

Democracy Corps Transcripts

Name: Group 2
Location: Bala Cynwyd, PA
Group Specs: Men, 30-50, college graduates, household income over \$50K, undecided in Congressional vote, recruited from PA CD 7
Date: September 20, 2006
Time: 8:00 PM

I'm Aaron and I'm from Exton. Been married eleven years. Have two kids, a son that's seven, a daughter that's three. I ride bike, I mountain bike. I used to coach soccer before.

I'm Brian and I live in Kingsville in Montgomery County near the Southern River. I'm married six years this year, no kids, just a dog, cat, some fish. I like to golf and woodwork, that's about it.

I'm Charles and I live in Downietown. I'm married, married eight years, one daughter, she's four. I'm a software analyst for a local company here. Hobbies, I have been doing bass fishing for about ten or fifteen years.

I'm David and I live in Downietown. I'm a father of five boys, been married twenty years. I'm surviving. I like to canoe in my spare time in Marsh Creek and a few other places. I like to fish and enjoy the good old outdoors. Work at United Parcel Service in operations and that's about it.

I'm Ethan and I live here in Downietown. I've been married for fourteen years. Have a little girl and a little boy. And I also coach baseball and football. And when I have free time I like to play golf. I have no free time, that's the thing.

I'm Frank and I've lived here in Exton, about two seconds away so it's really convenient. Married nine years, no kids. Wife and I love to work, work on the house, work at our jobs. I am an engineer that screws up traffic for everyone. So if you have any problems, come see me so I can screw it up a little bit more for you.

I'm Gary and I live in Downietown. Married 18 years, have three girls. Work for a local computer company as a systems analyst. Hobbies, collect trains, play basketball, things like that.

I'm Hank and I live in Downietown, married four years. Have our first child on the way, due in January. Like to golf like so many guys around the table here. I'm a district manager for a company called Cameron, so I travel quite a bit.

I'm Ivan and I'm from Downietown. Married seventeen years, two little boys. Like sports and outdoors, recreational stuff. I'm a carpenter by trade.

I'm Jake and I live in Coatsville. I call it the hood. I'm divorced. I have no children, a couple cats and a Harley. That's my hobby.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO START OUR CONVERSATION REAL BROAD AND THEN WE'LL NARROW, BUT THINKING ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON WITH OUR COUNTRY THESE DAYS, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THINGS IN THIS COUNTRY ARE GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR IN THE WRONG DIRECTION RIGHT NOW?

Gas prices are going in the wrong direction.

A lot of things are going in the wrong direction.

MODERATOR—I JUST WANT TO GET A SENSE OF RIGHT OR WRONG HERE.

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

Wrong.

MODERATOR—SO WHAT THINGS IN PARTICULAR?

Bush.

Division of classes. There is no middle class. The middle class is going away.

Poor leadership in general.

Morals. It seems like our morals have really changed in the last ten years as a country.

Getting a lot of lip service, you can't believe what you read. You get a sense of people being more selfish, self-centered, out for themselves. A lot of greed. You see this evidenced in the real estate market. It's everywhere.

Instant gratification. That's what everybody is about now.

CEO's, CIO's at the top of corporations worrying about themselves instead of their companies.

We are more interested in foreign affairs than we are in our own domestic affairs.

The fact that we feed the world, but we can't feed our own people.

I can agree with several of the comments. One that really sticks out because of my profession is the economic effect with the lack of leadership that we have, the impact on that. People not realizing what impact they have when they say something in public, what it does to the markets. And then what it does to the division of classes when there is no middle class. So we are a small or declining middle class. Those individuals really don't have the means to make those investments. So the people that do make the investments, the institutions, they are not being regulated enough for the person who is putting in forty or fifty hours a week. And they are relying on that pension that they have or that they are going to have in twenty years. So therefore there is no loyalty to the company and CEO's get upset, so it's a big chain reaction.

There is a tremendous amount of apathy, more than I've ever seen in my life. People don't vote, don't care to, could care less, don't take an interest. I mean I'm just appalled as a middle age guy at the apathy that's prevalent throughout my neighborhood and the country.

A lot of materialism. The marketing and advertising pressure to buy more stuff, get more stuff, more expensive cars, work harder, all that is tremendous really. It leaves you with a lot of feeling that you are not successful, but everybody else is. It's a lot of pressure.

I agree with just about everything that's been said. The price of everything, especially gas, concerns me a lot. The thinning of our military, how we are spreading out everywhere, that worries me too, because of the terrorist and all that that ties into that.

MODERATOR—OVERALL SENSE OF THE ECONOMY? IS IT GOING DOWN RIGHT NOW, IS IT JUST KIND OF FLAT OR DO YOU THINK IT'S ON ITS WAY UP?

Well, they expect the economy to rejuvenate, but then when you've got to spend \$50 two or three times a week to fill up your vehicle, where am I going to spend my money? I've got to put it in my gas tank.

The middle guy is getting squeezed out. It's becoming a nation of haves and have nots. You have to just rise to the upper echelon or sink or swim. And you get a sense that if you are in the middle class, like most of us are here, you get a sense that I better be on the upper end of the food chain or I'm going to just get, as he said, squeezed out.

I've never known so many people to have two jobs or more than I have lately. I had a job interview today because I can't make ends meet. I work for Comcast, you think that would pay, but it doesn't.

With the fuel prices, your discretionary income is down to nothing. What you would have used for your entertainment factor, it's going into your gasoline tank.

What is so discouraging about that is thatI don't know if any of you have seen this....there is definitely a better mousetrap than this so-called dependency that we have on Middle Eastern oil. And yet we are letting the politicians give us lip service and taking it and just accepting it and saying, gee, oh well. I have heating bills ad nauseum, I'm sure everyone does. Let's all boycott these guys and that is never effective. So we are not unified in our way of handling it. It's going to get worse.

MODERATOR—OTHER THINGS GOING ON IN TERMS OF THE ECONOMY IN THIS COUNTRY OR OTHER ISSUES?

The gas prices are affecting a lot of other things as well. A lot of places have started putting surcharges on goods. At the grocery stores, I noticed the prices are going up because they have to pay to ship that stuff. I think it's really ...the big picture...

Most of us know or people closer to my age can remember people throwing snowballs at each other during the Jimmy Carter administration when we had double digit inflation. And I was just in my teens, but I do vividly remember that very, very well. And here we are, we are just taking it. And we just let it go from 89 cents a gallon up to \$1.50, which became normal, to \$2.00 and now we are at \$3.00. And I'm hearing on the news that it's not done. And we are all just saying, I guess that's just the way it is.

MODERATOR—IS THIS INFLATION? THAT WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS TALKED ABOUT ALL THE TIME IN THE LATE 70'S. NOW PEOPLE JUST KIND OF SAY, WELL GAS PRICES ARE UP AND THE PRICE OF MILK IS UP. IS THIS INFLATION? IS THIS AN ECONOMY-WIDE PHENOMENA DO YOU THINK?

Yeah, as soon as they announce that a barrel of oil is increased, you see the stock market plunge. Almost every stock goes down. I watch the stock market every day and as soon as they announce that a barrel of oil went up to \$78, boom, everything goes in the red.

(many talking at once)

It's not inflation. The price of oil is definitely the key of what is happening here. And what you hear on the news, personally, I don't trust. Someone could sneeze the wrong way and barrels of oil go up another \$2 and gold goes up. But overall, you look at the economy, back to your earlier question, I think it's pretty flat. I mean the unemployment rate is fairly decent, yet people aren't working a lot. It's the price of the energy that is driving people crazy. That's the biggest thing.

The unemployment rate that's announced every three weeks for the month prior is a misleading indicator.

I agree.

Because it doesn't take into account...it only takes into account new applicants for unemployment. It doesn't take into account people that have fallen off the unemployment that are eligible for it, who can't find a job. It doesn't take into account part-time employees who have been laid off because they are the easiest ones to lay off. They don't have the tenured jobs with them so they are the first ones to go. Last one in, first one out. So that's a misleading indicator. I think our economists weight that too heavily when they put their models together to find out where we are going to go with interest rates or something like that.

Do you think it's to the point where there aren't enough jobs out there, where a lot of people are scrounging?

Yeah, there are a lot of people who are scrounging. I remember when I was in high school, to get a job in high school, even during college, was like a bonus. You had money to spend because your parents took care of everything else. Now we are taking care of our kids, but when you hire kids to work, go into a place. They are, I'm here, I've got a job, I want my money. They don't have the drive to do a good job.

I see the price of everything going up. Everybody talks about the oil and gas and all that, but everything in general is going up. And I know that's a natural thing, but for the last year or two we are just going through the roof. The prices for anything, cars, houses, whatever you want to talk about.

And fuel prices and energy, oil underlines all of that. There are energy costs in everything that you do.

(many talking at once)

There has got to be a better mousetrap. I know that there are people who are engineers and the like who....I just saw recently that there was a scientist who was able to take water and convert it into energy. That technology is there, but as an American I really feel slighted that we are not just running with that. And is it about just money or is it just about Bush continuing to line his pockets with the oil connections?

It's funny you mention that because I just read an article today about ethanol and how Brazil has weaned itself off oil. They don't import oil anymore, they export ethanol to the United States. They are totally off oil. Ethanol is their main supply now of fuel.

I just think like all the issues that we talk about all come down to a root cause, which is corporate greed. 99% of the money in this country is owned by 1% of the people. Whatever those guys want to do, if they want to make money in oil, they are going to make money in oil. The rest of it is just hopefully get our little bits in here and there. With the oil, they are posting record profits. Wal-Mart down the street, five of the top ten richest people in this country are Wal-Mart heirs. They plaster all over the news, save money at Wal-Mart. That's why people get so upset with Wal-Mart. If you look on the billionaire list, five of the ten in this country are Wal-Mart heirs. We are our own worst enemy. Collectively, we'll go and we'll trade there.

This gets back to what I was saying before, that we are not unified, locally much less nationally, as far as the clout and the power that we really have. This is why I'm appalled. As a Downietown and as an American, that people just don't realize...

MODERATOR—THE LACK OF ENGAGEMENT.

Yeah, yeah.

MODERATOR—ONE OTHER ISSUE THAT WE HAVEN'T TOUCHED ON DIRECTLY IS IRAQ. WHAT ARE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN IRAQ AND KIND OF WHERE WE GO FROM HERE?

I don't think it will ever end.

Yeah, me neither.

I think our best move right now would be to pull everybody out. They are going to kill each other, this has been going on for thousands of years, Shiites, the Sunnis and all that. It's not just in the past four years this has happened.

We are doing the same thing to them as we did to the American Indians.

It's also that our government hasn't taken a page out of history. Soviet Union was there in the 80's for ten years and got zero accomplished. And that's where we are going. And it's the sad part....coming from a military family, they don't have a plan in place. We are getting lip service, as Tom said, and it seems like there is no plan in place for the exit, anything. When they got there, they didn't equip the soldiers with the proper equipment to do the job. If you give the soldiers the equipment to do the job, they'll get it done to the best of their ability.

It's another Viet Nam.

That's what I'm afraid of.

It's pretty bad when parents are buying bullet proof vests and sending it over to the troops, to their sons and daughters so they don't get killed. Like he said, lack of planning. The reason we didn't go into Baghdad during the first Persian Gulf War is because Bush one didn't want to commit troops for ten years to stabilize the country. And this Bush didn't even have the foresight for that. He was just like, we'll just go in and then we'll figure it out. Like he said, there's no game plan.

Not to be negative, but I'm almost of the opinion to vote every incumbent out, just based on the fact that let's just change it. This isn't working, so I'm all forcompanies do it all the time. People get laid off. If you don't perform, you are next. And so, I think we are all kind of indirectly saying the same thing, is that, we need a change.

MODERATOR—OTHER ATTITUDES ON IRAQ?

Military background, your first rule of war is overwhelming force. We screwed that up. We went in soft. If we would have....I wouldn't have even had a problem with having a draft, going in and kicking ass. If you have a gun in your hand, we'll kill you. End of story because we are going to kill people. But the thing is, the politicians, we keep playing around. There's no plan. They finally decided now once Baghdad is in disarray that we are going to send more troops over there, which we should have done in the first place and tried to get out. I think we need to get out.

I think this bureaucracy has gotten so big that it spills over into everything. With the war and everything, there was no plan. And you can feel the thought that people are infighting of what to do because no one knows what to do. Let's see what these guys say and there's no clear cut, this is what we are going to do, if it does this, we'll go out and do this. If it happens here, it's five years and we haven't done anything, we are going to pull out. There is no leadership. Personally, that's my thought on that.

MODERATOR—ANYONE DISAGREE WITH THE NOTION THAT IT'S JUST TIME TO GET THE SOLDIERS OUT OF THERE?

I guess I could be the dissenting opinion. I originally supported the war and I still pretty much support it, but there are some very difficult questions. We are kind of in a spot now that...I don't believe that our leaders didn't think about what might happen. Civil war was certainly a possibility. And they hoped it didn't happen, but now it appears like it has happened so we are in a tight spot. So if we pull out and let the country fall into wherever it goes...and who knows what is going to happen to it. That would be good for us, but then does that stabilize the Middle East at all? Does that get them towards stabilization or does it leave them in worse shape? It's difficult. I'm not saying I'm a hundred percent behind it any more, but generally I feel we should stick with it, but I don't see an end either. I don't see where that's going to go or what's going to happen.

MODERATOR—ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS IF WE PULL OUT, THAT IT COULD MAKE US LESS SAFE THAN BEFORE WE WENT IN?

I don't think it would.

No.

No.

It's like we had Afghanistan and then all of a sudden we went into Iraq and kind of forgot about Afghanistan. Now we have Israel and Lebanon and Iraq has kind of taken a little bit of a back burner. I mean, we are not in Israel and Lebanon, yet, but who knows? It just seems like they keep on pushing their problems off and okay, we'll just focus on this now. Then, what's next?

Korea is next.

Iran.

There is always something to worry about.

But are we safer? And I think you make a good point. You look back to 9/11 when it initially happened. We were all devastated. And I don't think there was an American, at least that I know of, that wasn't ready to take arms themselves because it was an attack on our soil. But now, I would never send my children over there. It's ludicrous.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO THROW OUT THE NAMES OF SOME PEOPLE, ORGANIZATIONS AND KIND OF DO LIKE A WORD ASSOCIATION. THE FIRST ONE IS BILL CLINTON.

Best president we ever had.

Next to Jimmy Carter.

Good leader.

Monica.

(many talking at once)

Cigar.

Spoke well, but couldn't trust him.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT CONGRESS?

Crooks.

Corruption.

Over paid.

Fat cats.

No trust. Absolutely no trust.

Useless.

They don't do the job for the people, but they do it for themselves or the interest groups.

They are selfish.

They are not doing their job.

They should have a term limit.

MODERATOR—RICK SANTORUM?

I don't know anything about him.

He pushes morals on people.

Too conservative.

Pro life.

Old fashioned.

MODERATOR—DO YOU HAVE A GENERALLY POSITIVE OR GENERALLY NEGATIVE....

I used to think he was pretty good, but I don't remember the whole incident a couple months ago. I know there is a whole scandal with something he did or something he said.

Again, I'm going to drop my opinion a little bit, I would really need to listen to a lot more before I decide.

Ultra conservative.

Just another politician.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT BOB CASEY?

Bob Casey's son.

(many talking at once)

Living vicariously through your dad.

He's running for senate against Santorum.

I believe he was DA, wasn't he? I think he's the Pennsylvania district attorney.

Was he the DA or auditor?

I think maybe both of them. I'm not sure. I know he had some kind of a government spot.

Yeah.

MODERATOR-HOW ABOUT JIM GURLOCK?

I have been getting plastered with a bunch of e-mails at work from him. Or from someone from his office, someone running his office, which really annoys me.

I get phone calls.

Postcards, e-mails.

(many talking at once)

If there weren't so many...we finally got a new software to block all that. I have to go and look, do I want to let it in. And what annoys me is, I have to go and look because I have to block everyone else that could be a client that's trying to e-mail me. I was getting a bunch of them.

I just read an article today in the Phoenix about Lois Murphy who is running against Jim Gurlock. That's the only thing I've really heard about him, about the environment. That's the only thing I've really heard about either of them.

And I think, we are so used to campaign bashing, he said, she said, we said, and you've got to kind of be your own ...you have to decipher for yourself somewhere in the middle who is telling the truth and what's real and what's not. And so, you almost kind of become numb to the mudslinging. And it's obnoxious half the time.

MODERATOR-SO GURLOCK IS A MEMBER OF CONGRESS FOR YOU GUYS. DO YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF HIM?

I can say that he returned my letter. I know that he got \$300,000 for the state of Pennsylvania for town lunch programs. We had a town watch, I organized a town watch, because we had a serial arsonist and I wrote him a letter. And he actually responded

back to me and gave me information. You never know if you are going to write the letter and some secretary might....but he responded back to me on the process of trying to get some of it state funded.

When I want to read the stuff, I go to my newspapers and other publications to read it. I don't need to have....to me that's SPAM. People pay me to do a job and I need to do that job, just like politicians. They get paid to do a job, they shouldn't be getting SPAMMED.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT LOIS MURPHY? ANY SENSE OF HER?

Just what I read in the paper today.

Couldn't tell you.

Nothing.

I haven't started getting stuff in the mailbox everyday.

(many talking at once)

Towards the end of this month, that's when people are going to start heightening their awareness of everything going on for people who do vote.

I keep thinking, if all those pieces of paper that I get in my mailbox, if they put that money towards useful things, how much better could the country be?

MODERATOR—I WANT TO TALK ABOUT ONE OTHER PERSON AND THAT IS 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. AND THEN ON HANDOUT #2, WRITE DOWN ALL THE DOUBTS YOU HAVE ABOUT HIM. WHAT ARE THE GOOD THINGS THAT YOU WROTE DOWN?

He'll be out of office in two years.

He can't run again.

Sold the Texas Rangers after bankrupting them.

He has good speech writers. You can always tell when somebody wrote the speech or when he's winging it. It's night and day.

He seems as though he means well, he really does. There are some guys who just can't lead and I don't think he's a leader.

If he was a neighbor, he'd be a great neighbor, but any kind of leadership ability isn't there.

He responded strong with 9/11 at the beginning. He did unify everyone at the beginning.

He came out in support of alternative fuels like ethanol and so forth.

He chaired the reduction in tax base. There is also a bad side to that when we get to page two.

He seems to have surrounded himself with some very influential good leadership. His cabinet was strong, at least initially.

MODERATOR—FLIP TO HANDOUT #2. WHAT ARE THE DOUBTS YOU HAVE?

Attitude. Just his cockiness. I think sometimes....I was in Europe last year and just their dislike for him is immense. And that doesn't matter to us as much, but just talking to people there, my cousins. His attitude about America is it and you will do what we want. And if he was over there, they'd probably hang him.

Does not support stem cell research. I think that's atrocious personally.

I think he pushes his morals on the country. I always thought there was supposed to be a separation of government and religion. When he says homosexual marriage, it doesn't say that in the Bible. Well, you've got to separate church and state. To me, he just pushes his morals on...this is the way I believe, so this is the way it's going to be.

I think that's what is going to be his whole party's downfall in this next election. Merging church and state, there are still a tremendous amount of people who do not want that. The big thing a couple weeks ago, taking out "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance. It's been there forever, ever since it's been written, why are you merging church and state?

There's an arrogance about him really that turns people off. Look, this is the way it is and it's like this is America. We are a melting pot. Take into account a lot of different views and be very objective. I think we expect the leader to be, particularly the president of the United States, to be open to a lot of different scenarios.

I just think there's an overall disconnect with the American people that ties into everything else. It's my way or the highway. He's an arrogant prick. I have friends in England and they can't stand him either. Everybody seems to hate him because it's my way or the highway.

He sure enough hasn't balanced his own checkbook ever. You cannot overspend and cut taxes. It's great to cut taxes and give everyone a tax relief, but when you are spending at some point in time, our children or our grandchildren are going to have to pay for this. And there is no way you can spend a billion dollars a day and cut taxes and not cut something else down the road.

Too focused on the war and not enough attention on our own economy.

He's a pawn being controlled by big money and big industry.

His oil interests.

Yeah. Oil, defense.

Bad choices for some critical posts, like the whole debacle with FEMA, the head of FEMA during Katrina and all that. He made some bad choices for some of his posts. It seems like it's been favoritism until something important happens and then we'll find out about it.

I agree with most of it, like the mishandling of the war. I think we are thinning our military out too much. We've got a little in Afghanistan, we've got to worry about Iran, South Korea. That kind of worries me there. And a lot of the oil, like how everything is taking care of his oil buddies and family. That's where his money is.

Even securing our borders. What's our plan, Bush, what are we going to do? We are waiting for answers. Are we going to build a wall? Are we not going to build a wall? Are we going to police it? Are we not going to police it? Everything with him is just wishy-washy and there's no sense that he really has a handle on anything. When he speaks, I stop and I listen, but I'm like I'm changing the channel.

Some of the networks don't even carry his speeches.

A lot of times I think people tune out because he's such a poor public speaker. He has great speech writers, but he can't read it off the teleprompter. That just kills your public image. And the confidence from the public, if you can't get that across and it's right there on the teleprompter. You can't hem and haw and add an "uh" here and "uh" there.

Jay Leno has a field day all the time.

Yeah.

Letterman and some of the others.

I know we were in trouble when they started televising the President's speeches on Comedy Central.

His record on environmental issues. He is throwing away our concern for the environment. He's opening up the Arctic National Refuge to oil drilling. And I've been up there and seen that and I don't want any oil drilling going on up there. That's ridiculous. The place is beautiful. Some places just have to remain sacred no matter what.

You've got to do other alternative fuels and you never heard him discuss that before.

You contrast this president to somebody like Ronald Reagan and you talk about the fuel, which is a hot button for all of us. I can't imagine in the Reagan administration, which was also republican, if we would have just taken this. You get a sense that it would have been different.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO TALK NOW ABOUT THE ELECTIONS UPCOMING IN LESS THAN THREE MONTHS. THEY ARE GOING TO BE FOR GOVERNOR, SENATOR, CONGRESS, PLUS A LOT OF LOCAL OFFICES. WOULD YOU SAY, GIVEN EVERYTHING WE'VE TALKED ABOUT, YOU ARE MORE OR LESS MOTIVATED TO VOTE THIS YEAR THAN IN THE PREVIOUS ELECTIONS?

More.

More.

Yeah, more.

More.

MODERATOR—WHY?

Just because of the way things are going.

The need for change.

It's the only time to exercise your voice. It's the only time you really can speak out and be effective.

Other than that, what do you do? That's the hierarchy.

I've got to disagree. I think you mentioned earlier that people are apathetic about the whole process because the two parties have their candidates and they are machines. One of them is going to get in, if you don't like them, it doesn't matter. One of them is getting in.

It's hard to make a difference, no doubt about it.

It's hard to make a good decision.

Ten guys in this room, it's like, what are we going to do?

MODERATOR—SO, YOU DON'T SEE EITHER...

I vote every time. I'm independent, so I go back and forth. But sometimes I'm looking at the things going it's the lesser of two evils. I'm at the point like, I don't want either one of them. But you have no other choice.

People don't realize, the primaries are so important. And yet, that's where those machines are picked. And it's amazing.

But they are picked long before that. Those people are picked long before you get to the primaries because you have your bosses and your county commissioners and all that. And it gets to be a popularity contest. Okay, Joe will take us to the promised land. Well, Joe is nothing to me. Well, Joe is our man because he's done this for us. Well, he didn't do this for me.

It's politics.

I mean, it really comes down to that.

MODERATOR—OTHER THOUGHTS? DO THE REST OF YOU THINK THAT YOU CAN AFFECT SOME KIND OF A CHANGE, THAT YOU CAN MAKE THINGS BETTER?

I do.

I think it is. It's the way our society or country was formed. That's our only option. I always bring it down to big business. I can't stand big business. I've been laid off like three times in the last five years. I eat Ramen Noodles with my kids because employment wasn't enough. But there are the haves and the have nots. The have nots can never be a political force because it takes money to get elected. And it's the same thing with all the smear campaigns. But I think it's the only thing that we have that you can make a difference on. Over the last five years, I used to never write letters. And now I write one a month. I write to everybody. If you screw me, you get a letter. Seriously. I got to the point a couple times and I was like, shit, I've got to pay my electric bill today or I won't have electricity. I worked for a company, I worked eighty hours a week. I got laid off. I got \$200 a month with unemployment. And I think it's our only avenue to express ourselves. You could say yes or no it doesn't make a difference. Maybe it doesn't, but for me to vote makes me feel better.

I think it makes a difference more like on a local level, like your supervisors or your state congressmen or your state senators because they are more accountable. You see them more often. You are like, look, I voted for you because you are more for the Grow Green Initiative. And now you are backing out. It's not just my opinion, I talk to my neighbors and all that. And they take notice of that because they know it's more of a local thing. And it's like if you have a United States senator, I'm one person out of how many people does he...it might be a million people that he might represent. But like a state senator, it's only like 20,000 people he represents. So they are more accountable, I think, that way.

I think it does matter. And sometimes when you get like a coalition to really back something like the taxpayer thing last year. We pushed out a bunch of judges and incumbents because of the way they voted. But unless you have some kind of agenda, the individual ...just to do in and vote A or B, it doesn't matter.

I think when you talk to your neighbors, in general, you are not going to...it's one topic that people do not like to discuss, politics. But if you touch on a topic and if it's close to the time to vote, it sticks in a person's mind. That's why those smear campaigns work so well. You get people out there that are voting and it's that last scare tactic. Oh, you don't want John Smith because he voted this way over his last four years. Oh, I don't want him in. It's the last commercial you saw and that's all part of marketing, which is horrible. And that's why I think you definitely need caps on campaign spending.

If you look at the last two Bush elections, for example, and they were very, very close. And that was compelling to me. I was watching TV, like most people, I was glued watching the reds and the blues. And it was coming into the eleventh hour because it was just so darn close, despite the electoral college and everything. I felt empowered and invigorated by that. Whatever issues there were, I felt that I really mattered. And I felt that maybe perhaps more in those last two Bush elections, Bush vs. Gore and Bush vs. Kerry, than ever before. And I'm just being drawn into it because it was so close.

MODERATOR-FOR YOU GUYS PERSONALLY, WHAT IS THIS UPCOMING ELECTION GOING TO BE ABOUT?

Moderation traits. I'm not looking for someone who is coming out and being an ultra conservative, I'm looking for someone who is a representative of what I'm looking for. I don't see that with any of them. It's either one way or...you are too one way or too another way. You never have someone who is like the common man or woman. They are not...come down to the real reality here and what the issues are. There is no bonding. You mentioned Gurlock and Murphy. Gurlock who? He could have probably walked in and we wouldn't know him. It could be one of us here for all I know.

(many talking at once)

We almost have like a tier system of kings andyou almost get a sense that these people are different than us. Their agenda doesn't speak to the common man. I'd like to ask any one of these politicians, particularly those in the congress and so forth, how much is a gallon of milk? I know because I just bought a gallon. How much is a box of oatmeal? How much is a gallon of gas? Most of these guys go to work in limousines or go to dignitary parties that I can only dream about.

I'd like to see someone with some new ideas. The status quo isn't working.

MODERATOR—SPECIFIC ISSUES?

Economy, fuel, foreign affairs, at home, let's think America first. Yeah, there are poor people in Africa, there are poor people in Ethiopia, and all that, but there are poor people in Canaan. We've got to start looking at home first.

I agree with that.

Domestic affairs and environmental are my two big things.

Don't pound your morals on us. Be moral, but don't try to shove it down the public's throat. Nowhere in the Constitution does it say marriage of a man and a woman or a woman and a woman or a man and a man. I could care less, alright? Period. They have the right to vote. You should worry about that.

I drive in another township and the gas price is different because there are more taxes there than there are down in Shady Maple. It's crazy. There is no parity between two towns that are just miles apart. So, given that I live in Downietown and somebody else may live in Coatsville or whatever, those issues, again, are for fuel, our aging population. That's certainly a concern for me. Is Social Security going to be there when I retire? I really worry about those issues.

It will never happen, but if anybody had the courage and the ability to really bring out the corruption and put it on the table and weed it out, at any level, I'd vote for them. I'd be there in a heartbeat.

I think if a common man was running, not these professional politicians.

Like a Ross Perot type?

Well, just somebody walking around in shorts and a tee-shirt and saying, yeah, I'm going to be running for state rep. To me, I'm more in line with that kind of thinking. To me, that's the normal, everyday person I would talk to. Not just somebody who has been a politician for twenty years now. They started at township supervisor, mayor, now I'm state senator, I'm going for....

Like the guy in Connecticut who won last night. He was a common Joe, never held political office before today. And he got the common vote. You don't have that.

MODERATOR—WHAT ARE YOU HEARING FROM THE CANDIDATES SO FAR?

Nothing that is good.

Nothing.

I did see a commercial for Santorum where he's sitting there saying, they say I'm too conservative, but this one here says I'm not conservative at all. That's the only thing I've seen, that one commercial and that one article I read.

I'm still in non voting mode. I'll hear something on the radio and I'll immediately flip the channel.

Exactly.

It's too early.

Maybe in September, October, I'll start.

MODERATOR—THE TV ADS HAVE STARTED ALREADY AND IT IS PARTICULARLY EARLY. USUALLY IT'S AFTER LABOR DAY. ANYBODY ELSE HEAR ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR? HOW ABOUT AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL? WHY DO REPUBLICANS SAY YOU SHOULD VOTE REPUBLICAN THIS YEAR?

The division in the democratic party is one of the things that they've been focusing on. Like Lieberman got axed because he supported the war and the democratic party, that's one of the main reasons that he said he didn't get voted for. He's still a supporter of the war. I think a lot of the stuff on the republican end, you talk to one democrat and he says this, and somebody else in the same party has the complete opposite view.

We are better because they don't have a clear cut candidate. There is division amongst the democratic party.

It will be interesting, in my opinion, how the republicans handle Lieberman losing. Are they all going to jump the Bush ship now because of the war? I don't know what he lost by, but you are right, that was one of the biggest reasons why he lost. A lot of the national politics now, the senators and the congressmen for election, say we are not with him anymore.

MODERATOR—WHY DO REPUBLICANS SAY YOU SHOULD VOTE REPUBLICAN THIS YEAR?

I don't know.

I haven't heard any arguments for.

The war on terror. We can't pull out yet, it will cause civil war. We've got to finish the job.

Not much.

MODERATOR—OKAY, HOW ABOUT DEMOCRATS? WHY DO DEMOCRATS SAY YOU SHOULD VOTE FOR THEM?

It's time for a change.

Yeah.

Get the incumbent out.

MODERATOR-WHAT KIND OF CHANGE?

I read thatit was on MSNBC about the democratic national strategy and I was like, what the hell is that? The problem was it was like we need to fix the economy. Yeah?

(many talking at once)

Well, what's your strategy. The republicans are saying that too. It's like they don't have any plan for it, but....

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—WHAT ELSE?

Bring the troops home.

Yeah, I was just going to say that. They have an exit plan supposedly.

Environmental.

MODERATOR—RIGHT NOW REPUBLICANS CONTROL THE WHITE HOUSE, THE SENATE, THE HOUSE. IF DEMOCRATS TAKE BACK THE HOUSE AND/OR THE SENATE THIS YEAR, HOW DO YOU THINK THINGS WOULD BE DIFFERENT?

I'm not sure they are going to be different.

Not right away. I think it's going to take four to six years before you see any real big change. It's going to take awhile to get stuff going and moving.

More bickering.

MODERATOR—DO YOU THINK THAT WE ARE MORE LIKELY TO GET OUT OF IRAQ QUICKER IF DEMOCRATS HAVE CONTROL?

Yeah.

Just as a hot button, yeah.

I think they might not bring them home faster, but I think they'll actually start implementing a plan. I mean there is no plan right now about when these guys are going to be coming home. They might say, yeah, it's not going to be for like another five years, but at least there will be something concrete down. I think that they will do that. But like I said, I don't think we'll be pulling them out right away, but I think they will implement a plan.

But I think what you are going to get though is, now we've got to pay for what Bush created and you are going to have taxation and runaway inflation and other issues that based on a format or a platform will come back to bite us in the ass, and become our nemesis. They are going to say, look what Bush did, we've got to pay for that. Now it's going to have to be through your taxation. It's going to have to be through inflation. And I envision things getting are worse, not to be a naysayer, before they get better.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO MOVE TO THE SPECIFIC NOW. I WANT TO GET YOUR REACTION TO SOME OF THE ADS. FLIP TO HANDOUT #3 IN YOUR PACKETS. THE FIRST COUPLE THAT WE ARE GOING TO WATCH ARE FROM SANTORUM AND CASEY FOR THE SENATE RACE. I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO RATE EACH ONE ON THIS SCALE. ZERO MEANS WHERE YOU ARE AT RIGHT NOW. IF THE AD MAKES YOU A LITTLE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR SANTORUM, YOU WILL MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION. IF IT MAKES YOU A LITTLE MORE LIKELY TO VOTE FOR CASEY, YOU WILL MOVE THIS WAY. IT'S NOT A COMMITMENT THAT YOU ARE GOING TO VOTE THAT WAY OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT, IT JUST MEANS THAT WHAT YOU SAW IN THAT AD MADE YOU THINK A LITTLE MORE IN THIS DIRECTION OR THAT DIRECTION. THEN WRITE WHAT YOU TOOK AWAY FROM THE AD AT THE BOTTOM. (FIRST AD SHOWN) WHERE DID YOU FALL ON THAT SCALE?

Two towards Casey.

Same.

Three towards Casey.

Three.

One.

Three.

Zero.

One towards Casey.

Two towards Casey.

Zero.

MODERATOR—EIGHT OF THE TEN OF YOU WENT A LITTLE BIT TOWARDS CASEY. YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU FOUND IN THAT THAT WAS COMPELLING.

He talked about the common person getting....taking away from big business...helping them out instead of corporations.

Like a hometown guy, walking with people and being with the people.

Mentioning tax cuts a lot. That's what people want to hear.

David and Goliath effect, going after the big corporations and for the common man.

Living within your means.

He said you have to have a balanced budget, but like we said before, who is going to pay for that?

(end of side)

He's going to cut taxes for the middle class or get rid of the....the balanced budget is two-sided. You have to balance the budget, but who is going to pay for it?

MODERATOR—OTHER IMPRESSIONS?

Same thing. No more tax cuts for the upper echelon.

I think his tone was convincing and heartfelt.

MODERATOR—SO WHY DID YOU GO TO ZERO?

Primarily because it's another campaign ad. He approves of this message, if I hear that one more time...

MODERATOR—THAT'S LEGALLY MANDATED.

Yeah. Thank God that that is reminding me that this is an ad from a politician who is making another promise so I guess that's why I left it at indifferent.

MODERATOR—OKAY.

The same thing with me. No difference because how many fricking times have we heard this? Everybody says we are going to get rid of this, we are going to balance the budget, we are not going to spend any money. And nothing ever happens.

MODERATOR—LET'S WATCH ONE FROM SANTORUM NOW. FLIP TO HANDOUT #4. (NEXT AD RUN)

One towards Santorum.

Yeah, one towards Santorum.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

Two for Santorum.

One towards Santorum.

Zero.

Zero.

MODERATOR—MOST OF YOU WERE ZERO, BUT A FEW OF YOU WENT A LITTLE BIT TOWARDS SANTORUM. TELL ME WHAT YOU FOUND CONVINCING ABOUT THAT ONE?

I got an impression that he was on board with the dependency that we need to break with foreign oil. I'm watching these guys make sheets out of our flag, it's that temperament that goes back to 9/11 and all. All on board with breaking any and all Middle Eastern ties.

Same thing. I agree with the message. The way they did the commercial, all the fire and showing all that stuff is a little too harsh for the message. A little softer message, a little more straight talk.

It's like he's playing the terrorist card.

He's playing into the fear.

Exactly.

That's exactly why I stayed with a zero. He's playing the terrorist card from five years ago. You know what? Step up five years ago and say this is what we are going to do and this is what we did. Not play it now to gain some votes and pat yourself on the back about securing a hundred billion dollars. Tell me how many jobs you got with that hundred billion dollars, not I created new jobs. You could have created ten new jobs. Or did he create a hundred new jobs and for what county?

I went with zero because what is it for me? How far away are we from this? I mean, show me your special interest groups. How much money are you still taking from oil companies and things like that, even though you are doing this? You are talking out of both sides of your mouth there. Okay, I'm doing this, but I'm also doing this.

The one problem I have is to me it's like using hate to promote the good that he did. I mean, if he just came out and said, yeah I'm securing money for this coal to energy plant, that's one thing. But it's like, to show the people screaming and burning flags and all that, I mean that's using hate to promote your agenda.

My question is, how much of a difference did it make. Is it .000001%? We have one plant.

The question I have is how much for the company did building that plant, how much of a tax break did they get? You can create a thousand jobs and have a thousand new people working, that thousand people still do not make up enough of a tax base that that company would pay for that first year.

And what company does that company reside in that owns it?

MODERATOR—LET'S FLIP TO HANDOUT #5. THIS ONE IS FOR THE HOUSE SEAT. (NEXT AD RUN) JIM GURLOCK TO THE RIGHT, LOIS MURPHY TO THE LEFT.

I went three for Gurlock.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

One for Murphy.

Zero.

One for Gurlock.

Three for Gurlock.

Zero.

One for Gurlock.

MODERATOR—OKAY, FOUR OF YOU WENT TOWARDS GURLOCK, TELL ME WHY.

He mentioned that he speaks his mind to Bush. I don't know if he really does. He could say that all day. I like the idea of the no amnesty for illegal immigrants as well.

Pretty much the same thing, acknowledges that Bush may not always be right. At least he acknowledged that fact.

He speaks his mind and stands up for what he believes in, regardless of whether it falls along party lines or not.

I'm skeptical because to me he's just saying that because he knows that Bush is coming under fire for everything. He's like, I'm trying to distance myself a little bit from him. So that just made me very skeptical. I'm for Bush, unless I don't agree with him, then I'mit just seems....he's trying to cover his own ass.

I felt the same thing. Now Bush's popularity is down, it's time to move away from him. Distance yourself.

Get back to September of '01, I support everything he does.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU THINK OF SEEING HIM AND HEARING FROM HIM?

He's not Jim Gurlock.

Is he, again I'm not that familiar with him, he targeted the Burke's County there? Is there any reason?

MODERATOR—YEAH, I THINK THIS WAS RUNNING ON CABLE, SO....

It's interesting with the other ad, they were talking more home base and he went very national, at least I thought. And he compared himself to Bush. And then he started talking about immigration. Naturally that's a hot topic, but I never thought immigration was a major issue in this area. He didn't touch anything locally at all.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—IT'S BEEN A BIG ISSUE FOR A LONG TIME IN KENNETH SQUARE.

Right.

(many talking at once)

You know, he's just....you get a feeling that that's bullshit. I take all of these ads with a grain of salt. I watch them and I'm like, what do I make of it? Again, I'm back to submitting to you what I said initially, which is that I read and I watch and I listen on the radio and then I have to make a decision based on what is true and what isn't. It's like an interview process. What is my gut telling me?

Yeah.

What is my gut telling me?

It looks like the bashing ones. You believe that also. It's the same thing.

Is it the real deal or is it just another politician blowing smoke?

MODERATOR—OKAY, LET'S FLIP TO HANDOUT #6. WE'LL HEAR FROM THE OTHER SIDE. (NEXT AD RUN)

Three, Gurlock.

Two towards Murphy.

Zero.

One towards Gurlock.

Zero.

Zero.

Three towards Murphy.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

MODERATOR—THE TWO FOR WHOM MURPHY ACTUALLY SPENT HER MONEY CORRECTLY, TELL ME WHY.

I just got a sense that, again without having all the facts and figures and the ability to research both truths or half truths or what have you, it's like coming in and you making a statement to me and somebody saying, oh really, Carl. It was total exposure. I kind of bought into that. If you are going to make an accusation like that, you better be able to support that and have all your facts and figures because he's not going to take that lying down. So, therefore, I gave her the benefit of the doubt in her statement that she's calling him on something.

Yeah, I'd agree with that and what she's calling him on too. I didn't get impressed by Gurlock. So kind of like the feeling I got from his was reinforced by hers.

MODERATOR—HOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU, WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION TO THIS ONE?

It really doesn't state where she stands on the issues. She states where he stands on the issues. And it's like, I want to be an independent voice. But she doesn't state like how she feels about immigration or big oil or anything like that. She's here, I'm here fighting for the families in Burke's County. Yes. She doesn't give any issues of how she stands on them.

I'm the same way. She didn't really say anything to me.

Right.

Except bashing and mudslinging. Whenever I hear bashing, I turn it off.

Exactly.

I agree, she didn't state where she stood on any one of those topics that she just tried to bash him on. She brought up a good point by saying, this is his voting record over the

past, which is a good start. But you need to follow up. You can't just throw the softball out there and not follow up with the fast pitch.

See, I have a problem with mudslinging ads because if you can't stand on your own beliefs and your own issues, like how you stand on issues, you are resorting to putting down the other person. To me, that doesn't make a strong candidate.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO LOOK AT A FEW MORE ADS HAVING TO DO WITH THE RACE FOR THE HOUSE. WHAT OFTEN HAPPENS IN THESE RACES, THEY'LL PUT UP ADS IN ONE PLACE, SEE IF THEY WORK OR NOT, AND THEN TAKE THE SAME AD AND CHANGE THE FACE, CHANGE THE FACTS, BUT IT'S KIND OF THE SAME MIX AND MATCH KIND OF APPROACH. SO WE'VE GOT SOME OTHER ADS THAT ARE AIRING IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY THAT MAY VERY WELL END UP POPPING UP HERE. SO HERE'S MY CHEAT SHEET. IN THESE ADS, WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT CHRIS JAKOLA, YOU ARE THINKING JIM GURLOCK. AND WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT JOE DONNELLY, YOU ARE THINKING LOIS MURPHY. SO JAKOLA IS THE REPUBLICAN INCUMBENT IN INDIANA. AND JOE DONNELLY IS THE DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGER. SO, GO TO HANDOUT #7. (NEXT AD RUN)

Zero.

One towards Gurlock.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

One towards Gurlock.

Zero.

Zero.

Zero.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF THAT ONE.

Again, the negative tone. It's like the mudslinging and not standing on the issues. He's bringing out the negative of what the other candidate....

Yep, you don't tell me what you are going to do for me. You tell me what the other guy has done to me. On the other hand, the reason why I swayed, at least partially, is because taxes are a hot issue. Again, maybe it's personal, I'm just thinking, okay, this guy voted how and what? It's causing me to pay more attention to something that is a hot button, so therefore you've got my attention. I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt. You didn't convince me totally but you convinced me enough to pay attention.

MODERATOR—REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU SCORED IT, DO YOU WALK AWAY LINKING JOE DONNELLY AND HIGHER TAXES AFTER YOU SEE THIS?

No. I reject it for the negative tone like everybody else said. But again, you don't know if this guy that's paying for this stands for the same things that he's downplaying. He's not saying he doesn't.

So I couldn't see where the source was either. I tried to see where the source is. If it's the Pottstown Mercury, it's one thing. If it's the Philadelphia Enquirer, it's another thing.

Or the National Enquirer.

It's unfortunate that mudslinging has become so prevalent in our elections and in our ads. But when you really equate it to any kind of competition, it's almost inevitable. You can take a simple kid's soccer game or whatever and you can kind of get caught up in that. You can almost see where that comes from. But, again, you have to keep itI would never....

You can sling mud, but then back it up with something.

That's a good point.

I would be more receptive to that than just saying bad, bad, bad. If it's bad, but hey, I stand for this, this and this. Or at least something on the other side of it to give you a little bit more...I would listen to it a little bit more than just someone saying this guy is against this and this person did this.

(many talking at once)

And then I attribute some of that to the thirty-second spot. You can only do so much in thirty seconds.

MODERATOR—THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY LIMITED BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO ENDORSE IT AT THE BEGINNING AND SAY WHO IS PAYING FOR IT AND ALL THAT. LET'S SEE A DIFFERENT TAKE ON THIS, A RESPONSE TO THAT. GO TO HANDOUT #8. (NEXT AD RUN)

Zero again.

One towards Murphy.

One towards Murphy.

Zero.

Zero.

One towards Murphy.

One towards Murphy.

Zero.

Two towards Murphy.

Zero.

MODERATOR—OKAY. SO HALF OF YOU DID GO TOWARDS MURPHY A LITTLE BIT ON THIS, WHY?

Serious numbers there. That got my attention.

Yeah.

It's a stat that you can easily go look up. How much stock does he own in the oil company? He has to disclose that running for public office. So that's going to let you know, alright, that's what his personal finance is. Now, he's running for public office. Where is his vote going to lie? He doesn't want that stock to go down.

You take a huge hit when you own that many shares if it goes down a couple dollars. Bye, bye.

Voting records is one thing and tax breaks for big oil and all that, but when you see the personal interest in oil and all that. He's for himself not for his constituents.

Again, showing just the negativity of...yeah, okay, so he's got big oil stocks. What are you doing? How do I know you don't have holdings in Iraq or whatever?

I think the big difference between this one and the other ones, why I kind of swayed the other way, this was the democratic committee. It wasn't the candidate coming out and saying, yeah, I'm the candidate running against him. It's the whole party, which I understand the whole party is the pump master. But it's not like it's Murphy coming out and saying, I'm Lois Murphy and I approve this. It's the democratic committee that did this.

I think this one was a lot more effective because it showed what he personally is doing and what he personally owns. But still it's not telling me anything about what you are going to do for me.

It brought it home too with the price at the pump telling you how much you spend. It's reality, you know. And there is some legitimacy to that.

I think this one is going to catch more attention with the current events. Everyone is just waiting for that ten to fifteen cent price hike within the next week or so. So that type of ad is going to definitely grab everyone's attention right from the start and then they'll see what happens.

MODERATOR—THE WAY THAT AD STARTED, THE WOMAN AT THE PUMP, DOES THAT GET YOUR ATTENTION BETTER THAN MOST OF THESE TO START WITH?

Yeah.

Yes, definitely.

We've all been there at the pump.

Yeah.

I'll be there on the way home.

Now if you really want to write a good ad, just add a couple kids in that SUV.

Have somebody burn the flag behind it.

(many talking at once)

Just again, it conjures up doubts. Did he really support big oil? It's food for thought. You leave there thinking, wow, we are talking about a lot of money.

MODERATOR—WHEN WE TALKED ABOUT CONGRESS AS AN INSTITUTION, YOU GUYS SAID CROOKS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS. DOES THAT KIND OF RESONATE?

To me, that just confirms my feeling.

Sure.

MODERATOR—ONE OF THE GREAT PHENOMENA IS THAT EVERYBODY THINKS CONGRESS IS CORRUPT, BUT NOBODY THINKS THEIR CONGRESSMAN IS CORRUPT. TYPICALLY 95-98% OF THESE GUYS GET RE-ELECTED EVERY TERM. SO NOBODY HERE KNOWS WHO JIM GURLOCK IS. DO YOU ASSUME THAT HE'S AS BAD AS THE REST OF THE CONGRESS OR DO YOU TEND TO GIVE HIM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT UNTIL YOU KNOW SOMETHING MORE?

I need to do research coming up on the election. I'll look back on past voting records and stuff like that. I don't take what the newspapers put out. I'll go on the Internet and look at voting records to see where they stood on certain issues.

I think that's a good idea too. I know the Philadelphia Daily News, for example, will show you in a pullout page for you to take with you to the ballot. Here is where these people voted their pay raises. Here is where these people voted for various issues. Please be mindful of this when you go to vote. I look for that all the time as well.

I agree with that because that's the same thing I do. As it gets closer to election day, I'll go on different websites and check out how they voted. I even just check up on different things to see what they said recently, see if they make some statement off the cuff that hasn't been rehearsed. Hey, this is what they said at this public event.

I always give the challenger a head start in an election. I always see the incumbent as negative, especially in these times. I'll do my homework coming up to the election time, like what has he done, what has she done for me or for the economy, or how have they voted? What is the incumbent's platform and what do they plan on doing or what is the challenger's platform and what are their ideas? But right out of the gate, the challenger in my mind always has the head start because of the way things are today.

MODERATOR—I WANT TO SHOW ONE MORE OF THESE. AGAIN, THIS IS FROM A DIFFERENT PLACE. JOHN HOSTETLER EQUALS JIM GURLOCK HERE. (NEXT AD RUN)

Four for the opponent, Murphy.

One towards Murphy.

Zero.

Two towards Murphy.

Two for Murphy.

Two towards Murphy.

Two towards Murphy.

Zero.

One towards Murphy.

Zero.

MODERATOR—THE MAJORITY OF YOU MOVED IN THE SAME DIRECTION FOR THE FIRST TIME ON ANY OF THESE. TELL ME WHY.

I'm in the National Guard and I've been in the military for 26 years and when I see something like that, it really tugs at my heartstrings. And the pay raise thing.

Me too.

I know guys personally in the Reserves who have got well paying jobs and had to go over there and now their families are struggling. And for them to come right out and say, hey you voted down a raise for them and voted himself a pay raise....bashing immediately hit me, what a jerk.

No matter what is going on in the world, you've got to support the troops, no matter what. And so I think that tugs at your heartstrings. How can you not support the troops? People are giving up their lives. Converse to that I'm always thinking, okay what else was in that bill that was added to that he voted no against? Was it strictly just the military raise, yes or no, or were there other things tacked onto it that he voted no to?

Military has always been a soft spot. I'm a veteran myself and when I was in the Air Force, I knew master sergeants who were on second jobs because their salaries couldn't feed their families. They had to take a second job at like a Mini Mart. It's like a pay raise is shot down, but you vote yourself one....that's why I kind of swayed the other way.

I voted zero just because of the slinging, but it did piss me off. It's anger. These guys always seem like they are voting themselves raises. My personal opinion, I think the military deserves more money than a lot of people. They should be taken care of because they put their lives on the line. That hit a nerve. I think when it starts, it hits the nerve right away for military personnel. They definitely deserve more than for a politician to vote himself a raise when they also receive other allowances for housing and cars, transportation. You know what? Do without something because you know that the military families are doing without something besides one of the parents not being there. Or a spouse not being there for the other. That's why I went that way.

I have to agree too, whenever I see a politician vote themselves a raise I'm like, I don't get a chance to vote myself a raise, you know. What the hell?

I did a hell of a job this year.

Exactly.

And when he said, what else was in that bill. When you see the politicians vote themselves a raise, there is nothing else in that bill, most times.

Most of the ones who don't vote themselves a pay raise are the ones coming up for re-election.

Right.

MODERATOR—AND THEY ALWAYS HAVE THE OPTION OF NOT TAKING IT TOO.

Yeah.

I have heard that they can, but how many do?

The ones coming up for re-election.

MODERATOR—OKAY, LET ME GO BACK TO THIS ORIGINAL TAX ATTACK AND LOOK AT IT AGAIN. WE ARE NOT GOING TO RATE IT OR ANYTHING AND THEN I WANT TO LOOK AT ONE OTHER RESPONSE TO IT. (AD RUN AGAIN) NOW FLIP TO HANDOUT #10 AND THIS IS ONE THAT WE DON'T HAVE VIDEO OF, ANOTHER RESPONSE TO THIS ATTACK ON TAXES. I WANT TO SEE WHAT YOU THINK OF THIS ONE.

THE DEMOCRAT SAYS AMERICANS ARE STRUGGLING TO KEEP UP WITH THE SKYROCKETING COSTS OF GAS, HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION. PRESIDENT BUSH AND JIM GURLOCK'S ECONOMIC POLICIES HAVE PRODUCED RECORD DEFICITS WHILE GIVING AWAY BILLIONS IN TAX CUTS TO THEIR CORPORATE BACKERS AND SHIFTING THE TAX BURDEN EVEN FURTHER ONTO THE MIDDLE CLASS. WE SHOULD REPEAL TAX GIVEAWAYS TO COMPANIES THAT SEND JOBS OVERSEAS AND MILLIONAIRES WHO DON'T NEED RELIEF, AND INSTEAD PASS FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE MIDDLE CLASS TAX CUTS; MAKE COLLEGE TUITION TAX DEDUCTIBLE, GIVE TAX CREDITS FOR FIRST-TIME HOMEBUYERS AND TAX BREAKS FOR CARE GIVING EXPENSES ON BEHALF OF AN AGING PARENT.

RATE THAT ONE ON THE SAME SCALE.

Zero.

Three towards Murphy.

Three, Murphy.

One towards Murphy.

Two towards Murphy.

Three towards Murphy.

One towards Murphy.

Three towards Murphy.

Zero.

MODERATOR—SO AGAIN, MOST OF YOU WENT TOWARDS MURPHY ON THIS ONE. WHAT STANDS OUT TO YOU IN THIS STATEMENT HERE?

He's saying all the right things at the end. We should repeal tax giveaways, pass fiscally responsible middle class tax cuts, make college tuition tax deductible, give tax credits for first-time homebuyers. I mean, they are all hot button topics. I can relate to them.

Yeah, they all hit home.

MODERATOR—YOU WERE A ZERO ON JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING, WHY DID YOU GO THREE TO THIS?

It hits all the hot buttons of things that probably would improve the economy and stimulate it for the majority. Almost everybody can relate to one or more of these buttons that are pointed out on this list.

And not only stimulate the economy, but these are things that I could see directly. I can see my tax return being bigger because I'm writing off my college tuition. I could see these things more direct.

The only things none of the ads have hit, which in my opinion would help, is let's put some tax relief in the companies that want to reinvest and put up some new manufacturing plants here. And some tax relief for the middle class to buy from those people. Let's start to stimulate our own economy. Everything in this room comes from another country. We are a service country at this point.

That's a very good point. That's a very, very good point.

And you don't see any plants going up. We don't manufacture anything anymore. We are just a service country.

Let's reinvest it here, yeah.

When you look at what we manufacture in the immediate area even, it's virtually nothing, much less Pennsylvania. What do we manufacture locally? You look at the average price of homes, the median house here is what? \$400K plus? But we are not making anything. We are service oriented. And this gentleman can speak to the fact that he's been laid off how many times? And that's inevitable for all of us as we approach middle age and beyond. It's inevitable, who is next?

MODERATOR—OTHER REACTIONS TO THIS ONE?

They were talking about the cost of gas, healthcare and education, but they didn't come back with their solution and say, this is what we are thinking about as to how to fix those skyrocketing costs. I agree with everyone else. I think they hit home with the college tuition tax deduction, fiscally responsible middle class tax cuts. They never said, well here are the problems, but we are not going to address those, we are going to address these. Well, what are you doing about those? We all know that gas, healthcare and education are high, well what are you doing about it? That's why I only gave him a little bit.

MODERATOR—THE FIRST PART IS SAYING, OKAY, AMERICANS ARE STRUGGLING AND THE SECOND PART IS, PRESIDENT BUSH AND JIM GURLOCK'S ECONOMIC POLICIES HAVE PRODUCED RECORD DEFICITS WHILE GIVING AWAY BILLIONS IN TAX BREAKS. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT SECTION OF IT? DOES THAT RESONATE?

Yeah, it's also kind of interesting how the democrats are linking Jim Gurlock with George Bush.

They are making them synonymous.

Yeah.

You have to think, he's close to thethe governorship leads to....I can understand that.

MODERATOR—OBVIOUSLY THEY DO THEIR RESEARCH, BUT IF THEY SAT IN HERE AND SAW HOW WE TALKED ABOUT BUSH EARLIER THEY'D SAY, LET'S LINK HIM UP. SO IT MAKES SENSE. BUT IS IT A FAIR INDICTMENT OF GURLOCK?

Don't know.

We really don't know.

You hear Bush in there and you link it together.

MODERATOR—DO YOU AGREE WITH PRESIDENT BUSH'S ECONOMIC POLICIES, THAT THEY HAVE DONE THIS?

Yes.

Oh yes.

Absolutely.

Yes.

For me, I would have had a Jim Gurlock vote for specific topics on specific issues. And that will make my final decision.

MODERATOR—ONE OTHER THING THAT IS A PART OF THIS WONDERFUL CAMPAIGN PHENOMENON IS THE MAIL. (MAIL PIECES HANDED OUT) REACTION TO THIS?

If it comes to the house, I see, oh look it's something about a politician, I'm not even going to look at it. I don't care what the colors are, what it is showing.

First of all, the ad is really poorly laid out.

MODERATOR—THIS WOULD BE A FOUR PIECE.

Oh.

MODERATOR—I PRINTED THIS OFF THE INTERNET. THIS ON THEIR WEBSITE.

(many talking at once)

It would hit the trash without me even opening it.

Yeah, exactly.

My question would be like it's a \$2,031.65 each year savings, I never saw that. I never saw two grand. That would be my argument.

MODERATOR—SO YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT PENNSYLVANIA TAX FILERS SAVED ON AVERAGE \$2,031.65?

No. I'm pretty sure I haven't. Somebody might have saved three or four million dollars and averaged out among everybody, yeah, it's everybody who saved \$2,000. I personally don't think I did.

MODERATOR—OTHER REACTIONS TO THIS? THE FUNDAMENTAL POINT IT'S TRYING TO MAKE, LOIS MURPHY EQUALS HIGHER TAXES, DOES IT CONVEY THAT?

No.

No.

It's confusing.

It's not even clear cut.

If you were to really have this and I know I wouldn't read it in my mailbox, but if you really looked at it like this, the first thing I'm going to get when I open it is when I finally get down to the bottom where it says Lois Murphy has promised to raise taxes, I'll be like before I even get to that name, you are saying good things, but then you are driving home point is....there is just too much mud right there. So if I was to have anything to do with this ad, you'd have to just change it somewhat so it wouldn't be such.....just throwing dirt.

That's a good point.

The fact that the bad part is so tiny, I wouldn't even notice it either. Then throw it away and I wouldn't even read it.

MODERATOR—NOW LET'S LOOK AT A COUPLE OF ONES FROM HER. NOW, UNFORTUNATELY, SHE DOESN'T HAVE HER MAIL PIECES ON THE INTERNET, SO YOU'LL HAVE TO SHARE THEM. (MAIL PIECES PASSED AROUND)

I don't like her look. I wouldn't vote for her.

(many talking at once)

MODERATOR—REACTIONS TO THIS ONE?

I laugh because it said congress should conduct a full-scale investigation into price gauging. They did that, but it was just a dog and pony show. It's like they had some CEO's come in and they were like, yeah, yeah, we had record profits. But congress is like, hey we are investigating this and we never saw another thing about it. Never saw another thing about it.

They did it in '04 with AMOCO in Chicago, right?

Yeah.

And they just did it last year after Katrina. We are going to investigate this and then nothing. Never heard anything about it.

I do like that she put in there that she's not taking anything from the oil. That's one positive I got out of it. But it's too big an issue for one person to deal with. She's not taking it but the other three hundred plus are.

MODERATOR—THE PICTURE, DOES IT GRAB YOU?

It's a little weak. It didn't really do much.

It wouldn't stop me.

(many talking at once)

I don't like the picture.

(many talking at once)

Did this go out already?

MODERATOR—I'M QUITE SURE THIS WENT OUT ALREADY.

If you are comparing it to...I would at least look at...

(many talking at once)

And if they zoomed in on the prices of gas without the woman in the foreground, maybe I'd look at it for another half a second.

And once again, the Bush/Gurlock special interests.

MODERATOR—IS THIS EFFECTIVE? DOES IT MAKE THE POINT THAT SHE'S NOT HIGHER TAXES AND HE'S SPECIAL INTERESTS?

I think it makes the point.

It's effective.

Yeah, I think that point is very well made.

MODERATOR—ALRIGHT, LET'S LOOK AT ONE OTHER ONE. (MAIL PIECE HANDED OUT) WHAT'S YOUR REACTION?

I'd put it in the trash.

Yeah.

She's only dealing with one issue. Where do you stand on everything else?

MODERATOR—JUST LOOKING AT THIS ONE ISOLATED....

Too much verbiage on the front. If you are going to try to hit home, it home with a quick one statement.

A short statement, not that whole line.

I thought she made her point. Gurlock, special interests, higher taxes, oil prices. Me, I'm not doing it.

She's got a lot of chutzpah here. She says, I believe Congress should conduct a full-scale investigation. You don't hear too many of them going out there and saying that. I think that's very effective. You got my attention. It's one thing to mudsling, well he said, she said, we said, but to come in and make the accusation and then back it by saying, I challenge you to investigate it. That's effective to me.

MODERATOR—WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS COVER? DOES THIS GRAB YOU?

It's really...that's not the right one for this ad.

Yeah.

No.

And also, I don't take anyI believe Congress should take a full-scale investigation. There is no way a freshman congresswoman is going to go in and get a full-scale Congressional investigation.

That's true. To me, that's just a blind....something to throw out there.

You are right. That's a good point. What's the likelihood of that really getting done?

Yeah.

I would rather have that, though, then somebody who doesn't want to try.

Yeah, I agree. We all said kind of the same thing earlier that change is what is needed.

I agree.

If only somebody would step up and do it.

Until I see it done, though, I'm just not going to believe that's going to happen. But like you said, though, seeing that is better than not seeing it at all. It's like saying, okay, I'm just going to turn a blind eye to it.

MODERATOR—WHICH ONE OF THESE IS MORE EFFECTIVE?

I like that one.

The second one.

I don't like the picture.

Yeah.

The second one.

MODERATOR—SO THE SECOND ONE MAKES THE POINT EASIER?

Yeah.

Yeah.

MODERATOR—OKAY. LAST THING I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO DO. FLIP TO HANDOUT #13. GIVEN EVERYTHING THAT YOU FELT COMING IN HERE, GIVEN EVERYTHING THAT WE'VE TALKED ABOUT TONIGHT, FAST FORWARD THREE MONTHS AND YOU ARE IN THE VOTING BOOTH. YOU'VE GOT TO CHOOSE IN

EACH OF THESE RACES. WHICH WAY WOULD YOU GO RIGHT NOW? CIRCLE THE CANDIDATE THAT YOU WOULD AT LEAST LEAN TOWARDS RIGHT NOW AND UNDERNEATH TELL ME WHY. THANKS FOR COMING...

(end of session)