

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dennis Hastert

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # IS-A-L-2012-047

Dennis Hastert, an Illinois legislator before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, eventually becoming the speaker of the house, was interviewed on the dates listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: November 8, 9 and 20, 2012

Location: Hastert residence in rural Plano, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Betty Workman & Janice Culp, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 141 pgs Total Time: 2:06 + 2:12 + 2:24 / 2.1 + 2.2 + 2.4 = 6.7 hrs

Session 1: Growing up in small town Illinois, Hastert's teaching & coaching career

Session 2: Election to the Illinois legislature in 1980 and early years in the IL House

Session 3: Hastert's years in IL legislature and his 1986 election to the U.S. Congress

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on April 4, 2013.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Dennis Hastert, *Illinois Statecraft*, IS-A-L-2012-047

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Dennis “Denny” Hastert was born on January 2, 1942 in Aurora, Illinois and grew up in Oswego, working long hours at his father’s seed grain business when not at school. When his father sold the seed business and went into the restaurant business, Denny worked there as well. He also applied himself to both football and wrestling while at Oswego High School. Upon graduation in 1960, he attended Wheaton College, graduating in 1964. He soon landed a job teaching social studies at Yorkville High School, even while attending classes at Northern Illinois University. He also was an assistant coach for football and wrestling, eventually focusing his energies on wrestling, building one of the strongest wrestling programs in Illinois, with his team winning the state championship in 1976.

In October, 1979, Hastert saw an opportunity to run for the Illinois State House of Representatives as a Republican. Despite his lack of prominence in political circles, he won a seat in November, 1980, but only after the sudden death of one of his opponents. He won reelection in 1982, despite the impact of redistricting and the end of cumulative voting in Illinois. During his time in the Illinois legislature, Hastert was appointed to the Appropriations Committee, where he oversaw roughly half of the State’s budget and worked on many important pieces of legislation, including the Public Utilities Act, a restructuring of the telephone industry following the AT&T divestiture in 1984 and others. In 1986 he saw another opportunity and won a seat for the U.S. House of Representatives, again exceeding the expectations of political insiders. This interview will be followed by an in-depth series of interviews conducted by the U.S. House of Representatives Office of the Historian.

Speaker Hastert was sentenced to fifteen months in federal prison in April, 2016 for incidents of child molestation that occurred in the 1970s, while Hastert was the high school wrestling coach in Yorkville, Illinois.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Illinois House of Representatives in early 1980s; Oswego, Illinois; coaching career in Yorkville, Illinois; IL Public Utility Act; cumulative voting in Illinois; Equal Rights Amendment; Republican politics in Illinois; AT & T divestiture legislation in 1984; Governor Jim Thompson; Minority Leader Lee Daniels; House Speaker Mike Madigan; House Speaker George Ryan; funding for legislative races in Illinois; Senator James “Pate” Philip; Illinois House of Representatives Sunset Commission; Representative Tom Ewing; Title IX legislation;

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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