

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

FEBRUARY 1, 2008

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

>>> COMING UP NEXT, JOHN McCAIN WINS THE FLORIDA GOP PRIMARY.

HILLARY CLINTON TOPS THE DEMOCRATS.

THE PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT SCORES BIG, AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR TAX REFORM IN THE STATE?

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, DR. SUSAN MacMANUS IS A PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AT USF IN TAMPA.

JEREMY WALLACE IS A POLITICAL REPORTER AT THE "SARASOTA HERALD TRIBUNE."

TOM LEE IS A BUSINESSMAN AND A FORMER STATE SENATOR AND A

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

REPUBLICAN.

LINDA SAUL-SENA IS A TAMPA CITY COUNCILWOMAN AND A DEMOCRAT.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

GREAT TO SEE YOU.

JUST WEEKS AFTER HIS CANDIDACY WAS DECLARED DEAD IN THE WATER, ARIZONA SENATOR JOHN McCAIN WON THIS WEEK'S FLORIDA PRIMARY WITH A LAST-MINUTE ENDORSEMENT BY GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST.

McCAIN GOT 36% OF THE VOTE TO MITT ROMNEY'S 31%.

RUDY GIULIANI WAS THIRD AND MIKE HUCKABEE CAME IN FOURTH.

JEREMY, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOME NUMBERS FROM THIS.

AND I JUST WANT -- TURNOUT ON TUESDAY WAS REPUBLICANS.

THEY TURNED OUT 50%.

DEMOCRATS HAD LOWER TURNOUT BY COMPARISON, ABOUT 42%.

CUBAN-AMERICAN VOTERS IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY -- THIS NUMBER IS INTERESTING.

JOHN McCAIN 54% OF THE CUBAN-AMERICAN VOTE, RUDY GIULIANI 32%, AND MITT ROMNEY ONLY 9%.

ONE OTHER NUMBER I WANT TO SHOW YOU, AND THAT IS

SELF-DESCRIBED VERY CONSERVATIVES IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY,

MITT ROMNEY, 44%, JOHN McCAIN 21%.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THOSE NUMBERS FOR A MOMENT.

CUBAN-AMERICAN VOTERS WENT HEAVILY FOR JOHN McCAIN.

WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

>> WELL, IT'S INTERESTING.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

I THINK WHEN THIS CAMPAIGN STARTED, WE SAW THAT GIULIANI AND McCAIN SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN SOUTHEAST FLORIDA RECRUITING THAT VOTE.

AND I THINK WHAT YOU SAW, GIULIANI, AS HE CONTINUED TO SLIP IN THE POLLS AND I BELIEVE A LOT OF THOSE MODERATES AND A LOT OF THE CUBAN-AMERICANS, THE PEOPLE LOOKING FOR A CANDIDATE WHO WILL WIN SAW McCAIN.

HIS NUMBERS OUT OF SOUTHEAST FLORIDA, MIAMI-DADE, BROWARD COUNTY AND WEST PALM BEACH WERE REALLY ASTOUNDING OF HOW MUCH AHEAD OF EVERYBODY ELSE HE WAS.

AGAIN, WE THOUGHT GIULIANI WOULD TAKE AWAY SOME OF THE VOTES.

I THINK IN MIAMI-DADE ALONE HE GOT A 50,000 VOTE BULGE OFF OF ROMNEY JUST IN THAT ONE COUNTY ALONE.

YOU CAN SEE WHERE IT STARTED GOING DOWNHILL.

AND YOU CAN SEE ROMNEY JUST NEVER WAS ABLE TO CATCH ON WITH THE CUBAN AMERICAN POPULATION.

HE WAS NEVER ABLE TO SEAL THE DEAL WITH THEM OR WITH HISPANIC VOTERS.

IT WASN'T JUST CUBAN-AMERICAN VOTERS.

IF YOU LOOK AT THE HISPANIC VOTE TOTALS IN THE EXIT POLLS, YOU KNOW, THEY WENT WITH McCAIN.

THEY DID NOT GO WITH ROMNEY.

>> SUSAN, THIS SPREAD, THOUGH, VERY CONSERVATIVES CHOSE ROMNEY OVER McCAIN, YET McCAIN STILL WON IN THE FLORIDA

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY.

>> THERE'S AN OLD SAYING IN FLORIDA, THIS IS A FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE SOCIALLY MODERATE STATE.

LOOK AT HOW MUCH CHARLIE CRIST WON BY.

HE'S THE KIND OF REPUBLICAN THAT McCAIN IS.

AND PEOPLE LOOKING AT FLORIDA, ESPECIALLY PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE STATE, THINK OF IT AS A DEEP SOUTH STATE WITH A HUGE PORTION OF ULTRA CONSERVATIVE VOTERS, AND IT JUST AIN'T SO.

>> TOM, WERE YOU SURPRISED ON TUESDAY BY JOHN McCAIN'S WIN?

>> I WASN'T SURPRISED BY HIS WIN, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE CRIST ENDORSEMENT ON SATURDAY NIGHT.

I THOUGHT THAT THE RACE WAS PRETTY CLOSE, AND IT WAS PRETTY OBVIOUS THAT THERE WAS AN ENORMOUS CHASM BETWEEN THE CONSERVATIVE WING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND THE MODERATE WING.

THE CONSERVATIVES BACKING MITT ROMNEY, AND WHILE NORTH FLORIDA, CERTAINLY, YOU KNOW, IS VERY CONSERVATIVE, I AGREE WITH SUSAN'S ANALYSIS THAT WE ARE A FAIRLY MODERATE STATE HERE IN FLORIDA.

AND I THINK THAT WAS PROVEN WITH McCAIN VICTORY.

>> YOU KNOW, I WAS SURPRISED THAT RUSH LIMBAUGH AND SOME OF THESE RADIO TALK SHOW HOSTS WHO ARE CONSERVATIVE CAME OUT VERY STRONGLY IN THE LAST TEN DAYS AGAINST JOHN McCAIN,

BUT IT DIDN'T SEEM -- McCAIN'S VICTORY WAS ACTUALLY BIGGER THAN SOME OF THE POLLS WERE PREDICTING BEFORE WE WENT INTO TUESDAY'S PRIMARY.

>> YOU KNOW, IT'S INTERESTING, THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR DOLLARS INVESTED IN THAT RACE, THE NUMBER OF VOTES GARNERED. I MEAN, IN THAT WAY, McCAIN REALLY SHONE.

>> YEAH, McCAIN RAN 400-SOME ADS.

ROMNEY SOMETHING LIKE 4,000 ADS PRIOR TO TUESDAY'S PRIMARY. CLEARLY OUTSPENDING -- OUTSPENDING McCAIN, AND YET THOSE ADS DIDN'T REALLY WORK TO HELP MITT ROMNEY.

>> AND IT CAN'T BE UNDERESTIMATED WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ABOUT CHARLIE CRIST.

HIS EFFORTS AT THE END -- IT WASN'T JUST THAT CHARLIE CRIST ENDORSED.

CHARLIE CRIST REALLY GOT HIS MACHINE THAT HELPED HIM GET ELECTED, PUT THEM IN MOTION.

YOU KNOW, ALL OF A SUDDEN YOU HAD ROBO CALLS GOING OUT THERE.

YOU HAD A LOT OF THOSE FUND-RAISERS WHO HAD BEEN ELSEWHERE ALL OF A SUDDEN BACK ON BOARD.

HE WAS ABLE TO GET HIS NETWORK OUT AND GOING.

JUST AT OUR HOUSE, I KNOW WE GOT ROBO CALLS FROM CHARLIE CRIST AND FROM JOHN McCAIN, BOTH ASKING FOR VOTES, OBVIOUSLY.

AND WE'RE INDEPENDENTS AND WE'RE GETTING THOSE CALLS.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY OTHER CALLS WENT OUT THERE.

CLEARLY, THEY WERE BLANKETING THE STATE TRYING TO GET EVERYTHING OUT THERE.

AND I THINK CHARLIE CRIST, DESPITE RUSH LIMBAUGH, DESPITE CONSERVATIVE RADIO IN FLORIDA, LIKE SUSAN WAS SAYING, THE MODERATES ARE PRETTY DARN STRONG.

AND I THINK CHARLIE CRIST JUST PROVED MODERATE REPUBLICANS ARE BACK IN THE POSITION OF POWER IN THE STATE.

AND IT'S NOT THE ULTRACONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS THAT WE THOUGHT WERE IN POWER FOR A WHILE.

>> SUSAN?

>> YEAH, I THINK ANOTHER THING, YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE MAKEUP OF THE VOTERS.

THE AGE MAKEUP.

A LARGE PORTION OF THE REPUBLICAN VOTERS WERE OLDER VOTERS.

AND WHEN YOU LOOK AT WHAT THEY MADE THEIR MINDS UP ON WHO TO VOTE FOR, ISSUES VERSUS PERSONAL CHARACTER, PERSONAL CHARACTER WON BIG FOR THE McCAIN VOTERS.

THERE ARE A LOT OF OLDER VOTERS IN THIS STATE WHO THINK IN A TIME OF TURMOIL IN THE WORLD THAT YOU NEED SOMEBODY WITH CHARACTER AND INTEGRITY AND EXPERIENCE, AND I THINK THAT REALLY BENEFITED HIM.

PLUS, HE SPENT A LOT OF TIME ON THE I-4 CORRIDOR.

AND ON ELECTION NIGHT, AS I SAW THE RETURNS COMING IN AND COUNTY AFTER COUNTY AFTER COUNTY, ON THE I-4 CORRIDOR GOING

FOR McCAIN, I SAID TO OUR PEOPLE, I SAID HE'S GOING TO WIN
HERE.

THIS END OF THE I-4 CORRIDOR WAS THE BIG DIFFERENCE.

AND THINK ABOUT WHERE McCAIN SPENT THE LAST THREE DAYS
BEFORE THE ELECTION.

RIGHT HERE IN THIS END OF I-4.

>> SUSAN, I SAW JOHN McCAIN ON MONDAY, THE DAY BEFORE THE
ELECTION GIVE A 10-MINUTE SPEECH AT THE TAMPA CONVENTION
CENTER.

IT WAS ALL ABOUT NATIONAL SECURITY.

ALL ABOUT IRAQ, ALL ABOUT TERRORISM.

AND THE VOTERS OF FLORIDA IN THE REPUBLICAN PRIMARY, MANY OF
THEM WHO SAID THAT THE ECONOMY WAS THEIR MAJOR ISSUE,
CROSSED OVER AND VOTED FOR McCAIN, EVEN THOUGH McCAIN
REALLY HADN'T CAMPAIGNED HERE MUCH ON THE ISSUE OF THE
ECONOMY.

>> WELL, HE DID IN A WAY, BECAUSE HE HAS OFTEN AND FROM
CONGRESS, ALL OF HIS EXPERIENCE, REALLY BEEN A DEFICIT HAWK
IN ATTACKING THE PORK AND ATTACKING THE EARMARKS.

WHEN YOU LOOKED A -- WHEN PEOPLE SAID THE ECONOMY WAS AN
ISSUE, THE PEOPLE WHO SAID THE DEFICIT WAS THEIR ISSUE VOTED
FOR McCAIN.

THE ONES WHO SAID TAXES, VOTED FOR ROMNEY.

CLEARLY, THE ECONOMY IS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX ISSUE, AND WITH
OLDER VOTERS, THEY ARE VERY SOPHISTICATED IN THEIR

UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMICS.

>> OKAY.

WELL, THE DEMOCRATS ALL KEPT THEIR PLEDGE NOT TO CAMPAIGN IN FLORIDA, SO IT CAME AS NO SURPRISE THAT HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON, WHO IS WELL KNOWN IN FLORIDA, WAS ABLE TO BEAT BARACK OBAMA BY DOUBLE DIGITS.

CLINTON DID MAKE A THANK-YOU SPEECH IN SOUTH FLORIDA ON THE NIGHT OF HER VICTORY.

SHE'S ALSO PROMISING TO SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATION AT THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION THIS SUMMER.

BARACK OBAMA HAD A SLIGHT INCREASE AS WE HEADED INTO TUESDAY, BUT STILL LOST BY 17%.

>> WHEN YOU DON'T GET DOWN HERE AND CAMPAIGN AT A TIME WHEN PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT YOU SO MUCH, YOU'RE DISADVANTAGED. AND HONESTLY, THE CLINTONS HAD THE ADVANTAGE HERE BY THE LOCKOUT BECAUSE OBAMA WAS NEVER ABLE TO COME IN HERE AND SELL HIMSELF AT A TIME WHEN THERE'S MARKED ENTHUSIASM FOR HIM.

THE OTHER PROBLEM IS WHEN YOU TELL DEMOCRATIC VOTERS THAT THEIR VOTES DON'T COUNT AND YOU'RE COUNTING ON A SIZABLE PORTION OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY TO VOTE FOR YOU, THAT'S NOT A GOOD THING EITHER.

SO I THINK THERE WAS JUST A REAL PROBLEM AND THE WHOLE SYSTEM OF LOCKOUT WAS BIASED IN FAVOR OF HILLARY CLINTON. THAT SAID, SHE NEEDED TO WIN BIG HERE BECAUSE NOW SHE'S

WELL-POSITIONED TO WIN THESE OTHER BIG STATES ON SUPER TUESDAY.

SHE COULD SHOW THAT SHE COULD WIN IN A BIG, DIVERSE STATE, WHEREAS HE WAS LIMITED TO SHOWING THAT HE WAS ONLY WINNING IN THE SMALLER STATES.

>> NOW, LINDA, HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON SAID A COUPLE OF DAYS PRIOR TO OUR VOTE IN FLORIDA, SHE SAID, I AM GOING TO FIND A WAY TO TRY TO SEAT FLORIDA'S DELEGATION.

DO YOU THINK THAT HELPED HER A WHOLE LOT?

DO YOU THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WERE THRILLED, AT LEAST DEMOCRATIC VOTERS WERE THRILLED BY THAT?

>> MOST PEOPLE, WHO I KNOW, WHO ARE DEMOCRATS, WERE VERY CONFUSED ABOUT WHETHER THEIR VOTES WOULD HAVE ANY VALUE OR NOT.

AND I THINK THAT ENCOURAGING WORDS ARE SOMETHING YOU WANT TO HEAR, AND THAT WAS A VERY POSITIVE THING FOR HER TO DO.

I'D RATHER BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE WANT THEIR -- GO TO THE EFFORT, YOU WANT YOUR VOTE TO COUNT.

BUT THE FACT THAT BARACK COULDN'T CAMPAIGN HERE BECAUSE HE PLEDGED NOT TO WAS A HUGE DISADVANTAGE.

I THOUGHT THERE WAS A LOT OF MOMENTUM JUST IN THE NEWS ABOUT THE KENNEDY ENDORSEMENTS, AND THEN THAT WAS COUNTERED BY THE FACT THAT THE VOTE COUNT WAS UP IN THE AIR AND THAT HE WASN'T HERE PHYSICALLY.

>> NOW, JEREMY, HAS BARACK OBAMA SAID ANYTHING ABOUT TRYING

TO SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATION?

HE'S LARGELY BEEN SILENT ON THAT ISSUE.

>> WELL, IT WAS INTERESTING, IT WAS LIKE IT NEVER HAPPENED.

LIKE IT JUST DIDN'T HAPPEN.

>> LIKE THE FLORIDA VOTE DIDN'T HAPPEN.

>> EXACTLY.

AND IT'S WEIRD, LIKE, IT HAPPENED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE

CAMPAIGN, AS REPORTERS, YOU WOULD SEE THESE PEOPLE IN OUR

AREA, BOTH OBAMA AND CLINTON CAME TO OUR AREA.

IT WAS ALMOST AS IF WE WEREN'T STANDING THERE.

THEY WOULD WALK RIGHT PAST --

>> THIS IS WHEN THEY ARE COMING DOWN FOR FUND-RAISING.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

ABSOLUTELY.

COULDN'T EVEN GET A WAVE OUT OF THEM.

AS MUCH AS, YOU KNOW, IT PROBABLY HELPED HILLARY.

LOOK, IN THIS STATE, THE CLINTON NAME IS STILL VERY STRONG.

IT WILL BE HARD TO CONVINCING, YOU KNOW, RANK-AND-FILE

DEMOCRATS WHO ARE USED TO VOTING FOR CLINTONS, NOT TO VOTE

FOR A CLINTON.

OBAMA WOULD HAVE HAD TO CAMPAIGN HERE, WOULD HAVE HAD TO

SPEND A LOT OF MONEY.

IN THAT WAY, OBAMA PROBABLY WINS A LITTLE BIT, BECAUSE HE

DIDN'T HAVE TO WASTE THOSE VALUABLE RESOURCES IN A STATE

LIKE FLORIDA.

IT WOULD HAVE COST HIM \$3 MILLION TO JUST EVEN TRY TO PUT HIS NAME OUT THERE AND START TO MAKE THOSE INROADS. BEST TO JUST CONCENTRATE ON THE 22 STATES COMING UP ON TUESDAY THAN TO SPEND YOUR TIME IN A STATE WHERE THERE ARE NO DELEGATES AT STAKE.

YOU KNEW HILLARY WAS WAY UP.

I THINK HE JUST MOVES ON TO THE NEXT BATTLE FRONT.

>> TOM, DO YOU THINK THAT THE REPUBLICANS ASSUME THAT BOTH THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES ARE VULNERABLE, HILLARY, BECAUSE HER NEGATIVES HISTORICALLY HAVE BEEN SO HIGH, BARACK OBAMA, BECAUSE HE REALLY, DESPITE HIS YEARS IN THE SENATE AND HIS YEARS BEFORE THAT IN ILLINOIS IN THE LEGISLATURE, HASN'T REALLY HELD OFFICE FOR THAT LONG AND DOESN'T REALLY HAVE THE KIND OF NATIONAL EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE THAT YOU MIGHT LOOK FOR IN A PRESIDENT.

>> WELL, THERE'S NO DOUBT, BOTH CANDIDATES HAVE THEIR WEAKNESSES.

THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT.

BUT I THINK THE BROAD CONSENSUS INSIDE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS THAT HILLARYS ARE FAR MORE KNOWN AND QUANTIFIABLE. AND DEPENDING ON WHO IS A REPUBLICAN NOMINEE, THAT SENATOR OBAMA HAS THE ABILITY TO REACH ACROSS INTO INDEPENDENT VOTERS IN A WAY THAT HILLARY CLINTON PROBABLY CANNOT. AND THAT'S A REAL PROBLEM IN THIS ELECTION WITH THE ECONOMY AND THE WAR BEING A BIG ISSUE.

>> AND WITH McCAIN AS THEIR NOMINEE, IT MAY BE THE ONLY WAY TO ENERGIZE THE CONSERVATIVE BASE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS HILLARY CLINTON.

WHETHER THEY WERE BACKING ROMNEY OR McCAIN AGREES ON IS THAT THEY DON'T WANT TO SEE HILLARY IN OFFICE.

SO IF SHE ENDS UP BEING THE NOMINEE, THAT WILL REALLY KIND OF STIMULATE A LOT OF THOSE PEOPLE TO GET ON THE CORNERS AND START WAVING THE SIGNS.

>> WHAT IT TELLS ME, WE'LL HAVE THE SAME THING WE'VE SEEN THE LAST TWO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IF THOSE ARE THE CANDIDATES, THE INDEPENDENT VOTE WILL SPLIT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE IN FLORIDA.

>> I THINK THAT ONE OF THE INTERESTING THINGS ABOUT THIS IS THE GENERATIONAL VOTE.

I THINK THAT OBAMA HAS DONE SUCH AN EXCELLENT JOB OF GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE EXCITED ABOUT THE ELECTION, GETTING PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER REGISTERED PREVIOUSLY TO BECOME ENGAGED, AND IF IT WERE AN -- YOU KNOW, A CONTEST BETWEEN OBAMA AND McCAIN, YOU HAVE BOTH ENDS OF THE AGE SPECTRUM IN TERMS OF VOTERS.

I THINK IT WOULD BE PRETTY INTERESTING.

>> YOU WOULD HAVE A REAL BATTLE FOR THOSE INDEPENDENTS. BECAUSE AS TOM SAID, BOTH CANDIDATES APPEAL TO INDEPENDENTS.

>> WE HEARD THAT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE FREQUENTLY WHERE THEY ALLOW INDEPENDENTS TO VOTE.

INDEPENDENTS WERE SAYING, I'M NOT SURE WHICH ONE I'M GOING TO GO VOTE FOR YET.

IT WAS INTERESTING TO THINK THAT A DEMOCRAT AND A REPUBLICAN WOULD BE THE ONES THAT THEY WOULD BE CHOOSING VERSUS JUST DEMOCRATS OR REPUBLICANS.

>> RIGHT.

WELL, AMENDMENT ONE, THE MEASURE THAT WOULD GIVE FLORIDA HOMEOWNERS A MODEST REDUCTION IN PROPERTY TAXES WON HANDILY THIS WEEK, 64 TO 36 PERCENT.

GOVERNOR CRIST CAMPAIGNED VIGOROUSLY FOR THE AMENDMENT BACKED BY MONEY FROM THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY AND FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT.

TOM, I THINK THE GOVERNOR GAMBLED A LITTLE BIT BECAUSE SOME OF THE EARLY POLLS PREDICTED IT WOULDN'T WIN, BUT IT WON HANDILY.

>> HE'S AN ASTUTE POLITICIAN, AND HE'S NOT TO BE UNDERESTIMATED IN TERMS OF HIS ABILITY TO READ THE POLITICAL CALCULUS.

HE SAW THIS AS AN IMPORTANT THING FOR FLORIDA.

HE SAW IT AS AN IMPORTANT THING FOR HIM POLITICALLY.

HE WORKED VERY HARD.

RAISED A LOT OF MONEY.

THERE WAS NO REAL ORGANIZED PARTISAN.

THERE WERE PEOPLE AGAINST THIS, BUT THERE WAS NO REAL ORGANIZED PARTISAN OPPOSITION.

I THINK HE ENGAGED THE REPUBLICAN PARTY MACHINERY HERE AT THE STATE OF FLORIDA TO TRY TO WORK THIS ISSUE.

I WAS SURPRISED IT PASSED.

I TALKED TO A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT VOTING FOR IT, AND YET IT DID PASS AND IT PASSED HANDILY.

I THINK ONCE AGAIN YOU HAVE TO GIVE GOVERNOR CRIST MUCH OF THE CREDIT FOR PUSHING THIS OVER THE THRESHOLD.

>> I THINK IT WAS INTERESTING TO NOTE IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY AND THE CITY OF TAMPA, IT DIDN'T DO WELL ENOUGH TO PASS. NOW, IS THAT A REFLECTION ON WHAT PEOPLE THINK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICE THEY GET IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY AND THE CITY OF TAMPA?

THAT IS THAT THEY THINK THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS SPENDING THEIR MONEY WISELY, BUT IN ALL THESE OTHER COUNTIES WHERE IT WON HANDILY, THAT MEANS THEY THINK THEIR GOVERNMENT IS MISUSING MONEY?

WHAT CAN WE INFER FROM THAT?

>> THE EXIT POLLS SHOW CLEARLY THAT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE AROUND 60 PERCENT PLUS OF THE ELECTORATE WERE SUBURBANITES.

SUBURBANITES, HOMEOWNERS.

HOMEOWNERS IN THE OUTLYING COUNTIES AROUND HERE TEND TO BE YOUNG WITH KIDS, PROBABLY AT THE MAXIMUM CREDIT, WORRIED ABOUT THE MORTGAGE, ALL OF THAT KIND OF THING.

YOU KNOW, THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION IS, A VOTER LIKE THAT

GOES INTO THE VOTING BOOTH, AND THEY LOOK AT IT, AND THEY SAY, DO I WANT TO VOTE FOR SOME RELIEF OR NONE?

WELL, GUESS WHAT?

IT'S A NO-BRAINER.

THEY VOTED FOR SOME RELIEF.

AND ALSO, WHEN PEOPLE BECOME STRESSED IN THEIR OWN POCKETBOOK, THEY BECOME A LITTLE BIT LESS PATIENT WITH GOVERNMENT.

AND THEY EXPECT GOVERNMENT TO TIGHTEN ITS BELT, TOO.

SO I THINK THAT WE SAW A LOT OF THAT.

PEOPLE JUST, YOU KNOW, WE'RE IN THE ECONOMIC STRESS MODE.

PEOPLE VOTED THEIR POCKETBOOK.

PUTTING A LITTLE BIT MORE IN YOUR POCKETBOOK WAS BETTER THAN NOT PUTTING ANY BACK AT ALL.

>> THAT'S THE REASON IT WON STATEWIDE.

LINDA, IN THE CITY OF TAMPA, FOR INSTANCE, I THINK IT ONLY GOT 53% SUPPORT.

>> WELL, WE HAD BOTH NEWSPAPERS SAYING THIS ISN'T A GOOD THING.

WE HAD THE HEAD OF FLORIDA TAX WATCH, WHO IS A LOCAL PERSON, SAYING FLORIDA TAX WATCH DOESN'T SUPPORT THIS.

I THOUGHT THAT WAS VERY SIGNIFICANT.

THEY ARE SAYING BIG PICTURE, THIS IS NOT THE SMARTEST WAY TO REFORM OUR TAX SITUATION.

I MEAN, VERY THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE WHO WANT TO SEE TAX REFORM

DIDN'T ENDORSE THIS AS A WAY TO GO.

SO I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE REAL THOUGHTFUL HERE.

>> OKAY.

JEREMY, GO.

>> AND I THINK THERE'S CERTAINLY -- YOU HAD A LOT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS FIGHTING THIS THING.

AND I THINK VOTERS JUST WEREN'T MOVED.

JUST WEREN'T MOVED -- WE HAD OUR COUNTY OFFICIALS AND CITY OFFICIALS WENT OUT THERE AND SAID, HEY, THIS IS REALLY GOING TO HURT OUR BUDGET.

WE DON'T REALLY HAVE THE SPACE IN OUR BUDGET.

BUT I DON'T THINK THE TAXPAYERS WERE MAKING THAT DIFFERENTIATION.

THEY WERE JUST SAYING, HEY, MY TAXES ARE GOING DOWN.

YOU GUYS CAN LIVE WITH LESS.

I KNOW YOU CAN.

>> IT WAS NO SURPRISE.

PROPERTY TAXES HAVE BEEN AT THE TOP OF THE LIST OF PEOPLE'S CONCERNS IN FLORIDA WHEN THE STATEWIDE POLLS WITH LEADERSHIP FLORIDA AND WHATEVER, SO NO SURPRISE THAT IT'S REFLECTED IN HOW THEY VOTE.

>> YOU KNOW, I THOUGHT IT WAS SIGNIFICANT THAT THE OPPOSITION WASN'T ABLE TO LAUNCH A TELEVISION CAMPAIGN, AS YOU SAID, TOM.

SO THEY SENT OUT THESE MAILINGS.

SOME OF THE MAILINGS SAID THAT THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST WERE OUT-OF-STATERS, WHICH REALLY I DON'T THINK GOT TO THE ESSENCE OF WHAT AMENDMENT ONE WAS ALL ABOUT.

IN SOME WAYS, DIDN'T THEY STRETCH THE TRUTH AND KIND OF MAKE CLAIMS IN THE FEW ADS THAT THEY TOOK OUT, THE MAILERS THAT THEY TOOK OUT THAT DIDN'T MEASURE UP, THAT WERE HARD TO SAY THIS IS ACCURATE?

>> WELL, THEY WERE ABSOLUTELY INEFFECTIVE.

THAT'S FOR SURE.

THEY CLEARLY DIDN'T MOVE ANYBODY.

IT'S JUST THE WRONG WAY TO APPROACH IT AND TO TELL SOMEBODY, INSTEAD OF YOUR TAX CUTS -- IF YOU GET THESE TAX CUTS, GOING TO LOSE GOVERNMENT SERVICES.

I DON'T THINK VOTERS ARE GOING TO FALL FOR THAT.

THEY'VE HEARD IT TOO MUCH FROM THE STATE LEGISLATURE AND A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN FIGHTING THE TAX ISSUE TELLING YOU, YOUR TAXES ARE TOO HIGH, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, STATE GOVERNMENTS, EVERYBODY IS SPENDING TOO MUCH.

I THINK IT'S INGRAINED IN PEOPLE THAT GOVERNMENTS ARE SPENDING TOO MUCH RIGHT NOW.

>>> NOW THAT AMENDMENT ONE HAS PASSED, IS THERE ANY STEAM LEFT IN TALLAHASSEE TO CONTINUE ADDRESSING FLORIDA'S RUBE GOLDBERG TAX SYSTEM?

NOT EVERYONE WILL BE HELPED BY THE AMENDMENT PASSED TUESDAY. THE GOVERNOR AND OTHERS IN TALLAHASSEE SAY THE VOTE WAS JUST

THE FIRST STEP IN CHANGING FLORIDA'S PROPERTY TAX SYSTEM.
AND STILL TO COME, THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STATE
COMMISSION ON BUDGET AND TAXATION, WHICH IS LOOKING INTO
REFORMING FLORIDA'S TAX SYSTEM.

LINDA, DOES THIS TAKE THE STEAM OUT OF THIS MOVEMENT TO DO
SOMETHING ABOUT FLORIDA'S TAX SYSTEM, ESPECIALLY GOING BACK
AND REVISITING PROPERTY TAXES AND DOING MORE TO LOWER THEM?

>> WELL, I CAN TELL YOU THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO FEEL A
LESSENING OF THEIR PUBLIC SERVICES.

SO THAT MIGHT PUT A CHILL ON FURTHER CUTS.

BUT I REALLY LIKE THE IDEA OF THIS COMMISSION THAT MEETS
ONCE EVERY 20 YEARS.

IT'S NONPARTISAN.

IT'S SUPPOSED TO COME UP WITH RATIONAL, THOUGHTFUL WAYS TO
CREATE TAX EQUITY IN OUR STATE.

I'M EXCITED ABOUT WHAT THEY'LL COME UP WITH, BECAUSE I THINK
THEY HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE FAIR.

WHETHER THE STATE LEGISLATORS HAVE THE PATIENCE TO WAIT FOR
THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP ON THEM, THAT'S ANOTHER
QUESTION.

>> TOM THIS COMMISSION IS GOING TO MAKE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS,
I GUESS, ABOUT THE TIME THE LEGISLATURE MEETS IN A MONTH.
WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON HOW IMPORTANT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS WILL
BE?

>> WELL, I HOPE THEY MAKE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS.

I THINK THAT'S PROBABLY WHERE YOU HAVE THE BEST SHOT.

I THINK THE POLITICAL WILL PROBABLY IS OUT OF THE BALLOON,
SO TO SPEAK, THERE.

AND THEY PROBABLY WILL NOT BE TAKING ANYTHING UP TO THE
LEGISLATURE, WHICH IS UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE WE GOT A TAX CUT
ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 29th, BUT WE DIDN'T GET ANY TAX
REFORM.

AND THIS STATE REALLY NEEDS SOME TAX REFORM.

AND AS LINDA POINTS OUT, THERE'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO PEEL BACK
ALL THE LAYERS OF TAXATION THAT WE HAVE AND LOOK AT SOME OF
THE THINGS THAT COULD STABILIZE THIS ECONOMY A BIT AND
PRODUCE CONSISTENT REVENUE STREAMS FOR GOVERNMENT WITHOUT
NECESSARILY TRYING TO RAISE MORE MONEY FOR GOVERNMENT.
JUST TAKE THE PEAKS AND VALLEYS OUT OF THIS TREMENDOUS
ECONOMIC CYCLE THAT WE FEEL HERE IN FLORIDA THAT REALLY
IMPACTS THE STABILITY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES.

>> TOM, YOU WERE THE SENATE PRESIDENT.

WHERE WOULD YOU LOOK?

WHERE WOULD YOU POINT TO TO SAY THIS IS THE AREA WE SHOULD
LOOK?

>> WELL, TOUGH QUESTION.

BUT SIMPLE IN THE SENSE THAT THERE'S REALLY ONLY ONE THING
LEFT, AND THAT'S EXEMPTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS.

>> YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS.

>> THAT'S REALLY THE ONLY THING THAT'S LEFT.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO LOWER PROPERTY TAXES, YOU'RE GOING TO LOWER SALES TAXES.

WE DON'T HAVE AN INCOME TAX.

WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE AN INCOME TAX IN THIS STATE.

THE ONLY PLACE REALLY TO GO IS AT THE EXEMPTIONS.

AND MY GOOD FRIEND, FORMER SENATE PRESIDENT JOHN MCKAY, IS AS TENACIOUS AS HE CAN BE ABOUT TRYING TO MOVE SOMETHING LIKE THAT THROUGH THE TAX AND BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION, AND I THINK IT'S GOT A SHOT AND SOMETHING FLORIDA WILL HAVE TO LOOK AT IF WE'RE GOING TO TRY TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR THIS STATE OVER TIME.

>> SUSAN, IS THE STEAM OUT OF THIS MOVEMENT TO DO MORE ABOUT CUTTING BACK PROPERTY TAXES?

>> I DON'T THINK SO.

AND I THINK IN AN ELECTION YEAR, WHEN REPUBLICANS BENEFIT TREMENDOUSLY FROM TAX CUTS, I THINK THEY'LL CONTINUE THE PETITION DRIVE.

I DON'T KNOW THAT THE LEGISLATURE WILL DO IT, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT THE STEAM IS OUT OF TAXES AT ALL.

>> JEREMY, I GOT TO ASK YOU ABOUT MARCO RUBIO, THE HOUSE SPEAKER, CURRENT HOUSE SPEAKER.

HE HAS THIS IDEA WHERE HE WANTS TO PUT A TAX CAP ON ANY SORT OF INCREASES IN PROPERTY TAXES AT 1.35% PER YEAR.

AND HE'S GOING AROUND, LAUNCHED A PETITION DRIVE TO DO THIS.

I GUESS DAVID, THE DOCTOR FROM ST. PETERSBURG, IS INVOLVED

IN THIS.

MAYBE IT WAS HIS IDEA, I THINK.

BUT, SO WHERE IS THAT HEADING?

>> WELL, HE CERTAINLY APPEALS TO THE NONHOMESTEADED, YOU KNOW, PROPERTY OWNERS WHO PROBABLY AREN'T FEELING AS IF THEY'LL GET MUCH OUT OF THIS PLAN THAT PASSED.

THERE'S CERTAINLY AN AUDIENCE FOR HIM TO CULTIVATE.

>> SECOND HOME BUYERS, NEW HOME BUYERS.

NEWCOMERS TO THE STATE.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

LANDLORDS OF RENTAL PROPERTIES.

RUBIO DID ONE OF THOSE EVENTS DOWN IN SARASOTA, AND HE HAD A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE LANDLORD PROPERTY THAT THEY GET NO RELIEF ON.

SO I THINK HE CERTAINLY HAS AN AUDIENCE, BUT IT GOES BACK TO, WILL THERE BE THAT POLITICAL WILL AT THIS POINT TO DIVE BACK INTO THIS SO SOON WHEN SO MANY PEOPLE GAVE UP SO MUCH POLITICAL CAPITAL TO GET HERE TO BEGIN WITH.

I THINK THERE WILL BE A TENDENCY FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM TO SAY, LOOK, WE DID PRODUCE SOMETHING, LET'S SEE HOW IT WORKS FIRST BEFORE WE RUSH INTO ANYTHING ELSE.

>> BUT THE GOVERNOR HAS MADE SUCH A BIG POINT OF SAYING THIS IS JUST THE START.

AND IF IT'S JUST THE START, SOMEBODY IS GOING TO SAY, WELL, WHERE IS THE FINISH?

>> TOM, THE TAXATION BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION CAN PUT AN ISSUE ON THE BALLOT.

THEY CAN PUT A SUNSET REVIEW ON THE BALLOT THIS NOVEMBER, COULDN'T THEY?

>> RIGHT.

AND THERE'S A PROPOSAL TO DO JUST THAT ON A VARIETY OF SUBJECTS, BUT RELATIVE TO THIS SITUATION, SOMETHING THAT WOULD LOWER PROPERTY TAXES --

>> TRADE-OFF FOR PROPERTY TAXES.

>> REDUCE THE SALES TAX, EXEMPT EDUCATION OUT OF THAT, BUT LOWER PROPERTY TAXES AT THE SAME TIME BY REPEALING EXEMPTIONS.

>> ARE YOU BETTING SOMETHING LIKE THAT IS GOING TO BE ON THE BALLOT IN NOVEMBER?

>> IT'S A LITTLE TOO SOON TO TELL FOR SURE.

THIS MAY BE A NONPARTISAN COMMISSION IN THEORY, BUT IT'S VERY PARTISAN AT THE END OF THE DAY, AND THERE'S A LOT -- WHAT GOES ON THE BALLOT DRIVES TURNOUT, AND THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF CONCERN ABOUT WHO THESE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS WILL BRING TO THE POLLS AS THEY TRY TO WORK THEM THROUGH THE BUDGET AND REFORM COMMISSION.

BUT WE NEED SOMETHING, BECAUSE WE'VE CREATED A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF INEQUITY IN THIS SYSTEM THAT WE HAVE RIGHT NOW. AND THERE'S STILL A VERY, VERY GOOD CHANCE, A VERY GOOD CHANCE THAT THIS GETS THROWN OUT BY A SUPREME COURT THAT

SEES THIS AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL UNDER THE EQUAL PROTECTION AND
FREEDOM OF TRAVEL PROVISIONS OF THE UNITED STATES
CONSTITUTION.

>> VERY INTERESTING.

WELL, 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.

JEREMY, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> THIS SOUNDS RIDICULOUS, BUT THE 2006 ELECTIONS ARE ALMOST
OVER.

THE 13th CONGRESSIONAL TASK FORCE IN CONGRESS, WHICH IS
LOOKING AT THE VOTING PROBLEMS THAT WERE DOWN IN SARASOTA,
THEY MEET ON FRIDAY OF THIS UPCOMING WEEK TO ISSUE THEIR
REPORT OR AT LEAST HEAR FROM THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WHETHER OR NOT SOMETHING REALLY WENT WRONG WITH THE MACHINES
OR NOT.

THIS COULD VERY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF THE ACTUAL REAL
FINISH LINE OF THE 2006 ELECTION.

WE'LL KNOW, AS WE APPROACH THE NEXT ELECTION CYCLE, WHETHER
OR NOT THE 2006 ELECTION CYCLE IS OVER YET.

>> LINDA, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> THE TAMPA ELECTRIC COMPANY FRANCHISE IS COMING TO THE
CITY OF TAMPA FOR OUR BLESSING.

AND IT'S A 25-YEAR PROPOSAL.

IT DOESN'T ADDRESS UNDERGROUNDING OR SUSTAINABILITY OR

CONSERVATION.

25 YEARS IS A LONG TIME IN THE WORLD OF ENERGY, WHICH IS
VERY DYNAMIC.

SO I THINK IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY LIVELY CONVERSATION.

>> ALL RIGHT.

TOM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, I DON'T THINK YOU CAN OVERLOOK THE FALLOUT THAT
WILL COME FROM GOVERNOR CRIST'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
YESTERDAY TO THE LEGISLATURE.

LOTS OF GAMBLING MONEY AS A FOUNDATION FOR THAT BUDGET.
SWEEPING TRUST FUNDS, SMASHING THE CEILING THAT WAS PLACED
ON THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO SPEND MONEY THAT WE KNOW
WE'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE NEXT YEAR.

AND THAT WAS PUT IN THE CONSTITUTION IN 2006.

AND I DON'T KNOW HE HAD MUCH CHOICE IN SOME OF THOSE THINGS
BECAUSE IT REALLY IS VERY, VERY TOUGH TIMES FOR THIS STATE.
AND IT'S GOING TO HAVE TO RESET ITS PRIORITIES.

BUT THERE'S GOING TO BE A LOT OF POLITICAL JOCKEYING OVER
THAT THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS.

>> IT'S SORT OF A PAIN-FREE BUDGET IN A REALLY TIGHT BUDGET
YEAR.

IS IT DOA DO YOU THINK?

>> NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

>> THE LEGISLATURE IS GOING TO BE REALLY TOUGH.

>> WELL, THEY'LL HAVE TO HAVE A SUPERMAJORITY VOTE JUST TO

PASS THIS BUDGET BECAUSE IT DOES, IN FACT, VIOLATE THE
CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS ON SPENDING NONRECURRING MONEY
FOR RECURRING PURPOSES.

>> SUSAN, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> OH, IT'S GOT TO BE THE GREEN BOYS.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL GUYS WHO GOT TOGETHER TO HAVE THE
ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE HERE, LO AND BEHOLD, THEY ARE BIG
KING MAKERS IN THE WORLD OF REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL
POLITICS.

>> IS THIS THE START OF THE NEW GIANT MODERATE REPUBLICAN
MOVEMENT?

>> I THINK IT IS.

I DO.

I DO.

>> WOW.

>> OKAY.

WELL, THANK YOU, DR. SUSAN MacMANUS.

THANK YOU, TOM LEE.

THANK YOU, LINDA SAUL-SENA.

AND THANK YOU, JEREMY WALLACE.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE ALWAYS WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THIS PROGRAM.

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