

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

JANUARY 18, 2008

DISCLAIMER:

THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS AN UNEDITED VERSION OF REALTIME CAPTIONING WHICH SHOULD NEITHER BE RELIED UPON FOR COMPLETE ACCURACY NOR USED AS A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT. BECAUSE THIS DOCUMENT HAS NOT BEEN EDITED, THERE MAY BE ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, AND/OR WORDS THAT DID NOT TRANSLATE CORRECTLY.

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, ALLSTATE IS BLOCKED FROM WRITING ANY NEW INSURANCE IN FLORIDA.

WILL THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES CAMPAIGN HERE IN FLORIDA?

THE GOVERNOR STEPS UP HIS CAMPAIGN FOR AMENDMENT ONE, AND HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY AND THE GAY MARRIAGE BAN DON'T HAVE ENOUGH SIGNATURES YET TO GET ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

¶¶

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

AND NOW, MODERATOR ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

THIS WEEK, OUR PANELISTS ARE, MITCH PERRY IS ASSISTANT NEWS DIRECTOR AT WMNF RADIO.

DR. ED JAMES IS PUBLIC AFFAIRS HOST AT WWSB IN SARASOTA.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

APRIL SCHIFF IS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT AND A REPUBLICAN.

AND TONI MOLINARO IS CHAIR OF THE PINELLAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

GOOD TO SEE EVERYBODY.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

WELL, THE STATE OF FLORIDA IS GOING AFTER ONE OF THE LARGEST INSURERS IN THE COUNTRY.

STATE REGULATORS HAVE TOLD ALLSTATE TO STOP WRITING NEW POLICIES IN FLORIDA INCLUDING HOME AND AUTO.

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER KEVIN McCARTY IS DEMANDING THE COMPANY COMPLY WITH A STATE SUBPOENA SEEKING INFORMATION ON ITS BUSINESS PRACTICES AND RELATIONSHIPS, BUT THE INSURANCE GIANT IS REFUSING.

COMMISSIONER McCARTY SUSPENDED ALLSTATE'S INSURANCE LICENSE FOLLOWING AN ABRUPT END TO THIS WEEK'S HEATED HEARING.

>> EITHER YOU'RE GOING TO PRODUCE THE DOCUMENTS WE REQUEST OR YOU'RE NOT.

IF YOU'RE NOT, WE'LL USE ALL MEANS AVAILABLE UNDER FLORIDA LAW TO ENFORCE OUR AUTHORITY OVER OUR SUBPOENAS.

>> WILL YOU PRODUCE THE DOCUMENTS AS DIRECTED BY THE OFFICE? THAT'S A YES OR NO.

>> IT IS NOT A YES OR NO.

>> APRIL, LATE TODAY, THE APPEALS COURT IN TALLAHASSEE STOPPED THE STATE FROM BARRING ALLSTATE FROM WRITING NEW POLICIES.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

SO ALLSTATE CAN CONTINUE TO WRITE NEW POLICIES.

SO THEY WON THE FIRST ROUND IN COURT.

WHAT IS THE STATE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER TRYING TO DO HERE?

>> HE'S REALLY TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THE INSURANCE CRISIS WE HAVE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

WHETHER HE'S GOING ABOUT IT THE RIGHT WAY OR NOT, WHO KNOWS.

THERE ARE INSURANCE COMPANIES WHO DID NOT HAVE THE ISSUES THAT ALLSTATE HAS WHEN THEY COMPLIED WITH THE SUBPOENAS.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH ALLSTATE AS WELL?

THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER DID SAY TODAY THAT HE'S GOING TO GO BACK AND ATTEMPT AGAIN TO HAVE AN INJUNCTION AGAINST ALLSTATE UNTIL THEY COMPLY WITH THE SUBPOENAS.

BUT THE INSURANCE CRISIS IN FLORIDA IS HUGE.

HE IS DOING EVERYTHING HE POSSIBLY CAN IN USING ALL OF HIS AVAILABLE MEANS TO TRY AND GET TO A RESOLUTION OF THAT.

THE OTHER SIDE OF IT IS, A LOT OF PEOPLE WILL BE HURT.

A LOT OF LITTLE PEOPLE ARE HURT WHEN THAT HAPPENS.

YOU SEE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD ALLSTATE AGENTS AND THE PEOPLE WHO CAN'T BUY INSURANCE AND THAT SORT OF THING.

BUT AT THE SAME TIME, THE INSURANCE COMPANIES, EVEN AFTER THE DISASTROUS HURRICANE SEASONS, ARE MAKING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN PROFITS.

I MEAN, IN '05, IT WAS 44.8 BILLION.

IN '06, SOMETHING LIKE \$65 BILLION IN PROFITS.

SO THEY AREN'T HURTING NEARLY AS BAD AS THE CITIZENS IN THE

STATE OF FLORIDA ARE.

AND I THINK OUR LEGISLATORS KNOW THAT, AND THEY ARE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL.

OBVIOUSLY, ALLSTATE IS NOT COOPERATING THE WAY THEY WANT THEM TO.

>> APRIL, I'M SMILING, YOU SOUND SORT OF LIKE A DEMOCRAT.

>> DON'T SAY THAT.

>> YOU SOUND LIKE A CONSUMER-ORIENTED REPUBLICAN.

BUT I'M WONDERING, IS THIS A CHANGE IN DIRECTION, THOUGH?

CHARLIE CRIST IS BACKING UP THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

>> AND SAYING, YOU KNOW, I THINK ALLSTATE HAS SOMETHING TO HIDE IF THEY ARE NOT GOING TO HAND OVER THE DOCUMENTS.

THAT'S WHAT THE GOVERNOR SAID.

GO AHEAD.

>> WELL, THE INSURANCE CRISIS IN FLORIDA WAS STARTED A LONG TIME AGO WHEN SENATOR BILL NELSON SINGLE-HANDEDLY ALLOWED THE INSURANCE COMPANIES TO OPERATE IN FLORIDA AS A SINGLE ENTITY RATHER THAN USING THEIR NATIONWIDE AVERAGES ON PROFITS, WHICH IS WHAT ALL THE OTHER STATES DO, WHICH HAS SINCE THEN SNOWBALLED INTO A SERIOUS DISASTER.

WE NEED TO GET CONTROL OF IT.

I'M NOT SURE IT'S A GOVERNMENT ISSUE.

I DON'T LIKE TO SEE GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN BUSINESS.

I DON'T LIKE TO SEE THE REGULATIONS.

BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO FIX IT, AND THEY ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN DO IT IS THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA ARE SUFFERING DRAMATICALLY FROM IT.

INSURANCE POLICIES ARE GETTING CANCELLED ALL OVER THE PLACE.

>> TONI, DO YOU THINK THIS IS THE RIGHT WAY TO MAKE ALLSTATE COMPLY AND THAT IS SAY, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO WRITE ANY NEW POLICIES IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA UNTIL YOU COMPLY WITH THE STATE SUBPOENA?

>> I'M NOT SURE IT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT.

THERE DEFINITELY IS A PROBLEM.

I FIND IT INTERESTING THAT SHE BRINGS UP BILL NELSON AND WHAT HE HAD DONE.

WE'VE HAD SEVEN YEARS OF A REPUBLICAN CONTROLLED LEGISLATURE, GOVERNOR.

JEB BUSH AND THE REPUBLICAN CONTROLLED LEGISLATURE HAS BEEN TRYING TO DEAL AND SOLVE THIS PROBLEM AND HAVE GONE NOWHERE. AND UNFORTUNATELY, I THINK THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN PROFITING FROM THIS DON'T WANT IT TO GO BE FIXED OR GO ANYWHERE.

RIGHT NOW, IT'S A KNEE-JERK REACTION, AND I DON'T THINK IT'S THE RIGHT REACTION, BUT WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING.

>> ED, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE WAY THE STATE IS GOING ABOUT HANDLING THE ALLSTATE DISPUTE?

>> WELL, IN ALLSTATE'S DEFENSE, TRYING TO GET THE INJUNCTION LIFTED, THEY SAID THEY DID NOT GET PROPER NOTICE, ENOUGH

NOTICE.

AND I WANT TO KNOW -- SPEAK FOR ALL THE PEOPLE ACROSS
FLORIDA WHEN THERE ARE NONE RENEWED AND WITHOUT PROPER
NOTICE.

[LAUGHTER]

I THINK SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE
SOMETHING IS, BUT SOMETHING HAS TO BE DONE.

>> MITCH, GO AHEAD.

>> IT'S A VERY BOLD MOVE BY McCARTY AND YOU SAID BACKED UP
BY CRIST.

AS APRIL SAID, THESE GUYS ARE MAKING RECORD PROFITS THE LAST
COUPLE OF YEARS.

THEY ASKED FOR A 42% INCREASE.

WE HAVEN'T HAD ANY HURRICANES THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS.

YOU GO BACK PRE-2004, WE HADN'T HAD HURRICANES FOR SEVERAL
YEARS.

WE'LL SEE IF 2004-2005 WAS AN ANOMALY, THAT THE INSURANCE
AGENCY ACTS LIKE IT WASN'T.

THEY KEEP ASKING FOR THE INCREASES.

GOVERNOR CRIST CAMPAIGNED ON THIS REMEMBER BACK IN 2006.

HE SAID ONE THING WE CAN DO, GET LEVERAGE ON IT, TAKE AWAY
THINGS LIKE SELLING CAR INSURANCE POLICIES.

IT WAS SCOFFED AT.

ALLSTATE MAKES \$2 BILLION A YEAR OR CLOSE TO THAT WITH THE
AUTO INSURANCE.

THEY DON'T WANT TO LOSE IT.

IT'S A BIG LEVERAGE POINT THAT McCARTY HAS HIT THEM ON.

>> ALLSTATE'S DEFENSE, IT DOESN'T WANT TO REVEAL TRADE SECRETS.

IT DOESN'T WANT TO REVEAL THE WAY IT DOES BUSINESS DEALS AND THE WAY IT ARRIVES AT RATES AND THAT SORT OF THING.

WHAT DO YOU GUYS THINK OF THAT CLAIM THAT THE STATE IS SOMEHOW GOING TO REVEAL, IF THE SUBPOENA IS SUCCESSFUL, REVEAL TO ALL THE OTHER BUSINESSES HOW ALLSTATE SETS ITS RATES OR WHAT METHOD IT USES.

THIS IS A TRADE SECRET.

>> THEY HAVE SOMETHING TO HIDE, IT LOOKS LIKE.

IN MISSOURI, MacKENZIE AND COMPANY REPORT SUPPOSEDLY THAT ALLSTATE -- THEY HAD TO PAY \$25,000 FINES THAT WENT UP TO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS NOT TO REVEAL THIS.

IT WILL BE INTERESTING.

AS SAID, 40,000 PAGES OF DOCUMENTS.

BUT WHAT'S REALLY IN THE DOCUMENTS?

NOTHING THAT SATISFIES INSURANCE COMMISSIONER McCARTY.

SO WE'LL SEE, YOU KNOW, THEY GIVE THIS UP, WE CAN END THIS CRISIS RIGHT NOW.

THEY DON'T WANT TO.

THERE'S SOMETHING IN THERE THEY DON'T WANT THE PEOPLE OF FLORIDA AND MAYBE THE NATION TO SEE.

>>> WHILE THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES PLAN TO

INTENSIFY THEIR CAMPAIGNS IN FLORIDA IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS,
THE DEMOCRATS ARE STILL AVOIDING THE STATE.

THE QUESTION POSED BY MANY IS: WILL ONE OF THE DEMOCRATS
BREAK THE BOYCOTT AGAINST THE STATE IMPOSED BY THE
DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND CAMPAIGN IN FLORIDA AFTER
THE SOUTH CAROLINA PRIMARY?

TONI, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

DO YOU THINK THAT ONE WILL BREAK OUT OF THE PACK?

>> THERE'S ALWAYS THAT POSSIBILITY.

YOU KNOW, IT'S REALLY NOT CONTINGENT ON THAT.

VOTERS HERE IN FLORIDA ARE ALREADY EDUCATING THEMSELVES ON
WHO THE BEST DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE WILL BE FOR PRESIDENT.

AND WE ARE FORTUNATE THAT WE DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THESE,
YOU KNOW, TV ADS THAT KIND OF GO ON AND ON ABOUT HOW GREAT
THEY ARE.

WE HAVE TO ACTUALLY LISTEN TO DEBATES.

WE HAVE TO GO ON THE INTERNET, LOOK UP THE CANDIDATES AND
INFORM OURSELVES.

SO I THINK THAT THE FLORIDIAN VOTERS WHO ALREADY ARE VOTING.

I KNOW IN PINELLAS COUNTY THEY ARE ALREADY VOTING.

THEY ARE GOING TO VOTE REGARDLESS.

AND THE IDEA THAT THEIR VOTE WON'T COUNT IS REALLY SILLY.

THE ONLY TIME YOUR VOTE DOESN'T COUNT IS IF YOU DON'T GO TO
THE POLLS.

>> TONI, HEARD THIS WEEK FROM THE CHAIR OF THE DEMOCRATIC

PARTY IN PASCO COUNTY THAT SHE'S GETTING CALLS FROM PEOPLE SAYING THAT THEY THINK THEIR VOTE WON'T COUNT. IF THEY ARE DEMOCRATS, THEY ARE NOT GOING TO GO TO THE POLLS ON THE 29th BECAUSE THEY THINK THEIR VOTE WON'T COUNT BECAUSE THE NATIONAL PARTY HAS TAKEN AWAY FLORIDA'S DELEGATES.

>> SURE.

WHAT THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND IS ON THE 30th WE ARE GOING TO READ IN THE HEADLINES WHO IS OUR DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA, WHO WE CHOSE.

THAT WILL BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT HEADLINE GOING INTO TUESDAY WHERE 26 STATES ARE GOING TO VOTE.

SO WE HAVE AN INFLUENCE.

RIGHT NOW, WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT, WELL, WHO WON IOWA, WHO WON SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO WON NEVADA, IT'S JUST A NAME.

THEY ARE NOT COUNTING UP THE DELEGATES.

IT'S THE NAME AND THE INFLUENCE THAT THAT NAME GIVES GOING INTO THE NEXT STATE.

SO I THINK IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT FOR FLORIDIAN VOTERS TO KNOW, THEY CAN VOTE, AND IT WILL COUNT.

>> APRIL, DO YOU THINK THE DEMOCRATS MIGHT SEE A LOWER TURNOUT IN FLORIDA BASED ON SOME OF THIS CONFUSION ABOUT UNDERSTANDING, ABOUT WHAT THEIR VOTE WILL ACTUALLY MEAN?

>> SURE.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT ABSOLUTELY IS GOING TO HAPPEN.

I HAVE FRIENDS WHO ARE DEMOCRATS SAY, YEAH, I'M NOT GOING TO VOTE.

IT'S NOT WORTH IT.

I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT.

THE REPUBLICANS ARE SAYING, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, THAT'S OKAY.

YOU KNOW, THE REPUBLICAN RACES ARE STARTING TO TIGHTEN UP IN FLORIDA.

AND WHOEVER COMES OUT OF ANY GIVEN PRIMARY STATE AS THE WINNER IS THE NEW HEADLINER, THE NEW MONEY PERSON THAT'S GETTING ALL THE NEW MONEY IN.

THE VOLUNTEERS ARE STARTING TO FLOCK THERE.

SO, YOU KNOW, NOT SEATING THE DELEGATES IS REALLY NOT THE SAME AS WHO IS GOING TO WIN THE PRIMARY.

OBVIOUSLY, THE PRIMARY WINNER IN THE REPUBLICAN SIDE IS GOING TO TAKE THE DELEGATES.

WE ONLY LOST HALF OF OUR DELEGATES, NOT ALL OF THEM.

WE'LL SEE 57 DELEGATES AT THE CONVENTION.

AND THAT'S A BIG WIN FOR THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES.

THE FRONTRUNNER RIGHT NOW, I THINK, HAS 42 OR 45, SO WINNER TAKES ALL IN FLORIDA.

57 WILL PUT YOU REALLY SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU NEED TO BE AT THIS POINT.

>> MITCH, ARE WE SEEING ANY SIGNS THAT ANY OF THE DEMOCRATS WILL BREAK THE BOYCOTT?

ARE WE SEEING ANY HINTS THAT SOME DEMOCRATS ARE PUTTING OUT
FEELERS TO FLORIDA TO COME HERE AFTER SOUTH CAROLINA?

>> THERE WAS A REPORT THAT HILLARY CLINTON MAY BE COMING
DOWN THE 27th.

LOOK, IF SHE DOES THAT, WHICH WOULD BE BREAKING THIS VOW
THAT THE CANDIDATES DID THEMSELVES DID NOT OFFEND IOWA, NEW
HAMPSHIRE, SOUTH CAROLINA, NEVADA, IT WILL BE A DAY OR TWO.
THEY HAVE THE SOUTH CAROLINA PRIMARY ON THE 26th.

AT MOST, COUPLE OF DAYS WHERE THE CANDIDATES MIGHT DO THIS.

LOOK, ROB, WE JUST HAD AN ELECTION THIS PAST WEEKEND IN
MICHIGAN.

THIS IS THE EXAMPLE WHICH WE MIGHT SEE IN FLORIDA.

THE REPUBLICAN RACE, VERY HIGHLY CONTESTED.

VERY IMPORTANT RACE.

MITT ROMNEY WON IT.

THE DEMOCRATIC RACE NOT COVERED AT ALL.

THE CANDIDATES DIDN'T CARE.

THEY WERE IN LAS VEGAS AT A DEBATE.

I THINK BARACK OBAMA MAY WANT THIS SCENARIO FOR HIMSELF.

YOU LOOK AT DIFFERENT POLLS.

I THINK IT'S HIGHLY UNLIKELY HE'LL WIN FLORIDA.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER SENT IN A CONTROVERSIAL E-MAIL EARLIER THIS
WEEK SAYING HILLARY POTENTIALLY MAKING A CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE
ON THE 27th IS BREAKING THE VOW.

THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO CAMPAIGN THERE.

OBAMA GOT SOME BLOWBACK ON THAT FOR SAYING, OKAY, TRYING TO
DISENFRANCHISE FLORIDIAN VOTERS.

ALL DUE RESPECT, TONI, I DON'T KNOW.

I THINK BARACK OBAMA IS REALLY GOING TO TRY TO MAKE THIS NOT
MUCH OF A RACE.

HILLARY CLINTON WILL PROBABLY GET THE VICTORY HERE.

WILL MAKE IT AN IMPORTANT THING.

AND WE'LL SEE HOW MUCH THE NATIONAL MEDIA ACTUALLY MAKES OF
THIS.

>> ED, BARACK OBAMA IS AT A DISADVANTAGE IF HE IS THE SECOND
PLACE PERSON RIGHT NOW IN FLORIDA.

HE'S IN A DISADVANTAGE.

HILLARY HAS THE NAME RECOGNITION AND HE REALLY HAS HIS HANDS
TIED.

HE CAN'T LIFT A FINGER IN FLORIDA.

>> OH, I DON'T AGREE WITH THAT.

AND I DISAGREE WITH THE NOTION THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER.

IT DOES MATTER.

BUT I DON'T SEE HILLARY HAVING THE REAL ADVANTAGE.

SHE HAS THE ADVANTAGE IN OUR NAME RECOGNITION AND -- IN IOWA
IN NAME RECOGNITION AND THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN.

SHE HAD THE ADVANTAGE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, EVEN THOUGH SHE WON
NARROWLY, IT'S NOT GOING TO MAKE THAT KIND OF DIFFERENCE.

>> I HAVE TO SAY, I SEE GROUND GAME GOING ON BOTH SIDES.

HILLARY HAS A GREAT GROUND GAME GOING ON.

BARACK OBAMA, PEOPLE ARE OUT.

IT IS UNDER THE RADAR, BUT THESE PEOPLE ARE OUT IN FORCE.

>> HOW DOES IT PLAY OUT?

DOES IT PLAY OUT IN PHONE CALLS?

>> OF COURSE, THERE ARE TARGETED LISTS, VOTERS GOING AFTER.

WE'RE WORKING, AND, YOU KNOW, PEOPLE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT PEOPLE, THE DEMOCRATS WANT TO WIN NOVEMBER.

AND REGARDLESS OF ALL OF THIS THAT HAPPENED IN FLORIDA FOR JANUARY PRIMARY, WHICH IS NOT A MISTAKE BY OUR REPUBLICAN LEGISLATURE, YOU KNOW, WE ARE GOING TO WIN.

AND WHETHER THEY DO IT NOW OR IN NOVEMBER, THEY ARE GOING TO GET OUT AND VOTE.

>> ROB, THE FOCUS ON THE RACE DEFINITELY WILL BE THE REPUBLICAN RACE.

WE'VE SEEN RUDY GIULIANI BASICALLY LIVE HERE FOR THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS.

THIS IS HIS LAST STAND.

THE QUESTION WHETHER HIS STRATEGY WILL REALLY WORK OR NOT WILL BE DECIDED ON JANUARY 29th.

>> DO YOU THINK THERE WILL BE ANY SURPRISE ON THE REPUBLICANS SIDE?

>> THERE WAS UP UNTIL JUST A FEW DAYS AGO A DEAD HEAT AS FAR AS THE POLLING WAS SHOWING WITH THE THREE FRONTRUNNERS, WHICH IS HUCKABEE, GIULIANI, AND McCAIN, SAW A POLL THAT CAME OUT TODAY THAT SHOWED McCAIN PULLED FAR AHEAD BY

ABOUT SEVEN POINTS.

AND WE'RE SEEING A WHOLE LOT OF PEOPLE MOVING INTO THE
McCAIN CAMP.

YEAH, YOU MAY SEE SOME SURPRISES.

AND WHAT GIULIANI HAS DONE HERE IS GOING TO GO DOWN IN
HISTORY FOR THE POLITICAL SCIENCE CLASSES AS EITHER A
SUCCESS OR NOT A SUCCESS BECAUSE HE HASN'T CAMPAIGNED
ANYPLACE ELSE.

>> THAT'S RIGHT.

AND IT'S HUGE BECAUSE, OF COURSE, IF HE WINS, HE'S RIGHT
BACK IN IT.

ROB, EVERY POLL RIGHT NOW SAYS HE'S NOT WINNING RIGHT NOW,
WHICH IS REALLY DEFLATING FOR HIS CANDIDACY.

>>> LAST WEEK, WE GOT A LOT OF COMMENTS ON OUR DISCUSSION OF
SEX EDUCATION.

ONE OF THE GUESTS STATING THAT ABSTINENCE -- THIS IS AN
OXYMORON.

ABSTINENCE ONLY CURRICULUM IS EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS.

ALL OF THE MAJOR WELL-CONDUCTED STUDIES SHOW THAT IT IS NOT
EFFECTIVE.

I AM A PHYSICIAN WHO SPECIALIZES IN THE CARE OF ADOLESCENCE.

I SEE TEENS SEXUALLY ACTIVE WHO HAVE STDs AND, YES, WHO
ARE PREGNANT.

THEY NEED ALL THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO REMAIN HEALTHY AND
ABSTINENCE-ONLY EDUCATION DOES NOT GIVE THEM THAT.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THAT'S FROM DR. DAVID C.

AND WE RECEIVED THESE COMMENTS ABOUT A RECENT DISCUSSIONS BY THE EFFORTS OF THE RAYS BASEBALL TEAM TO GET A NEW WATERFRONT STADIUM.

>> FLORIDA DEVIL RAYS DO NOT NEED A NEW STADIUM IN ST. PETE. YOU DON'T HAVE THE PEOPLE.

IF YOU HAD PUT THE STADIUM SOMEWHERE BETWEEN, SAY, ORLANDO AND TAMPA, I WOULD DEFINITELY GO TO BALL GAMES.

BUT IT IS 85 MILES FROM HERE, AND I'D HAVE TO LEAVE DURING THE TRAFFIC HOUR TO GET THERE, AND THAT'S WHY WE DON'T GO TO BALL GAMES.

>> THEY WANTED THE STADIUM IN ST. PETERSBURG.

FINALLY WE HAVE A STADIUM, A TEAM AND NOW THE DEVIL RAYS ARE NOT SATISFIED.

WE CANNOT AFFORD TO CONTINUE TO BUILD, TEAR DOWN, BUILD AGAIN, AND TAKE AWAY MONEY THAT IS NEEDED FOR BETTER THINGS IN ST. PETERSBURG.

>> AND THIS E-MAIL CAME TO US REGARDING AMENDMENT ONE, THE PROPERTY TAX ISSUE ON THE JANUARY 29th BALLOT.

I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A SAMPLE BALLOT FOR THE JANUARY PRIMARY, AND I'M FLABBERGASTED BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THAT I'M EXPECTED TO READ, UNDERSTAND, AND CAST AN INTELLIGENT VOTE FOR OR AGAINST.

THIS DOUBLESPEAK IS CONFUSING.

AND BY MAKING IT UNINTELLIGIBLE TO THE VOTER, A TRAVESTY OF

OUR ELECTION SYSTEM, I HOPE THAT YOU WILL SPEAK TO THIS
ISSUE ON ONE OF YOUR FRIDAY PROGRAMS PRIOR TO THE ELECTION.

>> WELL, WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM.

YOU CAN ALWAYS SEND AN E-MAIL TO FTW@WEDU.ORG OR CALL OUR
TOLL FREE LINE, 800-335-9338.

OR YOU CAN LEAVE A MESSAGE ON OUR "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" WEB
SITE ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG.

WELL, ANNE, YOU ASKED AND WE DELIVER.

AMENDMENT ONE APPEARS ON THE BALLOT FOR VOTE IN A LITTLE BIT
MORE THAN A WEEK.

IT WOULD CUT PROPERTY TAXES FOR THE AVERAGE HOMEOWNER BY
ABOUT \$240 A YEAR, ALLOW OWNERS OF HOMESTEADED PROPERTY TO
APPLY UP TO A HALF MILLION DOLLARS OF SAVE OUR HOMES TAX CAP
WHEN THEY PURCHASE A NEW HOME.

IT HAS A TAX BREAK FOR BUSINESSES AND A 10% TAX CAP FOR
NONHOMESTEAD PROPERTY.

POLICE, FIREFIGHTERS AND TEACHER UNIONS AND MANY
MUNICIPALITIES ARE OPPOSED TO AMENDMENT ONE FEARING THE
IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT BUDGETS.

>> LOOKING AT AN AVERAGE SAVINGS OF ABOUT \$261 A YEAR, WHICH
EQUATES TO MAYBE 60 CENTS A DAY.

I THINK PEOPLE CAN WAIT THE EXTRA COUPLE OF MONTHS AND DO
SOMETHING RIGHT WHERE EVERYBODY WILL GET A BENEFIT.

>> AS A REALTOR, I DON'T HAVE ANOTHER YEAR TO NOT HAVE
BUSINESS AND NOT WORK.

I DON'T SEE ANY DOWNSIDE TO PASSING THIS AMENDMENT.

>> ED, ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE GETTING A TAX BREAK IF THIS AMENDMENT IS PASSED?

>> I DON'T KNOW.

I THINK IT'S IN BIG TROUBLE, BUT THE AVERAGE LITTLE GUY SAYS GIVE ME ANYTHING, I'M HURTING.

AND WHILE THAT'S NOT A BIG -- A LARGE AMOUNT, 240, 260 DOLLARS, UNDER 300 DOLLARS, SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE.

THE GOVERNOR, WHO, AS EVERYBODY KNOWS, IS REALLY PUSHING THIS, YESTERDAY, DECIDED HE WOULD GIVE A NEW -- NEW MONEY TRYING TO GET THE TEACHERS ON BOARD.

HE'S PROPOSING ANOTHER BILLION DOLLARS FOR EDUCATION.

NOT GOING TO CUT -- NOT GOING TO RAISE TUITION FEES FOR SCHOOLS.

THERE WOULD BE MORE MONEY FOR EDUCATION.

TRYING TO OFFSET THE POPULAR NOTION THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE IN TROUBLE IN THE LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES AND COUNTIES.

>> IS THAT ENOUGH TO PULL -- I KNOW YOU WERE AT A FORUM EARLIER THIS WEEK IN SARASOTA WHICH THIS WAS DEBATED AND DISCUSSED.

WERE MANY PEOPLE CONVINCED THAT THIS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO OR THE WRONG THING TO DO?

HOW DID YOU LEAVE THAT ROOM?

>> ALMOST TO A PERSON, THOSE WHO SPOKE AND THE BUZZ AROUND THE ROOM WAS, THEY WERE AGAINST IT.

AND THESE WERE DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS.

WE ARE MOSTLY A REPUBLICAN COUNTY ACTIVIST COUNTY.

I'M NOT SURE IT'S GOING TO FLY.

>> APRIL?

>> WELL, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ALIKE, EVERYBODY HAS MIXED EMOTIONS ON THIS AMENDMENT.

REPUBLICANS THAT ARE SUPPORTING IT ARE SUPPORTING IT BECAUSE IT IS BETTER THAN NOTHING, AND IT'S A START, AND WE'VE GOT TO GO SOMEWHERE.

THEY ARE RIGHT, WE HAVE TO GO SOMEWHERE.

OTHER PEOPLE ARE SAYING IT'S NOT ENOUGH.

WE HAVE TO VOTE IT DOWN SO WE CAN GO BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD AND DO SOME OTHER THINGS.

AND THERE ARE SOME OTHER THINGS IN THE WORKS OUT THERE.

THERE'S THE TAX AND BUDGET COMMISSION, WHICH IS MEETING RIGHT NOW, WHICH HAS THE ABILITY TO PUT AN AMENDMENT ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT.

THERE'S ANOTHER GROUP, THE 1.35% TAX CUT --

>> SOME PEOPLE ARE COMPARING IT TO PROP 13 IN CALIFORNIA.

>> THEY ARE PUSHING FOR THAT -- WON'T MAKE IT ON THE NOVEMBER '08 BALLOT, BUT THE FOLLOWING NOVEMBER.

SO THERE ARE SOME OTHER IDEAS OUT THERE THAT HAVEN'T REALLY GOTTEN AS FAR AS THIS ONE HAS.

AND I THINK A LOT OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE WORKING REALLY HARD FOR THIS ARE SAYING \$240 IS BETTER THAN NOTHING AND I'VE

NEVER SEEN A TAX CUT I DIDN'T LIKE.

THAT'S GOOD, BUT EVERYBODY HAS TO WEIGH WHETHER THEY THINK
IT'S GOOD ENOUGH.

THE POLLING ON THIS PARTICULAR AMENDMENT IS NOT STRONG
ENOUGH RIGHT NOW.

IT IS NOT SHOWING THAT IT'S GOING TO SUCCEED.

>> WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT AMENDMENT ONE?

>> I JUST THINK THAT IT'S A MISTAKE.

WHY DO WE KEEP DOING BAND-AID SOLUTIONS?

AND WHAT IS AT STAKE HERE?

EDUCATION IS NOT -- IS GOING TO BE HELD HARMLESS?

THAT'S NOT WHAT WAS SAID FROM THE GOVERNOR.

SO WE'RE LOOKING TO HURT, AGAIN, OUR SCHOOLS, WHO NEED THE
MONEY.

WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A TAX SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR EVERYBODY,
FOR BUSINESSES, FOR NEW HOMEOWNERS WHO ARE PAYING 13, 14
THOUSAND DOLLARS IN TAXES FOR THEIR HOUSE THAT THEY JUST
PURCHASED AND NOW THEIR VALUE HAS DECREASED.

THERE'S GOT TO BE A BETTER WAY.

>> SO WHAT WOULD THAT LOOK LIKE?

>> AGAIN, I AGREE, I THINK WE NEED -- THE TAX COMMISSION
THAT IS MEETING, NEEDS TO GIVE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO
TALLAHASSEE.

IT NEEDS TO BE A WELL THOUGHT OUT, NOT A PARTISAN BILL THAT
HAS COME, YOU KNOW, TWICE NOW TO THE TABLE FOR US TO LOOK AT

AND VOTE ON.

I THINK THIS PARTICULAR GROUP PROBABLY HAS TAKEN THEIR TIME, HAS GOT SOME GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR US TO REALLY CHANGE THE TAX SYSTEM AND MAKE IT FAIR AND EQUITABLE AND REALLY GIVE PEOPLE THE RELIEF THAT THEY NEED.

>> ALL RIGHT.

TONI, THAT WILL HAVE TO BE THE LAST WORD ON THAT.

WELL, FLORIDIANS MIGHT NOT BE VOTING THIS YEAR ON TWO HOTLY CONTESTED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

ONE, TO BAN GAY MARRIAGE, THE OTHER TO SLOW DOWN GROWTH.

THE STATE DIVISION OF ELECTIONS REPORTED THIS WEEK THAT THE GAY MARRIAGE BAN IS MORE THAN 20,000 SIGNATURES SHORT OF THE NUMBER NEEDED TO REACH THE BALLOT.

THE MAIN REASON, ABOUT 27,000 SIGNATURES HAVING ELECTRONICALLY REPORTED TWICE TO THE STATE.

LIKewise, THE FLORIDA HOME DEMOCRACY GROUP WHOSE AMENDMENT WOULD REQUIRE THE PUBLIC TO VOTE ON ALL CHANGES TO LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE GROWTH PLANS IS MORE THAN 110,000 NAMES SHORT ON THE BALLOT.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING SIGNATURES IS FEBRUARY 1st.

>> THE FLORIDA HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY AMENDMENT PROBABLY IS NOT GOING TO.

THEY ARE WAY SHORT.

CLOSE TO 200,000 SHORT ACCORDING TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE.

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THAT, BURNHAM AND LESLEY BLACKNER ARE VERY UNHAPPY ABOUT THAT.

THEY SAY -- THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY --

>> WHERE'S THE PROBLEM?

TALLAHASSEE OR THE LOCAL ELECTION SUPERVISORS?

>> BOTH.

I THINK BOTH WOULD SAY THAT.

JOHN STEMBERGER, THE MAN BEHIND BANNING THE SAME SEX MARRIAGE AMENDMENT.

I TALKED TO HIM THIS WEEK, AND HE WAS CIRCUMSPECT.

HE DIDN'T WANT TO GET TOO BITTER.

IF HE'S NOT QUALIFIED FOR THIS, WHEN HE WAS TOLD HE HAD THE SIGNATURES LAST MONTH, HE'S GOING TO BE REALLY ANGRY.

I THINK HE'S REALLY ANGRY RIGHT NOW.

I THINK THIS IS AN OUTRAGEOUS THING RIGHT NOW.

SURPRISE IT HASN'T MADE MORE NEWS.

BASICALLY SINCE JANUARY 1, SECRETARY OF STATE OFFICE BASICALLY SAID, SUPERVISOR OF ELECTION, MAIN BUSINESS IS GET READY FOR THE JANUARY 29th ELECTION.

NOT COUNTING PETITIONS AND SIGNATURES.

WE HAVE THE DEADLINE OF FEBRUARY 1 RUNNING UP AGAINST IT.

RIGHT NOW, THEY ARE NOT GIVING DAILY UPDATES ON THIS AND

THEY SAY THEY DON'T HAVE TO.

I THINK THIS IS A BIG ISSUE.

IT'S REALLY GOING TO AFFECT THE SAME SEX MARRIAGE BAN.

WE'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE WITH ISSUES OF THE DIVISION OF ELECTIONS OFFICE IN TALLAHASSEE AND WITH OUR LOCAL SUPERVISORS OF ELECTION OFFICE, I THINK IT REALLY NEEDS TO BE REVISITED AGAIN.

CHANGE SOMEHOW, SOMEWHERE.

THIS SHOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED, I DON'T THINK.

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

TONI, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> WELL, I'M FROM ST. PETERSBURG, AND WE'VE GOT A BIG DEVELOPMENT PROJECT ON OUR -- THAT CITY COUNCIL NEEDS TO WEIGH IN ON.

THEY INVITED DEVELOPERS TO COME AND PROPOSE IDEAS FOR THE TROPICANA SITE.

OF COURSE, THE WHOLE PROCESS HAS BEEN A LITTLE BIT MUDDLED BECAUSE THERE WAS SOME SECRECY BEHIND IT, AND PEOPLE ARE NOT HAPPY WITH THE PROCESS.

NOT SO MUCH THE PRODUCT OR THE OUTCOME, BUT I THINK THE PROCESS NEEDS TO BE REVISITED.

I THINK THAT'S GOING TO BE OUR NEXT BIG STORY.

>> OKAY.

APRIL, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> AND ALSO IN PINELLAS COUNTY, STOPPING MONTHS OF SPECULATION -- REPRESENTATIVE BILL YOUNG WILL RUN FOR

REELECTION FOR THE 20th TIME.

>> HE'S 77 YEARS OLD.

IT IS AMAZING.

>> FANTASTIC.

>> WHY DO YOU THINK HE'LL RUN AGAIN IN.

>> HE SAID THAT HIS JOB IS TO MAKE SURE THAT OUR MILITARY IS PROPERLY EQUIPPED.

AND HE WANTS TO BE THERE WHEN WE START COMING OUT OF IRAQ AND MAKE SURE THAT WE'RE PREPARED FOR WHATEVER HAPPENS IN THE UNITED STATES AFTER THAT.

HE NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF HIS CONSTITUENTS.

I THINK IT'S FANTASTIC.

>> ED, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> THIS IS A WEEK OF CELEBRATIONS OF THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF DR. KING, I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A QUICK ANALOGY BETWEEN DR. KING, BLACK LEADERSHIP, AND BARACK OBAMA.

IN MANY WAYS, KING AND OBAMA ARE THE SAME, SAME PAGE, SAME KIND OF POSITION.

WHERE BLACK CANDIDATES ARE PRESENT IN THE PAST, WHITE GUILT. OBAMA HAS NOT DONE THAT.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS, HE BRINGS FOR THE WHITE CANDIDATES WHO WANT TO DO BETTER, FOR THE WHITE COMMUNITY, A FEELING OF LEGITIMACY.

AND IT TAKES THEM AWAY FROM THEIR GUILT.

>> INTERESTING.

AND MITCH, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> YEAH, IN TARPON SPRINGS, THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VOTED
3-2 FOR A WAL-MART SUPERSTORE.

THE CHANGES ARE MAJOR CHANGES AND NOT MINOR ONES.

THIS IS A BIG DEAL, THEY NEED TO GO THROUGH REGULATORY
BOARDS AGAIN BEFORE THIS IS APPROVED.

THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR THREE YEARS.

THE CRITICS, FRIENDS OF THE ANCLOTE RIVER AND THE LIKE.

IT'S A VICTORY FOR THEM.

MAYBE SHORT-TERM ONE RIGHT NOW, BUT WAL-MART, WE'LL SEE IF
THEY DECIDE TO CONTINUE FURTHER NOW.

>> WELL, THAT'S AN INTERESTING QUESTION, WILL WAL-MART COME
BACK AND TRY AGAIN IN TARPON SPRINGS?

>> NOBODY KNOWS THE ANSWER TO THAT.

SPOKE TO WAL-MART YESTERDAY.

SENT AN E-MAIL SAYING CONTEMPLATING THIS, GET BACK IN A
COUPLE OF WEEKS.

>> NO SUGGESTION THAT THEY ARE LOOKING AT ALTERNATIVE SITES
IN THE AREA.

>> NOT THAT WE KNOW ABOUT AT THIS TIME.

>> THANK YOU MITCH PERRY.

THANK YOU, APRIL SCHIFF.

THANK YOU, TONI MOLINARO.

AND THANK YOU, ED JAMES.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THIS PROGRAM WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG WHERE YOU CAN FIND AN ARCHIVE OF THIS AND OTHER FINE LOCALLY PRODUCED WEDU PROGRAMS.

WE'LL RETURN NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

AND FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND, AND REMEMBER, EARLY VOTING HAS BEGUN, AND HAPPY MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY.

REALTIME CAPTIONING BY AMERICAPTION, INC.

>> "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" IS A PRODUCTION OF WEDU, WHO IS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS CONTENT.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

