

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

SEPTEMBER 21, 2007

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, THE GOVERNOR BEGINS CAMPAIGNING FOR THE SUPER HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION.

JEB BUSH TAKES A SWIPE AT CITIZENS INSURANCE.

WE'LL PREVIEW SOME OF THE YOUTUBE QUESTIONS FOR THE ST. PETERSBURG PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE, AND A UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA STUDENT IS TASERED SENDING SHOCK WAVES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

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 DARRYL PAULSON IS A PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT AT USF ST. PETERSBURG.

KEITH WOODS IS THE DEAN OF FACULTY AT THE POYNTER INSTITUTE.

LIANA FERNANDEZ-FOX IS A PROFESSOR AT HILLSBOROUGH COMMUNITY

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COLLEGE AND A DEMOCRAT AND CHRIS HART IS A BUSINESSMAN AND A FORMER HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSIONER AND A REPUBLICAN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

POLLS SHOW THE SUPER HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION AMENDMENT'S SUPPORT IS DROPPING.

SO THIS WEEK GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST CAME TO TAMPA TO TOUT THE BENEFITS OF THE AMENDMENT SAYING HE WOULD WORK LIKE CRAZY TO GET IT PASSED.

THE AMENDMENT WHICH WILL BE ON THE BALLOT JANUARY 29th WOULD REPLACE THE CURRENT \$25,000 HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION WITH A PERCENTAGE-BASED ONE THAT WOULD SLASH UP TO \$195,000 OFF THE FIRST \$500,000 OF A PROPERTY'S ASSESSED VALUE.

PASSAGE WOULD CHOP BILLIONS MORE OUT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

>> WHEN THEY VOTE FOR THE AMENDMENT THEY GET THE CHOICE OF EITHER ONE.

IF YOU WANT MORE CHOICE, IF YOU WANT LOWER TAXES THEN YOU OUGHT TO VOTE YES ON AMENDMENT ONE.

>> LIANA, WHO ARE THE MAIN SUPPORTERS BEHIND THIS IDEA OF THE SUPER HOMESTEAD?

>> WELL, IT WOULD BE FOLKS WHO HAVE SECOND HOMES, FOLKS WHO ARE FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS.

AND ONLY IF THEY'VE DONE THEIR HOMEWORK, BECAUSE THIS IS NOT AN EASY EQUATION TO FIGURE OUT.

AND MOST FOLKS ARE REALLY STILL, I THINK, A BIT CONFUSED BY

THE WAY THE PROPOSAL WORKS.

I DID DO SOME SEARCHING ON THE INTERNET AND FOUND THAT THE HILLSBOROUGH PROPERTY APPRAISER AND THE PINELLAS PROPERTY APPRAISER HAVE AN EASY CALCULATOR ON THEIR WEB SITE.

YOU CAN GO RIGHT THERE AND TYPE IN YOUR NAME, SEARCH FOR YOUR PROPERTY, AND THEN CLICK THE CALCULATOR, AND IT WILL TELL YOU THE DIFFERENCE SO YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TELL.

>> AND YOU CAN STILL KEEP THE OLD SAVE OUR HOMES 3% CAP.

>> RIGHT.

>> IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO.

BUT IF YOU'RE PLANNING ON SELLING YOUR HOUSE, THEN YOU MIGHT --

>> THAT'S REALLY WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS THE BREAK-EVEN POINT.

HOW FAR DOWN THE LINE IS THAT FOR YOU?

FOR SOME FOLKS IT'S MAYBE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW YOU'LL HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF A SAVINGS FOR FIVE YEARS AND ALL OF A SUDDEN IT TAKES OFF AGAIN AND SO YOU'RE UPSIDE DOWN IN THAT.

REALLY, THE CALCULATORS WORK VERY WELL.

THEY HAVE IT GRAPHED SO YOU WOULD SEE HOW IT WOULD AFFECT IF YOU STAYED WITH SAVE OUR HOMES IN RED AND IF YOU WENT WITH THE SUPER HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION IN BLUE AND YOU WANT TO LOOK AT WHERE THAT BREAK-EVEN POINT IS AND THEN DECIDE, AM I STILL GOING TO BE HERE AT THAT TIME OR AM I THINKING ABOUT MOVING ON?

>> CHRIS, I NOTICED THAT IT WAS THE REALTORS THAT REALLY HELPED THE GOVERNOR WITH THIS EVENT BECAUSE REAL ESTATE SALES ARE DOWN, ESPECIALLY HOUSING SALES ARE DOWN.

>> THEY ARE ALMOST AT A STOP IN MANY CASES.

BUT I GUESS SOME OF US WOULD SAY THIS IS JUST ONLY A GOOD START.

I'VE ENCOURAGED LEGISLATORS THAT AT ANY TIME LIKE THEY COME TO SPECIAL SESSION, THEY NEED TO LOOK AT COMMERCIAL PROPERTY.

THEY NEED TO LOOK AT OTHER OPTIONS.

BECAUSE WHAT WE'RE DOING IS NO DIFFERENT THAN SAVE OUR HOMES.

WE'RE PUSHING THE BALLOON ON THIS SIDE.

IT'S GOING TO BULGE OUT ON THE OTHER.

NOT THAT THEY SHOULDN'T TAKE IT IN BITES.

SOMETIMES COMPREHENSIVE GETS IN THE WAY OF REAL PROGRESS.

I'M JUST CONCERNED THAT WE HAVEN'T LOOKED AT THE WHOLE ISSUE OF THE WHOLE TAXING OF THE PUBLIC IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

>> IT NEEDS 60% TO PASS.

IS THAT WHY IT'S NOT ABOVE 60% IN THE LATEST POLL?

IT'S IN THE 50s, ACCORDING TO THE PUBLIC.

BECAUSE BUSINESSES FEEL LEFT OUT, MAYBE RENTERS FEEL LEFT OUT, IS THAT WHY IT'S NOT ABOVE THE 60% MARK?

>> THINK ABOUT SOME PEOPLE THAT FOCUS ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

NOW, THERE'S A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD BUT THE SWORD IS POINTED

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AT THE PEOPLE WHO CAN LEAST AFFORD IT, THE ACTUAL RENTERS
WHO WILL PAY IT OR SUBSIDIZED IN SOME WAY BY GOVERNMENT.

SO I DON'T THINK THAT'S A WIN-WIN.

SO I THINK THEY NEED TO TAKE A LOOK AND COME OUT TO THE
PUBLIC AND SAY WHAT WE'RE GOING TO DO NEXT.

I DON'T THINK YOU CAN JUST SAY THIS IS WHERE WE ARE, DO THIS
TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, BECAUSE WE KNOW IT DOESN'T.

>> UM-HUM.

>> I THINK THE PROBLEM HERE IS JUST CONFUSION.

VOTERS ARE CONFUSED ABOUT HOW THIS WILL IMPACT THEM.

THAT'S WHAT VOTERS WILL CONSIDER WHEN THEY GO INTO THE
VOTING BOOTH ON ELECTION DAY, HOW WILL THIS IMPACT ME?

WILL I BE BETTER OFF OR WORSE OFF?

A LOT OF VOTERS DON'T KNOW.

WHEN YOU GET INDECISION, THAT'S WHEN YOU GET THE POLL
NUMBERS STARTING TO DROP.

WE WERE IN THE HIGH 50s.

NOW 47% IN THE LAST POLL.

THE LEGISLATURE BY REQUIRING THE 60% PASSAGE NOW HAS MADE
THE TASK MORE DIFFICULT.

>> WHICH DIDN'T PASS BY 60%, BY THE WAY.

>> AND THE PEOPLE --

[LAUGHTER]

>> ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF FLORIDA IS BEHIND THIS.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IS BEHIND THIS.

THE REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY, BY AND LARGE, IS BEHIND THIS.
THERE'S NOW AN ORGANIZED GROUP SUPPORTING THIS VOTE YES ON
ONE FLORIDA HEADED BY MIKE FASANO, A STATE SENATOR FROM NEW
PORT RICHEY.

THE OPPOSITION, ESSENTIALLY, COMES FROM A GROUP CALLED "NOT
GOOD ENOUGH" WHO WANTS TAX REFORM, A DIFFERENT KIND OF TAX
REFORM, INCREASE IN THE SALES TAX AND ABOLISHING PROPERTY
TAX ALTOGETHER WHICH SEEMS LOONEY TO ME.

>> THE MARCO RUBIO IDEA, THE HOUSE SPEAKER IDEA.

>> YEAH.

AND THEN THE OTHER PRIMARY SOURCE OF OPPOSITION, I THINK,
COMES FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WHO ARE CONCERNED BECAUSE THE
NET IMPACT OF THIS IS THAT IF THIS PASSES, THERE'S GOING TO
BE ABOUT \$25 BILLION LESS IN REVENUE AVAILABLE FOR
GOVERNMENTS AND THAT HAS THE CONCERN OF GOVERNMENTS
THROUGHOUT THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

>> I THINK GOTTEN LOST IN THIS CONVERSATION IN GENERAL.
YOU'RE REALLY PITTING ME AGAINST MYSELF WITH THIS AMENDMENT.
YES, I CAN GET A BREAK ON MY HOUSE, AND I WOULD FALL INTO
THE GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO WOULD.

BUT THE CONSEQUENCE OF THAT IS I'M GOING TO WATCH SOME
SERVICE SOMEWHERE ELSE IN MY CITY GET CUT AS THE CITY STARTS
TO LOSE THE TAX BENEFITS.

SO I THINK THAT WHEN YOU COMBINE THOSE THINGS AND IT
EXPLAINS THE DECREASING POLL NUMBERS OVER TIME.

>> DARRYL, THE GOVERNOR HAS MADE PROMISES ABOUT PROPERTY INSURANCE IN THE PAST.

THIS TIME HE SAYS HE'S GOING TO WORK LIKE CRAZY TO MAKE THIS AMENDMENT PASS.

LET ME ASK YOU THIS, HAS THE GOVERNOR LIVED UP TO HIS PROMISES AT THE START OF SOME OF THESE EFFORTS THAT HE'S UNDERTAKEN?

>> WELL, I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED SO FAR.

I MEAN, WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE TWO MAIN THINGS HE WAS GOING TO DO, HE TALKED ABOUT HOME INSURANCE REFORM, AND THEY TALKED ABOUT SPECIFIC REDUCTION IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 25%.

MOST PEOPLE CERTAINLY HAVEN'T SEEN THAT.

IN FACT, A PROJECTION LAST WEEK, THERE SHOULD BE A 25% REDUCTION.

JUST THAT THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY IS KEEPING THE PROFITS AND THEY ARE NOT TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE CHANGES THAT THE LEGISLATURE MADE.

SO THAT DIDN'T COME THROUGH.

THERE'S EVEN MORE PRESSURE, I THINK, ON THE GOVERNOR THAN TO DELIVER ON PROPERTY TAX REFORM OR PROPERTY TAX RELIEF.

SO IF THAT DOESN'T COME THROUGH, HE'S GOING TO BE SORT OF LIKE 0 AND 2, AND THAT COULD, IN FACT, IMPACT HIS POPULARITY RATING.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, SPEAKING OF PROPERTY INSURANCE, FORMER GOVERNOR JEB BUSH ADDRESSED THE CONVENTION OF INSURANCE EXECUTIVES THIS WEEK IN TEXAS WHERE HE CRITICIZED FLORIDA'S LATEST EFFORTS AT INSURANCE REFORM.

BUSH TARGETED THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE, WHICH DOUBLED THE STATE'S CATASTROPHE FUND TO \$32 BILLION AND ALLOWED STATE-BACKED CITIZENS PROPERTY INSURANCE TO DIRECTLY COMPETE WITH PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES.

BUT BUSH ALSO TOOK AIM AT CURRENT GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST, WHO BACKED THE IDEA OF EXPANDING CITIZENS.

SO, DARRYL, IS THIS A SIGN OF A RIFT BETWEEN THE GOVERNOR AND THE EXGOVERNOR?

>> YES.

>> I LIKE IT WHEN YOU'RE DIRECT.

>> SAY THAT AGAIN.

WANT TO BE CLEAR ON THAT.

[LAUGHTER]

>> GOVERNOR BUSH SORT OF STAYED OUT OF THE WAY, STAYED IN THE BACKGROUND FOR THE SIX MONTHS, NINE MONTHS OF THE CRIST ADMINISTRATION.

I THINK, LET HIM ESTABLISH HIS OWN AGENDA, ET CETERA.

YOU KNOW, AFTER THAT SORT OF HONEYMOON PERIOD, GOVERNOR BUSH HAS SAID, I DON'T THINK THIS IS THE DIRECTION THE REPUBLICAN PARTY NEEDS TO MOVE IN.

I DON'T THINK THIS IS THE DIRECTION THE STATE OF FLORIDA

NEEDS TO MOVE IN.

AND SO YOU GOT THIS DISPUTE.

ESSENTIALLY, IT'S A DISPUTE ABOUT THE BEST APPROACH ON
INSURANCE, HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE.

SHOULD WE RELY ON THE STATE OF FLORIDA OR SHOULD WE RELY ON
THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

AND JEB BUSH IS VERY MUCH A PRIVATE SECTOR PERSON.

AND CHARLIE CRIST HAS OPERATED MORE AS A POPULIST ON THIS,
AND HE'S CERTAINLY BEEN VERY AGGRESSIVE IN ATTACKING THE
INSURANCE INDUSTRY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

AND I THINK IT'S ONE OF THE FEW MISTAKES THAT HE'S MADE.

I THINK CHARLIE CRIST HAS DONE A VERY GOOD JOB.

IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS WHY HIS POPULARITY REASONS HAVE BEEN
SKY HIGH, AND HAVE STAYED THERE.

BUT I THINK THE PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES NEED TO BE PART
OF THE SOLUTION, AND I DON'T SEE HOW THEY CAN WHEN YOU
CONSTANTLY ATTACK THEM.

>> CHRIS, IS THIS -- DO YOU THINK THAT CHARLIE CRIST
REPRESENTS A DIFFERENT IDEOLOGY, MAYBE A PULL BACK FROM THE
WIDE-OPEN FREE ENTERPRISE PRACTICE BY JEB BUSH?

>> WELL, I THINK IT IS DIFFERENT.

WHAT I HEAR FROM A LOT OF MY COLLEAGUES AND PEOPLE SORT OF
ON MY SIDE OF THE AISLE IS THIS IS NOT THE I'M GOING TO
CONTINUE THE JEB BUSH LEGACY APPROACH THAT WAS EXPECTED.
FROM THAT STANDPOINT, I WILL TELL YOU, I'M SURPRISED EVEN AT

THE LEGISLATURE FOR NOT TAKING MORE OF A FREE ENTERPRISE APPROACH TO THIS.

YOU KNOW, WHY IS -- WHY ARE WE AS TAXPAYERS, WHY ARE WE AS BUSINESS PEOPLE, WHY ARE WE AT ALL TAKING ON SUCH A LIABILITY FOR THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY?

WHY AREN'T WE MAKING THE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM WORK?

THIS IS A MAJOR PARADIGM SHIFT.

>> NOW, DOES THIS OPEN THE DOOR DO YOU THINK, CHRIS, TO ANYBODY CHALLENGING CHARLIE CRIST IN THE NEXT GOVERNOR'S RACE, ANYBODY WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY?

>> I THINK AS DR. PAULSON SAID, I THINK BY NEXT YEAR, WHEN WE GO THROUGH THE NEXT LEGISLATIVE SESSION, NOT THIS YEAR, BUT THE NEXT YEAR, IF THINGS DON'T CHANGE AND WE DON'T SEE PROPERTY TAXES GO DOWN, WE DON'T SEE INSURANCE CHANGED AND ANY OTHER MAJOR ISSUE OUT THERE, JUST TAKE A FEW, YOU'RE GOING TO SEE POSSIBLE CHALLENGES WITHIN THE PARTY, AND YOU WILL SEE MANY CHALLENGES FROM THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE.

>> LIANA?

>> WELL, I DEFINITELY AGREE WITH THAT LAST STATEMENT.

BUT I'D LIKE TO FOCUS BACK ON SOMETHING THAT DARRYL PAULSON SAID, AND THAT IS, HE IS A VERY POPULIST GOVERNOR AND HE'S GOVERNING IN THAT MANNER THAT'S EXTREMELY DIFFERENT FROM HOW JEB BUSH GOVERNED.

AND I DON'T THINK IT WAS EXPECTED THAT CHARLIE CRIST WAS CONTINUE.

IN FACT, THAT'S INDEED HOW HE GOT ELECTED, I BELIEVE, IS THAT HE PROMISED THAT THINGS WOULD BE DIFFERENT.

SO I'M THINKING THAT THIS TOPIC HAPPENED TO BE CONVENIENT, THAT HE WAS REALLY TIRED OF HEARING HOW WONDERFULLY AND HOW WONDERFULLY ACCEPTED THIS NEW GOVERNOR HAS BEEN AND HOW MUCH HE'S APPEALING TO BOTH DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS AND INDEPENDENTS AS WELL.

AND THIS HAPPENED TO BE THE TOPIC OF THE HOUR, SOMETHING HE KNEW SOMETHING ABOUT, OBVIOUSLY, AND HE WENT WITH IT.

>> KEITH, I NOTICED THAT IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL EDITORIAL PAGE TWICE HAS TAKEN SHOTS AT CHARLIE CRIST FOR EXPANDING THIS GOVERNMENT-RUN INSURANCE PROGRAM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, BOB HUNTER, WHO IS ONE OF THE LEADING CONSUMER INSURANCE ADVOCATES IN THE COUNTRY, SAID THE PROBLEM IN FLORIDA IS THAT THE INSURANCE COMPANIES ARE STILL MAKING RECORD PROFITS AND NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO CURTAIL THEIR PROFITS.

>> YEAH, I THINK THAT'S -- THAT'S CLEARLY ONE ISSUE. BUT YOU HAVE TO ALSO ASK YOURSELF -- AND I THINK IT'S, AGAIN, PARADOXICAL TO TALK ABOUT CITIZENS BEING THE PROBLEM THAT IT IS, AND IT IS, WHILE WE'RE WATCHING THE INSURANCE COMPANIES SLASH AND SLASH AND SLASH PEOPLE FROM THE POLICY. YOU HAVE TO ASK YOURSELF AT SOME POINT, YES, DO YOU WANT THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO DO WHAT IT SHOULD DO. BUT IF IT'S NOT DOING IT, WHAT DO YOU DO?

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

WE ARE AS A STATE INCREDIBLY VULNERABLE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER
TO SOME KIND OF CATASTROPHIC HIT.

WE'VE SEEN NOW ON THE GULF COAST WHAT IT REALLY LOOKS LIKE
WHEN IT'S BAD, AND WE WATCHED THE INSURANCE COMPANIES
PERFORM VERY BADLY IN NEW ORLEANS AND ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI
GULF COAST DURING THAT PERIOD.

>> I CAN PICK UP ON YOUR ISSUE, BECAUSE I THINK WE AGREE IN
MORE WAYS THAN NOT ON THAT.

BUT WHAT STARTED OUT IS TRYING TO FIND TAX EQUITY TO SORT
OUT THIS DISPARITY WE'VE GOT.

BECAME ALL OF A SUDDEN STATE GOVERNMENT AGAINST LOCAL
GOVERNMENT.

EXCUSE ME?

WHAT HAPPENED?

THAT DIDN'T HAVE TO DEAL -- IN FACT, DEALT WITH POLITICAL
CONVENIENCE.

NOW WE'VE GOT A CASE WHERE PEOPLE ARE SAYING, LOOK, I'M NOT
SURE I GOT ANYTHING BACK FROM MY INSURANCE COMPANY ON ONE
SIDE.

I KNOW MY GOVERNMENT TAXES ARE GOING TO COME DOWN.

I STILL CAN'T SELL MY HOME.

WHAT'S NEXT THAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AS A NATIONAL RIPPLE
EFFECT BECAUSE OF WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE MARKETPLACE?

WHERE DO WE GO?

WELL, AT SOME POINT, YOU'VE GOT TO STOP CAMPAIGNING, AND

YOU'VE GOT TO SERVE AS A CEO OF A STATE.

THAT MEANS, YOU'VE GOT TO SIT DOWN WITH THE INSURANCE COMPANIES.

YOU'VE GOT TO SIT DOWN WITH ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS, WHETHER THEY BE DEVELOPERS, WHETHER IT BE REALTORS, WHOMEVER HAPPENS TO BE, AND THE CITIZENS AND START TO FIND REAL SOLUTIONS.

>> AND YOU DON'T THINK THAT'S HAPPENING UNDER CHARLIE CRIST'S ADMINISTRATION.

>> NO, I DO NOT.

>> THAT WILL HAVE TO BE THE LAST WORD ON THAT.

TWO MONTHS FROM NOW, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ARRIVE IN ST. PETERSBURG FOR THE YOUTUBE/CNN DEBATE.

THE QUESTIONS ARE ALREADY ROLLING IN, SOME 2,000 POSTED ONLINE SO FAR, INCLUDING SOME OLD FAVORITE QUESTIONERS FROM THE DEMOCRATS' DEBATE, LIKE THE SNOWMAN AND NEW ONES LIKE THESE:

>> THIS QUESTION IS DIRECTED TO ALL THE CANDIDATES.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO AS PRESIDENT TO IMPROVE OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM SO STUDENTS LIKE ME CAN COMPETE AGAINST OTHER COUNTRIES FOR A JOB?

>> IT'S NO SECRET THAT BETWEEN THE INTRUSIVE SCREENINGS, THE INCESSANT ORANGE ALERTS, AND THE RIDICULOUS FLIGHT DELAYS, AIR TRAVEL SUCKS IN THE U.S. AND IT SEEMS TO BE GETTING WORSE EVERY YEAR.

MY QUESTION TO YOU IS, WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT THAT AS

PRESIDENT?

>> DIETS AND FAST FOODS ARE TWO OF THE BIGGEST GREAT AMERICAN BUSINESSES.

TO KEEP MONEY GOING WHILE OBESITY AND HEART ATTACK ARE THE NUMBER ONE CAUSES OF DEATH IN THIS COUNTRY, I WOULD LIKE TO SURVIVE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO TELL ANYONE.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?

>> AND YOU CAN SUBMIT YOUR QUESTION AT [YOUTUBE.COM/DEBATES](https://www.youtube.com/debates). WELL, CHRIS, DO THE REPUBLICANS HAVE ANYTHING TO FEAR FROM THESE KIND OF QUESTIONS THAT ARE COMING UP?

>> WELL, I DON'T THINK SO, BECAUSE I THINK IT'S ALL A JOKE. I SAW THE DEMOCRATIC DEBATE LAST EVENING THAT ADDRESSED HEALTH CARE AND FINANCIAL SECURITY.

AND THEY SAID, WE WANT TO ASK AND GIVE YOU ONE MIGHT BE TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION, WE'LL GET MORE QUESTIONS IN.

WE DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING, VERY LITTLE ABOUT WHAT THE PEOPLE ACTUALLY THOUGHT.

THE VERY FIRST QUESTION YOU HAD THERE FROM A YOUNG LADY ON THERE ASKING ABOUT, WHAT WILL THEIR APPROACH BE TO EDUCATION SO SHE CAN COMPETE IN THE WORLD, GREAT QUESTION.

WELL, LET'S GIVE THEM TIME TO ANSWER THAT.

LET'S BE SURE THEY REALLY UNDERSTAND HOW BIG A RESPONSIBILITY THAT THEY ARE --

>> YOU DON'T THINK THIS FORMAT WILL SERVE THE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> NO, I THINK IT'S ENTERTAINING.

I THINK IT WOULD BE A HOOT TO BE ON.

YOU KNOW, WHY SHOULDN'T YOU VOLUNTEER, BECAUSE IT'S A LIGHT LUNCH.

THERE IS NO RESPONSIBILITY TO REALLY PRODUCE A REAL ANSWER.

>> DARRYL IN.

>> LET ME DISAGREE A LITTLE BIT.

I THINK IT'S GOOD TO HAVE DIFFERENT FORUMS OF THESE DEBATES. TOO OFTEN THEY ARE STALE.

THEY ARE BLAND.

THEY FOLLOW THE SAME FORMATS ALL OF THE TIME.

I SEE NOTHING WRONG HAVING CITIZENS ASK QUESTIONS.

I PARTICULARLY WANT MR. HOT DOG THERE OR MR. SNOWMAN TO ASK A QUESTION.

I THINK IT DOES MAKE A MOCKERY OF THE RACE, PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN.

BUT THERE ARE OVER 2,000 CITIZENS WHO HAVE ALREADY ASKED QUESTIONS.

THEY ARE GOING TO PICK ABOUT 35, 40 QUESTIONS FOR THESE CANDIDATES.

I THINK REPUBLICANS ARE SOMEWHAT LEERY BECAUSE THE DEMOCRATS HAVE DOMINATED THE INTERNET AND THE BLOG SITES, ET CETERA, AND THEY ARE AFRAID THEY'LL BE AMBUSHED TO SOME EXTENT.

OF COURSE, THAT DEBATE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HELD THIS WEEK IN ST. PETERSBURG.

IT WAS PUSHED BACK A COUPLE OF MONTHS TO NOVEMBER NOW, AND THERE ARE STILL A COUPLE OF REPUBLICANS, MITT ROMNEY AND FRED THOMPSON, WHO HAVE NOT COMMITTED YET TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS DEBATE.

YOU KNOW, I HOPE THEY DO.

I THINK THEY ARE GOOD QUESTIONS THAT CAN BE ASKED.

>> KEITH, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE FORMAT?

>> I THINK IT'S 90% GIMMICK AND 10% ADDED VALUE TO THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

ONE OF THE VALUES THAT YOU DO GET IS THAT EVEN FROM THE CITIZENS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A QUESTION NOBODY ELSE THOUGHT OF TO ASK.

THE FIRST QUESTION ABOUT EDUCATION, I CAN WRITE THE ANSWER FOR YOU RIGHT NOW FOR ALL OF THE CANDIDATES WHO ARE GOING TO ANSWER IT, AND YOU GIVE THEM 20 MINUTES, I CAN WRITE 20 MINUTES' WORTH OF THAT ANSWER BECAUSE I'VE HEARD IT BEFORE. IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY CHALLENGE THEM.

MAYBE THE VALUE --

>> YOU'RE AN EXCITED VOTER, KEITH.

[LAUGHTER]

>> MAYBE THE VALUE OF THIS IS THAT WE HAVE THAT MOMENT LIKE WE DID IN THE BUSH/CLINTON TOWN HALL DEBATE WHEN YOU HAVE JUST A -- THE VENEER BREAKS AND YOU SEE A LITTLE MOMENT OF REAL FROM THE CANDIDATES. THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN.

MAYBE THIS WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE.

>> LIANA, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> I AGREE WITH DARRYL IN THAT ALL DIFFERENT KINDS OF FORUMS AND TYPES OF FORUMS ARE WHAT WILL GIVE US THE BEST LOOK AT THESE CANDIDATES.

IT'S STILL, IN THIS CASE WITH THE YOUTUBE, FALLS IN THE HANDS OF THE EDITORS TO DECIDE WHICH QUESTIONS ARE GOING TO BE ASKED AND WHICH COMIC THINGS.

I MEAN, LET'S FACE IT, THEY'LL STILL BE LOOKING FOR GOOD TELEVISION.

I HAPPENED TO BE IN THE SOUND TRUCK THE NIGHT THAT LAWTON CHILES SAID THAT -- WALK BEFORE THE BREAK OF DAWN.

EVERYBODY IN THE SOUND TRUCK WENT WILD.

THEY HAD GONE OVER TIME.

THEY DIDN'T CARE.

IT WAS GOOD TELEVISION.

THAT'S STILL WHAT THEY'LL BE AFTER.

WHAT DARRYL SAID IS EXACTLY WHERE WE SHOULD BE.

AND THAT IS, ALL DIFFERENT TYPES OF FORUMS SO THAT WE DO HAVE TIME FOR IN-DEPTH ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS.

AND REALLY NOT THE SAME ONES OVER AND OVER AGAIN ABOUT EDUCATION, ET CETERA.

THEY'VE GOT BROCHURES WITH THEIR PLATFORMS.

YOU CAN READ THAT IF YOU WANT TO, BUT I THINK HAVING A YOUNG PERSON COME UP AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER THE YOUNG PERSON CAME

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

UP WITH THAT QUESTION OR NOT, WHETHER SHE WAS FED THAT QUESTION.

BUT TO HAVE A YOUNG PERSON ASKING, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MY EDUCATION, IS REALLY PRETTY SIGNIFICANT.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, POLICE USING A TASER ON A UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA STUDENT THIS WEEK CAUSED AN INSTANT MEDIA SENSATION.

THE VIDEO OF STUDENT ANDREW MEYER ASKING A LONG QUESTION FOLLOWING SENATOR JOHN KERRY'S SPEECH, THEN BEING DRAGGED OFF BY CAMPUS POLICE AND HIT WITH 50,000 VOLTS HAS CAUSED SHOCK IN SOME AND SKEPTICISM IN OTHERS.

IT RAISES ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MOTIVES OF THE STUDENT AND THE FUTURE OF FREE SPEECH.

>> SECRET SOCIETY OF BUSH -- THANK YOU FOR CUTTING MY MIKE.

THANK YOU.

EXCUSE ME!

WHAT ARE YOU ARRESTING ME FOR?

IS ANYBODY WATCHING THIS?

I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING!

GET OFF ME!

OWWWW!

OWWWWWW!

>> WELL, KEITH, THIS WEEK, THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MOTIVES OF THIS STUDENT.

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

WHAT ARE WE CERTAIN OF ABOUT THE MOTIVES?

DID HE DO THIS HONESTLY, OR DO WE NOT KNOW?

>> I CERTAINLY DON'T KNOW, AND I DON'T THINK, FRANKLY, IN SORT OF THE RETROSPECTIVE LOOK AT THIS THAT -- RETROACTIVE LOOK AT THIS THAT WE WANT TO LOOK AT MOTIVES AND FIGURE OUT WHETHER THAT JUSTIFIES POPPING HIM WITH 50,000 VOLTS.

I THINK YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF FREE SPEECH THAT THIS REPRESENTS.

YOU HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THAT WE ARE IN A CONSTANT BATTLE.

THIS IS NOT A NEW THING, BUT WE'RE IN A CONSTANT BATTLE TO MAKE SURE PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT AT SOME POINT TO BE HEARD.

YOU KNOW, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA SAID THAT HE'S EMBARRASSED BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T TAKE ANOTHER STEP FIRST AND TRY TO HAVE SOME KIND OF DIALOGUE.

THEY WENT FROM CUTTING OFF THE MIKE TO ZAPPING HIM WITH A TASER.

>> DO YOU THINK THAT FREE SPEECH RIGHTS IN THIS COUNTRY ARE ENDANGERED?

I'M THINKING ABOUT THE EMMY AWARDS LAST WEEK.

SALLY FIELD WAS CUT OFF.

SHE USED THE GD WORD, BUT SHE ALSO CRITICIZED WAR.

WE KNOW ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S MANUAL IN WHICH HE TALKS ABOUT HANDLING PROTESTERS.

ARE WE SEEING A DECLINE IN FREE SPEECH RIGHTS IN THIS

COUNTRY IN.

>> LIKE I SAID, WE'RE ALWAYS AT WAR WITH OURSELVES IN THE
COUNTRY AROUND FREE SPEECH.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DON'T UNDERSTAND THE IMPLICATIONS OF
EVERYTHING FROM SHUTTING OFF THE MICROPHONE TO THE VIDEO
THAT WE SAW THAT FOLLOWED IT.

BUT IF YOU GO BACK EVEN IN TAMPA TO JOE REDNER AND THE GROUP
PROTESTING AS THE PRESIDENT COMES INTO TOWN --

>> AT YANKEE FIELD.

>> THE PROBLEM ALREADY WAS THAT THEY WERE GIVEN THEIR OWN
LITTLE CORNER THAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO STAND ON.

BUT EVEN THAT WASN'T ENOUGH IN THE END TO GUARANTEE THAT
THEY WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK.

WE'RE AT ODDS ALL THE TIME IN THIS COUNTRY WITH THAT.

AND I THINK EVERY TIME SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS, IT'S A
GOOD MOMENT TO TALK AGAIN ABOUT WHY WE SHOULD HAVE THAT
RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

>> DARRYL?

>> WELL, ONE OTHER THING YOU CAN SAY, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME
THERE'S EVER BEEN A BUZZ ABOUT A JOHN KERRY SPEECH.

I'VE BEEN A USF PROFESSOR FOR 35 YEARS, I THINK ANYBODY WHO
HAS TAUGHT AT THE UNIVERSITY FOR 35 YEARS, PROBABLY HAS TWO
OR THREE STUDENTS THEY WOULD LOVE TO TASE.

THIS GUY CLEARLY WAS LOOKING TO MAKE A NAME FOR HIMSELF.

HE'S PROBABLY HAPPY AS A CLAM NOW THAT HE HAS NATIONAL

PUBLICITY.

ON THE JAY LENO PROGRAM.

TALKED ABOUT, JOKED ABOUT, ET CETERA.

HE'S ACCOMPLISHED WHAT HE WANTED TO DO.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE UNIVERSITY, IT'S TURNED -- YOU KNOW,
SOMEBODY WHO I DON'T PARTICULARLY CARE FOR OR LIKE IN TERMS
OF HIS TECHNIQUE BECAUSE HE WAS DOMINATING THIS PROCESS.

IT WASN'T THAT HE WAS TRYING TO HAVE FREE SPEECH.

HE WAS TRYING TO DOMINATE THE AUDIENCE.

NOT LETTING OTHER STUDENTS ASK QUESTIONS.

NOT LETTING KERRY RESPOND TO HIS QUESTIONS.

HE WANTED TO BE THE PROGRAM THAT NIGHT.

AND I THINK THAT'S WHERE THE PROBLEM WAS.

AND I'M ALSO A LITTLE BIT CONCERNED THAT AUTOMATICALLY THE
BLAME GOES IN THE MEDIA TO THE UNIVERSITY POLICE THEMSELVES,
WHO TASERED THIS GUY.

IT MAY BE BECAUSE OF MY OWN SENSITIVITIES.

MY FATHER WAS A POLICEMAN FOR 30 YEARS AND YOU ALWAYS TEND
TO BLAME THE POLICE FOR ALL THESE THINGS.

CERTAINLY, THERE SHOULD HAVE BEEN AN INTERMEDIATE STEP BUT I
THINK CLEARLY THE STUDENT WAS OUT OF HAPPENED HERE.

>> THAT HAS TO BE THE LAST WORD.

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.

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CHRIS, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> WELL, I GUESS I HAVE TO SAY LAST EVENING THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY APPROVED A 4 BILLION-DOLLAR BUDGET.

HOWEVER, DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THEY HAD THEIR PRIORITIES CONSISTENT WITH THE PUBLIC.

I MEAN, HOW DO YOU FORM AND FUND SOME SORT OF SPORTS ENTITY THAT SUPPORTS OTHER NATURE OF SPORTS EXTERNAL TO THAT, BUT DON'T FUND PARKS AND RECREATION WHERE THE KIDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD NEED TO BE AND GO IN A GOOD ENVIRONMENT.

BUT THAT'S JUST SYSTEMATIC OF SO MANY THINGS THAT THEY'VE LOST THEIR WAY.

THEY LOST THEIR PRIORITIES.

AND I THINK A LOT OF US ARE CONCERNED JUST LIKE OVER THE WETLANDS ISSUE.

YOU JUST GO DOWN THE LINE.

IT HASN'T STOPPED.

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

>> SHAYLA MULDROW, A MOTHER SENTENCED BY A TAMPA JUDGE TO A YEAR IN PRISON FOR INCITING HER DAUGHTER TO HAVE A FIGHT ON A BUS.

I THINK ANOTHER ONE OF THESE MOMENTS WHILE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE STORY IN JENA, LOUISIANA, OF AN INCREDIBLY HARSH PUNISHMENT FOR SOMETHING.

YOU KNOW, WHEN IN THE CITY OF TAMPA, A WOMAN RUNS DOWN THREE

CHILDREN AND RUNS AND GETS PROBATION.

>> AND WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SENTENCE SHOULD HAVE BEEN IN THIS CASE?

>> WELL, I THINK WE COULD BE REALLY CREATIVE AND COME UP WITH A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT THINGS.

I MEAN, SHE COULD HAVE HAD TO SIT DOWN AND WRITE "I WILL NOT TELL MY DAUGHTER TO FIGHT" FIVE MILLION TIMES.

THERE ARE A THOUSAND THINGS YOU COULD DO SHORT OF SENDING THIS WOMAN TO PRISON WHEN SHE'S GOT CHILDREN.

WHO NOW GET THE ADDITIONAL PUNISHMENT OF HAVING THEIR MOM IN JAIL.

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

>> I WANT TO SAY, KEITH, HE MUST HAVE BEEN EDUCATED BY THE SOLUTION NUNS BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT THEY -- AND THEN USE THE TASER.

LET'S GO BACK TO THAT POINT A SECOND.

I WANT TO MAKE SURE ALL MY STUDENTS KNOW THAT WAS DARRYL PAULSON THAT MADE THAT STATEMENT.

I WOULD NOT LIKE TO TASER ANY OF MY STUDENTS.

>> I THOUGHT THEY WERE GETTING READY FOR THE FLORIDA/FLORIDA STATE GAME.

>> MINE IS RELATED TO THE BUDGET PROCESS.

AS WELL.

I WOULD HAVE TO AGREE WITH ROSE FERLITA'S COMMENT ABOUT BEING DISAPPOINTED IN THE PROCESS.

THIS WAS HER FIRST TIME WATCHING IT SO CLOSELY.

THOSE OF US WHO WATCH COUNTY GOVERNMENT HAVE WATCHED THIS
PROCESS OVER THE YEARS.

AND IT REALLY HASN'T CHANGED THAT MUCH.

AND I'M REALLY SORRY TO SEE IN PARTICULAR THE CUT THAT WAS
DONE TO PUBLIC ACCESS TELEVISION.

THE ARROGANCE -- I'LL JUST COME OUT AND SAY IT -- OF BRIGHT
HOUSE TO COME OUT AND NOT ONLY GO THROUGH -- SUPPORT THIS
PROCESS THAT WAS GOING ON, BUT THEN TO TELL THEM THAT THEY
ARE GOING TO MOVE THE CHANNEL NUMBERS WAY UP TO LIKE THE
300s, AND YOU AND I KNOW, IT'S ONLY THROUGH CHANNEL
SURFING THAT PEOPLE COME ACROSS SOMETHING THAT THEY REALLY
WANT TO WATCH THAT'S EDUCATIONAL.

>> DARRYL, WE HAVE 25 SECONDS.

>> MINE WOULD BE FRED THOMPSON, WHO'S ANNOUNCED FOR THE
PRESIDENCY, OF COURSE, AND BEEN IN FLORIDA SEVERAL TIMES.
LAST WEEK HE TALKED ABOUT TERRI SCHIAVO.

DIDN'T REALLY SEEM TO KNOW WHAT THE ISSUES WERE THERE.

THIS WEEK, IT WAS DRILLING IN THE EVERGLADES, AND HE SEEMED
TO BE SUPPORTIVE OF THAT NOTION.

THE ST. PETE TIMES SAYS, THE EVERGLADES IS THE RIVER OF
GRASS, NOT THE RIVER OF GAS.

[LAUGHTER]

HE HAS TO KNOW WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO FLORIDA.

>> ALL RIGHT.

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WELL, THANK YOU KEITH WOODS, THANK YOU CHRIS HART, THANK YOU
LIANA FERNANDEZ-FOX, AND THANK YOU DARRYL PAULSON.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE 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.

OR EVEN LEAVE A MESSAGE ON OUR "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" WEB SITE
ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG WHERE YOU'LL ALSO 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 WEEKEND.

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