

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

A CONVERSATION ON POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT
WITH U.S. REPRESENTATIVE RAHM EMANUEL (D-IL)

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Introduction:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. NIVOLA: Good morning. It's my pleasure to introduce Congressman Rahm Emanuel of Illinois this morning.

Congressman Emanuel is the Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, as you know. He also sits on the House's most prestigious committee — Ways and Means. Before being elected to Congress, Congressman Emanuel was the key advisor to President Clinton and played a big part in many of the Clinton Administration's most important initiatives and accomplishments, including welfare reform, the ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the 1993 budget agreement, the 1994 Crime Bill, and efforts to expand health insurance for uninsured children. Representative Emanuel chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in the months leading up to last fall's election.

As many of you know, the political parties in this country have been playing a much more proactive and centralized role in slating candidates for office than they did perhaps a generation or so ago. The smart selection of candidates — thanks I think to Congressman Emanuel's sound centrist instincts — went a long way to securing the Democratic Party's substantial gains in last November's election.

Mr. Emanuel is also a co-author of a recent book with Bruce Reed, called *The Plan: Big Ideas for America*.

We hope you'll say a few words about that perhaps in the course of your remarks today.

We really look forward to the Congressman's assessment of the different policymaking styles of the Clinton Administration and the Bush Administration, both styles and substance, which is what I gather he'll be addressing today. He'll then have some questions by Tom Mann, my colleague — and brace yourselves that some of them are tough.

It's wonderful to have you here, and welcome.

(Applause)

REP. EMANUEL: Good morning.

Pietro, thank you very much for those kind words. It's moments like that you wish your mother and father were here because you know your mother would be proud and your father would be amazed. So, thank you very much.

(Laughter.)

REP. EMANUEL: I want to thank the Brookings Institution for the invitation. My mother always warned me that one day I may end up in an institution. I don't think this is exactly what she had in mind.

In all seriousness, Brookings has a long and well-deserved reputation for its studies of government and public policy, with the goal of giving us a better understanding of the things that are working and those that are not. That's why I think this is such an appropriate forum for the observations I have

come to share with you today.

And let me preface the discussion by stating the obvious: I don't think "politics" is a dirty word. And some of you who know me, like Tom, know I know something about dirty words. Politics is a vital and essential element of our political system, the vehicle by which we advance our governing principles and policies.

Believe me, I'm not naïve. President Clinton made me a top aide in the White House not because of my good looks or charm and not because I was a top policy expert. No, I got to the White House the same way he did, through politics. And I'm not one who believes you can ever fully divorce politics from policy in a democracy, and it would be bad to do that. It would be like trying to separate physics from math or trying to do physics without math. Yet, I've always recognized that there's a basic balance, that we should never allow the basic functions and solemn responsibilities of government to be subjugated to or take a backseat to politics or party interest.

President Bush came to the White House with an entirely different understanding. Not since the days of Watergate when our judicial system and intelligence community were deployed by the White House in the service of partisan politics have we seen such, in my view, abuses; and in many ways, what we have seen from this Administration is far more extensive than that scandal.

Partisan politics has infiltrated every level of our federal government — from scientific reports on global warming to emergency

management services to the prosecutorial power of the federal government itself. Even the war in Iraq — from our entry to the reconstruction — has been thoroughly politicized and manipulated.

Recently, even those who have become somewhat inured to the intense partisanship of this Administration were shocked by the political manipulation of our U.S. attorneys, and we have just begun to feel the impact of this scandal. Just as Hurricane Katrina exposed the issue of incompetence, the U.S. attorney scandal has placed a spotlight on the Administration's pattern of always placing the Republican Party's interests before the national or public interest. I believe that the U.S. attorney scandal will be to public corruption what Hurricane Katrina was to competency.

The scandal has created a new context of viewing and evaluating the scandals in this Administration. Americans have learned just how the Bush Administration works and are discovering that under President Bush no function of the federal government is free from the influence of politics. And this is no accident. It is all by design.

The incidents I will list today are not a laundry list of one-off's or isolated cases. There is a common denominator. Instead of promoting solutions to our nation's broad challenges, the Bush Administration has used all the levers of power to promote their party and its narrow interests.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Karl Rove often drew an analogy between that election and the election of 1896 in which advisor Mark

Hanna joined forces with many of the plutocrats of the Gilded Age and ushered in a 35-year era of Republican dominance, dominance that did not end until the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Without a trace of reserve, George Bush and Karl Rove set out to recreate an earlier era of one-party rule, and they pursued their goal by inverting, in my view, the very purpose of government.

Under this Administration, the federal government has become a stepchild of the Republican Party, and in promoting its partisan interests, absolutely nothing is out of bounds — from our national security to our justice system and everything in between.

Principals and supporters of the Bush Administration have taken to attributing its myriad failures to mere incompetence. That is an ironic defense for an Administration that once touted President Bush as the first MBA president and then boasted about a cabinet filled with CEOs and MBAs.

In his appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee last week, the Attorney General denied politics was involved in his firing of the eight U.S. Attorneys. Instead, he suggested that the dismissals were just poorly handled or a public relations failure. The Attorney General could offer no coherent explanation for the mess, because to do so would unveil the guiding principle at the core of this White House, insinuating partisan politics into every aspect of government and bringing politics into what had used to be a political-free zone — the Justice Department.

Even today, after three months of interviews, investigations,

hearings, and public discussion, we still do not know who drafted the list of the U.S. Attorneys to be fired. We've been left with only three logical explanations for the dismissals.

First, there were 93 names put in the hat, and these seven were drawn by random.

Second, they originally hired eight incompetent U.S. Attorneys.

Third, you believe that public corruption, as explained at the election, was the cause for the failures — for basically the loss to the House and the Senate. And then you have got to stop and stem the bleeding of those public corruption cases.

And until we hold hearings, we will never find out whether they were randomly selected — as one plausible explanation; second, that they were incompetent U.S. Attorneys who were originally selected; or, third, as I think, if you look today at the *Wall Street Journal* story and other examples, that in fact something else was going on here because of the cases that these individuals were bringing, and we will never have that answer until the hearings are fully complete.

In my view, they had a plan, which they told us about. They carried it out. And now America is paying the price for that plan. This is exactly what they said they were going to do, and the only difference is there had been no accountability for another branch of government to bring heat to this.

From the very beginning, the Bush Administration has seeded the

government with highly partisan appointees — people more interested in serving their party than the broader public interest.

Almost every senior Bush appointee to the EPA and Interior Department has come out of the very industries they regulate and which generously funded the Republican Party. As Jim Hightower has noted, the Administration eliminated the middleman. The corporations don't have to lobby the government, because they are the government.

This cronyism transcends the regulatory agencies. The Bush Administration even laced FEMA with political operatives rather than people with experience handling emergencies.

There were early signs, not heeded, that this administration would be driven by partisan politics, not public policy. In Ron Suskind's book, "The Price of Loyalty," former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill complained that he couldn't interest anyone in policy discussions at the White House, because it was populated with political operatives rather than policy experts.

Even the President's highly touted faith-based initiative turned out to be a purely political play. The two top leaders of the new office both quit in frustration. John DiIulio, Jr., left after being forced to work in a White House that he likened to — and this is his quote — "the reign of the Mayberry Machiavellis." Former Deputy Director David — and I may be mispronouncing his name so I apologize — Kuo later alleged that then-White House political affairs director Ken Mehlman knowingly participated in a scheme to use that government office

to mobilize religious voters in 20 targeted congressional races of which the Republicans won 19.

This is inside. I've got to tell you, Tammany Hall had nothing on this Administration.

The Bush Administration has redefined the famous challenge of President Kennedy's inaugural address. Instead of "Ask not what your country can do for you," it's become "Ask what your government can do for our party."

It's true that Franklin Roosevelt started an era of Democratic domination of politics in Washington that lasted well into the '60s. Roosevelt forged a lasting political coalition by conquering the economic blight of the Great Depression and uniting our nation and its mission in World War II and to take on Hitler and the totalitarianism of his administration — not administration but his brain. The Democratic Party reaped the political dividends of successfully confronting those dual national challenges. That was a different model of governing. There was a political benefit for having done government well.

In contrast, the Bush Administration has ignored the great challenges of our day, and for six years, in my view, the Legislative Branch was complicit in this scheme. Now our country is paying the price.

Let's begin with the biggest issue facing our nation: the war in Iraq. We now know that when the CIA and other intelligence agencies failed to find evidence to justify the President's rationale for war, the Administration browbeat the CIA to tailor its intelligence. Vice President Cheney and Donald

Rumsfeld, the Secretary of Defense, even set up their own intelligence arm to provide the desired evidence.

When former Ambassador Joseph Wilson cast doubt on the Administration's contention that Saddam was trying to obtain uranium in Niger for a nuclear weapon, the Vice President's chief of staff, "Scooter" Libby, embarked on a smear campaign by leaking the identity of Wilson's wife, an undercover CIA officer.

Once the Iraq war was launched, we all knew how important the reconstruction would be to securing the peace. Politics extended to the reconstruction.

The person chosen to oversee Iraq's health care system was the community health director for the former Republican governor of Michigan. The individual he replaced was a physician with a master's degree in public health and post-graduate degrees from Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, and University of California — Berkeley, and taught at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health where he specialized in disaster response.

A 24-year-old with a background in commercial real estate was hired by the Authority to reopen and manage the Iraqi stock exchange.

The daughter of a prominent neoconservative was tapped to manage Iraq's \$13 billion annual budget.

Nothing was free from political influence.

Politically connected individuals weren't the only beneficiaries of

the Administration's Iraq operations. Before the invasion of Iraq, Halliburton's subsidiary was granted a \$7 billion classified contract to restore the country's oil fields. Halliburton then went on to overcharge the government and its taxpayers by a hundred million dollars.

The Administration's coziness with corporations extends to the treatment of our injured veterans. Last year, a company called IAP Worldwide Services won a \$120 million contract to privatize management at Walter Reed. IAP is owned by a firm chaired by former Bush Treasury Secretary John Snow and has political ties to Congressman Jerry Lewis, the former Republican chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Everyone knows about the Vice President's secret energy task force meetings with top executives from the energy industry, but science and sound policy have also taken a backseat to political considerations when it comes to the government's findings on global warming. The *New York Times* reported that when Phil Cooney served as the chief of staff for the White House Council on Environmental Quality, he removed or adjusted or edited descriptions of scientific research to downplay the links between emission and global warming. Before joining the Bush Administration, Cooney worked for the American Petroleum Institute. After resigning his government post, he went to work for Exxon-Mobil.

Bush Administration officials even vacation with energy lobbyists. The Justice Department's former top environmental prosecutor, Sue Ellen Wooldridge, recently bought a beach house with an energy lobbyist and Steven

Griles, a former Bush Administration official who pled guilty in the Abramoff case.

From legislation to government reports to oversight, the energy industry, one of the top GOP contributors, has gotten what they needed and asked for.

Even federal efforts to help students learn and afford college aren't off limits. The *Washington Post* recently reported that Matteo Fontana, a senior official in the Department of Education's financial aid office, owned about \$100,000 worth of stock in a student loan company that has been subpoenaed by New York officials.

Last weekend, we learned of an investigation into President Bush's *Reading First* program and allegations that officials improperly profited when implementing the program. And the case this week was just referred to the Justice Department.

The Bush Administration memorably demonstrated its willingness to enrich those who carry out its political agenda. Seeking to build support for the Leave No Child Behind program, the Administration paid Armstrong Williams \$24,000 in taxpayers' money to promote the legislation on his TV show.

And I also — I agree — I think one of the more egregious misuses of public funds took place around the Administration's budget-busting Medicare prescription drug bill. The nonpartisan GAO concluded that the Department of Health and Human Services illegally spent federal money to produce videos made

to look like news reports and distribute them to TV stations across America.

After the bill was passed, it was revealed that the Administration purposely withheld information from Congress on the true cost of the prescription drug bill. Richard S. Foster, Medicare's chief actuary for two Administrations, said that Bush Administration officials had threatened to fire him if he disclosed that the drug plan would cost hundreds of billions more than President — his staff was telling Congress. In short, Richard Foster would be fired if he did his job.

Perhaps the most thoroughly politicized bureau of the federal government is the GSA — General Services Administration — a large agency charged with procuring supplies and managing federal properties. Former Chief of Staff David Safavian was convicted of covering up his efforts to assist Jack Abramoff in acquiring two properties controlled by the GSA. Safavian was convicted of concealing facts about a lavish week-long golf trip he took with Jack Abramoff to Scotland and London, a trip that included Congressman Bob Ney.

The current head of the GSA is Lurita Doan, a former government contractor, who has donated tens of thousands of dollars to the Republican Party. On January 26th of this year, Doan took part in a meeting at the GSA that included 40 regional administrators by videoconference. At this meeting, political director J. Scott Jennings gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2006 elections. The *Washington Post* reported that one slide named 20 Democrats in Congress the Republicans will try to defeat in 2008. Another slide listed Republican Congressmen the party wants to protect. According to the *Post*, Ms.

Doan asked the assembled government employees how they could "help our candidates" in the next election.

Of course, it's illegal for political activity of this kind to occur in a federal office. At a House hearing last month, Ms. Doan claimed she couldn't recall the slide presentation or making the remarks that were attributed to her by various Republican appointees who were in attendance. Now, the Office of Special Counsel is investigating this matter.

The most vivid example of this Administration's corruption, and the one that revealed its true cost to the American people, was the fumbling of the Katrina disaster. Under President Clinton, FEMA was run by James Lee Witt, a political appointee and a man with years of experience in disaster management. But the Bush Administration chose to staff the sensitive agency with unqualified political appointees.

The President first appointed his 2000 campaign manager, Joe Allbaugh, to run FEMA. Joe hired his long-time friend, Michael Brown, as the Agency's general counsel. Michael Brown had no emergency management experience, having served as an attorney for the International Arabian Horse Association. Joe Allbaugh left in early 2003, and the President named Michael Brown to replace him.

When the Gulf Coast was hit by the worst natural disaster in U.S. history, FEMA, one of the best agencies in the federal government in the year 2000, and only four years after 911, was woefully unprepared to provide the

needed assistance.

Now, millions of Americans are continuing to suffer terrible consequences, and FEMA has left behind a striking legacy of mismanagement. Even FEMA's attempt to take modest action failed. After purchasing thousands of trailers for those displaced by the hurricane, those very trailers continue to sit empty in Arkansas. FEMA had no plan to move the trailers to the communities where they were needed.

Now, there's nothing wrong with political appointees. James Lee Witt, whom I mentioned earlier, was a political appointee who's also qualified to run FEMA. And I want to go back. Alexander Hamilton was a political appointee. He's a very good, qualified person for being the first Secretary of the Treasury. Harold Ickes, Sr., was a political appointee, a key architect of the New Deal that helped our nation emerge from the Great Depression.

Political appointees are not inherently corrupt or wrong. The difference is that these appointees that I just mentioned were well qualified for their positions, and they put the welfare of the nation ahead of purely partisan interest, and judged by those criteria few of the President's appointees would pass that test.

We've all focused on the recent firings of the eight U.S. Attorneys. They did not come out of the blue. There were a number of examples of political consideration overriding the work of Justice Department lawyers that should have woken us all up earlier.

The removal of the U.S. Attorneys for political reasons, in my view, is not a new occurrence. In 2002, a grand jury in Guam opened an investigation into Jack Abramoff's secret arrangement to block a bill threatening his clients in the U.S. territories. Just days later, the U.S. Attorney who launched the probe was demoted after more than a decade in office. A report by the Interior Department's Inspector General later concluded that Abramoff had actively lobbied for his dismissal and had a pipeline into the White House to accomplish that goal. And he wasn't shy about reaching out to the White House for help. While the White House initially told us that Jack Abramoff only occasionally or infrequently reached out to the White House, we later learned he contacted the White House 485 times. You can see the beginnings of a scandal: A U.S. Attorney was removed who wasn't — and I quote — "a loyal Bushie."

Sharon Eubanks, a 22-year veteran career Justice Department lawyer who led the Justice Department team that prosecuted the landmark lawsuit against tobacco companies, told the *Washington Post* that three political appointees in the Attorney General's office undermined the government's case in the final weeks of the 2005 trial, which cost the federal government billions of dollars.

Now we've learned that political considerations were behind the dismissal of the eight U.S. Attorneys across the country, including some members who were actively investigating Republican members of Congress. Recently released e-mails between the staff at the Justice Department and the staff at the

White House show that loyalty to President Bush and pressure from political figures led to the firings.

In the course of the ongoing congressional investigations, we have also learned that the White House staffers, including Karl Rove, have used e-mail addresses issued by the Republican National Committee. And I have a simple question as a person who worked in the White House: Why? Why did government officials need a political tool to conduct business and daily governing each day? Of course, party computers are necessary when a president and his operation are running for reelection. But are they still necessary two years later when the President had no campaign ahead of him? Those e-mail accounts were only necessary because politics was so deeply engrained in the administration's normal course of business. You only need a computer system paid for by the Republican National Committee for day-to-day operations if in fact politics had seeped into the daily way you govern. Now, I accept it during a reelection. I understand it. With no reelection ahead of you, why were you doing that? And I think that point illustrates, although a small one, the larger case we're making.

The Administration would like the press and the public to believe that all this corruption and cronyism consists of isolated instances — one-offs. But I ask you. Michael Brown, Scooter Libby, Bernard Kerik, Halliburton, Philip Cooney, David Safavian, Lurita Doan, Matteo Fontana, Sue Ellen Wooldridge, Steven Griles, Alberto Gonzales, FEMA, the Iraq intelligence, Iraq reconstruction, the U.S. Attorneys — none of these are an accident. They are not

isolated incidences. It's a pattern of political appointees who put partisan interests ahead of the country and were told to do so.

The good news is that this pattern of putting party first and country second has been brought into the light of day and can no longer be explained away as a product of errors or lapses in judgment or bad public relations. The implausible excuses, in my view, are piling up. The explanations are becoming harder and harder to believe and the truth more difficult to obscure. Americans now know that we are witnessing much more than just incompetent individuals at work. In my view, we are watching corruption in action.

This corruption might have continued unchecked except for the last election, which brought a Democratic majority to Congress with the ability to conduct oversight hearings and real serious accountability in those hearings. This administration and a complicit Congress thought the American people didn't care about the rampant corruption infecting their national government.

Many in Washington dismissed the Democratic effort to make the issue of public corruption an issue in the last election. But voters across the country rendered a different verdict than the official Washington line. And now we Democrats are accountable for fixing those problems.

I'm proud that the Democratic-led House and Senate passed the most sweeping ethics reforms since the Watergate era. But it was only a first step. We have more work to do.

First, we must pass comprehensive lobbying reform legislation.

The Senate has taken action, and the House will take action, and the intention of the leadership before the Memorial Day break to pass sweeping lobbying reform legislation and then go to conference.

Next, we must extend the lobbying and ethics reform for the legislative branch to the executive branch. Congressman Waxman and Congressman Davis, Republican from Virginia, have introduced bipartisan to do exactly that.

And, finally, we must continue to have aggressive oversight hearings and efforts in Congress to hold the government and government agencies accountable, both legislative and executive branches.

While we pursue these ideas and others to get politics and policy back into balance, ultimately we need leaders who see public service as a calling and not a profit center for either themselves or their political allies. A Congress that takes its oversight responsibilities seriously is our best antidote to the unprecedented politicization of government. Furthermore, the media must also continue to shine a bright light on government and keep our leaders honest and accountable. That vigorous oversight ought to extend to the next Administration, whether it be Democratic or Republican, and to the Congress.

The saddest legacy of the Bush Administration's six-year trial, in my view, of corruption is that it contributes to the public's already cynical view of government. This makes it even more difficult for those of us who believe that the purpose of government is to secure a better future for our country and all of its

people. Repairing this sorry legacy is one of the first challenges our next President will face.

Thank you. I'd be happy to take your questions.

(Applause)

MR. MANN: Well, I have the distinct honor and pleasure of moderating discussion. Rahm gave a thumping to the Republican Party in the 2006 election as Chairman of the DCCC. Now he has just administered a thumping to the Bush Administration as Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus.

The specifics that you mentioned are numerous, the list is long, and none of them is new. That is, you pulled together a series of reports and revelations, but gave it a unifying focus on scandal, the excessive, undue politicization of government.

My question, and I'm going to give a few clauses before I let you answer, is, why the decision to provide this unifying focus on scandal? The new Congress is off to, I would argue, a terrific start. There's been a sustained effort.

REP. EMANUEL: I would agree.

MR. MANN: There's been a sustained effort to reflect public priorities on the war in Iraq. We've seen a revival of committees and oversight that's been breathtaking in its scope and its seriousness, and there's really been a restraint in avoiding some of the excesses of the Republican Congress investigating the Clinton Administration.

Do you remember the White House Christmas card list, the travel office, Vince Foster's death, all culminating in the impeachment proceedings? Instead, this Congress has said, and the Speaker has been very clear about this, no impeachment proceedings, no "got you" hearings, no unconstrained use of subpoenas. We are going to focus on improving the performance of government. So the question I put to you —

REP. EMANUEL: I feel like we're at Passover.

MR. MANN: — Mr. Chairman, does your speech signal a real change from that initial start, and how do you think the public is likely to respond? Is there a market out there for lots of talk about scandal?

REP EMANUEL: First of all, I appreciate the "what's the purpose." There's four or five questions.

MR MANN: Yeah.

REP. EMANUEL: Let me say this; first of all, the main responsibility in our Congress is our policies to help people deal with the challenges they face every day, whether that's passing minimum wage, whether that's doing what we need to do to make sure people can afford to go to college, health care reforms, energy reform, and we're actively going to continue to do that. It doesn't mean it's one or the other, it's both.

But accountability is a responsibility of the United States Congress. We think we've tried six years without oversight and accountability. So my question to you is, how are we doing? And so that comes — now, if it looks like it's a partisan

witch hunt, we will pay the political price for this, that's number one. So we have to do both, accountability, and move forward on the challenges that people face every day given the intense opportunities, as well as challenges, that come from globalization, the war in Iraq, and what else is going on in peoples' lives from energy prices, health care costs, retirement security, educational opportunity, income equality, just to name just a few, and that doesn't mean I'm limiting others.

Second, though, and what really became the basis of this story, I do not believe that when you list this list and you get inured to it day after day. I mean just in the last 48 to 96 hours, from Reading First to the GSA to the student loan crisis, the explanation of either it's a public relations scandal or incompetence is just not acceptable.

Because then what you do is, you know, we just have a long list, well, incompetence becomes an explanation to dismiss. To me, there is something far greater here. And they said early on they were going to literally make the government a — infiltrate it with, and they have every right, political appointees. At every point there's a balance that is accomplished.

I worked for President Clinton, and as I said in the speech, I believe in politics, I think politics is a good thing. There's a balance, though, between politics and policy. That balance is severely out of whack in this Administration. And what's happening today is, they are getting caught, having done exactly what they said they were going to do. Some of us are shocked that it would go to either the Intelligence Committee, i.e., the national security area, or more importantly also,

the Justice Department. I would recommend you take a look at today's Wall Street Journal story on Rick Renzi and the timing and the firing of that U.S. Attorney. I recommend you look at the timing on Mr. Sampson's email on May 11th, back up to Washington, where he says, we must deal with Carol Lam.

On May 11th, the L.A. Times wrote a story, banner headline, an investigation of Carol Lam was out of — the investigation of Congressman Cunningham was now expanding to Congressman Jerry Lewis.

And you have an Administration that says, we're not going to give you — we're not going to testify, we're not going to give you the emails, et cetera. And I think this is very important, because the Justice Department is either free from politics or it's not. And if the Justice Department, with subpoena power and everything else, is going to be just another field for politics, then everything else is off the table.

MR. MANN: In the era of the permanent campaign, and we've been in it now for a long period, the lines between politics and elections and governing become blurred, and people in Congress, as well as in the executive branch, use the opportunities in government to advance their longer term interest, re-election, but building a majority, so other Administrations have done it. I take it your argument is that it's really the dimension of the effort, that it has stepped up in a way that we have not seen in modern times; is that right?

REP. EMANUEL: If you go back, and Lee Atwater wrote his master's thesis on the creation of the political office in the White House, and it takes

the direction, I bet a lot of you didn't know that I knew how to read, first of all, but that he wrote his thesis, to go back, it's at the University of South Carolina, I'd recommend you do it, and it's about the history of the political office in the White House.

And he goes through the Roosevelt Administration, to the fact that the legislative office in the White House was kind of the nexus of where politics existed. But it was not until Jimmy Carter that the political office was created, with Pat Cadell being brought into the White House, and the notion then that governing included campaigning like tools, as well as thinking.

And then from that forward, Ronald Reagan took it to a new level. And there's no doubt, we also know Clinton in the White House kept that effort of, to govern, you had to borrow more and more increasingly, not only technology, tools, but a mindset of politics. In my view, this is not just, oh, this is just another stepping stone. To me, though, this was a whole other thing where that balance between politics and policy or governing had been so tilted that what you end up with is at a level, an extension where national security and the judicial branch and then other pieces of it in between have not only been filled with political appointees, and again, I say to you, there's nothing wrong with that. It's what they think their mission is.

If you think your mission is to help meet the challenges of the public, you end up with a James Lee Witt. If your mission is — you think it's something else, you get yourself —

MR. MANN: One last question, and then I'd like to call on the

audience. What should the Democratic Party and its presidential candidates say and do —

REP. EMANUEL: How much time do I have?

MR. MANN: — to persuade the public that such an undue, excessive politicization of government would not occur under their watch?

REP. EMANUEL: You know, let me — that's a good question. Can I go back to like your first question while I also do this? I believe—and this may be both the child and the grandchild of an immigrant talking—I think the government is a force, if you believe in progressive government, you have to have the public see the government is an affirmative force rather than a negative force, and you have all this corruption that leads to a level of cynicism, where you don't think the government can run a one-car parade, and it has major consequences. You have to have all, you know, people want not only post 9/11, but also other times, they see the government as helping them meet their challenges. So there's a consequence to not only this corruption, but the cynicism it inveighs in our public. So it has a direct impact on a progressive vision, because you can't get there if you don't have a story line, a narrative of public service and public government serving some good. And I'll do one little — get right to that question.

It is not an accident that peoples' views of government changed dramatically when President Clinton both passed a balanced budget and welfare reform. People saw the government, once again, then they had an affirmative view after that that it could both reform itself to serve larger public good.

That said, I think what we have to do as Democrats, do our job right by helping people meet their challenges right now as we tackle certain issues in Congress, the issues facing the country and them individually, whether that's Iraq, terrorism, energy crisis, income inequality, preparing to help pay for college education so their children have a better future than they have.

In addition to that, we must as a party own the notion of accountability. That comes with oversight, and that's not just oversight for the sake of oversight, but that it would end in a result where government spent money better, did its job better, et cetera. So that's what I would, if I had a blind recommendation, and I'm happy with all of them that are offering those ideas out there. And let me be honest, since I like politics, I think Republicans should do that. I mean it's not just for my party. I think we're served better as a country if they have.

I'll give you one little small thing that I think they should do.

I think it's ridiculous that Republicans debate Republicans and Democrats debate Democrats in these presidential campaigns. They should have just went off on each other. Hilary should go debate Romney on health care. I think it would be a lot more interesting than nine Democrats debating nine Democrats. And then somebody else can debate, John McCain and Barack Obama rather than screaming to the press, have a debate on national security.

I think we need to change those so it's not just a format of nine and nine, but get more — that would be a lot more interesting. I think the country, and all of us who are interested in public service and in public policy, that would be a

service to our country.

MR. MANN: You just made news here. This is a really interesting idea. Okay.

REP. EMANUEL: But before it leaves here, it will be your idea, Tom. If it's successful, I'll take a little credit, if it's not, it's yours.

MR. MANN: Well, I am always derivative, what can I say? Okay. Please —

REP. EMANUEL: That's the frustration of being a middle child.

MR. MANN: Gary.

MR. MITHCELL: Thanks, Congressman; Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. In the next to the last paragraph on page one, you say, "Not since the days of Watergate when our judicial system and intelligence community were deployed by the White House in the service of partisan politics have we seen such abuses, and in many ways, what we have seen from this Administration is far more extensive than scandal," and then you go on from there.

And the question is, and it's at least intended to be a serious one, is, if that's the case, to sort of paraphrase the President, should impeachment be off the table, impeachment of some people somewhere in this Administration? I'm really interested in thinking about if this observation you make is true, and you have some pretty powerful background for it, then what about impeachment?

REP. EMANUEL: Well, first of all, I'm not for that, so that let me say that up front. But let me also say, Gary, to this question, I'd be just happy right

now if we got testimony that we should have on this U.S. Attorney case, that we get emails and documentation to back up what happened here, and I think that's the first step, is, let us make sure that the first step of accountability and oversight is done. I'm not for impeachment hearings, I don't think that's where we should go, I don't think that's the end result. I do want to, though, get to the bottom of, which I think is very important, was the Justice Department in any way used for political considerations as it related to these individual U.S. Attorney firings?

I still, and I want to stress what I said in that speech, we are three months into this, nobody — everybody has been asked, did you draw up that list, says I was not — he or she were not involved with it. We don't know why that list was drawn up, and how the eight names got on that list, and I think that's really important.

And I gave you two cases, I'm not saying it's conclusive, and maybe there's another explanation that's more benign, but I think today's Wall Street Journal story, although not conclusive and it's not the responsibility of a paper to do what our job in Congress is, it raises questions to the timing of the firing of the Arizona U.S. Attorney who was not on the list until September, in fact, when the case that they were doing was heating up.

And then I offer you what happened with the L.A. Times and Sampson's email. I want the oversight functions of both the Judiciary Committee and both the House and Senate to do its work. That, I think, would be the first step. But again, I want to stress, I don't believe the end result is what you just said, either

individuals or for anything, that is not what I'm here for. I'm here for getting the balance right between policy and politics, because I think both of those are necessary and good things. I think politics is good, I think public policy is good, and public service is good. If the balance is so out of whack that it creates cynicism, and not only cynicism, but leads to an acceptance level of corruption, we've all got a problem.

MR. MANN: All right. All the way in the back first; yes.

FABIAN: Hello; my name is Fabian, I'm a student from Johns Hopkins, across the street. I was just wondering — I had a comment I wanted to add to your picture you just gave us, that the whole — it's not only adding to a cynical view of government in the United States, but also undermines the ability of the United States to have something — power or moral leadership, because all these news are clearly reported across the world, I think.

And my question is, though, with all the oversight investigations and hearings, how big is the danger that the energy of Congress is being (inaudible) by that, and that you're not being able to really deal with policy and all their needs, and do you think it's a threat for the elections next year?

REP. EMANUEL: Put the elections aside, okay, that's not a worry here. You asked a very good question. If it becomes all consuming, we will pay a political price for it as a party, but also as a country. I have all the confidence, you can do oversight and successfully deal with funding the troops in Iraq, passing minimum wage, dealing with the energy crisis, for some people are now talking

about \$4 a barrel, and dealing with the fact that not only do we have about close to 50 million uninsured, but any time in the given year it's closer to 83 million people who are uninsured, and a health care system that is both strangling the family budget, as well as destroying I think, you know, effecting the federal budget and destroying business' ability to compete in globalization.

I just gave you a major speech. I also introduced the only bipartisan bill to expand childrens' health care up to 350 percent of poverty. You can do both. We're fully capable of doing both, and we will do both. There will be a line, if we go over that line, we'll get the flashback for that, there's no doubt about it. But I have all the confidence.

As Tom mentioned, we're off to a good start, we passed comprehensive ethics reform, but our work is not done. We will fund the troops, we're already marking it up, but not only issues dealing with global warming and legislation dealing with that, but we're also dealing with things that deal with college education and accessibility, and we'll have the authorization the higher education legislation has done. We've increased funding for Pell Grants. We can do all that and we should do all that. But we can't say, oh, we can either do that or this. It's not an either/or choice, we can do both, we're going to have to.

MR. MANN: All right. Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Emanuel, I'm prepared to accept the case you make here, but for the sake of a little perspective, taking the Justice Department, for instance, earlier you mentioned Jack Kennedy's memorable line, but when JFK filled

the Attorney General spot against all the advice of everyone around him, he picked his brother. And then there was the matter of President Clinton sacking all the Republican U.S. Attorneys; what do you make of this?

REP. EMANUEL: Well, let me deal, well, at least with both of those, let me take the second one first. President Clinton, he always used to take two questions, and when he said "let me take the second one first," it usually meant that he didn't want to answer the first one.

First of all, President Clinton, in the beginning of his Administration, I mean this has been well written so I ain't saying anything original here. Other presidents have, in the beginning, taken all the incumbent or inherited U.S. Attorneys, fired them, and started new with U.S. Attorneys. There's nothing wrong with that.

What was unprecedented here was, in the middle of a term, letting go a portion of the U.S. Attorneys; that has been unprecedented in history and happened only infrequently to rare instances on individuals. You've never had this type of firing. So you are really comparing apples and oranges. Second is, there have been sometimes where Robert Kennedy, you could say — I think you can use the word, abused the Attorney General's role; on the other hand, he has served his Administration well.

Where the conflicts existed, do you see them, and they've been noted in history, some of them dealing with Martin Luther King and others, and other times he — there was no sense that the Justice Department became merely a political tool.

MR. MANN: All right; yes.

MS. ORCHOWSKI: Peggy Orchowski, I'm with the Hispanic Outlook Magazine. I love the movie, The Queen, because at one point Blair finally tells her, I have the constitutional duty to inform you that you are harming the monarchy and the government. And I wondered, who is — I mean in this case, I suppose the Congress is Blair at this point, they have the constitutional duty to declare who is accountable.

But what happens if the Queen, in this case, the President, doesn't listen; what if the person who is accountable is in such a state of denial that they will not listen, even though all the accountability facts are on the table, then what happens?

REP. EMANUEL: You don't mind my smirk at the fact that somebody referring to the President plays the role of the Queen, do you? Peggy, thank you for the question. I never knew I was going to be a film critic for the day. We have a responsibility, an oversight. I really do believe, I mean, look, there's a lot we can talk about just in the '06 elections and the consequence and the meetings and what happened there. There is no doubt, and I agree with both the White House interpretation, not completely, but that in the '06 election, public corruption played a role, which is also what I laid out in the speech.

It was not just Iraq alone, Iraq was a big piece. People wanted a change to Washington. Iraq was case one of what they wanted. Public corruption had a corrosive impact on peoples' sense of what had happened to this town and what

was going wrong with one party rule, okay.

Second is, we have a role to do, we have a responsibility. People know the balance had been out of whack, and not just between policy and politics, but that an unchecked government had led to a series of policies where they were, and we were as a country, paying the price.

They didn't know it in the sense of, no disrespect to the Brookings Institution, in that kind of public policy, they just knew its success. And there's a reason that almost every person who had an issue or every district that had a public corruption case, that switched hands, almost to the race, okay. And there was an argument after the election, and I just want to make this one last point, the Republicans in the House and the Senate said Iraq was the reason they lost, and they were furious, as you know, about the sacking of Don Rumsfeld after the election. The White House, immediately after the election, pushed back at the interpretation coming out of the House and Senate and said, no, public corruption played a major role.

And I would argue to you, if your view is public corruption played a major role in the loss of the House or the Senate, what do you then do? Do you then try to stop the bleeding from where public corruption cases are coming from? That's just one explanation, hopefully hearings will prove that wrong, or maybe prove in individual cases it was right.

But you have to deal with this. We have a responsibility as a Congress to not just say — and what frustrates me is, people go, it's incompetence.

We poorly handled the firing of eight U.S. Attorneys, and yet you know what happened with the U.S. Attorney in Guam who was investigating Jack Abramoff.

I will not accept, nor do I think we as a country or we as a Congress should accept. If incompetence is one explanation, we'll get to that. But when you pile up the cases, I would argue there's a philosophy and a mindset here that is operable and is now finally coming out. And there are consequences to all of us, not just in the public policy sense. People have lost lives and homes down in Louisiana, Mississippi and the Coast. We are paying a price as a country for what's happening in Iraq. There are other consequences to peoples' lives. You've got to bring those back, not just for political reasons, but straight up, there are real consequences that are affecting peoples' lives.

MR. MANN: Rahm, past history suggests that congressional efforts to hold an administration accountable for the performance of government and to get them to reverse course on a matter of foreign policy are most successful if the minority party joins in, at least to some extent. Think of Watergate, and even the building opposition, the war in Vietnam and other things. What can you tell us about efforts to reach out to Republicans in the House and the Senate? Are you thinking about that, in moving ahead on this and Iraq, of laying the conditions under which Republicans will feel comfortable, some, in joining you in assuring that accountability?

REP. EMANUEL: Well, first of all, I mean there is no doubt that — I mean we were talking about this earlier, and I think Pietro brought up the example,

and I think it's true, that if you look all throughout history, about four years is the time for the American people on any given war, and after that, it starts to way on the American people and the public and the political system, et cetera. But it's not that we just got four years. Let's take the three major policies that are passed by the Democratic Congress in this most recent funding issue. And I think it's very interesting, a lot of people accused us in the election of not having an Iraq position as a party, and you couldn't win an election without a position on Iraq, and yet just two months after the election, we declared with — that not existed before, an issue on time line troops and benchmarks, which are major, and I think that's totally really been absorbed by both the country, as well as by those who analyze what goes on from a political and policy perspective.

That said, there is nothing that we recommended as Democrats that hasn't been recommended by some element of the national security apparatus. The benchmarks that we adopted and said we should have not just — we should say rhetorically, but there should be (inaudible) behind them, were first voiced by the President of the United States on January 10th, when he addressed the nation.

The only difference is, we took his benchmarks instead of — we didn't say, okay, we really, really mean it this time, we put law behind them, and they have a consequence of the Iraqis don't do their part to get off the sidelines and get onto the playing field and take ownership of their country.

And everybody from General Petraeus on down says, the only way to solve this is a political solution, not a military solution. And so we're finally putting

a consequence to that. And mind you, Secretary of Defense Gates said we were doing exactly the right thing to send a warning shot to the Iraqis, there's consequences for them not taking the steps they need to to take control and resolve their political problems. Two, everything to deal with troop readiness, in that whole big group that Jack Murtha has been a big pusher for is because of hearings and testimonies from the entire establishment of the Armed Services talking about what has happened to both the Guard Reserve and active duty for the constant redeployment of both Iraq and Afghanistan, and that we're near a breaking point, we're living on fumes, recommended that we had to get these folks in our units up to (inaudible) both the rest period and the training, et cetera.

Point three, the time line was recommended by the Iraq Study Group. Those are the three elements of the policy, those are the big ones. Nothing there wasn't recommended by some apparatus of our national security, just things that we needed to accomplish.

Now, to your question, I think the Republicans, based on — these are individual discussions, et cetera, totally agree with the benchmarks, totally. Two, like the fact — the big fight is whether you should have an explicit time line that says we are going to leave on X date, or we are going to begin redeployment on X date.

I just note to you that it was recommended by the Iraq Study Group, bipartisan group. Second is that, in fact, I believe that it had a positive impact to force the Maliki government, understanding that this is not some open ended commitment, which is what Secretary Gates said. But the Republicans, I do believe,

and Chuck Hagel is the first, and like everything, if you look at both Vietnam and other points in history, there is — each vote, you start to gain more folks on the other side who then say, you know what, this is the right balance. The policy changes from the first one you had, and as that process happens, you're going to gain more Republicans, in my view.

MR. MANN: What about on the subject of your talk today, on the undue politicism?

REP. EMANUEL: I don't think a lot of Republicans will sign onto that one.

MR. MANN: But look at the Republican Judiciary Committee members unhappy with the U.S. Attorneys (inaudible) and criticism of the Attorney General, that is, there are signs of it, and I just wonder whether any of that is to be seen in the House?

REP. EMANUEL: Let me tell you a different take on your question.

MR. MANN: Yeah.

REP. EMANUEL: The first bill I introduced in the 109th Congress was, Marty Meehan and I introduced comprehensive lobby and ethics reform legislation. The first bill got ridiculed by the Republican leadership, ridiculed for — and Tom Delay and I think I'm doing this almost word for word, or just let me — it will never happen was the quote, or an aide to the speaker said it, it won't happen. And I agreed I'd take my name off if it would help them move it, okay. We're going to take up that legislation and it's the basis of what we're going to deal with.

I'm not in the business of giving the Republicans political advice. But if I had seven members under investigation in the United States House of Representatives, seven Republican members of the House, I sure would have more of a proactive strategy besides that if you're under investigation, you get kicked off the committee.

I'm not in the business of giving John Boehner and Roy Blunt who are friends of mine, political advice. But there are seven members of the Republican party today serving the United States Congress who are — I should say one way or another either under investigation or have the FBI talking to them. And I don't think your response should be, well, if that happens, we then kick you off the committee, although that's a good thing to do. I think there should be something proactive — meet us half way, here's our ideas, where's their lobbying reform legislation? We at least have one. I'm not saying we're perfect, but we at least know this is a problem and we're doing something proactively to deal with it, because we have an institutional problem that requires an institutional solution.

MR. MANN: Last question from Bill Galston.

REP. EMANUEL: Good to see you, Bill.

MR. GALSTON: You, too, Rahm. I learned in 1993 that I wasn't likely to win an argument with you; I've changed my mind. You made a very powerful case. The only problem with it is that there's a danger that it becomes a unified field theory of everything. So let me just ask you, is it your view that the President of the United States got us into war in Iraq and has persevered in the course

of action through thick and thin and against the increasingly vociferous will of the American people in order to build the long term future of the Republic Party?

REP. EMANUEL: Here's what I think — well, let me just do the inverse. Some people used to say something about, you know, Clinton was always political, so I said I want to know the guy that gave the political advice for NAFTA, okay. But I do think — and not all those are equal, okay, Bill, not all of those are equal. I don't think what's happened in the Department of Education equals what I'm talking about on the Department of Justice, okay, that an individual has stock, major holdings of stock in a company in which they have oversight responsibility, okay, I'm not saying that.

What I am saying is that when you intimidate — that there is a philosophy and an operative theory in this Administration that's different in kind than anything we have seen before, and it did impact what happened to both the planning and preparation for the war, but more importantly, there was not — this was not 20/20 hindsight on the occupation. People said before the war that military piece would be one thing, the occupation will be everything. And I laid out to you three individual cases to the staffing of that occupation that are, in my view, galling, but it comes from a single mindset.

And I will lay to you, we have dealt as a country with ethnic strife before in the middle of an ethnic civil war, that is exactly what happened in Bosnia, on a different scale and in a smaller country, but we went in, we've occupied the country, been there for nine or ten years, lost not one soldier, not one, because the

policy you put in place is an important — is in protecting your soldiers and the men and women you ask to carry out a policy is a (inaudible) and we took from Dobbs and others, very serious people we put in place for that occupation.

We knew how important that was to accomplish what was going to happen both for the Croatian, the Serbians, and the Bosnians, and different ethnicities, and we didn't lose a single soldier. Now, it's different in scale to what you're doing in Iraq, but it was a telling lesson, and you learn from each of those experiences.

But when you look at what was happening for the occupation, and I've read the books, all about it, you know, post the war, the total kind of happens, it was just an after thought, not taken seriously, and then staffed with political people who didn't — were not qualified for this job. We are paying a consequence as a country, unprecedented, it's the worse challenge in American national security in over two generations, and there's a consequence because of a mindset and philosophy. And that occupation was essential to America's success there.

And people were put in place who had no reason to be there, and it wasn't just one or two or three, it was both who got contracts, who was put in place — put that policy in place, and now there's been a failure of a magnitude we've never seen before.

And also, I'm not going to go shy away, I don't — to your question, there were also things done prior to the war that clearly were about, you know, politically moving something because you wanted a result, and it has real

consequences.

So I don't think we went there for political purposes. On the other hand, there have been — what has happened has had, and for the people they put in place, has had real political consequence, and we're paying for, Bill, as a country, and it still comes out of the same mindset that they told you they were going to do. What happened over in the occupation is no different than how they filled some of the agency and people who were doing it. What they saw their public mission — well, let me ask you this question since it's been reported. What's your answer to Roe versus Wade have to do with the person you're going to staff in the Iraq reconstruction program? Not to be (inaudible) but I'm going to ask you a question, and that's what happened here, and it's a real — I mean understand. And I agree with you on one thing, I'm not going to just view the world in dealing with the Administration from that perspective.

But I would challenge you on this, if you begin to accept that it's just a lot of political appointees or incompetence or a PR problem, then you're not going to face up to the consequences or what is actually in front of you staring at you. And it's the weight of evidence that I thought needed to be brought together in one place to see it together in one area and say maybe there's something else here, because I think it bears down on this U.S. Attorney case in a serious way.

MR. MANN: Let me say in conclusion that I think we've all benefited that Congressman Emanuel this morning ended up in this institution rather than the one his mother had in mind. Please join me in thanking the Congressman.

Thanks, Rahm.

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