

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

MAY 2, 2008

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

>>> COMING UP NEXT, JOHN MCCAIN CAMPAIGNS IN TAMPA, THE CSX DEAL BLOCKED IN THE LEGISLATURE.

A WIDE-RANGING ENERGY BILL GOES TO THE GOVERNOR'S DESK AND PINELLAS SCHOOLS ARE FACING \$43 MILLION IN CUTS.

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, ADAM SMITH IS THE POLITICAL EDITOR AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" AND COHOST OF "POLITICAL CONNECTIONS" ON BAY NEWS 9.

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

TONI MOLINARO IS CHAIR OF THE PINELLAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

AND MARK PROCTOR IS A POLITICAL CONSULTANT AND A REPUBLICAN.

THANKS FOR COMING.

GOOD TO SEE YOU.

WELL, REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN ANNOUNCED HIS PLANS FOR A HEALTH CARE PROGRAM AT A SPEECH THIS WEEK IN TAMPA.

MCCAIN CRITICIZED PROPOSALS FOR UNIVERSAL CARE.

HIS PLAN IS A MARKET-BASED APPROACH.

HE'S PROPOSING THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDE TAX CREDITS, \$2500 FOR INDIVIDUALS, AND A \$5,000 CREDIT FOR FAMILIES THAT RECIPIENTS COULD USE TO BUY INSURANCE INDEPENDENT OF THEIR EMPLOYERS.

BUT WORKERS COULD STILL OPT TO STAY WITH THEIR EMPLOYER'S PLAN.

>> I'LL WORK TIRELESSLY TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM, BUT I WON'T CREATE ANOTHER ENTITLEMENT PROGRAM THAT WASHINGTON WILL LET GET OUT OF CONTROL.

I WON'T DO IT.

>> ADAM, THE ISSUE OF HEALTH CARE IS A BIG ONE THIS YEAR. THE DEMOCRATS USUALLY HAVE THE LOCK ON IT, BUT FOR SENATOR MCCAIN TO COME TO TAMPA TO MAKE THIS MAJOR SPEECH, IT SHOWS THAT HEALTH CARE CROSSES PARTY LINES.

>> IT WILL BE A BIG ISSUE.

HE SHOWED THAT HE'S PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT IS OFTEN A DEMOCRATIC ISSUE.

IT WAS STRIKING HOW LITTLE PLAY IT GOT NATIONALLY.

HE MADE A BIG POLICY SPEECH AND PEOPLE ARE STILL CONSUMED WITH THE DEMOCRATS.

THIS SHOULD BE AN ADVANTAGE FOR MCCAIN THAT HE'S GOT THE NOMINATION LOCKED UP, BUT IT'S HARD FOR PEOPLE TO PAY ATTENTION TO HIM.

>> MARK, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE PROPOSAL THAT THE SENATOR -- WERE YOU WITH THE SENATOR THIS WEEK?

>> YEAH, WHEN HE WAS IN TOWN THIS WEEK.

I THOUGHT IT WAS -- HERE IS MY PERSPECTIVE.

NUMBER ONE, I LIKE THE FACT THAT IT'S MARKET BASED.

IT'S NOT A GOVERNMENT, YOU KNOW, ENTITLEMENT PROGRAM.

AND THE \$5,000, I KNOW FROM MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE THAT THAT HELPS TAKE CARE OF SOME DEDUCTIBLES AND THINGS THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE HAD TO INCREASE THEIR DEDUCTIBLES TO SUCH AN EXTENT TO BE ABLE TO AFFORD COVERAGE, I THINK THAT FIGURE MAKES SENSE.

AND IT'S TAX CREDIT.

MAYBE IT WILL HELP SOME OF THESE INDIVIDUALS THAT THEIR SMALL BUSINESS OWNER CAN'T PROVIDE THE HEALTH CARE FOR THEM, IT GIVES THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET IN THE SYSTEM.

>> LET'S SEE IF I CAN CREATE A LITTLE CONTROVERSY.

TONI, HOW MUCH HEALTH CARE CAN YOU BUY FOR \$5,000 FOR A FAMILY?

>> YOU KNOW, HEALTH CARE SHOULD NOT BE A PRIVILEGE.

IT SHOULD BE A RIGHT.

IT SHOULDN'T BE ABOUT A MATTER OF MONEY, ABOUT HOW MUCH YOU CAN GET.

IT'S NOT FAIR TO THE PERSON WHO MAYBE DOESN'T HAVE A JOB, MAYBE IN BETWEEN JOBS, MAYBE CAN'T AFFORD SOMETHING.

THE \$5,000 THAT WAS JUST MENTIONED, THAT GOES DIRECTLY TO THE INSURANCE COMPANY.

TO ME, I DON'T SEE THAT THIS IS A FIX.

IN FACT, THIS SEEMS TO BE MORE OF THE SAME.

AND OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IS IN NEED OF A COMPLETE OVERHAUL.

I THINK WE HAVE TO HAVE A CHANGE ENTIRELY.

>> AND ARE YOU IN FAVOR OF GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED HEALTH CARE LIKE SINGLE-PAYER LIKE THEY HAVE IN CANADA?

>> I THINK THAT WE SHOULD LOOK AT THAT.

I THINK WE SHOULDN'T THROW IT OUT THERE LIKE IT'S SOME BIG MONSTER THAT IS GOING TO CREATE A VOID OF MONEY GOING SOMEPLACE, AND THAT PEOPLE ARE GOING TO BE PUT INTO A SITUATION WHERE THEY ARE NOT GOING TO RECEIVE GOOD HEALTH CARE.

RIGHT NOW, A PERSON WHO CAN HAVE HEALTH CARE AND PAYS A LOT OF MONEY FOR IT CAN STILL FILE BANKRUPTCY BECAUSE THEY GO, THEY GET SICK, THEY RECEIVE THEIR BILL, THEY HAVE TO PAY 20% OF IT, THEY CAN'T AFFORD IT.

>> MARK, LET ME GO BACK TO YOU FOR JUST A MOMENT.

YOU SAID GETTING THE GOVERNMENT INVOLVED IN THE HEALTH CARE

PROGRAM IS A BAD IDEA, WHY?

MAKE THAT CASE.

>> A LOT OF ANECDOTAL GOOD ENGLAND AND CANADA AND AREAS WHERE THEY HAVE A SOCIALIZED, FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD A SOCIALIZED MEDICAL CARE.

THEY SAID IT'S A GREAT SYSTEM UNLESS YOU ARE SICK.

THEN YOU HAVE TO WAIT SIX MONTHS TO GO IN AND GET AN APPOINTMENT.

AND IT'S GOING TO -- I TALKED TO A LOT OF DOCTORS.

IT WILL DRIVE THEM OUT OF THE BUSINESS.

YOU'LL SUDDENLY FIND THAT THAT'S A PROBLEM.

I THINK THERE ARE WAYS IN TERMS OF SOME OF THE INDIGENTS, LIKE WE'VE DONE IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, THEY HAVE AN INDIGENT HEALTH CARE PROGRAM TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE THAT ARE, YOU KNOW, UNEMPLOYED OR UNABLE TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN INSURANCE.

BUT I REALLY, I THINK INSURANCE COSTS AND HEALTH CARE COSTS HAVE ALL SKYROCKETED, BUT AT LEAST LET'S FIND A WAY TO WORK IT WITHIN, YOU KNOW, THE MARKET SYSTEM.

>> SUSAN, LET ME ASK YOU, GOING BACK TO WHAT I ASKED ADAM, THAT IS, WHAT ROLE OF ALL THE ISSUES WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THIS YEAR IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, WHAT ROLE WILL HEALTH CARE, DO YOU THINK, PLAY IN THIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?

>> I THINK A BIG ROLE.

YOU CAN ALREADY SEE IT, BECAUSE IT'S A TOPIC THAT COMES OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF ALL THE CANDIDATES EVERY TIME THEY APPEAR SOMEWHERE.

AND IT REALLY ADDS TO THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT, WHICH MAKES IT SUCH A BIG POCKETBOOK ELECTION.

BY THE TIME YOU GET HEALTH CARE, NOW GAS PRICES, AND OUR STATE INSURANCE, PROPERTY TAXES, THE VOTER IS BEING BOMBARDED FROM EVERY DIRECTION, AND HEALTH CARE IS A BIG PORTION OF IT.

AND IT ALL ADDS UP TO WHY THE CANDIDATES HAVE TO TALK ABOUT RELIEF TO THE POCKETBOOK.

>> SO WE'RE BEYOND THE ISSUE OF TERRORISM AND 9/11.

WE'RE INTO A POCKETBOOK ELECTION, IS WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE SOME FIGURES THAT SHOW THAT ABOUT THREE-FOURTHS OF AMERICANS STILL ARE WORRIED ABOUT AMERICA BEING ATTACKED AGAIN.

SO SECURITY IS NEVER FAR FROM THE MINDS OF VOTERS, BUT I THINK THIS TIME OUT, IT'S ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT IT'S THE ECONOMY ALL THE WAY.

>> LET ME TALK ABOUT THE OTHER CANDIDATES FOR A MOMENT.

ALSO, THIS WEEK, DEMOCRATIC CONTENDER BARACK OBAMA DISTANCED HIMSELF FROM HIS FORMER PASTOR REVEREND JEREMIAH WRIGHT IN THE WAKE OF SEVERAL MAJOR MEDIA APPEARANCES BY WRIGHT IN WHICH WRIGHT TOOK SOME CONTROVERSIAL POSITIONS.

ADAM, YOU WERE IN INDIANA THIS WEEK.

YOU WROTE A PIECE ABOUT SMALL-TOWN AMERICA AND THE REACTION TO THIS WHOLE WRIGHT CONTROVERSY.

>> WELL, THE REACTION IS, REGARDLESS OF THE POLL, A WHILE BACK, THERE WAS POLLING THAT SUGGESTED HE WASN'T TOO DAMAGED BY WRIGHT.

HE'S VERY DAMAGED BY WRIGHT.

THAT ISSUE IS NOT GOING AWAY.

HE HAS A LOT OF BAGGAGE HE HAS TO OVERCOME.

IT LOOKS VERY LIKELY HE'LL BE THE NOMINEE, BUT HE'S NOT QUITE THE FORMIDABLE CANDIDATE HE WAS A FEW MONTHS AGO.

>> BUT EVEN WHEN HE DISTANCED HIMSELF ON TUESDAY FROM HIS FORMER PASTOR, YOU DON'T THINK THAT MADE MUCH OF AN IMPACT ON THE VOTERS.

>> I THINK, YOU KNOW, IT MADE LESS OF AN IMPACT ON THE VOTERS THAT ARE DECIDING THESE THINGS THAN ON -- WHO MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT IS THE SUPER DELEGATE, THE UNCOMMITTED SUPER DELEGATES THAT ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DECIDE -- HE HAS IT ALL BUT WRAPPED UP, BUT IS HE TOO DAMAGED?

IS HE UNABLE TO TAKE ON THE CRISES WHEN THEY HAPPEN?

HE DID A PRETTY GOOD JOB OF TAKING IT ON AND OFFERING SOME ASSURANCES.

>> TONI, LET ME ASK YOU.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT BARACK OBAMA THIS WEEK?

DID HE PUT THE PROBLEMS WITH REVEREND WRIGHT BEHIND HIM?

>> I DO.

YOU KNOW, AGAIN, HE IS OFFERING SOLUTIONS TO THE -- TO THIS COUNTRY THAT RIGHT NOW WE ARE IN AN ADMINISTRATION THAT HAS FAILED POLICY AFTER FAILED POLICY.

YOU KNOW, THE WAR IN IRAQ, OUR HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, THE ECONOMY.

HE'S OFFERING THE SOLUTIONS.

AND THEN TO PAINT HIM AND SAY, WELL, THIS IS HIS PASTOR, THEREFORE, HE'S NOW NOT GOING TO BE ELECTABLE BECAUSE OF WHAT HIS PASTOR IS SAYING.

WHAT IS BARACK OBAMA SAYING?

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS THAT HE'S BRINGING TO THE TABLE?

>> WHAT'S INTERESTING, IN INDIANA, TALKED TO A LOT OF HARD-CORE DEMOCRATS FED UP WITH BUSH.

THEY FEEL LIKE HILLARY IS THE ONE OFFERING SOLUTIONS AND OBAMA IS OFFERING GRAND IDEAS ABOUT A NEW KIND OF POLITICS. THAT'S PART OF WHY SHE'S GAINING TRACTION.

>> ONE OF THE PROBLEMS THAT BARACK OBAMA CREATED FOR HIMSELF, WHICH IS, AGAIN, SORT OF A SIGN OF A FIRST-TIME, INEXPERIENCED CANDIDATE, WAS WHEN THE ISSUE OF THE REVEREND WRIGHT FIRST CAME OUT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, IT CAME OUT, AS I RECALL ON A FRIDAY.

AND HE LET IT SIMMER AND GET OUT IN THE NEWS CYCLE AN ENTIRE WEEKEND.

IT WAS ALMOST FIVE DAYS BEFORE HE RESPONDED.

BY THAT TIME -- AND THIS SHOWS UP IN POLLS AS WELL -- THE AVERAGE AMERICAN ALREADY UNDERSTOOD THAT OBAMA HAD SAT IN THIS GENTLEMAN'S CONGREGATION FOR 20 YEARS.

THAT 20-YEAR FIGURE IS ONE THAT'S NOW KIND OF CEMENTED IN THE PUBLIC'S MIND, AND I DO THINK, AS ADAM SAYS THAT IT'S GOING TO BE HARD FOR THE AVERAGE PERSON TO HAVE THAT ERASED FROM THEIR MIND.

>> I THINK THE AVERAGE PERSON IS MORE WORRIED ABOUT THE NUMBER IN THEIR CHECKBOOK.

I THINK THE ECONOMY IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE.

WAR IS ANOTHER VERY BIG ISSUE WHERE A LOT OF OUR MONEY IS GOING.

AND THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE AN ISSUE IN NOVEMBER.

I THINK IT WILL BE PUT ASIDE.

PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO BE SIDETRACKED WITH THIS.

THEY WANT SOLUTIONS FOR THE PROBLEMS THAT ARE HAPPENING NOW.

>> OKAY.

WELL, A DEAL IN THE LEGISLATURE THAT WOULD PAY CSX TRANSPORTATION \$450 MILLION IN STATE TAX DOLLARS IN EXCHANGE FOR USING 61 MILES OF THE COMPANY'S TRACKS FOR COMMUTER RAIL IN THE ORLANDO AREA MAY BE DEAD, AT LEAST FOR THIS YEAR.

THE BIGGEST HURDLE IS THE REMOVAL OF A PROVISION THAT PROTECTS CSX FROM LAWSUITS IN THE EVENT OF A COLLISION WITH ONE OF ITS FREIGHT TRAINS.

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL MAJOR OBJECTIONS TO THE PROJECT, THE

COST, THE LIABILITY WAIVER, WHAT SOME IN THE CITY OF LAKELAND SAY WOULD BE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THAT CITY'S DOWNTOWN AND THE SECRECY UNDER WHICH THE DEAL WAS STARTED DURING THE JEB BUSH ADMINISTRATION.

>> DOES THE CSX ISSUE CONTINUE ON AND THE FINANCES, OR IS IT DEAD?

>> THE COMMUTER RAIL, THE CSX STUFF, WILL NOT CONTINUE IN THIS LEGISLATION.

IT MAY CONTINUE SOMEWHERE ELSE, BUT NOT ON THIS BILL.

>> MARK, THE FRIDAY MORNING PAPER SAID IT WAS DEAD, BUT NOW IT'S FRIDAY AFTERNOON, FRIDAY EVENING AND --

>> AS WE SPEAK, THE LEGISLATURE IS STILL IN SESSION.

SO YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN.

WE'RE GETTING REPORTS OUT OF ORLANDO THAT MANY OF THE PEOPLE IN THE ORLANDO AREA THAT ARE VERY STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF THIS HAVE NOW GOT THE GOVERNOR INVOLVED IN TRYING TO WORK OUT SOME ISSUES, SOME OF THEIR LOCAL CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION.

>> DAN MICA IS INVOLVED, THE CONGRESSMAN FROM THE EAST COAST.

>> THAT'S WHAT WE UNDERSTAND.

THIS SOUNDS LIKE -- ALTHOUGH, THIS MORNING, I THINK WE WOULD HAVE ALL AGREED IT WAS DEAD.

IT AIN'T DEAD UNTIL IT'S DEAD.

>> WITH THE GOVERNOR'S INTEREST, WHAT DOES THAT SAY?

>> WELL, I THINK WHAT'S HAPPENED -- AND THE WHOLE ISSUE IS

THIS LIABILITY, YOU KNOW, OF REMOVING, YOU KNOW, GETTING THAT LIABILITY OUT OF THERE.

I THINK THE GOVERNOR IS SAYING GO AHEAD AND GO FORWARD WITH IT, AT LEAST TO COME UP WITH SOME COMPROMISE.

BUT THIS ISSUE, YOU KNOW, IT'S BEEN A BUZZ SAW FOR SOME TIME.

THE PEOPLE IN LAKELAND APPARENTLY DO NOT WANT IT, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE LEGISLATORS, LIKE J.D. ALEXANDER ARE ON DIFFERENT SIDES THAN PAULA DOCKERY.

SOME PEOPLE EVEN SAY IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE HIGH-SPEED RAIL, THAT HER HUSBAND WAS IN FAVOR OF THAT AND JEB BUSH GOT RID OF IT.

I'M NOT SAYING THAT'S THE CASE, BUT I'VE HEARD THAT RUMOR.

>> MAYBE PAYBACK ON DOCKERY'S PART.

THAT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU HAVE REPUBLICANS SPLIT ON THIS ISSUE.

AND SOME DEMOCRATS LEADING THE CHARGE TO CREATE THIS THING, AND SOME DEMOCRATS OPPOSED.

>> IT GOES ACROSS ALL LINES.

MOST PEOPLE AGREE, COMMUTER RAIL IS A GOOD IDEA GIVEN WHAT YOU'RE PAYING IN GAS AND WHATNOT.

BUT, YOU KNOW, IT WOULDN'T BE A LEGISLATIVE SESSION IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE SOME TRIAL LAWYER BATTLE.

THE ANTITRIAL --

>> AND ARE THE TRIAL LAWYERS INVOLVED IN THIS?

>> YEAH, BECAUSE ONE OF THE BIG STICKING POINTS IS, DO YOU WANT TO MAKE CSX IMMUNE FROM ANY LAWSUITS?

NATURALLY, THAT'S GOING TO CREATE A LOT OF ISSUES WITH THE TRIAL LAWYERS.

>> THE OTHER PROBLEM, OF COURSE, IS IT DOESN'T REALLY FEEL RIGHT.

WHEN YOU'RE CUTTING SOCIAL SERVICES AND YOU'RE DEALING WITH PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE AND LIVES, TO SUDDENLY BE TALKING ABOUT THIS KIND OF EXPENDITURE ON A PROJECT THAT'S CAPITAL INTENSIVE, BECAUSE, NORMALLY, THAT'S ONE OF THE KINDS OF PROJECTS YOU DELAY WHEN YOU HAVE SHORTFALLS.

YOU SPEND MONEY ON HUMAN NEEDS, AND YOU DELAY INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES.

AND I THINK THAT'S ANOTHER REASON WHY YOU SEE PEOPLE KIND OF SPLIT AND PARTIES NOT MATTERING AS MUCH, THE KIND OF DISTRICT THEY REPRESENT AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN IT.

>> SENATOR PAULA DOCKERY HAD AT LEAST IN ONE OF THE REPORTS ON FRIDAY, SHE HAD 27 BACKERS OF HER MOVE TO KILL IT.

IN THE SENATE, YOU ONLY NEED 20 VOTES TO KILL A PROPOSAL LIKE THIS.

>> WELL, THIS DEAL DOESN'T EVEN EXPIRE UNTIL NEXT YEAR.

WHY ARE WE PUSHING THIS?

ESPECIALLY WHEN WE ARE IN BUDGET CRISIS.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, LIKE YOU'RE SAYING, WHY ARE WE LOOKING TO SPEND ALL THIS MONEY IN THIS ONE PARTICULAR AREA

WHERE WE HAVE TO LOOK TO CUT SO MANY THINGS?

I THINK THAT THE LEGISLATURE NEEDS TO JUST TAKE A DEEP BREATH, LOOK AT THIS -- CSX IS GOING TO CONTINUE WITH THIS. THEY'VE BEEN DOING IT BEFORE IN SECRET.

I'M SURE THEY'LL CONTINUE NOW.

YOU KNOW, IT DOESN'T NEED TO BE DECIDED TODAY.

>> UM-HUM.

MARK, WHAT ABOUT THAT POINT THAT THIS IS NOT THE YEAR TO PASS A BIG SPENDING BILL LIKE THIS?

>> I MEAN, I THINK THAT GOES WITHOUT SAYING.

REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS ARE BOTH AT FAULT ON THIS, THAT, YOU KNOW, WE'VE GOT A LOT OF OTHER ISSUES THAT WE NEED TO BE WORRIED ABOUT OTHER THAN THIS.

BUT I LIKE ON THE ST. PETE TIMES BLOG TODAY, I SAW A COMMENT THAT CSX IS NOW SAYING IT'S NOT A TRAIN WRECK.

IT'S THE LEGISLATURE, WHICH I THOUGHT WAS AN INTERESTING PERSPECTIVE.

>>> WELL, BOTH THE HOUSE AND SENATE PASSED A WIDE-RANGING ENERGY BILL THIS WEEK SAYING IT'S THE FIRST STEP IN MAKING FLORIDA A LEADER IN CLEAN ENERGY.

AMONG THE PROVISIONS:

SUSAN, I THINK WITHOUT THE GOVERNOR, THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED, BUT WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT WHERE FLORIDA IS IN TERM OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY, GREEN STANDARDS, THAT SORT OF THING?

>> FOR THE LAST TWO OR THREE ELECTION CYCLES, IT'S BEEN QUITE APPARENT THAT FLORIDA REPUBLICANS, LIKE FLORIDA DEMOCRATS, ARE VERY PROENVIRONMENT.

AND THIS IS AN ELECTION YEAR, AND THIS IS THE KIND OF LEGISLATION THAT LOOKS GOOD FOR BOTH SIDES OF THE AISLE, WHICH IS WHY IT'S HAD VERY LITTLE DIFFICULTY GOING THROUGH. ONE OF THE ANGLES THAT'S BEEN USED TO SELL IT, OF COURSE, IS SOMETHING THAT FITS INTO THE STATUS OF THE ECONOMY AT THE MOMENT, WHICH IS THAT THESE KINDS OF THINGS WILL ACTUALLY CREATE JOBS IN FLORIDA.

AND PEOPLE, WHEN YOU HEAR THE TERM "ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT" WOULD LIKE TO THINK MORE ABOUT JOB CREATION THAN THEY WOULD LIKE TO THINK ABOUT DEVELOPMENT AS WE KNOW IT.

SO I THINK THIS IS JUST GOOD POLITICS IN AN ELECTION YEAR, AND PROBABLY GOOD POLICY FOR FLORIDA.

>>> TONI, THERE ARE SOME MANDATES IN THERE, ONE OF THE IDEAS, THOUGH, IS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO GET APPROVAL FOR NEW NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS.

AND, YOU KNOW, A LOT OF THAT STUFF I THINK THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT WOULD SUPPORT.

A LOT OF THOSE PROVISIONS.

BUT THIS ONE PROVISION WOULD BE A STICKING POINT, I WOULD THINK, FOR ENVIRONMENTALISTS.

>> WELL, AGAIN, THIS IS JUST THE PRELIMINARY BATTLE.

IT'S REALLY -- THERE'S A LOT OF THINGS THAT NEED TO HAPPEN

UP UNTIL 2010 BEFORE ANY IMPLEMENTATION HAPPENS.

AND SO I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH OF THAT IS GOING TO STICK IN THERE.

BUT I WOULD AGREE THAT THIS IS -- YOU KNOW, OF ALL THE THINGS THAT THEY PASSED THIS LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION, THIS IS FINALLY SOMETHING THAT WE CAN ALL GET ON BOARD WITH.

>> MARK, YOU KNOW, REPUBLICANS DON'T LIKE REGULATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

DON'T LIKE THE GOVERNMENT TELLING THEM WHAT TO DO, BUT HERE, YOU KNOW, REQUIRE NEW VEHICLES IN FLORIDA TO POLLUTE LESS, MAKE ELECTRIC UTILITIES PAY FOR THE POLLUTION THEY CREATE, THIS IS KIND OF -- YOU KNOW, THIS CREATES MORE POWER FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

>> THAT'S TRUE, BUT I THINK THAT YOU GENERALLY FIND BIPARTISAN SUPPORT TODAY, THAT, YOU KNOW, WE'VE GOT TO DO THINGS TO CERTAINLY IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT.

IT'S NOT GOING OVERBOARD AND SAYING IT'S ALL GLOBAL WARMING OR THIS WEEK NOW WE'RE GOING INTO THE ARCTIC FREEZE, BUT IT'S AT LEAST BEING CONCERNED ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.

FRANKLY, GOING BACK TO TEDDY ROOSEVELT, I MEAN, THE REPUBLICANS HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN -- I MEAN, THEY HAVE BEEN CONSERVATIONISTS.

SO I THINK THIS IS ONE, I AGREE WITH TONI THAT WE CAN FIND BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR.

THE GOVERNOR GETS TO DO ANOTHER SUMMIT IN MIAMI IN JUNE.

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER CAME LAST YEAR, AND I THINK HE ENJOYS TALKING ABOUT IT.

>> THERE'S A LOT THAT THE BIG BUSINESSES LIKE IN THIS. IF YOU'RE A LOCAL RESIDENT AND WANT TO GO TO YOUR LOCAL HEARING AND OPPOSE A POWER LINE, YOU DON'T HAVE THE SAME ABILITY TO DO THAT AS YOU WOULD.

THIS MAKES IT HARDER FOR THAT.

SO THERE'S PLENTY OF HELP GIVEN TO THE UTILITIES, TOO.

>> SO IT'S NOT ALL ONE DIRECTION.

>> NO, I THINK IF YOU'RE AN ENVIRONMENTALIST AND YOU'RE AGAINST NUCLEAR POWER, YOU HAVE SOME ANGST.

OTHERWISE, THIS IS GENERALLY A GOOD DIRECTION.

>> ADAM, WHAT DOES THIS DO FOR THE GOVERNOR'S REPUTATION? YOU KNOW, WILL THIS BE PERCEIVED BY THE OUTSIDE AS SAYING THAT THE GOVERNOR HAS, YOU KNOW, GREEN CREDENTIALS, OR, AS YOU POINTED OUT, THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS HERE, ENVIRONMENTALISTS MIGHT HAVE SOME PROBLEMS WITH THIS BILL. YOU KNOW, HOW DOES THE GOVERNOR COME OUT LOOKING AFTER THIS THING IS SIGNED?

PRESUMING HE'S GOING TO SIGN IT.

>> THERE'S A LOT TO BE IRONED OUT.

WE DON'T KNOW EXACTLY HOW GREEN THIS WILL TURN OUT TO BE, CLEARLY, THIS BOLSTERS HIS IMAGE, WHICH IS SOMETHING HE'S -- A TOP PRIORITY TO BE A GREEN GOVERNOR.

I THINK THIS CLEARLY HELPS HIM WITH THAT IMAGE.

>> TONI, DO YOU AGREE?

>> A LITTLE BIT.

I MEAN, I THINK, NUMBER ONE WAS TAXES AND INSURANCE.

I THINK THIS IS A BY-PRODUCT.

AGAIN, I THINK IT'S SOMETHING THAT'S A GOOD FIRST STEP, BUT

I EXPECT MORE.

>>> OKAY.

WELL, OUTGOING PINELLAS SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT CLAYTON WILCOX IS PROPOSING \$43 MILLION IN BUDGET CUTS NEXT YEAR.

HE WANTS TO CUT 147 JOBS INCLUDING 35 ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AS WELL AS A 2% SALARY CUT FOR MOST SCHOOL DISTRICT WORKERS.

THE REASON?

DECLINING SCHOOL ENROLLMENT AND STATE BUDGET CUTS.

TONI, WHAT'S GOING ON IN PINELLAS?

AND THIS IS GOING ON IN OTHER PLACES, TOO.

>> OH, OF COURSE.

AND, YOU KNOW, I GO BACK TO WE WERE GOING TO BE HELD HARMLESS.

AND WE ARE NOT HELD HARMLESS.

OUR KIDS ARE GOING TO SUFFER.

AND IT'S JUST REALLY UNFORTUNATE THAT THIS HAS TO HAPPEN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW WE HAVE PASSED THE VOUCHER STUFF AND WE'RE GIVING MONEY TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS WHERE, AGAIN, ENROLLMENT IS A HUGE ISSUE.

IF YOU HAVE LESS KIDS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL, LESS MONEY FOR

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THIS IS A PART OF THE PROBLEM.

THIS PASSED IN THE SESSION.

>> WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, TOO, IS A TAX BREAK FOR CORPORATIONS, AND THEY COULD SPEND THAT MONEY PAYING FOR SCHOOL VOUCHERS FOR SOME LOW-INCOME KIDS GOING TO PRIVATE SCHOOL.

>> EXACTLY.

SO ALL THE REST OF THE KIDS IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL NOW HAVE TO SUFFER THE FACT THAT THEY ARE GOING TO HAVE LESS PEOPLE, LESS ADMINISTRATORS IN THEIR SCHOOL TO BE ABLE TO HELP THEM. THEY ARE GOING TO HAVE TEACHERS WHO ARE GOING TO EARN LESS MONEY.

IT'S NOT A GOOD SITUATION FOR THOSE KIDS.

>> MARK, IS THAT THE WAY YOU SEE THE PASSAGE OF VOUCHERS THIS YEAR?

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, THE PROBLEM IS THAT THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVES TO JUST THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

THE VOUCHERS HAVE BEEN AT LEAST AN ACCEPTABLE WAY TO DO IT. THIS GIVES THE CORPORATIONS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GET SOME TAX RELIEF.

BUT I THINK WE CAN'T ATTRIBUTE ALL OF THE LESSER ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS DUE TO VOUCHERS.

THE BABY BOOMER BUST THAT WE'RE NOT BRINGING AS MANY KIDS

INTO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

PINELLAS, PASCO -- EXCUSE ME, PINELLAS AND HILLSBOROUGH HAD TO REDUCE THEIR BUDGET.

PASCO IS ACTUALLY GOING TO HAVE TO INCREASE THEIR BUDGET BECAUSE IT'S A GROWTH AREA AND MORE KIDS ARE MOVING IN THAT AREA.

BUT I THINK THAT -- YOU KNOW, ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IS IN FORECASTING HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE WE ANTICIPATING NEXT YEAR AND YOU BUILD THOSE SCHOOLS AND THEN SUDDENLY YOU DON'T HAVE THE ENROLLMENT TO FILL THEM, IT BECOMES A DIFFICULT PROBLEM ALL OVER THE WORLD -- ALL OVER THE COUNTRY -- OR ALL OVER THE STATE, ANYWAY.

BUT I WILL SAY THIS, THAT I AM DISTRESSED WITH THE FACT THAT WE SUPPORTED -- AND I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER -- BUT WE SUPPORTED THIS TAX PROPOSAL THAT WOULD NOT AFFECT THE SCHOOLS.

AND NOW THE SCHOOLS ARE BEING AFFECTED.

AND I DON'T HAVE -- I DON'T HAVE A TALKING POINT ON THAT.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY THAT HAPPENED.

>> YOU KNOW WHAT?

THE TALKING POINTS WILL BE PRETTY HARD.

A LOT OF THESE CUTS -- AND WE'RE TALKING TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL, TO YOUR SCHOOLS, TO THINGS THAT AFFECT PEOPLE.

PEOPLE ARE GOING TO START FEELING THAT RIGHT ABOUT THE TIME

THEY ARE PAYING ATTENTION TO THE ELECTION.

THERE ARE GOING TO BE SOME TOUGH -- PEOPLE WILL BE STRUGGLING TO GET THEIR TALKING POINTS WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR REELECTION.

>> SUSAN, WHAT ABOUT THE PROMISE, IT GOES BACK TO EVERYTHING THAT TONI AND ADAM AND MARK SAID, AND THAT IS THAT EDUCATION WILL BE HELD HARMLESS IF THIS AMENDMENT ONE PASSED, THE PROPERTY TAX AMENDMENT PASSED.

NOW IT LOOKS LIKE SCHOOLS OR RATHER EDUCATION WOULD BE HELD HARMLESS IF THE PROPERTY AMENDMENT PASSED.

NOW IT LOOKS LIKE SCHOOLS ARE GOING TO SUFFER.

>> WELL, A LOT OF THAT, PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE HAD A SERIOUS DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY.

SO THAT MAKES A LITTLE BIT OF IT MORE PALATABLE.

IT WILL STILL BE PAINFUL, DON'T GET ME WRONG.

BUT I THINK WHEN YOU LOOK AT WHAT THE SUPERINTENDENT HAS PROPOSED IN PINELLAS COUNTY, YOU SEE SOMETHING THAT IN LIGHT OF THE SITUATION IS PROBABLY THE PRAGMATIC THING TO DO, WHICH IS TO CUT ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL.

BECAUSE THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS THAT MOST OF US JUDGE EDUCATION THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR OWN EXPERIENCE.

AND A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAVE TO HAVE A LOT OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS AND ALL THAT KIND OF THING.

AND IT'S WHY THE PROPOSAL THAT WAS IN THE LEGISLATURE TO SPEND MORE IN THE CLASSROOM RESONATES WELL WITH THE AVERAGE

VOTER, WHO ISN'T USED TO SEEING ALL THESE ANCILLARY POSITIONS.

SO IT'S A TOUGH SITUATION ALL AROUND, BUT I THINK THAT THEY DID THE RIGHT THING BY CUTTING IN THE ADMIN RATHER THAN IN THE CLASSROOM.

>> SO WHEN ADAM SAYS THE EFFECTS OF THE CUTS WILL BE FELT AROUND ELECTION TIME, YOU DON'T NECESSARILY AGREE.

>> WELL, YOU CAN SEE IT FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ARE DIRECTLY AFFECTED, BUT TWO-THIRDS OF FLORIDIANS DON'T HAVE A CHILD IN PUBLIC SCHOOL.

AND SECONDLY, THROUGH POLLS THAT WE'VE DONE IN FLORIDA, INCLUDING ONES BY LEADERSHIP FLORIDA, YOU SEE THAT PEOPLE -- WHEN THEY ARE HAVING TROUBLE IN THEIR OWN POCKETBOOK, THEY DON'T WANT GOVERNMENT EXPANSION.

THEY WANT GOVERNMENT TO FEEL THE SAME PAIN IN CUTBACK AS THEY THEMSELVES ARE DOING.

SO IN A WAY, WHILE ALL OF US HERE WHO ARE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT BUDGETS AND PEOPLE AND WHO USES SERVICES COULD AGREE THAT THIS IS NOT A GOOD THING AND THAT PEOPLE WILL BE HURT, THE AVERAGE PERSON ON THE STREET THINKS, HEY, YOU KNOW, GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO CUT BACK, TIGHTEN ITS BELT, TOO.

>> ADAM, LET ME JUST ASK YOU, THOUGH, I MEAN, IS IT TRUE THAT MOST OF THE PEOPLE THAT PARTICIPATE IN ELECTIONS IN FLORIDA DON'T HAVE KIDS AND, THEREFORE, MIGHT NOT BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED?

>> I THINK THAT'S TRUE, BUT IT'S ALSO TRUE, YOU KNOW, IF THE DEMOCRATS WANT TO MAKE AN ARGUMENT ABOUT LET'S LOOK AT THESE CORPORATIONS THAT ARE GETTING CERTAIN SPECIAL EXEMPTIONS, THEY ARE GETTING SOME BREAKS THAT THE JOE SIX-PACK IS NOT GETTING, THERE'S A PRETTY GOOD ARGUMENT TO BE MADE.

>> THEY COULD MAKE AN AD OUT OF THAT.

WELL, 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.

ADAM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> I WOULD SAY KEEP AN EYE OUT ON THE DELEGATE BATTLE IN FLORIDA FOR THE SHORT TERM.

WE ARE IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE WHERE THE FLORIDA DEMOCRATIC PARTY WILL ELECT MORE DELEGATES IN ST. PETE IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS.

AND THERE IS GOING TO BE A BIG BATTLE, PARTICULARLY BY THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN, ON WHETHER TO ACCEPT THOSE ELECTED DELEGATES.

WE DON'T EVEN KNOW IF THEY WILL BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONVENTION, BUT THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN IS GOING TO BE QUESTIONING WHETHER SOME OF THE DELEGATES ELECTED ARE ACTUALLY HILLARY CLINTON DOUBLE AGENTS.

>> OKAY.

SUSAN, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> GO BULLS.

GRADUATION AT USF.

A LOT OF NEW STUDENTS OUT THERE LOOKING FOR JOBS.

LET'S HOPE FLORIDA CAN KEEP SOME OF OUR BEST EDUCATED.

>> ALL RIGHT.

MARK, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, I THINK THE OTHER STORY THAT CAME OUT OF THE LEGISLATURE RECENTLY, HASN'T GOT A LOT OF ATTENTION, THE FACT THAT CITIZENS INSURANCE, WHICH IS NOW A HUGE INSURANCE CARRIER IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA, THEIR RATES HAVE BEEN FROZEN TILL 2010, AND THAT'S GOING TO AFFECT A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT NOW ARE USING CITIZENS.

IT WASN'T A REDUCTION, IT DIDN'T DROP, BUT AT LEAST WE KNOW IT WON'T GO UP AND THAT CARRIES US THROUGH ANOTHER HURRICANE SEASON.

SO I THINK, YOU KNOW, AT LEAST A PARTIAL VICTORY.

SECONDLY, IS THAT A LOT OF THE SMALLER INSURANCE COMPANIES ACTUALLY ARE DROPPING THEIR RATES.

SO THE MARKETPLACE IS SEEMING TO WORK OUT.

HOPEFULLY NO HURRICANES THIS SEASON, AND WE'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

>> BUT IF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT'S CHARGED FOR CITIZENS INSURANCE IS HELD FIRM, DOES THAT MEAN THAT THE POOLED MONEY AVAILABLE FOR HURRICANE RELIEF OR RECOVERING FROM HURRICANES IS NOT GROWING FAST ENOUGH?

>> IT'S NOT GROWING FAST ENOUGH IF WE HAVE A STORM.

IF WE DON'T HAVE A STORM LIKE THE LAST YEAR, WE'LL BE IN

GOOD SHAPE.

>> TONI, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, HISTORIC DAY TODAY IN PINELLAS COUNTY.

OUR REGISTERS -- VOTER REGISTRATION OF DEMOCRATS HAS FINALLY SURPASSED REPUBLICANS.

HASN'T DONE THAT IN THE LAST 20 YEARS.

I THINK IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE.

I THINK VOTERS ARE READY FOR A CHANGE.

AND EXCITED ABOUT IT.

>> TONI, MAKE A PREDICTION.

IS PINELLAS COUNTY NOW SOLIDLY A DEMOCRATIC COUNTY AS WE GO INTO THE NEXT CYCLE OF ELECTION?

>> I WILL MAKE THAT PREDICTION.

I BELIEVE THAT PINELLAS WILL BE BLUE THROUGH AND THROUGH.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WELL, THANK YOU, SUSAN MacMANUS.

THANK YOU, MARK PROCTOR.

THANK YOU, TONI MOLINARO.

THANK YOU, ADAM SMITH.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE WANT TO HEAR 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.

AND YOU CAN WATCH THIS SHOW ONLINE AT WEDU.ORG BEGINNING EARLY NEXT WEEK.

PLEASE SHARE THAT ADDRESS WITH YOUR FRIENDS AROUND THE STATE
WHO CARE ABOUT STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS.

"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.

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