . . Not only the way you have some say in it, but it's to give some rationale to what you're doing, you know. In the senate you have forty people. Twenty-one is the majority. If you ran the budget out on twenty-one votes, as you do on policy—and everything that had any money attached to it was a twenty-one vote—you might as well not show up. And yet your

viewpoint should be represented, because of the fact of the constituency that you represent. This is representative government. And I should have a right to speak on behalf of my constituency and get something for my constituency that really matters to them. So that's where the give and take comes in the committees.

Now, I sat on that one. Now Health Committee had five, and Natural Resources had three. So again it was two to one. I'd yak my head off about things. But I did pretty good on that one, because I would make a lot of sense. Because I was really into the environmental issues, because I'd served on the committee twelve years in the assembly.

YATES: You mentioned earlier the role of the Big Five. So talk about that.

WRIGHT: That is the thing that I absolutely detest. I detest Big Five. Because here's what happens. Now, while we're working on our version of the budget that the governor's given to us, the assembly's doing the same thing. So the assembly has a bill and we have a bill. We finally come and our committees come together now as the Budget Committee and a vote is taken on that budget and it goes to the floor. Well, there's not too much done at that particular point in time, because that's not the big budget. This is to get it into conference.

Then, when you get into conference, you have three people from the assembly side and three people from the senate side. And it alternates. One

year the chair of the senate budget committee is the chair of the conference committee and the next year it will be the assembly chair who will be the chair of the conference committee, and they alternate that way, back and forth. But the whole point is to bring these issues together. Now you get your binder—and again it's yea thick—of all the undecided issues. For instance, if they decided they were going to put \$32 million or \$32 billion into education, and the senate agreed with the assembly or the assembly agreed with the senate, however it was, but it came out with the same amount of money and it was basically divided down the same way, well, that whole budget you wouldn't touch. But if there's any differences. . . .

YATES: How often does that happen?

WRIGHT: It does with minor, minor issues.

YATES: More often than. . . .

WRIGHT: But the real controversial issues, or the real issues where you really have some profound people in the legislature who are really in conflict with other people on it, you know, you have an issue where sides are going like this, then you have to work it out. And if you don't work it out, you sit there. Because what happens is that if you're going to stalemate, if there's one issue in one department, then that budget is not a balanced budget and it isn't a consensus, what the legislature wants to do. So that's what happens in the conference committee. Now, to me, it should be worked out in the conference committee.

And the governor, his people are sitting there and they can talk to you and try to work, because all these negotiations are going on with staff behind the scenes. It isn't that you're doing all the shouting and raving in committee. There's a lot of work going on behind. . . . The unsung heroes are the staff that start at eight o'clock in the morning and are there until midnight every day, Saturdays and Sundays, until the budget passes. And if there's one mistake in the budget they'll get chewed out for it.

This is what you're doing. So you're working in front, and the issues that are being voted on. . . . And it wasn't before but is now the past couple of years, is that it's on camera. You're being televised. So to me there should be some explanation. If people are watching to see what you're doing, then it is beholden of you to have this dialogue going back and forth between the members, and people then see how you come to an agreement. Now you come to an agreement. If you come to a total agreement, you end up going to the floor with the vote.

Well, it started really blatantly with Pete Wilson, that the leader of the Republican Caucus and the leader of the Democratic Caucus on the assembly and the leader of the Republican Caucus and the leader of the Democratic Caucus on the senate will now go down and meet with the governor. And the cameras are rolling and everything as they walk in.

YATES: So this is the Big Five.

WRIGHT: This is the Big Five. They close the doors. They do negotiations behind. . . . That's not right. And that's my whole problem. Why can't that be televised also? If you're going to televise us, then why not the Big Five?

YATES: This did not happen with Deukmejian?

WRIGHT: No, he was more subtle.

YATES: So these people were meeting, but it just wasn't as obvious?

WRIGHT: It was the staff that would meet until the governor would like it this way.

Well, give me a good reason why it has to be that way for the governor. That was me. Explain. And if it seemed logical and it didn't affect somebody else's budget that I thought was important, I was willing to go along with it, even if I didn't think it was really that important. But if it was important to the governor you'll go along with it, after all.

YATES: So it was more how it was handled?

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: During the Wilson administration?

WRIGHT: Yeah. And so what happens then in the conference committee is you get to a stalemate. Republicans don't want to budge on it, the Democrats don't want to budge on it, and they're going to toss it and let the governor and let the leaders work it out. Then I don't have to take responsibility for it, basically. And that's what's been happening. When you have a budget that doesn't get out on time, it's because the people that are sitting on the conference

committee will not negotiate between each other.

YATES: And of course during the nineties that was a very . . .

WRIGHT: Well, it was a hard thing . . .

YATES: That was happening.

WRIGHT: Yeah, that's what happens. See, it started out with that huge deficit at that time, right?

YATES: Well, right. That's also . . .

WRIGHT: But still the governor could present his proposal before. . . . He doesn't have to come down and sit in that meeting room and argue with the members. It's his staff. His staff is sitting there anyway. Negotiate. If you're going to get this budget, negotiate, where both sides say, well, yeah, I guess that's about the best we can do. And you vote on it. Then the budget goes out, it goes to the floor, it's voted upon. It's one vote which has both the assembly and the senate version in it and the governor's version in it, and you vote on it. And that's it.

YATES: Well, let me ask you now about another issue that's policy related, and that has to do with the Welfare Reform Bill.

WRIGHT: Ah.

YATES: Now, I know you served on the Special Committee on Welfare Reform '97-'98. Maybe you could talk for a minute to set the context.

[Interruption]

OK, I was asking you if maybe you could set the stage or give the context as to why there was a need for a welfare reform bill.

WRIGHT: Well, whether it was because of staffing in the welfare departments, whether it was because there were all these different programs all over the state. . . . Or all over the country—the federal government took it on. They came down about what was going to be. . . . Everyone was going to work. What was the vision of what was happening in welfare was that all these people were sitting on their duff and collecting while us poor guys were paying our taxes and working hard. These lazy bums drinking their beer and watching. . . . They all have television sets now, I want you to know, sitting there watching. Well, I started looking at the statistics. And when you would tell people that that's what they were doing, anytime they saw somebody in line with food stamps, they figured that's what they were doing.

Well, there were some people that were that way, no question about it. But the majority were not. And so it was decided that everybody was going to go to work. That was the federal government. You were only going to get so much time and then you've got to go to work. Well, for someone whose mother and father had been on welfare, they were raised on welfare, they had no job training, they had nothing, what do you think they were going to do? They weren't going to work. To comply with the federal government, then, we had to . . .

YATES: I see. Hence the special committee.

WRIGHT: The special committee was because then Wilson gave his plan. He gave it to a man who doesn't have a family, in a relationship that he didn't have children to raise. He didn't know. I was watching and going through some of the statistics. I thought, "Oh, my God." I bet it was about 90 percent—I don't know the exact, but it was really up there, really a high percentage—were single mothers. Husbands had walked out on them, or they had children, they never married the guy, and he walked out on them. But they had children. Now, should self-supporting? Yes, they should. I'm sorry about what happened to you in your life. But you're going to have to have some kind of training.

So the government-elected official would go on, they would go along with the training. But the thing that really killed me was child support. Child care. Another thing was alcoholism. Drugs. It wasn't only the person themselves, but you were putting a very tough demand about businesses themselves. They were going to hire these people, and if they were drunkards and if they were druggies, they don't show up for work, or if they do they don't do their job, or they get injured on the job because they're three sheets to the wind—or whatever their problem is, they can't coordinate—now you've got a workers' comp[ensation] case. Does that make sense?

And especially the Republicans. . . . They drove me crazy. Because these

are the people who think of the family. I think of family. Family comes first. That's the most important thing to me, is my family. So you want me to go out to work, what do I do with my child?

I saw my daughter. Baby was born in August. The first of November he walks out on her because he can't bear the responsibility. Well, Vicki had the kind of job that she could work days or she could work nights. So she had it all planned. She went back to work, I think it was the fifteenth of October. She was back to work two weeks anyway when he walked out. But she was going to work nights. He would work days on his shift. Then he would have the baby in the evenings, and she was going to work nights, and they were going to take care of the baby between the two of them. Wonderful concept. Well, he only lasted two weeks taking care of the baby at night himself. And he really wasn't because they were living here with me. So Vicki's on this shift, she has to work nights. Who is she going to get to watch the baby? Because don't forget I'm in Sacramento.

And that's what happens with so many people. Even if they have a day job, who's going to take care of a six-month-old baby, four-month-old baby, or even a year-old baby while you go off to work? And if you have no training you're going to get a job that's going to pay very little salary. Which is fair. I don't think anything is wrong with that. But how much of your money has to cover that, to take care of that child? If you have to pay more

money to have someone take care of a child than you're bringing home, what's the sense of going to work?

YATES: So how did the committee deal with the Wilson proposal?

WRIGHT: Well, of course, the Democrats had this wild one. . . . They were going to take care of everything in their proposal. And so when I got appointed. . . . And I wanted to get appointed, because I could not make headway with my guys in the caucus on this thing about child care. I had Ross Johnson sit there and say to me, "Well, Mrs. Johnson was able to work and have someone take care of her child." Yeah, Mrs. Johnson had a job, Mrs. Johnson took a leave of absence, Mrs. Johnson knew how many months she had to plan before she went back to work. And her job was there waiting for her.

YATES: But, now, what about in the senate?

WRIGHT: So now this was in the senate.

YATES: This was when he was in the senate.

WRIGHT: Yeah. He was in the senate at that time, yeah.

YATES: I'm just looking at the makeup of the committee here and I see there were six Democrats, three Republicans. And your fellow Republicans were [Jim] Brulte and Maddy.

WRIGHT: Who never showed up.

YATES: Maddy didn't?

WRIGHT: Once in a while Maddy came in. But he had one of his staff people sit there.

Because here was the whole idea. Here is what they were trying to tell us to do. They wanted the Republican Caucus not to do anything on that committee. Let the Democrats throw out their program and you'd vote against it. How do you explain to people. . . .

YATES: So there was no interest in trying to bring consensus between. . . .

WRIGHT: None at all. It was Wilson's program. Wilson's program didn't have anything about child care. He didn't have anything about child care, he didn't have anything about alcohol, and he didn't have anything about drugs.

YATES: So you're saying the Republican Caucus just didn't care about it? Or they knew that it was going to be a fight?

WRIGHT: No, they wanted what the feds had, they were in there supporting the governor, and that was it. And they weren't going to bother.

YATES: And they were going to let the Democrats and Wilson sort of fight it out.

WRIGHT: Well, it wouldn't even be a fight, because what would happen is the Democrats would pass it, Wilson would veto it . . .

YATES: Right, OK.

WRIGHT: And we wouldn't have a program.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And that was fine, because that would have been the federal plan.

YATES: That was OK.

WRIGHT: It was the Democrats' fault then, you see. It wasn't the Republicans' fault, it

was the Democrats, because they. . . . There was no meeting of the minds as far as the governor's program was concerned.

YATES: So how do you fit into all this?

WRIGHT: I refused. I told the guys. . . . I said, "I'm going. We know we have to have a welfare program or we're not going to get federal money. So I'm going to go to the meetings." "Well, all right, if you want to do that." And there was one, [Bill] Campbell over in the assembly, he was always at the meetings too, but he was doing the hard line thing over there too as far as his caucus was concerned. But I stopped them dead when they were doing something and told them they weren't going to get my vote if they did it. Because, see, if you had nine from the assembly and nine from the senate you didn't have to get a majority of eighteen, which would have been ten. You had to have a majority of the nine.

YATES: Within each group.

WRIGHT: So what you needed for eighteen, you had to have ten, because you just weren't going to go anywhere, so my vote was important. So I sat there and what I liked I liked and what I didn't like I didn't like, and I voted against it. And when it came to child care, I argued up and down about child care. You've got women out there who have never had a job, and you want them to leave their children with someone. Well, I certainly couldn't just walk out and say, "Will you take care of my kid? And you take care of it tomorrow," and

go on like that. You can't do it. You've got to give. . . . If you're going to go to work, you've got to go to work with peace of mind that the person that's watching your child and taking care of your child while you go to work is taking care of your child while you're at work.

YATES: I read somewhere that you voted for the Democratic-backed Welfare Reform Bill? Is that how you describe it?

WRIGHT: Sure. I got everything in it I wanted.

YATES: That you wanted.

WRIGHT: I had it this way. I said that a woman should not have to go to work for two years. I knew that was too long, but I figured if I put it a stretch out there, there would be some meeting between that and nothing. So I said two years. In the meantime she had to be going through a training program, with flexible hours on the training program so she could take care of her child, and at the end of the two years she would be prepared to go to work. And then she'd have to get someone to take care of that child. So she had two years to get training and get someone to take care of the child. And they agreed with me. So I got that.

And the other thing I argued, on behalf of the business community, why should you force someone to hire someone who's an alcoholic, that gets his hand caught in the machine and you're going to pay your workers' comp? Because the business pays that, and you're going to pay workers' comp for

that guy. Well, let's get real here. So I got the alcoholic and drug program into the welfare. I said, "Tie restraints on them. They've got to toe the mark, or they don't get it."

YATES: Then you were able . . .

WRIGHT: Then there was the federal portion of that, that after two years you didn't get any—any welfare. You were finished. Pffft. Good night. Never get any more welfare. You can see they're playing around with it now. Because you also have to have the jobs. Because what they were asking for was a hundred percent employment, which is impossible.

YATES: So your stance on the Welfare Reform Bill, how did that impact your relationship with the Republican Caucus?

WRIGHT: Oh, we had a joyous time. [Laughter] It was absolutely fascinating. These guys, I'm telling you. . . . Yeah. They all had, you know. . . . They all worked hard before they got there. Well, you worked so hard before you got there, how come you're scared to death that you're going to lose this job you have? It's a good job to have. You're paid well, you have perks, you have a good health plan. And you do make sacrifices, there's no question about it. You make sacrifices from your family. So I don't begrudge. . . . And I was a part of it. At first I didn't know that I got all these wonderful things. It's a good paying job, but do the job.

YATES: And so this put you at odds, obviously, with them.

WRIGHT: Yeah. Yeah, absolutely, yeah. And they said, “Get a job, get a job.” Well, when I got all that in, and there was a proposal that [Hilda L.] Solis had that I knew the Republicans wouldn’t vote for and it was dealing with. . . . I forget what the issue was, but I just knew they wouldn’t vote for it and I told them, “You’re not going to get anywhere with it,” and I got it kicked out. So if I got something that Solis wanted, who was a Democrat, and she didn’t get what she wanted and I got the three things I wanted, why wouldn’t I vote for the program? And I told them I was going to vote for it, I told them I was going to do it. [Mimics grumbling noises] “I’m going to do it. I made my commitment. How many times have you guys sat here and made commitments? I made my commitment, I’m going to vote for it.” [Laughter] So I was the only Republican in both houses that. . . .

YATES: Voted for it?

WRIGHT: Yeah. Over in the assembly they didn’t. The senate, I voted. And I got up on the floor and I explained why I was voting for it. Hey, got a nice item in the [Los Angeles] *Times* about it. And I got a color picture on page three of the *Times*, which was very nice.

YATES: Well, let me backtrack in terms of chronology here for a minute and return to elections. Because, of course, you won the election in ’92, began your term in ’93, then in ’94 you run for lieutenant governor. Now, explain why you decided to run for that.

WRIGHT: Well, I thought. . . . Wilson was running for re-election and Kathleen Brown, she was all over the board. He was really leading her. There was no possibility, unless he committed hari-kari or . . .

YATES: Except for he started from behind, didn't he? At the beginning?

WRIGHT: Well, not really.

YATES: No.

WRIGHT: He'd had some problems way back in the beginning of the year, it looked like, but he'd pulled himself out of it. So they were trying to get a balanced ticket. And I said you should have a woman on the ticket. Well, Pete Wilson wanted me to run for controller against McClintock.

YATES: You actually had a discussion with Wilson about this?

WRIGHT: Yes.

YATES: How did that discussion come about?

WRIGHT: He called me and said that he would like me. . . . Because he didn't like McClintock. In fact nobody in Sacramento likes McClintock, but that's another story.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: But, anyway, he wanted me to run for controller. I said I think it's crazy. Why spend all that money for two Republicans to run against each other? As long as you're trying to put this together. . . . I figure he's going to lose, McClintock's going to lose. I just thought that a good one was lieutenant

governor. Because, see, Carol Hallett had run for lieutenant governor and she lost, but she was running against the incumbent, [Leo T.] McCarthy. And then Marian Bergeson ran for lieutenant governor and she lost. I think she was running against McCarthy, too. It was an open race.

YATES: Oh, you know, I should know—hold on, I’ve got the information here—since I interviewed Marian, but right at the moment I’m blanking.

WRIGHT: Seems to me that. . . .

[Interruption]

YATES: Yeah, we double checked. So ’90, Marian Bergeson ran against McCarthy.

WRIGHT: And I know that Carol Hallett ran against McCarthy. Now, I think McCarthy’s race was his first for lieutenant governor. I think it was an open race when she ran, but she couldn’t get the support. She couldn’t get the support, because lieutenant governor, who cares who’s the lieutenant governor, right? Well. . . .

YATES: Yeah. That’s ’82 you’re talking about, with Carol Hallett.

WRIGHT: So two women had run, and I just thought things had changed between then and now. I said, “You know, we could make a team.” Of course, Pete and I got off on a lot of the wrong situation, because the minute he was elected the first thing I did was go down and talk to him about Systems of Care. And, oh, yeah, he was going to look into it, yes. It was . . .

YATES: This was when he was elected in ’90?

WRIGHT: And I thought, great. We've got to fund all the counties. We've got a piece of legislation that was signed into law in 1987 for it to go statewide and then we only had something like four or five counties at that time. Well, then, of course, the deficit hit and I was lucky to just keep it alive. But every year I went after that, and every year he always found some way to use the money for something else. Even to the point. . . . Maybe he thought he was satisfying me, but he put something like \$10 million in the budget to do an assessment of children at risk. So now you're going to find out that you've got all these children at risk that should be in a program, but you don't do anything, you don't have anything for the program. So what good is it?

YATES: But he did call you and talk to you about running for controller?

WRIGHT: Yeah. Because we had. . . . My God, we had a dream team that year. We had Matt Fong.

YATES: Matt Fong?

WRIGHT: Matt Fong. We had Matt Fong. So we had an Asian. There was the black man who ran for superintendent of schools. What was his name? I can see him. Some day they're going to say, "I remember that. . . . But what was her name, what was her name? I think it started with a W," trying to remember who I am.

YATES: I'm blanking. I don't have that with me. I've got everybody else. Anyway...

WRIGHT: Oh, God, he was a good looking black man. [Wilbert Smith] He was very

articulate. He was really good. He ran for superintendent of schools. So we had Pete Wilson, then, when he couldn't convince me. . . . I say no.

YATES: For controller?

WRIGHT: Controller, yeah. I wasn't going to do that. I said, "If we're going to do this, we should have the team. Whether you like him or not. . . ." I didn't like him. I didn't like McClintock, but I thought it was foolish.

So we had Pete Wilson, I was lieutenant, went into the race, and of course I was running against Stan Statham. And I beat Stan, because then Stan thought his big thing was dividing the state into two states. He was running to be lieutenant governor of the State of California, but he was wanting to break it [California] in two . . .

YATES: But he did back off on that, right, when he ran for . . .

WRIGHT: He did, but it still lingered. When we went around the state we found out it was still lingering, so. . . .

YATES: And you had Bill Jones running for secretary of state.

WRIGHT: Fong was running for treasurer.

YATES: Dan Lungren for attorney general. And [Charles] Chuck Quackenbush for insurance commissioner. [Laughter] We know how that turned out. But anyway . . .

WRIGHT: Oh, that was. . . . That, his running, that killed me too.

YATES: Oh, Quackenbush?

WRIGHT: Yeah. Because what happened was I'm trying to raise money, and I'm also trying to get known up in northern California and all over. So I call these people that I know. And he became the chair of the [California] Republican party later on, but McGraw, John McGraw, that had an insurance company [McGraw Group] in northern California, he. . . . You know, when I was battling about the insurance, when they were setting up because of the earthquakes and all that. . . .

YATES: Oh, you mean after the Northridge earthquake? Well, that's around that time.

WRIGHT: Around that time, and the legislation was going through and everything else.

YATES: In response to it.

WRIGHT: In response to it. So I could understand his concern about that. But he had always said to me, because of my stance and what I was saying about having this situation, that anything I wanted to run for, he was there for me. So I figured I had the support of McGraw, which meant the insurance industry. Then I had the same thing with [California] Correctional Peace Officers [Association]. So I thought I would have support from them, because they supported me, because I carried the very first piece of legislation they ran, when they weren't even organized. So I figured I had two good groups there, that I would be able to raise some money.

So what happened was that nobody was caring about the lieutenant governor's race. It was all to make sure Pete got reelected, as though he was

losing, which he wasn't. From about August on into the general, he was like around 15 or 16 percent ahead of Kathleen Brown. He was ahead of her because she was all over the board. Every day she came out with a different viewpoint on an issue. She was just burying herself. And I thought, God, this would be great, if I could get to be lieutenant governor, because we could really work together. We could let bygones be bygones. I would still be pushing for Systems of Care. But it would be great if we could do that. Nobody likes Gray Davis. So I should be getting some support there.

Well, what happens. . . . I beat Stan Statham. Just because more population down south than up north, and I was from the south, so I was able to beat him on that. So now I cannot raise money. I raise about the amount of money I would raise if I was running for the senate.

YATES: What was going on?

WRIGHT: The money was all going into Pete.

YATES: Oh, right. What you just mentioned, that's still the case.

WRIGHT: And then all the others, you know. All the others.

YATES: So you're having troubles raising money.

WRIGHT: I thought we could run as a team. Pete seemed to agree to that. I sat down with his movers and shakers, and I had to do this and this and this. They had me jumping through hoops. And I was trying to jump through the hoops, but I had to get known, and I didn't have the money to fly down to San Diego for a

meeting and then come back and sit on the phones trying to raise money.

And then the woman that was my fund-raiser, she [Ann LeGassick] turns around and she goes to work for Pete. So now I have somebody else I have to get. And the gal I got was good. Sabina Pellesier was good. But I'm competing against the governor. And you know we just got to get him elected, we can't bear to have him lose. Which was true, but let's look at the polls. He could have. . . . So anyway, he was supposed to help me. I didn't get any money from him. I did commercials for TV, and I had them, and he was supposed to help me with that. And I'm going crazy because I just. . . . In my gut I felt I could beat Gray Davis. Nobody likes him, but you've got to get the word out. I even did a book. We called it Gray's Anatomy, and it was all the flip flops he had done while he was in office, from being in the legislature to being controller and everything else. We had it all there, all his flip flops. But I couldn't get it mailed. I didn't have enough money to mail it all over the state.

So I was just beating myself. I could do it, I could do it. I could do it. So I would drive. I was driving all over the place. You drive out to the north coast, into the timber industry. You spend five hours to get in there, where if you had a plane you'd be in there in twenty minutes. But for the roads and everything it was five hours to get in and five hours to get out. So I was trying to do as many calls as I could, but it just. . . . But I did, I raised \$1 million,

\$200,000 I spent in the primary, \$800,000 in the general.

I got three million votes. Davis got a little over four million votes. So I just figured that I could have beat him. Of course he never forgave me for that. So that's how I have my run-ins with Davis.

YATES: Even though he won?

WRIGHT: Even though he won, yeah. He's a very vindictive man.

YATES: Well, let me ask you, historically the lieutenant governor position is known as not being all that powerful.

WRIGHT: It's up to the governor.

YATES: I was curious what attracted you to that particular position?

WRIGHT: Because I figured that sitting there, first of all, I would have been the first woman that was elected lieutenant governor. And I could have some influence. I felt that if I only went for like one objective, not five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. . . . Just one. And the one, of course, was the Systems of Care for children, and I figured I could do that. And then, who knows? Because if I won in '94, then we would come along in '98, Wilson was then out on term limits. Would I run in '98? I don't know if I would have run for governor. Maybe I would have, or maybe I would have stayed lieutenant governor, depending on who the Republican was that was going to run for governor.

YATES: So your relationship with Wilson at that point was such that you felt like you could have a good working dynamic?

WRIGHT: Yeah, because I stood up for him in the caucus on many issues. The things I didn't stand up for seemed to be the things that really drove him crazy. One of the things that stands out in my mind, he wanted to give a governor's diploma to kids for coming out of high school, because he was into education then. He was going to be all education, education, education. And it was crazy. If you graduated high school and you wanted to go to college, it would not be the governor's diploma that was going to get you into college, it was going to be the diploma that said that you completed the course. And he was going to spend something like \$10 million on it? I wouldn't go along with it. There were a couple of other issues. And of course he didn't like my welfare, wasn't supportive of welfare.

YATES: Right, and that's later on, though

WRIGHT: That was later on.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: Yeah, but . . .

YATES: So I was curious, at that point in '94 . . .

WRIGHT: So my point was still. . . . Because even when I was in the assembly we had this woman that represented the American Medical Association that did this polling on women and what everybody. . . . That's when everybody was talking about comparable worth for women and that women had to have equal rights and all this whole bit, and I brought her out, because guess what was on

the agenda? And this was back in the eighties, early eighties. You talk to women, it was child care. It was child care. That was the number one issue, number one throughout the United States. And so I had her come out, I paid for her to come out and make a presentation while we were having our retreat. And the guys walked out on it. It was like an afterthought on their agenda, and then they walked out on it. She had all these charts and everything, and all the polling made. . . .

YATES: They just didn't want to hear it?

WRIGHT: They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want to hear it. So that was it. So I just figured those were the issues and we could work it out. We could work it out. Because, again, I looked at Wilson as being a moderate.

YATES: Now, you know, I'm thinking about a few things you said about the Republican Caucus during the eighties, and you know the drive—I think it was Pat Nolan's goal—to get more Republicans in there and, of course . . .

WRIGHT: Well, that's . . .

YATES: That was part of . . .

WRIGHT: That was the thrust, yeah.

YATES: So in the nineties, I'm just curious as to . . .

WRIGHT: Well, the nineties we were going to do it.

YATES: Things were looking good for the Republican party.

WRIGHT: All we needed was an equal, fair reapportionment.

YATES: So what's going on in the Republican Caucus, then, in the senate? In terms of being able to go forward with an agenda?

WRIGHT: Well, we got a couple of conservatives in there that didn't want to keep Ken [Maddy] in. But Ken was so articulate.

YATES: You mean because he was too moderate? Or why?

WRIGHT: Yeah. See, the conservatives. . . . See, what bothers me is how can you represent. . . . Right now it's about 800,000 in a senate seat, and 400,000 in the assembly.

YATES: That's incredible, isn't it?

WRIGHT: Isn't it? When I ran it was 225,000. Of course I had about 250,000 in 1980.

YATES: The population's just . . .

WRIGHT: By 1990 it was in the three hundreds and now it's over 400,000 in the assembly seat. How can you represent these people and be so—blind. And it has to be perfect, you have to believe in everything, and that isn't the Republican party.

The Republican party is family. If you believe in family then you've got to support family. You can't support family and then pull some of the stuff that you do on people, because first of all we are our brother's keeper. And secondly we bring these children into the world and we're not going to take care of them. Maybe we don't like the woman that lives across the street that had the baby, but that child is still there, and that child deserves an education

and an opportunity to grow up a responsible adult. And so if the parents aren't doing it because they can't or won't, it's going to fall on the state. So do it in a cost effective way. But we have to do it. And make them toe the mark.

YATES: But they weren't even interested in discussing these things.

WRIGHT: No, no, no. But that's why I said women are more to policy, men are more to the power. See, I always felt that you get elected to office. . . . And I'll tell you, when I won the assembly seat I was in awe that I did it. I felt in my stomach a gut feeling I was going to win, and I worked real hard to win that election. I was running against, as I told you, five men. I was going to win, I just knew, I knew I was going to do it. But that was still scary. You had to wait until all the votes were counted, you know. And then when they were, I did it. And then I was driving down the freeway and I thought to myself, "My God, I have to represent all these people."

To me that's what's lacking in some of their thought process. With power comes responsibility. You have a responsibility. And they don't see it that way. It's always the power, it's always the power of the politics. It's all the politics. Well, what are they doing right now with this budget? Have you heard any Republicans come forward with a proposal as to how to alleviate the problem we have? No. And we didn't have it in the nineties, either. Except there was a little more. . . . I wouldn't say we didn't have any, we had some, because after all it was a Republican governor.

But, no, we're not going to participate. Well, that isn't what you got elected for. So you don't participate, you're going to disagree with everything, you're not going to negotiate. The best pieces of legislation are written because negotiations take place. Because that's what it's all about, is negotiating. I'm not saying you have to negotiate your philosophy away. You don't. What you truly believe in, you don't negotiate that away. And I never did. And women are pretty much that way.

But here we got a fair reapportionment in 1990. Go down and see how many Republican women were there in 1990, and how many Republican women were in 2000. Tell you something?

YATES: Let me wrap up today with. . . . I just want to at least get your take on what became a very big issue, which is deregulation of electricity.

WRIGHT: As I said, I was opposed to it.

YATES: I'm curious as to . . .

WRIGHT: But I did vote for it in the end.

YATES: You did.

WRIGHT: Yes.

YATES: OK. I'm curious as to . . .

WRIGHT: I voted because there was no opposition, not from consumer groups and not from the utilities, it seemed all was well. I don't know which it was.

YATES: And what were the discussions in the caucus?

WRIGHT: Well, first of all, federal government was talking about deregulation. Because they had deregulated the phone company. Hurray.

YATES: That turned out really well, didn't it? [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Look at your phone bill. I can remember when my phone bill was ten or twelve dollars. And then look at your phone bill today.

YATES: You know, hold on one second. We're at the end.

[End Tape 9, Side B]

[Begin Tape 10, Side A]

YATES: You were just getting started on talking about what was going on with deregulation.

WRIGHT: I just. . . . And maybe it's because you have an understanding of whether. . . . Maybe it was because of cable TV that I saw it. If a cable company comes in and they pay for all the wiring to go down the street and they pay for all the wiring into the homes, why should they have to give that up for somebody else to come in and use it? Another company comes in, "Oh, you're already wired, I'll just sell you our program." Why? On the other hand, do you want to have two, three, four, five wires being pulled down the street and pulled into your house, so you can decide which one you want to use? [Laughter] No. And to me that was in the back of my mind: when I represented or understood cable, because I worked for the cable company, knew the ins and outs of cable. So then I saw electricity was the same way.

Gas was the same way. So then it needed regulation. It's something that the state has to come in.

YATES: So it's a necessity?

WRIGHT: That's right.

YATES: Versus what you mentioned, which is cable is not necessarily a necessity.

WRIGHT: That's right, that wasn't. And yet I could see that. Why wouldn't it be even more so when you're talking about gas, electric and phones? Because your communication. . . . You have to have communication. And water.

YATES: So what were the discussions in the caucus that you remember?

WRIGHT: Well, the best part was that we were kind of waiting to see what was going to come up, because there were these meetings being held all the time. Brulte was on that, Steve Peace, and I can't think of who else was sitting on that committee. It was like a conference committee on a bill. You had three people from each side.

YATES: So it was whoever was on Utilities [and Commerce Committee] and what the equivalent was in the senate [Energy, Utilities, and Communications Committee].

WRIGHT: Yeah. And so they were working this whole thing out. Steve Peace was really running roughshod over everybody. You're going to sit at the table and you're not going to get up until we have an agreement. And of course at that point Pete Wilson wanted to be one of the first to have California one of the

first ones that was deregulated. And we went along with that. . . . Which you do. If somebody's representing you, sitting on a committee such as that, and they're there. . . . And there were all these meetings at night. We were always meeting late at night and going on, and Jim [Brulte] would come in and say, "Oh, boy, what a night. But we're getting there, we're getting there." So you thought, "OK." But to me, when you have that kind of an issue, you're usually inundated with lobbyists from both sides.

YATES: You mean both for and against the issue.

WRIGHT: Yeah. So you kind of weigh what they're saying, then you go through with the analysis of the bill and the whole thing back and forth before you make a decision what you're going to do. And I started out, I couldn't see it. I just couldn't see it. So it went on and on and on, and finally this was the agreement, it was wonderful, Jim got up and spoke on its behalf, and Steve Peace did, and I didn't have anyone come and see me and tell me it was no good. I thought, "I have to have a reason if I'm going to vote against it. I have to say, 'This is the reason.'" And outside my gut feeling I didn't have a reason not to vote for it. Everybody wanted it. The consumers were for it, because it would be less money you'd have to pay on your bills. The electric company was supportive of it. Everybody was for it. So the bill went out.

The problem came. . . . When they first had it up and running, the minute San Diego had those spikes in their rates we should have had a hearing.

Wanted to have a hearing in the senate the committee that had jurisdiction and [Governor] Davis wouldn't do it. He had his own agenda of how he was going to do things. He wasn't going to have any feathers ruffled or anything. So he didn't want to do it. Didn't want to do it. Just give them some money. So he signed off on the legislation that went through—I think it was Dede Alpert that carried it—that gave the bailout to San Diego. Because we had the money, what the heck. Bailed out San Diego. Well, the first thing you know, I left office and. . . .

YATES: Yes, and everything just went from there.

WRIGHT: And then everybody got hit. Everybody got hit. It wasn't just San Diego. But San Diego was low man on the totem pole. You had PG & E [Pacific Gas and Electric Company], [Southern California] Edison, and then San Diego. Well, the minute San Diego. . . . San Diego would be the first one to have problems because they didn't have the pool of rate payers and they didn't have that large of a company as Edison and PG & E had. So that should have been. . . . The minute they got hit, you should have known it was going to go up the pole.

YATES: In retrospect, what do you think could have been done differently in terms of that particular piece of legislation that might have averted this?

WRIGHT: Well, first of all, if you asked anybody who voted for it, they don't know what they voted for. And in the end I found out I didn't know what I voted for either. I voted because both sides said it was a good. . . .

YATES: There was no analysis that came out and kind of gave another perspective.

WRIGHT: No, no, no. It's the same with the budget. You've got to watch these things.

That's why you always have somebody on your staff who. . . . Especially, I had somebody for health and I had somebody for natural resources and I had someone for education that was watching all this stuff for me, so that I knew what was in the budget. So when I voted I was always comfortable with the budget. Either if I voted against or I voted for it, I was always comfortable with it, because I did know what was going on in the budget.

But this thing, it was in conference. But nobody. . . . You know, all of a sudden the bill comes at you and everybody's saying, "It's OK, it's fine. You know, let's get this thing over and done with, we're getting to the end of session, get it and go." And to this day. . . . I wasn't comfortable with it. I don't know what we were trying to accomplish by it. There's a problem that the companies were coming in asking for increases in rates and all this was supposed to be so costly, and that's what we should have been looking at. How do we make it more cost effective? See, my point is always cost effective. There's some things you have to pay for and some things you can maybe set off until another day to pay for, or it's something you can just do without and don't have to worry about paying for it. That was it, but I was never comfortable with it.

YATES: Well, great. Why don't we wrap up for today, if that sounds good?

WRIGHT: OK.

YATES: Thank you very much.

[End Tape 10, Side A]

[Session 8, June 6, 2002]

[Begin Tape 11, Side A]

YATES: OK. Great, let's get started. Good morning.

WRIGHT: Good morning.

YATES: We ended last time with a fairly thorough discussion of the time you were in the senate, from 1992-2000. But before I move on to some more general and then summary type questions, I did want to at least touch on your last campaign and election, which was in 1996, and talk a little bit about what happened there with that campaign.

WRIGHT: Well, as I recall, I don't think I had any opposition in the primary.

YATES: No, you didn't.

WRIGHT: I didn't think I did.

YATES: Yeah.

WRIGHT: Sometimes, these campaigns, they all run together.

YATES: Here are the sheets, just so you can. . . . The Secretary of State's *Statement of Vote*. That's the primary.

WRIGHT: Oh, John Birke. Of course, how could I forget John? He was a young man who I thought really didn't know what he stood for, or what he was talking

about. And the thing that stuck in my mind was in the San Fernando Valley they had a . . . I guess you would call it a forum between the candidates. And it was time for him to get up and speak. And it was all the chambers, the United Chambers [of Commerce of the San Fernando Valley], so practically every chamber over there was represented. And he gets up and he absolutely talks against business. That was his presentation. Total control and don't let them run away with the store. He just went on and on. And I sat there and thought, "There's nothing for me to say, this guy's just killed himself." Especially in the business community.

So that's why I always felt he was just. . . . He had his name put on the ballot and then went out and did his thing and had no intentions of putting out any major campaign. Because I don't even recall any literature coming in from him.

YATES: And, as you just mentioned, there were no other Republican candidates.

WRIGHT: No.

YATES: A fairly straightforward race, then.

WRIGHT: I would say so.

YATES: OK. Anything different in your campaign fund-raising at that point compared to your earlier experiences?

WRIGHT: No, because all I was looking at. . . . I had made a statement that, you know, "We're still dealing with people, and I don't care whether they're representing

some special interest or not, you're still dealing with people." And I always felt that I would like to. . . . The last year I was in office what I would like to have done was have enough money in my till that I could turn around and have my normal type fund-raiser in Sacramento, but instead not charge, and invite those people—even if they had changed representation—that had consistently come and represented whatever their cause was at my breakfast in the morning. I always had a breakfast on Valentine's Day. And so that's what I did. I was able to do that. So there was no actual "give me money" my last year. What it was, was inviting these people. . . .

I did the same thing down here. I invited those people who had religiously come to my fund-raisers in the district, and turned around and had my "Night in Italy", with all the Italian food and the singing and the whole bit. I sang at my events and did that whole bit. And didn't charge them. So that was my whole aim. So if I had the campaign which I did in '96 there was not the need for a lot of money. I didn't worry about it.

YATES: So you were able to do those types of things.

WRIGHT: Yes, I was able to have my fund-raiser to raise the money that I needed for that campaign in '96, and then for expenses, because any time I had to go anywhere to make a speech or something like that, my expenses went against my campaign committee. So I just raised enough money basically to keep that on board, and then the last year made sure that when we filed my 1999

statement that I had enough money in the till for the year 2000, that would take care of my expenses up until leaving office, but would also be able to do the two things I wanted to do, which was have an event without charging. And I was able to do that, so I was happy. So we closed out, we closed our books, we didn't have any money in the bank.

YATES: OK. Well, let me move on to some more general type things. And this is backtracking a little bit, but in, well, I guess it's about the mid-eighties the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] began their sting, which became known. . . . I saw one place it was called "Shrimpgate," and it led eventually to the conviction of several legislators for extortion, and it impacted both the Democratic party and the Republican party. So why don't you take a minute to talk about it? You were serving in the assembly at the time. What do you remember about what was going on with that particular, I don't know if you want to call it incident, but. . . .

WRIGHT: It was major. It was major. Because I didn't like the way in which it was done as far as the FBI was concerned, but something had to be done. Because there was no question about it, there were instances where. . . .

One that sticks out in my mind was the airlines. The employees of the airlines were wanting to be able to come in and basically be the owners of the airlines. And they wanted that opportunity. And my mind is a little fuzzy as to exactly what it was called—it was called ownership, partnership, or

whatever—but they felt that they could do better as employees if they had a say in the business. And I thought it was only appropriate that they be given the opportunity. I didn't necessarily think it was good or bad. I thought in some instances it had its good points and other instances it had its bad points. It was still something that was regulated outside the State of California, basically. It was regulated by the federal government. So once you have government involved in it, there's always an opportunity for improvement someplace.

But the thing that really stuck out in my mind, and which I think had a big bearing on everything that happened after—after, and even before. . . . As I told you, in 1980 it was the Republicans in the assembly that made Willie Brown the speaker. And they didn't really scrutinize some of the agreements they made, as far as I'm concerned, for the simple reason that they were more concerned about reapportionment than anything else. And so with an agreement from Willie that he was going to quote unquote take care of us, they lined up the votes, except the three that didn't vote for him, that voted for Berman.

YATES: Right, right.

WRIGHT: But I thought some of our guys were really hypocritical, because their biggest complaint, really, was that the controlling party, which was the Democrats. . . . They had the majority vote, they did control the house, and

with the strong leader that they had in Willie—because Willie had been around a long time, he knew all the corners, and he knew where all the bodies were hidden too, for that matter—money just flowed into their campaign coffers. And it was Willie that was doing it. There were members. . . . I told you, when they tried to overturn Willie as speaker, how they thought that by picking a Hispanic in Calderon to be speaker that he would just naturally bring in all the Hispanic votes in the caucus. Most of them owed their life to Willie, their political life to Willie, and so they weren't about to turn on him.

The biggest thing and the most important thing in the legislature is that you are a person of your word. If you're going to say something, do it. If you're not, say you're not. Because that's the only thing you really have going for you, is your word. That people can rely on you. And that isn't just necessarily what's going on in the capital, but your whole constituency, they can rely on you to make what kind of decisions you're going to be making for them.

So with that understood, and with Willie now the speaker, and being able, even under some of the restrictions that were passed. . . . And I said time and time again that the human mind is just fascinating what they can come up with, and for every rule or law that you lay down, there's someone in a corner someplace rustling through the pages and coming up with an idea of how you can get around it. And that's what happened. So you passed campaign reform

and they got something else out of it. And the biggest thing that was coming down the pipe at the time was what we called independent expenditures. As long as I kept you at arm's distance from me and didn't know everything you were doing, you could raise money for me and spend money on my campaigns, as long as my handwriting wasn't on the plan. So Willie had independent expenditures going. And you could say people paid a price to get something to the legislature if they wanted to.

I think the one that stood out, really, was with these airline people, because they came and they only had a little bit of money. And I'm saying a little bit, it was a lot of money, but compared to the other ones that just keep pouring money into support for or against a proposition, or whatever was going on, or a piece of legislation that was going through the legislature, they had limited funds. We had gone through the whole process in the assembly where their piece of legislation was going to give them the opportunity to make an attempt to set it up as a employee owned business. They had been pouring money into people who sat on the committee that would hear the bill, and to Willie, who would be setting the times, because as a speaker you had control as to whether a bill was going to be heard or not heard, because if your chairman of that committee didn't want to do what you wanted him to do you'd just change the chairman. So anybody who wanted to have the pride of being a chairman of an important committee in the state assembly wasn't going to buck Willie. So

that's what was happening. All this was going on, and I was watching these poor people being bled.

And now it came, it was to be a final vote. And it was on Thursday. The guys were flat broke. They didn't have any more money. They'd poured money into the whole thing. Maxine Waters, who was Willie's lieutenant, gets up on the floor and basically places this on the agenda to be voted on on Monday instead of Thursday. Which meant Friday, Saturday, and Sunday these guys are going to be bled for more money which they didn't have. And Monday it was defeated. So it was like if you didn't put enough money in the till you lost it. And those were the things that were bothersome.

Well, Pat Nolan as head of the Republican Caucus was determined that we were going to get some of that money. And so we were supposed to do all this. . . . We were going all over the state, we were having meetings in the agricultural community, showing how the Republicans were better for them for representation than the Democrats. Which was fine. And all the other issues and committees and that. And we were going all over the place. One of the things that was getting to Pat was the fact that Willie was still raising money. When you have all that money to spend you're bound to pick up some seats.

Do I have proof that I can tell you here in black and white? I saw the plan? I didn't. Because that was another thing Pat and those guys were doing, the

so-called Prop. 13 babies who then became the cadre that I thought I belonged to. But I found out decisions weren't made. . . . It was really a waste of time to sit there and have lunch with these guys, for the simple reason that everything we discussed or any ideas we were coming up with to make things better for our group had already been decided. Because these guys, the night before or days before or whatever, had met. The ones that basically were the movers in the caucus. So Pat was really upset that we couldn't seem to get any kind of control. And it was funny because he was still cutting deals with Willie. His wife [Gail Nolan] had gotten a job because Willie Brown got it for Pat.

Something else happened, and Pat was able to work it out for his own personal. . . . But I can't think of anyone else that would have done it, because why would anyone care? But there was \$1,000 in cash put under the door of Willie Brown and it was done with the idea of catching him, because you couldn't take cash. So it was the idea of getting Willie caught. And then it was leaked to the FBI, what was going on in the capitol. And so they started the investigation.

YATES: And that's what led to the set up of this shrimp factory. Supposed shrimp. . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah. But, again, I still don't understand why our guys didn't look at it more closely.

YATES: How do you mean?

WRIGHT: Well, a piece of legislation comes and it doesn't make much sense, I always investigate it and try to find out where it was coming from.

YATES: You're talking about the one dealing with the shrimp factory?

WRIGHT: Yeah, that was the one, that was the one that was to catch everybody into it.

YATES: So who voted for it and who voted against it?

WRIGHT: Well, I had to have been one of the ones that voted against it because, again, as I recall the way it was put together, it was basically a local government issue as I saw it. So I voted against it. Let the locals decide what they were going to do. But I kind of feel that our guys had their hand in trying to trip up Willie and he was too smart. He was too smart. He'd been around too long.

YATES: But obviously also Pat Nolan eventually . . .

WRIGHT: But Pat was doing. . . . Again, Pat was doing the same thing.

YATES: Exactly. OK.

WRIGHT: He was doing the same thing. And how stupid of him to go and meet in a hotel, in somebody's hotel room. I never met anybody in any hotel rooms.

YATES: Well, that was . . .

WRIGHT: I had dinner, private dinners that I went to. But not necessarily. . . . Even though you knew they were driving for something, it was never one of those things where the business were discussed.

YATES: Well, that leads me to my next line of inquiry I guess, because the topic of lobbyists obviously has come up at various points during our discussions, but

we really haven't talked about the role of the lobbyists and what your own personal philosophy was in terms of how you worked with lobbyists.

WRIGHT: Well, there were some lobbyists that would never come to see me because they just figured I was a lost cause. And that's what happened with a lot of the Republicans, because you're conservative. You know, you're conservative, you're not going to go for this, you're not going to go for that. So why waste their time? They'd get the ones that they thought were the ones that could be kind of swayed.

YATES: Was that also, do you think, because you were in the minority versus the majority? So the votes really mattered from the majority party?

WRIGHT: Oh, sure. Because, for example, as I said, when they tried to dump me off Rules, in reality it was just the actions of the house, where you picked who was going to sit on Rules from your particular caucus and then it went to a vote on the floor. So the Dem[ocrat]s voted for your guys and you voted for their guys. So they decided they wanted to dump me, and Tom Bane—who was the chair of Rules and wanted me on Rules, he liked the way I operated on Rules—told me I didn't have to worry, because they were not going to remove me from the Rules Committee. And so we had all the rules of the house. None of them were broken. I would have to have resigned, and I refused to resign, and so consequently they couldn't remove me unless there was a vote of the floor. Because it was a vote of the floor that had put me on Rules,

really.

YATES: I remember you did talk about what happened with that situation.

WRIGHT: So that's the way it was. So why would anybody who knew they had a good relationship with the speaker or the chairman of a committee, why would he care about getting Republican votes?

YATES: So what about the lobbyists you did have interaction with?

WRIGHT: I was always straight with them. I can remember—and then after Jackson, Clay Jackson went to jail—there was an issue that was up, and Clay had a strange way about him in that he was a huge man . . .

YATES: I've seen photos of him.

WRIGHT: And he walked around with all the power of the insurance companies behind him, you know. And sometimes he annoyed me for that, because to me insurance is still dealing with the little guy. But where I agreed I agreed, where I disagreed I disagreed. So he had my vote all lined up for this one particular issue. I said yes, I was going to vote for it. But when we got into the discussion in the [assembly] Finance and Insurance Committee, there were certain parts of it I didn't like and I tried to amend it. And that didn't work, because it was kind of greased that it was going to go through, you know. But I came down off the podium and I went to the back of the room and I said to him, "I'm not going to vote for it. And I want you to know, I'm telling you up front, I'm going to change my vote, because I'm not comfortable with it." I

even forget what the issue was.

But that was my position and that's what I would do. Don't waste your time talking to me, because I'm going to go with it unless you amend it to something different. Or I would tell them up front that I'm not going to vote for it, and you want to come in and talk to me, I'm willing to listen, but I'm not going to vote for it. It's against my philosophy or what I think is good for my constituents in the State of California. So that's how I operated.

YATES: And where would these types of discussions take place?

WRIGHT: In your office. They would come in. They'd make an appointment and they'd come into your office. I'd take people that I said I was opposed to, and we'd start talking, and I'd say, "Well, gee, it seems to me for what you want to accomplish, if you amended your bill. . . ." We'd discuss maybe amending the bill, as to whether or not I would vote for it or not. But I was always straight with them.

I appreciated the lobbyists. Now, there were some that I didn't want to deal with at all, because they were to me as crooked as the day was long. But for those that I felt were honest in their presentation of whatever they were supporting at that time. . . . Because there are two different kinds of lobbyists. There are lobbyists that are hired by individual companies or individual associations and then there are the lobbyists that are the contract lobbyists, which always boggled my mind. This year you're on this one guy's side, the

next year you're against him and you're on somebody else's, because that's who you have a contract with.

If I was to lobby now, I would lobby for mental health for children, because I've seen the devastation, not only for the child but for the families, and it could be averted. We have to realize that sooner or later these kids are going to come into the system and we're going to have to pay for them. Why not do it to turn them around? Not just to medicate them or incarcerate them. I could do something like that.

But I could not take and be solely against your issue and then next year contract to support that issue. You've failed and now you're rearranging your agenda. Because you really, definitely want to get this issue through, so you're going to reorganize your whole lobbying effect for that particular issue. Now you turn around and you hire me. I was opposed to you, because I was working for somebody else, last year. And so I was against you last year.

YATES: So you believe there's a philosophical component then to being a lobbyist. It's not just a job.

WRIGHT: No, it's not just a job. Because those guys spend just as much time in and around the capitol as we do. God help them if they miss a meeting in which something is done to their organization or their company. They're responsible.

YATES: Well, what have you observed about changes in the role of the lobbyist since

the passage of Prop. 140, with term limits?

WRIGHT: It makes it very difficult for them. Because, yes, you do set up relationships. There's those ones that fall by the way side, that do things differently. But the majority, the relationship between the lobbyist and the legislator is they keep you abreast of a lot of issues that you wouldn't even be looking at, given your normal day's work in the legislature. I sat on. . . . Well, as I left the senate I sat on three subcommittees of the Budget [and Fiscal Review Committee] and [I sat on] four standing committees. I sat on the Environmental Quality Committee. I did sit on Health and Human Services for a while. Then I got off it and I sat on Education and I got off of that. But it was that and the Judiciary Committee.¹ Heavy committees. So that issues of union employees relationships, or issues dealing with senior citizens, I didn't have a touch with those issues on a weekly, daily basis.

So it was good that a lobbyist would just raise the issue of a piece of legislation that I hadn't even looked at yet, that I wouldn't do anything with until it was going to go to the floor, because I wasn't going to see it in committee. My main thrust first was the bills that would go to the committee. I wanted to know about those. Then the next thrust was those that would go to

1. The other two committees Wright sat on were Constitutional Amendments, which she chaired, and Agriculture and Water Resources.

the floor and what amendments were made on those bills when they were in committee to change them. Because if you got the first bringing it to your attention it was one way, and then if it was amended it was another way, and then when you went to the floor it might even be another way. To know where they were going with that legislation, you had to. . . . And you couldn't rely on your staff to do it all. You know, you're talking about roughly—between the two houses—more than four thousand bills going through in any one session.

YATES: It seems from what you're saying though that once term limits go into effect it gives the lobbyist even more power, because people are there even a shorter amount of time. It sort of makes the balance not . . .

WRIGHT: Well, first of all, it's a shorter amount of time, you have more freshmen than you normally had. So it's an education process, because anyone that goes into the legislature and is going to give you the idea that they know everything about everything, I'd walk away from them. I'd be very leery about those people.

So who has more knowledge? Let's take cable TV. I was fortunate, because going into the legislature I'd worked with a cable company. I knew quite a bit about cable. Today it's even far beyond my knowledge of what I had when I went into the legislature. So you take that issue. I can't talk to my seat mate about it, because he doesn't know any more than I know. But the

lobbyist— Like take [Dennis] Mangers, if he's still representing the cable people [California Cable Television Association]. He's been around the cable business since 1980. He knows it inside and out. So if he's going to come in and talk to me I want to hear from him, because I want to know. I have to vote, I want to know about it. Or telephone companies.

YATES: But don't you think. . . . I guess I'm just curious, because as an initiative, and the supposed intent of the initiative, it almost seems to me that it defeats part of the purpose of not keeping people in office for long. It doesn't take into account that now you've given more. . . . In some ways there's more knowledge and potential influence now in this group of other people, these lobbyists. You've skewed it even . . .

WRIGHT: Well, again, the thing I guess that bothers me the most. . . . I didn't vote for anything in the legislature and I don't vote for anything on the ballot until I've read it and kind of deciphered it and then decided for myself if I think it's a good idea or a bad idea. I don't pay that much attention to the ads on TV. But we've got a populace here in the State of California, and all over the nation, they're too busy with their private lives. And in reality do you think term limits have affected me here as a private citizen? No. Fellow that works maybe ten hours a day and comes home at night, it doesn't affect him. Or you can bitch and complain about something that's in the paper that they did, but you're really not affected. You're not hit.

The time you're hit. . . . Like with the budget, if the budget isn't completed on time, then who's hit? The people who work in the capital. They don't get paid. Nobody gets paid. The legislature. But you know it's coming. As soon as that budget is signed you're going to get your paycheck and you get it all back. It's the same with the people who work there. They know that. If someone is working in an institution that does government work and then suddenly finds out that they're going to be laid off or something because they're not going to get paid because the state hasn't paid that particular company, yeah, that'll hurt them for a while. But the average day in and day out person who gets up in the morning and goes to work and comes home at night and has his dinner and goes to bed, he's not affected by term limits.

YATES: You don't think that by having somebody only in there for a few years, that doesn't have a long-term ramification?

WRIGHT: It will, it will in time. But the point is that right now. . . . I feel this whole budget has been affected by term limits.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: But then I can't say too much about that, because I was in the legislature. So it sounds like sour grapes on my part, you know? But it has. The whole thrust of term limits had nothing to do with the running of the legislature and the operations of the legislature. It absolutely had to do with personalities.

YATES: You mean the reasons for the initiative.

WRIGHT: Well, sure.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: [Peter F.] Schabarum didn't get what he wanted. He was angry and he'd been in the assembly and we as Republicans, after we put Willie Brown in place, were trying to get rid of him and we couldn't do it. We couldn't stir up the Democratic Caucus because he'd helped too many of the guys get in there, in office. And there's something about being an elected official that goes to your head. You want to stay there because of the fact that you have so-called power. Which, as I said, I don't think there's power. There comes responsibility. But a lot of them don't worry about the responsibility, because they're kind of removed from the people they're representing.

YATES: And the irony of course is even after Prop. 140 passed, and I think the Republicans thought they were going to get a change in leadership, Willie hung on.

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: He was able to negotiate it so that he was on for another. . . . [Laughter]

WRIGHT: Yeah. He was on until he was ready to leave. What did he do? He left just before he would have had to have gone out on term limits. That's what I said. He was smart. Never underestimate him. And when it came down to the end it wasn't so much worrying about the people, because he did. He was a good speaker, in that he was concerned about individuals within the legislature,

whether they be Republican or Democrat. Now, if he did too many favors for you he might come and ask you for something. But he also would accept the fact that you weren't going to do it. At least for me. And he really didn't do that much for me. He did in regards to dumping me off of Rules and trying to get rid of me on Ways and Means. He never went along with that, because he did have the final say with his caucus. So it didn't happen. But I never gave him anything for it.

When he called me on the phone I even told Ross Johnson, because he was the leader. I said Willie called me and I said I told him I couldn't do it. So I let him know. That was when they were going to try and dump him with Calderon. I told him, "I'm not going to do it. I'm not going to get involved with it." It was no fun sitting on the floor with all those people looking at you, and you're not saying a word and they called your name like 999 times. It seemed like they'd never stop saying Wright. But I wasn't going to do it.

YATES: I want to continue talking about Brown and then the leadership in the senate, but before we do that I want to just come back to what happened with "Shrimpgate." Because I'm curious, what happened in terms of the impact it also had on the legislature, once this all came down, basically?

WRIGHT: Well, you were a nervous wreck. And the reason you were a nervous wreck. . . . My nervousness was that I did something very innocently and all of a sudden was going to get entwined in this. So that got to be kind of a bother.

Well, when they did come and they asked me some questions I was so far removed from it it wasn't even funny. First of all, I had voted against the bill. So I didn't have. . . . They scoured to see if you had any money as a donation. I hadn't gotten any money from them. I was kind of out there, you know, one of the members of the legislature. So it never affected me.

But Frank [C.] Hill, Pat Nolan, they were two Republicans that got into trouble. But Frank was an arrogant little guy. He just thought he knew it all. He'd make some sly remarks. But they were trying to do what Willie was doing, but Willie had it well worked out. He knew exactly what he was doing. Willie could always. . . . Maybe on the hairline between good and evil, but he'd fall on the good side, because he only went so far and no further.

YATES: How did he, as leader of the assembly, handle this situation when it came to light, in terms of how things were functioning in the assembly? Do you know what I'm saying?

WRIGHT: He seemed to be above it all. Because I believe this thousand dollars under the door in cash was kind of to catch him, and it didn't. In reality, as far as the assembly was concerned, what Democrat was charged with anything? In the senate there were.

YATES: Right, right. There were people that were implicated, I believe.

WRIGHT: In the senate.

YATES: In the assembly, weren't there?

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: It was Gwen Moore?

WRIGHT: Gwen Moore, yeah. But it wasn't Gwen, it was one of her staff people.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And there was no way to show that she had directed her staff person to do it.

YATES: So there wasn't any response, like we're going to form a committee and look into things or . . .

WRIGHT: No, because Willie. . . . You know, you probably have to talk to him to find out what knowledge he had about what was going on. But there was no indication that anything had been done wrong as far as the capital was concerned. Now, what was done on the outside by some of his members. . . .

YATES: Well, a lot of this was still going on in terms of the convictions and everything once you were in the senate, is that correct?

WRIGHT: Yeah.

YATES: And what did you observe about the response in the senate to all this?

WRIGHT: Well, again, it was. . . . If you notice, it was always with what appeared to be leadership. Frank Hill was one of Pat's lieutenants. And there was Pat. But like Ross Johnson didn't get touched with it. Then Bill Jones, later on down the line, he didn't. None of us got touched with it except for those two, and they were supposed to be the movers and the shakers. They were the ones that did all the planning. And of course Ross was involved with the planning. Bill

Baker was involved with the planning. Knowledge of what Pat and Frank Hill were doing? Probably they had knowledge of it but never thought that it would go to a point where they'd be. . . . They were always within the law. I'm sure they were within the law.

YATES: Well, again, I was thinking, getting at sort of the leadership, how did [David A.] Roberti respond to what. . . . I'm not focusing on Republicans or Democrats, but just sort of . . .

WRIGHT: Yeah. Well, to me Dave Roberti seemed to. . . . First of all, the structure of the senate was so different than the assembly. So different. Seniority was important. Whether you be Republican or Democrat, in the senate your seniority carried something with it. The problem was that he relied on his members to do the right thing. I guess that would be the simplest way of putting it. And so if they overstepped their legal bounds in what they were doing, in trying to keep control of the house. . . . Because that's what it was, to have control meant you had the power. Those people around him. . . . But some of them were on their own.

I mean, [Joseph B.] Montoya? It was known all over the capital what Montoya was doing. What came out in the investigation with all these houses and everything that he was involved with that he owned, nobody knew that. But you'd come up with a piece of legislation and if he had given his commitment to someone on that piece of legislation, you could have the best

piece of legislation in the books and you would not get it passed through, because he'd already made a commitment to the guy because the guy was going to give him money.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: And so this shrimp thing, it was just something that came up that was intriguing, I guess. And they could see money coming, pouring in, and that's what they were interested in.

And as for [Alan] Robbins? Alan Robbins, he used to drive me up the wall. At the beginning of the year he'd like introduce fifty, sixty, seventy bills, and you're going "What in the devil?" They never had any substance, they had like a title and a number. And then anytime anything came up he had the piece of legislation. He'd just amend the bill, and he had something going. And he said, "You've got to get on board." He'd say to me, "You've got to get on board on this." "Why?" I said, "Because you said I should? Forget it." Train stopping off in Simi Valley to pick up people, who's the one in front of the press conference? Alan Robbins. Courthouse in Van Nuys, who's in the. . . . Alan Robbins. But he's got a piece of legislation for it. And he was always on the edge. He really liked being on the edge. And so what happened being on the edge? You can fall either way. He happened to fall on the bad side. I think he learned his lesson.

YATES: Well, let me segue, if I can use that word, now back into what you were

talking about, I think in terms of Willie Brown's staunch leadership. You served under, well, one speaker in the assembly, Willie Brown. But then when you were in the senate it was David Roberti, Bill Lockyer, and then John Burton. I was thinking maybe you could take a little bit of time and talk about different styles of leadership, and what worked or didn't work or what you observed serving with those people.

WRIGHT: Well, their whole process of picking leaders in the senate is just so. . . . It's almost regimental in the way they do it. But it's changed a little bit now, naturally, because of term limits. But with David Roberti. . . . I had no problems working with David. He'd have some of the most outlandish bills. And I'd say, "Oh, my God." And he'd say, "You know, you've got to give up a vote. Boy, you're not going to get anything out of the senate if you don't give him a vote." I wouldn't give him a vote. He said, "I don't understand it. You don't give me any votes, and yet you get everything you want." I said, "I'm working the system." [Laughter] "I'm working the system, lining the votes up."

I worked hard. I never went into a committee that I didn't know where my bills sat. As far as the members of committee were concerned, I always knew where I was at and what was the possibility. If I thought something was going to be really controversial that I was carrying, I always tried to have more in the bill than I wanted, so I could start throwing some stuff out of it in order to

get what I really was aiming for. And it worked. It worked.

I don't know if it would work today, because people seem to be undoing the good that's been done by the legislature. The new guys coming, they're undoing it. And some of the stuff they're getting themselves hung up on, it's just not worth it. But it gets them the headlines. That was the whole thing. You always had to consider your constituency, because basically they're always working for the next election. There are some that now see it as the fact that if you're going to do anything. . . . You're either going to accomplish something or you're not. Because you're only going to be in the assembly six years, and only half of you have the possibility of being in the senate.

YATES: Seems like that would have a big influence on how you approach what you're doing.

WRIGHT: Oh, sure. It should. But they don't have the understanding. What you're getting now is you're getting quite a few people in the houses that have been in elected office locally. And of course with term limits locally now you're pushing those people up. Not necessarily everybody that sits on local government should be in the assembly or the senate. But they do have more experience than the fellow that comes in off the street and runs.

YATES: Well, what about when Lockyer becomes leader of the senate?

WRIGHT: Well, he kind of had to work hard when he decided he wanted to be the leader. Because that's something that you have to have it in your being that you want

to be, and so with Bill Lockyer, he was such an emotional man. God . . .

YATES: I was just reading some articles to refresh my memory, and he really had to live down his personality, I guess.

WRIGHT: Because the main aim in the senate, because given you only have forty members, is to have the twenty-seven votes, and when you have members of your caucus who are pushing maybe several controversial issues, you've got to produce for them or they're going to have you out and somebody else is going to be leader. So Bill did turn around. The Bill Lockyer that was in the assembly as compared to the Bill Lockyer that was in the senate as compared with the Bill Lockyer that was the president pro tem of the senate, there's a big difference.

YATES: How effective was he, do you think?

WRIGHT: He was fairly effective. When he was in the senate, of course, he had his blowup with Diane Watson. But Diane Watson was always a difficult person to work with, until she mellowed out the last year or two that she was in office, when she knew she was leaving and she definitely would not go to the assembly.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: So . . .

YATES: Now she's in Congress.

WRIGHT: Now she's in Congress, so you see. . . . Us politicians never go away. We

don't even die, half the time.

YATES: Hold on a second, we're right near the end.

[End Tape 11, Side A]

[Begin Tape 11, Side B]

YATES: OK. I was asking you about how effective Bill Lockyer was as leader of the senate.

WRIGHT: I think he was fairly effective because, again, in that position you have got to take care of all the members of the house and you have to make sure that you've got the support of your caucus, and they did that. David Roberti, of course, was there the longest. But, again, the senate is made up. . . They just don't dump. . . . You've got to be really bad to get dumped as president pro tem of the senate. As you see, David Roberti? Term limits put him out. Lockyer, term limits. And John [Burton] will be term limits.

YATES: So talk about John Burton, then, as president pro tem.

WRIGHT: John Burton was the one. . . . John, since he walked in the assembly, he would say nice to things to me, and then—oh!—he would say some horrible things to me. And his language sometimes really got to me. But he had a good heart. He really did. And I admired him for the fact of all his weaknesses that he overcame. I think it's really something when you're in public office, you're there on stage for everybody to watch what you're doing, and to see him having turned his life around in regards to drugs and that. And, yeah, he's a

flaming liberal, but his causes are fairly good. Don't necessarily like the way he maybe wants to handle those, but still he's a sharp man and anything he does is very well. Except that you never know what he's going to say.

[Laughter]

YATES: Oh, really?

WRIGHT: You know, but that's John. And I think people accept him. Knowing that you never know what. . . . He would tear into me, and then I'd just answer him back. He'd say, "You have to have the last word." Yeah, I do. I'd say to him, "You're right." I think his statements about me on the floor were really nice.

YATES: Right, you're referring to the videotape of your. . . . Is it officially your last day?

WRIGHT: No. It was the last week, the last week of session.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And so when you shut down the house on the thirtieth of August, it's pretty much a done deal. The next couple of months you weren't doing too much, except in your district, closing out things.

YATES: I take it they now videotape those every time and they give you a copy.

WRIGHT: They also have it written. They do a . . .

YATES: Transcript.

WRIGHT: But if you see the transcript and you see the . . .

YATES: It's different.

WRIGHT: Yeah, it's different. Which amazed me. But it is, yeah.

YATES: Well, out of the three of them, referring to the president pro tem, what did you see as pluses or—I don't want to say minuses exactly, but differences in style of leadership that were effective or not effective?

WRIGHT: Well, it's hard for me, because I was only with David I think a year and then he left.

YATES: Yeah, it wasn't long, I remember.

WRIGHT: Dealing with him, though, as the president pro tem, he just seemed like a very nice man, which really I thought was fascinating. Here he was a practicing Catholic, anti-abortion . . .

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: Got women's support. Now, a Republican in that position, the same thing, practicing whatever faith he practices as a really practicing—not just a Catholic in name—Catholic, or whatever religion that has some strict guidelines, say. . . . David still managed to get women's support. Put a Republican in that same position, he wouldn't. They wouldn't get the support. Just because it's the whole presentation. David was proud to be an Italian. He always had these Italian dinners. I always sang at the Italian dinners, which give me a glass of wine, you know, and I'm ready to go.

It was a point that when I went to see him on the floor or went to see him in committee, and talked to him, if it was something that I was after that I really

couldn't get, and it was because he didn't have caucus, the numbers in the caucus just wouldn't be for it, he'd just tell me, "I just can't guarantee you anything on this." But if I asked him for something and he said, "Yeah, I could get the votes," I got the votes. So I worked well with David.

I worked well with Lockyer. Although there were times when I told him, when he was in committee, things I didn't like he was doing. I'd tell him. But I never did it like having shouting matches, like Diane had that one day that we all rallied behind her, because he was inappropriate as a chair to do what he did to her. I never did it out in the open. I'd just tell him after or before that I didn't like something I knew he was going to do. So Lockyer and I got along well. When he made a commitment to me that I would be on the Budget Committee when I asked him, because I knew my guys were trying to get rid of me for no reason that I could see. I did what they asked. I mean how could you do when you're down on votes?

YATES: He supported you? Lockyer did?

WRIGHT: Yeah, he did. And John did the first round. And the second time out John told me that I should have come sooner, that he had already committed to Ross that he'd put who he wanted on the Budget Committee, when he wanted. So he took my vice chairmanship away from me at the end. Because it was the vice chair. In the assembly they just appoint to serve on it. In the senate it was always the vice chair would be one of the conferees.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: So they just dumped me.

YATES: Let me shift here to the executive branch and a similar type of question. I'm wondering about your observations on the governors that were in office while you served in the legislature, and observations maybe about their effectiveness in working with the legislature. Or, if it helps, maybe more the relationship with the caucus—the Republican Caucus, too, as part of that. Jerry Brown was just there briefly, I guess.

WRIGHT: Well, two years. Two years of Jerry Brown was equal to eight years of Jerry Brown.

YATES: Well, why don't you start with Jerry Brown?

WRIGHT: Jerry Brown. For some reason or other, he had locked in his mind about the freeway coming into Simi Valley. Of course he had Gianturco there, she wanted to plant flowers instead of build freeways. He would see me, and he would always make the statement "I don't think you're going to get that freeway in Simi Valley." He'd always mention "in Simi Valley," because that's where I was from, Simi Valley. But he just. . . . He liked campaigning, I think, better than he did running the state.

YATES: Really?

WRIGHT: Oh, yeah. I think he liked the campaign. Because it seemed to me. . . . The type of man he was to me was—Willie called him Moonbeam—he was just

flitting around from one thing to another. I can remember him coming in and talking to us as a group, and I can't remember if it was just our caucus he came to, which I don't think he did, but I know it was where there was a group of legislators that was there. So it might have been one of those combination meetings where you had people from different organizations in there and then you had members of the legislature too. And he was speaking where he didn't see why we had to expand the freeways, because what we could do was that people would just ride together. That's all. People would ride together. When we were talking about some of the issues for housing, his thought was, "Well, you know you have people who worked days and you have people who work nights and why can't they share?" Well, who wants strangers in your home? Because they can live there and they'll go out to work. When you come home from work they're going out and you're coming in. That didn't make sense, but he'd make statements like that. So he was kind of strange. And I don't think he was the best governor.

Deukmejian, I really liked Deukmejian. Of course, then some of our guys were a little opposed to him.

YATES: Why is that?

WRIGHT: Well, you know, it's a strange thing. When you're going around. . . . And especially I can understand as a governor you're trying to get support. You make commitments. And the biggest thing in the Republican party at that

time was government waste. You can't just go spending money all the time and such as that. So Deukmejian, my interpretation of his reign as governor was the fact that he was going to be tight with money. But he didn't make any commitments on anything else. He was going to be law and order and tight on money. That was the Republican.

So then when you were trying to put something through that you thought was a really good idea, and you had the support for it, it was difficult to get his support. And he had no problem blue penciling and vetoing bills. Our problem was always trying to insure that he'd let us know up front that he was going to veto it. We were a small group. It wasn't forty something people he had to call, you know. Let us know. You're our governor. Let us know when you're going to dump on us, you know. I liked the point that you could talk to him, really talk to him. And it was the people around him. . . . That's one thing about a governor, they've got to get people around them. And it isn't necessarily because you supported me in my campaign and I'm going to give you this appointment, but get people around who understand that particular area of government.

That's what's been with the Systems of Care, that it's so hard trying to get through to them that this is not a program that you put money into and later down the line you're not going to have to spend any of the money. No, it's what it saves you. As we call it, cost avoidance. Because you don't see. . . . If

you could put all your graphs side by side you'd see that where we had Systems of Care in place year after year you saw a drop in the amount of youngsters not finishing school. So that's your special ed. You're getting more youngsters to graduate. You're not putting youngsters in group homes, you're not seeing them in the criminal justice system, the group that are being taken care of by this program. That's where the costs are reduced. Because otherwise, at the rate you're going, you're going to have them there forever. They'll just go from one branch or one program into another and you're still going to be paying for them.

So Deukmejian had a couple of people that were around him. Steve [Steven A.] Merksamer was one. He was his chief of staff. Whatever you said. . . . If you gave them a report they'd give it to one of their underlings, and they'd go through the report and they'd come back and they'd tell you this, this, and this. And so that's what you went with. You never got into the heart and soul of what was going on in that particular division. Well, you couldn't, that was true, but then at least have people around you who could, who would go out and find out why did you pass this piece of legislation to start with. Why did we start this program?

The—what is it called?—Lanterman-Petris-Short Bill is a good example.¹

1. S.B. 677, 1967 Reg. Sess., Cal. Stat., ch. 1667.

[Frank] Lanterman was a Republican, [Alan] Short and [Nicholas C.] Petris were Democrats. They came together on this program. It was the right program for that time. Now, they've been trying to change it ever since, but it's an area where you just can't put. . . . If you do this, then this and this is what you're going to respond. You do it this way, you're going to respond that way. You can't with these people, because if you do you're going to have some of them that are going to really be detrimentally affected by the decision.

So it was that. So with Deukmejian being a family man, when I started in the thing with the children I could talk to him. And he supported me right up until he left office, even though that last year he wasn't quite able to fund it as much as I'd like to have had it funded. At least he signed the fact that it could go state wide. I thought, "We'll work on that. We'll get it done." And so my commitment was to have it fully funded before I left office. So thanks to Davis. . . . And I wrote Davis a letter thanking him, and I said you won't be disappointed with the funding.

YATES: To Davis, you said?

WRIGHT: Yeah. I wrote letters to Pete Wilson too. Especially when they had such a deficit. Which then sounded terrible, the amount we were down in the budget. I wrote a note to him thanking him for keeping the program alive. He didn't cut it. At least he kept it alive.

YATES: Well, talk about Wilson. You have two Republican governors in a row. Talk

about his relationship with the legislature and the Republican Caucus.

WRIGHT: Well, starting out, I knew Pete way back when he was the mayor of San Diego. That's where I met him. I was the mayor of Simi Valley, he was mayor of San Diego. That's where I met Pete Wilson. And he was a really down to earth, what I thought a good Republican. I talk about being moderate, moderate, well, he represented an area that we would call progressive. You have to represent all the people. There are sometimes things you don't like, but you know that the people that are involved in that particular issue are trying their best, so you go along with it. So with Pete, whether he knew it or not when he came into office, he was now. . . . He really knew how to work the press as compared to other Republicans.

YATES: Because of his experience, you think? Being in the [U.S.] Senate?

WRIGHT: Yeah, and then coming back. And then he had people around him. You get all these hot shots working in your administration who. . . . All they want to see is to get themselves ahead. It would be wonderful if Wilson went to Washington and they'd go with him. They'd be part of his team.

His only promise to the caucuses, as far as I knew, was that they're going to get a fair reapportionment. So when they bitched and complained about everything else he did, they didn't have much to stand on, because he was fulfilling his obligation. He said he was going to do it and he did. He gave you a fair reapportionment. Well, what we found out was we really didn't

need a fair reapportionment. We needed one that's been kind of massaged and put in place to help us. [Laughter] Because certainly with the fair reapportionment we lost seats.

We did gain in '94. We had people in the legislature that didn't know how to handle it. I mean Brulte was. . . . Why he hung on. . . . The minute he went for a vote on the floor and lost it, there should have been somebody else put up in his place. Step down, work it out, find out where you can get the votes.

YATES: You're talking about the leadership?

WRIGHT: Yeah. We had the lead. We had a one vote lead. We had forty-one Republicans. There's forty-one Republicans. [Paul] Horcher could have been had. Horcher was a pick of Frank Hill, to take his place. He picked Horcher. Well, then, support him! He's your good guy or your bad guy, but you picked him. And instead the guy's hocked his house, he did everything and anything just to try and stay in. They weren't helping him. Well, if they'd helped him, he'd owe them, just like [Peter] Pete Chacon owed Willie. Pete Chacon would never have been in office if it wasn't for Willie raising money for him. He couldn't do it.

YATES: Well, continue with Wilson, the dynamics with Wilson and working with the legislature. I guess really we're talking about the caucus.

WRIGHT: Well, basically with the caucus, Pete expected us to just line step with him. Whatever he wanted to do was OK. And in the beginning he had some good

ideas. I was thrilled when I was on the conference committee in the beginning.

YATES: For the budget, you're talking about?

WRIGHT: For the budget, yes. But then he started doing strange things. And of course his staff was right there, and it was probably one of the staff people who dreamed it up, and one of the things that really stuck in my craw was this idea of giving the youngsters who graduated with honors this diploma from the governor.

YATES: Yeah. You did mention that last time, right.

WRIGHT: And I wouldn't vote for it in the conference committee. I voted against it. So then you come back with something. Then finally it was that he would just be able to send them out some kind of a merit congratulations from the governor. And all he was doing. . . . That was political. And you can do a lot of things politically without messing with the budget. And if I didn't like it, I didn't like it, so towards the end there I wasn't on his list of popular people, and I knew it.

But I was just so annoyed. Because the important things, he just kind of glazed over them, while he was trying. . . . For instance, again, my pet program that does work, Systems of Care, to expand the program. . . . When I explained what it did and everything for him, he'd rather take \$10 million to identify the youngsters, with no program the youngster could be put into. But

it had his name on it. So you could see that once he hit as governor of the State of California everybody around him—not only him, but everybody around him—had the Washington [D.C.] . . . Potomac fever, as they call it.

YATES: So you really think that was sort of a constant thing that was there?

WRIGHT: Sure, sure. What did he do? He came out and announced the fact that he was going to run for president.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And he had medical problems. He had so many other problems. Now what made him think he was going to do it? He really wasn't prepared, but he had everybody around him telling him how great he was and that he could do it. You have to have some people around to say, "Wait a minute. It's not going to work." But if you ever dared to say that to him, forget that piece of legislation that you needed for your district, you know.

YATES: So it sounds like, in terms of the Republican Caucus, there wasn't too much of a kind of support for each other in terms of legislation.

WRIGHT: No. As I told you, we had that retreat and Bill Baker and the governor, God, they went after each other.

YATES: Yeah, say a little. . . . Again, what was the retreat?

WRIGHT: Well, they had decided that before we would go into session every year. . . . And they've always had these retreats. They would go off . . .

YATES: The caucus meets.

WRIGHT: The caucus meets, away from the capital. It can be in one of the hotels downtown or it can be in San Diego or it could be up in Monterey. Whatever. And they meet and it's always to lay their plans for the next two years in office.

YATES: And do the newly elected members come?

WRIGHT: Yeah, they're invited. Oh, yeah.

YATES: So it's their introduction to . . .

WRIGHT: Well, kind of an introduction.

YATES: Kind of, OK.

WRIGHT: Yeah. I went to a couple, and as I told you the one that really got me, that I got just totally disgusted with this whole thing, was on child care.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: It was the number one issue.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: And they just—pfff—ignored it. I spent the money to bring the woman out, but they didn't give me the courtesy of sitting and listening to what she had to say. Very sparsely attended, that particular meeting. And yet in the end, what is the big issue? It was the big issue.

It seemed for myself that what kept me on this exhilaration about being in the legislature for all these years was the fact that I always felt like I was kind of a step ahead of them. I was trying to get them to support child care. I did it

with the budget, with the Welfare [Reform] Bill, mental health. I was always kind of a step ahead. In some of the things I said were going to happen, I was kind of a step ahead of them. But they weren't paying any attention, so. . . .

YATES: So what about this particular retreat, where you mentioned Wilson showed up, made it . . .

WRIGHT: That, as I said, was up north. [Chris] Chandler was the legislator. It was up in Nevada [City]. . . . Some old mining town or something that was quite unique that we went to. This was before we ended up with the deficit that we did.

YATES: So this is early in Wilson's governorship.

WRIGHT: Yeah. And then it kind of held, I would say, through his whole administration. He had a few members that would go along with him on everything he wanted to do, but then they were the more moderates.

YATES: So what would he do? Present his platform or . . .

WRIGHT: No, no. He came to talk to us about what was going to go on for the next year and where we were with the budget, and what were our goals and what were his goals, and how we were all going to work together. And then he made some statement that I just can't even recall what it was. But the four letter word was used and a lot of other words that. . . . You know there was that confrontation, but you don't remember it word for word. And I don't remember it word for word. And since we weren't taking minutes to be printed, it would have to be somebody with a better mind than I have right

now. I don't remember exactly what the issue was that caused the blow up.

YATES: But it didn't set up a very positive setting, then, for working together?

WRIGHT: No. You have to understand that this group of fellows, they're what I call purists in their ideals. For some reason or other it doesn't hit home to them that you're representing a district—I don't care what district it is—that isn't 100 percent behind what your beliefs are. I think the whole thing that we leave ourselves wide open for as Republicans is women's issues and children and social programs.

YATES: Well . . .

WRIGHT: So we're always the hardhearted people.

YATES: Right, and I want to come back to that, in terms of talking about what's happened with the Republican party. But maybe you can touch briefly on Gray Davis.

WRIGHT: As a . . .

YATES: As governor and working with the legislature.

WRIGHT: It started when he ran for lieutenant governor. And I told my caucus, and I told everybody I could, to try to get them to listen, that this was a chance to beat him. You see, you have the feel. If you're in the political arena you have the feel. And you knew this was a Republican year. You knew how close the votes were going to be. But you just knew we were going to pick up seats, there were a lot of things that were going to go on in '94. So I had the gut

feeling. I had the same gut feeling in '94 that I had in 1980, when I ran for the first time for the assembly. I had the gut feeling that I could beat this guy, because nobody around the capital likes Davis. They didn't like him. Republican or Democrat.

Now, to get that message out. What were his bad points? That's what you want to do, you want to hit him on his bad points. But I couldn't get the money. I had my TV spots reserved, I had the film ready to go. I never got to use it. I never got to use it. I just felt he could be beat. But I even had Democrats that told me they were going to vote for me and not vote for him, which gave me a good feeling. I figured San Francisco would probably be lost, a good portion of Los Angeles would be lost, but I could pick it up other places. But I had to get the message out. I never got my message out. So I lost.

First time he came into the chambers. . . . Well, he was going to open the session, that's how close it was. I'd lost in November, and here he was going to open up the session in December. So I went up to him and I congratulated him and I figured that was it. Battle, it's over, it's done. I didn't realize until I started getting into different issues that this guy holds a grudge. I should have never run against him. Well, what did he expect me to do?

So then we get him as governor, and I didn't realize that when he became governor that he still didn't like me until I was told that he never wanted my

name mentioned, and he'd roll his eyes when they would even mention me. And anything I wanted, I wasn't going to get. But then there were some issues where you know you had enough, you had all the Democrats' support along that he'd go along with, and even though his wife [Sharon Davis] has seen the children's program, seen the Village, which is the adult's program, and he was touting it. . . . I don't know if you saw this [*San Jose Mercury News*]. . . .

YATES: No.

WRIGHT: I'll let you read it. I should have made . . .

YATES: Is this a recent article?

WRIGHT: Yes. Yes, yes. His wife knows about the programs, and yet he wiped it out, completely wiped it out. Basically on a statement evidently made by one of his staff people, because they were looking for money. Here's \$35 million, dump it.

YATES: But now it's back in the budget?

WRIGHT: But it's back in the budget. But now we get down to the point of the Big Five, who will sit around a table just like you and I are sitting here now. And I know that, one, because I really am. . . . Maybe I'm getting paranoid in my old age, but I know there are members of the caucus in the senate that are aching to get even with me, if that's the term you want to use, that would have no problem. . . . Because, one, they thought it was always a touchy feely . . .

YATES: The Systems of Care?

WRIGHT: Yeah, it was always a touchy feely program. And there's something wrong with me, I'd gone off my deep end because I supported it. But I always looked at government as there are certain people that you are going to spend money on whether you like it or not. And the least you can do is do it cost effectively. Get something for your buck. More bang for your buck. That's it, that's where I'm coming from.

YATES: Well, I think this ties in nicely to talking about what's happened within the Republican party in California since the time you first became involved in the seventies, and what you've observed over time since then as to what's been going on with the party.

WRIGHT: It's frustrating. It's frustrating to watch them. And they pay no attention to me. It might have started out maybe a little bit with Ken Maddy. He was just a character. But he had such poise and such presence. And he was a moderate, no question about it, but he still worked with the conservatives. I thought he was an excellent leader. When you realize that you're dealing with a house of forty, and maybe have thirteen or fourteen people [Laughter], that's all you have in your caucus, and at one time I understand they were down to eleven. And that's when [Bill] Campbell was the Republican leader in the senate. Next was Maddy. You had to hand it to the man. And when he got up to speak on the floor on an issue he was very eloquent, and he knew what he was talking about. He had it all down. So whether he knew the subject matter

beforehand or not, he had the staff that really worked with him and really had things prepared for him.

YATES: But in terms of the Republican party in the state . . .

WRIGHT: But here's what I'm saying. . . . But they ridiculed Ken.

YATES: They being?

WRIGHT: The conservatives, again. Everybody starts out with ideals. And maybe you choose your party by those ideals or for whatever reason. I started out, I was a Democrat. I got to the point by 1976 that I couldn't stand the Democrats, because I was always looking, again, at cost effectiveness, instead of some silly program just because you've got a couple of people that are going to vote for you. And so by 1976 I'd had it. I could never go out and work for the Democratic candidate. And we had my two friends, Fran and Margaret Davison. They were very active in the Republican party here. And they were always telling me, when we'd get into little groups where we'd meet, how much I was a Republican and not a Democrat. And finally, of course, in 1976, that was right. No question about it. I just couldn't take what they were doing. And so I turned around, and Fran wanted me to change and I said not until after the election, because I was running for city council and I wasn't going to change my party registration at that point. I'd do it after the election. So the election was on Tuesday. Wednesday morning there's a knock on my door and it's Fran with a change of voter registration. I said, "Yeah, you're

right, I'm going to do it." So I did change.

At that point I then joined the Republican women. Because truthfully, if you take statewide or nationally, you do not have a group that is called the federated democratic women. You do have a Federation of Republican Women. What a wonderful tool. It was wonderful for any of the fellows that ran for office. And they patted all the women on the back. You stuff their envelopes, you walk precincts for them, you manned telephones. You do it all, and they get elected. And with some of the women, they haven't gotten beyond that. Regardless of rank, they'll introduce the man who's there that's an elected official before they'll introduce the women, and there's not that very many women to introduce anyway. And they just naturally seem to feel that if it's an elected position, it should be the men.

And then they have the situation where they really have to get more women into the federation. The clubs are dwindling. They have luncheon meetings. Well, if you're a working woman, which the majority are today, it's very difficult for them to go to your luncheon. So then they try to have it in the evening. It's not too easy to get them there anyway in the evening, unless they would have a cause and a reason for doing it, that they would really make a point. So they can be registered Republicans, but they're not necessarily going to work within this federation.

Then you have what is basically the disillusioned Republican women, who

are the ones who want to be a part, want to be elected officials. But they always seem to be working on their own when they do it.

YATES: So what's going on that the Republican party isn't attracting these people?

WRIGHT: Because what was done, and I was there in the legislature when they started this thing, was the fact that the conservatives were going to take over the state party.

YATES: So the . . .

WRIGHT: Pat Nolan and all those guys. Pat and Frank [Hill] and Bill Baker and Ross Johnson and John Lewis, and you go down the whole list of them that were there to take over the Republican party. And so they spent more time trying to get each central committee, get the conservatives elected into each central committee. . . . So now you have a party where the majority of the members and active members in the Republican party in the State of California are conservatives.

YATES: And women . . .

WRIGHT: And women . . .

YATES: Are not as conservative?

WRIGHT: The majority of women that they should have in the party would not be.

Because women want to be equal. What's wrong with that? So wanting to be equal, that I have a mind and I can decide I don't agree with you on this issue and I agree with you on this other issue. . . .

YATES: So if you're that conservative, if you're on this very conservative side or edge, then you're saying there's no way philosophically that they can consider women to be equal?

WRIGHT: I don't think there is. Now, they mouth a good platform, that they're there for the women, but they don't show it. I can sit here and say I'm conservative, and then have the staff of my own caucus in Sacramento say the only thing I have to do is change my registration. In other words they've written me off as a conservative Republican. All I have to do is just change my registration. I think they should know I already did that. I was a Democrat up until 1976, then I changed to Republican. I will not change my registration. I consider myself a conservative. But give me credit for having a mind of my own. Now, the Democrats can get together, and I would imagine behind closed doors they have some wild discussions, but when they come out they're united, the women are there for them. They've got women in office. Look at all the Democratic women in office.

YATES: Yes, it's noticeable. I was checking again. You've mentioned this before but, let's see, in '99 in the senate there were fifteen Republicans and one woman—that was you—and then in the assembly there were twenty-eight Republicans and three were women. Now there's no women Republicans in the senate, and now there are four women out of thirty within thirty Republicans in the assembly. And the numbers seem to be going down, not

up.

WRIGHT: Right. But the Democratic women have gone up.

YATES: And supposedly term limits was one way that people like women and minorities were going to be able to get access to these seats.

WRIGHT: So what is the key? The key. . . . I'll give you one good example. And I kind of blew my stack about it. And not that I'm a feminist, I don't consider myself a feminist. My family comes first. That's the most important thing. Good or bad, my family comes first. There's certain issues that I'm very sensitive about. Abortion is one of them. I am absolutely opposed to abortion. I don't like the idea of saying you're right-to-life or pro-life and pro-choice. Pro-choice is covering up. Pro-life is trying to make you feel oh-so-pious. You're against abortion. You can be pro-choice or pro-life and be against abortion. I can be pro-choice and be against abortion. So that isn't the issue.

The issue is that these are really matters of family decision or an individual decision, and if we're for individual rights, then we have to agree that they have a right to make a decision. I don't agree with it. You come and tell me you're pregnant and you are going to get an abortion. I don't agree that you should do that, and if you ask me for advice, I would advise you against it. But you still have the right to make the decision, and you're going to have to live with it. Now, to some, it don't mean a darn thing to them. To others they

grieve about it, they go into despair about it, but they make that decision for whatever reason. And if you believe in individual rights, if you believe in equality, if you believe in less taxes, if you believe that you're for law and order, all the things that are the Republican platform, or supposedly Republican philosophy, then you're there for it. Now, I have people like McClintock, that's always quoting Lincoln. Well, what did Lincoln do? He freed the slaves! It just doesn't gel.

YATES: It sounds like abortion is a good example of a situation, if I'm hearing you right, where those representing the Republican party in California are taking this one sort of extreme, more pious view that leaves no room for sort of this [idea that] you can be philosophically against abortion, but at the same time be able to work within. And that's why women perhaps are not more involved.

WRIGHT: Women are more inclined, as I see it, to be policy driven. Men are not. They are more politically driven. They can talk to you and be very pleasant to you, and you walk out the door and they'll say, "Well, you see that so-and-so," and they'll start tearing you apart. But they want your vote. So the numbers add up, they have your vote. They don't necessarily want any of your input. They just want your vote.

YATES: Well, what about political leadership groups? Like there was one called Seneca Network . . .

WRIGHT: Seneca was good. What they were trying to do. . . . And they're still good.

YATES: Yeah, you know, I tried to find . . .

WRIGHT: The problem is they don't have the funding.

YATES: Have you been involved in groups like that?

WRIGHT: Yes, I was involved with them for a while.

YATES: And what about CEWAER [California Elected Women's Association for Education and Research]?

WRIGHT: CEWAER is not a political . . .

YATES: Right. But I mean it . . .

WRIGHT: Political and not political.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: What it is, it's elected officials.

YATES: Right. But it's about . . .

WRIGHT: They don't fund women for campaigns.

YATES: No, no. But I was thinking maybe being a place where women who are elected officials come together from either party, and then are able to provide sort of a leadership role for other women, for younger women to do these things. But that's not happening, you're saying.

WRIGHT: Not really. Not really. Because it's still the party that's supposed to be the support. You have the support of your party. Just go back, go twenty years, and if you take, in twenty years, every election and every primary and check where there were women running for a Republican seat, you would see where

men were put in to run against them. You know, if you thought of someone and I'll take you. . . . I want to say it was [Charlene] Zettel, but I'm not sure it was Zettel that was running. It was out in the Riverside-San Bernardino area, and she was in the assembly.

YATES: Right.

WRIGHT: More years experience in the assembly than the young man who had just come into the assembly, who ran against her. But the support went to him instead of her. Or the same instance, here I am an incumbent running for re-election. Why would not the governor of the State of California stay out of the election? Or support me as the incumbent? He didn't. He supported the fellow who was running against me in the primary. Our guy supported somebody who was running against me in the primary.

YATES: Where do you see . . .

WRIGHT: And they wouldn't do that with a man. They just wouldn't do it. If they had a favorite they wanted to run they would tell him "Wait your turn."

YATES: What do you see as the possible future for change in this attitude?

WRIGHT: It's going to be very, very difficult. It's going to be difficult, because where do we show that in the next ten years we are going to get control of the houses in the State of California to have any say in reapportionment?

YATES: You're talking about just any Republican.

WRIGHT: Because that's where it comes from. But our guys in the assembly and in the

senate this year sold out on reapportionment. I mean there's always a good fight when there's reapportionment. Nothing. It was supposedly because we wanted the control, to keep the control in congress. Like the caucuses in the State of California were going to have any say. The caucus in the State of California is Democratic back in Washington [D.C.]. So where did we help by rolling over and playing dead on reapportionment?

[End Tape 11, Side B]

[Begin Tape 12, Side A]

YATES: I was curious also, to come back to the Republican party as a whole. . . . Again, when I was rereading some of the material I had, there was an article that came out I think in 2001 by Lou Cannon¹ that was actually about what's been going on with the Republican party and the challenges of the 1990s. And that one reason for the decline of the party, in California at least, he cited the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, because that was a rallying point for Republicans, and then also Wilson and Prop[osition] 187 in 1994.²

WRIGHT: I don't know who advised him.

1. "Surviving the Republican Train Wreck," by Lou Cannon and A.G. Block, *California Journal*, Vol. 25 (February 2001): 30-37

2. Proposition 187 (November 1994), illegal aliens, ineligibility for public services, verification, and reporting.

YATES: Well, because I guess what was behind that was that a lot of Latinos who might have supported Republicans before became turned off by that. What's your observation?

WRIGHT: Oh, sure. Here I am representing Oxnard. Oxnard is predominately. . . . And I always have problems with whether it's Hispanic, Chicanos, Latinos, and I didn't. . . . I had to be honest with them, I didn't recognize the difference. I had a lot of fellows and a lot of people in Oxnard that I just absolutely loved. They're Latinos. There may be an influx coming up of people into the State of California, because we're right on the Mexican border. It was the federal government's responsibility, not ours. I think we should never have gone after the illegals. The federal government should have. And if we have these people who want to come into our country, what did we do? Go back. Who can say that from the very beginning of time that they lived in the United States or what was the Americas, that they lived here? And so we were generation after generation. . . . We're all Americans.

YATES: But as a voting bloc and being attracted to the Republican party . . .

WRIGHT: And the best part of it is when you look at the principles of the Republican party and the philosophy of the Republican party, we should have every Latino in there. Every Latino should be with us.

YATES: So why don't you? Or why don't they, I should say.

WRIGHT: Because we're now going to hit them over the head with the fact that they're

illegal. And it's OK to do it because illegals aren't voting. Or shouldn't be. Now, if they are, well, that's something you should look into. But, basically, look at Latinos. What's their number one thing? Family. What's the Republicans'? Family. That's it. The majority of them are Catholics. Either fallen away Catholics, but at least they started with a Catholic background, so they should have a religious tie.

YATES: So what do you think about this observation about the Republican party and the connection with Prop. 187 having an influence over . . .

WRIGHT: Because in many instances we take these damn polls and we think we can win. And we did. We won 187. But I cringed at it, because it should have been with the federal government. Immigration.

YATES: So you do think that would . . .

WRIGHT: Immigration. It's not just the border. We have a border between Arizona and California, or a border between Nevada and California. But that border between Mexico and California is a federal responsibility.

YATES: So that shouldn't have become a state mandate.

WRIGHT: No. But of course we were having our problems, because the federal government wasn't supporting us financially. And there were other states that had the same problem. Texas, Arizona, they had problems too along the borders. But it was like everything else, let's do a poll. We do a poll and in the poll we find out this is a big issue.

Why are we all jumping on board on education? Education's a big issue. But are we handling it right? No, we're not. We keep changing. We have these poor kids who don't know whether they're coming or going. And it's tough because when I went to school, American history was number one. We had to have it in order to graduate. I really enjoyed American history. But I didn't have that many years I had to worry about it. I took it. My daughter. . . . And I remember when she was ten years old I said something to her and she cried, because I wasn't satisfied with what she was doing with her homework. And she said to me, "Yeah, you can talk. When you went to school you didn't have so much." And I said, "What do you mean, I had homework all the time." "Oh, no. You didn't have as many presidents to learn and you didn't have as many of this to learn." Yeah, there was more. Well, I can imagine my granddaughter's going to tell me the same thing when she gets really into it. Well, somewhere along the line some of it has to fall off if we're going to get everything else into the curriculum of what these kids are supposed to learn.

YATES: So what do you think . . .

WRIGHT: It's all this, you know. To me, you have to take and figure out a way in which you balance. . . . It's all balancing. We have the environmental people, so we all try to get the environmentalists, but the Republicans are fickle with the environment, we don't bother with environmental issues. We should be. But

no, that's Democrat.

Social. Everybody should work. Sure everybody should work. One problem. Even when we were doing welfare, we can't employ a hundred percent. We will never employ a hundred percent, because we don't have a hundred percent jobs. So something has to happen and we're going to have to be responsible. If I'm lucky enough to have a job, I'm paying some of my taxes to help that fellow who can't get a job. No matter what he does, he can't get a job. He wants to work, so let's find a way that we can bundle up that energy that he wants to expel in working and put him into something else if possible or set him so he can compete.

YATES: So do you see anything in the immediate future that indicates a change in approach by the Republican party?

WRIGHT: No.

YATES: This is the stance, this is the philosophy right now?

WRIGHT: A good example, [Rod] Pacheco in the assembly. How long did he stay as Republican leader?

YATES: I don't know. I'd have to look it up. Apparently not very long, I guess.

WRIGHT: I think he had a couple of weeks, maybe a month. But we had a Hispanic or Latino, whichever they want to be addressed as. I don't care. I'm Italian, but I'm an American first. There was a good point. If you voted him in, the least you could do was let him last a while. If you're having problems with him,

solve it behind closed doors. Don't dump him.

Why did Ken Maddy. . . I mean, I thought it was horrible. I voted for Ken Maddy when they dumped him. But it was cut and dried, they knew what they were going to do. I mean it was so easy to see. God, there we sat, Brulte made the motion to replace Maddy, for Ross Johnson to take it, so then the vote was taken and Ross Johnson became leader. You know when I found out about it? On the floor. Ross asked me if I was going to support him. I didn't even know he was running and I was a member of the caucus. It was cut and dried. So once Ross got his votes, then he appointed Brulte as his caucus chair. Imagine that. And it was all cut and dried who was going to be what. So you know how the votes came. Brulte to me is an intelligent young man, I don't take anything away from him on that, but he is hell bent driven for his own self.

So there he is, he's pulling all the strings, and what does the caucus talk about today? The same thing they talked about last year and the year before and ten years ago. It's how they can nail the Democrats so they can get more numbers in their caucus. But they sold out. They've got fourteen. . . Is it fourteen now? They have fourteen, they'll have fourteen from now until the end of time. Because who's going to do the reapportionment next time? The Democrats. And you've given them control for ten years. But, see, it's good, because for those in office, they can scream and scratch and rant and rave

about everything the Democrats are doing wrong and they don't have to come up with a plan of their own. They don't have to do anything. They'll get elected because the people in that particular district they come from is heavily conservative Republicans and they're going to . . .

YATES: Keep voting for those . . .

WRIGHT: Voting for them because they are the true Republicans.

YATES: But in terms of expanding numbers, that's not happening.

WRIGHT: I'd be very, very surprised. Election coming up in November, I want to see if we have more than fourteen Republicans.

YATES: Well, at this point, to wrap things up, I always ask people about in looking back on their tenure in the legislature what you feel are your accomplishments and what are your disappointments. And I assume you'll talk about Systems of Care.

WRIGHT: Yeah, you can't get me off that subject.

YATES: But are there any other things that stand out to you . . .

WRIGHT: Things that I think. . . .

YATES: You wish you'd done or . . .

WRIGHT: Well, I wish I was there to ensure that Systems of Care, both as a children's program and as an adult program, will eliminate some of the high costs we have of what we do with our people. I think it's horrible that we put people in prison because of the fact that they've had a mental problem. And you say,

“Well, how come we have so many mental. . . . You know, they’re just using it.” Well, let’s look around. We have more population, much more population. So the percentages have got to go up. The stresses that we put. . . . We have some of our kids going crazy just trying to pass a test. We have our teachers involved in doing nothing but preparing these kids to take these tests to prove what they’ve learned. Never had that pressure before. High tech is pressure. I’m still fighting with the computer because I don’t understand when it doesn’t answer the question. I think I’m giving it a simple question, and they come back with an answer. . . . What do they mean? We’ve got to prepare our young people. There’s no question about education. But you can’t educate someone who’s mentally ill.

YATES: So the positive is that you got this thing rolling?

WRIGHT: I got it going.

YATES: The hard thing is . . .

WRIGHT: Keeping it. Because if people come in. . . . Because they don’t know, and they’re not going to take the time. And look at the board of supervisors, they let the Ventura project be destroyed—or the Systems of Care be destroyed—in Ventura, because they never bothered to find out what it did or how it was successful or what happened with these youngsters after the program. Because they’re not in it forever. When they put them in jail, they’ve got them there forever. When they have them in an institution, they’ve got them

there forever. And if they dump them out on the street where they can't take care of themselves, they're going to have them either dead and they're going to pay for their burial. But somewhere we're paying, paying, paying for things we shouldn't have to pay for if we made productive citizens out of them.

YATES: Well, what in addition to Systems of Care do you think about?

WRIGHT: I'm proud of what I did in the business community in regards to environmental issues. Now maybe a couple of years down the line it may be wrong, just because as new technologies come. . . . Sometimes the technology is coming out so fast you can't keep up with it, but the whole idea was to ensure safety in the workplace, to insure that we could be competitive with the rest of the world in our products here in California. And we were doing that when I think the legislation that I carried, which we called the. . . . What was our title for it? Here I go again. This getting old is ridiculous. I can explain it to you and maybe the name will come to me.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: It was the idea of setting up so that people that were involved using what could become hazardous waste material, that they were not charged for the substance itself but rather the amount.

YATES: You did mention that. Tiered permitting.

WRIGHT: Tiered permitting, yeah.

YATES: Right. Right, we talked about that.

WRIGHT: So that was the other issue. What I did in education for some of our adult educational programs. Especially in Los Angeles, where the school district is so huge that everything was going to the main, and then all the outlying, like Lancaster. . . . I didn't work with Lancaster because I never got to that point, but we did in the Santa Clarita Valley, give them more say over that money, because their area was different than Los Angeles, than the heart of Los Angeles was. But that was the county. And to work that, to me that was good.

And then there were things that you do in office when people still come up to you on the street or up to you in the grocery store and thank you for helping them through the maze with the DMV or the maze with their state income tax, where you were actually helping individuals, who if they picked up the phone and called they got a recording and they didn't know where to go or what to do, and things only got worse instead of better for them. You could turn around and. . . . And your staff would handle it, it wasn't something I did personally, but that was my bent in my office, that they would take care of individuals. And you'd change their lives for them. I've had that with youngsters that said I made a difference in their life. And if I ever get near my boxes out there to go through them, in the garage I have a notebook full of letters from youngsters whose lives were turned around by Systems of Care.

So you're taking care of individuals. Isn't that what you're supposed to do? And it's a shame that we do so much polling. Because polling relates to if you say this and do this you're going to get the majority of the votes. And so that's what you do. And if you're behind in the poll, well, then, if you do this, this, and this you've got a good chance of winning. It's all about winning and losing.

YATES: So it takes you away from the actual issues?

WRIGHT: Yeah, and that to me was the only thing I was sad about. Because if I'd get a poll that said I was winning I didn't pay any attention, because I still wanted to go out and talk to these people. You'd be surprised, a simple little thing. . . . In Northridge, under Title IX [Education Amendments of 1972], what they were doing to the sports programs. . . . You go out and you recruit these kids who are coming out of high school, who have potential in one sport or another and so you give them the scholarship so they come to your school, then you cut the program. They lose the scholarship, now what? And so I got involved with that. How did I get involved with it? It came up in a conversation with one of my staff people that went to a luncheon or something and everybody was hot that was involved with the one program. I think it was golfing or something they were taking out. And basketball. It was basketball. They were reducing the basketball squads, that was it. And so they were really hot about it. And I started looking into it, and I agreed.

Title IX never meant that you took away from our athletes that are males in order to start a program for females. Especially if the females didn't care whether they were in it or not. There were programs that they were always trying to get women involved in sports. Well, then, that's what it should be, to get them involved, not to cut out the men who are involved in order to give to the women. That's where we get the battle of the sexes, you know. I mean, gee. There's some things that women want to do, let them do it. And there's some things they don't want to do, so why force them into it with the numbers game? And just being here in the district I found out about it and I was able to continue the sports at the university. Even though the chancellor's office, the ones that were the head, were going along with what they were doing.

YATES: This was at CSU [California State University] Northridge?

WRIGHT: Uh-huh. CSUN, yeah.

YATES: OK. That's what I have. I'm sure I've forgotten something, but I can't think of it at the moment.

WRIGHT: If you do, call. [Laughter]

YATES: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you think we should?

WRIGHT: Oh, gosh, I don't know. As I start going through things. . . . For instance, I went out and I got this whole stack, and I'm still working on it. . . . It's when the budget is signed is when I'll find out if we were successful.

YATES: OK.

WRIGHT: It's things like this. And I start going through. . . . "Oh, my God, I don't remember doing that."

YATES: Right. Well, obviously we can't cover every single thing, but hopefully we've hit on some of the key points. Well, thank you very much for taking the time.

WRIGHT: OK.

YATES: Great.

[End Tape, 12, Side A]