

lots of people are smart - but smart sticks at all over him.

When you are with CF,
he tells you what's on his
mind. So you do catch
up with him each time.

Chaka Fattah (D/PA) in Philadelphia, June 30- July 2, 1998

Wednesday, July 1, 1998

- 8:00-10:00 a.m. Top of the Tower: Attend the Philadelphia 2000 breakfast regarding Philadelphia's bid to host both the Republican and Democratic National Committees Conventions in Y2K.
- 10:30-11:00 a.m. West Philadelphia College Access Center: Attend and give remarks (TRIO Program) at the press conference regarding the DOED grant award to the College Access Program in the amount of \$216,529, which will serve 2,250 middle school students as well as adults. Additionally, you will receive the first "Partner in Education" award from the PA Association of Secondary Schools and College Admission Counselors (PASSCAC).
- 12:00-1:00 p.m. Speak at the AFSCME District Council 47, Locals 810 and 2186 rally on behalf of collective bargaining with the courts for Probation Officers.
- 1:00-1:30 p.m. Attend an Inner City Youth Golf Project meeting with Mark Turnbull.
- 2:30-3:30 p.m. Give brief remarks at the largest naturalization ceremony since 1986. More than 500 immigrants will be sworn in as US citizens.

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- in the 10/20 night stair
- I flew down from Cape. FAX of schedule waiting at Doubletree. Went to first event (Democratic committee to choose 2000 convention site) and it was cancelled. Back to hotel--message from Theresa telling me of cancellation and suggesting I come to office and we'd go together. I did and we went to the award ceremony--a dozen people in a small room with a podium and, eventually, three TV channels. We rode back to his office and talked there between appointments. Drove to a union rally near City Hall--probation officers want to negotiate a contract with judges. Lots of speeches of solidarity. CF gave Drove to lunch with group organizing a golf program for inner city kids. Six people plus us. Back to office and talk. Then to naturalization ceremony--453 people of 82 countries. Very moving--he gave five minute talk after they took the oath. Rode back to office. Little more talk. He had office hours. I left.

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- This was a one day--actually a five hour--visit with Fattah. It is not much, time-wise. But he answers all my questions and, in a sense, lets me punch myself out! I ride with him from place to place, and when he has spare minutes in the office, I go in and fire away. If we are interrupted, he'll say, "where were we" and pick up where he left off--whether the interruption is a phone call in the office or a speech that he's giving somewhere. Example: sitting below podium at naturalization ceremony, he keeps getting introduced, sits down and keeps up the conversation.

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- What there is not, with him, is any leisure to absorb what he's saying or write it down. He just goes like a triphammer. And we don't "see" the district in the sense that he tells me about things as we weave our way through the city. He always seems to be full of business--though he's now addicted to golf, and he certainly smiles a lot. I'm not sure any congressman I've ever known treats me quite as much as a business relationship as he does. He certainly is cooperative. But I'm left with a torrent of analysis and words and a sense of exhaustion. As an example of his manner, after the naturalization talk, we sneaked out the back of the gym and he said not one word about what he had done. Took up business. I said, "82 countries--amazing." He said nothing. Interesting!

- At end, "I'll be interested to read your project." I said, "Well I may see you again before you see the project." And he said, "that's fine." His first comment (after asking about my

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trip down) was "How's your project going?" "It's coming along." Again, none of this is said with any edge to it. It's just business!

- We talked first about High Hopes (HH). "Do you want the substance of it or the politics of it?" "Both, but start with the politics."
- "There were two major turning points: getting the White House on board and getting the bill out of committee. And they were critically important. Failure at either point would have lost the bill--maybe for many years."
- "Getting the White House on board meant that we would get publicity for it. We found out later that unbeknownst to us, it had gotten honorable mention on one of the daily White House memos."
- "Several times I went over to the Education Department to talk with their people about the idea. One day I had a conversation with a staff member there--general counsel I think she was then--whom I had known in Philadelphia, and I asked her who I could talk with in the White House. Just to show you that when big things happen, it's the little things that count. She told me that Gene Sperling was interested in that sort of thing, that even though his field was the economy, his real passion in life was education for poor kids. She said I needed to see him. I got in touch with him and he and I talked half-a-dozen times the next year. I don't call it a negotiation because in a negotiation, you have to give up something. We worked out an enhancement of the program for the better. The idea was bifurcated. My original emphasis was on the money--on giving the middle school kids the chance to get the scholarship. The mentoring part of it was very minor. Once the idea started to go through the White House policy process, there was more emphasis put on the mentoring idea. My idea was that the only schools eligible would be where 75% of the students were below poverty line. Sperling and I broadened it to include schools where 50% were eligible for school lunch. The result was to widen eligibility for the program. And the mentoring part was made much more substantial. My program would have used the TRIO program for mentoring. Our meetings empowered and enhanced the idea. I met with the President and the Vice President individually, and the President embraced it as his own. He mentioned it in the State of the Union. And he announced it in the East Room."

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- Getting out of committee, "The first thing I did was to get all the Democrats to support it. My political philosophy is that you need to build your own team first before you take the field. You get the Democrats first, then the Republicans. And I kept working on Chairman Goodling. He never fully embraced it, but I was able to make any opposition he might have had a moderate opposition. Even though he asked for a vote on it and voted against it, he was not as aggressive as he could have been. I've been out to his district almost as much as I've been in mine. I went to two hearings he held there--the only Democrat to do so. I took an interest in what he was doing. I did everything I could to wear him down or build him up."
- "In the committee, Mark Souder spoke in favor of it. And I got McIntosh, Scarborough, Castle voted present. Lindsay Graham spoke in favor of the concept and voted present twice, but finally voted against it. And then it was clear that it would pass. I'll leave that to your interpretation (smile)."
- "It was a moment of drama in the Committee."
- "The Chairman allowed me to add my name as a sponsor of the entire Higher Education Bill. Usually it's only the Chairman and ranking member. It signified that I was the author of 13 pages. I thought it was a pleasant departure from the norm!"
- "It is the only part of the Clinton agenda that has been acted on in either body--at least through the normal legislative course."
- "We agreed, as strategy, that we would not politicize HH. It was not listed on the Democratic agenda. The White House made no comments on it when it passed. The day after it passed, there was a story in the New York Times that the Clinton education program was not making progress. We have not politicized it. And that has a lot to do with the smoothness in getting it to where it is now."
- "I opened up a negotiation with Senator Jeffords in the Senate. I met with him--no staff, just the two of us. I would say we made a 'deal,' but my staff gets on me when I say that. So I'll call it an 'accommodation.'"
- "If you go way back five years or so to the previous reauthorization (I need to remember that it was a reauthorization and that gave it some priority). Jeffords had a program to help states that already had programs to help

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kids to college. There were seven states and he got \$3m. But it was his and he wanted it included in the bill."

- "We worked it out and crafted the new program as a significant expansion of his initiative of five years ago. We kept the seven states program and said that the bill accomplished two things at the same time. The Senate language will embrace 100% of the House language and will intertwine the two interests--helping the seven states with their program. In conference, it is my hope that my House colleagues will recede and accept the Senate language. I'm sure they will. After all, I am the author of the House language; no one is going to protest now."
- "I've been promised a Rose Garden ceremony. There have only been nine of them out of 900 bills the President has signed. But you can never tell about that."
- "When Joe Scarborough voted yes in committee, I knew I had been talking to him about it for nearly a year. I had talked to JC Watts and to my friend, Steve Largent--though I never got his vote."
- "In the beginning, I saw it as the pre-notification of Pell Grants."
- Re its bipartisan appeal, "If you look at Gingrich's book where he talks about the change from a welfare society--which I don't think we have--to an opportunity society, if you think broadly about that idea of opportunity, that's what this bill is about."
- "Over in the Education Department, there was resistance. They had a bunch of meetings about the cost and some of them said it was too expensive."
- "Why did I begin the program in the sixth grade? Because that way CBO couldn't cost it. They only do projections for five years, and a program that began in the sixth grade wouldn't cost much until the 12th grade--six years out. We do know that if you promise kids dollars, they will take it and the program will impact a lot of them. Everything we know tells us that it will work and it will cost money.... Ford Foundation and others are already interested in helping."
- "The real cost is in college mentoring. We figure \$1,000 per person--really only \$800, but we put in some fat."

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- "Clinton was primed for the idea because in last years budget, he had included the \$500 tax cut, and the Hope scholarships."
- "Last years budget agreement had a lot of higher education in it. But the reality of those programs was that the middle class and upper middle class ~~and upper middle class~~ students--and not the low income ~~students~~ ^{the new} would be the beneficiaries. The President countered by saying that the Pell Grant was increased, which it was. And that is the basic program for low income students. The point I made to the President was that ~~this~~ program is a departure from the norm in conventional financial aid programs. As it is now, students don't know till they get to Temple and ask exactly what is available and how to get it. This process leaves out all the kids that dropped out along the way and never thought they had a chance to get to college. The idea here is to take the present financial aid system and use it as a motivator to give students the knowledge that they can do something with their lives. It's a different approach. It burdens the student to work and the teachers to get involved. May be "burden" is wrong word--motivates!"
- Each kid gets a certificate and gets another one each year as a reminder.
- He says that he talked a lot to conservatives who said it would cost a lot. His point is that it costs a lot more (\$70,000) to incarcerate a kid, or support a baby of a teenager. "I had to convince my conservative colleagues that there's a cost to everything kids do. Mostly it's the kid's failures that cost us more--crime, teenage pregnancy, etc. Here's a program that doesn't cost you a dime unless it works."
- "As we moved along, there were all kinds of chances to compromise, to cut deals, to have pilot programs. I used to be called the best vote counter in the Pennsylvania Senate. My philosophy is get the votes and assume you have the ideas, you go forward. I know I was a royal pain in the ass in this matter. But we just kept going forward."
- "I always saw this as my first major legislative victory. And success builds on success. Riggs is going to give me a hearing on my equity bill--that's next. It may be years away. But I believe you build currency for your ideas."
- He likes the idea of "currency" as what you create before you can take bold steps--organization to election; hearing to

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bill; etc.

- Somewhere where re success following success, he said he got \$400 million for housing in the city. This year?
- He came back to this idea as we were driving back from naturalization ceremony to office--near end of my visit.
- "I'm having a ball! I'm introducing legislation. I'll bet I have at least 300 House members co-sponsoring one of my bills. I want to get the basics of my agenda introduced--the equity bill, auto insurance, investment in cities. I want to get each one laid out and then work em. And then I'll be able to see just how good a legislator I am. I know I'll get off on side roads. But I believe that if my ideas have any merit, they will take off."
- "I'll take advantage of situations that turn up--Armey's bill on auto insurance. I want to amend his bill to provide for help where rates are outrageously high as they are in Philadelphia. Armey's bill says you can pay less if you are willing to get less. My bill says that where one part of a state pays rates that are vastly greater than other people in the state, auto rates should be put out for bids among three competing companies. The winner would take everyone in the affected area. You would cut rates immediately in Philadelphia by 40%. It's competition--the market principle, as Armey's is. It may not go anywhere, but I believe I should try, like a lawyer, to help the people I represent. A lawyer may not know whether the client is innocent or guilty, but as a lawyer, you will give your client the best defense you can. My responsibility as representative is to give constituents the very best legislative effort I can--win or lose."
- He "lines things up" as a way of describing his approach to legislation from early agenda to last minute voting. And, for his career, too. He has a plan. Wanted Appropriations, worked to get it by "doing all the things you are supposed to do."
- High hopes, "brings together the best of everything we know now about early intervention programs."
- On the generational thing, he does see change--not only among black congressmen, but in Congress generally, i.e., re his success. "Congress has changed. It's easier than it used to be for a person like me to get legislation passed early on."

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- "Or, parties aren't as strong as they used to be. Candidates are stronger than parties. They raise their own money. It's harder to get people together, but you get better people. And you get better legislation in the long run. As least I think you do. I know I like it better."
 - Do you have an organization? "Yes, people call it the Fattah organization. It is a very significant organization. It was built from the ground up. It is strictly a political organization--to get me elected. It wages political combat and wins most of the time. It's the strongest, most feared organization in the city (smile). The only rival political organization is the party. If there are 33 contests, the party will win most of them. But if its head-to-head in one contest, we will usually win. It's made up of people who have been with me along time--since I went to the state House. My chief money raiser today is the same man who was my chief money raiser when I first ran. We went to high school together. It used to be car washes and chicken dinners. Now it's \$1,000 checks. To understand the importance of my organization, you have to go way back to when I started in politics."
 - "Candidates don't win elections. Organizations win elections. I believe that you build your organization before you run for office. You don't build your organization as you go along. My organization is the reason I never worry about an election." "Have you ever had any trouble keeping your organization together? Any rivals?" "No problems--ever."
 - *A lot of this research depends on what you think is stimulated by you and what is spontaneous. You try to sit back and let them say what's on their minds; but if you think you ought to hear about some subject and you, therefore, put a question to them and get an answer, how do you treat the answer? Different from the way you would have credited it had they said it spontaneously, earlier? Here's the problem. CF doesn't mention black churches as LS does. But if I ask him, as I did, he said they are important.
 - "The black church is central in urban politics. I have always enjoyed the support of the influential clergy. They were one of the established groups that went with me over the incumbent. They are involved everywhere in the community. And that goes back a long way to the time when they were the main source of strength for black people. They are an important support base." He said all the expected things. But I had to present the stimulus. So, are they less

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important to him than to LS. I think so, but... some uncertainty.

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- As much as anything this time, the sense I had from my first visit concerning his community involvement was strengthened. It came up over and over. And there were a couple of things he said that nailed it. For example, "My politics grew out of the neighborhoods." Or, "I call it empowerment politics, not party politics."

"They say Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods. That's true. My district is a district of neighborhoods. I know them because I've been involved with them. Haddington Leadership Association, the Winnfield Residents Association, the Pt. Breeze Association--dozens of community organizations, youth organizations. The reason I know a lot about them is because I go way back with them. My association with Legal Services goes way back to the sit-in in West Philadelphia. I worked with tenant associations, like the Stubbs Association. I understand the pulse of the neighborhoods."

- "It's a district of neighborhoods with similar issues--whether it's Overbrook State, Landsdowne South or the Action Council. The most important people to me are not the elected officials, but the people who are actually involved in the community. Talk to anyone in Philadelphia who has had anything to do with affordable housing and they will have a connection to me--The Enterprise Fund, the Germantown Foundation. I've been in anti-drug efforts. There are layers of people involved in efforts to improve the life of their neighbors. And not all of them are charitable. Some are self-interested, like the neighborhood crime watch. But the result is that you get to help others. The base of my support is in all those group things."

- "Because of my involvement, people expect a lot more out of me than they do out of the ordinary, run-of-the-mill figure in town."

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- He does describe the district "urban, economically and ethnically diverse. "I have--not the poorest part of the city--but some of the poorest and some of the most affluent part of the city, both black and white. I have more medical colleges than any district in the country."

- But I'm convinced that he sees neighborhoods when he looks at the district. And that is different from any other member I've been with. The first word he uses when he describes the

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district is urban. And he sees "urban" when he sees the district and then "diversity" and diversity leads directly to neighborhoods.

- "We have the largest organization of the Future Farmers of America tucked away in my district!" People studying agronomy at some school in Germantown, I think.
- "Philadelphia is a city of neighborhood organizations. I have been active in these organizations--in a variety of roles, ^{some of} which I took on some as a teenager, some as an adult. There are 1,000 community organization in the city. And I have worked with more of them than any one in the community. I've spent years dealing with the small minutia of these groups; and that goes way back to jobs I held in city hall. I remember once when the power company turned out the lights in one of the city parks. The people came to me. I asked PICO to turn the lights back on. They said no, we can't do that till they pay the bill. So I worked it out that the power company lent the park people the money so they could pay to have the lights turned back on."
- neighborhood party*
- "Many of the party people in the wards are ^(now) part of my organization, too. If our organization couldn't win in a ward, we'd mix and match some community people, some party people and control the ward that way."
- Equival*
- "If you look at my clips during the first six years, all they mentioned was my organization. Now, all they mention is policy. I'm a mixture of both. I have a dual competence. You don't get to do policy unless you have an organization."
- "Politics is multi-faceted. At a general level, what people want is a fair set of rules. At another level, what they want personally is to have the rules broken or bent to solve their problem. Politics is the interaction between these two levels. And we reflect what people want. ^{As} Jesse Jackson says, people want present help at the point of difficulty."
- "People in my organization want me to react to their problems in ways useful to them."
- "Most of the early generation of African-American congressmen came out of the civil rights movement--or the church. Most of the generation now, though they hate to say it, have the orientation of career or professional politician. They came out of local government. I'm doing what I decided to do early in life. I'm doing what I trained myself to do."

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- When I mentioned LS, emphasis on "firsts," he exclaimed "That's the last thing we would want to hear now. We hope that time has passed. It would be very unfortunate if we were still celebrating firsts."
- When I asked him who he represents, who he thinks of when he says, "I represent them," he answered subtly, "There are multiple levels of representation," then he gave me examples of each: his district, the city of Philadelphia (airport), big cities, Pennsylvania (health reimbursement), racial matters. "When it's racially related, you have a broader responsibility." We ended with a discussion of representation. He was quite eloquent about the situation where very conservative members have sizeable black constituents. And in that case, "one group gets everything and the other gets nothing." (I thought of MC)
- * One idea that comes out of this is that representing part of a big city is different, in the sense that you are tied to the whole, even though you represent a part. I see Philly when I go to his district, but not so much his district. That is partly because he's involved in everything that goes on in the city. Well, DMC goes to Indy a lot--for money.
- We talked about redistricting--in connection with the Brady election. There will be enough population 1.3 million in the city for two districts.
- He had no conflict in the Brady race. "I told Julian that if he wanted to run, I would support him. Brady seemed undecided. Everyone thought Julian would run and Brady would drop out. At the last minute, Julian dropped out and Brady ran. At that point, there was no problem, although there is still talk of someone running as an independent. It just goes to show you how unpredictable politics can be. But because of the way it happened, there is a 90% chance that there will be a challenge next time."
- Idea is that no black candidate ever got a good, fair shot at the seat. He says Brady will keep his party job--that he was picked by Goode and kept by ~~Randall~~ and that "he has chips from a long way back." What jobs there are, he gets from the Mayor and only a new Mayor is likely to change head of party. I noticed no real warmth when Chaka and Brady were on the podium at the rally.
- When we had our last visit in his office, I asked him to give

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me the details of his association with one neighborhood group and he chose the Winnfield Residents Association.

- "My family was very much involved in efforts to deal with youth gang violence. The Winnfield neighborhood was a substantial, integrated, middle class area that felt exempt from youth gang violence. Then one weekend, there were two killings, one in retaliation for the other. My father and I set up meetings between the two groups. In the Philadelphia Inquirer, there was a picture of me. I was a teenager--sixteen or seventeen. We facilitated a dialogue. We fought to close the bars in ^{the} area, and I marched in those protests. Ann Jordan was a leader in the Association and she ran against the Speaker of the (Pennsylvania) House. I helped her. She lost. Then we tried to get rid of the ward leader. I got involved in that and after an eight year fight, we won. Those committee membership fights were hand-to-hand combat. Then there was a creek that ran under part of the area and there was a settling problem with some of the foundations. When I worked at City Hall, I helped work on that problem. I had a history of involvement there by the time I ran for the State Representative."

- "I've been in more community meetings, toured more abandoned houses and lots and participated in more community clean ups than a whole host of elected officials put together."
- "My mother and father run the only urban boys home in the country--a place to live for young men who are delinquent or dependent or both. They have several row houses in West Philadelphia. "Maybe that's why I feel at home in politics. I grew up in a home where there were always 30-40 people around."
- "They led the effort in the city to end gang violence. There were 60-70 gang deaths." Not sure of the dates.
- "I grew up in a home where being involved in community life was a norm."
- "I call it empowerment politics, not party politics." (I forgot the context for this.)
- "When I show up some place, I meet people who worked with my Mom when she was VP of the Philadelphia Council of Neighborhood Organizations. Or they worked with my Dad when he ran (Heart Tran) a youth development center in North Philadelphia. He's a teacher now."

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- "He was involved in city-wide gang meetings where they negotiated peace treaties. I got the chance to go around and bring dropouts together."
- "The Haddington Leadership Organization helped to build the second shopping center in the area. I got involved with them in that."
- "At the union rally today, I knew a whole bunch of people from a whole lot of associations. I had a whole lot of different connections--positively convoluted."
- When he got through a lot of this recitation of his community work, he wanted to make the point that he had earned his spurs. "When I walk on the floor of Congress, I don't feel like I'm an imposter, that I'm doing anything I don't have the ability to do."
- Later, when he had talked about his legislative accomplishments, he expressed a similar sense of satisfaction. Not in awe of what's happening to him. "When I play golf with the President or have a ceremony in the East Room, my ego allows me to assume that those things can happen to me."
- He recalls driving his Mother to DC when she testified at a hearing held by Stokes and Conyers. "It inspired me to go into politics, and it had nothing to do with policy."
- "In my job, I act in four capacities. The first is legislation. Lou Stokes said to me 'there are 40 million African-Americans, but there are only 40 of us who can do what we do, write bills, pass amendments, and vote. If we don't do that, we do a disservice to the broader constituency we are responsible for.' I'm dedicated to that idea."
- "I'm dedicated to legislation. I want to be an intricate part of the policy debate. Some people are content to criticize other people's policies. (There's an off-the-record comment left out here.) I want to be at the table when policies are being made. I do what you have to do--the grunt work beforehand. As a freshman state representative, I helped get a small group to meet together to do something about the poor economy. We called it "Penn Pride." We worked all summer and produced a package bill--The Employment Opportunity Act--to uplift the state's economy. Some of my colleagues wondered why we would do that--in summer. But I thought that's what a legislator is supposed to do. It was interesting to see them

nudege their way into the picture when the media appeared,

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nudge their way into the picture when the media appeared."

- Second "capacity" is ombudsman--"cut red tape."
- Third "public spirited leadership--like any leader in the community. If people will take your phone call, you have a responsibility to do something for others--like drug free work. Now, I'm working to get more interest in public education so that they will be more supportive of it. Like that golf for kids thing today. It's legitimate for me to feel like taking on that burden. I have the access... I have to do electoral activities, but much of what I do is beyond politics. My annual Graduate Opportunity Conference, for instance. It is now called the Fattah Conference on Higher Education. We spend a weekend with minority undergraduates. (My notes tell me about the opportunities in graduate school. I have a press clip on that.)
- Fourth, "political leadership on behalf of some of the elected officials. I do that on occasion."
- At the rally: "Let the word go forth that.... Philadelphia is a union town... we have to stand up for our rights. In the shadow of City Hall, they who believe the Transportation Workers will be pushed aside, they are wrong. They hurl insults at one of the strongest, most progressive unions in our town... When you are struggling to win, let's stand together for the working people of Philadelphia."
- Rally of probation officers against judges trying to break the union--in CF's view.
- Re his seat on Appropriations, "It's as close to being done as anything can be in politics."
- Murtha made the decision, told Gephardt, it was CF. "Tradition was that PA had two members on Appropriations from the east and one from the west. That's the way Murtha saw it."
- Re his candidacy: "I've done all the things I'm supposed to do. I've raised money for the party. I've given speeches for the party. I even went on the Ethics Committee. Unless something goes very wrong, I've crossed another boundary. I passed my first piece of legislation and got on one of the most powerful committees in Congress."

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- Adm*
- An interesting point--all the conversations we had, he never mentioned the Black Caucus. It's not--I assume--an important reference point for his activities. He is a whip. He notes this on his bio. But it means more to LS.
 - At the award ceremony, "I am pleased to represent a city that provides an example of what can be done to help people think through their chances and choice points in their lives."
 - "I designed the legislation because of the examples in my district. There were efforts around the county to make financial commitments to students at an early age. Among black students, 60% to 92% on these programs go to college."
 - "It is not just finances. It is for mentoring, too. It's not a pilot program. It's for 7,000 middle schools, with a billion dollars pledged.
 - "When they know for certain that there is something there for them, they do better."
 - "Latino and African-American young people get lots of negative messages, so it is very important that they get positive messages. If we have high expectations for them, they will do better."
 - He talks about the \$2.5 million grant--"to help people find their way through the admission process."
 - He praises the college access centers (of which this is one) for helping "to make college a real opportunity for every student in the country."
 - In Philly, "it is important to have professionals like you available, who learn about various programs. You enhance the life chances of students because of the work of your great organization."
 - Three channels--6, 10, 17--came for the ceremony. Ch.6 is the biggest in Philly.
 - He calls College Access Program there "the best program in the entire country." (Applause) This was in his third talk--one for each channel!
 - They "intervene in the lives of young people."

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- This group has experience in dealing with young people via the TRIO programs--he mentions it.

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