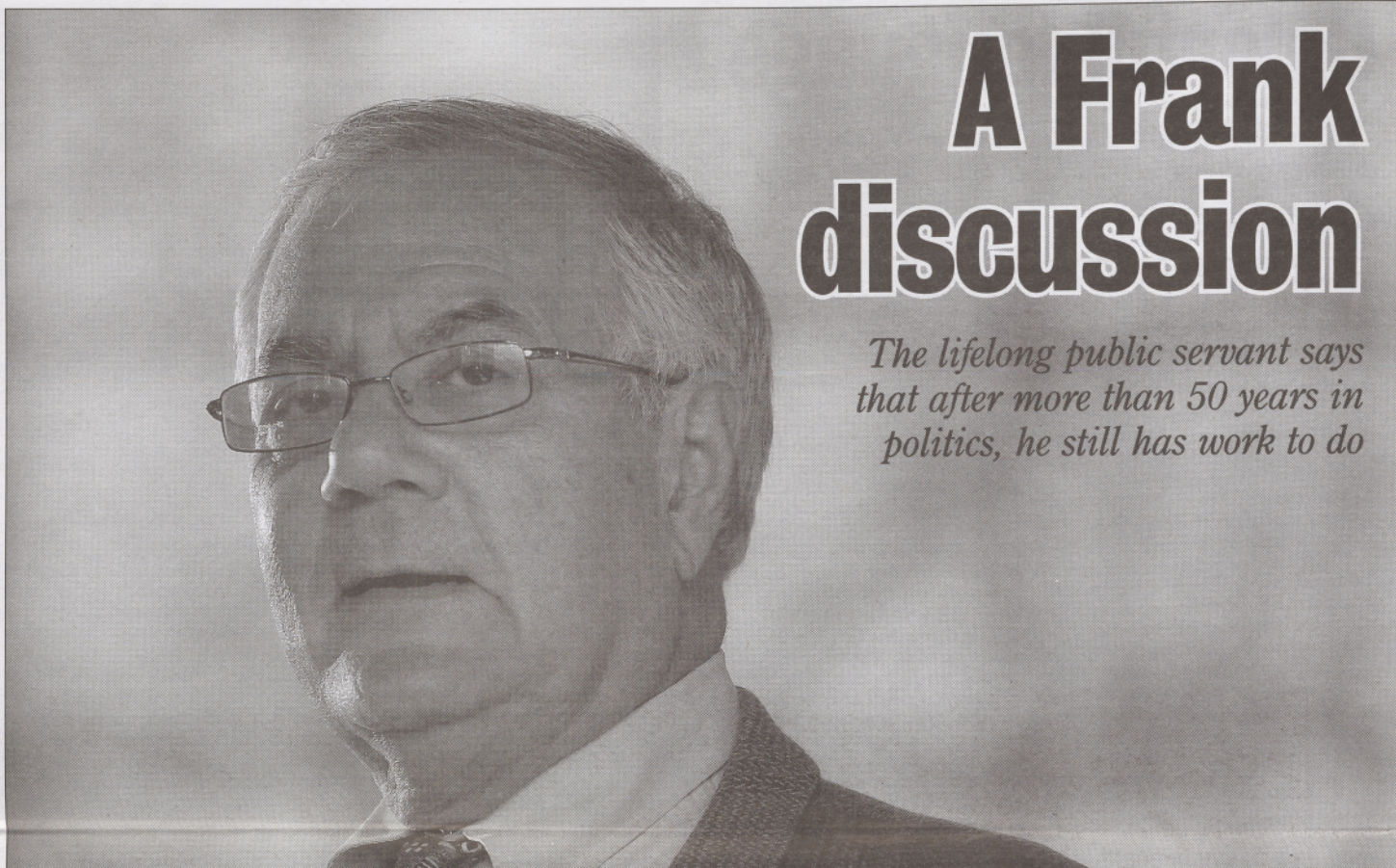


A Frank discussion

The lifelong public servant says that after more than 50 years in politics, he still has work to do



PHOTOGRAPHER: ADAM HUNGER

Rep. Barney Frank speaks at a news conference announcing that he would not seek a 17th term in Congress, Nov. 28, 2011.

BY EMILY GREEN
STAFF WRITER

When Grace Badik answered the phone at the Street Roots front desk, the caller wasted no time with pleasantries.

"Barney Frank."

Nothing more. Nothing less. With that voice, you almost don't need the name.

The former congressman from Massachusetts has adopted the habit of omitting small talk such as "hello" and "goodbye" from his phone conversations. He got the idea when he read a biography about Sherman Adams. The chief of White House staff to President Dwight D. Eisenhower

estimated that eliminating small talk saved him an hour or two every day.

Known less for his social prowess than for his quick wit, sharp tongue and characteristic mumble, Frank served as one of Congress' most prominent members for 22 years, retiring in 2013.

Depending on whether your political views lean toward the left or the right, Frank is either an outspoken champion for civil rights and social programs, or a scoundrel who promotes big government and contributed to the housing bubble burst of the late 2000s by promoting affordable housing policies.

But behind the public figure who authored sweeping financial reforms and tirelessly pushed for gay equality and increased housing for low-income Americans, is the story of a man who purposefully put his political career before his own personal happiness for many years.

Frank will be at Powell's City of Books on Saturday, March 28, at 4 p.m. to discuss and sign copies of his new book, "Frank: A Life in Politics from the Great Society to Same-Sex Marriage."

He sums up his book by calling it "a personal history of two seismic shifts in American life: the sharp drop in prejudice against LGBT people and the equally sharp

increase in antigovernment opinion."

Emily Green: Your book chronicles your career in politics as it spanned from working on Adlai Stevenson's presidential campaign in 1956 to serving as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives until 2013. I got the sense from reading it that you have a deep understanding of — and respect for — the rules involved in playing the political game that takes place in Washington D.C. In what ways, for better or for worse have you seen the rules of that game change since the early 1980s when you first became a U.S. representative?

Barney Frank: There are no political

A brief timeline of Barney Frank

Notable moments in Frank's career and personal life, with excerpts from his book, "Frank: A Life in Politics from the Great Society to Same-Sex Marriage"

1954: At age 14, Frank realizes his sexual orientation and desire to be a politician do not mix. He decides to keep his sexual orientation a "secret forever," he writes.

1972: In his first political campaign for state office, Frank rides in a car at Boston's second Gay Pride Parade. His platform this year includes "the legalization of marijuana, gay



Frank during the debate over holding impeachment hearings on President Clinton.

rights, strong environmental laws, and the cause of the United Farm Workers." He wins election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, where he serves for eight years.

1973: Frank introduces Massachusetts' first two gay-rights bills.

1980: Frank runs for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives and wins.

1986: Frank bargains, agreeing to vote for the Tax Reform Act in exchange for a beefed-up tax credit for affordable housing. "I was happy to sacrifice my ideological purity to improve legislation that was going to become law with or without me," he writes.

1987: Frank becomes the first member of Congress to voluntarily announce he is gay.

1990: Despite a highly publicized scandal resulting from his dealings with a prostitute,

Frank is reelected with 66 percent of the vote.

1994: Don't Ask Don't Tell is instituted in the place of the military ban on LGBT people. Frank writes, "It differed sharply from the provision I had advocated."

1994: First introduces the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would protect employees from discrimination based on their sexual orientation. The bill has been introduced in almost every session of Congress since.

1994: At Frank's request, President Bill Clinton urges Janet Reno to release an order granting refugee status to people persecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity.