

BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by the Institute for Continuing Learning, Young Harris College and the Russell Library at the University of Georgia. We're delighted to have as our guest today Senator Nancy Schaefer. Senator, welcome, we're delighted you're here.

NANCY SCHAEFER: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be with you.

SHORT: Well, thank you. We go back a long way.

SCHAEFER: Yes we do.

SHORT: All the way back to Clayton, Georgia.

SCHAEFER: Uh-huh.

SHORT: Where you grew up. What do you remember about those days?

SCHAEFER: Well, I have good memories about those days. I often think about all the opportunities that we had in such a small town at that time, to be involved in so much. I can remember thinking back as a little girl that I took voice, music, dance, speech, and of course, I studied art with a little old English teacher there in Clayton all the way through elementary and high school, and ended up majoring in art in college. And the opportunities that we had were just tremendous, and no one would believe that we had so much at our fingertips as children, growing up in a small town in Georgia during those years, but we did. It was a wonderful

growing up, and I have good memories.

SHORT: Good. You came from a very distinguished family, great citizens and great public servants. Tell us about your grandfather.

SCHAEFER: Well, I certainly remember the public service through growing up and hearing about it. My grandfather was in the state legislature for a while. Will Smith, there in Rabun County, he was the coroner, and an attorney, and worked very hard in those days and really cared about Rabun County and the prosperity in Rabun County and the people who lived there. My father, Lamar Smith, was also an attorney. My grandfather wanted him to become a doctor and come back to Rabun County and serve the community. And he got to Mercer University, thinking that that's what he was going to study and to become, and when he got there, there really was no one there to welcome him and it appeared that no one really seemed to know that he was coming, and he got on a bus with all of his belongings and rode the bus to Athens, and enrolled in the University of Georgia, and then called his dad and told him where he was. And of course, he studied law. As a matter of fact, he was the first in his class in the law school at the University of Georgia, and he was always involved in public service also, so I'm very proud of both of them.

SHORT: I'm sure they had an influence on your decision to become a public servant.

SCHAEFER: Oh, I'm sure they did. There's no question about it. It just kind of is in your background and it's there, isn't it?

SHORT: It is. You're a Senator now from the 50th District.

SCHAEFER: That's right.

SHORT: Tell us a little bit about your district.

SCHAEFER: Well, my district is quite large really. It's eight counties, from Towns County, Rabun, Stephens, Habersham, Banks, Franklin, all the way down to Hart County, then I have a portion of White County. So, it's a right large district, but it's a wonderful district. Grand people. It's a conservative district, mountainous district, beautiful part of Georgia. I say all the time that I have -- I have the prettiest district in the state of Georgia to represent, and I really believe it. There's nothing like northeast Georgia to me, and so it's been a pleasure to represent those constituents.

SHORT: I know that you're very good at keeping in touch with your constituents. What is their thinking about government and politics and the state of the nation?

SCHAEFER: Well, my constituents are -- they're really sort of concerned right now about the

nation and about where we're headed. They see the cultural disintegration that's going on, and then they see the government bureaucracy that always now is not working in the best interests of the people, and I think there is an underlying concern going on in my district that I see and that I hear. I've just been recently working and sent out a white paper on the corrupt business of Child Protective Services, and that is a bureaucracy in itself that is not really caring for the poor and for our children, and this is kind of the direction that our bureaucracies -- our government bureaucracies -- are taking, where they're not so interested anymore in the individual person. And when you have that going on, plus the disintegration of our culture and our morals and our nation, it doesn't make for a good situation. And there's some concern there for that.

SHORT: Well, I was going to ask you about that. You've been very active in that field, and in fact you've made some recommendations to the state government to solve some of those problems. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

SCHAEFER: Well, you're talking about the Child Protective Services?

SHORT: Yes, yes.

SCHAEFER: I did make some recommendations, and the paper that I wrote on the issue was a pretty scathing paper. But I have been studying and doing research on this issue for three years, and I've been in touch with just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of families who have had

their children taken away from them for no cause. But because of federal incentives, financial incentives that keep pouring into the state of Georgia and into all of our other states, there is -- it has turned into a business. Child Protective Services -- we call it DFCS in Georgia. It's called, you know, it has different names in different states, but it has turned into a business, and this past year I just was stunned to find out that we even had some departments in some of our counties that had quotas -- that they needed X number of children to meet the budget, and this just can't be. And once I sent the paper out, it hit the Internet, which I didn't expect. But now we have heard from every state across the country, and in some foreign countries, and we have done our best to answer these people and answer the emails and letters and calls, and that's one of the reasons that I would like to get to Washington -- is I would like to see those federal, financial incentives that created this program, that every time you adopt a child out, you receive a bonus, \$4,000.00 or \$6,000.00, or if it's a special needs child, you know, \$2,000.00 or \$3,000.00 more. That begins to add up and becomes very appealing to Child Protective Services, and I would like to see those acts abolished on a federal level.

SHORT: Before we get into politics, let me ask you if you will talk to us a little bit about your Family Concerns organization, and your work worldwide on those issues.

SCHAEFER: Well, Family Concerns was birthed out of my being invited to head up the Constitutional Liberties rally in Atlanta many years ago, in -- actually in 1986. And I went on that program and I served in that capacity with the Constitutional Liberties Rally for the State of

Georgia, and it was held in downtown Atlanta, this huge rally. The rally was carried via satellite into many different cities across the United States to try to encourage people to go to the polls and vote, to be involved, and to promote liberty and justice in the United States. Well, that was the first time that I had ever seen just hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of citizens of the United States that not only did not go to the polls to vote, they were not even registered. And it really had a bearing on me, and I knew that we could not go forward as a country, we could not support our families this way, and that was the beginning of my organizing and starting Family Concerns, Inc. And with that, we grew and worked hard for many years. We even had a companion organization called Citizens for Public Awareness. Family Concerns was a 501(c)(3), Citizens for Public Awareness was a 501(c)(4). And at the same time, we opened two pregnancy centers in downtown Atlanta, one right in downtown Atlanta, and the other out on Martin Luther King Drive, and we had two pregnancy centers going where we were able to help and meet the needs of well over 5,000 women and girls.

SHORT: And you have worked on those programs with the United Nations.

SCHAEFER: That's right. I was closely involved with the Southern Baptist Convention, and they were well aware of my Family Concerns organization, and they invited me to represent the Southern Baptist Convention and Family Concerns at several United Nations conferences in Beijing, China, in Rome, Italy, in Istanbul, Turkey, several in New York. They were quite enlightening. I'll never forget one of those conferences. I think we were in Istanbul, and I heard

the leadership of the United Nations talking about the day will come when we will be able to control and ship water from one continent to another. And you know, I've thought about that since in these latter months when we've been struggling with water here in the state of Georgia, and the importance of water all over the country, and confronting this drought that we've had here. I've thought about that. And, you know, I was at those UN conventions for the purpose of upholding the family, speaking up for family rights to come against abortion, to come against homosexuality in the family, just to protect the family and undergird the family and speak up for the family. When we were in Rome, Italy, we were standing up for many of those family issues, principles and values that our families -- you know, when I think back on it, I think, you know, the last 200 years, we've prospered in America because of our family values and our principles. And of course, we were there and I was there at these conventions to uphold those principles and speak up for family values, and try to protect the family in all different kinds of ways. Believe me, the United Nations had many documents there where they wanted to divide the family, and one of the areas that we fought against was the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which would have removed any type of parental overview or parental decisions on the rearing of their children, and we came against that. And of course, we came against abortion, and we came against China and their one-child-per-family policy, which to this day, they still have, and the atrocities continue on in China for a woman who may be pregnant for the second time, and that is not allowed. So, those human rights are so important.

And -- but anyway, we had been standing up for those principles and we were not being listened to like we felt like we should be, so we had this extra sheet in our hotel room, and on this sheet

we cut out the words -- the letters, and made the words, "United States delegation does not--".

Let's see, how did we have that? "United States delegation ignores United States women." And we had several women from other countries that joined us in fixing this banner, and we raised it one afternoon in Rome, Italy right after a press conference with all the delegates from the different countries. And of course it just caused a tremendous stir in this room to read, "United States delegation ignores United States women." And they invited us to leave the premises, and -- because we had caused such a disturbance, and they called in security, and we were then isolated in our hotel for the rest of that day and half of the next day.

But it turned out so grand because so many of the countries came over to our hotel and interviewed with us as to why we were there, what we were standing up for. They shared with us how so many boxes that were shipped to their countries from the United States, when they were begging for medicine and help and those kinds of ways, that the shipments from the United States would be -- have maybe three or four inches of medicine and things that they really needed on the top, and then from the rest of the bottom were nothing but condoms. And they were very upset about that, and said, "Your country is destroying our country. Your country is destroying our morals and our principles. We don't want that kind of help." And so, we really talked one-on-one, mother to mother, woman to woman, and at the end when they voted, they voted in our favor. And the United Nations lost on a couple of those issues. So, we felt like we had been real successful with our banner that we raised, even though it caused us some fear when we were put off of the United Nations property. But all turned out well.

SHORT: Good. Speaking of families, tell us about your family.

SCHAEFER: Well, I have a big family, Bob. I have five children, four boys and a daughter.

They're all great children. I am very, very proud of them. They're young marrieds, they're all

raising their children now. And I have 13 grandchildren, so I have been truly blessed. My

husband Bruce Schaefer's father was a surgeon in Toccoa, Georgia, and together he and I, as we

cover my district here in the Senate in north Georgia, we run into someone nearly everyday that

says to Bruce, "Your father delivered me or delivered my baby or cut on me and saved my life."

And so we have a great heritage on both sides of our family.

SHORT: Well, the Schaefer family was very political also.

SCHAEFER: Yes, absolutely.

SHORT: Dr. Schaefer, as I recall, was Chairman of the State County Commissioner's --

SCHAEFER: That's right.

SHORT: And Mrs. Schaefer, Orva Schaefer --

SCHAEFER: Yes.

SHORT: -- Who I dearly love.

SCHAEFER: Right.

SHORT: And to whom I referred as Madame Queen, was the first Director of our Department of Family and Children Services, appointed by Government Sanders.

SCHAEFER: That's exactly right. She did a wonderful job. She was a great lady.

SHORT: She was.

SCHAEFER: And I just, you know, I think about that now. Here I am fighting against Child Protective Services and DFCS, trying to get them to, you know, be reformed and take them back to the days when she was head of DFCS in the state of Georgia. What a wonderful job she did! I think often how she would turn over in her grave if she knew what I know today, and how she would certainly want me to be fighting for reform in that area right now.

SHORT: Well, that begs a question. Reorganization occurred many years ago, and during that process, several agencies were slapped together in what is now the Department of Human Resources.

SCHAEFER: Yes.

SHORT: Has that worked?

SCHAEFER: Well, it's quite large. It's just an enormous agency, and I think right now our Governor, Governor Perdue, is sort of trying to separate some of those agencies out. Our director of DFCS is no longer there, so changes are being made in that agency. Hopefully now that the session is over, more changes can be made and we can zero in on some other aspects of that, but we cannot be about taking children from their parents. This, to me -- I sort of call this a cultural/political phenomenon that's driven by the government that is there supposedly to take care of families and children. So, it's got to change. We've got to have some real reform in Child Protective Services. We're not protecting our children, and we're not protecting our families, and I think this has a lot to do with the cultural breakdown and the way it affects our government. If our government agencies and bureaucracies are in it just for what's in it for me, or you know, how I can just get by, along with the breakdown of our culture, then we're not helping the individual family or the individual person. So, we need reform in our government, we need reform in our culture, and I think this is what Americans are being confronted with today, is where we are and what are we going to do about this situation. It affects our security and our prosperity.

SHORT: How about our education in Georgia? Can it be improved?

SCHAEFER: Well, you know, we've had our problems in education in Georgia, and you know, as a Republican and as a mother of five children and 13 grandchildren, I support choice in education. I always believe in competition, and I think when there's competition -- it doesn't matter what it's in -- then it improves the whole situation. So, I've been in favor of the competition that we're entering in to our education in the state of Georgia, in favor of some of the vouchers that we're trying to make available for students to be able to get out of one school and into a better school, and so, you know, I'm for being creative with our educational system, making it as good as we can possibly make it.

It concerns me that we have so many dropouts. We can't afford to have high school dropouts in Georgia or across the country, because means that the students graduating in China and in other countries are soon going to overtake what we are producing here in the United States. Education is critically important, and our children must be educated in all of these areas, and they have got to finish high school and go on and graduate from college. So, and I appreciate what our Governor has been doing in regard to trying to promote children staying in high school and graduating. Our dropout rate is not good, and it is something that we must overcome.

SHORT: Well, now let's reflect a little bit on politics.

SCHAEFER: Alright.

SHORT: Do you remember your first race?

SCHAEFER: I do. I ran for Mayor of Atlanta. That was really something. I had been attending meetings trying to help find a candidate, and at the last meeting I attended, I turned out to be that candidate; and Bruce was on a golf outing that weekend, and when he came home, he had a Mayoral candidate on his hands, and so we really had a time. But it was a tremendous experience, just a wonderful experience. I was able to cover the entire city of Atlanta, I met lots of wonderful black pastors. And even then when I talked about choice in education, they said, "Do you mean there could be a way to get our children out of these drug-infested schools?" And I said, "Yes." And I loved meeting them and I loved going all over the city of Atlanta. It was a marvelous experience. And that's when -- Bill Campbell was running against me at that time, and I remember how Bill kept picking up on my speeches, and he would copy what I would say, and one day after we got through speaking, I said, "Bill, I'm going to send you a bill." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Because I'm writing your speeches."

SHORT: [Laughter]

SCHAEFER: But it was a grand experience, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

SHORT: Let's talk a minute now about your party choice. Like most Georgians, you're

grandfather, who was a politician, a successful one, your dad.

SCHAEFER: Yes.

SHORT: You know, the Schaeferes were all Democrats.

SCHAEFER: That's right.

SHORT: Because that was the party. Now we have no longer an emerging Republican party, we have a very strong Republican party in Georgia.

SCHAEFER: Right.

SHORT: What caused you to decide to be a Republican?

SCHAEFER: Well, I think as I came along, and I always respected the -- my folks, my mom and dad and Bruce's mother and dad, the Schaeferes. We always respected what they stood for, and I think actually, Bob, I think they stood for then exactly what I stand for now. It just -- somehow or another, we just shifted parties. And I began to see those in the Democratic party that I did not align myself with any longer, and because of that, that's why I changed parties. Because I liked the platform of the Republican party that -- certainly, first of all, that was pro-life. And

they kept the pro-life plank in that platform, and I was grateful for that, and in many other areas where maybe it was becoming a little more conservative. But -- and that's why I joined the Republican party. I think that happened to a lot of people. As a matter of fact, I think President Reagan said, "I didn't leave them. They left me."

SHORT: Yes.

SCHAEFER: And that's kind of what happened to me. I don't think my beliefs and my principles and values are different, because I know that mine are exactly like my parents.

SHORT: Yes.

SCHAEFER: And so therefore, it just shifted from one party to another.

SHORT: Well, you were successful in 1994 of securing the Republican nomination for Lieutenant Governor. How was that race?

SCHAEFER: Well, that was a fun race. That -- I was the Republican nominee that year, and we ran a hard race. We did not win against Pierre Howard, the Lieutenant Governor, but I think we gave him a good scare, and we had a good race. We learned a lot. You learn a lot by running, and so I, you know, I enjoyed that -- I enjoyed that campaign, and it was -- it meant a lot to us

and it meant a lot to the people of Georgia where I would talk about my principles and my values.

SHORT: I think you could be considered a pioneer in the Republican party. You have been there for a number of years now, and now that the Republican party is in control of the state of Georgia, you certainly should be proud of your activities in that area. Going forward --

SCHAEFER: Right.

SHORT: -- For a minute, and then we'll get back to some reflections, but going forward for a minute, you are now a candidate for Congress.

SCHAEFER: That's right. I qualify in the end of this month, so -- and those are our plans right now, to qualify the end of this month. And the session is over, so now I have a little time to turn to that. We were all very busy, you know what a session is like.

SHORT: Oh, yes, yes.

SCHAEFER: At the Capitol you don't have time to think, and so now we are turning our attention to that and are planning to qualify the end of April.

SHORT: Have you arrived at a platform?

SCHAEFER: Well, I haven't written it up yet. We are writing sort of a little overview right now of all of my issues, and we'll have them on our website soon -- my views on the issues, and so we're in the process of doing that right at this minute. We just got out last Friday, and we finished the session at 12:30 and I got home very late, put my head on the pillow about 3:30, and then was supposed to speak in Rayburn County the next morning at 9 o'clock!

SHORT: My goodness.

SCHAEFER: So it was -- that was some tight hours together there, but I did make it, did get to Rayburn County, and I did speak. And so, we've been now trying to turn our attention to this Congressional race. And that is important to me for lots of reasons, but one of the more important reasons to me is that reason that I would like to be in Washington to see this Child Protective Services turned around and set our children and our families free from the clutches of this corrupt Child Protective Services business.

SHORT: Think for a moment now and tell me your -- the brightest moment in your political career.

SCHAEFER: Oh my goodness, well, I guess my win for Governor -- I mean, my win for the

Senate was an exciting evening, because I had a longing to represent northeast Georgia. I had a longing to represent Clayton where I grew up, the people that I know, that I love, all over the mountains and the hillsides. And you know, I had that longing in my heart to represent them and to do everything that I could possibly do to promote northeast Georgia. And I think that was a wonderful victory to me that night when I won the Senate race for the 50th district, because I felt like that I was representing home, and that I was representing the people that I love and that I would do everything that I could do to help northeast Georgia. And I've worked real hard at that, Bob.

SHORT: You have, you have. What has been your biggest disappointment?

SCHAEFER: Well, let me see. I've been so busy all of my life. I guess my biggest disappointment maybe has been introducing bills in the General Assembly and not being able to get them passed. You know, it takes a long time to work a bill through and to get it just right, to get people both -- and Representatives in the House and in the Senate to uphold your views on the issues that you think are important. And although I did have some success in my four years in the Senate representing the 50th district, I would like to have gotten a few more bills passed that I cared very deeply about. And I think that's a disappointment for most every Senator and Representative down there, when they really pour their heart into legislation and work hard to get it passed, and then it just doesn't get through. I think that's kind of a disappointment.

SHORT: Looking ahead.

SCHAEFER: Yes.

SHORT: It's either Washington or back home.

SCHAEFER: That's right.

SHORT: What if it's back home?

SCHAEFER: Well, that would be fine. You know, we probably -- Bruce and I probably would enjoy a few days without a schedule and without an appointment the next morning real fast you know. We probably would enjoy that and would just consider it a blessing. We pray very much about our undertakings, and we have prayed quite a lot about my run for this Congressional seat. And if it is not the will of the Lord, we don't want to be in there anyway, because, you know, to be out of kilter there would not make it successful. So, we have prayed about being in the center of his will as we enter into this. And, you know, this is the first of April. We don't qualify until the end of April. So, you know, our plan is to qualify, but anything could happen between now and then, and we're always open and we're listening.

SHORT: Okay, it's Day 1 in Washington. What does Congressman Schaefer do?

SCHAEFER: Well, you know, I have some friends that are Congressmen in Washington and that I talk to quite a lot, and I think that I would work well with them. I don't feel like I would have a problem working with our Congressional delegation. I think we are sort of on the same page with a lot of issues, so -- and I have a lot of friends in Washington. I have a lot of 501(c)(3) organizations that are there that have supported me through the years, actually, and so I feel like that I would blend in and get off to a good start quickly.

SHORT: Good. Do you have any preferences when it comes to committees?

SCHAEFER: Well, you know, I have enjoyed serving on economic development in Georgia. It just has been a grand experience for me. I think I have a lot of that within me that I didn't know that was there, that I like to get out and work toward economic development for our people. That's why I have worked so hard on that Visitor Center in Tallulah Falls, is because I would like to see tourism boom in northeast Georgia. It's one of our -- it's important to northeast Georgians.

And I'm concerned about the job element across the country for our middle-class Americans, and I think jobs are important, and that's another reason why I'm so interested in economic development, is that we can protect our jobs and not send them all offshore, but protect our jobs for our people living in the United States. That concerns me. I also am very interested in children and youth, of course, and family issues, and those committees that protect that. I'm

interested in ethics and I have appreciated serving on the Ethics Commission. And of course, I served on Appropriations in the state of Georgia, and Appropriations is so important, which directs where that money is going, and we need efficiency and integrity in the committee on Appropriations. And so, I would be interested in serving in those capacities. I'm also interested in Security and Homeland Security, and would be interested in serving there.

SHORT: Senator, what, in your opinion, has caused this great surge towards Republicanism in Georgia?

SCHAEFER: Well, Bob, I think it goes back many years, and the shift was just gradually made. I do think social issues had a huge bearing on this, because those were your everyday Americans going to the polls to vote what they cared about. And as they looked at the numbers of abortions growing in the state of Georgia and across the country and they looked at the breakdown of the family and the breakdown of the home, and prayer being removed from schools, and the decisions made by the United States Supreme Court that were just taking away rights and liberty and freedom, I think all of this came into play and had a bearing on looking to the party with a platform that had a pro-life plank in it, and was sort of beginning to fight for these conservative social issues, and people began to gravitate to that. I did. I looked to the party because -- one, for the pro-life issue, and for family issues. And so, I think others did the same thing, and it grew until the Republican party became stronger and stronger. And as I said before in our interview, a lot of those values and principles were the same values that my parents had as

Democrats years before this. So, it's just been a shift there in issues, I think, and the party that showed the stronger attempt to answer some of these questions on social issues that emerged as being the stronger party at that time, and more people gravitated then to the Republican party. I would think that had a strong bearing on the shift between one party to the other. Then, of course, now today we're looking at homeland security and we're looking at lots of other issues that are tied in together with our government and prosperity and, you know, so much more. But the social issues, I think, brought out those voters.

SHORT: As you know, we do not have voter registration in Georgia. Should we? I'm sorry, party registration. We're not required to register as a Democrat or a Republican or an Independent. Should we do that?

SCHAEFER: Well, there are times when I really think that we should, because one party can elect the candidate for the other party without having party registration.

SHORT: And that has happened.

SCHAEFER: And that has happened, that can happen again. And I have seen it happen. So, that is not a comfortable feeling. You're running as a candidate that believes one way, and you're appealing to your Republican constituents or your Democrat constituents, and these are your views. Without registering as a -- with one party or the other, then that whole party can go

over and elect the candidate of their choice, and I don't think that's real good. I'd like to see that changed.

SHORT: How would you like to be remembered?

SCHAEFER: I would like to be remembered as a great mother and a wonderful grandmother, and a good wife also. And that's number 1 with me, and much of what I do, I think about my children and my grandchildren, and all of our grandchildren and what they're going to face in the years ahead. That's why I want to see us get back to -- get our moral compass back in line and protect our culture, protect our prosperity here in our country so that we do have something to leave to our children and grandchildren that we can be proud of.

SHORT: Well, you've been a great public servant.

SCHAEFER: Thank you.

SHORT: And we appreciate you with us today.

SCHAEFER: Thank you. It's my pleasure to be here, my pleasure to be with you. Thank you.

SHORT: Good. Thank you so much.

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