

SEEKING THE EXTRAORDINARY

# Ep 6 - Inclusion and Independence: Jim Langevin

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[00:00:00] **Lisa:** Seeking the Extraordinary is sponsored by The Colony Group, a national wealth and business management company that seeks the extraordinary by pursuing an unrelenting mission of providing clients with peace of mind and empowering new visions of tomorrow. Visit [thecolonygroup.com](http://thecolonygroup.com) to learn more.

**Michael:** Welcome fellow seekers of the extraordinary. Welcome to our shared quest, a quest, not for a thing, but for an ideal. A quest, not for a place, but into the inner unexplored regions of ourselves. A quest to understand how we can achieve our fullest potential by learning from others who have done or are doing exactly that. May we always have the courage and wisdom to learn from those who have something to teach. Join me now in seeking the extraordinary. I'm Michael [00:01:00] Nathanson, your chief seeker of the extraordinary.

Today's guest is his very own brand of extraordinary. He is resilience, leadership and service personified. At the young age of 16, he was working with the Warwick, Rhode Island Police Department in the Boy Scout Explorer program. A gun accidentally went off and a bullet struck our guest, leaving him paralyzed. But something happened after that. The outpouring of support from his community inspired him to change the world by becoming a public servant. He attended Rhode Island college and earned a Master's degree in public administration from Harvard University. About eight years after his injury, he was elected to the Rhode Island House of Representatives in 1988 and was elected in 1994 to be the youngest Secretary of State in the nation, serving Rhode Island in that [00:02:00] capacity until 2000. In 2000, he successfully ran for a seat in the U S Congress becoming the first quadriplegic in history to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

20 years later, he is a senior member of the House of Representatives where he now serves in several leadership roles. He is a senior member of the House Armed Services committee through which he serves as chair of the emerging threats and capabilities subcommittee. He's also a senior member of the House committee on Homeland security and the co-founder and chair of the bipartisan congressional cybersecurity caucus. He's been a powerful advocate for inclusion and independence for people with disabilities. Co-chairing the bi-partisan disability caucus and for medical research in all its viable forms. Please welcome the extraordinary Jim Langevin. Welcome, Jim.

**Jim:** Well, Hi Michael. Good afternoon. How are you?

**Michael:** I'm [00:03:00] doing well. I'm just so delighted to be able to speak with you.

**Jim:** Same here, looking forward to our conversation today and thanks for that kind intro.

**Michael:** Well, you've earned every bit of it.

**Jim:** I'm excited about your show, the show sounds extraordinary. And I am I'm honored to be a guest. It's really nice that you reached out.

**Michael:** Well, Jim, let me just give you a little bit of background on our show and what we're trying to do. Unlike other shows that might, for example, jump right into some of the political questions and there were many certainly we could get into, and perhaps we will, as the conversation proceeds. This is a conversation largely around what's made you successful and how you have been able to achieve what you have achieved. This is a show where our listeners are looking to learn from people who have truly achieved the extraordinary. And we're hoping to to unpack some of that and and learn some of your some of your formula for success. [00:04:00] And normally I like to begin by talking about your origin story. So maybe we could just get into your childhood. And I know certainly you had the accident. We're gonna get to that. But before that, I'm curious what kind of an upbringing you had and anything you can share with us about your childhood, that you can think of now as having been part of your journey to where you are right now.

**Jim:** So, I guess I'd say I, I grew up in a very normal middle-class family. Which, I guess by today's standards is maybe it's pretty extraordinary or in the sense that, we just I can't say there was anything significant that, I thought it was different about my family at the time than any other family. But as I grew up and got older, I understood how exceptional my family is and how lucky I was to be blessed with two great parents and great siblings and just a stable normal [00:05:00] upbringing. And so that was very helpful, know in later years, at least in my formative years, and then, going beyond that, it helped me to in a way thrive. I think they're not an of ways.

**Michael:** How many siblings do you have?

**Jim:** So I have two, I'm the oldest. I have two younger brothers and I have a younger sister. Growing up the dynamic was my mom and dad, and then I had my two brothers and I were relatively close in age. And so there's two years difference two to three years to treat my brother, my next youngest brother. And then after that. Right. But. I was six years difference between myself and my youngest brother. We all grew up together. And then when I was 16 it was a late life surprise in the family and my my little sister came along. So at 16 years difference between she and I. So we like to joke around that it was her name is Joanne, and it was good to be Joanne growing up because [00:06:00] she had three older brothers to look out for her. But at the same time, she was also like an only child with my, my parents when we were growing up, getting real middle class family, my parents struggled.

Like any other family to, to get by and get established. And so I couldn't say that there's a whole lot of extras and things when we were growing up that if you did, for one, you had to do for all three. So we didn't do a lot of, big travel adventures or things like that. Although we had great, just normal family vacations going camping or going in the family station wagon driving down to Virginia for summer vacations and things like that. But my sister came along, she did pretty good, my parents were by then established and she was a great addition to our family and she came along at an important time as it turned out since she was born just a few months before my accident.

**Michael:** Okay. And and you grew up in Rhode Island?

**Jim:** I did. Warwick, Rhode Island is my hometown, I'm born and raised there. I still live in Warwick. Been here all my life. I love the city. And I love Rhode Island in general. It's a great place to live. It's kind of, [00:07:00] I think of Rhode Island as a big neighborhood. And there's good families here. Great people and we have our problems like any other city, but Rhode Island is itself is is a wonderful place. And I wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Although hate our winters cause I'm not a cold winter person, a cold-weather person, I do love my summers, especially, so I'm a warm weather person through and through.

**Michael:** I can definitely relate. And Rhode Island is a great place and I've spent a lot of time in Providence and Newport, and actually I've spent some time in Warwick as well. It's a great state. So what kind of a student were you?

**Jim:** Yeah. So early on, I'd say I was an average student. I wasn't a standout academic student. It was I got average grades. Grades never came easy to me. I always had to work at whatever grade I got. I was always very envious of those people, who could you know, read through a book in a couple of nights or a week or, without studying, could get good grades. I was more of the type that, if I was going to get [00:08:00] good grades, I had to, this I had to study and I guess prior to my accident, I don't think I really appreciated the value of academics as well as it did after my accident. So I'd say before my accident, I was an average student. After my accident when I, and I realized that, in order to make anything of my life and of myself, that it was going to come through through hard work, and studying and academics would become more important than ever. It's only then when I really buckled down and started getting much better grades.

**Michael:** Yeah. Interesting. That that certainly makes sense. Were you in public schools or private school?

**Jim:** Public schools up until the fourth or fifth grade. My parents transferred us over to St. Peter's elementary school, where I did the rest of from fifth grade on, I did finish out elementary and also had the junior high school was that seventh and eighth grade at St. Peter's. And then from there went to Bishop Hendricken High School Catholic high school here in Rhode Island, where I did my high school [00:09:00] years. And then on to college from there.

**Michael:** So let's now, if you don't mind, I've actually never had a conversation with you about your accident. And I have had several conversations with you in the past, and mostly it's just talking about all the good work you're doing and and trying to be supportive of some of that work. Would you mind Jim speaking a little bit about the accident and telling us about what happened?

**Jim:** Sure. So in my early teenage years, around 13 years old, my mom who was working for the city at the time, she was friendly with the police chief. He had mentioned to her that they had this police cadet program, the chief knowing that my mom had three boys at the time, mentioned, especially with one about the right age for the program, he said, that might be a program that he might be interested in. My mom had the idea that this would be a good fit, and so she said, lets sign you up for this and see if it's something that you like. And I didn't know whether I was going to like it or not, but I signed up, went to the first meeting. [00:10:00] It was a program that, where we go to classes from January to June at the police station, learn about police work, and then in June we would take a test and the top 10 high scorers would get jobs for the summer. So I did that for the program for about four years and I loved it. I actually fell in love with police work and, we would work in different areas of the police department. And I actually we were able to work out there, a couple of cadets that were able to go on ride alongs with the police officers.

And so you got a real up close look at what police are able to do, how hard their job is, how extraordinary they are, and what they do. And but also how dangerous it can be. And but I really fell in love with it, and I said, "yep. This is what I want to do for a career." I thought maybe being police officer for a while, and then the idea of going on to the FBI at some point, becoming an FBI agent was something else that I had in my mind also. But something that I had a [00:11:00] passion for, it was really, it was a good feeling to know, the focus, the direction. I think that like the structure of the police department and public service aspect of it most especially. Giving back to your community, making a difference, Protect and Serve, as the motto goes for police officers.

And so at a young age, knowing what I was gonna do was pretty again, grounding and exciting and gratifying. And then of course, unfortunately as it sometimes happens in life, we've all been there, life had other plans for me and I was in the locker room of the police station one afternoon, getting ready to go on my shift, I was going to do a ride along as I recall that night.

I was there getting ready, and was in the locker room with another cadet and we were talking to two police officers. The one officer had just bought a new weapon and the other officer said, Oh, can I take a look at it, something to that effect? And so the officer handed him the gun. [00:12:00] And as he was examining it, the officer pulled the trigger, he pointed it into a locker and pulled the trigger as I was told, I'm recounting his story, and pulled the trigger. The gun went off. The bullet went into the locker, ricocheted and went through my neck and severed my spinal cord.

**Michael:** Oh my God.

**Jim:** So I, immediately was paralyzed and left a C-6 quadriplegic and really pretty readily ended my dream of going to law enforcement, the way that I had hoped for sure. One of the more devastating things that ever happened in my life or, that could happen to anyone's life.

**Michael:** Yeah, when you speak about it, Jim, I mean you used words like we can all relate and respectfully I don't agree. I think that's the kind of accident, that most of us cannot relate to.

**Jim:** Not the accident, but I think, all of us getting knocked off our life path, our life plan, is what, what I was referring to. I'm sure any one of us is has had goals and [00:13:00] dreams. And, as the doors close or, like, the rug gets pulled out from underneath. So not, maybe not as devastating in a way is, what happened to me, but I'm sure your listeners in some way will find something to relate to that, you think everything's going great and you're on a great path. And all of a sudden a door gets slammed shut.

**Michael:** So, what was the emotional state around all this? You and your family must've been absolutely devastated.

**Jim:** Yeah. Yeah. We were, and I can remember waking up, at various points at different hospitals. First being brought to the emergency room at Kent County hospital, which was a short distance away from from the police station. I give a lot of credit to the first responders and the police officers who literally kept me alive and got me from the police station to the emergency room and in record time to save my life.

And then from there, transferred to [00:14:00] St. Joseph's hospital in Rhode Island, which was more the rehab hospital. And then over the weekend, my mom getting a phone call from someone saying if he hopes that any kind of a normal life you've got to get him to a hospital in Boston. And my mother went to work in just, feverously finding a way to get me to, the best hospital in Boston was turned out to be the, at the time that the New England Regional Spinal Cord Injury unit. And brought me against doctor's wishes in orders by the Mobile Intensive Care unit and Providence Fire Department brought me to to Boston to the New England Regional Spinal Injury Unit, which it is now, it was at the time University Hospital in Boston now part of B.U. Medical center. So I understand it. But they were, it was a devastating time. I'm waking up at different points. And then finally figuring out I was asking a lot of questions. And I'm in ICU at the tongues that had been drilled into my head to keep pressure off my neck and flat on my back and can't [00:15:00] move some mobilized and still sedated I'm in and out of consciousness. And but when I finally put things together, it was the most devastating thing I've ever been through. And. Just, your world gets completely pulled out from under you and you feel completely helpless. And I felt just very in shock and just not understanding what life was going to be like going forward.

My parents put up a brave very brave front, and they would be there with me coming to visit every day and driving up, back and forth to Boston, from Rhode Island and yet, in, in subsequent times that, in years I understood how devastated they were and how, they were crying every night. And just not knowing what to do with what life was going to be like for me. So obviously a devastating time for my whole family, but we had each other and, it was because of that support system that I had around me, and we also had an amazing [00:16:00] community that responded and rallied around me and my family at a time that we needed them the most.

What really definitely helped pull me through most especially was my faith. There was no doubt that it was my faith, that also my family and community that, that helped me know that I would be okay. That, that I could get through this.

**Michael:** Yeah. I wonder if your parents had any idea what you plan to achieve in your life at the time they probably couldn't have dreamt that you would ultimately be as successful as you've become. Jim you on your website, and I do recommend that if anyone wants to read more, about Jim and his story and what he stands for politically. He's got an excellent website and he's very generous with sharing, including about his story. But on your website, you talk about how one of the great inspirations of your life was the community support for you the support around what had happened to you and support for you generally. Could you speak to that a little bit more?

**[00:17:00] Jim:** Yeah. So, when I was in the hospital, recovering, started off with all kinds of cards and letters from school children and people in the community, writing to reach out and with words of encouragement and support. And it was so nice to know that many people care, people that I didn't even know at the, at the time. People I'm sure that I still have never met to this day, but the fact that so many people wanted to reach out and, offer of support and help and prayers meant so much, and then the community reaching out to my family and saying, look, how can we help? There were many expenses that, my parents weren't equipped to, to deal with.

We had to renovate our home. My bedroom colonial type home and there was a two car garage and they wound up converting that into a first floor bedroom for me with a in-depth handicapped, accessible bathroom and [00:18:00] shower. And so it was one of the things that, again, unanticipated, but the community really stepped up and helped my family. So that at least I had the basics of what I needed to come home and live in my family's home and start to live an independent life. And so, I'm always appreciative of that effort, and I said it at the time, it really touched me in a profound way, and I saw the single minded determination of how with a community wanting to make a difference in someone's life, it made a difference, certainly had an impact on me, and I in turn said, if there were ever something I could do to give back that that I would really want to jump at the chance. And that's what mostly inspired me and my interest in public service and wanting to continue to give back and in in the way that I received help all those years ago,

**Michael:** Okay, well, I'm going to come to your political career in a moment, but I do want [00:19:00] to ask you a question that you probably have received, but nevertheless, it's an important question. People say that if you, and I don't know this personally, of course, but that if you lose your sight, for example, that your other senses become stronger to compensate for that. You did mention earlier the ways that you have become stronger and that you've been able to adapt. Is it fair to say that that your physical challenges have in some ways made you stronger, you talked about, for example your academics and that you were able to focus more on academics after your accident. I assume in some respects out of necessity, has your physical condition really made you stronger in some respects?

**Jim:** Well, I think there's maybe an inner strength that I found over, over the years because of the accident I had to deal with and, the changes I had to adapt [00:20:00] to that I understood that, life in order to go on, you've got to find a way to adapt. You've got a way to push through problems and figure out a way to make things work. And I think that's my life and on a day-to-day basis. How do I make things work? How do I get by? Starting from the minute I get up in the morning, the help of CNAs that it help me, with my just daily living, the things that I need help with getting dressed and, getting in the shower that the whole bit and then, doing my job and everything I do is a team effort. And I guess that's part of my leadership style too, right, that I never looked at it per se as there's no I in team, and it takes, people working with you and working together to get anything significant accomplished. And so that's showing how I view all the things that I've done in my political career, whether it came from campaigning to actually [00:21:00] holding office, it's all been about working with others and doing this together.

**Michael:** Thank you for sharing that, Jim. So let's get into your career because you've had quite an extraordinary career, and I think our listeners want to hear more about that. Let me start by asking, so I know you wanted to be in law enforcement and you spoke about being a police officer and perhaps an FBI agent, and that of course didn't happen as you point out. I'm going to start asking you about your political career, but was there a career before politics?

**Jim:** No, not really. I was a college student and so after I graduated from high school, I went to college. And I only applied to two colleges because I really thought I was going to go to Providence College. My father was the one who insisted I have a backup school so I applied to Rhode Island college as my backup school. I was confident I was going to get into PC, so I didn't think I needed one, but my father says you have to have a backup [00:22:00] school so I did. I did get accepted to both colleges and was excited to go to Providence College is was kind of the next logical step going from Bishop Hendricken, to a Catholic college as well. And so, but I was excited until I went to tour the campus and my accident happened a full 10 years before the Americans with Disabilities Act passed. My accident was in 1980. The ADA was passed in 1990. I graduated in may of 1983. So when I went to tour Providence college, it became pretty readily apparent that the college was not ready for someone like me yet in my physical limitations, not being able to get around and navigate independently. So I wound up going to Rhode Island college, it wasn't great, but it was a lot better than the Providence college, that were at least some curb cuts around the campus here at there. And they had elevators that were big enough for me to get into. One at PC, in the main hall, [00:23:00] the elevator was not even big enough for maybe two people to stand in, barely, let alone getting a wheelchair in. So, I went to Rhode Island college and turned out I had wonderful experience there and great academic programs. It was all thumbs up, I had a good experience with academically and extracurricularly there. I actually decided as a freshmen, to get involved in student government as a freshman representative to the student parliament there and was elected after our runoff election. So I had to kind of run twice for the same office because it, I guess I was tied. And the first votes were counted and, but on the second round I got elected. And so I had a great experience there.

**Michael:** So, before I ask you the next question, I want to ask you just, this is just a tangent question, but it's important, and I think it's important for the rest of this discussion. It's also, it would just, help me and I think our listeners [00:24:00] understand better your perspective. So during my introduction I referred to you as co-chairing the disability caucus, and I referred to your work for around inclusion and independence for people with quote "disabilities." How do you feel about that term? Is that a term that, that you're okay with, or is it a term that you really don't like?

**Jim:** I'm someone who happens to have a disability. I don't, I've never wanted to be defined by my disability, and I don't want to be the disabled lawmaker. I'm a lawmaker, an office holder who happens to have a disability. I have to say, I've never made per se disabilities issues the only thing that I've been doing, because I don't want to be known as the disabled candidate or have people pigeon hole me and think that's the only thing that I'm about, but at the same time, I also recognize that I have a responsibility to other people with disabilities. To try to make a difference and open up doors, bring down barriers.

**Michael:** [00:25:00]:That's certainly been my experience when I speak with you that you never talk about your disability ,but rather you are laser-focused on on the political issues that you're discussing, and that's why I wanted to just understand that a little bit better and the terminology that you prefer. And certainly I can vouch for you Jim, when you say that you do not lead with with your physical challenges, your disability, you definitely lead with the issues and what's important to everybody.

**Jim:**You know who is a political figure that's been an inspiration to me over the years that I've looked to is FDR.

**Michael:** Of course, that makes sense.

**Jim:** And I think that FDR's way of doing things his career, I've modeled myself after that and that FDR had never made his disability of focus of who he was or what he did. Now of course these were different times, right? In that in the FDR's time, disability was something to be hidden and be ashamed of, the FBI never wanted him to be photographed at his [00:26:00] wheelchair, never wanted people to really know or discuss disability. Now we live in different times and, it's not right for the people don't hide who they are and what their disabilities or abilities might be, that we want to treat all people equally. And it's important for people to be proud of who they are, but I also understood FDR's philosophy in the sense of the times, but also his desire to live a full life and not let his disability get in his way. So, he inspired me, and then also former and the late Senator Claiborne de Borda Pell, our state senior Senator, who was a real gentleman in every sense of the word and loved politics, but I understood FDR's inner strength and also what, what his philosophy was of moving forward and not letting the disability get in his way, and it's something that certainly inspired me in what I tried to do with my own life.

**Michael:** Makes sense. So Jim, I'm going to get to 2000 when you [00:27:00] successfully ran for the U S Congress, but you had quite a career before then, as well and wondered whether you might just briefly take us through your political career within the state. I read that it actually started not with you serving as a member of the state house, but in fact, you actually started by serving as a delegate at a state constitutional convention.

**Jim:** Yeah. So I was elected to that office while I was still in college. I was just starting my sophomore year in college when I ran for the office. So in Rhode Island, the way it works is every 10 years the voters are asked if they want to amend or redraft the state constitution. So just like we have the U S constitution, each state has its own individual state constitution. And on this particular election the voters were asked, do you want to amend or redraft the constitution? And the voters said yes. And I think that happened around 1982 or '84, when that was approved, and the [00:28:00] bottom line is that they they held a special election. So it must have been in '84 because they held the special election in November of that year and elected a hundred delegates statewide, one delegate for each state representative district.

And somebody had suggested or I got the idea that this would be an interesting thing to do great way to give back. I ran, I was elected and then for the next year was involved with the first major rewrite of our entire state's constitution since the state was first founded and we created the first constitution. So it was it was a meaningful experience, and I found not only was I was giving back, but also I really found something that I developed a passion for, and I really loved it. And so for me I wanted, I just, it felt very natural and I had the same passion I had for law enforcement and being involved in public service through that lane if you would, now I found the same kind of passion in elective office, and [00:29:00] that's what I've been doing ever since.

**Michael:** You had the honor of being the, is it true you were the youngest secretary of state in history at the state level.

**Jim:** At the, no, at the time I was the youngest secretary of state in the country of my colleagues that were elected. So I don't know about other secretaries of state and what was the youngest ever. But at the time I was the youngest secretary of state. I was elected 30 years old yeah, 30 at the time. So I was elected to the constitutional convention. When I was about 20 or 21 and a couple years later, so I served in that in 1986. It was just a one-year position.

And then a couple of years. So 1988, I ran for, it was elected as a state representative from the Rhode Island general assembly. I served there for six years and I was elected when I was in my undergraduate program. But that was still, I did my undergraduate program in seven years. So it wasn't a four year program, but I was elected when I was still in undergraduate, technically. [00:30:00] And then when I was in the general assembly, I also was working on my master's degree. I attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard and so I was doing, dual things.

They usually it's a two year program, but because I was a sitting legislator and I didn't want to give up my seat in the house, Harvard let me extend out the program an extra year, so I did a two years Masters in three years and when we were in session, I would get up and go to school in Cambridge, I didn't live up there. I drove up and started to go to school classes and then when I was done classes I would drive back to Rhode Island to go to the state house and be involved in the legislative session the afternoon and into the night's committee meetings and then go home and study and get up the next day and do it all over again.

**Michael:** I would say that's a less than traditional path for going through your your educational program.

**Jim:** Yeah, for sure. And I don't necessarily recommend it to anybody because I had no life for three years when I was doing [00:31:00] that besides my, my work in government and being a State Rep and then getting my Masters. But it was a full life at the time and continues to be a full life. I finished up my Masters in May of '94 and I was on the ballot running state-wide for Secretary of State in November of '94 and was elected there as Secretary of State. Served there for six years and then in 2000, when the current congressmen decided to run for the U.S. Senate, there was an open seat. I ran for Congress and was elected in 2000. That's why I've been doing ever since.

**Michael:** So, what was that like? Because you're now in the U S Congress. And again, you're a young guy you've accomplished so much and you have different life experiences than everybody else. How will you received, what was that like for you?

**Jim:** My college was incredibly gracious when I got there. I want to give a lot of credit to guys like. Steny Hoyer is our now he's average authority leader. He was one of the original authors of the American disabilities act. [00:32:00] And he was someone to this day, I still look up to and it with people like Steny and former Congressman Tony Coelho , Senator Tom Harkin, Senator Bob Dole , Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner and then all the advocates , people like Justin Dart and many college advocates who brought about the American disabilities act that really made it possible for me to run for elective office to serve in Congress because of the changes that the ADA brought about. But my colleagues were incredibly gracious. There were changes there that obviously that needed to be made to make the Congress rightfully accessible so I could serve in a meaningful way and do my job and they made those changes and I'm very grateful and I'm hoping that, and I've said this before, I gave you the first quadriplegic to serve in the United States Congress, but I'm most certainly will not be the last, least I hope not. And hopefully I've paved the way for others with disabilities too, to run for elective office, to serve and [00:33:00] help other people to realize that they, yes, they can too. I can serve in Congress. They can too.

**Michael:** Well said, Jim. I'm going to let you speak now about, what's probably most natural for you, which is, could you tell our listeners, what are your root political causes? What do you stand for as one of the key leaders of our country?

**Jim:** Well, I believe in the American dream and it may be cliché, but I was given that opportunity. I had certainly great struggles and a lot of things to adapt to and get through. But everybody has struggled with life and I would say nobody gets through life without challenges and difficulties, but I believe that we all have the capacity to overcome those difficulties and challenges and pave our own path to success. Again, my faith was incredibly important. It still is important to me to this day. My family, the support system I had around me. Now, I say the support system there for some people it's the family we're born into, for others it's the [00:34:00] family you make. For many of us, it's a combination of the two, but having a support system around is important. But then also though, believing in yourself, understanding that, life may hand you a lot of difficulties and life isn't always going to hand you an easy path to success. But I also, I believe that we can achieve success if we work hard at it, academics I would say played a big role in my life. And so that, that was surely an essential part of of me moving forward. But we have to have the courage to go through, walk through or roll through those doors of opportunity when they come about or that we create. So I would encourage anybody. That's got a dream that, to go for it. It may not be easy, people need to do the best to try to find to find a way.



**Michael:** I think people would be interested to hear just what's what are your top issues? What are the top things that you're working on and that you're thinking about?

**Jim:** So, as a [00:35:00] primary thing, and you had asked me this earlier. I want people to have the opportunity to succeed. And so I believe in hard work, but I also believe that like in my life where everybody needs a little help along the way that in those essential moments, that for those people that need a little help all the way that, that it's, they're not a handout, but a hand up.

And so I've always believed in, and that's why I believe that government does have a certain level, certain goals to play in those and in those areas. But I want to make sure that government, I look at it as a Congressman getting government to do those things, to help people to make government work the way it's supposed to be. According to what people's expectations are, we have certain rights that we keep to our unto ourselves. And there are rights that we give up to the government to live in as civil society. And I want people to live up to their role. I want government to live up to its role. When there are problems as well, that's when that's, when we have advocates that people [00:36:00] will be elected to represent us, that we act as their advocate and make sure that we cut through red tape where it exists. Beyond that I'm a problem solver and I look at okay, so what are some of the biggest problems and challenges that we're facing? Healthcare has always been a huge issue for me. And although I don't serve on any committees that have direct jurisdiction over healthcare reform, I also know that we can be advocates in different ways on different roles in government. So I was proud of the fact that I always said that I would judge myself on how well we did in reforming health care. And at the time we had a healthcare system that was broken. It's still not perfect. It's still broken in many ways, but when we passed the affordable care act, that addressed a lot of the problems of changing over from a fee for certain systems to now one that rewards providers based on quality of care. And I was proud to have introduced the first ever bipartisan universal healthcare bill and did that with Chris Shays at the time from [00:37:00] Connecticut. Chris is no longer in Congress, but I was proud of the fact that we were able to introduce that bill together and hopefully it laid the groundwork for the Affordable Care Act, down the road that got passed, and signed into law. I also really believe in strong National Security. And so that's an issue that is important to Rhode Island, it's important to me personally and so being able to sit on both the house armed services committee as a senior member there, and share a subcommittee as well as being on the Homeland Security committee, that's been a driving force, my time in Congress.

If you don't have your health and you don't have security, you don't have much of anything. So it's certainly tied in very well with my law enforcement interest background and on the security side. And I continue to work on those issues to this day, specializing in cybersecurity among the most important. I also believe though, the other issues, the two other issues that are driving forces for me career and technical education. Making sure that we are giving the young people, the skills, the tools they [00:38:00] need to pave their own path to success. We want to make sure that our young people, when they graduate high school are not only college ready but career ready. There's so many meaningful careers in career and technical education, whether it's IT or cyber or advanced manufacturing. You can't go into a a manufacturing facility these days and not be in awe of the technology that is there. They're not the old dirty factories that our fathers and grandfathers grew up with. These are high tech factories working with computer programmers in robotics and advanced manufacturing equipment that you know, that people need to know how to run.

That's that's been a driving force for me. I coach here the career and technical education caucus. And then the other caucus that I created and co-chair to this day is the bipartisan disabilities caucus. So that, that caucus is important because it allows us educate members and staff on important related issues to disabilities that are facing [00:39:00] the disabilities community, provides a forum for outside experts or groups to come in and speak to administrators and congressional staff about the importance of the challenges that the disabilities community is facing with the solution to how to solve problems. So I'm proud of the work that we do in there. It's part of my work to open up doors and bring down barriers for people with disabilities, wherever possible.

So that's kind of a highlight of some of the things of where my focus lies.

**Michael:** Excellent. That's great. I have to ask just given the environment that we're in right now. Do you think that we can have bipartisanship or even nonpartisanship? Is that possible now? Are we potentially heading into a new era?

**Jim:** It is. So I will answer that question in two ways. We are in a hyper-partisan environment right now. And it is it is disturbing and concerning on a number of levels. And I don't know where the story ends. I have to believe that we right [00:40:00] the shift at some point, but people are not happy right now. And on a lot of levels and they're looking for change. I think it's why Donald Trump was originally voted into office. And I don't think we all, even, especially if people in elective office right now, truly appreciate and understand, how upset people are and why they're looking for change. I don't believe that Donald Trump was the answer. And I think that unfortunately he divided the country a lot more than than when he got there. And that's unfortunate because he's an individual with such great potential. And I was hoping that he would have used those great gifts and skills to bring the country together and focus on things that unite us, even looking at a, an infrastructure package that would have created jobs and rebuild our crumbling infrastructure.

But that didn't happen. But there's a big divide in, in the country and in Congress, but Congress is very much politically divided. And there's a whole [00:41:00] host of reasons for that. And I think it's going to take, political science and sociologists years to try to figure out, but we've got to find a way to heal and bring the country together. And I know that we can, and we will. So on the other side of it, is there other things going on that do bring us together to where there is cooperation? And the answer is yes. I pride myself on being one most bipartisan members of Congress. I can, on any major issue that I am working on, I can look across the aisle.

And I can point to individuals that I'm working on the Republican side that I'm working with to address the issues that I'm most concerned with, that I'm working on that are pressing important issues for the country. So in cybersecurity, I have a guy like Mike McCall. And and Mike Gallagher, my co-chair of the Cyber commission that I just served on. And Senator Mike Rounds on the other in the, on the Senate side. Republican colleague over there on career technical education. I work with a great guy [00:42:00] named GT Thompson, Glen Thompson congressman, Republican Congressman from Pennsylvania. He and I are the co-chair of the career and technical education caucus together.

So, Don Young is my co-chair of the bipartisan disability caucus. So in all of the major issues that I'm working on, I can point to a Republican, a co-sponsor or a partner that that we're working on these together, that these things to get in and that, that bipartisanship does happen more than you realize. It just, that it doesn't get a lot of attention in the press, unfortunately, that the press can be part of the problem too, is that I, and I do believe in respect to a free and fair press, but I think it the news cycle and news has changed so much. We're in this 24 hour news cycle where there's a rush to get the story out, a rush to be first as opposed to the rush to be right. So the fact checking I think doesn't happen as often as it, as much as it should. And there's an old saying in my [00:43:00] business that now, if it doesn't bleed, it doesn't lead in the news business and so the news media does love to cover this sensational. More than good and hard news stories.

**Michael:** I suppose I suspected that you were going to be to be hopeful about the concept of bipartisanship. And I think it's telling that actually that answer was the first time that you indicated indirectly that you are a Democrat. I'd like to ask you. And I think our listeners would be curious to know, do you know President elect Biden?

**Jim:** I do. I've met him several times over the years. He won't remember the first time I met him, but I remember the first time. I was interning in Washington, DC, for then Senator Claiborne Pell. And I was able to attend a conference committee where the house and the Senate met in conference to work out the differences between two bills as your listeners might know, they, a bill has to pass an identical form. In the same year in both the house and the Senate before it goes out to the president.

And so when the house passes one [00:44:00] bill and the Senate passed another bill on the same topic, they have to meet in conference to work out the differences. And then then it goes on to the president. It goes back to after it's been, worked out, goes back to both houses. It has to be voted on and be approved by an identical form.

And then it goes to the President for the President's signature in he is going to sign it. Well, I was at this conference committee attending as a member of the public and during one of the breaks, they were out in the hallway and I ran into then Senator Biden and had a brief chat with him, but nothing of any consequence, but, he was chairing the conference committee at the time. So he's, he kind of filled a room. He was a very gregarious and an interesting guy. And so I followed his career ever since. Little did I know that, that young Jim Langevin that in the hallways of one of the Senate office buildings was meeting a future president of the United States.

But and I've had the opportunity to interact with him over the years, one of the more significant ones when I was serving as a member of the house intelligence committee the committee went over to the [00:45:00] White House, we were invited to meet with vice-president Biden in the situation room. And we discussed the ongoing situation in Syria, the civil war there. And so I've had numerous interactions with them and I'm proud to have voted for Joe Biden for President. And I hope that he's going to be the healing force that this country needs right now to try to bring us back together.

**Michael:** Well, perhaps you've just answered my next question and we're getting toward the end I just have a few more questions for you, but that was going to be my next question. Which is, are you feeling hopeful? It's been a very difficult year for everyone. And are you feeling hopeful?

**Jim:** Yeah, I am feeling hopeful . 2020 was a rough year for all of us. My God, I, I don't think any of us could conceive of really living through a pandemic. I actually had studied Pandemics and held hearings on it and knew that it was possible, but you know, it's like any other scenarios of emerging threats [00:46:00] that our country could face. And, we have to be prepared, but I don't think we can ever be fully prepared for something of this magnitude. 2020 was just a bad year for everyone, too many lives lost , businesses that have been closed permanently, or people out of work, people struggling to keep their heads above water. These are things that weigh on me every day, as a Congressman, as someone who's representing my district, knowing that people are hurting. And we, I never feel like we're doing enough because to me, people are still hurting. We're not out of the woods yet. We passed legislation that it did help in certain ways the Cares Act and the PPP program and the direct stimulus payments to people and extra unemployment assistance for people that have lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

So I know that we've helped in some ways. I just don't feel that it's enough until we're out of the woods. Still too many businesses are teetering. So we've got work to do. And I'm hopeful that we are going to provide more assistance, I know we are negotiating a package, [00:47:00] another aid package right now and I'm hopeful it's going to come together. But a new administration coming in, President-elect Biden and Vice-President elect Harris are, they're the two good people that want to do what's right for the country and they're going to represent everybody. Not just the people that voted for them, but even the people that, that didn't. To try to solve problems for people and make things better. So I am hopeful about the future.

**Michael:** Thank you for that message.

**Jim:** I can't wait for 2020 to close, and 2021 can't get here soon enough. We have a new administration coming in and the vaccine being approved and getting out to people and I'm excited and hopeful for the future.

**Michael:** So before we get to our teaching moment, I have one last question for you and then I'm going to ask you some rapid fire questions as part of our teaching moment.

But the question I want to ask is about your future.

So if the voters of Rhode Island we'll have you do you plan to continue to be a representative for the [00:48:00] next 20 years or 10 years, or are you thinking that at some point we could have a Senator Langevin or even a President Langevin or a cabinet position, or what's the future for Jim Langevin?

**Jim:** Well, I was just reelected to another two year term in the United States Congress. I'm incredibly grateful to the people in Rhode Island for the trust and support they've given me over the years and they trusted me again. And I've often said I'd never taken that trust or their vote for granted. And I never will. So I plan to work hard for them over the next two years. I don't know what the future holds and how long I'll keep doing what I'm doing or how long their voters will want me to do it. That's going to be up to them. I serve at their pleasure. And I have to, every two years, I have to ask them to rehire me if I'm going to run again. And so I'm gonna, I'm gonna look at doing the job right now. The future will take care of itself. I don't know what I might do next, but I know I was at the right time. I've always believed, I always hope that I'll be able to [00:49:00] leave on my own terms and know that right time when I've done all that I can it's time for someone else to to serve. But for right now, again, I'm focusing on this is two year term and we'll let the future take care of itself. I'll know, when I know.

**Michael:** Thanks Jim. Okay. So I want to be respectful of your time. I'm going to finish up with our teaching moment. I'm going to ask you three quick questions. You may or may not be able to answer quickly, but we'll find out. The first question is what single habit, technique, or tip would you offer that has helped you be your most extraordinary self?

**Jim:** I would say believing in myself, believing in what is possible. Not being afraid to fail. Drawing on my faith. And just knowing that if it doesn't work out, that I'll be okay. And just not being afraid to try.

**Michael:** Great. Do you have a personal mission?

**Jim:** So my personal mission in my work that I do, the job that I [00:50:00] hold is to try to make a difference that I know that I'm doing what I'm doing it's a finite period of time that we all have to serve. I'm incredibly blessed and honored to represent great people in a great state. Some of the hardest working people I've ever had the privilege of meeting. And I just want to do my best on their behalf. To try to make a difference. That is my mission to try to make a difference. And I wanna leave with accomplishments that have touched people's lives and I've made a difference in people's lives. And that of my community.

**Michael:** Well said. And lastly, what's the best advice you've ever given to someone else?

**Jim:** The best advice is to not be afraid to try, not be afraid to fail, believe in yourself. I tell young people all the time, do as many internships as you possibly can because it gives you a behind the scenes look at how things work and like in my circumstance, where I at the time found law enforcement, and I knew I had the passion for that. [00:51:00] And then, gave it a try when I ran for a constitutional convention, then found a passion in public service, through elective office. You don't know until you try, and do something in life that you have a passion for it that, I've often said, and I heard that it said one time that, do what you love and the money will follow. That you don't want to just do a job just to make money and make a living. You want to live by passion and do something that you enjoy. And you find fulfilling that's what's gonna make you feel good about the work you're doing and ywhere you'll probably have your greatest successes

**Michael:** You've certainly provided an example to go along with that advice. Thank you, Jim. Any parting words?

**Jim:** Well, thank you for the conversation I enjoyed talking to you. Hope it was a meaningful conversation. It's very, I enjoyed it and I hope your listeners do too.

**Michael:** It's safe to say that many people will get a lot out of that conversation. Ladies and gentlemen, that is the extraordinary Jim Langevin. And thank you to our [00:52:00] sponsor. The Colony Group is a national wealth and business management company with 15 offices across the country.

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