



PROFILE: INDIANA SENATE ASSISTANT PRESIDENT PRO TEM SUE GLICK

Legislating through listening: Longtime lawmaker learned that approach as a young campaign worker, and has tried to apply it ever since joining the General Assembly

by Derek Cantù (dcantu@csg.org)

To this day, Sue Glick uses a lesson in public service that she first learned in 1972, decades before she would become a legislator herself. She was a young campaign worker at the time, helping a physician-turned-politician named Otis Bowen become governor in her home state of Indiana. To help patients, “Doc” Bowen would tell her, a doctor must focus on seeing and listening to them describe the symptoms. He said the same should be expected of lawmakers serving their constituents, communities and state.

“Or you’re not going to know how to help them,” Glick says about the lesson imparted by Bowen.

Much has changed since that first introduction to politics 50 years ago, when part of Glick’s campaign responsibilities was operating an old PBX switchboard.

In the General Assembly at that time, the number of women state legislators hovered around 10; it’s now 35.

And a young Glick herself had to navigate a world of law and politics not always hospitable to women. During the early years of her law practice — an experience that included serving as local prosecuting attorney — Glick was the only female lawyer in her home county.

“You either fit in or you’re out there on the periphery,” she says. “There were a few old guys when I started that saw me as an interloper when I was practicing law.

“That wasn’t the same in the legislature. But they were a little bit worried about someone being an aggressive woman who was going to advance only women’s issues.”

Glick was first elected to the General Assembly in 2010; 12 years later, she’s risen to become the third-highest-ranking member in the Senate (assistant president pro tempore).

For all the changes she has been through and seen, the old lesson of “see and listen first” remains central to Glick’s legislative style and philosophy.

She shared her views and perspective in a recent interview with CSG Midwest. Here are excerpts.

Q How do you view your leadership role as assistant president pro tempore, both inside and outside the Senate Republican Caucus?

A My role is kind of a peacemaker, which I try to be. Sometimes it’s a peacemaker within our caucus because Indiana has a very large Republican majority. ...



BIO-SKETCH: INDIANA SEN. SUE GLICK

- ✓ is assistant president pro tempore of the Indiana Senate; first elected to the General Assembly in 2010
- ✓ serves on several legislative committees, including as chair of the Indiana Senate Natural Resources Committee
- ✓ previously worked as the prosecuting attorney for LaGrange County, Ind., and as counsel for multiple local governments
- ✓ is a 2011 graduate of CSG Midwest’s Bowhay Institute for Legislative Leadership Development (BILLD)

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The prior pro tem, David Long, urged us to always seek out a member of the minority party on our bills — to see if we could get consensus and have that member join in. It always furthers the purposes of the Senate, and of the legislature, if we can build bipartisan support, even though if you’re counting noses, maybe it isn’t necessary to get a bill passed.

But it really is. Listen to what they have to say, because there’s a lot of issues that they have that we might not consider or might not be as prevalent in our caucuses. My job is basically to try and involve as many people in that decision-making as possible.

Q You’ve talked about the value of listening and considering all sides. How does that play itself out on an issue as contentious as abortion, and in the special session you had this year that led to one of the first new laws after the *Dobbs* decision?

A We had 62 amendments offered on the floor and second reading. We had a number that were even offered in Rules Committee when we heard the bill originally. We had over 60 people testify during the Rules Committee process, and I sat through an equal number over in the House side because I wanted to make sure that we heard as many people as possible because I was the author of the bill.

Definitely, the Republican Party was not unified on the decisions or the positions on this bill: How far were members willing to go for exceptions, if any, [on the abortion ban]? What might

those exceptions be? How far should those exceptions go?

We had to listen very acutely to what people were saying. If we were going to say, “Here’s the rules and we’re not going to go any further,” then what services are you going to provide? Certainly, if you’re going to limit the number of abortions, then you need to talk about contraception, and how to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Q In the same year you were involved with this very high-profile, contentious abortion bill, you helped lead an under-the-radar, bipartisan effort to ban, in most cases, the restraining of incarcerated pregnant offenders. Can you talk about how this kind of bipartisan reform came to be?

A I was downtown after session, talking with a group of legislators — men and women, but predominantly women — and we were talking with Representative Rita Fleming.

She’s a member of the Democratic Party, so she is in the minority. She had offered this bill for several years and a couple of sessions. ... We had never heard it in the Senate because she could never get it through the House.

But when I heard about it, I said, “Well that’s just common sense, that’s core humanity. You’re giving birth to a child. ... You are not going to get up and flee if you’re in the throes of childbirth.” To have someone strapped down or chained down in restraints, there’s enough stress on the body, there’s enough stress on the mental health of that individual and certainly stress on the baby itself. That was just incredibly inhumane. ...

I said to Representative Fleming, “If we started this on the Senate side and got it through, do you think that you could, with other female legislators and other legislators, get it through the House?” And that’s how it came to be. ... Once we passed it with an overwhelming majority in the Senate, it was much easier for them to hear and pass it in the House.

Q The two of you recently shared this experience as panelists at BILLD, the annual legislative leadership program of CSG Midwest. You are a BILLD graduate yourself. What have been the benefits for you from participating in interstate programs and events like this?

A As a legislator, rather than trying to reinvent the wheel, it is so much easier if you find out, “Oh my gosh, Ohio’s been working on this for 10 years, Nebraska did this 15 years ago. Why are we struggling with this?”

Or, God forbid, somebody else tried it and it went over like a lead balloon. OK, then, why do we want to get involved in that if it’s an impossible task and it probably isn’t going to fly anyway?

You have that kind of valuable interaction. And you gain the ability to pick up the phone and call another legislator from another state and say, “You may not remember me, but we went to BILLD together.” Or, “I got your name from ‘Joe Doakes’ that I went to BILLD with, and they said that I should call you about this issue that you worked on.”

Almost every legislator I’ve ever known wants to talk about their bills and their successes. Or if it was an abysmal failure, they’ll say, “Oh God, don’t try that.”