

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

SEPTEMBER 28, 2007

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, WILL THAT SUPER HOMESTEAD AMENDMENT BE ON THE BALLOT IN JANUARY?

REPUBLICANS TRY TO SIGN UP DEMOCRATS WHO ARE ANGRY AT THE NATIONAL PARTY OVER THE FIASCO ABOUT THE PRIMARY DATE.

FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT ANNOUNCES A BILLION DOLLAR SOLAR ENERGY PROJECT.

AND COMMON CAUSE IS TRYING AGAIN TO TAKE THE POLITICS OUT OF REDISTRICTING.

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

WILLIAM MARCH IS A POLITICAL REPORTER AT THE TAMPA TRIBUNE.

TOM LEE IS FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA SENATE AND A  
REPUBLICAN.

AND EVELYN HALE IS A COMMUNITY ADVOCATE AND THE DEMOCRAT.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

GOOD TO SEE YOU.

WELL, GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST ADMINISTRATION WILL APPEAL THE  
COURT RULING THIS WEEK THAT KNOCKED THE PROPERTY TAX CUT  
AMENDMENT OFF THE JANUARY 29th PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY  
BALLOT.

MONDAY, A CIRCUIT JUDGE IN LEON COUNTY RULED THE AMENDMENT'S  
BALLOT SUMMARY WAS UNCONSTITUTIONAL SINCE IT DID NOT CLEARLY  
EXPLAIN THAT THE MEASURE WOULD EVENTUALLY ELIMINATE THE SAVE  
OUR HOMES PROGRAM ALL TOGETHER WHICH LIMITS HOMEOWNER'S  
PROPERTY TAX INCREASES TO 3% A YEAR.

SUSAN, IS THERE A CHANCE THAT THIS WILL BE ON THE BALLOT IN  
JANUARY?

>> I'D SAY THE ODDS ARE VERY, VERY GOOD.

REPUBLICANS KNOW THAT THEIR FEET ARE TO THE FIRE.

THEY MADE BIG PROMISES. THE GOVERNOR HAS MADE BIG PROMISES.  
GOING INTO '08, ONE OF THE BEST ISSUES THAT REPUBLICANS  
ALWAYS HAVE IN FLORIDA IS TO BE AGAINST TAXES, AGAINST  
HIGHER TAXES.

SOMETHING HAS GOT TO HAPPEN, AND THEY KNOW IT.

>>Rob Lorei: WILLIAM, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE MECHANICS OF  
THIS.

THE REPUBLICANS, THE GOVERNOR AND HIS ADMINISTRATION ARE APPEALING THIS JUDGE'S RULING, SO THEY'VE GOT THAT CHANCE, WHAT ARE THE CHANCES THAT IT COMES UP IN THE SPECIAL SESSION THAT THEY REWRITE THIS AMENDMENT AND SOMEHOW GET IT ON THE BALLOT IN TIME FOR JANUARY.

>> WELL, MARCO RUBIO HAS JUST SAID THAT HE FEELS LIKE IT'S GOT TO BE ON THE BALLOT IN -- ON JANUARY 29th, EVEN IF THAT REQUIRES DEALING WITH IT DURING THE SPECIAL SESSION, WHICH THEY ARE ALWAYS AS OPPOSED TO IT AS THEY POSSIBLY COULD BE TO ADDING MORE AND MORE TOPICS TO ANY SPECIAL SESSION.

HE SAYS THIS HAS GOT TO BE ON THERE EVEN IF THEY HAVE TO BRING IT UP AT THE SPECIAL SESSION.

THEY'VE ALSO SAID, KURT BROWNING, SECRETARY OF STATE, WHO IS ACTUALLY THE DEFENDANT IN THE LAWSUIT AGAINST -- IN THE MOVE TO TAKE IT OFF THE BALLOT, HAS APPEALED, BUT THE ADMINISTRATION, THE CRIST ADMINISTRATION WANTS TO APPEAL AND BYPASS THE APPEALS COURT LEVEL AND TAKE IT STRAIGHT TO THE SUPREME COURT IF THEY CAN.

THEY ARE PUSHING IT AS FAST AND AS HARD AS THEY CAN.

>> REALLY, THEY HAVE TO GET SOME SORT OF INDICATION.

BECAUSE THE SPECIAL SESSION STARTS NEXT WEEK.

>> YEAH.

>> TOM, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE CHANCES OF THIS TAX CUT AMENDMENT MAKING IT ON THE JANUARY 29th BALLOT?

>> I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS ONE, BUT SUSAN IS RIGHT, THEY HAVE TO GET SOMETHING ON THE BALLOT.

PEOPLE ARE VERY FRUSTRATED ABOUT PROPERTY TAXES.

THE CHALLENGE THE FACE AND THE QUANDARY THEY ARE IN IS THAT THEY REALLY DON'T HAVE CONSENSUS EVEN FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT THEY PASSED THUS FAR AND AT THIS POINT.

TAXES HAVE NOT REALLY DROPPED LIKE A ROCK.

THEY DROPPED MORE LIKE A FEATHER.

AND PEOPLE ARE FRUSTRATED, CONSERVATIVES ARE FRUSTRATED THAT THEY ARE NOT GETTING A BIGGER TAX CUT.

SOME OF THE DEMOCRATS WOULD LIKE TO SEE EVEN LESS OR MORE DONE.

ANYTIME YOU GET A CONFLUENCE OF THINGS WHERE PEOPLE WHO WANT MORE AND WANT LESS GET TOGETHER IN THE LEGISLATURE, A LOT OF TIMES YOU BLOCK THE PASSAGE OR SOMETHING.

SO I THINK THE STRATEGY RIGHT NOW IS TO GET THIS CERTIFIED TO THE SUPREME COURT SO THEY CAN GET A DECISION, HOPEFULLY NOT HAVE TO BRING IT BACK TO A LEGISLATURE OR YOU'RE LOOKING AT A FOOD FIGHT AGAIN.

BUT THEY HAVE TO GET SOMETHING ON THE BALLOT.

>> WHAT ABOUT MARCO RUBIO, THE HOUSE SPEAKER?

WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT HIM THE LAST FEW MONTHS OF WHETHER OR NOT -- I MEAN, HIS IDEA OF ELIMINATING THE PROPERTY TAX ALTOGETHER AND GOING TO SOME LARGER SALES TAX STATEWIDE AS A WAY TO DEAL WITH OUR TAX ISSUES, IS THAT IDEA GOING TO FLY?

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

>> I DOUBT IT.

THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY -- TOO MUCH COLLATERAL DAMAGE, TOO MANY IMPLICATIONS TO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

TAX FIGHTS ARE ALWAYS ABOUT THE WINNERS AND LOSERS.

AND THE LOSERS ARE ALWAYS SCREAMING LOUDER THAN THE WINNERS.

THEY RAISE MORE MONEY.

THEY FIGHT HARDER.

THEY MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO GET THINGS DONE.

THAT WOULD BE A MAMMOTH UNDERTAKING.

IT'S A REAL LONG SHOT TO TRY TO EXPAND THE TAX BASE THAT WAY.

>> AND SOME PEOPLE ARE SAYING WE SHOULD WAIT FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE TAXATION AND BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION STUDY OF THE FLORIDA TAX SYSTEM.

AND THEN SEE WHAT THEY SUGGEST BEFORE WE VOTE ON ANYTHING IN JANUARY.

>> WELL, I THINK THE LEGISLATURE IS IN A RUSH, BECAUSE THEY ARE VERY CONCERNED, AGAIN, BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONE ISSUE THAT A REPUBLICAN-CONTROLLED LEGISLATURE STILL DOMINATES IN THE POLLING AND THAT IS THE BELIEF IN LOWER TAXES.

AND THEY ARE TRYING TO SEND A MESSAGE THAT THEY ARE GOING TO LOWER THEIR BUDGET.

THEY ARE GOING TO REDUCE TAXES AND ADDRESS THE PROBLEMS THAT PEOPLE ARE FACING WITH HOMESTEAD.

I JUST DON'T THINK THAT OVER TIME YOU'RE GOING TO SEE A

WHOLE LOT OF NEW IDEAS WITH CONSENSUS, BECAUSE A LOT OF DIVERGENT VIEWS RIGHT NOW.

>> EVELYN, WHAT ARE YOU HEARING FROM DEMOCRATS ABOUT THIS MEASURE?

DO THEY WANT IT TO BE ON THE BALLOT?

ARE THEY LOOKING FORWARD TO IT?

>> I DON'T THINK THEY ARE.

I THINK IT'S A REALLY, REALLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE DEMOCRATS, YOU LOOK AT THE HIGHER TAXES AND YOU LOOK AT THE FACT -- AND I CONSIDER IT AS A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AND SAYING, OKAY, IF WE HAVE HIGHER TAXES THIS MEANS I'M NOT ONLY GOING TO HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GAS TAXES, NOW I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIGHER TAXES.

AND WHAT ARE WE THINKING?

I DON'T HAVE A HOME.

SO EITHER YOU HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE SENIOR CITIZENS WHO HAVE HOMES AND HAVE A PROBLEM BECAUSE THEY CAN'T PAY IT, OR YOU THINK ABOUT THE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN'T AFFORD THE HIGHER TAXES.

SO IT'S TOUGH.

>> BUT IN THIS CASE, I MEAN, THE BENEFICIARIES WOULD BE PEOPLE WHO ARE CURRENTLY HOMESTEADED, PEOPLE THAT HAVE CURRENT HOMES, BUT IF YOU'RE A SECOND HOMEOWNER, YOU WOULDN'T BENEFIT FROM THIS AMENDMENT.

IF YOU'RE A BUSINESS OWNER, YOU REALLY WOULDN'T BENEFIT THAT MUCH FROM THIS AMENDMENT.

AND IF YOU RENT, IF YOU HAVE AN APARTMENT OR SEVERAL APARTMENTS AND YOU RENT, YOU'RE NOT GETTING MUCH OF A BREAK UNDER THIS PLAN.

SO IT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S A BIG GAP IN THE JANUARY 29th PLAN.

>> BUT THEY CAN'T DO MUCH MORE BECAUSE THE CUTS HAVE BEEN PRETTY DRAMATIC OVER SUCH A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME.

AND THEY DON'T HAVE MORE MONEY TO CUT TAXES MORE BROADLY THAN THEY HAVE.

SO THEY ARE IN A REAL BOX.

PEOPLE HAVE THEIR TRIM NOTICES, AND THEY ARE VERY UNDERWHELMED WITH THIS \$150 REDUCTION THEY GOT IN THEIR PROPERTY TAXES.

IT'S A TOUGH PREDICAMENT WHERE THE RHETORIC JUST HASN'T MATCHED UP WITH THE RESULTS.

>> SUSAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE TURNOUT FOR THIS? LET'S SAY IT'S ON THE BALLOT, THAT SOMEHOW THE APPEAL WORKS OR THE LEGISLATURE MAKES SURE THAT THE LANGUAGE IS CORRECT, AND IT IS ON THE BALLOT JANUARY 29th, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE TURNOUT IS GOING TO BE?

>> WELL, A LOT OF IT, OF COURSE, IS TIED TO ANOTHER ISSUE, WHICH IS THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY.

>> WHICH WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT IN A MOMENT, TOO.

>> RIGHT.

BUT I THINK ANYTIME YOU PUT A MONEY ISSUE ON THE BALLOT, YOU HAVE A PRETTY HIGH TURNOUT.

THE "T" WORD, TAXES, USUALLY DOES RESULT IN HIGHER TURNOUT.

THE QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS, WHAT KIND OF ADVERTISING IS GOING TO BE DONE AGAINST IT?

BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, OPPONENTS OF THAT MEASURE ARE HAVING TO THINK ABOUT WHETHER THEY ARE GOING TO SPEND MONEY TO FIGHT THAT OR WHETHER THEY ARE GOING TO FIGHT THE HOMETOWN DEMOCRACY.

THEY DON'T HAVE ENOUGH DEEP POCKETS TO DO BOTH.

SO EVERYBODY RIGHT NOW IS LIKE A GIANT CHESSBOARD, AND EVERYONE IS TRYING TO SEE WHICH WAY THE OPPONENT WILL MOVE THEIR PAWN.

>> WILLIAM, LET ME ASK YOU, WHO ARE THE OPPONENTS OF THIS AMENDMENT?

>> WELL, PROBABLY THE BIGGEST SINGLE OPPONENT IS ORGANIZED LABOR.

THEY ARE A MAJOR CONSTITUENCY FOR THE DEMOCRATS.

THIS IS WHY IT TIES TO WHAT YOU SAID A MINUTE AGO, THE DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY.

DEMOCRATS WANT TO SEE A BIG TURNOUT FOR THE PRIMARY TO ALSO VOTE AGAINST THE TAX MEASURE.

AND I THINK, SUSAN, I'VE DONE A FEW INTERVIEWS ON THIS AND HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING DEFINITIVE, BUT WHAT LITTLE I'VE

HEARD SO FAR CONVINCES ME THAT DEFEATING THE TAX MEASURE  
WILL BE THE SINGLE BIGGEST POLITICAL GOAL FOR ORGANIZED  
LABOR THIS YEAR, BIGGER THAN ANYTHING.

PROBABLY BIGGER EVEN THAN SUPPORT FOR ONE OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
PRIMARY CANDIDATES.

>> OKAY.

WELL, THE FLORIDA REPUBLICAN PARTY SENT OUT A MAILER  
ENCOURAGING FLORIDA DEMOCRATS TO JOIN THE REPUBLICANS AS A  
WAY TO DEAL WITH THE ANGER OVER THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATS'  
DECISION TO PUNISH THE STATE FOR ITS EARLY PRIMARY DATE.  
WILLIAM, THE REPUBLICANS JUST -- THEY SEE AN OPENING, AND  
THEY TAKE IT.

HOW MANY DEMOCRATS DO YOU THINK ARE GOING TO TAKE THEM UP ON  
THIS?

>> WELL, I DOUBT IF A WHOLE LOT OF DEMOCRATS WILL TAKE THEM  
UP ON IT, BUT YOU JUST CAN'T ARGUE WITH THE FACT THAT WHAT'S  
HAPPENED HERE IS, THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATS HAVE BASICALLY JUST  
GONE OUT AND FOUND THE BIGGEST CLUB THAT THEY POSSIBLY CAN  
AND HANDED IT TO THE REPUBLICANS AND SAID, BEAT US WITH  
THIS.

I'VE GOT TO READ THIS.

THIS IS GAYLE COLLINS OP-ED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES YESTERDAY  
MORNING.

I'VE GOT TO READ IT TO YOU.

AMONG THE REALLY BAD IDEAS IN THE HISTORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC

PARTY, THIS RANKS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN BUTTERFLY BALLOTS AND WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.

WHAT'S HAPPENED FOR READERS WHO DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS UNBELIEVABLY COMPLICATED, ALMOST LUNATIC STORY IS, BEFORE EARLY STATES, THE STATES THAT HAVE THE EARLIEST PRIMARY, IOWA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, AND NEVADA AND SOUTH CAROLINA, ARE ANGRY THAT FLORIDA AND NOT JUST FLORIDA, BUT ALSO MICHIGAN, HAVE JUMPED INTO THEIR EARLY TIME SLOT BY MOVING THEIR PRIMARIES BEFORE FEBRUARY 5th.

IN FLORIDA'S CASE, THE LEGISLATURE VOTED TO SET IT ON THE 29th.

THEY BEFORE EARLY STATES IN RESPONSE TO THAT ASKED THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES TO RESPECT THEIR EARLY STATUS BY REFUSING TO CAMPAIGN IN ANY STATE THAT JUMPS INTO THE WINDOW, MEANING, MICHIGAN AND FLORIDA.

THE CANDIDATES ALL AGREED.

AND THE REASON THEY DID IS, THEY HAVE A VERY, VERY CLOSE RACE IN IOWA.

IT'S LIKE NECK AND NECK IN THE POLLS, AND ANYBODY WHO MAKES THE IOWA VOTERS MAD COULD LOSE IOWA AND LOSE THE BIG MOMENTUM.

SO THEY HAVE ALL PROMISED TO BOYCOTT THE NATION'S BIGGEST SWING STATE.

AND IF THAT'S HOW YOU GET VOTES AND WIN AN ELECTION, IT'S NEWS TO ME.

>> SUSAN, THERE'S ONE EXCEPTION TO THIS, AND THAT IS IF YOU'RE DOWN HERE IN FLORIDA, AS COLLINS WROTE IN THE NEW YORK TIMES THIS WEEK, AND WAVING A CHECKBOOK, THE DEMOCRATS ARE ALLOWED TO COME DOWN JUST TO COLLECT MONEY, JUST TO RAISE MONEY.

>> IT'S RIDICULOUS.

I WAS TALKING TO MY STUDENTS ABOUT IT IN CLASS, AND I TOLD THEM THAT THE CANDIDATES CAN COME DOWN HERE AND RAISE MONEY, BUT THEY CAN'T COME DOWN HERE AND CAMPAIGN.

AND MY STUDENTS JUST START LAUGHING.

THAT'S HOW LUDICROUS IT IS.

HOW CAN YOU SEPARATE THE TWO?

IT SORT OF BRINGS BACK THOSE WORDS OF WHAT IS, IS.

THOSE KIND OF COMMENTARIES ABOUT DEMOCRATS.

IT'S REALLY RIDICULOUS TO TRY AND MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN FUND-RAISING AND CAMPAIGNING.

IN SPITE OF IT ALL, WE HAVE DEMOCRATS COMING HERE THIS WEEK.

>> YEAH.

WELL, EVELYN, IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT THE DEMOCRATS WILL FORGET ABOUT THIS AS WE ROLL THROUGH NEXT SUMMER AND INTO THE NOVEMBER ELECTION, THAT THIS WILL ALL BE IN THE PAST? OR DOES THIS TAKE SOME OF THE STEAM OUT OF GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC ACTIVISM FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY AND FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION?

>> I REALLY HOPE THEY DO.

I REALLY HOPE THAT THEY GO FAST THIS AND REALIZE THAT THIS IS NOT HELPING THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY AT ALL.

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE ACTUAL BILL, IT WAS FILED BY A STATE SENATOR WHO IS A DEMOCRAT.

AND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTUALLY IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE WHEN THAT BILL WAS PASSED TO HAVE THE ELECTIONS, THE PRIMARY EARLY, NO ONE WAS OPPOSED, NOT EVEN DEMOCRATS.

NOT EVEN REPUBLICANS.

SO REALLY, WHEN WE LOOK AT THIS, WE SAY, OKAY, NOW THAT THIS HAS COME UP TO NATIONAL STORY IN THE MEDIA, NO ONE WANTS TO TAKE FAULT.

AND I THINK THAT WE NEED TO STEP AWAY ONCE AGAIN FROM THIS PETTINESS, AND REALLY FOCUS ON THE ISSUES.

AND I'M CO-CHAIR OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROFESSIONAL COUNCIL HERE IN TAMPA BAY, AND ONE THING WE'RE TRYING TO DO IS CHANGE THAT MENTALITY AND START FOCUSING ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

IT -- ISSUES OF FLORIDIANS, ISSUES OF AMERICANS.

>> WELL, TOM, I WOULD IMAGINE IF THE REPUBLICANS ARE SENDING OUT THESE MAILERS ASKING PEOPLE TO CHANGE PARTIES THAT YOU KNOW THAT YOU'RE TAPPING INTO SOMETHING, THAT THERE'S SOME ANGER OUT THERE AMONG THE PART OF AT LEAST SOME DEMOCRATS OVER THE NATIONAL PARTY.

>> WELL, I THINK IT'S REALLY AN EXTENSION OF THAT CLUB THAT WILLIAM POINTS OUT.

AND, YOU KNOW, THEY ARE GOING TO CONTINUE TO KEEP THIS OUT THERE IN THE FRONT OF PEOPLE'S MINDS.

I DON'T THINK THERE'S A GREAT EXPECTATION THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO WIDELY CHANGE PARTIES BECAUSE OF SOME DECISION OUT OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE.

BUT I DO THINK THAT THE IMPLICATIONS, AS YOU POINT OUT, POTENTIALLY SUPPRESSING VOTER TURNOUT IN THE JANUARY 29th PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE, THUS NOT HAVING THEM AVAILABLE TO VOTE AGAINST THIS TAX REFORM PROPOSAL, WHATEVER IT LOOKS LIKE AT THE END OF THE DAY, COULD HAVE A BIG IMPLICATION ON WHETHER OR NOT IT PASSES.

SO IT'S GOT A BIG STAKES.

BEYOND THAT, IT'S REALLY QUITE A SIDE SHOW.

I MEAN, I THINK THAT WE'D ALL BE BETTER OFF IF WE COULD PUT THAT GENIE BACK IN THE BOTTLE AND PRETEND THAT WE DIDN'T DO THIS.

THINKING WE WERE GOING TO LEAPFROG A BUNCH OF STATES AND NOT SET OFF THE DESIRE BY OTHER STATES TO FIGHT BACK OR LEAPFROG US YET AGAIN AND PUT US INTO THE CHRISTMAS SEASON.

AND THIS IS ALL GETTING GOING SO EARLY RIGHT NOW, THAT IT REALLY, REALLY DOES BEG THE QUESTION OF REVISITING HOW WE NOMINATE OUR PRESIDENTIAL PARTY NOMINEES.

>> BUT YOU'RE THE FIRST REPUBLICAN I'VE HEARD TO SAY THAT -- VAST MAJORITY OF THE REPUBLICANS HAVE BEEN IN FAVOR OF THIS AND REMAIN IN FAVOR OF IT.

AS EVELYN SAID, THERE WERE SOME DEMOCRATS IN THE LEGISLATURE WHO FAVORED IT.

BUT IF EVERY SINGLE DEMOCRAT IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE HAD EMULATED THEMSELVES ON THE FLOOR OF THE CHAMBER, IT WOULDN'T HAVE STOPPED THIS BILL.

THE REPUBLICANS WERE GOING TO PASS THIS FROM DAY ONE, AND THEY DID.

AND NOW WE'RE IN THIS HASSLE BECAUSE OF IT.

>> SUSAN?

>> WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A FEDERAL LAWSUIT UNDER THE FEDERAL VOTING RIGHTS ACT.

THAT'S THE WAY THIS WILL BE RESOLVED.

IF YOU LOOK AT WHAT DEMOCRATS IN FLORIDA HAVE DONE, THEY'VE BEEN THREATENING THIS.

IN FACT, WE HAD A PRESS CONFERENCE EARLIER THIS WEEK WITH CONGRESSMAN CORRINE BROWN, AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSWOMAN FROM THE DUVAL COUNTY AREA, BASICALLY SAID POINT-BLANK.

AND THAT'S THE WAY FLORIDA IS GOING TO WIN.

BECAUSE YOU CANNOT UNDER FEDERAL LAW, WHICH THEN MEANS IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE IT HAPPENS, IT'S RELEVANT, YOU CANNOT DISENFRANCHISE THE VOTES OF MINORITY CITIZENS.

FLORIDA HAS A SIZABLE PORTION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND HISPANIC VOTERS COVERED UNDER THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT.

AND AS LONG AS YOU HAVE A PROCESS WHERE A LAWFUL ELECTION, WHICH THIS IS UNDER FLORIDA LAW, PASSED BY THE LEGISLATURE,

SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR, UNDER FLORIDA LAW THEY CAN SET THE PRIMARY DATE WHEN THEY WANT AS LONG AS THE SELECTION PROCESS IN ANY WAY, THE NOMINATION PROCESS IS TIED TO ELECTION RESULTS BACK IN FLORIDA, I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN AVOID A FEDERAL VOTING RIGHTS ACT BEING SUCCESSFUL IF THE FLORIDA DEMOCRATS GO THAT DIRECTION.

AND I THINK THERE'S A LOT OF SIGNS THAT THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO DO IF THEY DON'T GET RESOLUTION.

>> BILL NELSON ANNOUNCED TODAY THAT KENDALL COFFEE WILL FILE SUCH A LAWSUIT ON WEDNESDAY OR THURSDAY.

>> THAT FOLLOWS THE VICTOR DiMAIO LAWSUIT FILED TWO WEEKS AGO.

WELL, FLORIDA GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST AND FORMER PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON TOOK THE STAGE TOGETHER AT THE CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK CITY TO ANNOUNCE THE RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANS THAT EVENTUALLY WILL INCLUDE A 300 MEGAWATT SOLAR THERMAL GENERATING PLANT SOMEWHERE IN FLORIDA.

THE JOINT APPEARANCE AIMED TO HIGHLIGHT PLANS BY THE PARENT COMPANY OF FLORIDA POWER AND LIGHT TO INVEST \$2.4 BILLION IN SOLAR THERMAL ENERGY PROGRAMS OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS.

THE PLANT'S LOCATION IS NOT NAMED BUT LIKELY TO BE IN AN FP&L'S SERVICE AREA.

FIRST OF ALL, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE POLITICS OF THIS.

CHARLIE CRIST AND BILL CLINTON TOGETHER ON THE STAGE LOOKING

LIKE BUDDY, BUDDY.

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, THAT'S VERY, VERY INTERESTING IDEA, BECAUSE WHEN YOU THINK, WE'LL GO BACK TO THE FLORIDA PRIMARY, I MEAN, WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO HAVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES COME TO FLORIDA, BUT IT'S OKAY -- I MEAN, ONE ADVANTAGE THAT HILLARY CLINTON HAS FROM OTHERS IS PRESIDENT CLINTON.

AND I THINK THIS IS A BIG, BIG ENDORSEMENT, AS I SEE IT, FROM CHARLIE CRIST TO DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

I DON'T KNOW.

>> TOM, DID THAT HURT CHARLIE CRIST AMONG THE REPUBLICAN FAITHFUL?

>> WELL, I DON'T THINK LONG TERM.

I THINK SHORT TERM, THERE'S A LITTLE BIT OF CONSTERNATION THAT ALWAYS GOES ON WHEN SOMEONE IS SEEN EMBRACING SUCH A LIGHTNING ROD OF A POLITICAL FIGURE LIKE THE CLINTON FAMILY, IN TERMS OF REPUBLICANS AND HOW THEY VIEW PARTISANSHIP. BUT, YOU KNOW, A LOT OF PEOPLE SURPRISED NOTWITHSTANDING -- I MEAN, WHAT I WOULD SAY IS, IT'S NOT MUCH OF A SHOCK TO ME THAT THE REPUBLICAN PUBLIC OFFICIAL IN AMERICA WITH THE BEST TAN WOULD BE OUT THERE SUPPORTING SOLAR ENERGY PLANTS IN FLORIDA.

WE HAVE LONG SINCE STRUGGLED TO TRY TO GET MORE GREEN POWER, MORE BIOMASS, MORE SOLAR, MORE WIND POWER IN FLORIDA. THE PROBLEM HAS ALWAYS BEEN THAT IT'S SUCH AN EXPENSIVE

SOURCE OF ENERGY TO PRODUCE THAT WORKING IT INTO THE OVERALL FUEL COST MIX HAS MADE IT COST PROHIBITIVE IN A LOT OF COMMUNITIES.

SO I THINK THIS IS A GOOD THING THAT'S GOING ON.

I THINK THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS PROBABLY ARE SHORT TERM FOR EVERYBODY.

>> SUSAN, WE ARE THE SUNSHINE STATE, AND YET, THIS IS THE FIRST BIG SOLAR PLANT TO BE ANNOUNCED FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

>> RIGHT.

AND THIS IS CERTAINLY CONSISTENT WITH POLLS THAT WE'VE SEEN IN FLORIDA WHICH SHOW A HIGH LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES.

AFTER ALL, ALL THESE TALKS ALL THE TIME ABOUT DRILLING OFF THE COAST OF FLORIDA CERTAINLY MAKES FLORIDIANS AMENABLE TO DOING THAT.

AND THAT, AND CERTAINLY SOLAR MAKES SENSE.

WE'RE THE SUNSHINE STATE.

I THINK IT'S VERY GOOD POLITICS ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNOR.

FLORIDA'S REPUBLICANS ARE MUCH MORE GREEN THAN OTHER

REPUBLICANS IN OTHER STATES BECAUSE WE'RE A VERY

PROENVIRONMENTAL STATE.

AND I THINK IT POSITIONS REPUBLICANS WELL FOR THE '08

ELECTION ON THAT ISSUE.

>> IS THAT THE WAY YOU SEE IT?

>> WELL, THERE ARE A COUPLE OF POINTS HERE I WANT TO RAISE.  
YOU DESCRIBE IT AS THE FIRST BIG SOLAR PLANT.  
TECHNICALLY WISE, LET'S NOT GET CARRIED AWAY WITH HOW BIG IT  
IS.  
THIS IS A 300 MEGAWATT PLANT.  
BY COMPARISON, THE HINES COMPLEX THAT PROGRESS ENERGY IS NOW  
COMPLETING NEAR BARTOW IS 1500 MEGAWATTS.  
FLORIDA'S THREE NUCLEAR PLANTS TOGETHER ARE 4,000, AND THEY  
ARE ONLY ABOUT 15% OF THE STATE'S GENERATING CAPACITY.  
SO THIS IS NOT A REALLY SIGNIFICANT INCREASE.  
IT'S NOT -- IT'S NOT ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE MIX OF  
SOURCES FOR OUR GENERATION.  
THERE'S ONE POINT I GOT TO MAKE, THOUGH, ON THE POLITICAL  
SIDE OF THIS.  
AND I THINK EVELYN IS RIGHT.  
THIS COULD BE SEEN BY SOME REPUBLICANS AS ADDING SOME, AS  
CHARLIE CRIST, LENDING SOME CREDIBILITY TO THE CLINTONS.  
AND I THINK THE REPUBLICANS OUT THERE ARE -- THE  
CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS, ARE GRUMBLING SOME ABOUT THE  
GOVERNOR DOING THINGS LIKE THIS.  
HIS ASSOCIATION WITH ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER WITH THE GLOBAL  
WARMING CONTROVERSY, AUTOMATIC RESTORATION OF FELON VOTING  
RIGHTS, THINGS LIKE THAT, BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW IS  
CHARLIE CRIST POPULARITY RATINGS IN THIS STATE ARE  
ASTRONOMICALLY HIGH, PARTLY BECAUSE OF HIS BIPARTISANSHIP.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AS LONG AS THOSE RATINGS STAY UP, THE GRUMBLING -- THERE  
WILL BE A LID KEPT ON THE GRUMBLING.

IF HIS POPULARITY RATINGS START TO DROP, THEN YOU'LL START  
HEARING IT.

>> OKAY.

WELL, THE CITIZENS GROUP COMMON CAUSE IS AGAIN TRYING TO  
CHANGE THE WAY FLORIDA DRAWS ITS CONGRESSIONAL AND  
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS.

THE GROUP FAILED LAST YEAR TO GET ON THE BALLOT.

THIS TIME, A COMMON CAUSE BACKED POLITICAL COMMITTEE IS  
ASKING THE FLORIDA SECRETARY OF STATE TO REVIEW TWO PROPOSED  
AMENDMENTS TO THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION.

THEY WOULD APPEAR ON THE BALLOT IN 2010.

AT ISSUE IS A MANDATE THAT LAWMAKERS DRAW COMPACT DISTRICTS  
RATHER THAN SNAKE THEM THROUGH MULTIPLE COUNTIES.

THE GROUP SAYS IT'S NOT TRYING TO HELP OR HURT ANY POLITICAL  
PARTY.

TOM, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS LATEST MOVE BY COMMON CAUSE?

>> WELL, I THINK IT'S WELL-INTENTIONED.

I THINK AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
OBSERVED THEIR VOTER REGISTRATION CARDS AND HAVE SEEN WHERE  
THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS' DISTRICTS ARE WONDER HOW WE COULD  
POSSIBLY COME UP WITH THESE STRANGE DISTRICTS THAT WE HAVE.

AND THERE HAD TO BE AN EASIER WAY TO DO IT.

THE CHALLENGE IS THAT FINDING A WAY THAT TRANSFERS THE

POLITICS OF REDISTRICTING FROM ONE GROUP TO ANOTHER, OR IN THIS CASE, POTENTIALLY CREATING A WHOLE NEW SET OF STANDARDS FOR WHICH THERE IS NO JURISPRUDENCE.

A LOT OF JURISPRUDENCE DEVELOPED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OVER TIME THROUGH THESE CASES.

AND THE DEVIL WILL BE IN THE DETAILS OF HOW THIS PROPOSAL LOOKS AT THE END OF THE DAY.

BUT IT CERTAINLY IS WELL INTENTIONED.

AND YOU CAN UNDERSTAND AS A PRACTICAL MATTER WHY SOMEBODY WOULD WANT TO CLEAN UP THE PROCESS A LITTLE BIT.

>> JUST SPEAKING FRANKLY, THE LAST TIME WE DID MAJOR REDISTRICTING, IT REALLY HELPED THE REPUBLICANS.

IT EXCHANGED, I THINK, IN A WAY, SEATS FOR HISPANIC LEGISLATORS AND CONGRESS PEOPLE AND BLACK LEGISLATORS AND CONGRESS PEOPLE AND DIMINISHED THE POWER OF WHITE DEMOCRATS.

>> RIGHT.

BUT THERE ARE -- THERE ARE WELL-TESTED, WELL-DEVELOPED LIMITATIONS IN THE LAW FOR THE EXTENT TO WHICH ANY PARTY CAN GO TO ACCOMPLISH THOSE KINDS OF ENDS.

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT PARTNERSHIP IS ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS IN REDISTRICTING REGARDLESS OF WHO CONTROLS THE REDISTRICTING PROCESS.

BUT THAT'S WHY THE COURTS HAVE STEPPED IN AND CREATED PARAMETERS AND BOUNDARIES TO THE EXTENT WHICH THOSE POLITICAL BICEPS CAN BE USED TO MASSAGE THE DISTRICT LINES

IN FAVOR OF ONE PARTY.

AND IT'S WHY IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO IN THE CONSTITUTION AND TRY TO CHANGE SOME OF THOSE THINGS AND PERHAPS AT THE END OF THE DAY, WILL BE OF NO MOMENT, BECAUSE THE FEDERAL LAW WILL ULTIMATELY TRUMP WHATEVER IS IN OUR CONSTITUTION.

>> EVELYN?

>> BUT HOW CLOSELY ARE THOSE RULES FOLLOWED?

WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE REDISTRICTING I MEAN, IT'S JUST INSANE HOW IT LOOKS.

AND THE QUESTION YOU ASKED WAS, WILL IT BENEFIT THE PARTIES, BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT BENEFITING THE PARTIES.

IT'S ABOUT BENEFITING THE COMMUNITIES.

AND WE SHOULDN'T BE DOING REDISTRICTING BECAUSE OF REPUBLICANS OR DEMOCRATS.

WE SHOULD BE DOING REDISTRICTING BECAUSE OF THE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE IN THERE, WHICH SHOULD BE BALANCED.

>> I PROMISE, WE'LL COME BACK TO THIS TOPIC IN THE MONTHS TO COME.

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

TOM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> THERE'S A BIG SHOWDOWN BREWING IN TALLAHASSEE RIGHT NOW BETWEEN THE MODERATE REPUBLICANS AND CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS, PARTICULARLY IN THE HOUSE.

THE CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS ARE OPPOSING A MOVE BY SOME MODERATE REPUBLICANS TO ALLOW A VERY RADICAL EXPANSION OF CASINO GAMBLING IN FLORIDA ON INDIAN RESERVATIONS, SOMETHING THAT WOULD ALLOW FULL-SCALE LAS VEGAS-STYLE GAMING TABLES. IF THE MODERATE REPUBLICANS DON'T BACK OFF ON THAT, THERE'S GOING TO BE A MASSIVE MELTDOWN IN TALLAHASSEE OVER THE RATIFICATION OF THAT COMPACT.

>> INTERESTING.

EVELYN, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, I WAS AT THE CITY OF TAMPA HISPANIC HERITAGE GALA LAST SATURDAY, AND COUNCILMAN MIRANDA SPOKE VERY HIGHLY OF FORMER COUNCILMAN BOB BUCKHORN, WHICH SEEMED TO BE -- SEEMS TO BE THAT HE'S POSSIBLY GOING TO RUN FOR MAYOR.

AND THAT'S VERY INTERESTING, BECAUSE THERE ARE A COUPLE OF NAMES OUT THERE THAT SEEM LIKE IT'S GOING TO BE A VERY INTERESTING RACE.

LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.

>> ALL RIGHT.

SUSAN, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> USF.

[ LAUGHTER ]

>> I DIDN'T HAVE TO ASK.

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.

THEY ARE GOING TO WIN.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

THEY HAVE ALREADY WON BIG IN THE HEARTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

>> WANT TO MAKE A PREDICTION ON THE GAME?

>> WELL, I ALWAYS SAY THEY WILL WIN.

>> ALL RIGHT.

THAT'S A SAFE ONE.

WILLIAM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> WELL, I THINK THE ONE TOM BROUGHT UP IS MAYBE THE BIGGEST ONE.

BUT IT'S REALLY INTERESTING THAT CHARLIE MIRANDA MIGHT BE BEHIND BUCKHORN.

ANOTHER THING PRETTY IMPORTANT, BOARD OF GOVERNORS THAT THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM HAS SET UP, A SHOWDOWN WITH THE LEGISLATURE BY VOTING FOR A 5% TUITION HIKE, SHOWDOWN OVER WHO REALLY CONTROLS THE UNIVERSITIES.

>> AND DOES THAT MEAN THE LEGISLATURE AND THIS NEW BOARD WOULD END UP IN COURT OR WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT COULD GO TO COURT.

OUR FORMER STATE SENATE PRESIDENT OVER HERE COULD PROBABLY PREDICT HOW IT WILL BE WORKED OUT BETTER THAN I COULD.

BUT THE LEGISLATURE HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF AS OPPOSED TO A TUITION HIKE AND THINKS IT'S IN CHARGE.

>> THIS NEW BOARD IS EXERTING ITSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME, REALLY.

>> YES, THE FIRST TIME SINCE BOB GRAHAM RESCUED -- SINCE JEB BUSH ABOLISHED THEM AND BOB GRAHAM RESCUED THEM, THEY ARE

EXERTING -- THEY ARE FLEXING THEIR MUSCLES.

>> TOM, WE HAVE ABOUT TEN SECONDS, BUT WHO DO YOU THINK WILL WIN THIS BATTLE OVER TUITION?

>> WELL, THEY NEED THE ADDITIONAL MONEY RIGHT NOW CUTTING BUDGETS.

IT'S A BIT OF AN IRONY THAT YOU WOULD RAISE TUITION WHILE YOU'RE CUTTING BUDGETS, BUT I REALLY THINK THAT THEY ARE PROBABLY GOING TO HOLD TIGHT ON TUITION IN THE LEGISLATURE.

>> WELL, THANK YOU, WILLIAM MARCH, EVELYN HALE, THANK YOU, TOM LEE AND THANK YOU, SUSAN MacMANUS.

THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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