



Podcast Transcript

The Cloakroom with Peter Roskam: 37th Annual Legislative Seminar – Congresswoman Erin Houchin (R-IN)

Date: June 5, 2026

Guest: Peter Roskam, Heath Shuler, Congresswoman Erin Houchin, **Host:** Leeann Lee

Run Time: 23:32

For questions and comments contact:



Peter Roskam

Partner
Washington D.C.
T: 1.202.861.1605 | proskam@bakerlaw.com



Heath Shuler

Senior Advisor
Washington D.C.
T: 1.202.861.1763 | hshuler@bakerlaw.com

Lee: Welcome to “The Cloakroom with Peter Roskam.” Former Congressman Peter Roskam leads BakerHostetler’s Federal Policy team. Through interviews with leading members of Congress, Peter provides an insightful, firsthand view into the latest policy and political debates on Capitol Hill.

In today’s episode, Peter is joined at the 37th Annual Legislative Seminar in Washington D.C., by his BakerHostetler colleague, former Congressman Heath Shuler, and Congresswoman Erin Houchin, a Republican from Indiana. Houchin is in her second term, and she serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has broad jurisdiction over healthcare, technology and energy policy. She is also a member of the Budget Committee and the Rules Committee.

Peter, Heath and Congresswoman Houchin discussed energy and healthcare policy.

Let's listen in to "The Cloakroom with Peter Roskam."

Roskam: Well, Congresswoman, thank you for taking the time. I know you're busy today, and I know you've shoehorned us in on a busy day, and I really, really appreciate it. You're in the middle of a lot of things. You're in leadership. You're on the Rules Committee. You're on the committee with the broadest jurisdiction in all of Congress. That is the Energy and Commerce Committee. So, we're interested in covering a number of subjects. So, coming from Indiana in particular with a big life sciences ecosystem that is massive actually, what is the future like for life sciences in the United States? And what are the pressures that you're seeing that are on your constituent companies? And where do you think, where are the pathways for them to continue to grow and to flourish so much?

Houchin: Well, thank you. It is nice to be with you. It is always great to be with former members of Congress. It gives me hope for the future after I get done. It is not just...

Roskam: There is a lot of life that awaits you, my friend. It is not just dragons in the mist. You will enjoy it when your time comes.

Houchin: Thank you. This, Indiana is a leader in life sciences. We have Eli Lilly. We have a lot of medical devices. We have bio, excuse me, pharma. And as a policymaker, I'm always trying to find ways that is helpful to the industries that we represent. So, we've had a lot of conversations with our pharmaceutical industries about trying to lower the price of prescription drugs in America. And they do want to be partners in that conversation.

I see a bright future, but we do have to be aware of threats from China. And for example, in my district, we have Arriva Pharmaceuticals. They make a precursor drug for cancer treatment, stem cell cancer treatment. So, it is a treatment that you have to have before you can get this cancer treatment. And the only place they can source their precursor is Wuhan, China. And when they ship that in, if China does allow for it to be shipped in, it costs about \$40,000 just to ship it. Now they have the capacity and the capability to manufacture those precursors in the United States. So, we need to look for ways to help the supply chain and the safety and security of our pharmaceutical industry by investing in these origination materials, which is going to be critical not just in pharmaceuticals, but also the critical minerals needed for chips and drones and in the future.

So, I think the future is bright, but we do have to be aware and invest in these technologies that can onshore as much of this as possible to the United States. We probably won't be able to get to 100 percent, but having 100 percent reliance on China for some of these things is just not acceptable in today's environment, and we need to be aware of that and look for ways to innovate.

Shuler: Yeah, we talked about Eli Lilly and the pharmaceutical industry and talk more about your leadership role that you have taken of helping negotiate because you have a Republican president who's been pretty critical of the industry. Tell us

about your leadership role that you've taken in the process between the president and the companies.

Houchin: Well, one of the things that I've noticed is, as a policymaker, I try to get as much information as I can to make the best decision I can to the benefit of the most people, the people that I represent. So, part of that is just trying to learn what the issues are on all sides of the discussion. With this particular issue, a couple of things stand out to me. One is other countries in the conversation about most favored nation, other countries don't have PBMs. And when we have PBMs in the mix, it is going to drive up the cost. And even if we are able to negotiate prices down, from the manufacturer level, it doesn't necessarily translate into lower costs for consumers. It might result in an unintended consequence of higher profits for PBMs, higher profits for the middlemen.

So, I want to try to bring that to the forefront. And when I'm in conversations with David Ricks and others, it is let's be sure that we're talking about these dynamics that are different in the United States compared to other countries and try to really, truly find cost savings. I am encouraged. We've had some meetings with Mark Cuban on Cost Plus Drugs and direct to consumer purchasing through TrumpRx and I do think that those are the next Gen. But I'll give you an example of the of the Affordable Care Act subsidies that were going to insurance companies they weren't going to consumers and even if we gave 350 billion dollars straight to health savings accounts that still does not break the wheel on health care cost. It just simply transfers the payment structure.

So, I've formed a healthcare roundtable. I've got about 40 doctors and people, stakeholders from the district. We meet quarterly and we're trying to figure out what is the low hanging fruit. Where can we not boil the ocean, but where can we draw in some consensus? And I am notorious for bringing differing perspectives to the table. I have said to stakeholders before, you guys can work this out or I can come up with an answer. You may not like the answer that I come up with. And so, I have found that to be very productive and also informational for me as a policymaker.

Roskam: I can't resist telling you a 60-second story. There is a state senator named Walter Dudich, who I served with, who chaired the rules committee. And he would negotiate deals. One of those guys in the state capital. And Walter would pull people in, the stakeholders in, and he would say, here, this is real simple. You come up with a bill, you compromise on the bill, and if you don't compromise, the first one that walks out of the room, we're going to run the other person's bill. See you. And it was remarkable. So depriving people of bathroom breaks is a really good technique that you may want to deploy.

Houchin: Okay. Then this gives me a quick story. So, I was at the White House negotiating on the budget when we did Reconciliation 1.0. The president came in and he gave us a list of about 10 things that he wanted to accomplish. And we were trying to achieve those objectives and stay within budget. We didn't want to account for more than two and a half percent growth. We were trying to cut two and a half trillion dollars. So, we're trying to do it in a fiscally responsible way, but

still also deliver the wins like no tax on tips and no tax on overtime and tax relief for seniors on Social Security. Those were the biggest, I would say, priorities that the President wanted to achieve.

And we were in this meeting going back and forth with Republicans with the president in the room for probably 45 minutes to an hour. And then he goes to the Oval Office and says, you keep negotiating. Come see me when you have an answer. We were there for four hours. And after four hours, votes got called and we did not get to an agreement. And I thought, I'm going to want to be the last person walking into the Oval right now to tell the president that we don't agree yet. We got there, as we know historically. We passed the Working Families Tax Cuts Act. It was signed into law on July 4 last year. So, we did get there, but it was a similar technique too. I'm out of here. You guys keep talking amongst yourselves. When you come to an agreement, come tell me about it.

Roskam: That works. Let me ask you a couple, in terms of earlier discussions, some of your colleagues have brought up social media in various contexts, largely in the context of the politics of today and so forth. Set the politics aside and think in terms of a parent. And you've got children in your household. I've got grandchildren, so we're separated by those years. But it is like looking at this conundrum of what is the role? Is there a way to make children safer online that the various actors can't just dance their way around technicalities? And we've seen it before where various interests come in and give you a big razzle dazzle and create so much confusion that nobody really knows what is going on and then nothing gets done. You've had your eye on the ball on this for a while. Where is this now? And what do you think is a reasonable approach to keep kids safe online?

Houchin: I really appreciate you asking this question when I talk to groups. This is the thing that I talk about that gets the most head nods in the audience when I'm talking about the complexities and the problems that we have with social media today. In 1998, Congress passed the Kids Online Privacy Protection Act, and that said that if you're 13 years old, you're basically considered an adult for internet purposes. That is pretty crazy if we think of today's standards, but at the time, we thought 13-year-olds, middle schoolers might need to have access to the internet to do their homework. We could not have, and it wasn't me, but we could not have imagined, Congress probably could not have imagined what it is today. But now we know. And once we know, it is incumbent upon us to take those policy provisions that we know we can change and we should change and proactively set about doing it.

When my daughter was 13, she accessed Instagram and was messaging who she thought were 13 and 14-year-old boys and girls all over the world. She was staying up on her phone all night. It was the summertime. We had parental controls. She hacked around it. We had limitations on her phone. We thought she was shut off from her phone at night. And when we discovered this, I contacted Instagram and said, I'd like to delete her account. And they said, she is 13. She is legally able to have it under the law. There is nothing you can do. If she would

like to call us and have her account deleted, she can. Well, she is not going to do that.

I literally found out like three weeks ago my daughter oldest daughter is 22 and she entered this long passcode into her phone and I was like what in the world is your passcode like why can't you have like just six digits or four digits like a normal person and she was like I had to set it to something that Elaine couldn't guess back when she was still at home.

So, here is the current status. Social media companies are not just in your kid's phone, on your kid's computer, they are in their bedroom and the door is locked and you cannot go in. Make no mistake that even if you think, oh well I'm not giving them a phone their friends have phones. Because it is the account that they create that they will have access to. So I'm on a mission to move that standard to age 16 at least with parental consent because you could have a 16-year-old that you don't want to have access to it either because they might be engaging in dangerous behavior.

But here is what we know: girls between the ages of nine and 13 are most vulnerable to anxiety, depression, eating disorders, peer pressure. Boys between the ages of 11 and 15 are most vulnerable to anxiety, depression, peer pressure, maybe eating disorders less. But these things are real threats to our households and to this next generation and we are losing kids. Now layer onto that AI chatbots and the dangers that we've seen with that encouraging kids to have self-harm. So, we have a lot to do in a very short period of time.

The Energy and Commerce Committee has put forth the Kids Act, but we did not mark up the Kids Online Privacy Protection Act, which moves the standard to 16, and they did not hear the Reset Act, which sets the standard for social media at 16. I'm working in a bipartisan manner with Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts. He and I chair the Kids Online Safety Caucus. He's been a great partner to work with. I happened to see a Substack that he posted about needing to move the standard to 16 and I'd never met Jake Auchincloss before and I went found him in the speakers lobby and I was like, hey, I read your Substack. I think we need to work together. And so, he and I have been partners. We have the Parents Over Platforms Act, which is an age assurance bill at the app store level to keep kids from lying about their age and then downloading the apps anyway. There is a lot to do, but this is my number one priority as a member of Congress is to increase awareness of the problem, get lots of partners engaged on moving this standard, and we're having success.

When I started this Congress, I had a member, a senator asked me to author a bill at the age of 13. I read the bill and said, I won't do it, but if you let me do 16, I think I can sell it on my side. And this person was like, we can't get 16. It won't be bipartisan. We can only get 13 if we want it to be bipartisan. And I said, well, you haven't given me an opportunity to try to convince people. And so, we've slowly been moving, I think, the needle toward a standard of 16 and you all can be very helpful in advocating for that standard change. It is a must do. We will lose a generation of kids.

When I talk to kids, they've got their phones and we all do it. We all doom scroll. I tell kids, every time your finger swipes that phone, you should be thinking cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching, because they are making those tech companies money. So put the phone down and have those interpersonal interactions. The kids will say, well, what do I do about my parents? Because they're addicted. And I said, yes, they're addicted too. So, you be the leaders and encourage them to put down their phones and go for a walk or have an interaction or play a game or do something different. This is my number one issue as a member of Congress, not just because of the personal experience that I had, but also the experiences of parents who have lost children due to dangerous online interactions.

Roskam: So, I was on Instagram and I would follow four people. I followed my wife Elizabeth, followed two of our daughters who were on Instagram, and Len Wolfson, a lobbyist here in town who has the greatest travel pictures ever. And that was it. But I would get on there and I'd, oh, okay, Len is in Portugal, interesting. And then I would just start going through and these things would find me. Like Prince's guitar solo, this is fantastic.

Houchin: I'm learning a lot about you, Peter.

Roskam: I would like, oh, this great BBQ. And for hours, like an hour, it is like evaporated. So, I had to, I had to delete it.

Houchin: You know what that is like, right? When you say it is an hour, you know that is an underestimation.

Roskam: It is two hours. Yeah. And it was, I just had to delete it. I couldn't, I just couldn't handle it. I was like, this is crazy.

Houchin: And that is us. Our brains are fully developed. Think about it. And some kids at nine are on these adult-like apps and at least 13.

Roskam: Let me just ask one quick follow up then. Is the next step is 13 to 16? That is your incremental step. And that would be...

Houchin: I wanted it to be 18. I think we would have 16-year-olds across the country revolt. I do think 16-year-olds can be responsible with it with parental involvement. But just like you might have a 13-year-old that is on Instagram and doing unhealthy things, you could have a 16-year-old who is doing unhealthy things and you still as a parent don't want them to have access to it because it is dangerous for them at 16. This is why the parental consent piece comes in. But I honestly, I've talked to members on the Hill who are like, yeah, my kid is 11 now. I think 13 should be fine. I was like, you think that until your kid is 13. And then there is nothing you can do to protect them. And they're not out in the neighborhood. They are all over the world and yet still in their bedrooms. Scary.

Shuler: So how do we get to conclusion on that? How is the opportunity?

Houchin: You help encourage members of Congress to move the standard to 16. The RESET Act is out there. We're working with Auchincloss to make some redline

changes on that, but the RESET Act is the 16-year-old standard. I've spoken with Katie Britt about potentially authoring that on the Senate side, but there is a competing bill that sets it at 13. And for me personally, I don't care whose bill gets done. I want it to be 16. It can be done in the Kids Online Privacy Protection Act at a 16 standard, but we still need, I think, reset in companion with parents over platforms. Those two bills in concert work together to close these loopholes. And we just have to get critical mass to not only change the standard but actually move the bills that will get the job done.

Shuler: Best of luck to you on that. That is very important policy.

Roskam: Let's stay in the committee. So, one of the other areas that the committee has jurisdiction is over vehicles and vehicle safety.

Houchin: Now we're going to talk about my least favorite topic.

Roskam: The Repair Act. It is controversial. There is, well, it is controversial. It is sponsored by Congressman Dunn who is retiring ill, et cetera. And so, there is a sympathy and a legacy dynamic, my sense is, on that. Where do you think this bill ends up? There is a lot of heat around it. Where do you think it ends up?

Houchin: This is one of those issues around Capitol Hill that there is two sides that, for whatever reason, have not been able to come to consensus for a long time, since I think 2014 when the first MOU was signed on the differences in whether you use OEM parts or replacement parts. There is another issue that is always around Capitol Hill and that is credit card swipe fees. There is another issue that is always on Capitol Hill and that is whether credit unions are going to be taxed or not. These are issues that are very sticky. Lately, recently, we had a couple of hearings on the Repair Act. It was going to be marked up, I think, this week, and that bill has since been pulled back. The language, I believe, is going back to the 2014 MOU language, and we are taking a couple of steps back on it again. Now, the bill language, I think my staff is back here, was just updated this week, last night, maybe. So, we're still looking at the language, but my understanding is it is going back to the 2014 MOU.

Roskam: Can you give us a sense? So, Indiana is, now let's just talk politics.

Houchin: Oh, great.

Roskam: So, Indiana was the center of the political universe on the redistricting drama. State legislature said no. Bunch of folks lost their primaries. It looks like the folks are coming back. Your state has, there is a lot of stuff going on, the politics, and there is a history to this, the fighting 8th District and all that for years.

Houchin: Which, by the way, I think was represented by John Hostetler.

Roskam: Nice. Okay, we'll claim it. So, what are the politics like right now in Indiana and how does it settle out?

Houchin: I mean, I think the politics are healthy in Indiana. I think primaries are healthy for the party. We saw in Indiana, actually last night, I got to tell the president that Thomas Massie lost the primary. The news broke right as he was passing me on the receiving line at the congressional picnic. And I said, he said, it is really hard to beat an incumbent. I said, it is. But in Indiana, you did it in seven and one day. So, I think it is in Louisiana, you see the power of the Trump endorsement. I think we're still going to see that moving forward.

In Indiana, it is no different. Republican primary voters wanted to support the president's position. And as controversial as we think that redistricting is in Indiana, 90% of our local elected officials at the county level, 90% of them, county and local level, are Republican. Yet we had a 7-2 map. And the districts like, one district is D22 and others R22. So I have argued that it is actually probably more healthy for the electorate to have a little bit more balance in the districts and have more like R10 to 15 versus these very swinging, very partisan hyper-partisan districts. So, I think it actually would have been healthy for Indiana to do it but the Senate chose not to.

The House passed the bill. The Senate declined to pass the bill and then we saw some challenger candidates come out that that the incumbents had been in for a really long time and on election day lost 70-30. We lost four or five committee chairs, our caucus chair, all in one day because people were so frustrated. Now I argue too that the frustration goes back well beyond redistricting. There have been a number of issues in Indiana that maybe Indiana is a conservative state and maybe they've not taken the most conservative position in the Senate. Things like 2A issues, pro-life issues, immigration issues, where the Senate has taken a more moderate approach and that has resulted in, I think, some frustration among primary voters that we saw on election day in Indiana.

Roskam: Well, for the record, I wouldn't run against you for nothing. So, we really appreciate your time. Congresswoman Erin Houchin. Thank you so much.

Lee: Thank you, Peter, Heath and Congresswoman Houchin. If you have any questions for Peter, his full contact information is in the show notes. As always, thanks for listening to BakerHosts and "The Cloakroom with Peter Roskam."

Comments heard on BakerHosts are for informational purposes and should not be construed as legal advice regarding any specific facts or circumstances. Listeners should not act upon the information provided on BakerHosts without first consulting with a lawyer directly. The opinions expressed on BakerHosts are those of participants appearing on the program and do not necessarily reflect those of the firm. For more information about our practices and experience please visit Bakerlaw.com