

INTERVIEW with HELEN D. BENTLEY

U.S. Representative from Maryland's 2nd district, 1985 through '94

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Helen Delich Bentley was born in Ruth, White Pine County, Nevada, on November 28, 1923; attended the University of Nevada, and Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.; and received a BA from the University of Missouri in 1944. During the next three and a half decades she was a journalist, television producer, chair (during 1969-75) of the Federal Maritime Commission, and then an international business consultant.

Bentley was a candidate for election to the 97th Congress in 1980 and the 98th in 1982; she was elected as a Republican to the 99th and to the four succeeding Congresses (serving from January 3, 1985, to January 3, 1995). She was not a candidate for reelection to the 104th Congress in '94, but instead sought the GOP nomination for Governor of Maryland. In 2002, she ran for election to the 108th Congress.

Throughout her career, Bentley has tirelessly advanced America's industrial/manufacturing base as well as its maritime community. In 2006, Bentley served as Chairman of the Port of Baltimore's Tricentennial Committee, which oversaw a year-long celebration honoring the Port's 300th anniversary. During a Tricentennial Committee dinner gala on June 1, 2006, Maryland Governor Bob Ehrlich announced that he had officially renamed Baltimore's port as The Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore. "There has been no one," said Ehrlich in making the announcement, "who has championed the vital role the Port plays in both the global economy and our everyday lives more than Helen."

Also see "doing business with" [Helen Bentley & Associates](#)

From the "Women in Congress" website

Able to attract blue-collar and traditionally Democratic voters, despite remaining relatively conservative, Bentley's gruff style and raspy voice seemed the very embodiment of her decades of experience spent on the city docks and plying the oceans. "I am a woman who worked in men's fields for a long time. I insisted on working on the city side of the paper and not the women's pages," Bentley once explained. "I did it all on my own. Women have to be willing to work and produce and not just expect favors because they are women."

Other Maryland officials who figure prominently in this transcript:

[Clarence "Doc" Long](#) -- U.S. Representative (D) from 1963 through '84

Senator Charles A. "Mac" [Mathias](#) and Governor Theodore [McKeldin](#)

Gregorsky: What kind of a kid were you?

Bentley: I was the youngest of a family of seven children, two of whom died young. We grew up in a copper-mining town -- 8,000 feet above sea level -- out in Nevada. It was a town of 1,500 people where you walked everywhere you went. It was mountainous country. We lived through the Depression there.

There were railroad tracks in front of our house. The immigrants had to live in certain sections of the town. Only the "white folk" could live in company houses and there were three sections of the town that were company houses. Immigrants lived on Main Street, which is where we lived, with the railroad tracks running right in front of our house connecting the mined copper and the pit copper together to go down to a smelter about 15 miles away. During the Depression we went out on those tracks to pick up coal remnants so we would have heat in our house.

Two older brothers were about six and eight years older than I and another was two years older, but he died when he was eight years old from tonsil poisoning. My dad was a copper miner. My mother kept boarders, which were the men who immigrated [and] came to work in the mines. And they lived on what we called "slip sheets" -- when one shift would come, they would use the beds; and then the sheets would be changed and the next group would sleep. And that was my beginning. We worked hard. We had a lot of snow every winter 'cause we were 8,000 feet above sea level.

Gregorsky: Your father also died when you were eight?

Bentley: He died when I was eight, right -- he died in 1932. Two brothers and I were the three left at home; my two older sisters had married and left home before my dad died. They had their families. My mother kept boarders so we would be able to live. I have a great picture of her somewhere with her mop in her hand.

Gregorsky: Were you glad to get out of there after high school?

Bentley: Well, I left.

Gregorsky: That's what people did, but --

Bentley: I left. I still go back once in awhile. I was back there last July and became very upset because all the copper is being mined -- the place had been closed down for years because of the EPA -- and now the copper is going to China. That disturbs me a great deal because I see this country's resources

being sucked up by China. We will have nothing left to produce anything in this country -- and I think that's wrong.

Gregorsky: When was your first interest in politics? I guess it's managing that campaign for the fellow who ran for Senate?

Bentley: Yeah, basically. While in high school, I worked on a weekly newspaper called the *Ely Record*. The owner of that paper was a Republican State Senator -- Charlie Russell. And I guess whatever interest I had emanated from that. When Senator Scrugham -- at this point he was candidate Scrugham -- came looking for campaign help accompanied by a retired Army Colonel (Colonel Tom Miller). They were Democrats. Charlie was a Republican. They asked Charlie who might be able help them. Out in a remote area like that, the parties helped each other at that time.

Gregorsky: [Makes a noise indicating mild surprise]

Bentley: I knew nothing about politics. But Charlie recommended me. And so they put me in charge of White Pine County and Eureka County. Senator Scrugham won -- and he carried both counties.

Gregorsky: And then you heard: "Come to Washington -- "

Bentley: To work there. At that time, there were five people on a [Senator's] staff. Five people total. To my knowledge they did not have an office in Nevada -- out in the district. But, back then, the Senate closed down on June 30th every year, and then the staff members who worked closest to the Senator would travel west with him.

From the 1950s to the '70s: Maryland and the Port

Gregorsky: What kind of a guy was [two-term GOP Governor] Theodore McKeldin?

Bentley: Very affable -- I guess you'd call him [pause] gargantuan?

Gregorsky: [Chuckling]

Bentley: He was a big man. Big man. But he was a man who'd bend down and listen to you -- and he'd listen. He was Governor in 1955 when we were fighting to change the Port here -- out of the hands of the railroads. He set up a committee to lead the fight in Annapolis. And, although I was with the *Sun* paper [and not] officially on the committee, I was on the committee -- because the paper granted me freewheeling authority. We went to Annapolis; we lost in that year of '55. McKeldin set us back up in power for the next year, and we won. And that's when I really learned about politics: The way you win votes is to (a) educate the Members and (b) make them feel important in enacting the legislation.

Gregorsky: Okay, so that --

Bentley: I also had a television show -- every Sunday afternoon -- called *The Port that Built a City and State*. It ran from 1950 to 1965. And between the '55 General Assembly and the '56 [session], I invited various members of the state legislature on my show. We talked about the Port and they became much more involved and appreciated the Port.

Gregorsky: So, in the early days, that would have been live television -- no video, right?

Bentley: It was live television. Totally live.

Gregorsky: You make a mistake, it just goes out.

Bentley: That's right. It was all live.

Gregorsky: Did you come close to running for office at all before the Maritime Commission?

Bentley: No, but during the Maritime Commission I did -- in '74. The conservatives were very unhappy with [Senator] Mac Mathias; they were urging me to run. They promised that one would raise \$300,000 and one would raise \$100,000 -- etc. And when we came down to nuts and bolts, the \$300,000 evaporated to \$30,000; the \$100,000 evaporated to \$10,000; and another guy was running in the primary -- Ross Pierpoint. He ran in many, many campaigns in Maryland. And Ross would not get out of the race, 'cause he said he was the only one who could beat Mathias -- in his opinion.

One Sunday afternoon before filing time -- filing time at that time in Maryland was around July 1st -- we had a long session talking with him. It was George Russell, Lyn Nofziger and Walter Moat (who was then very active in the Republican party). Did no good. Ross would not get out of the race -- no matter what.

So -- I didn't quite make up my mind then, but I didn't feel I was going to run. A three-way race? You knew Mac was going to win it.

Gregorsky: And that was the first year that Barbara Mikulski ran statewide.

Bentley: She then ran -- yep [as the Democratic nominee challenging Mathias].

Senator Mathias and His Non-Moderate Methods

Gregorsky: Why did Mathias have such a hold on Maryland for all those years?

Bentley: Well, as you know, he had a liberal voting record; so, in the general election, it was easy for him to win [a majority].

Gregorsky: He always seemed kind of aloof, though -- kind of "dry." Was he like that on the stump?

Bentley: Not really. He was rather warm.

On the last night for filing, I went down to Annapolis -- because you had to be in the office by 9:00 if you were gonna file. You didn't have to file by nine, but you had to be in the office. So I and three of my friends went down -- I was still thinking about making the race. My husband accompanied us. I kept doing the figures on how much money was needed and how much money I didn't have. Bill and I had no resources; he was a teacher [and I would have to] quit my job the minute I filed. And so we debated down there for about an hour and a half, 'til about 10:30 at night -- and decided I couldn't do it. Ross would not get out of the race.

Little did I know how worried the Mathias people were about my running -- I learned that later.

When my appointment came up for renomination by President Ford [in 1975], President Ford sent word to me: "I'll nominate you if you want, but you need to know that we understand that Mathias intends to destroy you in the Senate hearing, because he's very upset that you might run against him."

So I went up on the Hill, to Senator Inouye -- Dan Inouye was always a good friend, particularly because of shipping. I told Dan what the story was, and that I'd like to know what's happening before I decide. The President had told me it would be my decision.

A couple of days later, Senator Inouye called me to his office, and he said: "Helen, get out -- because Mathias does want to destroy you." He had something [like] a phone call on an office phone that involved the potential campaign; people had called me and somebody had typed something on a typewriter in my office. So Dan said: "Get out. You can run later; but if you come up here and your name is destroyed, you can never run."

Gregorsky: The earlier warning -- that didn't come from Ford personally, did it? When he said "I'll nominate you if you want but..."

Bentley: No no, it came from Hills.

Gregorsky: [HUD Secretary] Carla Hills.

Bentley: Not her, her husband.

Gregorsky: Roderick.

Bentley: Yeah.

Gregorsky: Did you ever confront -- I mean, you couldn't because you weren't supposed to know it at the time, but: Did you ever have a conversation with Mathias about that whole [1975 renomination] situation?

Bentley: No -- but I did with some of his staff later.

Gregorsky: Did they confirm it?

Bentley: Yeah, they did. They also confirmed how scared he was if I were to run.

Gregorsky: And what did he do when you got a congressional nomination in 1980?

Bentley: Well, he supported me. He supported me. And, as a matter of fact, he was on my side when I ran for Governor.

Gregorsky: Um-hmm. Against [Ellen] Sauerbray, really?

Bentley: Yeah. So --

Gregorsky: 'Cause you were more moderate than Sauerbray?

Bentley: Yeah. I guess. But anyhow, that's the political background.

LONG, Clarence Dickinson (1908-1994)

LONG, Clarence Dickinson, a Representative from Maryland; born in South Bend, St. Joseph County, Ind., on December 11, 1908; B.A., Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pa., 1932; M.A., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1935; Ph.D., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., 1938; United States Navy, 1943-1946; professor; author; associate task-force director, Hoover Commission, 1948; member of the Council of Economic Advisers to the President, 1953-1954 and 1956-1957; elected as a Democrat to the 88th and to the 10 succeeding Congresses; unsuccessful candidate for reelection to the 99th Congress in 1984; died on September 18, 1994, in Cockeysville, Md.

SOURCE -- <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000413>

Three Challenger Campaigns, "Doc" Long, Expanding the Harbor

Gregorsky: I was a junior guy on the Hill when "Doc" Long was in office and didn't pay much attention to him. But, what kind of a man was this?

Bentley: He was a very arrogant "I am Doc Long!" type person. He had a good staff and the staff is who kept him in office -- they did take care of the constituents. And of course he was Chairman of the Foreign Aid subcommittee of Appropriations. As you know in Maryland we have a large Jewish constituency, and they took care of voting for him always.

It was only after the 1980 redistricting -- when Harford County became part of the second district, which balanced out the Pikesville crowd -- that I was able to defeat him. And I won Dundalk. Dundalk, of course, is a very blue-collar area and I was able to turn Dundalk around to support me -- and that's really what made the difference. I still go to Dundalk often.

Gregorsky: I sort of like it down there.

Bentley: I love it.

Gregorsky: Two other people I know of had to run three times to get into the House Republican Conference.

Bentley: Newt Gingrich.

Gregorsky: And Frank Wolf.

Bentley: Yeah. Right.

Gregorsky: Although Frank didn't get nominated his first time out, but you and Newt went [as the party nominee] all three times and won on the third try.

Bentley: Um-hmm.

Gregorsky: Just the nuts and bolts, the fund-raising -- I mean, how did you keep on through three campaigns, to finally get there?

Bentley: I felt that the big issue was the Port of Baltimore. And the failure of Long -- not just failure, the brick wall that Long had built against the dredging and the placement of material. 'Cause that was my issue -- the need for a 50-foot channel. I'd been involved in dredging and the channel during my days at the paper in the '50s and '60s -- in fact, back to 1946.

You had Eddie Garmatz, George Fallon and Sam Friedel -- from Maryland, in Congress. All three were chairmen of committees. And I used to commute on the train (those were the days you always went by train). I was on the Hill a lot for the *Sun* paper. So I would go over with these guys and I learned an awful lot [laughter] about Long, who was not liked by any of them. None of the other Democrats liked Long.

As a matter of fact, shortly before the big race in '84, Long was the senior guy in the delegation, which gave him the right to call all of the Maryland delegation meetings. But he had not been having delegation meetings. So, all of a sudden, other members were called to a delegation meeting -- Long called it in his office. So everybody goes to the delegation meeting -- [Beverly Byron](#) will confirm this -- and everybody is ready to sit down and talk to Long. Long had 'em stand up for a photograph with him -- and then he dismissed the meeting! They were very annoyed -- that's putting it mildly. And they all came around indirectly to support me, because of his attitude towards them.

Gregorsky: Why was he oblivious toward the needs of the Port?

Bentley: That was Long -- I mean, he was in his own world. There was some concern about the placing of material at Hart Miller, which were two tiny little plots of ground left from hurricanes and everything else in the Bay -- that's where we wanted to put the material and build it up. Some of the people in the Dundalk area didn't want that, and he was supporting them.

He entered a lawsuit on this whole project. I'm not giving you the exact details; you'll have to do some research -- but [the point is that] he was blocking every effort. So I pointed out that he had cost the state three or four billion dollars and was continuing to do so. And this issue had to be resolved.

Gregorsky: Environmentalists were the ones who didn't want to proceed?

Bentley: Not so much at that time. No, not so much at that time -- although some of them didn't. I'd have to get you the background on all this. I emphasized the economy and jobs, and jobs and the economy, and jobs and the economy.

Gregorsky: All three times?

Bentley: Always. And, if we hadn't obtained the 50-foot channel when we did, Baltimore would never succeed today -- I can assure you of that. And everybody knows it.

Gregorsky: So, when was it obtained?

Bentley: It was finished in '88-89. I entered Congress in '85. The "WRDA" -- Water Resources Development Administration or whatever -- was the one that authorized the 50-foot channel. It was the last bill of the 99th Congress.

SIDEBAR: How Democrats Win Elections After They're Over

Gregorsky: The McCloskey-McIntyre fight was raging right after you were sworn in. What do you remember about those partisan frictions?

Bentley: Well, we became very angry with Bob Michel. 'Cause we all marched out on that issue. We went out.

Gregorsky: Did he go with you or not? I've heard two different versions.

Bentley: I don't remember -- probably not. We wanted to stay out -- and Michel called us right back in.

Gregorsky: "We" being the 1984 GOP freshmen or?

Bentley: Yeah. Yeah. We wanted to stay out -- and we should have.

Gregorsky: For like maybe a week or -- ?

Bentley: Whatever. That seat was definitely stolen, as they have stolen other seats. I think this show up in Minnesota [Coleman versus Franken] last year was outrageous. And unfortunately the Republicans either don't have the know-how -- or have the stamina -- to battle.

Gregorsky: As I recall, Rick McIntyre was certified by the State of Indiana as the winner. In your mind, that should have settled it.

Bentley: That should have settled it. Then, as I recall, they came out -- some of the Democrats from Capitol Hill -- went out to Indiana and did some tiddly widdly to change the figures.

Favorite Colleagues and an Out-of-Touch President

Bentley: The Japanese -- and I think it's probably still true -- had wormed their way into almost every hallway of every government agency in Washington. And I was one who went after 'em day in and day out on the Floor about this, because I felt -- I felt and I predicted -- that, as we lost our manufacturing base, we would bring about the economic collapse that we're seeing today. Forget about housing and all of that [as the supposed cause], it all came true -- and it's exactly what I said then. I can show you speeches on the Floor of the House that said that.

Gregorsky: Who were some of your Member allies in either party?

Bentley: Curt Weldon, [Duncan Hunter](#).

Gregorsky: Oh, good 'ol Duncan. Great guy.

Bentley: One of my best, on the Republican side. On the Democratic side --

Gregorsky: Traficant? Didn't he say make many of these points on the --

Bentley: Traficant was there. Yes, he was there. Marcy Kaptur.

Gregorsky: Um-hmm. And Mary Rose Oakar?

Bentley: Mary Rose was.

Gregorsky: Probably some of the Pennsylvania guys too, I would imagine.

Bentley: Yeah, they were there. John Murtha. And another guy from up there who was in the Steel Caucus -- Joe Gaydos.

Gregorsky: But you were a minority within the Republican Conference [when it came to just about every trade vote]?

Bentley: I was a minority. I'm still a minority [laughter] -- on that issue.

Gregorsky: So when Ross Perot burst on the scene in '92, you must have been delighted!

Bentley: Oh yeah. We became [pause] friends -- let's put it that way. And the Bush people were not paying attention to what the hell was going on during that '92 campaign.

I had been Maryland Chairman for Bush in '88 -- and in '92, when the Bush campaign asked me again to be the Chair for Maryland, I replied: "I will not [sign on] until I talk with the President." When I talked with the

President, the first thing he said was, "Why aren't you running for Senate against Mikulski?" And I said, "Because I can't win." "Ohhhh, yes you can." I said: "Mr. President, you might not be aware of it, but your popularity is at 33% in Maryland." He didn't believe it; he was shocked to hear it.

And I went on: "Now here is my opinion on what you need to do to turn things around in this country." I gave him some economic points such as tax credits for American manufacturing -- I'd have to get the list if you want it. I gave him seven points. Of course they were all ignored.

Gregorsky: But he didn't care about domestic policy; there's no evidence --

Bentley: He did not! You're right. One of the seven points was, at that time, McDonnell Douglas was going to Taiwan to get two billion dollars in loans and in turn "MD" was going to give a lot of manufacturing to Taiwan. And I said [to President Bush]: "You need to stop that. You need to find two billion dollars in this country for McDonnell Douglas -- and keep the manufacturing jobs here." He never understood. And, of course, later on MD went down.

Gregorsky: How did you deal with the agricultural lobby and farmers in your district who said: "If you get the U.S. to crack down on [Asian] investment here, or their other types of engagement here, we're not going to be able to sell our grains and foodstuffs there?" Protectionism goes both ways -- I mean, how did you deal with [the risks of retaliation]?

Bentley: I dealt with it. And the farmers were not against me in Maryland -- I managed it. A lot of the agricultural products were sold by AID. And we had meetings regularly with the farmers. We pointed out that you have to use American ships. You have to use American farmers because it is our money that is paying for this. So at least we should benefit some from it. That's still going on -- occasionally that's still an issue.

Iraq and Afghanistan; Richard Cheney

Gregorsky: What do you make of the younger George Bush and his Presidency?

Bentley: Ahhh [pause] -- not much.

Gregorsky: Was Iraq a mistake?

Bentley: I thought it was -- from the beginning. Standing in Duncan Hunter's office, I said: "Duncan, what the hell are we going in there for? What have they done to us?" I never got an answer. I would have voted against Iraq at that time -- and it went downhill from there.

Gregorsky: A trillion dollars. If anybody [in 2003] had any idea that we were going to spend that much -- I mean, that country might in the end be okay, but nobody would have wanted to spend a trillion dollars for it.

Bentley: Not in Iraq. And I'm not sure in the end that it's going to be okay. But -- what a waste. The lives of our young people -- those who were killed and those who have been turned into vegetables and who are handicapped. It just wasn't worth it. What a waste.

Gregorsky: Either as --

Bentley: And, I think Afghanistan is [pause] not right. Get the hell out of there. Let those people live however they want to live. We can't control the world.

Gregorsky: Either as Vice President or as a colleague, when you were in Congress, your thoughts on Dick Cheney.

Bentley: Dick was a good colleague. He came over here and campaigned for me. And I was always impressed with the fact that he drove himself. He would come; he would be there for the event early; and he would stay and chat. He was a good guy. As Vice President? I think he took on a lot of the heavy stuff that had to be taken on. Maybe some of it could have been allowed to slide -- but, all in all, I would give him "E for effort."

Women in (Maryland) Politics; Palin versus the Dems

Gregorsky: I would imagine you had excellent relations with both [Marjorie Holt](#) and Bev Byron -- 'cause in a lot of ways Bev Byron was almost a Republican.

Bentley: Yes, she was. And I did -- we got along well.

Gregorsky: And that was unusual -- to have three out of the eight Representatives be females.

Bentley: We had four.

Gregorsky: Four. Really?

Bentley: Mikulski was there [in the House from 1977 through '86].

Gregorsky: Oh, that's right.

Bentley: There were four of us -- half the delegation -- and now they have none.

Gregorsky: What do you think of Sarah Palin?

Bentley: I like her. I like her.

Gregorsky: She still doesn't know that much about the economy, apart from energy.

Bentley: Well, she --

Gregorsky: She can learn?

Bentley: She can learn. I mean, how many people come to Congress and they don't know a damn thing about anything? Except "I don't like Murtha or I don't like John or [whoever I just ran against]" --

Gregorsky: Sarah Palin is a relentless innovator. She does things her own way and then people cannot [figure out] the logic. Later on, it becomes clearer. She's got this intuitive sense that so far is holding her aloft. But it's a --

Bentley: Some of my best friends don't like her, okay? So I have arguments with 'em all the time. They don't like the fact that she's pro-life [and is] as strongly pro-life as she is. They also think she sounds wacky.

Well, you know, I don't agree. I think she knows her energy. I watched her on Sean Hannity's show this week, and she did pretty good. She did pretty good. I don't find anything that negative -- but the Democrats don't like her; they're afraid of her. And, that's why they're trying to destroy her.

Gregorsky: What were your relations like with the organized feminist groups when you were in office?

Bentley: I was never part of 'em.

Gregorsky: Did they try and get you to sign petitions and --

Bentley: I don't think they bothered with me.

How Trade Policies Can Bleed a Country

Bentley: Now, this book I read chapter by chapter on the Floor of the House.

Gregorsky: Let's get the exact title for the transcript -- *The Japanese Conspiracy* -- and the author is Marvin J. Wolf. Empire Books of New York is the publisher, and it came out in 1983.

Bentley: In my first three or four years there, I read chapter after chapter on the Floor of the House -- laying out the basis for my fears about the economy. Everybody thought I was nuts.

Gregorsky: Well, today almost everybody thinks the Japanese have made a mess of their economy and aren't much of a power anymore.

Bentley: They are still a power -- maybe not as much, but they're still a power.

Gregorsky: They have a lot less money to throw around, right?

Bentley: Yeah. But I wouldn't want to meet them in a back alley. Okay?

Gregorsky: Did their Embassy try to reach out to you -- mollify you -- do anything?

Bentley: A couple of times, but we never responded. And then, in 1987, it was learned that Toshiba had sold the secrets of our submarines to the Russians.

Gregorsky: I remember that!

Bentley: And neither Japan nor the company would admit it. They wouldn't admit it, at first to the State Department; and then the Congress began calling 'em about it, and they still wouldn't admit it. So, in July of '87, I gathered about six fellow Republicans -- Duncan, Curt Weldon [of Pennsylvania], I've got the picture -- and we took a Toshiba radio on the steps of the Capitol.

Gregorsky: Right, that's mentioned on the Internet.

Bentley: And -- we broke it with a big sledgehammer. Okay? That's when the Japanese really reached out.

Gregorsky: Um-hmm!

Bentley: That picture [from the Capitol steps] was run again and again. But Toshiba -- they finally admitted it -- after we did that, they admitted it. In the next trade bill that passed, we had an amendment that would prevent any U.S. agency from buying a Toshiba product -- for three years.

Gregorsky: Wow.

Bentley: Okay? That was in the version that passed the House. It was in the version that passed the Senate. But it was not in the version that went to the President to sign. Now you tell me what the hell happened to it.

Gregorsky: I never heard of that -- a specific prohibition against American government purchases from a foreign manufacturer -- a specific manufacturer.

Bentley: Yeah.

Gregorsky: And the House and Senate each voted for it? Probably somebody said, "Hey, you can go ahead and vote for this -- feel good, act tough -- and we'll take it out in conference committee."

Bentley: It did not come out in conference.

Gregorsky: Oh, it didn't?

Bentley: No.

Gregorsky: Oh, so on final passage --

Bentley: Yes, it was there! But when [the bill] went to the President -- we found out a couple of months afterward [that the provision was gone].

Gregorsky: Wow. Somebody made a computer deletion at the White House?

Bentley: Either that or somebody on Capitol Hill got a few green bucks.

Years later I saw Speaker Tom Foley -- this is after he had become Ambassador [to Japan]. I saw him on the elevator in the Capitol on one of his visits and he said: "Helen, you are better known in Japan today than Admiral Perry." And I said, "Well, give 'em my best regards."

"With a strong record of constituent-service, cross-party popularity..."

Gregorsky: What other comments do you have on your service during five terms in Congress? Sounds like you enjoyed it.

Bentley: Yep, I did. It was right up my alley.

Gregorsky: And you tried to come back in '02.

Bentley: In '02 -- it was an open seat. But the district had been changed. They put 35% of the district -- it had become city [and more of] a minority district -- easier for a Democrat to win. But, worse than that, Tom -- Tom [pause] -- he retired last year.

Gregorsky: Which state?

Bentley: Virginia. In 2002 he was chairman of the House --

Gregorsky: Davis. Tom Davis.

Bentley: I don't think it was Davis.

Gregorsky: He was also Chairman of Government Ops.

Bentley: Yeah. Government Ops.

Gregorsky: So that has to be Davis.

Bentley: Okay. He was then also Chair of the Republican Congressional Committee.

Gregorsky: "NRCC," right.

Bentley: So before I got into the race, we talked with him and his people and he said: "Well, if you're high up [in the polls], we'll support you all the way." Okay? We went back to him several times and he said, "If you are still close in August, you'll get our full support." I was ahead in October -- early October -- and still couldn't get a nickel out of him. And he never gave me a nickel.

Gregorsky: You're saying in October -- okay, you had the Republican nomination.

Bentley: I had the nomination! I had been the only one running [to be nominated as a Republican].

Gregorsky: Got it -- wow, that's impressive.

Bentley: And let me tell you furthermore: Duncan Hunter gave the congressional committee \$50,000 and told them it was all to come to me. [Outgoing Congressman] Ehrlich gave 'em \$100,000 [with the same stipulation] -- and I didn't get a penny of either donation. Okay? And that's why I lost -- because the Republican Party -- the congressional committee -- did not support me.

Epilogue -- from page 751 of the 2004 *Almanac of American Politics*

The Congressman from [Maryland's] 2nd District is **C.A. Dutch Ruppensberger**, a Democrat first elected in 2002, for whom this district was drawn.

Ruppensberger grew up in Baltimore, attended the University of Maryland and graduated from the University of Baltimore law school, and then served as Baltimore County assistant state's attorney. In 1986, he was elected to the Baltimore County Council; in 1994, he was elected Baltimore County Executive... Barred from seeking a third term in 2002, he claimed credit for the county's high bond rating... was an advocate for smart-growth initiatives, and championed extensive land-conservation efforts... In fall 2001, he signaled that he would run for the House if Democratic redistricters produced a favorable district; after they did, he announced he was running.

He faced some tough obstacles. In 2000, he had backed a property-condemnation plan that would give him the power of eminent domain to redevelop large pieces of the county; the proposal was soundly rejected at the polls. In the 2002 Democratic primary, his little-known opponent, investment banker and Princeton graduate Osman "Oz" Bengur, spent more than \$500,000 of his own money. Bengur, a former Republican whose political experience had been as an alternate delegate from Maine to the 1980 Democratic convention, said the proposal showed Ruppensberger was too closely tied to developers... The state's Democratic establishment lined up behind Ruppensberger [and] Bengur failed to pull off an upset [but] Ruppensberger won by the surprisingly weak margin of 50% to 36%.

The fall campaign was no easier. This open seat centered on the Port of Baltimore attracted former Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley, who had won the 2nd District seat in 1984 and held it until she ran, unsuccessfully, for Governor in 1994.

At 78, Bentley was by far the oldest candidate in a seriously contested House race in the 2002 cycle. But she was still feisty and energetic. She said that Republican leaders promised to restore her seat on Appropriations and that she would concentrate on national security and maritime issues. With a strong record of constituent-service, cross-party popularity and a willingness to buck her own party, Bentley seemed to have a chance to overcome the new district's Democratic leanings. Both candidates supported additional dredging of shipping channels in the Bay plus increased port security.

Ruppensberger won by a larger than expected 54% to 46%. His popular vote margin was more than 13,000 votes in the small part of the district in Baltimore City, which he carried 79% to 21%, and only 3,000 votes in the rest of the district. Bentley did not fare as well as Republicans had hoped in the suburbs, losing Baltimore County 51% to 48% and running about even in the other two.