Oral History Center
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

The Freedom to Marry Oral History Project

Matt McTighe

Matt McTighe on the Marriage Campaigns in Massachusetts and Maine

Interviews conducted by
Martin Meeker
in 2016

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Matt McTighe, 2015
Photo courtesy Freedom for All Americans

Matt McTighe is currently executive director of Freedom for All Americans. McTighe was born in New York and raised around the country because his father was in the military. He began his political work serving moderate Republicans before joining the campaign to win the freedom to marry in 2003 when he served as political director of MassEquality. After a 2009 "people's veto" of marriage in Maine, McTighe headed up what became in 2012 the first successful statewide ballot campaign to win marriage. In this interview, McTighe discusses the full sweep of political campaigns, both legislatively and through voter referendums, focusing on Massachusetts and Maine; he provides detail on running an extensive ground campaign and developing message research and political ads that clearly communicated successful messages.

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Freedom to Marry Oral History Project

In the historically swift span of roughly twenty years, support for the freedom to marry for same-sex couples went from an idea a small portion of Americans agreed with to a cause supported by virtually all segments of the population. In 1996, when Gallup conducted its first poll on the question, a seemingly insurmountable 68% of Americans opposed the freedom to marry. In a historic reversal, fewer than twenty years later several polls found that over 60% of Americans had come to support the freedom to marry nationwide. The rapid increase in support mirrored the progress in securing the right to marry coast to coast. Before 2004, no state issued marriage licenses to same-sex couples. By spring 2015, thirty-seven states affirmed the freedom to marry for same-sex couples. The discriminatory federal Defense of Marriage Act, passed in 1996, denied legally married same-sex couples the federal protections and responsibilities afforded married different-sex couples—a double-standard cured when a core portion of the act was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2013. Full victory came in June 2015 when, in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Constitution's guarantee of the fundamental right to marry applies equally to same-sex couples.

At the very center of the effort to change hearts and minds, prevail in the courts and legislatures, win at the ballot, and triumph at the Supreme Court was Freedom to Marry, the "sustained and affirmative" national campaign launched by Evan Wolfson in 2003. Freedom to Marry's national strategy focused from the beginning on setting the stage for a nationwide victory at the Supreme Court. Working with national and state organizations and allied individuals and organizations, Freedom to Marry succeeded in building a critical mass of states where same-sex couples could marry and a critical mass of public support in favor of the freedom to marry.

This oral history project focuses on the pivotal role played by Freedom to Marry and their closest state and national organizational partners, as they drove the winning strategy and inspired, grew, and leveraged the work of a multitudinous movement.

The Oral History Center (OHC) of The Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley first engaged in conversations with Freedom to Marry in early 2015, anticipating the possible victory in the Supreme Court by June. Conversations with Freedom to Marry, represented by founder and president Evan Wolfson and chief operating officer Scott Davenport, resulted in a proposal by OHC to conduct a major oral history project documenting the work performed by, and the institutional history of, Freedom to Marry. From the beginning, all parties agreed the Freedom to Marry Oral History Project should document the specific history of Freedom to Marry placed within the larger, decades-long marriage movement. Some interviews delve back as far as the 1970s, when a few gay activists first went to court seeking the freedom to marry, and the 1980s, when Evan Wolfson wrote a path-breaking thesis on the freedom to marry, and "domestic partner" legislation first was introduced in a handful of American cities. Many interviews trace the beginnings of the modern freedom to marry movement to the 1990s. In 1993, the Supreme Court of Hawaii responded seriously to an ad hoc marriage lawsuit for the first time ever and suggested the potential validity of the lawsuit, arguing that the denial of marriage to same-sex couples might be sex discrimination. The world's first-ever trial on the freedom to marry followed in 1996, with Wolfson as co-counsel, and culminated in the first-ever victory affirming same-sex couples' freedom to marry. While Wolfson rallied the movement to work for

the freedom to marry, anti-gay forces in Washington, D.C. successfully enacted the so-called Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. The vast majority of the interviews, however, focus on the post-2003 era and the work specific to Freedom to Marry. Moreover, OHC and Freedom to Marry agreed that the essential work undertaken by individual and institutional partners of Freedom to Marry (such as the ACLU, GLAD, Lambda Legal, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the Haas, Jr. Fund, and the Gill Foundation) should also be covered in the project. Once the U. S. Supreme Court ruled in *Obergefell* in June 2015, the proposal was accepted and work began on the project.

After an initial period of further planning and discussions regarding who should be interviewed and for roughly how long, an initial list of interviewees was drafted and agreed upon. By December 2016, 23 interviews had been completed, totaling roughly 95 hours of recordings. Interviews lasted from two hours up to fourteen hours each. All interviews were recorded on video (except for one, which was audio-only) and all were transcribed in their entirety. Draft transcripts were reviewed first by OHC staff and then given to the interviewees for their review and approval. Most interviewees made only minimal edits to their transcripts and just a few seals or deletions of sensitive information were requested. Interviewee-approved transcripts were then reviewed by former Freedom to Marry staff to ensure that no sensitive information (about personnel matters or anonymous donors, for example) was revealed inadvertently. OHC next prepared final transcripts. Approved interview transcripts along with audio/video files have been cataloged and placed on deposit with The Bancroft Library. In addition, raw audio-files and completed transcripts have been placed on deposit with the Yale University Library Manuscripts and Archives, the official repository for the Freedom to Marry organizational records.

The collected interviews tell a remarkable story of social change, the rate of which was rapid (although spanning more than four decades), and the reach profound. Historians of social justice and social movements, politics and policy, and law and jurisprudence will surely pore over the freedom to marry movement and Freedom to Marry's role in that for explanations of how and why this change occurred, and how it could happen so rapidly and completely. Future generations will ask: What explains such a profound transformation of public opinion and law, particularly in an era where opinions seem more calcified than malleable? What strategies and mechanisms, people and organizations played the most important roles in changing the minds of so many people so profoundly in the span of less than a generation? Having witnessed and participated in this change, we—our generation—had an obligation to record the thoughts, ideas, debates, actions, strategies, setbacks, and successes of this movement in the most complete, thoughtful, and serious manner possible. Alongside the archived written documents and the media of the freedom to marry movement, this oral history project preserves those personal accounts so that future generations might gain insight into the true nature of change.

Martin Meeker
Charles B. Faulhaber Director
Oral History Center
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December 2016

Freedom to Marry Oral History Project Interviews

Richard Carlbom, "Richard Carlbom on the Minnesota Campaign and Field Organizing at Freedom to Marry."

Barbara Cox, "Barbara Cox on Marriage Law and the Governance of Freedom to Marry."

Michael Crawford, "Michael Crawford on the Digital Campaign at Freedom to Marry."

Scott Davenport, "Scott Davenport on Administration and Operations at Freedom to Marry."

Tyler Deaton, "Tyler Deaton on the New Hampshire Campaign and Securing Republican Support for the Freedom to Marry."

Jo Deutsch, "Jo Deutsch and the Federal Campaign."

Sean Eldridge, "Sean Eldridge on Politics, Communications, and the Freedom to Marry."

James Esseks, "James Esseks on the Legal Strategy, the ACLU, and LGBT Legal Organizations."

Kate Kendell, "Kate Kendell on the Legal Strategy, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and LGBT Legal Organizations."

Harry Knox, "Harry Knox on the Early Years of Freedom to Marry."

Amanda McLain-Snipes, "Amanda McLain-Snipes on Bringing the Freedom to Marry to Oklahoma, Texas, and the Deep South."

Matt McTighe, "Matt McTighe on the Marriage Campaigns in Massachusetts and Maine."

Amy Mello, "Amy Mello and Field Organizing in Freedom to Marry."

John Newsome, "John Newsome on And Marriage for All."

Kevin Nix, "Kevin Nix on Media and Public Relations in the Freedom to Marry Movement."

Bill Smith, "Bill Smith on Political Operations in the Fight to Win the Freedom to Marry."

Marc Solomon, "Marc Solomon on Politics and Political Organizing in the Freedom to Marry Movement."

Anne Stanback, "Anne Stanback on the Connecticut Campaign and Freedom to Marry's Board of Directors."

Tim Sweeney, "Tim Sweeney on Foundations and the Freedom to Marry Movement."

Cameron Tolle, “Cameron Tolle on the Digital Campaign at Freedom to Marry.”

Thomas Wheatley, “Thomas Wheatley on Field Organizing with Freedom to Marry.”

Evan Wolfson, “Evan Wolfson on the Leadership of the Freedom to Marry Movement.”

Thalia Zepatos, “Thalia Zepatos on Research and Messaging in Freedom to Marry.”

Interview 1: April 10, 2016

01-00:00:05
Meeker: Today is Sunday, April 10, 2016. This is Martin Meeker, interviewing Matt McTighe, [“Mick-Tie”] correct pronunciation?

01-00:00:14
McTighe: Yes.

01-00:00:15
Meeker: At his home in Cape Neddick, Maine. This is interview session number one, and this is the Freedom to Marry oral history project. I begin every interview the same way, and tell me when and where you were born.

01-00:00:29
McTighe: I was born in New York, in 1979, grew up mostly in New York and Connecticut. Bounced around a little bit when my father was still finishing out a stint in the Air Force but settled in Connecticut by the time I was in my formative years, and that’s where most of my family lives still.

01-00:00:49
Meeker: When you said New York, was that Manhattan?

01-00:00:51
McTighe: I was born in Brooklyn and then lived in Long Island primarily, where, you know it was where my family was most of the time. So, that was a kid, you know, my father was still in the Air Force and so it was like New York, Houston, New York, Rhode Island, New York, Indiana, and then briefly New York and then Connecticut.

01-00:01:14
Meeker: So by the time you reached Connecticut, how old were you?

01-00:01:17
McTighe: I guess eight or nine, nine.

01-00:01:19
Meeker: Okay, so a lot of moving in those early years.

01-00:01:20
McTighe: Yes, the very early years, almost a different place every year.

01-00:01:24
Meeker: What role did your father have in the Air Force?

01-00:01:27
McTighe: He was a researcher. He was primarily, basically like a statistician, but he was on his way out by the time I was really old enough to remember, and then he briefly was in academia. He taught history for a little while and then ended up kind of just getting overtaken by the sheer number of children in the family,

and settled into something that was a little bit more reliable, a steadier paycheck.

01-00:02:06
Meeker: And what was that?

01-00:02:07
McTighe: He basically just did retail. He was the manager of a clothing store and then was an insurance underwriter for most of my high school and beyond. He just retired about a year ago. My mother ran a daycare of out our home, and they just closed that down. They're both about 75, 76 years old now, and so they just decided to pack it in. My mother loved kids, and so as we were all growing up, we were always not only lots of brothers and sisters, but also lots of daycare children growing up. By the end, it was mostly just her grandkids that she was babysitting for.

01-00:02:56
Meeker: How many siblings do you have?

01-00:02:58
McTighe: Six, and I'm the youngest.

01-00:03:01
Meeker: The youngest of six, so the oldest sibling was how many years older than you?

01-00:03:06
McTighe: She's actually twenty-five years older than I am.

01-00:03:08
Meeker: Wow.

01-00:03:09
McTighe: Well, no that's not right, twenty-three years older than I am. So there's a pretty big gap with some other—yeah, it's a pretty big gap in age.

01-00:03:20
Meeker: Was your family's a religious household?

01-00:03:23
McTighe: Yeah, Catholic, Irish Catholic. My father had actually briefly studied to be a seminarian and went to Catholic schools all his life, and they were very devout. It was a little bit of an issue in my coming out, although they're certainly very supportive now, and my mother has always been very supportive. But, yeah, growing up it was Catholic schools, for at least part of the time, and all the confirmation classes and really kind of at least once a week, church, and sometimes more than that.

01-00:04:06
Meeker: What was your parish church that you went to when you were in Connecticut, by the time you settled there?

01-00:04:11
McTighe: There were two that we kind of went back and forth, because we switched for reasons that I can't even fully remember, having something to do with one of my sisters getting married and either the original church, which was Saint Bartholomew's, couldn't do the wedding or just for whatever reason, had an issue or something like that, so Saint Bridget's was the one that we started going to, and I think my parents still go there.

01-00:04:41
Meeker: Growing up, were you faithful? Did you believe in the teachings of the church?

01-00:04:49
McTighe: No, not really. I was always skeptical about it, you know it always seemed more like just a community kind of thing, rather than the actual belief. It was also, because it was like being really forced on us, you know I think any kid has a natural tendency to reject or rebel or anything. But I was like an altar boy growing up and was kind of made to do all the typical Catholic kid things. I was always very skeptical of it growing up. By the time my siblings—like one of my brothers who was closest to me in age, he and I are very close friends still, but by the time he got his drivers license, I was fourteen, he was sixteen, we just, we would never go to church. We would skip church, you know, like that was somehow our parents allowed us to just say like oh yeah, we're going to go on the five o'clock mass on Saturday, and we would leave and take the car, and we would always sneak in and get a bulletin, so that we could bring it back and show as proof that we were there, but we'd actually go play racquet ball or go hang out with a friend of his or go drink beers in the parking lot of some other place. Yeah, but I was not a true believer myself.

01-00:06:16
Meeker: Looking back on it, despite your skepticism of theology, were there any values that perhaps you feel like you got through that milieu?

01-00:06:33
McTighe: Yeah. Whether it's through the church teachings or just through my parents and whether they kind of derive it from church teachings, I mean you know, just the simple concept of the Golden Rule stuff: treat others the way you'd like to be treated. That was always instilled in us as kids growing up, and reinforced at church, and something I always latched onto. It seemed like such common sense to me, but I can't really remember ever having like a breakthrough moment or anything like that. Beyond that, I always saw it as more of a belief system for people that just needed something to latch onto, who were looking for something that they could just, when they were hopeless, when they felt despair, when they just felt like the world was out of control and they couldn't do anything about it, it was at least something that they could sort of put their blind faith in.

Equally, that sort of appealed to me on the one hand, but also I just felt like it was a crutch in a lot of ways too. I remember, from a very early age, just sort of feeling like it was just it felt very fake, it felt very false, it felt like something that people who didn't have the strength to deal with the challenges that they were facing or didn't have the ability to kind of really ground the things that they were facing in reality, and deal with their problems, just kind of would throw up their hands and say, "Well, it's God's plan or this tragedy was God's plan." That just always rang false to me. I'm very much like a, you know, we can problem solve. I like to take on big challenges and I like to take on helping other people and helping my family, my friends, and taking the challenges head on. I don't like to just avoid the problems.

So it felt like, at least in my family certainly, growing up, where we did have a lot of issues, you know just various family issues growing up, that in some ways it felt like the faith thing was keeping us from actually doing what needed to be done to heal as a family or to make our family stronger. Instead it was like, "Well no, this is just, you know it's God's plan, so we're just going to deal with it," which is still an issue that causes tension in my family to this day.

01-00:09:08
Meeker: Tell me about your education. You said that you did some parochial education.

01-00:09:12
McTighe: When I was a kid, it was Catholic schools and then by the time we settled in Connecticut, the Catholic school there was not very good, or the Catholic school system there was not very good. The church that I mentioned earlier that I went to, did not have a school, so there was a separate Catholic middle school and high school. You know, my recollection was a big drug problem, and so my parents enrolled my older siblings in just the public school in Manchester, Connecticut, and by then, I just followed in their footsteps. So, we just followed the siblings, ended up going through the same school system by the time we got there.

01-00:10:06
Meeker: How did you experience high school? Was it a positive experience for you, were there particular sort of cliques or groups that you gravitated to?

01-00:10:16
McTighe: I got along with everybody. I was a fairly popular kid, I would say, you know I had popular older brothers, which helped probably make things a little easier, paved the way. My family is quite diverse from one sibling to the next, but the brother that I mentioned whom I'm very close with is also closest to me in age, he's only about a year and a half older than I am, you know he was very popular. He was a big jock, he was friendly with all the cool kids. We would always like have parties at the house, and people really kind of wanted to be around my brother.

I was a little different. I played sports and I was kind of popular in that traditional sense, I suppose, but I also like was really into music, into you know, more kind of like associated with some of the misfit type of kids, the outcast type of kids that were into punk rock and going to shows, and into you know, just not being part of the traditional school cliquish system. I guess in retrospect, of course, they were a clique in their own right. But I was friendly with the theater kids, because I did some plays, I was on the hockey team, so in with all the athletic kids and the jocks, and with the musical kids. I really looked for ways, I suppose, I mean one of the things that was kind of formative in those years for me was you know, I remember really always trying to find a way to be a little different and to just like kind of reject that idea of being in one bubble or one box. So if I felt like I was just too in with one particular crowd, I would really make a concerted effort to go befriend a different crew or a different clique, or making friends.

This is a silly example but it just sort of underscores that point of like you know, I would dress up in suits, like even after we stopped going to Catholic schools. I would like wear a suit and tie, and just had this whole thing, because it was like every kid that wanted to rebel back then was like getting their ears pierced and dressing all like kind of Goth or punk or whatever, and it just felt like there was too many people doing the same thing. It was like well, if you really want to rebel, if you really want to stand out or do something different, you know the ultimate kind of thing would be to just wear like a three-piece suit to school and stand out that way. That was one of the things that probably most people, if you asked high school classmates of mine they'd say oh yeah, Matt was the guy that would wear a suit to school every day.

01-00:13:05
Meeker: How did that fly?

01-00:13:07
McTighe: It was actually, it was great, it was hilarious. It started as a joke, I mean it started off as like, I was in a play and I think one of the guys in the play, I can't remember if it was one of the people that was actually in the play with me or just another friend of mine, who said he'd seen like a dress rehearsal and he saw the outfit that I was wearing. It was *The Cherry Orchard*, I think, yeah, and so anyway, I had like a three-piece suit and it was kind of like an old school style outfit and he said, "You should wear that to school one of these days." So I did and the reaction was just so priceless. Teachers just didn't you like, they were like blown away, the students didn't know what to make of it. A rumor started that I was a drug dealer and that I was—you know, like it was just kind of funny, like how people didn't know what to make of it, so they formed their own ideas. Also, once people got used to it, it was like, you know, I dated a lot of girls when I was a kid and in high school, and they all really got a big kick out of it, they liked the whole thing. One of the girlfriends that I had even started dressing up, when we were dating, to kind of

match what I was wearing. It was funny too, because on the hockey team, we would have away games, we would dress up. Everybody had to wear like a tie, and because I was already wearing a tie, I would actually like wear a tuxedo. I went and got a tuxedo at a thrift shop, you know we didn't really have a lot of money growing up as a kid, but I would get these clothes at thrift stores, get these old vintage suits and an old tuxedo, just because I always needed to ratchet it up a level beyond what everybody else was wearing or how they were dressing.

I was kind of a little bit of a closet delinquent. My parents had no idea. I wasn't like getting into trouble with the law, but I was going out of my way to find things to do to kind of push the envelope. I had a couple of friends with whom, we really, like had this—we would just like break into buildings, we'd break into places, break into schools, break into factories, break into whatever, and it was like this became this obsession of wanting to just go where we couldn't. We'd go in the middle of the night, when all of my other friends were off trying to sneak beer or go drink somewhere, at somebody's friend's house or something like that, we would go and break into a church or break into a school or break into whatever. We wouldn't steal anything, like we just, it was just purely like can we get in without getting caught. We never got caught, but like we got increasingly risky or more dangerous scenarios, where we would just try to push the envelope.

01-00:16:16
Meeker: What did it culminate in?

01-00:16:19
McTighe: I don't know. The church thing was probably fairly, you know, that may have been the final one, or the biggest one. There was a factory in town that we broke into a couple times. It started actually, with this idea of getting on the roof of our school. In fact, I think one day we were just like playing tennis on a weekend with this friend of mine, and I hit a ball up on the roof or something like that, and then we were just like, well we've got get it, because we didn't have any other tennis balls. I was like, "How are we going to get up there?" So we figured out how to get up on the roof by climbing this dumpster that we were able to kind of jerry-rig this thing to get up, and once we were on the roof it was oh, this is cool, this is really great, we're on—so you'd get on the other section of the roof now. Then we found this door that kind of looked like it was—it wasn't open but it was basically like ajar, and clearly the lock on it had buckled or broken or something like that, and so it couldn't shut all the way, and we were just like oh, well, let's see if we can get it. It was a weekend and it was just like getting into the school when nobody was there, it was like this is really, really cool, and once we did that, we had the taste for like breaking into places that we weren't supposed to go. Yeah, that was one of my things that stands out most about high school, was this weird delinquent stretch of breaking and entering, but never stealing.

01-00:17:45
Meeker: You said that you were dating girls in high school. Were you also coming to an awareness of being gay?

01-00:17:52
McTighe: Yeah. I'd say not so much in high school. I've thought about this a lot, I mean really, like as an out gay may now and I've been out for a couple decades now. I've been in a couple of relationships and certainly, I've become a professional LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] advocate, but really, like I can't, you know like as a kid, I don't really have any memories really, of wanting to be with men or feeling like you don't—and I think truly, I think why that is, at least in hindsight, the closest I can come is from the time I hit puberty, I was active with girls. I lost my virginity at a very young age, I had all these older brothers and that influence, and it was just like you know, they'd leave *Playboy* magazine or whatever, you know, like just kind of having that pushed on you, and it just was like what was expected. There were only like two people in our school, of probably close to thirteen or fourteen hundred kids in this school, and there were only like two that were known to be gay and it was, you know, very much like very, very flamboyant. I just remember kind of feeling like well if that's guy, then I'm not that, so I guess I can't be gay, and you know, because I was dating women, whatever.

In hindsight, there's a lot of things that now, I kind of look back and be like oh, clearly there was something going on there, and it wasn't about wanting to be with men or sexually being attracted to men, like that didn't really didn't come until college, freshman year of college. I was still pretty young, I was seventeen when I started college, so relatively speaking, it's still a fairly young age, when I did start to realize that I was gay. The thing I mentioned, like the dressing up in suits. I used to have these pictures of all these old Hollywood actors, I was like obsessed with the forties and old movies, and just read history, read old authors, like read from this time period between the thirties and forties. Somerset Maugham was my favorite author—not even because I was aware that he was gay, it was just like I really like *The Razor's Edge*, and then started to read all his other books, and then read *Of Human Bondage*, not even realizing, until years later, like what the context was, or realizing like I had like, literally like what would be considered almost like pinup headshots of Cary Grant and Montgomery Clift. Like I've never, honestly, like scout's honor, never been like, "Oh my God, I'm so attracted to Cary Grant or I'm so attracted to Montgomery Clift." It was more that I wanted to be like them.

It was more like I want to dress like that, that's what I want to look like. Even Bing Crosby, who I'm not remotely attracted to, I started smoking a pipe when I was like in high school, just because I thought that this was, and still do to this day, I just thought that there was something really cool about that, when I was like thirteen years old, like oh wow, I want to do that. Looking back on it, I'm like my God, if I had ever walked into the bedroom of that kid,

you know, at age thirteen or fourteen, and seen the closet full of suits and all these pictures of old Hollywood movie icons, like male movie icons, I would have been like "hmm," the antenna kind of being raised, like this kid may be gay. And as much as I kind of reject that idea of like well, there's certain things that are just like quintessentially straight or things that are typically gay. I didn't believe it then, I don't believe it now. It just felt like I'm into this now, I want to just take on this different thing. I'm also into all this punk rock stuff. But now, looking back and realizing that I'm sure that there was something there, that I just wasn't, just didn't have an outlet to really explore, because I never was for want of sexual activity with women. Really, like at thirteen years old and just dating girls, pretty much steadily through high school.

When I left home for the first time and went to college, I went to Marquette University for my freshman year of school, out in Milwaukee, and you know, even just the act of leaving now, makes me realize there was—I mean, chalk it up to independence. I certainly didn't go to Marquette for any reasons having to do with being gay, but there was something that I was clearly trying to get away from, this like defined world that was being forced on me by either Catholic parents or older brothers and siblings and all that stuff, and I just wanted to go as far away as possible. I remember, I had a lot of different scholarship offers, to go to a couple of different schools around the country, and I just picked Marquette because it just seemed far away. I wanted to go someplace where nobody was going to like pop in unannounced. I remember, like as a kid, I only had one other sibling that went to college, but she went to University of Connecticut, and I just remember my parents literally were like okay, we're all going to get in the car and we're just going to go surprise Dawn, and I was like, I definitely don't want that, and so went away and almost immediately, started to think about wow, it's interesting, that guy is kind of attractive, and not just in a way, you know, as the Hollywood movie actor thing, that I wanted to dress like him or be like him. It was more like oh, actually, I want to like be with that person, I want to befriend that person, and started to experiment with guys.

I went through a phase, as so many of my gay friends have described the same thing, of just, I was reading all this Gore Vidal and just really militantly feeling like we're all just bisexual. We're all sexual beings, we can all have sex with anybody. I've had sex with women, I can still have sex with women, but we're all just sexual beings, like this whole like, you know like the Kinsey scale kind of thing. I was reading all this Gore Vidal and all these interviews, where he was just espousing that world view, and I thought yeah, that's definitely it, everybody else has got it wrong, you know this whole idea of putting people in boxes or labels or whatever, is just totally not compatible with my way of viewing sexuality. In some ways that's true, but when I realized that I was truly gay, was like several years later, when I had my first long-term partner, and it was like just, I mean it sounds so crazy now, but it was just like this light bulb, like oh, I get it, it's not who I'm sleeping with, gay isn't just about who I'm attracted to. Gay is who do you want to wake up

with the next the next day, gay is like who do you want to be with, who do you want to form a life with. It was like clearly, like I wanted to do that with men, I was clearly attracted to in every way, and so that's when I stopped kidding myself.

But I mean, all through college, I was sleeping with both men and women, and in fact, one of the girlfriends that I had when I was at Marquette, because I transferred schools several times, but when I was at Marquette, one of the girls that I was dating my freshman year, who was older, she was like, what do they call the person that checks people in at the door? She was like the guard at the front desk or something like that, and she and I would like have bisexual experiences, like bring in like a man, or bring in a girl. She was really just very adventurous. College experiences, it's sort of fascinating, but yeah, but I just stopped having sex with women and realized, like I actually just want to be with Mason now, all the time, that was my first partner.

Also, not to get too sidetracked with all this stuff, but there was an experience that I had freshman year of college, where I—this goes back to the like the whole romanticized, 1940s thing. I had like saved up all my money and was going home for Christmas, and I wanted to take a train. I wanted to take an overnight, get a sleeping car, take like a first class thing. I'd saved up like $1,000, it was basically like all I had, other than just money for books and stuff like that. I felt like I just saved up all this money to take this trip and I was going to wear my suits and smoke my pipe and have my hat and my, you know whatever. It's so silly now, I mean that's embarrassing, but I just thought it was going to be the coolest thing, to take this old, traditional train trip and ended up being seated, when I went into the dining car, you know, you're by yourself, they sit you with somebody else who's by themselves. They seated me with this guy who ended up being this big influence in my life, who was gay and he was a psychologist. He and I ended up staying up all night and just like having this really in-depth, fascinating conversation, just talking about sexuality and talking about the ideas of attraction. So naïve, I was so naïve at the time. I was seventeen and, you know, of course now, I realize he was hitting on me, he was putting the moves on me. Nothing happened sexually that night. I ended up having a longer relationship with him, first as a friend and then briefly, very briefly, as sort of more than that, but that was like really when I started to think about sexuality, as opposed to just this whim of like oh yeah, that person's attractive, sure we'll sleep with that person and who cares, we're not going to define it, it doesn't mean anything, it's just fun. You know, that was when I was like oh wow, like this is like this meaningful, deep theme, that I really want to understand more and want to really think about and talk about. Anyway, he had a heart attack and I ended up taking off some time from school to go out and live in California, because he just didn't have anybody else who could kind of look after him, like he had to have quadruple bypass surgery and he just needed somebody to take him to the hospital and carry around a little nitroglycerin tab in case something happened. I just, through that world, was introduced to a very kind of

adventurous period in my life that, you know, more than sewed my wild oats. I really kind of got a lot of things out of my system, which you know, I look back on now and feel like great, now I can be extremely happy being settled down and living a nice quiet life and tranquil, and feeling very good, being settled in a relationship.

01-00:29:46
Meeker: This was your lost weekend in L.A.

01-00:29:48
McTighe: My lost almost year, I mean it was like a seven month kind of span of really just a lot of wildness, not all good. It's funny, I really felt like I was doing something that I needed to do. So the guy was healthy by then and, you know, there was no responsibility, it was just like okay, now we're going to go to this pool party and we're going to go to this other thing. He introduced me to this world out in L.A., that just like it's funny, like now, I was just out in L.A. for a fundraiser trip and bumping into people that I knew back then in a very different context. But he turned out to be a very, very bad influence on me, in the fact that I really like ended up breaking with this person and just saying you're just not a good person. I remember feeling like, "Yeah, I know I don't want to go to that party, I'm actually not interested in sleeping with that person. I just need to do it." I forced myself to like, you know I'm going to regret it if I don't, years from now. I remember truly, like having almost hindsight about it even in the moment, as like a kid, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, or eighteen years old, by the time, roughly, that most of this was happening, and just feeling like well, I'm going to want to experience this, so that years from now, I can feel like I took full advantage of my youth and full advantage of every opportunity. And you know, even just feeling like this is definitely not for me, this is definitely not the life I want to life. All the things that these people seem to value are not compatible with what I find important in my life. It's fun, it could be fun for like a month, it could be fun for like a week or it could be fun for a few minutes, but I just always felt like, this is just getting me further and further away from what I think is going to actually make me happy.

So, I got back, went back to school, and kind of got back on a more, I wouldn't say traditional path, because I still bounced around quite a lot, but I ended up saying okay, I'm going to go into journalism and I'm going to go to Washington, D.C., and transfer to George Washington University and get into politics. I've always been interested in politics, ever since I was a kid. I used to volunteer in campaigns in Connecticut, and you know, really just starting to feel like that was going to be my calling, you know politics. So, I worked for CBS News for a while, back when the Internet was just becoming a thing and they were going to have a website and they were going to have a news page, and it was like they needed somebody to produce content, and sure, like this untested kid could be one of our journalists, because who cares, it's just the online news site, like nobody's going to get their news that way. And of

course, that's now how most people get their news, but like this was very, very early on in the advent of the Internet Age.

I went to work for a member of Congress from Connecticut. I know we're bouncing around a bit, so you know, reel me back in if you want to save any of this stuff. I got into LGBT politics through that kind of pathway. I'd been doing some campaigns, I'd worked on some campaigns. I'd worked for this member of Congress, I'd done journalism, covering politics and covering campaigns, and so I had this kind of broad network of political contacts in Washington.

01-00:33:39
Meeker: It was Lincoln Chafee, right?

01-00:33:41
McTighe: Chafee was later. Rob Simmons was the member of Congress.

01-00:33:46
Meeker: Rob Simmons, he was a Republican?

01-00:33:47
McTighe: He's a Republican.

01-00:33:49
Meeker: Tell me about your politics as they were developing. I know that a Connecticut Republican or a Newton, Rhode Island Republican is very different than an Alabama one.

01-00:33:59
McTighe: Very different, right.

01-00:34:00
Meeker: Even at that point in time. How were you developing your own sense of politics and where you felt like you fit in the spectrum of things?

01-00:34:11
McTighe: I actually always considered myself a Democrat and am a Democrat now, but felt, I always felt liberal. I always kind of felt like, back before progressive was a phrase, like that that was clearly politically, like where I was. The Chafee thing and the Rob Simmons thing, working for these Republicans, even though I wasn't one myself, was just all about character. Rob Simmons, I would vote for that guy for president, I mean he's just such a principled man of character. He was a great rep for Connecticut, he just was a genuinely good human being, a strong leader, a great background, and in a lot of ways. There are no more Rob Simmons sadly, like the moderate Republican wing has like dried up completely. There's nobody like that, who was proud to call themselves a moderate. He had like a hundred percent LGBT human rights campaign score back when like most Democrats didn't have that. This predates marriage, like that certainly wasn't an issue that was like people were saying do you support same sex marriage. This was long before anybody

would even expect any politician to support same sex marriage, and he had just such extremely progressive views and I was just like that's who I want to be, or I want to work for that person.

With the Chafee thing, it was also, not in the same way as Simmons, but I had some connections to the campaign and he was somebody that I thought like wow, like he was very deliberative, he was very thoughtful, and he was in some ways, all the things that made him a great senator, it's sad, you know like now, in this day, in 2016, if you ask anybody about Chafee, what they recognize, but all they're just going to remember, you know like the kind of goofy, ill-fated presidential campaign. That's just so like not him in so many ways. What would make him a poor president, sadly but realistically, and even some ways what made him sort of limited in his ability to govern the state of Rhode Island when he was elected governor, was the fact that he did take his time to think through things, the fact that he really was deliberative. The prime example was in the Iraq War, he was the only senator, Democrat or Republican, who actually insisted on going to CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] headquarters and seeing all of the evidence. Colin Powell had come up from the State Department and presented the evidence of weapons of mass destruction and their justification for going to war, that like nobody questioned. It was like, "See that smudge there, those are weapons of mass destruction, that's why we have to go in, take my word for it." Most people were just like okay, like well, that's how it's being portrayed in the media so we have to just go with that, and he was like, "No, I want to see everything. So I go, get the full briefing, look at all the evidence, look at all the documents, and took his time, like really went through everything and was like no, I just, I don't see enough of a justification there." He was the only Republican to vote against the Iraq War Resolution, and that's the kind of stuff where, even though that was like years after I had kind of started to get into LGBT politics, and we're going to come back to that, I was like well that's good, that's what we should want in our elected officials. We should want them to be really thoughtful and make decisions based on purely the facts and what's right, as opposed to the pressure that they're getting from well, whether it's their constituents or just the press. And unfortunately, that's just gotten worse now.

The guy whose gubernatorial campaign I ran two years ago, Mike Michaud, is the same way, like he is the same kind of Rob Simmons, like take, get all the information, really understand it. Mike is actually a good friend and that's the primary reason I went to go do his campaign, even though I'd sworn off campaigns and said I'm never going to do another campaign.

In 2014, I went and ran his gubernatorial campaign, because he's a very good friend, and I really believed he would be a fantastic governor for the state of Maine. I remember him coming to Maine to visit my then partner and I in our first house that we had in Maine, when we lived up here together, and having him like, literally reading, he was literally reading the healthcare bill, Obamacare, the Affordable Care Act. It was like a 1,500 page, like he had this

gigantic thing, that he sat out in a chair on my lawn and read all weekend long, and read the whole thing, cover-to-cover. I remember him calling up his staff and being like, I need more information on this or send me this, or send me that. It's just so funny now, you think back and like, I mean I guarantee, if more than five people actually read the full Affordable Care Act, I would be surprised, in terms of members of Congress. Sure their staff, you know staff members, I'm sure did more diligent reading, but that was like one of the things, I was like man, like yeah, that should be a given, we should expect that of our politicians and sadly we don't.

01-00:39:47
Meeker: For the Simmons and Chafee campaigns that you were working on, what kind of work were you doing for them?

01-00:39:52
McTighe: Communications stuff primarily, it was all like press.

01-00:39:55
Meeker: What does that mean?

01-00:39:56
McTighe: Media, writing press releases, writing speeches, writing… a lot of writing primarily. Some organizing stuff. I did a little bit of LGBT outreach with Simmons, some more traditional like just field canvassing stuff with him. Most of my campaign experience, and even some of the other shorter, just random campaigns that I did along the way, for different state reps or mayoral candidates, it was either field organizing, knocking doors, doing phone calls, that kind of thing, eventually managing those types of field programs, but then mostly like getting into the media stuff, because I was interested in the journalism and writing. Writing speeches, writing press releases and statements for them to put out.

01-00:40:56
Meeker: What year did you graduate from GW?

01-00:41:00
McTighe: Two thousand and one.

01-00:41:01
Meeker: Two thousand and one. And so then you started work with the Human Rights Campaign in 2003?

01-00:41:09
McTighe: Yeah.

01-00:41:10
Meeker: Was that your first real LGBT movement work?

01-00:41:14
McTighe: Yeah, and what happened there was, I was working at the time, for an international trade lobbying group and wanted to—well, just doing financial service stuff. It was cool, because I got to travel to London and Brussels and Geneva and stuff like that.

01-00:41:35
Meeker: Is this the Prince of Wales Foundation?

01-00:41:37
McTighe: No, this was Coalition of Service Industries. But the LGBT thing: When the *Goodridge* decision happened, you know in Massachusetts, and I'd been following that case pretty closely and I was like obsessed with Mary Bonauto and when that ruling came down, it wasn't that long after, it was less than a month, it was immediate really, but it like a month later or so when things started to pick up steam for a Federal Marriage Amendment, like that it was actually becoming a political issue going into the 2004 elections. George W. Bush coming out and opposed marriage, coming out for a constitutional amendment to ban it and to sort of roll it back. I just remember saying like—and then I was with my partner, Mason, the partner that I had in Washington, D.C., and I just remember feeling like I want to be a part of that fight. That was one of the first times that I ever remember just feeling so strongly about something. There had been candidates, like Rob Simmons and others, where I was like oh that's a really good person, I want to go work for that campaign, but nothing where I was like I am going to join that fight, whether if it's just as a volunteer or whatever. I want to put myself in that movement and help how ever I can, and just having this like, you know, it's all good, almost like walking out the door of my job. You know, I was like I want to figure out a way to be a part of this and so, had some friends I knew, who had connections to the Human Rights Campaign, and through that, I ended up applying for this position. They knew me, I knew them. They needed a Republican, really, and this is why a lot of the people in the LGBT actually think I am a Republican, think to this day that I am because I was hired as like the gay Republican at the Human Rights Campaign. They didn't have any Republican connections, but between the Simmons stuff and the Chafee stuff, and international trade stuff where, because it was very much like free trade, pro-trade, it tended to be more aligned with Republicans and industry, and so I had all these connections to Republicans through that world as well, and they just didn't have any at HRC. They needed somebody who could kind of like "talk Republican," that's how they literally referred to it. It just kind of shows how disconnected in terms of like really doing meaningful bipartisan work. They just didn't even have anybody that could have those inroads, make those inroads and they really thought that there was like a different way of talking to Republicans. Aside from just the messaging as being different, they thought, they were just like we don't know anybody who can even speak to these people, and so I was hired for that.

01-00:44:42
Meeker: I want to ask you to pause there and dial back a little bit. You had mentioned, you know you had an obsession with Mary Bonauto. I'm trying to think is this maybe, is there a generational thing going on here, because there's a lot of, basically almost everyone I've talked to who's my generation or older, was raised in a gay political context where marriage, one, wasn't even a possibility, but for most people it was not desired; it was part of the patriarchy, it was about assimilation, all of those kinds of arguments. But it seems, a lot of people I've been interviewing who are come of age later, those arguments against marriage from a gay perspective, never really held any water.

01-00:45:36
McTighe: Right.

01-00:45:37
Meeker: Was there a moment where you remember kind of first learning of this idea of marriage for same-sex couples, and what did you think of it at that time?

01-00:45:50
McTighe: Well it's interesting, and I'll probably say this many times, given some of the stuff that we've talked about in my background, like there may be a connection or thematically, you might not be surprised to hear me say this, but like for me it was always about this idea of like you can't do that, and reacting very negatively to the idea that something was being kept away. I had no interest, desire, in getting married myself. I didn't think of it as like that's for me, we need to go win this fight so that I can marry the person I love. Like even though for part of that time I was in a relationship with somebody that I loved very much and could have married, it was just like well, the idea that somebody's going to say that we can't, that's the part I want to actually really fight against and rebel against, the idea that somebody's going to stop me from doing it. I just want to have the option and that just felt like, you know it's like going through the locked door thing. It's like, I just want to go in there, just so I can do it. I don't want to have it, I don't want to steal something, I don't want to take something for personal use, I just want to like go on.

I remember, when it came to marriage, I remember reading the news and I was still pretty young when Hawaii happened and then when the Defense of Marriage Act came down. I remember during the DOMA stuff, when again, going back to the chronology, I didn't know that I was gay at the time, I didn't think that I was gay at the time, and I remember feeling like that's really wrong, like that doesn't seem… like why would you do that? Why would you pass this law that's kind of like proactively stopping people from getting a hypothetical right that they don't you know. It just really felt wrong, like just wow, why would our government do that? And so really rejecting that, and so when this case was happening in Massachusetts and it was near my home state, and I was aware of it just through New England connections and friends that I had in Boston. It wasn't like today, where you can kind of like follow every—

you had to really go out of your way to find out when oral arguments were going to be for the *Goodridge* decision or when a brief was being filed, when the court was actually going to rule. It wasn't like SCOTUSblog, everybody checking every day, and Twitter erupting when something happens and everybody being able to keep real time updates on every bill and every law and everything they're passing.

I remember just being very interested and signing up for different email lists so that I can get updates, and getting on some of these lists to you know, be able to just see what was happening. It felt like to me, that that again, kind of going into what you were saying about this generation that never felt like marriage was something that they could have, and that it was just totally unattainable, I probably would have agreed to that too, but I also just felt like well, we need to at least get rid of any barriers to prevent it from happening. And then like, it wasn't like I thought that that was going to somehow bring same-sex marriage to everybody. It was just like, well we've got to at least just take away something that's going to stop us from having the option. Then, around *Goodridge* was when it became like wow, like actually maybe it is an option, like that was wow, it's going to be legal. But even then, it felt so tenuous because you had the federal marriage amendment thing, you had the state constitutional amendments in Massachusetts that they passed, or tried to pass the legislature. We can get into that, obviously, I was part of that fight as well. But you know, you had these people saying like once again, kind of like the DOMA, no, we're going to stop you from having this thing, and that was the part that just felt like well even if we can't, even if we never get to marriage in my lifetime, I definitely want to be a part of the fight to just stop you from taking away this thing and stop you from telling me that I'm wrong. That was the part that really was like so intriguing and something that I just was like really very passionate about.

I remember telling my partner at the time, and he was a Republican, actually is like very much a Republican, he says well, why would you—I was like, I think I'm going to go work, you know, I want to be a part of that. I want to quit my job and see if I can go up to Massachusetts or get a job with the Human Rights Campaign. He's like, "Well, that's such an impossible goal, like why would you set your sights on that? There are so many other things you should be doing and so many more practical things, and so many better uses of your time" or whatever, and I just felt, no, I need to be part of this. It was weird, like that was one of the few instances in my life I would ever feel like where I was just compelled to do something, like to action, and even though there was certainly nobody saying, "Yeah, do that, sign up!" like you know, I mean it's probably like some people who feel compelled to join the military or like it's why I joined the fire department. It's like I need to be part of that, and so that's why I wanted to go work for the Human Rights Campaign—you know, their political director at the time was a huge mentor of mine, Winnie Stachelberg.

01-00:51:06
Meeker: Who is that?

01-00:51:07
McTighe: Winnie Stachelberg. S-T-A-C-H-E-L-B-E-R-G. She's great and still a friend. She works for the Center for American Progress now, and so she's very connected, the D.C. insider person, but she was just like so cool. I remember when I met with her, when I interviewed with her at HRC, for the job, she really was taken with me and I was completely blown away by her. I was like, I'll do her dishes, whatever she needs. So I really wanted to be a part of that. It was funny, because I actually did—there was like a little hiccup where I didn't think that I would—you know, I was getting some really conflicting pressure to move and take this other position, and I was like gee, I don't know, it's too good of an opportunity. But like at the end I was like, no, no, I really need to go be part of that fight, I can't take that other job, I need to go do this.

So I went to go work there and in fact, they hired somebody. They had kind of moved on from me. They were like we really want you to do this and I was, for like a week, just kind of conflicted. I'm like but I can't, because I have to go move and do this thing. They found somebody else and I then I was like no, no, no, please tell me you haven't filled that job yet, because I really, I couldn't sleep and I need to do this. And they're like well, we actually had made another decision, but they haven't started yet and we'll just tell them no, and we want you to come and do this. It was like, I mean I just had been so grateful that they believed in me, that they saw something in me, that they sort of were so interested in that, that they actually made room for me to come onboard, because that's where I was able to finally, I feel like hit my stride. All these types of experiences that I had, all these different skills I was developing over years of just different campaigns and volunteering and activist stuff and candidate work, you know I was like wow, I can put it all to good use. I had good political contacts and I write and I can talk to people, and it was like finally, like oh, this is what I was meant to be doing all along. This was like, I really need to be a part of this and I'm here for a reason, and everything that I've been doing has been leading me up to this point. It was exciting and I really felt like it was the first taste that I ever had, of feeling like man, I really feel good about what I do for a living. I'd wake up in the morning feeling energized by the fact that I get to be a part of that life, and it had always been like that. Certainly since, I've been involved in the LGBT equality movement in one way, shape or form ever since then, and even as I've been doing other things, consulting on numerous projects or whatever, that has always been like a constant since 2003. Even as like there are times where it's like you're frustrated and it's hard or it's just very challenging, you just lost the energy, I remember really feeling like back then, this is just the calling, this is what I'm meant to do, and feeling very excited about being able to be a part of it. Then, as more challenges were coming up, bad bills were being filed, and we were starting to see these attacks coming towards the LGBT community in ways that hadn't really been at the forefront of the news

and the political process for a while. It was always just kind of a given that LGBT people were going to be discriminated against, it was like it didn't even need to be front page news. It was just a footnote, like yeah, of course we're going to just go after—but all of a sudden it was like even though we were losing, it was still becoming like a hot button political issue and more and more people kind of were paying attention.

With the marriage stuff, when we finally, like when we won the constitutional amendment fight, where we had to just stop this bill, and you had Wayne Allard and Marilyn Musgrave, filing these—

01-00:55:30
Meeker: Can you actually kind of walk me through that process? I mean, I know you worked on Don't Ask Don't Tell, immigration, taxation, pension issues, but the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment, I think is important. I think that obviously, you know at the beginning, it was a real uphill climb. I mean, amending the U.S. Constitution is difficult, for good reason, and I think that it would have been very difficult for them to pull it off in the best of their circumstances.

01-00:56:00
McTighe: Right.

01-00:56:01
Meeker: And the worst of our circumstances. But still, there had to be a fight. Can you walk me through that process a bit?

01-00:56:11
McTighe: Yeah, it's been a while since I've really thought about this, so I'm not even a hundred percent sure I'm going to remember all this correctly. We knew we needed to get some Republicans on our side, because there wasn't going to be enough Democratic support to guarantee stopping it. Actually, it wasn't even a given that all the Democrats were going to be with us either. There were a lot of Democrats who were kind of from Arkansas or something like that, like what's his name? I can't think of his name now, the former Senator from Nebraska.

01-00:56:53
Meeker: [Ben] Nelson?

01-00:56:54
McTighe: Yeah, yeah, that we were trying to get on our side.

01-00:57:05
Meeker: I think it was, you had to get—well, you had to get at least forty votes, I think.

01-00:57:09
McTighe: Forty, right. So we needed to get—right, that's right, okay. So we were trying to stop them from getting sixty and you know, I think we thought that there

were like thirty-four or so Democrats that we had, no Republicans, and we were going to have to try to get, on the Senate side anyway.

01-00:57:32
Meeker: So there was a point early on, that the odds looked in their favor, that you had to do the work.

01-00:57:37
McTighe: Oh yeah, yeah. We really felt like it was going to pass. When I was at HRC, we had these whip counts and we had these meetings and we'd have these really dejected, disappointing conversations with Democrats even—and it was like DOMA, like for them they just were like DOMA, even though this was relative, you know it's like almost a decade later by that point and a different world, but here you had this thread of marriage in Massachusetts, these activist judges needed to be put in their place and if we didn't stop them, this was going to happen everywhere. You had Gavin Newsom and—I forget the guy's name [Jason West], in New York, a small town in New York.

01-00:58:24
Meeker: New Paltz.

01-00:58:27
McTighe: Yeah, exactly, some of these rogue efforts where people were like, "Oh my God, we need to stop these people, like that has to be controlled." And so for a lot of the Democrats even, and certainly for most of the Republicans, it was not a foregone conclusion that we were going to be able to keep them in line. Actually, that was how I met Mike Michaud, like I remember that was one of the meetings I had that was like wow, this guy is going to be on our side, because he was like a rural—obviously he's gay, but I certainly didn't know that at the time, I don't think he even knew it at the time. He was this rural, blue collar guy, like mill worker, labor union guy, and he was like, "Yeah, I'm going to vote against that," and I was like, "Can you talk to some of your other democratic colleagues? Can you get us some meetings with some of these labor folks?" That was one of the ways that I met him.

We needed to get to some of these moderate Republicans. You had Rob Simmons, that was kind of there and Chris Shays and a couple of other folks who were good, but we did not have, you know, it was not like a guarantee that we were going to get Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins and Arlen Specter. Chafee was with us fairly early, but for a lot of these other folks, the pressure that they were reporting back was, I have to be against you on this. They were just, I think, going into a presidential election year, and a Senate and House election year, and most of these people were up for reelection. Especially for the House members, because all of them were feeling like this is just going to be such a big issue, I can't be on the wrong side of this. They didn't have the cover that people do now, to feel like of course, Democratic voters are going to support you. Now it's like a requirement, it's almost like a

litmus test, like are you for same-sex marriage. This was like light years behind that.

01-01:00:34
Meeker: Were you able to turn some of the more moderate Democrats? Were you in these conversations? Can you tell me a bit about how those would go?

01-01:00:44
McTighe: I wish I'd kind of sort of gone back and tried to research or look, just so I can really remember who were some of the good individual voters, who I'd hate to mischaracterize now and say like oh, yeah they were bad, but then we got them, good.

01-01:01:00
Meeker: You could correct it on the transcript if you need to.

01-01:01:04
McTighe: We had some meetings with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. I'm trying to think, there was like a couple of other good Republicans. Chris Shays, we weren't really sure where he was going to be. Arlen Specter's people, we met with them a lot. We were meeting with everybody and anybody, we just didn't take it for granted. We had Ted Kennedy out there with us, he was kind of helping to lead a lot of the efforts, especially on the Senate side. I'll have to go back and look at especially who the members of the Judiciary Committee were, because that was like, and then we had these hearings and you had to orchestrate these efforts. Specter was a major problem there, like [John] McCain, meeting with his people a lot, and trying to do something that finally, like figuring out even a way to appeal to this sense of the Constitution not being used to limit and restrict, almost kind of like a libertarian point of view, which is how we got to a lot of Republicans. We'd just talk to them about the Constitution and sort of states' rights. It's sort of funny, in some ways it's anathema to what we were ultimately going for in the big picture, but even though people like Evan [Wolfson] were already by then, thinking of this bigger strategy, back then it was more like we just need to stop this now. We're not thinking about like whether this argument is going to help us or hurt us twenty years from now, or be used against us in court. So we would go in and really hit the states' rights message, saying that every state should be free to do what they want to do, and it shouldn't be forced, and we would say to these members, absolutely, your state, if you need to pass a statement constitutional amendment, that's up to your state, but if this other state wants to do this thing, they need to be able to be free to do that, and trying to appeal to this that like oh no, don't worry, nobody's going to be coming for full marriage. Don't worry, John McCain, like Arizona is not going to be forced to do this, but don't you just hate the idea that somebody is going to stop, you know the precedent this is going to set and how this is going to actually stop you guys from forming your own laws. Just trying to appeal to this smaller government, kind of limited scope of the federal government overreach piece. Back then, in 2003, 2004, was how

we ultimately got a lot of the Republicans and even some of the Democrats to come on and join us.

I remember the day of the vote, being up on the Hill, in sort of the lobbying line. Back then you could be closer to the Capitol, and actually right as you were going up, you would be like the last thing that the members would see before they went into vote, and all these members coming by. We were trying to like just grab them one last time. Winnie Stachelberg were up there and the whole lobby, we're trying to see, trying to grab these people and like we need to make sure we get—you know, see these three people, and here's our checklist. Make sure that the last thing that they see is your smiling face, and make sure that you just remind them about the constituent meeting that we set up back home and the letter that they got from a lesbian couple, to remind them of this thing. We're trying to like get any indication, like what were they thinking? They gave us a thumb's up, they're going to be good, or that person is walking with John Lewis, and so I'm sure he's giving him an earful, and they're going to do the right thing in the end.

The thing that was like so scary is a lot of members who didn't walk outside, they took the tunnels. Now, you almost have to, because it's just so hard to get to the Capitol. But back then, it was much more commonplace to just walk across the street when the House was voting.

01-01:05:03
Meeker: From the office buildings.

01-01:05:04
McTighe: From the office buildings, sort of like walk across. So you would just like kind of camp out by the Longworth House Office Building and watch all these members come out and parade, but it was like oh my God, has anybody seen—damn, I wish I could really remember who some of the people were that took the tunnel, for reasons that could have been totally legitimate, like maybe they were already in the tunnel or they were already in the basement, or their foot hurt and they wanted to take the subway or whatever, but some of the people that seemed like they were avoiding us, and that was the fear. We were, as they were voting, feeling like oh, we just didn't get a final chance to talk to this handful of people and therefore, they were trying to avoid us, like they just didn't want to see us, they're going to do the wrong thing.

But, you know, watching as the results were coming in, we all had like BlackBerries, with some of the staff liaisons on the inside, with members of Congress, and oh, this person's with us, this person's with us, like watching the votes come in and just finally, the elation when we realized that we had it. But then that, you know, going back to what you said earlier, about even though it's a really uphill fight, you saw what happened in that election year though. Eleven states? I think maybe more than that. Eleven states that passed constitutional amendments, banning, and like had that been—had those votes

like actually been to amend the U.S. Constitution, I'm sure most of the states would have done it. I'm very glad it never came to that, just as I'm glad it never came to a vote of the people in Massachusetts, because I think we would have lost that as well. But just at least the fact that we were able to stop it in these two chambers, where our whip numbers were never solid going up to the final vote. I remember the day of, being like this could totally go either way.

01-01:07:02
Meeker: I imagine, on that day, as you're huddled out in front of the office buildings, trying to get one last word in, there's probably the opposition out there as well. Did you know the specific people who were lobbying for the opposition? I don't know if NOM [National Organization for Marriage] had existed at this point or not.

01-01:07:19
McTighe: No they didn't. Well, I don't think they existed, at least not in the form that we came to know them. They may have been incorporated, or not, but it was like, there was mostly like the Family Research Council and Focus on Family, they were the groups that were primarily pushing for this stuff and it's no coincidence that, you know, it's the lead sponsors of the respected House and Senate versions of that bill, that constitutional amendment, were both from Colorado; Wayne Allard and Marilyn Musgrave, who were the lead sponsors of the bill, you know came from Focus on Family's home turf.

[Pause in Recording]

01-01:08:04
Meeker: You were just talking about the Federal Marriage Amendment and the folks in Colorado.

01-01:08:15
McTighe: Right, so that was the opposition. I guess, because there were two votes, or I mean I think there were actually more than two, but the House and Senate voted differently, and so the one that really, I remember more, was on the House side. On the Senate side, by the time the vote came up, I think we felt a little more confident that we were going to be able to stop them from getting cloture. The House vote, it was like much more in question, and so that's why there was a much bigger showing from both sides, you had activists and lobbyists from both sides. I remember their side having like a lot of what are just really antigay signs. They weren't like substantive marriage, they were just like stick figures of men having sex, with a line through it, it was really offensively homophobic, antigay stuff, that wasn't like some substantive, one man, or some kind of marriage argument that was a well message or anything like that.

Yeah, so I didn't really know a lot of the lobbyists. Most of the ones that were there was like Tony Perkins, and some of the more prominent people that I

knew from being on TV and stuff like that, but unlike in the states, where I would usually get to know, when I was doing any of the state work, you'd know the other side, their people. When we get to Massachusetts, there's an interesting story about just being in kind of the closed quarters, like knowing the people and being part of the group, but yeah, on that it was much more focusing on who the members were that we were trying to grab on the way, on the way to vote. I mean it wasn't super close on the final vote but like what was amazing to me was how many people would not give us an answer, like they just wouldn't—like they wouldn't tell us, as the lobbyists. It wasn't like they were like coming over to our side and saying yes, proudly standing with you, we've got this thing in the bag, you know, putting out statements. Now, you know, everybody was like—wanted—that vote, it's not going to happen now, but you know if a couple of years ago, that vote happened, prior to the Supreme Court ruling, everybody would be putting out their statements and getting onboard and wanting to be on our side very publicly, very early, very consistently.

The thing that strikes me most now, is even now—this is the first time I've really thought about it in a while—was like how many people would not give us a commitment one way or another. They were telling the other side, presumably the same thing, like, "Oh, I haven't made up my mind yet," but for whatever reason, they weren't proud of their votes. Some were, I mean of course, like there's lots of exceptions, and there were some people who were leaders on the fight, who were very much opposed to the Federal Marriage Amendment, actively talking about it, but you know, just this vast group of people in the middle who were unwilling to say. And it's interesting, because like the parallel to how voters were thinking about this issue years later, when we were starting to win in 2012 and marriage was on the ballot, you know going to ballot. You had the same kind of phenomenon, people that were just like gosh, they go up, they go down, they're with us, they're against us, they're flipping, they're flopping, they're kind of unsure and they're grappling with it, and they are going to just remember the last message, where you just have to find some way to connect with them, in a way that's really going to resonate and give them their skin in the game that they can take with them to the ballot box or to the voting booth. That was, quite honestly, like a big part of the challenge when we did make it to the ballot later on, and we were actually trying to win the minds of voters, but the approach was very similar, like trying to just find some connection. Even when it was a legislative audience, back then the Federal Marriage Amendment in 2004, or in any of the states that passed it in the legislatures in the subsequent years, so even in Massachusetts, where we had all these votes, you know, we had the same problem. We just had a lot of people that didn't—they weren't making up their mind and putting out a public statement and saying okay, now I'm on the record with you. They were like, "Hmm, I'm leaning your way, but I may change my mind tomorrow." And the fact that they weren't on the record and weren't willing to say publicly where they were, was very disconcerting and also made it very possible that they would just change their mind one day. At

least now, people put out a press release when they evolve or when they come to a conclusion when they're getting ready to vote, but back then the vote was going to be the only time they were going on record, was like when they actually cast their vote.

01-01:13:30
Meeker: When you were lobbying these elected officials, you had mentioned that in some of the cases, the conversation centered around states' rights, and kind of a libertarian perspective. Was there much conversation about marriage itself? Were they asking, you know, "Why do gay people want this anyway, do you really want this?"

01-01:13:50
McTighe: Yeah, that's the thing that really strikes me, is it really wasn't about the substance of marriage, what we were trying to stop in some of those constitutional amendments, you know like any of kind of these attempts. The argument was much more about restricting rights and states' rights. To be honest, the questions we were getting weren't really about marriage either. Just, a lot of the swing members were coming from states where it was just like they weren't thinking that this was going to be coming soon to a state near them any time, so we weren't really talking about it on the merits of what about marriage? It was more just like, we just need to stop this bad thing from happening, really trying to make sure that rights weren't limited in such a way that they close the door on it forever. We weren't doing a lot of like constituent meetings with LGBT people. We had lobby days and things like that, where we would organize big lobby days and lots of LGBT people would come and descend on the Capitol, but that wasn't the primary message. It was much more about like just the people of your state don't want this, this is going to have unintended consequences, this is going to be a restriction on states' rights. It really wasn't until later on; there wasn't like competing set of groups that was like over having another conversation, like that were also actively on our side or working towards the same goal, but using totally different messages. That was the campaign and when we got into states like Massachusetts, that you know, like there was a coalition and we were all kind of using the same messaging, that is when we really started to talk more about marriage, and the big reason why, and I think that this was something that we—it was a concerted decision, because we knew, like we needed to actually have people who were married. You needed to have people you could put the face on it, and that was only true of Massachusetts. So, nobody was like, you know, if you were trying to lobby a member from Florida, you weren't bringing same-sex couples and having them talk about how they aspire to get married, like it was just so far-fetched, you know, that wasn't the link that was going to ever make the connection.

In Massachusetts, you actually had, by then, because it got legalized in the supreme court case, and then in May of 2004, the marriages started to take effect. So when they lost in Massachusetts the first time, and you probably

know this, but the first vote on marriage in Massachusetts that came out for the decision, our side lost badly. It happened in the intervening period, I think it was like February of 2004. So, the court case had come down but the marriages hadn't started taking effect, so you actually didn't have any firsthand personal stories to pull from, of people who were married, you didn't have the example. I mean, this is a big cliché, but I'll say it, like the sky could have still fallen in the minds of people that were against this. It was too early to say like, "Oh no, all those arguments aren't true, like that's not going to happen, this isn't going to lead to this, it's not going to cause this unintended consequence," because it hadn't started happening yet, and so they were still really trying to drive a message of like hypothetical fear, not grounded in reality. In the votes the followed a couple of years later, in the years that followed, in Massachusetts, in 2005, 2006, 2007, you actually had couples and you had people who could talk about the real experience of marriage and what it meant to get married, and the wedding day and show the pictures and bring that personal touch to a lot of that conversation. But again, we're talking about Massachusetts now.

It's so funny to me now, like we're doing a campaign in Massachusetts right now on nondiscrimination, where we're trying to get their bill, the LGBT nondiscrimination bill, corrected, to be fully comprehensive in its coverage of transgender people. A lot of people are saying well, why is your group even involved, it's like why are you guys pushing for Massachusetts so much, why is it sort of high on your top tier priority list? It's like, that's Massachusetts, liberal people, of course they're going to—it's like no, you have to understand, we've never done what we're doing, we're actually proactively talking about public accommodations, like bathrooms and locker rooms, and having a conversation where we're actually trying to specifically go after that very specific thing. In other places, we're just trying to get any form of LGBT nondiscrimination written into law, where there's nothing. It's almost important to show, you know, how you can like get those kind of incremental gains and finish the job, but my point being, a lot of people certainly discount Massachusetts. I say well, marriage started in Massachusetts, like we have the same kind of problem there, where we were trying to first win, because that was down in the courts, but like defend, in a place where we learned so much about the tactics and you know, obviously ten years later, you see the result of having the supreme court ruling, but you know, just where we kind of hone our tactics, where we see the attacks from the other side really developing, where we start to kind of figure out how to win, how to frame these arguments, has to happen somewhere, and in this case, that's why we're so invested in Massachusetts.

Back then, where you had marriage, the research wasn't nearly as sophisticated, the level of coordination wasn't as great as it is today. From a communications standpoint, we were so far behind where we ended up in terms of our sophistication, but we were starting to figure it out, we were really starting to figure it out, and a big part of that was, as I said, having this

well of actual couples, families, that could come and be a part of it. That's where you started to kind of really see like wow, there are certain elements, not just—like it wasn't, you know initially, you just think like okay, let's just bring any couple in and just have them say whatever comes to their mind. It was all new, it was being developed at the time, and so you realized, well there are some couples that are better than others, and maybe it's not enough to just have the couple, maybe they need to bring their parents with them. Maybe you shouldn't bring the kids or maybe you should bring the kids, or maybe you should bring wedding pictures, and maybe there's certain things about the story that you should try to focus on, based on the questions that were coming up in meeting after meeting. We started to realize, okay, these are the arguments we need to be prepared for, this is where we need to actually figure out, in a more sophisticated way, as opposed to just saying like okay, lesbian couple, go meet with this legislator and, you know, you're going to get some really tough questions and good luck answering them.

01-01:20:51
Meeker: What was the substance of those particular decisions and I guess instruction, that you were probably providing.

01-01:21:00
McTighe: We had polling, we had some focus groups, we had some more information, even just like anecdotal stuff. It was mostly anecdotal. Nowadays, we're much more sophisticated in how we like insist on messaging being researched, and then how we disseminate the well-informed messages. Some of the research was being done back then, but a lot of it was also just like trial and error and you would know, like all right, you're going to get a question about your kids and you're going to get a question about religion, and you're going to get a question—you know, you could at least start to frame, like here's a response we've seen work, here's a response that you should probably avoid saying certain words.

01-01:21:44
Meeker: Could you give me some examples of this?

01-01:21:47
McTighe: A lot of it, people would just go down this road of like we're just like you and, you know, wanting to just talk from—some people getting way more personal than you would want anybody to get in a lobby meeting with a legislator, which was interesting, because sometimes it would be the legislators that would take the conversation there, like actually get people being fixated on sex and wanting to kind of just get some questions answered about like, "Well, do you guys sleep together, like how do you, so what do, what's?"

01-01:22:21
Meeker: Like who's the man and who's the woman.

01-01:22:22
McTighe: Yeah, like who's the top? I mean really that was the question that you would get in some of these conversations. A lot of times, you'd have people that want to come in and just, in a way that I totally understand, but in a way that's not really helpful, to say we are just like you, like my rights, like how dare you, almost in a kind of like aggressive way. We realized, like yeah, even though that's true and we all want to take a principled stand, and we've all been trying to get this meeting with the speaker or with the senate president, for so long, we need to be smarter about how we talk about this. We can't just go in there and say, "You bigot, you idiot, how could you possibly deny me equal treatment, we're just like you." Legislators and voters don't see gay and lesbian people the same as they see themselves, and that's still an issue that we face today. It's getting better, generationally it's changing, but you can't just say, "Well we're the same, and therefore we should have the same treatment." People fundamentally saw a divide and legislators absolutely, you know it was safe for them to feel like oh no, you're other, you're different, and therefore, don't come at me with an argument of equality. Instead it was like protections and rights, very much fixated. And this is a double-edged sword, but I'll finish my statement and then unpack it, because a lot of the—this is true now, about discrimination, this is true with just about any issue you can name. A lot of the messages that work with the legislators and the questions that legislators have, are exactly the wrong message to win over voters. The audiences are just very different. Legislators, it's their job to be more substantive, it's their job to come at things from a more clinical, legal perspective, and the arguments that they're hearing, fundamentally it's about (a) what's going to get them elected, and you know, how can they spin it and what's the issue, so like political concerns, things like that. With voters, it's such a personal decision and people are really just guided by, ultimately what they can relate to, almost in, quite honestly, like almost like a selfish way, that's how we all approach voting when we're voting on issue. It's like how is this going to impact me, and that's just true of anything.

So, the legislative meetings that we were having, what we started to figure out was working, that was most helpful, was really like the rights and benefits kind of protection, which when I say it was a double-edged sword, I think is why we assumed, as a community, as a movement, that those same kind of messages were the ones that voters needed to hear, and it ended up being such a losing message for us and it was never enough to get us a victory, when we lost thirty-one, thirty-two times in a row, every time marriage was on a ballot, on all these bad constitutional amendment fights, and even up to Prop 8 in 2008, or Maine in 2009, where we were losing, and we were still trying to make this kind of like hospital visitation, rights and benefits, which for legislators, going back to 2005, 2006, 2007, were what we finally figured out again, going back to this whole like trial and error thing, is when you can have somebody actually tell, like a hospital visitation story in a firsthand context, that would almost bring legislators to tears. It doesn't work as well though, you know, when you're trying to get a voter to think about it, because they

can't put themselves in the same position; they're like, but I can visit my spouse in the hospital so screw you, like that's your problem.

01-01:25:57
Meeker: Well, and there's also the in-between of civil unions.

01-01:26:01
McTighe: That was the other thing, right.

01-01:26:02
Meeker: "Let's just give them the rights but not marriage."

01-01:26:05
McTighe: "Why do you have to call it marriage?" Yeah, and that was of course, a huge part of the transition from merely playing defense, to actually winning offensively, and how we, as a movement, did start to figure out how to win and you're absolutely right. That's also one of the ways, going back to that whole Federal Marriage Amendment thing, it's amazing to me in hindsight, but of course, civil unions were, back then, still seen as like a radical idea, I mean like even then, it's something that we would think of as such a lukewarm, kind of milquetoast alternative that nobody wanted a kind of solution. It was like, there were a lot of people, including a lot of legislators and even a lot of advocates, who would deny this to this day, but a lot of advocates who would say, yeah but like, we're pushing for marriage, we're going to talk about marriage, but if at the end of the day we get civil unions, that's a huge win. There were people that really believed that marriage was like such a far out, kind of extreme goal, that we were almost just using it as a way to win this compromise step and like to push for marriage, like, [whispers] "*what you really wanted is civil unions*." It's like no, of course that's not what we really wanted. But for legislators, when we were trying to stop these constitutional amendments, that's oftentimes where they would end up too, is like they'd say like, "Well, we'll just call it this other thing," and we would say to them, "Yeah, sure, if that's what we ended up getting to, but this constitutional amendment would stop us from even doing that, like this constitutional amendment would ban any form of legal relationship recognition and make it impossible for us to have that alternative compromise."

You're right, when we leaned too heavily on that message, so then when it did come to voters, you know it was just all too easy for people to just wash their hands of it and say, "Great, you know, we'll just vote for civil unions, we'll call it something else, but you're the ones that pushed for marriage and therefore, I'm not going to give you everything you want," and that's why we were never going to have that breakthrough until we started to get at the root of why marriage matters and why marriage is important and what marriage even means, like what does it mean to a person, to a couple, to get married? What made you want to marry your wife, what made you want to marry your husband?

You know, so much of the work we did between 2010 and 2012, was really figuring out how to do that, how to talk about that, and it was a huge part of course, of why we won. I'm so proud of the work we did in Maine, because that was the last—well, North Carolina lost too, but a little different. But to have this major loss in 2009 and then three years later, to be able to turn it around and literally reverse the vote totals, and to do all this research in this climate, where we were still figuring things out. We were able to test a lot of new messages, we were able to develop a lot of the tactics and test them out and perfect them. Maine was like this Petri dish, through which so much of the movement's research was being developed and tested, Maine along with Oregon, which ended up not going to the ballot in 2012, for mostly financial reasons. They didn't think they'd be able to raise the money. But for a while, those were the two states, in 2010 and early 2011, there were like all the—Freedom to Marry was coordinating a lot of this research, and not just them, and we were working with a lot of groups and we were doing our own thing too, but so much of it really was being developed in these test states, where we then were able to disseminate it to all the other states. As we were proving tactics worked and as we were finding messages that were more effective than others, we were able to export that to places like Minnesota, Washington, Maryland.

01-01:30:04
Meeker: So, you leave HRC at the beginning of 2006. I'm wondering, during the time that you were there, were you engaging much with what was happening in Massachusetts, as an HRC employee?

01-01:30:17
McTighe: Massachusetts was one of my states that we were. We broke things up, primarily by region, and in my case, because I was like the Republican—like, I also just had like a bunch of random states. Arizona was a state, because we had a lot of Republicans there. I'm trying to remember a couple of the other outlier states like Florida, where we had like a couple moderate people that we could work with, but mostly I was doing the Northeast, so working a little bit with them, certainly during the legislative fights, that we were trying to provide them with resources and provide them with support, but it was not the level that you would see today.

01-01:31:02
Meeker: What was the HRC view of the other organizations on the ground there? I mean, you had GLAD [Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders], you had I guess Mass Equality at that point. Freedom to Marry, I don't know what their level of participation in Massachusetts at that point in time was.

01-01:31:22
McTighe: It was a different dynamic for sure, it was a different kind of playing field. Mass Equality actually was a coalition, so there was an LGBT group called the Mass Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, and Mass Equality didn't exist, and basically, after *Goodridge*, it was clear that there needed to be a bigger

effort, that we just needed to somehow coordinate all the different groups. So you've got GLAD, Mass Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, the Task Force was there, you know, eventually some labor unions joined and you had, I think the ACLU was engaged at some level. There was a group called Mass Alliance, they were like the progressive, left, kind of activist group. Every state has an equivalent, here it's the Maine People's Alliance, but they were part of the coalition. And so you had all these groups operating under—and HRC had a representative, like a seat at the table, that was… I'm totally blanking on his name.

01-01:32:44
Meeker: Is that Marty Rouse?

01-01:32:45
McTighe: No. No, no. This was before Marty was at HRC, he was still at Mass Equality. The plaintiff from the *Goodridge* decision. George? African American guy. It will come to me.

01-01:33:02
Meeker: Okay, we'll add it later.

01-01:33:03
McTighe: One of the plaintiffs, yeah, one of the plaintiffs from the *Goodridge* decision. He and his husband were very involved and he in particular, and his name will come to me, was very active. I don't think he was on the board of HRC, but he was a big federal club member, supporter, and so like he was the representative, because HRC didn't have an organizer on the ground full-time, and he was like our person, something Wilson. I'm getting there. Anyway, he was like the person that would go to the meetings of the coalition. Mass Equality became bigger than some of its parts and now is just known as the LGBT group. It's sort of funny, like I saw that. We do work with them now, as part of this coalition, but things do kind of come full circle, because as we're doing this transgender campaign in Massachusetts, we realized the same thing, it's not enough to just have the usual suspects, and so like Mass Equality, which was started as a coalition, to make up for the shortcoming of any one of its groups, you know the LGBT group, the political caucus. Now we had to form another, bigger umbrella coalition called Freedom Massachusetts, for this nondiscrimination effort. Well, we brought in other players besides just Mass Equality, so things have got to come around. But no, so at the time when I was at HRC, that was the network through which we were getting information and having it fed back to us, engaging in whatever way we could, but there wasn't a ton to really plug into at the time. There was a volunteer effort, we would do coordinated phone calls, we would help the appeal effort, there was money, financial support that was provided. When I ended up in Massachusetts, doing the Massachusetts campaign, it wasn't because of like an HRC entry point.

It’s very funny and ironic, because Marty Rouse, Marc Solomon and myself, so like just played musical chairs. Literally, Marty moved down to Massachusetts, to go work for HRC, took my old office. Marc Solomon took Marty’s office, as the executive director, literally like moved office and took Marty’s chair, and then I took Marc’s chair as the political director, so I took Marc’s old job. It was sort of funny, how we just all swapped roles, but it wasn’t like I had been working really closely with them. At HRC, they were so focused on other issues, like after the Federal Marriage Amendment was defeated, marriage was not one of their top proprieties. They were much more engaged in the electoral stuff. They really didn’t play much at all in terms of—nor did anybody, this isn’t a criticism of HRC. We all recognized, you have to stop the Federal Marriage Amendment, that’s just a deal breaker, like just everybody wanted to be engaged at HRC, in that fight. The state amendments that were passing in 2004 and 2006 weren’t anywhere near the level of campaigning. Now, it’s like there’s all these anti-LGBT bills and proactive campaigns, and everybody, you know HRC, ACLU, all these groups will join, but back then it was like well yeah, of course it’s going to pass. We’ll join a call every once in a while, we’ll listen in, maybe we’ll share polling information, but nobody was really, like coordinating a big effort from Washington, D.C., or sending people staff or sending organizers. So when I went up to Massachusetts, I left D.C. I left HRC, because by then, my second partner and I were just, we missed New England and we’re moving back to D.C. He was going to go, he’d been working on the Chafee campaign, and I was sick of D.C., so we went back up to Boston and he commuted to Rhode Island. But when I was figuring out what I wanted to do, I was like, I would like to still be involved in LGBT stuff, but I didn’t like leave to go take that job. I sort of decided to leave Washington because I just needed to get out of Washington and wanted to be back in New England. My first priority was like, is there a way that I can stay involved in this movement, and eventually, before too long, I figured it out, just because of the sort of chain—you know, Marty leaving, I’ll take Marty’s job.

So I knew Marc, was how I came to Mass Equality. I had met Marc in Cambridge somewhere, at a—I forget who the sponsor or organizer was. It was Don’t Ask Don’t Tell, like town hall, and I was flown up from Washington, from HRC, to speak at this community forum thing on Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. I was the HRC panelist, and it was me and like two other people, and Marc was in the audience, and during the Q&A portion, he asked a question and we talked briefly during that. He made a pitch in the room, like about something related, like, “Oh hey, by the way, everybody make sure you come to this Mass Equality thing next week.” A room full of LGBT people, he took advantage of a captive audience, worked the hall of LGBT supporters. It was a big room full of people who had come out to hear about Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. What’s so funny is I can’t remember if we actually made a plan or just bumped into each other, but the next day, we saw each other at a coffee shop, and I’m pretty sure it was just totally coincidence. I don’t remember saying like hey, let’s meet up or something and get together. I was visiting a

friend and he was coming out of this coffee shop, and so we just talked some more, like it was just another chance. You know how things are, like if you're traveling someplace for work, at least for me, that's like my work bucket. I travel all the time now, and if I met somebody in a social—like if I met a person that is cool and that I want to be friends with, I'm going to just associate that with work stuff, like you're in the work bucket. Rightly or wrongly, I met you at this rally, I met you at this forum or I met you at this fundraiser. In my mind, you're just like a work person. That broke it out of like—had that not happened, I probably always would have just—Marc and I would have crossed paths professionally, but all of a sudden it was just like oh, now there's something that is taking it out of that realm, and now I'm going to remember it more, and we're going to have a relationship that's deeper than whatever, and so we stayed in touch, which may not have happened otherwise. We stayed in connection and when I was leaving or when I left D.C., Marc reached out about the job. We met again, met up in Boston, this time for an actual interview. It was very informal, we just met at a coffee shop and just talked about the job, talked about everything, and it was just a perfect fit. You could just tell that this was going to be a great partnership and he was definitely I wanted to go work with, and I think he can probably say the same thing, like we really hit it off very quickly. He needed somebody that could start, like pick up kind of right where he'd left off—to Marc's credit, he knew he was going to have to work.

At that point, we were gearing up for what we knew was going to be a long constitutional amendment fight, and we knew that there were going to be multiple votes, we knew that this was probably going to take awhile, that the strategy was just to like delay and delay and delay. We knew that we didn't have the votes to win substantively, on an up and down, so all we were trying to do was like postpone these constitutional conventions with procedural motions to adjourn, and you know, all these other kind of like parliamentary maneuvers. It was not substantive, like let's go win. So I think I started in February let's say, but the first vote was going to be in either May or June, and so it was like well, okay, the first phase, all we could see was to the next vote. It was like there was no real clear end game other than just like all right, back to this vote, then we're going to have to, three months later postpone it again and then postpone it again, and then postpone it again.

01-01:41:52
Meeker: What was your role in this, at this time?

01-01:41:56
McTighe: I was the political director, so I was coordinating all the lobby efforts. Marc was having to worry more about fundraising, and so coordinating the lobby campaign and meeting with legislators, and then we also were very engaged with the electoral work at Mass Equality. One thing that Marc had done a very good job of, asserting them really early, right after the 2004 election, so shortly after *Goodridge*, trying to get Mass Equality this brand new group to

inject itself into some of these campaign races, and try to elect some good people. I can't remember now, exactly what year it would have been, and this will be easy to check, but you had a couple of concerted campaigns to elect good candidates and take out some bad guys like right away.

01-01:42:48
Meeker: Well, marriages start 2004, you know, the presidential election is November of 2004. I imagine that the big campaigns, the biggest one would have been 2004, and then 2006.

01-01:43:03
McTighe: Right.

01-01:43:04
Meeker: Because it was resolved in 2007.

01-01:43:07
McTighe: Yeah. I just can't remember if there were some special elections in-between, and there were several special elections, I know, even under my tenure. Like for example, Carl Sciortino, Steve Canessa, and one other person, got elected, and I guess that must have been 2004. I know Marc talks a lot about Carl's election in his book—yeah, so I guess it was 2004. I couldn't remember if Carl's was a special election, but I'm pretty sure it was. I can check, but it was 2004.

Anyway, my role was to coordinate all the lobbying efforts, do all the coalition meetings, and also the electoral work, and so the major thing was defend our allies. We were always trying to swing some votes too, and in Massachusetts in those two years, there were a lot of open seats, so a lot of retiring legislators. You know, you were like all right, we need to have some good people. It would be like a two-point net gain for us if we could replace one of these bad retiring people with somebody good, and so the electoral part was a big part of our effort, so I was overseeing all of it. Mass Equality operated almost like an independent expenditure campaign. You know, we would do a lot of mail, we would do a lot of field organizing, do a lot of grassroots mobilizing, communications, a lot of mail for candidates. We had a pollster that we would work with and coordinated really closely with that group I mentioned earlier, Mass Alliance, for our electoral work, where we would run certain efforts through them, with certain campaign tactics and ran some of our mail as being from Mass Alliance, so that it didn't look like it was coming from the big gay group. And it was about any issue, like the work—and this is still true with a lot of races. It wasn't like we were doing mail, saying you know, Steve Canessa is great on LGBT equality or same-sex marriage. We were saying he's the right person for education and schools and healthcare, you know like we would poll in these districts and be like what are the number one issues that are on the minds of voters, and gay marriage was always like way, way down, unless we were reaching out to our own members,

which we also had a major program that we would coordinate. So yeah, I was like the political and electoral guy.

01-01:45:42
Meeker: Certainly, in previous elections, there's been this real professionalism brought to elections on behalf of gay issues, but it really seems like in Massachusetts, at this point in time, it's the first time that there's substantial funding and expertise brought in this particular realm. I mean, is that what it felt like to you? Did it seem like you guys were kind of on the vanguard here, of a new way to effect change that would be in essence, pro-LGBT or at least LG change.

01-01:46:23
McTighe: Yeah, very much so, and what's really interesting is like it's hard to put this into perspective now, and I know we're only talking about like ten years ago, but things have changed so rapidly and so dramatically, that there weren't a lot of really experienced campaign professional, like high caliber people, that would like come work on these issues. We had to do it ourselves, like we had to figure out how to do most of the work ourselves. Some of us were campaign professionals in our own right, like I'd worked on a lot of campaigns, Marc had worked on a lot of campaigns. But we weren't like the high priced consultant that worked in Washington, D.C. and was hired by all the presidents—you know, like those people didn't want anything to do with us. In fact, a lot of them like really were openly antagonistic to us—and this is not an over-statement. "You gays cost John Kerry the election," you know we heard that for years after 2004, that this was the issue that lost John Kerry the election, and John Kerry's people said it directly.

01-01:47:27
Meeker: I think John Kerry said it directly.

01-01:47:28
McTighe: Yeah, he did, exactly. So you had a lot of these consultants that just thought we were a loser of an issue, that didn't want to encourage us in any way, didn't want to keep us, didn't want to support us, thought that we were kind of poisonous and that it was going to hurt their job prospects if they're affiliated with us. Now of course, these consultants, I mean my God, the number of unsolicited proposals I get every day, from people that want to be a part of our efforts in all of these different states, and whenever we do an nondiscrimination campaign in any state, all the biggest PR firms are calling and sending proposals; we want to do your mail, we want to do your polling, we want to do your media, we want to do this and that, just trying to make a buck, and they realize now that it's a really lucrative issue and there's opportunities.

But anyway, back then, we had to figure it out on our own, and we were kind of learning by doing in many cases. There were some tactical things that we knew were kind of tried and true types of messages, but so much of the

electoral work in particular was you know, taking what we knew about campaigns and trying to tweak it to work for our issue, but it was also walking this fine line of not being too public about it. One of our mantras at Mass Equality was once you vote, you know once you tell us you're with us, we don't care if you ever—this was back then, it's different now, but back then it was like once you commit to being with us, we don't care if you ever say the word marriage on the campaign trail again. In fact, it's probably better that you don't. That's what we would tell candidates frequently, we were like we don't want you going out on a stump speech saying I'm proud to stand with Mass Equality and we're huge supporters or whatever. We would make endorsements, but a lot of candidates didn't want our endorsement. A lot of candidates would only take it after the vote, you know they didn't want to necessarily be too aligned. So that's why a lot of the work we did was more behind the scenes. It was truly like an independent expenditure, where we would partner with like a Mass Alliance, and we would kind of run money through these outside efforts, to try to coordinate some wins and get some people on our side.

But we would interview the candidates, and I remember them being very reluctant to even sit down and talk with us, you know, when I would go meet with these—like, so and so is considering a run for state rep in Swansea, and just really trying to convince these people that we actually could help them, and we were going to be there for them, but we're not going to cost you the election. We're not going to come in there and expect that you talk about LGBT stuff all day long. We really had to do a lot of that to put people at ease. But the biggest focus electorally, because again, we're still at a point in 2006, where we didn't—it wasn't that we were trying to win marriage, we had it in Massachusetts by then legally, so we were just like trying to stop this constitutional amendment. It was really, really important that we defended the people who had voted with us, that was like the biggest talking point we had, is nobody has ever lost their seat for voting for, for taking a principled stand for evolving. Nobody's ever lost their seat. You know, we were able to finally kind of work with some of these legislators, to get them to be a little more outspoken, but for all those years, it was always just delay, delay, delay, which is what led the fight in 2007. So in the final victory in 2007 was so monumentous—sorry, momentous I should say. Monumental, momentous.

01-01:51:17
Meeker: I think you just coined a new word.

01-01:51:20
McTighe: Anyway, you know, this huge undertaking, it just felt like we didn't want to even consider it, because it was too daunting of a task, the idea that we were going to get three-quarters of the vote, plus one. You know, all the other side needed was fifty votes, and we needed 151, out of like a joint chamber, I mean the math did not add up—and that's why, for all those years, everybody was like let's just have a parliamentary maneuver, like all we need is a simple

majority to adjourn and to kick the can down the road a little bit further. You didn't even want to acknowledge where that was going, like that some day we were going to have to have this moment of reckoning. It was like yeah, we're going to continue to build on our majorities, but when we were talking to these legislators, we weren't kind of telling them that like at some point you're actually going to have to really take a vote on a substantive issue. So we were trying to educate them through this process, but the ask at the end of the day was always like, all you have to do is just vote for a cloture vote, or vote for some parliamentary thing, vote to like adjourn, that's all we need. There were a lot of legislators that we would even kind of give a pass, because we only needed a majority procedurally, to stop a lot of these things, to kick the can down, but we knew we were like nowhere near the reporters.

01-01:52:48
Meeker: In other words, so their position would not be revealed.

01-01:52:52
McTighe: Exactly, yeah, keep it kind of close and let them vote against us on process. That's a really scary thing to do, where nowadays again, going back to what I was talking about before, when we were doing the Federal Marriage Amendment, they weren't like putting out a press release saying I have made my decision and I know which way I'm going to vote and I'm going to vote with the LGBT community and stand up for equality. It was like touch and go right to the moment, and so when you weren't putting some of these people on record, you know if it was a necessity, because we were like all right, we need that vote. If we forced them to make a decision right now and they stood with us, they are going to like really have—when it really matters, we may lose their seat or we may lose their support. All it takes is one of these people losing their seat to make all of them scatter and run for cover, because they would feel like they were going to fall victim to the same thing. So a really tough kind of line to walk, you know keeping your friends on the team. People would be resentful, like how come you gave him a pass, what about me, I'm sticking my neck out here. So you had a lot of that, and then you'd have to kind of reel everybody else in. You would have people that would almost jump ship just out of spite, or at least threaten to. They didn't in the end, but you'd have people that were like well I'm just pissed that you gays made me take all these votes and so and so is over there getting a free pass, and they don't have the same kind of problems that I'm facing when I go home to my constituency.

01-01:54:31
Meeker: All this intelligence is fairly well-known within the legislature, I'm guessing, like all of these people know what's happening with their colleagues and where their colleagues stand?

01-01:54:40
McTighe: Exactly. I also want to be clear, it's not like we were giving fifty people a pass. I mean it was just like there were a couple that we were like all right, as long

as you're totally, a hundred percent with us, fine, we'll let you do what you need to do to go back and get reelected or to kind of like for strategic sake, kind of keep that quiet for now and then we'll unveil it when we need to. But it wasn't like part of some like master plan of ours, where we were like all right, we're trying to trick the other side. We would have loved to have had their votes publicly, but they just weren't quite ready to make that jump.

01-01:55:15
Meeker: It actually is coming across as kind of a master plan, and to me this is how I'm hearing it and it's kind of unique. I'm remembering back to another interview I did with this Willie Brown, who is kind of a famous/infamous California politician. He had many successes over his career, but maybe the most notable one was that he managed to retain the speakership of the state assembly as a Democrat, when there was a Republican majority. He describes the process and you know, he had one Republican, and so he got that one Republican's vote, and he actually hid that person in South Korea for a couple of weeks. But I said to him I said, "Well, listen, I mean, what would stop the Republicans from getting rid of that one person and what makes you think that you could actually have retained it?" And he responds, "Oh, I had six or seven others on the bench. There was this guy, this guy, this woman." So, you know, those people, he didn't have to activate them, they were kind of like sleeper voters.

01-01:56:23
McTighe: Right.

01-01:56:24
Meeker: It was like a sleeper cell.

01-01:56:27
McTighe: Well then in that sense yeah, we did have that, like we did have a few of those people, but even to them, they didn't fully know what they were committing to by staying with us, kind of like making these commitments to kind of be, all right, we're going to keep you on our side, we're going to keep quiet, but this is a promise here; otherwise, if we feel like you're violating this, we're going to come after you and try to run somebody against you, try to get a primary against you. We don't want it to come to that. I think some of them, they didn't necessarily realize that they were, at the end of the day, were going to be asked to vote on marriage, that they were actually going to have to take a stand with us on substantive grounds. We were able to, like this shoring up their confidence again and again, and having to reassure them and having to constantly make sure, like keeping tabs. We have this group over here, it's—you know, people always describe campaigns, running campaigns, as like three levels of chess, where it's like you can't move on this board until you win the game on this board, and then you can kind of come over here now, and you're doing all these different levels. It's really tough, to kind of manage like all right, we've got this group over here and we're really close to getting the votes. We need to get through this next election, otherwise we're going to

lose these five people, and then we also need to pick up five more. And so you had this electoral game that we were playing, trying to increase our majorities that way, and by 2006, certainly after the 2006 elections, that's when we realized okay, like this is all built, we're getting closer to the point where 151 is not outside the realm of possibility. We know it's thirteen votes away instead of fifty votes away.

01-01:58:14
Meeker: You've got a better governor.

01-01:58:15
McTighe: Well that was a huge part of it, I mean it cannot be overstated, like having Governor Patrick in that office and willing to work with us and really leverage the full support of the office of the governor was like this huge, huge turning point in the campaign in Massachusetts. It wasn't the only reason we were able to finally be victorious, but we certainly wouldn't have been able to get there without his support and without him really actively and openly campaigning on the issue and speaking about it very publicly, and behind the scenes as well. You had a really supportive speaker of the house, you had a supportive senate president, we had a change in leadership on the senate president side as well. I forget when [Robert] Travaglini left, but he was the former senate president, who had not really been with us, like he was always like, "Hmm, maybe I'll let you have this substantive vote, go along with this procedural thing today," but he was always very, very shaky. He wasn't with us, he was personally opposed. Anyway, you had Therese Murray take over the senate presidency, you had Speaker DiMasi, who is now still in jail, sadly, and then you had the governor, and all three branches of the leadership. And even then, and this is the thing that's still really amazing, is like to have—I mean I would settle, now, when we're doing a lot of this work on LGBT issues, you've got the opposite. You've got a supermajority, Republican controlled, Republican governor, unsustainable levels, insurmountable levels of opposition. There, even with all three bodies totally run by, controlled by, there was no guarantee that we were going to get there, and we were still a long way off, and quite frankly, getting to 151 was going to require some Republicans as well. That's why a big part of the challenge was like how do you make this not just be a partisan issue. How do you get in the minds of these Republicans, that like we're going to be there for you too, we're going to back you electorally, we're going to do whatever we can, we're not part of this organization, we're going to stand with our friends, whoever they are, and building up those kind of majorities. Massachusetts doesn't have a lot of Republicans but we needed to get some of them on our side. There were Democrats who were against us, so it wasn't just like a simple, all the Ds, and you see them with a couple Rs.

The final eleven votes, by the time we got really close, that was really touch and go, I mean like getting those last eleven was where the rubber really met the road and where we had the culmination of all this work that had been

building up, even before my time there, going back to 2004, all the electoral work, all the standing by our friends, all of the lobbying, all of the messaging and coalition building, was finally going to come to a head. And you had this, you know, obviously a great governor, but you still had this really concerted opposition that was becoming increasingly sophisticated in their own right and really growing in their opposition and demonstrating that they too had an apparatus behind them and a composition and some muscle that they could throw around. You had the Massachusetts Family Institute, where we actually did know the lobbyists. You were asking me about this earlier. In a state house it's very different, like you see the people, especially at all the votes, like there's literally a pen where two lobbyists or three lobbyists from our side and three lobbyists from their side were like, right before any major vote, would go to that spot and that was like right outside the chamber, and that was the only place where lobbyists were allowed to be. So, for all those different procedural votes, it would be myself, Marc, and a woman named Arline Isaacson. She had been the head of that group I mentioned, the Mass Gay and Lesbian Political Caucus, which was very small but an important LGBT group prior to Mass Equality's existence. And so she was still part of the coalition, she was a good lobbyist and had some good connections. So we would be in these close quarters with the three people from the other side, just trying to grab members as they were going in.

01-02:02:52
Meeker: Did you get to know any of the people on the other side? Did you ever have any substantive conversation?

01-02:02:57
McTighe: Yeah, oh yeah, definitely, we'd have conversations. I got to know Kris Mineau, who was the head of the Mass Family Institute, not like personally, like we didn't go camping together. We just, you know, you would have conversations, you would bump into him, like you would try to be cordial, and behind the scenes you're like screw that guy, you know but like you're trying to at least, (a) just because you want to be a decent human being, but (b) you're trying to get kind of like at least a sense of him, like you know just, we're going to chat in the coffee shop and maybe something will slip, you know, maybe I'll get a sense, like from if they're feeling good, if they're feeling confident. If I mention a legislator's name and they say you know, like oh yeah, he's great, as opposed to like that person's a jerk, or you know, what is their reaction means probably whether they're with us or whether they're with them. Yeah, I mean it was sort of surreal, because again, you have these close quarters and it's very hard. You couldn't be in the chamber, you know, there were only a select, handful of seats in the chamber anyway and we would have people that would go, but you couldn't do anything in the chamber. You could walk and that was cool, but for us, that we're actually talking to the legislators and doing the lobbying, you had to be standing outside, where you're now shut off.

Once they went through that door, you're craning your neck, trying to see the scoreboard, like the light, you know where they light up the names, who's yes and who's no, who's yea and who's nay, and you're trying to keep tabs on stuff and passing notes, like you're allowed to pass notes through one of the clerks that can then run it in to a member and say, "Hey, I need to talk to you, I need you to tell so and so something, or come outside, come back outside to the pen, we need to chat." It was very interesting too, because the way these constitutional conventions would work, when they would have these joint votes, was it literally was a joint vote. So the senate, which had its own separate chamber in the Massachusetts State House, on the other side of the building. It's like Congress, they had their own chamber, the house and the senate, and the house was bigger obviously, because there were more members, and so the senate would come to the house, and there's this whole procedural pomp and circumstance thing where the, I guess the Sergeant at Arms, you know, would yell out—I can't remember if he had a horn but there was like a trumpet or something like that—and that announced the precession was beginning, and the senate would come down, led by this guy who had a top hat and a special staff. It was very like, you know, this whole tradition going back hundreds of years, since the start of the chamber, and you know, they would like all march in. The house is already in there, so we've already gotten the house members, we've talked to them as they've been going into the building, they've been going into the chamber. Now you've got like this final chance where the senate is going to come marching, and like literally, in single file. It's very funny to watch and to see this procession of these people, and you're just trying to get one last—just like with the congressional thing in 2004, that last look, that final come here, okay, I've got to give you this, I've got to hand you this note, I've got to get a thumbs up, I've got to just yell out one last thing to remind you, you know don't forget so and so. Remember Jane and Mary, remember that constituent meeting that we had, do it for your kids. That was your last sort of opportunity and your last chance, and then once they go in and they shut the door, you're kind of crammed around a little TV. That's the most vivid memory I have for the Massachusetts campaign, of all the things, for the couple years that we were doing that, where you have all these votes and all the different parliamentary maneuvers and these procedural things, where you just kind of felt like you were dodging these bullets and kicking the can down the road. Finally, you had this moment of truth, and sitting around the pool feed from the news crew. The journalists are in the same pen that the lobbyists are, it's this roped off little area, and so the journalists are all—we were all huddled around one tiny little monitor that was like fed off of one of the pool cameras, and so all of us, lobbyists, me, Marc, Kris Mineau from the Family Institute, the woman that worked for him, all just crowd around, with a couple of these journalists, watching, like on this tiny little monitor, you know crammed in there, just trying to get any kind of indication, and watching these different votes as they were called.

The house members, because they're in the house chamber, they just hit a button. Their name is up on a board already, they're a permanent voting

member in that body, so they've got a chair with a button and they just hit and it [snaps fingers] lights up green or red. So from there, you can kind of see some. Some of our targets were house members, so we knew, like oh we got that person, we got that person, fantastic. Most of our swing targets though, were senators, and that final senate, they do a roll call, an actual voice roll call, and the clerk reads the names. As they are being read out, Senator Morrissey? "Aye," Senator… and so forth. And as we were getting some of these people and watching the look on the faces of some of these other lobbyists, and one, Michael Morrissey was the final one. It was not the last name read, but that was like the nail in the coffin for them. As soon as they read Michael Morrissey's name, we knew we won, because he was the last true holdout, where we were like if we got him… I mean it wasn't a done deal, there could have been a surprise in our side too, when they had gotten further in the alphabet, because they do it alphabetical order. They could have gotten further down the list and maybe somebody that we were counting on being with us was going to defect, but we had no reason to believe that that was the case. He was the one last vote that we were like, here's the senator from Quincy, and trying to just get him to commit. We did so many constituent meetings, we had so much field activity going on in his district, and his own door got knocked on a dozen times. Finally in the end, in hindsight, or in retrospect, he was clearly won over by just the outpouring, just the sheer volume, which he admits and he sort of would joke about. I just told them, like if you promise to stop—you know, if the gays get out of our district, I'll promise to vote with you, you just get out of here, because he was just like sick of every day. He was getting postcards, he was getting phone calls, he was getting knocks on his door and his family members were seeing people. We found out that he had a gay nephew, that we were trying to track down through one of the online dating sites, just because we'd heard a rumor that he was gay and on one of them. We just had no connection. Getting businesses from his district to call, getting everybody we possibly could, to weigh in with these votes and ultimately, it paid off.

I remember Kris Mineau. He's a tall man, he's an older guy, so he's very tall, and I was standing right next to him as the votes were being called, and when they read Michael Morrissey's name and they said that he was with us, this big, tall guy just, you've never seen the air kind of come out of somebody, like just so dejected. It was like he had just shrunk three feet, like this guy that's six-six or something like that, just all of a sudden felt like he just shrunk down to nothing. His shoulders slumped, just kind of dejected, and just the whole like life just kind of went out of his body for a minute, you know he knew that they'd lost. It was just so surreal, but it was great, because then it just gave me more time to savor as they read the remainder of the names. Normally, it's like the final vote gets called and you're like wait, what just happened? But I knew from that moment that we won, and then as they finally announced the tally, by then I was like I won five minutes ago, you know, as far as I was concerned, like that was such a victory in and of itself. But I also knew that that was going to lead to the final one.

But the cool thing was, they had the chamber, a lot of folks were packed into the chamber, but there was pretty limited seating, so what they did was they do an overflow room, where they have TV monitors, and it was like that was actually a very large, massive room, and the cheers that you hear, it's like down the stairs and on the other side of the building and quite far from where we were in the lobby pen, but the cheers that you could just hear echoing through the building from the final vote being called. It was just so resounding and so overjoyed and so cool. I still remember it very vividly. I wished I could have been there at some point too, you know, to just be in the room for it, because the light—you know it was like that video I showed you of the Maine victory. That was an amazing milestone and a huge step for the marriage movement, you know winning, defending something like what you had, like after this judge's—and you know, it really kind of from there took off.

During my time at Mass Equality, we then got very involved in Connecticut, and I know you're going to talk to Anne [Stanback] from Love Makes a Family. In Rhode Island, we got very involved down there.

01-02:12:55
Meeker: Do you mind if I ask you a few more questions?

01-02:12:56
McTighe: Please, yeah.

01-02:12:58
Meeker: This Kris Mineau guy. I was thinking about how politics and political people sometimes work. Was this guy a true believer or was he there to win something?

01-02:13:18
McTighe: I think he was a true believer. I think some of his staff were just hired guns, so they were just brainwashed into believing it, because it was the true sign of a patriot. I think he really was a true believer, and I actually don't believe that he personally like hated gay people. I don't think that he was necessarily approaching it from that standpoint, but I think he was this very moderate, traditionalist, and in his mind, the idea of same-sex couples marrying was just like this bridge too far, this kind of cultural thing that just represented a change that he was just uncomfortable with, in society and life. It was just too much liberalism, too much getting away from what he'd grown up with, too much this idealized, kind of 1950s, black and white world. He looked like he could have been an extra on "Leave It to Beaver," the guy was like clearly, you know just cut from a different cloth and very straight-laced, a devout church-goer, and all the things that you would associate, but I don't think he was like—you know, a lot of people in this movement that are on the other side, I think really do approach it from a very negative and often dark place, sometimes very bigoted, sometimes truly homophobic, sometimes even very like blatant rejection of their own. There's plenty of examples of people who have either been found to be or largely suspected to be gay themselves, that

you know, just almost like a self-hating kind of thing, that they just really need. I don't think any of that stuff would apply in this case. You know I think he would probably say that it was too far, too big of a change, too radical, too different.

It made the whole thing really, for our side to be able to like finally claim a victory like that, knowing how many people had to actually come out and sort of take a vote and actually be counted, and put their position out there now, where they couldn't hide from it, they couldn't just say well, that was a procedural thing, we were just trying to adjourn, or I swapped that vote for a political favor down the road. This was like it, this was going to be the final say, in Massachusetts at least, as far as marriage is concerned, you know the last stand really. Had it passed, had the other side won, it would have gone to ballot, and so it's ironic of course, that years later, when our campaign for so long in Massachusetts was like it's wrong to vote on rights, you know don't put rights of a minority up for a vote in majority. Then in Maine, to be the one state that proactively brought marriage, you know a direct referendum, like going directly out with an offensive ballot initiative was certainly interesting, but I don't think it was hypocritical in any way, because seeking something out and trying to realize that our only chance of getting this thing was to do what we did in Maine, versus like having that forced on you by somebody that's trying to strip something away, trying to take away these protections, and really truly put, the rights of a minority up for a vote of majority, that was a little different.

01-02:16:49
Meeker: There's been a lot made of this idea of the journey narrative, particularly, I think obviously most widely known in the case of the president. In 2008, he sits with Rick Warren and says you know, "God's in the mix and for me marriage is a man and a woman," and then in advance of the 2012 election, somewhere in-between, he talks about evolving, and then he comes out personally in favor of it. Were you starting to use some of that in the Massachusetts campaign, where you'd have to get people to change their minds? Were you trying to use examples of other people who had changed their minds, as kind of a model that they could follow?

01-02:17:46
McTighe: Not a lot, to be truly honest. Where we really started to grasp on to that frame and that piece of the narrative was after Massachusetts, because then you really did have, especially with those eleven people, and the personal stories that we were able to use to get them onboard. By then we were talking more about marriage, by then we actually were bringing in more same-sex couples, were really kind of presenting that, like this is for something, you're not just blocking the possibility of denying protections. And so we had so many stories there, but it was definitely less of a frame. In fact, what we would do more often was more of the messengers that we would usually put up were people that were either with us from the beginning or never—you know,

somebody even like Dick Cheney, or somebody who's more conservative, Colin Powell, it's not like they were necessarily like super against us before and then all of a sudden decided [snaps fingers] hey, I've had a change of heart. When we talked about them, if we talked about them at all, is always to say this person also opposes a constitutional amendment, or also believes that same-sex couples should have recognition. And so we would really only highlight the end point of the journey for a lot of folks, and just try to use them as an example of like, be like them, without spending as much time talking about what it took to get them there, even for the people who did change their minds. In a way, everybody evolved on this issue. Very few people were like right there from the beginning. Some people, the evolution started twenty years ago, and other people, it was all in the last two years, the last three years.

I think on this, right after Massachusetts, as we started to go to other states, then you had much more recent, fresh, like honest and neat examples, where you have this guy who's super conservative Catholic Italian, and this other guy who's blue collar mill worker, and this other person who's just like an old school political person. You know, a lot of different types of stories of what it took to get these different folks with different demographic histories, different backgrounds, different constituencies, to come around on the issue, and how it was just personal for every one of them, is when I think we really started to figure it out. It's one of the reasons, I think why Marc was so useful in Freedom to Marry's efforts, you know, just what we all learned on that campaign, the individual, kind of unique, personal and personalized frame, like narrative approach that we have to take for all these people. There were some legislators, Paul Loscocco.

01-02:20:37
Meeker: Who?

01-02:20:38
McTighe: I guy named Paul Loscocco, what moved him was legal stuff. He was a lawyer, like all he wanted to do was get really into the weeds of what it was going to mean and what possible unintended consequence could be taken from this and what it can mean to other laws. Richard Ross, it was like totally personal, another Republican senator, for him it was totally personal, and his is a story that you may have heard, I think maybe you mentioned last night, that he came around purely on like personal grounds, just where it was like really, the messages that were most effective with him were constituents, and then also thinking about his family. He was like what if your child some day said that they were gay, and he didn't know it at the time, but his daughter, it turned out that she was a lesbian, and came out to him after the vote, after the fact, and to this day, if you ask Richard Ross about it, he'll just say—he thinks it's almost like an act of God, that he came around, he was brought to a place where he could be as accepting, because he says, like I never would have been able to live with myself, had I voted the wrong way and then she came out,

that somehow it was meant to be that he was going to have this evolution and that he was going to get to where he needed to be to do the right thing. He did it without knowing anything about his daughter, or at least officially knowing anything about his daughter, but that's in the end, it's such a powerful story that when we tell it in other states, people kind of get it.

We had really, like blue collar Democrats, and just big unions—I mean, what's his name? Brian Wallace, another state rep. Brian was from South Boston, I mean he wrote a book that is basically "The Departed," I mean his life was like you know, he wrote a novel, and that's his whole life. He was Irish, you know South Boston, and was as conservative as it gets, like he never went outside of the state house, the bar, and the VFW hall and like South Boston. So for him it was just like getting to his network, his personal network, like finding people in his orbit who could talk about this issue, kind of like just getting him to see that he wouldn't be alone, that the people in his own world cared about it too. He was, you know, South Boston, where they would routinely, where they deny gay groups the ability to march in their Saint Patrick's Day parade, and still, up until recently did. I remember, not to get off too much, but like making the decision at Mass Equality, to go and try to actually organize and sign up volunteers at the South Boston Saint Patrick's Day parade, which is one of the biggest Saint Patrick's Day parades in the country, and a huge tradition, but we knew there were going to be a ton of people, and we wouldn't interfere with the parade, we weren't going to try to march in the parade, but we were just going to go sign up volunteers and get people to sign postcards, because we were trying to get this guy Brian Wallace. So having all these people who are in his district… And so we went and I remember being very pleasantly surprised, but you know, the anticipation going there. We were getting calls from people in South Boston, threatening. Word got out that we were planning to organize, some emails had been sent, some meetings had been discussed, and some people were calling and saying, you better not—some people were like threatening, "You better not come to South Boston." Other people were like sort of imploring us to not come, because they were worried for our safety, so they were like I live in South Boston, you guys are going to get bottles thrown at you, you guys are going to get shot, you're going to get attacked, you're going to get beaten up, don't come, don't come.

When we got there, there were definitely some people who were like screw you, and get the hell out of here, why do you gays want, you know, but by and large, the response was actually very supportive. We signed up a ton of people, we got a lot of postcards signed. I remember one particular, just another vignette, just a little thing that sticks in my mind, is walking up to this big group of guys together, I think they were off-duty police officers, and just asking them, would you all sign a postcard, and they were sort of saying like, "*Eh, what the hell, this is our Brokeback moment, sure, this is our Brokeback Mountain*." That movie had just come out and they were like sure, this will be our Brokeback Mountain moment, come on guys, let's all sign a postcard.

And these guys who, you know, a couple of years earlier would have been like prime candidates to punch is in the face and tell us to get out, you know, in the end, I think they just thought it was like this is the cool thing to do, this is a good thing to do. Anyway, that was one of the many, many little stories, a lot of good ones from Massachusetts.

01-02:26:11
Meeker: I just have one more question and then take a break, and then we'll come back and talk about the Maine campaign, and give that it's full due when we've got a little more energy. During this period of time, you were there at Mass Equality until 2008, this last vote happened in June, 2007, I think.

01-02:26:29
McTighe: Yes.

01-02:26:30
Meeker: Obviously, there's a national campaign being run right now in many states, on many fronts. It's making its way through the courts in California, after the 2004 Newsom marriages. In 2005, I think there was, a national strategy developed, called the 10-10-10-20 concept or something like that, campaign. At HRC, and then in Massachusetts, how aware are you of, and how plugged in are you to this broader national movement?

01-02:27:10
McTighe: By then, by the time that paper was being developed, pretty plugged in. Winnie Stachelberg, my boss, was in a lot of those conversations. We were sort of brought in to them, asked to comment on things, asked to sort of review things, and sort of weigh in, just from a regional gut-check, like how is this going to be perceived, you know if we're passing it in these states. Let's just try to take stock of what are the places—where I was involved in some of the conversations was like if the goal is to get ten states with marriage, and then ten states with civil unions and ten states with some other form of relationship recognition, you know how—what are the targets, what are the primary suspects? Where are the states where we can actually do that? Kind of reviewing just a lot of different criteria and kind of looking at the likely places where we would have a shot, especially knowing how badly we'd been—you know, like after the 2004 election, when so many of those states passed constitutional amendments, really looking at the map and realizing, that national strategy, we all bought into it. We were certainly aware of it, we all agreed to it, we all signed on to it and had seen even getting ten states with marriage felt like such a far off goal. The reason I remember that, that it stood out in my mind, was because Oregon had lost the constitutional amendment fight, and of all the places, we felt like if we can't win there…

01-02:28:45
Meeker: That was 2004, right?

01-02:28:47
McTighe: Yeah. So we were like if we can't win there, where are we going to win? You had Ron Wyden and all these people that are like out for all these things, have seemed very liberal leftie in their own right, and just looking at the map and feeling like well, I can see how we could get to civil unions, I could see where we could win a couple more places, but also knowing it was going to be a multifaceted approach to get there, so it wasn't just going to be lobbying, it certainly wasn't going to be the voters. Most of us, at that time, were not thinking about ballot initiatives.

Interestingly, now, I was reacquainting myself with that paper quite a bit last year, because I was hired to write the equivalent for nondiscrimination. So, to write the same concept paper, and it was basically hired to say write the 10-10-10-20 plan for nondiscrimination. So I was really re-familiarizing myself with that and going through it, and from that is how this new campaign effort followed, on Freedom to Marry, that I now had Freedom for All Americans, was launched, was like going through that exercise of writing that paper and realizing, yes there are a lot of similarities, but there are also a lot of major differences. One thing, all the lessons that we learned, like knowing that we needed a Freedom to Marry-like organization that could be the central clearinghouse for all of this information. It could be a single issue, singularly focused group, that could be helping to orchestrate all those different strategies and just when all the other groups were worrying about—you know, just like with marriage, it was like well, HRC cares about the constitutional amendment stuff, but they're also doing Don't Ask Don't Tell, and immigration and fifteen other things, and ACLU has got a lot of other social justice issues. It's like somebody needed to be keeping their eye on that strategy and in the case of marriage it was Freedom to Marry. The idea that that blueprint, as it was known in the movement, existed, and that it was an ambitious strategy and an ambitious plan, was knowing that there needed to be somebody to kind of help us stay on the path and adhere to the plan and stay on track. That's one of the things that we sort of realized how this movement on nondiscrimination, to have that same—some were applying that same rule. I know we'll get into this a lot more when we're talking about Maine, but you know, of all the things that we need to give Freedom to Marry and Evan credit for, I think the biggest picture kind of contribution was helping to get all these different efforts aligned. It's the biggest turning point for me, of all the—like yes, culturally, you change, yes the president—like the climate changed, education was starting to pay off. Work was being done and it was finally starting to show, but none of that would have happened if we hadn't finally started to kind of like align these efforts, and that blueprint, the 10-10-10-20 plan, was a big part of it.

Evan had been already advocating for that approach, even before the approach existed, sort of advocating for marriage obviously, when most people were saying that's crazy, that's impossible, don't do it, you're rocking the boat too much, but at least that was a way to get people to recommit to an effort. And

then the thing that they did better than anyone, the thing that they did that was so important was getting people to actually come together and start sharing information, aligning their efforts. When we were losing, we weren't doing that. You had HRC would be over here doing their thing, and the ACLU would be doing their thing, and this other group would be doing something else. We were never taking stock of our losses and we were never trying to lose forward, learn from our mistakes, nor were we sharing information. It's no surprise then, when you look back and think like, we just kept on saying the same thing, like the conventional wisdom carried over from one campaign to another. We kept on using the same kind of losing messages, and it wasn't until we finally said somebody's got to pump the brakes on this and say hit the reset button, and not only hit the reset button, but then we're going to actually help develop an alternative. I think that was probably Freedom to Marry's greatest contribution, to play that role of convener, to play that role of like strategic validaters, like this is part of the plan, this is building to something bigger and there is a goal here, and making sure that all of those efforts were feeding into that, instead of competing with them.

01-02:33:44
Meeker: Freedom to Marry, Evan kind of starts working on it about 2001, it goes public 2003. At what point in the history of the movement do you see Freedom to Marry actually stepping up and starting to play that role that you're talking about?

01-02:34:00
McTighe: Publicly versus behind the scenes would be two different answers. Behind the scenes you had Evan having these conversations with organizations, but more importantly with funders, and that was going on early, like even earlier than that, and certainly around the time that he was developing the paper, and then getting people to commit money and resources and the c3 foundation partners to actually pony-up money for research. It's not like it was all funding going to Freedom to Marry either, like he wasn't saying to these funders commit to me, like commit to Freedom to Marry. Even the Civil Marriage Collaborative, which I assume you're familiar with.

01-02:34:41
Meeker: Yeah, but you might want to define it just for—

01-02:34:43
McTighe: Sure. The Civil Marriage Collaborative was this coalition basically, of funders that Evan was instrumental in bringing together. These are big, mostly foundation partners, who were all committed to marriage, and represented very wealthy individuals or organizations, foundations, philanthropy, that on the c3 public education side, could have funded a lot of things and for many years were just funding random stuff, before the CMC existed. The individual funders that made up the CMC were giving money to LGBT equality issues, but was it building towards something bigger, was it coordinated in any smart, strategic way? No. It was just kind of like well, this sounds good so we'll do

this, and this sounds good so we'll fund that, whatever. That was where you finally started to say to these people that are really going to have the resources to carry out the strategy, here's where we're going to coming together. We're going to think through things strategically, we're going to fund things strategically, and even though other groups might not participate and might want to fund their own stuff, for whatever their own reasons are, at least this core group that represented several million dollars a year, could give money to the different state and national efforts that were building towards the elements of that plan. And so that was happening behind the scenes.

Publicly, to the extent that it was ever really public, and most people still wouldn't know anything about the 10-10-10-20 plan, can't get in a line or anything like that, but at least, with Freedom to Marry playing a more prominent role as an organization, I started to really see it around, you know probably just before Prop 8 and certainly right after it, people were aware of them. But outside of the movement, funders were definitely aware of them, movement people were aware of them, I certainly was, but I think the general public, they didn't have a really outward, frontward facing. Most people just thought that Freedom to Marry was like just Evan, you know, but while it was, for a long time it was, but they started to actually hire more people, they started to bring together a bigger team, like really ramp up their efforts and started to create an infrastructure to support the work that was going on, that was bigger than just one or two people in an office driving a strategy and writing a paper. They were actually doing some of the direct work themselves and building up their own resources. I think one of the other big things that they did, which we can get into when we talk more about Maine, was helped to develop a model for coalitions to work together. That now has carried over to—I mean we really, I think Maine was really the first one.

01-02:37:34
Meeker: The MOUs.

01-02:37:35
McTighe: Yeah, the MOU thing, like *Blank* United for Marriage, Mainers United for Marriage. It's not the first time groups of people came together, but having these MOUs, people buying into a table with real resources. Maine actually only did it in sort of a half measure. By today's standards, Freedom for All Americans, the organization that I run now, on nondiscrimination, when we go into states, it's one of the first things you do, is like insist that there's a clear buy-in and really set goals and set benchmarks, and how people are going to coordinate and what resources you're going to put in and how frequently you're going to meet and who's going to make decisions and who you were going to hire, and things like that. Maine was like kind of that, like we started to do it a little, and Freedom to Marry, I remember even just convincing what was like the steering committee. Before there was a campaign, before there was a campaign, before there was Maine united, there was like this steering committee of GLAD and Equality Maine, and a handful

of individuals convincing them, like we should bring Freedom to Marry on to whatever this table is. This is before we even had an MOU, before we had a name, technically before I was even hired as campaign manager, but I was already running the campaign. I'd been hired to be the c3 public education director, which was the campaign manager before there was a campaign, that was 2010, 2011. But I mean convincing that what otherwise was this body that we were part of, you know, or that I was a part of, to say like we want a national person like Marc Solomon and we want a group like Freedom to Marry to actually be at this table with us, along with GLAD and Equality Maine, and whatever other groups are here basically, and having a lot of resistance, where they were like but they're like a big national group, how do they really know—like you know, this is going to be Maine driven, and blah-blah-blah. It was one of the best things we could have done, because obviously it gave us access to some additional resources and expertise, but having them as a champion for stuff that we were trying to do, and then also making sure that they were having access to all this information and being able to share it with all the other states and all the other campaigns. And now that model, with this MOU coalition building model, is just the standard practice every place we go and it's understood now, that the value of this collaborative effort is really how we win these fights.

One of the big, lasting contributions of a lot of people, not just—you know, Freedom to Marry didn't invent the concept, there were a lot of people that sort of were helping to shape it, but it's funny, compare it to my understanding anyway, of like the Washington campaign, or certain like the 2013 and beyond New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware, Oregon, all the campaigns that kind of went after 2012, it was much stricter, because we knew, it's like this works and, you know, there's a way to do it that's even more effective. Maine, you had that, like Freedom to Marry was putting in lots of money through Maine, but you also had like random individuals on the board of the campaign, which would never fly today, like these are people who weren't committing hundreds of thousands of dollars, it was just like random person. Not random, but like people that wouldn't be known, that they don't represent an organization, somebody like there was a woman name Pat Peard, who's an incredible civil rights advocate and attorney in Portland, who is an out lesbian, has been at the forefront of the Maine LGBT movement since there was one, and was just an individual. She wasn't there representing some major monied interest or anything like that. She was just a really smart, strategic woman that was sitting at the same table with groups that were putting in hundreds of thousands of dollars. That probably wouldn't happen today, but give credit where credit was due, I mean Freedom to Marry definitely helped take that model and export it to other states.

Interview 2: April 10, 2016

01-02:42:13
Meeker: Today is the April 10, 2016. This is Martin Meeker, interviewing Matt McTighe, for the Freedom to Marry oral history project. This is interview session number two, on the same day. The last time we wrapped up, before lunch, we were talking a bit about the role of the national campaign, the role of Freedom to Marry, the role of the national agenda, the 10-10-10-20 idea. So let's now start talking about your work in Maine. I know, maybe a brief bit about the interim period of time, where I know you worked for a law firm in Boston, is that correct?

01-02:43:17
McTighe: Yeah.

01-02:43:18
Meeker: So you wrapped up your work with Mass Equality in 2008.

01-02:43:24
McTighe: Yeah, so right at the end of 2007, I guess, or the beginning of 2008, I left Mass Equality and took some time off, traveled around the world for four months and was living in India for a little while with a friend of mine, my best friend, who worked at Fidelity in Boston and was just about to retire and said you know what, for my final year, I would love to do an international thing, and so he said put me someplace fun, I want to kind of do something cool on my way out the door, and so he left and went to India, and I went and stayed with him for a while and did some fun stuff, but you know, I had always planned to come back and in fact had already agreed to go work for this law firm, which was at the time called Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge. It's been renamed as they've gotten bigger and merged with other firms since I left. They asked me to start a government affairs practice. It was this really big old, white shoe firm, with a lot of ties to both Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and they had always sort of looked down their nose at political stuff, lobbying, government affairs. In fact, it was sort of ironic, because I think like four U.S. Senators had been partners there, from Rhode Island, including John Chafee, and they decided to finally get into that game when they realized that that was a good business model, a good way to keep another service for their clients, and so hired me to help, along with this other guy, Jason Zanetti, who was my business partner at the time, they hired us to go in and start this state government affairs practice, focused on Rhode Island and Massachusetts. So, a lot of different clients, a lot of healthcare stuff, that was like our biggest bread and butter issue, but we did some economic development, a lot of alternative energy, wind development stuff. They basically hired me because they knew I had very good ties politically in Rhode Island and in Massachusetts, but while I was there, I would go consult for all these different campaigns where they had a vested interest in the outcome of the governor's race in Rhode Island, and so we were getting connected with—in that case, I

was working with the Chafee folks again, because Lincoln was running for governor at that point.

Anyway, I just was there for about two years and you know, always stayed pretty actively involved in the LGBT world. I was, at that point, helping to start this young leader's group that was forming around the HIV/AIDS group there, called Fenway Community Health Center. It's one of the largest HIV/AIDS research labs and medical health centers in the world, and it's actually the largest LGBT, dedicated LGBT-focused building. It's bigger than the HRC building, it's bigger than any other organization, and it just really serves—I mean it's not exclusive, you know they're open to everybody, it's a healthcare center, but they really focus on the LGBT community, and so in New England and Massachusetts, I was getting much more involved in HIV/AIDS work. My partner at the time was HIV positive, and he had been the head of AIDS Action, and I had already been involved in that. I did a little bit of it when I was at HRC, I did some of it when was at Mass Equality, and I stayed involved with it after leaving Mass Equality, through the Fenway Community Health Center.

So, I stayed connected, very connected to the Massachusetts stuff, and I didn't have connections really, to Maine. I just kind of started going up there with my then partner at the time. We just really started to explore. We rented a house as like a weekend home. A lot of our friends from Boston all either went to Cape Cod or went to southern Maine for weekends, and I've never been a big Cape Cod guy, and so I really fell in love with Maine, long story short. We were renting a house, we just had gotten up there, and I was really just kind of getting into the work at my firm, so we weren't here enough, and I didn't really get a chance to get involved. I did a couple volunteer shifts for the Maine 2009 campaign, when they lost, but I was very angry. It was cruel to think that the state, that I was at the time, in the process of adopting, first as a second home and eventually as a full-time home, you know that they were the first state to pass marriage at the ballot—or not the—well, the ballot box too, but at that point, they were the first state to pass it through the legislature and have it signed into law by a sitting governor, to actually proactively get marriage through. That was a big deal and then to see it stripped away through a people's veto, which Maine has a very engaged civic kind of activism model for voters to directly engage, so either repealing and vetoing laws that are passed, or by direct action through citizens initiatives.

01-02:48:57
Meeker: When the legislature campaign was happening and it was signed by the governor in May, 2009, were you following it at all closely and did you have your own interpretation of the wisdom of that campaign, given the ease with which it could be vetoed by the people?

01-02:49:20
McTighe: Yeah, and it's interesting. Yes. So I know for sure, that it would be very easy. I knew that by no means, like the fact that they won, like the law wasn't even going to take effect, it was always going to be kind of in limbo until the voters took action on it. I mean, there was never a doubt that the people were going to get the signatures. I had a little bit of experience with that and was very familiar with the sort of whole people's veto process, because Maine, when they were trying a nondiscrimination law, it took them three tries, or actually four tries, to get nondiscrimination. It kept on getting repealed by the voters, in 1998, 2000, and 2005 is when it finally passed. I was working at the Human Rights Campaign at the time. We weren't super involved in the Maine referendum, but we were supporting it and New England was my region, so we were doing a little bit of work back then, on Maine. Most of the stuff that I was doing was working with the congressional delegation, trying to kind of keep them engaged and having a kind of two-way street of getting their experience from Maine down to congress. HRC did send some staff, some volunteer support, with eMobilize, with their membership up there, but they didn't have a huge membership list in Maine proper, so it was more about trying to get some people from Massachusetts and New Hampshire to take a bus up and volunteer. We were a little bit involved and I was sort of engaging in it at some level when I was at HRC. So I was familiar, certainly knew that it was easy to get things on the ballot in Maine, that it was going to be a real uphill battle, and that it was always going to be almost certainly challenged by the voters once it was signed into law by the governor in 2009, when they finally got marriage.

So, I was obviously extremely disappointed to see it go down, but I had enough of a sense of marriage, because by then, knowing how difficult of an issue it was, from the many, many losses that we saw and that I was very kind of connected to or at least following closely, 2004 and 2006 and 2007, and then Prop 8. So you had all these losses, and I was following those, and in some cases quite involved in some of those campaigns along the way. So I knew how hard it was to win marriage when voters were involved, and I was very skeptical, understandably and rightly so, that winning at the ballot box is something that could have been done in the short period of time that they had.

One of the biggest challenges, I mean it's not their fault, the resources are finite, but one of the biggest challenges that they had in Maine in 2009, was they put so much energy and all of their resources in the legislative fight, you know lobbying legislators, trying to get those final few votes, and they really worked aggressively to get it done and exhausted themselves and had spent all their money, and had been asking volunteers to engage at a high level. That gets signed into law, the bad guys start gathering signatures, and during that phase, there wasn't enough energy, money, time, people, to do the public education work, and even if there had, it wasn't for lack of interest or effort, I mean they wanted to and they tried, but there was just not enough time. Six months is nothing when you're trying to actually go out and move a crop of

voters on any issue, even on candidate campaigns. It takes a year or more or really dedicated campaigning and education, and again, at this point, we'd never won marriage at the ballot any time voters were involved, and so clearly there was a gap, that even if we had more time, the research wasn't there, the messaging hadn't been developed yet. We didn't know what we would even be doing with that time.

So, to kind of bring it back to how I got involved. I had the Maine ties at that point, and I had worked really closely with GLAD, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Mary Bonauto's group, in Massachusetts, they were part of the Coalition for Mass Equality, they were our biggest partners. When I was at Mass Equality, we worked side-by-side with them, to defend and defeat all the attempts to roll back Massachusetts marriage. Obviously, with Mary Bonauto having been the lead litigating attorney that won marriage in the *Goodridge* decision, that was GLAD's baby, and Mary worked for GLAD, and so they certainly wanted to defend it, so we were very involved. Mary lives in Maine, and so they had another tie. GLAD does work in all the New England states, but they had another particular tie to Maine because of Mary living in Portland.

The culmination of like, right after the loss in 2009, the group that had been involved, of which GLAD was a member of that coalition of the 2009 campaign, started to regroup, and they started to kind of thinking about like all right, we lost and it sucked, but we came close and we got it through the legislature for the first time and we started to build up. If we just had more time, if we just had another few weeks or months or years, we could do this. And they started to put together the inklings of an idea, this coming back for marriage very early.

01-02:54:58
Meeker: Before we get to the point of the idea of coming back to the ballot, there's been a lot written, a lot talked about, after Prop 8 in California, it was a hard time in the state, in the sense that there was a lot of soul-searching, there were recriminations, there were competing organizations that were established, because there was this sort of idea that the leadership of the gay community had failed and grassroots activists should be leading the charge. Was there any of that at this point in time?

01-02:55:32
McTighe: There's always, like second-guessing, kind of Monday morning quarterback stuff. If there's one lesson I've learned from any of the campaigns I've done, the victories and the defeats, and especially from the losses, you know, you never know what you don't know. The best thing you could do is really just kind of try to keep questioning assumptions. It's very rare, and in fact in this movement I would say almost happens never, that what makes sense to us, you know what sounds good to the ears of a gay man like me or like you, or to the LGBT community, is seldom what is going to sound right or help

convince somebody who's really conflicted on this issue or somebody who's not personally part of this community and doesn't have the same connection to it than we do.

Amy Simon, who I don't know if you talked to, but was our pollster on the Maine campaign, her way of putting it was like what meets our emotional needs is probably not the thing that's going to get the people to yes, you know these conflicted voters. There's a base of people for whom absolutely, that's the message for sure, the activist base, the people that are already with us, great, but we needed to really figure out how to talk to those other voters, and that was true of Prop 8, you know a lot of it is true in Houston now. All the Monday morning quarterback stuff that came out after that, and it was like some of it directly contradicts everything we learned from Prop 8, and everything we learned from Maine in 2009, and people who should know better, quite frankly. Some of the LGBT activists who were just angry about that loss and wanted to find someone or anyone to blame, and so they were pointing fingers at this campaign and saying, you needed to—the exact same arguments that they were saying after Prop 8, and it was all stuff that turned out to be wrong.

So, anyway, to bring it back to where we were, I think there was certainly a lot of anger, but I think the best thing about Maine, from everything I was seeing at that time, was this relentless dedication. I wouldn't even necessarily say optimism, and people have been thwacked before, but I think in part, because they had taken three tries to win on nondiscrimination, it was just like yeah, this is what we do, incremental progress, we come back and we try it again and if we get it in three tries or less, well then that's progress. There were actually four campaigns on the nondiscrimination, because there was also a legislative fight one time that didn't go to the ballot. There was this unwavering commitment, there was never a question of whether they were going to come back, it was just a question of how and when, and that was when I was brought in. So, because I had this GLAD connection and because I had this connection to Maine, I got a call from one of the communications people at GLAD, asking if I would be interested in talking to them about this role that they were developing. Mary Bonauto and Lee Swislow, their executive director, had approached and asked for a sizeable grant from Donald Sussman, who's the largest political donor in Maine, and one of the biggest donors to democratic and progressive causes across the country and was, up until recently, married to Congresswoman Chellie Pingree, from this part of Maine, southern Maine, where we are right now, and was very committed to the issue and really wanted to sort of come back and see it more. He'd invested a lot in the 2009 campaign and was very disappointed that it failed, but was not angry. He was just like we came close, now we've got to finish the job, and so for him, to make sure that the money that he'd already invested was fully realized, you know, it was just like put more money in, and that's to his immense credit. There are donors like that, like Tim Gill is another obvious example, who say, you know hey, we're going to learn from this loss

and it's all part of a bigger effort. Even though we might have lost that fight, we need to keep going and this is all going to eventually pay off. We may need to lose several times before we can win, and that's true of most issues, because we learn so much from those losses. Even though we came up short in 2009, a lot of voters were thinking about marriage in a way that they'd never thought about it, and all of a sudden it was at least on the radar of people in Maine.

So, I was brought on initially, to form a campaign, to basically create a public education campaign using this grant. At the time, there was no timeline, there was no decision about exactly how we were going to do this. We didn't know whether we were going to try to come back in 2010, we didn't know whether we were going to come back in 2011 or 2012 or 2016 or 2020. I mean it was just like, we're going to just do more work. We're going to start investing in education, with no timetable, and it's actually like the best thing you can do. Without having the urgency of like, we need to have X number of conversations by this date, instead you can just be free to kind of let the research guide you and let the messaging kind of take you where it naturally would go, instead of trying to like well, the poll says we need to be talking to voters of this age and gender and whatever, so we're only going to go talk to those people and we're only going to care about messages that affect those people. Instead, it was very freeing, to be able to just like kind of test assumptions, and that's where that whole kind of reset button on the messaging really was able to get done and basically kind of throw out all the conventional wisdom and start from scratch, without like a ticking clock kind of rushing us along. Research takes time to do it justice, and so we kind of were able to cast a very wide met.

There was some national research, and Freedom to Marry and other groups, Third Way and a few other groups were involved in some national research as well, but it was more theoretical, like we were at a place where we were able to start really doing a lot of really analytical, statistically informed, methodologically sound research, with voters, in a real world setting, doing field testing, doing these controlled experiments, doing larger focus groups and multiple rounds of focus groups, and kind of developing these tactics and these messaging where we could then go out and see who it worked for and was it effective.

01-03:02:17
Meeker: Can you give me some examples of those on the ground research initiatives?

01-03:02:23
McTighe: We ran one of—I mean, I think it's to date, probably the largest canvass operation on marriage, in any state, to just like actually go out, because we didn't have this timeline, and we actually went out and started having personal conversations with voters, and we ended up having 250,000 of them, which in Maine, that's like a quarter of the voting population. So, along the way, we

did several different variations of controlled experiments with, you know working with Analyst Institute, and some of our other research partners, where you know it's okay, this month we're going to try this new script with different messaging and a different tactic, and then later on, okay, now we're going to do a test where some people get a mail piece and then get a knock on their door, other people just get a knock on their door, let's see who's more effected. Maybe some people are going to watch a video on an iPad, and which video are you going to see, how long is the video going to be. And so we would test these different tactics and tricks. This was before we really had any voter modeling, and Maine was really, I think the first state, and certainly, other states in 2012 started to utilize it too, but we were the first state to actually do like a national LGBT sort of modeled analysis of the voter universe, and try to break it down by likely support score, where we were.

01-03:03:49
Meeker: Can you describe voter modeling? I'm not really familiar with this.

01-03:03:52
McTighe: Modeling and its offshoot, micro-targeting. They're technically different things but very similar concepts, just different tactics. Micro-targeting is something that was really more developed by Republicans, modeling is a little different and tend to be done better by progressive groups. Barack Obama got elected using voter modeling, George W. Bush got elected using micro-targeting in 2004, for his reelection. The easiest way to think of it is like a way of using many different points of data, to try to determine voter behavior. Normally, if a campaign amasses data, you get all these different things, okay, I know this person's age. A lot of it is just available in the voter file, but a lot of it you can acquire. You can buy access to marketing data, to see what magazines people subscribe to and what cars they drive, and a lot of stuff, some of which is almost like creepy in its invasiveness, but it's all publicly available, as long as you're willing to pay for it. Normally, if you have all this data, you've got I know your age, I know which magazines you subscribe to, I know what liquor you drink, I know what car you drive, I know where you live, I know whether you went to college, and what zip code you're in, so I know how affluent you are. You have all this information, I know your voter history, normally you would get all that data and not have anything to do—like what does that mean? You're essentially like throwing it into a blender and hoping that what comes out tastes good.

With modeling, it's more like a mixing board like in a recording studio. You've got a master technician behind that board that knows like the volume needs to be up and that the treble is going to be adjusted, and we're going to put up this mike and make all these adjustments so that in the end it sounds perfect. There's all these different levels, and it's going to help us kind of predict—what we can do is like determine that if a voter has an income level here and partisanship score that says that they are more Democrat, and they're down here, and their age is this and they're Catholic, and all these different

data points, we can tell, based on a lot of this information, that you are probably going to be more likely to vote yes or you're more likely to vote no, or you're more likely to vote yes but drop off after you're exposed to a certain argument from the other side. And the way we do that is by these field experiments, where first you do a modeling survey where you call 10,000 people, it's like a poll on steroids, and you ask them a lot of these questions and you get all this feedback. It's such a large sample. Normally a poll is like anywhere from 400 to 800 people in a voter universe. With modeling, you're doing 10,000 or more sometimes, and at the end of this analysis, you've got such a large sample of voters, that you can find the people that look the same in terms of their demographic data breakdown, so this level of education, that they're this, and it says you know what, everybody that was college education and in this income bracket, and live in this county versus this county, all seem to really like this message, or they all voted yes after they were exposed to this, or 80 percent of them voted yes after they were exposed to this. You're constantly reinforcing the data by doing more field experiments, by having more conversations, because every day, as our field teams were coming back from having these door-to-door conversations, these 250,000 conversations, would come back and say you know what, something's not right, like Catholics really seem to be falling off at a worse rate than they were a month ago, or we're not doing as well among young people as we were six months ago, let's try to see why that might be, let's make some adjustments to figure it out. Sometimes you can explain it through you know, hey the Pope just put out a statement, so that's probably why the Catholics are not with us as much, or the opposition is running some attack ad that's aimed at religious liberty or something. That's not always the case, that you can really pinpoint exactly why something might be happening, and so you're making adjustments to your data throughout the campaign, and you keep tinkering with it until it actually is serving as an accurate predictor.

01-03:08:29
Meeker: The way that these things work then, is a series of questions interspersed or followed by what would you vote on this, so you can determine whether people are more likely or less likely to vote on a particular—

01-03:08:44
McTighe: When you do a modeling survey, you do ask, a couple times through the survey. With the field testing, you usually have like three points of an ask, well four really, because you normally would know a lot about the person before you knock on their door. As you're walking up the steps to their door, our canvassers all had iPads that had all this data, and we knew, like chances are, that person is likely to be with us and they need to hear you say something about religion, or they need to hear you say something about whatever, just some particular argument that we thought will be helpful.

01-03:09:22
Meeker: So that this in essence is an algorithm.

01-03:09:24
McTighe: Yeah, it is absolutely an algorithm.

01-03:09:27
Meeker: And so somebody would come up to your door, they probably wouldn't even come up to your door.

01-03:09:31
McTighe: Well, they wouldn't come up to my door.

01-03:09:33
Meeker: But like maybe your neighbor, and they would be like this is Jane Smith, she's sixty years old, she owns a Subaru, is more kind of a libertarian type. Our testing says that people like this respond to this kind of…

01-03:09:57
McTighe: Yeah. That's actually where you get more into—when you're tailoring the message, that's more of micro-targeting, where you try to find out, and that uses a lot more market research, to try to figure out, not just how likely somebody is to—like modeling is great for figuring out which voters you should talk to. You know some people are modeled to look like a supporter, and so therefore, everybody that looks like them in a voter file, you know, the people that are between 80 and 100 percent on this model are all with you. Just make sure you remind them to vote on election day; otherwise, you've got them, you don't need to worry about a thing.

01-03:10:35
Meeker: Why no one would come to your door.

01-03:10:40
McTighe: Right. And people that fall between fifty and seventy, those are your swing voters, those are the people—and so that's great to figure out who you should talk to. Micro-targeting is great for figuring out what you should say, where you're actually testing different messages and seeing how different groups respond. One good example of how we would utilize it is in our mail program. Anything that could be tailored specifically to a voter is where you would use this type of tactic. TV, not so much, because TV, everybody's seeing it, and so whether you're old, young, Catholic, Jewish, white, black, you're seeing the same TV ads when you watch the six o'clock news, but mail, or nowadays online ads and other things like that, that can be tailored specifically to you, we would do these mail pieces. We did some testing early in the campaign, where we tested a couple of different kinds of mail. One, there was like a glossy postcard, another that was like a letter, and another one that was meant to look like a handwritten note. The more personal it seemed, the more effective it was. It was mass produced but it looked like a handwritten note, and it would come from somebody. We found real voters whose story, it was true to them, the words in the letter were all true, they were telling a story; my granddaughter is a lesbian and she wants to marry, or I served in the military with this person, or I was a firefighter with this person. You know, it was true,

the person whose name on it was a real person, but the letter itself was tailored to fit the needs of the recipient. So, it was like the first sentence was the same, the last sentence was the same, but the three middle paragraphs, it was like all right, you're a voter that really cares about faith, and so we're going to use a line, a paragraph, talking about religious arguments and faith. You are most susceptible to, when the opponents talk about the B&B owner being forced to put up a gay couple for a wedding, and so we're going to address that. At the end of the day, you're going to be moved by some kind of Golden Rule type message. For somebody else it might be, you know, you're really concerned about the impact that this has on kids, and you need to hear something reassuring about children and schools, and then you need to hear a personal plea from a parent at the end. You can kind of like have this tailored thing, where the mail would be very specifically tailored to the needs and the concerns that a voter was likely to have.

01-03:13:15
Meeker: This is going ahead a little bit, but since we're on this topic, is there then, research that's done ex post facto, that tries to determine the accuracy of the algorithm?

01-03:13:30
McTighe: Yeah, and I mean basically, you can do a couple of different things, you can just overlay. It's gotten better now. It was harder to do back then, but you can just do, from exit polling, which exit polling of itself is not an exact perfect thing, you can do kind of like an analysis of like well, according to the model, we were going to win—so, like in Houston, for example, this has happened. The modeling in Houston [Proposition 1, 2015] told us we were going to lose, 60-40, like there's an LGBT support model that's been developed in the last two years and it's been reinforced and reprogrammed and it exists. I can use it to predict behavior in any state or municipality, anywhere in the country. In fact, we're doing an analysis right now, of literally, every city and town, what their modeling score, which suggests about the people that live there, for every state that does not have nondiscrimination protections, so that we're looking at what are the places where we could go into and win, if it was challenged at the ballot box, like where are some of the places where we could actually pick a fight that we could win.

01-03:14:40
Meeker: Is this the stuff that's related to support for reproductive rights?

01-03:14:43
McTighe: We work with the reproductive justice groups, but that stuff, the Houston thing was not connected to that. This was just a thing that Thalia [Zepatos] did for us. But to answer your question, yes, you can, like we were able to go through and look at okay, we know how many people actually voted, we know how badly we lost, we know, in our marriage campaign, you can say like how much we won by, and sort of figure out first of all, was it accurate. Because I don't actually know how every voter voted, you know that's

confidential, I can't look up who you voted for in 2004, it's not exact, but either based on real data that you know, like turnout. We expected turnout, like in Houston, we had a turnout model, as well as the support model. The turnout model, which was based on a national thing that gets done every year, projected turnout to be much lower than it was, and clearly, there was a gap in enthusiasm in terms of predicting how much the other side was going to be fired up to come out. So you can look at that and say okay, that analysis shows that the modeling in that case was wrong. In Maine, it was pretty much dead-on accurate in terms of predicting turnout, and that's not surprising. Maine has very, very high, reliably high turnout, especially in presidential election years like 2012.

So you can do a lot of analysis after the fact. The best thing to do though is to just to constantly be checking your work as you go, and that's why having such a gigantic field operation, run by the best field mind, Amy Mello, who works for me now, is just incredible and knows this stuff better than anybody, and so we got really, every day, we could be tracking where we thought we should be. By this time, by April 10, 2012, we expect that we will have had 110,000 conversations and we'll have moved 60 percent of the voters that we talked to from being on the fence to being a yes. Instead we were finding, actually, we were doing better than that or we're ahead of schedule, or a lot of people that we thought, based on our data, were going to be on the fence, as we were walking up to the door, people that we expected to say well, I'm not sure, I'm undecided, sometimes they would just say no, I'm totally with you, I'm a hundred percent. It's not perfect, this stuff, this modeling. Or they would also sometimes say no, screw you, I hate you, you're going to burn in hell. So it's imperfect, but it's usually a pretty good predictor within like 85 percent success. But you're constantly checking it against the real data you're getting back from the campaign every day, to see if it's holding up all right.

01-03:17:37
Meeker: And you could do all this in the context of a c3?

01-03:17:39
McTighe: Not all of it, not really a lot of it in fact. It just depends on what you're talking about. The modeling itself is mostly c3. At the time when we were starting this research it was all c3, because we weren't saying, you know vote for this or on election day, don't forget, November 4th, make sure you turn out and vote. In fact, we weren't even on the ballot yet. We were running a signature gathering campaign while simultaneously doing this, where we were doing this education, where we were just going out and having conversations with voters about marriage and why marriage matters, and engaging them on the topic, and at the end of the conversation, we would find that they were more supportive than they were before, of marriage. We tracked all that information of course and we had access to it once we were in campaign mode, where we could say okay, we know that these people have been touched already, like now we need to follow up with them and have a follow-up conversation, and

when we go back and knock on their door a second time, it's going to be more of a reminder, as opposed to a jumping off point. So a lot of the education, and then in that case, then you could be more explicit. By the time you get to the second or third conversation, all that education that you've done, hopefully the people are with you and they're solidly, reliably with you, so that when you go back you can just say stick with us. But they're also being exposed to a lot of different messaging from the other side too. They're getting TV ads, they're getting mail pieces, they're getting phone calls, they're getting door knocks of their own, on the other side, they're getting yelled at in church. So it's, yeah, it's just an interesting back and forth that you see during campaigns.

01-03:15:21
Meeker: What were the metrics as far as deciding when it was appropriate to really start the signature gathering effort?

01-03:15:34
McTighe: It was interesting. That's a great question, and in some ways it was like the fundamental, of all the work we were doing. When I was hired, again, it was just like let's just do it, let's just put together a mail program, let's start doing some research. We were doing a lot of video testing where we were like just trying different things. It was like throwing stuff up against the wall to see what sticks, like we would just go film videos and then do focus groups, or we'd show five minute long videos. Some of them eventually were ads, but an ad is thirty seconds, or sometimes more or less, but usually like thirty seconds, and at the time, with no music, with no slick graphics, it was just like watch this firefighter talk or watch this grandmother talk, and at some point oh, I really liked it when she said, whatever. Oh, okay, cool.

01-03:20:23
Meeker: Were you those kind of dial tests?

01-03:20:24
McTighe: Dial tests and things like that. Well, we did a couple different stages of that. Sometimes it was dial tests, sometimes it was focus groups. When it was long, when it was the longer, five-minute video, trying to get it down to like a two-minute video or a one-minute video, it was like just focus groups and hearing people talk. But the metrics as far as like making the decision, we wanted to be above 50 percent in the polls, and we wanted to have had 50,000 conversations, and we wanted to have had, like a high enough rate of persuasion that we had reason to believe that the conversations were working, like we've at least figured out how to do this, like what messages seem to work. And then there were also some fundraising goals too, like we want to have access to, you know, I think it was something like $1 million, or at least a pathway to getting towards a certain fundraising goal, and we beat all the goals. We were way ahead in conversations, we'd done more research than we expected, we had a much better sense of—not so much on the polling, because we just weren't doing as much actual mass persuasion. We'd spent so much

time kind of focusing more on like select universes for test purposes, but we had all the reason to believe like boy, if that's worked so well for those 10,000 or 50,000 people, it's going to be great when we take it to the state. If we're seeing that kind of rate of return now, it's going to extrapolate that to the full voter universe and it's going to be just as good and be more than enough to get us to victory.

And then just a lot of like stakeholder conversations, where we were talking to key leaders and just getting their take on it. Are you going to be with us and do you think this is a good idea. It was interesting, so many of the people who were really the most reticent to do this, including a lot of Democrats, and it goes back to sort of what we were talking about earlier, about the whole, the gays cost John Kerry the election thing. There were still a lot of Democrats in Maine who, because the legislature went from Democrat to Republican in 2010, they blamed it on the 2009 marriage campaign. They said well, those voters were throwing all these people out, and there's not a lot of evidence to suggest that at all. In fact, most of the seats were reliably safe one way or another, the issue of marriage didn't come up during the campaigns.

Anyway, so they lost the state house, and so a lot of Democrats in the state, democratic leaders were telling us just wait, just wait a little longer, don't go, why are you doing this? And we knew, from some of the analysis that we'd done, that clearly, a presidential election year was the best thing for us, we realized that fairly early on, even going back to 2010, when we did some of our initial polling, and we looked at polling in different universes. In polling, you can pull a voter file and you could see how many—even though I don't know who you voted for, I know whether you voted in 2008 and whether you voted in 2004. So I can look at it and say okay, among presidential voters who are reliably good presidential voters, were winning our support look like this. Off-year voters, who only vote in the in-between years, were bad. In 2009, that was one of the major problems, is like they had the worst possible electorate, like the lowest propensity voter turnout very low. So we knew presidential campaigns were our friend, and we were making that decision. It was just a question of do we go in 2012 or 2016, and we felt that we're making enough progress, at a fast enough pace, for a cost that we can raise money to fund taking this statewide and doing it right now, and making that jump.

We kind of also realized, in those intervening years between Prop 8 and certainly between Maine and 2009, there was a lot more sort of stepping back and kind of looking at the bigger picture, at least for me certainly, I mean there were people like Evan who were doing it all along. We were now talking more regularly with groups like Freedom to Marry, and there was a much greater context to this. It was becoming an issue in the national sphere. This was before the president or the vice president had come out, you know but it was starting to get there. More senators were coming onboard, more politicians were speaking about it. It was starting to become part of the

national conversation in a way it really hadn't been up to then, and so stepping back and kind of look at like this moment in this movement, it felt important to—we knew we had to win at the ballot at some time. We knew that it wasn't going to be enough, like we were never going to get to the national victory just winning in the courts and with state legislators. At some point we had to take away that final argument. It was the leg on the stool that the opposition was standing on. First it was radical judges and activist judges; okay, well then we won in some state legislatures. Well, those are liberal, leftie states. And then, you know, we won in some more conservative places. Oh, but the voters have never voted for this. It was a tough argument to break through, because every time the voters did vote we would lose. And so we knew we needed to win at the ballot box, and I also just really personally felt like it was very important that we win in a state like Maine, where we'd lost, and where we were the ones bringing the fight, so basically going on the offensive.

When we were debating internally, there were a lot of people in Maine, including a lot of the folks who had been involved in the 2009 campaign, who were saying let's do that again, let's do the same thing. Let's go through the legislative process and do that way. And it just, I mean to me it was like there was no reason to think it was going to yield a different result. If anything, the legislature got more conservative, it had switched from Democrat to Republican, you had a Republican governor, you know the chances of winning in the legislature were steep. More importantly, there was no reason at all to believe the opposition wouldn't just go out and gather signatures again. So, we're no further along than we were before, and for me and for a couple of folks at GLAD that I was working with, it was very clear that we just need to go to the voters. Cut out the middle man, the legislature. Every minute we're talking to legislators is a minute we're not talking to the people who are ultimately going to decide this. In Massachusetts we were saying it's wrong to vote on rights, don't put this up for a popular vote. In Maine, we were pushing for a popular vote, so what's the difference? The difference is it was going to go to the voters one way or another, so the only decision we had to make was were we going to let them bring it to the voters, or were we going to be the ones to bring it to the voters? If we bring it to the voters, we can determine the timing. Do we go in 2011 or 2012 or what? We can determine the message, we can determine the wording of the question, or at least have a lot more influence over it. The Secretary of State determines the wording, but we can have a lot more influence over what it is we're actually advocating for, and that idea of being for something, you know a positive, optimistic campaign is just so important as opposed to being in this defensive crouch, where is actually is now, on a lot of the nondiscrimination stuff, and that's why groups like ours are pushing for taking a much more offensive minded strategy and taking it right to some of these cities and towns.

01-03:28:10
Meeker: So, you know, this decision is made to start gathering names, or rather signatures. Before you started signatures, was the decision made in that sense, before you make that move?

01-03:28:23
McTighe: Yeah. Well actually no, not a hundred percent, no. We started gathering signatures in the summer of 2011, in July, I think we turned in our paperwork to apply and then started gathering in August. We didn't turn in the signatures until January of 2012, and so that was like the final "go, no go" decision was January. I mean it was likely, I mean I for one was like we're doing this, like there's no way we're backing out, and a lot of other people were in that same place, really just deciding we're absolutely going to do it. But you know, we left ourselves the off-ramp, at least from a message standpoint, you know, I was not on TV saying come hell or high water we're doing this thing. So, yeah, we're out gathering the signatures while simultaneously continuing to do those door-to-door conversations.

One of the footnotes, while we're on that subject—it wasn't a metric, it wasn't something that we had established, but seeing the volunteer enthusiasm while we were gathering signatures just made it even more apparent that this was the right strategy, that we had just this tremendous influx of energy in people that wanted to be a part of this, and we were going to go out and knock doors. It gave people this tremendous ownership over it, it was a citizen's initiative, that they were the ones that were gathering the signatures, it was their family members who signed the petition. They felt like they owned this thing and they became like the best volunteer base. That's why we were able to have so many conversations and why we were able to get so much done. You just had this like motivated, activated base that you don't typically have on campaigns.

01-03:30:13
Meeker: In advance of 2012 there are several other states that are wanting to go to the ballot box, and there's, from what I understand on the national level, somewhat heated discussion, rather adjudicating which states should in fact go forward, which states will get the national funds to go forward. It ended up being that Oregon decided not to go, but Washington, Maine, Maryland, and then there was a defensive one.

01-03:30:45
McTighe: Minnesota was defensive.

01-03:30:47
Meeker: Maryland was, I understand, there was a lot of uncertainty in the broader movement. What were your conversations like with HRC and Freedom to Marry, and I guess the Civil Marriage Collaborative, who would have been providing some substantial funding to state campaigns.

01-03:31:11
McTighe: In a lot of ways, every state was left up to their own devices. There was certainly funding influencers saying we'll either back you or not, but none of them were saying we're going to back you enough, that would have ever given anybody the confidence. Like they weren't like saying, nobody was like saying hey, we're going to fund Maine a hundred percent. A lot of it was like you're going to go out and raise a lot of money, like here's a budget, we can help meet some of it, we can put some money in, but not committing to a specific number, nobody was committing to a specific number. It was like hey, your budget is going to be $4 million, we think we can get you close to halfway there but we'll see, you know, we can't guarantee anything. And so I think even like Oregon, really made the decision on their own, not so much based on whether people were going to fund them or not, but just realizing who was going to actually go out and raise that money and not feeling that they can do it.

Minnesota is in a different category, because that was brought on by the legislature, that was a fight that the other side was dictating. I think everybody understood that that was a commitment that was going to be on the table, most national groups were like, "Okay, we've got to be there, somebody brought that fight on."

Washington and Maryland, you had legislators who were the ones pushing for it, and both states had a process of where it was going to have to go to the voters at some point eventually, but the legislators were the ones that were kind of like making the decision to go separate from the activists, and they were on a different timeline, like in Maine we were already pretty much going by 2010, 2011. Some of them weren't really fully starting until 2012, like that was when the legislative fight was beginning.

But the funders nationally, I remember Freedom to Marry was very good and very encouraging, and helping kind of be a validater for us, with that Civil Marriage Collaborative Group. And because we'd been doing a lot of this research in the early phases, which the CMC funded some of it on the c3 side, they were very interested in Maine, they saw the progress we were making in Maine, they had access to the data that we were producing in Maine, and Oregon at the time, and in fact, I think they would have funded—you know, a lot of national groups would have funded Oregon. I think if Oregon had gone to the ballot they probably could have won. Where it was tricky though is that there aren't a lot of c4 funders. All the c3 groups were like, "Yeah, we're great, we're with you, you guys are going good stuff," but like once we started the campaign, our c3 budget was like one-sixth of the actual campaign budget, but in the year and a half leading up to that point it was almost all c3.

The other nice thing we had in Maine was a donor like Donald Sussman who, because we had at least one big instate funder, because funders are always looking for like, "Well, I don't want to be the only person funding this thing,"

from wherever I live, in New York or California or Denver or whatever. They want to know that there's somebody instate that's supporting it too. I will just be totally honest, there were not a lot of people that were interested in funding Maine and HRC, under their old leadership, after Chad got onboard, they did give a good chunk of money at the end of the campaign after he started, but the year before, when we were going, we were just very low on their priority scale. They were going to maybe do $100,000, $150,000 at the most, that's what the expectation was that they set for us. They did a board meeting and it was like their priorities for 2012 did not include Maine marriage. It was like Barack Obama, Tammy Baldwin for Senate. There was another candidate race that was like their third priority, marriage was like fourth. I remember talking to the people that had been at this board meeting and getting a call from Marty Rouse, and having him walk me through what levels of funding they might be able to commit to and marriage was like fourth, and of marriage we were fourth, of the four marriage things, because it's like they just don't have a lot of donors in Maine. That's not just a personal knock against HRC, that's like a lot of groups would have said the same thing and many thing, that they just didn't have—like the ACLU didn't necessarily do a lot of stuff, but the fact that they had a good, solid, strong ACLU affiliate, at least gave them like okay, we'll fund some of the work through them because they're a good affiliate.

Maine is not like a big fundraising hotbed. We don't have a lot of big companies here, we don't have a ton of rich donors here, so for a lot of people it was just a lot less sexy and were it not for the fact that we did have one big donor in Donald Sussman, and also this year and a half of prep lead-up time, I think we would have faced a lot more pushback and skepticism. But there again, at least Freedom to Marry was not the only group, but certainly the biggest group that recognized early on. Even before we started, they saw Maine as like a good, safe investment, an they were telling other validators—most of the people that they were talking to at that stage were more on the c3 side, but later on, I mean they were our biggest source of funding. We had to raise half of our budget or a little more than half of our c4 budget on our own, but they were shepherding and stewarding major contributions from donors that they had access to that we did not, and they were just giving us these big bundled contributions that could keep us afloat.

01-03:36:48
Meeker: Freedom to Marry was doing a lot of interesting and innovative research along the lines of what you were doing here in Maine, particularly out in Portland, Oregon. Was there a lot of sharing of ideas?

01-03:37:00
McTighe: Absolutely.

01-03:37:01
Meeker: Can you tell me how that happened and what it was that you were discovering in the process?

01-03:37:06

McTighe: Well, they had something called the Marriage Research Consortium, and it was really being guided by some of the national stuff that they were just doing like in wherever, I mean they were just doing it in a national place not specific to any state where they were trying to advance a campaign, and then they were doing stuff in Maine and then they were doing stuff in Oregon. They would organize regular check-in calls with us where every time that—not weekly, but monthly, with other national groups as well, and they would bring all these people together and they would ask us to give an update, and any time we had a new study or a new test, we would give a presentation on it, and any time Oregon had a new study or test, they would circulate it to this group and talk about it, and invite us to come onto a briefing or a call. And so we would actually walk through with whoever conducted the research and we would share the information going out of there, we would listen to the information that was coming out.

The thing that they did really well, and this is something that I've really tried to emulate and other groups now have as well since marriage, and it's one of the things that I tell other issue groups, is like every piece of data has to build on what came before. So, when Oregon does a test, they would do a test on mail tactics, let's say, of like is it better to do this kind of mail or is it better to do mail and a phone call, mail without a phone call, or mail with a door knock, which is most persuasive. We would then find out okay, well, people like to get that mail piece and then the door knock. Okay, what kind of mail piece? So then we would do our test and we would say, "Okay, we're going to do this type of mail versus this other kind of mail, and let's just see which is more persuasive." Okay, great, and that gets shared back. Now you've figured out that a certain kind of research or a certain tactic works better. Well, what should the letter say now? Well let's tinker with that and see a couple different variations. Everything was just building on everything else that had come before, and that was especially true on the research around the messaging piece. That was one of the biggest things that Freedom to Marry was helping to orchestrate, of like working with researchers like Amy Simon and others, who were developing, you know just doing a lot of research, trying out different techniques, doing focus groups, doing a lot of polling, doing a lot of online video testing. Like when I talked about the focus groups, we were doing a lot of that stuff in Maine, and the video tests that we were testing, Maine and Oregon were doing a lot of that kind of stuff where, you know, we were trying to figure out to the kids in school stuff and trying to figure out how to talk to parents, and how to talk to older voters, and finding our which messengers were the most credible and which ones were the most effective. Who were you, as a voter, most likely to listen to. So there was a lot of work going on.

So I remember just one example that I can give, is like we thought that the research suggested that when it came to addressing the kids in schools attack, which we'd seen manifest itself in Maine in 2009, in Prop 8 in California in

2008. We knew it was coming, you know, so much of the research was like how do you respond to that princess ad, how do we respond to the kids in school attack? And we started developing this research that Freedom to Marry was leading on, where they had some promising data from some video testing they had done, suggesting that teachers were good messengers to sort of rebut that attack. It was really early stages, we didn't necessarily know exactly what the teachers should be saying or whatever, but they told us, find some Maine teachers, like find some real voters in Maine who are teachers and who also have kids.

So we started, you know, we found some people and then we did some testing with Amy Simon, where we tried a couple different variations of scripts. We filmed these long videos, where we would then show focus groups, and from that, that's when you started to get the kind of values stuff, and where you started to see like, you know, it was more as a parent that that messenger was helpful in delivering a useful message. In essence, what they were saying was like as a teacher, that attack about the princess ad is false. As a mom, we teach our values to our children at home, and kind of flipping the argument around. The implied argument, you know, and we tested this a lot to try to figure out, how explicit do we need to be. We tested videos where we tested exactly what I'm about to say, where it's like the world is a scary place. The minute your children walk outside the door, they're going to be exposed to things that are potentially dangerous or potentially harmful and may run counter to things that you want them to know, but that's the world they live in and somehow, you're going to get them through it as parents. Like no matter what else it is that they're going to see or feel or hear, you're the one that teaches them the values at home and it's up to you, it's your responsibility. And actually like putting that on the parents, of like it is your job, don't punt this off to the teacher, don't blame the teacher, you know, that they read a book in school and then that's the reason your child has gotten whatever. It's you, it's up to you. It's an abdication of duty if you don't teach your children values, and so we, in some cases tested wording like it's a dangerous world out there—you know, like trying to be really aggressive, and we figured out what combination of wording was most effective and we figured out which messengers were most effective, and we kind of came up with these ads of like as a teacher, I mean we can show you some of them, you've probably seen. "As a teacher, we teach our children lessons in the classroom, but as a mom, it's really up to me to instill in my children, the values that I want them to learn and that's something that all parents need to do." It was like kind of flipping the argument, dismissing it—addressing it, not trying to ignore it, but basically saying like without bringing up the threat of gay panic and like your kids are going to be made gay—children are exposed to a lot at school, but it's really back to me, it's my responsibility to teach my kids what I want them to really value and know. So, a lot got left on the cutting room floor, and a lot of stuff that we tested worked and some of it didn't work.

I showed you an ad earlier, the Harlan ad, the World War II vet. There was this idea that like having generations was an important ingredient in this; we knew that older messengers were good messengers, because most of the opposition were older voters, like the people where we had the biggest problem were among older voters. The older you were, the less likely you were to be supportive.

01-03:44:25
Meeker: So they were the unexpected messengers.

01-03:44:27
McTighe: So already off the bat, you knew older people were good. We knew parents were good messengers, because they could respond to kind of like the kids in school stuff, and that you know, it was other parents of school aged children who were most susceptible to the attacks, and so we knew we needed to get family members involved. We knew that family members were good to like show that this isn't a scary thing, like your family accepts you so why shouldn't I? So we had all these reasons to think that something with family was going to be an important piece. We knew that obviously finding parents as messengers, but this idea, Amy Simon used to refer to it as like the Kennedy family Thanksgiving of like, it was just this quintessential Americana. We're all playing touch football out on the lawn and we're all carving up a turkey. It's Rockwellian, it is this idea that people have in their minds about what family means when you say family, and you think of Thanksgiving, like what do you think. And so we had this idea of like wouldn't it be great if you could have three or four generations all together, and then that way you've got the older people and they don't care, you've got the younger people and they don't care. They're all seemingly coexisting under this roof, they're breaking bread, they're enjoying their time together, even though one of them is gay. Like the straight brother is just as comfortable with the whole thing, everybody is onboard, they all get it. And so we had this idea for a long time, this working title of this Kennedy Thanksgiving thing, and we just kept our eyes open for throughout the campaign, and again, this is because we had a head start because we'd already been doing so much canvassing and signature gathering and research, that we had a lot of time for this, but we were keeping our eyes peeled for a multigenerational family that was supportive, and we had this incredible volunteer from the Bangor office and she would always talk about her grandparents, and they lived in Machias, Maine, which is like one of the most cozy, Maine, like traditional, it's like where the whole "down-easter" accent comes from like, "*Oh, you can't get that from here*," like that, Machias is Maine, that's what they're talking about. Beautiful, very far north, past you know, what would be the Canadian border, if it was contiguous.

She was talking about the grandparents, they were older, they were like in their nineties, and I was like wow, they sound awesome. He was a World War II vet, wow that's incredible. What about your parents? Well, the parents were

separated but she was still kind of close with the mother, but the mother wasn't totally onboard. But they had a daughter, her and her partner had a daughter, and so we're trying to put it together. So we felt like if we could just get the mother, and she doesn't even have to say a word, she just has to be present for it, because we want to have an unbroken lineage. We don't want to have an implied like well, the mom is not cool with this, and let's call attention to that fact. So, we had this whole idea, with the whole script, and we found this family, and so we set up a shoot. I'd hired the media firm by then, and we set up the shoot for Mother's Day. We said we'll just do a breakfast. If you can host a breakfast at your house and get everybody there, we'll come and film it. We'll just help out, whatever we need to do, and do some interviews there. Originally, it was going to be talking to everybody, and everybody was going to have something to say, and the brother was going to say a line and the mom was going to say a line, and everybody was going to have some role in this thing. And I walked in the room and I get upstairs, and I look in the corner, sitting in this corner. Everybody else is kind of hanging out in the kitchen doing whatever, and I see this guy that looks like, you know almost like Colonel Sanders or Samuel Beckett, you know it's this very grizzled looking, kind of bearded, white beard, just looked so Maine, just really looked like as rural, and like the big suspenders. He just looked the part, like central casting, and then he asked me about directions, like he asked me which road I had taken in to get to the house and whether I had any problems, and as soon as I heard him speak, his accent could not have been more perfectly quintessential, like you wouldn't believe it. If you showed that to somebody from Maine, they would say that's just like somebody—that couldn't be real. It's a very good, authentic impersonation, but you know it's too good to be true, and I just said this is the ad, it's this guy. The other people will be in it but all I want to do is talk to him. And so we just did an interview with you know, just basically with him. Occasionally, you would say now what do you think about that, and the daughter would say something, but the camera was just focused on him.

01-03:49:26
Meeker: So you scrapped the other script I guess.

01-03:49:28
McTighe: Yeah. The script was more just like a series of questions that we knew would sort of elicit certain responses, and then we were always like, could you say it a different way, like you know, would you say that this is an important thing, that teaching values is important to you? We would kind of feed them the line, but we wanted them to always say it in their own words. It wasn't like say this exactly or read this exactly, it was just like tell us something, and we want you to put it into your own words. Anyway, so we kind of scrapped all that and just instead had this conversation with this guy, Harlan Gardner who, you know, World War II vet, and it just made like the best ad. The problem was, he was very old and had this very slow, laconic kind of way of speaking that was long, and ads are short and TV time is expensive, and getting somebody

to say things in thirty seconds is really hard. We saw the first cut of the ad it was a minute and I just said like, we just need to bite the bullet and pay for this, it's too good. Like if we try to cut it down to thirty seconds, he doesn't speak fast enough, we're going to lose half of it. And so we actually ran the ad on opening ceremonies of the Olympics. We spent like a week's worth of budget just to run the ad just during the opening ceremonies, because we wanted it to really get a lot of play. It ran in the first hour block of the opening ceremonies sure enough, and like the next day had 100,000 hits on YouTube already, and this is like, you know we're only talking about a few years ago, but Twitter didn't exist yet, you didn't have the same kind of like viral, social media frenzy that you do now with things. But anyways, it was a gamble and it paid off because people were talking about it the next day and it was on the news, and it was getting a lot of earn media and people were writing columns about it. Frank Bruni came up to New York to write a column because he wanted to meet Harlan and he wanted to go up to the place and meet him. So it was a very cool example of like how, through the course of this research, like as we've been sort of developing these messages, we knew the kind of messengers we needed, but as much as we can really do a lot of smart research, you also have to sort of sometimes just kind of go with your instinct and what happens, and you know, deal with the moment. Sometimes some really great things can happen and you've got to sort of seize on it. When you meet some incredible messenger or there's just something that's just so powerful, some moment that you're able to elevate and remind people of or call up, that can be the most powerful, and the most scripted, well thought through TV ad.

01-03:52:15
Meeker: Did you ever follow up with the family, and what kind of response did they get in their community.

01-03:52:19
McTighe: Oh yeah, actually it's great. They got a very favorable response. The wife did a radio ad for us later on, and they would tell these stories about like, "I was at the grocery store and this person came up to me and they told me about their grandchild is gay too, and they just wanted to let us know how touched they were that we did that ad." You know really very sweet response. He was honored at the Equality Maine dinner a year later, and so I went up there for that. He was Harlan, this World War II vet, ninety some-odd year-old guy, was invited to be the grand marshal of the Washington D.C. Gay Pride Parade, and he went down for it, literally sitting on the back of a convertible, waving to people, because he'd kind of become a little bit of a celebrity in his own right within the LGBT world. A lot of people had shared and seen that ad, and were sharing it, you know, it sort of made the rounds. So he was out there on this float, it was kind of astonishing. I did an event he came to, during Mike Michaud's campaign as well, he came up and I saw him, that was the last time I saw him, that was about a year ago.

01-03:53:31
Meeker: I want you to tell me about the other ad.

01-03:53:36
McTighe: Oh, the firefighter?

01-03:53:37
Meeker: The firefighters, your neighbors really.

01-03:53:39
McTighe: Yeah, so that's interesting. I am a firefighter in York, Maine, something I'd always wanted to do since I was a kid. I'd always wanted to be a firefighter, but I didn't have the passion like I wanted to make it my job, you know I had other interests, but I always lived in big cities and they didn't have volunteer fire departments. In Maine, like 96 percent of the firefighters are volunteers. Other than Portland and Bangor, there really aren't a lot of like paid professional firefighters full-time, so volunteer firefighters. As soon as I established my residency in Maine, it was like the first thing I did, was like I joined the York Fire Department. You go through the training, you get involved, and you know, I had been a fairly, not like famous, but somewhat prominent LGBT activist for a while by that point. I'd been on TV talking about the stuff, I'd worked for HRC, I used to be the spokesperson on Massachusetts, which isn't that far from Maine. Not that like most people would have reason, like outside of the LGBT community, to know any of that or care about any of that, but it wouldn't be hard to bump—you know, if you Googled my name, the first ten things that would come up would be all gay advocacy things. And so it was very strange to join this department and for the first time, by then, it was like the first time in a decade or more, that I really was like not closeted, but was really interacting very regularly with a group of people who didn't know me as Matt the gay activist. So, you know, I didn't go in and say like, "Hey, I'm Matt, I'm gay, and I want to join the department." I just said I'm going to go, I'm going to get them to know me, and pull my weight, and eventually, as I get to know them, I'll be honest with them and tell them everything about my life, once we start hanging out, and it just happened way faster than I expected it to. We hit it off, they really liked me, they saw that I was pulling my weight and going to calls and stuff. It is a very deep brotherhood, you know you're putting your life in somebody else's hands and you're trusting them.

You know it's funny, I had the chief's son, who's a captain on the department, one night was asking me like, "Hey, how come you don't have a girlfriend?" It was like a crowded bar and for whatever reason, I didn't feel like I should tell him, I felt like oh, I'm just not going to say anything, and I said, "Oh, no, I just don't have time, I'm not too busy," and I didn't use the opportunity to come out. I didn't sleep a wink that night. It was like the first time I'd ever like, really ever, even since I came out, since I started having sex with men and realized I was gay and started to kind of live that life of like knowing that I was gay, that I had ever hesitated to tell people, because once I realized I was gay there was never a question, I'm just going to come out and tell people and screw them if they don't like it. And for some reason I just clammed up, and I felt so awful about it that the next morning I literally went over to his

house, knocked on his door and said, "Hey, I need to talk to you about something" and I just came out to him and told him, and his reaction—and this guy is like uncouth, rough around the edges as it gets, like he is you know, just Archie Bunker, he's cut from another cloth, very, very, very locker room, kind of like offensive, you know just the guy that will say the crazies thing. I said well gees, if I come out to this guy, if he had a problem with it, then you know, he's a good indicator of how the rest of the department is going to go. He just said, "Look man, you know, I don't care who you sleep with, you know, we just care that you've got our backs, that you come to calls and you do your job." It's funny, we're celebrating our hundredth year anniversary for the fire department, and he was doing an interview with this reporter up here and he just randomly brought it up as like a story that he was proud of the fact that they'd been so accepting. So I came out to the rest of the department and the only person who was disappointed was the chief, because he actually had designs on me like marrying his daughter, he had like started setting me up with his daughter.

So anyway, fast-forward to the Maine campaign, and the guys all know that I'm doing the campaign. We were very close by then and I'd been on the department for a couple of years and they wanted to help. A lot of them gathered signatures for us. We were gathering signatures at our annual firefighter field day, which is like the whole town comes out and there's a parade, and some of the firefighters were literally carrying around petitions and clipboards and getting people to sign this petition, which was really cool. And when it came time we were in this research phase, one of the things that came out of one of the focus groups that we did, or I think it was a poll actually, we just asked people what kinds of messengers do you find the most reliable, and first responders, like far and away, was like one of the top ranking messenger, trustworthiness type of categories. So, Amy Simon, our researcher was like you know, we just need some first responders, if anybody knows anybody, anybody that can do anything, that can help with something, cops, firemen, whatever. I said well, I'm a firefighter, I'll see if I can work on it, and so I started asking around the station and if anything, like the hard part was having to turn people down, because some just either wouldn't have come across well on TV, or they just weren't free the day that we needed to do the shoot and couldn't fit it into their scheduling or whatever. There's only enough room, so much room in the camera, you wanted three to five, tops.

Anyway, we settled on these four guys that are friends of mine and all great firefighters, including one guy, who was like the top firefighter in Maine, he's just incredible.

01-03:59:50
Meeker: And these are all volunteers.

01-03:59:52
McTighe: Yeah. But he is just as tough as nails, family owns a hardware store in town, he's pretty well known as being a real man's man, bruiser kind of a guy, like just tough, nobody would mess with this guy, and he and these other guys that all wanted to be a part of it were just like so happy to do it. During the shoot, we gathered everybody, I asked the chief for permission to shoot at the fire station, and we had a rough idea of like a script, but we really wanted to kind of get at it in an interview kind of way, so that the answers felt very natural. That was the one problem with a lot of these guys, is that they were kind of nervous in front of a camera. They'd never done anything like this before and that's one of the reasons why some people couldn't do it. It's tough, to kind of like just be natural on camera, and it was so important that this felt real and authentic. So you didn't want them reading lines, you didn't want to have them like memorize things and they're tripping up and worrying about what they're saying.

01-04:00:52
Meeker: Were you doing any screen tests?

01-04:00:54
McTighe: I sent pictures and that sort of thing, but we never had a chance to do anything ahead of time. Instead, we basically just said look, let's just schedule ample time for this, and do it interview style, so that over the course of two hours, they'll eventually say what we need them to say, and if we need to kind of go back and ask it a different way and you know, would you say… and you could kind of guide them and lead them. So we're having this conversation, this interview style conversation, and it was this guy Aaron, who we had asking the question. Normally, it would be me, but these guys knew me too much, I didn't want that to be a distraction, when they're talking to me the way they would, you know, they're like ah, screw this guy, oh come on McTighe, you know fuck you, like this, you know they would just talk too naturally. So we had somebody else kind of asking these questions and one of the questions was basically about have you always felt comfortable with same-sex marriage, or did you kind of come around to it, and if so why or how, just kind of describing their own evolution. A couple of the firefighters said well, one of the firefighters I used to work with, he was gay, or my brother is gay or a friend of mine is gay, or I knew this person and I watched this TV show, and some of them were just like politically, who cares, why should I care like who you're doing. One of them, Ryan, instead, started to answer the question in a personal way, saying, "Well you know, I probably realized I was gay a few years ago," and came out, in the context of this interview style conversation, and one of the guys that was there knew it, I certainly did not and the other guys did not, and he hadn't really talked about it before. And so it was really fascinating, because it ended up changing the dynamic of the ad, like initially, it was going to be four firefighters being okay talking about being okay with same-sex marriage, and instead, you had three straight firefighters and one gay firefighter, and it made it so much more effective. In fact, when we tested, we filmed like—we had so much footage that we tried a lot of different

variations of this that we took to focus groups, and we did some online video testing, and in one version it's not clear that Ryan is gay, and he never says anything in like a first person, whatever. That was much less effective than the versions where we tested where it was like where he would explicitly acknowledge, you know as a gay man, or you know, I didn't know how people would feel about me, that kind of thing. It was incredibly telling to see, there was a right way.

Back up for a second. One of the things we knew from all of these earlier stages of research, was that like we are sometimes our own worst messengers as gay men or lesbian women, because a couple things. Number one, gay men in particular, and I've sat through more focus groups that I care to admit, where people just have an aversion, like it's a distraction. It doesn't matter, you could be giving the most articulate argument; people become fixated on the idea of a gay man having sex. If you put two gay men together, they really become fixated. Early on, we tested some messages where people were like, it was two ninety year-old guys, it's like nothing remotely sexual about them. They've been together for fifty years, like nothing, it wasn't like they were making out or anything like that, they're just kind of like sitting on a couch next to each other, and people would just reject it out of hand. Even people that were kind of inclined to be with us and support marriage, they were like I don't know, just the whole time I was—their reactions to these videos. Well the whole time, I just kept on waiting for him to reach over and hold the other guy's hand, or I don't know, which one of them do you think is the top. People get so distracted by this fixation that they have on sex, and it becomes such a distraction that you know, we become ineffective messengers. And, there's also a fundamental kind of othering that exists, that's just latent in most voter's minds, you know that aren't gay or lesbian themselves, where there's like I'm not—you actually are different from me, like you're gay. Even voters that support, a lot of them are like, "Yeah, sure I support you but it's not the same, you're not the same as me, you're different. I'm not saying better or worse, you're just different, so don't come at me and say I'm just like you," because people just reject that. And instead, so we found straight messengers really were the most effective. In fact all of the ads, with the exception of that firefighter one, the closest you had to you know, any kind of LGBT person in the ads themselves was like the granddaughter sitting next to the old man, or maybe they'd show a picture.

We ran, I think twelve different spots throughout the duration of the campaign, eleven or twelve. One, I mean like there was parents of an Iraq War vet, and the gay Iraq War vets. They hold up a picture of their son and they say he fought for our freedom, he should have the freedom to marry. That was about as close as you could get without it becoming a distraction. Anyway, it was just interesting, because it was the one time that we finally figured out, like there is a context in which you can have a gay or lesbian messenger talking about same-sex marriage, that is not going to turn off voters. In fact, it was helpful in that way, but it took literally, like the most stereotypically straight,

at a fire station with a bunch of burly firefighters standing around to show that it was okay. And had it been two gay men in that video, I'm guessing we would have had a different outcome. If it was a guy talking about his boyfriend, that probably would have been a turnoff for a lot of people, and as much as it pains me to say that as a gay man, I mean again, I've sat through so many of these focus groups where people just start joking about Adam and Steve, and they start saying these offensive things, and even the voters that are with us, are just like so turned off and distracted by, you know the idea if it's two women, it's like, "Oh, they're hot, don't you think they must get"—you know, like really, almost juvenile, kind of locker room offensive stuff, from adult men and women that would just make your head explode, but it was telling and you had to kind of listen to them. It's one of the reasons why we did start to see such a shift, and it makes sense. Again, as much as it pains me to say it, it does make sense.

Voters, again, when they go into that voting booth, they're just thinking selfishly. How is this candidate going to help me more than this candidate? How is this issue going to impact my life? Is this going to raise my taxes? Is this going to give me some right or some protection? That's it, that's how they vote, most people, and you need to give them something that they can feel a personal hook to. So, what that something turned out to be for the majority of those conflicted middle voters was the possibility that someone that they knew or loved could be impacted by this. It wasn't going to necessarily impact them personally, they weren't gay, but they're a parent or maybe they aspire to be a parent some day, they're going to have kids. Maybe their kid is three years old, they don't know whether they're gay or straight, but they could turn out to be gay. Wouldn't you want that child to have the same protections as your other children? And so a lot of the message is focused on those kinds of themes, the shared values, we all want the same things. We want the same things for our families, we want the same thing for our children, you know, we should be treating each other the same way we would want to be treated ourselves. We had a lot of different variations of that message throughout all of our media; TV, mail, our canvassing. All of our canvassers would go with a personal story about somebody that they knew. If they themselves weren't gay, they would at least have a personal story about somebody who was close to them who was.

Going back to that whole like micro-targeting thing, it wasn't used for everybody. Some voters just didn't need to hear that or didn't want to hear that, and instead they were moved by something else, but almost always it was that personal, that detail. I'm here, knocking on your door today because I really love my sister, and she is a lesbian, she came out to our family, and we just want to see her be happy. It was that kind of idea.

01-04:09:54
Meeker: This is a bit of an aside, but I'm curious, when the commercial was being filmed and Ryan comes out, did you just sort of say cut, and you know, what then happens at that moment?

01-04:10:10
McTighe: Actually, I don't think we even did. It did cause a little bit of a stir, but nobody had any kind of negative reaction to it. It was just like if anything, there was just like a few minutes of just kind of joking around, like ribbing, like that just had to be gotten out of the way, you know the other guy is kind of teasing him or whatever, but it wasn't—like there was no conflict in how he did it, it was just so natural. It was just like he may as well have been describing what he had for breakfast that morning. I think that made it just so, like kind of diffused any, not tension, but like you know where that might have been a bigger deal before, like if he'd kind of said well, I have a confession to make guys, I've never told anybody this before.

[Pause in recording; side conversation deleted]

01-04:11:30
Meeker: There are a few things, kind of in wrapping up, that I want to get to. Actually one question: In the fall, or rather in the spring of 2012, Obama finally comes out and perhaps with a little prodding from his vice president, you know makes his support to marriage extension to same-sex couples public, do you think that had any impact in Maine?

01-04:12:06
McTighe: I don't think it had a huge impact. I mean, I think it just had an impact for everybody across the country by getting people to just stop and think about this, but again, it really does ultimately come down to like how does it impact you. I think it certainly helped get a lot of people to kind of just consider their own position or reconsider their own position in a way that maybe they hadn't thought about it in a while or maybe they'd never thought about it, and it was like dinner table conversation across the country, so people were all of a sudden talking about marriage in a way that they hadn't before. Ultimately, we found that throughout the campaign, that any other third party validater didn't necessarily like—the fact that you evolved on same-sex marriage isn't what's going to make me evolve. It's the fact that my sister is a lesbian or my friend is in a same-sex couple, or my kid might be. Showing somebody else involved wasn't really kind of like—in most cases. I mean, you needed to show it was possible, but you needed to do it in a way that made them feel like that could happen to them too, and so that, like most people can't necessarily relate to the president in a personal way, but they related to him as a parent and they had conversations with their own families and their own kids, and they thought about ways that maybe they had probably not thought about marriage before. But it's not as if you can just say well, the president supports it so now you should too, like we didn't see any bump in support or anything like that, after that.

01-04:13:35
Meeker: Approaching the election in November of 2012, what was your polling looking like? Were you feeling confident at that point?

01-04:13:45
McTighe: No, we were not super confident. Our polling was good, but it was showing, like support was slipping. We kind of reached a high watermark of mid, like maybe 56 percent on some polls, but it was like strong support was always right around 50. Undecideds were kind of still uncomfortably too high, and all past campaign experience led us to believe that undecideds were all going to go the other way. If you were undecided that meant you were a no, you weren't with us. And so when you factored all of that in, it could have gone either way. We didn't know until election night. I mean again, Maine was the first state to ever win at the ballot, so there wasn't a big playbook for this and there was no, you know, like pattern that we could detect and see. The one thing I will say is we really had—because we had so much data and because we also had a recent loss three years earlier. We had a lot that we could look at, as sort of like benchmarks of support, and as like even when we were out doing our canvassing, just knowing like well, we lost that county overwhelmingly last time, but now our polling shows the county, the support has narrowed, like we're still losing but instead of losing by 15, we're losing by 5. Or, we've had so many great conversations there and the movement that we're seeing at the doors, it's just so strong, it just leads us to believe that things are going to be better this time around. So we felt confident, but I don't think any of us actually felt like we were going to win until the moment the vote was finalized. The night before, I mean none of us had been sleeping for several days.

Marc goes into a lot of detail about this in the book, but there was a story that broke, like right before the vote. It was a couple of days before election day and there was this middle school in Gorham, Maine, where somebody had done—it was like a diversity day thing, just an annual diversity day that the students get together and they just learn about different groups and they hear sensitivity lectures and things like that. There was this one person who gave a lecture, apparently on some LGBT thing, it wasn't sanctioned by the campaign, I don't even know who the person was, it wasn't connected to us in any way or any groups that were related to the campaign, it was just this individual, and he, apparently at the end of his lecture, started to go into a whole long sex ed thing, unprompted, where he talked about fisting and he talked about some other kind of like using saran wrap as a replacement for condoms, if you don't have a condom, just stuff that was like not good for that audience of young middle school students, and also really set off some parents, and some parents wrote to the school and it ended up making the news, and this story was going to break. It actually happened like a week before the campaign and we were able to keep it out of the news for like five days, of just getting the papers, they're there, the story is unfounded, there's no—this was like as soon as the person said something, you know this person wasn't

related to the campaign at all, this has nothing to do with marriage, this was just like some individual person doing something, and they were immediately asked to stop and leave when they went off on this kind of rant.

So, we were able to keep it out of the papers for a long time but the night before, like literally election night we hear the story is going to run, and there's nothing we can do to stop it, and it's going to be in the paper the next day, there's going to be this story. Nowadays, and back then too in 2012, you get the online version usually posts some time at night, the night before the paper comes out. So that story hit the wire online, the online version of the *Portland Press Herald*, around nine o'clock at night or maybe eight o'clock at night, and it was horrible, it could not have been worse. The story was just so negative and like tied it to the campaign and talked about—not like directly saying that we were involved, but basically saying and this is why some people are worried about same-sex marriage, and like talking about it in some related context that could not have been worse for our side.

My communications director, who was my right-hand man on that campaign, a guy named David Farmer, who I still work with now, was, like both of us, we were just on the phones that whole night, working every angle we could to get the paper to change it. By nine o'clock at night, everybody's gone, like there's one person manning the editorial desk and the reporter has gone home, and you're trying to literally change this thing, stop the presses, before they go to print at like two in the morning, and just like calling in every possible angle we could and finally, and David deserves the credit on this one, we were able to get them to agree to make changes, and then it just became like a ticking clock kind of thing. Did they make the changes in time, did they already go to print, which version, what story is this going to be, is it going to be the lead? So that night, I wouldn't have slept anyway, you never sleep before election night, you're just too amped up and you're working late and whatever, and I just drove around and sat in a gas station parking lot, waiting for the bundle of papers to be delivered, so that they could sell them at the gas station at four-thirty in the morning. You know, the truck pulls up, and I jump out of my car and get the guy and give the guy some money to just grab one of the papers, and flipped through it. Sure enough, so it's not on the front page, it's on a first inside section, lead story on the inside section, and it was the edited version of the story. I don't know that that would have been like the difference maker, but it absolutely would have turned some people off at that critical moment, that final day, where we couldn't afford to lose even a couple points. We won 53-47, but it was much closer than you think when you break down the numbers, and a slight downturn in turnout or a little bit of an up-tick in opposition really could have led to a very different outcome.

So no, to answer your question, we were never totally confident. It wasn't until that night and you know, you're in the war room with the campaign and you've got all these computers and you've got all this data. We'd worked out a system of like being able to track, in real time as votes were being reported.

We had people out at all of the different polling locations across the state, and so we had them, as they were being updated, they're calling in and saying okay, we've got 763 votes in Gorham, and how ever many in Portland, and this precinct and that precinct, and this ward, and you're entering them into a system where we could see, compared to 2009, exactly where we were, and what percentage of a swing that represented, when adjusted for, an adjusted turnout. So it's like another algorithm thing, and it was clear we were really pulling ahead. Not like in a way that we were going to win by a landslide, but it was like we were winning places we'd lost before and we were winning by greater majorities in places that we'd won. We started to realize things were coming around and we thought we had a real shot, and yeah, that's when I remember just calling the election, you know just in the room. I've got the pollster on one phone, David, my communications director, he's got the AP [Associated Press] guy and getting all this information, and just you know, all this last bit of data was coming in from all these different towns, and even though not every town had reported yet, it was just finally, like there were a couple towns that were just such symbolic victories, where we were winning by way more than we should have or losing by way less than we should have, and it just became clear that this thing was coming our way. And so right before the AP called, we made the decision in the room, just said literally, I mean I remember it as clear as day, I just said, "Unless anybody can tell me a reason right now, why I shouldn't go downstairs and declare victory, we're going downstairs." Everybody said no, I think we won. It was a little anticlimactic in the room, in that war room setting, because it was just like there was no like hey everybody, like we just got the official word. It was just like we're going to do this, we think we won.

01-04:22:51
Meeker: Well you make an announcement before AP, so.

01-04:22:55
McTighe: Yeah, and as it turned out the AP actually called it, like right as we were getting up on the stage, which I didn't know, like we were already going up on the stage. That is probably one of the best moments of my life and career wise, I can't think of anything that's come close. I've won other campaigns before, I've been part of other victories, you know even Massachusetts or any of the other states where we won these things or I've been involved on marriage, it's just nothing like that moment of winning the first state, winning what was by then my home state, which made it even more personal, and you know, just having this roomful of people erupt like the minute we walked in the room, and to be able to go up there and announce that with all the support from all these people who had been fighting for so long. We had so many volunteers and signature gatherers and people. Everybody who was in one of the TV commercials, all the firefighters had come up, you know everybody was in the room, and you had like, you know it was like I don't know, it was just heaven. It was like everybody who was a part of thing all gathered together and just went nuts when we called it.

01-04:24:07
Meeker: Well, you could barely hear what you had to say. What did you have to say?

01-04:24:10
McTighe: That's true. In that video?

01-04:24:11
Meeker: Yeah.

01-04:24:12
McTighe: I remember I had a speech and I ended up deviating from most of it, just because it was like so in the moment. I just remember saying like you know, thanks to the work of so many people in this room, you know it's been a long time coming but tonight, thanks to the work of so many people in this room, we finally won the freedom to marry, and then bedlam.

01-04:24:35
Meeker: And that night of course was a historic night. You end up fighting something back in Minnesota, a victory in Maryland and a victory in Washington.

01-04:24:44
McTighe: I remember, so Maryland happened like right after we made the—well, so we made the announcement, we had all the speeches and stuff like that, and forty-five minutes later, we got the call. Marc Solomon even told me, because he was monitoring all these other states too, because he was Freedom to Marry. So they got the call that Maryland won. Minnesota, we found out late that night, and you probably saw the famous video with Richard Carlbom, the campaign manager there, where they're literally, like he's giving a speech in his war room. Have you seen the video?

01-04:25:19
Meeker: Yeah.

01-04:25:20
McTighe: Where he's just saying all right guys, we don't have enough data, we're just going to have to go home and get some rest, and they're going to be counting all night, and we're just going to all go home and we'll regroup in the morning and maybe we'll know more by then. So then somebody just says, like off in the background, "The AP just called it, we won," and he just freaks out, I mean Richard just does this incredible—it's so cool and Richard is a good friend. All the campaign mangers became pretty close during that campaign. I still talk to Zack and Richard in particular. Washington, though, we didn't really learn about until the next day or even two days later, because they vote by mail and there was a lot of counting to do. They were feeling somewhat optimistic, but we didn't know until, I think a day or two later, when we were having a celebratory lunch for the campaign team. It was interesting.

There's one story that I did want to share with you, because it's certainly part of my history and it want it to be part of this history. A friend of mine, early in the campaign, like before there was a campaign. I was doing the education

piece but the campaign, we hadn't made the decision to go, we certainly didn't know when we were going or whatever else. It was just becoming like, do I really want to make this commitment to do this thing, and to be a part of this for the long haul. This could take years, it could take a long time. I've done enough campaigns to know that this is going to be grueling and this is going to be miserable and it's going to be time-consuming and I'm not going to have a life, and do I really want to do this? And a friend of mine said to me, one of these days, somebody is going to win one of these campaigns and somebody's going to actually like, somebody's going to have to win at the ballot box one of these days, and it's just going to set in motion, the whole change of dominoes falling down, and I think you are going to be—you know, Maine is going to be, you guys, the campaign, are going to be the first ones to do it. And he gave me, and actually, I brought it downstairs, he gave me this domino, with a twelve on it, for 2012, and I carried with me every day of the campaign, I had it in my pocket. Towards the end of the campaign, a couple people knew that, had heard that story, because the people I was really closest to on the campaign knew that, but I did, I gave this speech at the end of the campaign, to the whole team. We had like 130 people on our staff, with all the field organizers, and I told them about the story and I held up the domino and said you guys, you know, I need you to just give it everything you've got for the final forty-eight hours or the final three days or whatever it was, and then the day after the campaign, I gave another speech for the whole team, and actually went and got everybody—I went to the store and bought dominoes for everybody and I passed them out, and I just said, "I want everyone to have this as a memory, as a souvenir, take it with you. Somebody had to be the first and it was us, and you guys will take this with you no matter where you go, this experience is just going to be meaningful and historic and you made it happen." It's amazing to me, how many people still send me pictures. Right after the Supreme Court decision, ten people must have sent me pictures, the staff, of like their domino that they've turned into a necklace or that they kept in their pocket. A lot of people got tattoos of dominoes. I was actually going to get one and just didn't end up finding a designer that could do the design that I had in mind. So many people kept these things and just remembered it and used it, and now use it as their own sort of inspiration. Yeah, I mean I talk about it sometimes when I'm out now, talking about other state work, and the ongoing fight for nondiscrimination and equality. I still use the analogy a lot of times that we've got to get these victories, we've got to get more states. That's something that Evan Wolfson taught me, you know, just winning that kind of building block approach, that's how you make change. You start small and you build up and you build up, and eventually the dominoes start to fall and in the end, you get what you sought after.

01-04:29:26
Meeker: You had mentioned 2015 and the *Obergefell* decision. Where were you when this came down?

01-04:29:33
McTighe: I was at home, and I was just on the computer. I was doing some work actually, for a background check campaign, and I was working on a report and had the TV on in the corner, and SCOTUSblog and everything all ready to go, and was just monitoring any refraction, just watching carefully. I couldn't be there. I was supposed to go down to a rally the day before and speak at this rally, because they wanted somebody from all the different campaign states to come. I had to be at some other work thing that night and so I couldn't do it. And so I was watching and yeah, no I cried and just got more emotional than I imagined I would have, because by then, I sort of knew it was going to happen, it was not a foregone conclusion, but we were really optimistic and a lot of us were already planning past that. It was a question of when, not if, we were going to win, and we really felt optimistic. You know you never know, just like election night that night in 2012, or in any of the other states where we've done these things, you never really know. I mean, like being in the gallery in Rhode Island, when they made the final vote and the call, like being in Delaware, being in some of these places where you've watched these decisions come down, you know you never know for sure. Yeah, I mean I just got totally overtaken and spent most of the rest of the day on the phone and ended up having to do a lot of interviews that day too, especially for Maine press, wanted somebody that was really grounded in the broader movement, in the fight and stuff like that, and so I ended up doing like a lot of interviews, kind of talking about the victory and what it meant, and also talking about what's next and where we go from here, and the fight is not over and how we need to capture this momentum and channel it and do something positive with it. That's what we're trying to do, I mean that's why we started on Freedom for All Americans, it's modeled on Freedom to Marry. It's literally the same concept, in fact it's many of the same staff, and there was a real concerted plan and a push to make sure that we learned from this movement in a way that all of those lessons that we learned, in many cases the hard way, you know that we learned from our losses, that we learned from really bitter defeats, that we were able to capture that knowledge and capture that institutional knowledge and that expertise and some of the staff and some of the messengers and the resources and the donor lists and the email lists, and some of the stuff that we had, that we wanted to be able to make sure we were not just losing. So much went into creating that, so much went into building that, that we didn't want to see it just evaporate.

There's a need, obviously, for ongoing work, you know that we just tried to create something that could fill that same role, to be the conduit for all this change, to be the convener, and to be the group that doesn't get the credit all the time. That's the one thing I'll say, Evan Wolfson, Freedom to Marry, those guys did it right. They never cared about credit, they just cared about winning. There are a lot of other groups that are really good at getting their names in the paper and there are a lot of groups that are good at getting on TV, and you know, rewriting narratives and whatever else, but the people that were there, the people that really were in these fights, and I consider myself

relatively involved, but I was in for ten, twelve years, and there were people that were in for far longer. The ones that were really involved in this stuff know exactly what role Evan and Freedom to Marry played, and Marc and the whole team there. You know, we wouldn't be here were it not for them. Having a plan and being able to stick to it is a very hard thing to do in a movement with a lot of moving parts, and it takes money, it takes energy, it takes a lot of strategic thinking and it takes a vision that most people wouldn't be able to really see, and let alone see for the long haul. I mean the challenge we're facing right now in our movement is we're stuck in this defensive crouch, reacting, it's like "Whack a Mole." Every time these bad bills, these referendums and these anti-trans bills pop up in a different state, and it's only by forming more of like an offensive plan, that we're actually ever going to change that narrative and reframe these fights as not being against anything. Instead, we're actually for a greater principle, in this case nondiscrimination, but it's the only way you can actually—like you need to give people something positive, you need to give people something they can be for, and reframe these negative fights. The problem is that that stuff is not sexy. The negative stuff is in the news, the bad bill is on the front page today, the fight is on your doorstep and you've got to fight it, and we've got to fight it, we do. Our organization is involved and every one of these negative campaigns, we are playing defense, but we can't just expect. We'll be fighting that fight twenty years from now if we keep just playing that way. You've got to start laying the groundwork for the successes, the future wins, the places that might not happen, the wins that may not come for another year or two or three. It's that line from *Hamilton*, you know the planting seeds in a garden that you'll never see. So that's, thankfully, Evan got to see it and we all got to see it when it came to marriage, so maybe we will on nondiscrimination too.

01-04:35:03
Meeker: Well, that's a good hopeful note to end on, yes?

01-04:35:04
McTighe: Yeah, I think so.

01-04:35:06
Meeker: All right, thank you very much, Matt, I really appreciate it.

01-04:35:10
McTighe: You're so welcome, this was fun, this was great. No, this was great, thank you.

[End of Interview]