

THE ECONOMIC CLUB

O F W A S H I N G T O N, D. C.

Signature Event

The Honorable Joseph Manchin III
United States Senator (D-W.Va.)

David M. Rubenstein
Chairman
The Economic Club of Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2021
Capital Hilton
Washington, D.C.

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN: So, we have Sen. Manchin and let me give him a proper introduction. The senator is a native of Farmington, West Virginia. He is a person who was first elected to the State House of Delegates in 1982.

SENATOR JOSEPH MANCHIN III (D-WV): Correct.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Elected to the State Senate in 1986.

SEN. MANCHIN: Correct.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Elected to the secretary of state in 2000, and then elected governor in 2004, and then reelected in 2008, and then won a special election to succeed the late Robert Byrd in 2010, and he's been a senator since then, since November of 2010.

SEN. MANCHIN: There were two more elections since then, 2012 and 2018.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You've won twice since then, right?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So you've won three times as senator?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. He's now the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He is a person who is a former football player at West Virginia University. He went there as a football star but got injured.

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, I don't know about star. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And he is married for 54 years.

SEN. MANCHIN: Correct. [Applause.] To the same woman.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Same woman – [laughter] – wife, Gayle, from Beckley, West Virginia, and he has three children and 10 grandchildren.

SEN. MANCHIN: Correct.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And he actually – I asked him later – earlier if he could name all 10. He did right away. So –

SEN. MANCHIN: I know – I know them all.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Knows them all. OK.

So, senator, thank you for coming. Anything new lately?

SEN. MANCHIN: Not much. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: There's been reported in the press that you were spending the weekend in Delaware. Anything you can tell us about what happened there?

SEN. MANCHIN: I had a nice visit. I really did. I had a nice visit. President Biden and I have known each other for quite a while. But, you know, knowing each other in the political arena and then knowing each other as a person is a different – a different setting.

So since he's been president, we've got to know each other as who we are and who – hopefully, he knows who I am, and I just, basically, said to the president, I said, Mr. President, my philosophy of politics is this. When I got involved in 1982, I always thought government should be my partner, not my provider, and I meant that literally and figuratively.

And I said, my reason for that is, is that then when I became governor – and Sharon Rockefeller was the first lady of West Virginia and did an unbelievable job when Jay was the governor – and watched how they conducted themselves, and I'll never forget one time Sharon and I were talking and she says, Joe, I think my dad and you would have gotten along just well – just fine – Senator Percy – and I took that as a compliment. She knows how I felt about that.

Anyway, we started looking at what's going on where we are and this and that, and I said, my reason for saying that is that I have a moral responsibility to take care of those who can't take care of themselves and I think government has that moral responsibility. Government has a moral responsibility to do things that, basically, the private sector won't do or it's too risky for them. We got to jump out and be creative and do things, and then the private sector will jump in and the entrepreneurs will take over and Steve and all his group will jump in there and make things happen. We'll take the risk out of it but we, you know, shouldn't be on the front end putting everything and taking care of everybody.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. But as a result of the session you had with the president, do you think you came away with an understanding of where the country is going on all these bills?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, and I've said this and I think all of you remember maybe a couple months ago, I said – I really thought long and hard about taking a strategic pause, and the reason I said maybe we should take a strategic pause and reevaluate what we're doing and to the extent of what people want to do, my reason for saying that was a lot of the things that were – that are in this reconciliation bill, a lot of the things there we had covered in the ARP, American Rescue Plan, at \$1.9 trillion. And if you look at American Rescue Plan bill that we did, it covers a lot of the things they're talking about clear up through 2022 and into '23.

So I didn't see the urgency that someone's going to be left without any type of cover through coming out of the COVID pandemic, and the whole reason about what we did in 2020 to the extent we did what we did was trying to prevent the country from going into a health crisis or a financial crisis, and we did that.

Now, I said, the unknown was this. We didn't know if COVID was coming back, the very end of COVID. We didn't know what it was going to do, and we're still seeing, you know, spikes and valleys and spikes. We didn't know what – if inflation is transitory or not. Now we're finding out it might not be transitory.

And then the biggest thing that I had concerns about, which you don't hear people talk about much, was the geopolitical fallout of how we left Afghanistan. Because I know what – my little coal town I come from just human nature was if there was a bully and you saw someone smack that bully and make that bully back down, then everybody else is ready to take their shot, too.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So but to finish on the session in Delaware – [laughter] –

SEN. MANCHIN: He's not going to let this one go, is he? [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What – did you leave thinking that we're making progress and that you said to the president, well, here's my bottom line and if you can deliver this you got my vote?

SEN. MANCHIN: I don't think you – no one should ever negotiate with the president, especially, or anyone else if you're negotiating in good faith. I've always tried to put myself in the other person. But I want the other person to understand who I am, too. So if they can put themselves to where I am and I put my –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

SEN. MANCHIN: – we reverse roles and look at it.

So when I left, I think it was a very positive meeting. We know there's a lot of things we can do to make more – a more perfect union.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. When you go to a president's house like that, I guess you can ask for anything you want to eat and they serve anything, right, because they want to make you happy, right? So you had a good time?

SEN. MANCHIN: Let me tell you, the thing we had a good time was, as you know, I kidded him. You know how he was always supposed to be the poorest senator? He had an eye for real estate. [Laughter.] So I told him, I said, Mr. President, you didn't do – you didn't do too bad for a poor senator.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So –

SEN. MANCHIN: But let me tell you one thing he did, and we talked about that and you walk down – but he built the home and I was very impressed.

He did a heck of a job and he designed the whole thing. We went through it. It's a very nice home in a very nice setting, and he has some neighbors and one neighbor is not of his political persuasion and if he's four inches over – if a car parks four inches over that sometimes he hears about it and –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Even when he's president of the United States?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, right now more so when he's president. Yeah. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So when you're negotiating with him or meeting with him do you – are you kind of representing Sen. Sinema or does she represent herself?

SEN. MANCHIN: No. No. One thing you learn about being in the Senate if you can take care of yourself you're lucky.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So – all right. So she has her own views and you have –

SEN. MANCHIN: She has her own views.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: I respect her very much and she's a friend of mine. But, you know, we – I think what – we bonded and because I was – I've been adamant. I've been there long enough to vote in 2013 against the nuclear bomb, getting rid of the filibuster that – when at that time Sen. Harry Reid did, and then in 2017 when Mitch McConnell did it for the Supreme Court, and I've been very steadfast on that. And then to find out I have another person who feels as strong as I do was welcome.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So is all the tension you're getting pleasurable or actually a pain in the something or another?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah, I wouldn't – this position, I guess, I wouldn't wish it on anybody. And people keep talking about power. You know, everybody – I look in this room and all the power in this room, and you all have been around – all of us have been long enough and watching life and watching how people, basically, navigate life.

I've seen people with an awful lot of power that abused it and I said, why would they do that? And I've seen people that sought power and destroyed themselves trying to gain it. And then I've seen people took a moment of time, and I'll tell all of you right now a moment in time is this. We better bring our country together. We better figure out it's United States of America, United, not Divided, States of America and we better start working on that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But –

SEN. MANCHIN: It's scary. [Applause.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But, in other words, you are the key vote in so many things going on in the Senate, and Sen. Sinema as well.

SEN. MANCHIN: It's not pleasant.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Is that – is that fun to be the –

SEN. MANCHIN: No, not – there was nothing fun about it. But I always said this. I kept thinking, because I was a governor in 2009 when they were doing the American Rescue Plan – I mean, the Affordable Care Act, and I kept thinking if I'd have been governor – if I'd have been senator at that time it had come down to a swing vote like it did with a couple of the moderates at that time, I think maybe I could have made a little bit of a difference there and because I understood how it was delivered in the states and people that were going without and people that needed it, but also people that could abuse it and take advantage of it, and I thought there's a better way to do it.

Lo and behold, 10 years later, I find myself in the position in about every vote. A 50-50 Senate. Who would have thought that it would come down to this?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So is this making you more popular in West Virginia or less popular, all this attention? Or is it –

SEN. MANCHIN: Depends on what corner of town you go to. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So and you go back almost –

SEN. MANCHIN: I go back all the time, yeah. And, you know, I love my state and I'm born and raised in a little coal mining town, Farmington, 4- or 500 people. And I just – I just saw people that worked all the time and kind of shared what they had and took care of each other and took care of those who couldn't take care of themselves. If they were mentally or physically handicapped the town always picked them up. I mean, I saw all the good in what we are in small-town America and what the United States is, and I thought, well, maybe the whole country's that way.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Now, the House has announced that I think it's going to have a vote on two bills – the infrastructure bill, which has passed the Senate, and maybe the larger bill that we've been talking about that will be subject to reconciliation. Do you know what's in the reconciliation bill that the House is going to vote on?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, you know, the House – I haven't seen their bill, you know. Whatever they do, they'll send – if they pass it, they'll send it to us and then what we'll do is look at it from the standpoint and then if it goes into conferees or if they don't want it to go into conferees who accepts which version of it.

But I haven't seen all the text yet. So I've said this. I'm very, very supportive. I think the president's done an admirable job of putting people together and making us talk and work through our differences and at least understand each other.

The president – I think he made a comment a couple of weeks ago or so. They said, what do you think about Joe and Bernie getting in the same room? He said, I think there'd be homicide. [Laughter.] So let me – I want to make sure that you understand. So when I went Sunday, I said, Mr. President, I took your advice. Bernie and I have met the last three days for at least an hour a day, getting to know each other differently than we ever did before. And we have the respect – I hope I have his – I hope I have his respect. He has my respect. I know who he is and where he's coming. I just respectfully disagree in the approach. And he knows that and we've been up front.

I had a wonderful a meeting with Pramila Jayapal and a beautiful person, and I never knew her and she didn't know me, to explain – I said, you know, Pramila, you represent Silicon Valley. I represent an energy state that people struggle and have always struggled. I said, so we have two different points of view and we got to make sure whatever we do takes care of everybody.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: The president has said he would like to pass a bill relating to climate change before he goes to Glasgow.

SEN. MANCHIN: Sure.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But one of the climate change provisions in the bill it is said that you were in favor of taking it out.

SEN. MANCHIN: Here, they keep saying I'm going to take something out. What we talked about is this. They call to the CEPP, which is a paid – it's, basically, paying utilities \$150 billion with a B, \$150 billion, to transition. So if you would think that would accelerate them and we're going to pay them to transition away from fossil, mainly coal. And I said, well, let's look at the facts. And I've always said this. You're entitled to your opinion. You're just not entitled to create your own facts to support your opinion.

So I said, you know, if you think that whatever we do the rest of the world will follow in the climate world, and I've always said you can't – you can't eliminate your way to a cleaner climate. You can innovate your way, but you can't eliminate it. And by just saying we're going to do away with coal, we're going to do away – now, gas will be next – if you look in the year 2000, 52 percent of our electricity came from coal-fired power plants. Fifty-two percent. Today, 19 percent. Pretty good transition going on. OK. The other is coal, I mean, natural gas used to be 16 percent. It's up to 40 [percent]. We replaced it with another fossil. They don't like that. They want to say, well, how can we get –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

SEN. MANCHIN: And we will, but we have to have storage first. Transmission has to be. There's so many things that we can do. So I've just said this. I'm not going to pay taxpayer dollars and give it to a publicly-traded utility – \$150 billion – to do something they're going to do anyway. And they said, well, Manchin scuttled the plan.

I haven't scuttled the plan. I, basically, come to the reality, why would you do that? So if you want to then give tax incentives for us to transition, and I've told them this. I said – I'll give you another one. They want to do all these charging – EVs, electric vehicles – and everybody in America we're always great at wanting to – the end user is us who want to show, well, we're clean, green, and everything. That's great.

But the bottom line is, there's a lot of suffering people around the world producing the minerals that we – basically, that China takes it and China does all the refinery, and we're going to be dependent on foreign supply chains to run electric vehicles if we don't do something. You can't get a permit to mine any of that stuff.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, that provision, in other words, will not be in the bill if you –

SEN. MANCHIN: That provision is not in the bill.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So – [Laughter.]

SEN. MANCHIN: Yes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: I just gave you the reason it's not.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. All right. OK. I got it. So let me ask you this. West Virginia used to be a solidly Democratic state. When John Kennedy ran for president it was a very Democratic state. Now it's –

SEN. MANCHIN: Democratic state until 2010.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. So now it's a Republican state. What changed, West Virginia or the country?

SEN. MANCHIN: I think the dynamics of the country have changed and, basically, I had someone – when I first got here in 2010, because I couldn't believe – and I was very blessed with having good support from Republicans, Democrats, independents. You know, I never got the extremes. I never got the far right or far left, and I can understand that.

But we never ran our country or our states or our politics from the far right or far left. It was always – and I told people – I gave a speech one day the first time we came back off COVID to Bethany College at their graduation. A little – a beautiful little college up in northern West

Virginia. And I walked on the stage. I didn't – they gave me a speech. I have good people here that work with me and I – just nothing – what do I say? You've been cloistered in for one year.

And I had nothing on paper or nothing in my mind that I was going to say as I walked to the podium. I'm thinking, man, I'm blank. I don't know what I'm going to say. And I walked up there, and I just apologized. I said, I want to apologize. I am sorry. I am sorry. I've been radicalized.

And they looked at me and I don't know how that came out that way. I said, I've been radicalized. I says, your grandparents have been radicalized. Your parents have been – our generation was radicalized because we don't understand what's going on. You understand?

I never had – I never had computers. I never had cell phones. I didn't have any of those growing up. So I got my news pretty much down the middle – CBS, ABC, NBC. I'll never forget one time when John Kennedy was running for president and West Virginia was a swing state. And my parents were all excited, and I didn't know why they were all excited about politics. But a young – the young person running and he was a Catholic, and we're a Catholic family, and there's not many Catholics in West Virginia. So they were all excited so I got excited.

So we're watching television one night and it had to be Walter Cronkite. He said, it's been said that if John Kennedy becomes president the pope will run the country. I looked at my mom. I says, boy, he don't know the – he don't know the Catholics we know. [Laughter.] That's how I – that's all I could come up with because I figured I've never seen anybody tell a Catholic or a Protestant or a Jew anything. They're going to make their own minds up.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You're the only statewide office holder in West Virginia who's a Democrat, right?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, yes. It's very lonely.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So have you ever thought life would be easier for you if you shifted to being a Republican? And somebody said recently that, you know, people have approached you about doing that.

SEN. MANCHIN: Every day.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Every day. So –

SEN. MANCHIN: Either that or just – I actually –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Wouldn't life be easier for you to do that?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, it'll be much easier. My goodness.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Are you thinking of going –

SEN. MANCHIN: Is that the purpose of being involved in public service because it's easy?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Are you thinking about doing it?

SEN. MANCHIN: No. I'm never – I've never thought from this – I mean, what I'm telling you now is who I am. Do you think by having a D or an I or an R is going to change who I am? I don't think the Rs will be any more happier with me than Ds are right now. OK. I mean, that's about as blunt as I can put it. So I don't know where in the hell I belong. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, let's go to an easy – [laughter] – well, let's go to an easy subject. Let's talk about filibusters.

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So when filibusters – is it your view that we should keep the current Senate filibuster rule, even for the voting rights bill that you authored?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, I'm presuming – here's the thing I've said. What's the purpose of the filibuster? They said, well, it wasn't in the Constitution. Why did you come up with these crazy rules, archaic rules? I said, there had to be a thought process in our Founding Fathers.

Can you imagine when Washington had to tell somebody from Pennsylvania or New York or Virginia, say, guess what, we're going to have two bodies. One is going to be the people's side and that's going to be the Congress and they're going to, basically, just go balls to the wall, whoever. Simple majority.

We're going to have something else called the Senate, and this is going to be pretty different because there's nothing like it in the world. We've come up with this. So someone had to tell New York and big bad Virginia at that time and Pennsylvania, and guess what, Rhode Island and Delaware is going to have the same representation you do – that you're not going to be any better than they are.

So someone had to be thinking something so the minority should have a(n) input. You should never blank the minority out, and that was the purpose. That's how I interpret it. And then as we developed our rules, we had unlimited talking filibusters up until 1917 and then it went into a 67-vote, then the 60-vote and this and that. The purpose is – and I hear a lot of people say, well, it was used for discrimination. It was used in Jim Crow and all that.

The only thing I know, I watched the Democrats use it against Trump in a lot of things that we were able to stop, things that just didn't make sense to us. So how can we just two or three – two years ago, three years ago, 39 Democrat senators led by our leader, basically, signed letters, please, Mitch McConnell, do not do away with the filibuster. Now all of a sudden, it becomes, oh, please get rid of it because it'll help us more. Makes no sense to me at all.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I take it you're not supporting –

SEN. MANCHIN: I think I just explained that to you.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. All right. OK. We got that. All right. [Laughter.]

So let's talk about the debt limit. We've extended it until December. Are you worried about the debt limit not being passed in December?

SEN. MANCHIN: It is crazy for us to use that as a political weapon. It is absolutely insane. I think that, basically, the thing that we should do is come to an agreement. Call a truce. And, David, what I would say is that the thing that bothers me more I don't see our leadership working together. I don't see people talking, having dinner or coffee, or even having a conversation on the floor.

You'll see a few of us going back and forth and this and that if you're watching – you know, if you are, you're in more trouble than I thought if you're just watching C-SPAN and seeing us going back and forth. But the bottom line is, is no one's working and talking. So if you're not going to talk and communicate, then the easy way to do it get rid of the filibuster. That's easy. Sure. All of this is easy.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Would you be in favor of eliminating the debt limit, just get rid of it, because –

SEN. MANCHIN: The debt limit should be done this way. The debt limit should be 14th Amendment, that the president has the right to make that decision. We have the right to override if we think he went too far. That, to me, is the simplest. It takes all the politicians out of it, making a deal.

The thing that we got caught in the conundrum right now, the Republican says, well, fine, I want you to set the debt limit. It's going to be \$31 trillion, \$32. You know, we're right at \$29 trillion now.

So who's going to set the set one? The one we have right now is \$28.4 [trillion] and that's going to slide into December. And, basically, the only way we can do it right now is if the Republicans would not agree and I don't think that we should change the rules by ourselves, which is called the nuclear option.

This should be something that's done that's going to hold and saying, OK, the president has that authority. We have the authority to review and override.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Based on your experience, you would expect that sometime in December, they'll figure out how to extend the debt limit?

SEN. MANCHIN: Before that. I'm pushing it now.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

SEN. MANCHIN: We should do it now. It should not come down to the limit again. So if we can't do it and they don't agree on that, the Democrats have the responsibility, being the majority party right now, to do it through reconciliation, and when you – reconciliation, you've got to set a number, and that's our responsibility and I will take that and do it.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What about the Continuing Resolution to fund the government? Do you think that'll go to the last minute as well?

SEN. MANCHIN: Everything goes to the last minute, and it's a shame because no one's talking up until the last minute and it becomes a crisis. We're OK. We can still manage through a crisis. It's a shame that you have to run the greatest country on Earth through a crisis.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So the infrastructure bill – the bipartisan infrastructure bill was more or less paid for by not paying for it. In other words, there's not a specific tax to pay for that for a lot of reasons. Then it was decided it was good for the country to have it without taxes. The bill that you're now considering now – is that right? There's not a pay-for, really, for the infrastructure bill?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, there is a pay-for, yeah, because you have –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: It's going to be paid for?

SEN. MANCHIN: There's two things they did. There's a couple hundred billion dollars they're saying that the CBO didn't score. And when people – there's soft money and there's hard money. So the hard money is – basically, if you move the corporate tax from 21 [percent] to 25 [percent], we know that, historically, it's a hundred billion dollars a point. That's \$400 billion. That's hard money.

Soft money is if you do all this, you all are going to get so excited you're going to go out and spend more and buy more and invest more. That's dynamic growth. Dynamic growth gives our economy another \$3- or \$400 billion.

Everybody has used that and it's never come true. We never could score that when they say did it really happen. So I said that's soft money. Soft money should go towards debt reduction. If you don't hit the numbers you're supposed to, then you haven't done anything because no one thinks you're serious about the debt anyway. But the hard money is going to pay for what exactly we want to do. That's how I got to \$1.5 trillion.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So in July, you apparently signed an agreement with Sen. Schumer that leaked out just recently. How did it keep – it was kept a secret for such a long time you'd signed this agreement. Why did you sign that? Did he make you sign it or do you want him to sign it, or how did that come about?

SEN. MANCHIN: How did you know about that? [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Somebody leaked it recently. I don't know. But were you surprised it kept – it was kept a secret for so long?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, you know, Chuck and I, we have, I think, a good relationship. We've been friends and I really – I respect the hard work he puts it – he's 24/7 all the time. We just have agreements to disagree. And it's like two brothers getting in a room and have a disagreement and it gets a little loud at times and it gets a little robust at times and it gets people excited, hearing on the other side of the door that something might be going on.

Anyway, we have this type of relationship so we can talk through it. And I said, Chuck, listen, I'm not going to go to the reconciliation. I don't think we should be running government through reconciliation because it's not lasting. If you don't have buy-in from both sides, then we're going to be like a banana republic, flipping back and forth every two to four years.

I said, that's not who we are as a country. That's not the faith and goodwill that we have around the world and why people invest in us, and why we have the monetary – the U.S. dollar is the monetary currency of the world. I said, that's not good, Chuck, and I said, I'm not going to do that. And he kept saying, well, we've got to do that.

I said, Chuck, listen. There are two different – these bills you have together at one time, they were about \$4- or \$5- or \$4.7 trillion when they put them both, and I said, Chuck, one is hard infrastructure, and one is social reform. Two different subject matters. Let's separate them.

So we finally made a deal, and he says, well, I'll go ahead and separate those if you'll get on budget – if you'll get on the budget resolution, which takes you into reconciliation. And I said, let me think about that. So I went back and wrote out a contract.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: And I said, here is my conditions for me voting. So don't come back and keep thinking I'm going to do anything different.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. But that –

SEN. MANCHIN: And he asked me not to say anything, and I didn't.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. So \$1.7 billion was the number in that little agreement.

SEN. MANCHIN: One-point-five.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: One-point-five.

SEN. MANCHIN: Trillion.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: One-point-five trillion over 10 years.

SEN. MANCHIN: Over 10 years.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Ten years. So the number that will now pass might be higher than that or you don't know for sure?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, I don't know for sure. We're all negotiating, and I think in good faith you have to keep all options open or you're not being fair with the other side. I think \$1.5 [trillion] was more than fair since we just did \$1.9 [trillion], since we just did another \$1.2 [trillion].

And, you know, when you look – I started looking and thinking about how much – I've never heard trillion dollars even used even when we had the meltdown in 2007-2008. They got up to \$800 billion, I think, in that neighborhood, \$8 - or \$9 [billion], and then we thought it was outrageous we'd have to spend this much money to keep us from a financial collapse. We talk about billions like chump change.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Wow.

SEN. MANCHIN: OK. And we talk – now we're in the trillions like it's expected. And I said, what did World War II cost us? What did the Marshall Plan cost in today's dollars? I just – I was just curious. I don't know how that come to my mind. So I had my – I had one of my researchers check it out.

They come back and they said, what do you think? And I said, I really don't know. Ten-20 trillion. I don't know. They said, \$4.7 trillion. We saved the world in World War II, we rebuilt Europe on today's dollars at \$4.7 [trillion]. We've already spent \$5.4 [trillion] and we're about ready to spend a heck of a lot more.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So the pay-fors for this bill that's either \$1.5 [trillion] or \$1.7 [trillion] –

SEN. MANCHIN: Whatever it is. Yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: – whatever it is, there's been some proposals floated around. Do you have anything you can comment on? The taxes that might be proposed?

SEN. MANCHIN: It's still floating. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But you haven't signed off on any –

SEN. MANCHIN: I haven't. I haven't. You know what? And this – I think – and the Senate's responsibility is we're going to do a deep dive, and we should do a deep dive. And that's why I've always said when you do reconciliation and things such as this in such a manner that it's all partisan, you don't go through regular order – it doesn't go back to the committee, there's not a hearing, you don't have a chance for all of you to come in and testify and tell us what's working, this could have this ramification, did you think about this, did you think about – we don't have

all the professionals – basically, you just have a few staff from the leadership trying to put things together and massage it the way they want it, and I just thought that wasn't a good way.

So do I think I know? I don't know. I went 25 percent on corporate net. I went 28 [percent] cap gains all in. I thought get rid of carried interest, some of the loopholes. I know you've been hearing this wealth tax has got everybody totally excited to a certain extent and the only thing I've ever said about taxation - it should be fair.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: A wealth tax, in your view, is something you support or –

SEN. MANCHIN: A wealth tax, I don't know. I haven't seen the text on it. But the only thing I've said this. I'm all for a minimum 15 percent corporate. I think every corporation should pay a minimum tax in America and I think every individual, no matter how wealthy you may be, everyone should participate.

So when they start setting, well, if you're \$250[,000], you don't – there's nothing going to affect you if you make less than \$250,000. Now it's \$400,000. The way we're moving pretty soon anybody that's not a millionaire, don't worry. We're not fooling with you at all. We're going to get all these people up here.

That's not America. We all – I mean, last time we had a balanced budget, last time we had surpluses, it was under the – Bill Clinton, and that was Erskine-Bowles and John Kasich put all that together in 1996-97. We spun everything off to where we had surpluses. We'd have been debt free by 2006.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, some people think that you can pick up a lot of revenue by having more IRS agents to enforce the laws, but that didn't seem to get very far. Is that dead?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, there's going to be – no, we're going to – the IRS is going to be able to do the job that they are – they should be done – they should be doing and they're going to be able to modernize their computer systems and be able to do what they're intended to do. They were never enabled to go into bank accounts to the point – to the average individual and I told him – the president and I had this conversation.

I said, Mr. President, I don't know who put this out and how it got screwed up. When they said, basically, we're going to start looking at \$600 transactions, even if it's \$10,000, OK, that's only \$800, \$900 a year. And I said, do you understand how messed up that is to think that Uncle Sam's going to be watching and what it does for bankers and this and that?

I told him, I said, Mr. President, I don't know what happened. This cannot happen. It's screwed up. Well, we're sitting there and all the staff is around and everybody's looking, I can tell. I don't know who's – I don't know who was responsible, but they were all looking at each other back and forth, who in the hell did this one? [Laughter.]

And so he says, I think Joe's right on that. So I think that one's going to be gone. We can do that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So just to complete on this subject, you believe by – in a few months or so we will have passed a bipartisan infrastructure bill and a – perhaps a partisan soft infrastructure bill that will pass the Congress? Do you think that will happen?

SEN. MANCHIN: I sure do think there's a high probability that's going to happen –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: – and I think that, basically, this infrastructure bill, the – we'll call it the BIF, the BIF bill. We all refer to it as the bipartisan infrastructure bill. But the BIF bill, I think – and Debbie would be able to tell me better than anybody here – I would like to hope it passes Wednesday evening. The president needs to take something with him.

[UNKNOWN]: Let's go to the end of the week. By the end of the –

SEN. MANCHIN: By the end of the week. And what they're saying is this and that. We're dealing in good faith.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: If the president passes that – if we get that one piece of legislation passed, it shows that in a bipartisan way we can do something because there will be Republicans that will vote for it on the House side. And it's going to be a good piece, and he's able to go – he's got a lot of good clean energy stuff in there, tremendous.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But when you go to your Senate colleagues who are Republican and say, why can't you support the soft infrastructure bill – so-called – you can't get a single vote. Is that right? They're just locked in –

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, everything here – so I – you know, this is a lot of social adjustments, if you will. The only reason I – I was up out of the chute. I said, I don't have a bit of problem going to reconciliation because I believe there needs to be a tax adjustment. And I told the president – we were talking – he said, what do you think? And I said, Mr. President, the only thing I know that we all agree on as Democrats, not any of us voted for the 2017 tax cuts the way they came out.

I had worked with Republicans all the way up until they had gone into reconciliation, which basically allowed them to do everything just by a party-line vote. So I knew where I thought the acceptable parts or the sweet part was: 25, 20, 28, 25 [percent]. There wasn't gouging. Taxes can be adjusted a couple of different ways. First of all, you can have basically an approach – a hostile approach thing: I'm going to make you pay for what you got, all these breaks. I'm going to come back and hit you hard. So you make adjustments that aren't competitive. It's, you know, more aggressive if you will.

Then you can do it in a way that, hey, these are all the things that we'd like to pay for. Let's just find the money to do it. And that's where \$3.5 [trillion] or whatever comes out.

And then you have a way, say, like most Americans – this is what I told him – I said most Americans that I know, and most people in business say, OK, what's our revenue, what's the ability for us to raise revenue, and if this is for real, what can we do and what's our priorities? That's what we – that's what we tried to do, and I don't know what we're going to end up with, but that's where my mind has been. That's how I got to \$1.5 [trillion].

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, the Senate Democrats and the Senate Republicans, do they socialize or talk to each other very much? Or just it's not considered appropriate to be talking to people in the opposite party very much in the Senate?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, it's a shame that you see some of that going on, that people just don't talk to people that much, and I make it a point to have dinner with them, or meet them somewhere, just – you know, I always do that and try to, and I think that's the way. And I think there should be – there should be something to where at least the leaders have to have lunch one day a week. I would think that would be good. But do you know what we do? We have caucus lunches. All the Democrats go over here; all the Republicans go over there. And once a year we have – Johnny Isakson¹ would have all the people from Georgia come up and do a big pork thing, barbecue thing and we'd all get together. But even then – it didn't last much longer than that.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So you have a Republican colleague in the Senate from West Virginia, Sen. Capito.²

SEN. MANCHIN: A very good friend of mine.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So how do you relate to –

SEN. MANCHIN: We get along good. One night we were – I had to go – I had to go back home. We were voting late and we missed the plane. We only had one flight a night going back. So I said, hey, Shelley, I said, I'm driving. She said, OK. I said, do you want to ride with me? And she thought about it – [laughs] – for a minute or two, and she says, OK, count me in. So about 10:00 we take off for West Virginia. And I drive a little bit fast, and at night I drive a little bit faster because I know –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Within the speeding limits, though, of course.

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, I won't say that. [Laughter.] So we were – we were driving, and we were going through Beckley, and we got picked up for speeding. [Laughter.]

¹ John Hardy Isakson (R) served as a U.S. Senator from Georgia from 2005 to 2019 and represented Georgia's 6th congressional district in the House of Representatives from 1999 to 2005.

² Sen. Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV)

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Oh, you did? [Laughter.] But when you get picked up, I mean, they know who you are, so what did they do?

SEN. MANCHIN: The state policeman comes to the door, and he rolls in. Oh my God, he says. He says, Governor – I said, oh, no, Senator. He was one of the troopers that I had when I was governor.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. [Laughter.]

SEN. MANCHIN: So I thought I was in pretty good shape. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So you – I guess you didn't get a ticket then.

SEN. MANCHIN: And then when – the funny part was this. He looked over and says, oh my God, it's both of you! [Laughter, applause.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, but you're a motorcyclist – do you ever ride your motorcycle back to West Virginia?

SEN. MANCHIN: I ride all over the state any time I get a chance. I enjoy that. And we do a – we do a Gold Star family motorcycle ride to raise funds for the Gold Star families, and that's a big thing, and we do it every year. So I enjoy –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So a lot of people here probably haven't been to West Virginia.

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, my.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So what's the appeal of going to West Virginia as a tourist? What could they –

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, one thing, we've got – we've got separation whether you like it not. [Laughs.] We've got a vast area, and we're not overly populated, so please come and enjoy.

I will say this. During COVID, we had more people coming, probably from the D.C.-Baltimore areas coming in – because it's only an hour and a half if you get to Harper's Ferry, Shepherdstown, that beautiful part of our eastern panhandle. You can over to Canaan Valley into our eastern mountains, which is gorgeous, if you like to hike and bike. And then if you want to go down to the New River Gorge, you can go down there in some of the greatest rapids. I just did the Gauley [River] last week with my grandkids and my children, and –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What do your grandchildren call you, Senator, or?

SEN. MANCHIN: Dadoo [sp].

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: Can you believe that? I mean, if all of you all are about to be a grandparent and you haven't named yourself, please do so. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So –

SEN. MANCHIN: I was in – I was in – I was in denial. I was in denial that I was going to be a grandfather, and my wife kept saying – she says, I'm going to be Nana. She wanted to be Nana. I said, oh, no, I'll come up with something. I'll come up – well, the first grand, little Joey was born, my grandson, and he got to where he could start jibber-jabbering and talking back and forth, and I'd be holding him. He'd go da-da-da-da, and he couldn't get the dad, which was his father, my son. And he said, now that's not your dad; that's your granddad, and somehow something came out Dadoo [sp]. [Laughter.] And by God, it stuck. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So are you worried that the Senate and the House could flip to the Republicans in the mid-terms because that often happens in these first-year mid-terms?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, we didn't have much of a buffer going in, OK, David?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right.

SEN. MANCHIN: It wasn't like we had a little bit of bench strength here.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I know. So are you worried about this?

SEN. MANCHIN: Sure. I mean, you're worried if – I'm a chairman right now of a committee, which I enjoy very much. I've been ranking before on the committee which is a minority part. Lisa Murkowski was one of my dearest friends and a great partner, and we worked back and forth. But, yeah, it's much better off when you can control the agenda versus you have to follow it.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But there's nothing you can do about it, and Republicans –

SEN. MANCHIN: You can't do anything about it, but you can have good, sound policies. I've always said this: the best politics is good government. And today, that's not what we're practicing. Today it's not about right now, and I said the Republicans are missing a golden opportunity not to jump on the infrastructure bill and be overwhelmingly bipartisan and taking credit.

I've seen people take credit of good legislation that voted against it. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: I can't believe that happens in Washington. [Laughter.]

So is being governor more fun than being a senator?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh my God, yes. [Laughter.] Being governor – and you know how I got involved in politics. I was upset because I saw a guy come in one time, talk to my father. I was

35 years old with three kids. I had no intention of getting involved in politics – none at all. And the guy came in, he started talking about favors. My dad – they called him Johnny – he said, Johnny, you know, I did a favor – I did this. My dad would always try to help people, so if he saw somebody needed something, he called the people that he always supported, whether it be Jay or whatever, and they would take care of it.

This was a local politician. He says – when he left, I said, Dad, he made it look like that he was doing you a favor to take care of people of his constituency. He's not doing his job. And I said, I'm going to run – I'm – just went through me like a knife. I said, I'm going to run. And Dad says, oh, no, no, you don't want to get involved in politics. That's not a good profession. Boy, how prolific he was back then – [laughter] – to understand that. And I said – I said, Dad, you're a hypocrite. I thought he was going to hit me. And he looked at me, and he says, why would you call – I said, Dad, you always said you want good people involved, have good values. They should get involved for the right reason. I said, I think I was raised right, and you all – I mean, I think I feel pretty balanced. And he looked at me, and he says, you're right; let's go get him. [Laughter.] So I ran, I won, and that's how I got involved.

I was one of a hundred when I was at House of Delegates. I said, you know what? If I was in the State Senate, I'd be one of 34. I'd have three times the ability to help more people. And then I said, boy if I was governor I'd be one of one. [Laughter.] I could really do something.

So that's how – and now I'm back to one of a hundred. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right, but –

SEN. MANCHIN: I've come full circle.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, you're up for reelection in 2024?

SEN. MANCHIN: 2024.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So you're going to run again, I assume.

SEN. MANCHIN: I'll be 77 years old. What do you think?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But that's young in the Senate. I mean, you're younger than –

SEN. MANCHIN: [Inaudible]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: – you're younger – I mean, the president of the United States is older than that, so, I mean, that's young. So – you haven't decided yet, or do you want to announce here?

SEN. MANCHIN: No, I haven't – [laughs] – decided. [Laughter.] I haven't decided.

You know, if I think I can – if I think I can contribute, and be productive, and if I think this moment in time we’re in right now we can balance some things out and people understand – the thing that bothers me more than anything that I think I’ve ever had in my political life is I don’t hear the word “this will be good for our country” when we’re looking and thinking about fixing a problem until we start and then someone tries to justify – if you’re on the right or the left, if you’re a Democrat or Republican – then saying we’re going to do this because it’s good for the country. No, no – [Applause] – you’re going to do that because it’s good for the party. [Applause.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: In 2024, there is another election – president of the United States. You wouldn’t think of running for president, would you?

SEN. MANCHIN: That would be one on one, wouldn’t it? [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Yeah, it would be like a governor. Why not –

SEN. MANCHIN: I haven’t – I haven’t thought of that at all.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You haven’t – you haven’t ruled it out, but you haven’t thought about it – or you –

SEN. MANCHIN: Do you want to be campaign manager?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: [Laughter.] You wouldn’t win if I was campaign manager; I’m not that good, but – [laughter] – so –

SEN. MANCHIN: No, I haven’t.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right, so –

SEN. MANCHIN: I’m going to support – I support Joe Biden.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: I really think he was the right person at the right time.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: We’ve just got to balance things out.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, how do you think the Biden administration is doing nine months into it?

SEN. MANCHIN: They’re having – they’re having a little struggle right now. I really think so, and we’ve got to rethink this whole thing. And I’m thinking that, you know – I agree with him getting out of Afghanistan. We should have –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: You were happy with the way it occurred?

SEN. MANCHIN: No. No one could be happy the way we got out. No one could be happy about that, but there's not a good way to get out of these things, but there had to be, you'd think, better than what we did. So you can look at it from that standpoint.

But I think he understands foreign policy – he really does – on some of the things we're working. We've talked about some different concerns we have around the world, and the United States has to be ready to do what we do – defend democracy.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Are you in favor of a stronger position than the U.S. government has already had in Glasgow. In other words, when the president goes to the Glasgow summit, presumably they want to toughen up the Paris Accords. Are you in –

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, the bottom line is what he needs to do is brag about what we've done. We've cleaned up the climate more than any other nation on earth, and no one gives us credit for that. You know, we've reduced more emissions in 20 years than any other nation; last 10 years more than any of them. And we've got scrubbers, we've got low NOx boilers,³ we've got baghouses for mercury, so we – I can remember when I was a kid. You couldn't hang – my mom couldn't hang her laundry out, OK? We've cleaned up all of that, and the CO2, and now methane. We can do all that, too. But they just are hell bent on eliminating it, and so I've been – I've been brutal – brutally supportive of nuclear. And we're going to – and we don't jump in with nuclear – we have 20-some billion dollars to help shore up nuclear – you can't meet your emission standards, and you can't have dispatchable power.

So all these things we're fighting to try to balance out –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: What percentage of the GDP in West Virginia is dependent on coal?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, it's not so much the GDP. I mean, we're still – I think we're still around 16 percent or so, but it's not so much that. It's the culture that we have, and the areas that we still have it. And Sharon knows as well as I know – southern West Virginia, that's their whole life, and with that – and the only thing I've ever said – if you're going to transition, don't you think – if you're going to give all these tax credits, don't you think the tax credits for whatever you're doing – whether it be energy or any other – chemicals, energy, whatever it may be – that those tax credits should be first incentivized to be used in areas that lost the jobs? So I said, we'll build you the best windmill you've ever seen. We'll build you the best solar panels you've ever seen. We'll build you the new storage hubs. We'll do whatever you want; just give us a chance.

So you asked me one question which I never answered the way I should have. You said, what happened to West Virginia? Why did it change and flip? Someone, when I got to Washington 2010, they asked me. I said, I'll tell you exactly what happened. We've done – my little state has never complained. We've done all the heavy lifting. We've done the mining. We

³ Low NOx boilers provide improved energy efficiency and lower emissions of nitrous oxides.

made the steel. We've done everything it took for this country to be the superpower of the world. And all of a sudden they took a breath and looked back, and now we're not good enough, we're not clean enough, we're not green enough, and we're not smart enough. So the hell with you. So they said, well, the hell with you, too. And that's exactly what happened.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: If the election were held today – the presidential election was held a year or so ago – would West Virginia vote the same way? West Virginia is still not that supportive of the Democrats.

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah, I'd still vote for Joe Biden, but I'd be in the minority.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. And in your view, West Virginia is likely to stay Republican for presidential purposes for the foreseeable future.

SEN. MANCHIN: West Virginia was a Republican state up until the Depression. And the Depression changed us to an FDR state. But we were always a conservative Democrat state. We were the northernmost Southern state in the nation because we're on the Mason-Dixon Line. We never flipped – we flipped in 2010. When we flipped, we flipped harder than any southern state ever flipped.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: The voting rights bill – you have authored an amended version of the Voting Rights Act that you thought would get through the Senate. Doesn't seem like it's getting through unless you change the filibuster rules. What do you think is going to happen on voting rights?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, let me just tell you this. I didn't author, OK? I put – I had input because I saw the For the People, and I knew it was aspirational. And I understand; everything that you can imagine was in that bill. We're just trying – we're just trying to protect the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which got shot down in the Shelby decision in 2013. We haven't even fixed that. We haven't even fixed that because basically it went from nine states to 13 states, and then they threw it out with the Shelby decision. And I said, really all 50 states should be held responsible and accountable. And I couldn't – in my mind, when I was secretary of state, we used to have secretary of state association meetings. We were always competing who could get the greatest turnout. I can – and now I'm realizing that people were basically looking at the advantage they would get if people don't vote – or certain people don't vote. That's beyond my comprehension, but it's the reality of what we're dealing with. It's got to be corrected.

But I can't believe that my Republican friends don't see it that way. I just – I still can't – and you know what? And they keep saying, well, Joe, how many Republicans you got? How many this? And I'm working and talking to every Republican, and I keep looking at them, I say, what have you done? Who was the last person you talked to on the Republican side? I need a little bit of help.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Right. So when people come to lobby you, what's the most effective way to convince you? Is it telling you this is going to affect West Virginia a certain way, or does it appeal to your national instincts? How do people lobby you effectively?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, boy. Hmm – other than putting a gun to your head – [laughter].

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Who has done that? A few people? [Laughter.]

SEN. MANCHIN: No. People come in – you know, I’m not good – I’m not good if people try to put pressure. I’ll never forget one time there was a person when I was governor, and I’m sitting in the governor’s office, and the person I knew very well, and this and that came in, and they were just whaling away on something they wanted me to do, and it made no sense at all. It was not good for my state. And I said, that doesn’t make any sense at all. And the person said, well, you remember I had a fundraiser for you. And I said, oh, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute; I thought you were investing in good government. You were investing to take care of yourself. Get the hell out of here. I found out how much money they gave us, sent the money back, never had another problem with that one. So that took care of that. That’s the way you have to –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: OK. Now, the other thing is, when they come in – I always tell people – I say, when you come in, do this. Tell me what you’re lobbying for and why, and give me the facts, then put your hat on – the other person who basically is against what you’re trying to do. That helps me an awful lot be able to decipher and I can get to – I can get to a decision much quicker.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, speaking of fundraising, senators and members of the House have to raise money all the time. How debilitating is that for members to have to spend all that time raising money?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, you got to put your priorities. I mean, the bottom line, they expect you every day to be calling people and raising this and that and everything. There are so many rules that could be changed and we could have a much more amicable relationship. We shouldn’t – there should be a rule, and I’ve put it in a piece of legislation, you shouldn’t be able to campaign against a sitting colleague, whether you like him or not, whether it’s Republican or Democrat.

And I told Harry Reid one time – first of all, Harry asked me to vote for something. He says, Joe, this is a party-line vote. Now, mind you, I’ve been in government for a long time and I’ve been governor. I never heard the word “party-line vote.” So I said, Harry, what does that mean? He says, well, we all got to vote for it. If you’re a Democrat, you have – I said, can I see the bill? So I looked at the bill and I said, Harry, on my best day I can’t sell this crap in West Virginia, and I can sell pretty good. This is not something – so he says, well. I said, Harry, you didn’t hire me. You can’t fire me. Doesn’t make any sense to me. I’m not going to vote for it. So it took a while for us to understand each other. Then he says, can you at least tell me how you’re going to vote? And I said, sure. And then it got to the point, can you vote last? Yeah. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So –

SEN. MANCHIN: So we had – we had to get to understand each other.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, to summarize where I think you are, you expect the Senate will ultimately pass a soft infrastructure bill and it will be paid for in some way that isn't yet clear yet. But you want it to be paid for.

SEN. MANCHIN: It's got to be paid for. I said that from day one. Well, I never knew they'd be that creative in paying for things.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: If the House passes something this week –

SEN. MANCHIN: The House is going to pass something, whatever the House does. And I think the world of Nancy Pelosi, and people – I just think that she's just fascinating and just a lovely person. I enjoy her and her husband, Paul. And we agree to disagree, but we can talk through it. She's such a professional. And she says, you know – but I think she was – you know, we were raised in close-knit, big families, ethnic families, so there's a – there's a certain bond you have that you understand how things operate and what the clicking and the pecking order is.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So do you enjoy being a senator with all this pressure on you? Is this fun, or is it not that much fun?

SEN. MANCHIN: No, there's no fun. There's no – I mean, here, I don't – you know, and everybody says, how are you taking the pressure? I said, well, I have a responsibility. I have a responsibility to do my job, and I'm going to do my job, and I'm – and I'm going to explain myself. I've always said if I can't go home and explain, I can't vote for it. You might be my best friend, and I just said, please, can you give me a pass on this, you know. My dad always said if you can say no with a tear in your eye, you might be OK.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: All right.

SEN. MANCHIN: And I've been crying a lot lately. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, did your parents live to see your enormous political success?

SEN. MANCHIN: No, my dad did not. He died in 1982, and I'll never forget that. My mother – my mother, when I got inaugurated and she was with me – and she's been with me when I got sworn in as senator. My mother passed away a few years ago, just the most beautiful person. And when I became governor, they were – and I didn't even know this, and she was talking to a reporter or somebody. And my mom was real – she was just a beautiful mother. And she was never a bragger, though; she just always loved all of her kids. She says – but you know, they said something like, I guess you always knew and always wanted Joe to be governor, you always knew he'd be governor. And she says, no, not really, she says, but his dad always knew he would be. And I said, I never had that conversation with my dad. I never had the conversation

he says you can be governor. We just never had it. Just whatever life – we just took whatever life gave us.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, when you were governor, did your mother call you up with advice ever? Does she –

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, no, she'd get on the talk show host, and – [laughter] – and, boy, if you talk about her boy, she got mad. [Laughter.] My mother was something. She was the athlete. She made – we played ball and she took us everywhere, and she could throw a baseball as good as I could. She could shoot basketball, throw the football. She was great.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So you were a great high school quarterback and you were –

SEN. MANCHIN: I don't know about great. My number was 57 and I was quarterback. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well –

SEN. MANCHIN: We were just lucky to get a uniform. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: But you were –

SEN. MANCHIN: We didn't care what number was on it. Everybody now, well, I got to have 12, I got to have 14, or – hell, I just – you know, if someone says – I went to a school, grade school was first – was first grade to sixth grade, and if you got out of the grade school you got to walk across the football field and go to high school, seventh to twelfth. Well, I wanted to play football.

Now, can you imagine – I'm 12 years old; I'm going to play varsity football. There ain't no way it's going to happen, but in my mind I'm going to – I'm out for the football team. We had a coach, he says, no problem, come on out. And so someone says, what did you do at 12 years of age, being in seventh grade, you had kids 18 years old on the same team? I says, the only thing I know, coach gave me shoulder pads which came clear down to my elbows and he gave me a breast protector that came clear down to my hips and below. I had, basically, hip pads on that came down to my thighs and knees. I had thigh pads that took care of my knees and my kneepads took care of my shins. And nothing fit. And they said, well, what did you do? And I said, coach, when am I going to get to play? He says, when the uniform fits. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, but –

SEN. MANCHIN: That was – that was good old –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Well, you were pretty good. I mean, you got a scholarship.

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, I grew quick. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK. And – but, ultimately, you hurt your knee, right?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah. Yeah, I –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And now you have a –

SEN. MANCHIN: I have a cobalt-titanium knee.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So I notice you have shoes that are a little different than the normal shoes that people –

SEN. MANCHIN: You know what? They're my running shoes. My lobbying shoes.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Oh, these are your lobbying. So when –

SEN. MANCHIN: When I got to run, they got to be quick, too, to get me.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: When the lobbyists come, you run away?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah. [Laughter.]

Hey, David, can I say one thing to this crowd? Because you guys are so wonderful. But you – here's the thing: You're the movers and shakers. Your people – and Steve heard me say this last night – we're not going to be able to fix Congress from within, and I've come to that conclusion. You can fix it. You all sitting here can fix it. And I've said this, as the smart businesspeople you are, the astute investors that you are, you've made a horrible investment in all of us who don't give you a return of good politics. Demand more. Demand. Ask a person: I see you're voting 99 percent one way. I never see you talking to anybody else. Why have we become so, so partisan? How is it going to work? That's not who we are.

We can't do it. I've tried – I tried to shame them. I've said, can't we just pass a bill that we can't campaign against each other? Can't we pass a bill that we shouldn't contribute to an opponent of a colleague? Because how in the world – and I told Harry – I said, Harry, I'm not going to go out and call – I'm not going to get on the telephone and call to raise money to beat whoever's running because we have a Republican in a seat. And you know, if there's a Republican or Democrat and they're up for reelection, if you can find Donald Duck on the other side they want you to invest in Donald Duck because he has a D or an R by their name to beat whoever's a sitting senator. And I just won't do it. I says, where I come from, my little town, if you try to get me thrown out of school or defeated or whatever or lose my job, I says, they're going to beat the living crap out of you. They're going to meet you behind the school or in the parking lot and just tear into you.

So I said, Harry, that's not who we are. I says, I can't in good conscience write a \$5,000 check from my PAC to give it to somebody who's running against a colleague that I'm working with every day, and then you expect me to go to their home state on the weekend to campaign against them, and then you expect me to come back Monday and say, oh, by the – by the way,

Ricky, would you – would you cosign this bill with me and be my partner. They're going to say, are you crazy?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So businesspeople, to be effective in lobbying you, what should they do? Should they be – they come in with just the merits on the issue for the country, or for West Virginia, or?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, let me tell you one thing. If you walk into a senator's office or a congressional office and you're getting hustled for a fundraiser, you're in the wrong office. You're in the wrong office. If you got that appointment because you were hustled by one of the staffers – and I'm not saying anything that you all don't probably know what I'm talking about to a certain – it might not be directly spoken, but it's been indirectly suggested – that's crazy. That kind of stuff's got to stop. And that's where you all stop it. Say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Go find somebody else.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So what is – the most important issue in the mind of West Virginians today is what?

SEN. MANCHIN: I think the respect and dignity of who they are as a human being in the society that we have and the culture that we have, understanding us. We're the hardest-working people, but I don't have enough workers. So I can tell you, my state grew in immigration back in the – in the early 1900s. People came there because they wanted to work. I need workers. We need people that want a quality of life for themselves and their families.

And take care of the ones – I have a lot of elderly people. I have a high percentage of elderly and they talk about social reforms. I said, wait a minute. If Social Security and Medicare is not solvent and the trust funds are not solvent, then you're taking away a lifeline that people have right now. Why should I expand all these social services when I can't even pay for what we got?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Do you get – do you get a lot of emails or letters on any one issue? What's the most attention you're getting from your constituents now, on what issue?

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, boy. Well, first of all, you know, we've – it's gotten so erratic that we've had to limit it to where I'm – my staff reports to me on a daily basis of the incoming that we have from West Virginians. So it would have to have a ZIP code or a digit that we can understand it's within our code range. We watch that. But you know, they're on everything because right now the airwaves in West Virginia are flooded: Tell Joe do this, tell Joe do that, Joe's going to save us on this, Joe's going to save us on that, Joe – why is he destroying this or why is he not for that. So we're getting it on all different issues.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So is it effective when people put television ads in your state to lobby you and they're not from your state? Is that effective?

SEN. MANCHIN: Well, it's – it can be effective. With me, no. With the people that I represent, yes, because then they're going to come and say, Joe, I heard you were doing this or I

heard you were against that, or – whether it be on climate or transitioning. We’re going to transition, and we’re going to do it and do it well. But we need to do what we do best, and that’s basically the hard work that people have done in West Virginia, give them a chance to do that.

I’ve had people come to me and says, we’re just going to send a check to everybody; shouldn’t that take care of things? I said, it’s the worst thing in the world. I said, you know, I remember the Great Depression – I’ve read the history books – I don’t remember FDR ever sending a check to a human being during the Great Depression to pull us out. I don’t remember that. Gave a lot of opportunities.

They talked about electric vehicles, spending \$80 billion building charging stations. I said, I’m having a hard time with that one, too. I don’t remember the federal government building filling stations when Henry Ford invented the Model T, so tell me why the market won’t pick up wherever the demands are.

Now, if you want to mature something quicker, then we can invest. But basically, if I’m going to invest in something that’s going to be very profitable for you and you have a publicly-traded company, I want to eventually get my input from the taxpayers’ Treasury – I’d like to get it back, all right? So I’m going to help you expand a transmission line. Sooner or later, that transmission line is going to be very profitable. I’ll work with you, and I’ll front all the money and take all the risk, I need to come back to the Treasury so we don’t chalk that up as a debt. They think, oh, you’re being insensitive, Joe. I said, when’s the last time you wrote a check to somebody?

MR. RUBENSTEIN: So, Senator, final question. You’re now even more famous than you were before –

SEN. MANCHIN: Oh, yeah.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: – because everybody is coming after you, but can you go to a restaurant or anywhere where people aren’t bothering you or lobbying you anymore?

SEN. MANCHIN: Only thing I know is whenever I’m out in public I am a public person, so I expect all that. You think I’m going to go to a public place and I don’t want to talk to people? I expect them to come up. They want to talk to me, sure, we talk. I said, people – I live on a boat, as you might know. [Laughter.] I had an – I had, basically, an armada, a bunch of little kayaks coming after me one day. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: OK.

SEN. MANCHIN: And so I think they were surprised. They were all screaming and they’re paddling around and everything. I just went to the back. How are you doing, I said. There’s –

MR. RUBENSTEIN: This is in your houseboat?

SEN. MANCHIN: Yeah, down here.

MR. RUBENSTEIN: And you like that houseboat because it's what?

SEN. MANCHIN: It's a great place to wake up in the morning and look at the water on the Potomac and just enjoy a cup of coffee. But peace of mind, but most importantly it's a great place to bring people together. I can bring – when I – when I bring people down, I bring – I bring 10 – if I bring 10 senators, I'll bring 5 Ds and 5 Rs. I try to balance it out the best. One day we were all going – we went and took the boat out and had Jonathan – I had Jonathan – Lisa Murkowski cook hamburgers. I had Lindsey Graham – that's when he got COVID. And I said, damn, Lindsey. I said – [laughter] – I said, did you bring – he said, Joe, I think I got it after that. And I said, so only thing – I got a phone call the next day that he said he tested positive, so we all had to test. And we all tested negative, and everything supported Lindsey had been – gotten it somewhere else.

But we have – you know, that's a good place – and I'll use – Lee Greenwood. Do you know the song "I'm Proud to be an American"? That's a great song, right? And without failure, every time that we're together – every time that we're together, at the end of the day, no matter who they may be – Democrat, Republicans – I put Lee Greenwood on. And everybody hugs, and we – you know, like this.

I'll give you one – I'll give you one little tidbit. It was many years ago when I first got here in 2010/2011. I had a boat and I was at National Harbor. So I was – I always brought senators out, and I had Tom Harkin.⁴ I'll never forget this. And Tom's a beautiful person. And I had Tom on the boat, and he said, Joe, you know, I've never been on the Potomac. This is so wonderful. And he says, that's great. And he says, do you do this – I said, Tom, I just try to get people together. And Tom's sitting there, and all of a sudden here comes Ted Cruz walking down the ramp to get on the boat, and he says, I'm getting the hell off of this boat, he says. [Laughter.]

MR. RUBENSTEIN: Senator, I want to thank you for a very interesting conversation.

SEN. MANCHIN: But anyway, he stayed and they worked together. [Applause.]

⁴ Tom Harkin (D) served as a U.S. Senator from Iowa from 1985 to 2015 and was the U.S. Representative for Iowa's 5th congressional district from 1975 to 1985.



U.S. Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.) was sworn into the United States Senate on November 15, 2010 to fill the seat left vacant by the late Sen. Robert C. Byrd. For Manchin, serving as West Virginia's senator is truly an honor and a privilege.

Born and raised in the small coal mining town of Farmington, W.Va., Manchin grew up learning the values that all West Virginians share — family, common sense, fairness and hard work. As a small businessman, he learned firsthand from his grandfather, Papa Joe, who was an Italian immigrant and the town grocer, the importance of serving the public. As a young man, his beloved grandmother, Mama Kay, inspired

Manchin's belief in public service through her unflagging compassion and desire to help those less fortunate.

From his days as a state legislator to his six years as governor to his current role, Manchin has always been committed to his philosophy of "retail government" — in other words, connecting with all of his constituents and making service to them his top priority.

As a senator, Joe Manchin is committed to bringing this same spirit of bipartisanship to Washington. As he has done throughout his entire life, he remains committed to working with Republicans and Democrats to find commonsense solutions to the problems our country faces and is working hard to usher in a new bipartisan spirit in the Senate and Congress.

Legislatively, job creation is Manchin's top priority and he believes that government should act as a partner, not an adversary, in helping to create the environment that produces good American jobs. Manchin also firmly believes that our nation can and must do what he did in West Virginia - put our fiscal house in order. He believes we must find commonsense ways to cut spending while keeping our promises to our seniors and veterans by protecting Social Security and Medicare.

Manchin is strongly committed to developing a balanced national energy plan that utilizes all of our resources and recognizes that fossil fuels will be a vital part of our energy mix for decades to come. He believes that a balanced, commonsense approach that considers the needs of our environment and the demands of our economy, can and must be developed if we are to achieve energy independence within this generation.

Manchin currently serves as the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and also serves on the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Armed Services, and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs - four critical committees that tackle the important work of addressing our nation's energy needs, overseeing discretionary spending, standing up for our veterans, and defending our nation.

Manchin is an avid pilot, outdoorsman, hunter, angler and motorcyclist. He has been married for more than four decades to the former Gayle Conelly of Beckley. They have three children: Heather, Joseph IV and Brooke, and are the proud grandparents of Joseph V, Sophie, Kelsey, Madeline, Chloe, Jack, Carly, Vivian, Beaux and Knox.