

Nathan Deal interviewed by Bob Short
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Nathan Deal

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BOB SHORT: Hello, I'm Bob Short. Welcome to another in our series of programs on Reflections on Georgia Politics sponsored by Young Harris College and the Institute for

Continuing Learning. Our guest today is Nathan Deal, who was elected to the Congress in 1992 after a very stellar career of some 14 years in the Georgia Senate. Nathan represents Georgia's 9th District, which extends all the way from the Alabama-Florida -- I'm sorry -- Alabama-Georgia-Tennessee border on the west clear across through Union County. It abuts Tennessee -- the whole area that we border with Tennessee -- and the whole area we border with North Carolina. So it's a large district, a very diversified district, and Congressman Deal has been serving us in the Congress for that period of time.

Nathan Deal was born in Millen, Georgia. He got his B.S. degree at Mercer University and is a graduate of the Mercer Walter F. George School of Law. Following his graduation there, he served for a while in the army and then returned to Gainesville, Georgia where he opened private practice and became an assistant district attorney and later a member of the state Senate. He was elected to the Senate from Hall County and served in that body for 12 years, ascending to the top post in the Senate that is electable, and that is President pro tem, where he served before his election to Congress. But Nathan went through a tough decision-making process when Ed Jenkins retired as Congressman from the 9th District, but he was overwhelmingly elected as a Democrat to succeed Jenkins. Following his first term, Nathan switched to the Republican party and has been elected since then as a Republican.

Nathan's devotion to the Senate and his interest in immigration has enabled him to move up the ladder of leadership in the United States Congress as well. He was among the first who became concerned about immigration policy and has introduced several measures that deal with closing the borders and tightening up immigration in the United States. We're happy today to

have as our guest Congressman Nathan Deal of Georgia's Ninth Congressional District.

BREAK

SHORT: I'm Bob Short, here with another in our series of Reflections on Georgia Politics with Congressman Nathan Deal of Georgia's Ninth District. Congressman Deal, welcome, and thank you for appearing on this program.

NATHAN DEAL: Thank you, Bob.

SHORT: We always begin our conversations with our guest by asking a simple question. How did you get interested in politics?

DEAL: Well, like most people, I suppose that's a little bit of a long story! So, I'll start back to my high school days. Both of my parents were school teachers. My mother was a first grade school teacher, and my father was a vocational agriculture teacher. So, I grew up in raising livestock, showing them at the fairs, and that was what I thought I wanted to do. And I decided I wanted to be a veterinarian, and that was my goal -- was to be a veterinarian. When I graduated from high school, I was going to go to the University of Georgia and go to their vet school, hopefully.

And then about my senior year in high school, I had had a little bit of a diversion from the

path that I thought was going to take. I'd been active in debate in high school. In fact, we were fortunate; my junior and senior years in high school, we'd won the state debate championship. And I got involved in public speaking in FFA, and my junior year in high school, I won the Georgia regional and went to Kansas City at the national FFA public speaking competition, and I came in second in the nation my junior year there. I also got involved in public speaking in the church. I'm a Baptist, and we had public speaking in the Baptist training union in those days.

And one of the competitions that I was in that took me to Mercer University campus in Macon. And I lived in Sandersville, which is where I grew up, and Mercer was only about 60 miles away in Macon, but I'd actually never been to the Mercer campus before -- never thought about going to school there. But I went there for that competition and liked the campus. It was a small community campus, and I decided that that was where I was going to go to school. So, when I did that, I sort of got off the track of being a veterinarian at that point and then decided that I thought I wanted to go to law school, and I wound up going to law school at Mercer University as well.

So having a law degree, after I went into the army, which I went through the ROTC program at Mercer and got a commission and then went in the army and served there, and when I was discharged, I came to Gainesville, Georgia. Now I didn't really know anybody in Gainesville, Georgia. I had a good friend of mine, who is still a very good friend of mine, who -- we were in law school together, served in the army in the same post together. And he was going back to his hometown of Dalton, and he said, "You ought to go to north Georgia," he said. "But I'm going to Dalton. Don't go there; go to Gainesville." So upon his suggestion, I came to

Gainesville.

So, like most young attorneys, I got involved practicing law. I was an assistant district attorney and then became a part-time juvenile court judge and just generally in the practice of law. That sort of rocked along until in 1980, our state senator, who was Howard Overbee at that time -- and Howard had served in the state Senate representing this area for many years -- decided he was not going to run again. And I had friends of mine who said, "Well, you ought to look at running for that position." And it's something I really had never thought that much about doing, but as it turned out, I did. And I was elected in that 1980 election to go to the Georgia Senate, representing the 49th district, which, at that time, was all of Hall County, part of Forsythe County, and part of Jackson County. And I stayed in the state Senate for 12 years and was fortunate to be chosen by the Lieutenant Governor -- Zell Miller, at that time, after my first term -- to be the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee of the state Senate. And, of course, that is one of the committees that receives a good bit of the legislation that goes through the processes, and I got a really good education and exposure to people as well as issues there. And the last two years I was there, my colleagues selected me to be the President pro tem of the Senate, which was a high honor and it was something that I really valued the experience there.

And then after those 12 years, I was at the point where trying to practice law in Gainesville and be in the state legislature was getting to be -- time-wise -- a very difficult situation. I'd pretty much decided I was either going to get into politics full time or I was going to get out of it. And coincidentally, in 1992, our then Congressman, Ed Jenkins, decided he was not going to run for reelection to Congress anymore. And with the encouragement of some of

my friends, I decided, "Well, this is a chance to find out if you're going to be in politics full time or if you're going to just get out of it completely." And I was fortunate enough, in 1992, to be elected to Congress and have served since that time.

My career, though, has been a little different than a lot of people. I served in the state legislature -- the state Senate -- as a Democrat. I was elected in 1992 when I first went to Congress, as a Democrat, was reelected in 1994 to Congress as a Democrat. But I changed parties in 1995, and since that time I have been a Republican and have run as a Republican and been reelected as a Republican since then. I think, in part, that reflects a good deal of the political shift that has occurred in our state, and that's a story unto itself, of course, but I was sort of in the mix of all of that shifting of political alignments among the parties at that time.

SHORT: Yeah. I, of course, want to talk to you about national issues, but -- but I'm curious to know how you feel about the ascendancy of the Republican party in Georgia and whether or not it's a permanent thing.

DEAL: Well, you know, I take a little different look at it, I suppose, than a lot of people, because I wasn't originally a Republican. And when people used to say Republican Party, I think they thought of the Republicans of the 1940s, 1950s -- the so-called Rockefeller Republicans -- those who were maybe the "up east" who represented the big business interests, etc. I think what we have seen happen is that the modern Republican party -- in the South, at least -- is more of a populist-type movement. It was a populist movement that was primarily

fueled by the positions that the National Democratic Party was taking. We all say that most things in politics are grassroots and come from the bottom up. I think the political shift that occurred in the South, at least in Georgia, was something that sort of started from the top and came down. I think people began to look at the positions that the National Democrat Party was taking, and, as a result of that, they decided that they were not aligned with where they personally felt about issues any longer. That was sort of where I was.

In 1995 -- when I changed parties -- was the year that the Republicans had gained control of the United States House of Representatives in the '94 election cycle, and for the first time in 40 years, Republicans controlled the United States House. It was the era of the Contract with America, which had been the political statement that was the battle cry for the 1994 elections.

SHORT: Newt Gingrich.

DEAL: Newt Gingrich was elected Speaker at the beginning of that session in 1995. And what I found was that when I looked at what the Contract with America talked about, and I looked at my Democrat campaign literature, they were very similar. And I found myself voting for almost all of those issues. In fact, I think I did vote for all of them, ultimately. And I suddenly realized that if I was campaigning on these issues, and when I was finally given a chance to vote on those issues, and the party I belonged to was opposed to them, then there was something wrong with that alignment. And that's when I made the change. And I think people don't understand fully that that kind of Republican posture is a populist kind of posture. It is issues that people are

concerned with in their everyday lives, and it's not really the distinction between the big business of the Republican party in the past and the little guy, which has always been the historical distinction between the two parties, and I don't think that's as clear as it used to be.

SHORT: While in Washington, you have been a pioneer in immigration reform. Would you tell us a little bit about that?

DEAL: Well, as you know, Bob, that's been one of those social issues that has been perhaps the most difficult issue, I think, that we have encountered. When I first got to Washington in 1993, I soon realized -- looking at my Congressional district -- that this was something that was becoming an issue. In the beginning, it was an issue as it related to schools, education. We were seeing that children who were coming in that did not speak English, for example, were putting extreme pressure and cost on the local school systems. We then recognized that it also had an effect on health care, because many of these were showing up in the emergency rooms. Many of them were receiving indigent care treatment, and that was accelerating the cost to the local hospitals and to the general health care community. Those two -- health care and education -- and now a third one of crime are the three big impact factors of illegal immigration in at least my district, and I think probably all across the country.

We know now from statistics -- the latest one I saw -- was that one out of every ten children born in this country is born to somebody who is illegally in our country, and that has a huge impact on the social makeup of our country. You know, when you start talking about

immigration, most people want to think about immigration of the years when Ellis Island was in place in New York harbor, of primarily Western Europeans -- Irish, German, Italians -- coming through and immigrating into our country. And that was a big period of immigration, but it was done in an open arms -- the slogan of the Statue of Liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor" -- truly, that was the period in which that was happening. They were leaving Western Europe and they were coming to the United States. We didn't have a lot of immigration laws in place at that time. Subsequent to that, federal statutes began to be put in place, and they pretty much had quotas as to where you could come from, what the priorities were in terms of who was allowed to immigrate into our country.

But what we've seen happen with illegal immigration is that we have bypassed all of those constraints that the federal statutes put in place about who was allowed to come to our country, and now they mean virtually nothing, because we see an immigration population that is huge. It is very large in Georgia. In fact, I think we now have about the fourth largest population of illegal immigrants of any state in the country, and that's quite something to say for a non-border state. So, it is a huge problem and it's one that Washington has not been successful in trying to resolve.

SHORT: You have a bill there now, don't you? A pending bill?

DEAL: I do, and it's one that relates to that issue of birthright. It is called the Birthright Citizenship Bill. You have to go back a little bit in history to understand what this is all about.

As you may recall, at the end of the Civil War when the question arose as, well, what is the status of people who were formerly slaves who've now been freed as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation, and now that's the law of the land? What is their status? Are they citizens or are they not citizens? And the 14th Amendment was passed with the idea of clearing up that issue, because the Supreme Court had ruled contrary to that issue. And the 14th Amendment, in essence, says that if you're born on American soil and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, you shall be a citizen.

Well, that seems fairly clear in the context in which it was written post-Civil War. But that phrase, "Subject to the jurisdiction thereof," is a phrase that meaning that has now been ignored. In fact, there were several cases, one of which was an Indian. He had been born on an Indian reservation in the United States, and his case went to the Supreme Court of the United States, and the question was, "Am I a citizen?" Because he had left the reservation and was now in the general population. And the Supreme Court ruled that he was not a citizen. They said, "You were born in the United States, but you didn't meet that qualification of being subject to the jurisdiction thereof. You were born subject to tribal jurisdiction." So, we have a very checkered history of what that amendment means.

What my bill would try to do is to go in and statutorily define that phrase, "Subject to the jurisdiction thereof." And simply put, it says that at least one of the parents would have to be in a legal status in this country as a condition for extending citizenship to their child. Now that is the majority position in the world community. In fact, there are like 122 countries in the world that require that kind of restriction, and there are only about 33 that do not -- that grant what we

call birthright citizenship, the United States being one of them. There is not a single country in Europe any longer that grants birthright citizenship. So, I think it is an issue that as long as we do not control our borders, then the birth of children to illegal immigrants is going to continue to be an increasing issue, and this is one way I think we can get a hold of it.

I do think it's one of the magnets that brings people to this country. I don't think it's as big a magnet as jobs, maybe not as big a magnet as social benefits that some receive, but it is certainly one of those magnets. It's the reason that the term "anchor baby" has been coined. That child becomes the anchor that gives the family unit access to social benefits such as food stamps, such as assisted housing, such as Medicaid, all of those other social benefits.

SHORT: That begs the question of border security.

DEAL: Yes.

SHORT: Can we secure our borders, and if so, how?

DEAL: Well, Bob, I sort of take a little bit of a hard line position on that. I told you that I was in the army, and my assignment in the army was as a law instructor teaching military law, back during the era when we were having riots in the United States. In fact, I was assigned to a unit at the military police school to teach civil disturbance control. And, of course, one of the things that we always learned and understood was the so-called Posse Comitatus Act of the United

States, which says you will not use the military to enforce civilian law except in times of emergency. Now, I have voted on a couple of occasions -- every chance I've had the opportunity to vote, actually -- to say that the military should be used as an auxiliary enforcement tool to our civilian law enforcement to secure our border. I quite honestly don't think we'll ever be able to hire enough border control agents, in and of themselves, to do the kind of security that we need. Now we've talked about a fence, and we've authorized, I think, a 700-mile fence to be built. Obviously, that can only work in some of the more vulnerable parts of the border, but you're talking about a 3,000-mile border and it's virtually impossible to build a fence the entire way. But we can do a better job. We can use electronic surveillance. We can use drones. A good friend of mine whose son was on active duty in Iraq when I went there a year ago, one of his responsibilities was supervising the drones that were patrolling the roads in Bagdad, and they were detecting the placement of the incendiary devices along the roads using these drones. We can use that same kind of technology along our border.

I think it just requires the will to do it, and it breaks -- it does not break down along political party lines. I've been there when President Clinton was in the White House, a Democrat, and I've been there since President Bush, a Republican, has been there. And honestly, I do not think that either administration has had a very firm commitment to securing our borders, and I would like to see a much firmer commitment from the White House. Because the bottom line is that Congress can only make the law; we can't enforce it.

SHORT: Right.

DEAL: We depend on the Executive Branch to do that.

SHORT: You have been supportive of our efforts to democratize Afghanistan and Iraq. Are you pleased with the progress we're making?

DEAL: Well, I think everybody acknowledges that we have not seen the progress that we had hoped for. Perhaps we were a little naïve to expect that if we showed people freedom, they would just freely and openly embrace it and abandon centuries of history and tradition that had made freedom something that was a very elusive and probably not an attainable goal. I do think that what we have seen -- and as you and I are talking now, we are in the same week in which General Petraeus has just submitted his report to Congress and to the executive branch as to the progress in Iraq. And I think we can say that we have seen some progress with the surge of additional troops going into Iraq. We've seen some progress on the military front, which is encouraging.

You know, it's very difficult to think that people are going to just simply embrace a doctrine if they are not secure. If they don't feel comfortable, if they still feel like they're going to be killed or somebody is going to invade their home, it's very hard to have them embrace something where their own personal security is at risk. So, I think what we've seen General Petraeus tell us is that the surge has worked in that regard. On the civilian side of it, they have huge issues to deal with. We have not seen the political side of it make as much progress as their own military

side has made. And whether or not that will be done in a timeframe that keeps with the American public's sympathy, I do not know. They're going to have to make some real strides in the very few months between now and this time next year, in my opinion.

SHORT: So, at this point, do you think it would be a mistake to withdraw?

DEAL: I think it would be a mistake to just precipitously withdraw, because what we will have achieved by doing that is to simply open this country up to the same kind of system that we saw in Afghanistan prior to 9/11, which was where all the terror training camps had taken place. We would now open up Iraq -- a much larger territory and a much more resource-rich country -- as a haven for terrorists, and that would be a huge mistake. So, that would be the worst of all scenarios -- would be to have that happen. And the question is, how do we get out and -- at the same time -- make sure that terrorist takeover of that country does not occur.

SHORT: Is Iran looming in the future?

DEAL: Well, Iran has not helped the situation, let's put it that way. All of us can remember -- or at least most of you and I can remember, at least -- the days at the end of the Carter administration, with the hostages in Iran and all of the hostility that was generated from that. And it is unfortunate to see that country become so dominated by a very religiously ideological point of view. And now, with the capabilities that they have -- nuclear and otherwise -- they

pose a huge threat, not just to that part of the world, but I think to the world as a whole. And I think it's without question, and General Petraeus certainly verifies it, that they have aided and assisted in the sectarian violence that has occurred in Iraq.

Now, how do we deal with them? Hopefully, we can deal with them without having to do so militarily. There have been a lot of suggestions that one of the things we could do on a diplomatic basis is to give more aid and comfort to those within the Iran community who are in opposition to their current leadership. That is a delicate thing and very difficult to do sometimes.

SHORT: There's also -- there's been -- I attended some of your community meetings, and I was very impressed --

DEAL: Thank you.

SHORT: -- By your approach to answering questions.

DEAL: Thank you.

SHORT: For example, the budget.

DEAL: Yes.

SHORT: And I recall in your explanation to the people that you went through the budget to show that defense spending is not the major expenditure today, although most people believe that.

DEAL: That's right. Just like they think foreign aid is one of the big expenditures that we have in the federal budget. It's only a fraction of one percent, you know. What we are faced with, Bob, on a financial basis -- as far as our federal government is concerned -- is that we have put in place social programs that are very, very costly. And we call them entitlement programs, and the reason we call them that is because the law defines what the program is and it defines the benefits that go with those programs. And people then become "entitled" to receive the benefits the law provides.

Now, the political reality is that it is very difficult to adjust those programs even when the cost of them is far in excess of what was ever anticipated. The largest, of course, is Social Security.

And as you know, that is certainly the political hot potato. Anytime that you talk about doing anything to try to keep the Social Security system solvent, such as President Bush's suggestion that maybe we allow people to take two percent of their FICA tax that they're paying in and have it as a self-controlled investment account. He got no political traction there whatsoever. And, of course, Medicare, the health care delivery system for senior citizens, is the second largest entitlement program. And then Medicaid, which is the health delivery system for the poor in our country, is the third largest. And all three of those put strains not only on the federal government, but when you come to the Medicaid portion of it, it is a partnership with the

states and the federal government. The states have to put in money to keep the program going. And last congress, when I was chairman of the Health Subcommittee of Energy and Commerce, we had the National Governors Association come to us on a unanimous bipartisan basis and say, "You need to change the law, because we can't afford Medicaid as it is currently composed." And we made changes to try to address some of their concerns.

But from a budget standpoint, the demographics of our country are what cause a great deal of that pressure. And by demographics I mean the baby boom generation -- those born to the returning soldiers in the era after World War II. When you have systems like Medicare and Social Security that depend on a trust fund as one of their primary -- as their primary source of funding, that trust fund is paid for under -- through FICA tax, of working people paying into those two trust funds. As long as you've got a big population bubble that's paying into the systems, you can accumulate surpluses, which is what has happened in Social Security. Medicare has not got any surpluses to speak of, quite honestly. But once those people stop paying that FICA tax because they're no longer working, and they move into the receiving category and they're drawing money out of those trust funds, that's when the pressure really mounts. And the trouble is, the population that follows the baby boom is not nearly as large in numbers as the baby boom population itself. And yet they're going to be the ones that are expected to keep those systems solvent, and that's what is the concern that most people who look at it objectively say we've got to come to grips with. But politically, it is very difficult to do.

SHORT: Tax reform. How do you stand on the fair tax proposal?

DEAL: I'm a co-sponsor of the fair tax. Now I acknowledge that there are some unanswered questions that the fair tax proposal has to address, but the simplistic approach to that is do we have -- is there merit in moving from a percentage of income based tax system, which is what we have now, to a system that deals with consumption as a controlling factor? And that's what the fair tax does, just like a state sales tax does. If you consume, you pay the tax. If you don't consume, if you save, if you do the kind of things that people are encouraged to do -- that is, to save -- then you avoid the consequences of it. Now, you have to accommodate those who are at the lower income of our economic system, and, of course, the fair tax tries to do that with a rebate system of giving them credit, in effect, so that they don't pay that consumption tax on certain things up to a level of income.

But the truth of the matter is, politically, I don't think you will ever see major tax reform until it starts at the presidential level. There again, it's one of those things that I think has to start at the top and work its way down, rather than the bottom and work its way up. And we're now in the presidential primary season. It seems like it starts earlier every four years, but we're in the middle of it now even though we're more than a year away from the election. And I think the only presidential candidate that I have heard to endorse the fair tax is Governor Huckabee, the former Republican governor of Arkansas, on the Republican side. And I say to those who support the concept of the fair tax is, "Well, you know, support the guy who's supporting the issue, if you believe in it, because I think it's got to start at the top and work its way down." The president has the pulpit to be able to sell the concept, and Congress, I don't think, has the ability

to do that.

SHORT: That's what I refer to as the well digging concept. You dig a well, you start at the top.

DEAL: That's right.

SHORT: And I feel, incidentally, a lot about politics that way, too.

DEAL: Right.

SHORT: Now we're undergoing discussions about global warming, and I think a lot of people, including myself, are very confused about that issue.

DEAL: Yeah.

SHORT: Can you give us a little light?

DEAL: Well, I could, Bob, if I were a good scientist, I could probably do it. Because I think it's like a lot of issues -- everybody's got an opinion, you know. And what we hear nowadays -- we live in the era of talk radio, talk television, talk. And sometimes the talk is not founded in good science or good facts.

SHORT: Right.

DEAL: And I think that's the way we've seen this global warming issue. Sometimes the facts are not real facts that people base their opinions on. I think people acknowledge that our climate, over the history that we've been able to recreate, and even prehistory, we know that our globe has gone through cycles of climate change.

I mean, I grew up in Sandersville, Georgia, as I told you earlier. Sandersville calls itself the kaolin capital of the world. Well, kaolin is the white chalk, for those who don't know. And the white chalk is made up of the fossil remains where the ocean was located, right along the so-called fall line in Georgia. That was the edge of the ocean, and it was the deposits of those fossilized shellfish and everything else that created that kaolin deposit that is there. So, we know that our climate has changed throughout thousands of years. And I don't know and I can't say whether or not we're just in the middle of one of those -- or in the beginning even, perhaps -- of one of those climate cycles. I'm inclined to think that's probably the case.

Now, having said that, should we be concerned about trying to keep our air and our water as clean as possible? Absolutely. I think that's the responsibility of every generation to do that. We know that if we pollute, it's going to affect. Whether it affects global warming or not, it's going to affect the lives of our children and our grandchildren and generations to come. So, I'm one of those that says let's do what we think we can realistically do. That's our responsibility. But we have to do it within the context of not destroying our civilization in the process.

As you may recall at one of my town hall meetings, I had a chart that talked about CO2 emissions as they are projected into the future. And the United States and Europe, their projections of CO2 emissions -- carbon dioxide emissions -- into the atmosphere are going to be relative stable, because we've taken great measures to try to reduce our CO2 emissions. The two countries that are going to see theirs escalate are India and China. And the point I was making there is that we need to incorporate -- if our concern is things like CO2 emissions into the atmosphere -- and, of course, if they're emitted in China and India, they don't just stay in China and India - they affect the entire global atmosphere - then we ought to tie our policies to those concerns, because we can't do anything about it just by restraining our own industry and our own activities here in our country if these other countries are having no constraints whatsoever.

And the suggestion I had was maybe we ought to try trade policies, because much of that CO2 emission is being generated by the manufacture of goods that are being produced and thereby emitting gases into the air. And without the constraints, they're expecting to sell those goods to the countries that are -- like United States and Europe -- that are doing a good job controlling their own. They're buying the goods from those other countries that are not putting those same controls on themselves. So, I think the only way you get a linkage where you can begin to have some effect on the control of countries like China and India is to link it to our trade policy. If they can't sell the goods that they're producing and thereby polluting the atmosphere - if they can't sell their goods to the consumers in Europe and the United States, then maybe they would begin to change their conduct a little bit.

SHORT: Speaking of China, there have been reports recently of toys that contain lead.

DEAL: Right.

SHORT: Are we cozying up a bit too much with China?

DEAL: Well, I'm one of those that have just never voted for any increase of our trade relationships with China, because I don't think they've shown good faith in what they've done. Now, we don't have a free trade agreement with China. We're operating under the World Trade Organization umbrella of trade in general. But I think what we have allowed China to do is to get away with so much of violating our trade laws, of our safety rules such as the contamination of products, etc.

But for years, you know, that we've lived in the textile belt of the southeast, and we've seen that textile base basically evaporate. It has gone to other parts of the world. It initially went to China. Now it's going to even poorer countries than China that have taken those textiles away. But for years, we were seeing boatloads and shiploads of textile products coming in where China had trans-shipped them. That is, they had made them in China; they had shipped them to a country that had a trade agreement with the United States. They'd either taken the labels off or just sewed labels on top of them so they could use that country as a conduit for getting their products into the United States. Well, that's cheating, and we've allowed them to cheat. And here again, neither Republican nor Democrat administrations, in my opinion, have

done a very good job of calling their hand on it, and I quite honestly think it's time we did.

We're going to continue to see more of the contamination issues, because we all know that their standards are not our standards. And if we continue to accept the products that they're producing with low standards -- and allow them into our country -- then we're inviting these kind of disasters to occur. I just think we need to do a much better job of policing our trade policies.

SHORT: Where do we start?

DEAL: Well, it starts at the executive branch again, since the issue of trade and the U.S. Trade Representative's office is an appointed position, appointed by the president of the United States. And I've had numerous conversations with various representatives there over the years, and you generally get a good lip service, but it sometimes just does not materialize in terms of what they actually do. Now, I think there have been times when they've tried and they've done a better job when they really focus on it, but it is so easy to get caught up in the politics of trade. And every president seems to want to negotiate more and more trade agreements with more and more countries. And that's not all bad, but the point I made as recently as a week ago to our current Secretary of Commerce is that it doesn't do any good to negotiate a trade treaty if you don't intend to enforce it. That's where we've fallen down. It's not that we've negotiated, necessarily, bad treaties. It's just that we've forgotten about the enforcement tools that those treaties contained. And I think most people who watch the subject will acknowledge that that's part of where the breakdown occurs, is on the enforcement side.

SHORT: Within your district are two major industries.

DEAL: Yes.

SHORT: The carpet capital of the world.

DEAL: Right.

SHORT: And the chicken capital of the world.

DEAL: Right.

SHORT: Has NAFTA had any effect on those industries?

DEAL: Well, I think it has been a positive effect in that it has an effect. Certainly, poultry is one of those unique agricultural products that is not subsidized. It is one of those things that is the largest single producer of agricultural income in the state of Georgia. And agricultural income, as you know, is at the top of the list in terms of where our economy comes from. And they depend on being able to sell their products overseas, and they have done a very good job of it -- Mexico, Central America, South America, Russia. And it's interesting, you know, every

time that Russia has a problem, the one thing they clamp down on is poultry, because they can retaliate by clamping down on poultry when we're calling their hand on something else, because they know that's where we have a favorable trade balance.

Carpet. The very nature of carpet -- the weight of it, the cost of shipping -- it is somewhat unique in that regard. It is not totally immune from competition from other countries, but the cost of shipping carpet products sort of makes it a little bit of a unique product. But it has gone through its hard times. You've seen most of the carpet companies consolidate -- in some respects -- their own industry, and broaden the product base of their industry. I think virtually every carpet company now has a hardwood component to it or laminate component to it. As peoples' choices change about what they want on their floors, the carpet industry, I think, has done a good job of trying to accommodate those changes of public entity.

SHORT: You received 73 percent of the vote in your last election. That seems to be a tremendous popularity.

DEAL: Thank you.

SHORT: What's ahead for Nathan Deal?

DEAL: Well, I've announced that I am running in 2008. I think there are a lot of things that we still have left standing in Congress that we need to do. As you know, the political climate is a

very difficult one right now. With the numbers on both the Senate and the House being very close, things sometimes tend to break down along party lines. I would like to see us be able to work in a more bipartisan fashion. That is much more difficult to do on the House side, I think, than on the Senate side. We've seen more success, I think, on the Senate side of dealing with a bipartisan-type approach. But my intentions are to run for reelection in 2008.

SHORT: Now, you are thinking of the state capitol.

DEAL: No, I don't have any intentions to do that, Bob. I left there when I ran for Congress and I don't see myself trying to go back.

SHORT: What is your fondest political memory?

DEAL: Ooh. Well, that's hard to say. You know, from a personal satisfaction standpoint, it's not the things that happen in the glare of the television cameras or anything else. It's the personal satisfaction of being able to feel like you have done something that makes a difference in the lives of people. And much of that was hands-on work that I did in the state Senate, as we redrafted the state constitution when I was there, redrafting our statutes that affect the lives of people on an everyday basis, of being able to have the ability to put words that show up in the text of a statute and know that those words have a meaning in the lives of people. That to me is the most rewarding, and that's the kind of thing that nobody ever talks about. Nobody ever hears

that, yet to me, that's the most rewarding.

And from a political side of it at the federal level, being able to help people with their personal needs. And we do a great deal of those constituent service things in our district offices. They don't take place in Washington; they take place in our offices within the state and within our district. Because people do have problems -- with Social Security, they have problems with Medicare and a number of other things that people have problems with in dealing with federal programs that we've put in place. And we depend on our staffs do to that, and I've been very fortunate to have some excellent staff people to assist people.

SHORT: Tell me about the Deal family.

DEAL: Well, Sandra and I have four children. One son who is the oldest, Jason, he is now a Superior Court judge in the Northeastern Judicial Circuit, which serves Hall and Dawson Counties. He has three children, which are part of my six grandchildren that we have. My oldest daughter is a retired college professor. She was a theater professor at Piedmont College and she's now a mommy at home with two children, and they live in the Atlanta area. My second daughter is a graduate of North Georgia College, and she and her husband run an outdoors store up in Habersham County. And my youngest daughter, who just got married last December, she and her husband are both actors, and they are in the process now of doing various theatrical and musical shows. They're rehearsing for one up at the Black Bear Theater in Helen, Georgia right now. So, all of my three oldest children have children -- Jason three, and Mary only has two,

and my middle daughter Carrie has one -- so we have six grandchildren. My wife is a retired sixth grade middle school teacher. She retired several years ago.

SHORT: Congressman, we are very, very indebted to you for appearing with us today. We thank you very much.

DEAL: Thank you, Bob.

[END]

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