

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

NOVEMBER 16, 2007

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, THE RAYS BASEBALL TEAM WANTS A NEW WATERFRONT STADIUM.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE SEMINOLES REACH AGREEMENT ON EXPANSION OF GAMBLING.

TAMPA PLANS TO LAY OFF ANOTHER 100 WORKERS.

AND A SURVEY SAYS FLORIDA VOTERS ARE NOT INCLINED TO PASS THE PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT.

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, JOE BROWN IS A COLUMNIST AND EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER AT THE "THE TAMPA TRIBUNE."

MITCH PERRY IS ASSISTANT NEWS DIRECTOR AT WMNF RADIO.

ROCHELLE REBACK IS AN ATTORNEY AND A DEMOCRAT.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

AND PAUL BEDINGHAUS IS A REPUBLICAN STATE COMMITTEEMAN AND A CPA.

WELL, THANKS FOR COMING.

GOOD TO SEE YOU.

WELL, THE TAMPA BAY RAYS WANT TO BUILD A NEW 450 MILLION-DOLLAR OPEN-AIR DOWNTOWN STADIUM ON THE SITE OF AL LANG FIELD.

THE NEW BALLPARK WOULD HOLD 35,000 PEOPLE.

THAT'S SMALLER THAN TROPICANA FIELD.

SO FAR THE TEAM HAS REVEALED LITTLE.

NO DRAWINGS OF THE PROPOSED STADIUM, AND FEW DETAILS ABOUT THE FINANCING.

SINCE THE PLANS INVOLVE CONVERTING PUBLIC PROPERTY, VOTERS WILL HAVE A SAY, AND IT'S LIKELY THAT THE ISSUE WILL BE ON THE 2008 BALLOT.

THE OWNERS WILL ALSO SEEK A SALES TAX REBATE OF \$60 MILLION FROM THE LEGISLATURE.

>> IT WOULD CERTAINLY INVOLVE THE PUBLIC IN ANY PROCESS RELATED TO THIS.

>> SO, MITCH, IS THIS STADIUM NEEDED?

>> NOT REALLY.

BUT REALLY, IT ALWAYS IS NEEDED.

WHEN OWNERS WANT NEW STADIUMS, BUT THE RAYS ARE STRUGGLING FRANCHISE.

THEY ARE THE LAST LEAGUE IN ATTENDANCE FOR EVERY YEAR.

ALSO LAST RECORD-WISE EVERY YEAR.

THEY FEEL, AGAIN, LIKE A LOT OF THE FRANCHISES DO THAT A NEW BALLPARK WILL ENERGIZE THE COMMUNITY AND MORE FANS WILL FLOCK TO IT.

THERE ARE SO MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS TO THIS, WHERE DO YOU EVEN BEGIN?

WE'VE LEARNED MORE ABOUT THE FACT THAT THIS HAS BEEN VERY QUIETLY DISCUSSED BEHIND THE DOORS OF ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS IN ST. PETERSBURG AND THE RAYS OWNERSHIP.

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO THAT PRESS CONFERENCE.

REMEMBER, IT WILL HAPPEN IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

AS THE PROPOSAL STANDS NOW, I DON'T SEE IT HAPPENING THE WAY IT'S WRITTEN DOWN RIGHT NOW.

THE BIG THING, THE \$60 MILLION THAT THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE WILL NEED TO APPROPRIATE FOR THIS, THAT WOULD BE A SALES TAX REBATE THAT WOULD BE FOR \$2 MILLION FOR 30 YEARS, THE FLORIDA MARLINS DOWN IN MIAMI HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL THE LAST SIX TIMES, INCLUDING THIS PAST YEAR, TRYING TO GET THAT.

THAT'S WITH THE POWERFUL MIAMI LEGISLATURE BEHIND THAT.

AND THIS BUDGET DEFICIT YEAR COMING UP, I DON'T SEE IT HAPPENING.

>> SO, JOE, IF MIAMI HASN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET ITS TAX REBATE TO BUILD THE STADIUM DOWN THERE, BUT NOW WE HAVE THE MIAMI DELEGATION AND CONCEIVABLY, THE PINELLAS, HILLSBOROUGH,

PASCO, MAYBE THE MANATEE STATE REPRESENTATIVES AND SENATORS INVOLVED, IS IT MORE -- AND THE GOVERNOR, WE CAN'T FORGET THE GOVERNOR, IS IT MORE LIKELY WITH TWO BIG POWERHOUSE DELEGATIONS THAT THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO PUSH THROUGH SOME REBATE TO BUILD THESE STADIUMS?

>> IT'S POSSIBLE.

BUT I DON'T THINK IT WILL MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.

IT'S ACTUALLY A SMALL PART OF IT.

I LIKE WHAT HE SAID, WE INTEND TO INVOLVE THE PUBLIC.

WELL, OF COURSE, YOU DO.

YOU WANT SOME OF THAT MONEY.

DOESN'T EVERYBODY WANT TO BUILD A STADIUM?

MIAMI LEADS THE LEAGUE IN RAIN DELAYS EVERY YEAR, OR THE FLORIDA MARLINS, EXCUSE ME.

I DON'T SEE WHY IT WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT OVER THERE WHERE AL LANG IS.

IN FACT, I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY USE AL LANG.

IF YOU'VE BEEN TO A RAYS GAME LIKE I HAVE, YOU CAN FIT EVERYBODY IN AT AL LANG.

>> WHEN THE OUT-OF-TOWN TEAMS COME IN, BOSTON, NEW YORK, ATLANTA, THEY GET A BIG CROWD, RIGHT?

>> SOMETHING LIKE THAT, BUT STILL, MY FEELING, TO PARAPHRASE FROM THE MOVIE "FIELD OF DREAMS," IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY STILL AIN'T COMING.

>> SO, JOE, YOU THINK, TOO, THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT PUTTING A

SAIL, SOME SORT OF SHEET OVER THE TOP OF THE STADIUM WHERE
AL LANG IS.

THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE ENOUGH TO PROTECT THE GOERS FROM THE
ELEMENTS.

>> NO.

>> OKAY.

PAUL, I TALKED TO SOME ACTIVISTS THIS WEEK IN
ST. PETERSBURG.

THEY THOUGHT THAT THIS ISSUE SHOULD HAVE COME UP DURING THE
CITY ELECTIONS THAT WERE HELD RECENTLY.

AND THEY THINK THAT SOME CITY LEADERS SAT ON THIS
INFORMATION.

HAVE YOU HEARD THAT?

HAVE YOU HEARD THAT CRITICISM IN.

>> NO.

IN FACT, THE ELECTED OFFICIALS WERE NOT IN ON THIS PROCESS.
MAYOR BAKER DID NOT KNOW ABOUT THIS.

THIS WAS DISCUSSED WITH CITY STAFF, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
PEOPLE WHO ARE ALLOWED TO DISCUSS THINGS DISCREETLY BEFORE
IT GETS OUT.

SO THE ELECTED OFFICIALS IN ST. PETE WERE NOT IN ON THIS.

>> SO THERE'S NO COVERUP DURING THE WEEKS AND MONTHS LEADING
UP TO THE ELECTION.

>> THERE'S BEEN NO INDICATION OF THAT.

>> SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS IDEA, THOUGH?

>> IT'S INTRIGUING, AND TIMING IS EVERYTHING.
OF COURSE, WHAT IS DRIVING THIS IS ECONOMICS.
THE CURRENT STADIUM, TROPICANA STADIUM JUST DOESN'T PRODUCE
THE REVENUE FOR THE TEAM THAT IT NEEDS.
THIS IS ABOUT LUXURY SUITES, LUXURY BOXES THAT MAKE THE
MONEY FOR THE TEAM.
IN FACT, THE NEW STADIUM IS ABOUT -- WOULD HOLD ABOUT 10,000
PEOPLE LESS THAN TROPICANA FIELD.
I THINK IT WOULD HELP IF THE DEVIL RAYS COULD GET TO A
HUNDRED WINNING GAMES A YEAR.
I THINK IF YOU BUILD A TEAM, THEY WILL COME, NOT JUST A
STADIUM, BUT BUILD A TEAM AND I'M SUPPORTIVE OF THE DEVIL
RAYS, AND I GO TO THE GAMES, BUT WE GOT TO BUILD A TEAM AND
EVERYTHING ELSE WILL FOLLOW FROM THERE.
IT WORKED WITH THE BUCS.
THE BUCS ACTUALLY BUILT A NEW STADIUM, AND THEIR WINNING
TEAM KICKED IN, AND I THINK THEIR REVENUE SHARING KICKED IN
ALL AT THE SAME TIME SO IT WORKED WELL FOR THEM.
BUT THIS IS A TOUGH ENVIRONMENT FOR ASKING FOR STATE DOLLARS
OR PUBLIC SUPPORT, AND THERE'S ACTUALLY A MOVEMENT AROUND
THE COUNTRY FOR OWNERS THAT WANT STADIUMS TO FUND A LOT MORE
OF IT THEMSELVES THAN ASKING THE PUBLIC TO DO IT.
>> SHELLEY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS IDEA OF THE RAYS
WANTING A NEW TEAM -- OR NEW STADIUM, RATHER.
I'M SORRY.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

THEY PROBABLY WANT A NEW TEAM, TOO.

[LAUGHTER]

>> I'M GOING TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT.

BUT I WILL TALK ABOUT THE IDEA OF THE TEAM NEEDING TO HAVE SOME STATE SALES TAX REBATES IN ORDER TO GET ENOUGH FUNDING TO DO IT.

AND I THINK, AS PAUL POINTED OUT, I HAVE TO AGREE, IT'S A TOUGH TIME TO BE ASKING THE PUBLIC TO SUPPORT THAT.

HOUSE DEMOCRATIC LEADER DAN GELBER POINTED OUT, WE HAVE 700,000 KIDS WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE AND THE WORST HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE IN THE COUNTRY.

AND IT'S A LITTLE BIT ARROGANT TO SUGGEST THAT WE NEED TO DIG DEEPER TO FUND SPORTS INTERESTS.

SO I THINK THAT'S ONE PROBLEM.

SECOND OF ALL, I THINK THE TEAM IS WELL INTENTIONED, BUT I THINK THEY COULD HAVE HANDLED THE DISCLOSURE BETTER.

I THINK IT WAS KIND OF AN INAPPROPRIATE INVOCATION OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION TO KEEP THIS POTENTIAL DEAL SECRET FROM THE PUBLIC AS LONG AS IT WAS, BECAUSE I DON'T THINK THAT IT WAS A PROPER USE OF THAT EXEMPTION.

AND I THINK UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY REALLY NEED TO COME FORWARD NOW AND MAKE A LOT MORE DISCLOSURES AND GET THE PUBLIC INVOLVED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, BECAUSE THE PUBLIC IS THE BIGGEST STAKEHOLDER IN THIS.

>> YOU KNOW, I WOULD AGREE, ROB W WHAT SHELLEY SAYS ABOUT

STUART STERNBERG.

NEW OWNER.

PEOPLE WERE EXCITED WHEN HE CAME IN AND TOOK OVER THE
NAIMOLI ADMINISTRATION.

HE HAS NOT PUT A LOT OF MONEY IN THIS TEAM IN THE TWO YEARS
HE OWNED IT.

THEY HAD THE LOWEST PAYROLL, \$24 MILLION.

THAT'S HALF OF WHAT A-ROD MAKES.

NEVERTHELESS, WHAT SHELLEY SAYS ABOUT THE BACK DOOR
MANEUVERINGS, IT DOESN'T COME OUT I DON'T THINK TO A LOT OF
PEOPLE.

WHO KNOWS WHAT THEY FEEL ABOUT THIS.

THEY ARE LEARNING MORE ABOUT THIS.

SO MUCH TO LEARN.

THE RAYS DO THEIR LITTLE REBRANDING. IN ST. PETE AND TAMPA
THEY UNVEILED NEW UNIFORMS, NEW NAME, BUT THEY NEED A BETTER
BALL CLUB.

THAT WOULD HELP THINGS OUT.

YOU CONTINUE TO STRUGGLE LIKE THIS, I DON'T WANT TO USE AN
OLD CLICHÉ, SO I WON'T, BUT IN TERMS OF PUTTING THE
SITUATION UP HERE, I DON'T THINK A BALLPARK WILL HELP.

YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT THE SITUATION ABOUT THE CANOPY, I DON'T
KNOW, YOU HAD SOMEBODY CALL YOUR RADIO SHOW THIS WEEK WHO
SAID THE -- PEOPLE SHOULD GO TO TROPICANA FIELD AND NOT HAVE
THE AC ON.

UNEDITED REALTIME CLOSED CAPTIONING

MAYBE TURN THE SPRINKLERS ON AND SIMULATE THE STORMS
UNDERNEATH THE CANOPY.

>> AT LEAST TROPICANA IS AIR CONDITIONED.

GOVERNOR CHARLIE CRIST AND THE SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
HAVE REACHED AN AGREEMENT TO ALLOW LAS VEGAS-STYLE SLOTS AT
INDIAN CASINOS.

THE AGREEMENT WOULD ALLOW BLACKJACK AND BACCARAT AS WELL AS
LAS VEGAS-STYLE SLOTS IN THE HARD ROCK CASINOS IN TAMPA,
BROWARD COUNTY, AND OTHER SITES, BUT NO CRAPS OR ROULETTE.
IT GUARANTEES A MINIMUM OF \$100 MILLION A YEAR FOR THE STATE
IN REVENUE FROM THE BETTING.

JOE, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS IDEA?

>> I DON'T THINK GOVERNOR CRIST HAD MUCH CHOICE, ACTUALLY.

HE SAID THEY REACHED AN AGREEMENT.

I THINK, HEY --

>> HIS BACK WAS AGAINST THE WALL.

>> YES.

AND THE ODDS WERE AGAINST HIM, SO TO SPEAK.

[LAUGHTER]

I KNEW THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO -- IN ONE OF THESE AMENDMENTS THAT
NOBODY PAYS ATTENTION TO, THEY APPROVE THIS THING THAT
ALLOWED -- WE APPROVED A VOTE TO ALLOW BROWARD COUNTY TO
VOTE ON WHETHER THEY HAVE THIS KIND OF GAMBLING.

OKAY, SO ONCE YOU DO THAT, YOU GOT TO ALLOW IT WITH THE

SEMINOLES.

I MEAN, THAT'S THE LAW.

THAT'S A FEDERAL LAW.

SO CASE OF SOVEREIGNTY, WHO HAS IT, SO FORTH AND SO ON.

I THINK THAT IF CRIST HADN'T DONE IT, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A LOT OF LITIGATION INVOLVED WITH THE STATE -- IT WOULD HAVE ENDED UP THE SAME WAY.

>> THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE SAYS THAT HE WANTS TO CHALLENGE THIS IN COURT.

>> I UNDERSTAND.

>> WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

>> I DON'T THINK HE'S GOT A CHANCE.

I DON'T THINK HE'S GOT A LEGAL CHANCE.

>> WELL, MAYBE SO, BUT I'VE HEARD HIM AND STEVE GELLER, THE SENATE MINORITY LEADER, SAY THEY DO HAVE A LEGAL CHANCE, ACTUALLY.

THEY SAY THAT COURT CASES PREVIOUSLY, PRECEDENT SAYS THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD BE INVOLVED WITH THIS.

I'M NOT SURE.

YOU'RE DARN RIGHT.

NOT ONLY RUBIO, BUT GELLER WILL WANT TO HAVE THIS GO TO THE COURTS.

>> BUT WHAT'S THE REASON FOR THE LEGISLATURE TO GET ITS FINGERS INTO IT AT THIS POINT?

>> YOU KNOW, I HAVE TO ADMIT, I DON'T KNOW THAT.

>> HE SAYS --

>> IT'S A BUDGETARY.

THAT'S THE DOMAIN OF THE LEGISLATURE.

THEY HAVE A SAY, AND GOVERNOR CRIST HAS SAID I WANT THE
LEGISLATURE TO COME IN AND RATIFY THIS.

NOW, THEY ARE SORT OF BALKING AT IT BECAUSE THEY THINK THAT
THE DOG TRACKS AND OTHERS SHOULD HAVE A PIECE OF IT, WELL,
THEY ARE OUT OF IT.

BUT IF FLORIDA WANTED TO HAVE A PIECE OF THIS PIE, THIS WAS
THE ONLY WAY TO DO IT, BECAUSE THE INDIANS WOULD HAVE GOTTEN
THE RIGHT TO DO THIS BECAUSE OF WHAT JOE MENTIONED ABOUT THE
SOUTHERN FLORIDA COUNTIES HAVING IT.

AND WE WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT OF THE LOOP.

WE WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN ANY REVENUE FROM THIS WHATSOEVER.

SO IF WE WANTED TO BE AT THE TABLE AND GET SOME REVENUE, THE
GOVERNOR HAD TO CUT THIS DEAL.

>> PAUL, SOCIAL CONSERVATIVES ESPECIALLY WITHIN THE GOP ARE
VERY UPSET AT THIS DECISION.

I SAW QUOTES FROM SENATOR RONDA STORMS THIS WEEK, FROM TERRY
KEMPLE, A RELIGIOUS ACTIVIST IN EASTERN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY,
THEY ARE QUITE UPSET THAT THIS DEAL WAS MADE.

>> WELL, SOME ARE, AND SOME REALIZE THAT, OH, MY GOD, WE
HAVE GAMBLING IN FLORIDA.

WE DO.

WHETHER WE WANT TO CALL IT THE LOTTERY OR YOU WANT TO CALL

IT THE INDIAN CASINO, WE HAVE GAMBLING IN FLORIDA.

ACTUALLY, THE PEOPLE VOTED IN THE AMENDMENT IN FLORIDA TO GIVE CERTAIN PEOPLE THE OPTION TO GAMBLE IN MIAMI-DADE AND BROWARD COUNTIES.

SO WE HAVE IT.

AND THEN THE QUESTION AS TO LEADERS IS, WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DO YOU HAVE TO SECURE THE PUBLIC SHARE OF THIS REVENUE STREAM?

AND I THINK THE GOVERNOR DID THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE THING THAT HE COULD DO.

>> SHELLEY, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS DECISION THIS WEEK TO REACH AN AGREEMENT?

>> I THINK IT'S THE CONSTITUTIONAL LAWYERS FULL EMPLOYMENT ACT FOR A WHILE BECAUSE I DO THINK THERE'S GOING TO BE LITIGATION, AS WE PROFESSIONALS SAY, UP THE WAZOO.

BUT I DO, BECAUSE I THINK IT'S ABOUT THE FACT THAT SOMEONE IS GOING TO CONTROL THIS PILE OF MONEY.

AND THAT MEANS SOMEONE IS GOING TO HAVE INFLUENCE.

OF COURSE, THE GOVERNOR HAS TAKEN THE POSITION THAT WE DON'T NEED THE LEGISLATURE'S APPROVAL AT THIS POINT BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T IN THIS COMPACT MADE ANY PROVISIONS FOR HOW THE MONEY SHOULD BE SPENT.

WE'RE JUST GOING AND GRAB IT.

THEN IT'S GOING TO BE THE LEGISLATURE'S PURVIEW ABOUT HOW IT SHOULD BE SPENT ALTHOUGH THERE'S A RECOMMENDATION THAT I

BELIEVE IS NONBINDING THAT 95% OF IT GO TO EDUCATION.

THAT'S ASPIRATIONAL, THOUGH.

THERE'S NOTHING THAT WOULD REQUIRE THE LEGISLATURE TO DO THAT, AS FAR AS I CAN TELL.

SO I THINK THAT'S, YOU KNOW, GOING TO BE A VERY, VERY BIG QUESTION IN THIS STATE.

>> THERE WAS, BACK WHEN GOVERNOR CHILES WAS GOVERNOR, HE MADE A DEAL WITH THE TOBACCO COMPANIES.

HE DID A SETTLEMENT WITH THEM THAT PROVIDED A FOUNDATION AND A REVENUE STREAM.

HE DID THAT WITHOUT THE LEGISLATURE.

THAT IMPACTED OUR BUDGET.

I'M NOT AN ATTORNEY.

I'M A CPA.

IT SEEMS TO ME THERE'S SOME PRECEDENT FOR THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO CUT THESE DEALS AND THEN LET THE LEGISLATURE DETERMINE HOW THAT MONEY IS TO BE APPROPRIATED AND SPEND IT.

>> AND ROB, I TALKED TO THE EXPERT, STEVEN WHITE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA THIS WEEKEND.

HE SAID FLORIDA GOT A GOOD DEAL RELATIVELY SPEAKING BECAUSE THE SEMINOLES HAD GOOD LEVERAGE ON US.

HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS THE FIRST YEAR, 125 MILLION THE SECOND, 150 MILLION THE THIRD, AND HE SAYS IT'S GOING TO GROW BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE GOING TO REALIZE THEY CAN DO MORE GAMBLING IN FLORIDA.

>> GOVERNOR CRIST SAID IT MIGHT AMOUNT AS MUCH AS TO A BILLION DOLLARS OVER THE FIRST FIVE YEARS.

>> IT WILL.

BECAUSE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO NOW GO TO BILOXI AND PLACES LIKE THAT WILL STAY HERE.

>> MORE LAYOFFS IN THE CITY OF TAMPA.

MAYOR PAM IORIO SAYS SHE'S ENDING THE JOB OF HUNDRED MORE CITY EMPLOYEES BECAUSE OF PROPERTY TAX CHANGES ORDERED BY THE STATE.

THIS IS THE SECOND ROUND OF LAYOFFS THIS YEAR IN THE CITY. MANY OF THE JOBS AFFECTED WILL BE JANITORIAL AND SECURITY SERVICES.

SOME OF THE JOBS WILL NOW BE DONE BY PRIVATE COMPANIES.

SHELLEY, IT SEEMS ODD THAT A DEMOCRATIC MAYOR WOULD WANT TO PRIVATIZE PART OF CITY GOVERNMENT.

>> IT DOES.

[LAUGHTER]

IT DOES.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT TO SAY, WHEN YOU PRIVATIZE TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT FUNCTION, YOU LOSE ACCOUNTABILITY.

AND WHEN YOU LOSE ACCOUNTABILITY, THERE'S NO WAY TO QUANTIFY WHETHER OR NOT IT'S THE MONEY-SAVING PROPOSITION THAT IT WAS INITIALLY TOUTED TO BE, WHICH IS WHY YOU CLAIM YOU NEED TO DO IT IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I THINK IT'S JUST AN AWFUL IDEA, I HAVE TO SAY.

>> DO YOU THINK IORIO IS LOOKING AHEAD TO RUN FOR GOVERNOR, THAT IS, SHE CAN CLAIM TO BE A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE AND EVEN HAVE A FOOT IN KIND OF THE REPUBLICAN CAMP AND TO SAY TO VOTERS ACROSS THE STATE, YOU KNOW, I GOVERN FROM THE MIDDLE OR MAYORED FROM THE MIDDLE, IF I CAN USE THAT WORD?

>> THERE ARE TWO THINGS ABOUT THAT QUESTION, DO YOU THINK SHE'S LOOKING AHEAD AND WANTING TO BE A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE? I GUESS UP UNTIL THIS MORNING'S NEWS WHERE SHE IS THROWING JIM DAVIS INTO THE RACE OR RECOMMENDING JIM DAVIS INTO THE RACE FOR MAYOR, ONE HAS TO WONDER WHETHER OR NOT THAT MIGHT BE TO FIND JIM DAVIS A JOB OTHER THAN DEMOCRATIC SENATOR FROM FLORIDA, WHICH IS A JOB MS. IORIO HERSELF MIGHT BE INTERESTED.

THAT'S ONE THING THAT TODAY'S NEWS SUGGESTS THAT SHE MAY, IN FACT, BE MOTIVATED SOMEWHAT BY FUTURE POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS. I WOULDN'T HAVE SAID THAT YESTERDAY.

THE SECOND THING, THOUGH, IS THAT TO SAY THAT THIS WILL DEMONSTRATE HER COMMITMENT TO BEING A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE I THINK IS REALLY A STRETCH, BECAUSE IF WE'VE LEARNED ANYTHING FROM THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION, WE'VE SEEN WHAT A DISASTER PRIVATIZATION CAN BE.

EVERYTHING FROM BLACKWATER, KBR, TO, YOU KNOW, WHAT WE'VE SEEN AS FAR AS THE OUTSOURCING OF TRADITIONAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS.

IT'S BEEN A FINANCIAL DISASTER.

>> PAUL, IS THAT YOUR VIEW OF PRIVATIZATION, THAT IT'S A FINANCIAL DISASTER TO PRIVATIZE?

>> NO.

AND TO GET AT THE ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUE, THAT'S WHAT ACCOUNTANTS DO.

WE CAN DESIGN A SYSTEM TO PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TO MEASURE OUTCOMES AND TO MEASURE WHETHER OR NOT PEOPLE ARE PERFORMING ACCORDING TO THE CONTRACT.

IT CAN BE DONE.

IT SHOULD BE DONE, AND IS DONE IN GOVERNMENT WHEN IT'S IN-SOURCED.

IT CERTAINLY CAN BE DONE WHEN IT'S OUTSOURCED.

>> ROB, YOU'RE RIGHT.

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT HER BEING A FISCAL CONSERVATIVE, SHE HAS DONE THAT IN HER FOUR-YEARS-PLUS IN OFFICE.

SHE'S BEEN CRITICIZED, \$15 MILLION, PROBABLY MORE, SET ASIDE FOR HURRICANES OR DISASTER FUND.

SHE WANTED TO BUILD IT UP LARGER.

PEOPLE SAID, HEY, COME ON, SPEND SOME OF THE MONEY.

ISSUES AT THE COUNTY IS THAT THE MAYOR WANTS TO HOLD ON TO SOME OF THAT MONEY.

THIS IS PART OF HER LEGACY, PART OF HER BRANDING, IF YOU WILL.

UNFORTUNATELY, YOU COULD ALMOST SAY IT'S WHAT SHE'S BEST KNOWN FOR.

I GUESS, AGAIN, IF YOU'RE RUNG AND YOU WANT PEOPLE TO -- IF YOU'RE RUNNING AND YOU WANT PEOPLE TO FEEL GOOD WITH THAT ASPECT AND THERE ARE PROPOSED NEW BUDGET CUTS COMING FROM TALLAHASSEE, THIS IS A HARSH MANEUVER, I BELIEVE.

>> JOE, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> IF IT SAVES MONEY, FINE.

IT DOESN'T ALWAYS DO THAT.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MAINTENANCE AND LONG CARE IS NOT AS MUCH AS, SAY, ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GETTING PEOPLE OFF THE VOTER ROLLS, WHICH IS -- OFF THE VOTER ROLLS, WHICH IS WHAT THE JEB BUSH ADMINISTRATION DID IN 2000, WHICH CAUSED A BIG MESS, BECAUSE THEY HAD A COMPANY THAT PURGED THE ROLLS.

I TALKED TO A PINELLAS COUNTY OFFICIAL A FEW YEARS AGO, THEY WERE GOING TO PRIVATIZE A BUNCH OF SERVICES OVER THERE.

AND THE GOVERNOR SAID, OH, NO, SO HE SAID, OKAY, LOOK, THIS IS WHAT THEY SAID THEY CAN DO IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

YOU DO IT FOR THAT MUCH OR LESS AND WE'LL KEEP IT, AND THEY DID.

>> DEGREE OF COMPETITION GETS THOSE GOVERNMENT WORKERS MAYBE TO ACCEPT A LITTLE BIT LESS.

>> NO, IT WILL BE JUST MORE EFFICIENT.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, ONLY 53% OF REGISTERED VOTERS SAY THEY SUPPORT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO REDUCE TAXES THAT WILL BE ON THE JANUARY 29th BALLOT.

THAT'S SEVEN POINTS SHORT OF THE 60% NEEDED TO PASS.

IN A SURVEY TAKEN FOR THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES," BAY NEWS 9 AND SEVERAL OTHER FLORIDA MEDIA OUTLETS, 20% OF THE PUBLIC IS STILL UNDECIDED.

SUPPORT FOR THE TAX PLAN DROPPED EVEN FURTHER WHEN POTENTIAL VOTERS WERE TOLD ABOUT SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE PLAN WHICH HEAVILY FAVORS LONGTIME OWNERS OF HOMESTEAD PROPERTY AND WOULD CUT \$2 BILLION FROM SCHOOL BUDGETS OVER FIVE YEARS.

PAUL, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS SURVEY?

I MEAN, WE ARE A WAYS AWAY.

IT'S JANUARY 29th THAT THE VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE.

IS THERE A CHANCE THAT THEY COULD MAKE UP THAT 7% DEFICIT?

>> NOT ONLY IS THERE A CHANCE, I PREDICT IT WILL PASS.

WE'RE AT 53%, 54% RIGHT NOW OR 56%, DEPENDING ON WHICH POLL YOU'RE LOOKING AT.

IT'S EARLY.

PEOPLE HAVE TO GET EDUCATED.

THERE ARE 20% UNDECIDED IN THIS POLL.

IF HALF OF THOSE 20% GO IN FAVOR, WE'RE OVER THE 60% MARK.

SO I THINK IT PASSES.

THERE ARE TWO KEYS IN THIS THING, WHY I THINK IT WILL PASS.

ONE IS SAVE OUR HOMES IS PRESERVED AND EXPENDED.

IF YOU GO TO A LARGER HOME UP TO HALF A MILLION DOLLARS, YOU RETAIN YOUR SAVE YOUR HOMES BASE.

THAT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT WAS NOT THE CASE IN THE PREVIOUS

AMENDMENT.

NUMBER TWO, THE SECRET WEAPON IS THE TANGIBLE PERSONAL
PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION OF \$25,000.

THAT'S FOR BUSINESSES, BUT IT'S ALSO FOR MOBILE HOME OWNERS.
ONE MILLION STRONG IN FLORIDA.

THEY HAVE TANGIBLE PROPERTY TAX THAT THEY HAVE TO PAY ON
ADDITIONS TO THEIR MOBILE HOMES SUCH AS OUTSIDE SHELTERS,
STORAGE UNITS, ET CETERA.

MOBILE HOME OWNERS WILL SAVE HUNDREDS OF DOLLARS UNDER THAT
EXEMPTION.

THEY WILL BE OUT IN FORCE, AND THEY ARE BEHIND THIS.

>> MITCH, I GUESS, TOO, ONE OF THE FACTORS IS THE ADS THAT
COME OUT BETWEEN NOW AND JANUARY.

WHO IS GOING TO RUN ADS?

>> WELL, THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEES DEFINITELY WOULD DO THAT.

I TALKED TO AFSCME AND SEIU THIS WEEK AND FLORIDA EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION, THEY WILL ALL GET INVOLVED AND MAYBE ANNOUNCE
THE CAMPAIGN SOON.

>> AND THEY ARE GOING TO OPPOSE IT.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

NOW, BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS, VERY FEW SO FAR SAY THEY ARE
GOING TO SPEND ANY MONEY TO SUPPORT IT.

YOU KNOW, AGAIN, IT IS EARLY, AND THESE POLLS ARE
FLUCTUATING.

I THINK THAT GOVERNOR CRIST WILL SEE, YOU KNOW, WHAT HE'S

MADE OF HERE.

HE'S REALLY PUSHING THIS THING HARD.

WHEN WE GET BAD ECONOMIC NEWS LIKE WE DID THIS WEEK ABOUT ANOTHER DEFICIT, HE TOLD PEOPLE MORE INCENTIVE TO GO OUT AND VOTE FOR THIS AMENDMENT ON JANUARY 29th, BECAUSE THERE'S MORE MONEY FOR YOU, \$240 PERHAPS, THAT GOES TO THE TREASURY. BIG TEST FOR GOVERNOR CRIST IN THIS BATTLE, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.

>> SHELLEY, ONE OF THE CRITICISMS ABOUT THIS IS IT HELPS THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ALREADY BEEN HELPED BY THE SAVE OUR HOMES TAX CAP AND DOESN'T -- NOW, WHAT PAUL SAID, THOUGH, IS INTERESTING, YOU HAVE THIS \$25,000 PERSONAL EXEMPTION, BUT IT DOESN'T -- THE BIG CRITICISM OF THIS IS IT DOESN'T HELP PEOPLE WHO BOUGHT THEIR HOMES IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, NEWCOMERS TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

I THINK THERE'S STILL A QUESTION OF HIGHEST AND BEST USE, LAND ESPECIALLY ON THE WATERFRONT.

THAT'S NOT PROTECTED IN THIS NEW PLAN.

THERE'S STILL A BUNCH OF NAYSAYERS OUT THERE.

>> OH, NOT TO MENTION THE FACT THAT IT'S GOING TO BE ENORMOUSLY DISADVANTAGEOUS TO EDUCATION FUNDING.

IT'S GOING TO COST I THINK -- I THINK THE NUMBER SUGGESTED IS LIKE \$2 BILLION IN EDUCATION FUNDING.

THAT IS EXTREMELY DETRIMENTAL TO THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN FLORIDA AND REALLY TO OUR ECONOMIC BASE FOR FUTURE

GENERATIONS.

I MEAN, IF WE CAN'T GET PEOPLE THROUGH OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND HAVE A STRONG AND PRODUCTIVE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM, THEN WE'RE NEVER GOING TO BE COMPETITIVE IN THIS WORLD.

>> JOE, PAUL SAYS THE DEFICIT, THE 7 POINT DEFICIT CAN BE MADE UP BETWEEN NOW AND JANUARY 29th.

DO YOU THINK IT CAN BE MADE UP?

>> WE'LL HAVE TO CUT MORE.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE REVENUE WILL COME FROM.

>> IF IT'S DOWN IN THE POLLS BY SEVEN POINTS.

>> I DON'T THINK SO.

I THINK THE MORE PEOPLE READ INTO THIS, THE MORE THEY REALIZE THAT THIS IS STILL UNFAIR AND INEQUITABLE.

I JUST LOOK AT MY BLOCK.

IT'S STILL NOT GOING TO FIX THE FOLKS.

I'M STILL PAYING LESS THAN HALF WHAT MY NEIGHBORS ON ONE SIDE ARE PAYING AND ABOUT \$500 MORE ON THE OTHER.

SO IT'S JUST -- STILL, THAT'S NOT GOING TO BE FIXED.

AGAIN, ONLY PEOPLE WHO BENEFIT, IF YOU MOVE TO FLORIDA AND MOVE INTO A MOBILE HOME MAYBE.

BECAUSE IF YOU MOVE INTO MY HOUSE, IF I MOVE, THEN YOU'RE GOING TO PAY MORE THAN WHAT I PAID BEFORE I MOVED OUT.

AND THAT'S NOT BEING FAIR.

>> ALL RIGHT.

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

JOE, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> THE NAACP IN PINELLAS IS ALL UPSET.

THEY ARE FINALLY GOING TO GET OUT OF USING RACE AS A FACTOR.

THEY ARE AFRAID THAT, MY GOSH, SOME SCHOOLS MIGHT END UP
BEING MAJORITY BLACK.

MY GOD, WHAT'S THE WORLD COMING TO?

I THINK THESE FOLKS NEED TO GET WITH THE 21st CENTURY.

IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

NOTHING WRONG WITH A MAJORITY BLACK SCHOOL.

IN THE '50s, LINDA BROWN OF THE BROWN V. BOARD OF
EDUCATION CASE, COULDN'T GO TO A SCHOOL NEAR HER HOUSE
BECAUSE OF SEGREGATION.

NOW, LINDA BROWN'S GRANDDAUGHTER, IF SHE LIVED IN
ST. PETERSBURG COULDN'T GO TO A SCHOOL NEAR HER HOUSE
BECAUSE IT DOESN'T -- IT WON'T BE DIVERSE ENOUGH FOR SOME
PEOPLE.

IT'S REALLY SILLY.

THEY NEED TO GIVE IT UP.

>> OKAY.

WE'RE GOING TO COME BACK TO THAT ISSUE IN DECEMBER.

MITCH, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> GROUP OF EDUCATION OFFICIALS AND STATE LEGISLATORS

TRAVELED UP TO ALBANY, NEW YORK, TO CHECK OUT THE ASSESSMENT TEST THEY DO IN NEW YORK CALLED THE REGENTS EXAM.

WELL, THIS COULD PORTEND THE END OF THE FCAT.

MAYBE NOT.

MAYBE THE OFFICIALS ARE BEING MORE CIRCUMSPECT ABOUT THAT, MAYBE ADDITION TO THE FCAT.

BIPARTISAN, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, DAN GELBER WENT UP THERE AS WELL, BECAUSE THEY REALLY THINK -- YOU KNOW, WE'VE HEARD CRITICISM ABOUT THE FCAT FOR YEARS, AND MAYBE SOME PEOPLE WILL TRY AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

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

>> WELL, MY BIG STORY OF THE WEEK AND I THINK THE BIG STORY OF OUR LIFETIME IS GOING TO BE THE ENVIRONMENT.

AND LOCALLY, WE'VE SEEN A LOT OF INTERESTING THINGS HAPPEN. THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY EPC MET YESTERDAY AND DECIDED TO TAKE NO ACTION ON THE RULE THAT THEY WERE DEVELOPING HAVING TO DO WITH AGRICULTURAL LAND.

I BELIEVE A LITTLE BIT CHASTENED AFTER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO GET RID OF THE LOCAL EPC REGULATION ALTOGETHER.

I THINK WHAT WE'RE SEEING IS PEOPLE ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THEY ARE MAD AS HELL, AND THEY ARE NOT GOING TO TAKE IT ANYMORE.

AND ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE GOING TO NEED TO PAY CLOSER AND BETTER ATTENTION BECAUSE PEOPLE WANT A VOICE -- AGAIN, IT'S

A QUALITY-OF-LIFE ISSUE AND PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUE, AND PEOPLE WANT TO BE SURE THAT THEIR ELECTED OFFICIALS ARE GOOD STEWARDS OF THE ENVIRONMENT.

>> SO DO YOU THINK IT WILL PLAY A ROLE, FOR INSTANCE, IN THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSION ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR?

>> I THINK IT WILL BE "THE" ISSUE IN THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY COMMISSION ELECTION UNLESS WE HAVE SOME KIND OF SCANDAL THAT TAKES PRECEDENCE.

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

>> ROB, A RECENT POLL ONCE AGAIN SHOWS THAT FLORIDA IS NOT RED.

IT IS NOT BLUE.

IT IS PURPLE.

VERY CLOSE ELECTION BETWEEN RUDY GIULIANI AND MRS. CLINTON HERE IN FLORIDA.

I DON'T KNOW IF THOSE WILL BE THE NOMINEES; HOWEVER, IF BY THE TIME WE GET TO THE CONVENTION, THE POLLS ARE SHOWING THAT FOR REPUBLICANS, FLORIDA IS IN PLAY, THAT WE MIGHT LOSE FLORIDA, INCREASING LIKELIHOOD THAT CHARLIE CRIST WILL BE ON THE VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TICKET.

>> VERY INTERESTING.

DO YOU THINK THE DEMOCRATS HAVE SHOT THEMSELVES DEEPLY IN THE FOOT, THOUGH, BY DOING AWAY WITH THE DELEGATES FROM FLORIDA BECAUSE WE'VE MOVED UP OUR PRIMARY?

>> I THINK THEY SHOT THEMSELVES IN THE FOOT, AND I THINK

THEY JUMPED ON THEIR FEET AFTER THEY SHOT THEMSELVES.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, THANK YOU, JOE BROWN.

THANK YOU MITCH PERRY.

THANK YOU SHELLEY REBACK AND THANK YOU PAUL BEDINGHAUS.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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