

**DEMOCRACY CORPS  
GROUP 4  
TUCSON, AZ  
MEN, WHITE, AGES 30-45, COLLEGE, OVER 50K HH INCOME,  
WEAK PARTISAN, MAX 4 UNION MEMBER  
MARCH 7, 2006, 8:00 PM**

I'm Al and I'm a physical education teacher. I'm married, have two children, a one and a half year old and a four year old.

I'm Bruce and I'm a web developer. I'm married and I have two daughters, 5 and 3. And I do things like this to (inaudible).

I'm Charlie and I'm a district manager at Blockbuster. I'm from Tucson, single.

I'm David and I work for the city, billing supervision and customer service. I like to golf.

I'm Ed and I'm a middle school science teacher. Married, two kids, 14 and 10. Been in Tucson for 20 some odd years.

I'm Frank and I'm a chiropractor here in Tucson and I have six kids. And I coach my son's baseball team.

I'm Gary and I'm a native of Tucson. Four kids, 8, 4, 3 and about six months. I'm a computer guy at a community bank.

I'm Hank and work for the state. I'm a CPA. I was born in Chicago and have lived here about thirty years. I have two kids, 9 and 7, both girls. They are involved in a swim team.

I'm Ivan and I'm a general contractor here in town. Been here for about three years. Came from California. I also have three girls, 6, 5 and 2. That's about it.

I'm James and I'm a Tucson native. Haven't always lived here, but most recently for about twenty years. Married, two kids, one of each, 7 and 9. Work for a local non profit doing evaluation of their social service programs. I stay busy.

**MODERATOR—I WANT TO START OUR CONVERSATION REAL GENERAL. THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON WITH OUR COUNTRY THESE DAYS. GUT FEELING, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE COUNTRY IS GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR IN THE WRONG DIRECTION RIGHT NOW?**

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

Not going the right way.

More right than wrong.

I don't know. I think there are some things that are going well and others that are not.

**MODERATOR—I HEARD MORE WRONGS THAN RIGHTS, SO TELL ME FIRST WHAT THINGS ARE GOING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION.**

The war. We don't seem to have any exit strategy and it's costing more than 200 billion dollars so far and we don't seem to have a plan.

I'm worried about the economy and healthcare costs that are escalating dramatically. And that seems to be taking a pinch from everybody's pocket. And I don't see an answer in the short term.

Education is going downhill. Kids are graduating from high school that have never seen a textbook. Kids graduating from college with degrees that they don't even understand what the word statistics means.

I think from an economic perspective, the country is doing well. I agree with healthcare issues. I think there needs to be some legal reform. The legal system is out of control.

Everything has to be legislated. Nobody can just be free, so to speak.

Income equality is getting worse. The top one half of one percent has gone up more than 100% in the last ten years, their income. The bottom 40%, the income has actually gone down.

**MODERATOR—WHAT THINGS ARE GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?**

You mentioned the economy. It seems like it's going in the right direction, but I wonder if that's just the bubble that's going to burst eventually.

Different parts of the country are strong.

We still lead in terms of technology. They talk about all these engineers in India and China, but they are just not there yet in terms of real four-degree engineers. Everybody comes to America for that.

I think it was the (inaudible) and the quality of life continues to improve for the average person. You get people at both ends of the spectrum, but I think the average person (inaudible).

I actually think the Supreme Court Justices that were nominated, I think that we've got a pretty good candidate for the chief justice. It seems like...not just because he leans my way ideologically, but because he seems like an upright, honest type of guy, which I think we could actually use. Somebody that's not looking to make law, but to try and do a good job with what he is supposed to be doing.

I kind of feel ...it's interesting that people have said the economy is doing well because I don't really think it's doing all that well. And I look around at the people around me and I see a lot of people have material goods and bigger houses and getting really expensive houses...I don't know how they can afford them, based on the incomes that they have....I think they are getting farther and farther in debt. I think the long-term impact of that is bad. Bankruptcy rates are out of control. I think it's easy to look around and say everybody is doing better, but I think in reality, it's all a façade.

Everybody is in debt. The government, individuals....all it would take ....the three big causes of bankruptcy are divorce, illness or job loss. I think a lot of people that experience any one of those things can go over the edge.

There's no retirement, there's no savings. People are living paycheck to paycheck. I got laid off a couple of years ago. The company I worked for merged with another company. I remember looking for a job and for three months could not find anything. And this was in 2002, 2003. And there was literally nothing. The job situation has improved tremendously since then.

I think the country is in a mess in so many ways. I think we have horrible, horrible leadership in government right now. And I don't think....I kind of agree with him, I don't think that anybody is really making any strides financially. This war in Iraq, I don't even know why we are there. The hijackers, two or three were Iraqi, but somehow the case is made that Iraq is where we should be bombing. All kinds of jobs are being outsourced out of the country for minimum wage.

**MODERATOR—LET'S TALK ABOUT SOME SPECIFIC ISSUES, IRAQ, BEING AN OBVIOUS ONE. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE SITUATION AND WHERE WE ARE NOW?**

I think we went to war with (inaudible) intelligence. We were given all the intelligence on one side of the balance and on the other side, they didn't put in any of the caveats that intelligent people generally say about...well, this guy we don't trust. We don't know how reliable his information is. We had all this stuff that said, we have absolutely known that this stuff is here and none of the little footnotes on all the reports that said, well we are not really sure...this is our best guess.

It's all about oil. We wanted their oil and they weren't going to sell it to us anymore so we said, well we'll take it.

I just think it's one of those...it's a continuation of Afghanistan. Hey, we are there, we won. We did such a great job, blah, blah, blah, let's just keep the momentum going. War makes politics. And if you are in power at the time that you are successful at war, you are going to remain in power. I think it was a ploy.

I don't know if it's...it could be a way to continue the success and power and all that kind of stuff, but it's also, although I don't think it's necessarily a strategy, it's a good way to get re-elected. No one wants to change presidents in the middle of a war. So, I think that plays into it too. Even if people don't like it, that disruption in leadership...unless there is like an easy way out, which there is not, no matter what...if there was an easy way out, then yeah, I think we'd have probably had another president in November.

**MODERATOR—REGARDLESS OF HOW WE GOT THERE OR WHY WE GOT THERE, GIVEN WHERE WE ARE TODAY, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

Civil war is unavoidable there at this point. Are we simply delaying the inevitable? They are bombing each other's mosques now. It's not even that they are bombing the army or the civilians, they are bombing holy places. It doesn't really get much worse than that. The only thing keeping both sides from all out war is the fact that the United States is there.

I think they ought to leave Charlieorrow. All the oil companies made all the money they could possibly make, so isn't that enough? Aren't we done there? Didn't we take as much oil and minerals as we needed? Time to go.

I think people just don't know how to get out. They don't know what to do to get out. And to still look good.

Even to look bad, you could...

Watch the BBC News sometime. They don't sugarcoat all this stuff.

You bomb it, you've destroyed this country, you've broken its economic and political, every aspect of the country you've completely demolished. So now we pick up and leave and do we leave this country with absolutely nothing? What are they going to turn to? They are going to turn to whatever they can, which is going to be another dictator, which is going to be another political problem that we are going to have in the future. Whoever is strongest is going to take over the country. So now you've got to look at the damage that you've caused and again, just like every other war we've gotten into, the US now has to pay to rebuild that country so that they can turn around and gauge us even more somewhere down the line.

I don't think we are ever going to be able to rebuild it. I think we are going to have to split it in three. The Kurds are going to get one part, the Shiites are going to get another and the Sunni's are going to get the third part and that's it. They don't seem to be able to live together.

I think it's a really difficult situation with no easy answers.

I feel like that too. I keep waiting for the grand plan to emerge. Is somebody seeing something I'm not because I don't see a way out right now.

There was a plan and like all war plans, the minute the shells started falling, the plan fell apart because that's the way war plans go.

I don't think that's entirely true. Just the straight facts of the matter, I don't think that's true.

I think our president had a grand vision of how he wanted to remake the Middle East, the democratic way. The place he started with was the easiest target. The one that was already an international pariah, the one whose army was completely weakened by a decade of sanctions. And it was the easy target to start with.

Their army wasn't weakened by a decade of sanctions. It was the regular people who were weakened by a decade of sanctions. You don't think Saddam had kept his army well fed?

He kept them well fed, but he couldn't buy the latest tanks and the latest aircraft or the latest electronics.

We are still not making any headway even though we have superior fire power.

**MODERATOR—ARE THERE SPECIFIC BENCHMARKS THAT WE HAVE TO HIT BEFORE WE CAN START BRINGING TROOPS HOME?**

We can't leave it a failed state, whether we have to split it in three states that function or find a way to get all the sides to communicate and actually form a working government. We can't just leave it in chaos. Every time we do that, we just create more trouble for ourselves down the line.

I agree with that. There's got to be some sort of a plan, set some goals.

There's going to have to be a government established one way or the other. You are going to have to have some ruling party established in order to take over control of the country, so to speak, to get things moving in the right direction as far as recovery, rebuilding, getting the basic necessities back to the people, water, electricity.

It's never going to happen until there's order. If they keep rebuilding pipelines and electrical generating stations and people keep blowing them up.

**MODERATOR—WHAT HAVE YOU GUYS HEARD ABOUT THE RECENT CONTROVERSY OVER A STATE OWNED COMPANY FROM THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES TAKING CONTROL OF A NUMBER OF MAJOR US PORTS?**

That there is an Arab owned company ...it's actually buying out a British owned company and taking over a couple of US ports. If you ask me, it was much ado about nothing. It doesn't change anything that actually happens at the ports. It just changes who runs it.

Talk about racial profiling. Oh my God, it's an Arab company. They are going to use it as a method to destroy our nation.

Dubai has no interest...Dubai's politics is who has got money. They are the banker to the Arab world. I don't think they really care about politics except how it affects the botCharlie lines of their companies.

Isn't that what the United States does?

Yeah, but ...well no, our president is pretty ideological. He pretty much cares about democracy.

I don't have enough time to really listen to a lot of the news. I spend a lot of my time prepping for lessons, training kids who don't know how to read, even though it's science. I work about 90 hours a week as a school teacher.

You teach intermediate?

Yeah.

My father taught middle school.

So, to say that I'm well versed on this, I'm really not. I do know that having a company from the Arab Peninsula running anything here scares the hell out of me. And that's how I'll leave it.

I think it was interesting that not a lot of congress and senators were alerted to that or even grieved about it. And then when they brought that up, then everybody...all the republicans say, well, it was lower level staffers who kind of passed this along. Well why are you leaving this kind of decision to lower level staffers? Aren't you interested?

**MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT THE POINT THAT GARY RAISED. DOES IT MATTER WHO CONTROLS THE OPERATIONS AT THESE PORTS?**

Security is controlled by homeland security, the Coast Guard...the security is all handled by somebody else.

That didn't change.

What they control now is moving cargo on and off ships, trucks and trains and that's it. That's the only thing they control.

I think it's a bad idea.

I trust the British a lot more than I trust the Arabs.

I don't know if it's bad or not, but it doesn't look good.

**MODERATOR—WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE HERE? IS IT THE FACT THAT IT'S AN ARAB COMPANY, IS IT THE FACT THAT WE HAVE FOREIGN COMPANIES BEING PAID BY THE US GOVERNMENT TO MANAGE US PORTS? WHAT'S THE ISSUE HERE?**

Everything I hear in the press, it's all about, oh my God, it's an Arab company. Nobody said a thing about the Danish or the British or ...

What about the Indian governments that have such a strong influence in this country with all the different outsourcing, as well as ...they are bringing a lot of their own firms over here taking over a lot of the US companies as well. And nobody cares because they are not Arab.

The fact that it's linked to the ports makes it sort of uncomfortable.

My gut feeling was that there is no issue. It was really just a chance to jab the administration and get some face time for some politicians that wanted to take jabs at the administration. I think the Bush administration passed on lower level staffers because it wasn't a big deal. They didn't think it was a big deal. And never thought that opponents would make a big deal out of it. Or didn't see far enough in advance that opponents would take that as an issue.

**MODERATOR—IS THIS JUST A PARTISAN ISSUE OR IS THIS....**

It started out that way, but the other republican congressmen who have to run for re-election this year are jumping like rats from a sinking ship. Tying your fate to the administration at this point, if you are a republican looking for re-election, it's a bad idea. It's just....his negative ratings are so high. His positive ratings are so low I mean. I think it's something like two thirds don't approve of his running of his administration right now.

**MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK?**

This whole thing just scares the hell out of me. It really does. Were the French not available to run our ports? Were the Chinese or us?

The Chinese do actually run a couple of ports.

MODERATOR—ANYONE ELSE? ONE OTHER ISSUE, LAST WEEK SOME VIDEOTAPE CAME OUT OF PRESIDENT BUSH BEING BRIEFED ON KATRINA BEFORE THE STORM HIT. DID ANYBODY SEE ANY OF THAT?

I'm aware that it happened, but it just kind of like ...it kind of struck me and went off.

I think the biggest impact that I have on all that was shortly thereafter e-mails that came around showing four different countries with four different levees. And you have these huge, huge electronically controlled levees that are built to withstand all these different natures and then you see the US, which look like little construction pylons lined up against the ocean. That was a bigger impact than the other one was.

He was like, well we didn't know that the levees were going to be a problem. And here he is a few days before the actual event and people are telling him the levees are going to get breached. They are really vulnerable.

I remember seeing the headlines and I just glanced at it and left the house. I have a hard time with something like Katrina, looking at the president and saying, it's his fault. He's only one guy and it's a big country. It's real easy to always point at that one person, but it's a big country and there's a lot of people who work in the agencies that are responsible for tracking that kind of information. There's a lot of things that fell apart at many different levels. So, for me to just say the president didn't do something about it, well so did 50 other people between him and the governor of Louisiana. There was a breakdown all the way throughout the government, not just at the presidential level.

But the buck stops here.

I completely disagree.

He could have made things happen. If it had been Texas, it would have been a different story.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—HOLD ON, I JUST WANTED TO CHECK ON THAT VIDEO THING.

I agree with what Hank said.

There are other people that were responsible for that situation than the president of the United States.

MODERATOR—I'M GOING TO THROW OUT THE NAMES OF SOME PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS, THINGS LIKE THAT AND JUST KIND OF DO LIKE A WORD ASSOCIATION. WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU ASSOCIATE WITH BILL CLINTON?

I think he was a good president.

Cigar.

Immoral.

Slick.

Budget surplus.

Good economy.

What's the definition of "is?"

70% approval toward impeachment.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT CHARLIE DELAY?

Sleaze.

Typical republican.

I didn't vote for him.

Fanatic.

Business as usual.

Tired of hearing about him.

He'll probably get off.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT SCOOTER LIBBY?

He's the guy who has been indicted for lying...

Former chief of staff to vice president Cheney.

Yes, he was the one who leaked the Valerie Plain...the name of the CIA agent.

Oh right.

That's who they are pinning it on.

Right.

He's in his 50's.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT HANK KYLE?

I voted for him.

Wishy washy.

Indifferent. Nothing stands out about him.

Opportunist. He's an opportunist.

I have a sense he's making a name for himself actually. In the senate nationwide. There are senators out there where they are known literally only in their own state. And I think Kyle is getting past that.

You see him all the time in the media. And like his name. And like you say, other senators, it's just in their home town and that's it. He's always out there.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT DAVID PETERSON?

Sounds familiar.

MODERATOR--HE'S THE DEMOCRAT RUNNING AGAINST KYLE FOR THE SENATE.

Oh.

This is Arizona. That doesn't mean much.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT HILLARY CLINTON?

2008.

I hope not.

I hope so. I hope she runs.

Just because she's ugly doesn't mean she's....

She could run all she wants.

Smart lady.

Power hungry.

I think that's sexist. I think if a man is looking for the job, then he's ambitious. But if a woman wants to be president, then she's power hungry.

Bush is power hungry too.

And I honestly don't mind that. My undergrad is poli sci and I would love to see what would happen with an ex president, especially Bill Clinton, in the role of first lady. I cannot imagine a more ....

(many talking at once)

Maybe I'll just move out of the country for four years.

I would just think that would be something I could write to my grandkids about. I was alive when...

**MODERATOR—WHAT DO THE REST OF YOU THINK ABOUT THE NOTION OF HILLARY RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT?**

I think she would like to, but I don't think she'd win.

I don't think she's got a shot.

She's too left wing.

The country is not ready for a woman president.

Yeah.

If it's a female, it's got to be someone moderate.

A female president would have to be along the lines of Maggie Thatcher to be president of the United States.

**MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT JACK ABRAMOFF?**

Charlie DeLay's best friend.

I've heard the name, but I don't know him.

He's the lobbyist who worked for the Indian casinos and he would work for one casino and then he stole all their money.

He was getting paid by both sides of an issue.

I know the name, but....

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT DICK CHENEY?

I wouldn't want to go hunting with him.

Yeah, stay away from hunting.

He's a lunatic.

It's been 31 days and he hasn't shot anybody.

31 and counting.

He's horrible.

When they tried to get ENRON stopped or anybody who had any questions about that, it got up to Dick Cheney and then he stopped it.

I think he's the real power behind the throne at this point. Some of the executive orders our president signed have basically been like, everything that I know he should know. He's in the loop on everything.

He's been around so long that people will listen to him. He's kind of the stealth...people will listen to him. They are going to keep him in their pockets and pick his brain.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU THINK OF CONGRESS?

I try not to.

Out of touch.

Corrupt.

Self serving.

They spend more time trying to...

It's harder to dislodge an incumbent than from the Politborough in Soviet Russia.

They are so busy trying to get their wheeling and dealing to get their political speaking ventures to line their pockets and to jump into bed with all the businesses to get even more money that nothing gets done over there. You watch C-Span and hardly anybody is in the House during half of these meetings except when the major issue comes up that their state needs, then they run it. None of them have any idea of what they are talking about.

You see a bill that's this thick in paper. Tell me that any one of them has actually read it or understands what it means.

More focused on local issues rather than national issues like healthcare.

It's just bureaucratic.

Slow to respond to anything.

They don't need to.

I honestly think that there are probably a lot of congressmen that are trying to do a good job. And people going there thinking that here's how I am going to work and then you get there and you find the House that there are 434 other people that have their own ideas and you get ...and you find that in order to get the people to vote for your issue, you have to promise to vote for their issue. Now maybe if we could replace all 435 at the same time and all hundred in the senate at the same time, maybe things would change. But I honestly don't see it changing the way things are.

As long as there aren't any term limits, it's always going to be that way. They are the same people that have been in there for 20, 30 years.

But there are positives to not having term limits. Then you've got ....

I agree with you on that one.

You've got experience. You've got people who are used to trying...I'd like to see a bunch of first term congressmen and first term senators pass a budget bill.

I want to see more laws...

Could it be any worse than it is?

It could be loads worse.

I don't think so.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THE CURRENT CONGRESS IS WORSE THAN IN THE PAST OR IS IT JUST KIND OF BUSINESS AS USUAL?

I'm a little bit frustrated. I'm fairly republican and I'm frustrated because we've got a republican majority, senate, house and president and my expectation was that they would be able to go back and cut back the budget and start making cuts. That's kind of what I think republican versus democrats...democrats like to spend money, republicans don't. And that's not happening. I just see them spending money. So in one way, I almost think gridlock is a good thing. Then things don't...

Our president has never vetoed a spending bill ever. Any time you have a democrat in office, you'll have a balanced budget.

No.

Any time you have a republican in office, you are going to have outrageous runaway spending.

Clinton had the largest tax hike in history.

How was his budget though?

And did it stop the economy?

No, it didn't stop the economy.

Tax hikes aren't going to stop the economy.

If you look at control of the House and control of the Senate, you'll notice on the democratic side, the military has always scaled back and that's a huge portion of the budget. Therefore the spending drops back and you get the balanced budget. When a republican takes over control, all of a sudden the military is boosted up and there goes your budget.

It's not just the military. The non-military discretionary spending has gone up more percentage wise in this administration than it has in the last three.

MODERATOR—HOW DOES ALL THIS STUFF THAT'S GOING ON IN CONGRESS IMPACT YOU AND YOUR LIVES?

It takes money out of my pocket. Every paycheck I look at that thing that says Social Security and I just write that off. I'll never see that.

We are talking about increased spending and taxes. If they make bad choices, what we pay in taxes is going to go up. That's one of my big concerns of what's going on. It's

not just looking at the taxes as a percentage of ...hidden taxes, I'd guess you'd call them. It seems like every year, those taxes go up.

**MODERATOR—WHICH HIDDEN TAXES ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?**

Taxes on gasoline, taxes on fuel. Things like that.

Our taxes on fuel haven't gone up in a long time. It's all prices of gasoline and it's supply and demand. Tax is 18 cents and it's been that way for more than a decade and it hasn't changed.

It just seems that way because we pay so much more for gas now.

**MODERATOR—OTHER THOUGHTS ON WHAT GOES ON IN CONGRESS IMPACTS YOU AND YOUR LIFE?**

I'm more worried about what my kids and my grandkids are going to have to face with these deficits. They keep growing and growing and we don't seem to be...eventually somebody is going to have to pay somewhere down the line.

I don't understand when we talked about earlier about the bills, that's what they have staffers and stuff for. Why are we not focusing on reducing the government as opposed to increasing government? If you have all these state governments that are running the individual states, why are we trying so hard to make sure that we can control every single aspect of everybody's lives? And each time we get another task, we have to add another staff to handle that task. It's time that they started doing their own jobs, reduce the amount of government in Washington, and drop it down to like a regular state type of government office. You've got all these governors and stuff, why can't you do a little something on your own? Start running this country like a business and not necessarily the typical government.

I think it's little stuff. It's not any one thing that government is doing that's going to affect everybody. It's just a little bit here, a little bit there. It starts to add up. A lot of that comes out through taxes and taxation. It's the biggest impact.

**MODERATOR—I WANT TO TALK ABOUT GEORGE W. BUSH. (HANDOUTS PASSED OUT) ON HANDOUT #1, WRITE DOWN ALL THE GOOD THINGS THAT COME TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF GEORGE W. BUSH. THEN ON HANDOUT #2, WRITE DOWN ALL THE BAD THINGS THAT COME TO MIND. WHAT GOOD THINGS CAME TO MIND?**

2008, he's out.

I put nothing.

I think he handled 9/11 well.

He's not such a bad job that we'll probably have a democratic president next.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—YOU ARE STRETCHING TO QUALIFY THAT AS A POSITIVE FOR BUSH AT LEAST. POSITIVES FOR BUSH?

He's a man of conviction.

Yeah, he's not afraid to fight for the things that he thinks are right.

MODERATOR—SPECIFIC EXAMPLES?

He's been knocked repeatedly because he's an evangelical Christian, but he's not going to change that because some liberal left wing whack job says.....

He's a Christian.

And I've got that too. He doesn't believe that separation of church and state equals disappearance of church in the state.

For those of us who are not Christian...

MODERATOR—HOLD ON, WE ARE GOING TO GET TO SOME OF THAT STUFF LATER, BUT AGAIN...NO RIGHT, NO WRONG. WE DON'T NEED TO DEBATE IT.

He seems to be family oriented.

MODERATOR—IN TERMS OF HIS OWN FAMILY OR IN TERMS OF...

He just gives that impression that his family is important to him.

I think he's significantly improved homeland security. What's going on with the borders, the border patrol has gone up significantly. I don't think we are in the loop on everything that has happened, but my guess is that if there are other terrorist attacks...that it is a priority. There are people out there that are willing to give their lives to kill innocent people in the country. It's a tough fight to fight, but I think he's doing a good job with it.

I think that happens a lot more than we know.

I think he's also honest. He's got the best intentions. I think he's just doing what he feels is right.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #2. WHAT DOUBTS DO YOU HAVE ABOUT BUSH?

He's incapable of admitting errors.

Presents a poor image of the United States to the rest of the world.

MODERATOR—HOW SO?

Let's see...he's not very well versed as far as public speaking is concerned.

I thought I was being petty, but that's the first thing I wrote down. He's not a good speech giver. He doesn't seem to know the facts.

We talked about staffers earlier. Can't you read a teleprompter?

Exactly. Again, education, can't read, can't speak.

Every job he's had he has failed at ...I can't even say he's....

General Manager of the Texas Rangers, I guess he managed to run them into the ground.

He's insulated and he listens only to people who says what he wants to hear, I think.

He's a big legislator of morality. What he feels is his moral beliefs should be legislated as law to everybody else across the world.

He has a terrible disregard for the environment.

I didn't particularly like the No Child Left Behind. He should have never signed that. I've yet to meet a teacher who does like it.

I haven't met a parent that likes it either. I for one don't like it.

I think he's privileged to the point that he has not idea what regular people think or need. I don't think he's ever had to face a real...he has never had to face the idea of losing a job. One of his father's friends would have him the next day. He's failed in several businesses, but he's never had to pay for those failures. He's never ...there was always a job for him the next day. He's never really faced...

20 years of a nuclear non-proliferation treaty and all of a sudden one of the countries that hasn't signed that treaty, he goes and signs a separate agreement with them.

(many talking at once)

That goes along with the fact that he's got the power over the button. And that scares the hell out of me.

He makes very poor decisions and when he gets confronted on them...he's got excuses, oh well it wasn't my fault...so and so told me this and so and so told me that. If you were smart enough to give him \$100,000 and be a patriot then you were rewarded with a hundred million dollar no-bid contract.

I just have several things done. Dealing with current issues, it just seems like some of the big issues in the country are not getting any better, like healthcare and spending. You hear him talk about them in his speeches, but it just never seems to get anywhere.

For him to say that we are addicted to oil and he's the oil president, it's all about oil. He's the one that's relaxed all kinds of standards as far as any EPA standards for mileage or emissions. Scaled back everything for industry so that they don't have to be responsible.

Mostly I had about the public speaking, whether he's illiterate or not, I think sometimes he tries to be disarming, but it comes up being kind of smart. And I'm not necessarily anti Bush, but I think it doesn't...it's not very convincing.

He comes off as an arrogant frat boy at times.

I think it's funny how such a small issue is (inaudible). Just something like not being able to give speeches well drives me crazy.

You were talking about Social Security earlier, all the political reforms that he's promised, and nothing has happened.

Medical benefits to private companies and people have to pay more.

(many talking at once)

I don't think that's the president's fault though. What can he do about that?

About the Social Security?

About the Social Security.

He can remove the cap from the earnings. He could ask congress to write him a bill...

But he won't.

**MODERATOR—I DON'T WANT TO GET INTO DIVISION OF POWERS TOO MUCH HERE. LET'S STEP BACK A MINUTE HERE. WE TALKED ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF THE COUNTRY AND A LOT MORE THINGS WERE GOING**

WRONG THAN WERE GOING RIGHT. PRETTY MUCH NOTHING POSITIVE TO SAY ABOUT CONGRESS REALLY. A LOT MORE NEGATIVES THAN POSITIVES ABOUT BUSH, WHAT'S WRONG WITH WASHINGTON? WHY IS THERE THIS SORT OF BROAD DISSATISFACTION? WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON?

I think having all three of the...both houses and the presidency all being the same party is actually worse for the country. There is no compromise. Republicans ....

I made mention to the fact that I think Bush is a man of conviction. And then David said he's trying to legislate morality. Not that David is wrong in his opinion, that's his opinion and he's certainly entitled to it, but any time somebody says, you know what, this is wrong, we need to change this, they are slammed somehow. They are not allowed to do what's necessary to change it. There is too much division. Everybody is right and nobody is willing to give an inch.

I worked as a consultant for about eight years helping big companies streamline their processes. There is so much waste. We would go in there and we would charge them ten million dollars to streamline the processes. And there would be a ten or a hundred fold return on that. And the government is like that magnified. There is so much waste and they spend so much money, it's just....and I just want to see there be less government. That's my thing. Less is better.

The only problem I have with that is, I find that people want less, but they never know what they want less of. Do you want them to cut the clerks who handle Medicaid processing, in which case...

Everybody wants less until it affects them.

Yeah.

It's a classic economics problem. Everybody demands less for the greater good until it directly affects them.

And then there's the organizational issue. Bigger an organization, and I've worked in big companies and I've worked in little companies, there seems to be a kind of geometric relation to how many people work at a company as to how difficult it gets to manage inefficiency.

Let me give you an example. My experience, I've worked with county governments and some different governmental agencies, and they have the mindset, they have to spend their entire budget because if they don't it will get cut back. So they look for places to spend the money. And that is the wrong mindset.

(many talking at once)

We buy three computers to get rid of the budget surplus so they don't cut it next year.

I agree with what you are saying. And it goes back to a simple business strategy. The majority of companies make their budget by saying, this year we spent this much money, inflation is this much so we are going to increase our budget by this percent. Well, they need to step back and get off of that type of a thought process and look at basic business zero line budget and start from zero and go with what you need and build your budget backwards.

Then it goes back to the process that he was talking about. You revamp what you are doing and you get rid of that waste. And you'll find that you don't need to spend that fifteen or twenty million dollars on personnel or on all the other different aspects of the corporation because you are saving the money going back and identifying what you need.

**MODERATOR—OTHER ANSWERS TO MY ORIGINAL QUESTION OF, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON?**

They just want to be re-elected. I think that some of the freshmen that get in there, they are filled with great ideas and idealism and I'm going to change it and I'm not going to be like that, but along the way they get corrupted and bought and sold. And selling their votes.

I sold out years ago. Like that movie, All the King's Men.

I think the biggest problem really is that they want to get re-elected. And to get re-elected you have to ...

And you don't really think about your constituents back home.

I think they do think about their constituents. Everybody I talk to says, congress is terrible, it sucks. But my representative is a really good guy, I like him. You get that a lot. As long as your particular representative is bringing home the bacon. He's representing your district to the best of the narrow interests of your district...

Do you think that?

Do I think Colby is representing our district?

Is that who you have?

I think that's our...who we have.

**MODERATOR—HOLD ON. I WANT TO GET TO SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE RAISED, WHICH IS THE FACT THAT WE'VE BEEN IN A PRETTY UNPRECEDENTED SITUATION HERE SINCE 2001. REPUBLICANS HAVE HAD CONTROL OF THE WHITE HOUSE SINCE 2001. AND THEY'VE HAD CONTROL**

OF THE CONGRESS SINCE 1995. AND ASIDE FROM FDR DURING THE WWII PERIOD, IT'S VERY RARE THAT WE'VE HAD SUCH A SUSTAINED PERIOD OF ONE PARTY CONTROLLING WASHINGTON.

What about Carter?

MODERATOR--HE DID, BUT HE WASN'T THERE FOR MORE THAN FOUR YEARS. AND ALSO REPUBLICANS HAVE THE SENATE. BUT ANYWAY, THE POINT IS, REPUBLICANS HAVE HAD CONTROL OF THE WHITE HOUSE AND BOTH CHAMBERS OF CONGRESS NOW FROM 2001 TO THE PRESENT DAY. HAS REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON BEEN A SUCCESS OR HAS IT BEEN A FAILURE?

You can't say it's been an overwhelming success, but it hasn't been an abysmal failure either.

I think it's been a failure.

I think it's been business as usual. It really doesn't matter who is in power, you are going to run into the same stonewalls. Who is really running the country? It's the staffers.

I agree with Ron. A lot of it has been status quo as far as what's going on or where the government is going. And that's where a lot of the frustration comes from. If you are not moving forward, then obviously you are moving backwards and that's where a lot of this is falling. They haven't moved the country forward like they said they were going to. Let's look at the big debate. We had to have legislative debates over filibusters because the democrats through a filibuster on the floor and it stopped the republicans for what? Two weeks. So then they had to throw another legislative session to redefine filibusters and the ability to use them, which took another two weeks. So now we lost a whole month in congress just because people got upset because they didn't want to talk about a particular subject.

MODERATOR—IVAN POINTED OUT THE SPENDING THING, THAT YOU EXPECTED MORE FROM REPUBLICANS, YOU SAW THAT AS A FAILURE.

Expected less.

MODERATOR—OTHER AREAS WHERE THE REPUBLICANS HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT THEY HAVE CONTROL OF TWO...OR PLACES WHERE YOU'VE SEEN THAT THEY'VE FAILED?

Healthcare. Our healthcare system is so broken in this country. You go to Canada or anywhere in Europe and for half the price, you live longer. Half the price. Per person, GDP, they spend half as much in Europe and they live longer than we do.

I don't necessarily agree with that. I think the United States has the best healthcare system in the nation. As soon as you put in the government controlled healthcare system, it encourages mediocrity. Whereas right now it's a for-profit system and that encourages excellence. Now I think the insurance system is broken.

Actually the best run healthcare system in the world is the veteran's administration here in the United States. It provides the best care at the lowest cost.

Based on what?

Based on studies that have been done. Actually they had an article in the Economist last month or the month before about how well its performed.

**MODERATOR-OTHER AREAS YOU CAN POINT TO WHERE IT'S BEEN A SUCCESS, WHERE IT'S BEEN A FAILURE?**

Got a lot of tax cuts passed.

For rich people.

Mostly, yes.

They pay most of the taxes.

They don't pay most of the taxes.

Social Security taxes account for much more dollar wise.

(many talking at once)

I would dearly like to see them do something with Social Security. I really would. I would have killed to have a portion of my Social Security money put into an account that I control, that I decide where it's going. And that I don't have a big IOU sent to me once a year saying here's how much we expect we'll be paying you.

I have a question for you.

(many talking at once)

I really can see it as a failure of the president because he chose to make it an issue and it fell through. If he just left it alone, I would have said, you know what? It's just not being taken care of here. But he chose to make it an issue and then it never happened.

I agree with Gary and I would like to second that in terms of legal reform. He talked about legal reform and why haven't they gotten things accomplished on spending, on Social Security? I don't know.

Because they have bad ideas. The studies that I read in like US News, Time and Newsweek that there was a hundred dollar difference between what Bush wanted and what it would have been if you just left it alone. So why would you spend all this money to have these private accounts, who is really going to benefit from that? That's what you need to look at. Who is going to come out the winner on this?

**MODERATOR—YOU ARE SAYING THAT YOU DON'T THINK THEY WERE JUST POPULAR ENOUGH TO WIN THE POLITICAL SUPPORT WHEN IT NEEDED TO BE PASSED?**

It wasn't a good idea to begin with. There was really no reason to fix Social Security. If you stopped borrowing from Social Security, it wouldn't be in trouble.

See tort reform is one area where I do see a success. They passed a law that prevents venue shopping. If it's a class action suit, you have to file it in a federal court now. You can't file it in whatever jurisdiction you like.

**MODERATOR—HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE THE CURRENT CONGRESS AND ITS RECORD?**

Dismal.

Used car salesmen.

They rolled over.

Ineffective.

Poor priorities.

I think the problem is that you have 535 sets of priorities and none of them compatible. And so you end up with no real plan. It's 535 separate agendas. Each person is moving in their own direction. Nobody pulling in the same direction.

Thus, poor priorities.

**MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #3.**

(end of side)

**MODERATOR—READ THE LIST REAL QUICK AND MARK THE TWO THAT YOU THINK BEST DESCRIBE THE CURRENT CONGRESS AND ITS FAILURES. HOW MANY CIRCLED DO NOTHING? 2. TOO PARTISAN? 5. WRONG PRIORITIES? 3. BEHOLDEN TO CORPORATE INTERESTS? 5. RUBBER**

STAMP? FOR THE RICH? 1. CORRUPT? 3. TOO PARTISAN, WHY DOES THAT CHARACTERIZE THE PROBLEMS MORE THAN THE OTHER ONES?

I honestly had a hard time picking a second one. That was my second choice. It gets back to that economic issue. It's for the good of the country until it affects you personally. It's much easier just to play the game and get the sound bites than to be substantial. And sound bites equals saying the democrats are wrong, saying the republicans are wrong. The whole port thing was a sound bite. It really came to nothing, but it got people on the news. And now those people who were up in arms can go back and say, I am fighting for national security.

Too many people are pointing their finger as opposed to just trying to fix the problems. Same with work and everything else. If they did something wrong, let's figure out how to solve it.

If I can elaborate, I'm so tired of hearing, instead of just having a slight difference from us in opinion, that's there's a diabolical plan. That they are out to do something evil. And that's what it seems like all the time. They can't just say, I don't agree with that point of view. It has to be something nefarious behind that point of view.

Us against them.

MODERATOR—BEHOLDEN TO CORPORATE INTERESTS, HALF OF YOU HAD THAT ONE AS WELL, WHY?

I can give an example. A couple weeks ago I took my son to the dentist and he needed braces. And so the dentist recommended an orthodontist. He said he's really good, don't go to anybody else. And I happened to know the office manager, so I asked her about it. She said, he's the worst and the most expensive orthodontist in town, but he's the doctor's golf partner. Don't go to see him. That's an example of how I feel things happen.

Well, just recently was it Bill Frist or Richardson that put in a rider in a bill that shield Eli Lilly from any sort of lawsuits in regard to the mercury poisoned vaccinations that are here in the country because we have this autism epidemic now? But yet, they didn't make them destroy their stockpiles, they sent them to other countries like China, which now has an autism epidemic where it was virtually unheard of. So you wonder why China hates us...isn't that bioterrorism right there?

That's such a conspiracy theory.

(many talking at once)

I read that there is no epidemic.

Last week's issue of Time, they had somebody slipped into any omnibus spending bill, they have this synthetic fuels....they have a synthetic fuels tax credit where if you make synthetic fuels, you get a tax credit based on whatever the price of oil is. So, the higher the price of oil, the smaller the tax credit you get. A lot of companies have been using this to make money. Now, in this bill, they inserted it where they changed it so it doesn't apply to the price as it is today, but what it was in 2004, when the price was much lower. With the price of oil the way it is now, the benefit disappears. You don't get any tax credit for the synthetic fuels that you make. So, they just slipped this in so that the companies that make synthetic fuels can still get the tax credit.

**MODERATOR—THAT'S SOMETHING THAT THEY'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT ON BOTH SIDES, THE IDEA OF EARMARKS AND SPECIFIC PIECES OF LEGISLATION THAT ARE PUT IN THAT WOULD BENEFIT ONE INDIVIDUAL, ONE COMPANY, ONE SITUATION.**

Also I don't like the fact that they are letting all kinds of companies dump their pension funds.

**MODERATOR—CORRUPT, FOUR OF YOU PICKED THAT ONE, WHY?**

It kind of goes back to what's wrong with congress in general. I think the political system in general. I think a certain percentage of people go into politics for the right reason, but I think a lot of people go in because their corporate interests influence them to go into politics. And then that follows them all the way through. And you realize that's a pretty good job. And I think they enjoy being wooed by the companies and giving all the kickbacks and the benefits that go along with it. And I just don't think....I think they have to decide on what the purpose is and that's to make decisions to help the country. And I just don't think there's a large enough percentage of people that go into it for that reason.

I think there are so many millionaires in congress nowadays.

It goes back to what Charlie said earlier too, there's more business down on the golf course than in the office. And who are you going to do your business with?

Government is not going to work unless you have people that are honest and have character. And that's what our government was founded on.

I read a little article about the two Hightower rights. How there's one group that has consistently outperformed the New York Stock Exchange and the best people around and it's senators.

**MODERATOR—IN TERMS OF THEIR STOCK HOLDINGS?**

Uh-hum.

MODERATOR—WRONG PRIORITIES, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT ONE?

Just the fact that you put Terry Shiavo in there. I was absolutely astounded that the senate would involve themselves in that and spend time on it.

It's like somebody was trying to make a point, but what a bad choice of cases to get involved with.

It goes back to what I talked about earlier, legislating morality. It's like, this is a family's decision, a family situation. This isn't a government responsibility to sit there and decide through what the family has been going through...whether you agreed with the family or whether you agreed with the husband is irrelevant. The point is, they have the means to resolve the situation and the US government took the time out of their schedules to legislate morality.

The President flew back just to sign the bill.

And I was talking about the filibuster earlier. We are so concerned about telling the other person, oh stop doing that in congress...

Which gets back to the partisan point.

Exactly.

The filibuster was completely partisan.

It was. It was all the way down the line. If they spent as much time dealing with the issues as they do trying to make the other side look bad...

MODERATOR—LET ME PULL A COUPLE DIFFERENT THINGS TOGETHER HERE. WE TALKED ABOUT HOW THEY ARE JUST TRYING TO GET RE-ELECTED. BUT THEY ARE IGNORING ALL THE ISSUES THAT YOU GUYS HAVE TALKED ABOUT AND THEY ARE DEALING WITH THINGS THAT YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T WANT THEM DEALING WITH. WHY ARE THERE NO CONSEQUENCES? WHY IS IT THAT EVERY CYCLE BETWEEN 96 AND 98% OF THEM GET RE-ELECTED?

The only thing that people remember when they get in that voting booth is that person's name and whether they've heard of them before. They don't really keep themselves abreast of what issues are happening and how that person has voted.

One of the prerequisites for a functioning democracy is an educated electorate and I think that we are failing that test right now.

The level of gerrymandering and particularly in certain states, not in Arizona, Arizona has...

(inaudible) would never be elected without gerrymandering.

Right.

Colby too.

It goes back to some of the things that my father used to do.

He was a senator?

No. He was a straight...he was so hardcore democrat it wasn't even funny. He never bothered to read the issues, he never bothered to see what was going on. He'd step in the booth, party lines. If you were democratic, you got the vote. It didn't matter. He didn't know who they were.

**MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT STILL HAPPENS NOW?**

Oh yeah.

Yes.

Big time.

I've got a mother-in-law and a grandmother-in-law that do that. They don't know what the issue is, it's just straight democratic.

Yeah, whatever your pastor says that Sunday, that's who they vote for.

There's a lot of party line voting.

When I step in the voting booth, but I tend to try to look at what's the lesser of two evils.

I agree.

**MODERATOR—IS THERE A POINT THAT YOU REACH, THOUGH, WHERE THERE IS SO MUCH DISGUST WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION THAT PEOPLE JUST START VOTING FOR CHANGE RATHER THAN THE DEVIL THEY KNOW?**

It could get to that point.

Sure.

I could see that happening.

(many talking at once)

I did that the last election.

The incumbent, I voted against him.

There were democrats I would have voted for over George Bush, Kerry was not one of them.

I think people probably go in the booth, and there's two people that actually have a chance of getting elected. And there may be other people there they'd rather vote for. But they know if they vote for them, it's a wasted vote. You see the polls and everything and that person doesn't really have a shot.

And then you also have things like the judges. The judges in our voting things, there are nine openings for judges and they have like eleven people running. And I've never heard of any of them before.

Or they have nine or seven sometimes. You don't know who any of these people are, whether they are competent or not.

I think there's going to be a change in the next four years. There's going to be a shift in the way people vote. I don't know if I will or not, but just from everything that's going on and the dissatisfaction.

**MODERATOR—IT IS A LITTLE WAYS OFF NOW, BUT THERE ARE ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS IN NOVEMBER. I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHICH WAY YOU MAY BE LEANING TO VOTE RIGHT NOW, BUT REGARDLESS OF THAT, WHAT IS GOING TO DETERMINE YOUR VOTE? WHAT ARE THE ISSUES? WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES? WHAT'S THE INFORMATION THAT YOU ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING FOR?**

On what?

**MODERATOR—FOR CONGRESS.**

For Congress.

**MODERATOR—WHAT ARE THE ISSUES, WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES?**

Healthcare.

I'm hoping more democrats get voted in because then we might have some indictments as to what happened with this rush to war and that sort of thing.

Budget reform.

I don't have a hot button issue.

Budget reform is my biggest thing. Again, the spending.

Yeah.

I would just get a feeling for which one seems the most honest. That's probably the most important.

The only problem with that is there are some good liars out there.

I know, that's it.

Exactly.

And in all reality, it's the person who gets most face time on TV is usually the one that gets elected and that's not a good thing.

Or the best public speaker.

That really won the 2004 election.

There's nothing out there that's bothering me any more than anything else. I think that and going back to one of the previous exercises we did when we couldn't really think of anything good about Bush, and whether you like him or not, I think that people overall would be able to think of more things if it wasn't for the war. I think that's distracting a lot of people's attention from having a hot button.

Social Security reform.

(inaudible)

**MODERATOR—I KNOW THAT YOU GUYS ARE GOING TO TELL ME THAT WHEN YOU VOTE YOU LOOK AT THE INDIVIDUAL. YOU MAKE DETERMINATIONS ABOUT THAT PERSON, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHO THE CANDIDATES ARE GOING TO BE. I WANT TO KIND OF GET PAST INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES AND JUST TALK ABOUT THE PARTIES. WE'VE COMPLAINED ABOUT TOO MUCH PARTISANSHIP IN WASHINGTON. REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU PLAN TO VOTE IN NOVEMBER, WHAT ARE THE BEST REASONS TO VOTE FOR A REPUBLICAN FOR CONGRESS THIS YEAR?**

I think ....we talked about giving the rich tax cuts as being a bad thing. But when the rich get tax cuts they spend money and they put that money back into the economy,

which creates jobs. And I think that's a good thing for the economy. It drives the economy.

Give anybody a tax cut and they put the money back into the economy.

Yeah.

I understand where Ivan is coming from because it's a basic business rule. If my business is going to get a tax cut, then I'm going to be able to take that money and move it somewhere else within the organization. And when I do that, that may be buying a new computer or a system or a new server or expanding my operations into a second store, or whatever the case may be. And that's a basic economic principle that will work, but you've got to make sure that the tax cut that's being done is actually being focused towards the corporations and not the CEO or presidents of the corporations. I think that's where some of it gets lost.

I think our national defense listing is (inaudible).

We've had more deficits during republican administrations.

We just go out and keep defending everybody else.

Right.

When you go around the world waving a stick at everybody, telling them you better behave the way we want you to....

It's like we've become the world police or something.

But that's not only a republican characteristic.

Sure it is.

No, that's a US characteristic.

It's been a US tradition for years.

FDR did it, Truman did I, Hankson did it.

**MODERATOR—OTHER REASONS TO VOTE FOR REPUBLICANS FOR CONGRESS?**

They tend to stand more by their convictions. If they think something is wrong, they are not afraid to say, I don't agree with that.

You know what drives me crazy? Six years ago, I could have just rattled off a list but I've been shaken.

It's been six rough years for being a republican. For somebody that thinks that the government should be the biggest spender, and it's been hard.

Yeah, I agree.

**MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #4 THERE. HERE'S A CASE THAT THE REPUBLICANS MAKE FOR WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE FOR THEM FOR CONGRESS. READ THE FOUR, PICK THE ONE THAT YOU THINK MAKES THE BEST CASE.**

Do we have to pick one?

God, there's nothing to pick.

Hold your nose. Jump in.

**MODERATOR—HOW MANY PICKED A? 3. B? 2. C? 2. D? 3. LET'S START AT THE TOP. DEMOCRATS HAVE OPPOSED THE PATRIOT ACT AND FUNDING FOR OUR TROOPS....**

This is getting so old. I'm tired of it. Everything...if you don't think the way I'm thinking, it goes back to the Communists back in the Cuban missile crisis era. Prior to that it was, oh my God, if you don't believe what we are saying, you are a Communist. Same thing now.

You are not a patriot in this country.

It's getting old. Move on.

That was mine, but...

I think we have to do it. Like I said before, there are people out there who would die to attack this country. They would give their lives to kill innocent people.

**MODERATOR—AND DO YOU BELIEVE...THE BASIC PREMISE OF THIS IS THAT REPUBLICANS WILL PROTECT THIS COUNTRY AND DEMOCRATS WON'T...**

I think they'll protect it better than democrats.

They'll spend more money trying to protect it.

Okay, yeah, I agree with that.

Halliburton needs more money. They need it.

I was just going to say, more money, that's the difference.

I think there's a lot more money being spent on homeland security and defense issues, but I also think there's a tremendous amount of waste. We don't know where our money is going.

They are doing some, but probably not as much as they could with the money that's going ....

One thing we haven't really touched on, is I think we are going to have a lot of problems making our Army going forth. It used to be fifteen or twenty years ago, it was an all volunteer Army. Really, there was almost no chance you were going to go to war. Right now, if you sign up, you know you are going to see combat. You know you are going to see action. Enlistments are down and they are having to give a lot bigger bonuses to incent people to join the Army. That's a problem that is going to have some impact on our ability to maintain our forces over the next....

They have been taking the dregs....they've been taking the people who have scored low on the tests.

That's the only ones who want to get in.

It's been that way the whole time, but it's just now being brought out because we are at war. It's been like that all the time. And the recruitment goals that they meet, they come and go, based on the economy. When the economy is down and there are no jobs available, recruitments are way up there. When the economy is growing strong and unemployment is low, recruitments are difficult. It's just that way. It has always been that way with the Army.

But like with the reserves...

But retention has gotten worse. That's the problem.

With the reserves, they never saw action. You've got people that just went into the reserves and it was like one weekend every month or two. And now, those guys are going overseas.

**MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT THE BOTCHARLIE ONE? DEMOCRATS REJECT THE ROLE OF FAITH IN OUR PUBLIC LIFE....**

It scares the crap out of me.

I'm Christian and...

**MODERATOR—FIRST I WANT TO HEAR FROM THE PEOPLE WHO PICKED IT.**

Yeah, I'm around kids all the time at home, at work, they are everywhere. And I see the effect of what pop culture does to our children and it's not a good thing. I can watch primetime television and see sex acts performed when my kids are watching too. So I have to be doubly diligent about making sure that they don't get the wrong ideas that okay, I can just go do that. And I don't think government should ever really mess ....as far as the faith issue, they should just keep their nose out of it. I don't believe in that. That's just all there is to it. I don't like to be told what to believe. I don't like to be told through congress or anybody else what I believe is wrong. I just don't like that.

Yeah, I believe that's what the perception of the republican party is, they take that stand. Whether they do or not, I don't know. It's kind of the same problem of not being able to find honest or people to put in congress. It's an overall moral issue and I guess I feel that as a whole, the morality in this country is going down. And that's a concern. So that would be important to me.

Just for your benefit, I don't really necessary think that Christian values...

I believe in values, I'm just....

Absolutely. And I'm saying that part kind of galls me that it's the Christian values. I think Jewish people have just as good family values as anybody else does. But, yes, I feel that in general republicans feel more closely as I do on those areas, which are very important to me, than democrats do.

**MODERATOR—HOW DO THEY MANIFEST THAT ON YOU?**

How do they...anytime I see the ACLU saying you can't have the Ten Commandments in a courtroom, I say, why are we wasting our time with this. The Ten Commandments are not necessarily a Christian thing, it comes from a Jewish book.

It is the basis of law.

And it is the basis of law. I start looking at that and the fight to obliterate religion in the public eye, I think, is something that...I don't know if the democrats are fighting to obliterate it, but somebody is striving to get religion out of state whatsoever. I do not think that's what the founding fathers had in mind. I think they had in mind that the government would promote a religion.

**MODERATOR—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU WHEN PEOPLE TALK ABOUT NOT NECESSARILY CHRISTIAN VALUES, BUT FAMILY VALUES?**

It's just a word in order to make themselves look good. But yet if you ask them about it, they've been married five or six times. Who was that one senator, he was going to sue

because they accused him of being married six times, but he really only was married five times. And who is controlling the networks? Republicans. So whatever you are seeing on TV is as a result of republican domination.

Really, CNN?

I thought FOX was.

CNN?

ABC.

I've got to get out of the classroom.

(many talking at once)

I'd like to go back to what Ron was talking about, being the parent and monitoring and taking care of what his kids are watching and doing that. This is what I talked about earlier about legislating morality and civil liberties and stuff like that. Parents are going to be parents. I don't need the government to sit there and regulate what's going to come across the TV waves, what's going to come across my cable channels, what church I'm going to go to or if I'm going to go to church. I don't need the government telling me these things. And if you are going to run a platform saying that I'm going to instill Christian values, I'm going to say, you know what, I'm going to do everything I can to vote you out because I don't want Jerry Farwell running this country.

I have two young daughters and I know they don't watch violence on TV, they don't see sex on TV. And not because it isn't on there. It's because I make sure that they know they are not allowed to do it. And two, we specifically permit them and don't permit them to watch certain things. But it's religion and government...where my daughter goes to school and she goes to a public school, they discuss Christmas and Christianity and it's a little uncomfortable for my daughter. She's only five and she doesn't really understand. And it's not our faith and I don't necessarily want my daughter's teachers to discuss Christ with her. I don't want them to discuss Jesus with her. It's not really their place to tell my daughter about it.

Sure, absolutely not. I'm a public school teacher.

**MODERATOR—LET'S TALK ABOUT THE OTHER TWO THINGS. DEMOCRATS ARE TRYING TO RAISE TAXES....REPUBLICANS HAVE LOWERED TAXES AND INTRODUCED SOME NEW IDEAS. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT ONE?**

I chose that one. That falls back to the typical...it's one of the reasons the first Bush got voted out. No more taxes. Well, he lied. Look at local elections, the same thing. With

the recent city elections here, it's like, oh, the garbage tax. Then people lost their jobs and lost their seats because of that. And taxes and ....

(many talking at once)

Didn't that get repealed?

Oh no.

And they knew it wasn't going to in the first place.

I pointed that out to my wife when I read the article.

It's not getting repealed.

They are not going to be repealed. Even all those tax cuts that the republicans are making to help spark the economy and do different things, it's a game. When you start messing with the basic principles of economics, you have to continue to mess with those economics. Basic principle, leave it alone, it's a self-balancing economy and it will take its ups and downs and it will level out. But then you start sparking it and throwing these little things into it, now you have to continue to control it because you've screwed it up.

This is your classical stereotype of democrats tax and spend, republicans cut back the government. Except it hasn't been true in the last six years.

In the last ten years.

I think the first four of those years....but the last six, Bush's spending is out of control. And the congress has...the president can't spend on his own, so the congress has been a willing participant in that. That's why I didn't pick that one.

**MODERATOR—WHAT ABOUT DEMOCRATS OPPOSE REPUBLICAN'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE OUR ECONOMY, WHILE OFFERING NO SOLUTIONS OF THEIR OWN...**

I just think the democrats have really run out of ideas on a lot of stuff. When it comes to healthcare reform ....the big Hillary thing...and it was just more complicated than the system we already have, which is already too complicated and too inefficient as it is. We spend twenty five cents out of every healthcare dollar on bureaucracy. They've got no...they just don't seem to have any new ideas. They are stuck with the ideas they had in the 1930's and they haven't updated them for what we now know about technology, about science, about economics. There have been all sorts of wonderful discoveries in the last seventy years and we don't seem to...the democrats don't seem to have incorporated any of them into their thinking.

It's the offering no solutions of their own. And it's not just a democratic thing. It's the other way around. If the democrats were in power, the republicans would be rolling out these little chants and stuff. But there wouldn't be a specific solution. It's always the mantra that is reflected in all four of these points. If there was a good solution to the war, then the democrats would have put it together.

The one thing that Clinton did really well (inaudible). I think he was fairly moderate. It's good to have people who are moderate in office.

That's why he drove the (inaudible) crazy.

Too far left, too far right starts to screw stuff up.

**MODERATOR—LET'S LOOK AT THINGS FROM THE OTHER SIDE NOW AND TALK ABOUT THE DEMOCRATS. WHAT ARE THE BEST REASONS TO VOTE FOR DEMOCRATS?**

It's just an aspect of change. We talked about it earlier, moving backwards or the not moving forward aspect, its change.

I just think somebody needs to tell the president, somebody who has at least enough power to at least confront him, that sometimes you make bad decisions. And you really need to look back at them and learn something from them.

Well, the war will end, the runaway spending will end.

I don't see the war ending if the democrats gain control of the house and senate in the next year. I don't see the war ending.

War won't end.

As long as there's a republican, it will never end. It will go on for twenty years.

I think as long as there is a United States the war is going to continue on. We all have the same power aspect of trying to make democracy worldwide. We don't want to just leave countries to fend for themselves. We've got to run out and save the world.

Not all those countries want democracy.

Well, that's the point. We need to start leaving them alone.

We are not even a democracy. We are a republic.

A democratic republic.

We are supposed to be a republic. That's what it says in the Pledge of Allegiance, but we are not. We are a democracy now.

Well if democracy were the case, then we'd vote for people who would work for us.

Look at what it did for the president in 2000. He got the popular vote.

The Electoral College needs to go away.

**MODERATOR—WE DON'T NEED TO GET INTO SEMANTICS. OTHER REASONS WHY DEMOCRATS ARE A BETTER FIT FOR THE CONGRESS.**

What I see in democrats is that they do have a better idea of some of the social problems that exist. And there are some significant social problems in this country. I think when Clinton changed the welfare, when he reformed welfare; he did it the wrong way. He took money away from the people that really needed it. The kids that are poor, that don't have food on a daily basis, and that exists in this country whether we want to face it or not. I think the democrats have a better idea of how to handle that.

I sometimes think that the democrats believe that the government can help and go about proving it. And republicans believe that the government can do harm and go about proving it.

I think they gridlock their way through it.

**MODERATOR—NO HARM, NO FOUL?**

I think it would allow moderates to take to the fore, where people will have to compromise. Right now, the republicans in power in congress don't feel they need to compromise with democrats or with anybody because they are in power. They should be able to pass whatever they want. The fact that they are infighting amongst themselves is another thing. But they don't feel the need to find a moderate position, to find a halfway step. They think they can make the big jump when whether the country is ready for it or not. I think with the democrats at least controlling a part of congress, they'll be forced to take a half step as opposed to trying to take the whole...

**MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, LOOK AT HANDOUT #5 NOW. THESE ARE REASONS WHY THE DEMOCRATS ARE A BETTER CHOICE. READ THE LIST, MARK THE ONE THAT YOU FEEL IS THE BEST REASON. HOW MANY PICKED A? B? 8. C? D? E? 2. ALRIGHT. GIVE ME B, (SOMEONE COUGHING)...**

Do you want the E guys to speak first?

**MODERATOR—NO, I WANT TO HEAR B FIRST.**

I would cross out one line in there. A failed emergency response system, I really don't feel that way.

And I would too.

I thing Brown did not do a heck of a job.

I think B and E actually are kind of similar in a lot of aspects when you look at it. It's all going to deal with the fact that what we talked about earlier with Iraq and no exit strategy. It's all been about the war and they've failed in what they are supposed to do. And they've failed in this and they've failed in that. But they've spent all this money and accomplished nothing. Both of them are kind of similar on that aspect.

I feel like the democrats wouldn't do it different if they got in there.

Right, it's not a matter of them doing any different; it's just a matter of the strategy to get them out.

If you need money to do whatever and you are doing a lousy job at it, if somebody keeps handing you a check are you going to change whether you are going to do a good job at it or not? But if somebody holds onto the check and says wait a second, before I give you this check, how are you going to fix what you screwed up? They are more likely to give some sort of plan, even if it's not a very good one.

Is a bad plan better than no plan?

I can tell you, I didn't pick the other four because I can go through and say not realistic, democrats bring real change to Washington, I doubt it. Democrats will reform the current healthcare system, not a chance. Democrats will reform our tax code, who are we kidding?

**MODERATOR—OKAY, I GET THE POINT.**

All of the rest of them offered untenable things, but this one actually says, you know what? The whole role of congress is to offer a check to presidential power. And this congress has not done that. And nor do I believe that they will, as long as it continues to be a republican dominated congress. And going back to the opportunity to change, you can't vote the president out for another three years. But you can vote the congress out each year. I see that as the best reason to vote democrat.

A stronger checks and balances in the three branches of government.

Cut out of control spending, that stood out loud and clear to me.

Demand for accountability is the most important thing in there. Right now, the president does what he does. Whether he fails at it or he's good at it, and he fails at it...his plans,

the way things have been running in Iraq, it's just been awful. That we went in with inadequate troops, with no real plan to deal with the aftermath. And the republicans can't really say anything. He's their president, he's on their team. They can't say you really screwed up. And how are you going to fix it? Because then it falls back on them and they have to say, well we voted for this, we supported all this. So, I think ...

Some democrats did too.

Democrats did too.

By and large, a great majority of them did too.

But a lot of them didn't.

Under the onus of, well you are not a patriot if you don't vote for this.

Yeah, but if you can't stand up...

That didn't come out till later. I think it goes back again to the very beginning with the information that was provided by the Bush administration and the staff of what's going on and what needs to be done. And everybody fell for it hook, line and sinker. It wasn't until after the information was given that...

It's just status quo. We've been doing that for years now. Democrats, republicans, it doesn't matter, sticking our nose into other people's business.

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE ABOUT B?

It kind of implies the ethics, reinstating an ethics standard. Stopping the unconstitutional behavior. Bringing that back into the mind.

It's the checks. It's bringing things back into balance.

And for the last 50 years, there have been very few instances actually where the White House has been one party and at least one house of Congress has been another party. There's always been that until the last six years.

I think that's not a very good idea. The whole point of checks and balances is that it works. And if one party controls both houses of Congress and the White House and there is no check, there's no balance at all...nobody in power, nobody who has some control is going to say, well maybe we should think about this more...

Is there an Iraq exit strategy?

Right now?

I haven't heard of one.

Victory, I think is our exit strategy.

(many talking at once)

Once there is a government in place, isn't that what they are working for?

They have a government in place.

A viable government in place that can defend itself and unite the country. Ultimately, isn't that what they are working for? But how we get from here to there, I don't know.

The problem is, they don't have an exit strategy.

They have milestones on what they need to have done, but they don't have a goal.

They are not taking the steps.

They have a goal, but they don't actually have a plan.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, ON E, WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

It's that port thing isn't it?

Well, that and the energy issue. I definitely think that we need to curb our dependence on oil. Whether it's from our country or from somebody else's country because it's a finite resource. We need to look into alternative forms of energy. And there are some very viable ones that if the money were provided for the additional research, trying to make it more...bring it to the public, that it would be more successful. I don't really think the democrats will do any more or less to make it safe at home. I don't think the government can do any more or less, unless we are going to build hundred foot walls and put guards with machine guns every 50 feet on the border. You are not going to close the border. You can't stop illegal immigration.

I don't think that will happen if you change to a democrat, not much of a change. It's going to be the same. I don't think there's really going to be that change.

Actually that was the one thing that kind of rang with me on the "E" was the energy item. That's going to become, over the next ten to twenty years, that's going to become a huge issue.

It's going to be even more important over 50 years. It's going to have to be.

China has what? 25 nuclear power plants coming on line in the next 15 years.

We haven't built them because environmentalists haven't allowed it, which is typically a left wing democrat.

Well, after Three Mile Island nobody wanted a power plant in their own backyard.

(many talking at once)

The technology has gotten to a point where we should be able to do it.

The danger used to be there.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—LET'S NOT GO TOO DEEP INTO THAT. I WANT TO TALK ABOUT ONE OTHER THING. ONE OF THE ISSUES WE SAW FROM BOTH PARTIES IS HEALTHCARE. AS YOU PROBABLY HAVE HEARD PRESIDENT BUSH IN HIS STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH TALKED ABOUT DRAMATICALLY EXPANDING HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS. THAT WAS HIS BIG IDEA ON HEALTHCARE. REPUBLICANS IN CONGRESS STRONGLY SUPPORT HIM ON THIS. WHAT HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS ARE BASICALLY IS THAT THEY ALLOW INDIVIDUALS OR THEIR EMPLOYERS TO PUT PRE-TAX MONEY INTO SAVINGS ACCOUNTS FROM WHICH THEY WOULD THEN DRAW TO PAY OUT-OF-POCKET HEALTH EXPENSES. THE ACCOMPANYING INSURANCE POLICY IS PRETTY MUCH A CATASTROPHIC CARE ONLY WITH A HIGH DEDUCTIBLE, A \$4 OR \$5,000 DEDUCTIBLE. OVER THE COURSE OF A NORMAL YEAR, YOU ARE NOT GOING TO HIT YOUR DEDUCTIBLE UNLESS YOU HAVE SOME PRETTY SIGNIFICANT MEDICAL EMERGENCIES. BUT AS YOU ARE PAYING THAT DEDUCTIBLE, YOU CAN PULL MONEY OUT OF THIS TAX FREE SAVINGS ACCOUNT TO PAY FOR OUT OF POCKET. SUPPORTERS OF THIS SAY THIS IS GOING TO IMPROVE THINGS IN A NUMBER OF WAYS. ONE, IT'S GOING TO LOWER COSTS AND IT'S GOING TO INCREASE COMPETITION BY ALLOWING INDIVIDUALS TO SHOP AROUND FOR THE BEST PRICE. IT'S GOING TO ALLOW YOU TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN DOCTORS AND YOUR OWN CARE. AND THREE, IT'S GOING TO ALLOW PEOPLE TO MAKE THE FINAL DECISION ON THE COVERAGE THAT THEY WANT AND WHATEVER WORKS BEST FOR THEM. WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE IDEA OF HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS?

They are just a bad idea.

I like the tax shelter option, quite frankly. Honestly, it wouldn't make that much of a difference to me right now. But the idea...if I could have done that last year, it would have had a significant tax break for me. It was a bad year medical wise for my family. I paid a lot of money.

They already have it. It's called flexible spending accounts.

I know.

I put money in that every year.

MODERATOR—HOLD ON.

A lot of the insurance companies have negotiated rates with the different companies. So you get this service and it costs this much and they'll negotiate it to half that amount. I have a thousand dollar deductible, but that helps a lot because the cost of service goes down based on the large insurance company being able to negotiate that. So I guess my question is, how does that work or is it just all the same....how does a person shop around for medical care? I don't get that.

The best deals are negotiated. I'm no fan of HMO's, but they are the ones who have the power to get the best price. It may not be the best care, but it's going to be the lowest price. If we all go out with our little stacks of money and try that, that's not going to happen. It might factor into some economic balance, but we as individuals don't collectively have the power that HMO's do.

And no one is going to save for this thing. People don't save now. If it's a voluntary thing, people need their paychecks now. And if you have a choice that either you have to spend money for some type of preventative care, and our system is terrible about preventative care right now period, at least now when you go....like particularly for the dentist...my dental program pays 100% of preventative care. If I have a toothache, I'm going to the dentist. If I have to pay for that, if I have to pay \$100 every time I go to the dentist or somebody does, how much more likely are you going to say, oh I'll see if in a week it feels better. And you end up with an abscess or a root canal instead of a cavity. Healthcare is not like other parts of the economy in that certain things...you can put off buying a car for a very long time. You can't really put off medical care for a very long time.

There's going to have to be some revamping of the way the system is. With my company, all the health savings accounts and flex accounts that are available for you to buy into, you have to use or you lose it for that particular tax year. So, I'm going to throw \$10,000 of my annual salary into this account in case I have a medical problem and then come January 1<sup>st</sup> or whatever your calendar year is for that plan, I haven't used it, so now the money is gone.

Is that true for an HAS or is that just flexible spending?

That's just flexible spending. HSA's get carried over.

No, some of the ones that we've got they can't be carried over. They camouflage them as HSA's.

There are so many of them out there.

(many talking at once)

**MODERATOR--THAT'S THE OTHER THING THERE ISN'T A UNIFORM STANDARD HERE.**

But I have an FSA and I've used an FSA for the last seven years and I have yet to not use all the money I've put in that FSA.

Well because you purposely plan...

No, I keep pushing it up every year. And I find, particularly now that I have kids, and it just keeps....and usually when you see what your expenses are the year before, you get a pretty good idea of how your expenses are heading. I underestimate a little because I don't want to overspend it.

**MODERATOR—ARE THERE POSITIVES TO THESE THINGS?**

Tax shelter.

It's a tax shelter.

**MODERATOR—COULD IT LEGITIMATELY LOWER COSTS?**

What are the costs now? Can you go into a doctor and say, by the way, how much is that hernia operation? Can I get level one, two or three?

You never know what your costs are until after the services have been performed.

I don't see the shop around aspect.

(many talking at once)

What's funny though is that I would have no problem doing that with my Social Security. Not a problem in the world. But I don't feel nearly as knowledgeable about medicine as I do about investment choices. And so it's not an attractive option for me.

It goes back to other sales...it basically becomes a sales pitch at this point. The doctor tells you that you have to have this surgery. Well, what's the non-medical person or you are telling me as parent that if I don't have this operation on my son they are going to be deformed for the rest of their life or they are not going to be able to survive. You are going to play the emotion game. And granted, while fighting with HMO's for certain things becomes a hassle, they understand the language. They understand what's going on and when they are telling you, you need to re-look at this option, at least it gives you to start thinking.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #6. HERE ARE SOME OF THE QUESTIONS AND THE CRITICISMS THAT INVOLVE HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS. GO THROUGH THE LIST AND PICK TWO THAT YOU FIND TO BE THE MOST CONVINCING REASONS TO OPPOSE THEM. HOW MANY CIRCLED A? 4. B? 1. C? 3. D? 1. E? F? 4. G? 5. OKAY. SO, THE FIRST ONE, IT DOES NOTHING TO ADDRESS THE REAL HEALTHCARE CRISIS. IF YOU DON'T DO SOMETHING TO CONTROL COSTS....

Well look at prescription drugs. They get a patent for this drug for the first five or seven years and they can charge whatever they want to recover their research and development costs. So all these lifesaving new drugs, nobody can afford them. You drop to this plan, who is going to get the medicine they need?

MODERATOR—AND THE BOTCHARLIE ONE, YOU DON'T LIKE THE IDEA OF PEOPLE BEING ON THEIR OWN TO MAKE THESE DECISIONS?

I don't like that at all.

Definitely.

Somebody who is sick is the most vulnerable. The person who is going to lose their job because they can't work. If you get some sort of debilitating illness, something like Lupus or a form of cancer, or something where you can no longer work, you lose your insurance coverage. Completely leaving the most vulnerable people without any possible way of getting their medical coverage...that's the big problem with employer coverage. If you find that you cannot work, then you are pretty much screwed when it comes to health insurance.

I just don't think the average American is all that smart.

I agree with you there.

I don't know about smart, but not informed.

Not informed is better.

I know a bunch of doctors and they spend all their time, all their spare time, just keeping up with the latest medical advances. The amount of reading and studying and courses these doctors have to take, it's not just...

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—LAST THING I'D LIKE YOU GUYS TO DO BEFORE YOU LEAVE AND WE ARE NOT EVEN GOING TO TALK ABOUT IT, TURN TO HANDOUT #7. AGAIN, MOVING AWAY FROM INDIVIDUALS AND JUST

THINKING ABOUT DEMOCRATS AND REPUBLICANS, IF THE ELECTION WERE HELD TODAY FOR CONGRESS, WHICH WAY WOULD YOU BE LEANING? ZERO IS TOTALLY UNDECIDED; ONE OR TWO LEANING A LITTLE IN EITHER DIRECTION; THREE OR HIGHER A LITTLE MORE. THEN ALSO RIGHT BELOW THAT, JUST TELL ME WHY.

MODERATOR—THANKS FOR COMING...

(end of session)