

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

APRIL 4, 2008

DISCLAIMER:

THE FOLLOWING REPRESENTS AN UNEDITED VERSION OF REALTIME CAPTIONING WHICH SHOULD NEITHER BE RELIED UPON FOR COMPLETE ACCURACY NOR USED AS A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT. BECAUSE THIS DOCUMENT HAS NOT BEEN EDITED, THERE MAY BE ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, AND/OR WORDS THAT DID NOT TRANSLATE CORRECTLY.

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

>> COMING UP NEXT, HOWARD DEAN SAYS FLORIDA'S DELEGATION WILL BE SEATED AT THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION.

HOUSE LEADERS SAY YES TO A PLAN TO TAKE MONEY OUT OF THE RAINY DAY FUND.

LEGISLATORS PLANNING TO ADD MORE REGULATIONS ON WOMEN SEEKING ABORTIONS, AND THE STATE SUES MEMBERS OF THE POE INSURANCE FAMILY FOR ALLEGEDLY DIVERTING MONEY BEFORE THE COMPANY WENT BANKRUPT.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

¶¶

>> FROM THE WEDU STUDIOS, THIS IS "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

AND NOW, MODERATOR ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

FIRST, WE'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OF YOU WHO GENEROUSLY DONATED DURING OUR FUND DRIVE.

WE SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT.

THIS WEEK, OUR PANELISTS ARE: PATRICK MANTEIGA IS EDITOR AND PUBLISHER OF LA GACETA NEWSPAPER AND A DEMOCRAT.

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

JONI JAMES IS STATE EDITOR AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES." AND ANGELETTE AVILES IS A BUSINESSWOMAN AND A REPUBLICAN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

GOOD TO SEE YOU.

WELL, THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE CHAIR HOWARD DEAN SAYS THE PARTY IS COMMITTED TO SEATING FLORIDA'S DELEGATES AT THIS SUMMER'S CONVENTION AS LONG AS ANY AGREEMENT IS SUPPORTED BY BOTH OF THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS. DEAN MET THIS WEEK WITH FLORIDA'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AND STATE PARTY CHAIR KAREN THURMAN TO DISCUSS WAYS OF ALLOCATING DELEGATES.

IS THIS IT, DARRYL, FINALLY, AN AGREEMENT IS ABOUT TO BE REACHED?

>> NO.

DEMOCRATS ARE GOING TO HAVE TROUBLE WORKING THIS THROUGH. I'M NOT SURE THEY'LL GET ANYTHING RESOLVED BEFORE THE CONVENTION.

FLORIDA DELEGATES WILL BE SEATED.

THAT'S, I GUESS, YOU MIGHT SAY SOME ADVANCE OVER WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE.

THE QUESTION IS, WHAT ARE THEY GOING TO DO ONCE THEY GET TO THEIR SEATS?

ARE THEY GOING TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL ROLE TO PLAY?

ARE THEY GOING TO BE ABLE TO VOTE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES?

WE DON'T KNOW THAT YET BECAUSE THE OTHER HALF OF THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT, SO TO SPEAK, THEY NEED TO COME UP WITH A RESOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH THE OBAMA CAMPS AND CLINTON CAMP.

IN MY VIEW, THERE IS NO SUCH OF AGREEMENT.

ANY KIND OF PROPOSAL YOU COME UP WILL BE VETOED BY ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER BECAUSE IT PUTS THEM AT A POLITICAL DISADVANTAGE.

I THINK THERE'S INCREASING LIKELIHOOD THIS WILL GO BEFORE THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE.

SOMEWHAT INTERESTING THE LAST TIME THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WAS 1972, SOME 35 YEARS AGO AT THE MIAMI CONVENTION, MIAMI DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION, AND THIS TIME AROUND, ONCE AGAIN, FLORIDA SEEMS TO BE IN THE MIX.

WE ALWAYS MAKE POLITICAL NEWS, NOT ALWAYS THE KIND WE WANT TO MAKE, BUT IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING.

>> AND THAT CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE, ANY IDEA WHICH WAY IT LEANS RIGHT NOW?

>> THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE IS MADE UP OF 25 PEOPLE APPOINTED BY HOWARD DEAN, BUT THE REST OF THE COMMITTEE, AND

IT'S A 200-PLUS MEMBER COMMITTEE, IS ASSIGNED TO THE CLINTON AND OBAMA FORCES DEPENDING ON THEIR STRENGTH WITH RESPECT TO THE VARIOUS STATE DELEGATIONS.

BUT ANOTHER FACTOR IS, THE THREE CO-CHAIRS OF THE CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS WHO HELD POSITIONS IN THE BILL CLINTON ADMINISTRATION.

>> UM-HUM.

PATRICK, I GUESS THE SHORT-HAND WAY TO DESCRIBE THIS IS BARACK OBAMA IS NOT THAT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT SEATING THE FLORIDA DELEGATION, AND HILLARY CLINTON, SINCE SHE WON PRETTY DECISIVELY IN FLORIDA, IS ANXIOUS TO SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATION.

IS THAT THE WAY YOU SEE IT?

>> WELL, CERTAINLY.

AND I THINK IT'S WAITED SO LONG NOW THAT THE BARACK OBAMA PEOPLE WILL SAY, WELL, LET'S GET THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA. LET'S GET THROUGH NORTH CAROLINA, AND COUNT THEIR DELEGATES. AND THEN SEE WHAT THEY CAN GIVE AWAY, IN ESSENCE, IN ORDER TO GET FLORIDA SEATED.

YOU KNOW, I DO THINK THERE'S A RESOLUTION HERE.

BUT I THINK THAT WHAT SOME PEOPLE DON'T RECOGNIZE HERE IS THAT WHILE, YOU KNOW, DEAN MIGHT SAY THEY ARE GOING TO SEAT FLORIDA AND WE MIGHT SAY, WELL, IT'S UP TO OBAMA AND CLINTON, IT ALSO HAS TO COME BACK DOWN TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA, DO YOU GUYS WANT TO BE SEATED THIS WAY?

THEY TALKED ABOUT, WELL, WHY DON'T 50% FOR HILLARY, 50% FOR OBAMA, I DON'T THINK THAT SATISFIES FLORIDA DELEGATES.

WE VOTED.

IN SOME FASHION YOU HAVE TO REPRESENT THAT VOTE AND SPLITTING IT 50/50 IS IGNORING WHAT HAPPENED HERE IN SEATING FLORIDA DELEGATES.

WELL, FLORIDA VOTERS DON'T WANT THAT TO HAPPEN.

I THINK WHAT YOU'LL LOOK AT IS PROBABLY A WEIGHTED VOTE WHERE WE'LL SEAT THE DELEGATES, BUT, YOU KNOW, THEY ONLY COUNT FOR 50%, 25% OF A REGULAR VOTE.

SO THAT INSTEAD OF OBAMA BEING DOWN 30 DELEGATES BECAUSE OF FLORIDA, MAYBE HE'S DOWN 19 OR 15 OR 10 OR WHATEVER THE NUMBER WILL BE DECIDED.

>> JONI?

>> MEANWHILE, I THINK THIS ISN'T GOOD FOR THE DEMOCRAT -- WHOEVER THE EVENTUAL WINNER IS, THIS IS NOT GOOD FOR THEIR HOPES IN NOVEMBER.

IT IS JUST DRAGGING -- I MEAN, WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THREE MONTHS AGO THAT WE WOULDN'T HAVE A NOMINEE YET, THAT, YOU KNOW, SLOWLY EVERYONE HAS SORT OF ASSUMED THE DEMOCRATS HAVE THE UPPER HAND THIS ELECTION BECAUSE OF THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY, BECAUSE OF THE FATIGUE OVER THE WAR.

AND AS THIS DRAGS ON AND ON, ANY CHANCE THEY HAD TO CAPITALIZE ON THAT JUST SORT OF ERODED.

>> JONI, YOUR POLITICAL EDITOR OF THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES"

WROTE A FEW WEEKS AGO THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE DEMOCRATS MIGHT BE WRITING OFF FLORIDA AS A PLACE TO -- AND LOOKING OUT WEST OR MAYBE LOOKING TO OHIO AS THE OTHER STATE TO PICK UP GIVEN THEIR STRONGHOLD IN THE NORTHEAST AND THE WEST COAST.

>> I THINK THAT'S POSSIBLE.

I THINK, THOUGH, IT'S STILL -- THIS IS -- YOU KNOW, WE'RE ALL SO FATIGUED WITH THE DELEGATE ISSUE.

KIND OF LIKE WATCHING THIS TENNIS MATCH THAT WILL NOT END.

I THINK UNTIL THAT SORT OF GETS RESOLVED, WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THEIR STRATEGY WILL HAVE TO BE.

>> ANGELETTE, I THOUGHT IT WAS INTERESTING THAT WE GOT PRESS RELEASES IN NEWSROOMS AROUND THE BAY AREA THAT BARACK OBAMA IS COMING TO THE BAY AREA TO CAMPAIGN ON MAY 9th.

>> VOTERS ALREADY FELT A LITTLE DISENFRANCHISED, WHETHER HE COMES IT'S A LITTLE LATE.

ONE DAY NO, ONE DAY YES, NO, NO YES.

I THINK VOTERS FEEL DISENFRANCHISED NOT ONLY BY THE CANDIDATES BUT BY THE PARTY AS WELL.

IT'S KIND OF IRONIC BECAUSE I KNOW DEMOCRATS WERE COMPLAINING BACK IN 2000 OF THE OUTCOME OF THAT.

NOW THEIR LEADING CANDIDATES ARE KIND OF IN THE SAME SITUATION.

IT JUST SEEMS KIND OF HABITUAL WITH THE DEMOCRATS.

>> DARRYL, JOHN MCCAIN WAS IN FLORIDA CAMPAIGNING A COUPLE

OF TIMES THIS WEEK.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF BARACK OBAMA ANNOUNCING OR HIS CAMPAIGN ANNOUNCING THAT HE'S HEADED HERE?

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, HE'S ALWAYS SAID AND HIS SPOKESPEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS SAID WE WILL CAMPAIGN VIGOROUSLY IN FLORIDA, AND WE EXPECT IT TO BE IN PLAY AND WE'LL SPEND A LOT OF RESOURCES THERE.

PROBLEM IS, FEWER AND FEWER PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT.

IF CLINTON IS THE NOMINEE, EVERYONE THINKS SHE'LL MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT IN FLORIDA.

BUT IF OBAMA IS THE -- HE IN ESSENCE, I THINK, HAS TORPEDOED HIS CHANCES OF SUCCESS IN FLORIDA BY VIGOROUSLY OPPOSING ANY SORT OF ATTEMPT TO COMPROMISE ON THE FLORIDA ISSUE OTHER THAN A 50/50 SPLIT WHICH FLORIDA DEMOCRATS DON'T WANT AND THE CLINTON CAMP DOESN'T WANT.

I THINK YOU HAVE REAL PROBLEMS IN THAT RESPECT.

THE ONE THING YOU CAN COUNT ON FOR THE DEMOCRATS, LIKE EVERY FOUR YEARS, IS THAT THE DEMOCRATS WILL ONCE AGAIN REVISE THEIR RULES ON HOW TO SELECT PRESIDENTS AND REPUBLICANS WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON THE RULES THAT THEIR GRANDPARENTS MADE.

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, I THINK THAT OBAMA'S PEOPLE REALIZE THAT HE'S GOT TO START DOING SOMETHING IN FLORIDA.

THEY JUST CAN'T LET THIS SIT HERE AND WAIT UNTIL THE CONVENTION TO BE SETTLED.

THERE IS PRESSURE FROM SOME THAT, YOU KNOW, MAKE FLORIDA A

BATTLEGROUND STATE.

IF MCCAIN HAS TO FIGHT HERE TO WIN FLORIDA, THAT ONLY HELPS YOU NATIONWIDE.

BECAUSE THE DEMOCRATS CAN STILL WIN WITHOUT FLORIDA.

THE REPUBLICANS CAN'T.

THEY HAVE TO HAVE FLORIDA, I THINK, REALLY FOR THEM TO BE ABLE TO WIN.

RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE STARTING TO SEE BOTH OF THE DEMOCRATS KIND OF FALL DOWN IN THE POLLS, BUT IT'S VERY EARLY STILL.

IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE IT'S EARLY BECAUSE WE'VE BEEN AT THIS SUCH A LONG TIME.

RIGHT NOW, MCCAIN HAS BEEN GOING UP VERY FAR UP IN THE POLES, BUT NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO PEAK.

IT'S A LONG WAYS RIGHT NOW.

SO THIS LULL FOR THE DEMOCRATS RIGHT NOW, IT'S GOOD THAT IT'S HAPPENING NOW.

HOPEFULLY ONCE THEY PICK A WINNER, THEY CAN MOVE FORWARD AND GET STRONGER.

>>> WELL, HOUSE LEADERS IN TALLAHASSEE AGREED TO A PLAN TO TAKE MONEY OUT OF LONG-TERM RESERVES.

THE SO-CALLED RAINY DAY FUND TO HELP COPE WITH FLORIDA'S BUDGET CRISIS.

BUT THE HOUSE LEADERS SAID THEY WOULD USE THE OPTION ONLY FOR AN EMERGENCY.

THE ABILITY TO TAP RESERVE FUNDS WOULD COME IF THE STATE'S

FINANCIAL SITUATION DECLINES FURTHER.

THAT WOULD ALLOW A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE PANEL TO SPEND UP TO \$1.7 BILLION FROM RAINY DAY FUNDS TO COVER THE STATE'S BILLS AFTER THE LEGISLATURE ADJOURNS.

>> IT WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNOR THE ABILITY TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LDC ON HOW MUCH OF THE BUDGET FUND WE SHOULD USE, UP TO HALF OF IT.

AROUND 700 MILLION, AND UP TO A BILLION DOLLARS OF THE LAWTON CHILES ENDOWMENT TRUST FUND TO GO INTO OUR BUDGET TO MAKE SURE THAT WHEN THE INVOICES COME IN THAT WE CAN STILL PAY THE BILLS.

>> JONI, IS IT TIMES LIKE THESE THAT THE RAINY DAY FUNDS ANTICIPATE?

THAT IS, WAS IT DESIGNED TO HELP US GET THROUGH THESE KIND OF TIMES?

>> I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WILL TELL YOU PROBABLY NOT. THE BUDGET STABILIZATION FUND THAT REPRESENTATIVE SANSOM WAS JUST TALKING ABOUT WAS ESTABLISHED AFTER HURRICANE ANDREW. THIS FEELING OF, IF WE GO THROUGH ANOTHER MAJOR HURRICANE OF THAT SIZE AND SCOPE, WHICH -- YOU KNOW IT HIT HOMESTEAD. HAD ANDREW HIT MIAMI, WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE SHAPE. THE STATE NEEDS TO HAVE SOME RESERVES TO KEEP THINGS GOING TO START HAVING HELP ON THE WAY.

IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS, TOO, AS WELL THAT IT IS NOW THAT FLORIDA HAS SUCH A GREAT CREDIT RATING IS BECAUSE CREDITORS

ON WALL STREET LOOK AT THAT MONEY SITTING IN THE BANK AND SAY THIS IS A PRETTY GOOD GAMBLE BECAUSE THEY HAVE IN -- THIS MONEY IN CASE OF A HURRICANE.

PEOPLE THOUGHT OF IT AS NATURAL DISASTER, ACT OF TERRORISM, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

WHAT IS SORT OF NOT BEING SAID HERE IS THAT THIS IS A ONE-YEAR -- CRIST WILL BE GIVEN THE OPTION TO DO THIS WITH THE LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMISSION FOR ONE YEAR.

THAT GETS US PAST ELECTION DAY.

THAT KEEPS HIM FROM HAVING TO COME BACK TO DO A SPECIAL SESSION TO FURTHER CUT THE BUDGET IN AN ELECTION YEAR.

BECAUSE, BY LAW, WE MUST HAVE A BALANCED BUDGET.

THIS IS SORT OF OPENING UP THE PIGGY BANK SAYING WE DON'T REALLY WANT YOU TO GO THERE BUT RATHER GO THERE THAN CALL US BACK.

>> DOES THIS GIVE EXTRAORDINARY POWER TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE BUDGET COMMISSION OR DOES THIS --

>> CERTAINLY DOES AND IT SHOULD RAISE ALL SORTS OF CONCERNS. GENERALLY THIS WORKING CAPITAL FUND HAS \$2 BILLION IN EXCESS CAPITAL THAT CAN BE USED FOR THIS RAINY DAY EMERGENCY.

THEY ARE NOW APPROACHING INSTEAD OF \$2 BILLION, TALKING ABOUT \$200 MILLION.

ONLY ABOUT A TENTH OF THE FUND POTENTIALLY LEFT.

THE PROBLEM IS, THIS YEAR'S BUDGET WAS \$70 BILLION.

NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA, THEY ALREADY

MADE \$5 BILLION IN CUTS.

WE'RE TALKING ABOUT \$65 BILLION.

IN ESSENCE, WHAT THEY ARE SAYING IS, WE HAVE CUT EVERYTHING WE THINK WE CAN CUT.

WE HAVE NO MORE THINGS TO CUT.

WE HAVE NO MORE MONEY.

THE ONLY WAY TO PAY FOR THIS IS DIP INTO THE RAINY DAY FUND. IF THEY DO THAT, THE POTENTIAL PROBLEM IS, THEY DO THAT AND THIS AUGUST OR SEPTEMBER WE'RE HIT WITH A MAJOR HURRICANE AND YOU HAVE TAKEN THE MONEY OUT ALREADY, HOW DO YOU PAY FOR THAT?

>> SOMETHING ELSE TO MENTION ABOUT THIS, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT TWO FUNDS HERE.

HE MENTIONED THE WORKING CAPITAL FUND, THE BALANCE OF THE STATE'S CHECKBOOK EVERY DAY, WHICH HAS DWINDLED TREMENDOUSLY BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF MOSTLY SALES TAX COMING INTO THE STATE.

BUT THE BUDGET STABILIZATION FUND HAS TO BE REPAID, SO WE ARE REALLY JUST USING OUR CREDIT CARD TO GET -- YOU KNOW, TO GET THROUGH -- IT'S NOT REALLY BALANCING YOUR BUDGET IF YOU HAVE TO TAKE CREDIT.

>> ANGELETTE.

>> I HAVE TO AGREE.

I REALLY THINK IF YOU'RE GOING TO DIP INTO THAT, YOU HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO REPLACE IT, JUST LIKE IF I WERE TO DIP INTO MY

SAVINGS ACCOUNT, I NEED TO FIND A WAY TO REPLACE IT.

IT'S SET UP FOR THE UNEXPECTED.

AND I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE ALREADY KNEW THE WAY THE ECONOMY WAS GOING TO GO PROBABLY TWO YEARS AGO.

AND IN ORDER TO PUT BACK INTO IT, WE NEED TO CONSIDER ANOTHER MEASURE ALONG WITH IT, FOR INSTANCE, LIKE CUTTING TAXES, BECAUSE THE TAXES THAT GIVE MORE MONEY BACK INTO PEOPLE'S POCKET.

AND THOSE ARE THE PEOPLE THAT NEED TO GO OUT AND SPEND.

BECAUSE THE NUMBER ONE SOURCE OF REVENUE FOR THE STATE IS THROUGH SALES TAX.

>> WELL, THAT'S ONE THEORY OF HOW YOU COULD STIMULATE THE ECONOMY.

>> -- UNDER BUSH, WE HAVE CUT TAXES, CUT TAXES, NOW WE HAVE NO REVENUE COMING IN.

AND UNDER BUSH, WE EVEN PULLED OUT OF SOME OF THESE TRUST FUNDS.

RIGHT NOW, IT IS A RAINY DAY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

THE MORTGAGE CRISIS IS EVERY BIT AS BIG AS A HURRICANE WHEN YOU LOOK AT WHAT IT'S DONE TO THE ECONOMY HERE.

I THINK IT ISN'T A GOOD SOLUTION, BUT THE PROBLEM IS THAT THE LEGISLATURE HAS FAILED TO COME UP WITH CUTS THAT ARE MEANINGFUL.

WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IS THEY HAVE JUST LOPPED OFF 10% ACROSS THE BOARD AND, YOU KNOW, THE JUSTICE -- THE COURTS HAD TO

TAKE IT.

THE SOCIAL SERVICES HAD TO TAKE IT.

EVERYBODY HAD TO TAKE THESE CUTS.

AND THAT DOESN'T REALLY REDUCE THE COST OF GOVERNMENT.

THEY HAVEN'T SAT DOWN AND TRIED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT BUSINESS WE'RE GETTING OUT OF.

HOW WE'RE GOING TO ACTUALLY REDUCE THE COST OF GOVERNMENT EVERY YEAR AND BE ABLE TO DO SOME JOBS WELL AND MAYBE NOT DO SOME OTHER JOBS AT ALL.

>> ANGELETTE MADE A GOOD POINT ABOUT SOME PEOPLE SAW THIS COMING TWO YEARS AGO.

YES, THEY DID.

IN FACT, THE LEGISLATURE DID.

IN FACT, THE CURRENT SENATE PRESIDENT, I BELIEVE IT WAS EVEN FOUR YEARS AGO, WAS PART OF AN EFFORT TO TRY TO LOOK AT A REVIEW OF SALES TAX EXEMPTIONS TO SEE ABOUT TAKING SOME OF THEM OFF THE BOOKS.

OF COURSE, YOU CAN ARGUE ABOUT WHETHER THERE'S REALLY ENOUGH MONEY THERE TO MAKE A WHOLE LOT OF DIFFERENCE.

BUT NONETHELESS, VERY POWERFUL SPECIAL INTEREST LOBBYISTS PREVENTED THAT FROM HAPPENING.

AND SO IT REALLY CONTINUES TO BE, THEY SAW THIS COMING, SOME PEOPLE TRIED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

THEY WERE UNSUCCESSFUL, AND IT'S STILL HAPPENING AND WE'RE STILL IN THE HOLE.

>> WHEN YOU LOOK AT OUR LONG-RANGE PLANNING NOW, YOU'VE GOT SOME THINGS GOING UP FOR VOTE THAT COULD END UP TAKING SALES TAX -- TAKING SCHOOLS FROM GETTING SO MUCH PROPERTY TAXES, MOVING THEM OVER TO A SALES TAX SYSTEM WHICH, OF COURSE, RIGHT NOW PROVES TO BE UNABLE TO KEEP UP WITH OUR NEEDS AND OUR GROWTH.

SO, YOU KNOW, EVEN OUR LONG-TERM PLANNING AT THIS POINT APPEARS TO BE FLAWED WHEN YOU LOOK AT OUR CURRENT FINANCIAL SITUATION.

>> IN FACT, RIGHT NOW AS WE'RE TAPING THIS, THE TAX AND BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION IS HAVING ITS FINAL MEETING FOR VOTING ON MEASURES TO PUT ON NOVEMBER'S BALLOT.

AND IT REALLY HAS BECOME THIS ASSORTMENT OF REFORM IDEAS, NONE OF THEM VERY SIGNIFICANT OR DEEP REFORMS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED.

>> AND THEY ARE ALL TAKING REVENUE OUT BUT NONE ARE PUTTING REVENUE BACK IN.

WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH REVENUE AT THE MOMENT.

THAT'S OUR ISSUE.

>> I THINK IT NEEDS TO BE -- CUT TAXES AT THE SAME TIME OF DIPPING INTO THESE FUNDS, SO IT KIND OF -- YOU'VE GOT TWO SITUATIONS GOING ON WITH MONEY COMING IN --

>> WELL V TO CUT INTO MORE FUNDS.

CAN'T CUT REVENUE AND EXPECT MORE IN AT THE SAME MOMENT.

>>> TWO BILLS BACKED BY ABORTION OPPONENTS MOVED FORWARD IN

THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE THIS WEEK.

ONE REQUIRES WOMEN IN THE FIRST TRIMESTER OF PREGNANCY TO GET AN ULTRASOUND AND UNLESS THEY SIGN A WAIVER, VIEW THE RESULTS BEFORE HAVING AN ABORTION.

ANOTHER BILL WOULD MAKE VIOLENTLY CAUSING THE DEATH OF A FETUS MURDER NO MATTER HOW EARLY IN THE PREGNANCY THE INCIDENT OCCURRED.

THE BILL'S SPONSOR SAYS ITS PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT UNBORN CHILDREN AT ANY STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT AND PREGNANT WOMEN. BUT OPPONENTS SAY THE BILL IS AN ATTEMPT TO CHANGE FLORIDA LAW ON WHEN LIFE BEGINS, GIVE RIGHTS TO ALL FETUSES AND ULTIMATELY INFRINGE ON A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO HAVE AN ABORTION. ANGELETTE, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?

>> WELL, FOR THE FIRST BILL, I THINK THEY ARE MEETING THE NEEDS OF PROTECTING THE WOMAN'S HEALTH.

ULTRASOUNDS ARE ALREADY PERFORMED AND PROVIDED IN ABORTION CLINICS AFTER 12 WEEKS OF GESTATION.

AND EACH PREGNANCY IS DIFFERENT.

I KNOW.

I HAD THREE KIDS.

IMAGINE IF YOU WERE PREGNANT AT 11 WEEKS, PERFORMING AN ULTRASOUND BY A PHYSICIAN WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR HIM OR HER TO DECIDE WHETHER TO PERFORM A SUCTION, ASPIRATION METHOD OR DNC OR DNE.

RIGHT THERE, THEY ALREADY HAVE IT.

>> YOU DON'T SEE THIS AS AN UNDUE BURDEN ON THE PREGNANT WOMAN BECAUSE SHE HAS TO PAY FOR THE ULTRASOUND?

>> WELL, I THINK IN MOST ABORTION CLINICS, THERE'S A STANDARD FEE OF HOW MUCH AN ABORTION IS, AND IT INCLUDES AN ULTRASOUND AND WITH THIS, THE WOMAN IS ALLOWED TO SIGN A WAIVER TO NOT VIEW THE ULTRASOUND BECAUSE THAT'S A CONTROVERSY AS FAR AS VIEWING THE ULTRASOUND MAY PERSUADE THEM NOT TO HAVE AN ABORTION.

>> THAT WAS THE POINT OF THE BILL.

THE BILL ORIGINALLY HAD IN IT THAT THE WOMAN HAD TO SEE IT. THIS WASN'T ABOUT WOMAN'S HEALTH.

THIS WAS ABOUT GETTING A WOMAN TO HAVE TO SEE THE FETUS, TO HAVE A WAITING PERIOD AFTERWARDS SO THAT THEY COULD CHANGE THIS WOMAN'S MIND.

>> BUT THAT'S ALL --

>> BUT THAT'S WHAT WHOEVER WROTE THIS BILL, I THINK IT WAS TRAVIESA, THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED TO ACCOMPLISH.

YES, SOME OF THIS STUFF HAS BEEN STRIPPED OUT BECAUSE IT WAS RIDICULOUS.

SO AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE ULTRASOUND PART WAS NEVER ABOUT MEDICAL REASONS.

IT WAS ABOUT ONCE AGAIN TRYING TO ADD A COST TO MAKE IT HIGHER, MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT, SLOW THE PROCESS DOWN, TRYING TO PUT PEOPLE'S RELIGIOUS VIEWS INTO A WOMAN'S MEDICAL DECISIONS.

AND THAT'S JUST WRONG.

>> I DON'T THINK SO.

I THINK IT HELPS A PHYSICIAN BETTER DETERMINE WHAT PROCEDURE TO DO.

AND AS FAR AS THE SECOND BILL, IF I WERE CURRENTLY PREGNANT, WHICH I'M NOT, TELL MY HUSBAND, PLEASE, I'M NOT.

LET'S SAY IF I WAS ABOUT 11 WEEKS AND SUPER EXCITED ABOUT HAVING A BABY, I WOULD BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT IF SOMEONE WERE TO CAUSE HARM TO ME AND CAUSE THE DEATH OF MY UNBORN CHILD THAT I WOULD BE SO EXCITED TO HAVE, I WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE THAT THAT PERSON WOULD BE CHARGED WITH MURDER.

IT'S BASICALLY AN EXTENSION OF WHAT'S ALREADY IN PLACE.

>> JONI?

>> I MEAN, I THINK REGARDLESS OF WHATEVER HAPPENS, EITHER ONE OF THESE WILL END UP IN COURT.

IT IS A RECURRING ISSUE.

YOU KNOW, SOME OF THE DEMOCRATS VOTED AGAINST THIS MEASURE ON THE FLOOR IN THE HOUSE SAYING, TALKING ABOUT THE ULTRASOUND BILL, THIS IS A DIVERSION, WHY AREN'T WE SOLVING THE INSURANCE PROBLEMS, WHY AREN'T WE SOLVING BUDGET ISSUES, THAT KIND OF THING.

REPUBLICANS, ONE OF THE REASONS -- I THINK WHAT WILL BE VERY INTERESTING IS WHETHER CHARLIE CRIST WILL SIGN THIS BILL.

HE HAS SORT OF SKIRTED THE ABORTION ISSUE QUITE A BIT DURING HIS POLITICAL TENURE, AND THIS WILL PUT IT SMACK ON HIS

DESK.

>> REAL PROBLEM WITH THIS BILL FOR THE REPUBLICANS IS FOR A LONG TIME BEGINNING WITH CONNIE MACK BACK IN THE 1980s, REPUBLICANS CAMPAIGNED ON THE MANTRA OF LESS GOVERNMENT, LESS TAXES, MORE FREEDOM.

AND THIS TO ME, AND I'M SAYING THIS AS NOT ANYBODY WHO IS FOND OF ABORTIONS.

I'M SAYING THIS AS SOMEBODY WHO IS A REPUBLICAN, I THINK THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IS A LITTLE BIT LOOPY ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE.

I THINK THEY HAVE GONE TOO FAR BECAUSE WHAT THEY ARE DOING IS INTRUDING GOVERNMENT IN A PRIVATE DECISION.

AND I THINK THERE ARE LIMITS ON GOVERNMENT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU CAN HAVE THE MANTRA LESS GOVERNMENT AND THEN REQUIRE AN INDIVIDUAL TO HAVE AN ULTRASOUND AND HOW THAT PROVIDES MORE FREEDOM TO A PERSON.

I MEAN, I HOPE THAT THERE'S NO ABORTIONS BUT AT THE SAME TIME, I DON'T THINK GOVERNMENT HAS ANY BUSINESS TELLING A WOMAN THAT SHE HAS TO HAVE AN ULTRASOUND, ALTHOUGH SHE CAN SIGN A WAIVER THAT SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO LOOK AT THE PICTURES. THAT'S NUTTY PUBLIC POLICY TO ME.

>> WELL, WHEN YOU HAVE A SITUATION TRYING TO HELP A WOMAN'S HEALTH CARE, VERY CONCERNED ABOUT IT, AND THEN YOU HAVE BUDGET CUTS AFFECTING DELIVERING SERVICES TO THESE SAME PREGNANT WOMEN, IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.

IF THEY WERE THAT CONCERNED OVER A WOMAN'S HEALTH, THEN THEY WOULD FIND THE MONEY TO TAKE CARE OF THE SHORTFALLS WE'RE HAVING IN OUR SOCIAL SERVICES.

>>> OKAY.

WELL, FLORIDA REGULATORS SUED FORMER TAMPA MAYOR BILL POE THIS WEEK, SENIOR, BILL POE SENIOR, AND 19 OTHERS INCLUDING HIS WIFE AND FIVE CHILDREN FOR ALLEGEDLY SCHEMING TO DIVERT MILLIONS FROM THREE PROPERTY INSURANCE COMPANIES EVEN AS THOSE COMPANIES NEARED BANKRUPTCY.

THE LAWSUIT ALLEGES THAT WHILE THE POE COMPANY SUFFERED HUGE LOSSES FROM THE EIGHT FLORIDA HURRICANES IN 2004 AND 2005, EXECUTIVES BEGAN TO SIPHON MONEY INTO THEIR OWN POCKETS AHEAD OF POTENTIAL CREDITORS PAYING THEMSELVES ABOUT \$143 MILLION IN DIVIDENDS, LARGELY AFTER -- DIVIDENDS, LARGELY AFTER THE COMPANY'S BALANCE SHEET ENTERED THE RED. SINCE POE INSURANCE WENT BANKRUPT, ALL FLORIDA OWNERS HAVE PAID HIGHER INSURANCE BILLS TO COVER POE'S UNPAID CLAIMS. PATRICK, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE LAWSUIT?

>> I THINK THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION SHOULD HOLD OFF ON ANY JUDGMENT.

FORMER MAYOR BILL POE IS SOMEBODY WHO HAS ALWAYS APPEARED TO HAVE A LOT OF PRINCIPLES, A LOT OF HONOR, AND THIS JUST SOUNDS SO COMPLETELY OUT OF CHARACTER WITH THE POE THAT I KNOW, AND THAT OTHER PEOPLE IN TAMPA KNOW.

THERE'S ALSO A BACKDROP TO THIS OF POE SUING THE STATE, AND

HAS BEEN FOR 15 MONTHS OVER DESTROYING ONE OF HIS COMPANIES. POE THOUGHT THAT AFTER SUFFERING SEVERAL LOSSES FROM HURRICANES, AS DID MOST OF THE INSURANCE COMPANIES, THAT HE COULD WORK HIMSELF OUT OF THESE LOSSES.

HE HAD TAKEN A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF HIGH-RISK PROPERTIES OUT OF THE FLORIDA INSURANCE SYSTEM AND HELPED THE STATE BY DOING SO.

HE WANTED TO GET A LOAN FROM THE STATE, WHICH IS OFFERED TO INSURANCE COMPANIES, \$20 MILLION, AND THOUGHT HE COULD DO IT.

THE STATE IN TURN SAID WE DON'T THINK YOU CAN.

AND THEY TOOK OVER HIS COMPANIES, WALKED IN, TOOK OVER ALL 300 OF HIS EMPLOYEES AND BASICALLY RAN HIS COMPANIES UNTIL THEY COULD MOVE ALL THE POLICIES BACK INTO THE SYSTEM.

SO YOU HAVE TWO SIDES TO THIS STORY.

I TALKED TO POE --

>> THE OTHER SIDE IS BOO-HOO-HOO.

HE'S ACCUSED OF TAKE \$143 MILLION.

THAT'S NOT POCKET CHANGE.

WHEN HIS COMPANY HAD MORE LIABILITIES THAN ASSETS, HE'S ACCUSED OF DIVERTING \$143 MILLION TO HIMSELF, HIS WIFE AND FIVE CHILDREN. IF THAT'S TRUE, THAT'S THE MAJOR ISSUE.

IF THAT MONEY WAS DIVERTED, I DON'T CARE WHAT BILL POE DID IN THE PAST, HE OUGHT TO BE IN JAIL.

>> WELL, IT'S VERY INTERESTING, THIS ALL HAPPENED IN 2006.

THERE ACTUALLY WAS NOT A LOAN PROGRAM AT THE TIME HE ASKED THE STATE FOR A LOAN.

>> RIGHT AFTERWARDS, THEY LOANED OUT \$250 MILLION.

>> THEY DID CREATE THEM.

BUT I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL THIS UNFOLDING.

I ACTUALLY WANT TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED.

I WANT TO UNDERSTAND, WHY DID THE STATE EVER LET POE TAKE THIS HIGH OF A CONCENTRATION OF POLICIES OUT OF CITIZENS IN SOME OF THE HIGHEST RISK AREAS?

IT'S WILMA THAT SORT OF DEVASTATED HIS COMPANIES.

THE POE COMPANIES GOT THROUGH 2004, BUT IT WAS 2005 AND WILMA THAT SORT OF NICKEL AND DIMED THE COMPANY INTO THIS INSOLVENCY, APPARENTLY.

AND YOU HAVE THE PHILOSOPHY ABOUT HOW TO REGULATE INSURANCE AND WHAT OUR MARKET SHOULD LOOK LIKE WAS VERY DIFFERENT IN 2006 THAN IT IS EVEN NOW.

THE POES WERE VERY POLITICALLY ACTIVE.

ALL THE FEELINGS WERE, LET'S TRY TO MAKE IT SO NO ONE LOSES -- YOU KNOW, EVERYONE GETS THEIR CLAIMS PAID, THAT KIND OF THING.

BUT IT IS NOW TAKING \$800 MILLION OUT OF FLORIDIANS' POCKETS.

IF IT COULD HAVE BEEN DROPPED DOWN TO 650 WITH SOME OF THE MONEY THE POE FAMILY TOOK OUT, WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT.

>> -- NOTHING BY HELPING THIS COMPANY OUT AT THAT MOMENT IN

TIME WHEN THE STATE WAS DESPERATELY SEEKING --

>> WE HAVE TO SEE HOW THIS PLAYS OUT.

WE'LL COME BACK TO IT.

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

PATRICK, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> THE PARKING DEPARTMENT OF TAMPA SEEMS TO HAVE UPSET ALL OF THEIR CUSTOMERS.

THEY PUT MACHINES IN IN PARKING LOTS IN YBOR CITY AND IN DOWNTOWN.

PEOPLE DON'T LIKE THE MACHINES.

THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO WORK WELL ENOUGH.

THERE DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE ANY STANDARDIZATION OF IT.

WE HAVE NOW PUT MACHINES TO REPLACE PEOPLE, AND WE HAVE PEOPLE BABY-SITTING THE MACHINES BECAUSE NOBODY KNOWS HOW TO USE THEM.

>> DARRYL?

>> ALMOST EXACTLY 40 YEARS AGO TONIGHT WHEN THIS PROGRAM AIRS THAT MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS ASSASSINATED.

HE HAD A GREAT IMPACT NOT ONLY IN THE SOUTH BUT IN FLORIDA IN PARTICULAR.

HE CAME TO FLORIDA TO ST. AUGUSTINE TO CAMPAIGN.

HIS BROTHER CAME TO ST. PETE AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION.

UNITED STATES OF FLORIDA ARE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT BECAUSE

OF MARTIN LUTHER KING.

WE HAVE THREE BLACK CONGRESSMAN.

FIRST SERIOUS BLACK MAN FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

NONE OF THAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT KING.

>> I'M EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF A NEW WEB SITE
CALLED HISPANICVISION.ORG.

I HAVE TO READ THE MISSION.

IT'S KIND OF LONG.

BIPARTISAN EFFORT TO ENCOURAGE HISPANICS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF THE POLITICAL SPOTLIGHT, EMPOWER THEM TO COMMUNICATE AND
SHARE THEIR OPINIONS ON ISSUES TO THOSE IN POWER.

BASICALLY, THERE ARE THREE TYPES OF FORMS, ONE IS A BLOG AND
POLL IN WHICH TO COLLECT SOME DATA, AND ALSO THERE WILL BE
OTHER FORUMS IN THE FORM OF PUBLIC FOCUS GROUPS.

SOON TO BE ON TV, YOUTUBE.

>> HISPANICVISION.ORG.

JONI, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> THE SENATE IS EXPECTED TO VOTE FOR A GUNS TO WORK BILL
THAT WOULD ALLOW ANYONE WITH A CONCEALED WEAPONS PERMIT TO
TAKE THEIR GUN WITH THEM TO WORK AND LOCK IT IN THEIR CAR
AND LEAVE IT THERE.

BIG BUSINESS HAS FOUGHT THIS FOR MANY, MANY YEARS, AND WILL
BE UNSUCCESSFUL.

AGAIN, IT COMES BACK TO WHAT WILL CHARLIE CRIST DO?

ON ONE HAND, HE HAS THE NRA WANTING THIS BILL.

ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU HAVE A VIOLATION -- YOU HAVE A TAKING AWAY OF A PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHT OF EMPLOYERS.

INTERESTING TO WATCH TO SEE WHAT HE DOES.

>> TO SEE WHETHER HE SIGNS IT.

THANK YOU DARRYL PAULSON, THANK YOU ANGELETTE AVILES.

THANK YOU JONI JAMES AND THANK YOU PATRICK MANTEIGA.

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.

THIS SHOW WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE FOR PLAYBACK BEGINNING EARLY NEXT WEEK AT THE WEDU WEB SITE.

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK" RETURNS NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

FROM ALL OF US AT WEDU, HAVE A GREAT WEEKEND!

REALTIME CAPTIONING BY AMERICAPTION, INC.

>> "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" IS A PRODUCTION OF WEDU WHO IS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS CONTENT.