

## **Weidenbaum Center Annual Dinner**

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### ***Forces Shaping the Presidential and Congressional Election Campaigns in 2004***

By

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I am honored to be asked to speak with you tonight. What Steven Smith left out of that introduction was my primary qualification for being a political analyst and that was the fact that I was born and raised in Louisiana where politics is in our blood. Let's face it, Louisiana is known for great food, a wonderful culture, fabulous nightlife. But, Louisiana is not known for good government.

We had a governor many, many years ago back in the 1930s, whom I'm sure you all heard of, named Huey Long. Now Huey Long was governor of Louisiana. He didn't go to LSU, Louisiana State University, but he was just an enormous LSU fan. In fact, during the 1930s Huey Long decided that LSU needed to expand Tiger Stadium, the football stadium. The state legislature was in a really obstinate mood that year and refused to go along. But, the Governor noticed that they had appropriated some money for a new dormitory. So Governor Long had them build a horseshoe shaped dormitory around the perimeter of the existing football stadium. Then he had them put a roof on the dorm that consisted of seats facing inward. So up into the late 1980s Tiger Stadium in Baton Rouge was also a functioning dormitory.

Now a few years after that we had another governor named Richard Leche — who will go down in history as perhaps the most corrupt man to ever serve as governor

of Louisiana. Which is truly a remarkable statement. At one point, one of Leche's supporters bought him a yacht that he kept at Lake Pontchartrain. When the news media found out about it and asked him about it, his response was this: "I may have taken the oath of office but I didn't take a vow of poverty." After Governor Leche was removed from office in a scandal that also took out the president of LSU, his Lt. Governor naturally moved up and that was Earl K. Long — Huey's younger brother. Now let me ask how many of you ever saw the Paul Newman movie *Blaze* that came out a few years ago? A few of you did. Go to Blockbuster or someplace and check it out if you really like politics. It's a wonderful movie, mostly — but not entirely accurate. It's about Earl Long and his relationship with a stripper named Blaze Starr. Now my favorite part of the movie — and this part was absolutely true — was how Earl was committed to an insane asylum while he was governor. He was committed by his wife and by his staff. Absolutely true, but the best part was how he got out. Governor Long fired the State Commissioner of Hospitals. Then he put a new one in who had been discharged from the insane asylum. I mean is that crazy?

Then a few years after that we had another governor named Jimmie Davis who you may remember was the country western singer and songwriter who was famous for the song "You are my Sunshine." Now most people assumed that Sunshine was his wife or sweetheart but no. Sunshine was his horse, and when Jimmie Davis became governor he wanted his horse to see his office, naturally. So he brought — absolutely true — he brought his horse up the 48 steps into the State Capital Building and into the governor's office. In those days, it was on the lobby level of the State Capital Building.

Someone at the time pointed out that it was the first time they ever had an entire horse in the governor's office.

In the years after that we had Edwin Edwards as our governor who was also known as the "Silver Zipper" but we won't go there. Edwards is famous for, by his own count, he was investigated something like 18 or 19 separate times by state and federal authorities. But, he was actually only indicted four times and then convicted only once. He is currently enjoying federal hospitality in Texas. Anyway, Governor Edwards went on trial four separate times. The first time resulted in a hung jury. The second time he was actually acquitted by a jury of his peers. Now the third time, he was in fact convicted, and then the fourth time resulted in a hung jury again. As I said, the second time he was acquitted by a jury of his peers. Now some of you may be wondering how do we know for sure that it really was a jury of his peers? It seems that when the sequestered jury finally rendered their verdict and they were allowed to go home, it turns out they had stolen over \$4,000 worth of towels from the hotel. That's how we really are quite sure that it was a jury of his peers.

Then finally after Edwards we had Buddy Roemer. He was our governor who was famous for, when asked a question by a reporter, "Governor, where do you stand on the death penalty?" Roemer replied, "Right next to the switch." So when I speak to people from other parts of the country, I go through that so you get an idea of where I learned my politics before I came to Washington thirty-two years ago.

This is a fascinating time in American politics. It really is. This is going to be an amazing election. I think it's going to be incredibly close. Sitting here in St. Louis in one of the, what we call swing states, a state that's not really a red or a blue, it is just going

to be really close. You're going to see, you got a front row. You got home plate or right behind the dugout or whatever metaphor you want to choose. You're going to see it all right here.

It's interesting when you think about it. Depending on your definition, 18, 17, 16 states; some people say 9 or 10 that are really going to matter. Many other people from around the country, they're going to be looking at this presidential election through a window because they're going to see very little advertising. This campaign is basically going to go on someplace else, but you are going to be here right in the middle of it. I'm not sure if that's a good or a bad thing. You may get sick of it by the time it's all over — but it certainly is interesting. This really is a fascinating time in American politics.

Did any of us ever think we would live long enough to see a presidential election with one party winning the popular vote by a half million votes and the other party winning the Electoral College by 537 votes in one state? That is truly amazing. The thing about it is this country is still just about as evenly divided today as we were back then. At the end of every year the Gallop Organization takes all of their national surveys and they total them up and they look at the party identification. When Gallop did that for 2003, they totaled up all the people; and they found that 45.5 percent of all American adults were either Republicans or they were Independents that leaned towards the Republican side. 45.5 and 45.2 percent were either Democrats or Independents leaning towards the democratic side, which was a three-tenths of a percentage point Republican advantage. When Gallop did that for 2002, it was actually the other way. It was 45.5 for Democrats and 45.3 for Republicans, a one-tenth of a percentage point democratic advantage.

The other really broad gauge of measuring where the parties are in this country is to look at state legislative seats. After all, we have 7,382 state representatives and state senators in this country. Of those 7,382, 49.95 percent of them are Republican and 49.13 percent of them are Democrats, an eight-tenths of one percentage point Republican advantage. So Republicans are ahead by a smidgen but, boy, this country is still pretty, pretty evenly divided.

The other thing that really stands out is the level of polarization that we see in this country. Back during the Clinton presidency I thought I'm never ever, ever likely to see a president hated by members of the other party the way Bill Clinton is by Republicans. I didn't think I'd ever see anything like that again. Well, it turns out I didn't have to wait very long. I mean because the thing about it is we're seeing something that is really, really amazing. Back when Gallop did their poll in early March they found that 91 percent of all Republicans approved the job that President Bush is doing which is a fabulous job-group rating, 91 percent, and only 17 percent of Democrats approved the job he was doing, an astonishing low. In going as far back as 1952, Gallop has never found a president that had a gap as wide as 74 points between the approval rating of his own party and the approval rating of the other party, although Clinton, particularly after Monica Lewinsky, got awfully close to that point. Now think about that in a historical context. I never met a soul who hated President Bush Senior. I knew some Democrats who hated some of President Reagan's policies, but I don't know that I knew of any that really hated him. I knew a lot of conservatives and Republicans who thought that President Carter was weak and indecisive but how many people really hated him? I know I never met anybody that hated President Ford. You really have to

go back to Democrats hating President Nixon, particularly after Watergate, and Republicans hating President Franklin Roosevelt, “that man in the White House,” to find truly large numbers of people in one party loathing a president of the other party. We’ve now seen that in back-to-back presidencies. I don’t know what it is. Maybe we are just not as nice a people as our parents and grandparents were. Maybe it says something about the rise of talk radio — the various cable network news food-fight shows where there’s just a lot more heat than there is light, or the Internet or whatever. I don’t know, but it’s clearly a level of polarization that is not normal in American politics but boy we’ve had it now with back-to-back presidencies.

Now what does this mean for this presidential election? Because President Bush has such a very, very high approval rating among people of his own party, and that at the same time he has such a low approval rating among people of the other party, he’s got a high floor underneath him of the Republican vote. At the same time he’s got a relatively low ceiling. So a high floor and a low ceiling so that most of the time you would say, if he were a stock, you would say that he has a fairly narrow trading range. Now it does get out of that range a bit from time to time. For example, back in late November, December of last year we saw it start to go way above that range when we saw first he had his Thanksgiving Day trip to Iraq to meet with the Troops. That was very well received by the public. Then you had the capture of Saddam Hussein, and then I would throw in one more development that didn’t get nearly as much attention obviously but was still pretty good: the announcement by the United States and the United Kingdom with Libya to dismantle their nuclear weapons-making capability. Those events back-to-back against a back drop late last year of some pretty good

economic news sent President Bush's job approval rating where it had been 50 percent approved/47 percent disapproved pushing up to 63 percent in the last Gallop Poll going into the Christmas holidays. Sixty-three percent is amazing and clearly out of that trading range.

Then after the first of the holidays are over, it comes down to 60, 58, 55. Then when we got into the middle, latter part of January when you saw the democratic presidential candidates campaigning in Iowa, New Hampshire and elsewhere just beating the tar out of President Bush and you started sliding down through and then out the bottom of that trading range, dropping down to a job approval rating of 49, 48 or something like that. You see the trading range sort of 50 to 53, you saw him pop back up in March a little bit. Now it's kind of receding as measured all over, but the last thing I've seen maybe a touch below 50 in some polling last week but still sort of right on the bottom of that trading range. He can go above it a little bit, he can go below it a little bit but pretty much right in that sort of zone. Now for a presidential election he's kind of right at the cusp because the presidents that have had higher job approval ratings at this point in their presidencies have all won and the people that had lower job approval ratings than where President Bush is right now have all lost. So he's sort of right in this kind of gray area. All except his father, his father was lower on the approval rating but was still ahead of Clinton at this point, dropped behind him later on. But actually, his father had a lower approval rating than the current President Bush does.

So where are we headed? What I've been saying since last summer is that if I had to make a prediction on whether President Bush was going to be re-elected or not at any point last summer but if before I had to make that prediction, if I had a choice of

knowing either: (a) Who is the democratic nominee going to be? or (b) How's the war in Iraq going? It's not to say that who the democratic nominee was is unimportant but I'd just rather know how the war in Iraq was going. If I'd had a choice of knowing who the democratic nominee was going to be or how's the economy doing, the economy defined as gross domestic product, stock market, consumer confidence, unemployment rate, job creation — all those things, I would rather know that. The reason is that when a president is running for re-election, remember back when we all learned civics, that we learned when a president is running for re-election ultimately it is more a referendum on the incumbent than it is a choice between two people. People ask themselves do you feel as though this incumbent, this President, performed well enough to deserve re-election? Do you have confidence in this President to lead us for another four years? If you think about it, there are three possible answers, yes, no, and maybe. If the answer is yes to those questions, they believe the President has performed well enough to deserve re-election, they have confidence that the President can lead us for another four years, then it really doesn't matter who the other side nominates, does it? I mean Democrats could nominate the reincarnation of Franklin Roosevelt or John F. Kennedy and they'd still lose. Given the even division, the high polarization we have in this country, it would be a fairly competitive race but President Bush would win certainly under those circumstances.

On the other hand, if people think that any president has not performed well enough to deserve re-election, if they don't have confidence for another four years then it goes to another point. Then they look at the alternatives and they say does this



person reach a threshold level of qualifications to be considered. If the answer is yes then they compare the two and make a choice between the two people.

Think back to the 1980 election. Often times we think about that election, former Governor Ronald Reagan beating Jimmy Carter by ten percentage points. We think it was a landslide. With a ten-point win it obviously was a landslide. Remember going in a week out before that election that race was too close to call. It was very, very close. You remember there was only one debate in that campaign. It was the Thursday night before the election. It was very, very close. The American people did not want to re-elect Jimmy Carter as president. They really didn't. On the other hand they really weren't sure, they really still had some doubts about Governor Reagan. So they went into this one debate not wanting to elect one person but not sure about the other. Ronald Reagan stood there in that debate next to President Carter and they decided that Ronald Reagan was in fact big enough and was ready to be president. Over the last week before the election he pulls away a ten-point win. The thing is they initially decided they didn't want to re-elect Carter, but that didn't close the deal. Then they had to look at Reagan and see if he was big enough and then they made the decision. I think that's how the decision making structure really works.

Now Iraq, we've obviously had a horrible couple of weeks. Lord knows what's going to happen next. Let me ask you a question, how many of you know someone who's there right now or has been there? Actually that's a bigger number than I normally get. Particularly when you know somebody that's there, you pick up the paper every morning and you just agonize over whether the friend or loved one that you have there, how well are they doing? This is something that we don't know where this thing

is going. The thing that scares a lot of defense analysts that I talk to in both parties is the speculation of what happens if we really do start to hand over the control on June 30th, and the possibility of having a civil war is just so great that it just scares the daylight out of them. I don't know what this is going to turn out to be like, but boy is this thing a cloud over the President's head. It's just obvious to say that.

Then we get to the economy. We really need to watch these next few job reports because we know that economists look at things somewhat differently. For the average person on the street the economy means jobs. Watch these job reports coming out for the next few months because the key period for predicting a presidential election in terms of the economy is the first six months of the year. Particularly the second quarter of the year: April, May and June. Those are the critical months. So can we see the kind of job creation that we saw for the month of March, can we see that replicated during April, May and June? Not necessarily 300,000, that's way too high. That's a phenomenal number and nobody expects that. Can it stay at the 100,000; 150,000; 200,000 range for the next couple of months? What worries me about the economy, and I'm not an economist and many of you are, and some of you are very famous. What worries me is whether we're going to bounce back job wise, whether this is really as durable as we can be.

There's a fascinating study that the Federal Reserve Bank of New York did back in August where they looked at the current economic downturn and they compare the job losses during the downturn recovery with the previous ones. The interesting thing to me is, just as sort of a layman and a political person, was when they went back and looked at the mid 70s, the twin downturns in the mid 70s, 49 percent of all the job losses

were reciprocal job losses, part of the business cycle. You know, they let shifts go at the plant, or you let sales people go. Fifty one percent were structural job losses where the jobs no longer existed, 49 and 51. When they looked at 1981 and 1982 they found exactly the same thing in that downturn, 49 percent were reciprocal, temporary job losses while 51 percent were structural job, permanent job losses. Then they came to 1991 and 1992. In that one the reciprocal, temporary job losses dropped to 43 and the structural job losses went up to 57 percent. That one took a little longer to get the job creation going after that one.

What about this one? The Federal Reserve Bank of New York estimated that during this economic downturn recovery pattern only 21 percent of the job losses were reciprocal, temporary job losses, 79 percent were structural. The thing that worries me as I travel around the country and meet with business leaders all over it — the reluctance to hire back people. I have a small business. I have three employees. I have a wife and three kids. There are eight lives on our health insurance plan. We pay about \$27,000, \$28,000 in health insurance premiums which is a 30 percent increase over last year, which was a 25 percent increase over the previous year and a 17 percent increase the year before that. If we were making something with global economy, you're not real competitive after something like that going on for a few years, are you? I was talking to one CEO of a high-tech company in California back in December who said there is no level of overtime that we would not be willing to pay, there is no level of temporary services that we would not be willing to hire on, there's no level of outsourcing or off-shoring that we would not be willing to do to keep from having to hire one new permanent worker in the U.S. Wow, now I've heard that less distinctly

and I've heard that from a lot of other people too. The thing about it is that really is kind of scary. I'm not a protectionist, I wish protectionism were the answer. I mean, we know how to do that. That's easy. I don't think it is the answer. It's scary to think what can we do in this country to make our work to be more competitive. What can we do? It keeps coming back to health care costs in many, many ways. What I really worry about is whether we really are going to see the kind of meaningful job creation bouncing back that we need. That's obviously something that President Bush and his campaign have to watch very, very closely because they can't afford for Iraq to be in lousy shape and the economy not to be bouncing back. Everything else with the economy is extremely robust, it's just the job picture isn't but from the standpoint of politics that is the most important single thing that's out there.

We talked about President Bush's problems, now let's talk about Senator Kerry's problems. I've always thought that if you stuck a thermometer in John Kerry's mouth or somewhere else it would probably come in around 63 degrees. The guy's just kind of a cool customer, cool, patrician, aloof, distant. Let's face it, would you want to go fishing with him if you knew you weren't going to catch anything?

I was down in Iowa for the Iowa caucus back in January. The day before the caucus, we went around to watch each of the candidates' campaign. There was this Kerry rally at an elementary school in Waterloo, Iowa. The place was absolutely packed to the rafters, high school band playing, Ted Kennedy giving him a rousing introduction. Then they introduce this fellow, Jim Rassmann, who was an army Green Beret. Kerry had saved the guy's life in Vietnam. In a nutshell what had happened was Kerry was the captain of one of these little Navy swift boats. Rassmann was on another swift boat.

They were in a river, they were taking fire from Vietcong on both shorelines. A mine went off next to the other boat. It knocked Rassmann overboard. Again, they're taking fire. Kerry brings the boat back. Kerry is wounded, reaches in and grabs Rassmann and pulls him into the boat. They take off, saves the guy's life. They hadn't seen each other for 31 years until the day before. They introduce this guy, they tell the story. It's really kind of an electric moment in this rally. I'm thinking I've been to a lot of political rallies over the years and this is certainly, really a memorable one. This guy is going to hit the cover off the ball. It was really, really exciting. Kerry gets up there and he was "okay." I'm thinking my god how did you not hit a grand slam home run in a packed house, high school band, rousing Ted Kennedy introduction? This kind of thing is an electric moment. Just pretend, I'm going to ask you to stretch your imagination for a minute, just pretend for a moment if you can that Bill Clinton had served in Vietnam and pretend that he'd been the fast boat captain, that he'd won three purple hearts, one bronze star, one silver star, that Ted Kennedy had been captain of that boat, had come back wounded, fire from both sides, pulls this guy out of the water and saves his life. If you were in that room there wouldn't have been a dry eye in the place. Rush Limbaugh could have been in the audience and he would have been wailing like a baby. This would have been a magical moment. John Kerry just isn't capable of doing anything like that. I run the risk here of further alienating some of you, if I compare him to John Edwards if Edwards was running for president. The first day he got into the U.S. Senate, he had no known accomplishments in the U.S. Senate and couldn't find the men's rooms in the entire Capital Building complex. I'm willing to stipulate that. The first time he came by our office when he was campaigning, running for Senate, I

realized within the first fifteen minutes why fellow trial lawyers from all over the state of North Carolina would drive across the state to sit in a courtroom and watch John Edwards try a case. I mean the guy was that good. He was smooth. There was a legal publication that estimated during the 1990s John Edwards won 10 percent of all the jury awards for the entire state of North Carolina that decade. When you consider that during 1999 he was in the U.S. Senate, and in 1998 he was running for the U.S. Senate, in other words in eight of the ten years of the 1990s he won ten percent of all the jury awards. Listening to him, I never saw him in front of a jury, but certainly I saw him in front of the voters and watching him reminds me of the line someone used to say about Bill Clinton. He could pee on your leg and convince you it was raining. That's John Edwards. The thing about it is this is not John Kerry. He just doesn't have that. That's one side, the guy just doesn't connect with people. People want to like whom they vote for president. They want to feel some connection to him and John Kerry just can't do that.

The second problem I think John Kerry has and we'll be touching on it in sort of a round about way. We were having dinner a little over a year ago with one of President Bush's top strategists and we were going through talking about each of the democratic candidates, which ones would be more formidable or less formidable an opponent for President Bush. This strategist made a point that I thought was very interesting. It's not an accident that the last three democrats elected President were all southerners. It's not just because they were able to pick up off a few southern states although that obviously helped a lot. With a lot of voters, particularly a lot of swing voters when they see a southern democrat there is a presumption of moderation, a presumption of

centrism that unless proven otherwise they assume that candidate is something of a moderate. Now whether that is true or not is beside the point. A lot of voters just assume and after all how could a crazy liberal get elected statewide in the south? I could tell you about a few but still most voters see it that way.

At the same time when they see a Massachusetts Democrat there is a presumption of liberalism until proven otherwise. Many of you heard when you were a small kid the Uncle Remus tales. Remember tar baby where everything would stick to the tar baby? That's the problem that I think Senator Kerry has. Charges that may or may not stick to another Democrat are more likely to stick to him because he's that Massachusetts Democrat — Kennedy, Dukakis, the only state that voted for George McGovern, that's the problem for him. You saw Kerry come out of there where he was an absolute blank piece of paper. The American people knew absolutely nothing about him. The Bush campaign dropped about \$40 million dollars worth of negative on his head and they brought his unfavorable ratings in some polls are now as high as his favorable ratings. Now in a month's worth of work that's pretty remarkable. I would argue this again, this Massachusetts Democrat thing, it was easier to tattoo him than it would be say some other Democrat.

I think this thing is going to be absolutely incredibly close. It's going to come down to depending upon your definition — you start off with about 18 states or so that are just competitive. Where there is some reasonable amount of doubt of who is going to carry those states. You start out with the Great Lakes States. Every state that touches the Great Lakes except New York and Illinois that always go Democratic and Indiana that always goes Republican. Then you skip over to the Pacific Northwest and

you have Washington and Oregon. Then you come down southwest, New Mexico, Nevada, and then Arizona. It wasn't on the original list but it was added on. Then you come to the center, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas. Come down here you have Florida, West Virginia, Maine, and New Hampshire. That's pretty much the 17 states, that's the basic list that is out there where the advertising is being waged. Colorado may or may not get added on the list. We're seeing polls that show it closer than it was. If you want to narrow it down to what I think are the big nine, it would be four states that President Bush carried last time and five that Al Gore carried last time. Florida for obvious reasons. Second would be Ohio and in some ways I think for President Bush it's the most important state in the country because he carried it by about three-and-a-half percentage points last time, but keep in mind that the Gore campaign pulled out about three weeks before the election. They pulled all their advertising, basically pulled out of the state. Since then they've lost about 225,000 jobs and the President is not in great shape there. To be more specific, the northern part of the state he's got a real problem with because of the jobs. In the southern part of the state he's actually in somewhat better shape because southern Ohio is culturally a lot more like Kentucky than say Michigan, and socially culturally more conservative so the President is in a lot better shape in the southern half of the state but that one is going to be really, really, really close. Keep in mind no Republican has ever been elected president without carrying Ohio. Then we get here in Missouri. As far as I'm concerned this is a microcosm of America. Missouri has gone with the winning presidential candidate in every presidential election since 1900 except for 1956 when Adlai Stevenson carried it. Every election since 1990 except one, that's pretty remarkable. Look at one other statistic, in



the year 2000 in that election the presidential, senate, and gubernatorial races were all decided by three percentage points or less. You can't find any other state with a record like that. It's a real bellwether of where this election's going. The last one is New Hampshire. This is a state that used to be conservative Republican and it's down because of in-migration. It's becoming more independent, not really democrat, just more independent. Those would be the four Bush states I would watch. The five Gore states would be Minnesota, Wisconsin, Oregon, Washington and New Mexico. New Mexico Gore carried by 366 votes last time. Those are the nine states that I think are just teetering right on the edge of this thing. It's going to be awfully, awfully close.

Who's going to be the running mates? I have a confession and an observation. The confession is this: I have never ever accurately predicted a vice presidential running mate. Never. The observation: I do not know anyone who has ever accurately predicted a running mate. I do not know a soul that thought that Al Gore was going to pick Joe Lieberman and I know Joe Lieberman and he didn't think he was going to get picked. I don't know a soul that thought Governor Bush was going to pick the guy that he had picked to be the head of his vice presidential running mate's selection committee, Dick Cheney. Nobody thought he was going to pick Cheney. Going back from 2000 to 1996, how many times have we heard Bob Dole teased about Jack Kemp's intelligence? He had played football one time too many without a helmet. Nobody thought that Dole was going to pick Kemp. They didn't like each other. Who thought in 1992 that Clinton would pick Gore the guy his age from the next-door state — so much for ticket balancing. Nobody thought that. Who in 1988 thought that Vice President George Bush was going to pick Dan Quayle? Who thought Dukakis would

pick Lloyd Benson? Who thought in '84 that Mondale would pick Geraldine Ferraro? We are always wrong. So when you see people on television, no matter what the channel, pontificate who's going to be the running mate, it should say this is for entertainment purposes only. If I'm accurate it's purely accidental.

Having said that with that disclaimer, the conventional wisdom right now is that it's going to be Edwards. He's got this ability to connect with voters and all this. He has all the skills and all the talent in terms of connecting with people that John Kerry doesn't have. Which is absolutely true. The problem I have with the Edwards pick is two things. Number one is I don't think the guy can carry his home state, and to me if you don't carry your home state, if there's not any specific state or demographic group that you're going to pull over the finish line I don't know what the heck good are you. That's the primary reason. The second is one that I need to credit somebody else, Michael Barone, the principal editor of the *Almanac of American Politics*, and who is with Fox News. His argument, which I think is very good, is when have you ever seen a presidential nominee pick a running mate who is more attractive, more articulate, more dynamic and more charismatic than they are? Somebody that can show you up. I think the short answer is never. Would Kerry really pick somebody that would sort of out shine him? No, probably not. So who would you pick? To me, first is the Hippocratic oath, do no harm. Is that how it goes? Yes, okay. Do no harm, number one. Number two, somebody that does deliver a key state or group of states, or demographic group or just make some powerful statement. If I, and I'd say this no matter where I am, if I were Kerry, I'd probably just do Gephardt. It's not exciting, it's not a wow, but number one, the guy's life is an open book. There are no skeletons in Dick Gephardt's

background, number one. Number two, while he's never been elected statewide here in Missouri, he's not a statewide figure really, at the same time this state is so close, it just teeters right on the edge. Would it be good for 10,000 or 20,000 votes because people would think it would be pretty neat to have a vice president from the state? Yes, it is probably good for 10,000 or 20,000 votes. Third, I think on the jobs issue, particularly Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, I think Gephardt would be pretty good there. Does that mean he's going to pick him? No he probably won't. He'll pick somebody else. It'll probably be some random person like Kathleen Sebelius, the Governor of Kansas, or Bill Richardson from New Mexico or whoever else. The thing about it is it's likely to be some random person that in retrospect seems to make some sense. The thing is we are never right on that. There's also been a little bit of talk that Vice President Cheney has become fairly controversial. I think there's particularly zero chance of Cheney not being on the ticket unless there's an absolute legitimate health issue there. For one, President Bush is probably the most loyal person in the world. I can't imagine him abandoning Vice President Cheney, that's number one. Number two, has Cheney become something of a lightning rod? Yes, but I'm not sure that's necessarily a bad thing because when lightning hits I'd rather it hit a lightning rod than hit me. It tends to attract the lightning away. That's what lightning rods are for. You'd rather there not be lightning at all but if it's going to hit I'd rather it hit someplace other than me and a lot of times you don't mind a little bit of that. The third thing is I don't think that there's anybody in America that would vote for George Bush that won't because of Dick Cheney. I don't think there's many people at all like that. His father realized in 1992 when Dan Quayle was a real liability that damage sustained in dumping a running mate

is probably greater than the damage of keeping him. That is basically standing up and effectively saying the first decision I made as the presidential nominee I screwed up. I picked the wrong person. That's a horrible thing to do. Even if you did make it and I'm not saying President Bush did this at all because I don't believe it. I think Cheney was a very important part of that 2000 victory. Even if he were a liability it would probably be a mistake to replace him. I just don't see that happening at all.

Where's this thing headed? If the election had been in December or early January, President Bush would be re-elected. If it were February he would have lost. If it were March he would have won. If it were right now, close call this week, it's been a bad week, probably would have come up a little short. I think you're going to see this thing see-saw back and forth six, eight, ten times between now and November 2nd. This year's going to be one to remember. The House is going to remain republican absolutely positively. The Senate has gotten a little bit more interesting. There was a 90 percent chance of the Republicans holding onto the Senate back in January. Now it's probably around 60 percent. You've got a 51 Republican, 49 Democrat Senate. You had a Republican senator who was almost a lead pipe cinch to get re-elected, Ben Nighthorse Campbell in Colorado, who announced about a month ago that he was not seeking re-election. Where Democrats are given an edge there, that kind of changes things a little. I still think it's more likely than not that Republicans are going to hold on to the Senate but that was not something we were looking at even two or three months ago. There have been some other races other places where it's not going to come together quite as well as Republicans had hoped but they're probably going to hold on to the Senate. It's a close call. Basically the presidential race is going to be quite close.

## QUESTIONS

Question 1.) I'm running for U.S. Congress in the 9th Congressional district-Democrat here in Missouri. I had lunch last week with a woman who's a former state representative here in Missouri, a Republican who came to me very quietly and said she is very concerned at how religion is playing so much a part of right wing politics these days. She said there's an entire collision of people who claim to vote for me without coming out of the closet so my campaign staff are starting to call these people "closet downs." Any observations about that across the nation? Looking back to the Reagan Democrats, almost a flip flop of that profundity.

Answer 1.) I haven't seen any of that one on a wide spread basis. I really haven't. During the 1990s I think we all focused so much on the swing voters, the people between that are between the two forty-yard lines. Philosophically and in terms of partisanship this election has a completely different feel to it. There's a sense in both parties of focusing on the bases, of getting their bases out, and making sure you're holding your base together. President Bush, the current Bush White House, they're really preoccupied with not making the mistake they saw his father make, which was of alienating the conservative base. Where conservatives who loved and worshipped Ronald Reagan never saw President Bush Sr. as sort of the legitimate heir to the Reagan legacy. When he broke his "No New Taxes" pledge, that just ripped it with them. So they've just been fixated on not repeating that mistake.

At the same time each side is totally preoccupied with getting their base out. People use to offhandedly say the third republican, the third democratic, the third up for

grabs, and today maybe that's only about 6, 7, or 8 percent. That is a very, very tiny percentage that's here in the middle. It used to be twenty years ago we would think of independents as very well educated, very intelligent people who just sort of didn't buy into the dogma of either side and today that's just not the case. Today more likely than not, independent voters are people who do not read newspapers, do not read news magazines, do not watch television news, don't watch any of the cable news shows, and they don't pay attention to politics until the last week or two before the election — if then — and may not even vote at all. Neither side is paying nearly as much attention to the swing vote as we used to. What we're seeing is more party line voting if anything with Republicans pretty much sticking within the party and Democrats sticking within the party. We're not really seeing anything like that on a national basis.

Question 2.) In listening to you, it sounds like we're in a situation where external events are most likely to be the biggest influence in the election and it's sort of out of the candidates' control and it's kind of up for grabs due to factors beyond our control?

Answer 2.) I think that's a great point. That basically we're on a scale, both sides are pretty evenly matched. It's like two fairly evenly matched football or baseball teams that you can play twenty times and X number of times one side would win and Y the other side would win. There are going to be a number of events, first off the trial of Saddam Hussein. That's going to be out there late summer, early fall. Presumably that would bring out a lot of the atrocities that occurred during his reign of terror. That's something that ought to be good for the President. June 30th, the hand over, is that a good thing or is that a bad? I think you're absolutely right, though, that in basically a stalemate situation external events are going to drive things. To the extent that there's elasticity in

this race, it's external events. Not really anything that either of these people can do. In fact I would argue that all we've seen in the last month or two is for President Bush and Senator Kerry negatives to go off, making them even less likely to grab somebody from the other side.

So I think you're right about external events. We just wish we knew what they were. God forbid if there's another act of terrorism. I think the initial reaction instantaneously is that people rally around the flag and they rally around the President. I think that the instantaneous response would be favorable towards President Bush. As horrible as the event would be, it would be favorable to him. Then after X number of days or a week or something, then it would be, is this something that we probably couldn't have prevented or is this something that was preventable? In the next few days, and it may or may not take place, does it cause any kind of re-evaluation of Iraq and Saddam Hussein versus Osama Bin Laden and all that? I'm not sure whether that would happen or not but it's certainly a possibility. I share with you that it's probably going to be external events more than anything else that drives this race.

Question 3.) I read that Bush had recently finished his campaign push for funds and he ended it substantially higher than he had in his last campaign where he incurred more money than any candidate in the history of the United States. Has his campaign finance base essentially remained the same? Do you know the answer to this question? Or has he found new contributors? What were the sources of his income?

Answer 3.) I think he raised about 50 percent more than he did last time and for the most part it's traditional Republican money. Although I think he raised more money in the Jewish Community than any Republican, I mean I haven't seen a figure — it's just a

guess, than Republicans do. I think in terms of the broader issue of campaign finance, President Bush is going to have significantly more money than Senator Kerry. I think that's obvious. Although Senator Kerry broke a one-month record in terms of fundraising last month. President Bush is going to raise more money than Kerry. The Republican National Committee is going to have more money than the Democratic National Committee.

The question is on this next level, the so-called 527s, named after the provision of the tax codes for these independent groups that were set up after the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform was passed. My hunch is that there's going to be a good bit more money on the left than on the right on that level and while it won't offset the financial advantage that the President will have, it will take it down to 3 to 2, or 4 to 3 or something like that. We're just seeing a lot more fundraising among these pro-democratic groups that are out there running ads that for all the world look like the Kerry campaign ads. Might as well be Kerry campaign ads that are raised with so-called "soft money" that would have been done from the parties normally.

The thing about it, I wouldn't be surprised to see the President start fundraising back later on again and Kerry's going to do fundraising all the way through. I think this thing's going to be so close. They're spending money at such a rapid rate that I would not be surprised to see them raising money literally all the way to the end. The Bush campaign went through \$40 million on television based in one month and raised \$150 million, do the math. If it's still pretty close and they haven't put it away they're going to have to keep spending and Kerry I think will as well. I don't think it's going to be won or lost based on dollars. I think it's more likely to be events than dollars that are going to



dictate who's going to come out ahead. One other thing is that the reformers said this is going to clean things up and get soft money out of partisan politics. We all knew that was baloney at the time. That basically it's just re-channeling money away from the parties into these new entities that are less transparent, less accountable. But gosh we're reformed, aren't we cleaner? Don't we feel better? It's a joke.

Question 4.) Is there a closing of the gap between Democrats and Republicans?

Answer 4.) I think Democrats lost their dominance when there were just a lot of conservative Democrats, moderate Democrats, who knows why they stayed Democrats as long as they did, but they finally either died, or quit, or joined the Republican side. So what we're seeing is more of an ideological, a little bit of movement from liberal moderate Republicans towards Democrats and a lot of movement from conservative modern Democrats towards the Republican party. There's more of an ideological alignment now than there used to be. You can still see a few, just in the House of Representatives. I've argued that Gene Taylor, who's a democratic congressman from Mississippi, he's as conservative as any Republican you've got in the Missouri Delegation. He's a dinosaur and there just aren't that many here on the elected officials or for that matter the voter level. They've all basically become Republicans.

The other thing that's happened, though, in terms of voting patterns that is a little different, is outside of the south we started seeing a new alignment. It's like small town rural voters and then the south becoming increasingly or remaining very Republican. Then we're seeing suburban voters outside of the south and the emphasis on "outside the south," suburban voters starting to become somewhat less Republican. What I think we're seeing is social and cultural issues are starting to play a bigger role that are

moving some people closer to the republican party and other people closer to the democratic party. Abortion, guns and I'd actually throw in the environment to a certain extent. Take the gun control issue, it's a great example. Is it true that Republicans have created problems with some soccer moms, this and that certain groups?

Absolutely, no question about it. Republicans have hurt themselves with some voter groups in certain parts of the country with their position on gun control. No question about it, but there's also no question about it that Democrats have hurt themselves in the south, in the border south, rural small town America, and with union members. So the gun issue has been like an incredibly sharp sword with two edges slicing the heck out of Republicans in certain voter groups in certain parts of the country and slicing the heck out of Democrats and other voter groups in other parts of the country.

Abortion and, to a lesser extent, the environment — the same sort of thing. Now these issues are polarizing on those levels so that you see people who have relatively low incomes in small town rural America of the south that you assume are probably Democrats are actually becoming more Republican, and some relatively high income people, particularly women, who if you look at their income tax returns you'd swear they were Republicans, but actually they're voting more democratic. We've seen some split along those lines as well. The fascinating things have occurred really in the last twenty years in terms of these voting patterns. Let me give you an example: West Virginia, overwhelmingly democratic. If God had told me before the 2000 election that George W. Bush was going to win West Virginia, I would have assumed he was going to win the country by a landslide. But on the other hand, if somebody had told me that Al Gore was going to win three huge heavy Republican suburban counties right adjacent to

Philadelphia, Montgomery, Bucks, and Delaware counties where Republicans almost always win — Gore carried all three of them. If somebody had told me that would happen I would assume that Gore was winning in a landslide. Yet both of them happened in the same election, wow. Weird things.

Question 5.) Of the two huge issues in the country today, the economy, unemployment, you touched on that pretty well, and Iraq, which do you think is going to be the prevalent issue come November?

Answer 5.) Historically the economy is dominant. If you looked at history you'd say that. What it is, historically you would say the economy would be more likely to dominate. Maybe so. I don't know. Historically the economy would have a greater weight than anything on the foreign policy side but this is such an extraordinary foreign policy situation that I don't know if history is of great value. The irony, of course, would be that a year ago, foreign policy was a strength and the economy was his weakness. What we may be seeing now is his weakness has become his strength and his strength is becoming his weakness. Which is rotation, where you're seeing things turning and it's like an onion and you keep peeling layers back. Historically it would be the economy. Who knows? This is going to be a great one.

Thank you.