

INTERVIEW WITH TAMMY DUCKWORTH AND BRYAN BOWLSBEY 2008

CONNIE DOEBELE, C-SPAN HOST: Tammy Duckworth and Bryan Bowlsbey it's been just over three years since we talked last. Lot's has changed since then. First, let's just get an update on your – what's happened. How long after that first interview that we did with you in March of 2005 did you stay at Walter Reed?

TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD MAJOR AND IRAQ WAR VETERAN: Until December so I was there another seven months, eight months.

DOEBELE: And what happened to you during that time?

DUCKWORTH: A lot of rehabilitation. A lot of – I'm learning to walk. Getting fitted over and over again with prosthesis. Adjusting down. I had recurrences. I had to have surgery on my arm several times. Learned to use my arm again so I think at that time I had – I wasn't able to move my right arm and now I can. Just getting things going again and learning to live my life.

DOEBELE: And Bryan what was going on with you during that time?

BRYAN BOWLSBEY, ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD MAJOR: Well the past three years we've come back and been deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom once and just freshly back so lots of different landscape between now and then so.

DOEBELE: If I remember correctly, you said at the end of the interview that you were thinking that you were going to be deployed at the end of 2005. What actually happened?

BOWLSBEY: We came back – I came back in and got promoted. Left command of that company that I had and the exact company is now deploying as of 2008 but in actually I wound up deploying last year. So in January -- December or January of last year we got the word so they needed a major to go and I was a newly promoted major so boom. So I went I was the operations officer for a truck battalion.

DOEBELE: Where were you based?

BOWLSBEY: Mostly in Kuwait. The battalion ran convoys all the way as far north as you go in Iraq and basically everywhere in Iraq. So anywhere there were Americans we were dropping stuff off.

DOEBELE: Now you had both said at that time that you were expecting this that you would be deployed. What was it like for you to be back here while he was gone?

DUCKWORTH: Well, I was – it was humbling. It was humbling because I'd never been the spouse who was left behind before. I was always the one who got deployed so it was tough to have him gone even though I had an advantage because I knew all the places that he was going to. I could talk to him about what the base looked like and so I had an advantage over a lot of the other spouses. But it was still tough when he was gone and I just worked as hard as I could at my job and kept myself busy and not think of where he was and waited for him to come home you know 13 months goes by really, really fast.

DOEBELE: How long have you been home?

BOWLSBEY: About a month now.

DOEBELE: And now what happens?

BOWLSBEY: Well don't know exactly. Go back to work. We're for the next month though we're going to go to Hawaii so we're taking three weeks on the beach and go in our rags for about three weeks.

DOEBELE: See your family? Do you have family there?

DUCKWORTH: No, not right now. We're just going to go and take some time and we haven't had a holiday in many years and I never got my break after I was deployed. We planned on that but of course I got hurt so I spent that year in the hospital but – so now we're going to take some time.

DOEBELE: You had said in the first interview how much you wanted to fly again with the military. What happened there?

DUCKWORTH: I am not able to fly again for the military. I am flying on the civilian side. It took about three years but I did receive my medical from the FAA so I am flying again small airplanes. The prosthesis we could never get them adjusted well enough. My loss -- I ended up losing so much of my right leg that I'm not able to control the pedals the way I could so I'm not flying for the Army. I am still in aviation. I'm a safety officer. I'm still a drilling national guardsman so I go and do my one weekend a month two weeks a year but I am flying on the civilian side. And in some ways it's a lot more fun because it's not completely mission oriented. It's just flying for the joy of it.

DOEBELE: Were you disappointed though when the military said no?

DUCKWORTH: Well you know the military didn't say no. The military said if you can meet the standards and I got in the simulator and I just could never get my prosthesis to work correctly for what I needed to do so I am disappointed especially since my unit has also been redeployed. Half of it is now on its way to Kosovo and the other half will come later on this year – the middle of this year will be on its way back to Iraq and that's been pretty tough on me to know that they're going back and I'm not going with them.

DOEBELE: How long after you left Walter Reed did you start thinking about the possibility of getting into politics? I mean if I had asked you this question when were sitting there a little over three years ago and said you're going to be running for Congress next year you'd probably would have thought I was crazy.

DUCKWORTH: I never said that you were crazy, absolutely. No, I actually had started – Senator Durbin whom I just met just a few weeks before the first interview, I had just met him and we developed a relationship where a lot of advocacy work for the veterans and for the other soldiers at Walter Reed and at the end of that year he had contacted me and asked me if I would consider running and so by that fall even before I'd left the hospital I was already thinking about it and I ended up leaving Walter Reed early against some of my therapists wishes in order to start my campaign. So I left Walter Reed on December 14th at five in the afternoon and I started my campaign at seven in the morning the next day.

DOEBELE: Now why would you make a decision to do that to run for Congress?

DUCKWORTH: Over the course of that year, I became more and more frustrated with the way politics were going in the nation with the fact that I didn't feel that the service members were really being well represented in Congress and I was sort of calling back and forth to Senator Durbin's office whenever there were issues. At the time, I was the highest ranking amputee at Walter Reed for about five or six months and so I sort of took it on myself and it was part of my healing process to go back to taking care of soldiers to look out for them and so I would start calling the senators and saying we have another problem. There's a pay issue. There's this. There's that. And so ...

DOEBELE: So more constituent type of ...

DUCKWORTH: Yes. Just because I was the most senior ranking of the wounded a lot of the guys came to me and asked me you know what they should do. They're young. They only had three or four years in the

military and by this point in time I had about 15 years so it was just an unofficial kind of a thing and next thing I know Senator Durbin says, well if you're this concerned you know put your money where your mouth is and why don't you consider running and try to make a difference and so that's why I did it. I never had any dreams of going into politics or doing any of that. I just to inject a voice in a debate that was that of someone who had served.

DOEBELE: What was your reaction to all of this? To her running for Congress.

BOWLSBEY: Oh, my gosh. We're never going to get a break after this deployment and then I thought we were going to get a break after we leave Walter Reed. I guess we're not going to get a break. So we're no longer expecting a rest. We had three weeks in Hawaii and we're going to be content with that but no, it's been just a firestorm of work which has been good though while I was deployed. So I'm glad that she worked 60, 70 hour weeks while I was gone because I did that gig you know where you sat in there on the couch and the house is empty and there's nobody here but you and your loved one is overseas and you're not sure exactly what's going on over there. I mean I had a fairly good idea because I'm Army as well but you know I'm glad she was able to work 60, 70 hour weeks because it just keeps your mind off of the what could be kind of scenarios. So that's been great. I've just got to get her slowed down so.

DOEBELE: Physically, how did you handle being on a political campaign?

DUCKWORTH: We had to be smarter about how we used my energy because I was just out of the hospital and actually the first I want to say six, seven weeks of the campaign I actually had an IV in me still and I was still on a drip antibiotic that we had to change every six hours because I had had a resurgence of an infection – of this infection in my arm that many of our soldiers and marines all of our service members have coming out of Iraq and so I was dealing with the physical issues but in some ways the campaign was really good therapy for my walking. I wore my legs a lot and I walked a lot and really brought my skills in terms of walking and maneuvering obstacles. It really improved them but there were days when I was in my wheelchair and there were days when I was walking and we just had to be smart about how we used my energy.

DOEBELE: How many operations have you had since we talked in 2005?

DUCKWORTH: You know I have no idea. At least a few dozen because ...

BOWLSBEY: Yes.

DOEBELE: A few dozen?

DUCKWORTH: At least. Yes, because there was a point in time where I was having one every other day and my latest one was just this past February. They had to do a revision on my left leg.

BOWLSBEY: It's slowed down quite a bit since she left Walter Reed. The only operation she's had since she left Walter Reed was this February while I was deployed but it's hard to say how many because they – when she was first hit they kept the wounds open and then they would go back in every couple of three days and debride them ...

DOEBELE: Debride?

DUCKWORTH: Clean them out. Take away dead tissue. Shrapnel, I was constantly expelling shrapnel out of body and I still do.

DOEBELE: You still do?

DUCKWORTH: A little bit here and there. Not as much. In the beginning, it was a lot in my face that was coming out and ...

BOWLSBEY: She's gone back into surgery every couple of three days but that's not really – I mean it's the technique that the doctors are using.

DUCKWORTH: They put you under and they go to work on you and it's been a while and then I've had about a two year break and then just a couple of months ago I had to go back in and have my left leg. I had a revision on the amputation so I'm just learning to walk all over again. I'm a lot less steady than I was these past two years.

DOEBELE: Show us how you're doing with your different injuries because you show us then.

DUCKWORTH: Oh, sure.

DOEBELE: You pushed your arm.

DUCKWORTH: So this is my arm that had – I don't know if they had done the flap here where they had just taken it off ...

DOEBELE: Taken it off I think.

DUCKWORTH: Taken it off so this is it. I can't turn my hand. It's stuck and I can't straighten it but I think when we spoke last I had to actually use this hand to lift this one and I couldn't move this one and over the past three years the nerves have slowly grown back and now I have sensation which I did not have. I -- My whole hand just feels tingly and I can make a fist which I couldn't. I was (INAUDIBLE). By the end of that year of 2005 my hand was actually in a claw because it has atrophied and so all this is coming back and I think you're nerves grow back at – I don't remember what it was. One millimeter ...

BOWLSBEY: A week or something like that.

DUCKWORTH: A week or something like that so it's – I've had many weeks for that to grow back and that works. As I said, I had a revision of my amputation on this left side. They took some more tissue off the bottom and sanded down the bone but I have a great new prosthesis and you know I'm learning to walk all over again.

DOEBELE: Show me the prosthesis on your right leg because that was something at the time we first spoke was state-of-the-art. No one – they hadn't tried it on anybody. How many prosthesis have you – prosthetics have you had? Have you had a lot?

DUCKWORTH: I've probably gone through six or – well right now I own I think four pairs of legs and they're for different uses. This is my primary pair that I walk with and I have a backup pair. I have a pair of swim legs that I use for going into the ocean for exercise. That's what you want to do water aerobics. I have a pair which is a power knee which they are testing out on some of us coming out of Walter Reed. It's actually the first truly bionic knee and it actually has a motor in it and I'm testing that out. It was meant for a person who's a single leg amputee but they – the amputees at Walter Reed are strong enough and showing that bilaterals can do it and so I use that one mostly to walk on the treadmill because it actually improves my gait. But in terms of each of the legs, I've gone through many versions of the same legs. The knee stays the same, the component -- the microprocessor stays the same but the rest of it where it fits on my body changes as my body changes shape as I heal and change.

DOEBELE: And is that true for all amputees things change as their body changes?

DUCKWORTH: Yes. Things change as your body changes and also as you become more or less active over your lifetime and it's expected that you will continually have to get new – this part. This is called the socket. It's like a sleeve made out of carbon fiber that your leg fits inside and so this part will need to be changed periodically throughout the rest of your life.

DOEBELE: Is it difficult to take one on and off?

DUCKWORTH: No, no. It's very easy to do so.

DOEBELE: And this leg. How do you move it at the knee?

DUCKWORTH: I actually put weight when I'm standing as I walk and that leg is behind me. As I'm starting to take a step I push down on my hip and push down on the toe and then the leg actually propels itself. It's got a microprocessor that calculates an algorithm 50 times a second and measures my pace, my stride, length, my balance and it keeps me upright and if I start to stumble it locks me up and prevents me from falling. So that's this particular model of the knee and that's generally what I use.

DOEBELE: What did you find in terms of the military's ability to handle your needs as far as an amputee and as far as your changing needs for prosthetics over the period of time in the last three years?

DUCKWORTH: Well, Walter Reed has been fantastic. They've met every need that I've ever had and anticipated needs that I didn't know I had. Coming out in the real world has been a little bit more difficult and I still go back to Walter Reed for some care but I now have found a local prosthetist (ph) out here in Chicago. A man who is fixing – actually, he made this pair of legs for me. So this is really my first pair. The knee is old but the rest of the leg is the first pair I've had outside of the hospital.

DOEBELE: What did you have to do in preparation for Tammy coming home? Did you come to this home?

BOWLSBEY: We did. We did and I didn't have to do much. The guys from her unit, some of the retirees and some of the ones that had just returned actually came in. They moved walls. They ripped out the floors and we had – the house was built in 1970 so it had the 1970s era carpet that kind of makes you cringe but they came in and they ripped that out. They laid tiles on all the floors and where there is carpet it's a very low pile carpet that they put in so they basically replaced all the floors. Re-did the wood floors. Widened the hallways. Rounded off the corners. Moved walls. Widened the doors so that the whole house is accessible and basically they did it for her.

They came and the house had like a popcorn finish on some of the walls that they use to do in the '70s and it had real sharp edges on it. As you can imagine, you'd catch your knuckles on that popcorn finish as you wheel down a hallway so they spent hours sanding that down and basically made the walls smooth. So painted everything and basically built a accessible deck on the backside of the house so we didn't have to do much for her to move right into the house. When I deployed, we had – we modified some things some more because we realized I wouldn't be here to help her in. The VA of course ...

DOEBELE: Like what?

BOWLSBEY: Well the VA had purchased and had installed a ramp on the front of the house so she can get in and out through the ramp and then I built a dock inside the garage kind of a dock so we had a four-wheel drive pickup at the time and it had a wheelchair lift in it so she can drive into the garage. The wheelchair lift puts the wheelchair right beside the truck on the deck if you will and then she can hop down into the wheelchair on the deck and just wheel in the house. There's no step. Basically the deck inside the garage is same height as the floor inside the house. So those were some of the things we did to enable her to get around if I weren't here to help her. But the house is really – when the guys got done with it was really ready to go and ready for her to live in.

DOEBELE: To what degree does the government take care of any of those modifications in terms of financially?

DUCKWORTH: You can apply to get – there are grants to help you modify your home. The VA depending on your level of disability will give you up to \$50,000 to modify your home and you can access that three different times for a total of \$50,000 but you can only use \$50,000 once in your entire lifetime and since we have plans on building a retirement home place we're choosing to not access that money and wait and we'll access that later when we go to our final retirement home. So our friends coming in and doing the modifications tremendous because them doing that actually allowed me the independence so that I could continue to live here while Bryan was deployed because if that had not been done I don't think that I could have lived by myself.

BOWLSBEY: When they did that they paid for that. That was all basically the American people just giving money and or time or materials. That was – the government didn't spend anything on that. We didn't spend any of our funds. That all came from people just helping out.

DUCKWORTH: It was amazing. There were times when Ron was telling me that you know some people would show up and say I'm an electrician. Can you use me for the day or I'm a union plumber. Can you use me for a day and so all these people would just drop by and work for a whole day and then put this house together for us.

DOEBELE: And as I recall, they didn't give you any choice in all of this. It was something like give us the keys or we're going to come through the window.

BOWLSBEY: You can either mail us the keys or we're going to break in and I think that was the way Ron put it to me at the time. But I mean everywhere they went to – if they got not only cooperation I think he went to the city of (INAUDIBLE) and the state village and for work -- building permits and of course they cost money so the people in the village passed a hat and bought the permits for him. Here you go.

DOEBELE: Ron is a friend of yours?

BOWLSBEY: Yes.

DUCKWORTH: Ron was someone I – he and I had served with Ron Stek (ph) – Sergeant Ron Stek (ph). He and I served with and he knew me from the time I was as cadet and you know kind of sort of watched me grow as an officer and he was my platoon sergeant and he wanted – he was a part of the unit going to Iraq and ended up not being able to go medically and so was very, very disappointed. His son ended up going without him and so he's an old friend but he's also – you know that officer – non-commissioned officer relationship and officer NCO relationship. He kept me from making a lot of stupid mistakes when I was learning to be an officer and I was a cadet and then he was here to take care of me even while I was hurt.

DOEBELE: Back to you running for Congress.

DUCKWORTH: Yes.

DOEBELE: What did you learn about running for Congress?

DUCKWORTH: I learned to sit down and talk and have great discussions with people. I – you know you sort of see this political process on TV and you see a lot of people making speeches but I think for me the most rewarding was we – about two or three times a day sometimes I would actually go into someone's home and we'd just sit at a kitchen table or usually in the living room and they would invite their neighbors and we would just talk and it was really interesting the issues that people had and what they were concerned with and basically they're the same issues. They're just you know I want to keep my job and it costs too much to send my children to college and I'm afraid that there's going to be a draft and my child is going to get sent off to war and all of those types of issues that everybody has. So that I think was for me the best part and the part where I learned the most was when I got to sit down in people's homes and we talked.

DOEBELE: The latest records that I have said that you spent about four – that the campaign was about \$4.5 million. Is that close?

DUCKWORTH: Yes, that's what we spent on our side.

DOEBELE: And how much of that was advertising I mean because usually the big chunk ...

DUCKWORTH: A big chunk of it was. Most of that was advertising. We ran a very lean campaign staff wise but most of that was advertising and even so we were still outspent almost two to one with advertising.

DOEBELE: Did you ever feel that your patriotism was questioned during the campaign?

DUCKWORTH: I think my opponent tried, yes you know to impinge my patriotism which I felt was a disservice to the process because the process was about issues and it wasn't about questioning someone's patriotism. I certainly didn't question his. I didn't feel the need. But you know I don't think people bought into it to be perfectly honest. I think people realize that my sincerity in terms of love for this nation and what was important to me was doing the best I could for the district and for the people I live with.

DOEBELE: What was your job in the campaign?

BOWLSBEY: I basically worked. I wound up in (INAUDIBLE) for a lot of times and candidate wrangler (ph) her a little bit and that kind of thing so didn't officially work for the campaign but spent a lot of time around there and helping out with various things.

DOEBELE: Would you have been allowed to as a member of the military being a paid staffer?

BOWLSBEY: As a – there's different statuses and at the time I was just a drilling national guardsman so on a drill weekend no. Any weekend where I'm on orders or anything where you're officially in the Army today, no. There's no – the two are completely separate. They need to be completely separate.

DUCKWORTH: And I was doing drilling at the time just as I am now so I would have to stop my campaign when it was time for me to go do my drill weekend or my two weeks I'd have to stop. Now I'm a soldier. Put on my uniform and all (INAUDIBLE) activities had to cease and do my duty and then come back.

DOEBELE: You have been quoted as talking about how at some point that now you have a little bit more freedom to talk about how you feel about things like the Iraq war and obviously that was almost your platform right? Your being against the war?

DUCKWORTH: Well my – I don't think it was my platform. I was very upfront about the fact that I felt that the war was a mistake in Iraq. I felt that we should have concentrated all our efforts in Afghanistan and basically crush the enemies who would dare attack us on our soil. But I felt that the war in Iraq was a distraction and was a mistake but that didn't mean that I didn't feel that I had an obligation as a soldier to serve and I absolutely feel that we need to do everything to support our troops and give them the equipment that they need. If anything, you know we need to give them more equipment just to make sure that as long as they're going to be put in harm's way in a very unique type of a situation that they have everything that they need so that they can come home.

DOEBELE: Do you think that your stance against the war helped or hurt you?

DUCKWORTH: I think it allowed people to just breathe a deep sigh of relief. I saw that a lot on our campaign when I stood up and said I fought in Iraq. I love my nation. I would go back to Iraq if I was ordered back but I'm telling you that in my opinion the war was a mistake. Now can we talk about what we

need to do as a country and it allowed people to almost set the war aside, the fact that they didn't feel that their patriotism was being questioned and people were almost relieved to be able to talk to me because then they could talk about the economy and the fact that they were losing jobs and that they could barely make their mortgage payments and afford college and they didn't feel that that – you know thinking about that made them less patriotic because I could say look I'm just as patriotic as the next person and we have issues that we need to deal with in this country.

DOEBELE: Do you find that your work and – or your work in the military has – anything that's changed at all now that it's an open – that it's – that everybody knows that you're against the war?

DUCKWORTH: Well actually you know I think that over the last three years when I first declared my candidacy and when I first stood up and said I felt that the war was wrong you know there were some of the people that I served with sort of said well I don't agree with you but over the last three years more and more of my friends have sat down with me since then and said you know you were right. It was a mistake to go in and I said that was my point all along. I didn't say that we needed to do anything differently in terms of supporting the troops or funding the troops but my statement was the war was wrong from the beginning and it's funny how the attitudes have changed as people realize that you know this is a quagmire over there and we need to really rebuild the arm forces and then we've taken the Army that I love and really weaken it and you know plundered it in some ways and we need to focus on building our national defenses back up and rebuilding our forces and getting the equipment that we need and making sure our troops have what they need and also making sure that our troops get the benefits they deserve whether they're still serving or when they become veterans because if we don't keep our promises to our troops then in an all volunteer military you're not going to get people volunteering if they know that this country won't keep its promises and I think that would undermine the strength of this nation which I believe so strongly in.

DOEBELE: What about you? I mean ...

BOWLSBEY: I don't think – first off no official – you know you think of the army as a monolithic – you know what does the army say? No difference whatsoever from that angle. Now you had individuals in the army and I think there's been real animosity from certain individuals toward me for that kind of thing but no more so than say you know I'm upset at you sir because you wrote me a bad counseling statement because I did something wrong. There's animosities for all little interpersonal things and I don't think there's been anymore because of any stance that my wife has taken you know politically.

DOEBELE: How open can you be about your own personal feelings about the war?

BOWLSBEY: Well again, depending on what status I'm in. I mean on drill weekend not at all and in general if I'm talking to a group of subordinates not at all. That's not the proper role but if I'm on a Title 32 traditional in a guard status then I'm a private citizen. I can say whatever I believe is true. So there's a – I don't know. There's an opportunity to abuse and misuse and you've got to make sure you're not doing that. So I mean even if I'm having a beer out with the guys and the topic comes up if they're my peers, there are other majors or they outrank me and we're behind closed doors I'll tell them exactly what I think but if they're a group of privates then it's not my place to influence what they're – you know what they're thinking about and I'll tell them to go vote. I've had no problems with that. I think we should tell all of them to go vote, but I don't want to tell them how to vote. That's not what I need to do as a soldier.

DOEBELE: So what about a setting like this where you're being interviewed on television? Are you comfortable talking about how you feel about the (INAUDIBLE)?

BOWLSBEY: If I'm talking to a private citizen, a civilian yes no problems at all. While they're cutting my hair, you know OK let's talk.

DOEBELE: And how do you feel?

BOWLSBEY: I think that there's going to be a long drawn out low intensity conflict when we get to actually fight it but we've been diverted into a war in Iraq that really is less about us now than it is about different (INAUDIBLE) not being able to get along. So – I don't know. I think that's kind of unfortunate but again if my number comes up and I'm ordered to go back and my services are required got 150,000 of my people there I'm going. So there's no – actually probably 140,000 of my people there right now but same deal. They need something I can do for them I'm on the way.

DOEBELE: To what degree do you if there is a finger to blame in all of this blame the leadership in this country for where we are in Iraq today.

DUCKWORTH: You know I'm just so tired of the whole blame thing because it's – we're there. We're there. We've lost some lives. We have spent our national treasure. We have spent you know the forces of military and I'm just right now at this point concerned with rebuilding.

BOWLSBEY: When we say national treasure let's define that. When we are talking about that we're talking about 4,000 American soldiers. There's also – people may misstate. We're talking about \$3 trillion. Well yes that may be a concern as well but first and foremost 4,000 lives so American mothers, sons and daughters. That's the national treasure that is first and foremost that concerns. \$3 trillion is a lot of money and our nation's future as well but that's a secondary concern.

DUCKWORTH: But it's also the strength of our military and I'm more focused on that the fact that we need to rebuild. That we are less strong a nation than we were before the war.

DOEBELE: You think we are?

DUCKWORTH: Oh, absolutely. I think our military is tired. I think that we have used up our equipment. Our equipment is tired and that we need to rebuild and part of that you know involves stepping away from the blame game, who voted for what. Who supported what and let's fix the problem and let's fix the problem. You know not just the national defense side but also part of that is our economy and let's fix those problems and let's bring the country together and reunite the country because whether we supported the war or you don't support the war or even on a drill weekend you know when I sit down and I talk to my buddies and my peers you know in a casual setting you know – it's not even – I don't care who you voted for. Let's talk about what we need to do to make America as strong as she once was because that's what we all – that's why we put on the uniform was to defend this democracy and I think this democracy while it's a strong democracy has lost some of its strength in terms of you know its military, its defenses and its role as a leader in the world and I look forward to when we can take that place again.

DOEBELE: When you were at Walter Reed, I read some place that you refused to allow Secretary Rumsfeld to come visit you. Why?

DUCKWORTH: I think I was hurting too much at the time. I think I was too emotional to be able to let him in my room. I was very resentful of what I felt was a lack of empathy for what the troops were going through and you know I asked – he was coming through visiting and I asked him I said I will see him if he's in my chain of command. If this is an order, of course, I'm a soldier but if I have the option then respectfully no. I don't care to see him and at the time you know I was up and down. I had my good days and I had my bad days and I was probably – you know I just didn't want to see him. I didn't want to see him because I didn't know that I could be a good soldier and keep my mouth shut.

DOEBELE: Was there any repercussions for that decision?

DUCKWORTH: I think a psychiatrist came to my room the next day. They were worried about me. They said how come you didn't want to see the secretary and I said well sir between you and me I think that makes me the most sane person in the room. I thought it was kind of funny that they sent a psychiatrist in to see me the next day. But I just – it's very important to me as a soldier to live up to the standards and be a professional and that day I didn't feel that I could be a professional and I chose not to see him.

DOEBELE: November 2006. Let's go back to the election and ...

DUCKWORTH: Yes.

DOEBELE: And why do you think – how much did you lose by and why do you think you lost?

DUCKWORTH: Just around 4,000 votes out of 140,000 plus (INAUDIBLE).

DOEBELE: A couple of percentage points.

DUCKWORTH: Yes. A little – it was like 1.2 percent, something like that. We were outspent tremendously. I think when it was all said and done including the independent expenditures which is money that other people spend that you can't control our side overall about six million and or 6.5 and the Republican side spent about 11. So it was almost two to one. Not quite two to one and in the end I believe then Speaker Hastert dropped an extra \$2 million in the last 48 hours something like that and ...

BOWLSBEY: For TV.

DUCKWORTH: For television. Just very negative that we just never had a chance to recover from and a lot of voter suppression tactics that were used against us and I think you know a big part of it was I didn't do any negative TV commercials which perhaps was naïve of me as a new young politician.

DOEBELE: Did you walk away from that experience feeling naïve?

DUCKWORTH: I think I felt naïve about the negative commercials but I'm glad that I chose not to do the negative TV commercials. I didn't want to be another politician. I walked away from the experience feeling like I gave it my best shot. I didn't think I could have worked any harder or done anymore than I did and was I devastated? Absolutely. I was absolutely devastated. But you know election day was only – was less than 10 days before my alive (ph) day and as devastated as I was by that it's hard to sit down and feel sorry for yourself when you have that day come up it reminds you how lucky you are to be alive. So ...

DOEBELE: And what is an alive day?

DUCKWORTH: A live day is an anniversary of the day that I was injured. It was something that was taught to us by the Vietnam veterans. I think they called it a life day. Basically, November 12th for me can either be a really sad, dark day when I think about this is the day I lost my legs. This is the day I was shot down. A terrible tragic day or it can be a day of joy and we choose to make it a joyous day where we celebrate and every year I get together with the crew of my helicopter and the rescue aircraft and we – they make me buy them drinks every year. It's like gosh, am I going to be buying you guys drinks for the rest of my life just because you saved my life on this day but – and we get together every year and we celebrate and that happened you know just a few days after I lost the election. So it puts things in perspective and I was lucky that I was able to just switch to that and give thanks for being alive because what's losing an election when you could have lost your life this day two years before.

DOEBELE: So after the election then what did you do?

DUCKWORTH: After the election – three days after I lost the election Governor Blagojevich called me and offered me the position of Director of Veterans Affairs for the State of Illinois and I've been doing that ever since.

DOEBELE: Were you surprised?

DUCKWORTH: I was very surprised. I was at a loss because I went from my mission in Iraq to my mission of recovery at Walter Reed to my mission of the (INAUDIBLE) without slowing down or

changing gears. I was going 100 miles an hour the whole time for those three years and so I was sitting and hoping what am I going to do now when I got the call from the Governor's office saying that he wanted me to use my advocacy and take care of Illinois veterans and I was deeply grateful for the opportunity to do that.

DOEBELE: So what is your job?

DUCKWORTH: I run the state agency. I am a member of the Governor's cabinet. We have about \$105 million budget and about 2,000 employees and I do everything from ensure that the veterans in Illinois get their federal benefits to all of the state benefits to advising our legislators on state benefits. We have four veterans' retirement homes that we also are in charge of. So it's everything from making sure that people get their GI bill – money to making sure that I come up with new programs. In the last 18 months we've introduced \$60 million worth of new programs in the State of Illinois for veterans. We have started our own first in the nation program for post traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury and we've been able to pass some really innovative new laws in the state and benefits of veterans so much so that Illinois is now as far as benefits provided by the state we're one of the top states in our nation for that.

DOEBELE: Now one of the things that you have done in that time that has been seen nationally is that you've come to testify before Congress.

DUCKWORTH: Yes.

DOEBELE: How many times?

DUCKWORTH: I think four or five. I was just back there again last week.

BOWLSBEY: I was in Kuwait.

DOEBELE: But you were there one time?

DUCKWORTH: Yes, yes. The first time and I think I've had three or four since then in my role as Director of Veterans Affairs. We're doing many innovative things here in Illinois. Many first in the nation programs whether its tax credits to employers. Whether it's our own unique mortgage loan programs. Our traumatic brain injury, Illinois Warrior Assistance Program. We have quite a few initiatives that we've started in the last 18 months where we're leading the nation and as a consequence I have gained a role as an advocate for veterans in Washington, D.C. and I do go back and forth fairly often and I guess one of the benefits at the run for Congress is that I was able to develop a relationship or in some cases friendships. In some cases just professional relationships with many members of Congress who I've been very fortunate that I can pick up the phone and call and they will listen. They'll answer the phone which is half the battle I think with the members because they're so busy.

DOEBELE: Your national visibility has gone up a lot.

DUCKWORTH: It's crazy. It's partially your fault. I don't know how many times we heard from people that they saw the CSPAN interview. I think that was played over and over again and I think that the first Memorial Day weekend it was replayed so you're partly to blame for that.

DOEBELE: Has it done anything to your privacy?

BOWLSBEY: A little bit. I think the campaign did more to our privacy. I mean the other side apparently they gave out phone number – our home phone in their TV ads and they did various things like that so I mean someone was going through our garbage at two in the morning and there's been some things like that because of the campaign but other than that the only impact is we'll be out walking down the street and someone will recognize her and come and shake her hand and that kind of thing. So there hasn't been a terrible negative impact outside the campaign I don't think.

DOEBELE: What's that like that's much different than the person that we talked to three years ago?

DUCKWORTH: It's very surreal. It's very surreal because I think of myself as just living my life and you know to have other veterans come up to me and thank me for my service is very strange because they too served. If anything, I should thank them for what they've done for this nation especially older veterans, Vietnam veterans, Korea, World War II. The guys who built this nation. That's very strange. I do see it as a consequence of what I'm trying to do. The work that I've taken on which is fighting for veterans benefits. It – you just deal with it. I cringe inside but people are basically good. The American people they love their vets and they love their warriors and they just – they want to make a connection with you not because – I don't see that they're trying to make a connection with me because they've seen me on TV. I think they want to make a connection with me because I'm a very visible symbol for Americas veterans and if that's the case then it's an honor. But yes, there's a part of me that cringes on the inside every time because I just would like to go outside in my shorts. I'm really just joking. The other day we were ...

BOWLSBEY: Put on her dark sunglasses and she said do you think anyone will recognize me and I look down at the long dark hair and the prosthetic legs and no honey.

DOEBELE: Not a soul.

BOWLSBEY: Strictly inognito (ph).

DUCKWORTH: And my artificial legs and my wheelchair. I didn't want to put on makeup when we went outside. I just wanted to get the story (ph) and he looked at me and he says you have not legs (INAUDIBLE).

DOEBELE: How much time do you have to spend in the wheelchair and how much time do you spend in your prosthetic?

DUCKWORTH: When I'm home I'm in my wheelchair because this house is so wonderfully accessible for me and the legs are – they're uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time. When I'm traveling I am in them as long as 18, 20 hours a day. When I go to work if I have a lot of appointments outside of the building where I work where I have to catch cabs then I'm in the legs but I'm very fortunate in that I have that option and I have all of the different tools that I need. I have wheelchairs that fold. I have wheelchairs with power wheels. I have fully powered wheelchairs and then I have the different legs so I – you know, evenings I'm in my wheelchair once I come home first thing I'm going to do is take these legs off and throw them against the wall. As functional as they make – that they help me live my life they are not that comfortable long term. But I wouldn't live without them because --

DOEBELE: The VFW. I read – it was in the national newspapers that veterans of foreign wars did not endorse you. They actually endorsed your opponent in the Congressional campaign. How did that happen and how did it make you feel?

DUCKWORTH: Well, VFW Political Action Committee did not endorse us. They have a – they've never endorsed in an open race and they only endorse incumbents and out of the blue and we had called and checked on that early on in the campaign and out of the blue they said that they – when they announced that they had endorsed my opponent they also at the same time announced that they'd changed their policy for the first time and that they were now endorsing in open races. It hurt. It hurt because I saw myself as being a fierce fighter for vets. As being dedicated to other vets but I also knew that it was a political decision at the national level and that did not reflect the majority of the VFW membership. If anything, so many of my friends terminated their membership with the VFW and I had to tell them not to do that. I'm still a life member of the VFW myself. I was very tempted to tear up my membership card but I did not because I feel very strongly that veterans organizations whether it's WFW or the American Legion or the DAD, Disabled American Veterans all of those organizations do a very valuable job and that we need to pull together and not fight to fight for our rights and it was a very cynical thing that they did and I'm sorry

that they felt that they should do that and I hope that they're happy with their choice. I'm pretty sure my opponent voted against the GI bill for the 21st century just a few days ago. So you know it's sad because that's – it shouldn't be about party politics. It should be about who do you think is going to fight for what you believe in and I hope that I've demonstrated in the last 18 months that I am a fighter for vets.

DOEBELE: Back to – I know we're going all over the place but I want to go back to the conversation that we had in 2005 about you possibly being deployed. And when I asked you had you two talked about what could happen if one of the two of you had been deployed. You said you had talked about the possibility of one of you dying. Not one of you coming back injured. What kind of conversation did you have if you don't mind sharing it before you left?

BOWLSBEY: Well we upped the insurance every – we have pretty good National Guard Association in the state and they've had some additional insurance that we purchase so if something happened to me I was pretty sure that Tammy was going to be at least monetarily in pretty good shape so it doesn't get you there but it relieves a lot of the stress. You know if there's enough money to do what you need to do you know you can grieve and get by where you need to get by in my opinion.

DOEBELE: What if you had come back as injured as Tammy was?

BOWLSBEY: Well that would have been difficult. I mean we kind of knew from her injuries that anything – if I were to get hit below the elbows and below the knees probably pretty good shape. Anything you know an above knee amputation would make it rough for us in old age because we're going to rely a lot on me being able to lift things around and that kind of thing in old age so my knees are pretty important so when I was out on convoy I had armor around every leg.

DUCKWORTH: We bought additional armor for him just because ...

BOWLSBEY: Yes. No. The army gave us the best inceptor body armor and I mean I've seen where they've – was shot with a five five six round and the plate that I saw there was maximal (ph) discharge and they had it up on the wall but it will stop a rifle round and I had a plate on my front. Plate on my back. Plates on both sides. All army issued in sleeves that came down about this far so we also – we purchased some other plates and I had them on my forearms and I scrounged some other soft armor and had it around my outboard leg when I was driving down the road. But just like I say, I mean anything below the knee – a below the knee amputation get along pretty well. You know but if I'd lost one or more legs above the knee that could be rough for us in old age so we were worried about that and of course the – if I were to get killed the insurance would pay out and that would help at least a little bit. So – you know you do what you can to try and prepare for those circumstances and all of the families do. I mean everyone that deploys they're trying to plan as best they can for their loved ones and that kind of thing so this is not an uncommon thing at all and you know I'm trying to plan for what does Tammy do? Well you know you have a lot of fathers or mothers or someone like that that deploys who may be special needs children so now what's going to happen when mom or dad doesn't come home and the other spouses – the only one left with a special needs child and three other kids. So there's always these family issues. It's not just something specific to us. It's all military families are dealing with that kind of thing and planning for it and it comes with the territory. You know what you're getting into when you sign up. So a ...

DUCKWORTH: And we have an advantage in that we know if he had gotten hurt he would have gotten the best care possible because that's what I received at Walter Reed and so in some ways we have got comfort. It's hard to think of 13 months in a hospital as a comfort but we had that comfort and we knew the doctors and we knew that if he was hurt I wouldn't be lost.

BOWLSBEY: Yes. As a matter of fact, she went through surgery when I was in Kuwait and I of course knew about it but I also knew that she was going to Walter Reed. Knew the doctor who was going to be doing the surgery. You know knew that he had done all of these surgeries during this war or many of them, several hundred. I figured this is the one guy that if there's one individual in the world that you want

cutting on your spouse it would this guy so that was a great comfort and knew all the therapists and knew the hospital and I thought what am I going to add to this and I stayed in the theater (ph). And the other part of that was we didn't have enough leave time to let the privates go on leave – all the privates. The truck drivers. The people that were actually doing the work. Can't let them go because there's enough work to do that they can't go on leave. Well I can't be taking leave unless I really need too unless there's really an emergency and I didn't feel that I was going to bring anything to the equation back to Walter Reed because I know they've got it and my family's there. So you know my mom and dad are going to be there. Hospital there and Walter Reed is just you know the finest institution that could be so I'm going to stand (INAUDIBLE) and continue doing my job.

DOEBELE: Your job was what?

BOWLSBEY: I was the operations officer for a truck battalion.

DOEBELE: And what does that mean?

BOWLSBEY: Basically planning all training and dealing with any kind of operational issue. In this case not day to day operations because in this specific type of outfit you have an officer that that's his or her only job. They plan the day to day convoy ops and you know how to work out loads and that kind of thing. So anything other than that you know training issues in terms of tactics, techniques and procedures and that kind of publishing SOPs and making sure everyone's kind of (INAUDIBLE) the knowledge that they've picked up out on the road. So that's one of the sought after jobs is the S3 in most tasks. In most task force staffs that what you want to be. The S3 or the spoe (ph) or something like that. So ...

DOEBELE: And you have been in the military how long?

BOWLSBEY: Twenty – working on 21 years now. (INAUDIBLE) 20 years in August as a marine (ph) now.

DUCKWORTH: He had 19.5 when he got deployed.

DOEBELE: In 20 years you can retire can't you?

BOWLSBEY: I can. I could.

DOEBELE: Do you have any plans to?

BOWLSBEY: No. So I'll be in – they will review me now every year to see if they want to keep me after 20 so they'll be a board every year to see if they still need me but Tammy won't retire for another three years. I don't see any benefit to retiring before she does and even then it's kind of hard to think about that. You know ooh.

DUCKWORTH: Yes. It's hard to hang up the uniform. It's hard to give up that commitment so that's why I couldn't quit either so I'm on my 17th year working on another three and we'll decide then and just the thought of stopping is going to be – it can be hard when it's such a big part of your identity and such an overt part of what's important to us.

DOEBELE: You mentioned Walter Reed a couple of times about the importance of the care that you got there. It has been since we last spoke that the major series of articles in the Washington Post came out about Walter Reed. What was your reaction to those articles and did you see any of what was exposed?

BOWLSBEY: I saw more than Tammy because she was either in the hospital or at Fisher House so she didn't see a lot of the areas that they were talking about and I did because at one point I had – I'd started working for the network security folks at Walter Reed when she needed basically space to be able to falter on her own and you know have to struggle through doors which was a necessary part of recovery. I started

working for the networks so I saw some of the recesses of the hospital and you know the stories were partly true. Some were living areas that they had to use when this war continued past the time that you know was originally thought that it was going to continue and you had more wounded. Some of those living areas were not good and some of the living areas that they reopened because Walter Reed was on base – the closure list. You know it was going to be closed so they didn't maintain those areas because they were going to go away. So suddenly the war is lasting longer. You need more spaces to put people. Some of the living areas were bad. That was true. The thing that kind of – I kind of was upset about was that the inference was the medical care was not good.

DUCKWORTH: It was such a broad brush.

BOWLSBEY: It was a blunt instrument ...

DUCKWORTH: It was and the medical care was amazing. I mean I still go back there. When I had my recent surgery I chose to go back to Walter Reed. It's the best care in the world. There are no more dedicated doctors and nurses and technicians and therapists than there are at that hospital. They pour everything into caring for their patients. Now were there problems? Absolutely. There were problems with maintenance and a lot of those issues. You know my mother had to clean my hospital room because at the time the maintenance contract was not sufficient and my room wasn't getting cleaned so when I went to have an operation every other day my mom would actually scrub the room down and mop the floors because that wasn't getting done on a regular basis. But that did not – you know that was a completely different component to the care that I've got.

I have you know O-6s full bird colonels which in the army is a pretty high rank. That's one step below a general. I had full bird colonels who were giving personal time at 9:30 at night to come and make – personally make devices and splints for my arm that they didn't need to because they didn't want me to go an extra two hours without the care that I needed. The dedication was just amazing. My therapist went with me everywhere and took care of me and so it was such a broad brush stroke. I think it needed to be done in terms of really bringing to attention some of the problems that were there and that was part of the advocacy work that I was doing while I was there because you know when you have more years in the army like Bryan and I do when somebody tells you no this can't happen – for example, I guess I was unconscious at the time but Bryan and my mother were told that there was no place for them to stay and they slept on the waiting room floor for three days and Bryan having more time in the army was able to say no. No room at the end is not the correct answer. What is the correct answer is that you're going to find a space and you're going to shuttle her mom back and forth to the hospital if need be. But when you have a young life or a young spouse and the soldier is a private or specialist and maybe has two years in the army, they don't know.

BOWLSBEY: And someone in personnel says I'm sorry you can't have that. Or I'm sorry that doesn't exist and they say oh.

DUCKWORTH: They don't know how to fight the bureaucracy.

BOWLSBEY: Or that they can't.

DUCKWORTH: That they can't.

BOWLSBEY: So it's – and that's the other – and if someone were to say well there's a lot of bureaucracy in some of the administrative things at Walter Reed. Yes there are. Very large organization. I don't like. The army's a big army. You're going to deal with that and you're going to deal with that if you go to a big company. If you work for IBM there's a lot of bureaucracy. There's administrative time that it just takes to get anything done. So – I mean that's part of the problem too and I don't like that but it's not – if someone were to look at that and draw the inference that the medical care is not what we should be giving the vets I don't – I completely disagree with that. I think – I mean that was our preference when she got that right leg operated on again we want her to go to Walter Reed and there's nothing self-deprecating about that or

nothing you know just trying to be a team player. No, I was looking for the best care we could get and that's where we could get it. So you know that's – I don't know. There's part of me that's almost insulted – angered when I see the media kind of using that blunt instrument kind of approach to you know – I guess it's because it didn't make it for a sensational story and I really would like to see some of those things fixed so I think that they could have gone in with a scalpel rather than a hammer and we could have gotten some better effect than we did. So – of course we had a million and one scalpel and saying there's a few things wrong doesn't get you the kind of national media attention. You know maybe there's more leverage that you get from going in and making a sensational story. I wished they had targeted the specific problems a little better than they did.

DOEBELE: What contact and input have you had to your other senators, presidential campaigns Senator Obama?

DUCKWORTH: You know we have talked a lot about veterans issues with Senator Obama. He is on the Veterans Affairs Committee and actually I've testified in front of his (INAUDIBLE) because he invited me there. I guess it's probably been about a year or so now. He's very concerned about the inequality of care in terms of benefit compensation rates for veterans across the nation. Illinois in terms of federal compensation for veterans was 49 out of 50. 49th out of 50 states in terms of the level of compensation and it is very in equal because it is a subjective analysis.

For example, if you are a below knee amputation you are considered I think 40 percent disabled and that's the same across the board but my arm which is very subjective I could be 20 percent disabled here in Illinois for this arm but if I were in Texas I would be 40 percent disabled because they're more generous. It's arbitrary and so he's been very concerned about that. I've been working with his office a lot on veterans issues and you know he is a staunch defender of veterans and of all service members and so that's been great. Both he and Senator Durbin have been great with that.

DOEBELE: Have you been active at all in his campaign?

DUCKWORTH: I have not because I am a state employee and I do get federal funds to my agency for my four veterans home so I have not been able to be politically active during this time.

DOEBELE: And if he won the presidency and turned to you and said Tammy will you be involved in the Veterans Affairs Administration what would you tell him?

DUCKWORTH: You know I would continue to serve. I have not thought that far ahead. I am launching my traumatic brain injury program here in Illinois. I'd to see that through and I'll just let that come when it comes and I think that you know he's a really strong advocate for veterans because he already is. I can pick up the phone and call his office just as I can Senator Durbin and get the help that I need for vets. So you know I will serve in the best capacity that I can but I am not making decisions for anyone nor am I campaigning for any office right now. I'm happy where I am.

DOEBELE: Some of the articles that have been written about the two of you talk about the transition that you made from the federal veterans system, Walter Reed and your recovery there and then to the state system. What happened to you after you got out and you would be taken care of by the Veterans hospitals here in Illinois. What did you discover?

DUCKWORTH: Well actually the transition is from the DOD to the federal VA because I run the state agency. So you know I found it was an interesting transition. It was fairly smooth. I had my VA representative was at Walter Reed and they had already made the connections and facilitated the connections with my VA rep at Hines VA, Hines Hospital is my VA hospital. I mean most of that was taken care of. Just about everything went very smoothly and I've been very well cared for at Hines. I have some issues with the prosthetics when I first started just because I felt they were not up to the standards

that Walter Reed was that they did not have the absolute high tech equipment that I was use to getting at Walter Reed.

BOWLSBEY: Now they're use to serving a different population ...

DOEBELE: A geriatric population.

BOWLSBEY: Yes. Now you have a bunch of young kids 20, 22 years old. They're going to be wearing computer controlled prosthetics. They're going to be playing basketball on them and breaking them so the VA that's a different ...

DOEBELE: Is not ready for that.

DUCKWORTH: I felt that they were not ready for that when I first came out of Walter Reed at the end of 2005 and so I continued to go back to Walter Reed for my prosthetics care for a long time but I went to my Hines Hospital for everything else, for women's health. They even did my infectious disease with the infection in my arm. They continued – they took care of that and they've been some therapy and actually their therapists at Hines was great. He and my therapist at Walter Reed talked to one another and coordinated my care so I've had a very positive experience. I have now arranged with Hines for me to go to an outside provider for my prosthetics. Here in Chicago we have some great, great clinics that are civilian clinics and so everything is fine and I have great access and get my prescriptions mailed to my home so I don't even have to go in and wait in line at the pharmacy.

DOEBELE: There's a lot of discussion and has been for some time about the use of private medical personnel in a lot of areas using the veterans and having been taken care of through the local medical facility and not the VA. Does that work?

DUCKWORTH: In some cases – and it's very specific. There are some things that VA hospitals do better than anyone else and I would never want to go to anyone else but a VA hospital for that thing. The infectious diseases that were picked up by veterans in Vietnam or the ones that I picked up in Iraq, unless you've dealt with you know one veteran after another you're not going to gain that expertise. Hines VA, my home hospital has a wonderful state of the art blind rehabilitation program. They also have a great spinal cord rehabilitation program. Some of the best in the country. They're centers of excellence. I wouldn't want a veteran to go anywhere else but there for care. But other things, sure the prosthetics. They don't have the time to catch up so I go to someone who is now state of the art which is outside and that flexibility is what's important so that our veterans should be able to choose to go to either the centers of excellence or if they live a long way away – I'm fortunate that I live just about an hour away from Hines but if I lived anywhere else in Illinois I could drive two or three hours and in that instance it's probably better to be able to be allowed to access healthcare providers near your home which is why at the state level we are trying to supplement that. And so state VA through our governor we are providing health insurance programs, veterans care and other – and traumatic brain injury testing and post traumatic stress disorder treatment paid for by the state for our veterans who live too far away from the nearest federal VA facility because we don't want them to just not get treatment.

DOEBELE: Now this war has found us the situation where there are more people like you.

DUCKWORTH: Yes.

DOEBELE: Multiple amputees. Should the VA itself get a higher level of expertise in prosthetics because there are more of you?

DUCKWORTH: And I think they will. I just don't think that they've had the chance to play catch up – or they're playing catch up at this point in time. I think over time they will develop that expertise but I don't think that they were ready in the first couple of years and frankly there's not enough VA prosthetists (ph). If they were to take all those folks and send them to schools on the high tech prosthesis then that would

have left the Vietnam, World War II and Korea generation veterans without providers. So you know if you do this to take care (INAUDIBLE) then you are shortchanging the veterans in previous conflicts and that's not right either. They're going to catch up. It's going to take time and in the meantime let the veterans go and access the care that they need where they can get it.

BOWLSBEY: It's going to take time and funding.

DUCKWORTH: And funding and that funding is not assured and it should be.

BOWLSBEY: It's year to year. Each budget year maybe it's cut. Maybe you get more you know so that there's no guaranteed funding. It's kind of hard to plan if you don't know how much funding you're going to have next year. So there's difficulties.

DOEBELE: You had mentioned a couple of times of PTSD and it brings the scan that you're mandating.

DUCKWORTH: Well traumatic brain injury, one in five of our vets coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan one in five – I think that's DOD figures will have some form of traumatic brain injury and as many as 20 to 30 percent will have some form of post traumatic stress disorder. Up until recently the DOD was not screening 100 percent of their returning service members for the injury so in Illinois we've made it mandatory for our National Guard because our governor is commander and chief of the National Guard so he did an executive order and all National Guardsmen returning will be screened for traumatic brain injury even if it doesn't look like you have it because it's an invisible wound and also we have the treatment program and our screening tool was written for us by the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago which is a national leader in brain injuries and so we are accessing state of Illinois resources and experts and working together with the Illinois Brain Injury Association and various groups to try to do something at least here in Illinois that we can control because we simply can't let these men and women continue to suffer and not get the treatment that they deserve simply because they live too far from a VA clinic or hospital and get the help that they need.

DOEBELE: And where does the hotline come in?

DUCKWORTH: Well that's part of the program. So what happens is you can go to the web page at IllinoisWarrior.com and read all about it and family members can go as well and then you can call into the hotline. It's 866-554-IWAT and when you call into that hotline you immediately reach a counselor with a Master's degree so it's not a phone operator and you will – if you are in a crisis mode with posttraumatic stress disorder for example you will get counseled immediately. But part of that process is they will give you the screening to see if you have indications of either traumatic brain injury or post traumatic stress disorder and then at that point in time they will refer you to a local provider near your home who will give you that official diagnoses and then my department steps in and we get you to apply for your federal benefits so that you can get the federal treatment from the federal VA and the DOD. If the veteran does not want the federal government to know and this is where we're unusual the state of Illinois will bear the full cost.

DOEBELE: So they can do this completely ...

DUCKWORTH: They can do this anonymously and completely confidentially if they choose not to go after the federal dollars simply because many of them are still serving in the military and they feel reprisals. They may rightly or wrongly feel that it might jeopardize their military careers and so we at the state said we are going to make sure we take care of them and we opened a program to veterans of all wars and interesting enough over 10 percent of our callers into the program have been Vietnam vets.

DOEBELE: Are you hearing from other state directors of veterans offices across the country in some of these programs?

DUCKWORTH: About two other states have contacted us directly wanting to know what we've done and looking to set up something themselves. Some of us nearby sister states, I think Michigan, I think Wisconsin have set up their own programs with the telephone hotline. Again paid for by state dollars. We've also been contacted by DOD as well as I believe the Centers for Disease Control also contacted us also wanting to know what we were doing. It's a very innovative combination of state funding but also accessing resource network outside of the DOD and the federal VA and sort of using that outside expertise that was there. So what we do is we go in and we train the counselors on military courtesies, on military culture just so that they will still deal with those members of the military.

DOEBELE: So what's next for you besides the vacation?

BOWLSBEY: After Hawaii. Well back to work I suppose and then that's about it so I'll be – there won't be any promotions in the near future for me so I'll be just tracking along with my National Guard job and back to working with computer networks.

DOEBELE: You were a captain when we talked to you last.

BOWLSBEY: I was and now you're major. You're both majors?

DUCKWORTH: Yes.

DOEBELE: And what about you? What's next?

DUCKWORTH: Well I'm going to keep doing this working on veterans and you know see what happens in November and in terms of the National Guard I'm continuing to serve and doing my thing and hopefully I'll get my 20 years of military service. I did turn down my medical retirement in order to continue to serve so I now have to do 20 years in order to get my military retirement unless I'm willing to go through the whole medical board again. So I will have to do 20 years at this point and get that done and we're just going to try to live our lives and you know it goes back to living up to what my buddies did for me because I could have died and Dan Willburg (ph) my friend who's on his way back to Iraq and I'm pretty emotional about it he carried me ...

DOEBELE: He was the other pilot.

DUCKWORTH: He carried me out of that field and I've got to live up to that.

DOEBELE: And what about the other old men that I think were in the helicopter that day. Where are they?

DUCKWORTH: Well Chris (ph) Veers (ph) is back serving. They were able to save his leg and so he's back serving – back on flight status. Kirk Hanneman (ph) who's now my door gunner is now in flight school. So he's on his way to becoming a helicopter pilot himself. I'm so proud of him and Dan Willburg (ph) was two days away from his retirement papers being complete when he pulled the packet and he didn't want the unit to go off to war without him and so he's going on another deployment.

DOEBELE: Where will he be?

DUCKWORTH: Iraq.

DOEBELE: And where in Iraq? I mean what kind of job does he do?

DUCKWORTH: I have an idea but I don't want to mention it just for operational security reasons but they're headed back over there.

DOEBELE: And is another political run possibility?

DUCKWORTH: You know I'm keeping my options open. I would do it. It would have to be for the right reason. I didn't run the first time for the title. I didn't want to be a senator or a congress person. I was running because I wanted to inject something into the debate and if I were to run again it would have to be for a good reason. It can't just be for the office because frankly, I'm not interested in that.

DOEBELE: And finally, if Senator Obama did win the presidential race and again he turned to you and he asked you the question what should I do about the war what would you two tell him?

DUCKWORTH: That we need to make it clear to the Iraqis that they need to take control of their own country and that we need to have a very good plan for drawing down our troops and bringing the men and women home and rebuilding our military and rebuilding our national defenses and completing the job in Afghanistan.

BOWLSBEY: I can't picture that being an overnight process though. I can't imagine wins in November and OK January 1st everybody starts getting out and 30 days everybody's gone. Not realistic in my view so it's got to start getting something out of the Iraqi government. Some kind of goals met rather than a never ending open checkbook and you know which includes American lives being on the line forever. There's got to be some sort of metric that you're holding the Iraqis feet to the fire. But there are no simple solutions. Anything is going to be complex and it's going to take some time in my opinion.

DOEBELE: Thank you both for your time. Appreciate it.

DUCKWORTH: Thank you.