

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING TEXT

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"
JULY 6, 2007

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, THE STATE'S PROPERTY TAX PLAN MIGHT FACE SOME LEGAL CHALLENGES.

THE McCAIN AND OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS COULD FADE FROM FLORIDA.

GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST PREPARES TO HOLD A SUMMIT MEETING ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

AND THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSION IS PREPARING TO DO AWAY WITH ITS WETLANDS PROTECTION.

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, ERNEST HOOPER IS A COLUMNIST AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES."

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

ADAM GOODMAN IS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT AND A REPUBLICAN.

AND ROCHELLE REBACK IS AN ATTORNEY AND A DEMOCRAT.

THANK YOU FOR COMING, EVERYBODY.

WELL, NOW THAT THE STATE HAS MANDATED A PROPERTY TAX ROLLBACK ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, SOME LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WONDER WHETHER WHAT THE LEGISLATURE DID IS CONSTITUTIONAL.

>> THE STATE LEGISLATURE REALLY DOESN'T HAVE THE ABILITY TO COME IN AND MANDATE THAT WE GO BACK TO THE ROLLBACK RATE AND THAT WE DO THIS ADDITIONAL PERCENTAGE CUT AND WE ONLY TAKE IN 3% OF THE NEW CONSTRUCTION REVENUE.

>> THE STATE CONSTITUTION GIVES THE POWER TO LEVY UP TO 10 MILLS IN PROPERTY TAXES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

AND BACKERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE SUSPICIOUS OF A CLAUSE IN THE PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT THAT'S ON THE BALLOT NEXT JANUARY THAT WILL GIVE THE LEGISLATURE THE POWER TO LIMIT LOCAL TAXES.

>> OBVIOUSLY, THE FACT THAT THEY INSERTED THAT IN THERE INDICATES THAT CITIES AND COUNTIES HAVE A POINT IN REGARDS TO THE UNCONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE NEW LAW.

>> PLUS, SOME PART-TIME RESIDENTS ARE SUING OVER FLORIDA'S EXISTING "SAVE OUR HOMES" TAX CAP WHICH TAXES NEWCOMERS AND SEASONAL RESIDENTS AT A HIGHER RATE THAN LONGTIME HOMEOWNERS WHO ARE COVERED BY THE TAX CAP.

WELL, WHETHER ARE TWO CHALLENGES, TWO POSSIBLE LEGAL CHALLENGES TO THIS, JEREMY.

DO YOU THINK THAT EITHER ONE OF THESE WILL GO FORWARD AND PUT A CRIMP IN SOME OF THESE CHANGES TO PROPERTY TAXES?

>> WELL, I THINK YOU'LL SEE THE COUNTIES AND THE CITIES MAY NOT BE NEARLY AS -- MAY NOT WANT TO BE OUT IN FRONT ON CHALLENGING THIS IN COURT.

ALTHOUGH, YOU KNOW -- I'VE TALKED TO SOME OF THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS IN MY AREA, AND THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT, YOU KNOW, THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF IT.

BUT THEY DON'T WANT TO BE OUT FRONT LOOKING LIKE THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO RAISE TAXES HIGHER.

>> PLUS POLITICALLY, IT'S DEADLY.

>> YEAH, POLITICALLY, THEY ARE JUST IN A POSITION -- MY COUNTY COMMISSION, WELL, LOOK, WE'LL JUST GO IN THERE, WE'LL FIX THE BUDGET.

WE'LL DO WHAT WE GOT TO DO, AND WE'LL LET THAT LEGAL PROCESS, YOU KNOW, WORK ITSELF OUT.

CLEARLY, THEY DON'T WANT TO BE ASSOCIATED.

WHETHER OR NOT THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WILL BE WORKING ON THAT, THAT'S ANOTHER STORY ALTOGETHER.

I THINK THAT'S WHERE THEY ARE GOING TO NEED SOMEBODY ELSE TO PUSH THAT FOR THEM IF THEY ARE GOING TO DO IT.

>> SO, ADAM, THERE'S THIS OTHER CHALLENGE BY PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN ALABAMA, COME DOWN TO THE PANHANDLE PART TIME, LIVE IN

THE FLORIDA PANHANDLE AND SAY, OUR TAXES ARE HIGHER THAN OUR FLORIDA NEIGHBORS WHO LIVE, YOU KNOW, RIGHT DOWN THE STREET.

>> WELL, YEAH, THE CONSTITUTIONALITY CHALLENGES GO BACK TO 1992 WITH JUDGE OVERTON.

THE SAME KINDS OF ISSUES IN A WAY WERE RAISED BACK THEN, 15 YEARS AGO.

THERE ARE TWO THINGS IN PLAY HERE.

AND JEREMY TOUCHED ON ONE, WHICH IS THE POLITICAL PALATABILITY OF TOUCHING TAX REFORM WITHOUT BEING FOR TAX CUTS IN TERMS OF TAX REFORM.

AND NO ONE WANTS TO BE ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THAT.

THE SECOND IS TAX FAIRNESS.

AND THAT'S REALLY THE DIFFICULT PART OF THIS.

AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL CLASSES ARE TREATED APPROPRIATELY AND FAIRLY.

AND THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION THERE, WHICH IS WHY THE CONSTITUTIONAL BALLOT AMENDMENT IDEA FOR JANUARY 29th WAS CONSIDERED DEAD ON ARRIVAL AS SOON AS IT CAME OUT OF THE LEGISLATURE.

AND THEY ARE LOOKING TO ALLAN BENSE AND THE COMMISSION, TAX COMMISSION TO HOPE THEY DO VERY HEAVY POLITICAL LIFTING TO TRY TO FIND THE MID GROUND OF FAIRNESS AND TAX REFORM WITHOUT TAX CUTS.

>> IN OTHER WORDS, SOME INSIDERS ARE SAYING JANUARY 29TH, VOTERS ARE NOT GOING TO PASS THIS THING, AT LEAST NOT BY

60%.

SO THE LEGISLATURE WILL HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOME OTHER PLAN
AND WAIT FOR THE TAX COMMISSION THAT'S FORMED TO MAKE ITS
RECOMMENDATION.

>> I THINK THE TAX COMMISSION HAS TO STEP FORWARD HERE.
AND DO SOME BOLD STUFF.

AND LOCAL LEADERS -- AND JEREMY IS RIGHT -- LOCAL LEADERS
ARE IN A KIND OF FIX HERE.

THEY WANT TO BE, AGAIN, ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF CUTTING TAXES
AND MAYOR BAKER I THINK DID A GOOD JOB OVER IN ST. PETE.
MAYOR IORIO HERE IN TAMPA IS GOING DOWN THE SAME PATH.
BUT THE DEBATE HAS JUST BEGUN, AND THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT HAS
EVERYONE SHAKING IN THEIR BOOTS.

>> JEREMY, LET ME GO BACK TO YOU FOR JUST A MOMENT.
ARE WE SEEING PLACES AROUND THE STATE RAISE FEES -- WHEN THE
LEGISLATURE SAID A FEW WEEKS AGO, WE WANT YOU TO ROLL BACK
YOUR TAXES BY THREE TO NINE PERCENT, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, ARE
WE SEEING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS RAISING THEIR FEES?

>> YEAH.

THEY ARE ALREADY KICKING AROUND -- OF COURSE, -- I THINK
WHAT WE'RE SEEING IS YOU HAVE THIS POLITICAL GRUDGE MATCH
GOING ON HERE.

AND THE JUDGES ARE GOING TO BE ALL THE PEOPLE OUT THERE
TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHO IS REALLY RESPONSIBLE.
IN SARASOTA COUNTY, THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT THINGS LIKE

RAISING FEES ON SWIMMING POOLS, ON BEACH PARKING, ON ALL THESE THINGS THAT YOU KNOW PEOPLE ARE GOING TO FEEL.

THEY ARE GOING TO SEE THAT.

AND THEY ARE GOING TO WANT AN EXPLANATION.

I HAD ONE COUNTY COMMISSIONER THAT SAID WHEN WE CUT OUR LIBRARY HOURS, WE'RE GOING TO PUT A PIECE OF PAPER ON THE DOOR THAT SAYS, REQUEST YOU'RE UPSET ABOUT THIS, CALL YOUR STATE LEGISLATOR.

THEY DID THIS.

UNTIL YOU SEE LIKE THERE'S THIS LITTLE GAME GOING ON -- THE STATE LEGISLATORS I'M TALKING TO CAN'T BELIEVE -- NOT JUST SARASOTA, MANATEE, CHARLOTTE COUNTY, THEY ARE ALL TALKING ABOUT THE SAME THING, FINDING OTHER PLACES FOR REVENUES. STATE LEGISLATORS TELL ME THE POINT OF THIS IS ROLLING BACK.

NOT FORCING TO FIND NEW REVENUE.

SUPPOSED TO CUT THIS THING BACK.

IT WILL BE INTERESTED IF THEY GET SCARED OFF BY THE IDEA THAT THEY ARE JUST RAISING FEES AND HOW HARD STATE LEGISLATORS WANT TO PUSH TO KIND OF MAKE THEIR REASONING CLEAR.

>> ERNEST, THIS IS ONE OF THE BIG PROMISES THE GOVERNOR MADE WHEN HE CAME INTO OFFICE, I'LL MAKE PROPERTY TAXES DROP LIKE A ROCK.

NOW WE HAVE THIS PROBLEM HERE.

WE SEE FEES GOING UP IN SOME CASES.

IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKELY THAT PART TWO OF THE PROPERTY TAX PLAN IS GOING TO PASS IN JANUARY, AT LEAST THE WAY THINGS LOOK NOW.

IS THE GOVERNOR IN TROUBLE?

>> WELL, I THINK HE MAY BE IN TROUBLE.

AND I THINK THE STATE LEGISLATORS MAY BE IN TROUBLE ALSO.

WHAT WE'RE SEEING HERE IS THE SAME THING WE SAW WITH THE HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE CRISIS.

THE LEGISLATURE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING INSTEAD OF DOING NOTHING, BUT THEY REALLY DIDN'T DO ENOUGH TO FIX THE PROBLEM.

AND THIS IS THE SAME CASE.

I THINK THE AVERAGE HOMEOWNER IS GOING TO SAVE \$174 IN PROPERTY TAXES OVER THE NEXT YEAR.

I MEAN, THAT'S NOT THE KIND OF RELIEF PEOPLE WERE SEEKING. PEOPLE WANTED REAL RELIEF.

I MEAN, \$174, THAT'S BASICALLY NOTHING.

I THINK THE LEGISLATURE, I THINK THIS WILL TAKE LONGER THAN ONE SESSION OR ONE FIVE-DAY SPECIAL SESSION TO COME UP WITH A REAL SOLUTION.

>> UM-HUM.

MARCO RUBIO, THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE HAD THIS PLAN DURING THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION TO DO AWAY WITH PROPERTY TAXES ON HOMES AND TO RAISE THE SALES TAX STATEWIDE.

AND NOW HE'S RAISING THAT IDEA AGAIN.

HE SAYS IF THIS IDEA ON JANUARY 29th ISN'T GOING TO FLY,
I'M BACK, AND I'M PUSHING THIS IDEA.

I MEAN -- BUT WE DON'T HAVE MANY OTHER PLANS THAT ARE OUT
THERE IN THE OPEN YET UNTIL WE HEAR WHAT THE STATE
COMMISSION ON TAXATION SAYS.

>> I THINK EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE BACK ON THE TABLE,
BECAUSE I AGREE WITH ERNEST, I DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO
SEE MUCH SUCCESS IN JANUARY.

BUT I ALSO THINK THAT WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SEE IS NOT ONLY
OUR LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES GOING TO BE RAISING FEES UNDER
THE -- WE NEED TO BRING IN REVENUE BECAUSE WE'RE NOT GOING
TO HAVE THE PROPERTY TAX FUNDING, BUT WE'RE ALSO GOING TO
SEE THE OPPORTUNITY TAKEN TO GUT PROGRAMS AND REGULATION
THAT ARE POLITICALLY UNPOPULAR OR STAND IN THE WAY OF
CERTAIN SPECIAL INTERESTS.

AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT THAT MORE, BUT I THINK WE'RE SEEING
THAT OPPORTUNITY NOW.

EVERYTHING THAT EVERYBODY HAS DISLIKED FROM THE BEGINNING IS
GOING TO BE SET UP FOR A BUDGET CUT, BECAUSE WE'RE POOR NOW.

>> -- ACTUALLY TALKED ABOUT CUTTING ONE OF THE JAILS IN OUR
COMMUNITY.

AND FOR A DAY, IT LOOKED LIKE THEY WERE GOING TO CUT THE
SOUTH COUNTY JAIL IN SARASOTA COUNTY.

THE NEXT DAY THEY COME BACK, OH, NO, WE'RE NOT GOING TO DO
THAT AFTER ALL.

IF THEY KEEP DOING THAT FOR THESE BIG ISSUES, THE PUBLIC SERVICES, YOU WONDER WHAT KIND OF EFFECT THAT WILL HAVE ON THE POPULOUS THAT WILL START FEELING LIKE, LOOK, THEY HAD TO CUT ALL THIS STUFF, THE JAIL, THE LIBRARY, THEY HAD TO RAISE THE FEE.

WHO ARE THEY GOING TO BLAME FOR THAT?

>> REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CONTAINER JOHN McCAIN GOT BAD NEWS THIS WEEK.

HIS FUND-RAISING IS NOT KEEPING UP WITH THE FRONT RUNNERS THE RACE.

THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" REPORTS THAT HE'S LAYING OFF STAFF HERE IN FLORIDA.

MEANTIME, THE NEWSPAPER REPORTS ONLINE THAT DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE BARACK OBAMA MIGHT SKIP FLORIDA'S JANUARY 29th PRIMARY IN FAVOR OF THE FEBRUARY 5th PRIMARY STATES SUCH AS CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, AND GEORGIA.

HOWEVER, THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN IS DENYING THAT.

ADAM, LET'S START WITH McCAIN.

McCAIN IS IN BIG TROUBLE.

DIDN'T RAISE AS MUCH MONEY AS HE HOPED FOR THIS QUARTER, PULLING OUT OF FLORIDA, WHAT'S THE SIGNIFICANCE?

>> WELL, A COUPLE OF THINGS.

NUMBER ONE, HE DIDN'T HAVE A BIG STAFF IN FLORIDA TO BEGIN WITH.

IT WAS NATIONALLY.

A LOT OF PEOPLE FROM FLORIDA WHO WERE WORKING ON HIS NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ARE NOW LOOKING FOR OTHER EMPLOYMENT. THE PROBLEM WITH McCAIN IS SIMPLE. SEVEN YEARS AGO, HE'S AMERICA'S GREAT UNDERDOG. SEVEN YEARS LATER, HE'S SEVEN YEARS OLDER. I THINK THE MAGIC OF THAT AND GOING AGAINST THE ESTABLISHMENT, ET CETERA, ET CETERA, IS NOT QUITE WHAT IT USED TO BE ANT WAR BEYOND THAT I THINK REALLY HURT HIM. THE OBAMA PART I THINK IS MORE INTERESTING. OBAMA'S FUND-RAISING TOTALS WERE TREMENDOUS. FOR ANYONE THAT HAS A MEASURING STICK ABOUT RAISING MONEY, REPORTED RAISING OVER 32 MILLION IN THE LAST QUARTER, BUT THE FACT THAT HE'LL SKIP FLORIDA I THINK WON'T GO DOWN WELL. I THINK THE PROBLEM FOR OBAMA IS GOING TO BE WHERE THE IMAGE -- WE'RE TRYING TO MATCH THE IMAGE TO THE REALITY OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE CANDIDATE. AND I THINK THAT IS ONE STRATEGIC MISTAKE HE MADE I THINK SKIPPING THE FOURTH LARGEST STATE IN THE COUNTRY IS NOT GOT A POLITICS.

>> IT'S INTO THE SURE THING YET.

>> YEAH, I JUST DON'T BELIEVE THAT'S HAPPENING.

>> IT'S A TRIAL BALLOON THAT'S BEEN FLOATED MAYBE.

>> YEAH, I JUST CAN'T IMAGINE ANYBODY WHO THINKS THEY ARE IN THE TOP TWO OR THREE CANDIDATES IS JUST GOING TO TRY TO SKIP FLORIDA ALTOGETHER.

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I THINK WHAT IS GOING ON, NOW THAT THEY HAVE ALL THAT MONEY,
BECAUSE THEY HAD A HECK OF A HAUL THIS TIME AROUND.

THEY REALLY MATCHED UP REALLY WELL WITH HILLARY CLINTON.

I THINK THEY HAVE THE MONEY NOW TO BLITZ THE OTHER AREAS.

I WONDER IF WHAT IS AT PLAY, HILLARY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AHEAD
IN MOST POLLING IN A LOT OF THE STATES.

IT'S BECAUSE OF HER NAME RECOGNITION AND WHAT.

NOW THAT HE HAS THAT MONEY TO GO ON THE AIR IN PLACES AND
MAYBE COMPETE, I THINK YOU'LL SEE HIM MOVE A LOT OF
RESOURCES INTO THE EARLY STATES BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT,
HEY, THIS WENT A LOT BETTER THAN MAYBE EVEN THEY
ANTICIPATED.

>> HE'S GOT TO MOVE THAT PARTICULARLY INTO THE BIG STATES.
HE'S GOING TO NEED BIG MONEY FOR THAT AS OPPOSED TO IOWA,
NEW HAMPSHIRE, SOUTH CAROLINA.

I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO BE EXPECTED TO COMPETE AS
HEAVILY AS HE WILL IN SOME OF THE LATER STATES.
HE'LL NEED THAT.

>> ERNEST?

>> I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO TOTALLY ABANDON FLORIDA, BUT
I THINK HE'S PROBABLY DISCOURAGED BY THE FACT THAT WE'VE
SEEN SOME PROMINENT AFRICAN-AMERICAN ELECTED OFFICIALS IN
THIS STATE ENDORSE HILLARY CLINTON.
KENDRICK MEEK OUT OF MIAMI, HASTINGS OUT OF FT. LAUDERDALE.
AND THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW OTHERS IN THE LAST COUPLE OF WEEKS

THAT HAVE STEPPED OUT AND ENDORSED HILLARY.

THAT HAS TO BE DISCOURAGING TO HIS CAMPAIGN.

>> PLUS YOUR MONEY GOES FARTHER.

I WAS READING ONE REPORT THIS WEEK THAT SAYS IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE COMPETITIVE IN FLORIDA, YOU HAVE TO SPEND A MILLION DOLLARS A WEEK.

SO IF YOU'VE MADE THIS 37 MILLION OR SO THIS QUARTER, YOUR MONEY WILL GO FARTHER IF YOU SPEND IT IN THE SMALLER STATES, RIGHT?

>> YES, BUT THE OPPORTUNITY, I THINK, FOR OBAMA TO REALLY CATCH FIRE IS GOING TO BE -- IN MY OPINION, IS GOING TO BE IN THE LARGER POPULATION AREAS IN THE COUNTRY.

>> BECAUSE YOU GET BIGGER HEADLINES IN A BIGGER STATE.

>> -- MAYBE FLIES BETTER THERE.

HE SAID, WELL, HE RAISED \$32 MILLION.

LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT THE NET DOLLARS ARE.

WHAT DOES HE HAVE LEFT ON HAND?

THOSE DOLLARS GO REALLY FAST WHEN YOU HAVE A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN APPARATUS AND A NATIONAL ORGANIZATION.

>> OBAMA AND ROMNEY TO A DEGREE, I THINK BOTH OF THEM HAVE TO DO SO WELL IN ONE OF THE FIRST TWO STATES.

AND BECAUSE WE HAVE IN OUR MINDSET IT'S RUDY AND HILLARY AND THEN EVERYBODY ELSE.

SOMEBODY HAS TO EMERGE AS THE CHOICE.

WE'VE SEEN THAT WITH ROMNEY.

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HE HAD SO MANY ADS, HE HAD THREE DIFFERENT ADS RUNNING IN IOWA TWO MONTHS AGO.

THE GUY PUT A LOT OF EFFORT AND HE'S ACTUALLY DONE A LOT IN FLORIDA.

WE JUST DID A STORY A WEEK AGO ABOUT HOW MUCH ATTENTION HE'S PAID TO FLORIDA COMPARED TO THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

HE'S BEEN HERE FAR MORE THAN BOTH McCAIN AND GIULIANI COMBINED UP UNTIL JUST A FEW WEEKS AGO.

YOU'LL SEE OBAMA DO THE SAME THING.

HE HAS TO HAVE ONE OF THE EARLY VICTORIES IN ORDER TO PROVE HE HAS THE ABILITY TO GO A LONG WAY.

WHEN HE GETS ONE OF THOSE, I THINK THAT'S WHEN FLORIDA CHANGES AROUND FOR THEM.

IT WILL BE INTERESTING HOW MANY STAFFS WILL HAVE TO QUICKLY MOVE AND MOBILIZE BACK INTO FLORIDA DEPENDING ON HOW THE FIRST TWO STATES GO.

IOWA AND NEW HAMPSHIRE MAY BE AS BIG AS EVER INSTEAD OF US BEING BIGGER THAN THEM.

>> I THINK EVERYBODY THOUGHT BY FLORIDA MOVING UP THE PRIMARY DATE THAT WE WOULD BE MORE INFLUENTIAL.

WHEN YOU SEE THIS IDEA FLOATED THAT BARACK OBAMA MAY BACK AWAY FROM FLORIDA AND WE SEE McCAIN ELIMINATING STAFF HERE IN FLORIDA, FLORIDA BECOMES LESS IMPORTANT EVEN THOUGH WE MOVED UP THE PRIMARY.

>> IT DOES, BUT I ALSO THINK FLORIDA IS A GREAT STATE FOR

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION HERE.

AND ONE OF THE THINGS THAT'S FAIRLY UNIQUE ABOUT OBAMA'S CAMPAIGN IS HOW MUCH MONEY WAS RAISED FROM SMALL SOURCES AND HOW MUCH MONEY IS DESIGNATED PRIMARY MONEY.

HE CAN GO BACK TO THE WELL.

AND SO HE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY EXPLOIT THAT HERE.

AND I THINK THERE'S A MOMENTUM THAT NEEDS TO BE BUILT UPON.

AND I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO WASTE THAT.

I THINK HE WILL BE -- I THINK HE WILL BE WORKING FLORIDA AT THE PRIMARY.

>> MARK MY WORDS, FLORIDA WILL BE VERY CRITICALLY TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PROCESS ON BOTH SIDES.

>> SO HE CAN'T GIVE IT UP.

>> AT ALL.

>> ALL RIGHT.

GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST HOLDS HIS BIG TWO-DAY CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT MEETING NEXT WEEK IN MIAMI.

HE'S GATHERING SOME OF THE TOP EXPERTS ALONG WITH BIG-NAMED POLITICIANS SUCH AS CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR ARNOLD

SCHWARZENEGGER AND ENVIRONMENTALIST ROBERT F. KENNEDY

JUNIOR.

CRIST SAYS HE WANTS TO DO MORE WITH RENEWABLE ENERGY, AND HE SPOKE FAVORABLY THIS WEEK ABOUT THE INDUSTRY DECISION NOT TO BUILD A NEW COAL-FIRED POWER PLANT IN TAYLOR COUNTY.

ERNEST, THE GOVERNOR IS BACKING AWAY FROM COAL, SUGGESTING

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THAT WE SHOULD GO TO SOLAR, WIND, NUCLEAR.

IS THIS OPENING THE DOOR TO MORE NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS, DO YOU THINK, IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA?

>> I THINK IT MAY BE, BUT IN A LARGER SENSE, IT'S GETTING THIS STATE TO KIND OF MOVE INTO THE 21st CENTURY AND REALLY RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CONTROL AND WHAT IT MEANS TO THIS STATE.

YOU KNOW, I TALKED TO A FRIEND OF MINE WHO IS AN ENVIRONMENTALIST, AND I ASKED HER IF THIS MEANS WE NEED TO LOWER CASE THE "R" NEXT TO CHARLIE'S NAME.

AND SHE WAS SAYING NOT AT ALL.

THAT REPUBLICANS ARE COMING AROUND, AND THAT IT'S NO LONGER FAIR TO LABEL REPUBLICANS AS A PARTY THAT DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND THAT A NUMBER OF REPUBLICANS ARE KIND OF GOING BACK TO THE ROOTS OF THE PARTY, WHICH WAS ALWAYS VERY INTERESTED IN THE ENVIRONMENT.

>> DAYS OF THE TEDDY ROOSEVELT.

>> TEDDY ROOSEVELT THE FOURTH COME TO SPEAK TO THIS EVENT.

>> YEAH, I'M NOT SURPRISED AT ALL.

AND I THINK CRIST HAS DONE A REALLY GOOD JOB OF HEIGHTENING AWARENESS OF THESE ISSUES.

ONE THING TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT GREEN EQUALS GREEN.

THE MORE WE'RE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, THE MORE STEPS WE TAKE TO IMPROVE THINGS HERE.

IT'S GOING TO TRANSLATE INTO COST SAVINGS FOR THE STATE, AND

IT'S GOING TO ATTRACT MORE BUSINESSES.

>> SHELLY, I'M WONDERING ABOUT INVITING ROBERT F. KENNEDY JUNIOR, ONE OF GEORGE BUSH'S, THE PRESIDENT'S BIGGEST CRITICS TO COME TO THIS SHOWCASE EVENT NEXT WEEK IN MIAMI, IS THIS A SLAP IN THE FACE?

BECAUSE ROBERT F. KENNEDY, IS A CRITIC OF GEORGE BUSH'S ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, BUT ALSO, HE THINKS THAT THE REPUBLICAN STOLE THE 2004 ELECTION IN OHIO BY MANIPULATING THE BALLOTS.

>> WELL, I MEAN, CHARLIE CRIST IS NOTHING, IF NOT A PRAGMATIST.

AND THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME WE'VE SEEN HIM STEP AS FAR AWAY FROM BUSH AS POSSIBLE.

AND IT WON'T BE THE LAST.

WE HAVE 18 MORE MONTHS TO GO, AND I THINK THAT CHARLIE CRIST LONG AGO MADE A DETERMINATION THAT HE DOESN'T WANT TO HITCH HIS WAGON TO THAT STAR AT ALL.

AND, IN FACT, YOU KNOW, HE SEES IT AS MORE OF AN ANCHOR.

AND I THINK THIS IS USEFUL TO HIM.

I MEAN, I THINK THAT HE'S SEEN THE SUCCESS THAT SCHWARZENEGGER HAS HAD BY POSITIONING HIMSELF AS MORE OF A PRAGMATIST AND MORE OF A CENTRIST, AT LEAST.

UNIONS NOTWITHSTANDING.

>> OR IMMIGRANTS NOTWITHSTANDING.

TELLING IMMIGRANTS TO TURN OFF THE MEXICAN TELEVISION OR

SPANISH TELEVISION.

>> BUT I THINK IT'S CLEAR THAT CHARLIE CRIST WANTS TO RUN AWAY FROM GEORGE BUSH, AND THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HIM TAKING THAT STANCE.

>> INVITE ROBERT F. KENNEDY, IS THIS A SLAP IN THE FACE OF THE PRESIDENT?

>> NO.

COUPLE OF THINGS I WANT TO SAY.

FIRST OF ALL, I WANT TO THANK ERNEST FOR HIS COMMENTS.

I THINK IT'S SAFE FOR THIS BROADCAST AND WE'RE GOING TO USE THIS IN REPUBLICAN ADVERTISING AROUND THE COUNTRY.

NO, HE'S DOING THE RIGHT THING.

EVERYBODY I THINK THAT HAS COMMON SENSE ABOUT AND KIND OF A PERSPECTIVE IS SAYING WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND WE HAVE TO GET ON THE FRONT EDGE.

AND ERNEST IS RIGHT.

IN A PLACE LIKE FLORIDA THAT MAYBE IS NOT ALWAYS ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF THINGS, THIS IS A PLACE WHERE WE SHOULD BE. THAT'S GOOD.

THIS IS VERY CONSTANT WITH WHERE CHARLIE CRIST HAS ALWAYS BEEN.

THIS IS NOT, OH, WHAT SHOULD I DO IN IS THIS GOOD OR BAD, CLOSE OR NOT AS CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT?

IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH GEORGE BUSH.

IT HAS TO DO WITH AN ISSUE, WHICH IS THE VERY KIND OF ISSUE

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2008, LOOKING FOR SOME KIND OF FRESH WIND FROM SOME OF THE PEOPLE RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT AND I THINK THEY WILL FIND IT.

>> WHEN YOU GET DOWN AND LOOK AT CHARLIE CRIST AND WHAT HE'S BEEN ABOUT, I THINK THE FACT THAT HE'S ASSOCIATED WITH ANYBODY NAMED KENNEDY AND ROOSEVELT, YEAH, LIKE THAT. PEOPLE START TALKING ABOUT HIM AS A NATIONAL CANDIDATE, NOT A BAD NAME TO BE MIXED IN WITH, CRIST, ROOSEVELT, KENNEDY, YOU DECIDE WHICH ONE --

>> THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSION VOTED 4-3 TO DO AWAY WITH THE COUNTY'S REGULATION OF WETLANDS AND LEAVE THAT JOB TO THE STATE.

COMMISSIONERS SAID THE COUNTY DOES NOT NEED TO DUPLICATE WHAT THE STATE ALREADY DOES.

BUT ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAY HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DOES A BETTER JOB PROTECTING WETLANDS THAN DO STATE REGULATORS.

>> I CALLED THE EPC NUMBER NOT REALLY EXPECTING TO GET ANYONE ON A SATURDAY, BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THEY WERE OUT THERE WITHIN 20 MINUTES AND PUT A STOP TO THE MULCHING OF THIS WETLAND.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT A STATE AGENCY WOULD HAVE ACTED AS QUICKLY AS OUR LOCAL COUNTY DID.

>> SOME OF THE JOBS AND THINGS AND THE CUTS WE'RE LOOKING AT IN OUR COUNTY TODAY, DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S WORTH THE DUPLICATION OF SERVICES, MR. CHAIRMAN, I'D LIKE TO PROPOSE A

MOTION THAT THE ADMINISTRATION MOVE TO ELIMINATE THE DUTIES OF THE EPC REGARDING THE WETLAND DIVISION AS WELL AS AMENDING THE COUNTY'S LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND COMP PLAN TO MIRROR THAT OF S.W.F.W.M.D.

>> SO IF WE'RE SAYING WE WANT TO ELIMINATE THE WETLANDS DIVISION FOR BUDGET REASONS, HE SUBMITTED HIS BUDGET AND WE DON'T NEED TO DO IT.

SO THERE MUST BE ANOTHER REASON.

AND IT'S NOT FOR COST SAVINGS.

>> SO WHAT'S THE REASON HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY BY A 4-3 MAJORITY HAS VOTED TO DO AWAY WITH ITS WETLANDS PROTECTION?

>> WELL, I MEAN, MARK SHARPE WAS VERY CLEAR IN POINTING OUT THAT DR. GARRITY SUBMITTED A BUDGET THAT REFLECTS THAT HE'S WITHIN HIS CONSTRAINTS.

IT WASN'T GOING TO SAVE ANY MONEY.

AND IT'S OBVIOUSLY, YOU KNOW, SOME -- IT APPEARS TO BE SOME SORT OF PAYBACK FOR THE SPECIAL INTEREST MONEY THAT WENT INTO THE GANG OF FORCE CAMPAIGNS THAT HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING THEIR ROLE ON THE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR THE LAST SEVERAL ELECTION CYCLES.

SO THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ANY OTHER RATIONAL --

>> WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT KEVIN WHITE'S STATEMENT THAT IT'S ABOUT DUPLICATION.

WE WANT TO ELIMINATE THE LOCAL DUPLICATION OF WHAT THE STATE DOES?

>> WELL, THAT ALSO DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE SENSE.

FIRST OF ALL, THEY INVITED DR. GARRITY AND GAVE HIM TWO MINUTES TO SPEAK, AND THEN CUT OFF THE MEETING BEFORE HE EVEN HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT HIS PROGRAM, WHICH HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO DEVELOP TO DEMONSTRATE THAT DUPLICATION WAS NOT REALLY AN ISSUE.

AND, IN FACT, IF THEY WERE EVEN REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THAT, THEN IT WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE TO MAKE THE LOCAL EPC WETLANDS DIVISION THE PRIMARY REGULATOR AND HAVE STATE REPRESENTATION THERE.

IT MAKES MORE SENSE TO DO THAT AND HAVE GREATER PROTECTION THAN IT DOES TO JUST GET RID OF IT WHEN THERE ARE NO BUDGETARY ISSUES.

>> ADAM, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS DECISION BY HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY?

>> WELL, I THINK ULTIMATELY IT'S GOING TO BE REVISITED. I'LL MAKE A WILD PREDICTION.

THEY ARE GOING TO GO AT THIS AGAIN.

I DO THINK THERE IS A CONCERN.

IT GOES BACK TO THE FIRST ISSUE TONIGHT ABOUT GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY.

AND WE'RE ABOUT TO HAVE TO MAKE SOME VERY TOUGH DECISIONS. MAYBE THIS DOESN'T FIT IN YOUR DEFINITION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES, BUT ESSENTIAL SERVICES IS GOING TO DRIVE DECISION MAKING, ESPECIALLY FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' STANDPOINT AND

LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MOVING FORWARD.

AND I THINK THIS IS -- AS MUCH AS WE SAY ENVIRONMENT,
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT IS HUGEY IMPORTANT, AND IT IS IN
FLORIDA, THE QUESTION IS, HOW BEST TO GET AT THAT, AND HOW
BIG A PRIORITY IS THAT OVER ADDING THREE MORE COPS TO THE
BEAT OR TWO OTHER FIREFIGHTERS OR ET CETERA.

AND UNFORTUNATELY, IN FLORIDA, UNLESS WE'RE WILLING TO COUGH
UP MORE IN TERMS OF TAX REVENUE, WE'LL HAVE TO START MAKING
SOME VERY TOUGH DECISIONS.

AND SOMETIMES NOT POPULAR ONES.

>> SOME PEOPLE HAVE SEEN AND WRITTEN ABOUT -- THERE ARE
BLOGS OUT THIS WEEK WRITTEN BY ENVIRONMENTALISTS SAYING THIS
IS THE HAND STATEWIDE OF DEVELOPERS WHO WANT TO MAKE SURE
THAT WETLANDS DON'T GET STRONG PROTECTION.

SO THEY ARE GOING TO GO AFTER HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY'S WETLANDS
PROTECTIONS DIVISION AS A WARNING TO THE REST OF THE STATE.

ANYBODY --

>> WELL, THEY WENT AFTER THE STATE FIRST.

I MEAN, THEY TRIED -- THEY TRIED TO --

>> THE LEGISLATURE TRIED TO ELIMINATE IT.

>> YEAH, THE LEGISLATURE TRIED TO ELIMINATE THE STATE
REGULATION OVER WETLANDS.

AND TO ME, THIS IS JUST DEVELOPERS TRYING TO REMOVE A
HURDLE.

AND I'M BOTHERED BY THAT, BECAUSE, YOU KNOW, I THINK IF THIS

WAS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE ENVIRONMENT, THEY WOULDN'T BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT WETLANDS PROTECTION.

>> SORRY, WE'RE OUT OF TIME.

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

ADAM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> CONCERNED ABOUT 1.3 MILLION POLICY HOLDERS IN CITIZENS PROPERTY INSURANCE.

IT BLEW MY MIND WHEN I SAW THAT HEADLINE.

GOVERNMENT RUN INSURANCE IS GOING TO BE A VERY BAD THING.

AND ALL I CAN SAY IS, YOU BETTER PAY ATTENTION TO THE WEATHER CHANNEL THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS.

>> ROCHELLE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

>> WELL, I JUST WANT TO GO BACK TO ANOTHER TANGENTIAL STORY ON THE WETLANDS ISSUE WHICH IS THE ISSUE OF TRANSPARENCY.

I THINK THAT ONE OF THE OTHER PROBLEMS IS THAT WE HAVE THESE MEMBERS OF THE COUNTY COMMISSION SITTING AS THE BOARD, AND WE HAVE NO REPRESENTATION ON THAT BOARD BY ANY OF THE OTHER LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES WHO ARE SO DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THIS.

AND SO THERE'S VERY LITTLE TRANSPARENCY TO SAY WHAT GOES ON.

>> AND THE CITY OF TAMPA, FOR ONE, IS FIGHTING TO GET SOME REPRESENTATION ON THAT BOARD.

>> YES.

THE CITY OF TAMPA, COUNCILWOMAN MULHERN MADE A MOTION AND

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED TO ASK FOR REPRESENTATION ON THAT BOARD.

AND I THINK THAT THAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN.

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

>> WELL, IT'S WHAT'S COMING UP, I THINK.

CHARLIE CRIST, MEL MARTINEZ AND ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER ALL GOING TO BE AT A FUND-RAISER IN TAMPA NEXT FRIDAY.

I WOULD LOVE TO BE THERE.

IT'S A REPUBLICAN PARTY FLORIDA MEETING.

AND YOU WOULD IMAGINE, THEY WILL BE ASKED A LOT OF QUESTIONS AS TO WHY ARE YOU DOING THAT?

ALL THREE OF THEM HAVE BEEN VERY MODERATE ON A LOT OF ISSUES OBVIOUSLY IN TERMS OF MEL MARTINEZ WITH THE IMMIGRATION REFORM LEGISLATION THAT WENT DOWN.

YOU CAN IMAGINE THERE'S A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO IN THAT ONE LITTLE FUND-RAISER.

>> IS THIS THE MODERATE WING OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY HAVING A CAUCUS IN TAMPA?

>> I WOULD LOVE TO SEE WHAT THE REACTION IS GOING TO BE WHEN YOU HAVE THREE PEOPLE WHO -- YOU KNOW, REALLY, A LOT OF PEOPLE ARE SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS, KEEP HEARING CHARLIE CRIST IS THE BEST DEMOCRATIC PARTY SINCE NAME YOUR GOVERNOR.

>> OHHH.

ERNEST, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK.

>> WELL, A REPORT CAME OUT THIS WEEK THAT INDICATED AT ONE

POINT IN THE '90s, WAL-MART WAS TAKING INSURANCE OUT ON THEIR EMPLOYEES AND THEN COLLECTING ON THAT LIFE INSURANCE WHEN THE EMPLOYEES DIED.

AND THE ATTORNEY WHO IS FIGHTING THIS AND TRYING TO GET A CLASS-ACTION LAWSUIT DESCRIBED IT AS CREEPY.

AND I WOULD TEND TO AGREE.

IT DOESN'T TAKE A LOT OF IMAGINATION TO COME UP WITH SOME SCARY SCENARIOS.

I COULD SEE A MANAGER SAYING, I KNOW CHARLIE IS A GREETER, BUT WHY DON'T WE HAVE HIM GO OUT AND GET THE SHOPPING CARTS TODAY.

AH, CHARLIE, I HAD MY HEART ATTACK IF HE GETS THE SHOPPING CARTS.

YEAH, LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT.

[LAUGHTER]

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, THANKS TO ERNEST HOOPER, THANKS TO SHELLY REBACK, ADAM GOODMAN AND JEREMY WALLACE.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE ALWAYS WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS ABOUT THIS PROGRAM.

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

THIS SHOW WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE FOR PLAYBACK EARLY NEXT WEEK.

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK" WILL FEATURE A SPECIAL INTERVIEW NEXT

WEEK WITH CABLE BROADCASTER GRETA VAN SUSTEREN, NEXT FRIDAY
NIGHT AT 8:30 AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.
FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!

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