

Kenny: Sure, take your time. I still have to slate this. Anything else? Just one second.
You're rolling. Okay, that looks-

Bill Walton: Okay. All right Mr. Kenny we ...

Kenny: Let's go ahead and get rid of these [inaudible 00:00:28].

Sara: Don't start till I-

Ron Nicol: That's good, I didn't ...

Bill Walton: Why don't you keep it down beside you so if you want more water, you can just reload. Now the way this is going to be edited, we're going to be just talking and everything's getting recorded in this camera and then what Kenny's going to do afterwards is he's going to go figure out what the best shots are. So if you're fiddling around with something, it's just not going to end up on the show. So if you're dipping down to get a bottle of water, it won't matter because he's not going to show that shot.

Kenny: [crostalk 00:00:56]. Right here, just one second please [inaudible 00:01:08].

Bill Walton: The funny thing is with this teleprompter, when Ron was here, he's a big movie director and I started getting really nervous. I've got to pick movie directory and I had a hard time with the teleprompter.

Kenny: All right. Bill Walton show, April 8th. One second, I'll tell when to go. Hang on just one second please. I want to make sure you can hear me.

Sara: Yes.

Kenny: Okay good.

Bill Walton: We all set team?

Kenny: And we are, and when you're ready Bill.

Bill Walton: Okay. Two years ago I had the honor to serve as a leader on the Trump presidential transition team. From August, 2016 to the inaugural in January, 2017 over 300 policy experts ... We just lost our teleprompter guys. What happened here? I'll tell you what, why don't you put it back on six and let me just work with the slower version and I will pronounce my words very slowly, then that way don't have to tap the thing. Or put it back ... Six is slow, right? Which one's the slow one?

Sara: Seven was what you had on. Six, it would be slower.

Bill Walton: All right, let's put it on six so I don't have to tap.

Sara: Okay, let me do it over here as well so that way we're sure that we have it going.

Kenny: Just one second please.

Bill Walton: Kenny, are you worried? We [inaudible 00:03:04].

Kenny: Excuse me?

Sara: Hold on.

Ron Nicol: This phone's on silent [inaudible] that it's beat.

Ed Meese: Well that's not good.

Ron Nicol: Wyatt did that.

Ed Meese: You didn't think to do it.

Kenny: Airplane or do not disturb, would be great.

Ron Nicol: It's on silent, so it should be okay.

Kenny: The vibration's fine.

Ron Nicol: Is that what it is?

Kenny: Yeah, everyone here ... Okay, Bill, when you're ready. Wait till it gets up to the top or you'll

Bill Walton: Two years ago, I had the honor to serve as the leader on the Trump presidential transition team. From August, 2016 to the inaugural in January, 2017 over 300 policy experts developed plans to transition all of the government agencies to the Trump administration. It was an extraordinarily talented group of people. Two men in particular stood out; our leader, Ron Nicol, had run the Boston Consulting Group's America's practice and our most senior and respected advisor was Ed Meese who had served as Ronald Reagan's attorney general and as counselor to the president, the top staff job in the White House. Transition was an intense and sometimes chaotic experience.

Bill Walton: Ron and I had come from the private sector and in the process learned a lot about how government works or doesn't. Ed provided much of the needed context and wisdom to guide us through our long days together. We talked about leadership styles, Trump versus Reagan, crisis management, the

differences between business leadership and political leadership. Ed told some terrific stories about Ronald Reagan and Ron regaled with a few about what it was like to be in the navy. I often wished I'd had a tape recorder ... Guys, this is running so slow. It's running so slow. We can't do it this way.

Ron Nicol: Let's do it on the next screen up.

Sara: All right, we'll go up one.

Bill Walton: Okay, let's go up on one. It's too bad.

Kenny: It's actually okay because you know what, I really want to make an adjustment here cause this mic is blocking your face a little too much so hang on for one moment.

Sara: Seven or eight?

Bill Walton: Where were we before?

Sara: Six.

Bill Walton: Let's go seven, not eight. We're just watching that thing ...

Kenny: All right, this is [inaudible] changes.

Bill Walton: Okay, so we didn't have a good shot.

Kenny: It wasn't enough to kill it but this is good.

Bill Walton: Okay, now we're better.

Ed Meese: It maybe even works.

Sara: I know. Wait [inaudible] I want to make sure. Did we go with seven?

Bill Walton: Yes.

Ed Meese: I'm sure they're having times when people as a joke are speeding up the teleprompter.

Sara: [crosstalk 00:06:13].

Ed Meese: And the speaker's trying to catch up.

Bill Walton: Or speeding up to get them off that stage. Okay. Choose script. Ed Meese and Ron Nicol.

Kenny: All right, we're rolling and when it comes up there.

Bill Walton: Two years ago, I had the honor to serve as a leader on the Trump presidential transition team. From August, 2016 to the inaugural in January '17 over, 300 policy experts developed plans to transition all of the government agencies to the Trump administration. It was an extraordinarily talented group of people. Two men in particular stood out; our leader, Ron Nicol, had run the Boston Consulting Group's America practice and our most senior and respected advisor was Ed Meese, who had served as Ronald Reagan's attorney general and as counselor to the president, the top staff job in the White House.

Bill Walton: Transition was an intense and sometimes chaotic experience. Ron and I had come from the private sector and in the process learned a lot about how government works or doesn't. Ed provided much needed context and wisdom to guide us through our long days together. We talked about leadership styles, Trump versus Reagan, crisis management, and the differences between business leadership and political leadership. Ed told some terrific stories about Ronald Reagan. I often wished I'd had a tape recorder to capture everyone's conversations and thoughts. So today we're going one better.

Bill Walton: Ron and Ed are joining me here on the show to talk about the things we talked about during transition and to continue our conversations. Edwin Meese III, after his service with Ronald Reagan, joined the Heritage Foundation where he founded its Center for Legal and Judicial Studies. For years, he has been the nation's most prominent conservative voice leader, thinker, and elder statesman. Among his many books are The Heritage Guide to the Constitution and Leadership Ethics and Policing. He graduated from Yale University and his law degree is from Berkeley. Welcome Ed.

Ed Meese: Thank you. Good to be with you.

Bill Walton: It's great to have you here. Ron Nicol, named one of the top 25 consultants in the world by Consulting Magazine led Boston Consulting Group's America's organization and technology practices. At BCG, he developed strategies for dozens of fortune 100 companies. Ron also served as the chairman of the board of advisors for Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Following his graduation to the Naval Academy with a BS in physics where he ranked seventh in his class of 850, Ron served as a nuclear naval submarine officer and served with distinction in the navy. Welcome Ron.

Ron Nicol: Great to be here Bill.

Bill Walton: It's great to have you here. It's great to reunite the team after a couple of years.

Ron Nicol: It is.

Bill Walton: Ed you had a little prior experience with transition. Ron and I were new to it. You had some experience with Ronald Reagan.

Ed Meese: Yes. I was fortunate to have been asked by then president elect Reagan in the 1980 to head the transition that year, a transition that started literally the day after the election on the 4th of November, 1980.

Bill Walton: So we got started-, and Ron, you started the trial, you were the first guy on the scene.

Ron Nicol: Early August right after the GOP convention.

Bill Walton: I understand that we have a law that creates the transition process.

Ed Meese: Well, at the time that I was a director, there was essentially no law. No law at least to provide any funding or any authority to do anything until after the election. And of course for us, we felt that was a good idea so that everybody who was supporting Ronald Reagan could devote all of their attention to winning the election. And forbade anyone even thinking about what might happen afterwards so that we didn't have rivalries, people grasping for the best jobs that might happen. We thought it was very important to win the election first and then worry about what you did afterwards.

Bill Walton: Well, I think our candidate, Mr. Trump agreed with Mr. Reagan. He was a little ambivalent about a transition team starting up before the election, Ron you had some insights there.

Ron Nicol: Well there was a law change in 2010 that provided resources right after the convention up until the election. We stood up the team prior to that. But to your point, Bill, I can remember some of our team members going to campaign events, and going up to president Trump and saying, "Hey, I'm working on your transition." His answer was, "Why are you doing that? Start working on the campaign because unless we win, it doesn't matter."

Bill Walton: Well, nevertheless, we toiled in obscurity very productively. Give us the scope of what the transition was. It was a very interesting process, and those of us that didn't know as much about government learned a lot.

Ron Nicol: We started as I mentioned right after the convention. We had a number of teams, we had a team to do appointments. That was led by Bill Haggerty. We had a team that was looking at who were potential candidates for positions of government, because one of the obviously goals is to get those people in place. Secondly, there was a team that looked at the future White House operations. There was a team for policy. The team that I worked on was agency review, but we changed the name to agency action, responsible really for looking at the transition of each of the agencies of government.

Bill Walton: We had over 300 people and we were broken up into groups. Ed headed one group. I had one and-

Ed Meese: Ed Feulner was another and I think Mike Rogers for a while also headed one.

Bill Walton: We had teams for each agency and we wrote plans based on how we saw things needed to be changed. My favorite plan was the one for the SBA which I ever saw. I didn't think the SBA needed to exist. I had a one page plan for that drafted up that basically says let's shut it down. The next day I think we were, I don't know how serious we were, but the next day Mr. Trump appointed the head of the worldwide federation of wrestling Linda McMahon as head of it, and I thought we can get rid of our one page she's not going to let us shut this down.

Ron Nicol: Coming back to your point Bill, the fact is we started with no one. We had to spin up a team of about 250 to 300 people in a fairly short period of time. By the way one of the things that was really pleasing about that process is you had a lot of patriots, people that wanted to be participating in this. It was an unpaid job. There were some, a very few number of positions that were compensated but not very high level. Most of the folks on these teams were volunteers.

Ed Meese: The fact that was that there are a lot of people around that have had prior experience in one administration or another over the years that were willing to come out of retirement or do part time from their regular jobs in order to participate in the transition. We really had some expertise that wasn't expected really, based upon what people had done before. Very few people knew about their background and experience, which was very valuable to put that knowledge into the planning for the new administration

Ron Nicol: As you mentioned it, as Bill said, we come from the private sector, so I had no experience with Washington. An interesting analogy came to my mind. You have a large tree with full of birds and they're all on their patches. What happens in the election is potentially the tree gets shaken and all the birds fly away, and you've got all these other birds circling around looking for a place to reuse. You have a lot of people that have an interest because they want to be in the next administration. There was highly motivated people in this team.

Bill Walton: One of the things that was interesting is our building we had a government building that we were provided. Our transition team was on the seventh floor.

Ron Nicol: Seventh and half of eighth I think.

Bill Walton: The Hillary transition team was on 11. Of course in August of 2016 everybody knew that she was going to win. We'd ride up and down the elevator with the Hillary people. They'd look at us like you people are hopeless. Then we had our moments because remember we had some very dedicated people, very brilliant

people right at the outset. Then nobody was really sure we'd win and then we won. Then all of a sudden we had a lot of new dedicated people showing up.

Ed Meese: Actually that was one of the problems, going back to what we discussed earlier about the differences of the two campaigns.

Bill Walton: That's where I was going with this one.

Ed Meese: Because here we had the people who have been working on the transition and now you had a lot of other people who've been exclusively on the campaign, and they were also interested what happened in the future.

Ron Nicol: That's a really good point. In fact, what I would say is what happened after the election was in business balance, a takeover not a merger. It was difficult to mitigate that because as we talked earlier, the folks on the campaign had almost no idea of what we did, and assumed we did nothing. We had this takeover occur after the election. I think it could have been mitigated because I think your point is a really good one. In the future, if you had someone in the position of running the transition who was a highly trusted advisor of the candidate, who is probably not looking for a position in government. But who would be trusted once the transition is evolving post-election. Because we didn't have that and that made it more difficult.

Bill Walton: We'll Rodney was much more engaged in his transition than was Trump. He had a full blown corporate thing and very involved in the campaign and I'm not sure of course he went ahead and lost the election. This is a resource allocation question. Well, in hindsight, do you think we would have been better if we'd started November 7th?

Ron Nicol: Well, it's hard to say. I think a lot of it was, it depends on the people. But I think for one thing, it would have been better to have someone who had been in the campaign from the start in the sense, who can pull together the two groups, and we didn't have that. We really had as Ron points out two different groups trying to find their way of joining together without, and actually the person who had headed the campaign during the, excuse me the person who headed the transition prior to the election, was no longer the head of the transition after that time. It was not just meshing two different groups of people. It was also meshing a different philosophy of the transition from one person to another. So that made it more difficult. Plus the fact that we were divided in location. A lot of people who had been in the campaign, and now were officials in the transition were in New York. A lot of us who are kind of the workers were in Washington DC, and it was kind of hard to get those two groups together sometimes.

Bill Walton: The lesson is that it needs to be integrated, you need to have a candidate that believes in the work before the election, but really most of the work say 90% of it's got to happen afterwards. Because there's a certain unreality to doing all

this planning before the election, even if you think you're a shoe in like Hillary's team did.

Ed Meese:

Well, one of the things that is important of course, is what the President promised in the campaign has to be transitioned into the plans for the future, if he's going to maintain integrity and credibility. Of course if you weren't out there in the campaign knowing what's being promised, and instead were developing a separate set of plans, that makes for the cleavage really between the two groups.

Bill Walton:

But that's the thing that I find remarkable is that Trump really, now that he's been in the job for a couple of years. He really acted on most of those things that we build in the plan. Now, I don't think he read all how many plans we had, but the basic promises we worked to get engaged in and the plans that were developed, and then now they're being acted on.

Ron Nicol:

Well one of the things we did at the pre-election process was track what was said in the campaign and capture those. One of the things we learned from previous transition efforts, there'd been a tremendous amount of paperwork generated. A lot of position papers and so on. What we tried to do is focus it down on something we call it the two pager in 20 pager. In that two pager we captured all of those campaign promises.

Bill Walton:

I think I learned as much about the consulting businesses as I did politics. The BCG process is amazing. One of the things we talked about was the difference in leadership styles between the political leader and the business leader. We all talked about that.

Ron Nicol:

I can remember vividly a session, it was being held to educate the team on how a chief of staff should operate the White House. It was very theoretical, it was an academic discussion. I thought about this and said, most of the CEOs I know and certainly what I see of Mr. Trump would be, I don't think he's going to operate that way. Of course he didn't. It was a very different style that came in. It was a very much more corporate style.

Ed Meese:

I think too, Ron both you and I really got our leadership training initially in the military, you in the navy and me in the army. I think that had a lot to do with our view of things, because in effect in many cases, corporate leadership style is more like the military I think. The political style the big difference is that corporations run pretty much the same in terms of their internal structure and so on. Occasionally there are major changes, but for the most part there's kind of a climate, there's kind of a culture if you will, that continues from one executive chief executive to another. In campaigns, particularly when you have a different style in the person of the President himself or herself, you have some potential for real change. I think President Trump pro illustrates this as much as anyone has.

Bill Walton: What was Ronald Reagan's leadership style?

Ed Meese: Actually, Ronald Reagan learned his leadership in the army too. He goes all the way back to the army reserve in the 1930s. When he joined the army reserve because he wanted to ride horses. Then he took courses those days they had correspondence courses for people who were enlisted then, to advance in rank. He took the courses to become a second lieutenant. When World War II came along, he was a second lieutenant in the army reserve, and he was called to active duty in 1942 and spent the war ultimately leaving as a captain in the army. That was his initial leadership schooling, if you will. But of course he had had a lot of private sector experience as well, because he was President of the Screen Actors Guild. Then he'd had the political leadership as governor of California. So he had had a great deal. As a matter of fact, his leadership went all the way back to being president of his class, I believe in high school and President of the student body when he was in college.

Bill Walton: Interesting.

Ron Nicol: Well I was just going to say Ed you pointed out. One of the things that was really difficult to deal with is there was no sense of chain of command, so to speak, in the transition. The accountability and responsibilities that we're used to really didn't work that way. It's a very different structure that works in politics.

Bill Walton: I think we concluded that Trump was not a typical corporate business executive. I mean he really run a family real estate development shop, and his business was basically taking properties and serially developing them. But he didn't need a big organization to do that. He created an organization to run a hotel perhaps, but that wouldn't be something he would be involved with. He didn't have any real-

Ron Nicol: No low overhead, very sparse resources to get things done.

Bill Walton: He's still running the government that way. You two mentioned the office of the personnel shop we had to get people appointed. We're still under achieving in that category.

Ed Meese: The presidential personnel operation has had difficulties, and those were compounded then by having a very hostile opposition party in the congress. As a result of that, we're now at two thirds of the way into the first term. We still have, I would say almost every department still is lacking some of the top officials being announced and nominated and then confirmed. This has a deleterious effect really on maintaining accountability as Ron mentioned, and the other kinds of things you need when you're talking about an enterprise that has well in excess 2 million employees, when you put the civilian and the military people together. This is a big job for anyone, but particularly you need a very highly organized and a very highly communicating and highly accountable structure for your organization to be successful.

Bill Walton: How did Ronald Reagan do that?

Ed Meese: Well, he did it first of all by recognizing the importance of two way communication. He had for example, he worked very closely with his cabinet. He had developed a cabinet system when he was governor of California, where he would meet with his cabinet as often sometimes three times a week. Now that was a small cabinet then because a state, you can do it with about six people. What he did was he had four people who had all of the different departments, I think there were like 40 different departments divided among the four of them, they call them cabinet secretaries. Then he had this chief of staff, and then he had the director of finance and that was his cabinet.

Ed Meese: Sometimes for example, when the legislature finished their half year session and left all the bills to be decided, whether he'd vetoed them or signed them. We would often be going literally from 8:00 o'clock in the morning until 10:00 o'clock at night. With him sitting there, getting the advice of his cabinet and making decisions. He carried that over into the federal government. Obviously the scope of the federal government's much greater than a state. He had what he called cabinet councils, which were groups of the cabinet less than the whole and he would meet with them. He would be in touch with his cabinet secretaries-

Bill Walton: Those were really exchange of ideas meetings.

Ed Meese: Very much exchange of ideas. He had a system where the Cabinet Council for example would get together without him there for a preliminary meeting in order to do three things; number one, to identify what the issues were. Secondly, to get the options and thirdly to be agreed on the facts so he didn't have people arguing about facts in front of him that there would be so that he had an organized system. He was highly organized himself, but he had a very organized system to get the maximum information, so that he could make a decision.

Bill Walton: Well, I wish we had him running some of the cable networks so we could agree on the facts.

Ron Nicol: I remember an early conversation after the election, and we had gotten the point where some of the cabinet secretaries had been appointed. Ed Feulner was having dinner sitting at Mr. Trump's side. He was frustrated because he'd been trying to get messages across, to get coordination across the cabinets. Ed Feulner brought up this point of the cabinets meeting, which was an interesting idea in government, which strikes me from a private sector standpoint that the leadership team of any company would be meeting regularly. But that doesn't happen necessarily without prompting, so now they were doing that.

Bill Walton: And Ron, I think I booted the description in the opening, but you ran the organization practice at BCG, you ran a lot of things, but what was the

organization practice and advising a big company? Talk about talent management, human resources, organization design, coming from that world, were you-

Ron Nicol:

Think about the strategy of organizations, how you design an organization, how the operating model of an organization works. Again another interesting observation about culture. Culture is part of organization as you know. When I got involved in Washington and the transition, it was a different world that I'd been in. Just a couple of interesting observation. McClelland's Theory of Needs is a way to think about people in organizations. We have really three drivers if you will for needs. One is motivation, I'm sorry, affiliation. Affiliation is basically someone's Joe's coming down the hall.

Ron Nicol:

Everyone loves Joe, but Joe won't make any decisions because he doesn't want to make anyone mad, doesn't want to upset anyone. The second dimension is power. The power person is someone who you give, they want resources, they want to control the money and the people. If you give someone, for example, say I'll give you \$500 million thousand people, but the project has a 99% chance of failure, they'll put their hand up right away. Because they don't really care whether it works or not, they just want to control. The last dimension is achievement. The achievement dimension is take that hill.

Ron Nicol:

The thing that I would observe is the mix between those three that I saw on the culture of Washington, was much more toward power and affiliation and much less so towards achievement. Bill you remember that you and I were reviewing résumés bringing people on the team. I was always struck by how impressive the résumés were, because we had people that had been former assistant secretaries, deputy secretaries, tremendous number of titles. I would ask the question, "Well what did you do when you were in that job?" The summary answer was that doesn't matter here. It just matters what title you have.

Ed Meese:

That's a big difference. To too many people government is a process rather than a results oriented business. I think the latter of course. Quite frankly, I think that is one thing that President Trump has brought to the federal government, and that is a sense of the importance of accomplishments. The fact that he has in fact carried out the things that he said he would do during the campaign, and makes a point of saying promises made, promises kept. That's a very important part of it as it was for Ronald Reagan. He had made very definite commitments. Of course, in his case they were pretty large. One was to revitalize the economy. The second was to rebuild our national security's apparatus, and the third was to renew the spirit of the American people. Those are pretty large goals, but he was able to accomplish them literally making substantial progress even by the end of the first term and certainly by the end of the second term.

Ron Nicol:

Well this is, Ed this is a very good point. Because what's frustrating, I think a lot of the Democrat party frustrating the news media, is the fact that the President

is achievement oriented. He is checking his boxes and making good on the promises he made in the campaign.

Ed Meese: The one big difference between the private sector and government, the government in a sense is more like the military experience in this sense. There's another force combating you in the course of this, and unfortunately that combat has gotten more accentuated in this administration than I think we've seen it in a long time, so it makes the leadership even more different.

Ron Nicol: Very good point.

Bill Walton: Key to the kingdom? Is there any way to unwind this thing or to change it? Those of us that remain pessimistic about the promise of progress in Washington, you're not giving me any reason for optimism.

Ed Meese: Well, I think the one thing that many of us feel about it, is that we have to hold the government within the bounds for which government is designed, and that's to do the kinds of things that the private sector can't do. To limit itself to the things that government is really formed to do, which is the protection of people, the helping of those who cannot help themselves to defend the nation. Those kinds of things that are set forth in the constitution. Not to get into all kinds of other things where government is notoriously not very good at it.

Bill Walton: Ron?

Ron Nicol: I'll take a shot at your question Bill.

Bill Walton: You do some work in the government agencies?

Ron Nicol: Yes, that's correct. Well, I would answer your question by saying I think that movement of the parties and particularly the left is moving so far to the left, it's going to leave potentially the public behind. At some point there'll be a reaction. Because one of the things I observed, again having been in Washington, it's an ecosystem. The ecosystem of Washington exists to perpetuate itself. Those outside of Washington will be the counterforce at some point that will bring this back closer to the center.

Bill Walton: Do you think that we need Ed the system, the civil service system was designed to protect us from corruption in government and people and cronyism. Yet the civil service system has left us with the permanent governing class. Even if we get all the appointees that we want into these agencies, it's still only 2% of the people there. I mean, is there a civil and I'm interested in you as an organization designer, is there a civil service reform that could get us a long way towards this?

Ed Meese: Well, I don't think there's any reform that will substitute for good leadership. As when I headed the department of Justice, now we had at that time 78,000

people. But I was very fortunate in having a great group of people around me who were good leaders. Through two way communication, through teamwork building, through letting people know what you expected, through taking accountability and pushing it all the way down through the organization. There's a saying in the military, what gets inspected is what gets done. Part of it in my case was getting out there and getting away from Washington, visiting the field officers. We had at that time 57 field officers of the FBI, a comparable organization for the Drug Enforcement Administration. Many dozen, a couple of dozens federal prisons.

Ed Meese:

You have to get out and have to see what's going on yourself, but also letting people know that you're looking at what's going on. I think that what we really need is good organization, and good communications to let people know what is expected, but also to get their ideas. Ron, you talked about affiliation. Making people feel part of the organization themselves, so that they have a stake in results. That's the very important part of it. Those kinds of things that you normally do in a profit making business have to be carried over into the federal government, so you don't have people that are just, they're putting in time until they get their 20 years and retire.

Ron Nicol:

Unfortunately though I think that there is limited competition inside the human resources part of the government. Meaning in most private sector businesses, you have an upper out sent to you deliver or don't. People leave the organization. That happens less so. I think that one of the things that frustrates a lot of government employees, is folks that actively disengage in the activities they are involved with, or actually there's no remedy in the Civil Service Act for have people leave. It's very difficult to have people leave an organization in the government.

Bill Walton:

I think Ed I think you're right about the leadership piece because we talk about the swamp and the deep state, but you go into these agencies and I had the experience running the treasury landing team. You go to the agencies, and I've been known to say things like, well, we had to shut down the IRS and things like that. I just realize how blindingly stupid that is, when you actually go in the IRS and meet the people and see who they are and they're decent people. They're good people. They're operating in a system that's terrible because they're so demonized that they can't get resources from Congress to build a proper computer system, information system. They're not getting enough staffing to do things, and they're laboring under incredible handicaps. I sort of went meeting the actual people went from an enemy of the IRS to a champion of we got to do something to make because it would make everybody better if we properly resource them.

Ron Nicol:

Well what you point out Bill the complexity of our government is overwhelming. Tom [Leppard] was the team lead that did the Social Security Administration near Baltimore. Those folks were starved for resources to make things happen,

to make things work. Everybody's trying on a daily basis to do everything they can, but frankly they don't have all the resources they need.

Ed Meese:

Well, and this is compounded by the fact that for several years now, we haven't had budgets until sometimes never. In other words, you're operating on last year's budget because the Congress has not gotten around to this year's budget yet. You can go two thirds of the way through the fiscal year before you even get a budget. As I say, in some years you've never gotten a budget. You operated on what they call a continuing resolution. Therefore any idea of planning is almost out the window. I would say that that of all the things that is detriment in terms of running a sound organization, is the way in which the whole resource planning, and the way in which appropriations are made is out of lack. In 1974, I think it was, Congress decided they were going to change the appropriation system.

Ed Meese:

They delayed the start of the fiscal year from the 1st of July to the 1st of October so they could get a new system in place. That was going to have a new budget system, and a way in which you would have the budget enacted well before the start of the fiscal year. It worked for a few years I think. But it certainly doesn't work today and that's one of the great problems. When you have all of these detriments, some lack of accountability on individuals, a lack of knowledge of what the budget's going to be or when it's going to start, all of these things are things that could be easily corrected by the top leadership, quite frankly, particularly in the congress doing their job properly.

Ron Nicol:

Very good point Ed. In fact one of the things we found the transition is we developed hypotheses, looked at the resources in the various agencies. Reallocating some of those resources would be the optimal thing to do. Yet it's extremely difficult to do, because you have to take it out of someone's budget and put it in someone else's budget. There's parochial views on how we want to do, what they want to do with that money.

Bill Walton:

I want to go a couple of directions with this, but let me come back to you Ron. Your organization practice, you developed something called the delayering approach, which is BCG is biggest revenue producer now.

Ron Nicol:

I'm not sure at this point because I've been away from it for a while, but it is a process. It's an interesting process. I actually did work with Pentagon-

Bill Walton:

Because it gets at this issue of these things being complex organizations. There's too many continue.

Ron Nicol:

You look at the structure of organization and what I would like to see is the fewest number of levels in the organization, a few number of layers. You'd like to see spans of control of seven to 10, something like that. What you find is when you look at government organization, you see tremendous number of deputies. You'll see two people in a box. You find most spans of controls and a

lot of layers of organization. Those are certainly not optimal ways to run organizations.

Ed Meese:

You're right Ron. Let me tell you, when President Reagan was in office, we had in the Department of Defense two Under Secretaries and then we had a number of assistant secretaries. Today they have either six or seven Under Secretaries in the Department of Defense. Actually less of a mission in many ways now than we had during the Cold War. Yet at the same time, more people and those people that were assistant secretaries for example in a particular function, have now been raised up to Under Secretaries, and they have that many more deputies. In essence, what we've done over a period of 20 years, we have made this complex organization more complex and more expensive and less accountable than we had when President Reagan was president, five presidents ago.

Ron Nicol:

That's a very good point Ed because there's no force. There's forces to elevate positions, but they're rarely forces to take out positions. It takes an overt to actually delay an organization. It's really tough to do.

Bill Walton:

Do you remember the SCC organization chart?

Ron Nicol:

I do.

Bill Walton:

Do you remember all those boxes?

Ron Nicol:

A lot of boxes.

Bill Walton:

We had an organization chart dozens of boxes, somebody in each box. You've got the commissioner there, and then you got the four other, you got the chairman and the four other commissioners. Then you notice something very interesting. None of the boxes really report to each other. Do you remember that? Everybody had their own piece of the pie and nobody was really running the thing. You had the SCC commissioner who has all the power and all the staffing, but that person can't run that.

Ed Meese:

I think that explains you take what is at the start a complex situation and you make it more complex by not having accountability really. When you have five people each having a separate part of the pie so to speak, and none of them accountable for the end result it makes it very difficult.

Bill Walton:

I always like to find lines of action, I guess in your three pieces of the world or types of people, affiliation, power, achievement. I guess you and I figured out we like to achieve stuff and so does Ed, so he doesn't qualify as a regular government.

Ron Nicol:

No, exactly. He's an anomaly.

Bill Walton: You're one of the achievement people.

Ed Meese: Actually most of my life, at least half of my life, more than that really has not been at government. It's been in other enterprises including the nonprofit world.

Bill Walton: Well you founded the center for Legal Studies at Heritage.

Ed Meese: Well that's right. Heritage is a great example of accountability, where the various division heads there, the policy divisions legal, whether it's legal or national security or economics, whatever it is. Our Vice Presidents have to set goals for the year for their organizations, and then their compensation is based upon their achievement of those goals. That's a powerful incentive for people to recognize and to keep their mind on what the ultimate objective really is.

Ron Nicol: This is a very good point Ed. In terms of compensation, when I look at how much our government servants are paid people in government, it's actually quite a bit below what the private sector pays.

Bill Walton: Are you sure that's still true?

Ron Nicol: It's true at the top.

Bill Walton: In technology it's true.

Ed Meese: At the top of the pay is very low by comparison with the private sector, Below that, support personnel and so on, it's much higher.

Ron Nicol: That's a good distinction.

Ed Meese: When I moved from the federal government to the Heritage Foundation, my assistant, for example had to take a pay cut. That was a very an illustration really-

Bill Walton: From the federal government through Heritage.

Ed Meese: From what she had been getting yes.

Ron Nicol: The reason this is important is because you're right, if you look at the benchmark data, what you'll see is that the average compensation of a government employee exceeds the private sector equivalent.

Bill Walton: I think it's by 50% when you include all the benefits it's even higher.

Ron Nicol: Absolutely. But what Ed pointed out, if you look at the leadership, you look at the top, you're not going to be able to attract necessarily the same people you

can attract in the private sector because the compensation is too low. Back to Ed's point earlier of how important leadership is. I don't know that we recognize that, because we should be actually competitive in bringing in talent at the top of a government.

Ed Meese:

Well, and I think it varies as Bill points out, it does vary. For example, I just saw a survey the other day that they uncovered. There's something like almost a couple of hundred of people in the Department of Education, for example, which shouldn't even be a federal department. There's nothing in the constitution that authorizes that. Yet you have them making close to \$200,000 a year, for doing essentially nothing other than paperwork. One of those departments that we shouldn't even have, and which probably does more to compound the problems of education rather than actually make an actual contribution to more kids learning better things.

Bill Walton:

I'd love to see if we can in this show develop lines of action or reasons for optimism or things people ought to say, gee, there ought to be a law to do this or legal to do that. What do you think would be fundamental change that if we could bring it about would solve some of these problems?

Ed Meese:

Well, we might look at history. One of the more fundamental changes in the government was that were the two Hoover commissions that were appointed after World War II and did a great job of consolidating functions, of bringing groups together, making lines of authority more clear. I think we possibly need something along those lines to. Particularly we need to have a set of principles that the federal government should not be doing things that could be better done by the private sector. Not have the mission creep that almost every department has experienced over the course of the last 25 to 30 years.

Bill Walton:

Who were commissioned? This was Herbert Hoover who was our engineer president. He came from the private sector and utilities, and so he brought all that into the government.

Ed Meese:

Brought a talented group of people together who had no stake in what happened except good government. As a result, they were able to do good things that put, and then you had president Eisenhower who really came along after that and did a lot to streamline things based upon his experience in the military.

Bill Walton:

Once again the great general.

Ron Nicol:

What I've found in organizations is, it's organization redesign and restructuring it's almost like trying to do an operation on yourself. You can logically say I need an appendectomy, but taking the knife and doing that to yourself is a very difficult exercise. I think the point you made about having outside, an unbiased outside party such as well-intentioned and respected leaders that would take a

look at the structure of our government, there are significant changes could be made.

Ed Meese:

Actually, I had some experience with that in this sense, President Nixon appointed the ash commission to kind of follow the pattern of the Hoover commissions in the early 70s. They came up with some interesting ideas on governmental organization. Now almost none of them were adopted by Congress, but in California under then governor Reagan, we used a lot of the ideas of the ash permission, reformulated those and adapted to a state government. It was very helpful in the way we organized the executive branch of California.

Ron Nicol:

Another example, Bill, to your question around actions that can be done. I was involved with one organization, the Pentagon, where if you looked at the attrition rate of the people in the various organizations its 78%, because now the baby boomers are reaching a point where it's a lot of retirements. Historically what had been done is just when someone retired, you replaced that position. You just hire someone into the box that the person left. What we work with the organization to do is to say, rather than do that, when the box is emptied, rearrange the box. It's almost like the puzzle you had when you were a kid, where you would have little blocks and would have to make a face out of it. It's a lot more complex. But actually they did a great job in over a couple of years they reduced 20% of their costs by taking that approach. There are things that we can do in these organizations to make them much more effective and efficient

Ed Meese:

In the first couple of years of the Reagan administration we were able to eliminate 75,000 positions in the federal government just by something along the lines you've indicated.

Bill Walton:

Well our current president doesn't seem to have much appetite for doing this kind of thing. My thought is maybe we ought to see if we couldn't hire a chief operating officer for them because we need more. I think he's doing a good job living up to his performance, his campaign promises. But there's so many missed opportunities right now.

Ron Nicol:

I'm not sure that I would lay it at the president's feet. I think the secretaries of the departments ought to be taking this on.

Bill Walton:

You're right.

Ron Nicol:

The thing it does, it actually creates a more effective, efficient organization.

Bill Walton:

They need a mandate to do that.

Ron Nicol:

That's the point.

Bill Walton: Somebody needs to say you got to do this.

Ed Meese: But there's one other component and that is the Congress. Because right now that's one of the things we found in the Reagan administration, he had a lot of ideas including getting rid of the department of education and things like that. He was stymied literally by Congress. Because what happens is you have this iron triangle, and the iron triangle is made up of three components. One is the organization itself and the federal government. Number two is the special interest group on the outside. And the third is their rabbis if you will, or their sponsors in Congress? The latter two can overcome the part of the executive branch that's trying to make the change.

Ron Nicol: That's the ecosystem I was talking about earlier that I've seen operating in Washington and it's quite strong. It's not, I mean people talk about the swamp, but it's more than that. It's actually a set of forces that are in place that make it very difficult to make change here.

Ed Meese: Also, unfortunately, the impetus, the objective of too many members of Congress is to add something that they're definitely supposedly for their constituents, when actually what they're doing really is adding to this tremendous bill, that now is going into the trillions rather than the billions that we had to contend with back in the 1980s.

Ron Nicol: Another example that is regulation you know, in the transition we identified a lot of places that regulations could be reduced. One of the things I'm really pleased to see is this administration's done a great job of that. But you don't find people taking things away to your point Ed, it's more about adding, putting something on top of what's already there.

Bill Walton: Well, unfortunately we've got to wrap up. One of the great personal pleasures for me and volunteering to work for the transition was meeting and I knew Ed, but getting to meet and work with both of you in this. I think if we can continue to get people like the two of you willing to commit your time to make things happen, I think we're likely to have good outcome. Anyway, Ron Nicol thanks for joining me, Ed Meese thank you again. Any last words guys?

Ron Nicol: No, it's been a pleasure.

Ed Meese: Good to be with you enjoyed the discussion.

Bill Walton: Okay, well thanks for joining and we'll see you next time. That's good. A lot of content.

Kenny: Let's stop the cameras even though I know that we're going to do another, we're going to stop the cameras.

Ron Nicol: That was interesting.

Bill Walton: Did you enjoy that?

Ron Nicol: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bill Walton: I think we flowed pretty well. I just get so depressed when I hear all the things that we can't fix.

Ron Nicol: I know that's tough.

Ed Meese: I think one of the problems is-

Bill Walton: Camera's not on, mics off.

Ed Meese: One of the problems is the President is a good, is a paradox really. He is a good executive for the things he wants to do, and the things he's interested in. He's a bad leader because of his personal style. He's a bad leader and he's a bad manager because he doesn't have any interest in the organization itself. He wouldn't know what the Under Secretary of education does for higher education. He wouldn't have had either such a position or the Under Secretary for health HHS, I mean he wouldn't have the slightest idea of this.

Ron Nicol: That's Bill's point around the fact that he ran in more of a real estate portfolio than a real large major company, where you have thousands of people and that's the missing link.

Bill Walton: We ended up getting, it happened to you Ron, I'm sure, people said, well why didn't you go to work for Trump and the administration? I said, because I worked for Trump in the transition.

Ed Meese: I didn't want to get into it, but look at the White House. For the first year-

Bill Walton: See this is why we do an after show. Really got the camera running the real good stuff.

Ed Meese: For the first year, the White House, the top positions in the White House, first of all, there were too many top positions in the White House. In order to get somebody appointed there or nominated you had to touch base and get the approval of five disparate power centers in the White House. You had to get the Chief of Staff, Reince Preibus, you had to get O'Bannon, Bannon.

Ron Nicol: Bannon.

Ed Meese: Bannon. You had to get Kelly ...

Ron Nicol: Kelly Anne Conway.

Ed Meese: Kelly Anne Conway, you had to get either Ivanka or Jared and I think there was at least one other ... None of them got together to say, what do we want to do?

Ron Nicol: Observation. As you know, and it's a really very good point when we were in Washington and all the decisions were being made in New York. I from an organizational design standpoint, I said, how is this really working? I actually interviewed people that were in New York and in Washington. Here's what my takeaway was. It was working like The Apprentice. Here's the following way.

Bill Walton: Are you sure we don't have the cameras on? Good stuff

Ron Nicol: You had Kelly Anne, you had Bannon you had all these overlapping. Basically everybody was given the same. Because one of the things I think the president is brilliant at, is picking up, it's like lets you and he fight. He could watch the argument the interaction, and then glean from that major arguments. Unfortunately that created for us chaos because depending on who called was what we were told to do.

Bill Walton: I didn't want your job.

Ron Nicol: It was interesting. It was a fascinating job.

Bill Walton: The FDR did that, he used to spine the same thing to two or three people.

Ed Meese: See who came up with the best solution.

Ron Nicol: Well then the fixer, remember the fixer?

Bill Walton: The fixer yeah.

Kenny: Absolutely. The New Yorker.

Bill Walton: Next time we do this we're not going to tell people the cameras are still rolling.

Kenny: No, we'll tell them the camera's off [inaudible 00:54:24].

Ron Nicol: Yeah, there you go. No, we literally had a real fixer. You've got to transition out-

Bill Walton: We're just going to, you're going to stay there and we're going to talk to Ed about what just happened today with the Muller report. How should I title what came out today?

Ed Meese: It was the attorney general released the final report of the special council.

Bill Walton: The final report of the special council okay.

Ron Nicol: Ed you made a really good point earlier that that wasn't even a required evolution.

Kenny: Sarah, why don't you reset the time?

Bill Walton: Yeah, we'll give it 10 minutes and Ron you're curious about this too so let's just even though we're not subject matter experts let's just dive in, because it doesn't stop me.

Ron Nicol: You do want me to comment on it?

Bill Walton: Yeah, I do. I think it's interesting.

Ron Nicol: I think it's fascinating.

Bill Walton: You're a high bandwidth guy. You've got a big brain. I want to hear what you think. Okay are we ready to go?

Kenny: I'm waiting for you standby. Rolling. Okay there we go and maybe zoom out just a little bit.

Bill Walton: We god?

Ron Nicol: You're not using this right?

Ed Meese: No.

Kenny: There we go. Okay, Bill we are ready.

Bill Walton: Is it rolling?

Kenny: Yes.

Bill Walton: We just completed a fascinating show with Ed Meese and Ron Nicol about lessons learned from the Trump transition, and various ways we might improve the government, federal government. Some of it optimistic, some of it not so. But we're here taping on a very special day. We're taping on the day where we have the final report to the special council from the two year-long investigation of the Trump campaign and collusion and so on and so forth. Ed Meese with us and Ron and I both are curious about what you think about all this?

Ed Meese: Well it's a big day because there's been so much of the media attention to the investigation by the special council of, and the mission of this special council originally was to find out whether there was collusion and cooperation between the Trump campaign, and agents or people who were involved with the Soviet with start again. The purpose of the special council investigation was to see

whether there was any collusion or cooperation between members of the Trump campaign during 2016, and agents or other people connected to the Russian government. The special council was appointed, because the attorney general had, because he had been part of the campaign itself, had to recuse himself. That was why a special council was appointed. But the report itself, and it's important to understand what that is, it's very similar.

Ed Meese:

The special council really was like any other prosecutor in the Department of Justice. That is, they have a responsibility if they decide to either get an indictment, or if they decide not to get an indictment in a particular case where there's been an investigation of potential or possible criminal activity. This is a confidential report that that prosecutor would give to the attorney general or to if it was an assistant US attorney, to the US attorney for that particular office. The purpose of it is to explain why a decision was made. That's entirely what this report was. It's confidential because it reveals a lot of information that is itself by law confidential, such as grand jury proceedings and that sort of thing.

Ed Meese:

This attorney general, to his credit is trying to make the report because of the public attention, because of this two year process, is trying to make this as transparent as possible and give to the public, and coincidentally to the congress as much information as he possibly can. But there are certain areas where obviously he can't, and therefore had to redact a portion of the report. One is where there's grand jury material, and that's because of our laws. That is where everyone is innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. Unless a person is indicted and goes through a trial which would determine guilt or innocence. If the prosecutor himself or herself determines there's no basis to even go to put that person to the test of a trial, then that grand jury material has to remain secret out of fairness that to the individual that's being investigated.

Bill Walton:

How many people, how many Americans do you think understand that?

Ed Meese:

Well, probably not because almost nobody has much to do with, or sees much about the grand jury because if there isn't ... Let's take an ordinary case, a case let's say of a fraud and someone's accused of fraud. The testimony is taken before a grand jury. The grand jury finds that actually there was no fraud, or that there's insufficient evidence to even indict that person. That is to charge that person. That case never sees the light of day. That's proper because you can't ruin a person's reputation based upon accusations without some evidence that is at least sufficient to indict that person and give them to the test of a trial. That's really what we're talking about. There are other areas which can't be revealed right now.

Ed Meese:

One is if it compromises National Security information, and when we're talking about something having to do with spying by a adversary country, there's nothing poor or adversary that kind of a relationship in terms of National Security. A third area is where there are other cases going on where to reveal

certain information might prejudice the prosecution of those cases. We have several cases that have come out of the Muller investigation, which are totally separate from that investigation itself, which have been now prosecuted by other agencies like the southern district of New York in one case, the eastern district of Virginia in another case and so on. Then there's one other, and that is where a person who peripherally is involved as a witness for example, and information came out that might be embarrassing to them.

Ed Meese: Where they're not really part of the essential investigation itself, but the even the fact that they had to testify, could be embarrassing to them in their profession or in their family life or something. That information is properly excluded. Put that all together it's a minor part. The important part is that the report itself that deals with the matters which the special council actually did investigate and had a mission and authorization to investigate, which in this case were two. One was there collusion and cooperation between the campaign or members thereof and the Russian government? Secondly, did the President in any way obstruct justice? That information basically as a whole is going to be before the public.

Ron Nicol: Can I ask you a question about this having been the attorney general in those shoes, how would you judge ... The special council clearly said there was no collusion but left the question of obstruction open for the attorney general to answer. How do you see them?

Ed Meese: Well, I think that that was a failure quite frankly of the special council to carry out his total mission. I think he should have been a willing to say the evidence goes either one way or the other. Either there is sufficient evidence there to at least at the very minimum lay that out, and say that there was obstruction of justice and then leave it up to the Department of Justice whether they're going to proceed with an indictment. But in the absence of an indictment, actually then he should have indicated that there was no basis for indictment, and therefore that should have ended it.

Bill Walton: We talked about this before the show though, don't you think he had a problem with his hyper partisan team that was not going to be finding anything except Trump is guilty? How much division there was there in the team?

Ed Meese: Well this is speculation on my part because I don't know exactly why.

Bill Walton: I'm speculating on my part, you don't have to take it's my speculation.

Ed Meese: I think that's a very logical and common sense reason why he didn't do that. He could not because of the fact that so many of the lawyers that were working for the special council in this case, and it's very surprising quite frankly, so many of them, one at least one was totally irresponsible, unprofessional, unscrupulous lawyer who had been actually criticized by the US Supreme Court for his work in some of the previous cases.

Bill Walton: Isn't he the one that took out Arthur Anderson?

Ron Nicol: Yes and [Enron 01:04:06].

Bill Walton: And Enron, yeah.

Ed Meese: The fact that he was even on that team just amazed me. Because that's a person that I wouldn't have had if I was still in the Department of Justice, would not be any part of the Department of Justice or the US attorney. But beyond that, I think that the fact that that he could not, my speculation is that the special council could not get consensus among his own people. Therefore for that reason he punted, if you will, and punted the ball back literally to the attorney general, who then looked at this matter with the deputy attorney general who had the day to day responsibility of liaison with the special council. They consulted the office of Legal Counsel, which is the attorney general's legal advisor if you will, and came to the conclusion that there was not sufficient evidence for any charge against the President for obstruction of justice.

Ron Nicol: One thing we haven't heard about is the scope document of the investigation. Do you think the attorney general should release what the scope of this investigation was?

Ed Meese: Well we haven't seen the memo or the documentation, we've only seen it paraphrased as being the two items that I mentioned. But I agree. I think it should have been the scope of that should have been, and the exact mission given to him authorizing him to investigate by the in this case, the deputy attorney general who was acting attorney general at the time.

Bill Walton: Well it was a matter of politics. You are a brilliant careful lawyer, one of our leading constitutional experts. You understand how this plays out. You just gave us a great reason why this was being handled the way it is, and we're going to come out with this report. Yet as a matter of politics, most of the American people doesn't understand or appreciate the kinds of things you're saying. I don't know how we put this to bed as long as people don't understand civics or the constitution.

Ron Nicol: Well Bill it's even worse than that because after the attorney general's press conference today, I had a few minutes to flip between channels. Flipping between Fox News, CNN, MSNBC you wouldn't think they were talking about the same talk. It was really interesting.

Bill Walton: I was getting back to Ronald Reagan wanting people to agree on the facts. We're not even close.

Ed Meese: Well, I think that there are too complicating factors that we have to recognize in this particular matter. Number one is, we had the first time I've ever seen it frankly, the corruption within the Department of Justice and the FBI and the

intelligence agencies. Seeking, first of all to keep the current president from getting elected, and secondly to harass him, and try to get him compromise after he was elected. We've never seen that before. This has been the worst corruption in the FBI in its history. Of course that's already been identified with the former director, former deputy director and acting director right down the line. Much more will be heard about that because the current honest attorney general has indicated that he's going after this, and he's going to on behalf of the people of the country find out and assign accountability and take appropriate action.

Bill Walton: Do you feel that the agencies have rooted out those corrupt people?

Ed Meese: Well, I don't know. I don't know whether they've got them all or not. I hope so. But I think that will come out of this investigation that the attorney general has said that he is beginning. The other complication of this is we've never had as let's say, partisan and divisive news media as we have at the present time. If you take the people who have been commenting on this on the various cable shows, CNN, MSNBC and so on. Who have been saying things as though the decision had already been made, and that there was clear evidence that the President was guilty or that the campaign at least was guilty of collusion, and the President was guilty of obstruction of justice. Both of which have now been found to be untrue.

Ron Nicol: Related to that, because I think you make a very good point. Already the attorney general is being viewed as a partisan, even though he's trying to be neutral. Do you think this is going to lead to another special council?

Ed Meese: I don't think that it's going to lead to another special council. We've had enough trouble with the one we had, and the way in which that whole thing was handled. I don't think you only will have a special council if there was reason for the current attorney general recuse himself or someone else in the department had to be recused. I don't think that that is the case and I don't think it will be the case. The way in which certain members of the Congress are handling it, particularly Adam Schiff for example, who should be really is an embarrassment to the congress and should be resigning, and there are others like him that are continuing with this attack. You have this if not a conspiracy, you certainly have a commonality between the people in the government who are corrupt, with these people in Congress for their own partisan political purposes.

Ron Nicol: Ed so you've been in this organization, you know this situation for decades. Put this event, what's happened in the last couple of years in historical context. How do you think it's going to be viewed in the future?

Ed Meese: I think certainly the corruption of the FBI, the corruption that took place in the Department of Justice will be historic. I think it will be a black mark against those people who are involved. I think the important thing is for the public to understand that 99.9% of the people in both the Department of Justice and the

FBI, which of course is a branch of the Department of Justice, are honest, hardworking people doing a good job. It's too bad that a certain group of corrupt people have compromised these agencies, at least to the extent that they did.

Ron Nicol: Bill based on all conversations you've had, what do you see in this situation?

Bill Walton: I see that Congress is going to open their own investigation. I don't think this puts anything to rest. This is never about the rule of law. It's not about following careful procedures it's politics. I think unfortunately this is going to be with us so long as Trump is President.

Ron Nicol: Do you think it's going to be a positive or a negative?

Bill Walton: The good thing I think is it helps him in 2020.

Ron Nicol: That's what I was asking, do you think it's going to help in 2020?

Bill Walton: As a matter of politics, I think this is the way everybody's behaving very good for him. Because there are enough fair minded people in the country that are going to say look he went through all this and there's nothing there and they're going to stop listening. Rachel Maddow ratings have plummeted.

Ron Nicol: Good point.

Ed Meese: I would hope that in the Congress that the Republican leaders for example, and also some of the Democrats that are fair minded people would come together and say we've had enough. In the case of the Democrats that they would abandon the course that their own leaders are on to try to make a partisan circus out of this, and say look we need to get back to the people's business we need to have a budget. If they come up without a budget now for another fiscal year-

Bill Walton: They're really all about politics and power and it's in their interest to do that.

Ed Meese: It really is because we have the best constitutional republic in the history of the world. To have a few people, both in the executive branch which have now been identified and hoarded, and in the Congress who are essentially violating their oath of office by the partisan and vicious attacks that are taking place on the President at the current time.

Bill Walton: Guys thank you. General Meese Attorney General Meese great man. Thank you for illuminating this for Ron and me. We'll continue on with the next conversation, the next crisis and we'll hope to have you both back.

Ed Meese: Thank you.

Bill Walton: Okay. All right. Thanks for joining.

Ron Nicol: It was a good discussion.

Bill Walton: It was great. I must admit one of the huge reason I like doing this show is because I learn so much.

Ron Nicol: But that's also what the audience gets out of it Bill. Like you said, what Ed was talking about most people you don't really hear that. You hear the daily attack, you don't hear the step back and think about this.

Bill Walton: Well that's the audience piece of this. It's a different side of the same coin or whatever you want to call it.

Ron Nicol: Thoughtful people that's your audience thoughtful people.

Bill Walton: I think people take notes. I don't want to tell them we've got a transcript on Wednesday. I don't want to lose that intensity. Thank you. That was great. That was great Ron. That was great. I do feel like we need to come up with a redesign of government project. But Ed you're right you need to have a leader to do that.

Ron Nicol: Remember when Al Gore did reinventing government? I was invited to speak at one of his, and I said it won't happen this way. It was all politics.

Bill Walton: Unfortunately we only started this on our 50th show.

Ron Nicol: That's a great idea though.

Bill Walton: We're going to begin better late than never.

Sara: Better late than never.

Bill Walton: Your plane is what time?

Ron Nicol: 2:44. How long is it going to take to get to the airport?

Bill Walton: Are you driving?

Ron Nicol: No, Uber.

Bill Walton: I think Reagan is probably only about 25 or 30 minutes.

Ron Nicol: Okay. I get there by 2:00 I'll be okay I can leave at 1:00, 1:15 1:30.

Bill Walton: We could do this, I have a tennis lesson at 1:30.

Ron Nicol: I'm impressed you picked up tennis.

Bill Walton: I could go change, and then we could go over the club and have a sandwich if you'd like to do that because it's literally five minutes away.