

The West Wing Weekly  
1.13: Take Out the Trash Day  
Guests: Senator Bob Casey & Liza Weil

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*REP. BRUNO: I'd like to hold hearings into the two of you being stupid.*

[End excerpt]

[Intro music]

HRISHI: You're listening to *The West Wing Weekly* . I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

JOSH: And I'm Joshua Malina.

HRISHI: Today we're talking about season 1, episode 13.

JOSH: "*Take Out the Trash Day*"; written by Aaron Sorkin, directed by Ken Olin, whom we know from his role as Michael Steadman on *Thirty Something* .

HRISHI: Coming up later, we're gonna talk to Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania about hate crimes, a big topic in this episode, because Senator Casey just introduced the Hate Crimes Prevention Act -- a piece of legislation that addresses gun ownership and hate crimes, which was spurred forward by the recent mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando.

JOSH: And in a special 'two-fer,' we'll have another guest, and we'll talk to the fabulous Liza Weil, whom you know from her roles as Amanda Tanner on *Scandal*, Paris Geller on the *Gilmore Girls* , currently she plays Bonnie Winterbottom on *How to Get Away with Murder*. And we'll talk to her about her role as Karen Larsen on this very episode.

HRISHI: Let me read the NBC synopsis of the episode: "While President Bartlet and his staff debate the appropriate response to a controversial new sex education study, there are fears that the parents of a murdered gay teenager should be excused from attending the signing of a hate crimes bill because of the father's embarrassment about his son's homosexuality. Josh and Sam meet with an appropriations subcommittee which is investigating Josh's lack of cooperation in the White House staff drug probe, all of which is designed to expose Leo's former substance abuse problem. Toby relishes his verbal duel with some congressmen who have held up the newest appointments for the Public Broadcasting Corporation. C.J. is advised to save a few embarrassing stories for release on Friday to blunt the effect on the media over the weekend, but she also finds time to continue her frisky flirtation with a White House reporter, Danny." Once again, I'm going to give a shout out to whoever wrote this, whoever wrote "frisky flirtation."

JOSH: Nice. That's a lot of alliteration for anxious anchors.

HRISHI: It's a pretty peppy synopsis, pal.

JOSH: Do you know what I was referring to -- "A lot of alliteration for anxious anchors?"

[Broadcast News excerpt]

*"A lot of alliteration from anxious anchors placed in powerful posts!"*

[End audio clip]

HRISHI: I thought it was the same thing that I'm referring to.

[Broadcast News excerpt]

*"Pretty peppy party, isn't it pal?"*

[End audio clip]

JOSH: Oh, maybe it is.

HRISHI: *Broadcast News?*

JOSH: Yeah, ok, it is. What d'you think of this episode?

HRISHI: I love this episode.

JOSH: Yeah, it's a good episode.

HRISHI: Yeah. It's got a lot of gravity and a lot of seriousness in the subject matter, but it is hilarious. The cold open of the episode is so loaded with jokes.

JOSH: C.J. in the press room?

HRISHI: Yeah. C.J. in the press room and the sex education report.

JOSH: That was really funny.

HRISHI: And then Carol has the thing about the pens, why fifteen pens, but they continue the running joke of not being able to spell correctly.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: Carol... Dotting the i's, crossing the t's, thank you for that.*

*CAROL: We do our homework.*

*C.J.: You misspelled "senator."*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: That was funny, but let me tell you that I bumped on this already, on something. Fifteen pens...

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: The president will sign the bill with fifteen pens, and I guess someone on my staff wanted you to know that.*

*DANNY: C.J.?*

*C.J.: Tell me you don't have a question about the pens...*

*DANNY: C.J., I have a question about the pens.*

*C.J.: Yes Danny?*

*DANNY: 'Josiah Bartlet' has thirteen letters in it. How's the president going to use fifteen pens?*

*C.J.: Danny?*

*DANNY: I just...*

*C.J.: You know you were the only one in the room doing the math on that, right?*

*DANNY: I just -*

*C.J.: The only one in the room.*

*DANNY: My readers expect a little bit more.*

*[Giggles from other members of the press corps]*

*C.J.: [sigh] Fifteen pens, thirteen letters, they must have stuck something in here about... Yes He's gonna... interesting. He's going to literally dot the 'i' and cross the t's.*

*DANNY: Thank you.*

*C.J.: Freak boy.*

*[Laughter from other members of the press corps]*

*DANNY: Thank you again.*

*[End excerpt]*

*JOSH: Why aren't there sixteen pens to give away?*

*HRISHI: [laughter] One for each T?*

*JOSH: Well, I mean... Isn't the implication that...*

*HRISHI: Right.*

*JOSH: Right? There's two t's and an i so that would be an additional three pens. So then there really should have been a follow up question from Danny, "Why not sixteen pens, C.J.?" That bothered me.*

*HRISHI: Of course it bothered you...freak boy.*

*[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]*

*C.J.: Freak boy.*

*[End excerpt]*

JOSH: Fair enough. By the way, and I'm going to throw this out there, because others have noted the ATX panel. That was a lot of fun. It was a fun weekend.

HRISHI: It was awesome

JOSH: But it was not lost on many of the shrewd listeners in our audience that Aaron Sorkin himself referred only to "Bartlet."

HRISHI: I know...

JOSH: And not "President Bartlet."

HRISHI: I know...

JOSH: And that has freed me up. I'm throwing it to the wind.

HRISHI: Oh no!

JOSH: I no longer feel any compunction about saying "Bartlet" as opposed to "President Bartlet."

HRISHI: Oh man! See for me, I was sitting there and every time he was saying it, I was like:

[whispers] "President Bartlet."

JOSH: I actually didn't even notice it during the panel, but so many people have pointed it out.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Oh, you didn't?

JOSH: [cross talk] I'm delighted.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Oh yeah, the whole time...

JOSH: [cross talk] Thank you. I thank them. I wasn't really listening.

HRISHI: After the cold open and the title sequence, we get yet another round of Donna and Josh exposition. And I feel like we should have a name for that.

JOSH: Have you got one?

HRISHI: No.

JOSH: Oh.

HRISHI: Shall we throw this to the listeners?

JOSH: Yeah, please. Do lets.

HRISHI: I mean, I thought that maybe the brain that came up with "flentl" would have a...

JOSH: [cross talk] I'm sorry. I'm stalling out.

HRISHI: [cross talk] ...a term for...for...

JOSH: It's been a long morning Hrishi.

HRISHI: This is our trope. Here's what we're looking for: what do we call it when Donna asks a question to Josh, so Josh can explain the premise of the entire episode...

JOSH: [cross talk] To the entire audience.

HRISHI: [cross talk] ...in a walk and talk early on in the episode?

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*DONNA: What's take out the trash day?*

*JOSH: Friday.*

*DONNA: I mean what is it?*

*JOSH: Any stories we have to give the press that we're not wild about, we give them all in a lump on Friday.*

*DONNA: Why do you do it in a lump?*

*JOSH: Instead of one at a time?*

*DONNA: I'd think you'd want to spread them out.*

*JOSH: They've got X column issues to fill. Right?*

*DONNA: Yes.*

*JOSH: They're gonna fill them no matter what.*

*DONNA: Yes.*

*JOSH: So if we give them one story, that story's X column inches...*

*DONNA: You give them five stories...*

*JOSH: A fifth the size.*

*DONNA: Why do you do it on Friday?*

*JOSH: 'Cause no one reads the paper on Saturday.*

*DONNA: You guys are real populists aren't you?*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: Ok, here's another hilarious part that I never noticed until this particular re-watch.

JOSH: What's that?

HRISHI: As everybody kind of gathers in Leo's office, Josh is already in there, and he's eating his dinner. And Leo and Toby and Sam come in and then Josh starts telling Leo about how

they're gonna go on the Hill, and in the background as he's speaking, Sam's eating, just eating the leftovers from Josh's dinner. And Josh at one point, turns around at one point and sees Sam.

JOSH: Oh, I did not notice that.

HRISHI: He's like, caught red-handed with a piece of food in mouth.

JOSH: I gotta go back and look at that, I don't know how I missed that.

HRISHI: I love it.

JOSH: That is funny.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*LEO: What else? What's this thing on the Hill?*

*JOSH: Sam and me, we're meeting with Bruno from an appropriations subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the White House budget.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: So how about the meeting? Representative Joseph Bruno, Republican of Pennsylvania, played by James Handy. A very recognizable character actor.

HRISHI: He's somebody they can work with.

JOSH: Yeah, he's willing to make a deal. What do you make of that deal?

HRISHI: Leo for the sex ed report? Seems like an incredibly good deal for the White House.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*REP. BRUNO: Yes sir.*

*JOSH: You want the White House to keep it in a drawer for a year?*

*REP. BRUNO: Yes sir.*

*JOSH: Why?*

*REP. BRUNO: I don't want the debate. Nobody does. Nobody wants to support it. Nobody wants to oppose it. Nobody wants the debate -- not 'til after the midterms.*

*JOSH: We put this thing in a drawer for a year, and you can guarantee us...*

*REP. BRUNO: That there will be no hearings in the House. Yes.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: It's not like they have to kill the report. They just have to wait until after the midterm elections. Seems like a pretty good deal for them.

JOSH: But how many unwanted babies are going to be born in that time Hrishi? How many?!

HRISHI: I mean...

JOSH: To save one man's career?

HRISHI: What do you think about the deal then?

JOSH: I think, look -- this is politics. It's the practical, real side of politics, and it's probably a very good deal.

HRISHI: But the thing is, it's just about introducing a report. It's not even necessarily that the report would take hold, and it would have an effect, and legislation would be passed, and that legislation would be enacted by schools. I mean, there are several steps and ifs that would have to all line up to say, "Oh by doing this, this thing isn't happening".

JOSH: That is true. And as a viewer of the show and a fan of Leo's -- I sure like him -- I get it all. But then if you taken a step back, the shelving something potentially important to save one guy, who is not being falsely accused, he's being outed for something that in fact was the case -- that he had an addiction to, or continues to have an addiction to but no longer acts on it, to painkillers and alcohol. So I don't know, I think there's an argument to be made that, you know, that placing the personal over the greater good.

HRISHI: I don't think that it stops with Leo. Really, like, the case to be made for keeping the investigation from going forward, from stopping hearings...it is framed like it's just about saving that one person, but I don't think that's true. I think there are ripples that would happen in terms of the political capital that the administration has and their standing with the public, or certainly certain sectors of the public. So I think that it is actually in the service of the president.

JOSH: Additionally, I guess it also has greater implications about the right to privacy.

HRISHI: That's true too. Yeah.

JOSH: Ok, ok. I'm signing off on the shelving of the sex report.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*BARTLET: I need you to get Leo of the hook, C.J.*

*C.J.: It's the deal Josh and Sam made.*

*BARTLET: Yes. We'll deal with it after the midterm elections.*

*C.J.: I understand.*

*BARTLET: I was hoping you would.*

*C.J.: Yes sir.... Several members of the press already know, I think, the report came back to us and...*

*BARTLET: Yeah...there's nothing wrong with telling them we got it. I wouldn't make a big deal out of it. We got it. We're looking at it. We're studying it. Throw it out with the trash.*

*C.J.: Yes sir.*

*BARTLET: Thanks, C.J.*

*C.J: Thank you, sir. Mr President? We can all be better teachers.*

*BARTLET: I know.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: At the end, it felt a lot like the *Enemies* line.

JOSH: Oh, boom! I wrote that exact thing down. I thought the exact same thing.

HRISHI: Yeah.

[West Wing Episode 1.08 excerpt]

*JOSH: Mr President?*

*BARTLET: Yeah?*

*JOSH: We talk about enemies more than we used to.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: And I wanted to go, "Feels like a good exit line, but what are you talking about?"

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: I'm so delighted that you said that, 'cause I did feel the same thing and I think, "Am I being too critical?" But no. I drew an exact parallel to the *Enemies* thing. It ends up playing like a sort of inscrutably passive aggressive thing to say; it should cut back to the president going, "Huh?"

HRISHI: Yeah. Mrs. Landingham, I felt like, emerges even more as a character in this episode.

JOSH: True

HRISHI: Both in terms of her relationship to the president and also to the other assistants.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: What are you girls doing?*

*MARGARET: We're just...talking, Mrs. Landingham.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: You all work for very important people. This is not a place for gossip. You understand me?*

*MARGARET: Yes ma'am.*

[End excerpt]



JOSH: And she calls them “girls.” That whole scene really reinforced the boys’ club-iness of this work environment.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: It’s all women, and then the older woman comes in, calls them girls and scolds them for gossiping.

HRISHI: Right. It’s a little scene out of *Mad Men*.

JOSH: There you go. I don’t know why everyone wasn’t smoking?

[Mad Men 1.01 audio clip]

*JOAN: I don’t know what your goals are, but don’t overdo it with the perfume. Keep a fifth of something in your desk -- Mr. Draper drinks rye. Also, invest in some aspirin, Band-Aids, and a needle and thread.*

[End clip]

JOSH: Also with the Mrs. Landingham, I had two thoughts. One, that bananas are not just a good source of potassium, but they’re a great way to start a conversation about potassium.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: Mr. President? Did you say you wanted a banana?*

*BARTLET: No.*

*MRS LANDINGHAM: Nancy, run get the president a banana.*

*BARTLET: I really don’t want a banana.*

*NANCY: Are you sure, sir?*

*BARTLET: Yes, thank you.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: It’s got lots of potassium.*

*BARTLET: I’m done talking to you now.*

[long pause]

*BARTLET: Mrs. Landingham?*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: Yes sir?*

*BARTLET: You’re not going to believe this, but I think I’d actually like a banana.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: I’m afraid not sir, no.*

*BARTLET: Why not?*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: You were offered one earlier sir, and you were snippy.*

*BARTLET: I wasn't snippy.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: I'm afraid you were, Mr. President.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: And also, that were I the president I would have fired her for refusing to bring me a banana. Kudos to her for holding her ground, but get him a banana.

HRISHI: [laughing] But that's the thing is, you can't fire your mom, and it becomes clear here that Mrs. Landingham is President Bartlet's surrogate mom.

JOSH: Hm.

HRISHI: Right?

JOSH: Yeah. Yeah, I think you're right.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: Would you like to share what's in that report, sir?*

*BARTLET: With you?*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: Yes sir.*

*BARTLET: No.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: May I ask why not, sir?*

*BARTLET: Because I'd rather not be in therapy for the rest of my life.*

*MRS. LANDINGHAM: Very well, sir.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: That's funny.

HRISHI: Maybe I'm projecting a little bit because the whole thing with the banana reminded me so much of my dad: "Oh, did you say you want a banana?" "No. Thank you. I don't want a banana." "Let me get you a banana." "No. It's fine." "It's no problem. I'll get you a banana." It's like, "No, no. I actually said I didn't want a banana." "It's no trouble at all. Hold on. Banana is coming."

JOSH: [laughter]

HRISHI: That's my dad to a tee. Such a sweet spirit, but sometimes you're like, inconveniencing me with your generosity. The part that is not like my dad: Later if you were like, "Actually, I will take a banana," my dad would be like, "Here's six." And you'd be like, "I really just wanted one."

JOSH: So that's where he and Mrs. Landingham part ways.

HRISHI: Yes. There is a scene between C.J. and Toby where there's clearly still some lingering resentment between them. He makes a joke to her about leaking the story.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: Hey.*

*TOBY: You remember Chad Magrudian?*

*C.J.: The advance man?*

*TOBY: Yeah. He took a ride.*

*C.J.: I know about this already. A round of golf.*

*TOBY: How do you know?*

*C.J.: Danny got it from a White House source.*

*TOBY: And Danny gave it to you?*

*C.J.: Any problem with that?*

*TOBY: As long as it wasn't the other way around. It was a joke!*

*C.J.: It better have been.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: Although, when I heard it, it sounded to me like he might be making sure.

HRISHI: Right. Like...

JOSH: He says, "I'm joking, I'm joking," when she takes offense. But it seems to me like it might have been a minor fishing expedition.

HRISHI: Like so many jokes right? There's like...

JOSH: There you go.

HRISHI: It's 90% joke and 10% passive aggressive truth.

JOSH: Right. Yeah.

HRISHI: Yeah. But then there's another pay off to it later, when she actually goes to meet up with Danny. And it kind of prolongs their will they-won't they scenario. Because as long as she's feeling pressure from Toby, or a sense of like, maybe there's some lack of professionalism on her part because of her relationship with Danny. It prevents her from really pursuing, in a real way, a meaningful relationship with him. Because it pits her professionalism against her feelings.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: There won't be anymore kissing.*

*DANNY: I'm sorry to hear that.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And we know where it's coming from, you know, because twenty minutes earlier Toby had been accusing her of this, "Did it go the other way?"

JOSH: And of course, later in the episode she actually does attempt to leak a story to him.

HRISHI: Right.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: [sigh] If you call Mr. and Mrs. Lydell in St. Paul and ask them why...*

*DANNY: Don't.*

*C.J.: Look.*

*DANNY: Don't leak me a story.*

*C.J.: I wasn't.*

*DANNY: I've seen this look on the face of four other press secretaries before you. You've got a story in the trash this week that's a story. You want it out there and someone said no.*

*C.J.: They're all stories this week.*

*DANNY: That happens sometimes.*

*C.J.: Four other press secretaries and you never took a free lead?*

*DANNY: I always took a free lead.*

*C.J.: Then...?*

*DANNY: Not from you.*

*C.J.: Why?*

*DANNY: 'Cause twenty minutes from now you're going to remember you're a professional and you're not going to like me anymore.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: When C.J. and Danny are talking about kissing and they've also talked about the sex ed report...

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*DANNY: Like I said, I applaud the spirit, but I think there's better things ahead. As I'm sure you're about to read.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: Yeah. That was saucy.

HRISHI: It was saucy. There was a little bit of sauce in the episode. With Josh saying...

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*JOSH: By the way, pages 27 to 33 -- a couple of things every girl should know.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: Yes. Yes. And the whole sticky wicket line...?

HRISHI: Yup.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: Everything but?*

*JOSH: Yes.*

*C.J.: Ah.*

*JOSH: Yes.*

*C.J.: They want teachers to teach...*

*JOSH: Yes.*

*C.J.: And so the sticky wicket joke was...*

*JOSH: A regrettable pun.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: The president really feels sort of like a mother hen in this episode. The way that he talks to Leo about Simon Blye, and you know, the way he's like, "Look I know you like this guy, but you're gonna get your heart broken."

JOSH: It's a good scene, too. You get to see mad, mad, mad Leo and...

HRISHI: But even the set up, even just the president talking to Leo first about it's so nice. They have another great moment. I remember what you were saying in the last episode -- I believe that there's history between those guys.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*LEO: I need some counsel.*

*BARTLET: That you couldn't get from me, or Toby, or Josh. or Sam, or C.J.?*

*LEO: I didn't mean that, Mr President.*

*BARTLET: I know you.*

*LEO: And of course your counsel is valued above all else. I just meant... I can use all the help I can get.*

*BARTLET: You put a lot of faith in people Leo, and I love you for that. I just don't want to see you get disappointed.*

*LEO: Yes sir.*

[End excerpt]

*JOSH: He figures it out pretty quickly, and knows this is no friend of his. He understands why he's shown up -- he wants him to consider resigning -- and in fact, Simon is about to publicly call for it.*

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*LEO: Simon, I'm just taking a guess. Is there an op ed piece coming out that I should know about?*

*SIMON: In tomorrow's Post . I wanted to let you know as a courtesy as we've been friends for so long. I have a copy with me.*

*LEO: No, I don't need to see it. I know what it says.*

*SIMON: Leo!*

*LEO: "For the good of the party, for the good of the President..."*

*SIMON: Yes.*

*LEO: Leading Democrat comes out, in the Post , and calls for my resignation. That probably won't get much attention...*

*SIMON: Leo...*

*LEO: ...and it will definitely not distract from the president's agenda!*

*SIMON: Hang on a second!*

*LEO: But I haven't seen you making the rounds on the Sunday morning talk shows in a while, Simon. I'm glad I could help out.*

*SIMON: I was hoping this would go differently.*

*LEO: Tell me something: where's your grave concern for country, party and President when you're out whoring for Atlantic oil?*

*SIMON: I'm insulted by that.*

*LEO: Well, God! I sure didn't mean to hurt your feelings.*

*SIMON: I do not--*

LEO: *I think you should walk out of here now.*

SIMON: *Leo!*

LEO: *As a matter of fact, I think you should run!*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: There's a really weird moment in this scene.

HRISHI: With Simon Blye?

JOSH: Yes. As I've mentioned, I watch with the closed captioning on, and at one point Leo kinda tears into Simon and says, "You're out whoring for Atlantic oil," and the subtitle says, "You're out whoring for standard oil."

HRISHI: Wow.

JOSH: I don't know what to make of that.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: But it's weird, right?

HRISHI: Sometimes it doesn't match up 100%.

JOSH: Yeah. I've even noticed there was an episode of *The Bachelor* where somebody says, "You're a real jerk," and the closed captioning said, "You're a douchebag."

[laughter]

JOSH: This is actually, this is commentary.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: This isn't closed captioning, this is commentary.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Kind of fantastic. The big scene I guess, is the scene with the Lydells.

HRISHI: You've got the scene with the Lydells, but you also have the scene with Simon Blye, and you also have Leo's scene with Karen Larsen.

JOSH: Which we're going to talk about a little bit later with Liza Weil.

HRISHI: Yeah. A little double *Gilmore Girls* in Leo's office. Because Simon Blye is played by...

JOSH: Dakin Matthews.

HRISHI: ...who also played Headmaster Charleston on the *Gilmore Girls*.

JOSH: He's a terrific actor. Big theatre actor, Shakespearean actor and scholar, I think.

HRISHI: His voice drips with something in the moment he comes into the scene. Like the idea of what the president has warned Leo about. It feels like you get it immediately, with the first line. He has like a...he seems slimy from the first moment he speaks.

JOSH: We like actors who do that. Like Roger Reason. The handshake.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: The actor shaking a hand in a way that immediately establishes a character. And I guess Dakin Matthews is the same thing, just vocally.

HRISHI: Yeah, it's incredible. As a non-actor, I'm very impressed by that.

JOSH: As a non-actor, I'm also impressed by it.

HRISHI: [laughter] One thing that's interesting about Simon Blye, and about a scene between C.J. and Danny, where she asks about the Lydells. In both cases, you've got characters who are looking outside of the inner circle for advice. In C.J.'s case, I feel like it's a reflection of her feeling like she's not trusted, and so she needs some external support. With Leo's case, it's a little more confusing, because it feels like these guys have his back, but maybe it's just that he feels like they're actually blinded by their loyalty. I mean, Simon Blye uses the phrase, that the president is "blinded by friendship," and the point that you objected to, where Sam was like, "Yeah, you gave me an order, but I disobeyed you because...tough." And so maybe he needed somebody who wasn't so great of a friend because...

JOSH: I think that's exactly what it is, and I would draw a direct line between the way Josh and Sam are constantly going against Leo's wishes to do what they think is the right thing for him. I think there's a sort of yes man status that you sometimes want to get away from, and get the cold hard take that someone a little more objective will give you. Of course, ultimately, he -- Leo -- fights back hard against Simon's take. Which is, this is actually cause of resignation, and that would be the best thing for the party. But I think that's what he was doing, was seeking out a more coolly objective point of view.

HRISHI: Do you think he was fair on Simon Blye? I mean, Simon Blye is like, "I think you should resign."

JOSH: No. I think in a way, I liked that it was a very human reaction. There was no, "Let me consider that." Because it's not the most unreasonable position to take.

HRISHI: Right. Exactly.

JOSH: It's a bummer to hear, I'm quite sure, if you're Leo. But it's a defensible opinion.

HRISHI: Yeah. I mean if he's like, "Hey, you know what, I need some outside counsel. Everybody in here has got my back and they're all like, 'You're fine,' 'You're in the right,' and 'You should keep on with this course.' I'm going to look to somebody else to get a second opinion. Second opinion is something that's other than what these guys are saying, and I'm going to get pissed about it?"

JOSH: Right. Or then maybe it's the fact that he's already written an op ed and it's coming out. And really, really what he's saying is, "I'm not just pulling you aside to say, 'Hey, I think you ought to consider this. I've already written a piece that's coming out in the paper.'"



HRISHI: Yeah. I think that's probably what the bigger thing is. Maybe he's not giving him genuine advice; he's giving him advice that's gonna give him a chance to take the bully pulpit for a second. You know, stand on a soapbox and say, "This is what I think," and it is more selfish than as a friend. But still... I was like, "Leo, maybe he's got a point." This is another episode where I had sympathy for Mandy. Both having to sit with the president while he goes through the sex ed report -- that's gotta be uncomfortable. But then also telling C.J. that she has to send the Lydells home. Early on in the cold open, C.J. does what we've seen her now do a couple times, where she kind of precipitously acts. She jumps ahead without maybe seeing things through and she's like, "Oh definitely, they'll definitely be there." And Mandy's like, "I wish you hadn't said that." And seems like maybe C.J.'s still learning to, like, keep her cards close to her chest?

JOSH: Or hedge things a little bit if you're not 100% sure about them. I felt the same thing too. Maybe Mandy ought to have pulled her aside before the press conference. There's some sort of miscommunication going on. If she thinks something's locked and loaded and 100%, maybe it's her fault. Or maybe somebody is not communicating with her what needs to be said.

HRISHI: Yeah. I think that C.J.'s own assumptions and biases are playing into it. She's like, "There's no way that this guy is gonna be against this, because it was about his son."

JOSH: Right. That's right. We do learn that she's just incredulous to the point of asking several other people: "Is it possible that somebody whose child was slain for being homosexual could find himself, after that act, still embarrassed?"

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*C.J.: Is it possible that a father could be embarrassed about his son being gay, even after his son was murdered?*

[end excerpt]

HRISHI: Of course, it turns out she's completely wrong about the whole thing, but Mandy is the one who has to then say, she tells her to get it together. That's gotta be hard, to be the heartless one. Maybe Mandy is a little bit more predisposed, that character is predisposed to be like that.

JOSH: There's a reason why she's good at her job. That's her job.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Appearances, appearances.

HRISHI: But again, I find myself saying this every now and then: she's not wrong.

JOSH: No. And though she wasn't quite able to tease out what Mr Lydell's reticence was about, there was something there.

HRISHI: Yeah. So I put this episode to people who hate on Mandy. Like, what's your issue with her here? I would challenge you to find one. I feel like she's serving the team well. I like this episode for her. But C.J. has a lot of heart in this episode. Like, you can see how much it's affected her -- coming out of the room you know, and she's like, she's really affected by the whole dynamic and the whole issue. You can see how much it has moved her and moved her to the point where she's willing to be impractical and say, "Let him say what he's gonna say, he deserves it."

JOSH: Yeah. She's really bristling as she brushes up against what the job is, and what the situation is. And she does in that scene with President Bartlet as well.

HRISHI: Yeah, presenting their agenda as opposed to allowing a dissenting voice. Even though the dialogue is important, it's not her job to present both sides of the argument.

JOSH: Yeah. It must be hard to come to terms often, and I think we'll see it again and again, with kind of what the deal is, what the job is.

HRISHI: Yeah. You have to present the party line. I also love that Toby, when he comes out from his conversation about the Corporation for Public Broadcasting...

JOSH: Oh yeah, we haven't mentioned that yet.

HRISHI: ...he goes back in and he says...

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*TOBY: I gotta get back in there. This is too much fun.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And I was like, "Oh, he's enjoying himself?"

JOSH: Right. This is a great clever little set up by Aaron. It's just that we think he's in battle, and there's something very important to him at stake, but he knows he's going to win the entire time. He's just having fun. He's just a cat playing with a mouse.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: And I was also thinking during this entire time, as Toby fights the good fight to save *The Muppets* and *Sesame Street* for PBS, how they are now on HBO. What would Toby think?

HRISHI: So, I love this episode because it has sort of the hallmark attributes of a great *West Wing* episode for me. There is heroic intent -- people wanting to do the right thing. There is dissent and disagreement. You've got the Hate Crimes Bill that the administration's trying to get passed, but you've gotten some dissent. In *In Excelsis Deo*, we heard some dissent:

[West Wing Episode 1.10 excerpt]

*LEO: C.J....*

*C.J.: Beyond the crime itself is a manifestation of racism, or sexism, or anti-semitism, or homophobia that are only the tip of the iceberg of a pathology troubling this country.*

*LEO: I'm aware of all of that. I'm just not sure it's right to legislate against how someone thinks. A lot of people aren't sure. A lot of them work here. And I'm telling you to dial it down!*

*C.J.: Ok.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And then in this episode, you have the Lydells saying:

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*MR LYDELL: The Hate Crimes Bill is fine. Who gives a damn? It's fine. I don't care. If you ask me, we shouldn't be making laws against what's in a person's head, but I don't give a damn, it's fine. I don't understand how this president, who I voted for, I don't understand how he can take such a completely weak-ass position on gay rights -- gays in the military, same-sex marriage, gay adoption, boards of education. Where the hell is he? I wanna know what quality necessary to being a parent the president feels my son lacked. I want to know from this president, who has served not one day in uniform -- I had two tours in Vietnam -- I wanna know what quality necessary to being a soldier this president feels my son lacked. Lady, I'm not embarrassed that my son was gay. My government is.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: The gist of what he seemed to be saying is, "I don't really care much about the Hate Crimes Bill. That's the least of it."

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: "Why isn't anything being done on all these other fronts?" In that sense he's minimizing, I think, the importance of hate crime legislation, which I found interesting. I myself have an ambivalence about it. Obviously, the direct parallel that's being drawn is between the Lydells' story and that of Matthew Shepard. And Matthew Shepard's killers were convicted and sentenced, not under a hate crime law because one didn't exist in Wyoming, and they're serving consecutive life sentences, I believe. There's no enhanced sentencing, had it been under a hate crime law that would have...there's no extra they would have been put away for. There are a lot of issues and we're going to talk to Senator Casey later, about some of them.

HRISHI: Yeah. There's another little thread that runs through the whole episode about a town that wants the only wants the laws of the land to be that of the Ten Commandments.

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*SAM: There is a town in Alabama that wants to abolish all laws. Except the Ten Commandments.*

*TOBY: I saw it.*

*SAM: Well, they're gonna have a problem.*

[End excerpt]

HRISHI: And what Sam's running objection to the whole thing is, is how do you know if someone is coveting their neighbor's wife?

JOSH: Right. That's a thought crime.

HRISHI: Yeah. How do you enforce what somebody is thinking? That's the problem with the Commandments. Well, the same problem exists with hate crimes. I don't feel like they drew those two together. I feel like they existed concurrently but not...they didn't correlate them.

JOSH: I had a similar thought, but I kind of liked that what seems like an innocuously humorous side does, in its way, settle the comment on the concept of hate crime legislation and thought

crime, and is it really possible to divine what is going through a criminal's mind at the time of the crime?

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: There's so much going on in this episode like that, things that don't necessarily get their full outing, or their full moment. There's a weird little mention, a couple of times, of a possibly racist professor of Zoe's that really doesn't get fleshed out at all. But also, in its way, is subtly in the same arena -- a teacher teaching, and what his point of view and what his thoughts are, and how that affects others. I thought all these things sort of dance around and inform, in small ways, the main focus and subject of the episode.

HRISHI: I guess that's probably part of what C.J. is saying when she says, "We could all be better teachers," right?

JOSH: Yeah. I think that's in there too.

HRISHI: Will you talk a little more about your ambivalence about hate crimes? I'm not saying that because I disagree with you.

JOSH: Yeah. I mean look, I do see their value and there's a certain sense of security in having specific groups recognised as overwhelmingly being victims of certain kinds of crimes. You know, and I'm Jewish, and the ADL -- the Anti-Defamation League - is very pro-hate crime legislation. The NAACP is. And I'm not against it, I just have an ambivalence, I guess on several levels. One, the difficulty of figuring out what's inside a criminal's mind. And is it one single thought or is there a lot going on? And is it a murky area that's very difficult to establish? And can these kind of laws be equally and fairly enforced? And if the criminal action is identical in two instances, and in one you've decided it was motivated by hate and by something else in another, does it call ultimately for a different sentence?

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: I also know, additionally just from reading about it, I think there's not really much, if any, evidence to suggest that these enhanced sentences deter anyone from committing crime. Do longer sentences for thought criminals help? Or does it fail to address a mind frame that maybe could be open to rehabilitation or just make a longer sentence for somebody who acted out of hate?

HRISHI: Yeah. I think it's an imperfect avenue to try and rectify culture. I think, in terms of the way that laws work, you shouldn't have different sentences for the same crime based on motive. In a vacuum, there's no need for it. But I think the problem is that the reality is actually very messy, and the reality is that there are crimes that are motivated by hate, and there are people who are targeted, not because of anything about them personally, but because they are members of a class. And so you have to figure out a way to fix it, and if you're a legislator the only way you can fix it is by writing new laws or changing existing laws. So it's like a way to change cultural attitudes with the limited tools that you have. It's not perfect, and it's weird and messy. But I think that it's important, even just as a cultural symbol.

JOSH: Symbolism matters and telling the various groups that they are recognized and protected is significant. But also when we get to the actual, as you say, getting something actually done, one of the things I'm interested in discussing with Senator Bob Casey, Democrat of Pennsylvania, is this idea that he's pushing for and mentioned during the filibuster, that perhaps there should be a ban on the acquiring of weapons by people seriously suspected of, or have been convicted of, misdemeanor hate crimes. Because to me that actually pushes away some

of my ambivalence about hate crime legislation because that says if we can identify this group of people that have acted out on hate before -- not in a felonious manner -- but keep weapons out of their hands, then maybe we really are preventing future tragedies, like what happened in Orlando. So, that's very practical. That's where I get on board and I go, "Ok, well this makes sense." If you can identify people who have an inclination towards violence motivated by hatred towards any of these protected groups and we can keep guns out their hands. That's when I started thinking, "Well that's a very direct benefit that we'd have."

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: That's one of the, I think, brilliant things about the scene with Mr. Lydell, is he's saying these are the root problems. Maybe there won't be so much hate out there if we have a society where gay adoption is something that we see frequently, and same-sex marriage and, you know, all the things that he ticks off.

HRISHI: Right. Right. That's the culture that is being legislated. You know, you add on to these bills. Like, even the Civil Rights Act, or like the Equal Rights Act. We've already said all men are created equal so, you know, why do you need to hang another ornament on it? But you do because without that extra level of codification, obviously things aren't falling into line.

JOSH: Right. Why was there push for legislation...anti-lynching laws? Because there was a time when the laws against murder weren't being enforced.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: So I do understand that. Unfortunately, it's like an above and a beyond thing. Well like this isn't working, the fundamental law isn't working so we have to sort of cast a light on areas that need to be addressed.

HRISHI: A lot of the time the debate is like, "Why don't we just enforce the laws that we already have? Rather than create new laws we should enforce the laws that we already have." And the fact is that, that sometimes just isn't enough. And to say, "Oh ok, well now we really intend to enforce the laws," it just doesn't, at a practical level, work or make a difference. And you have to have the symbolic gesture of creating something new to buttress what's already there, in order to make a difference. I wanted to get some context about the Matthew Shepard parallels in this episode so I spoke to someone who knew him and continues to work for his legacy.

[Interview]

JASON: I'm Jason Marsden. I'm the Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation here in Denver, Colorado.

HRISHI: How big of a deal do you think it was that this episode focused on hate crimes and had a Matthew Shepard-inspired storyline?

JASON: Yeah, I think it was very significant for *The West Wing* to tackle this issue. It would have read, I think at that time, very clearly to anyone who had followed Matt's story that it was a commentary on that. Going back, you know, this episode airs in, I think, early 2000.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JASON: Probably would have been written in the middle of 1999, at a time when the trials of Matt's killers were still in progress in Laramie, Wyoming. They were very much in the news. This was a new piece of territory for the national, and even international, media to cover the issue of

an anti-gay hate crime. There have been anti-gay hate crimes probably since before historical records, and this was the first one that merited attention from the national media. Many Americans had no idea that hate crimes were as severe and violent as they were, nor as prevalent as they were and continue to be. This episode would have struck viewers at the time as being groundbreaking for covering this issue.

HRISHI: Something that's I think so particularly remarkable is that it's not just a matter of including a storyline that's about Matthew Shepard, but presenting the parents in this way where they take the administration to task for how they deal with gay issues.

JASON: Right. I think, it echoes in many ways the experience Dennis and Judy Shepard went through, especially in that first year. It was Dennis who did most of the speaking, Dennis who delivered a victim impact statement in open court that is still quoted as a great piece of American jurisprudential history. It was Dennis who spoke at the press conference in the hours before Matt's funeral in Casper, Wyoming in October of 1998. And to have the episode acknowledge that the father could be in a leading position of standing up for his son, this echoes the lived experience of a lot of gay men.

HRISHI: What do you think about the relevance of the episode at this point in history? Does it still resonate for you?

JASON: It's funny to look back on this episode as a time capsule, from here in this future we couldn't have imagined back then, when same-sex marriage is legal, same-sex couples can adopt in all 50 states, you can serve in the military. But it wasn't that much of a time capsule piece, even four or five years ago. It's only been a year that it's been legal for our community to adopt in all 50 states. It's only been a couple of years that marriage has started rolling out broadly across the country. You know, we look at Don't Ask, Don't Tell which Mr. Lydell refers to in that episode.

HRISHI: Right, and the repeal of that only happened...

JASON: ...only five years ago, less than five years ago? You still couldn't serve openly in the military. Another thing that I noticed was the cultural arrogance that is displayed at the White House. A remark is made that...

[West Wing Episode 1.13 excerpt]

*LEO: This guy sells dental supplies in the Twin Cities so how enlightened do you think he's gonna be?*

[End excerpt]

JASON: ...how enlightened can he be?. And I think, even 16 years ago, that would have rang false to people from the middle of the country. I grew up an hour and a half from the Twin Cities, and my relatives were tremendously supportive and very curious and interested in what our community was like, and very grateful to have a family member who was a part of it. So I don't know if that was to portray Washington D.C. as a little bit deaf to what the fly-over states are like.

HRISHI: Yeah. There have definitely been some examples in the show of how the Bartlet Administration can be a little bit arrogant or a little bit elitist and that's definitely a stark example of that. So, where can listeners go if they want to learn more?

JASON: I'd invite anybody who'd like to learn more about The Matthew Shepard Foundation's work to visit us on the web at [www.matthewshehard.org](http://www.matthewshehard.org) . Specifically a lot of information about hate crimes is available at [www.matthewshepard.org/hate-crimes-reporting](http://www.matthewshepard.org/hate-crimes-reporting).

HRISHI: And we'll put a link to that up on the [www.thewestwingweekly.com](http://www.thewestwingweekly.com) as well. Jason, thanks so much for joining us and giving us your insight.

JASON: Yeah, it's my pleasure. Thanks very much for reaching out to us.

[End interview]

[Interview]

HRISHI: We're joined now by Senator Bob Casey of Pennsylvania. He used to be a pro-gun senator but his opinion on gun control changed after the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. He's now introduced The Hate Crimes Prevention Act in the wake of the massacre in Orlando's Pulse Nightclub. Senator Casey, welcome to the podcast and can you tell us about your bill?

SEN. CASEY: Sure. We had legislation prepared, we ended up introducing it in the Senate on Monday, instead of later in the week, to get it underway a couple of days earlier in light of the horror of Orlando. In this case, you have someone who is engaging in what can only be described as terrorism, but was also clearly indicated as a hate crime, as well. So we wanted to make this a priority as soon as we could. Hate crimes are going up in the country and the number of hate groups has increased. By one estimate, this is from the Southern Poverty Law Center, 892 hate groups are currently operating in the country. That's up 14% from just 2014 and almost a third, up by 33%, since 2000. So it's gone way up, and of course no one would be surprised that African Americans are targeted disproportionately, for example 190 Ku Klux Klan groups operating around the country. Not surprising that anti-Muslim groups are also growing, they're way up since just 2014, so we've got a major hate problem and we can either wait until it manifests itself into kind of a full blown felony that would allow you to prevent someone from getting a gun, or we can go at the problem earlier and I believe it will prevent crimes with firearms if we're able to say that if you're convicted for a misdemeanor hate crime, you can't have a gun. Simple as that. The law would also bring with it the purchase, possession or shipment of a firearm by anyone convicted of that defined misdemeanor hate crime. Or you could prevent someone from getting a weapon who received a hate crime sentence enhancement. I believe we should start to focus on the prevention of crime, and because of that, the prevention of hate crimes, long before they result in the kind of violence that we've seen in a lot of places around the country.

HRISHI: I wanted to ask you about the evolution. I saw that Southern Poverty Law Center statistic too, and I was wondering if there's any chance that the rise of hate groups and hate crime is actually a byproduct of a greater awareness on our part, that it's always been there but we've just gotten better at identifying it and then prosecuting it as such?

SEN. CASEY: I think that's certainly part of it, but by one estimate over a four year timeframe from 2010 to 2014, approximately 4,300 hate crimes were committed using firearms. That's not even counting hate crimes that aren't involving firearms. Some of it might be attributable to the fact that you have an ongoing debate about immigration and national security and homeland security and substantial progress made, at least on the question of marriage equality, by folks who are gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender. What one group of Americans believe is progress, the others might view as upending their traditional world, or their view of what marriage should be, or what relationships should be. So, there could be, I hope it's not true, but there could be a lashing out against societal change.

JOSH: Has there been any kind of statistical analysis done to take a look at what percentage of people that have been found guilty of felony hate crimes, might have been prevented from acquiring firearms because of previously being found guilty of misdemeanor hate crime?

SEN. CASEY: I'm not aware of any. We tend to only focus on the cases where there's a mass shooting, and it's in a setting that is so unusual. What we don't often document, and certainly don't talk much about, is gun violence that happens on our streets every day. Just this past week, since the Orlando killings, there have been 69 gun deaths in the country and over 160 people injured. Just this week! And not one of those sixty...very few I should say, of those 69 was the subject of a lot of notoriety and coverage.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: And given those kinds of numbers, it's stunning that there would be the need to filibuster to insist on debate on these issues.

SEN. CASEY: Chris Murphy had to stand on his feet for 15 hours, and Cory Booker and Dick Blumenthal spent a good portion of that 15 hours on their feet. The rest of us were there talking, trying to give Chris's vocal chords a rest and try to get our points out, but we didn't have to stand that long. But that took 40 senators with varying degrees of participation, spending hours and hours and hours.

HRISHI: Right.

SEN. CASEY: It took all that effort just to force the Republican leadership to schedule a vote. Not to get their agreement on a bill they would vote for. Not to get their agreement to do more.

HRISHI: Your legislation is about guns but I was wondering about the debate on hate crimes. In the episode of *The West Wing* there are comments made about the need for hate crime legislation. Do you feel like the debate has changed? Is there still the debate about the need for hate crime legislation, do you find?

SEN. CASEY: I think there is. In some ways we haven't really... we've progressed since the days of the Matthew Shepard case, but we haven't progressed nearly enough. There's an element to the debate which is still outrageous and misguided by those who don't think we need to deal with this, and that's kind of an opposition to anything that seems to be, what we should do to help the GLBT community for example. I hope some Republicans will start to look at this issue through the lens of just what it is -- hate crimes -- instead of saying, "Oh, there go the Democrats again, trying to make an issue of sexual orientation or gender identity." Well, to a large extent, we have to because they're victims, disproportionately, as are African Americans. That's why you have to have a law that focuses on those protective classes and I believe that the line should be drawn at the misdemeanor level. It's not any misdemeanor hate crime, it's a hate crime that has the use of force as the driving element in it.

HRISHI: I know that your attitudes on gun control have evolved. Do you think that because of the events in Orlando, have you seen or gotten any signals that attitudes from senators across the aisle, that their attitudes are evolving, as well?

SEN. CASEY: I don't see any evidence yet, although we're only days from the massacre. I hope that it causes more Republicans to have the kind of moment that I had. Part of the way you make a decision about a big issue like this is when you're facing a vote. It forced me to think about the issue and say, "Ok, are you going to stay in this lane of saying, 'Well, just enforce the law and there's no scientific proof that if you pass a law that will reduce gun violence?'" or



whatever argument I and others have been using. I finally had to say to myself “Ok, you’re saying to the world that you’re going to vote against these three bills.” And at that time it was background checks and the ban on the military-style weapon and the limitation of the clips for magazines -- the number of bullets. Saying that you’re going to vote against all those, and stand up and say, “We should just enforce existing law,” and thereby admit that there’s nothing that the United States of America and our government could do. Not a single thing that we can do that’s new to prevent 20 children from being massacred in the most indescribably horrific way that anyone could imagine. And you’re saying there’s nothing we could do in the future to protect those children, other than enforce existing law. I finally said to myself, “You cannot be serious, you cannot really take that position any longer.” That’s the realization I came to.

HRISHI: Did you find that you are geared up to have this debate for your legislation on two fronts -- both on the Second Amendment front but then also on the hate crime front? Do you have to defend your position not just on gun control in order to get this passed, but also just on convincing people of the need for hate crime legislation to begin with?

SEN. CASEY: Yeah, I think you’re right. It’s almost like you have to fight a two-front war in a way, or have it on two tracks. I think it will be a while before we can anticipate a vote on my legislation. And like on gun issues generally, we have to figure out ways to perpetuate the debate, to sustain the debate and that’s challenging because you move onto another topic, and then there’s another event. Before you know it, the country’s attention is on something else, and maybe even more so in an election year. The challenge we have is: how do you sustain intensity and focus and the sense of urgency, not just days or a few short weeks, but literally over months? That’s why we have to do a range of these bills, including my hate crimes bill.

JOSH: One of the things I find intriguing about focusing on those found guilty of misdemeanor hate crime, is that it neutralizes, I think, a lot of the arguments against hate crime legislation. You can argue that enhanced sentencing doesn’t work as a deterrent or that it’s a redundancy. But it’s hard to argue against identifying those most likely to commit a hate crime, and keeping guns out of their hands. It’s a preventative measure.

SEN. CASEY: Right. And if someone is kind of enthralled with using guns a lot and is a violent person, or has a propensity to engage in violence, they still may be dangerous, but at least we can prevent them from engaging and escalating violence with a firearm.

HRISHI: Senator, thank you so much for talking to us today about this.

SEN. CASEY: Well, I’m grateful and I appreciate you putting a spotlight on it, as we’re going to have to sustain this over a long period of time.

[End interview]

HRISHI: Since talking to Senator Casey, four gun control measures were introduced into the Senate. All four measures failed. And to go back to this episode, which maybe feels a little bit strange, but I do think that’s what great about *The West Wing*, is it gives a framework to talk about some of these ideas beyond the limitations of what we actually have in real life. But one of the things I love about this episode, is an understanding of like a tacit level of failure in the world of governing. That you push for something, you try and get a foot ahead and maybe you get an inch. And there’s like a lament for all the ways in which you’re not actually the accomplishing the sort of nobility of your goal. And that scene with the Lydells really frames that, but then there’s also this reconciliation of differing views. And that is what is so beautiful about the Leo/Karen Larsen scene.

JOSH: It’s a great scene.

HRISHI: So good.

JOSH: Yeah, I like that Aaron chose to write it not as a situation where Leo has brought Karen in front of him to sort of decide what to do with her, but that he's had a second thought after firing her; to bring her in because he wants to understand more, and then he's actually open to changing his mind. It's interesting, it's not a scene about making up his mind in the moment, what to do with her -- he's already decided to fire her -- and I guess something in him thought, you know, "I'm getting a second chance, maybe I'll at least give this woman a chance to express herself, to give some sort of explanation." And then they end up really connecting at a very deep level because they have similar stories.

HRISHI: Yeah. The way that Leo talks about addiction in this episode is really powerful.

[West Wing Episode 1.12 excerpt]

*KAREN: Is that why you drank and took drugs?*

*LEO: I drank and took drugs 'cause I'm a drug addict and an alcoholic.*

*KAREN: How long did it take you to get cured?*

*LEO: [sigh] I'm not cured. You don't get cured. I haven't had a drink or a pill in six and half years. Which isn't to say I won't have one tomorrow.*

*KAREN: What would happen if you did?*

*LEO: I don't know. But probably a nightmare, the likes of which both our fathers experienced, and me too.*

*KAREN: So after six and a half years you're still not allowed to have a drink?*

*LEO: The problem is that I don't want a drink. I want ten drinks.*

*KAREN: Are things that bad?*

*LEO: No.*

*KAREN: Then why?*

*LEO: 'Cause I'm an alcoholic.*

*KAREN: I don't understand.*

*LEO: I know. It's ok. Hardly anyone does. It's very hard to understand. [*

End excerpt]

HRISHI: When I first saw this episode, I felt like it really opened my eyes to how addiction might work.

JOSH: It's great acting, that scene. Both of them.

HRISHI: Yeah.

JOSH: Let me ask you this, and this is important. As the episode ends, C.J.'s giving a press conference...

[Episode excerpt]

*C.J.: Oh, I have a note here that Jonathan and Jennifer Lydell won't be able to be at the bill signing this evening. There was some family business that required them to go back to St. Paul.*

[End excerpt]

JOSH: And she continues to speak as the credits begin to roll. Technically a flentl?

HRISHI: Technically a flentl.

JOSH: I thought so.

HRISHI: Yeah. I said, "Flentl," when it happened.

JOSH: [laughter] You don't want to let these things go by without being commented upon. What about Take Out the Trash Day all together? This concept of dumping stories by the White House on Friday mornings. Is that an anachronism now that we have a 24 hour a day news cycle and the internet? I wonder if it's still...?

HRISHI: I would imagine that is actually not an anachronism. As the Senator said, the harder thing is to keep people's attention sustained on a particular topic, because something new happens the next day and then it all goes away. So if you say, "Here's five things," right, it's not just about if you dump it on a Friday, nobody's going to cover it because nobody reads the newspaper on Saturday.

JOSH: Yeah. That's what I meant. I get the volume aspect of it, you just throw it all out there and, you know, maybe they won't weed through and find the story you really don't want them to find, but that's what I mean. If a story is a story at any point, it's going to find sustenance in the internet now.

HRISHI: Yeah. Exactly. Someone will tweet about it. Although I will say, if there's any kind of parallel, I definitely, like, will sometimes have something good to say on Twitter, and I'll wait til Monday to say it. Because I'm like, "I'm not going to waste this on weekend Twitter."

JOSH: Interesting. You have greater self-control than I. That thought flits through my mind, but if I think it's funny, if it's one in the morning, I do it at one in the morning.

HRISHI: Like for *Song Exploder* episodes, when they're going to come out, I'm like, "Ok, I have to post my news item, essentially, in the morning, during the week. It can't be at night or during the weekend."

JOSH: That's probably a good call. It's less important for dumb jokes.

HRISHI: [laughter] But it's sometimes important for dumb jokes, you're like, "I want to save this for peak audience."

JOSH: True. Yeah. Well now that the beauty, now you can retweet yourself.

HRISHI: [laughter]

JOSH: So just put it out there originally, any time, and then retweet during peak hours.

HRISHI: Right.

JOSH: Although, man does it look bad when you retweet yourself. What kind of [expletive deleted] are you?

HRISHI: I bet the president would be very embarrassed if Mrs. Landingham caught him retweeting himself.

JOSH: Ooh, especially not in the Oval Office.

HRISHI: In the Oval Office especially.

JOSH: That's just wrong.

HRISHI: And now we're gonna take a quick break, and then talk to Liza Weil.

[ad break]

[Interview]

HRISHI: We're joined now by Liza Weil, who played Karen Larsen in this episode.

JOSH: Did you watch the episode by any chance? Rewatch?

LIZA: That episode looms large in my memory.

JOSH: It does?

LIZA: [cross talk] Yeah. That was a big moment for me. So it's fresh. It's always fresh.

JOSH: [cross talk] Do you remember getting the role? Reading for it? Getting it?

LIZA: Yes, I remember all of it. It was my first year in Los Angeles, I think I was not here very long. I had one of those crazy holding deals with Warner Brothers, so I could only audition for Warner Brothers shows.

JOSH: I always dreamed of a holding deal. I'm very, I'm very covetous right now. No one ever wanted to hold me.

[laughter]

LIZA: [cross talk] Yeah, I know, it's an old-timey thing they used to...

JOSH: [cross talk] It is.

LIZA: [cross talk] They used to just give them out at the airport, Josh.

JOSH: Well, I was at the wrong airport because I never got one.

[laughter]

LIZA: Yes. It's a dubious honor. So yeah, I went in for John Levy and he was lovely.

HRISHI: That's the casting director?

LIZA: Yeah. He was sort of casting *ER* and *The West Wing* and I had sort of just found out about *The West Wing*. It was the first season, so it wasn't on for very long, I think. It was new, but I was very excited and...I think Tommy Schlamme was in the room and Aaron was in the room, too. And it was, also it doesn't happen like this anymore, you used to be able to go in at like 11 am for a guest star and know that you got the job at 3. It was so fast. And I was still very new here, I was wee and small and very eager and nervous. So yeah, I found out that I got it and I then I was just immediately sort of terrified. But everybody was very nice, and I just remember how happy everybody seemed. There was just that sense that everybody was really glad to be a part of something. There was just a sense of it being very special. And of course, being able to spend any moment with John Spencer was pretty remarkable. And he's very, very kind. I just remember thinking, "God, am I ever gonna be as relaxed as he is?" I just remember him eating pizza and sort of, you know, just making jokes with people and laughing and then just being able to immediately drop in and be so wonderful. And Martin Sheen let me pee in his trailer, that was also the big take away from that job.

JOSH: Just all over? Like marking his trailer kind of thing?

LIZA: No, inside it. We were rushing and I couldn't, there was an AD that was trying to show me how far away the, you know, bathroom for the hoi polloi was and Martin was walking by and he was like, "Just go in mine. Just go in here."

JOSH: Aww, he's a good man. That's a nice memory.

LIZA: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, it's a very nice memory.

JOSH: Well, you say being calm. It's actually a great scene between Karen and Leo. Between you and John Spencer. And you are very calm and still. It actually particularly stuck out to me because it is an atypical Aaron Sorkin scene, I think, in it's sort of slow, it's slowly paced, there are pauses, and you give a very subtle and excellent performance. And you really have to create somebody that we believe has a huge back story that gets unpacked a little bit in this scene, you know, with your dad, in this...

LIZA: [cross talk] Yeah.

JOSH: [cross talk] It's a difficult scene, it must have been.

HRISHI: Yeah, that's what I thought. They asked you to do a lot.

LIZA: Yeah. It was a little bit tricky. Ken Olin directed that episode, and he was so helpful and really, really smart. And he was really trying to get me to be, you know, I think that my instincts, especially as a younger actor, was to just completely crumble and be devastated. He kept trying to get me to be stronger and fight back more with Leo, which was such a smart adjustment and I think it really added to what was going on there. And then, yeah, there was sort of a devastating rumor...I remember leaving that day and John took me aside and he was like, "You know, they're talking about making you recurring."

JOSH: Ugh.

LIZA: I was like, "Oh... what?" He was like, "Yeah, they just, I think maybe you're going to be like sort of like a daughter figure to me." And I was like, "Oh my God!" And then it didn't ever happen.

[laughter]

JOSH: That's interesting too, I did go back and I checked IMDb to see if you did more episodes, because it seemed like, like you would. You got your job back, you have a very special relationship that gets forged in that scene with him. So it would have been actually a very interesting area to explore, particularly because he has some tension with his actual daughter in the show and he could have used a work daughter who understood him so well.

LIZA: [cross talk] Yeah. [laughter] It would have been nice, but there were many, many stories to tell on that show. So I think it all worked out alright.

JOSH: Yeah, well you did ok for yourself, since then. But you speak to an interesting, one of the interesting things, I think, about that scene is there is a real tension. You're clearly on the spot; I mean, you've already been fired, but you're being called on the carpet in front of the man who fired you and pressed on why you did what you did.

LIZA: Yeah.

JOSH: But you and Ken pulled off a neat trick, because you do have a dignity and an unwillingness to break in the moment, and you have an answer, really, as to what you did do, why you did do what you did.

LIZA: Yeah. I think that Karen sort of has a staunch belief, at such a young age, that Leo is flawed. I don't think she really understands what addiction means or how that works. I think that was a big learning thing for me, 'cause I think I immediately was like, "Well young people wouldn't...they would just be like, 'Yes, of course, you're right, I'm sorry.'" [laughter] It was a nice way to open up the scene. It was good.

HRISHI: I loved how it contrasts with the scene between Leo and Simon Blye. And I was wondering, I don't know when the last time you watched this episode was, but if you are as excited as I am about the *Gilmore Girls* connection in that office in this episode?

LIZA: Yeah, that was sort of foreshadowing, because *Gilmore Girls* had not come to be yet.

HRISHI: Right!

JOSH: So that's Dakin Matthews, who played Simon Blye.

LIZA: Yep. Yeah, I just got to spend a day with Dakin recently, because we have now revisited *Gilmore Girls* and did this whole reunion, so I got to play with Dakin again, which was lovely and super bizarre.

JOSH: What can you tell us about that? Can you share anything about what's coming up?

LIZA: I can't really share that much. I think it was, you know, a very lovely thing to be a part of, and I think that people who are fans of that show are going to be very happy and satisfied with what Amy and Dan have come up with.

HRISHI: I think there's an official listing now that you're going to be in the first chapter of the reboot.

LIZA: Yes. I'm in two, I'm in two of the four. I am in *Winter* and *Spring*.

HRISHI: Have you read *Spring*, as well? Are they being super secretive about the scripts?

LIZA: I was only able to read the ones that I was in, so I will be surprised as well when the other ones come out. Because, yeah, they were kept very close and protected. [laughter]  
Understandably so.

HRISHI: I wanted to go just back for a second. You talked about how you go in to read in the morning and you find out you got it in the afternoon. How much time was there between that audition and then actually shooting the episode?

LIZA: Not a lot. I think that I went in the day before and found out that afternoon, and then went and had a fitting the next day and then I think shot that day, too. And I think I was only there for a day.

JOSH: Wow. What about all your other jobs? *How to Get Away With Murder*? When do you go back to that?

LIZA: So soon, and not soon enough. I am just rotting in hiatus here. [Laughter]

LIZA: We've been down for so long. We go back, I think, we do start pre-production first week of July and we start shooting July 11th.

JOSH: Oh. Yeah we're on soon, too. I'll no doubt see you in Shondaland...

LIZA: I hope so. I hope so.

HRISHI: It's so nice to hear that -- I mean, I love this episode so much -- so it's really nice to hear that it was a significant memory for you too.

LIZA: Oh yeah. It really, really was. I'm so glad that I was able to get on early. I have so many friends who are die hard fans of *The West Wing* and who are actors, that are still in mourning that they never got to show up on it.

JOSH: Did you work with Aaron at all? Was he around when you...? You say he was at the audition...

LIZA: He was at the audition, but I didn't know who anybody was. He actually popped in when I was shooting this scene with John, but I didn't know that it was Aaron Sorkin. He was just some guy that sort of shuffled around and was like, "I just... I'm really... I think what you're doing is really great and I don't have anything to say to you," and I was just like, "Ok...". But he didn't introduce himself and I didn't know it was him. I think it was years later that I was like, "Oh, that's who that was."

[laughter]

JOSH: That's who the mysterious shuffler was.

LIZA: Yeah...It was also the day that the Christmas crew gifts were being passed out and everybody got these awesome *West Wing* coats.

JOSH: Nice!

HRISHI: Did you get one of those, Josh?

JOSH: No. I got a Swiss Army knife [laughter] and I got a *West Wing* bike that I gave to Lin Miranda.

HRISHI: Really?

JOSH: And I don't know what else.

LIZA: You gave your bike to Lin Miranda?!

JOSH: Yes.

LIZA: Nice.

JOSH: Well, my feeling is, as nice as it is to get a bicycle with the name of the TV show that you're on embossed on it, you can't ride it.

HRISHI: [crosstalk] It's like wearing your own band's t-shirt...

JOSH: You can't ride around...yeah. Have you ever worn anything with the name of the show you're on, on it? You can't.

LIZA: No. No. You can't do.

JOSH: Yeah. Holiday time, I just want somebody to give me money.

[Laughter]

JOSH: Money with the name of my show on it, that's fine. That I'll spend.

LIZA: Yeah, just some money.

HRISHI: You guys have both been recruited on many shows to speak a lot of dialogue quickly.

LIZA: Yeah.

HRISHI: Between your overlap in Shonda Rhimes shows, but then also, now you guys are both *West Wing* alum. Josh had *Sports Night* so, and you had *Gilmore Girls* ...so that's...

LIZA: Yes. I know, it's a very.... Do you feel this way Josh? Do you feel like...I've always felt like it took me so long, that I think that I was.... I had a predisposition to speaking quickly because I was just so freaked out all the time.

JOSH: [laughter]

LIZA: ...and I didn't feel like I had earned the right to take my time with anything, and it took me so long to sort of learn the lesson to slow down. And then, ironically, I just got hired to reinforce that bad habit. [laughter]

JOSH: Actually, it's funny that you say that because I don't think about it too deeply, but I think I do have that. And I think I have still yet to learn to take my time.

LIZA: [laughter]

JOSH: That just brought back a flood of a memory. I don't know if a single memory can be a flood. But what I'm saying is, this memory just came back to me. My first episode of *The West*



*Wing* there was a moment where I had to stop and take an aspirin -- open the bottle and drink it. And I think I kept doing it really quickly, because I still had this thing.

LIZA: Yeah.

JOSH: I remember Alex Graves, the director, saying, "Dude, just take two aspirin." Like, take your time. And I said, "No no, this feels like an opera about aspirin. It's taking too long. And I'm...it's taking much too much time."

HRISHI: [laughter]

LIZA: How does a man take an aspirin in life? I don't know.

[laughter]

JOSH: Well done. Well, there you go. I think I have yet to learn. But I will say, that even on the normally fast talking, as I tried to allude to earlier, the normally fast talking *West Wing* you had a nice scene where you guys took the time that was required for those moments and those beats.

LIZA: Yeah, I felt like it was in the human realm of speech patterns.

HRISHI: [Laughter] Yes! Which ends up having a big dramatic effect on the show, because you've been bouncing back and forth between all this quick dialogue, and so then when those moments when it does slow to down human speed, it suddenly feels like you're really soaking in the performances and what's being said.

LIZA: Yeah. It is such a good thing when you have shows that have a very specific style and then the indicator I think, the only indicator of a shift in tone, is that there's all of a sudden you're allowed to put air in things, which I think is so great. They really were able to accomplish so much when people were able to just put some air in there.

HRISHI: Did you end up watching the show after that?

LIZA: Yes. I watch it like every couple years. I'll just watch the whole show.

HRISHI: Aw, that's awesome.

LIZA: With the exception of, I do skip over the season that Sorkin wasn't there. [laughter] But I watch...

JOSH: Hey, it's multiple. It's the whole end...I have this with Hrishi, we're doing a podcast about the entire show and he's only recently revealed to me that while he's a deep dive expert on the first four seasons, after that not so much.

HRISHI: Yeah.

LIZA: Yeah. It's a similar thing for me.

JOSH: Fair enough.

HRISHI: I'm going to go back onto *The Gilmore Guys* for my third episode with those guys...

LIZA: [cross talk] Oh, nice!

HRISHI: ...and I'm on season seven, and I have never seen season seven.

LIZA: Are you going to watch the whole season or are you just gonna watch the episode that you're speaking about?

HRISHI: I think I have to watch the whole season just to, you know, have context and everything.

LIZA: Wow. Yeah...

JOSH: Hrishi takes his podcasts very seriously.

[laughter]

LIZA: Yeah...I'm curious about your thoughts, it is a strange thing. I don't know.

JOSH: Liza, have you been on *The Gilmore Guys* ?

LIZA: I have.

HRISHI: [cross talk] Yeah!

LIZA: [cross talk] I did one of them. Yes. They're lovely. They're really nice guys and they're a delight. They're so smart and it was a real treat to be able to speak about that time of my life with people who are so well-versed. They really do their research and they know that show so well. It was really a special day for me to do that, yeah. I enjoy them.

HRISHI: Thanks so much for talking to us. This was awesome.

LIZA: Thanks for having me. It was nice to talk to you guys, and yeah I'll see you soon, Josh.

JOSH: In Shondaland. People think Shondaland is a concept, they don't realize that it will someday be a theme park.

[laughter]

LIZA: We can only hope.

[End interview]

HRISHI: And that's it for our episode. Thanks so much for listening. You can discuss this episode with us or with other *West Wing Weekly* listeners on our website [www.thewestwingweekly.com](http://www.thewestwingweekly.com) or on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/thewestwingweekly](http://www.facebook.com/thewestwingweekly) . You can also tweet at us: I'm at @HrishiHirway, Josh is @JoshMalina. Senator Bob Casey is @SenBobCasey and Liza Weil is @Liza\_Weil.

JOSH: Ok.

HRISHI: Ok.

LIZA: What's next?