

S P E C T R U M

THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS ■ THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PARK
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Post-Election Insights Enliven Speculation on Incoming Administration's Effectiveness



Cokie Roberts on "Congress: Beyond Gridlock"

On November 9, three veteran Congress observers took to the dais to discuss "Congress: Beyond Gridlock." Cokie Roberts, Thomas Boggs and Lindy Boggs, all members of the same political family, came to the University of Maryland to participate in the School of Public Affairs' Third Distinguished Board of Visitors Lecture. Tom Boggs, a partner in the Washington law firm of Patton Boggs & Blow, is a noted Washington lobbyist and long-time member of the School's Board of Visitors. His mother, former Congresswoman Lindy Boggs, and his sister, ABC News and National Public Radio correspondent Cokie Roberts, have long been Capitol Hill observers in their respective capacities. All three mark their experience with the legislative branch from 1941, when the late-Hale Boggs, later to become House Majority Leader, first brought his family to Washington as a freshman member of Congress.

Each member of the Boggs family forecast both opportunities and impediments to action in the newly-elected, Democrat-controlled government.

"I'm thrilled because I've gone 5 days now without hearing Ross Perot's voice," Cokie Roberts quipped at the outset. "I have to admit to a certain lack of gratitude on my part; Ross Perot had initially picked me as his vice president – I'm not making this up. When Ed

Rollins got to Texas for the putative summer campaign, Perot handed him a piece of paper on which there were two names, mine and William French Smith. Perot said, 'This is the short list for vice president.' Rollins said, 'Well, it's even shorter than you think – William French Smith is dead.' But I want you to know that I have checked my Constitution and it says nowhere that the vice president has to be alive, which actually explains a lot."

In addressing the gridlock between Congress and the executive branch, Roberts noted, "When we started this campaign, the polling was 2:1 for divided government. By the time it was over, it had reversed. The more President Bush talked about Congress as a problem, the worse it was for him. People thought that, as long as Congress is going to be Democratic, we ought to have a Democratic president in there to work with them."

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