

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

JANUARY 25, 2008

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, THERE'S NO CLEAR LEADER AS THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY GOES DOWN TO THE WIRE.

WHAT WILL FLORIDA'S DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY MEAN IN THE FACE OF PENALTIES FROM THE NATIONAL PARTY?

AMENDMENT ONE, WILL IT GET THE NEEDED 60% APPROVAL?

AND FLORIDA VOTERS SEEM EXTRAORDINARILY INTERESTED IN TUESDAY'S PRIMARY ELECTION.

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, STEVE BOUSQUET IS TALLAHASSEE BUREAU CHIEF AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES."

JOE BROWN IS A COLUMNIST AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER AT THE "THE TAMPA TRIBUNE."

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

MARK PROCTOR IS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT AND A REPUBLICAN.

AND PATRICK MANTEIGA IS EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF LA GACETA  
NEWSPAPER AND A DEMOCRAT.

GOOD TO SEE YOU, EVERYBODY.

WELL, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS BLANKETED FLORIDA  
THIS WEEK AND APPEALED TO VOTERS WHO WILL CAST THEIR FINAL  
BALLOTS IN THAT RACE NEXT TUESDAY.

A "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" POLL PLACES JOHN McCAIN WITH 25%  
AND MITT ROMNEY WITH 23% IN A STATISTICAL TIE FOR FIRST  
PLACE, WHILE RUDY GIULIANI AND MIKE HUCKABEE, RATHER, BOTH  
POLLED 15% FOR THIRD.

RON PAUL WAS A DISTANT FOURTH.

HUCKABEE, ROMNEY AND McCAIN ALL CLAIMED WINS IN EARLIER  
PRIMARY RACES.

SO A FLORIDA WIN MAY PRODUCE A DEFINITE LEADER IN A LARGELY  
WIDE OPEN REPUBLICAN FIELD.

MARK, HOW WOULD YOU HANDICAP THIS RACE?

IS IT DOWN TO A THREE-PERSON RACE WITH McCAIN, ROMNEY AND  
GIULIANI?

>> I'M GOING TO CARRY IT ONE STEP FURTHER, I THINK IT'S DOWN  
TO A TWO-PERSON RACE.

LET ME DISCLOSE, I WAS A LATE-COMER.

I FINALLY MADE UP MY MIND.

I DECIDED TO GO FOR JOHN McCAIN.

SO I'LL DISCLOSE THAT UP FRONT, BUT IT TOOK ME OVER A YEAR

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

TO MAKE UP MY MIND.

I LOOKED AT ALL THE VARIOUS OPTIONS.

I MET THEM ALL.

I GOT AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH THEM PERSONALLY, AND THEN FINALLY WENT THAT WAY.

LET ME JUST GIVE A REAL BRIEF HISTORY.

I THINK PART OF THE PROBLEM NOT ONLY HERE IN FLORIDA BUT AROUND THE COUNTRY, I THINK A LOT OF REPUBLICANS WERE SET ON THEIR CANDIDATE OVER A YEAR AGO.

HIS NAME WAS GEORGE ALLEN.

I THINK WHEN GEORGE ALLEN GOT BLOWN UP OVER HIS MACACA COMMENT, ALL OF A SUDDEN PEOPLE WERE GOING, OH, MY GOSH, NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

I THINK THEY'VE BEEN VERY CAUTIOUS.

THEY'VE BEEN MEETING WITH THE CANDIDATES AND LISTENING TO THEM.

RUDY GIULIANI MADE A MISTAKE, I BELIEVE -- YOU KNOW, I REALLY FELT SORRY FOR HIM IN THE DEBATE THURSDAY NIGHT, BECAUSE IT WAS LIKE HE PUT ALL OF HIS EGGS IN HIS FLORIDA BASKET.

HE WAS THE MOST POPULAR GUY IN THE COUNTRY, IN FLORIDA, AND NOW HE MAY GO BEHIND HUCKABEE IN SOME OF THE POLLS THAT I'M SEEING.

SO I THINK -- TO DIRECTLY ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, I REALLY THINK IT'S BETWEEN JOHN McCAIN AND ROMNEY.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

ROMNEY DID REAL WELL IN THE DEBATE.  
HE HAS A LOT OF MOMENTUM.  
HE CERTAINLY HAS THE REGULAR TALK SHOW HOSTS ON HIS SIDE.  
THEY DON'T LIKE JOHN MCCAIN.  
>> RUSH LIMBAUGH IS AGAINST MCCAIN.  
>> BIG TIME.  
SEAN HANNITY, ALL OF THESE CONSERVATIVE TALK SHOW HOSTS DO  
NOT LIKE JOHN MCCAIN.  
>> WHAT'S THE APPEAL FOR YOU FOR MCCAIN?  
>> WELL, THE APPEAL FOR ME, THERE ARE A LOT OF ISSUES I  
CERTAINLY DIDN'T AGREE WITH HIM ON.  
BUT I FEEL A LOT OF THE THINGS HE DID, HE DIDN'T DO FOR  
POLITICAL GAIN.  
HE DID IT BECAUSE HE FELT THAT WAS THE RIGHT THING TO DO.  
YOU KNOW, THERE'S NOBODY THAT'S GOING TO SIT THERE AND AGREE  
WITH YOU ALL THE TIME, BUT I WOULD RATHER HAVE SOMEBODY THAT  
I CAN AGREE WITH MOST OF THE TIME THAN HAVE SOMEBODY THAT'S  
GOING TO CHANGE THEIR OPINION AND SAY, OH, BY THE WAY, THIS  
IS THE WAY I AM NOW.  
AND ONE FINAL POINT ON MCCAIN, JUST ON FRIDAY, HE GOT THE  
ENDORSEMENT OF SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ.  
SO I THINK THAT'S HUGE.  
THAT'S AFTER THE DEBATE.  
MEL COULD HAVE STAYED OUT OF IT.  
I THINK THINGS ARE REALLY SHIFTING BACK IN HIS DIRECTION.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> STEVE, THE OTHER BIG QUESTION, TOO, WHO DOES THE GOVERNOR ENDORSE?

YOU ARE UP IN TALLAHASSEE.

ANY HINTS FROM THE GOVERNOR ON WHICH WAY HE'S GOING TO GO?

>> OH, I THINK HE'S SITTING IT OUT.

>> HE'S NOT GOING TO ENDORSE.

>> NOT GOING TO ENDORSE.

I WOULD BE SURPRISED IF HE DOES IT AT THIS LATE DATE.

ESPECIALLY IN A TWO-PERSON RACE.

MITT ROMNEY CAME INTO FLORIDA IN 2006 WITH A CHECK FOR \$1 MILLION FROM THE REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR'S ASSOCIATION FOR THE CRIST FOR GOVERNOR CAMPAIGN.

THAT'S HAD THE EFFECT OF NEUTRALIZING HIM.

RUDY GIULIANI CAMPAIGNED IN SYNAGOGUES AND OTHER PLACES FOR CHARLIE CRIST IN SOUTH FLORIDA BACK WHEN GIULIANI WAS RIDING HIGH.

I THINK AT THIS POINT, CHARLIE CRIST, HE SEES A TWO-MAN RACE, VERY TIGHT, EITHER McCAIN OR ROMNEY WILL WIN THE THING IT LOOKS LIKE.

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

IT'S DOWN TO A TWO-MAN RACE.

I'M WONDERING, ROMNEY HAS ALL THIS MONEY.

THERE'S SOME TALK THAT McCAIN WAS HAVING A BIT OF MONEY TROUBLE.

I KNOW HE'S DONE WELL IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS, BUT ROMNEY HAS

OODLES OF MONEY.

HE CAN GO THE DISTANCE, CAN'T HE?

>> YOU KNOW, HE CAN.

AT SOME POINT, YOU HAVE TO WONDER IF YOU WANT TO SPEND THAT MONEY WHEN IT BECOMES APPARENT THAT YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE.

I DON'T THINK IT'S QUITE THAT WAY YET.

BUT I HAVE A FEELING McCAIN WILL WIN.

I THINK A LOT OF THE UNDECIDED VOTE AMONGST REPUBLICAN PARTY THAT NONE OF THESE CANDIDATES REALLY EXCITE THEM SO YOU'LL GO TO WHAT IS COMFORTABLE.

I THINK McCAIN IS A COMFORTABLE CHOICE FOR THEM.

HE'S BEEN AROUND A WHILE.

THEY KNOW HIM.

THEY KNOW WHAT HE'S ABOUT.

I THINK THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SEEING HERE, THESE UNDECIDEDS, WHICH HAVE BEEN AROUND SUCH A LONG TIME, SAYING, WELL, I HAVE TO CHOOSE SOMEBODY, LET ME GO TO McCAIN.

SO I THINK THAT HE MIGHT PULL THIS STATE OUT.

I THINK IT WILL BE A DISASTER FOR RUDY GIULIANI.

I DON'T KNOW HOW FAR HE CAN GO.

ONCE IT GETS DOWN TO TWO PEOPLE, ONCE IT'S McCAIN AND ROMNEY, SUPER TUESDAY MIGHT BE ABLE TO SORT THAT OUT PRETTY QUICK.

AND THEN, YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES MONEY ISN'T GOING TO BUY AN ELECTION.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AT THAT POINT IN TIME, WE'LL HAVE TO SEE.

McCain HAS TO CONTINUE TO DO WELL BECAUSE HE HAS TO RAISE MONEY AND HE HAS TO LOOK LIKE A WINNER IN ORDER TO DO THAT.

>> McCain, THOUGH, JOE, HAS NOT ENDORSED THE CAT FUND, WHICH WOULD BE INVOKED IF WE HAD A REALLY BAD HURRICANE. YOU KNOW, IT HASN'T BEEN PASSED BY CONGRESS YET.

IS THAT A PROBLEM FOR JOHN McCain THAT HE'S NOT ON BOARD WITH THE CAT FUND?

>> IT'S A PROBLEM, BUT PART OF HIS STRAIGHT TALK EXPRESS. HE WENT TO MICHIGAN AND SAID, LOOK, THOSE AUTOMOBILE JOBS ARE NOT COMING BACK.

HE'S BEING HONEST ABOUT IT.

ROMNEY GOES, OH, YEAH, I'M GOING TO BRING BACK THE AUTO INDUSTRY.

GOOD LUCK TO YOU, BUDDY.

I'D LIKE TO SEE THAT.

YOU TALK -- I DON'T THINK GOING TO PULL IT OFF.

AGAIN, IT'S PART OF HIS STRATEGY TO SAY WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID RATHER THAN WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO HEAR.

>> ISN'T THERE A LONG TRADITION WITHIN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY TO GO TO THE SENIOR STATESMEN WITHIN THE PARTY AND THAT IS THE NEXT CONTENDER FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

>> THAT TENDS TO BE THE CASE.

ONE OF THE THINGS THAT PEOPLE WANTED TO AVOID WAS A REPEAT OF 1996 WHEN THAT WAS ROBERT DOLE AND BOB DOLE BECAME THE --

BUT THERE WAS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT SITUATION.

YOU HAD A SITTING PRESIDENT AT THAT POINT, AND LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT.

I DON'T THINK JOHN McCAIN AND BOB DOLE.

IT'S A WIDE OPEN -- IT'S AN OPEN SEAT.

LET ME MAKE A COUPLE OF POINTS THAT I BELIEVE, ONE IS THAT I'M NOT SURE THAT THE REPUBLICANS ARE READY TO ANOINT SOMEBODY YET.

IT SEEMS LIKE SOMEBODY WINS THE PRIMARY, AND THEN THE TALK IS, WELL, IF THEY WIN THE NEXT PRIMARY, THEN IT'S ALL OVER, THEY VOTE FOR SOMEBODY ELSE.

THAT'S NUMBER ONE.

NUMBER TWO, I THINK WHAT IS DRIVING A LOT OF THE REPUBLICAN VOTE IS THE NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL NEWS.

WHEN THERE'S AN ASSASSINATION IN PAKISTAN, ALL OF A SUDDEN, JOHN McCAIN COMES OUT.

WHEN THERE ARE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, ALL OF A SUDDEN ROMNEY BECOMES POPULAR.

I THINK A LOT OF WHAT HAPPENS OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS IS GOING TO BE DRIVEN BY WHAT HAPPENS OUTSIDE.

>> ONE LAST QUESTION.

HOW IMPORTANT -- AND MIKE HUCKABEE, EVEN THOUGH HE'S IN FOURTH PLACE, THIRD OR FOURTH PLACE RIGHT NOW, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST POLL IN THE NEWSPAPER, BUT HE WAS RELYING, I THINK, A LOT ON EVANGELICAL VOTERS.

FLORIDA WILL BE THE FIRST PRIMARY WHERE INDEPENDENTS AREN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE PART IN OUR PRIMARY.

WE HAVE A CLOSED PRIMARY.

AND MAYBE THAT'S THE REASON McCAIN WENT BY HUCKABEE IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

DOES FLORIDA HAVE SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH NUMBERS OF EVANGELICAL VOTERS FOR HUCKABEE TO DO SOME SORT OF SURPRISE HERE?

>> I THINK SO.

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY THERE WERE VOTING.

THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY, PARTS OF IT, DISHEARTENED AT THE MOMENT, BECAUSE THEY HAVE WORKED HARD, VERY HARD, TO GET THE MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'LL FALL JUST SHORT OF THE SIGNATURES THEY NEED.

YOU CAN LOOK AT THAT TWO WAYS.

THAT WILL EMBOLDEN THEM TO WORK EVEN HARDER FOR HUCKABEE TO GET A VICTORY HERE, BUT, YOU KNOW, HUCKABEE IS NOT SETTING THE WORLD ON FIRE EITHER, AND HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH OF AN ORGANIZATION.

>> AND I'VE GOT TO SAY, I THINK IN THE DEBATE, HE MADE A BIG MISTAKE BECAUSE HE SAID THE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION WERE IN JORDAN, WHICH IS AN ALLY OF OURS.

AND I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE SHOCKED THAT HE DIDN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THAT.

>> OKAY.

WELL, FLORIDA DEMOCRATS ALSO MAKE THEIR CHOICE FOR THEIR PREFERRED PRIMARY CANDIDATE ON TUESDAY, DESPITE NATIONAL PARTY SANCTIONS THAT AWARD NO DELEGATES TO THE WINNER. IN THE DEMOCRATIC RACE, THE LATEST "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" POLL SHOWS HILLARY CLINTON WITH A COMMANDING 42%, BARACK OBAMA WITH 23%, AND JOHN EDWARDS AT 12%, UNDECIDED VOTERS DREW 18 AND DENNIS KUCINICH PULLS AT ABOUT 2%. THIS WEEK, THOUGH, HE ANNOUNCED HE'S DROPPING OUT. MEANWHILE, FLORIDA DEMOCRATS WONDER IF THEIR CANDIDATES WILL LIFT THEIR BOYCOTT AND VISIT ONCE SOUTH CAROLINA COMPLETES ITS VOTE THIS WEEKEND. ALEX SINK MADE THE APPEAL THIS WEEK. SHE SAID, YOU KNOW, CANDIDATES -- TO THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, YOU SHOULD COME DOWN AND CAMPAIGN THOSE FINAL TWO DAYS BEFORE OUR PRIMARY. >> I DON'T THINK THAT IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. I THINK THAT CLINTON BELIEVES SHE HAS THIS STATE WON. SO WHY BREAK YOUR PROMISE? OBAMA DOESN'T THINK HE CAN WIN THIS STATE SO THIS GIVES HIM AN EXCUSE TO SAY HE DIDN'T WIN THE STATE. HE WASN'T CAMPAIGNING HERE. SHE WAS BETTER KNOWN THAN HIM HERE. BUT HILLARY DID RELEASE TODAY A PRESS RELEASE SAYING THAT SHE WOULD ASK ALL OF HER DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION TO SUPPORT THE SEATING OF FLORIDA'S DELEGATES.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THIS PUTS OBAMA IN A BOX.

LAST WEEK HE WAS CRITICIZED BY A LOT OF DEMOCRATS BECAUSE HE BASICALLY SAID FLORIDA VOTES AREN'T GOING TO COUNT.

IT DOESN'T MATTER, TRYING TO MAKE OUR PRIMARY SEEN WORTHLESS.

I THINK THAT UPSETS FLORIDIANS.

AND NOW SHE COMES OUT AND SAYS, COUNT FLORIDA VOTES, AND IF HE DOESN'T DO THAT, IT'S GOING TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HE'S WILLING TO PLAY GAMES WITH FLORIDA VOTES JUST FOR HIS OWN BENEFIT.

I SEE HILLARY TAKING A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC VOTE HERE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

I THINK IT WILL HURT HIS CAMPAIGN A LOT.

HE BETTER BE STRONG IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

EVEN IF SHE IS SECOND, BUT COMES CLOSE TO HIM IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND IT'S VERY NECK AND NECK, I THINK THAT REALLY WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO COME BACK.

>> JOE, I KNOW SOME LOCAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OFFICIALS REPORT THAT THEY ARE GETTING CALLS FROM THEIR MEMBERS SAYING -- THEY ARE ASKING THE PARTY OFFICIALS, WILL OUR VOTE COUNT, AND THEY WONDER IF THEY SHOULD COME OUT FOR THIS ELECTION. THE OTHER THING IS, WE HAVE THIS AMENDMENT ONE THAT WE'LL TALK ABOUT LATER ON THE BALLOT THIS TIME AROUND, IS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT DEMOCRATIC TURNOUT WILL BE DEPRESSED?

>> I BELIEVE IT WILL BE.

YES.

NOBODY IS COMING.

YOU HAVE ALL THESE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES COMING DOWN HERE,  
TALKING TO FOLKS, MEETING PEOPLE, HOLDING DEBATES.

NOBODY HAS SEEN ANY DEMOCRATS.

AND A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK, OH, WE HAVE A PRIMARY?

YEAH, THEY DO.

>> I DISAGREE.

I THINK DEMOCRATS ARE EXCITED ABOUT THEIR CANDIDATES,  
WHETHER THEY ARE HERE OR NOT.

MORE ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE THAN THE REPUBLICAN SIDE.

IF YOU LOOK AT EARLY VOTING AND ABSENTEE VOTING, THEY ARE  
SEEING A TREND WHERE DEMOCRATS ARE DOING PRETTY WELL.

>> WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS AGAIN IN A MOMENT.

MARK, I MEAN, WHO DO YOU THINK -- DO YOU THINK THAT HILLARY  
HAS A LOCK ON THE STATE OF FLORIDA?

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT -- ARE REPUBLICANS ASSUMING THAT  
HILLARY IS GOING TO BE THE EVENTUAL NOMINEE?

>> I HAVE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT, BUT NOW I THINK MORE THAN  
EVER.

AND I THINK THAT THE PROBLEM -- I CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO  
ADVISE THE DEMOCRATS, BUT I THINK THE PROBLEM THEY HAVE RUN  
INTO NOW, THEY ARE CREATING A REAL DIVISIVENESS WITHIN THE  
PARTY THAT I SEE.

AND SOME OF THESE DEBATES, THERE SEEMS TO BE A REAL

ANIMOSITY BETWEEN THE CLINTON FORCES AND OBAMA.

AND I THINK -- MAYBE I'M HOPING -- BUT I'M AFRAID WHAT MAY HAPPEN FOR THEM -- I THINK EVERYBODY SHOULD VOTE -- IS A LOT OF THE PEOPLE SUPPORTING OBAMA MAY SIT HOME IN THE ELECTION. THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE REPUBLICANS.

>> STEVE, THERE WAS A REAL DIFFERENCE IN TONE THIS WEEK AT THE REPUBLICAN DEBATE IN SOUTH FLORIDA WHERE THEY REALLY DIDN'T GO AFTER EACH OTHER THE WAY THE DEMOCRATS, ESPECIALLY CLINTON AND OBAMA WENT AFTER EACH OTHER.

>> RIGHT.

THE REPUBLICANS WERE PLAYING NOT TO LOSE.

YOU JUST MADE A GOOD POINT.

KEEP THIS IN MIND, THE DEMOCRATS HAVE HAD A TWO-PERSON RACE NOW FOR AT LEAST A MONTH, JOHN EDWARDS, MAYBE NOT.

JOHN EDWARDS LOOKS LIKE HE'S FADED.

YOU HAVE OBAMA AND CLINTON GOING AFTER EACH OTHER, ALL THE BILL CLINTON NOISE.

McCAIN AND ROMNEY ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THAT ARENA WHERE IT'S MANO AGAINST MANO KIND OF THING.

AND CAN'T YOU TELL?

McCAIN REALLY DOESN'T LIKE MITT ROMNEY AT ALL.

THERE'S A REAL INTENSE PERSONAL DISLIKE.

YOU CAN SEE.

IT COMES THROUGH ON THE TUBE.

>> SO IT'S LIKELY TO TURN.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

YOU THINK THE TONE OF THEIR CAMPAIGN WILL TURN THE WAY THE  
DEMOCRATS CAMPAIGN --

>> I THINK IT IS.

>> WHEN IT BECOMES TWO PEOPLE, I MEAN, LET'S FACE IT.

GO BACK TO THE 2000 ELECTION WHEN IT WAS JOHN MCCAIN AND  
GEORGE W. BUSH, IT GOT REAL NASTY.

WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE, YOU CAN ALL TAKE A COUPLE OF  
SHOTS.

I THINK THERE'S A LOT TO BE SAID FOR THAT.

>> A LOT OF DEMOCRATS WATCH THAT REPUBLICAN DEBATE THURSDAY  
NIGHT PROBABLY -- OH, WELL, HILLARY ALREADY --

>> -- LAST LONGER ON THE REPUBLICAN SIDE THAN THE DEMOCRATIC  
SIDE.

>> THE REASON IS BECAUSE ROMNEY HAS GOT DEEP POCKETS.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS IN FLORIDA OR EVEN ON SUPER  
TUESDAY, HE COULD STAY IN THIS THING.

HE ALREADY PICKED UP A BUNCH OF DELEGATES.

AND MCCAIN WILL PROBABLY STAY IN IT BECAUSE HE'S STUBBORN.

SO I THINK THESE TWO ARE GOING TO BE FIGHTING IT OUT FOR  
SOME TIME.

>>> OKAY.

WELL, NEXT TUESDAY WHEN FLORIDA VOTERS CAST PRESIDENTIAL  
PRIMARY BALLOTS AHEAD OF MORE THAN 40 OTHER STATES, IT WILL  
BE THE EARLIEST FLORIDA PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY.

LAST SPRING, UNANIMOUS FLORIDA SENATE AND OVERWHELMING HOUSE

MAJORITY MOVED THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY TO THE LAST TUESDAY  
IN JANUARY.

ONE INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE VOTE IS 70,000 PEOPLE HAVE  
ALREADY VOTED EARLY IN FLORIDA INDICATING HUGE INTEREST IN  
THIS ELECTION.

THEY VOTED EARLY AND THESE ARE ABSENTEE BALLOTS, TOO.

>> 700,000 SO FAR.

AND IT'S CLIMBING UPWARD.

THERE'S STILL SEVERAL MORE DAYS TO GO BEFORE THE POLLS OPEN.

TO PICK UP ON PATRICK'S COMMENT OF A MINUTE AGO, YES, SOME  
DEMOCRATIC VOTERS ARE A LITTLE BIT DISCOURAGED BECAUSE THEY  
CAN'T SEE THEIR CANDIDATES, BUT YOU DON'T SEE IT REFLECTED  
IN THE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE SHOWING UP SO FAR.

>> BUT THE REPUBLICANS HAVE DONE A SLIGHTLY BETTER JOB IN  
GETTING OUT THAT EARLY VOTE.

>> THEY ALWAYS DO.

THEY ARE RUNNING ABOUT EIGHT TO TEN POINTS AHEAD OF THE  
DEMOCRATS IN A CRITICAL AREA, WHICH IS THE ABSENTEES THAT  
GET MAILED BACK TO THE SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE.

IT'S EASY TO ASK FOR AN ABSENTEE, ARE YOU GOING TO FILL IT  
OUT AND SEND IT BACK?

THE REPUBLICANS HAVE HISTORICALLY DONE A BETTER JOB THAN THE  
DEMOCRATS AT THAT.

>> SO IS THERE AN INDICATION BASED ON THE STORY THAT YOU  
FILED ON FRIDAY THAT THE DEMOCRAT VOTE IS GOING TO BE

DEPRESSED THIS TIME AROUND?

>> NOT SEEING IT.

WHAT WE CAN'T KNOW IS WHAT THE DEMOCRATIC VOTE WOULD HAVE BEEN LIKE IF HILLARY AND OBAMA WERE DOWN HERE NONSTOP FOR THE LAST TEN DAYS.

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THROUGH THE CEILING.

I SUPPOSE IT IS DEPRESSED TO SOME DEGREE.

THE QUESTION IS, WHICH IS MOTIVATING VOTERS TO COME TO THE POLLS MORE IF YOU'RE A DEMOCRAT?

IS IT THE CANDIDATES WHO ARE CAMPAIGNING IN SOUTH CAROLINA OR THAT PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT?

I THINK WE MIGHT KNOW ON TUESDAY.

>> JOE, YOU POINTED OUT EARLIER THIS WEEK, THAT MOVING UP OF THE PRIMARY DATE WAS THE IDEA OF MARCO RUBIO.

THIS IS PART OF HIS 100 IDEAS FOR FLORIDA.

>> YES, AND I WAS FOR IT AT THE TIME.

WE WERE FOR IT AS A BOARD, AND I STILL AM.

IT MADE US -- I MEAN, THE NEW YORK TIMES ON FRIDAY MORNING ENDORSED CANDIDATES IN THE FLORIDA PRIMARY.

NOW, THAT MEANS -- SO IT SUCCEEDED IN THAT, WE'RE NO LONGER --

>> BY THE WAY, PROBABLY HURT JOHN McCAIN A LOT FOR GETTING THAT ENDORSEMENT.

>> SO THE GOAL OF MAKING OUR PRIMARY COUNT FOR A CHANGE SUCCEEDED.

I MEAN, WELL, COUNTED -- WE GOT THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT.

>> DOES IT STAY THIS WAY, THOUGH?

IF WE GO INTO 2012, IN THAT ELECTION SEASON, WILL FLORIDA BE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO SAY TO THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, LOOK, YOU CAN'T SAY YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SEAT OUR DELEGATES?

>> I WOULD LIKE TO.

I HOPE NOT, BECAUSE I WOULD LIKE TO SEE AND I'VE SAID ON THE SHOW BEFORE, REGIONAL PRIMARIES AND STOP THIS LEAPFROGGING TO TRY TO BE FIRST.

SO THAT'S WHY.

>> I THINK THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WILL HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOME SOLUTION OTHER THAN JUST MAKING SURE FLORIDA DOESN'T COUNT THE NEXT TIME AND THE NEXT TIME AND THE NEXT TIME.

IT WILL REALLY BE UP TO THE POLITICS OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

IT'S GOING TO BE UP TO FLORIDA GETTING A GOOD REPRESENTATION UP THERE TO MAKE SURE THAT WE BUMP SOUTH CAROLINA OFF OF SOME OF THOSE COMMITTEES AND HAVE OUR OWN STRONG VOICES THERE.

SO I THINK AT LEAST FLORIDA WILL NOW BE FOCUSED ON THIS. HOPEFULLY MICHIGAN WILL BE, TOO, AND THERE WILL BE SOME MOVE TO GET ON THE RIGHT COMMITTEES, MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE TO COME UP WITH SOME NEW SYSTEM.

>> AND MARK, ONE LAST QUESTION, I GUESS IT'S EASIER, THOUGH,

FOR THESE CANDIDATES IN THOSE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF THE  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION TO GO TO A PLACE LIKE NEW HAMPSHIRE  
AND IOWA WHERE ALL THAT POLITICKING IS RETAIL.  
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND VAST AMOUNTS OF TELEVISION MONEY TO  
GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT.  
YOU GO DOOR TO DOOR.  
YOU HAVE LITTLE MEETINGS IN LITTLE TOWNS.  
YOU MEET PEOPLE.  
YOU GET A LOT OF FREE MEDIA UP THERE IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.  
IT'S NOT QUITE SO EXPENSIVE TO CAMPAIGN UP THERE.  
>> ABSOLUTELY.  
AND I THINK THEY ENJOYED THAT.  
AND I THINK THEY ENJOYED THE LUXURY OF IT.  
AS REPUBLICANS, I THINK WE GOT TIRED OF SOMETIME AROUND MAY,  
BY THAT TIME, THE ASSUMED NOMINEE WOULD SHOW UP FOR A  
ONE-DAY TOUR OF FLORIDA.  
THEY ARE IN HERE NOW.  
THEY ARE LIVING IN FLORIDA.  
THIS IS EXCITING, BECAUSE YOU GET TO SEE THEM AND TALK TO  
THEM.  
>> SO EVEN THE REPUBLICANS ARE GOING TO BE ON BOARD TO MAKE  
SURE THAT FLORIDA IS ONE OF THE EARLY STATES.  
>> THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND.  
THE STRATEGY OF THIS DID EXACTLY WHAT THEY WANTED TO  
ACCOMPLISH.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AND THAT WAS, WE ARE NOW THE FOCUS -- THIS IS THE ONLY  
ELECTION ON NEXT TUESDAY.

>> OKAY.

WELL, A STATEWIDE FLORIDA TIMES UNION POLL FINDS WEAK  
SUPPORT FOR THE AMENDMENT ONE PROPERTY TAX PLAN, THE FIRST  
TO TEST FLORIDA'S 60% THRESHOLD FOR AMENDMENT PASSAGE.

OVERALL, ABOUT 45% OF LIKELY VOTERS SUPPORT AMENDMENT ONE  
WHILE 34% ARE OPPOSED AND 21% ARE UNDECIDED.

THE AMENDMENT FEATURES REDUCED HOMEOWNER PROPERTY TAXES  
AVERAGING \$240 A YEAR, A PORTABILITY PLAN WHERE HOMESTEADED  
PROPERTY OWNERS APPLY UP TO \$500,000 OF THE SAVE OUR HOMES  
TAX BREAK TO A NEWLY PURCHASED HOME.

A TAX BREAK FOR BUSINESSES, AND A 10% TAX CAP FOR  
NONHOMESTEADED PROPERTY.

AMENDMENT ONE OPPONENTS SAY IT WOULD LEAD TO CITIES AND  
COUNTIES CUTTING PUBLIC SERVICES.

PROponents SAY IT WILL KICK START THE HOUSING MARKET.

GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST IS A LEADING ADVOCATE.

>> I'M CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC.

I THINK IT'S GOING TO TAKE A LOT OF WORK.

I'M TRYING TO WORK VERY HARD TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN.

THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR HAS AS WELL.

I THINK IT WILL BE CLOSE, I REALLY DO.

BUT I DO THINK THAT IT WILL PASS.

>> DO YOU THINK IT WILL PASS?

>> SORRY, CHARLIE.

IT'S NOT.

MAYBE FOUR YEARS AGO, IT MIGHT HAVE, WHEN YOU ONLY NEEDED  
50.1%.

60%, I DON'T SEE IT.

ONE OF THE REASONS WHY -- I VOTED EARLY TODAY -- AND WHILE I  
WAS WAITING FOR THE EARLY VOTING TO BEGIN, GOT THERE A  
LITTLE BIT BEFORE 10, I WAS TALKING TO THIS GUY WHO IS AN  
ATTORNEY.

HE SAID, I FIND THIS REALLY CONFUSING.

NOW, IF AN ATTORNEY FINDS THIS THING CONFUSING, WHAT IS THE  
AVERAGE JOE GOING TO THINK OF IT?

>> STEVE, I GUESS ONE ARGUMENT OUT THERE IS THAT PEOPLE WANT  
AT LEAST SOME RELIEF BECAUSE WE'RE HEADING INTO UNCERTAIN  
FINANCIAL TIMES.

240 BUCKS IF YOU'RE A HOMEOWNER, SOUNDS LIKE A LOT OF MONEY,  
YOU'LL TAKE IT AND YOU'LL VOTE FOR IT.

>> IF THERE WAS A TIME WHEN SOMETHING LIKE THIS SHOULD BE A  
SLAM-DUNK, IT'S RIGHT NOW.

PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE ECONOMY.

THEY FLIP ON THE TV, THERE'S MITT ROMNEY TALKING ABOUT THE  
ECONOMY, LOU DOBBS TALKING ABOUT THE ECONOMY AND SO FORTH.

IT WILL BE CLOSE.

IT MAY NOT MAKE IT.

IT'S THE FIRST REAL TEST OF THE 60% THRESHOLD.

THE THING THAT THE PROPONENTS AND CHARLIE CRIST HAVE GOING FOR THEM IS SATURATION TELEVISION ADS.

IT LOOKS LIKE -- YOU COME INTO THE TAMPA BAY MEDIA MARKET, YOU WOULD THINK CHARLIE CRIST IS RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR AGAIN, THE ADS ARE ON TV SO MUCH.

AND THE OTHER SIDE, WHILE THEY HAVE A VERY COGENT ARGUMENT AGAINST IT, WHETHER YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE, THEY NARROWED IT DOWN TO -- THEY HAVEN'T HAD THE MONEY TO PUT A COUNTERBALANCING TV SPOT ON.

SO THE ONLY VOICE YOU'RE SEEING ON TELEVISION IS CHARLIE CRIST SAYING IT'S A GOOD THING.

>> PATRICK, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER ALLAN BENSE.

PROUD REPUBLICAN.

THIS IS WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE PROPERTY TAX -- AS MANY OF US IN THE PRESS HAVE CALLED A CRISIS, HE SAID NOT EVERYBODY IS HAVING HEART FAILURE OVER THIS.

ONCE WE GET PAST THE PREMISE THAT EVERYONE IS MAD ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT, THERE MIGHT BE REAL REFORM.

WHAT BENSE IS SAYING IS THAT THE WRONG PEOPLE ARE GETTING THE BENEFITS UNDER AMENDMENT ONE.

NEW HOME BUYERS, PEOPLE THAT JUST MOVED HERE, OR PEOPLE THAT WEREN'T LIVING HERE IN FLORIDA WHEN THE SAVE OUR HOMES TAX CAP WAS FIRST ENACTED, THESE ARE ALL PEOPLE THAT ARE NOT

GETTING BENEFITS.

>> ALSO, PEOPLE AREN'T VOTING.

>> WHEN YOU LOOK AT WHO IT'S BENEFITING, THEY TARGET IT VERY WELL TO THE PEOPLE SHOWING UP AT THE POLLS.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE STATE FOR A LONG TIME.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE OWNED THEIR HOMES FOR A WHILE.

ELDERLY.

SO THEY AIMED THE TAX CORRECTLY.

THE QUESTION IS, YOU KNOW, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE SERVICES?

THE ISSUE IS, DO I WANT A \$250 SAVINGS.

I LIVE IN TEMPLE TERRACE.

I LIKE THE GOVERNMENT.

I THINK IT DOES A GOOD JOB OF DELIVERING SERVICES TO ME.

DO I FEEL IT WILL AFFECT IT NEGATIVELY IF I TAKE 250 BUCKS AWAY FROM THEM?

I DON'T KNOW.

I THINK THAT IT'S HARD TO JUDGE THIS SO ON POLLS AND THINGS BECAUSE I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE REALLY DON'T KNOW HOW THEY WANT TO VOTE ON THIS.

AND A LOT OF TIMES, YOU FEEL LIKE IT'S MORE RESPECTABLE TO SAY, WELL, I'M AGAINST THIS TAX, BUT I WONDER ONCE YOU GO TO THE POLL, ALL OF A SUDDEN, DO YOU THEN VOTE FOR IT, BECAUSE YOU FEEL, WELL, \$300 IN MY POCKET, \$200 IN MY POCKET, BETTER IN MY POCKET THAN IN THEIRS.

>> MARK, WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON WHERE THIS IS GOING ON TUESDAY?

>> WELL, A WEEK AGO I WAS SAYING THERE'S NO WAY IT WILL PASS.

I AGREE WITH WHAT STEVE SAID THAT THAT SATURATION OF CHARLIE CRIST IS A VERY POPULAR GOVERNOR.

HE'S ON TV EVERY FIVE MINUTES, YOU SEE A COMMERCIAL.

HE'S GOT A VERY COMPELLING MESSAGE.

YOU SEE THE VOTE YES SIGNS EVERYWHERE.

AND IT'S BEEN A MINIMAL ANTIVOTE.

SO I ALSO AGREE WITH JOE THAT IT'S GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT TO GET THAT 60% THRESHOLD, BUT I'M GOING TO PREDICT RIGHT NOW THAT I THINK IT WILL PASS.

>> WE TALKED ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC TURNOUT, WHETHER OR NOT IT'S GOING TO BE DEPRESSED.

AND I'M JUST WONDERING, LET'S SAY FOR A MOMENT JUST FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT, LET'S SAY IT'S DEPRESSED SLIGHTLY BECAUSE THE DEMOCRATIC VOTERS ARE DISAFFECTED BY THE WAY THEY ARE BEING TREATED BY THE NATIONAL PARTY.

ARE THE DEMOCRATIC VOTERS MOSTLY NO VOTERS ON PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT --

>> BETTER ASK PATRICK.

>> PEOPLE SAY THE DEMOCRAT VOTE IS STRONG.

I THINK DEMOCRATS ARE HURTING JUST LIKE REPUBLICANS.

IT'S TOUGH OUT THERE.

INSURANCE PRICES ARE HIGH.

WE'VE GOT NO CONTROL OVER THAT.

I THINK THAT DEMOCRATS GENERALLY AREN'T AS RICH AS  
REPUBLICANS, SO I THINK THEY EVEN HURT A LITTLE BIT MORE.

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY ARE AGAINST IT AS MUCH AS PEOPLE SAY  
THEY ARE.

>> THEY ARE AGAINST INEQUALITY, AND IT STILL DOESN'T FIX THE  
INEQUALITY BETWEEN SIMILAR HOMEOWNERS.

I'LL TAKE MINE.

>> STEVE, THAT'S A QUESTION.

IF THIS IS PASSED, IS IT LIKELY TO BE CHALLENGED ON  
CONSTITUTIONAL GROUNDS IN THE COURTS?

>> I THINK SO.

NOT SURE.

WHETHER IT PASSES OR IT FAILS, IT'S NOT THE END OF THE  
PROPERTY TAX DEBATE.

YOU HAVE PEOPLE IN TALLAHASSEE LIKE MARCO RUBIO WHO SAY THIS  
THING DOESN'T GO FAR ENOUGH.

YOU'VE GOT -- IF IT'S A CLOSE VOTE, YOU'LL HAVE UNIONS,  
TEACHERS, CITIES AND COUNTIES THINKING WE ALMOST -- WE'VE  
GOT CHARLIE CRIST TO AN EIGHT COUNT.

WE COULDN'T CLOSE THE DEAL, BUT ALMOST GOT IT THERE.

SO THE PROPERTY TAX DEBATE, THIS ISN'T THE END OF IT.

>> I THINK DEMOCRATS ARE ALSO -- I TALKED TO CHARLIE JUSTICE  
TODAY, AND HE SEEMS TO FEEL THAT SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE.

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THIS MIGHT NOT BE IT.

SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE.

>> 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.

STEVE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> WELL, IT WILL BE I THINK THAT THE MUCH-AWAITED, MUCH-ANTICIPATED HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY BATTLE OVER THE SLOW GROWTH THING NOT GOING TO GET THE PETITIONS TO GET ON THE BALLOT.

THEY ALREADY STARTED TALKING ABOUT 2010.

>> OKAY.

AND JOE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> FOR THE LAST FOUR MONTHS, A GROUP CALLED THE FLORIDA CONSUMER FIREWORKS TASK FORCE HAS BEEN MEETING TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT ALL THIS BANGING WE HEAR EVERY 4th OF JULY AND CHRISTMAS.

>> CHRISTMAS?

>> AND NEW YEAR'S -- YEAH.

IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD.

[ LAUGHTER ]

ANYWAY, PUN INTENDED, IT WAS A DUD.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT IT CAME UP WITH WON'T DO ANY GOOD.

KEEP YOUR EARPLUGS HANDY.

[ LAUGHTER ]

>> NO BAN ON FIREWORKS ANYTIME SOON.

>> NO, THEY'LL MAKE IT SO YOU HAVE TO PROVE THAT YOU'LL USE  
IT FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES.

[ LAUGHTER ]

>> HERE'S A GUY WHO KNOWS ABOUT FIREWORKS.

PATRICK, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> YOU KNOW, THIS WEEK THE CITY COUNCIL IN TAMPA, THE STAFF  
CAME BACK AND TALKED ABOUT AN ECOFRIENDLY ORDINANCE TO TRY  
AND MAKE BUILDING IN TAMPA MORE GREEN.

JOHN DINGFELDER CAME UP WITH A PLAN A COUPLE OF WEEKS AGO.  
THE CITY WANTED TO ACTUALLY SCALE IT BACK.

YOU KNOW, IF THE STATE, OUR GOVERNOR TALKS ABOUT BEING  
ECOFRIENDLY.

OUR CITY, OUR MAYOR, IF THEY WANT THIS STUFF, THEY'LL HAVE  
TO PUT THE MONEY WHERE THEIR MOUTH IS.

GIVE BUILDERS REAL INCENTIVES TO BUILD ECOFRIENDLY  
BUILDINGS.

RIGHT NOW IT APPEARS AT LEAST THE CITY HERE DOESN'T WANT TO  
DO THAT.

>> MARK, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> HUGE POLITICAL BOMBSHELL THIS WEEK.

DENNIS KUCINICH DROPPED OUT OF THE RACE.

I HEARD FROM PRETTY RELIABLE SOURCES THAT HIS DELEGATE IS  
GOING TO GO FOR RON PAUL.

>> RIGHT.

WELL, THANK YOU, JOE BROWN, PATRICK MANTEIGA.

THANK YOU, MARK PROCTOR.

AND THANK YOU, STEVE BOUSQUET.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM.

SEND US AN E-MAIL TO FTW@WEDU.ORG OR CALL OUR TOLL FREE LINE

AT 800-335-9338.

OR LEAVE A MESSAGE ON OUR "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" WEB SITE

ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG WHERE YOU'LL FIND AN ARCHIVE OF THIS AND

OTHER FINE LOCALLY PRODUCED WEDU PROGRAMS.

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK" RETURNS NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

AND FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT GASPARILLA WEEKEND

AND REMEMBER TO GO OUT AND VOTE.

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