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The Axe Files - Ep. 156: Bob Dold

Released June 15, 2017

Axelrod: [00:00:00] Bob Dold welcome. Let me thank you first for spending your spring here at the Institute of Politics really big impression on our young people here.

Dold: [00:00:12] Well it's been an absolute honor to be here and I thank you David for giving me the opportunity to come and have a conversation with some of these young people. They are truly a gifted bunch.

Axelrod: [00:00:21] I want to get into. And I will. What life is like as a moderate Republican in Washington in the modern era. But before I do I want to talk a little bit about your own your own journey and first of all how the adults get here were you guys original originals in terms of what you're just getting here to us getting here to the U.S..

Dold: [00:00:48] You know I think there was some original I think we trace some folks back to the Mayflower at some point in time I wish I had a clearer picture of what that looks like but I have been in the Chicagoland area. My grandparents were here and so this has been home for a long time and so tell me about see Norman Dold. Oh my gosh. Norman duelled my grandfather grew up in Norwood Ohio and went to a little school in Ohio Denison University which add up to be a family school. I was the 23rd in my family to go so he and my grandmother met there and a very strong Laymon Christian. And it was kind of laid the foundation of God into the pest control business and we have we've kind of been here in the Chicagoland area basically ever since they graduated from the.

Axelrod: [00:01:41] And yours is. So I read somewhere yours is like the oldest pet Pepe has control.

Dold: [00:01:46] Exactly. I was for 10 in the old country the oldest pest control company in the country we know that it started in 1860. Can prove it to 1860 we think it actually started in 1845. And have you.

Axelrod: [00:02:03] And were the Dolds affiliated with it way back then?

Dold: [00:02:07] So back in 1860 Solomon Rose started the company. And so it's two families five generations. And so Daniel Rose with Solomon Rose's son and the Rose family and adults were very close. And when my grandfather graduated from Denison University he worked for Procter and Gamble and then was pulled away to go work for Rose exterminator company at the time and became the general manager of all the rose operations which were at that point in time were coast to coast from San Francisco to New York.

Axelrod: [00:02:37] That's a lot of pests. [crosstalk] did you always know that you were going to go into that business.

Dold: [00:02:47] Well it's being a family business. That was something that in my own mind's eye you know my my hero as it were as my father. I mean he is the person that when when I was kind of struggling which way to go what to do I had a very easy path and that I would usually generally follow what my father did from you know future high school to Denison. The difference we started a very he went to business school at the University of Chicago, I went to Northwestern but that was quite a schism right. So what was the schism on that front. But ultimately going into the family business was something I was always for me it was going to be a when not if and so that ultimately was the case and you know and been involved in the pest control business to this day.

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Axelrod: [00:03:33] So you know I read about your upbringing in the northern suburbs of Chicago including the fact that you know you went into the family business and so on and it's kind of it's sort of like your classic American story. You were the quarterback of the football team and the captain of the wrestling team in the lacrosse team and president of your class and at Denison and all of that. I mean it it sounds like a Norman Rockwell painting.

Dold: [00:04:04] Well I have been extremely blessed and I give a lot of that credit to my parents who raised me with three sisters. And so very tolerant of women and had to be as we grew up with a single bathroom and that sort of a situation. But listen the Norman Rockwell painting that's where you learn compromise you have to have a compromise and a pretty significant way. But you know I you know scouting and that sort of thing always part of the upbringing and I think you know are a part of the Boy Scouts Eagle Scout. Exactly. And they're part of that Norman Rockwell type painting and I hope that my wife and I can try to provide that for our children. But we want to do it not just for our children but we hope that people have that sense of Americana regardless of what community they grow up in and ultimately for me I realize that there are people out there that struggling with a lot bigger issues than the ones that I dealt with growing up and you know I was blessed to be in that situation and my hope is that for our country we get to a point where communities in the inner city regardless of state have that same type of an opportunity is fine.

Axelrod: [00:05:21] I mean you raise this issue of and empathy somehow has become a dirty word in our politics that you know empathy is a sign of softness or liberalness. So but it seems like everyone in politics could use a little bit more empathy and a little bit more willingness to understand not just other people's experiences but also where their points of view come from.

Dold: [00:05:49] Not only do I think it's healthy I think it it it shines a light on kind of a whole different opportunity for solutions. And so not only this idea of empathy but this idea of understanding and there's I think too little of it right now to take the time to understand where people may be coming from which is a point of view that frankly is not wrong it may be just different. And ultimately if we're going to get out of the mess that we find ourselves in in any particular issue that you might want to go down the only way that we're going to get out of that mess is by people finding some common ground and and working on it together. So there's going to be a bipartisan solution. And ultimately that's throughout history been one of the only ways that we know how to solve problems.

Axelrod: [00:06:33] Yeah but it's hard to find hard to find extremely difficult. Yeah yeah. When you were in Congress and you did two stints in Congress will we'll get into the history of that. But as long as we're on this empathy subject you are thrown together with members from all over the country. What did you learn from them. What did you what what how did people from other places in the country and other experiences including inner city communities how did that impact on you.

Dold: [00:07:08] Well I mean for me I wanted to make sure that I for one was listening to where people were coming from and somebody that was a mentor to me pulled me aside when I first got to Congress and said If you want to be successful you need to understand three things you need to understand the rules the rules of the game kind of the procedures that happen in Congress. You need to become an expert in some things some field of sorts and you need to always keep your word. And the idea behind becoming an expert is that you want to make sure that people are coming to you and the like. And ultimately for me it was trying to listen to people that might have been more had more experience or might have an expertise in a certain area. But I think the opportunity for success is to really highlight and make sure that you're taking an opportunity to dive a little bit deeper with those relationships to understand where people are coming from. And that's not just with those on the same side of the aisle that's with those on the other side of the aisle as well. I will tell you that you know to this day you know there are some very good friends on the other side of the aisle that if called I'd be there in a second for them you

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know I think about this in terms of some of these really divisive issues that we deal with today one of them is guns.

Axelrod: [00:08:27] You know you know what the inner city. We're sitting here on the South Side of Chicago not a mile from here. You know you have combat going on. And oftentimes young kids involved in it and young kids even younger kids the victims of it. So there's a kind of desperation there and yet there's also a strong feeling in you know rural communities and small small town smaller town America that gun rights are sacrosanct and therefore any effort to control them is is blasphemous. So you dealt with that a little bit. Talk to me about an issue like that. And what your experience was.

Dold: [00:09:19] Well we faced some significant issues in the Chicago land area where they have the highest murder rate in the country here in Chicago. And literally just a stone's throw from where we sit right now is is a war zone it's a battle zone. And even listening to some of the academics here that are embedded in themselves. So for Stewart who's done a significant amount of work with some of these gangs and just kind of listening to him we know that there is a significant problem. And so how do we balance the rights of the Second Amendment which I think are important. Can't pick and choose what parts of the Constitution we want to follow with having some reasonable restrictions that people can understand to say you know what. That makes a heck of a lot of sense whether it be background checks that frankly right now if you were to go into a gun shop they're doing the background checks right now. Closing the gun show loophole making sure that we have some sort of a mechanism out there where we can try to reduce the violence because honestly David as we look together I can sit with people on the other side of the aisle even people that think the Second Amendment is sacrosanct as you say. And the thing that we'll agree on is we all want to reduce gun violence so the people are the reason why people want to keep their right to keep and bear arms is it necessary to go have gun violence out there in the streets. They want to be able to protect their home or they want to go hunting or do those other things.

Axelrod: [00:10:38] Well they would argue I disagree with this but they would argue that if more people are armed somehow you have less gun violence because people will be able to defend themselves.

Dold: [00:10:47] Well there is that argument to be had but I don't believe it. But again going back to the point they want less gun violence. So how do we get to that at least let's agree that we can start with the premise that we want to reduce gun violence. And what works and what doesn't work. But I do believe when we know whether we're keeping the guns out of you know violent felons keeping guns out of the hands of those that have a mental illness are going through a potential problem. Those are things that I think are the right move. And as you know I took a lot of heat for coming out with some of those positions. But I think it's the right thing to do.

Axelrod: [00:11:25] Well let me ask you now obviously you were cross pressured because you come from a. You came from a district that is more progressive on those those kinds of issues maybe more conservative on fiscal issues which sort of reflects your political profile but of one former congressman from your district Abner McFaul was sort of the leading proponent of gun control in the U.S.. So there's a history of this. But within within the sort of mainstream of Republican politics today yours would not be the position you just articulated it would not be an acceptable position and the NRA leverages quite a bit of influence.

Dold: [00:12:14] They leverage a significant amount of influence as do other organizations on the left for different reasons that I am not here to say that the NRA is not powerful and has a significant amount of influence. But what I do think is important is that people have to recognize and have to stand up to say we have a problem that is happening right here in our country and there has to be I mean that the fear is that there's going to be a slippery slope that if they start to infringe upon somebody's right that it's going to come and take their guns away. And we have to make sure that those on the right and the left recognize

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that we're not coming to take away your second amendment rights. We want to talk about having common sense discussion about reasonable and rational things that can reduce gun violence.

Axelrod: [00:13:00] Let me ask you this. I know that you were very very well-liked by your colleagues. In fact many of them who I spoke to said you got to get told to come in and be a fellow at your institute. And I appreciate the recommendation but how many of them do you think were there or not. And let's stipulate because I don't want to get into a partisan discussion there are pressures on the left and the right. Sure. How many how many of your colleagues left to their own devices would gravitate to the position that you've taken. I mean you must have these discussions and people are probably frank with you about the pressures they face.

Dold: [00:13:41] Absolutely. And whether it's scoring of a certain bill that they need a rating so that the NRA or that and honestly some of my colleagues on the right would say look the NRA is a liberal organization because they're more conservative pro-gun groups out there that they need to try to placate and ultimately I think if left to their own devices we'd have more people that would agree that this isn't a ploy to take people's guns away. This is a ploy to try to say we want to put that step in place whether it be on background checks or doing a whole host of things. And you know that may be a third of them on the on the Republican side.

Axelrod: [00:14:22] That--that would be maybe significant.

Dold: [00:14:25] That would be a significant a significant group. No question about it. And we saw even in the United States Senate when that opportunity to have some some meaningful movement on the gun issue and it didn't pass even when the Democrats were in control. So this is an issue that's going to hit conservative Democrats as well.

Axelrod: [00:14:44] We. Let me get back just a little bit to your to your journey. You said in an interview once that politics was always around your home that you was pervasive. Right now not everybody I talked to says that. I mean some people come to it in other ways. Tell me how how you saw politics in your own home and your politics.

Dold: [00:15:07] You know for me was it was one of those things that my father was a precinct captain. And so it was almost a chore for the Republican Party for the Republican Party and we would come home and my friends would you know come home after school with me and they would see these bags of literature stacked up an entrance way. You know right outside the door and they would run because they knew that my father going to sucker them and grab them and say we're going to deliver literature so that it would kind of make things pass quickly. And I I tell people that my my father would take me out delivering literature and I think that oftentimes I was the bait because as a seven year old you know walking the streets to deliver literature they're going to anti-roll me so he's going to open the door if there's a set there and song pancake breakfast tickets or something who knows what we're going to do. But and then my father had an opportunity to talk to them about the upcoming election or that sort of thing. So you know I have been involved in that type of capacity since a very young age and it was really one of the things in the family that it was an opportunity that we were able to give back. My father ran for state representative a long time ago I think when I was one I'd take a look at some of the pictures and you know that was in the days when they had I think three representatives from various districts. And when any of that it was I think it was nine people in the primary and he ended up not winning but you know you got to be in the arena if you want to make a change. And so you know for us it was good dining room table discussions about what was happening and around the country at the time and politics for us was always one of those things that was encouraged my mom and dad to go volunteer and get active and and that's kind of a typical dinner around the old household was was talking about this new tree or township Nutra township. Absolutely.

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Axelrod: [00:17:00] You know there was there was a great old character who you probably knew in Democratic politics up there Lynn Williams was the township committeeman for years and he was you know he was like a liberal stalwart fighting what was then a very powerful Republican.

Dold: [00:17:21] So we're going to shift a little bit up there.

Axelrod: [00:17:23] Yeah.

Dold: [00:17:24] And in the last couple of decades.

Axelrod: [00:17:25] Well, when Mikva got elected up there in the northern suburbs he moved from the South Side of Chicago to Evanston and got elected up there that was like an earthquake. In fact the Tribune endorsed Abner make for in one of those elections and when the Chicago Tribune sort of the bedrock Republican newspaper endorsed the Democrat it was like national news. Back then but now it's the ultimate the ultimate swing district. I will get I want to get to that because you and and the current Representative Brad Snyder You're like Graziano and Zale. You just had a series of heavyweight battles where they were middleweights but right battles one election after another and I want to talk to you about that but talk to me about you didn't it wasn't you didn't just go from being a small businessman to running for cause you had a number of political experiences leading up to that.

Dold: [00:18:26] I did. And so I was kind of always engaged in politics and whether it be school politics that sort of stuff but for me my first kind of interaction international politics was doing some advance work for Ronald Reagan. It was my first advance trip in Columbus Ohio and then really you know what.

Axelrod: [00:18:47] How did you know what advance work was I did they had you in the breach.

Dold: [00:18:52] There was. It was literally somebody a friend was doing some of the advance were on the advance team and needed some volunteers and so pulled me from Dennison which is just a few miles away over to work the event. And then from there I got really engaged and end up going to work.

Axelrod: [00:19:07] And what do you remember did you get to meet Reagan then.

Dold: [00:19:10] I did. And so this was at the really the tail end of his administration. It was really kind of the ramp up for for George H.W. Bush and his run. And so he was coming to Columbus Ohio into the basketball arena to kind of help George Bush out and kind of be stumping for him through Ohio. And that was just fascinating to be some to see and to meet President Reagan at the time and shortly thereafter after the election and after he had won I ended up going to work in really the vice president's office doing advance work. How does that come about. I applied. Right. That was the thing I go to schools all over the place I say Are you one of the secret about working in the White House. And they say of course they all say yes and I said I applied and the person they can say is no and so I had two opportunities I could have worked in the presidential news summary which as you know was stuck in the fifth floor of the Old Executive Office Building working all odd hours clipping papers and putting them together at that time. Or I could have worked for Vice-Presidential advance. This was the second floor of the Ohio be normal hours and is as you know a student in college working in the summer at the White House. I wanted normal hours to go out and have some fun outdoors after work so I took the vice presidential advance job. And so I did the typical intern ship at the White House answering phones and doing all whatever they asked. And the reward was I got to go on the road and do one advance trip and was kind of all hell broke loose on that trip to Cleveland Ohio and the lead advance at the time said get this kid on the road as often as you can and from that point it was. We worked in the advance office every summer and during the campaign until the Clinton by we you mean you wienie me that I went you're using that political way. How

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do I use that all the time which I get criticized for. So I went and worked doing advance work which was fascinating and I encouraged friends on the other side of the aisle to get engaged and it he's the greatest.

Axelrod: [00:21:11] Let me just take a quick break and we'll be right back with Bob Dole. Advance work is really that is a really really kind of frantic exciting part of politics. And you're like you're like you're parachuted in and you have to make things happen.

Dold: [00:21:35] You have to make things happen and often times really quickly. I remember as a 19 year old going down to Lockheed and we were going to go do something on the floor of Lockheed and the CEO basically took his executive vice president out of his office and wanted me to take his office over and I said no no no I don't need to do any of that. I don't need to be here you know I'm going to be on the floor I don't need to do any of that. But it's those type of experiences that are just fascinating you get to see the country at a totally different set from a different set of perspective and you get to do it at a high level which was just fascinating.

Axelrod: [00:22:14] What about Quayle What do you know he was obviously a kind of a controversial figure some people felt he was a young senator from Indiana. In fact I covered his first race for the Senate when I was a young reporter at The Chicago Tribune and he kind of came out of nowhere and there was an occasional deer in the headlight quality to him in that first campaign particularly in his debate with Lloyd Bentsen. But what was your experience with him.

Dold: [00:22:44] I think the vice president was underrated. And you know when I look back at it because his son came to Congress with me in 2010 and we were very close and we were thinking back about it because when we came to Congress or when I was first came to Congress I was older than the vice president when he became vice president. I said oh my gosh I can't even imagine if I were to be going right now down to the White House to be the vice president of the United States So again very very young. And you know ultimately if you look and listen to some of his colleagues with the whole Patriot missile the Patriot missiles Ted Kennedy will tell you or would have told you that Dan Quayle was instrumental in making sure that the Patriot missiles came to fruition through the United States Senate. So there were some of those moments that you wish you could kind of steal back. But you know I have nothing but the highest respect for Vice President Quayle.

Axelrod: [00:23:44] So you went to law school.

Dold: [00:23:46] Yes I did. I went to Indiana for three years which was great. And I did a stint over with the New York State Supreme Court for a just judge named Judge Ghalia who was just a fantastic guy.

Axelrod: [00:24:00] It was here what who appointed him was he.

Dold: [00:24:04] He's a Democrat and I was looking for an experience and this was someone that really kind of let us kind of dive in and was really a fantastic experience understanding what was going on in New York at the time. I mean selfish reasons my girlfriend at the time now wife was in New York and so I was looking to try to get out that direction. You understand how that goes.

Axelrod: [00:24:28] I do. And that's how I became a Chicagoan.

Dold: [00:24:32] Which we appreciate. So did did that stint and then worked for came the second summer for a mid-sized insurance defense firm queering heroine Chicago and then ultimately went to work in the house right now. Well after I worked for Senator Dole doing in my third year law school was when his campaign got Iggy got kicked up and doing what are you doing advance events. And again a small community so they called and said can you travel for us. That's a skill once you get you're in for life. I

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mean they'd probably hire you to do advance right now if your if your station would allow it. Well it's interesting that like even for my wedding like you can't get the advance hat off. So I'm looking at certain things in my life certainly arise in tables this way that sort of thing. But ultimately I got an opportunity to work with Senator Dole doing the advance work on that campaign and then after that was over I went to the house to work on the government reform and oversight committee as an investigative Council which was which was fascinating and so did the campaign finance investigation investigating not only some of the foreign money that was coming in but there was some some dollars that you I was investing you know on the Republican side as well.

Axelrod: [00:25:44] So and what caused you to a lot of people go and say what caused you to leave.

Dold: [00:25:53] Well I mean honestly I thought I'd done my government service and ultimately was business school that kind of strong and stimulated quite a ways here making me feel in an no. So it was it was business school and so the opportunity to go to Northwestern was was really the impetus to get out of Washington and so it was time for me to kind of get that chapter going and take a career in the private sector.

Axelrod: [00:26:22] And you came back and you helped out on your. That's where you started get involved with your family business.

Dold: [00:26:28] Right after after Kellogg. I actually ended up working in Exodus Communications which was doing Web hosting and during that whole process and was doing business development for them and then went into the family business. So I think it's again I would encourage people to get an experience if you're going to do a family business outside of the family business first which again just allows you to bring those experiences and different set of ideas back to the family business which I think is healthy.

Axelrod: [00:26:57] What did you learn from from running your family business.

Dold: [00:27:03] Well is the biggest thing on our family businesses that we have to work hard to earn the respect of the people that have been there for a long time. How many folks work. So we have a little about 135 folks that are working in the business today and the people that I work with they don't really care that I went to law school. They certainly don't care that I went to business school the fact that I was a member of Congress may actually hurt me within. But you crawled across space with them. All of a sudden then you've got their respect and I've never forgotten the idea that you know look this is a this is a business that you know we have great pride in the work that we do and protecting people's homes and the food supply and all that other stuff. So I'm just enormously proud of what the work that we're able to do in the business and frankly when I look at that 135 people that's 135 families that we've been able to help. And my hope is again that we are one big family. That's the idea behind a family businesses that frankly we're able to operate a little bit differently than those that are doing quarterly earnings for Wall Street.

Axelrod: [00:28:12] Yeah. I mean that's a pervasive issue with companies that are sort of slaves to those quarterly reports and their shareholders. And oftentimes it is at the expense of. I mean the easiest way to plus up that shit is to cut labor costs. And it's a concern for the country.

Dold: [00:28:36] It is and when one of the things that that certainly I'm very proud of is that during every downturn that we've experienced at no time do I know that we've ever laid people off because of a downturn. Now certainly we've laid people off for other reasons or they've left for some other reasons but we've never we've just tightened our belt largely because the goal of our organization at least that I make sure everybody knows is that we want long lasting relationships with coworkers and customers.

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Axelrod: [00:29:02] So I was thinking as you were talking maybe the answer to our problems in Washington is to get Republicans and Democrats to climb into crawlspaces together.

Dold: [00:29:10] Well you certainly you certainly are very close in that sort of situation. Yeah I mean it's a good thing to do it. But again rolling up your sleeves and kind of understanding what people that are living paycheck to paycheck are going through I think is good medicine for frankly anybody that wants to be in public service never to lose sight of those things.

Axelrod: [00:29:30] So Mark Kirk represented your district before you did and you ran in a very crowded primary. And it's certainly not unprecedented but still you ran against people who had been office holders at least some of them. How did that whole process come about your decision to run for public office. So at a fairly high level yeah there's an emotional and practical side to it.

Dold: [00:30:00] So what I tell people is that the emotional side was a small business person. You know I felt the government was making it harder and harder for me to put the key in the door of my small business and it is small business and they should be making it easier for me to open my doors. Easier for me to hire the next individual. That was kind of the emotional side like OK we run and you know I we we met you. [crosstalk] And I think that's fair because it is a family decision.

Dold: [00:30:30] No question. And there was one person that could have ended this whole thing at any time and that's my wife. But so we made a decision that we can do anything for six months is what her words were. Needless to say.

Axelrod: [00:30:42] Did you mentioned to her that if you were successful it was going to be a lot more is going to be longer than six months.

Dold: [00:30:46] Well again in this type of situation the emotional side was that was the reason to step up to try to run the practical side was is that as you pointed out Mark Kirk wasn't running so it was an open field because trying to run a business and a young family certainly wasn't a convenient time to run for office. But the crowded primary I think there was more people after I decided to jump in. Other people decided to jump in so it became more crowded. I don't think ultimately we had about seven people that were in the primary at one time. Couple of them dropped out. But it was was one of those things that we were never supposed to. We were never supposed to when we weren't really on the radar for the National Republican Congressional Committee. And you know so therefore we had to work hard to try to get their attention. And ultimately nobody told us we weren't supposed to win. So we just outworked the other side and ultimately at the end of the day emerge from the primary with 38 percent of the vote which was in that five way primary at the end was insignificant.

Axelrod: [00:31:52] The the experience that you had starting from when you were 7 year old and leafletting for your dad and your party through your experiences as an advance person your experience in Congress working on us as a staffer in Congress. How much did that help you in that campaign.

Dold: [00:32:17] I think more so the grassroots type work helped largely because the the people that really got me over that initial threshold were the grassroots folks and they wanted to know kind of where have you been what have you done. And the fact that I was a precinct captain and had worked and carrying water for the local organization for a long time was helpful as opposed to someone that parachuted in and said Now is my time I'm going to run and like your support. And so you know that I think was enormously helpful and also helpful to try to make sure that you know you have to go knock on the doors you have to you know in essence interrupt people during dinner at the diner. That's sort of a thing. And that's one of the things you have to get over something that I saw happen in the past and knew

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that was one of the things that I needed to do. And so I was I guess I'd seen it a little up close before and was all too willing to help. I mean the advance work I think was helpful in terms of kind of making sure that whatever images we were putting out message of the day. Do we have that in a picture and can we put that on Facebook or can we do those types of things. But there's nothing that's going to replace the face to face the opportunity to talk to people about you know why why me and what makes them comfortable enough to put their trust so there are a lot of first time candidates who don't get all those nuances and probably helpful to have done that. So you were one of the I remember very well because I was on the other side of this the night of the 2010 election you were one of the 63 new Republican members of Congress. I still have them. I still have those tire tracks on my back from freeways. It was a huge huge class.

Axelrod: [00:34:12] I always I always joke that that Franklin Roosevelt was 78 I think it was maybe 73 but it was some number even larger than 63 in 1938. So you know we were better than Roosevelt's year. That's. Yeah.

Dold: [00:34:31] I mean you got that going for you. But the thing was the class was actually a bigger class because the numbers that you're not putting in there are those seats that Republicans left that Republicans filled. Right. In terms of new faces. Was actually closer to 97 new members of Congress that were coming in some of those Democrats that were filling for other Democrats. I think there were nine of them that came in and a huge freshman class 63 which had taken over for Democrats. I think something along those lines so it was. When you look at kind of just the institutional knowledge of the of the institution you know I think we've had over the course of the last few Congresses over two thirds of them have been there less than six years. So it was it's just interesting when you look at that what does the impact of that. Well I think you've got a number of people that are looking to kind of come in and make a change immediately not recognizing or understanding kind of the way things were. And the fact that the way things were in politics for a long time was this reference which people longingly look for in the tip O'Neill Ronald Reagan type thing that we can disagree without being disagreeable will fight like cats and dogs during the day on policy and at night we we're going to be friends and not be pulled that wasn't really the tenor of our politics in 2011 when you arrived in Washington that was not the tenor of the politics then. And so it not in that time or in the next couple of Congresses we've seen a kind of a sharp departure from that and that you know this was the first time that when when I came we had taken over the house. And so there was much kind of exuberance from the Republicans that we had taken over the house first time in a long time that we had actually controlled the gavel there. And then you know came back in 14 when we took over.

Axelrod: [00:36:30] I don't don't don't get don't don't get ahead of. All right. So John Boehner was the was this the speaker. And it seems to me that he now he is someone who was sort of a he came in in 94 so it was a little bit after that that that tip O'Neill. Yes period. But he was someone who he was a veteran of many Congresses and had relationships across the aisle he was chairman of the Education Committee. I think at one point it worked he was yeah. And my guess is that you were probably you probably had a good relationship with him did you not.

Dold: [00:37:10] I did. I had a very good relationship with with John with Speaker Boehner and he this is a guy that had a tremendous respect for the institution and would do anything to protect the institution and recognize that the institution worked best by making sure that he was giving. And there was some give and take there certainly with the other side and he had a lot of great relationships and frankly when there was when he was under some pretty significant pressure from folks on our side of the aisle I had conversations with others that would have come to his rescue. Should there be kind of a vote of no confidence to take him off the floor that they would have stepped up to vote in his favor.

Axelrod: [00:37:57] Yeah because he he was faced with and he's been very outspoken since that day.

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Larry is like a liberated he's a liberated. He talked about the I guess what now is formally described as the Freedom Caucus. But these folks who were in all terribly opposed to compromise and the difficulties that posed how if you are chairman of the of the Tuesday Group right. My colleague Anderson Cooper did note when once that branding may not work particularly well. The freedom caucus versus the group that we weren't strong marketers the Tuesday night that I won and I you know make sure that people know that are listening that I did not brand it that way. But what were your frustrations in dealing with some of your colleagues from the right.

Dold: [00:38:54] Well my frustration certainly from members on the right that are unwilling to either listen or compromise on and again compromise is not a bad word but knowing that we need to get 218 votes is that the frustration level is that they would constantly be moving things further and further to the right. And if you know this was a conservative piece of legislation they wouldn't vote for it because they wanted to move it even further to the right. So the answer was generally always no regardless. And it got to the point where we needed folks from the Freedom Caucus otherwise we weren't going to get 218 votes. And so the frustration level is it would put others in a particularly difficult situation in order to try to get things done.

Axelrod: [00:39:36] Why. I think people listening would ask why. Two hundred and eighteen votes out of your own caucus. Why not try and forge bipartisan coalitions around legislation which and forget what was the so-called Hastert rule that you need a majority of the majority in order to move forward.

Dold: [00:39:58] I argued that with this with frankly of both speakers to say look if the Freedom Caucus is going to take us down that path let's let's cut the deal and frankly it's going to have a much better opportunity to certainly in that first Congress when we had a Democratically controlled Senate to say let's let's absolutely work with some Democrats and make sure we've got a bipartisan support. Let the Freedom Caucus continue to go off further to the right and the before there was a Freedom Caucus some of the folks that would have been in that caucus. And let me just give you an example. We're talking about a continuing resolution how we're going to fund the government. We had an agreed upon in the absence of a budget in the absence of a budget. We have a continuing resolution and the agreed upon number between the House and the Senate was one trillion twenty \$28 billion. That's a sizable number to use to fund the government for a period of time. And there were some on the right that said you know what we think we can do this for one trillion \$19 billion and you know I said Listen I like to save \$9 billion dollars just like the next guy. But our agreed upon number with the Senate is ten twenty eight. They said no we're not going to we're not going to do 10:28. We can do it for 10 19. Ultimately we put 10 28 on the floor and it failed because no Democrat voted for 10:28 until the Republicans could show that we could get 218 votes. So it failed. Steny Hoyer who was the whip Democratic whip at the time walked across the floor to Kevin McCarthy who at the time was the Republican whip and said it looks like you need a few Democrat votes. The new number is 10:48. Now you had Republicans that had voted for 10 28 that were really having problems voting for another \$20 billion in conservative districts. The more conservative guys that voted no on the 10 28 because they wanted 10 19 certainly weren't going to get there. And so my conversations with those folks were after we had to vote for 10:48. And the speaker came to me and said Bob we need your vote because we're not going to shut the government down. I asked him what makes you think my constituents want to spend an extra \$20 billion dollars. He said well we need you in order to keep the government up and operational. So I said OK I'll vote for it. My conversations off the floor with them are you guys just cost us an extra \$20 billion. And they said No I voted no and hell no. So I didn't do a thing and I said no no. We had an agreement for 10 28 and if you had voted yes or we would have spent one trillion 28 billion but you voted no so we're going to spend 1 trillion. 48 billion. So you spend an extra \$20 billion dollars of our children or our taxpayer dollars and you need to understand that there's a there's a cost on some of these things that frankly is going to end up hurting a lot of us.

Axelrod: [00:42:52] We're going to take another short break. We'll be right back with former Congressman

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Bob Dole.

Axelrod: [00:42:57] You were in a particularly difficult position because after redistricting in 2000 you had a pretty liberal district you got more liberal after the reading. Yes I mean the redistricting in Illinois was in the hands of Democrats. Your district became more democratic. So these kinds of debates put you really in a vice no way we were.

Dold: [00:43:30] We seemed like we were in the crosshairs for a good chunk of my time in Frankly both different Congresses. But that's OK. I mean that's you know I knew what I was signing up for. With regard to this and really felt we had an opportunity to try to move the needle but we were constantly in the crosshairs because we had a Republican majority that wanted to pull things further to the right. And and ultimately we had to try to appease some of those folks and I honestly wish that we were able to get more stuff done and really believe that we would be able to have gotten more done if we were able to try to forge a little bit more of a conciliatory tone.

Axelrod: [00:44:11] It will. I want to talk about your 2012 and 2010 14 and 16 races the winning losing winning. But I guess who's losing winning losing. But as you look forward now it feels like and we should point out you didn't endorse President Trump and we'll talk about that in a second but sure it feels like there may be at best a smaller Republican margin in the Congress in two after 2018. It feels like there's great risk there for the Republican Party that's what polling suggests right now there's a lot of energy. Sure on. On the Democratic side if the margin is smaller and Democrats don't take over the house which is a possibility if the margin is smaller. Will that encourage more bipartisanship because that's the only way you can pass anything. Or will it just exacerbate assuming. Paul Ryan is still the speaker that exacerbate his problem in trying to get stuff done. Yes yes meaning it what?

Dold: [00:45:27] Both are going to happen. So what I mean by that is if you have the moderates that will go to the speaker's office basically saying that look we came to Washington to get things done. The only way that we're going to get things done is by working with the other side. We need to forge an agreement to be able to have some give and take. We're you know again as Ronald Reagan or or as others have said get us partway there we'll get the wrecks the rest next time. Let's continue to make sure that we're moving forward. And so you're going to have a huge number of members of Congress go to the speaker to advocate that and you're going to have others that will basically be championing the we're not going to give in. We're going to continue to take the hard line you know in essence Warnock and we need to continue to be the champions of this largely because the way their districts are drawn that's what they are. They want their constituents want them to be banging that drum. And ultimately what that is that is that's a recipe for absolute gridlock for nothing to happen. And I would argue that that is not what people generally were sent to Congress to do. They were sent hopefully to solve some problems. And even if it's not everything that you want. My hope is that you're getting something there that you can look your children in the eye and say this is what we were able to do to try to make life a little bit easier a little bit better. Try to make sure that we're growing our economy a little bit might not be everything that we wanted but ultimately we need to know that this is the things that we're fighting for.

Axelrod: [00:46:59] A lot of your colleagues in the in the Tuesday group opposed the the House bill health care bill and many opposed it even as revised. What how would you have voted on that. You voted to repeal the Affordable Care Act multiple times when you were in the House.

Dold: [00:47:26] And also voted not to as it got later. So in the first term it was more of this hasn't really rolled out. Let's not let's not move forward. I didn't think that the way it came about in terms of without a single Republican vote. When you're talking about one fifth of our economy not the appropriate way to do it. So but with 130 Republican amendments with amendments no question about it but I still think that the process was not the appropriate one and was against it. And then once it had been rolled out again I was

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campaigning and believed that you can't take something away from folks without having the alternative having the replacement there. And so even during that second term voted not to was one very like I think two or three Republicans to vote not to repeal the Affordable Care Act largely because we hadn't come up with what the replacement was going to be. And in this one.

Axelrod: [00:48:24] Because you lost in 2012 to the Brad Schneider in the presidential year President Obama was running away with the district. Sure.

Dold: [00:48:36] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:48:36] And then you won in the mid in the midterm in 2000 and in 14 of them or three point races or something.

Dold: [00:48:44] Well the race in 2012 we lost by seven tenths of a percent when President Obama won the district by 17. And then in 2014 we won by four points. And then this last time around with President Trump at the top of the ticket we lost by four.

Axelrod: [00:49:02] Mm hmm. So when you were talking about voting against repeal you're too late in that second term in that second term. So 2015. Right. 2016. So had you been in Congress how would you have voted on a bill that the House passed?

Dold: [00:49:20] This most recent bill I would have voted no in the sense that I do not believe that the replacement was one that was up to speed. I don't think that it was ready as they say ready for prime time. And I do think that it does require some additional work. Not again the thing that I hear from constituents again is we see premiums that are on the rise deductibles that have gone through the roof. I do think that there is certainly things within the Affordable Care Act that need to be changed. And you know colleagues frankly on the Democratic side of the aisle will say the same. Yes sure. And ultimately this is about my heart my hope is can we get beyond this now can we start to fix it. Can we fix this issue because this is something that's going to impact every single American and ultimately you know this is something that they haven't. So for me it was I would have been a no on this until I had seen.

Axelrod: [00:50:17] Let me ask you a question. And I think it's it's one that's been asked a lot. But you were there. How is it. How is it after all those years of voting to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act that you say there wasn't a ready for prime time proposals shouldn't there have been a ready for primetime proposal?

Dold: [00:50:38] Yes I think there should have been and I recognize that this is still a process. And again health care is tough.

Axelrod: [00:50:46] Yeah there's no question which it is.

Dold: [00:50:48] It is a very complicated issue. And ultimately I think that some of the things that the Republicans are talking about in terms of patient centric care are positives those are really good things. We want people to be more in control of the health care that they're going to be able to receive. But again how it gets rolled out and what the actual details are are extremely important. And those are not things that you can gloss over or even put together with the 30000 foot type scenario.

Axelrod: [00:51:16] So talk to me about the 2016 race because they must have been excruciating to be running in a district. What did tell me again what was Hillary Clinton's margin in your district. Hillary Clinton won the district by 32 points and lost by four which is pretty remarkable. I think that was the most Democratic district represented by a Republican in the country. You know what was your thought

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processes as you watched this presidential race unfold and was there ever a point where you said in the parlance of the business I'm about to be exterminated.

Dold: [00:51:59] Honestly no. We I thought as did my team that we even you know election night after all the regular votes were in and we were just waiting for the early vote to come in. We thought we were going to win this race. And you know we worked and we did about 22:00 events in the district and were able to get a message out. And again as a master record as one of the most independent and bipartisan members in the United States Congress which is exactly what the district I think was looking for. Donald Trump I think was one of those things that frankly had it been anybody else running. I think that we would be in Congress today.

Axelrod: [00:52:43] I mean I understand the politics of why you didn't endorse Trump but personally. Yeah. What was your--

Dold: [00:52:52] Listen for me I--my oldest daughter's name Jacqueline Harper Dold. We named her Harper after my uncle who was a POW in Vietnam he was the second one shot door shut down. He was flying off the USS Coral Sea on and off the Crusader ejected out of his plane 35 feet above the ground broke his back on impact. And for the next eight years and a day was in captivity. When Donald Trump came out to say that he didn't think John McCain was a hero because he was captured and shot down he prefers those that were not shot down. For me right there and then I said this is not someone that I can support to be commander in chief for me very personally because the one thing that we do know David is that someone's going to be shot down again and it's not going to be something that we want to have happen. We just know that there will be a conflict there will be an American serviceman or servicewoman that's going to be flying a mission that's going to be shot down. And what we don't need is them to believe that the commander in chief doesn't think highly of them or prefers somebody else. Honestly if anybody wants to say that that my uncle or John McCain or any of those W's aren't heroes to me is completely unacceptable.

Axelrod: [00:54:12] And as Vince wore on did did you have any second thoughts about that.

Dold: [00:54:17] No I never had any second thoughts about it. I recognize that people were angry with me they said how can you not support Donald Trump he's our nominee and the like and I said look I will support whoever you send to 16:00 Pennsylvania Avenue in the sense that I'm going to work with whomever is there to be the voice of the 10th Congressional District. But I'm not going to go back nor would you want me to change my position on that. I certainly was not a Hillary supporter I think there was some integrity issues there which I'm happy to talk about if you want to. But you know I don't seem relevant anymore. It's not. I mean I listen I I wrote in somebody actually wrote in an African-American woman to the president the United States. So I don't have any regrets because who was it Condoleezza Rice. So I don't have any regrets about the way things went down or the positions that I've taken. I stand by them. And I'm happy to discuss them with anybody. I had some people ask me you know would you work with the president with Donald Trump if he became president I said of course just like it would work with any president.

Axelrod: [00:55:25] How do you evaluate the first hundred and twenty three days or whatever we've seen. And what do you hear from your colleagues.

Dold: [00:55:35] I think it can be best summed up by Mitch McConnell that stated just the other day we'd like to see a little less drama coming out of the White House. And there's a significant amount of things that I know that my colleagues would like to try to tackle including you know tax reform and regulatory reform. We have obviously a big issue with regard to health care to ensure that we have quality affordable care for people that is going to take people coming together to solve issues. And you know as you say it's

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complicated. We've got complicate well. Tax reform is going to be complicated a lot of complicated issues and that we need basically all the rows all the oars in the water row in the same direction. And frankly I would argue that we want those oars to be Republican and Democrat oars in that water row in the same direction.

Axelrod: [00:56:26] When you when you talk to your cause just to extend your analogy about the oars in the water. At what point do people start jumping out of the canoe here.

Dold: [00:56:38] I don't think that there is and I think that there are some people that are looking at this and saying to Speaker Ryan you know we've got to move forward with our agenda. And I think there's going to be a push to continue to talk about well what is Congress doing what is Congress doing it's obviously being overshadowed by tweets and what happens at 16:00 Pennsylvania Avenue and ultimately you know we still have to govern and we need to move forward and I think there's a lot of people out there concerned that the legislature to do though and the environment is so focused on the sort of contretemps that the day isn't it. It is extraordinarily difficult. And you know I I would argue that you know ultimately we want to move forward with the legislative agenda and that's why we're hopefully things can calm down and hopefully people can have an opportunity to look at the issues and try to do it. I think that when the word is hopefully hopefully there I don't see that happening anytime soon. And my colleagues at least many that I continue to talk with are concerned that they're not going to because pretty quickly. As you well know we all are going to be in political season.

Axelrod: [00:57:50] Yeah and the campaigns are and people understand that how short the legislative kind of opportunity is because you turned the corner after Labor Day and people are already campaigning for reelection. And and take to focus on these complicated issues and take political risks becomes much more difficult.

Dold: [00:58:11] It does and what people often also have to recognize is that if you're calling it Labor Day turning the corner which is completely accurate. Congress is out in most of August. So you've got to basically August 1 to be able to really have that policy agenda really start to start to take hold and then afterwards the politics really starts to kind of be pervasive in this thing and certainly by the time the new year rolls around people are in full reelection mode.

Axelrod: [00:58:41] And as you point out given that current course and speed it's not likely that the next Congress is going to be easier than this one.

Dold: [00:58:49] No I think it's a real potential to be much more difficult and the next one. And you know I think what is it three Congresses or three elections since in the last 100 and some odd years where the incumbent party has gained or maintained seats. So I think that certainly the odds are against the incumbent party which would be there looking right.

Axelrod: [00:59:09] This is like the optimal year to buck the tide either given the current events in Washington but yet again every time I've made any sort of yes an assessment with my predictions of if I'm wrong.

Dold: [00:59:23] But yeah I mean certainly as a student of history it does not look promising for any certainly any gains which would mean it would be more difficult in the next Congress to get a Republican agenda moved forward.

Axelrod: [00:59:36] So let me ask you about yourself as we finish up here. You are only 47 years old and that's relatively young especially in an age when we hear the names of octogenarians except the generic is being bandied about as potential presidential candidates. What what's in the future for you. Are you

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done with public service because you seem to really enjoy it.

Dold: [01:00:03] Well listen it's been the honor of my life to be able to be the voice and serve the people at the 10th Congressional District. I think public service is something that frankly each and every one of us ought to be looking at how we serve in some way shape or form it may be narrow it may be with a school board it may be helping out it maybe volunteering. But for me I think public service is absolutely critical and I would love to have the opportunity to serve again. And what I said in a statement before I just don't think 2000 or 2018 is going to be the year for me. So I am not looking to run for Congress in 2018 and I'm going to look to try to see how we might be able to spend more time with the family and try to work on the private sector type stuff and hopefully keep options open down the road. Whether that happens or not I don't know but certainly would welcome an opportunity to serve.

Axelrod: [01:00:55] Maybe could it be statewide rather than.

Dold: [01:00:58] Sure. I mean I'm not closing any doors on anything. I just think it's important to keep options open and I would love to have the opportunity to serve again in some capacity.

Axelrod: [01:01:10] Well I really appreciate you and I you know we don't agree on some stuff but we do agree on how important it is to find answers and do it in a way that is constructive. And your great example in that regard. So David thank you.

Dold: [01:01:29] Really appreciate being here. Thank you.