

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

FEBRUARY 8, 2008

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

>>> COMING UP NEXT, FLORIDA COULD STILL PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN CHOOSING THE EVENTUAL DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE.

THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET DRAWS SOME SKEPTICISM FROM BOTH PARTIES.

STATE SENATORS GRILL INSURANCE COMPANIES, AND THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BAN MAKES IT ON THE NOVEMBER BALLOT.

HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY DOES NOT.

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, WILLIAM MARCH IS A POLITICAL REPORTER AT THE "THE TAMPA TRIBUNE."

JONI JAMES IS THE STATE EDITOR AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

TIMES."

LES MILLER IS DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS AT USF, A FORMER STATE SENATOR AND A DEMOCRAT.

AND ADAM GOODMAN IS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT AND A REPUBLICAN. GOOD TO SEE EVERYBODY.

WELL, THE PRIMARY PICTURE CHANGED DRAMATICALLY THIS WEEK AS MITT ROMNEY DROPPED OUT OF THE REPUBLICAN RACE, MAKING THE NOMINATION OF JOHN McCAIN AS THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT ALL BUT CERTAIN.

OVER ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE, BOTH HILLARY CLINTON AND BARACK OBAMA DID WELL IN THE SUPER TUESDAY PRIMARY.

THEY ARE SO CLOSE IN THE RACE FOR DELEGATES, SOME ANALYSTS ARE PREDICTING THAT THE BATTLE FOR THE NOMINATION COULD GO ALL THE WAY TO THE AUGUST CONVENTION.

IF THAT HAPPENS, THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER TO SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATION AT THE CONVENTION BECOMES A BIG ONE.

IF THE DELEGATION IS SEATED, IT COULD HELP HILLARY CLINTON, WHO WON THE FLORIDA PRIMARY.

IF THE DELEGATION IS NOT SEATED, IT COULD HELP BARACK OBAMA.

WELL, WINDY, WHAT ARE THE PLANS RIGHT NOW TO RESOLVE THIS?

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING ABOUT HOW THEY MIGHT TRY TO RESOLVE THIS DISPUTE?

>> WELL, THERE IS NO -- THERE IS NO PLAN.

HOWARD DEAN SAID WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS GET THE TWO PARTIES TOGETHER, TWO PARTIES MEANING CLINTON AND OBAMA, TOGETHER

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AND MAKE AN ARRANGEMENT.

IF YOU'RE A DEMOCRAT, PRAY THAT HE DOESN'T, GIVEN HOW WELL HIS ARRANGEMENTS HAVE WORKED SO FAR.

THIS IS A SLOW-MOTION TRAIN WRECK.

IT'S ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE STORIES I'VE EVER COVERED.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S TENACIOUS ATTEMPTS AT SELF-DESTRUCTION IN THIS PRIMARY.

>> WHAT ABOUT THIS IDEA TO HOLD ANOTHER PRIMARY OR TO HOLD SOME SORT OF SERIES OF CAUCUSES IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS IN FLORIDA TO GIVE FLORIDA VOTERS ONE MORE SHOT AT DETERMINING WHO THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE SHOULD BE?

>> THAT WOULD BE DONE IN A WAY TO LEGALIZE THE FLORIDA DELEGATION IN TERMS OF MAKING IT FIT WITH THE PARTY'S RULES. STATE PARTY HAS REJECTED THAT IDEA.

THEY SAID WE HELD OUR PRIMARY HERE.

WE'RE GOING TO CHOOSE OUR DELEGATES BASED ON THE OUTCOME OF THAT PRIMARY.

OF COURSE, THE NATIONAL PARTY SAID THE PRIMARY WAS ILLEGAL AGAINST THE RULES BECAUSE IT WAS TOO EARLY.

SO THAT'S PROBABLY NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

THE REAL -- THE REAL TROUBLING ISSUE FOR DEMOCRATS HERE IS IF NEITHER OF THE TWO CANDIDATES, OBAMA OR CLINTON, GETS FAR ENOUGH HEAD TO BE THE OBVIOUS PRESUMED NOMINEE, THEN YOU COULD HAVE TWO STATES, FLORIDA AND MICHIGAN, WITH DELEGATES THAT ARE CURRENTLY FORBIDDEN FROM BEING SEATED.

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YOU COULD HAVE ENOUGH DELEGATES IN THOSE TWO STATES TO CHANGE THE OUTCOME.

>> AND DEPENDING ON WHETHER -- IF THE DELEGATES FROM MICHIGAN ARE SEATED AT THE AUGUST CONVENTION OR THE FLORIDA DELEGATION IS SEATED, IT COULD HELP HILLARY, BECAUSE SHE RAN IN MICHIGAN, AND SHE WON IN FLORIDA.

>> WELL, OBAMA'S PEOPLE ARE ALREADY SAYING IT'S NOT FAIR TO SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATES BECAUSE THERE WAS NO REAL CAMPAIGN HERE.

ONE OBAMA PERSON WAS QUOTED, SARASOTA, I THINK, OBAMA SPOKESMAN WAS QUOTED IN PAPERS YESTERDAY SAYING IT WOULDN'T BE FAIR TO SEAT FLORIDA DELEGATES.

WE HAD NO OPPORTUNITY TO CAMPAIGN HERE.

WELL, THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY.

THEY BOTH BOYCOTTED THE STATE.

BUT MICHIGAN IS IN A DIFFERENT CASE BECAUSE IN MICHIGAN, THEIR NAMES WEREN'T EVEN ON THE BALLOT, EXCEPT FOR CLINTON'S.

HERE IN FLORIDA, DEMOCRATS ARE SAYING, THE NAMES WERE ON THE BALLOT.

OUR PEOPLE VOTED.

WE DECIDED HOW WE WANT OUR DELEGATES TO GO.

SO IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY BITTER, DESTRUCTIVE AND POSSIBLY DIVISIVE ARGUMENT.

AND THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID IT IS IF ONE OF THE TWO CANDIDATES

GETS FAR ENOUGH AHEAD SO IT DOESN'T MATTER.

THE REALLY DISTURBING POSSIBILITY IS, IT COULD TURN INTO A RACIAL ARGUMENT BECAUSE YOU HAVE ONE BLACK CANDIDATE AND ONE WHITE CANDIDATE, COULD PUT SOME RACIAL OVERTONES ON THE FIGHT.

>> LES MILLER, YOU'RE A BACKER OF BARACK OBAMA.

WHAT ARE YOU HEARING ABOUT WHAT THIS END GAME MIGHT BE? HAVE YOU HEARD ANY SORT OF PATH TO FIGURING OUT WHETHER OR NOT THE FLORIDA DELEGATES WILL BE SEATED OR WHETHER THERE WILL BE SOME SORT OF DO-OVER?

>> WELL, I THINK WINDY IS ABSOLUTELY RIGHT.

THERE IS NO PATH.

THERE IS NO GAME PLAN.

YOU HEARD HOWARD DEAN TALK ABOUT A PLAN, AND I DON'T EVEN THINK HE HAS A PLAN.

THE BARACK OBAMA PEOPLE DO NOT WANT THE DELEGATES TO BE SEATED BECAUSE THEY WOULD FEEL IF THEY TOOK WHAT HAPPENED ON ELECTION DAY THAT HILLARY CLINTON WOULD, OF COURSE, GET THOSE DELEGATES IN THERE.

SO I'M SAYING WE DID NOT HAVE A PRIMARY, JUST LIKE HE SAID.

BUT SOMETHING WILL HAVE TO HAPPEN.

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, IF WE'RE GOING TO WIN THIS ELECTION IN NOVEMBER, THEY NEED FLORIDA.

SO SOMEONE HAS GOT TO PUT TOGETHER A PLAN.

>> IF THE FLORIDA DELEGATION ISN'T SEATED AT THE CONVENTION,

DOES THAT ANGER RANK-AND-FILE DEMOCRATIC VOTERS HERE IN THE STATE?

>> I THINK IT TOTALLY ANGERS DEMOCRATIC VOTERS THAT FEEL THAT THEY ARE DISENFRANCHISED AND DIDN'T HAVE A PART OF THE PROCESS.

I THINK THAT YOU REALLY WRITE OFF FLORIDA, AND DEMOCRATS LOSE.

SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAVE TO HAPPEN.

HOWARD DEAN WILL HAVE TO COME TO SENSES AND HOPE THAT SOON -- AND ALLOW THE DEMOCRATS IN FLORIDA, IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA TO BE PLAYERS.

IF WE DON'T, WE'RE IN TROUBLE.

>> I'M SITTING HERE WATCHING ADAM -- WHAT REALLY -- BEYOND SENTIMENTS IN FLORIDA, THE PEOPLE THAT MUST BE REALLY HAPPY ABOUT THIS ARE JOHN McCAIN'S CAMPAIGN.

AS A PRESUMED FRONTRUNNER NOW FOR THE REPUBLICANS, EVERY DAY THAT THE DEMOCRATS REMAIN UNUNITED BEHIND A SINGLE CANDIDATE IS ANOTHER DAY THAT HE HAS THE STAGE MORE TO HIMSELF.

>> IT'S HIS SAVING GRACE BECAUSE HE HAS HIS OWN BITTERLY DIVIDED PARTY TO CONTEND WITH WHICH WOULD BE ALMOST SURE DEFEAT IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE DEMOCRATS DOING ANYTHING THEY CAN.

>> ALL McCAIN HAS DO IS STAND BACK AND WATCH.

HE JUST HAS TO WATCH THIS HAPPEN.

HE DOESN'T EVEN HAVE TO GET INVOLVED, RIGHT?

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> HE'S ENJOYING THIS SO MUCH, HE ACTUALLY HAD A SMILE ON HIS FACE WHEN HE WENT BEFORE THE CONSERVATIVE CONVENTION THINKING ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON HERE.

YOU TALK ABOUT THE DEAN SITUATION AND THE DEAN SCREAM, OF COURSE, THAT COST HIM THE PRESIDENCY, MANY WOULD ARGUE, A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, WELL, I THINK THE WHOLE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WILL BE SCREAMING AT DEAN.

IT WILL BE A SCREAM IN REVERSE BECAUSE OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN HERE.

THERE'S ANOTHER THING THAT'S ALMOST A REALITY IN TERMS OF WHAT WE'VE SEEN AS A TREND IN THE CAMPAIGN.

OBAMA HAS CARRIED EVERY CAUCUS SO FAR.

IN THE REST OF FEBRUARY, THERE ARE NINE MORE CONTESTS.

FOUR CAUCUSES, FIVE PRIMARIES.

THERE'S AN EXPECTATION NOW. HE'LL CARRY ALL NINE CONTESTS, BECAUSE EVEN THE PRIMARIES ARE IN STATES LIKE MARYLAND, VIRGINIA, D.C., LARGE AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATIONS AS A PART OF THE PERCENTAGE, AS A PERCENTAGE OF THE ELECTORATE.

HE HAS A CHANCE TO GO NINE FOR NINE.

AND THE IDEA OF HOLDING A CAUCUS IN FLORIDA IS ABSOLUTELY GOING TO TEAR HILLARY AND HER WHOLE SUPPORT BASE APART WITH PROTESTS AND, OF COURSE, ULTIMATELY WE'LL SEE A REPLAY LIKE WE SAW IN FLORIDA IN 2000, OF EVERY ELECTION LAWYER IN THE COUNTRY COMING INTO PLAY.

>> I DON'T THINK WE'LL HAVE A CAUCUS.

SOMETHING WILL WORK OUT.

I BELIEVE IT WILL WORK OUT.

I THINK THAT THE DEMOCRATS ARE GOING TO COME TO THEIR SENSES, AND DEAN IS PART OF THAT.

THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

SOMETHING WILL WORK OUT.

BUT I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE A CAUCUS.

>> I'M CURIOUS, WHAT ADVICE -- YOUR CANDIDATE DID NOT WIN IN THIS STATE.

I MEAN, WHAT'S YOUR THOUGHT -- I MEAN, ARE YOU TORN AT ALL ABOUT -- IT'S NOT NECESSARILY IN BARACK OBAMA'S INTEREST.

>> AND THIS IS, I BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT CAUCUSES AND PRIMARIES, THAT BARACK WILL WIN THEM ALL.

I THINK HE WILL HAVE ENOUGH DELEGATES AT THAT PARTICULAR POINT IN TIME THAT IF WE DECIDE THAT WITH HILLARY, HE'LL BE SO FAR AHEAD --

>> DO YOU ACCEPT THE FACT THAT OBAMA LOST?

>> WILL I ACCEPT THE FACT THAT HE LOST?

>> THAT HE LOST IN FLORIDA.

>> I DON'T THINK -- THIS IS NOT A LEGITIMATE ELECTION.

-- SAID IT'S NOT GOING TO COUNT.

>> IN REALITY, IT DIDN'T COUNT.

>> RIGHT.

>> IT DIDN'T COUNT.

BUT WE HAD AN ELECTION AND THE NUMBERS SHOWED HE LOST IN

FLORIDA, BUT IT DID NOT COUNT.

WILL THAT GO BACK IN THE COUNT?

WE DON'T KNOW.

WILL THERE BE A CAUCUS?

I DON'T THINK SO.

WE HAVE TO SIT DOWN AS DEMOCRATS AND WORK THIS OUT.

>> LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION ABOUT THE REPUBLICANS.

WHY ARE SOME IN THE CONSERVATIVE WING IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY SO MAD AT JOHN McCAIN?

AND WE HEAR THE LITANY.

IT'S OVER HIS SUPPORT OVER McCAIN-FEINGOLD, IMMIGRATION REFORM, SOME OF THE OTHER THINGS, BUT McCAIN IS STILL A HAWK ON THE WAR.

HE SUPPORTS PERHAPS GOING AFTER IRAN.

HE'S HAWKISH ON A LOT OF ISSUES, WHY IS THERE THIS VISCERAL ANGER TOWARDS JOHN McCAIN WITHIN THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE REPUBLICAN PARTY?

>> I LIKE IT, I MEAN.

[LAUGHTER]

>> YEAH, SURE, SURE HE LIKES IT.

NOW WE'RE TURNING THE TABLE.

FIRST OF ALL, HE GOT A GOOD RECEPTION AT THE CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS YESTERDAY, WHICH WAS, FRANKLY, A GOOD THING FOR ALL REPUBLICANS.

FELT VERY RELIEVED TO SEE THAT.

HE ACTUALLY HAS A FAIRLY CONSERVATIVE RECORD.

THE THING ABOUT JOHN McCAIN IS HE'S WILLING TO SAY THE WAY HE FEELS THINGS ARE.

HE TELLS IT STRAIGHT, THE STRAIGHT TALK EXPRESS, ET CETERA. AND SOMETIMES THAT GETS HIM IN TROUBLE.

EVEN WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY.

THIS PARTY HAS BEEN LOOKING THE ENTIRE PRIMARY CAMPAIGN FOR THE ULTIMATE CANDIDATE THAT COMBINES ALL THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BEING REPUBLICAN.

AND FRANKLY HAVEN'T FOUND THAT IN ONE PERSON.

>> YOU HAVEN'T FOUND THE PERFECT RONALD REAGAN.

>> WE HAVEN'T.

>> I THINK IT GOES A LITTLE FURTHER THAN THAT.

I MAY BE WRONG ON WHO SAID THIS. IT WAS A SENATOR.

I THINK IT WAS THAD COCHRAN, McCAIN HAS A TENDENCY NOT JUST TO -- TO BE WILLING TO SAY UNPOPULAR THINGS, BUT TO SOME PEOPLE HE COMES ACROSS AS EAGER TO SAY UNPOPULAR THINGS.

AND I THINK IT WAS THAD COCHRAN, BUT I'M NOT SURE WHO SAID, I JUST WISH HE WOULD FLIP OFF DEMOCRATS AS OFTEN AS HE FLIPS OFF REPUBLICANS.

[LAUGHTER]

>>> IN HIS PROPOSED STATE BUDGET, GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST CALLS FOR MORE SPENDING ON CHILDREN, HEALTH CARE AND PRISONS.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> FLORIDA'S BRIGHTEST DAYS TRULY ARE AHEAD OF US.

WE ARE FACING EXTRAORDINARY ECONOMIC TIMES, AND TIMES SUCH AS THESE, IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR YOUR GOVERNMENT TO SPEND YOUR MONEY WISELY.

>> THE 70-BILLION-DOLLAR PLAN TAPS INTO TRUST FUNDS AND USES NEW GAMBLING DOLLARS FROM THE LOTTERY AND EXPANDED CASINOS TO OFFSET AN EXPECTED 2 BILLION DROP IN STATE REVENUE. AS A RESULT, CRIST HAS PROPOSED NO MAJOR CUTS IN ANY PROGRAM.

BUT ONE AREA OF STATE SPENDING IS IN TROUBLE.

A NEW REPORT SAYS BUDGET CUTS AND CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING HAVE LEFT FLORIDA'S UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ON THE BRINK OF A CRISIS. PROFESSORS AND STAFF LAYOFFS ARE LOOMING.

THE STATE BOARD OF GOVERNORS RECENTLY FROZE GROWTH IN FRESHMAN ENROLLMENT FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

IN ADDITION, TOTAL STATE FUNDING PER FULL-TIME STUDENT ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION HAS DROPPED FROM MORE THAN \$14,000 IN 1990 TO UNDER \$11,000 THIS YEAR.

LES, LET'S START WITH THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET.

IS IT REALISTIC TO THINK HE CAN PULL THIS OFF AND NOT MAKE ANY MAJOR CUTS IN ANY OF THE MAJOR PROGRAMS AROUND THE STATE?

>> NOT AT ALL.

HE SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR WANTING TO PUT MORE MONEY IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE.

THE PRISON ISSUE, THAT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT STORY WITH ME.
BUT IN LOOKING AT WHERE HE WANTS TO GET THIS MONEY FROM, IT
DOES NOT WORK.
YOU CAN'T -- YOU CAN'T TAKE WHAT IS CALLED NONRECURRING
FUNDS AND PLUG THEM INTO A RECURRING HOLE.
WHAT HAPPENS THE NEXT YEAR?
IT GETS BIGGER AND BIGGER.
THE ONLY WAY TO CORRECT THAT, TWO THINGS HAVE TO HAPPEN.
ONE, YOU HAVE TO HAVE HURRICANES.
THE SECOND ONE, YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT TAXES.
AND WE HOPE THAT WE HAVE NO HURRICANES.
THEN PEOPLE SAY, WHY IS THAT?
WELL, WHEN YOU HAVE HURRICANES, DESTROY, BUY MATERIAL TO
BUILD BACK, THAT'S TAXES, SO YOU GET MORE MONEY BACK INTO
THE BUDGET.
SO THE DYNAMIC OF HIM WANTING TO UTILIZE TRUST FUNDS,
UTILIZE GAMBLING DOLLARS, WHICH WE HAVE NO IDEA WHERE THAT'S
GOING, AND WE HAVE A LAWSUIT OUT THERE.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WITH THAT.
AND ALL THESE OTHER IDEAS THAT HE'S THINKING ABOUT, THOSE
ARE NONRECURRING FUNDS.
AND WHEN YOU START DOING THAT, YOU'LL HAVE TO LOOK AT CUTS.
AND THOSE CUTS ARE GOING TO BE PAINFUL.
AND WE'RE ALREADY TO THE BONE.
WE WENT THROUGH THE MUSCLE.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

WE'RE TO THE BONE.

SO SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, THE LEGISLATURE, IF THEY ARE GOING TO LOOK AT WHAT HE'S DOING WILL HAVE TO HAVE CUTS. THE LEGISLATURE WILL HAVE A MAJOR, MAJOR PROBLEM, ALSO, ON HOW THEY ARE GOING TO DO THIS FUNDING.

>> JONI, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS BUDGET?

>> IT'S INTERESTING, YOU KNOW.

IT'S ABOUT -- YOU KNOW, WHEN JEB BUSH WOULD ROLL OUT HIS BUDGET, HE WAS VERY -- IT WAS A COMMAND PERFORMANCE IN THE SENSE OF HE VERY MUCH DICTATED THE DISCUSSIONS AS THE LEGISLATURE WENT FORWARD.

YOU REALLY GET THE SENSE WITH THIS BUDGET THAT THE GOVERNOR ISN'T THAT INTERESTED IN BEING IN CHARGE OF THIS.

HE WANTS THE LEGISLATURE TO TAKE THIS OFF HIS HANDS.

HE USED THE STATE REVENUE ESTIMATE FOR SALES TAXES THAT IS FROM NOVEMBER.

AND EVERYONE AGREES IS OVERLY OPTIMISTIC AT THIS POINT.

SO YOU'RE GOING TO SEE MORE MONEY FALL OFF THERE.

USING ALL THESE TRUST FUNDS IS SOMETHING THAT'S VERY HARD FOR THEM TO DO TO THE EXTENT HE WANTS TO DO.

>> HE CAN'T KEEP DOING IT YEAR AFTER YEAR.

HE CAN ONLY DO IT FOR ONE OR TWO YEARS BEFORE HE REALLY HURTS THE STATE --

>> HIS RATIONALE IS, HE BELIEVES THAT THE ECONOMY IS GOING TO COME BACK IN THE NEXT YEAR OR SO AND IT WILL ALL BE FINE.

>> YOU NOT ONLY HURT THE TRUST FUNDS, YOU CAN'T CONTINUE TO DO IT EVERY YEAR.

YOU HIT IT ONE YEAR, AGAIN, YOU'RE TAKING THOSE DOLLARS THAT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO HAVE AGAIN NEXT YEAR AND PLUG THEM INTO A HOLE THAT REALLY MAKES IT EVEN WORSE.

THE OTHER PART IS THIS, WE TALK ABOUT THE UNIVERSITIES, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT AN ESTIMATE OF 60,000 STUDENTS THAT WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET INTO OUR STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM. THAT IS A MAJOR, MAJOR TRAVESTY.

WHEN I WAS THERE, WE NEGLECTED TO FUND STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM ADEQUATELY.

IT'S BEEN YEARS OF DOING THAT.

>> I REALLY WONDER IF THIS OR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS OR SO MIGHT BE THE PERIOD WHERE THERE IS SORT OF A FINAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION ABOUT WHERE WE WANT UNIVERSITIES TO BE, HOW MUCH WE WANT TO SPEND FOR IT.

WE SPEND ABOUT \$3600 A YEAR NOW IN TUITION AND FEES.

IT'S THE LOWEST IN 50 STATES.

A LOT OF PEOPLE IN THE SYSTEM WILL TELL YOU, YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR.

>> WE HAVE THE WORST FACULTY-TO-STUDENT RATIO IN THE ENTIRE NATION IN OUR UNIVERSITY SYSTEM RIGHT NOW.

IT'S GONE DOWNHILL THE LAST FEW YEARS.

>> AND YOU'LL LOSE THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST STUDENTS BECAUSE OF THE FACT IF THEY CAN'T GET IN, THEY'LL GO

SOMEPLACE ELSE.

>> THESE ARE VERY DIFFICULT TIMES.

WE'VE BEEN WRESTLING WITH HIGHER HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE,
HIGHER PROPERTY TAXES, UNTIL AMENDMENT ONE, OF COURSE --
WE'LL GET BACK TO THAT -- HOUSING SLUMP.

I MEAN, THESE ARE TOUGH TIMES, AND LES, I APPRECIATE
EVERYTHING YOU ARE SAYING.

NO ONE REALLY WANTS TO GO INTO A TRUST FUND OR INTO A RAINY
DAY FUND.

BUT THAT'S REALLY WHAT THEY ARE THERE FOR, I WOULD ARGUE.
BECAUSE THE ALTERNATIVE IS, YOU CUT SERVICES NOT ONLY TO THE
BONE, BUT BEYOND.

AND YOU RAISE TAXES.

THE ONLY WAY YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS WORK WITH THE
NUMBERS THAT WE'RE LOOKING AT OVER THE SHORT TERM, AND I
THINK IT'S WORTH DIPPING A LITTLE BIT TO TRY TO HELP US
THROUGH A TRANSITION THAT'S REALLY HURTING.

>> WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DIP INTO?

DIP INTO THE RAINY DAY FUND OR THE TRUST FUNDS TO MAKE IT
WORK?

I DON'T THINK SO.

YOU HAVE \$25 BILLION IN TAX EXEMPTIONS SITTING OUT THERE.

WHY?

SOME OF THEM HAVE BEEN ON THE BOOKS BEFORE YOU WERE EVEN
BORN.

SO I THINK IT'S TIME TO START LOOKING AT SOME OF THAT STUFF
AND START DETERMINING WHAT WE'LL DO.

YOU JUST CANNOT CONTINUE TO TAP INTO THE TRUST FUND AND TAP
INTO RESERVES. IT WILL RUN OUT.

YOUR DEFICITS WILL GET BIGGER AND BIGGER.

THE ECONOMY MAY NOT TURN AROUND.

YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT WHAT YOU HAVE OUT THERE.

THAT'S 25 BILLION --

>> WILLIAM, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE BUDGET?

>> IT'S FILLED WITH SEVERE PROBLEMS.

SPENDING NONRECURRING REVENUES AT LEVELS HIGHER THAN STATE
LAW ALLOWS, IT WILL TAKE A 60% VOTE OF A LEGISLATURE TO
AGREE TO THAT.

THE LEGISLATURE IS ALREADY SAYING, AT LEAST IN THE -- THAT
THE BUDGET IS DEAD ON ARRIVAL.

DEPENDING ON GAMBLING REVENUES, DEPENDING ON PROBABLY OVERLY
OPTIMISTIC ECONOMIC FORECAST, AT THIS POINT, AS JONI
MENTIONED, THE BUDGET PROBABLY DOES NOT EVEN BALANCE. IT'S
DEAD AT THE TIME OF NOVEMBER.

I HAVE TO ADD THAT WHAT JONI SAID, CRIST'S SEEMING LACK OF
INTEREST IN THE DETAILS OF THE BUDGET THE DAY AFTER HE
ANNOUNCES IT, HE GOES OFF ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL WITH JOHN
McCAIN, WHICH IS WHERE HE IS NOW.

BUT THE ONE FACTOR THAT IS REALLY STRONGLY ON CHARLIE
CRIST'S SIDE -- AND DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THIS -- HE'S NOW

POSSIBLY THE NUMBER ONE SUPPORTER IN THE NATION OF THE PRESUMPTIVE NOMINEE OF HIS PARTY FOR PRESIDENT. THAT WILL GIVE HIM AN AWFUL LOT OF CLOUT IN DEALING WITH THE LEGISLATURE.

HE'LL BE ABLE TO GET HIS WAY.

I BELIEVE.

>> EXCEPT THEY STILL DO HAVE TO BALANCE THE BUDGET.

>> THEY HAVE TO BALANCE.

>> HE'S NOT A FEDERAL EMPLOYEE YET.

[LAUGHTER]

>> MY PREDICTION, THEY'LL END UP BALANCING IT THE WAY HE SAYS TO BALANCE IT.

>> WE'LL HAVE TO TALK ABOUT THAT TOPIC.

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT CHARLIE AS VP.

>>> ON MONDAY, FLORIDA LAWMAKERS GRILLED INSURANCE EXECUTIVES UNDER OATH TRYING TO FIND OUT WHY PROPERTY INSURANCE COSTS HAVE SOARED IN THE LAST YEAR DESPITE A STATE LAW THAT WAS DESIGNED TO CUT RATES.

THAT LAW PASSED SHORTLY AFTER GOVERNOR CRIST TOOK OFFICE.

UNDER IT, THE STATE ASSUMED A GREATER RISK IN PROVIDING BACKUP INSURANCE FOR CATASTROPHIC HURRICANES.

IN RETURN, STATE OFFICIALS EXPECTED RATE REDUCTIONS IN THE RANGE OF 24%.

INSTEAD, THE INITIAL RATE REDUCTIONS AVERAGED ONLY 15% AND STATE OFFICIALS WERE MORE STUNNED WHEN SOME INSURANCE

COMPANIES LATER ASKED FOR RATE INCREASES IN EXCESS OF 40%.

>> IT SEEMS LIKE THE FOOTNOTES IN THESE DOCUMENTS SUGGEST THAT THE EARLIEST INDICATIONS OF IT BEING ABLE TO REDUCE YOUR RATE LED ACTION WITHIN THE COMPANY TO CONSIDER WHAT ALTERNATIVES IT WOULD DO TO COUNTER THAT.

>> ADAM, THIS IS AN ISSUE THAT CHARLIE CRIST CAMPAIGNED ON. THERE WERE A LOT OF PROMISES THAT SOMETHING WOULD BE DONE, AND STILL, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF AN INSURANCE CRISIS.

>> SENATE BILL 1-A IS WHAT IT WAS CALLED LAST YEAR. IT WAS PASSED TO DO JUST WHAT THE INTRO TO THIS PIECE SUGGESTED, WHICH IS, WE'RE GOING TO PASS ON SAVINGS TO INSURERS, AND YOU ARE GOING TO BE MANDATED TO PASS THOSE SAVINGS ON TO CONSUMERS.

WELL, THEY GOT HALF OF IT RIGHT.

THEY PASSED THE SAVINGS OF REINSURANCE ON TO INSURERS BUT FOR SOME REASON NEVER GOT TO THE CUSTOMER.

THE COMPANY YOU TALKED ABOUT OR ALLUDED TO, ALLSTATE, WANTED A 42% RATE INCREASE WHILE REPORTING RECORD PROFITS FOR, I THINK, THE FOURTH YEAR IN A ROW.

OF COURSE, THEY ALWAYS HAVE WAYS TO CONDITION, WELL, YES, IT LOOKS LIKE 42, BIG PROFIT, BUT WE HAD ALL THESE EXPENSES AND ALL THESE -- WE HAD -- WE HAD A LOT OF STRESS ON US THIS YEAR.

SO THEY REALLY HAVE TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE.

AND THE SENATE HEARING, YOU JUST SAW SENATOR ATTWATER, ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THIS IN THE SENATE, DEMAND ANSWERS. THEY PUT THE INSURANCE EXECUTIVES UNDER OATH AND SAID, OKAY, BOYS AND GIRLS, NOW TELL US, YOU HAD ALL THESE SAVINGS, WHERE DID THEY GO?

I TELL YOU, THE ANSWERS HAVE BEEN VERY INDIRECT, VERY OBLIQUE, AND WE'RE STILL NOT TO THE BOTTOM OF IT. AND IT'S WRONG.

>> THE INSURANCE COMPANIES NEVER REALLY GAVE DIRECT ANSWERS. 16 HOURS OF TESTIMONY, AND, LES, THE STATE SENATORS DIDN'T REALLY GET AN ANSWER.

>> THEY NEVER GOT AN ANSWER.

THEY WOULD SIT THERE AND TAP DANCE.

THEY GOT NO ANSWERS.

AND THIS ALL STARTED FROM THE LAST -- THE LAST BILL THAT WAS PASSED IN THE SESSION OF 2006.

THOUGHT THEY CORRECTED IT, AND THEY DIDN'T.

AND THEN THEY CAME BACK WITH BILL 1-A, AND THEY DID NOT.

I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED, BECAUSE WE PUT HEALTH CARE INSURANCE COMPANIES UNDER OATH WHEN I WAS THERE, AND WE GOT SOME ANSWERS.

THEY REALLY CAME FORTH WITH ANSWERS.

BUT THESE PEOPLE CAME FORTH AND JUST DID NOT ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS.

DID YOU MAKE ANY MONEY FROM THE CAR INSURANCE POLICIES?

WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF WE DID.

I CAN'T TELL --

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

YOU'RE CEO OF THE COMPANY.

SOMEBODY SHOULD TELL YOU IF YOU MADE MONEY OR NOT.

I MEAN, IT WAS REALLY SHOCKING TO ME THAT THESE COMPANIES WHO WANT TO RAISE RATES 40% AND ALL THIS GOOD STUFF, BUT THEY CAN'T EVEN ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE PUT FORTH UNDER OATH.

>> IN SOME WAYS, WE'RE IN THE WORST POSSIBLE SITUATION HERE. NOT ONLY GOT THEM ASKING FOR THE HIGHER RATES, YOU ALSO GOT WE AS TAXPAYERS ARE ON THE HOOK NOW FOR A CATASTROPHIC FUND THAT IS GIGANTIC.

IN FACT, ALEX SINK JUST THIS MORNING, I THINK, PRESENTED TO A HOUSE COMMITTEE A PLAN TO TRY TO REDUCE SOME OF THAT CATASTROPHIC EXPOSURE BY REQUIRING THEM TO GET SOME MORE PRIVATE INSURANCE.

YOU KNOW, THIS IS SUCH A COMPLEX THING, AND IT'S A CLOSED SYSTEM TO A CERTAIN EXTENT.

THE ONLY PEOPLE PUTTING MONEY IN ARE EITHER YOU OR INVESTORS, AND RIGHT NOW, IT FEELS LIKE IT'S ONLY US.

>> AND THE STATE HAS FAILED.

I MEAN, THE GOVERNOR AND HIS INSURANCE COMMISSIONER TRIED TO STOP ALLSTATE, SANCTION THEM BY SAYING NOT ONLY COULD YOU NOT SELL ANY MORE HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE, BUT YOU CAN'T SELL

ANY INSURANCE LINES.

THE COURT SLAPPED THEM DOWN.

SO THE SANCTIONS THAT THE EXECUTIVE IN TALLAHASSEE TRIED TO PUT IN AREN'T FLYING.

>> THIS IS ONE ISSUE WHERE WE REALLY NEED THE PEOPLE, THE PEOPLE TO COME BEHIND THIS.

THE OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATION SAID IN THEIR REPORT IN PART, THEY HAD EVIDENCE OF COMPUTERIZED CHEATING, PRICE GOUGING.

THEY SAID EVERYTHING BUT CONSPIRACY.

WE NEED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS.

WE NEED ANSWERS, BUT WE NEED PEOPLE TO WEIGH IN.

IT CAN'T JUST BE FLORIDA SENATE, AS WELL AS THEY ARE DOING UP THERE, THEY NEED HELP.

THEY NEED PEOPLE TO BRING PRESSURE.

AND YOU CAN BRING PRESSURE AS A CONSUMER, I THINK, IN THIS STATE TO HAVE THEM COME TO THE FLOOR AND SAY WHAT HAPPENED.

>> WHAT AMAZES ME ABOUT THIS IS HOW MUCH YOU SOUND LIKE A DEMOCRAT TALKING ABOUT THE OIL INDUSTRY.

[LAUGHTER]

>>> WELL, A CITIZEN INITIATIVE TO PUT A GAY MARRIAGE BAN IN THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION WILL BE ON THE BALLOT IN NOVEMBER, BUT THE HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY ACT, WHICH WOULD HAVE REQUIRED VOTER APPROVAL BEFORE CHANGES ARE MADE TO LOCAL GROWTH PLANS, MISSED THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING THE NECESSARY

NUMBER OF SIGNATURES.

JONI, THERE WAS A FULL-COURT PRESS TO TRY TO STOP THAT HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY ACT FROM GETTING ON.

DEVELOPERS AND OTHER BUSINESS INTERESTS WHO TRIED TO STOP IT WERE SUCCESSFUL.

>> I THINK WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE NUMBERS, THEY DID HURT THEIR EFFORT SOMEWHAT, BUT THE QUESTION TO ME THAT I'M STILL NOT SURE OF IS, HOW MANY PETITIONS MAY BE SITTING IN SUPERVISOR OF ELECTION OFFICES THAT MAY NOT HAVE GOTTEN VERIFIED? THIS IS THE FIRST YEAR THAT WE HAD THE PETITION DEADLINE MOVED UP.

PART OF THAT WAS BECAUSE OF AN EFFORT BY MANY INTERESTS IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS TO MAKE IT HARDER TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION.

AND IT SEEMS TO HAVE WORKED IN THIS CASE.

YOU KNOW, I THINK HOMETOWN IS BACK IN 2010.

THEY HAVE TWO MORE YEARS.

>> DO YOU THINK THEY'LL MAKE IT EVENTUALLY ON THE BALLOT?

>> I THINK THEY WILL MAKE IT.

I THINK THE MOST INTERESTING THING TO WATCH BETWEEN NOW AND NOVEMBER ON THE GAY MARRIAGE AMENDMENT, OTHER THAN THE GAY MARRIAGE DISCUSSION HAS ARRIVED IN FLORIDA NOW, IS WHERE IS OUR GOVERNOR GOING TO BE?

BECAUSE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY CAME OUT SOON AFTER THIS WAS ANNOUNCED SAYING, KUDOS, BUT THE GOVERNOR HAS MORE RECENTLY

SAID, LIVE AND LET LIVE.

I SIGN THE PETITION, BUT, YOU KNOW, IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY BELONG IN THE CONSTITUTION.

>> THAT WILL HAVE TO BE SOMETHING WE WATCH.

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

ADAM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> TWO BIG STORIES, I THINK THE CHARLIE CRIST, JOHN McCAIN PICTURES ARE NOW GOING FOR A HEFTY PRICE.

YOU SAW EVERYWHERE ACROSS THE COUNTRY THE LAST WEEK.

AND THE OTHER THING, AT THE SAME TIME, FLORIDA REPUBLICANS CAME OUT IN RECORD NUMBERS IN THE PRIMARY TO SUPPORT, IN THIS CASE, JOHN McCAIN.

DEMOCRATS CAME OUT IN RECORD NUMBERS SO THAT THEY WOULDN'T COUNT.

>> WILLIAM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE OF THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMPLETED ITS INVESTIGATION OF THE 2006 CONGRESSIONAL RACE BETWEEN CHRISTINE JENNINGS AND VERN BUCHANAN.

THE HUGE UNDERVOTE THERE WHERE HER SUPPORTERS CONTEND SHE WOULD HAVE WON EXCEPT THAT FOR SOME REASON VOTES DIDN'T GET RECORDED.

THE GAO SAYS IT WAS NOT A FAILURE BY THE VOTING MACHINES, THAT IT WAS PROBABLY A BALLOT DESIGN PROBLEM.

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>> AND SO THAT'S JUST IN TIME FOR THE NEXT CONGRESSIONAL RACE TO GEAR UP IN SARASOTA.

>> SHE'S RUNNING AGAINST HIM AGAIN.

>> YEAH.

OKAY.

WELL, WE'LL SEE WHAT THE OUTCOME OF THAT IS IN THE FALL.

LES, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, I THINK MY BIG STORY IS WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN WITH THE PASSAGE OF AMENDMENT ONE, THE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND WHAT PEOPLE WILL SEE HAPPEN TO SERVICES.

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY TAKING A MAJOR -- I THINK -- I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THE NUMBER IS THERE, BUT I KNOW IN THE CITY OF TAMPA, IT'S MORE LIKE 12 TO \$15 MILLION.

ST. PETERSBURG LIKE \$11 MILLION THAT THEY HAVE TO CUT FROM THEIR BUDGETS, AND THAT WILL REALLY HURT SERVICES.

EVEN THOUGH PEOPLE WANTED IT, THERE'S NEVER BEEN A TAX CUT PUT ON THE BALLOT THAT HAS FAILED, \$240 MIGHT SOUND LIKE I WANT THAT IN MY DEDUCTION FROM MY PROPERTY TAXES, BUT WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU START CUTTING SERVICES AND START CUTTING PEOPLE FROM JOBS THAT GIVE YOU THOSE SERVICES.

I'M REALLY, REALLY CONCERNED.

I THINK PEOPLE NEED TO PAY ATTENTION WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS.

>> JONI, YOUR OTHER STORY?

>> MY STORY IS GETTING BACK TO WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT, NOW THAT WE CUT TAXES UNDER AMENDMENT ONE, WE CUT TAXES FOR HOMESTEADED HOMEOWNERS.

WE HAVE NOT CUT TAXES FOR BUSINESSES.

WE HAVE NOT CUT TAXES FOR SNOWBIRDS.

WE HAVE NOT CUT TAXES FOR ALL THOSE OTHER OWNERS WHO ARE REALLY THE PEOPLE WHO SUFFERED SO MUCH IN THIS PROPERTY RUN-UP.

YOU'LL SEE THE 1.35% BALLOT MEASURE TO CAP PROPERTY TAXES AT 1.35% BALLOT MEASURE IS NOW BACK BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE.

THEY ARE STILL GATHERING SIGNATURES.

I'M NOT SURE THE LEGISLATURE WILL PUT IT ON THE BALLOT, BUT THERE STILL IS REAL DISCORD AMONG THOSE PROPERTY TAX PAYERS ABOUT AMENDMENT ONE.

>> WHAT WINS OUT?

PEOPLE FEELING THE LOCAL SERVICES CUTS, OR PEOPLE SAYING, HEY, I WAS LEFT OUT OF AMENDMENT ONE, AND I WANT MY SHARE.

I GUESS WE'LL HAVE TO SEE IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

WELL, THANK YOU, JONI JAMES.

THANK YOU, ADAM GOODMAN.

THANK YOU, LES MILLER.

AND THANK YOU, WILLIAM MARCH.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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