

>> Peter Robinson: Growing up in Yazoo City, Mississippi Haley Barbour defected from the Democratic Party of his family and friends, to join the Republican Party instead. In his early 20s, he was elected Chairman of the Mississippi GOP. At the time - this was the early 1970s - democrats so dominated Mississippi that out of 178 state legislators, 4 were republican. Some 2 decades later, Mississippi had a congressional delegation in which republicans outnumbered democrats, a republican governor for the first time since reconstruction and a reputation for voting solidly republican in presidential elections. Haley Barbour had a lot to do with that transformation. During the 80s, Haley Barbour served as a political advisor in the White House of Ronald Reagan, where he and I both met each other. During the 1990s, he served as Chairman of the Republican National Committee: a position to which President George H.W. Bush appointed him. And in 2003, Haley Barbour was elected the 63rd governor of the great state of Mississippi, and the second republican governor since reconstruction. He's now running for a second term. I looked all over the internet, but I couldn't find a commentator who thought he was going to have much of a fight. You may tell me about the fights you're going to have. Today the Governor of Mississippi on the current state of the Grand Old Party: Congress first. You're Chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1994 when the GOP recaptures the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years, making your friend Newt Gingrich the Speaker. This past November, the GOP lost that House majority, making your friend Denny Hastert the former Speaker. What did the GOP do right in 1994?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well I think in 1994, we ran a campaign on issues. We offered people an agenda: contract with America. We gave people something to vote for. They already had decided they didn't like Clinton's tax increase. They didn't like government run healthcare system that the Clinton's were proposing. They didn't like a lot of things about the Clinton Administration, but at the same time they wanted to see what we would do. And so we put forward a positive agenda. It's really almost unprecedented in American history. But we won the biggest midterm majority sweep in the 20th Century. We went from not having control of the House for 40 years, to gaining 54 seats in the House.

>> Peter Robinson: And when you and Newt Gingrich and a few others were planning that campaign, the famous dictum in politics - particularly with regard to the House of Representatives - is Tip O'Neill's "All politics is local." How did you know better? You nationalized that campaign.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, we did and we actually nationalized it as a positive referendum on an issue agenda. But it's an issue agenda that was broad. Most people agree with most of the things that we said we would try to do. And in fact we tried to do them. I think that's why we stayed in power for 12 years.

>> Peter Robinson: So, the negatives on the Clinton Administration were already there. You didn't have to run an attack campaign. You were going to run a positive campaign.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: We didn't have to convince people they weren't for the largest tax increase in history. And we didn't have to convince them they didn't want the federal government to run our healthcare system.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, GOP in 1994 picked up 52 new seats: 19 of them were in the south. The question here is, "Were you and Newt and the others - that national campaign in 1994 - were you actually persuading people of your point of view, or were you taking voters who were fundamentally conservative and simply persuading them to vote for a republican this time instead of a more or less conservative democrat?"

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, of course it was both. I mean you talk about we gained a lot of seats in the House. We gained several seats in Georgia. But we also gained several seats in Washington State. We gained seats all through the northeast. We gained several seats in California. So it was an across the board victory. I mean that's why it's been referred to as it has as the Greatest Midterm Majority Sweep from going from the minority to the majority. It was all over. And it was based on the issue agenda, the idea of small government, low taxes, and I think the republicans lost control of the House in 2006 not because people had decided they disagreed with those issues or principles. People decided the republicans weren't adhering to what they thought they had voted for.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, let me ask you. You hear 3 explanations for the defeat: loss of the House and the Senate last year. Corruption - Abramoff scandal, foley scandal - the disenchantment of conservative voters with big increases in domestic spending, the sense that the GOP had lost its way, and Iraq. Weight those 3.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, first of all you have to remember, in the third term -- in the second midterm election of a 2 term republican president they have historically been large losses. I mean you go back...

>> Peter Robinson: What'd Reagan do in '86? I can't remember.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well let's say -- let's start in 1958. We lost 13 senators. In 1974, we lost about 40 in the House when we were in the low majority to start with. In 1986, in Reagan's second midterm, we lost 8 senators.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: So this is the fourth second midterm election of a 2 terms republican president and history said we were going to lose some seats. That was added to enormously by the fact that American's don't like long wars. You know, ask Harry Truman. Ask Lyndon Johnson. It's not partisan.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Americans don't like long wars. Then it's compounded by corruption and by spending and frankly the republicans did not handle that very well. But at the end of the day, most republicans voted republican by a very high percentage. Where we lost was among moderates: among independents. And that spread enough across the way that it was almost as national as the 1994 election that was smaller.

>> Peter Robinson: So, your press - at least when you were in Washington before you became governor - your press tended to be "Haley Barbour's an inside man. He's a fixer. He knows how to pull the levers." What you're saying is you're actually a conviction politician. We won in '94 because we had a platform in which we -- I say we republicans. You and I are both Republicans. You won in 1994. I now put some distance here so to be a little more impartial. You won in 1994 because you had a positive platform and lost last year around historical reasons, Iraq's part of a reason, but they were no longer true to their principles. They had no clear platform. Is that right?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: I think that sets up the road for recovery. You know, I became -- actually George Bush didn't appoint me president -- chairman. He lost in November of 1992 and we had an election for chairman.

>> Peter Robinson: I'm sorry. Go ahead.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: I won in a landslide on the third ballot. But my whole platform and my chairmanship was about the fact that we had not lost in 1992 because Americans had changed their minds about the issues. Americans had changed their minds about us. And so I tried to get us back to the party of ideas to be based on limited government, low taxes, strong national defense, rational regulation. You could go through the whole issue set. And when we ran in 1994 - and you know the Clinton Administration helped us, let me just say that - but we went back to what we'd won with under Reagan.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, The Gipper versus W. The President you and I served in the 80s versus the current occupant of the White House. Listen to a few comparisons. Ronald Reagan quote, "Government is the problem." George W. Bush quote, "Government should help people," closed quote. Reminds me of Ronald Reagan - what was his line - that the most dangerous words are "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you." George W. Bush, "Government should help you." Ronald Reagan cut non-defense, discretionary outlays by more than 11 percent. George W. Bush has increased them by almost 30 percent. Ronald Reagan increased defense spending to more than 6 percent of GDP. When he talked about carrying a big stick, he did. George W. Bush has increased defense spending to only 4 percent of GDP: a percent and a half below the 45 year average. So here's the question, "Has George W. Bush done what he had to do to adapt the conservatism of Ronald Reagan and the Republican Party of the 80s to the issues of the day or has he simply diluted what was once a very sharp party identity?"

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, I think to start with when George Bush was elected President, I felt like and said publicly that he was more like Reagan than he was like his

own father. You know, I think his views, he really wanted to change the government and he had some things that he was very strongly committed to: reducing taxes so that the people who worked got to keep more of what they earned and spend it the way they wanted to...

>> Peter Robinson: Wanted to do it and did it.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: ...and really to emphasize education in the right kind of way. He was not elected on a foreign policy -- on a foreign policy background. And the September 11th just kind of came out of nowhere.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Just like Katrina came out of nowhere in my governorship. We weren't preparing for that. Once that happened, then of course you started having big differences because Bush had to face different problems from Reagan. And I think the Bush people think right now - and they may be right - that history will look back and judge him like they judged Harry Truman who became very, very unpopular because of an unpopular war in Korea. And that Bush is unpopular primarily because of an unpopular war in Iraq. But we look back 50 years later and say, "You know, Truman was strong enough and had guts enough and cared little enough about the political consequence that he did what he thought was right."

>> Peter Robinson: Yeah.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: And that's what I think the president's trying to do now, what he thinks is right. You can agree with him or disagree with him.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: But I think he's clearly trying to do what he thinks is right.

>> Peter Robinson: I'll grant you every bit of that. Harry Truman goes into office thinking one thing about the Soviet Union. As far as he knows, they're our allies. Within 18 months, he discovers that they're not our allies. The Cold War begins. He has to figure out an entirely new world: put in place a new policy. It remains in place for 50 years. George W. Bush same thing: he gets hit with something completely unexpected. It's up to him to learn on the job, but fine I'll grant you all that. Let me push though however. He says, "We're in a major war. The very survival of the nation's at stake." Yet the military's strained. Defense spending's only at 4 -- isn't there a kind of -- the point I'm trying to make is when Reagan said we need to be strong, he spent to make us strong. Isn't there a kind of a lack of conviction or don't people sense that somehow or other it doesn't add up in this administration?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, people may sense that. I'm not sure they're right. I mean the fact of the matter is war has changed enormously at least for now, that we're not

fighting a country like Germany or Japan or the Soviet Union who we've never had a war with, but we had the Cold War with.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Now we're talking about tribes with flags here and we're talking about even within weak governments like you see in some of the Middle Eastern countries, we're not even fighting the government. The government is trying to fight the same people we're trying to fight. It's a very different type of warfare. And I don't think it's decided by how much you spend.

>> Peter Robinson: Domestic policy: no child left behind. No child left behind -- the big education bill of the Bush Administration. But it federalizes what had previously been a state responsibility. It's an enormous aggrandizement to the federal government of state responsibility. You're a governor. You actually have done impressive things in education back in Mississippi, but you can't say that was a conservative move by George W. Bush, can you?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well I can't say it was a conservative move, but I can say it was a responsible move.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: I mean as one who you know -- we have a 63 percent of my state budget's spent on education. Almost half is spent on K through 12 alone: we're No Child Left Behind. The government has not taken over to dominate. They've set some rules but frankly we had already set some of the same rules: to require every child to be tested. What the government really did in No Child Left Behind primarily not exclusively...

>> Peter Robinson: [Inaudible]

>> Governor Haley Barbour: ...right, right. Primarily but not exclusive -- it said if we're going to give you the money, we're going to measure to see if we're getting our money's worth. We want some accountability. And that's fine with me. No Child Left Behind is really not the biggest burden on my state. The biggest burden on my state in education's got nothing to do with the federal government. It's got to do with poverty. It's got to do with lack of good teachers. It's got to do with a whole lot of other things including - and this is something I feel positive about - we're trying to change the mentality and the culture about education in our state. We have a state superintendent - who I didn't appoint by the way - who has a sense of urgency and a bias for action and we're out there trying to do some things. And a lot of those...

>> Peter Robinson: And the feds are not getting in your way?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: No, they're compatible with what No Child Left Behind is.

>> Peter Robinson: Right, okay: the GOP in the Land of Dixie. Listen to the historian W.J. Cash on the Old South into which Haley Barbour was born in 1947, quote "The democratic party had ceased to be a party in the south and became the party of the south, a kind of confraternity having in its keeping the whole corpus of southern loyalties. To question the Democratic Party was to stand branded as a renegade to race, to God and to southern womanhood." How'd the solids -- Democratic south become the solid republican south?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: My mama voted the first time in 1940. She said in the Lake City Precinct, Wendell Willkie got 3 votes. She said, "You'd had thought Hitler got 3 votes."

>> Peter Robinson: [Laughter]

>> Governor Haley Barbour: But I did grow up in a one party system: what we referred to as a multi-factional one party system. And today we have a very vibrant 2 party system in the south. The republicans tend to have the advantage, but it's clearly a 2 party system. The democrats are pretty competitive most everywhere including in my state of Mississippi.

>> Peter Robinson: What's the make up in your state legislature now?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well when I was elected, democrats controlled both houses. By some party switches and some special elections, we control the Senate now 27-25, but the democrats control the House 75-47.

>> Peter Robinson: Not close, not close there.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: No, but it's close enough that we can pass most of what we want to pass because there are enough conservative democrats.

>> Peter Robinson: So how'd it happen? How'd this change take place?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Evolution, that's the first thing you've got to understand. It's evolutionary. It took a long time. It took decades. It took in fact a generation or maybe 2 generations. But people quit voting their party and started voting their principles. That's the single biggest thing. Most people in my state are conservatives. And the Democratic Party was a party that was not built on conservatism. It was built on populism and race. And when that broke down people started voting their principles instead of their party.

>> Peter Robinson: So the people didn't change; just their voting affiliation changed?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: By and large. The population of the south has changed. We've had an enormous influx of people since World War II. I mean I think about 50

million people are anticipated to move to the south in the next 30 years, which is just a continuation of what's been going on since World War II.

>> Peter Robinson: So you're looking more and more like the rest of the country?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: That is true.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright, now this is a question you will have gotten before. Barry Goldwater, republican candidate for president in 1964 opposes the civil rights legislation of the mid-60s, and it's argued that Richard -- republicans from Richard Nixon through Ronald Reagan had a southern strategy which is in one way or another, code words. They're playing on racist sympathies among southern whites. So what role does race play in the rise of the GOP in the south?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Let's start off with a fact based on what we were just talking about.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: When I was born, the Republican Party was not a national party. The Republican Party didn't have a party in the south. We weren't a national party. The Republican Party became a national party during my lifetime.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Mostly during my adult lifetime. And you're right, race was the only issue back when I was a kid and before. That's really changed. The way republicans have become successful is getting the campaigns off of race and getting them onto jobs, onto social issues that people care strongly about. And the democrats have continued to move to the left, to the left, to the left. And the republicans hadn't moved in Mississippi. But the public - as that gap got wider - the public said, "Well look, I think more like the republicans." And it's interesting Peter, my generation was the first generation to become republicans. Our parents became republicans after us. And you see that over and over and over in my state, where you'll see some young politician whose daddy was a democrat elected official, whose grand-daddy was a democrat elected official and the daddy today is a republican.

>> Peter Robinson: Right, okay. Has the GOP become too southern? Journalist Christopher Caldwell. I'm going to read this a couple paragraphs here, but it's interesting stuff. "Southern interests diverge from those of the rest of the country and the southern presence in the Republican Party has passed the tipping point and begun to alienate voters from other regions. The most profound clash between the south and everyone else of course is a cultural one. It arises from the southern tradition of putting values - particularly Christian values - at the center of politics." Close quote. GOP may be good for the south but the south is not good for the GOP.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well of course the New York Times has been trying to play that drum ever since I've been involved in politics. You know, to say that you know "The southerners have taken over the party and that abortion's the only issue that matters." The fact of the matter is we are a broad, diverse political party. When I became chairman -- I'm pro-life. I used to say that they're millions of pro-choice republicans just as good a republican as I am. And we supported them when I was chairman. They continue to win elections as republicans, just like pro-life republicans tend to -- continue to win elections. This is all about issues. The south is somewhat more conservative. I will say the problems in the northeast in my opinion are much more caused by the war and by the 6 year itch than they were by social issues. Out here in California, I can remember when I was elected chairman they said "You know you can't win in California because republicans are too pro-life."

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Pete Wilson got reelected 1994 in a landslide that just rocked and socked them. We picked up 5 or 6 seats in the Congress.

>> Peter Robinson: And Pete Wilson was pro-choice.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: That's right, and we elected pro-choice republicans all over the country and pro-life republicans in virtually any state. The fact of the matter is neither party is about 1 thing. We are the conservative party of the United States. The democrats are the liberal party of the United States. But there are republicans who are quite moderate and even liberal and some of them get elected to office and do a dang good job.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, 1996 Bob Dole receives 12 percent of the black vote. In 2000, George W. Bush receives 9 percent and in 2004 just 11 percent: scraping along at about 1 African American voter in 10. How can the GOP do better than that?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: We can do better than that. We have a...

>> Peter Robinson: But, but tell me how did you do when you were...

>> Governor Haley Barbour: I got between 8 and 10 percent of the black vote...

>> Peter Robinson: Just about what you were trying...

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Running -- running against an incumbent democratic governor, let's remember.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Senator Thad Cochran on the other hand, he always...

>> Peter Robinson: That is a republican senator from Mississippi and a good friend.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Senator Thad Cochran is the Senior Senator for Mississippi who's a republican. And he always gets 20 something percent of the black vote. We have to remember, most African Americans in the United States are democrats today, but there are a lot of republican candidates who do very well. At the presidential level's probably the hardest place to break the monolithic black vote.

>> Peter Robinson: How come? What's going on there?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Because it's just seen as such a national election and it's more partisan than any other elections that we have. We have a lot of republicans in my state who have a lot of black support and get elected and reelected and reelected to the legislature, to county office, getting a considerable amount of black support. I suspect this time I'm going to get about 20 percent of the black vote. I'm going to be disappointed if I don't. But you just have to work at it and remember how I said the south became republican in a very evolutionary way? Why would it be any different with African American voters? It's not going to happen overnight. It's going to be evolutionary: not revolutionary.

>> Peter Robinson: And you're not going to change your issues? It's a question...

>> Governor Haley Barbour: No.

>> Peter Robinson: ...of tone. It's a question of standing for what you stand for, but trying to demonstrate why what you believe in is right for African American voters just as it is for white voters.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: And also it's a matter of effort. I mean we have some campaigns where people make the decision they're not going to try to get the black vote. They just don't have the resources to make the special effort and think it's not worth it if they had to put those resources there.

>> Peter Robinson: Right, right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: But my own view is that the black vote in my state little by little, is becoming more and more like the white vote did. We've gone through a generation or so of where the black politicians wanted everything to be about race. And now we're starting to have black politicians who talk about other things than race.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright, 1996 Dole receives 21 percent of the Hispanic vote. In 2000, George W. Bush receives 35 percent and in 2004 he receives 44 percent. Question: can the GOP continue to increase its share of the Hispanic vote, while having a fight within the party over illegal immigration?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well the answer's yes. We don't have a large Hispanic population in my state, but it's growing particularly in the wake of Katrina. I mean the Spanish speaking workers who were helping rebuild the Gulf Coast, I don't know where we'd be if they weren't there because we've got a labor shortage on the coast now for the need of reconstruction. There's so much to be rebuilt. But yeah the republicans can. The African American vote is almost unique in its monolithic voting for democrats. Other large minorities like Spanish speakers who are not all monolithic either. As you know, Mexicans vote sometimes one way. Cubans vote sometimes one way. And now we have lots of Central Americans in the country. And so they just need to be appealed to like everybody else: just appealed to on issues. What you do see about them, they tend to be religious, they tend to respect small business and they tend to be very family oriented. So there are 3 things that republicans can...

>> Peter Robinson: They're natural born Mississippians.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: [Laughter] Well, those 3 places it's obvious that republicans can appeal.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, Haley Barbour, I'm going to quote you to yourself. This is something you said around about 2000. "Folks my age joined the republican party in the south because it was the reform party. The party of change. The party of kicking out the folks who had been running things down at the court house for generations. Trent Lott used to say, "Hell, if the republicans had been in office down here for 100 years, I might have become a democrat just to run them off." But it's been a long time since the GOP was the party of change even in the south. The question here is "Working a political revolution in the south is one thing. Maintaining a status quo..." How do you keep the Republican Party from becoming the tired party of the status quo?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, you look at people like Jeb Bush. Served 8 years. Never, never quit reforming. Never quit changing. I mean he was making [inaudible] reforms his 8th year in office. Sonny Perdue in Georgia. In my state in my 3 and a half years as governor, it's almost all been about reform: tort reform, reforming our workforce development and job training systems, getting our budget back out of a 720 million dollar hole.

>> Peter Robinson: Out of how...What's your...?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: 3.6 billion at the time. We had a -- we were 20 percent under water. And my second budget had a 70 million dollar surplus without raising anybody's taxes. We got control of spending and we've been growing our economy. And a lot of that's got to do with good public policy. So at the state level, you don't see republicans mired in stasis. You see a lot of reform even from people who've been in office a long time all the way across the south. Nationally it's a little bit different deal. And again part of the reason is the focus on war. And I mean when the president of the United States has a war going on, the American people expect that to be his first priority.

>> Peter Robinson: Right, let me try a similar question a little bit different way here. Republican senators Trent Lott and Thad Cochran both good friends of yours and both famous for sending federal resources back home to Mississippi. After Katrina, you more or less camped out in Washington and you lobbied for rebuilding assistance that at best I can see it amounted to about 30 billion dollars so far. Is that -- that's about right?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: North of 25 billion so far.

>> Peter Robinson: North of 25 billion, alright. Now, all 3 of you would consider yourselves conservative republicans and all 3 of you believe in limited government. So here's the point. In office and out of office, democrats will tell you the same thing: we want more government. You elect them they'll give you more government. Republicans out of office they would believe in limited government: in office they find themselves subject to all the exigencies of American politics. You've got to deliver for the folks back home. So what I'm suggesting here is, don't Republicans face a kind of internal contradiction? It's just very hard to remain faithful to your principles: harder to remain faithful to your principles in office for a republican than it is for a democrat. Republicans need to be tossed out every so often for their own good.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well let me just say when I went to Washington after Katrina, Louisiana stood up, had a news conference and said "The federal government ought to give us 250 billion dollars."

>> Peter Robinson: 250 billion.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: 250 billion dollars. And I knew right then we had to go to work to craft a conservative, appropriate, responsible plan for Mississippi. Within 3 weeks, we went to Congress and said, "Here's Mississippi's plan. 34 billion dollars, including 17 or 18 we're already entitled to under preexisting law." So we said, "Give us 16 or 18 billion dollars that we wouldn't normally get, and that's what we're asking for because we bore the brunt of the worst natural disaster in American history." And the federal government has given us a large percentage, though not nearly all of that. And we're very grateful. It's unprecedented. What's more important, they have given us unprecedented latitude in how to spend that money. But what is it based on? Here's the biggest thing it's based on: most of -- we had 70 thousand homes destroyed by the hurricane. Most of them were outside the flood zone. The flood zone is delineated by the federal government. The federal government says, "Peter, your house is in a flood zone. Your house is out of the flood zone." Flood insurance is sold by a federal government agency: The National Flood Insurance Program. So they say, "Peter, your house is outside the flood zone. When you're buying your insurance, you don't need flood insurance." Except that about 30 thousand houses in Mississippi that were outside the flood zone were obliterated by the storm surge which is considered a flood in insurance law. And therefore their homeowners insurance did not cover them. Now in our country, when the federal government tells you something and you rely on what the government tells you and they turn out to be wrong - I'm not saying that the federal government was evil, they just were incorrect - that when the federal government tells

you this is what you should do and it doesn't work out, who ought to be responsible? Federal government ought to be responsible. And that is why we have this unprecedented package that they realized "Hey, a lot of these people were as responsible as they could have been but because they relied on the information the government gave them, they got obliterated."

>> Peter Robinson: So your point is that even when it comes to raising federal resources for the folks back home, there's a conservative way to do it and there's a liberal democratic way to do it. And the conservatives will tend to ask for less and they'll ground it on conservative principles. There's still going to be a difference.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well that's the way we did it after this disaster. Look...

>> Peter Robinson: By the way, what proportion of its 250 billion request did Louisiana get?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Not much. I mean Louisiana's got about twice as much as we have. All of these programs, they're not deciding on politics. Louisiana had about half as many or 175 percent of homes damaged as we did. So if we had 10 thousand, they had 17 or 18 thousand.

>> Peter Robinson: Got you. Alright.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: And they have gotten money proportionate to that and we've got money. Now they've gotten more than 10 billion dollars to rebuild their levies. We've gotten none of that. However, the government's been told, the core of engineers have been told, study what we should do for long term hurricane protection...

>> Peter Robinson: In Mississippi as well as Louisiana.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Right. And so while we don't have levies on the river, they are studying "Is there a way that we can mitigate the damage from another monster hurricane like Katrina?"

>> Peter Robinson: Right, okay. A little bit of practical politics before you run off to your next event here. Barack Obama, John Edwards, Hillary Clinton: give me a sentence on each. Who's going to win? Do you want to make a prediction?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, I think Hillary Clinton is the natural frontrunner and the likely nominee. Barack Obama is a phenom who is captivating a lot of people. John Edwards is a -- when he was in the Senate, he was the most liberal democrat in the Senate. Yet because he's from North Carolina, he maybe has a little bit different image. But all of them are very liberal democrats.

>> Peter Robinson: Why's Hillary the natural frontrunner?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, she has the resources behind her. She's got the smartest people in the party. She has more of the smartest people in the party behind her. I mean she is just the natural frontrunner. If you look at the poll and if you look at how democrats describe themselves, then how they describe others, they describe Hillary as being just like them, if you're talking about the people that vote in democratic primaries who of course are the left, left...

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: ...in the Democratic Party.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: But you know, Obama is quite a phenomenon and we'll see what happens. But my instinct is at the end of the day Hillary Clinton is going to be the democratic nominee because she just starts off with so many advantages over the others.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright. Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, Mitt Romney.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: No true frontrunner. Most open nomination contest since I've been involved, and that goes back to 1968.

>> Peter Robinson: How come?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Well, it just for a variety of reasons but one reason is in the normal scheme of things when your 2 term president goes out of office, who's the frontrunner?

>> Peter Robinson: Vice president.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: The vice president. Vice president's not running. Governor of California - Arnold Schwarzenegger - incredibly popular: not running. Jeb Bush, governor of Florida, incredibly popular: he's not running. So we've got a little bit of a different kind of thing here because instead of starting off "Do I want to be for the vice president or not? Do I want to be for the frontrunner or not?" People are having to look at all of these guys. And they all know a little something about all of them. There's a lot to like about all of them. But I don't think either one of them yet has made the kind of traction he needs, but look we're not even supposed to be talking about this, this early in the election. The news media has hyped this election so incredibly so that today people are acting like on television "Well people have made up their mind." You know "This guy's going to do this, that and the other." We're a long way from that.

>> Peter Robinson: Is Super Tuesday a good idea for the Republican Party, to have so much decided on one day? So many primaries on one day?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Not in my opinion. When I was chairman of the party, I tried to do 2 things: make the decisive times of the nomination contest come later. We have a very bad problem. It's all been moved up too early. But the bigger problem is compression. All of these things are so close together, they go off like a string of firecrackers that you -- events don't have time to change anything.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: We would be much better off if we had 2 or 3 primaries and then waited 3 weeks.

>> Peter Robinson: Right.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: And then have 10 primaries and wait 3 weeks to let the voters have a chance to absorb the change. It's why in the last 20 years as far as I can see, only the frontrunner and the second place person have any chance because everybody else doesn't get enough attention. And so at the beginning frontrunner wins or doesn't win, and it becomes between one and two, and everybody else is...

>> Peter Robinson: You're saying you're got to finish first or second in Iowa this year to have a chance or...?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: No not necessarily in any particular deal, but I think about '88 when Jack Kemp was Number 3. Very attractive, just couldn't get past Dole.

>> Peter Robinson: And went nowhere.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: You know, and it's very hard in one of these deals for 3 to pass 2.

>> Peter Robinson: Okay, let's...

>> Governor Haley Barbour: But anyway, the biggest thing is a year from now you'll look back on this show and 50 things that people are thinking in April of 2007 are going to turn out to be totally wrong because this cake isn't nearly cooked.

>> Peter Robinson: Can you envision any circumstances in which it might make sense for a John McCain or a Rudy Giuliani or a Mitt Romney or a Tommy Thompson or a Fred Thompson to put on the ticket a southern governor from perhaps a Gulf State, from perhaps the state of Mississippi?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: You know Peter, if a republican candidate for president loses Mississippi then he's going to have lost about 48 states. So I think it's very unlikely that a republican candidate for president would choose a governor of Mississippi to be his running mate.

>> Peter Robinson: So the only way Haley you're going to get on that ticket is to run for the top of the ticket?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: [Laughter]

>> Peter Robinson: Four years from now?

>> Governor Haley Barbour: Let's see, I'm up this year.

>> Peter Robinson: Alright.

>> Governor Haley Barbour: My election is this November of 2007 and I have a serious opponent. I'm going to take him seriously. You know in our business we have an old axiom: you either run unopposed or scared. And I'm not unopposed. But we'll see what happens after that.

>> Peter Robinson: Haley Barbour, the 63rd Governor of the great state of Mississippi. Thank you very much. For the Hoover Institution, I'm Peter Robinson. Thanks for joining us.