

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

MAY 16, 2008

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

>>> COMING UP NEXT, BARACK OBAMA IS PLANNING A RETURN TO CAMPAIGNING IN FLORIDA AFTER A LONG ABSENCE.

ALLSTATE INSURANCE IS TOLD IT MUST STOP WRITING NEW POLICIES IN FLORIDA.

THE RAYS BASEBALL TEAM UNVEILS FUNDING PLANS FOR ITS PROPOSED NEW STADIUM.

AND JEB BUSH QUIETLY KEEPS HIS HAND IN FLORIDA POLITICS.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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>> FROM THE WEDU STUDIOS, THIS IS "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."
AND NOW, MODERATOR, ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

THIS WEEK OUR PANELISTS ARE, DARRYL PAULSON IS PROFESSOR OF GOVERNMENT AT USF ST. PETERSBURG.

LAURA FIORILLI-CREWS IS NEWS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS PRODUCER

AT TBO.COM.

HENRY RAINES IS A RADIO TALK SHOW HOST FROM BRADENTON AND A DEMOCRAT.

AND TOM LEE IS A FORMER STATE SENATOR AND A BUSINESSMAN AND A REPUBLICAN.

WELL, DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER BARACK OBAMA IS PLANNING A CAMPAIGN TRIP TO FLORIDA NEXT WEEK AFTER AN EIGHT-MONTH ABSENCE.

HE'LL BE APPEARING AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES" FORUM ON WEDNESDAY IN TAMPA AND WILL ALSO BE STOPPING IN ORLANDO AND SOUTH FLORIDA IN AN EFFORT TO MEND FENCES WITH FLORIDA DEMOCRATS, SOME OF WHOM HAVE HARD FEELINGS OVER THE LACK OF A RESOLUTION ON SEATING FLORIDA'S DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION.

HENRY, HE'S COMING BACK.

WHAT DOES THIS SAY ABOUT FLORIDA'S POTENTIAL FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

>> WELL, I THINK EVERYBODY IS EXCITED THAT ELVIS -- I MEAN BARACK IS COMING TO TOWN.

HE HASN'T BEEN AROUND.

THERE ARE A LOT OF REASONS TO COME TO FLORIDA, NOT JUST TO THINK ABOUT THE NOVEMBER ELECTION, BUT THERE'S A LOT OF MONEY TO BE RAISED HERE IN FLORIDA.

HE'S GOING TO GET TREMENDOUS PRESS WHEN HE'S AT THE ST. PETE TIMES FORUM.

IT'S A LITTLE SHOT ACROSS TO MCCAIN --

>> IN A SENSE, IS IT TOO LATE?

HAS HE BEEN GONE TOO LONG OR IS THE TIMING RIGHT?

>> THE TIME IS ALSO RIGHT IN REGARDS TO THE CONVENTION.

THERE'S STILL THE POSSIBILITY OF A FIGHT OVER SEATING THE DELEGATES.

HE NEEDS TO SHOW THAT HE REPRESENTS FLORIDA ALSO.

AND POSITION HIMSELF.

HILLARY HAS PROBABLY HALF THE SEATS ON THE CREDENTIALING COMMITTEE.

SO YOU GOT TO COVER ALL YOUR BASES.

>> DARRYL, DOES THIS SAY THAT FLORIDA IS POTENTIALLY IN PLAY FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

>> WELL, I THINK YOU CAN'T IGNORE IT.

IT'S SUCH AN IMPORTANT STATE THAT HE JUST CAN'T COMPLETELY IGNORE IT.

BUT I THINK IT WOULD BE MUCH TOUGHER FOR HIM THAN IT WOULD BE HILLARY.

THE LAST CAMPAIGN APPEARANCE THAT HE HAD IN FLORIDA WAS SEPTEMBER 9 OF 2007.

THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA ON THEIR WEB SITE HAS A THING ABOUT WELCOME BACK OBAMA POINTING TO THE 250-DAY ABSENCE, SO WHY SHOULD FLORIDIANS VOTE FOR HIM.

HE MAY NEED A GPS TO FIND FLORIDA HE'S BEEN GONE FOR SO LONG FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

THIS IS SORT OF LIKE A REINTRODUCTION.

JOHN MCCAIN WENT ON HIS BIOTOUR IN FLORIDA.

HE'S REALLY REINTRODUCING HIMSELF OR INTRODUCING HIMSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME TO A LOT OF FLORIDA VOTERS WHO HAVEN'T HAD THE CHANCE.

THE ONLY PEOPLE HE'S REALLY MET WITH UP TO THIS POINT IN TIME ARE THE DONORS.

HE HASN'T MET WITH THE VOTERS OF FLORIDA.

>> OF COURSE, JOHN MCCAIN DOESN'T KNOW WHAT A GPS IS YET.

>> DARRYL, THERE IS SOME OBAMA MANIA.

LOCAL DEMOCRATS ARE SAYING PEOPLE ARE FLOODING THEIR OFFICES WITH PHONE CALLS WANTING TICKETS.

>> ABSOLUTELY.

THEY WANTED TO HAVE IT IN THIS PARTICULAR VENUE BECAUSE THEY WANT A BIG EVENT.

THEY WANT TO TRY AND CREATE THE MEDIA ENTHUSIASM, THAT EVEN THOUGH HE'S BEEN ABSENT SO LONG, IT HASN'T MADE ANY DIFFERENCE AND THERE ARE FLOCKS OF PEOPLE WHO WANT TO GET IN.

I'M SURE HE'LL HAVE A BIG CROWD.

THERE'S A LOT OF ENTHUSIASM ABOUT IT.

YOU KNOW, IT'S ALSO TIED INTO WHAT'S HAPPENING IN FLORIDA.

HIS POSITION HAS BEEN COLDEST TOWARDS FLORIDA WITH RESPECT TO THE DELEGATES.

HE'S VETOED EVERY PLAN THAT'S PUT FORWARD.

ALL HE'S COME UP WITH IS SPLITTING THE FLORIDA DELEGATES EQUALLY.

HE HAS REAL PROBLEMS HERE IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND I THINK THIS IS AN EFFORT TO TRY AND MEND FENCES.

>> LAURA, IS IT POSSIBLE, DO YOU THINK, THAT HE CAN MEND SOME FENCES?

WE'RE ALMOST SIX MONTHS OUT FROM THE ACTUAL ELECTION.

>> WELL, EVER SINCE THE VOTES IN NORTH CAROLINA AND INDIANA, HE'S BEEN TRYING TO MOVE PAST THE PRIMARY AND SKIPPING OVER STATES THAT ARE YET TO VOTE IN FAVOR OF SOME OF THE SWING STATES.

SO I THINK HE'S TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE THERE.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IT COULD TAKE HOLD TO A CERTAIN DEGREE.

>> TOM, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

>> WELL, I THINK IT'S A SIGN THAT HE IS SEEING THIS NOMINATION AS A BIT MORE OF A FAIT ACCOMPLI.

THE FLORIDA AND MICHIGAN TERRITORIES HAVE BEEN SORT OF OFF-LIMITS FOR DEMOCRATS BECAUSE OF THE RULES OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

I THINK THEY TRIED TO STAY OUT OF FLORIDA CAMPAIGNING.

THE FACT THAT HE'S COMING BACK HERE AND COMING BACK HERE BIG, I THINK IS AN INDICATION THAT HE'S NOW READY TO TAKE THE MANTEL AS THE PRESUMPTIVE NOMINEE.

AND I THINK HE'S CORRECT.

I DON'T SEE ANY METRIC BY WHICH HILLARY CLINTON IS ABLE TO

OVERTAKE HIM SHORT OF SOME POLITICAL FAUX PAS ON HIS PART. I THINK IT'S TIME FOR HIM TO STEP FORWARD AND REENGAGE IN FLORIDA, AND I THINK THAT'S KIND OF WHY THEY'VE BEEN ON THE SIDELINES FOR A WHILE.

ANYBODY WHO WON THAT NOMINATION WAS GOING TO SEAT THE FLORIDA AND MICHIGAN DELEGATION.

THE CHALLENGE THAT THEY HAVE IN EXTENDING THIS OUT, IN MY OPINION, IS, YOU KNOW, I DON'T SEE A HAPPY ENDING FOR THIS THAT DOES NOT RESULT IN BARACK OBAMA BEING THEIR NOMINEE. I THINK YOU'LL HAVE ABSOLUTE MUTINY, PERHAPS ALONG RACIAL LINES IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IF FOR ANY REASON THAT MAN DOES NOT BECOME THEIR NOMINEE.

>> WELL, IF YOU WANTED TO MAKE A WISE POLITICAL MOVE, SEEMS TO ME THE THING HE SHOULD DO AT THIS POINT IN TIME, SINCE HE HASN'T CAMPAIGNED IN FLORIDA AND TURNED DOWN OR REJECTED ALL THESE PLANS PUT FORTH, HE ESSENTIALLY SHOULD SAY, I'M SO FAR AHEAD THAT I'LL WIN THE NOMINATION, I'M GOING TO COUNT FLORIDA.

I'M GOING TO RECOMMEND TO THE RULES COMMITTEE AT THE END OF THIS MONTH WHEN THEY MEET THAT THEY SEAT THE FLORIDA DELEGATION, THAT THEY PARTITION THE VOTES BASED ON THE JANUARY 29th PRIMARY EVEN THOUGH THAT WOULD GIVE HILLARY A 50 TO 33 ADVANTAGE ON A PERCENTAGE BASIS IN TERMS OF DELEGATES.

IT WOULD MAKE HIM LOOK VERY MAGNANIMOUS.

I WOULD MAKE FLORIDA RESIDENTS HAPPY.

IT WOULD MAKE UP FOR HIS LACK OF PARTICIPATION AND PRESENCE IN FLORIDA.

>> ONE OF THE WILD CARDS, TOO, IS THAT JOHN EDWARDS' DELEGATES IN FLORIDA, EDWARDS GOT 13 DELEGATES AND ABOUT HALF OF THEM HAVE COME FORWARD SAYING THEY WILL NOW FOLLOW EDWARDS AND BACK OBAMA.

>> I THINK THAT WOULD BE THE BEST THING FOR HIM TO DO. EVEN IF THE DNC COMES OUT AND RESTORES HALF OF THE DELEGATES TO FLORIDA, I CAN ALMOST GUARANTEE YOU WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK AFTER THAT, THE REPUBLICANS WILL COME OUT AND RESTORE ALL OF THE DELEGATES TO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

>> THEY ALL WILL GET RESTORED, BUT WHO THEY VOTE FOR AT THE CONVENTION IS THE SECONDARY ISSUE.

I DON'T THINK HE COULD AFFORD UP UNTIL JUST RECENTLY TO ALLOW ALL THOSE DELEGATES, IN AN ELECTION THAT REALLY WASN'T FAIR.

I THINK SHE WOULD HAVE WON ANYWAY HERE IN FLORIDA. BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE A REAL ELECTION HERE IN THIS STATE WITH FULL CAMPAIGNING.

TO ALLOW ALL THOSE DELEGATES TO GO TO THE CONVENTION AND VOTE FOR HER WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN VERY RESPONSIBLE FOR HIM AND ALL THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE SUPPORTED HIM IN THE CAMPAIGN.

>> LET ME CHANGE DIRECTIONS FOR JUST A MOMENT IN THE LAST FEW SECONDS WE HAVE HERE.

LAURA, WITH CHARLIE CRIST BEING FIRMLY IN JOHN MCCAIN'S CAMP AND LET'S SAY YOU HAVE BARACK OBAMA AND MAYBE BRINGS EDWARDS TO CAMPAIGN FOR THE GENERAL, MAYBE BRING SOMEBODY LIKE AL GORE, WHO KNOWS WHO HE BRINGS, BUT IS THERE ANY STAR WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY THAT CAN KIND OF MATCH THE STAR POWER OF CHARLIE CRIST RIGHT NOW?

FOR, LET'S SAY, INDEPENDENTS IN FLORIDA.

>> FOR ENDORSING A CANDIDATE?

>> YEAH.

>> I'M NOT SURE.

PEOPLE HAVE TALKED ABOUT THE DREAM TEAM POSSIBILITY OF OBAMA NAMING CLINTON AS HIS VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

DOESN'T SEEM TOO TERRIBLY LIKELY FOR ME.

THE CLINTONS ARE ALSO STARS, BUT THANKS TO THE RIVALRY THAT'S DEVELOPED OVER THE PRIMARY SEASON, I'M NOT SURE THEY COULD CARRY THAT FOR HIM.

>> SO, HENRY, DO YOU AGREE?

IT'S TOUGH FOR A DEMOCRAT TO CAMPAIGN HERE BECAUSE CHARLIE CRIST -- BECAUSE OF CHARLIE CRIST'S POSITION IN FLORIDA POLITICS, AND CHARLIE CRIST HAS CHOSEN JOHN MCCAIN.

>> I DON'T THINK THAT IT'S HARD FOR THEM TO CAMPAIGN, BECAUSE I THINK, UNFORTUNATELY FOR CHARLIE CRIST, IS THAT THE ECONOMY, LOTS OF ISSUES IN THE STATE ARE NICKING AND CHIPPING AWAY AT THAT POPULARITY THAT HE HAS.

AND I THINK BARACK OBAMA HAS A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF DENYING

JOHN MCCAIN'S DREAM TO BECOME THE OLDEST PRESIDENT EVER ELECTED.

>>> OKAY.

WELL, THIS WEEK, THE STATE COURT UPHELD THE OFFICE OF INSURANCE REGULATIONS POWER TO SUSPEND ALLSTATE INSURANCE FROM WRITING ANY NEW POLICIES.

STATE INSURANCE REGULATORS WANT TO PUNISH ALLSTATE FOR REFUSING TO TURN OVER DOCUMENTS IT SUBPOENAED FOR AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE WAY THE COMPANY SETS ITS RATES.

THE SUSPENSION WILL BE LIFTED AS SOON AS THE INSURER CERTIFIES IN AN AFFIDAVIT THAT IT HAS PRODUCED ALL THOSE DOCUMENTS THE STATE REQUIRES.

LAURA, AS IT TURNS OUT, THE END OF THE WEEK, THEY TURNED OVER THE DOCUMENTS.

>> THEY ARE ALWAYS DOING SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

IT ACTUALLY DID HAPPEN AS WE WERE GETTING STARTED HERE THAT THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER LIFTED A BAN ON ALLSTATE.

AND IN A SENSE, THEY ARE BACK IN BUSINESS, BUT WHILE THIS SORT OF OPENS THINGS UP TO SALES AGAIN, IT DOESN'T REALLY SOLVE THE LARGER PROBLEM OF THE SURVIVAL OF HOMEOWNERS' INSURANCE AND INSURANCE COMPANIES IN GENERAL IN FLORIDA.

THIS ONE IS NOT OVER.

>> SO, TOM, THIS WEEK WE SAW THAT THE STATE REINSURANCE FUND IS GOING TO BILL FLORIDA POLICYHOLDERS FOR FIVE OR SIX HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS FROM PAST DEBTS INCURRED BY LOSSES

IN HURRICANES IN 2004-2005.

WE'RE STILL PAYING OFF THE HOLD HURRICANES.

>> YEAH, AND I THINK THAT'S PART OF THE REASON WHY ALLSTATE IS REALLY NOTHING MORE THAN A DIVERSION.

THEY HAVE BECOME SORT OF THE POSTER CHILD FOR EVERYTHING THAT'S WRONG WITH INSURANCE IN FLORIDA.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR A LONG TIME, THERE IS NO FREE LUNCH.

YOU CAN PAY ON THE FRONT END THROUGH PREMIUMS OR YOU CAN PAY ON THE BACK END THROUGH ASSESSMENTS.

ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, WHEN THE WIND BLOWS IN FLORIDA, SOMEONE HAS TO PAY THOSE CLAIMS.

IT'S AN EXPENSIVE PROPOSITION.

IT'S FEAST OR FAMINE.

IT'S NOT LIKE AUTOMOBILE.

IT'S AN ALL-OR-NOTHING PROPOSITION, ONE STORM, AND IT CAN WIPE OUT THAT ENTIRE CAT FUND RESERVE AND THE RESERVES IN CITIZENS AS WELL.

IT'S A REALLY DAUNTING FISCAL ISSUE FOR OUR STATE RIGHT NOW.

AND WE ALL NEED TO KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED HERE YET AGAIN THAT WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE MAJOR STORMS IN 2008.

WE'RE NOT PREPARED FOR THEM.

>> HENRY, BECAUSE THESE PRIVATE COMPANIES, A LOT OF THEM HAVE ABANDONED FLORIDA.

THE STATE HAS MOVED IN AND DONE BOTH INSURANCE THROUGH

CITIZENS AND REINSURANCE THROUGH THE CAT FUND, WAS THAT A MISTAKE FOR FLORIDA TO GO IN THAT DIRECTION?

>> WELL, I THINK YOU HAVE TO DO SOMETHING WHEN IT'S AT HAND. BUT I THINK WHAT WE REALLY NEED TO LOOK FORWARD IS WE NEED ALL OF OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION AND THE DELEGATIONS IN MISSISSIPPI, IN LOUISIANA, WE NEED A REGIONAL CATASTROPHIC FUND AND NOT JUST BECAUSE OF SELFISH REASONS ON THE GULF COAST.

WHETHER IT'S TORNADOES IN THE MIDWEST, FIRES IN THE WEST, YOU KNOW, THE INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES OF DIFFERENT REGIONS IS SO TIGHT, THAT WE NEED A BIGGER UMBRELLA THAN WHAT WE CAN DO FOR OURSELVES IN OUR OWN STATE.

>> WHAT HAS OUR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION DONE IN TERMS OF TAKING STEPS TO DO THAT?

>> WELL, I BELIEVE DOWN SOUTH OF THE BAY, VERN BUCHANAN HAS PUT FORWARD A PROPOSAL, A BILL FOR A REGIONAL. HE'S HAD TROUBLE GETTING MUCH ACCEPTANCE FROM PEOPLE FROM CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS THAT DON'T THINK IT AFFECTS THEM. I THINK IT HAS TO BE SOLD AS SOMETHING THAT AFFECTS EVERYBODY.

BECAUSE, I MEAN, JUST IN THE PAST MONTH, WE HAVE SEEN SO MANY THINGS THAT HAVE HURT DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY.

>> WELL, THERE ARE NATURAL DISASTERS AND THERE ARE ECONOMIC DISASTERS.

FLORIDA HAS EXPERIENCED CERTAINLY THE FIRST, THE HURRICANES. THEY ARE VERY LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE BOTH OF THESE IN THE SHORT-TERM FUTURE, BOTH THE NATURAL DISASTERS.

AND WITH THAT NATURAL DISASTER WILL COME AN ECONOMIC DISASTER TO THE STATE.

CITIZENS, I THINK, IS A HUGE MISTAKE ON THE PART OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

THE LEGISLATURE FREEZING RATES FOR CITIZENS I THINK IS A HUGE MISTAKE.

IT ARTIFICIALLY LOWERS THE RATES BEYOND WHAT MARKET VALUES WOULD REQUIRE.

TO ME, THE ONLY WAY I THINK YOU CAN GET OUT OF THIS MESS IS GET THE PRIVATE COMPANIES TO COME BACK TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

NOW, THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE, BUT I DON'T THINK THE STATE OF FLORIDA SHOULD BE IN THE INSURANCE BUSINESS AND CERTAINLY NOT TO THE EXTENT THAT IT IS IN THE INSURANCE BUSINESS.

>> DARRYL, IF YOU LET THE PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES BACK IN, THEN YOU'VE GOT TO ALLOW RATES TO START CLIMBING AGAIN, AND THAT'S WHEN PEOPLE WERE SCREAMING.

>> WELL, YES, ABSOLUTELY.

THEY ARE GOING TO SCREAM OVER RATES AND PROBABLY THE MIDDLE GROUND IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN WHAT THE INSURANCE COMPANY, WHERE ALLSTATE CAME IN AFTER THE REINSURANCE WAS LOWERED AND

CAME IN WITH A 46% RATE INCREASE.

IT'S NOT STRANGE THAT PEOPLE WOULD COMPLAIN ABOUT THAT ON THE PART OF ALLSTATE INSURANCE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, FREEZING CITIZENS' RATES AT A POINT WHERE THEY ARE ARTIFICIALLY LOW NOW AND WHERE CITIZENS ARE LOWER THAN PRIVATE INSURANCE COMPANIES AND MORE AND MORE PEOPLE ARE GOING IN SIMPLY PUTS THE STATE OF FLORIDA AT A MUCH HIGHER RISK, SO IF WE HAVE A REPEAT OF 2004 AND THE CATASTROPHIC STORMS OF 2004 OR IF WE HAVE A HURRICANE ANDREW THAT DIRECTLY HITS MIAMI, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT A \$70 BILLION EXPOSURE JUST IN THE CITY OF MIAMI ALONE FROM A CATEGORY 5 STORM, WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF THE INSURANCE BUSINESS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

AND WE'RE NOT MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION AS FAST AS I THINK THE STATE NEEDS TO MOVE.

>>> OKAY.

WELL, THE TAMPA BAY RAYS ANNOUNCED FINANCIAL DETAILS FOR THEIR PROPOSED \$450 MILLION DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT BASEBALL STADIUM THIS WEEK.

THE PROPOSAL INCLUDES: \$150 MILLION FROM THE TEAM.

\$100 MILLION FROM EXTENDING A 1% BED TAX ON PINELLAS COUNTY HOTELS FOR 25 TO 30 YEARS.

\$75 MILLION BY EXTENDING THE CITY'S PAYMENTS FOR TROPICANA FIELD FOR ANOTHER 25 TO 30 YEARS.

\$70 MILLION FROM THE DEVELOPER PURCHASING THE TROPICANA

FIELD SITE.

AND \$55 MILLION IN PARKING REVENUE.

DARRYL, THERE ARE A LOT OF NAYSAYERS OUT THERE IN
ST. PETERSBURG.

IS THIS GOING TO DO IT?

IS THIS GOING TO CONVINCING PEOPLE THAT THE FINANCIAL PICTURE
LOOKS GOOD?

>> WELL, IT'S A GOOD START, BUT THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF
QUESTIONS OUT THERE, INCLUDING THE \$55 MILLION FROM PARKING
REVENUE.

THEY CALL IT GUARANTEED PARKING REVENUE.

NOBODY KNOWS WHERE THAT GUARANTEED PARKING REVENUE IS COMING
FROM SINCE THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE PARKING ON THE
STREETS OF ST. PETERSBURG.

HOW CAN YOU CLAIM TO GENERATE \$55 MILLION JUST FROM THAT?

WHAT THE RAYS ARE SAYING IS, THEY ARE GOING TO PUT IN
\$150 MILLION.

THEY WANT \$175 MILLION OF PUBLIC INVESTMENT.

BUT IN EXCHANGE, THEY ARE SAYING, THEIR ARGUMENT IS THAT
WILL GENERATE OVER \$300 MILLION IN TAX REVENUE THAT WILL GO
TO THE SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

SO IT'S A PAY FOR YOURSELF KIND OF SITUATION.

AND STU SILVERMAN OF THE RAYS PROBABLY GAVE ONE OF THE MOST
PREPOSTEROUS STATEMENTS.

THE PLAN IS NOT ABOUT BASEBALL, HE SAID.

THE PLAN IS ABOUT AN OPPORTUNITY TO GENERATE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF REVENUE.

WELL, THE PLAN IS ALL ABOUT BASEBALL AND THE FUTURE OF THE RAYS.

OF COURSE, ON THE SPORTS PAGE OF THE ST. PETE TIMES TODAY, JOHN ROMANO TALKED ABOUT IF THIS ISN'T PASSED, THE RAYS ARE LIKELY TO LEAVE, THAT IMPLICIT THREAT THAT THEY'LL EITHER SELL THE TEAM OR BREAK THEIR LEASE AND GET OUT OF ST. PETERSBURG.

BUT WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE -- REALLY, IT POINTS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE STADIUM IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I THINK ONE OF THE WORST PUBLIC DECISIONS EVER MADE BY A CITY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA AND PERHAPS THE UNIVERSE WAS THE DECISION BY THE ST. PETE CITY COUNCIL 20 YEARS AGO TO BUILD THAT STADIUM WITHOUT PUBLIC INPUT, WITHOUT PUBLIC VOTING ON THAT STADIUM, BUILDING A MULTIPURPOSE STADIUM THAT IS NOW 20 YEARS OLD AND IS ALREADY DEFICIENT.

THEY STILL OWE \$70 MILLION ON THAT STADIUM.

IF THEY HAD THOUGHT THIS THROUGH THE RIGHT TIME, PUT THE STADIUM IN THE RIGHT PLACE, AND I THINK THE BAY IS THE RIGHT PLACE.

IT'S A GREAT PLACE FOR THE STADIUM.

THE NEW OWNER CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE HOSPITABLE TO THE CITY OF ST. PETE THAN THE PRIOR OWNERSHIP GROUP, IT WOULD BE IDEAL TO GO AHEAD WITH THIS.

THAT FIRST DECISION, IN ESSENCE, SO SCREWED UP THE SITUATION IN ST. PETE, THAT IT MAKES IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR A LOT OF PEOPLE TO SUPPORT ANY KIND OF BASEBALL STADIUM.

>> LAURA, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT THIS WEEK BY THE RAYS?

>> THEY ALWAYS -- THE SITUATION PLAYS OUT IN CITY AFTER CITY.

THE TEAM WANTS A NEW STADIUM OR ELSE THEY ARE GOING TO LEAVE.

TIME AND AGAIN, THEY TRY THE CLICHÉ FROM "FIELD OF DREAMS." IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME.

I HEARD THAT OVER AND OVER AS A LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPORTER.

I JUST THINK -- I WISH I COULD BAN IT.

IT'S NOT JUST A CLICHÉ.

IT TURNS ECONOMICS ON ITS HEAD.

IT'S ALWAYS DEFIED.

I WOULD HEAR IF WE BUILD A CONVENTION CENTER IN OUR LITTLE PODUNK TOWN, THEY WILL COME.

THE CONVENTIONS WILL COME.

NOT TRUE.

IF THEY BUILD IT, YOU KNOW, PEOPLE TO -- TO SOME EXTENT, PEOPLE WILL CONTINUE GOING TO GAMES, BUT IT'S NEVER THIS REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE IN A CITY THAT'S GOING TO BRING MONEY INTO THE PUBLIC COFFERS.

>> I WAS AT THE RAYS GAME WHEN THEY BEAT THE YANKEES ON

MONDAY, THE FIRST GAME OF THE SERIES.

THEY HAD JUST COME OFF A WEEKEND SERIES IN WHICH THEY BEAT LOS ANGELES, SWEEP.

THERE WERE 12,000 PEOPLE THERE IN DOWNTOWN ST. PETE.

I'M WONDERING, CAN YOU DRAW BASEBALL FANS TO DOWNTOWN ST. PETE?

OR IS THAT THE WRONG PLACE FOR BASEBALL?

>> I'M NOT SURE -- I THINK THE BIGGER ISSUE THERE IS THAT BASEBALL GAMES, LIVE SPORTS, LIVE EVENTS IN GENERAL ARE JUST COMPETING IN A MUCH MORE CROWDED WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT.

YOU CAN WATCH IT ON HIGH-DEFINITION TV IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TRUCK YOURSELF DOWN TO A GAME OR YOU CAN CHOOSE FROM ANY NUMBER OF INTERACTIVE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

IT MAY BE MORE ABOUT REAL LIFE THAN HOW PEOPLE ARE SPENDING THEIR TIME.

>> I THINK IT'S ABOUT REAL LIFE, BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S ABOUT OTHER ENTERTAINMENT COMPETITION, NOT AT THIS TIME.

I THINK THAT IF THEY WEREN'T WINNING, THOSE NUMBERS WOULD BE TERRIBLE.

THIS IS A HARD HIT, WORKING-CLASS KIND OF GAME.

WHEN YOU COMPARE IT TO THE WEEKLY FOOTBALL GAME OR SOMETHING, IT'S GREAT THAT THEY ARE TURNING THOSE PEOPLE OUT BECAUSE IT IS HARD.

I MEAN, TO COME UP FROM BRADENTON OR SARASOTA, EVEN THOUGH IT'S AN EASY DRIVE, IT'S ALMOST THE COST OF THE TICKET IN

ADDITIONAL GAS COST.

>> SO THE ECONOMY IS A BACKGROUND TO THIS.

YOU CAN'T EXPECT TO SEE BIG NUMBERS FOR A GREAT TEAM LIKE THE RAYS BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE HURTING FINANCIALLY.

>> DEPRESSED HOUSING MARKET, INFLATIONARY TIMES, THEY ARE DOING PRETTY WELL.

LET'S SEE HOW THEY ARE DOING IF THEY ARE STILL IN CONTENTION AT THE END OF THE SEASON.

>>> THE LOCAL ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER CREATIVE LOAFING CARRIED A STORY THIS WEEK BY WAYNE GARCIA, A FREQUENT PANELIST ON THIS PROGRAM, WHO WRITES THAT FORMER GOVERNOR JEB BUSH REMAINS A POWERFUL, IF BEHIND-THE-SCENES FORCE IN FLORIDA. HE'S INVOLVED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST EXPANDED GAMBLING. HIS SURROGATES AND AIDES DOT IMPORTANT STATE COMMISSIONS. HIS ALLIES ON THE TAXATION AND BUDGET COMMISSION WERE SUCCESSFUL IN PUTTING SCHOOL VOUCHERS ON THIS NOVEMBER'S BALLOT.

GARCIA WRITES THAT BUSH IS SLOWLY EMERGING AND POISED TO MAKE A RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY SOMEWHERE DOWN THE ROAD.

IS THAT WHAT WE'RE IN STORE FOR, TOM?

>> THAT'S CONNECTING A LOT OF DOTS IN MY WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.

>> HOW ACTIVE IS THE FORMER GOVERNOR BEHIND THE SCENES HERE IN FLORIDA RIGHT NOW?

>> WELL, I THINK THE FORMER GOVERNOR IS ACTIVE.

I THINK YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL DYNAMIC IN THAT YOU HAVE A REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR SUCCEEDED BY ANOTHER REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR.

THE LAST EIGHT YEARS OF POLICY REFORM IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA HAS BEEN PRETTY DRAMATIC.

GOVERNOR BUSH BELIEVES VERY STRONGLY IN THE THINGS HE ADVOCATES.

HE WALKS THE WALK.

AND TO SEE SOME OF THEM UNDER ATTACK AS THEY NATURALLY ARE GOING TO BE AS THE PROCESS EVOLVES, HE'S GOING TO WANT TO TRY TO PROTECT THE THINGS THAT HE BELIEVED IN.

I THINK HE'S GONE ABOUT IT IN A VERY CLASSY WAY TO TRY TO STAY OFF THE STAGE TO NOT CROWD OUT THE TIME THAT GOVERNOR CRIST HAS IN OFFICE TO BE THE STANDARD-BEARER OF OUR PARTY. BUT HE HAS ALSO BROUGHT WITH HIM A GREAT DEAL OF FOLLOWING. HE SCHOOLED AND TRAINED A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT WERE PART OF HIS ADMINISTRATION AND NOW FIND THEIR WAY WORKING UP THE POLITICAL LADDER IN TALLAHASSEE.

AND THEY ARE A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, AND THEY ARE GOING TO DEFEND THE KINDS OF THINGS THAT THEY BELIEVE ARE TAKING THE STATE IN THE RIGHT PLACE.

>> DARRYL, DO YOU THINK JEB BUSH IS POSITIONING HIMSELF FOR AN EVENTUAL RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY?

>> I DON'T THINK THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN HIS ULTIMATE GOAL. HE CERTAINLY WANTS TO DO THAT.

BUT FOR FATE, WHICH OFTENTIMES INTERVENES IN POLITICS, HE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT.

HE LOST TO LAWTON CHILES, AND EVERYONE THOUGHT HE WOULD WIN.

HIS BROTHER WON IN TEXAS AGAINST ANN RICHARDS AND EVERYONE

THOUGHT GEORGE WOULD LOSE THAT PARTICULAR RACE.

TURNT OUT JUST THE OPPOSITE.

YEAH, I THINK THAT'S THE CASE, BUT THE BIG HURDLE FOR HIM

IS, TWO BUSHES ALREADY IN THE WHITE HOUSE.

AND WITH HIS BROTHER HAVING MISERABLE POPULARITY RATINGS,

THE LOWEST PERIOD OF LOW RATINGS IN THE HISTORY OF THE

PRESIDENCY, WHEREAS RATINGS HOVERED AROUND 30%, IT MAKES IT

EXTREMELY DIFFICULT.

BUT DOESN'T MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE.

CERTAINLY HE'S NOT THE KIND OF PERSON THAT WILL BE THE VICE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

HE DOES ASPIRE TO THE TOP JOB.

>> HENRY, WHAT DO YOU THINK JEB BUSH'S LEGACY IS RIGHT NOW

AS WE SPEAK IN 2008?

WHEN HE LEFT, HIS POPULARITY RATINGS WERE PRETTY HIGH.

CHARLIE CRIST'S RATINGS ARE EVEN HIGHER.

WHERE DO YOU THINK JEB BUSH STANDS AMONG THE FLORIDA

POPULOUS?

>> I THINK IT'S LIKE A FOND MEMORY FOR SOME PEOPLE.

BUT I DON'T THINK THE ACTUAL POLICIES HAVE THAT MUCH

ATTACHMENT TO PEOPLE.

AS TIMES CHANGE, AS OTHER CONCERNS CHANGE.

JUST TO ADDRESS SOMETHING THAT DARRYL SAID ABOUT IT MIGHT NOT BE JEB'S INTENTION TO RUN FOR THE PRESIDENT, ALTHOUGH I MIGHT DISAGREE WITH THAT FUNDAMENTALLY, WHEN YOU HAVE A PATRONAGE NETWORK LIKE A BUSH FAMILY OR A CLINTON FAMILY, THERE BECOMES AN INERTIA BEHIND YOU PUSHING YOU THAT'S VERY HARD TO RESIST.

AND I DON'T KNOW, ESPECIALLY IF A DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT COMES IN AND FACES THE PROBLEM OF CLEANING UP WHAT THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS LEFT FOR HIM, 2012, PEOPLE MAY NOT REMEMBER HOW THEY WERE FEELING IN 2008.

>> THAT'S VERY TRUE.

HAPPENS VERY OFTEN.

THE SNAPSHOTS IN TIMES OF THESE POLLS ARE MEANINGLESS.

POPULARITY RATINGS, YOU GET FOUR YEARS OF SOMEONE PROMISING TO CLEAN UP THE WORLD UNDER CHANGE AS THE MANTRA AND NOTHING CHANGES EXCEPT WE'RE FOUR YEARS OLDER AND THEY ARE GOING TO WANT MORE CHANGE.

I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN BEFORE.

COMPARING A CURRENT GOVERNOR'S POPULARITY WITH A FORMER GOVERNOR'S POPULARITY, SOMEONE WHO IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF GOVERNING BUT WHOSE POLICY CHANGES AND IMPACTS ON STATE GOVERNMENT HAVE YET TO LIVE OUT IN STATUTE AND AFFECT PEOPLE'S LIVES.

LOOKING BACK WITH 20/20 HINDSIGHT, IT'S MUCH HARDER TO HAVE

HIGH POPULARITY RATES THAN IT IS WHEN YOU'RE CURRENTLY IN OFFICE.

>> LAURA, WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON WHAT JEB BUSH IS UP TO THESE DAYS?

>> IT'S LIKE TOM SAID, HIS PEOPLE ARE STILL IN THE GOVERNMENT AND STILL AROUND MAKING A DIFFERENCE.

GOVERNORS' TERMS COME TO AN END, BUT THAT DOESN'T APPLY TO EVERY FUTURE.

AS FAR AS HIS FUTURE PLANS GO, I THINK IT'S PROBABLY A GOOD YEAR FOR HIM NOT TO BE RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OR ANYTHING HIGHER.

THE BUSH NAME IS MUD, AND IT'S JUST NOT A YEAR TO BE PART OF A DYNASTY OF ANY KIND.

IN FOUR MORE YEARS, THINGS COULD LOOK BETTER DEPENDING ON HOW THEY GO.

>> SENATE SEAT MIGHT BE OPENING UP IN 2012.

>> TALKING ABOUT THE MARTINEZ SEAT.

>> NO, NELSON.

>> BILL NELSON.

>> HE WOULD NEVER RUN FOR THE SENATE.

I CAN'T SEE HIM BEING ONE OF 100.

I THINK IT'S THE PRESIDENCY OR NOTHING FOR HIM.

>> HE WANTS TO BE CEO.

>> HE WOULDN'T DO WELL IN THE KIND OF COLLEGIAL ATMOSPHERE OF THE SENATE.

>> HE'S THE LEADER.

HE'S THE POLICY WONK.

HE IS THE MOST TRANSFORMATIVE GOVERNOR IN MODERN FLORIDA HISTORY.

PEOPLE MAY NOT LIKE THE TRANSFORMATION, BUT THERE'S NOBODY WHO HAS HAD A BROADER IMPACT ON PUBLIC POLICY IN FLORIDA THAN JEB BUSH.

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

TOM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY OF THE WEEK?

>> WELL, ONE THAT WE ALL TALKED ABOUT BEFORE THIS SHOW THAT WAS IN THE NEWSPAPER.

THE PREMATURE PASSING OF FORREST POLLOCK, THE PASTOR OF BELL SHOALS CHURCH.

WHAT A GREAT FAMILY, GREAT PEOPLE, PRINCIPLED.

THERE'S JUST SOMETHING INCREDIBLY IRONIC ABOUT A MAN OF SUCH GREAT FAITH SO BELOVED BY THE COMMUNITY AND SUCH A GOOD FATHER, GOOD FRIEND AND DONE SO MUCH FOR THE FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY IN THE EASTERN PART OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY TO HAVE SUCH AN UNTIMELY PASSING IN HIS AIRPLANE.

THE LOSS OF HIS CHILD WHO WAS TRAVELING WITH HIM.

THE FACT THAT ONE CHILD DECIDED NOT TO GO LATE.

AND THEREFORE IS NOW STILL ALIVE.

IT JUST CREATES A REAL OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT.

AND THEIR FUNERAL WILL BE THIS SATURDAY.

WE WISH THE FAMILY ALL THE BEST.

>> HENRY, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, JUST TODAY IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT HOUSING STARTS TOOK A BLIP UP, BUT IT WAS IN APARTMENT HOUSING, NOT SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES.

AND I HAD A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN A CONFERENCE, PRESS CONFERENCE WITH GEORGE TALKING ABOUT THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL SETTING.

ONE STATISTIC STOOD OUT AND WHY WE NEED OUR NATIONAL LEADERS IN CONGRESS TO TRY AND KEEP PEOPLE IN THEIR HOMES THAT ARE FACING FORECLOSURE AS OPPOSED TO BAILING OUT CORPORATIONS. EVEN IF YOU'RE SAFE RIGHT NOW AS YOU LISTEN TO THIS, THE COMING FORECLOSURES COULD GO TO TWO TO THREE MILLION. THE NATIONAL MARKET FOR HOMES IN THE UNITED STATES IS 600,000.

IF YOU PUT TWO OR THREE MILLION MORE HOMES INTO THE HOUSING MARKET, THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL WILL CONTINUE FOR YEARS.

GOT TO PUT THE BRAKES ON THAT.

>> LAURA, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> I WOULD LIKE TO DRAW SOME ATTENTION TO THE CONTAMINATED WELLS THAT ARE CURRENTLY BEING INVESTIGATED IN ST. PETE. TOO EARLY TO SAY HOW THAT'S GOING TO GO, AND IT LOOKS AS THOUGH IT DIDN'T SO MUCH GET INTO THE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY, BUT IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO FIND OUT HOW RAYTHEON, WHO

APPEARS TO SORT OF HAVE INHERITED THIS PROBLEM, IS GOING TO HANDLE IT WITH THE NEIGHBORS OVER THERE.

>> THEY ARE SPRAYING IT ON THEIR LAWNS IN THE AZALEA NEIGHBORHOOD.

WE DON'T KNOW HOW BIG IT IS.

>> NO.

>> DARRYL, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> MAY 1st OF THIS YEAR FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1984, THERE ARE MORE REGISTERED DEMOCRATS IN PINELLAS COUNTY THAN REPUBLICANS.

PINELLAS COUNTY WAS THE FIRST REPUBLICAN COUNTY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA, SORT OF SET THE TREND IN TERMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODERN FLORIDA REPUBLICAN PARTY.

IT'S NOW TRENDING DEMOCRAT.

IT'S A BAD SIGN FOR THE REPUBLICANS.

I THINK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE COUNTY'S HISTORY, IT WILL HAVE A TRULY COMPETITIVE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM WITH ESSENTIALLY NORTH PINELLAS COUNTY BEING REPUBLICAN AND SOUTH PINELLAS COUNTY BEING DEMOCRAT.

>> WHAT'S DRIVING THAT CHANGE?

>> DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES PRIMARILY.

THE PEOPLE THAT USED TO MOVE HERE WITH THEIR STRONGER REPUBLICAN TIES AREN'T MOVING TO PINELLAS COUNTY ANY LONGER IN PART BECAUSE IT'S BECOME A VERY EXPENSIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND THEY WANTED A LOW-COST, NO FRILLS, LOW-TAX KIND OF

ENVIRONMENT, SO THEY ARE MOVING FARTHER DOWN THE SOUTHWEST COAST, AND A LOT OF BLACKS AND HISPANICS WHO WEREN'T VOTING 50 YEARS AGO ARE VOTING AND VOTING OVERWHELMINGLY WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

>> THANK YOU, LAURA FIORILLI-CREWS.

THANK YOU, TOM LEE.

THANK YOU, HENRY RAINES.

AND THANK YOU, DR. DARRYL PAULSON.

AND THANK YOU FOR WATCHING "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

WE ALWAYS WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS.

PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE TOPICS WE COVERED.

YOU CAN SEND AN E-MAIL TO FTW@WEDU.ORG OR CALL OUR TOLL FREE LINE AT 800-335-9338.

THIS PROGRAM WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE FOR PLAYBACK BEGINNING MONDAY MORNING.

WE'LL SEE YOU NEXT FRIDAY NIGHT AT 8:30 AND SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT 12:30.

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

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