

**DEMOCRACY CORPS
GROUP 1
COLUMBUS, OH
WOMEN, WHITE, AGES 30-45, NON-COLLEGE, UNDER 50K HH INCOME,
WEAK PARTISAN, MAX 4 UNION MEMBER
MARCH 6, 2006, 5:30 PM**

(MODERATOR OVERVIEW)

(PARTICIPANTS' INTRODUCTIONS)

I'm Alice. I'm a massage therapist and have 2 boys, 22 and 23. I like to play chess.

I'm Barbara, divorced mother of 5. Only 2 are left at home. That doesn't leave me a whole lot of time for much else.

I'm Claire, I live in Powell, and I work for HR Agents, an insurance broker as an administrative assistant and I like to read.

I'm Danielle and I work at Unlimited Logistics Services as an executive assistant there. I live over in Tahanna, been married for 4 months.

I'm Eva from Hillard. I work with LFA, a trade show manager. We have the largest horticultural trade show in the United States. Married, 2 kids and NASCAR fan.

I'm Fran from Columbus. I work for the public schools as a parent consultant. I'm married with 4 kids.

I'm Gail, live in Hillard and work for the Bruner Corporation. In accounting, single, no children, like to travel and I work.

I'm Heather, live in Worthington, have 2 kids, 18 and 12.

I'm Iris, single, grown daughter, like to party. I work for an insurance company as a claims adjustor.

My name is Jane, have 2 children, 17 and 25. I'm a nursing student.

MODERATOR – I'M GOING TO START WITH THINKING GENERALLY ABOUT THE COUNTRY. DO YOU SEE THINGS MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR THE WRONG DIRECTION?

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

MODERATOR – WHAT THINGS ARE GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?

I think it's support from our average ordinary citizens.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I watched a little bit of the President's address. I was just really upset that the entire audience which I was thinking was Congress people mostly and political people, just how they wouldn't not clap. Not that they have to agree with him, but I just feel like support as far as the citizens go for our government is not there the way it should be. it's just a real shame.

Lack of respect.

A country divided almost.

And everybody wants to blame [him].

I think that's wrong.

MODERATOR – WHAT THINGS ARE GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?

The war.

The war.

The war.

Too many people dying.

I don't think that we're going to help them. It's been years and years and it's always been the same. By us going in there and killing everybody and them killing us, we're not doing any good anywhere. We're spending a lot of money.

It will never help. It will always be the same.

We have homeless people here that they could be helping.

Yeah.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?

All of our jobs are going overseas, too.

Yeah.

Yup.

MODERATOR – BEFORE WE GET TO THAT, I JUST WANT TO TALK A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT IRAQ. DANIELLE, YOU DISAGREE?

Yeah, I don't know what the others mean when they don't think that anything is going to be different. I don't know if they mean Iraq overall. But it seems to me that an awful lot has changed over there already. I'm not arguing with anyone at the table, but I think it was huge when we took down the leader over there and now they have their own form of government that's different. So I'm not saying all the problems there are solved and that sort of thing. and that there's not a lot over there that still needs to be accomplished and so forth. But I don't think that it's as drastic and that nothing is going to change and everything going to remain the same because I think that too much has changed already.

I don't like that they are not allowed to show the caskets coming home because if people saw that. . .

I don't think that we know enough about their culture to really understand everything involved.

MODERATOR – A COUPLE OF PEOPLE HAVE EXPRESSED THE SENTIMENT THAT WE'RE NOT ACCOMPLISHING ANYTHING MORE BY BEING THERE LONGER. ARE THERE THINGS THAT WE STILL NEED TO ACCOMPLISH? ARE THERE GOALS THAT WE NEED TO REACH BEFORE WE CAN START TO BRING TROOPS HOME OR IS IT TIME TO START COMING HOME NOW. DO YOU THINK THAT WE'RE GOING TO BE THERE FOR A LONG, LONG TIME? REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT WE SHOULD HAVE GONE IN THE FIRST PLACE, GIVEN WHERE WE ARE TODAY, WHAT DO YOU THINK NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Peace. Everybody fights there. They don't really care about their lives with the suicides. They really don't care.

A stranger is not going to change how they think. We can only enforce so much change with the elections and the new government.

We're covering one little part of the world and then you hear about here and here. We could go plug up all the holes and then bring back all our guys who are all affected. It just seems like it's the finger in the dike or something like that to me.

MODERATOR – WHO ELSE?

The same thing. There is only so much that you can change. I think it's born and bred in their culture over there.

MODERATOR – IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE THAT YOU GUYS THINK THAT WE NEED TO ACCOMPLISH? OR DO YOU THINK IT'S TIME TO BRING THE TROOPS HOME?

I think that I wouldn't want it for the loss of lives that we've had to be in vain. I do think that some sort of substructure should be in place because if we do pull out and nothing happens, nothing changes, then it would have been in vain. So it's kind of a rock and a hard place. I just don't like the loss of our young men.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE? SOMEONE SAID THE JOBS GOING OVERSEAS. TELL ME ABOUT THE ECONOMY OVERALL. WHAT'S IT LIKE? WHAT'S GOING ON?

I think it's very tough out there, especially for people that have worked in a job for so long and then they're let go, laid off. I think it's really difficult for them to start over in a new position, maybe not making the same money, maybe not having the same benefits. I think it's very hard for our citizens to rebuild and it seems like a lot of people are having to do that.

MODERATOR – WHAT ELSE?

The minimum wage. There's a lot of those jobs, but nothing for a family.

I just think that they should take care of us. There's people that come over from other countries, they live here and they get everything paid for, they go to school, they don't pay insurance, don't pay taxes. And then there's Americans that are on welfare or can't get a job because the foreigners are getting it. It's not fair. If you want to come here, you need to speak our language. Why should we go to our schools and have to teach our kids Spanish here in America? Speak English. That just irritates me to death.

Oh, that burns me.

When you go anywhere now, the ATM machine, Spanish or English.

When you go to make a phone call, it's like I want to speak English.

They get free insurance. . .

Free everything.

. . .for 7 years.

They pay Social Security.

There ain't going to be no Social Security.

Well, they pay into it.

When they're on welfare?

No, when they're working. And whether we like it or not, Spanish is going to be our second language.

If I went to Europe, I would learn to speak their language.

MODERATOR – WHAT ELSE ABOUT THE ECONOMY?

The interest rates keep going up.

The gas.

Groceries.

Gas is \$2.49 now.

Natural gas.

Heating.

Everything is going up and then your pay isn't going up.

Or just barely.

Gas went up today. Luckily I got it before it went up to \$2.45. But gas that you put in your car and gas that you heat your home with. . .

And you've got to have that.

You have to.

It's just like food.

Me, being a single person, I don't have anybody to help me with my income.

Good point. When I was trying to get assistance with the gas company and they're not willing to help me and I don't understand why.

You have to have all these certain things. I read that.

I'm working, I'm struggling, but yet they don't seem to want to help me. But yet the foreigners are coming in and they're paying for their entire bill, I get nothing. So that's very frustrating.

And they get medical.

That's why our insurance is so high. We're self-employed and our medical with the 4 kids is \$900/month. And that's basic.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU SEEING GOING ON WITH THE HEALTH INSURANCE STUFF?

My company just went into the HSA account, where you pay so much in and it's like a savings account. Bush was just here (inaudible) and my company is now doing that. I'm with United Healthcare and you pay \$100/month for a single person with a \$25/co-pay. I put an extra \$40/month into my account. So now I'm in the plan, but if I quit my job, all that money I'm saving goes with me. It's pre-taxed. It's like savings. It's just for all medical, vision and dental. But if you quit the company, you can take it with you. So my company is now with that.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE ON HEALTHCARE? ANY OTHER ISSUES THAT STAND OUT TO YOU? HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING ABOUT A STATE OWNED COMPANY FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ASSUMING CONTROL OVER A NUMBER OF THE MAJOR U.S. PORTS.

I've heard that.

Yeah, but I'm not real up on it.

I'm not either. I don't understand why our ports have to be controlled by some other country.

Yeah.

Especially Arabs.

It doesn't make a lot of sense. When there are people right here that need jobs, why can't we. . .

Does that mean that somebody dropped the ball?

MODERATOR – WHAT HAVE YOU HEARD?

I haven't heard anything.

(Inaudible) that position or something. now what is wrong with that. I think that there's something wrong with that.

I thought that the majority of our ports were owned by a British company anyway. So it's just one country selling them to another country.

But the wrong country.

Yeah, but it doesn't have anything to do with national security. National security is still run by our government. The security of the ports is still run by our government. It's just that they would own the ports. They don't have anything to do with the security of it. the U.S. government and Homeland Security would still be taking care of that.

Which I have no trust in.

That's interesting.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK ABOUT IT?

I haven't read too much on it. I'm just now starting to hear.

I think that we do too much everybody else anyway. We just need to take back what's ours and go from there.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO YOU THINK THE REAL ISSUE IS HERE? THAT FOREIGN COUNTRIES ARE OPERATING OUR PORTS? IS IT THE FACT THAT IT'S AN ARAB COUNTRY THAT WOULD BE TAKING CONTROL OF THE PORTS? OR IS IT WHAT BARBARA SAID, THAT WE HAVE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY THAT NEED JOBS. AND THAT IT SHOULD JUST BE OUR COUNTRY CONTROLLING IT. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Just our country.

It's having an Arab country.

That's a scary thought after everything that we've just been through and going through.

Exactly.

If you look at everything, everything is made in China because they pay their employees 1 cent.

MODERATOR – ANY IDEA OF WHO IS SUPPORTING THIS OR HOW IT GOT TO THIS POINT?

I heard that President Bush was supporting it.

That doesn't surprise me.

So that means that Republicans are supporting it and Democrats are not.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE HEAR ANYTHING ON THAT?

No.

MODERATOR – DOES IT CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT PRESIDENT BUSH AT ALL IF HE IS SUPPORTING THIS?

Yeah.

MODERATOR – HOW SO?

I've always been cautious of him and his ties to, I still think it's about the oil.

He's rich so it really wouldn't matter if somebody lost a few jobs. I have respect for him but sometimes you feel that way because we're losing everything.

MODERATOR – OKAY. ANYBODY HEAR ABOUT THIS VIDEO THAT CAME OUT LAST WEEK WITH PRESIDENT BUSH BEING BRIEFED ON KATRINA?

(Many speaking at once).

I think to fix. . .

New Orleans could have stepped up a lot more than they did.

Yeah.

Yes.

I think so.

I think that they dropped the ball and now they're trying to blame it on our government. I think that's wrong. That's not acceptable to me and they need to take responsibility for their own.

That is our own.

Sure. But we went there with aid, but their local government dropped the ball, big time. You hear about the school buses that were flooded out. They could have been utilized to get people out of there. And they didn't.

MODERATOR – I’M GOING TO SAY THE NAMES OF PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS. TELL ME THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND. FIRST NAME, BILL CLINTON.

Slimy.

I like Bill Clinton.

I have no problem with him.

I have no problem with him at all.

I like him.

I don’t care what he does in his personal life, as long as he ran this country well.

I had money.

I really didn’t care about the Monica Lewinsky.

If any of us did that in our office. . .

I just think that when you are in the public eye to the degree that a position like that is, that you are held to a higher standard, number one. And number two, I think to the point of what he does in his personal life, you can’t separate those two because I think that how you conduct your personal life is the core of you and your morals and your values and what you’re going to do. Those things that motivate how you conduct your personal life are going to spill over into your professional life. I just don’t trust him.

MODERATOR – ANOTHER NAME. DICK CHENEY.

Monster.

Killer.

Poor shot.

(Many speaking at once).

Deadpan.

I don’t think he really does much.

He’s a maniac.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE? HOW ABOUT MIKE [DUYWANE]?

I think I've heard his name. Not sure.

Yeah.

Trying to think.

MODERATOR – ANYONE?

(Many speaking at once).

MODERATOR -- BUT NO REAL SENSE OF HIM?

No.

MODERATOR – OKAY. NEXT. HILLARY CLINTON.

I like her.

President one day.

Yeah. Next election.

I hope so.

I like her.

Yeah, I like her.

Bitch. She's got to be one day or she's pretty close to it.

If she runs in the next election, I'm voting for her.

Yeah.

I would, too.

I don't think I would.

I would.

Just because I said that she's a bitch doesn't mean that I think she's bad.

MODERATOR – THOSE OF YOU WHO SAID THAT YOU WOULD VOTE FOR HER, WHY?

Because I think we need a woman in the office.

I like Bill and I know that he had to have a strong person behind him and it was Hillary.

MODERATOR – AND YOU SAY, NO WAY?

No, I don't say no way. It was that stuff that they had about Whitewater. I don't feel one way or the other, I suppose. I guess if she came back out in the public eye like that, it would be something to check out. But I don't think that I would really consider her.

I felt like if I didn't vote for Bush, another [Democratic] that she would be in the new election. A lot of people felt like that. If they voted democratic, that at the next election that she would be in. So that really swayed me.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT TOM DELAY?

Never heard of him.

I've heard of him, but I don't know exactly.

Lacking moral values.

Is he the guy in Texas?

MODERATOR – YES.

What's he doing?

MODERATOR – CONGRESSMAN DOWN IN TEXAS. HE'S BEEN INDICTED. HE WAS THE FORMER MAJORITY LEADER IN THE HOUSE.

That's what I thought.

I just can't remember what he did.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT SCOOTER LIBBY?

Who?

I've heard it.

Can you elaborate?

MODERATOR – HE WAS CHENEY'S CHIEF OF STAFF.

But he got into trouble for something also.

He did.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT JACK ABRAMOFF? DOES THAT NAME MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

They make fun of him on Howard Stern.

MODERATOR – JACK ABRAMOFF, ANYONE HAVE ANY SENSE OF HIM? OKAY. HOW ABOUT SHERWOOD BROWN?

My grandmother worked for him, so I can't really say anything bad. Can't say anything good either.

MODERATOR – DOES ANYONE KNOW WHO HE IS?

No.

No.

He's the attorney general, is that what he is?

MODERATOR – HE'S A CONGRESSMAN NOW. HE USED TO BE SECRETARY OF STATE? ANYONE HAVE A SENSE OF HIM? HE'S RUNNING AGAINST MIKE [DUWAYNE] FOR THE SENATE. NO? OKAY. HOW ABOUT WHEN I SAY CONGRESS, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?

I think a bunch of immature, bickering, lacking respect. . .

Paid too much.

Paid way too much.

I don't have a lot of respect for Congress lately.

I think that they get tunnel vision. I think that they lose sight of the real reason why they're supposed to be there.

MODERATOR – SO WHAT ARE THEY DOING INSTEAD OF WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING?

I just think that they get too caught up in the bickering back and forth and the egos and the competition and the "my ideas" and all that kind of thing. I think it just gets too convoluted.

Decisions can't get made when they're bickering. And then they're made hastily and usually they're not right.

And they have recess a lot.

They have more recess than our kids do.

It's too large. Too many hands in the pie.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE? DO YOU THINK THAT THE CURRENT CONGRESS IS WORSE THAN USUAL OR IS THIS THE SAME AS IT ALWAYS IS, OR IS IT GETTING WORSE?

I think it's worse.

MODERATOR – HOW SO?

I know most of it is on Republican. I vote for whoever I feel does the best job, whether it's Republican, Democratic or independent. If you're going to vote, you've got to look up and see if they're doing the views that you agree with. But it always the dumbest things and that's what they're bickering about when we have so many other problems to get to.

MODERATOR – OTHER THOUGHTS ON WHETHER THIS CONGRESS IS PARTICULARLY BAD OR JUST THE SAME AS USUAL? OKAY? I TALKED EARLIER ABOUT TOM DELAY WHO WAS INDICTED. AND THERE WAS ANOTHER CONGRESSMAN WHO WAS SENT TO JAIL THIS WEEK FOR TAKING A COUPLE OF MILLIONS IN BRIBES AND THEY ARE A COUPLE OF OTHERS UNDER INVESTIGATION.

[Laughter.]

See?

MODERATOR – DO YOU SEE ONE PARTY OR ONE GROUP IN CONGRESS AS MORE CORRUPT THAN THE OTHER OR DO YOU THINK IT'S PRETTY PERVASIVE, THAT THEY'RE ALL PRETTY BAD?

Right now, it's all you see. Even though a lot of Republicans are getting in trouble, I'm sure the. . .

I always heard that the Democrats are the bad guys.

MODERATOR – HOW DOES CORRUPTION IN CONGRESS IMPACT YOU? WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Because they're supposed to be running our country. We should be able to trust them to take care of us.

They should be a role model for our children.

Yeah, right.

They should be moral.

Right, right. But they're not.

MODERATOR – HOW ELSE DOES IT IMPACT YOU?

The laws that they've passed.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING THAT YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT AS A RESULT OF THEIR CORRUPTION?

Yeah, the Homeland Security, the pharmaceutical companies are big lobbyists. They're influenced by their lobby.

Whoever has more money.

Right.

MODERATOR – OTHER WAYS THAT CORRUPTION IN WASHINGTON AFFECTS YOU? OKAY. ONE OF THE MAIN THINGS THAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS GEORGE W. BUSH. BUT I WANT YOU TO WRITE SOME THINGS DOWN. TAKE ONE AND THESE AND PASS THEM DOWN. JUST DO HANDOUTS #1 AND #2. ON #1, WRITE DOWN ALL THE GOOD THINGS THAT COME TO MIND ABOUT PRESIDENT BUSH. ON #2, WRITE DOWN ALL THE DOUBTS THAT COME TO MIND ABOUT PRESIDENT BUSH. WHAT ARE THE GOOD THINGS THAT YOU WROTE DOWN?

I have not one thing.

I put nothing.

Barbara Bush.

That's his momma.

I put that he reacted swiftly to 9-11 which was positive to me.

His wife.

He's in good shape.

He doesn't drink anymore.

He's not a coke head anymore.

He's a good family man.

That's what I put.

He cut taxes when he first got into office.

I worked for the "No Child Left Behind". He bought that in.

MODERATOR – IS THAT A POSITIVE?

Yes.

He appointed Condellezza Rice.

MODERATOR – YOU LIKE HER?

Yes.

MODERATOR – WHAT ELSE?

It seems that he has morals and values.

MODERATOR – WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL THAT WAY?

Because just after coming after Clinton, I just thought that that was an embarrassment to the United States of America.

MODERATOR – OTHER POSITIVES?

I think he tries to do a good job.

MODERATOR – ALL RIGHT. HANDOUT #2. WHAT DO YOU DO HAVE?

I think some people that he appointed for some offices were not qualified, that they were friends.

I think he has too big of an interest in oil.

Yes.

“Believe me when I tell you”, he says over and over in his speeches.

That’s true.

He hasn’t kept the country in a positive, together mood. He just really let it go.

Colin Powell and all those people that were leaving the office and all that was going on. And the NATO things that I don’t agree.

I think he’s kind of mixing his religious views with politics. A lot of people don’t agree about the abortion rights and stem cell research and things of that nature.

I think he’s stubborn. He just hangs on to his opinion, regardless.

Yeah, it’s his way or no way.

Yeah, and he’s got that cowboy attitude.

He’s hardheaded.

Don’t mess with Texas.

MODERATOR – OKAY. WHAT ELSE?

I think he seems a little slow sometimes.

[Laughter.]

Not slow in walking, but in his responses. The media really portrays any kind of the sitcoms or the jokes. He’s usually the butt of the joke.

MODERATOR – ANY OTHER NEGATIVES ON BUSH?

I’m with Fran. When I listen to him, A, I just can’t stand to listen to him because I can’t stand the sound of his voice. But I just don’t think that he knows what he is talking about. When he speaks, he just sounds like a moron.

(Many speaking at once).

I don’t know if it’s his speechwriting people. But when I listen to him, he sounds like a moron, like he doesn’t know what he’s talking about.

So you have a leader that you have no confidence in.

Oh, no.

He's not charismatic or he can't speak off the cuff very articulately. Whoever writes his speeches, he either doesn't know how to read them or. . .

He goes off to the (inaudible).

Some people are just eloquent. I thought Bill Clinton was very eloquent, a great speaker.

Oh, yes.

Yeah.

Yes.

But it doesn't mean that he's a bad President because he's a bad speaker. I just don't think that he has. . .

He doesn't command.

Yes. He's not a commanding speaker. He comes off a little slow.

He's tired. He's got 2 more years and then he quits.

MODERATOR – DO YOU GET THAT FEELING FROM HIM, THAT HE'S TIRED?

A little bit.

A little bit.

I wonder why they run again. Four years really seems like it's enough to do you in.

It made him old.

It made all of them old.

I hope that he doesn't let the war go on too long.

Yeah.

That's a concern.

I want it to end.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE THAT WE HAVEN'T COVERED? OKAY. WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY, EVERYBODY SAID WRONG AND WE HAD THIS WHOLE LIST OF THINGS THAT ARE GOING WRONG, FROM THE WAR TO THE ECONOMY TO

HEALTHCARE AND ALL THESE DIFFERENT THINGS. YOU DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT CONGRESS. YOU DIDN'T HAVE MUCH POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT THE PRESIDENT, A LITTLE BIT. BUT A LOT MORE NEGATIVE THAN POSITIVE. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH THE LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON? HOW DID WE GET TO THIS POINT WHERE WE HAVE VERY LITTLE POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTY, THE PRESIDENT, THE CONGRESS?

We're so far away. It's too far for me to be involved.

If I would see some positive things, I agree on a lot of things and I know that it takes money to build things and to make money, but I think that we're giving too much away and not helping people here. I work for the schools and I see kids that don't have shoes, coats. We do a universal breakfast. That way we know that they've had breakfast. But are they going to get anything else to the next day? maybe not. There is just so much to do here and it's just not being done. But boy, in Afghanistan they need that, write them a check.

Well, it's any country that has a disaster.

And write them a check.

And now look at what happened after 9-11? How many other countries came over here to NYC and helped?

Zero.

Besides Britain maybe? But no one else. Anytime anything happens over there, a hurricane, anything and our money goes over there. And we have homeless and people who just need help.

MODERATOR – OKAY.

That's what really concerns me.

I know that America is the land of the free, but sometimes I don't feel like I'm free because it's just the way it is. Nothing's free.

MODERATOR – SO A SENSE THAT WE'RE NOT TAKING CARE OF OUR OWN.

Yes.

Right.

MODERATOR – WHAT ELSE?

There's never going to be peace. There's always going to be some idiot doing something and then we're going to send our men over there. I wonder what it's going to be like for my children.

i think a lot of us feel like a lot of the members of Congress have lost touch with reality. With every day life.

With the common everyday person. and they're the ones making the decisions that affect us.

They're kind of blinded to us. I believe that, too.

When it's election time, you see all these pretty commercials of them with their family and it seems like it's just a bunch of lies, because now everybody is indicted. They don't know what it's like to live on a budget. To get up and have to go to work and take care of there kids. They've got somebody doing that.

Another thing, too, they only report the side that they want you to hear.

My nephew is over in Iraq for 12 months. He said, you guys don't see anything that's going on. They're not telling the whole truth.

Bush doesn't want anyone to know because if we see scenes like we saw from Vietnam, that's it.

Like the caskets thing.

He really has control on the media and I really don't like that.

MODERATOR – BUSH HAS BEEN IN OFFICE FOR OVER 5 YEARS. REPUBLICANS HAVE HAD CONTROL OF THE CONGRESS FOR OVER 10 YEARS NOW. AND THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN WHERE THE WHITE HOUSE, AND BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS ARE ALL CONTROLLED BY THE SAME PARTY. DO YOU FEEL THAT REPUBLICANS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN LEADERSHIP?

I think that it should be a term and now it should be Democrat. Try something new. Change is good.

MODERATOR – OVERALL, DO YOU THINK THAT REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE?

Depending on who it is.

I think it's been pretty good for a long time in that aspect.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU?

I didn't have that much problems until the war. That's a totally depressing area for everyone. And you can't even watch the news until they say, 17 Americans.

There's nothing good anymore. It's just depressing.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?

I think it's been somewhat successful as far as their leadership goes.

MODERATOR – HOW SO?

As far as some of their policies. I know some of the polices that Bush had put into play are now coming to light. But I feel like some of the policies that Bush's father put into place, and I can't think of any one specific examples.

MODERATOR – CAN YOU THINK OF ANY SPECIFIC WAYS IN WHICH Republican LEADERSHIP HAS BENE A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE?

I think that school-wise, that Laura made sure that the library and that we have "No Child Left Behind", I think that in that aspect, they were trying to help education. But I think that they are trying.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE? HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE CONGRESS NOW AND ITS RECORD?

Mediocre.

MODERATOR – SOMEONE SAID THAT THEY WERE OUT OF TOUCH OF HOW PEOPLE LIVE THEIR LIVES. HOW ELSE WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THEM?

They have their own agendas.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE? FLIP TO HANDOUT #3. THIS IS A LIST OF THE WAYS THAT OTHERS HAVE DESCRIBED CONGRESS. READ THE LIST AND PICK THE TWO THAT YOU THINK BEST DESCRIBE THE CURRENT CONGRESS.

- 1 – DO NOTHING – 0
- 2 – TOO PARTISAN – 2
- 3 – WRONG PRIORITIES – 5
- 4 – BEHOLDEN TO CORPORATE INTERESTS – 2
- 5 – RUBBER STAMP – 4
- 6 – FOR THE RICH – 3
- 7 – CORRUPT – 3

HALF OF YOU WENT WITH THE WRONG PRIORITIES. WHY DOES THAT ONE STAND OUT MORE THAN ANY OF THE OTHER ONES?

(Many speaking at once).

Healthcare.

Not so much the Terry Schiavo thing.

I don't think that the Terry Schiavo case was any of their business.

Exactly.

It was a family issue.

Yeah.

That just stirred up too much trouble. That was not right.

MODERATOR – WHAT ELSE? DOES CONGRESS HAVE THEIR OWN PRIORITIES? NOBODY PICKED DO NOTHING, SO YOU CLEARLY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE DOING SOMETHING.

It goes back to them having their own agenda.

MODERATOR – WHAT IS THEIR AGENDA? WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

They're passing the taxes for the rich so the rich get richer. So that's something.

It ties back into the partisan gains. They voted themselves a pay raise. You know what I'm saying? To Debbie's point earlier, they have lost touch with their constituents. We vote them into office based on their campaigns goals. It seems like they go off to Washington and vote themselves a pay raise, it seems like they get other priorities and a different agenda other than for what the purpose of what we thought we were voting them into office.

MODERATOR – FOUR OF YOU WENT WITH RUBBER STAMP. WHY DID YOU PICK THAT ONE?

I guess because Katrina (inaudible) on that one. I know that there are different opinions about that.

The gas pricing.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL THAT CONGRESS ISN'T DOING ITS JOB TO KIND OF HOLD THE PRESIDENT AND THE WHITE HOUSE IN CHECK OR ARE THEY JUST. . .?

They had a thing in the paper, in the Dispatch. Like the head guy made \$3.6 million in six months after Katrina. They kept raising it. He made all that money. Well, shame on him. He should have been lowering it instead of charging \$5.

Yeah.

MODERATOR – OTHER THOUGHTS ON THIS ONE? ALL RIGHT. HOW ABOUT FOR THE RICH? WHY DID YOU PICK THAT ONE?

Because that's what they're doing.

The rich get rich and the poor get poorer. That's how I feel.

MODERATOR – WHAT HAS CONGRESS DONE TO HELP THE RICH GET RICHER?

They give themselves a raise all the time. they don't have to pay Social Security so when they leave Congress, they'll be taken care of. Their families, they don't have to worry about money like the rest of us. I'd like them to come switch places. Let them come live my life for awhile. I'll take their money, go play golf and go on cruises.

MODERATOR – OTHER THINGS THAT THEY'VE DONE TO HELP THE RICH GET RICHER?

There isn't going to be any Social Security left for me.

There's certainly not going to be any left for my nieces and nephews. There's no retiring at 65. I won't be able to do that.

I'll be working until I'm 82.

At least I have a 401K. But who knows? After 25, 30, my money might be gone because somebody might take it. Like all those other people that lost all their money. I have friends that lost all their money because their companies went under and they lost their money. So now they're 70 years old, still working. You're going to have to start taking your money home and hiding it.

Like the Amish.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE ON THIS ONE? HOW ABOUT CORRUPT?

When they're campaigning, it's a big façade because when they get down to it, they are only worried about the people that they're working with everyday and the people that they see and not the average American.

They keep giving themselves pay raises. And then, of course, they're accepting bribes and money from lobbyists to get their interest addressed. Here we are, well, write to your Congressman. Well, you know that goes in a circular file probably never gets read by the actual Congressman. His staff, I'm sure, maybe opens it.

Maybe.

Maybe, yeah.

MODERATOR – SO WHY ARE THERE NO CONSEQUENCES? THERE IS THIS WHOLE LIST OF GRIEVANCES? WHY ARE THERE NO CONSEQUENCES FOR CONGRESS? WHY DO THE SAME PEOPLE KEEP GOING BACK TIME AFTER TIME? WHY DOES IT KEEP BEING LIKE THIS?

They're untouchable.

There's too much corruption in the world as a whole. There's an imbalance where nobody is standing up and holding anybody accountable.

MODERATOR – WE HAVE ELECTIONS EVERY TWO YEARS FOR CONGRESS. BUT 96-98% OF THEM GET REELECTED EVERY TIME. SO IF WE'RE SO UNHAPPY WITH THE SITUATION IN CONGRESS AND IF THINGS ARE SO BAD THERE, WHY DO WE KEEP SENDING THE SAME PEOPLE BACK OVER AND OVER AGAIN?

I think some of the older members of Congress, maybe we've developed a trust. They've been there a long time. They know how the system works. Maybe in their past, they had something to their credit that was. . . . **(END OF SIDE A/BEGINNING OF SIDE B)**. . . and I don't know that it's more corrupt today. But we do get to hear a lot more of it.

Because of the media.

Right.

A lot of the public, it's just name recognition. They don't really know who they are. They haven't read anything and they just go in, okay, I know this guy.

Sure.

MODERATOR – ONE OF THE SAYINGS IS THAT EVERYBODY THINKS CONGRESS IS CORRUPT, BUT NOBODY THINKS THAT THEIR MEMBER OF CONGRESS IS CORRUPT.

Exactly.

MODERATOR – DO YOU THINK THAT’S KIND OF TRUE?

I think it’s true.

MODERATOR – DO YOU THINK IT’S TIME TO HOLD INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ALL THESE THINGS THAT WE’RE TALKING ABOUT? DO JUST BECAUSE THEY’VE BEEN THERE A LONG TIME, THEY SHOULDN’T BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT’S HAPPENING?

I think that they need to give it up and let somebody else step forward.

MODERATOR – OTHER PEOPLE? NO THOUGHTS ON THAT?

I think it’s time that they’re held accountable individually.

MODERATOR – OKAY. I KNOW IT’S A LONG WAY OFF, BUT THERE WILL BE ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS IN NOVEMBER. FOR YOU PERSONALLY, WHAT IS THE ELECTION ABOUT? WHAT WILL YOUR VOTE BE BASED ON? WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT YOU’RE GOING TO BE THINKING ABOUT?

What are they doing for me.

After this, I’m sure going to look at it differently. I’ve always paid attention before, but I guess I’m like everybody else and I’m busy and I’ve just let it slide, saw the name and just went with it. But now I will give it a second thought.

MODERATOR – ARE THERE SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT ARE GOING TO DRIVE YOUR VOTE?

I will have to read up on it before I make a decision.

I think it depends on what the Congressmen are running on, what’s their political agenda.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE? I’M REALLY LOOKING FOR SPECIFIC THINGS THAT YOU’RE PASSIONATE ABOUT.

Healthcare.

MODERATOR – IS THERE ARE SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT YOU CARE ABOUT? IF YOU’RE JUST LOOKING FOR A CHANGE?

Bring back John. . .

Education is number one in my opinion.

Bring back the jobs, the economy.

A medical issue. Pharmaceuticals.

That's very confusing. It's so costly. They have to do something.

MODERATOR – ANYTHING ELSE? OKAY. OBVIOUSLY HOW YOU VOTE IS ULTIMATELY BASED ON THE INDIVIDUALS THERE AND WHAT THEY SAY AND WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM, INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES. AS WE TALKED ABOUT, THERE ARE SIMILARITIES IN THE WAY THAT DEMOCRATS DO THINGS, AND THE WAY REPUBLICANS DO THINGS. SO GETTING PAST INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE THEIR STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESS. REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU PLAN TO VOTE, WHAT IS THE BEST REASON TO VOTE FOR REPUBLICANS THAT MAKES THEM A BETTER CHOICE RIGHT NOW FOR OUR COUNTRY?

For me, they're more conservative and that's what I favor.

MODERATOR – WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, CONSERVATIVE?

More conservative, less liberal. On things like moral issues and abortion and different things like that, they seem to more often take the conservative side of things.

They're for defense.

MODERATOR – WHO ELSE? WHAT IS THE BEST REASON TO VOTE FOR REPUBLICANS THAT MAKES THEM A BETTER CHOICE RIGHT NOW FOR OUR COUNTRY?

It's what my mom would want.

[Laughter.]

I think that the Republicans are for the rich.

Yeah.

Yeah.

I voted mostly Democratic because my family is Democratic.

MODERATOR – OTHER THINGS ABOUT REPUBLICANS THAT YOU LIKE?

I think that they're big on wealth. They give the tax breaks to the rich, but maybe they would like to share a little bit of their wealth with the rest of the United States.

[Laughter.]

(Inaudible).

MODERATOR – THEY DO OHIO?

Yes.

MODERATOR – HOW SO?

Because they're defense. More or less a swing state. Especially in the last two elections, it's been our vote so usually we benefit.

It has a lot to do with the way we're swinging.

MODERATOR – TURN TO HANDOUT #4. FIRST WE HEAR FROM REPUBLICANS OF THE BEST REASONS TO VOTE REPUBLICAN. PICK THE BEST REASON THAT YOU THINK IS THE BEST REASON TO VOTE FOR A REPUBLICAN FOR CONGRESS. HOW MANY CHOOSE:

A – 0

B – 4

C – 5

D – 1

This was tough.

It was.

That was a tough one.

I didn't like to pick any of them.

MODERATOR – SO HALF OF YOU WENT WITH C. WHY DID YOU SEE THAT AS THE BEST REASON TO VOTE FOR REPUBLICANS?

I think it's when you have a Republican Congress and a Republican President, it's natural for the Democrats to oppose. It's almost knee-jerk.

I would think that it would be opposite. If we have a Republican President then we should have a Republican Congress. That way it would seem like it would level everything out. But I voted for that because I just thought the healthcare, the retirement savings like the Social Security.

MODERATOR – REGARDLESS WHETHER YOU PICK THIS ONE OR NOT, IS IT A GOOD ARGUMENT? IS IT A COMPELLING CASE TO VOTE FOR REPUBLICAN?

Yes.

MODERATOR – WHY?

I've only started to become more in tune with things like this in the past few years. I don't know if it's age or what it is. But when the debates were going on, and even though I voted for Kerry, and things were being weighed and everything, I did feel like what will he do. Like in some cases, I really didn't know why that was a better choice where there were some things on that the Republicans seem to spell things out better.

MODERATOR – LET ME PLAY DEVIL'S ADVOCATE HERE A LITTLE BIT. THE REPUBLICANS HAD CONTROL OF CONGRESS FOR 10 YEARS, HAD THE WHITE HOUSE FOR 5 YEARS. SO THEY'VE HAD A DECENT AMOUNT OF TIME. HAVE THEY REALLY PROVEN THAT THEY'LL DEAL WITH THE BIG CHALLENGES AND WORK TOGETHER AND SOLVE OUR COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS? IS THAT A COMPELLING CASE FOR THEM TO MAKE AT THIS POINT?

I don't think that they're afraid to tackle any big issues or challenges. They may not always work well together, but I think that given the fact that they're willing to dive in and the immigrant issue and how President Bush, well, I'm not sure it was him exactly, or just Congress, that wanted to close the borders and things like that. It just made me think that they are thinking of us. And maybe they do want to help us American citizens.

MODERATOR – WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? DO YOU THINK THAT Republican ARE MORE APT TO SOLVE PROBLEMS AND TO TACKLE BIG CHALLENGES THAN DEMOCRATS ARE?

No.

I think that they're pretty well equal. It just depends on who is in the office and what problems occur.

Bush has had some pretty big problems to deal with.

He has, really. More than a lot of other Presidents.

Sure, sure.

MODERATOR – DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FIRST PART THAT SAYS, BASICALLY DEMOCRATS WILL OPPOSE WHAT THE REPUBLICANS ARE DOING, BUT THEY DON'T HAVE ANY IDEAS OF THEIR OWN?

Yeah.

No.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT THE ONE ABOVE IT, THE DEMOCRATS ARE TRYING TO RAISE TAXES? WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT ONE?

I like that idea and it does seem to me, since I've been voting that whenever Democrats are in office, they raise taxes and then all of a sudden there are so many government programs. So I hadn't noticed that.

MODERATOR – WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK OF THAT ARGUMENT?

I agree.

I agree with her.

I agree.

And it tends to not go to the people. Yes, those programs are needed. But it seems like the Democrats will give it to whose who, I want to sit and watch TV instead of going to ones who deserve it. . .

Yeah.

Sure.

. . .where they may be more strict.

MODERATOR – OTHER REACTIONS TO THAT ONE? DO YOU GIVE REPUBLICANS CREDIT FOR WHAT THEY CLAIM HERE? THEY'VE LOWERED TAXES, INTRODUCED NEW IDEAS, GIVE PEOPLE MORE CONTROL OVER THEIR OWN MONEY?

We don't have any money to control.

Yeah, that's right.

That's the problem.

MODERATOR – OKAY. SO YOU DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO BENEFIT YOU EVEN IF THEY DO (INAUDIBLE)?

Probably not.

It might not be the right solutions, but at least they're giving people ideas.

Options.

Sure, options and ideas.

Which plan do you want for how much?

I'm on an HSA and it was my choice to go on it because I can put money away and it's pre-tax money. So they'll never get it and I can take it with me when I go.

MODERATOR – LET'S GO TO THE ONE ON THE BOTTOM. DEMOCRATS REJECT THE ROLE OF FAITH IN OUR PUBLIC LIFE.

That's just mudslinging.

Yeah.

But look at President Clinton.

Well, he got caught.

There are a lot of Presidents that messed around and we just never heard about it.

Look at Kennedy.

MODERATOR – BUT AGAIN, LOOK AT THE PARTY AS A WHOLE. DANIELLE SAID EARLIER THAT SHE ASSOCIATED THE REPUBLICANS MORE WITH VALUES AND DEMOCRATS LESS. IS THAT AN ASSOCIATION THAT THE REST OF YOU AGREE WITH OR NOT?

No.

No.

It just tries to include everything bad in it.

MODERATOR – SO YOU DON'T THINK IT'S FAIR TO SAY, DEMOCRATS REJECT THE ROLE OF FAITH IN OUR PUBLIC LIFE.

No.

No.

No.

And if I heard that, I would say, ewww.

With this battle of taking off, In God We Trust, is the Democratic or Republican?

That started when Clinton was in office, didn't it?

And they are trying to take it off.

MODERATOR – ANYBODY KNOW?

No.

MODERATOR – EVA, DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT?

No.

When did that start, In God We Trust?

They're trying to take it off all of. . .

MODERATOR – WHO ARE "THEY"?

Who was it that started that.

Congress that thought of it.

It was somebody in Congress.

They need to worry about more important things. That's the way it is and they should leave it that way. Maybe some religious people started doing it, I don't know. leave it alone. We have more important things to worry about than that. like the schools. When I was in school, we said the Pledge of Allegiance.

They don't say it anymore?

No.

You're kidding me.

Because of all the religions.

I think that's a good thing.

Yes.

We should say that.

When you're in America, you should say it.

When did they stop it?

(Many speaking at once).

MODERATOR – WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT CHRISTIAN VALUES, THE MORAL FOUNDATION OF OUR COUNTRY, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN TO YOU?

That God is supposed to take over. It's into supposed to be any kind of faith. They're trying to take faith out of all the government.

But our country, church and state is supposed to be separate.

But our country was founded on religious grounds.

But it's a religious right.

People came here to escape religious persecution. We have freedom of religion. Just because we're not all of the same faith, doesn't mean that we should take out, In God We Trust, because it's a tradition. I'm more of a conservative maybe and I believe in those traditional values.

MODERATOR – BUT WHAT ARE THOSE VALUES?

Honesty, integrity. I'm laughing because it's kind of a joke today.

It's what Barbara was talking about. It's whatever you think of when you think of morals and values. Here's we're talking about the sanctity of the family and integrity. I think that when those start getting eroded away, it leads to increased degradation. When you start not putting as much importance or emphasis on those types of things, it just becomes indoctrinated into our society that it's just kind of a free-for-all and that it doesn't really matter and you can do whatever you want.

MODERATOR – SO WHAT ARE THOSE VALUES?

Loyalty.

Honesty.

Integrity.

Freedom.

I was just going to say freedom. Like the women in other countries, they can't do anything. Their freedom does not count at all.

MODERATOR – DOES IT EXTEND TO WHAT DANIELLE WAS TALKING ABOUT, TO THE SANCTITY OF THE FAMILY? DOES IT EXTEND TO ABORTION OR GAY MARRIAGE OR ANY OF THOSE OTHER ISSUES THAT THEY TALK ABOUT A LOT IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS?

I do.

When I think of Christian values, it can be any religion.

Right.

Just as long as they keep the values.

You go around the world, there's many different gods.

Right.

It's all about the positive of a faith, of morale.

Not killing each other.

There's a lot of people being killed in the name of religion.

Some parents just let their kids run and they don't care. That's why there are so many kids in jail and so many are getting killed with guns. It's terrible.

MODERATOR – LET'S GO TO THE TOP ONE. DEMOCRATS HAVE OPPOSED THE PATRIOT ACT. NOBODY CHOSE THAT ONE. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF IT? DO YOU AGREE WITH IT, NOT AGREE WITH IT?

I somewhat agree with it. I just felt that they should have covered more. . .

I do, too.

. . . I think that the Democrats wanted to cut a lot of funding to the troops, but you've got to think of the future, too. You never know what could happen. And as far as Bush always putting America's security first, I don't necessarily believe that's the case or 9-11 never would have happened.

MODERATOR – OKAY. WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK OF THIS STATEMENT? AGREE, DISAGREE? DO YOU THINK REPUBLICANS ARE

BETTER ON SECURITY ISSUES? DO YOU THINK THAT REPUBLICANS WILL MAKE OUR COUNTRY SAFER?

I think that they were forced to. We got bombed. And that stance took us to the war and everything.

It just so happened that Bush was in office. If that were to happen with a Democrat, who knows?

MODERATOR – SO DO YOU THINK THAT DEMOCRATS WOULD MAKE US SAFER OR LESS SAFE?

I don't know.

I think it all got propelled because the public demanded it.

Revenge.

Yeah.

MODERATOR – LET'S LOOK AT THE OTHER SIDE. LOOKING AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU THINK THAT YOU'RE PERSONALLY GOING TO VOTE, WHAT ARE THE BEST REASONS TO VOTE Democratic FOR CONGRESS RIGHT NOW? WHAT IS IT THAT MIGHT MAKE THEM THE BETTER CHOICE FOR OUR COUNTRY RIGHT NOW?

Just not being a Republican.

MODERATOR – SO JUST THE IDEA OF CHANGE?

Yeah.

Maybe that's it. Just to see what would happen. See how they can run the county.

MODERATOR – IT'S A ROLL OF THE DICE?

Yes.

I feel that it needs to be divided almost equally. That way they can each check each other. If we have a Democrat in office, then the Republicans can put their foot down and say, wait a minute. What about this, this and that? Whereas if there is a Republican in office, then the Democrats can do the same thing.

MODERATOR – WHAT ARE THE BEST REASONS TO VOTE DEMOCRATIC? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS THAT THE DEMOCRATS MIGHT BE A BETTER FIT FOR THE COUNTRY RIGHT NOW?

Maybe because a Democrat wasn't in office, but I think that they're less likely for the war. I thought that our job rate when Clinton was in office, everything was good. The economy was good. Things were going good.

They weren't moving jobs overseas.

Now it seems like everything just went to pot.

MODERATOR – FLIP TO HANDOUT #5 AND LET'S HEAR THEM MAKE THEIR CASE. SAME THING. READ THE ARGUMENTS AND PICK THE ONE THAT YOU THINK IS THE BEST REASON TO VOTE FOR A DEMOCRAT. HOW MANY CHOOSE:

A – 0

B – 1

C – 3

D – 3

E – 3

SO WE KIND OF DIVIDED ON THIS ONE. LET'S START AT THE BOTTOM AND WORK OUR WAY UP . FROM KATRINA, IRAQ AND ALLOWING FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO CONTROL OUR PORTS. WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU?

I like country energy inter-dependent by 2020. I would really like that.

MODERATOR – WHETHER YOU PICKED THIS ONE OR NOT, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS ONE?

It kind of covered everything that I've been worried about. Healthcare, energy. . .

Leadership.

. . . leadership. So and I liked B, too.

MODERATOR – WE'LL GET TO B. BUT WHAT ABOUT E STANDS OUT TO YOU, POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

I guess it seems kind of negative to me just in the sense where it says, they've failed. I don't think that it's that black-and-white for me.

MODERATOR – SO YOU DON'T NECESSARILY AGREE WITH THAT PART?

No.

MODERATOR – WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU? HAVE REPUBLICANS FAILED TO HANDLE THE ISSUES THAT ARE FACING OUR COUNTRY?

I think that there are too many foreigners coming over here. They come over here, learn what they want to learn, and then they take it back to their country. Just like 9-11 people coming over to learn how to fly planes and learn how we live and what's going on and then go back and decide what they're going to do, and come over and blow us all up. I just think that if you're over here, they should only be here for a period of time and then they're shipped back.

MODERATOR – OTHER THOUGHTS ON E? IS IT BELIEVABLE WHAT THEY SAY THAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO?

No.

No.

MODERATOR – DO YOU THINK IF YOU ELECT DEMOCRATS FOR CONGRESS THAT THEY'LL BE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE THESE THINGS HAPPEN?

No, I don't believe that's true.

MODERATOR – WHY?

Because we've been debating these issues for quite some time. I don't think that they can provide affordable healthcare to everyone. If the Republicans can do it and they're wealthy, supposedly, I don't feel that the Democrats can do it either. They may have some different ideas about getting there.

MODERATOR – OKAY. OTHER THOUGHTS? ALL RIGHT. HOW ABOUT THE ONE ABOVE IT? REPUBLICAN HAVE GIVEN AWAY MILLIONS TO THE WEALTHY AND CORPORATE INTERESTS?

I like that one just because of the American jobs. But I think Republicans or Democrats are both probably guilty. But I would like to see something where American jobs come back.

I liked it because it was a little softer than the others ones. I think of the oil companies and these things as kind of a Republican slant.

MODERATOR – OKAY. OTHERS ON THIS ONE?

On both of these sheets, I can see the Republican and Democratic. It's all stuff that's been going on forever and ever. It just depends on how non-harsh you want to state whatever

argument is that they're raising. So it does seem like with Bush, with the record deficits, and the war, they're just pumping money into it. We're wanting to see no caskets and we just want that whole situation to get better. But it's never going to go away. And I think if anything, terrorism is here to stay. So I think that in the future, we're going to be living with record deficits.

MODERATOR -- SO DID REPUBLICANS MAKE A MISTAKE BY CONTINUING TO CUT TAXES EVEN WHILE THE SPENDING INCREASED ON REBUILDING AFTER 9-11 AND THE WAR AND EVERYTHING?

Oh, no. I think it gave the economy a boost, like Bush wanted to do. and I think that it did help the morale because it was tangible in your hands so that you could take it to the bank and cash it. I thought that was good. But if you look at the deficit, it's always the left and right hand side of everything.

MODERATOR – FRAN SAID SHE DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT IN TERMS OF GIVING AWAY MONEY TO THE WEALTHY AND THE CORPORATE INTERESTS UNDER DEMOCRATS. AGAIN, REPUBLICANS HAVE DONE THIS, WE WON'T. WE'LL GO THINGS DIFFERENTLY. AGAIN, DO YOU AGREE, DISAGREE, IS IT BELIEVABLE?

I think they both do.

I do.

The Democrats are just as guilty.

It's just different interests.

We're just hoping that they do what they say they're going to do.

MODERATOR – Democrats SAY THAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO TWO THINGS HERE THAT DEMOCRATS DO. REFORM THE TAX CODE. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT PROPOSAL?

Probably more likely that the Democrats would do that.

MODERATOR – AND THE SECOND PIECE, PROVIDE TAX BREAKS TO COMPANIES THAT INVEST IN AMERICAN JOBS AND TECHNOLOGY.

It's a good idea.

I think the Democrats will more than Republicans.

I think Clinton had some policy on that.

He did. That's why our job rate was good.

MODERATOR – HOW ABOUT THE ONE ABOVE THAT? REPUBLICAN HAVE FAILED TO ADDRESS AMERICA'S HEALTHCARE CRISIS. WHAT STANDS OUT ABOUT THAT ONE?

I almost voted for that one. I think that the Democrats do look out more for Americans. The everyday people that who just live paycheck to paycheck.

I liked that because the reform of the current healthcare system and provide affordable healthcare to all Americans. I know Hillary was on to something with that. that was her big reform.

MODERATOR – AGAIN BELIEVABLE?

I think so.

I think so.

I hope.

I picked C and I think that they're just bring on more government programs which will increase our deficit ever more. But I do believe Republicans have failed in the healthcare area because all of a sudden, now they've got this new prescription drug plan but it's confusing for a lot of people. So I think that they just rushed into something. I think it's very confusing for a lot of Americans.

MODERATOR – ANYONE ELSE ON THAT ONE? HOW ABOUT THE ONE ABOVE IT? REPUBLICANS HAVE GIVEN BUSH A BLANK CHECK. WHAT STANDS OUT?

Oh, yeah. That's very believable.

MODERATOR – OKAY, WHY?

He has been given a blank check because he relates everything back to 9-11 and terrorism and we had to fight. So he just asks for more and more money. It's a catch-22 because he's not going to be able to resolve the issues and he's not going to be able to bring them home.

I would like to know when the war is going to be over and the out of control spending.

Do they have a plan?

I think that they had an exit plan, didn't they? But I don't know whatever happened to it. Was it pushed back? It keeps getting delayed for whatever reasons.

MODERATOR – OKAY. ANYTHING ELSE? NOBODY PICKED THE TOP ONE. IT SAYS, REPUBLICANS DEFEND A STATUS QUO. WHY DID NOBODY PICK THAT ONE?

It didn't touch on anything that I really cared about.

I believe that politics is politics where a lot of politicians are the same where all that lobbyists and campaign finances is concerned.

MODERATOR – SO YOU DON'T THINK THAT THE REPUBLICANS ARE MORE TIED TO THE LOBBYIST STUFF?

I don't.

MODERATOR – SO IF DEMOCRATS STAND UP AND SAY THAT WE'RE GOING TO CHANGE THE WAY BUSINESS IS DONE IN WASHINGTON. IT'S NOT GOING TO BE THE SAME IF WE HAVE CONTROL.

They can say that.

But can they do it?

MODERATOR – BOTH PARTIES TALK ABOUT HEALTHCARE. AND WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO DO. REPUBLICANS SAID, WE HAVE NEW IDEAS, WE'RE WILLING TO TACKLE THIS ISSUE. DEMOCRATS TALKED ABOUT PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL AMERICANS. SO WE HEAR FROM BOTH SIDES. ONE OF THE NEW THINGS, AND SOME OF YOU TALKED ABOUT IT, WAS HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS. PRESIDENT BUSH HAS PROPOSED THE EXPANSION OF HSA'S WHICH ALLOWS INDIVIDUALS OR THEIR EMPLOYERS TO MAKE TAX-FREE CONTRIBUTIONS TO AN ACCOUNT FROM WHICH THEY PAY OUT-OF-POCKET HEALTHCARE EXPENSES. THE ACCOMPANYING INSURANCE POLICY THAT COMES WITH THEM IS BASICALLY A HIGH DEDUCTIBLE PLAN WITH CATASTROPHIC COVERAGE. THEY SAY THAT THESE POLICIES WILL LOWER COSTS AND INCREASE COMPETITION BY GIVING INDIVIDUALS AN INCENTIVE TO SHOP AROUND FOR LOWER PRICES, CHOOSE THEIR OWN DOCTORS AND TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION ON THE TYPE OF CARE THAT THEY WANT. IN OTHER WORDS,, YOU'RE SPENDING MONEY OUT OF YOUR POCKET SO YOU'RE MORE LIKELY TO SHOP FOR THE LOWEST PRICE AND NOT JUST GO AND GET ANY OLD THING DONE, BUT REALLY MAKE CONSCIOUS DECISIONS. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT IDEA? ANY DOUBTS YOU HAVE ABOUT IT?

Comparative shopping with the medical field and doctors is not like going to Wal-Mart and Meyers.

Exactly.

I think it's a great idea, but who has the, well, I guess they're wanting to take money out of your paycheck before it's taxed, which sounds fabulous. But who really has the money to do that?

It still money off your paycheck.

Who has the money to do that really? I live paycheck to paycheck.

You have to have health insurance.

I have the HSA and I save \$600/year instead of just going with the regular insurance without having this HSA.

What about if you had a baby with all the well-baby visits?

They have a family plan with at \$4,000 deductible. But when you go to the doctor, I give them my health card, they deduct whatever the insurance company paid, and I paid the balance. So that's what that HSA is for.

MODERATOR – OTHER THOUGHTS OR QUESTIONS?

I think the deductible is very high.

I think so.

I would be hard pressed to come up with \$4,000.

\$4,000.

And that may be over 6 months or so. But still when you're living paycheck-to-paycheck.

MODERATOR – FLIP TO HANDOUT #6. THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT PEOPLE WHO OPPOSE THESE HAVE RAISED. READ THE ARGUMENTS AND PICK THE TWO THAT YOU THINK IS THE BEST REASONS TO OPPOSE HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS. HOW MANY CHOOSE:

- A – 1
- B – 5
- C – 1
- D – 0
- E – 1
- F – 5
- G – 4

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THEM OVERALL AFTER HEARING BOTH SIDES OF IT? WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON THESE THINGS?

I don't think that they're the answer.

MODERATOR – WHY NOT?

Especially for the reason in A, that they're not really addressing the real problem of healthcare. Of the skyrocketing costs. What makes a difference if we can put pre-tax dollars in a savings account? The costs are still outrageous. There's still not a control mechanism in that.

MODERATOR – SO YOU JUST WANT THEM TO BRING DOWN THE COSTS?

Right.

I just agree with what Danielle said. It doesn't deal with the high cost of medical services, the drugs, the drug companies and the growing number of uninsured Americans. Healthcare costs are healthcare costs but then if you don't have insurance, then you get sick people and you end up paying anyway. If a diabetic can't get insulin, then you're going to have long-term renal failure. They can live a long time on dialysis, but it's a lot of money. And that's just one. It just comes back on us.

MODERATOR – OTHER THOUGHTS. THE LAST THING I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO DO. FLIP TO HANDOUT #7. WE'RE NOT GOING TO TALK ABOUT THIS ONE. GIVEN ALL THE STUFF YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT Democratic AND Republican. IF THE ELECTION WERE HELD TODAY, WHICH WAY DO YOU THINK THAT YOU WOULD GO? ZERO MEANS THAT YOU'RE TOTALLY IN THE MIDDLE, TOTALLY UNDECIDED. FIVE MEANS YOU'RE LEANING STRONGLY ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. CIRCLE THAT NUMBER AND THEN BELOW TELL ME WHY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

(END OF DISCUSSION)