

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

JANUARY 4, 2008

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>> THE FOLLOWING IS A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>>> COMING UP NEXT, HUCKABEE AND OBAMA WIN THE IOWA CAUCUSES.

WHAT DOES THEIR WIN MEAN FOR FLORIDA?

MORE PEOPLE ARE CHOOSING NOT TO MOVE TO THE SUNSHINE STATE.

WHEN DID THE STATE KNOW IT WAS MAKING RISKY INVESTMENTS?

AND INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN THE HILLSBOROUGH DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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>> FROM THE WEDU STUDIOS, THIS IS "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

AND NOW, MODERATOR ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

THIS WEEK, OUR PANELISTS ARE: DARRYL PAULSON IS A PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT AT USF ST. PETERSBURG.

ERIC DEGGANS IS MEDIA CRITIC AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES."

PHYLLIS BUSANSKY IS THE HEALTH CARE CONSULTANT AND A

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

DEMOCRAT.

AND CHRIS HART IS A FORMER HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSIONER
AND A REPUBLICAN.

GREAT TO SEE YOU.

HAPPY NEW YEAR.

WELL, THIS WEEK HERALDS THE OPENING DAYS OF ELECTION YEAR
2008.

AND IN THE RACE FOR THE WHITE HOUSE WITH WINS BY FORMER
GOVERNOR MIKE HUCKABEE AND SENATOR BARACK OBAMA IN THE IOWA
CAUCUSES, SECOND-PLACE FINISHES BY MITT ROMNEY AND JOHN
EDWARDS AND THE FLORIDA PRIMARY JUST A LITTLE MORE THAN
THREE WEEKS AWAY, DARRYL PAULSON, HOW DO THE IOWA RESULTS
AFFECT US IN FLORIDA?

>> THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

I THINK IT DEPENDS A GREAT DEAL ON WHAT HAPPENS IN NEW
HAMPSHIRE.

YOU GET THE BACK-TO-BACK BLOWS, SO TO SPEAK.

IF OBAMA WINS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, IF HUCKABEE CAN DO WELL IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE, WHICH CERTAINLY IS NOT EXPECTED, THEY CAN
HAVE GREAT MOMENTUM COMING INTO FLORIDA.

BUT I WOULD EXPECT SOME REVERSALS.

YOU KNOW, I THINK JOHN McCAIN WILL DO VERY WELL FOR THE
REPUBLICANS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

I THINK OBAMA WILL DO WELL IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

AND IF HE DOES DO WELL IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, IT'S GOING TO SPELL

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

REAL DIFFICULTIES FOR HILLARY'S CAMPAIGN, A BACK-TO-BACK WIN BY OBAMA.

YOU KNOW, THEY SAY THE ONLY REASON THAT WE FOLLOW ELECTIONS IS TO SEE HOW ACCURATE THE PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ARE, AND THEY WERE QUITE ACCURATE IN IOWA.

YOU KNOW, IT TURNED OUT THAT HUCKABEE HAD SURGED LATE, AND HE WON BY APPROXIMATELY THE MARGIN THAT WAS PREDICTED.

AND OBAMA WAS AHEAD, AND HE, OF COURSE, WON BY THE MARGIN THAT WAS PRETTY CLOSE TO WHAT WAS ANTICIPATED.

BUT THIS WAS A RACE WHERE THE ANTIESTABLISHMENT BEAT THE ESTABLISHMENT IN BOTH PARTIES.

YOU KNOW, BARACK OBAMA TWO YEARS AGO WAS IN THE ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE.

TWO MONTHS AGO, WHEN YOU MENTIONED MIKE HUCKABEE, PEOPLE WOULD SAY "HUCK-A-WHO?"

I MEAN, THEY ARE VIRTUALLY UNKNOWNNS.

AND I THINK THAT'S PART OF WHY THEY DID SO WELL IS THAT THEY ARE UNKNOWN.

PEOPLE DON'T KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THEM.

THEY DON'T HAVE A RECORD TO DEFEND LIKE THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

THE OTHER THING THAT STRUCK ME LAST NIGHT WAS THE LANGUAGE OF THE SPEECHES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE RESULTS.

HILLARY, I THOUGHT, MADE SOME MISTAKES.

IF YOU LISTEN TO HER SPEECH, I BET SHE USED THE WORD "I" 25

TIMES.

I HAVE PUSHED FOR THIS.

I HAVE LED EDUCATION REFORM.

I HAVE DONE THAT.

THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS IS INCLUSIVE, THE LANGUAGE OF "WE."

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HILLARY, YOU HAD MIKE HUCKABEE.

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS HE SAID, THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME.

IT'S ABOUT WE.

HE KNOWS THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICS WELL, AND I THINK THAT'S

WHY HE DID WELL.

OBAMA THEN FOLLOWED HUCKABEE AND MUST HAVE HAD 30 "WE" IN

HIS STATEMENT.

WE CAN DO THIS.

WE HAVE CHANGED THE NATION.

WE HAVE REFORMED THE COUNTRY.

CHANGE IS COMING.

HE USED THAT LANGUAGE VERY EFFECTIVELY, I THINK.

>> ONE OF THE THINGS I'D SAY, THOUGH, IS THAT THEY ALL HAD

DIFFERENT MISSIONS WITH THOSE SPEECHES.

HILLARY'S MISSION, QUITE OBVIOUSLY, WAS TO MAKE THE CASE

THAT THIS WAS NOT THE DEFEAT THAT EVERYBODY WAS GOING TO SAY

IT WAS.

HERE IS WHY THIS DOESN'T COUNT SO MUCH.

THERE ARE ALL THESE VOTERS WHO DIDN'T PARTICIPATE.

PEOPLE WORKING AT FIREHOUSES AND ALL THIS.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AND I'M REALLY QUALIFIED.

AND TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT ME.

I MEAN, IT WAS ALL BASICALLY SAYING, PLEASE, YOU KNOW, TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT ME.

AND THIS IS NOT DEFEAT THAT EVERYBODY THINKS IT IS WHEN CLEARLY IT WAS.

YOU KNOW, OBAMA'S SPEECH, IT FELT LIKE HE HAD SEEN SOME TAPE OF HOWARD DEAN RIGHT BEFORE HE WENT ON STAGE.

THE MAIN THING HE WAS TRYING TO DO WAS NOT REPEAT THAT AWFUL MOMENT WHERE HOWARD DEAN WENT OUT AND STARTED SCREAMING AND IT GOT PLAYED OVER AND OVER.

>> HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK ALL THIS MEDIA COVERAGE IS?

THE HUCKABEE WIN AND THE BARACK OBAMA WIN SURPRISES, AT LEAST BASED ON WHAT WE SAW TWO MONTHS AGO, THEY KIND OF CAME OUT FROM LEFT FIELD, IF WE COULD SAY THAT.

>> SURE.

>> SURPRISED AND SHOCKED THE POLITICAL INSIDERS THERE IN IOWA AND ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

NOW WE'RE SEEING WALL-TO-WALL MEDIA COVERAGE WITH HUCKABEE AND OBAMA BEING THE STARS.

HOW IMPORTANT IS THAT FOR TUESDAY'S ELECTION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE?

>> WELL, IT'S INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT, BECAUSE THE TWO BIGGEST -- THE BIGGEST QUESTION BOTH OF THESE GUYS FACE WAS, ARE THEY ELECTABLE?

ARE THEY REALLY CANDIDATES THAT HAVE A SHOT?
AND PARTICULARLY IN HUCKABEE'S CASE, YOU HAD A LOT OF PEOPLE
WHO WERE SAYING, HE'S CHARISMATIC.
HE'S FUNNY.
HE SEEMS LIKE A DECENT GUY, BUT HE HASN'T GOT A PRAYER.
AND HE GOES INTO IOWA, AND --
>> HE SAYS HE DOES HAVE --
[LAUGHTER]
>> EVERYBODY IS GOING TO SAY THAT UNTIL THEY DROP OUT.
CHRIS DODD WAS SAYING THAT HE HAD A PRAYER UNTIL HE DIDN'T.
YOU KNOW, THAT WAS A CENTRAL QUESTION THEY HAD TO ANSWER.
NOW THEY AT LEAST HAVE THE RESULTS FROM IOWA TO SORT OF FACE
THE NATION AND SAY, YOU KNOW, I DO HAVE A PRAYER.
WHAT WAS INTERESTING TO ME, TOO, WAS IN WATCHING THE MEDIA
COVERAGE, I SAW LESS DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA THAN I DID
AMONGST THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES.
>> YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE REPORTER?
>> YEAH, WHEN HAVE WE EVER SEEN THAT THE ANCHORS COVERING
THE STORY ARE LESS DIVERSE THAN THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY RUNNING
FOR OFFICE?
>> I THINK THAT SHOWS SOMETHING ELSE OF THAT BECAUSE WE ALL
KNOW THAT IOWA IS NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NATION IN TERMS
OF ITS MAKEUP.
IT'S DEFINITELY MORE CONSERVATIVE REGARDLESS OF PARTY.
I THINK WHAT IT SHOWED POLITICALLY AND WHY THE PUNDITS WERE

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

WRONG, IS THAT THE NEGATIVE ADVERTISING FROM THE HILLARY CAMPAIGN TO OBAMA, THE ROMNEY CAMPAIGN TO HUCKABEE, WAS REJECTED.

THEY WERE TIRED OF THIS.

I THINK THAT CATAPULTED AND SURPRISINGLY HELPED BOTH OF THOSE CANDIDATES.

>> CHRIS, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT FLORIDA.

WE SAW IN IOWA IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY, THE REPUBLICAN CAUCUSES, RATHER, ABOUT 60% OF THE TURNOUT WERE EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS.

WOULD YOU EXPECT THAT KIND OF TURNOUT AMONG EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY IN FLORIDA?

>> I THINK WE'LL SEE THIS HERE NOW BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY SAW IN IOWA, BUT I THINK WE'LL SEE IT BEFORE THEN IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

>> OKAY.

PHYLLIS, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT HUCKABEE AND OBAMA AND WHAT YOUR THOUGHTS.

YOU KNOW, YOU'VE BEEN IN GOVERNMENT A LONG TIME, AND I JUST WONDER, THESE GUYS ARE NOT TESTED ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. THEY HAVE NO CREDENTIALS ON FOREIGN POLICY.

WE JUST SAW THE ASSASSINATION OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO IN PAKISTAN, YET IT DIDN'T SEEM TO HAVE MUCH OF AN IMPACT ON THE THURSDAY CAUCUSES.

>> I THINK THE CAUCUSES ARE VERY UNREPRESENTATIVE OF WHAT

THIS ELECTION IS ALL ABOUT.

AND I THINK IT'S REALLY TOO BAD THAT, YOU KNOW, WHOEVER IS FIRST IN THE CAUCUSES ARE LOOKED AT AS NECESSARILY FRONTRUNNERS, BECAUSE I DON'T THINK IT'S ALL IN -- AND I THINK IT'S GOING TO PLAY OUT THROUGH THE REST OF THE PRIMARIES.

I THINK THE FLORIDA PRIMARY IS GOING TO BE CRITICAL ON JANUARY 29th.

I MEAN, MY HOPE IS THE DEMOCRATS WILL GO OUT AND VOTE BECAUSE THEY MIGHT BE SO ANNOYED THAT THE CANDIDATES DIDN'T CAMPAIGN, BUT THAT WILL BE OVER BY THEN.

>> DO YOU THINK THEY ARE GOING TO COME OUT AND VOTE GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE DEMOCRAT -- NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY AREN'T GOING TO RECOGNIZE FLORIDA DELEGATES?

>> I WILL BET YOU RIGHT HERE AND NOW THAT THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY WILL RECOGNIZE FLORIDA OR SOMEONE WILL RECOGNIZE FLORIDA, AND FLORIDA WILL HAVE DELEGATES SEATED. AND I BELIEVE WHETHER THEY ARE NOT SEATED, WHAT THEY SAY, WHAT FLORIDA DEMOCRATS SAY AND WHAT FLORIDIANS SAY ON THAT PRIMARY DAY IS GOING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE IT'S GOING TO SHOW, YOU KNOW, A COUNTRY, A STATE THAT REALLY IS --

>> ONE OF THE THINGS, YOU KNOW, IT SHOWS THAT THE CAUCUS IS A GOOFY PROCESS.

NO MATTER WHICH CANDIDATE YOU SUPPORTED, I MEAN, IT'S NOT A

GOOD PROCESS, I DON'T THINK SO, BECAUSE THE TURNOUT IS UNREPRESENTATIVE.

AND YOU HAVE A VERY SMALL TURNOUT.

THEY TALKED ABOUT THE RECORD-SETTING TURNOUT, BUT IT WAS ONLY 15% OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS IN IOWA.

SO YOU EXCLUDE SO MANY PEOPLE FROM PARTICIPATION BECAUSE IN THE CAUCUS, ESPECIALLY ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE, YOU HAVE TO GO OUT 7:00 IN THE EVENING, AND YOU HAVE TO SHOW UP, AND IT MAY LAST AS MUCH AS TWO HOURS.

A LOT OF PEOPLE CAN'T PARTICIPATE.

PEOPLE WHO ARE POLICE OFFICERS, HOSPITAL WORKERS, ALL THE MILITARY IN IOWA ARE DISENFRANCHISED BECAUSE THEY ARE SERVING SOMEPLACE IN THE COUNTRY, OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY.

SO YOU ELIMINATE A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT WOULD BE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE.

BUT WHEN YOU COMBINE IOWA AND NEW HAMPSHIRE AS THE ONE-TWO PUNCH IN THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE, IT'S A NUTTY SYSTEM.

BECAUSE BETWEEN THOSE TWO STATES, YOU HAVE FOUR MILLION PEOPLE IN IOWA AND NEW HAMPSHIRE, A GRAND TOTAL OF 11 ELECTORAL VOTES COMBINED BETWEEN THOSE TWO STATES AND FLORIDA ALONE HAS 19 MILLION PEOPLE AND 27 ELECTORAL VOTES. THE PROCESS IS IN DIRE NEED OF CHANGE.

>> BUT I WILL SAY WHAT I LIKE ABOUT THE CAUCUS PROCESS IS THAT IN PARTICULARLY HUCKABEE'S CASE, YOU HAD SOMEBODY WHO DIDN'T HAVE VERY MANY MATERIAL RESOURCES, DIDN'T HAVE A LOT

OF MONEY, AND CAME IN AND BECAUSE OF THE FORCE OF HIS PERSONALITY, WAS ABLE TO OVERTURN A GUY WHO WAS LITERALLY SPENDING TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO TAKE THIS NOMINATION.

AND IN A STATE LIKE FLORIDA THAT'S SO BIG, SOMEONE CAN COME IN WITH A BIG POCKETBOOK, BLANKET ADS, AND GET THE KIND OF ELECTORAL RESPONSE THAT YOU CAN'T NECESSARILY GET IN A STATE WHERE IN IOWA WHERE RETAIL POLITICS IS REALLY IMPORTANT.

I THOUGHT THAT WAS GREAT.

NOW YOU SEE HUCKABEE ON THE LATE-NIGHT SHOWS.

HE'S ON LETTERMAN AND LENO.

HE'S GETTING EVERY BIT OF FREE PUBLICITY OUT OF THIS THAT HE CAN POSSIBLY GET.

>>> WELL, THE LATEST CENSUS BUREAU REPORT SHOWS THAT FLORIDA'S POPULATION GREW SLOWER THIS YEAR THAN ANY YEAR THIS DECADE.

MORE RETIREES ARE LOOKING ELSEWHERE, BEING SCARED AWAY BY SURGING HOUSING COSTS, INSURANCE AND PROPERTY TAXES.

MANY ARE ALSO DISENCHANTED BY CONGESTED ROADS, LOW WAGES AND THE FEAR OF HURRICANES.

ERIC, I THINK SOME PEOPLE ARE WONDERING, IS THIS A GOOD THING OR A BAD THING?

>> WELL, I UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO BELIEVE IT IS A GOOD THING, BECAUSE WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT CONGESTION, AND WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS,

AND WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT SPRAWL.

BUT THE PROBLEM THAT WE HAVE IS THAT THE STATE'S ECONOMY AND A LOT OF OUR LOCAL ECONOMIES ARE BUILT ON THE IDEA OF SUSTAINING GROWTH.

YOU KNOW, OUR TAX STRUCTURE IS BUILT AROUND IT.

EVERYTHING WE EXPECT FROM OUR COMMUNITIES IS BUILT AROUND THIS IDEA THAT WE WILL GROW, THAT OUR TAX BASE WILL GROW, AND THAT, YOU KNOW, WE'LL HAVE THE SYSTEM WHERE SO MUCH OF OUR REVENUE FOR OUR GOVERNMENT COMES FROM SALES TAXES AND TAXING TOURISTS.

WE'RE DEPENDING ON TOURISM AND WE'RE DEPENDING ON HOUSING GROWTH TO FUEL A LOT OF THE THINGS WE WANT TO DO WITH OUR GOVERNMENT, AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM.

WE FOUND AFTER 9/11 THAT WHEN THAT THIRD LEG OF THE STOOL GOT KICKED OUT, AND TOURISM WENT WAY DOWN, OUR ECONOMY WENT INTO A TAILSPIN, AND WE'RE HAVING THE SAME PROBLEM BECAUSE THE BOTTOM IS FALLING OUT OF THE HOUSING INDUSTRY.

>> CHRIS, IS THAT THE WAY YOU SEE IT?

>> WELL, IN ADDITION TO THOSE COMMENTS, I THINK WHAT IT SHOWS, WHEN WE HAD THE CATASTROPHE OF ALL THE HURRICANES, BUT EVEN BEFORE THAT, THIS IS NOT SOMETHING THAT JUST STARTED THEN.

THIS STARTED AS GOVERNMENT GREW.

LOCAL AND STATE TAXES DOUBLED, AT LEAST LOCAL TAXES, PROPERTY TAX DOUBLED IN ABOUT SIX YEARS.

ESTATE TAXES GREW IN PROPORTION TO THE ECONOMY, BUT THEY STILL INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY.

I THINK GOVERNOR BUSH'S BUDGET DOUBLED DURING HIS TIME. BUT WHEN YOU TAKE ALL THAT INTO ACCOUNT AND LOOK AT PROPERTY TAXES ON ONE SIDE, WHICH ARE THE BIG KILLER FOR EVERY HOMEOWNER, INSURANCE COMPANIES, I WILL HANG IT ON THE INSURANCE COMPANIES, BECAUSE THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FAIR WITH FLORIDA.

THEY HAVE NOT BEEN FAIR WITH THE CITIZENS AND THE BUSINESSES OF FLORIDA.

WE ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY PAYING FOR OTHER STATES, AND THEY ARE PROFITING FROM IT IN THE BILLIONS.

AND THAT IS PERVASIVE.

WE HAVE SEEN MORE CANADIANS DOWN NOW BECAUSE OF THE CHANGE TO THE DOLLAR.

THEIRS HAS GONE UP.

BUT WHAT YOU'RE NOT SEEING IS THAT COMMENSURATE INVESTMENT.

AND THE OTHER RETIREES OR PEOPLE WHO WOULD NORMALLY COME HERE, HAVE GONE TO GEORGIA.

THEY HAVE GONE TO TENNESSEE.

THEY HAVE GONE TO OTHER STATES LIKE THAT WHERE THEY FIND A BETTER, EITHER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT OR A PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT IN TERMS OF THEIR PERSONAL TAXES.

AND WE'VE GOT TO LOOK AT WHAT IT COSTS TO RUN A BUSINESS HERE.

>> A COUPLE OF INTERESTING THINGS, IF YOU LOOK AT THE CENSUS BUREAU INFORMATION ON WHY THE GROWTH IS SLOWING DOWN, AND THAT'S AN IMPORTANT POINT TO STRESS, FLORIDA IS NOT LOSING PEOPLE.

I'VE HEARD A LOT OF PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THAT.

WE'RE STILL GROWING IN POPULATION.

IT'S JUST THAT THE PACE OF GROWTH HAS SLOWED SUBSTANTIALLY.

IN THE 1950s ON, WE USED TO BE ONE OF THE FASTEST GROWING STATES.

IN PART, THAT WAS BECAUSE IN 1950, FLORIDA ONLY HAD A COUPLE OF MILLION PEOPLE.

SO WHEN THE POPULATION CAME, YOU KNOW, THOSE PERCENTAGE FIGURES, FLORIDA WAS UP GROWING BY 15, 20, 25 PERCENT A YEAR.

AND THEN TYPICAL YEAR, FLORIDA WOULD GROW BY ABOUT 350,000 PEOPLE, BETTER THAN A THOUSAND PEOPLE A DAY MOVING INTO THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

LAST YEAR, THE FIGURES SHOWED WE ONLY HAD 35,000 PEOPLE FROM OTHER STATES MOVING TO FLORIDA, WHICH IS THE LOWEST TOTAL SINCE THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN KEEPING THE STATISTICS, AND THE OTHER THING IS, THERE WERE ABOUT 80,000 PEOPLE WHO MOVED IN TO FLORIDA FROM OTHER COUNTRIES.

THE FIRST TIME THAT WE'VE HAD MORE PEOPLE MOVING IN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES THAN MOVING IN FROM OTHER STATES IN FLORIDA. AND I THINK PART OF THE REASON FOR THIS, YOU KNOW, THERE ARE

ALL SORTS OF THINGS, HURRICANE, PROPERTY TAXES, HOME INSURANCE, CONGESTION, POOR SCHOOLS, BUT FLORIDA IS NOT AN INEXPENSIVE STATE ANYMORE, AND AS GARY MORMINO HAS SAID, FLORIDA IS A HARD PLACE TO BE POOR.

AND SO A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE MOVING ELSEWHERE WHERE THE COST OF LIVING IS MUCH LESS THAN IT IS IN FLORIDA.

>> PHYLLIS?

>> WELL, UM, I HAPPEN TO BELIEVE THAT GENERALLY SPEAKING, GROWTH DOES NOT PAY FOR ITSELF.

AND SO THESE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO COME -- AND I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT THE FIGURES USED TO BE, BUT THOUSANDS EVERY DAY WOULD COME IN, THE INFRASTRUCTURE IS NOT SUPPORTING THEM AND NOR IS THERE A TAX STRUCTURE.

AND THE TAX STRUCTURE -- THEY ARE -- THERE ARE AN ENORMOUS NUMBER OF INEQUITIES IN IT.

I THINK IF WE COULD FINALLY HAVE A LEGISLATURE THAT WOULD LOOK AT IT IN A SERIOUS WAY AND GET RID OF THE INEQUITIES AND START LOOKING AT HOW YOU REALLY -- HOW PEOPLE REALLY PAY FOR THE THINGS THEY WANT AND MAKE IT A QUALITY STATE AND NOT WHAT WE SEE NOW, THEN WE STAND A CHANCE.

AND MAYBE THIS LITTLE HIATUS IN GROWTH COMING IN IS A GOOD THING, BECAUSE MAYBE IT WILL GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO STOP DEPENDING ON THESE KIND OF PHONY, FALSE, YOU KNOW, FIXES, AND DO SOMETHING REAL.

>> PHYLLIS, I KNOW WHEN YOU SAT ON THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

COMMISSION, YOU AND CHRIS WERE BOTH ON THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSION AT DIFFERENT TIMES, BUT ONE OF THE BIG ISSUES IN CURRENT POLITICS IS DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

AND I WONDER IF THESE NUMBERS SHOWING GROWTH IS SLOWING DOWN, AT LEAST POPULATION GROWTH IS SLOWING DOWN, INCOMING PEOPLE, THAT THAT TAKES SOME OF THE WIND OUT OF THE SAILS OF THE HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT, IF PEOPLE -- IF VOTERS REALIZE THAT FLORIDA ISN'T BEING PRESSURED BY PEOPLE MOVING HERE FROM OTHER STATES AND THE NUMBERS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE A DAY THAT DARRYL TALKED ABOUT A MOMENT AGO.

>> WELL, I THINK -- I WOULD LIKE TO SAY -- WELL, NO, IT ISN'T.

I DON'T THINK IT'S TAKING THE WIND OUT OF THE SAILS OF HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY.

I THINK BECAUSE YOU HAVE TREMENDOUS DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE AND BUSINESSES AND ENORMOUS ONES, AND YOU'RE WATCHING THEM PUSH HARDER AND HARDER AS IT GETS HARDER TO DO THINGS.

FOR THESE KIND OF DEVELOPMENT THINGS THAT DO HURT THE ENVIRONMENT IN MANY WAYS, THAT I DON'T THINK WE CAN AFFORD TO PAY FOR, AND SO --

>> SO IT'S STILL --

>> IT'S STILL TOUGH.

>> -- STILL A VIABLE MOVEMENT YOU THINK.

OKAY.

WELL, LAST SPRING, AN INTERNAL AUDIT WARNED THE STATE BOARD THAT INVESTS LOCAL GOVERNMENT MONEY THAT IT WAS RELYING ON TOO FEW BROKERAGE HOUSES WHEN BUYING SECURITIES.

THE INVESTMENT POOL LOST A LOT OF VALUE IN THE MORTGAGE SECURITIES COLLAPSE CAUSING MANY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN FLORIDA TO WITHDRAW MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE POOL'S TOTAL MONEY.

LEHMAN BROTHERS SOLD ABOUT HALF THE PROBLEM INVESTMENTS TO THE STATE AND FORMER GOVERNOR JEB BUSH BEGAN WORKING AS A CONSULTANT FOR LEHMAN BROTHERS LAST JUNE.

HE'S DENYING, THOUGH, ANY CONNECTION TO THE STATE'S PURCHASE OF THE QUESTIONABLE SECURITIES.

CHRIS, THE STATE, THIS AUDIT SAID YOU'RE RELYING ON TOO FEW INVESTMENT FIRMS.

YOU'VE GOT TO BROADEN THE KIND OF ADVICE YOU'RE GETTING, THE RECOMMENDATIONS YOU'RE GETTING.

THEY DIDN'T SEEM TO DO IT.

HOW DID THAT AFFECT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?

YOU'RE A FORMER COUNTY COMMISSIONER.

>> WELL, AS WELL AS A COMMUNITY BANKER HERE FOR MANY YEARS, BUT THIS WAS A CASE FOR THE LISTENING AND VIEWING PUBLIC, THIS IS LIKE HAVING AN INTEREST-BEARING CHECKING ACCOUNT WHERE YOU PUT MONEY IN FOR SHORT-TERM NEEDS.

YOU NEED TO PAY FOR YOUR GROCERIES.

YOU NEED TO PAY SOMEBODY THAT MOWED THE YARD.

IN OTHER WORDS, YOU PAY EMPLOYEE SALARIES.

YOU PAY FOR THE SHORT-TERM NEEDS YOU HAVE, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE.

THEY ARE NOT THE LONG-TERM THINGS.

SO, THIS IS A CASE WHERE FOR 25 YEARS OR ABOUT 25 YEARS, THIS THING HAD GONE ON WELL, SO WELL THAT IN SOME CASES, RETURNS WERE UP TO 15% ON YOUR MONEY.

NOW, THINK ABOUT THAT.

YOU CAN'T GET THAT IN YOUR CHECKING ACCOUNT, YET LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WERE DOING IT AND STATE GOVERNMENT AS WELL.

SO HERE YOU'VE GOT THE GOVERNOR.

YOU'VE GOT CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, ALEX SINK, WHO IS ALSO THE TREASURER, AND YOU'VE GOT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, BILL McCOLLUM, WHO OVERSEE THIS.

BUT WHAT YOU HAD WAS A STAFF THAT WAS NOT RUNNING IT BY BANKING 101.

NUMBER ONE, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS HAD THEIR MONEY IN THERE, COULDN'T EVEN FIND OUT WHERE THE MONEY WAS BEING INVESTED.

IN ONE CASE, ONE OF THE COMMUNITIES HAD TO GO HIRE AN ATTORNEY UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT JUST TO GET THEM TO DISCLOSE THAT INFORMATION.

WHEN THIS STARTED TO UNFOLD AROUND NOVEMBER TIME FRAME AND THANKSGIVING TIME FRAME, THERE WAS ABOUT \$25 BILLION IN THIS FUND.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

IT WENT DOWN TO SOMEWHERE AROUND 14 BILLION BECAUSE SOME OF THE COMMUNITIES AND SOME OF THE SCHOOL BOARDS AND SOME OF THE AGENCIES WERE PRIVILEGED TO INFORMATION THAT THINGS ARE NOT WELL AND THERE MAY BE SOME REAL RISK AND DANGER.

WELL, THE OTHER PEOPLE LOOKED AT IT AND SAID, WAIT A MINUTE, 25 YEARS OF HISTORY, WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THIS.

IF A YEAR AGO YOU AND I SAID THESE ARE AAA-BACKED BONDS, WOULD WE QUESTION IT?

AND YOU WOULD SAY NO.

BUT WHAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW, EVEN SHORT-TERM MONEY LIKE THIS WAS BEING INVESTED INTO MORTGAGE POOLS THAT ACTUALLY WERE NOT BACKED BY MORTGAGES.

IF YOU TURN AROUND AND SAY SHOW ME THE MORTGAGE, THEY GO, WELL, WE DON'T REALLY HAVE THE MORTGAGE.

WE HAVE THIS NOTE THAT HAS SAID SOMEBODY ELSE HAS THEM.

WELL, YOU KEPT GOING THROUGH THAT CHAIN.

THEN YOU FOUND OUT, WAIT A MINUTE, THIS IS THE SAME POOL THAT OTHER PEOPLE HAD THAT WERE THESE BAD LOANS.

SO --

>> WELL, I THINK ONE OF THE PROBLEMS, TOO, THE PROBLEMS IN THE MORTGAGE SECURITIES INDUSTRY WERE BEGUN TO BE RECOGNIZED LAST SUMMER, YET LEHMAN BROTHERS, WHO IS STILL SELLING FLORIDA THESE MORTGAGE-BACKED SECURITIES.

>> WELL, THIS IS BEING LOOKED AT, AND IT SHOULD BE.

BOTH PHYLLIS AND I HAD EXPERIENCE WITH FIRMS LIKE -- WELL --

>> CALLED ETHICS.

>> YES.

>> ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, BUT WE DEALT WITH ALL THE MAJOR
BROKER HOUSES.

AND SO I CERTAINLY AM NOT GOING TO SIT HERE AND CONDEMN ANY
ONE OF THEM, BUT, ALL THOSE ARE BEING INVESTIGATED.

THERE ARE POSSIBLE CRIMINAL ISSUES HERE AT PLAY, BOTH IN
TERMS OF STATE EMPLOYEES WHO WERE OVERSEEING THIS, TO
CONSULTANTS HIRED DOING THAT TO FIRMS.

IN FACT, LIKE LEHMAN BROTHERS, AS YOU MENTIONED, AS
POTENTIALLY AT RISK OUT THERE.

THIS IS ALL BEING INVESTIGATED, EXTERNAL AUDITS, THE
ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE AUDITOR GENERAL, ON AND ON THROUGH THE
STATE OF FLORIDA.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WE'LL SEE IN A FEW MONTHS WHERE IT TURNS UP.

THE FOURTH TOPIC CONTAINS TWO ITEMS ABOUT LOCAL POLITICS.

FIRST, THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" WEB SITE, THE BUZZ,

REPORTS THAT FORMER ST. PETERSBURG NAACP PRESIDENT DARRYL
ROUSON HAS DECIDED TO SWITCH FROM REPUBLICAN TO DEMOCRAT IN
ORDER TO RUN FOR THE STATE HOUSE 55 SEAT BEING VACATED BY
FRANK PETERMAN.

ACCORDING TO THE BLOG, ROUSON WOULD AVOID HAVING AN "R" BY
HIS NAME IN THE HEAVILY DEMOCRATIC AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN
DISTRICT.

THE OTHER STORY FIRST REPORTED BY THE TAMPA TRIBUNE IS THAT THE TOP TWO DEMOCRATIC PARTY OFFICIALS IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY RESIGNED THIS WEEK OVER MONEY HANDLING BY THE COUNTY PARTY'S TREASURER.

TWO OFFICIALS ARE CHAIR MIKE SUAREZ, A PANELIST ON THIS PROGRAM, AND VICE-CHAIR DEBORAH COPE.

A NEW ELECTION WILL TAKE PLACE JANUARY 22nd.

PHYLLIS, IT ALWAYS SEEMS THAT THAT HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS A HARD TIME.

THERE'S A LOT OF TURNOVER IN THAT LEADERSHIP POSITION.

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, IT'S AN IRONY AND AN IRONIC THING THAT JUST HAPPENED, I THINK, BECAUSE THEY DO HAVE TURNOVER, BUT MUCH LESS SO.

AND THE PARTY ITSELF, I MUST SAY, IS REALLY BUILDING ITSELF UP PHENOMENALLY WELL.

THEY HAVE MORE DEMOCRATIC CLUBS.

THEY HAVE MORE SPEAKING TIME.

THEY ARE JUST DOING -- THEY ARE JUST FINALLY GETTING A Foothold IN DOING IT RIGHT.

AND I THINK THAT JUST AS THE STATE WAS, YOU KNOW, ITS INVESTMENT POOL, I THINK THIS COUNTY AND THIS STATE HAS A REAL PROBLEM WITH FINANCES.

I MEAN, I DON'T THINK IT'S JUST THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY THAT HAS A REAL PROBLEM.

I THINK THAT AS YOU LOOK AROUND, PEOPLE ARE NOT BEING HELD

ACCOUNTABLE, AND WE HAVE TO GET BETTER STRUCTURES.

BUT THE DEMOCRAT PARTY DID MOVE QUICKLY.

THEY DISCOVERED WHAT WAS WRONG.

THE TWO TOP PEOPLE, YOU KNOW, RESIGNED.

WELL, IT WAS KIND OF AMAZING.

THE GUY WHO DID IT, DIDN'T RESIGN.

>> SHOULD HE HAVE RESIGNED --

[TALKING OVER ONE ANOTHER]

>> THAT'S A BIZARRE PIECE --

>> I WONDER, I MEAN, WHAT THE NEWS STORIES WERE SAYING WAS THAT THE PEOPLE WHO RESIGNED DIDN'T WANT TO SERVE WITH A GUY WHO DECIDED TO LEAVE AND THEN DECIDED TO COME BACK.

YOU KNOW, I FIND MYSELF CONSTANTLY QUESTIONING -- THIS WAS LIKE THE GAME THAT CAN'T SHOOT STRAIGHT.

YOU HAVE A COMMUNITY WHERE THERE ARE MORE REGISTERED DEMOCRATS THAN REPUBLICANS, RIGHT?

BUT YOU HAVE THESE REPUBLICAN OFFICIALS WHO KEEP GETTING ELECTED BECAUSE THE LOCAL PARTY IS SO DYSFUNCTIONAL.

AND THAT'S WHAT I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

>> BUT I THINK IT'S CHANGING.

I HAVE TO TELL YOU, I DO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS VERY FAST ACTION.

I THINK IT WAS BIZARRE HOW IT PLAYED ITSELF OUT.

FAST ACTION.

THEY ARE GOING TO PICK SOMEONE NEW.

THERE ARE GOOD PEOPLE INTERESTED.

>> TALKING ABOUT BOB HENRIQUEZ TAKING OVER THAT POSITION.

IS HE THE LIKELY CANDIDATE?

>> NOT NECESSARILY.

I THINK HE'S TERRIFIC, BUT THEY HAVE THREE OR FOUR TERRIFIC PEOPLE.

>> ISN'T THERE A SENSE THAT THE PEOPLE, DEMOCRATS, WHO ARE REALLY EFFECTIVE AND REALLY CONSIDERED COMERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE PARTY BECAUSE THEY FEEL THE ONLY THING IT CAN DO IS HURT THEM?

>> WELL, I WOULD SAY THAT WAS TRUE.

I WOULD SAY IN THE PAST YEAR, VERY HONESTLY, I HAVE SEEN THOSE KIND OF DEMOCRATS REALLY UP-AND-COMING, MARY MULHERN, PEOPLE LIKE THAT, WHO ARE REALLY INVOLVED.

SUSAN SMITHS, WHO ARE PUTTING THINGS TOGETHER.

SO I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO SEE -- I THINK THIS IS JUST A BLIP AS IT IRONS ITSELF OUT.

>> PHYLLIS, WOULD YOU CONSIDER TAKING OVER THE CHAIRMANSHIP, CHAIRPERSONSHIP OF THE HILLSBOROUGH DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

ARE YOU OUT OF POLITICS ENTIRELY?

>> NO, I'M NOT -- WELL, I DON'T KNOW.

I WOULD NOT CONSIDER DOING THAT, BUT THE ONE OFFICE THAT I HAVE --

>> CAN YOU COUNT, PHYLLIS?

-- NEED A TREASURER --

>> NO, NO, I DON'T WANT THAT ONE.

THE ONE OFFICE THAT I WOULD THINK SERIOUSLY ABOUT AT SOME POINT PROBABLY WOULD BE SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS, BECAUSE I BELIEVE IN INTEGRITY.

AND I BELIEVE IN INTEGRITY IN THE ELECTION PROCESS.

>> WELL, I WAS GOING TO ASK ON THAT NOTE WHETHER THE SUPERVISOR OF ELECTION OR THE SECRETARY OF STATE HAS A ROLE TO TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LOCAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, BECAUSE IF IT'S A FUND OF THOSE, IT'S ONE OF THE TWO ORGANIZATION THAT HAS THE OVERSIGHT.

AND I HAVEN'T SEEN THAT REPORTED YET.

SO --

>> KAREN THURMAN IS INVOLVED IN IT, AND SHE HAS BEEN VERY ACTIVE.

I THINK SHE'S ONE OF THE REASONS THE PARTY IS CHANGING.

>> WE'LL HAVE TO GO QUICKLY THROUGH THE NEXT SEGMENT.

FINALLY, EACH WEEK, WE ASK OUR PANEL ABOUT ANOTHER STORY FROM THE WEEK OR ON THE HORIZON WHICH AFFECTS PEOPLE HERE IN WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA.

CHRIS, WE HAVE ABOUT 20 SECONDS FOR YOU.

[LAUGHTER]

>> CLEAR MY THROAT.

I'M IRISH AND PRESBYTERIAN.

IT WOULD TAKE ME LONGER THAN THAT TO CLEAR MY THROAT.

THAT'S IT.

THAT'S IT.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, REGARDLESS OF WHAT I PREFER ON THE
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, IT WILL BE GIULIANI AND HUCKABEE.

>> VERY INTERESTING.

VERY INTERESTING.

ERIC, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> BOY, THIS IS GOING TO BE HARD TO DO, BUT THERE'S A TUSSELE
OVER THE PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS ON CABLE.

AND THERE'S A CONTROVERSY BECAUSE THERE'S A SENSE THAT
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY MAY HAVE CUT A DEAL WITH THE CABLE
PROVIDERS.

\$150,000 IN SUPPORT IN EXCHANGE FOR NOT OPPOSING THEM MOVING
THEIR CHANNELS WAY UP --

>> EXCUSE ME.

THAT IS REAL CRAP.

>> -- WAY UP TO THE DIGITAL TIER.

THERE'S ALSO A SENSE THAT THE PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD,
THEY HAVEN'T CUT A SIMILAR DEAL, BUT THEY ARE THINKING THE
SAME WAY THAT IF THEY WORK WITH BRIGHT HOUSE, THEY'LL GET
MORE RESOURCES THAN IF THEY FIGHT THEM, AND THAT'S A BIG
CONTROVERSY.

>> PHYLLIS, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> REALLY QUICK.

GAMBLING.

I ACTUALLY TOTALLY DISAGREE WITH ENLARGING THE SCOPE OF

GAMBLING HERE.

I THINK IT'S REALLY -- I THINK IT'S JUST AWFUL, FRANKLY.

AND I GIVE MCCOLLUM CREDIT FOR STANDING UP TO IT.

I'M SORRY CRIST DID THAT PIECE, BECAUSE HE'S DONE SOME VERY GOOD THINGS.

I THINK IT'S A REAL MISTAKE TO HELP PEOPLE DIG THEMSELVES DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO POVERTY OR GO INTO POVERTY.

AND GAMBLING HAS NEVER BEEN THE SALVATION FOR ANY STATE OR ANYTHING THAT WE AS AMERICANS BELIEVE IN.

I FEEL STRONGLY.

>> DARRYL, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> TURNOUT ON THE JANUARY 29th FLORIDA PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY.

IT'S GOING TO BE VERY IMPORTANT AND WILL TELL US, I THINK, WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE FALL, IN PARTICULAR, BECAUSE DEMOCRATS HAVE SAID THAT THEY ARE NOT GOING TO GET ANY DELEGATES COMING OUT OF FLORIDA.

IF DEMOCRATIC TURNOUT IS HIGH, THAT COULD BODE VERY POORLY FOR THE REPUBLICANS IN THE FALL.

AND IF DEMOCRATIC TURNOUT IS HIGH, IT COULD CREATE PROBLEMS FOR THE PROPERTY TAX ISSUE, WHICH IS ON THE JANUARY 29th BALLOT, AND IT WILL LIKELY BE DEFEATED.

>> ALL RIGHT, WELL, THANK YOU, DARRYL PAULSON.

THANK YOU, PHYLLIS BUSANSKY.

THANK YOU, CHRIS HART.

AND THANK YOU, ERIC DEGGANS.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

BEFORE WE GO, WE WANT TO SEND OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY
OF VICTOR DiMAIO SENIOR.

VICTOR DIED THIS WEEK.

HE WAS BORN IN YBOR CITY, ACTIVE IN LOCAL POLITICS, A FRIEND
AND CONFIDANT TO MANY IN THE BAY AREA, PLUS A HUGE GATORS
FAN AND LOVING FATHER OF ONE OF OUR PANELISTS, VIC DiMAIO.
OUR THOUGHTS GO OUT TO THE VIC DiMAIO FAMILY.

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THIS PROGRAM.

YOU CAN SEND AN E-MAIL TO FTW@WEDU.ORG OR CALL OUR TOLL FREE
LINE, 800-335-9338, OR EVEN LEAVE A MESSAGE ON OUR "FLORIDA
THIS WEEK" WEB SITE ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG WHERE YOU CAN VIEW
THIS AND OTHER FINE LOCALLY PRODUCED WEDU PROGRAMS.

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK" RETURNS NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND
SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!

>> "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" IS A PRODUCTION OF WEDU WHO IS SOLELY
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