

We are particularly

18 proud and happy today to have a former speaker of the
19 House of Representatives in the United States, Dennis
20 Hastert here. The speaker of the House of
21 Representatives is the third most formally important in
22 the United States. You have a president, you have a
23 vice president and then comes speaker of the house. And
24 Dennis Hastert was speaker from -- I have to look here
25 now so I say correctly -- eight -- four Congressional

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1 periods if I understand, eight years. And Speaker
2 Hastert comes from Illinois, great state of the United
3 States, including Chicago which is perhaps the best
4 known small town there on the prairie. But his district
5 is to the west of Chicago but including, as I just
6 learned, some of the suburbs of Chicago. And you
7 realize that he was speaker during these years. He also
8 was speaker at the very moment 9/11/2001 which of course
9 will give a particular perspective to your term as
10 speaker. So I will start with you, Mr. Hastert. You
11 have the floor please.

12 SPEAKER DENNIS HASTERT: Thank you very much and good
13 morning. First of all, two things I would like to talk
14 about. First of all, just a little bit about the
15 Congress as opposed to most European parliaments, and
16 then also why and the importance and what developed to
17 create our Department of Homeland Security.
18 The Congress is somewhat unique by our constitution. We
19 are separate from the government. In most parliamentary
20 units in Europe the government evolves out of the
21 parliament, who gets the majority and becomes the ruling
22 party and then the ruling party develops its leadership
23 and its ministers and then follows through that process.
24 In the United States the Congress is completely separate
25 from the executive office. And so the Congress itself

1 has some very important functions. First of all, it has
2 the functions of passing any law. You pass the law and
3 put the laws together completely independent from the
4 executive branch. The executive branch ultimately, if
5 the laws are passed, the president has to sign a bill.
6 He can also veto a bill. So there is some cooperation
7 during the process, but the president makes the decision
8 at the end whether he's going to sign this bill or not.
9 He really has little input while that process is being
10 put together.

11 The second part of this is not only does the Congress
12 have separate committees -- and it has almost 20
13 different types of committees -- it takes part in
14 various different aspects of the government, but it also
15 controls the appropriations process. There are 13
16 separate appropriation committees and subcommittees and
17 parts of the major appropriation committee, and each one
18 of those subcommittees has an area of government. They
19 not only fund that area, so the money that funds the
20 Department of Defense or funds the Department of
21 Education or the Department of Health comes from a
22 appropriation committee. And that process of course has
23 scrutiny and oversight in itself before they put
24 together their budget and allot monies over several
25 different areas, and all these governmental agencies are

1 really in a sense competing for a set number of dollars.
2 So there's a give and take between the administration
3 and the actual activity of the administration and the
4 activity of the Congress. But it's in a sense kind of
5 an adversarial. We need this, but you have to still
6 apportion this money over a number of bodies.

7 So with that setting you find that there's a separation,
8 a large separation, between the administration and the
9 Congress itself. The speaker has a great deal of power
10 because, first of all, he has the power of the purse.

11 In the House of Representatives all the appropriation
12 bills begin in the House of Representatives, and so you
13 control the flow of legislation. You also control who
14 are the committee chairmen, so you have some control
15 over how that money is spent. The second part of it,
16 you control the flow of legislation. So any ideas that
17 come out that end up being a bill goes through and that
18 low flow of legislation is controlled by the majority
19 party and usually the speaker. So it's a unique
20 situation, gives a person who is a speaker a lot of
21 responsibility.

22 So let's go back to September 11 in the year 2001. I
23 was speaker of the house, had been speaker for
24 approximately three years, and I remember that morning.
25 It was a bright September morning, not too different

1 from this morning, a little bit of chill in the air.
2 Blue sky, beautiful puffy clouds. Came to work early,
3 about 7:00 in the morning. Had an appointment, and then
4 at about 8:30 I heard a knock on the door and said,
5 Mr. Speaker, something happened in New York. We think a
6 small plane or a helicopter went into one of the World
7 Trade towers. And we have quite a spectacle on TV. So
8 I said, I'll be there in just a minute. Walked in just
9 in time to see the second plane fly into the World Trade
10 tower. I knew at that point that it wasn't an accident,
11 that something was amiss, that there was terrorism
12 there. We didn't know who or why or what. But I tried
13 to get ahold of the vice-president. The president was
14 out of Washington. He was in Florida at that time
15 speaking to a group of children at a school. And we had
16 miscommunication back and forth back and forth between
17 my office and the White House. The vice-president was
18 in the White House with the Secretary of Transportation
19 trying to get airplanes out of the sky and onto the
20 ground. And all of a sudden I looked out my window and
21 looked down this mall -- I always said I had the second
22 best view in Washington -- and saw this smoke rolling
23 across the mall. Now, there's no manufacturing, there's
24 no industry in Washington and very little smoke.
25 Sometimes. But, anyway -- that's an inside joke,

1 Americans understand that -- but anyway I ask the fellow
2 keeping my door, I said something happened. Where is
3 that smoke coming from? And of course the third report
4 came in that the airplane flew into the Pentagon. So I
5 called the temporary speaker pro tem and said, we're
6 going to close down Congress. Because we're supposed to
7 have the prime minister of Australia give a joint
8 session, so I called the temporary speaker pro tem and
9 said, we're going to close down Congress because we were
10 supposed to have the prime minister of Australia give a
11 joint session speech to Congress that morning. When you
12 have a joint session of Congress you have the House, you
13 have the Senate, you have the administration, you have
14 all the secretaries of the various agencies of the
15 government, you have the Supreme Court and the Joint
16 Chiefs of Staff all in one room. So I said, probably
17 not a good idea to do that this morning. So
18 unilaterally I decided to close down that Congress that
19 morning. And we did. And I went to the House floor,
20 and I remember, to give the signal to bring down the
21 gavel to close down the House, and instantly I had two
22 security guys rushing me out and ended up in an Air
23 Force base, then ended up in an undisclosed location
24 outside of Washington. And I remember flying over
25 Washington in a helicopter and looking down and seeing

1 Reagan National Airport just completely closed down,
2 nothing moving on the tarmac. Looked across at the
3 Pentagon building, and the Pentagon is just a huge
4 building. We're flying right over the top and there's
5 black-blue smoke and fire belching out of that building
6 and (Check tape.) The whole suburbs of northern Virginia
7 just covered in in blue black cloud and I'm thinking to
8 myself -- I was a teacher of history before I got into
9 the business of government and teaching about the
10 British invasion of Washington in 1812 -- and thinking,
11 here I am Speaker of the House, and this terrible thing
12 has happened to our country. To make a long story
13 short, I came back along with the other leadership of
14 Congress that day, and we gave a short press statement
15 and said that we would be back in Congress the next day.
16 And the problems that we faced were things like we
17 couldn't -- airplanes couldn't fly. Not only would
18 there be the danger of not knowing what would happen if
19 who would be on those airplanes, but we also had the
20 danger that airplanes had no indemnity for terrorism.
21 So until that was taken care of, those airplanes could
22 be covered in insurance, they wouldn't fly. The markets
23 were closed. The New York Stock Exchange was shut down.
24 We had redundancy in communication, but still just the
25 danger of trying to get into Manhattan and the

1 disruption closed down the markets. You can imagine,
2 Sweden or Great Britain or Germany or the United States
3 without any commerce happening. So that had to happen.
4 We couldn't rebuild anything because the construction
5 companies again had to have indemnity in case they were
6 held harmless in case of another terrorist attack. So
7 we had all these problems facing us and how do we
8 address this. And for day after day, night after night
9 in my office we literally put out legislation. We put
10 out legislation we probably could have never passed
11 except for a situation like 9/11. And we said to
12 ourselves, and I think there was a common pledge among
13 the members of Congress and with the administration,
14 that we wouldn't let this happen in the United States
15 again. And so we took some extraordinary measures.
16 Some of them was the Patriot Act, which probably could
17 never pass except with the situation of what happened on
18 9/11, but we also then put in place indemnity
19 legislation for airlines, for construction. But we had
20 a very difficult time because there are so many
21 different agencies that we had to bring together to make
22 these things work. So we decided we needed to revamp
23 government and what we needed to do is to bring these
24 agencies under one type of cooperative effort, under one
25 umbrella. And it was a very difficult thing to do

1 because in American government, I suspect other
2 government, once you have an agency or a ministry
3 there's kind of a protection of territory. We call it
4 "turf wars" in the United States. And nobody really
5 wants to share that information. Nobody wants to be
6 encapsulated into another agency. So we had this kind
7 of natural resistance among the different governmental
8 agencies, and also in Congress itself. We have probably
9 20-some different committees that have jurisdictions and
10 they have expertise, they have traditional control and,
11 for instance, the Coast Guard, the Coast Guard was part
12 of the Department of Transportation. It wasn't part of
13 the military, still is separate from the military. But
14 it also had an issue over fishing rights, so if you were
15 a congressman from Alaska that had a very large interest
16 in fishing and you were on the transportation committee,
17 you didn't want to see the jurisdiction of the Coast
18 Guard move away from you into another entity. So
19 there's this protectionism even in the Congress. And
20 the second part of that is the appropriation process.
21 The appropriation process, there was a turf and a
22 situation where you didn't want any other committee
23 taking the jurisdiction away from you or your expertise
24 to go into a larger committee. So we had this huge
25 fight. As a matter of fact when we finally did put all

1 the homeland security and created the Department of
2 Homeland Security and put it under one umbrella, I had
3 to take -- it was just a practical thing. I had to take
4 probably ten different chairmen from different
5 committees and put them on the Homeland Security
6 committee on an ex officio basis just so that they could
7 say that they didn't lose everything. And eventually
8 you kind of peel them off the committee, and that was a
9 process that took a number of years. It didn't happen
10 overnight. And then the appropriation process, you had
11 to find one person to take care of the appropriations
12 and where maybe six or seven or maybe all 13
13 appropriation committees were involved. But to do this,
14 to make sure that you had one entity that was
15 responsible under one umbrella to get these huge issues
16 done -- communication, transportation, just the
17 security. And you'll find that in the United States
18 there's different attitudes I think maybe than you'll
19 find in some European countries and even here in Sweden.
20 For instance, in the United States it would be very
21 difficult enforcing every citizen to carry an ID card
22 with a picture and identification number. Just
23 resistant to do that because they felt this impinges on
24 their individual rights. So to get that type of thing
25 so you know who is moving where, who's coming across the

1 borders and to be able to check and see if somebody is a
2 citizen or outside -- and of course we have a very
3 unhomogeneous population so you can't by looking at
4 somebody -- you certainly can't tell that they're an
5 American citizen or non-American citizen. On the other
6 hand, we have no compunction at all and very free in
7 putting cameras. Cameras outside -- one of the
8 jurisdictions I had before I became speaker was to
9 defend or to make sure that our embassies around the
10 world were safe. We put cameras and surveillance. Our
11 streets are surveilled in the inner cities. We have
12 cameras to make sure that people are safe walking down
13 sidewalks, and it's all monitored by police agencies.
14 You probably couldn't do that very well here in Sweden
15 or in other European nations because of the feeling of
16 integrity of citizens. So there's different attitudes
17 that certainly separate the United States and other,
18 say, European communities. But overall there's a huge
19 need. There's a huge need for cooperation so that
20 agencies from different nations can work together, share
21 information. It's a difficult thing to get entities to
22 share information. For instance to get the Coast Guard
23 to share -- that has one basis of control, and the Navy
24 that has another basis of control. To get them to share
25 information, it's just kind of a -- well, we don't trust
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1 this agency to take our information or we're not going
2 to give that information away. One of the problems that
3 we had prior to 9/11 and one of I think one of the
4 causes of 9/11 is we had the CIA stovepiped away from
5 the FBI, and they didn't share information. Those types
6 of agencies need to share information. There's
7 information that the CIA could have that the FBI had
8 that would actually have changed our surveillance and
9 how we control our borders. So these are things that
10 you have to take into consideration. Certainly
11 differences in parliaments, what happens in the United
12 States and what happens in Europe, but these things all
13 have to be taken into consideration. And I think the
14 trend towards real security is not only cooperating on
15 the public sectors and internationally on the public
16 sectors, but we also have to cooperate on the private
17 sectors as well because there's a lot of intelligence
18 out there in the private sector that certainly can be
19 compatible and work with complementing the intelligence
20 that we have in the public sector. So thank you very
21 much. I look forward to carrying on the discussion, and
22 I hope you got some insight on what we had to do on
23 protecting the country. And then we had issues that we
24 talked about yesterday, things like anthrax. We had the
25 anthrax scare. So how did you effect that? We had the
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1 bird flu scare that actually came together and how did
2 you start to put together the resources to make sure
3 that that was not a real problem? Sometimes these types
4 of things you have to work way in the future, but they
5 are future problems that a government or a parliament
6 has to look at and start to prepare for. So I look
7 forward to our discussion. Thank you very much and
8 thanks for having me here.