



WASHINGTON WATCH
WITH ROLAND MARTIN

TRANSCRIPT

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MR. ROLAND MARTIN: We're going to get to the healthcare debate in a moment, but the Obama administration is facing a different health challenge, and this trial isn't being waged on Capitol Hill. It's happening in clinics and doctors' offices all across the country. Many folks are clamoring to get vaccinated for [the] H1N1 virus, also known as "swine flu." The pandemic has already claimed more than a thousand lives in the U.S. The problem: there just aren't enough vaccines available, and some folks are blaming the Obama administration.

The person in charge is Health and Human Services secretary Kathleen SEBELIUS, and she's here exclusively on "Washington Watch."

Glad you're here, Secretary.

SECY. KATHLEEN SEBELIUS: Thank you. Nice -

MR. MARTIN: All -

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- to be with you.

MR. MARTIN: -- all right. Let's jump right into it.

This week, the President declared swine flue - H1N1 - a national emergency.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Right.

MR. MARTIN: Some people are saying, "What's the big deal?"

Why - why did he feel it was necessary to go to this extent,

declaring a national emergency?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, what a national emergency does is give us at Health and Human Services the flexibility. If states need to move quickly, we can do that. We -

MR. MARTIN: You ran -

SECY. SEBELIUS: don't have to wait -

MR. MARTIN: -- a state[?]. W- -- former governor of Kansas.

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- you bet. You bet. So, he's really getting out- -- usually, you see a national emergency after a tornado hits, or when a hurricane comes, and it takes a week, and then a presidential declaration comes. This president has said from the outset, "We want to get out ahead of this. We want to be as safe and secure as possible."

So, he declared it. We now in the department - if a hospital needs to expand bed space, if they need to move patients from one place to another, they don't have to wait and go through the bureaucratic hurdles.

MR. MARTIN: Now, originally, we heard there were going to be 40 million vaccines available by the end of October.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Right.

MR. MARTIN: What? Another 20 million a week later, but right now we're - what - about 10 million short? Where do we stand -

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well -

MR. MARTIN: -- now?

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- we're - at the end of this week, we have

about 27 million doses that have been drawn down by states. We'll have another 10 million next week. So, the startup was slower than we would've liked, and, unfortunately, we listened too carefully to the manufacturers' rosy predictions. We have now - I was on the phone yesterday with each one of the five manufacturing partners, saying to them, "We need to know what's coming. We need to know when it's coming."

We've also sent a team out. We had a team in Liverpool, England, the home of Novartis, last week. We're going to - Sanofi - and going to the other ones to say, "What is it that you're doing that we could possibly speed up? How can we get this out faster?"

Our production companies are now accepting seven days a week, shipping overnight, so we're cutting all the time off we possibly can to get the vaccine into the communities.

MR. MARTIN: Now, of course, conspiracy theorists, they're sitting here saying, "Oh, this is the drug companies doing all of it on purpose" - things along those lines. But here's what is alarming. ABC News-Washington Post poll: 4 out of every 10 Americans saying, "We don't think it's safe." What does that make someone in your position think, when you hear people saying, "We don't think it's safe," yet we know folks have died. We know people have been -

SECY. SEBELIUS: You bet.

MR. MARTIN: -- impacted, and this is not like the traditional

flu. This hits people who are younger, even children.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Pregnant women and children are prime targets for this. And I think there was some public confusion about the fact that we kept saying this was a new virus - and it is; never been seen before - but it's a traditional way of making the vaccine, exactly the way seasonal flu is made. So, we have about a hundred million Americans every year who get a seasonal flu shot, an enormously high safety record. So, we can say with confidence to folks this vaccine is safe - and, actually, it's really important, because as you say, we've seen about a hundred children die so far. We have about a thousand people who've died, about 20,000 hospitalized. And kids can get really sick, particularly those with asthma and diabetes. Underlying health conditions make children even more vulnerable.

So, getting the vaccine safe and secure protects them and protects the ones around them, who they love.

MR. MARTIN: I fly through probably three, four airports a week, and - very interesting - probably in 1 out of 10 airport restrooms you actually have hot water there. So -

SECY. SEBELIUS: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: -- frankly, you need that really to wash your hands to destroy any particular germs. What are you telling people, though - the basic things that they can do -

SECY. SEBELIUS: Sure.

MR. MARTIN: -- short of the vaccine? They're sitting at home

right now, saying, "Look, I haven't gotten the vaccine yet."
What can they do to try to prevent getting H1N1, or swine flu?

SECY. SEBELIUS: First of all, if you start to feel sick, stay home. Don't go around other people. Don't share your germs with anybody else. Washing hands - and if you don't have hot water, carry some alcohol gel. It works. Do it frequently. You know, anytime you shake hands with folks, wipe your hands off. Wipe a computer -

MR. MARTIN: There's no- --

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- key off --

MR. MARTIN: -- it's not personal -

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- telephone - absolutely -

MR. MARTIN: -- but we - [crosstalk] -

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- not.

MR. MARTIN: -- the swine flu thing.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Or, do the - [extends her elbow] - flu bump -

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles and extends his elbow in return.]

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- instead of shaking -

MR. MARTIN: Oh, *that's* it?

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- hands. You bet.

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

SECY. SEBELIUS: You bet.

And kids have learned how to sneeze. I mean sneeze or cough into your sleeve and not into your hands. So, those steps have

been effective, and we want people to test them out.

We also know we have antivirals that work, if people get sick, that going to a doctor and getting Tamiflu or Relenza is effective - particularly with people who have higher-risk conditions. It's important to contact a doctor.

We have a great website, Roland: Flu.gov. People can go on, hit their home state, put in a zip code and figure out where to get the vaccine, when it's going to be available, get some questions answered, do a self-evaluation tool: "If you're feeling like this, you know, take these steps." All of that information is on Flu.gov. It gets updated regularly, and we can do some things to keep people safe before they get the vaccine and then get in line. Sign the consent form for your kids, if there's a school-based clinic, because it's the most important thing you can do.

MR. MARTIN: Last year, we saw lots of criticism, schools closing. Some folks felt it was premature. How are you advising school districts, how are you advising state education boards in terms of how they should handle this process, so they're not completely shutting schools down. So, the question of saying no - is there a certain threshold you should be reaching before you go to that extent?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, what we didn't know last spring is just how lethal this would be, so there was some concern that this could be a deadly flu. Were kids really getting the flu?

Everybody would -

MR. MARTIN: So, the smart move was [to] say, "Look. Just shut it down. Let's just try to figure it out."

SECY. SEBELIUS: "And let's figure it out."

MR. MARTIN: Okay.

SECY. SEBELIUS: We know a lot more. We know now that, while there are some instances where people get really sick, most people have the flu, and it's not comfortable, but it's not deadly. So, the science right now says keeping school open is actually safer for kids. A lot of kids would be home alone; don't get school lunches and breakfasts if they don't go to school; are in, you know, unsafe environments. And often, their parents have to stay home and may be jeopardized in terms of losing a job, if the -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- the kid is home.

So, right now it's leaning toward keeping a school open; keeping kids learning; keeping them fed; asking, again, parents, if your child is sick, please keep him or her home, because this flu spreads, and it spreads quickly.

MR. MARTIN: You have folks out there who, again, believe that HHS, the federal government, they really oversold this and, frankly, right now are trying to play catch-up. I had a comment here from Mike Osterholm, the University of Minnesota - a former Minnesota public health official - who said, quote, "The one

thing they have to stop saying is there's a dose for everybody. The virus has been in a race with the vaccine, and the virus is winning. It doesn't matter if there's a dose for everybody if it doesn't get to them before they become ill."

So, again, you're dealing with folks who are saying things along those lines, but what other steps are you taking to reassure the public that you are doing enough, that there will be enough doses, but also you know all the answers, if you will, to make sure folks are not dying from this disease?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, we're trying to get the vaccine out. As fast as it comes off the production line, it's gone. The remarkable thing is six months ago, this virus was identified. We now have a safe and secure vaccine. That's record time, without cutting any safety steps. It's being distributed [at] up to 150,000 sites, so [it's] going right to where it's needed. It's going to doctors' offices and clinics.

And what we say to pe- -- I mean some people are going to get the flu. Some people got the flu this spring and summer, before we had a vaccine available. Some people, unfortunately, are getting the flu right now.

Our scientists still say go ahead and get vaccinated, even if you had it before. We don't know what's going to happen. We just began seasonal flu season. This could get a lot worse in the winter months. What we have right now is an opportunity, starting with the priority population, but spreading out, to get

people a vaccination that we know is targeted toward this flu. And it's a good idea.

MR. MARTIN: How is the monitoring system set up? That is, is the CDC driving this? What particular department is driving this, and how are you monitoring it? How - how are you watching to see what the trend lines look at [sic], in terms of is it stronger in one part of the country than another?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, CDC, our Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is really the agency that does the on-the-ground surveillance. So, they have surveillance teams across the country, daily input about what the disease outbreak looks like, who's being hospitalized, and particularly testing the more serious cases, 'cause what we need to know is if the virus mutates at all, if it changes. And so far, it hasn't, so we've got a vaccine that's right on target for this virus. And we will watch.

We also have a great safety surveillance system. We want to make sure as people get vaccinated, if there're any adverse reactions, that we track them quickly, and we notify people quickly. But so far, so good.

MR. MARTIN: Got to talk about healthcare for a moment here. We see [the] House and Senate bill; the Senate bill - Senator Harry Reid is talking about a possible opt-out. You ran a state.

SECY. SEBELIUS: You bet.

MR. MARTIN: And one of the issues that we have been talking about on this show is that the places where, frankly, this health bill is needed the most: largely southern states, there are Republican governors. And so there's an issue there in terms of - just like we saw with the stimulus bill, folks saying, "Hey, I don't want the money."

So, does the opt-out make sense, leaving it up to states to decide whether they're going to be in it - because if you have that, folks *still* may not be a part of the healthcare plan?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, I would prefer, personally, a national plan that would be available to everybody, regardless of where they live. What became clear in at least the Senate debate was right now, there're still not enough senators who think some kind of national program is what they're willing to vote for.

MR. MARTIN: Meaning - as some have described -

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- a robust -

MR. MARTIN: --- a "robust public" -

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- public -

MR. MARTIN: -- "option."

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- option. You bet.

So, I think this -- makes sure that there will be competition, there will be cost control. And, frankly, it puts the pressure on the local official. If there're folks in that state who don't have affordable insurance, they've got a way to deal with their elected official and vote 'em out and get

somebody who actually is responsive. So, it kind of puts the pressure point home at the state, where you might start with a philosophy and a governor saying, "I'm not going to do this," they're likely to hear from a whole lot of constituents who say, "Well, wait just a moment. That's my choice." You know?

MR. MARTIN: But, of course, they --

SECY. SEBELIUS: "That's my" -

MR. MARTIN: -- als- --

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- "option."

MR. MARTIN: -- but - but they're also likely to hear from lobbyists and others, who're going to be pressing them in those states, as well.

SECY. SEBELIUS: You bet, but it's a very transparent process, where they're going to be able to watch what's going on elsewhere. They're going to be able to see where there's competition.

Part of it is, Roland, in many states, like my home state of Kansas, two thirds of the state had one insurance company, so you had no choice. It - a monopoly doesn't do a really good job of lowering costs and often doesn't do a good job of offering innovative plans and innovative strategies.

So, I think, as the President believes, a little competition is always a good idea, and it helps lower costs and gives some choice.

MR. MARTIN: You stated personally, in terms of where you stand

on this; and, clearly, you have Democrats who're saying the President needs to become more involved and demand a public option. But is it a question of saying, "Look, if the votes are not there, we need to go for, frankly, what's the second-best choice," as opposed to saying, "We're going to force people to drive home the first choice"?

SECY. SEBELIUS: Well, I think at the end of the day, the President has - has never backed away from the notion that, in a new marketplace, you need choice, and you need competition - and we need to keep costs down. And that - the public option is, by far, the best way to get there.

He talks on a *daily* basis to individual legislators, to committee chairs, to the leaders; and has been working on this plan nonstop for six months. I can tell you, because I participate in a lot of those meetings. So, he has never given up the notion that these are the principles that he thinks are the right ones.

At the end of the day, though, the bill has to get through the House and get through the Senate and get to his desk. So, he's going to keep the pressure on, keep pushing, keep bringing people together and, I think, make it clear that "if you've got another strategy to lower costs and give people choice, put it on the table. Let's see what it is."

MR. MARTIN: But isn't that the practical point that progressives and liberals, moderate Democrats must understand as well, and

that is, at the end of the day, a bill has to get passed? It has

-

SECY. SEBELIUS: You bet.

MR. MARTIN: -- to get through?

SECY. SEBELIUS: The status quo just is unacceptable, and it's breaking family budgets. It's bankrupting state budgets. It makes our companies less competitive. *We have to act.* We have to act this year. And we're going to get the best possible strategy we can to the President's desk.

MR. MARTIN: Do you think Congress will pass a bill by the end of this year, and the -

SECY. SEBELIUS: I do.

MR. MARTIN: -- President will be signing it before the new year?

SECY. SEBELIUS: I do.

MR. MARTIN: Okay. Secretary SEBELIUS, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Thanks.

[THE TWO SHAKE HANDS.]

MR. MARTIN: All right.

SECY. SEBELIUS: Nice -

MR. MARTIN: Check with you soon.

SECY. SEBELIUS: -- thanks.

MR. MARTIN: All right.

Folks, coming up, our very outspoken panel weighs in on Afghanistan, the politics of healthcare and the key elections

coming up this week. Also, I['ve] got a surprise for them as well. Our panel: White House correspondent April Ryan, Democratic strategist and pollster Cornell Belcher, Republican activist Sophia Nelson, and *Los Angeles Sentinel* publisher Danny Bakewell.

[END SEGMENT.]

MR. MARTIN: This week's "Washington Watch" panel is raring to go. Joining me today is April Ryan, White House correspondent of American Urban Radio Networks; and we['ve] got *three newbies* -- [CHUCKLING.]

MR. MARTIN: -- Cornell Belcher, Democratic pollster; Sophia Nelson, writer for Theroot.com; and Danny Bakewell, publisher of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

So, we'll - we'll haze the three of you. April's - she's been here, but we'll - we'll break y'all in gently.

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: Let - let's get right to this, uh - the first issue, healthcare. This week, Senator Harry Reid - [claps his hands] - "I got the votes!" What - what's the deal? I - I hear "robust public option," "moderate public option," "weak public option." It's lots of drama when it comes to this public option and this healthcare bill.

What in the heck are we eventually going to get?

MR. CORNELL BELCHER: Well -

MR. DANNY BAKEWELL: I hope its not a loss-leader public option. They put it out there; prop it up; talk about it; make everybody feel like, you know, "I was with the public option." When it goes down in flames, you just say, "I tried." And *that's* what we really have to be careful about.

MS. SOPHIA NELSON: I'm in agreement with him, actually, I think that the President and the White House and the leadership decided they probably can't win on this one, but they've got to go to the base, and they've got to push for it. I don't think they can get what they're talking about - the public option. I think that the Democrats within their own party are the problem for them. That's the challenge.

MR. BAKEWELL: But we've got to *jam*. I mean we - we can't just rely on that. That we - we're sort of, I think, peeping the hold card, but the reality of life is we *need* a public option.

MS. NELSON: But the -

MR. BAKEWELL: There're lots of people who really are depending on that.

MS. APRIL RYAN: But the issue is what you consider a win is. I mean, you know, you're talking about opting in and opting out. And when the President, at the end of the day, sits down and signs this, he's going to have something that's not totally what he campaigned for, because originally it was about everyone being included, covering all Americans.

MR. MARTIN: Of course, Speaker Nancy Pelosi - their bill [would cover] 96 percent of all Americans.

MS. RYAN: But that's still not all Americans, and what's going to happen is it's going to leave states, again, the chance to say, "Okay. I'm not going to deal with this. I'm not going to opt in. I'm going to opt out." And then you have, again, a scenario where there will be people that are not covered.

And then also, what is the penalty issue? You know, some people are going to be looking at the fact that the penalty costs much less than *getting* insurance, even though it's a mandate to have it.

MR. MARTIN: Cornell, I asked Secretary SEBELIUS that - this whole issue of the opt-out, and she said, "Hey, it's going to put pressure on - on - on state officials."

But, look. That's simply saying, "Okay, let's fight this battle *again*."

MR. CORNELL BELCHER: I love it. Two - two things. One is that the public option, I don't think, is - is something that they put out there for politics. [The] truth of the matter is you[ve] got a majority of Americans right now who're supporting the public -

MR. MARTIN: Poll -

MR. BELCHER: -- o- --

MR. MARTIN: -- after poll after -

MR. BELCHER: -- public option.

MR. MARTIN: -- poll.

MR. BELCHER: So, the idea that it's - that it's just playing politics - it's playing politics to - to the *majority*, 'cause the majority of Americans *do* want a public option.

Taking this battle to the states, I think, is a beautiful thing, because, in fact, when you take this battle to the states, you get an opportunity to have this fight - you know, Democrat versus Republican, on options -

MS. RYAN: But are people going -

MR. BELCHER: -- opting in, op- --

MS. RYAN: -- to be insured again?

MR. BELCHER: -- op- -- opting out. Well, but if we can move this battle, if in some states, they'll certainly opt in, but in those states that opt out - those Republicans who want to opt out, well -

MR. MARTIN: See -

MR. BELCHER: -- then let's put them on the ballot for opting -

MR. MARTIN: -- see, that's what I'm saying.

MR. BELCHER: -- out.

MR. MARTIN: So - so, Cornell, you're thinking as a pollster. You're - you're saying -

MR. BELCHER: [Crosstalk]. I'm thinking polling[?].

MR. MARTIN: -- that this could be a wedge issue in those states with Republican governors: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama - all those places.

MR. BELCHER: Absolutely. When - when we can build a coalition of poor - 'specially in - in parts of the South that you mentioned - poor Whites, who need to be opted in, along with African-Americans and Hispanics, we could see a coalition here built that we haven't seen before.

MR. MARTIN: Danny -

MR. BAKEWELL: I - I disagree.

MR. MARTIN: -- do you buy that?

MR. BAKEWELL: No, I - I disagree. I mean I - I don't think it's a - it's a good thing. My real concern is whether or not the public option is even *in* the bill, for opting in or opting out, at the end of the day.

MS. RYAN: Something that resembles a public option will be there at the end of the day. Will it be called a public -

MR. BAKEWELL: Well, I'm not --

MS. RYAN: -- option is a -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- so sure.

MS. RYAN: -- whole different story.

MR. BAKEWELL: I'm not so sure, because the reality of[?] life is, just as you say, on the - on the state level, people would e- -- be able to use it as a wedge issue.

The issue is not that they don't *want* a public option, not that the *public* doesn't want an op- -- public option. *They can't get it through* -

MS. RYAN: The White House -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- Congress.

MS. RYAN: -- says it's about choice -

MS. NELSON: [Crosstalk] -

MS. RYAN: -- and competition -

MS. NELSON: -- I'm saying.

MS. RYAN: -- but at the end of the day, the mandate was to cover all Americans, and opting out? You're not covering -

MR. BAKEWELL: I think with the -

MS. RYAN: -- everyone.

MR. BAKEWELL: I think - let me just say I think that the problem is that the argument they're making now is if you sign a bill that covers everybody, but you leave 25 million out - then you['ve] got a win. And I think the White House is looking -

MS. RYAN: But what is a "win"? What's -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- for a win.

MS. RYAN: -- the definition of -

MR. BELCHER: But - but -

MS. RYAN: -- this win?

MR. BAKEWELL: Well, that's the point. That's the question.

MS. RYAN: That's the - that's -

MR. BELCHER: -- but - but

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. RYAN: -- the question.

MR. MARTIN: -- [crosstalk]. Is that a real issue? Because,

look, if you say, "Hey," you know, "we['ve] got a bill," and people say, "But I'm not happy with it," who's *happy*?

MR. BELCHER: Right.

MR. MARTIN: Who wins -

MS. NELSON: I'm -

MR. MARTIN: -- in the end?

MS. NELSON: -- I'm going to play devil's advocate on this panel. I don't support the public option. I don't think it's a good idea, and I -

MR. BELCHER: [Groans.] U-u-ugh.

MS. RYAN: [Laughs.]

MS. NELSON: -- think - I'm sorry. I don't, and I think that it - the devil's in the details. I mean nobody's talking about these fines and these penalties. I mean -

MS. RYAN: I just did.

MS. NELSON: -- April ki- -- April kind of alluded to it. But I think that to fine folks because they don't opt in is going to be a real problem, and I think that's a wedge issue on -

MR. MARTIN: But - but so --

MS. NELSON: -- the *other* - [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: -- but - but aren't you already paying for those very same people, because when they get sick, and they go to [the] emergency room, if you're a local -

MS. NELSON: That's true.

MR. MARTIN: -- taxpayer -

MS. NELSON: There's no doubt.

MR. MARTIN: -- you're paying -

MS. NELSON: But I'm -

MR. MARTIN: -- for them.

MS. NELSON: -- paying through - through my healthcare. I mean -

MR. MARTIN: *No, no, no, no.* As -

MS. NELSON: -- we don't - we don't -

MR. MARTIN: -- a *taxpayer* -

MS. NELSON: -- have time to get -

MR. MARTIN: -- you're paying for it.

MS. NELSON: But I'm saying they - they put those hidden costs - the hospitals sock it to the people with the bills. Check it out. They'll tell you that they try to make up for those that walk into -

MR. MARTIN: Gotcha.

MS. NELSON: -- the emergency room. They're billing us -

MS. RYAN: I just walked into -

MS. NELSON: -- to pay -

MS. RYAN: -- the emergency with my -

MS. NELSON: -- sure. *You know* -

MS. RYAN: -- baby -

MS. NELSON: -- what I'm talking -

MS. RYAN: -- recently.

MS. NELSON: -- about.

MS. RYAN: And if I didn't have insurance -

MS. NELSON: Yep. It -

MS. RYAN: -- I had a -

MS. NELSON: -- would've been ugly.

MS. RYAN: -- \$400-something bill, and the insurance paid \$300.

It was like \$48.31 --

MR. BELCHER: But you had insurance.

MS. RYAN: -- I had to pay.

MR. MARTIN: Right. But you *had* it.

MS. RYAN: [Crosstalk.]

MR. BELCHER: And - and - and that's -

MS. NELSON: True. True.

MR. BELCHER: -- the key.

MR. BAKEWELL: That's the issue.

MS. NELSON: That's true.

MR. BELCHER: And that's - the issue is that you -

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. BAKEWELL: And the quality of it is a whole different discussion.

MR. MARTIN: But I -

MR. BAKEWELL: [Crosstalk] -

MR. MARTIN: -- tell you what.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- you have -

MR. MARTIN: Tell you what. I had a - I had a surgery in 2000, \$80,000 in hospital bills - a ruptured appendix. Trust me. If you either have *bad* insurance -

MR. BELCHER: Right.

MR. MARTIN: -- or [sic] *no insurance* -

MS. RYAN: [Crosstalk] - better than *no insurance*.

MR. MARTIN: -- you don't mind -

MS. RYAN: Ooh!

MR. MARTIN: -- having -

MR. BELCHER: Right.

MR. MARTIN: -- bad insurance!

MR. BELCHER: Right, but that -

MR. MARTIN: Real quick.

MR. BELCHER: -- but that's your - but that's the point that - that I've been trying to make. That's a *win*. If - if we move this ball down the field, let's not let the perfect be in the - get in the way of the good. And we - we can move this ball down the field -

MR. MARTIN: And so -

MR. BELCHER: It is-

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: like in sports -

MR. BELCHER: it is - it is a win.

MR. MARTIN: -- in sports, "win ugly."

MR. BELCHER: It - it *is*. Well - well, when you - we can cover - when we can -

MR. BAKEWELL: [Crosstalk]. Right.

MR. BELCHER: -- any win -

MR. BAKEWELL: There ya go.

MR. BELCHER: -- if we can cover more people, it's a win.

MR. MARTIN: I want to -- I want to talk about a win, big elections coming up on Tuesday. Will we see a referendum on President Obama in Virginia, in New Jersey? If Corzine loses, if Deeds loses, is this a question of states' will, or, "No, President, this is a signal to you"?

MS. NELSON: Well, as --

MR. MARTIN: Sophia.

MS. NELSON: -- a Virginian here, I will say that I think that Deeds has run a terrible campaign. Okay? And that being said, if he loses, I'm not so sure that's a reflection on the President --

MR. MARTIN: *Really?*

MS. NELSON: -- as much as he ran a terrible campaign.

Bob McDonnell's been well funded. Virginia, remember, is -- it's intuitively a red state. It truly is.

MR. MARTIN: Yeah, but -- [crosstalk] --

MS. NELSON: A- -- a- --

MR. MARTIN: -- here's the deal, though. Tim Kaine, Democrat --

MS. NELSON: Wait. Don't -- let me f- --

MR. MARTIN: -- fol- -- followed --

MS. NELSON: -- I ain't finished.

MR. MARTIN: -- Mark Warner, Democrat. Obama wins Virginia.

MS. NELSON: I didn't say that it wouldn't have an impact. I'm

just saying that they didn't have a great candidate this time in New Jersey. I think Corzine's going to pull it out. I grew up in New Jersey. I think they have the - the -

MR. BELCHER: [Crosstalk.]

MS. NELSON: -- organization, the - [unintelligible]. The Republicans - Whitman - since Whitman left office, they've had no real Republican party there.

MR. BAKEWELL: She's probably -

MS. NELSON: I spent a number[?] -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- right about Virginia -

MS. NELSON: -- right.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- because - and I would concede to her judgment, but the reality is I think it will be *perceived* as a -

MS. NELSON: I totally[?] -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- weakness and a chink -

MS. NELSON: -- agree[?].

MR. MARTIN: Oh! Oh!

MR. BAKEWELL: -- in the -

MR. MARTIN: Trust me.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- armor -

MS. NELSON: I agree.

MR. MARTIN: They - Cornell --

MR. BAKEWELL: -- big-time.

MR. MARTIN: -- Cornell, [if] they lose, it's coming down to the President.

MR. BELCHER: Well, no. If they lose, this is what it comes down [to]. It should come down as - as a warning for Democrats, 'cause guess what? We built a blueprint for how you turn red states blue.

MS. NELSON: How[?]?

MR. BELCHER: You engage the young people. You engage that surge electorate, which is browner and blacker and younger, and you build that coalition. That's what we did in Virginia. If Democrats - and - and, again, I've said this for - for - f- -- a- -- right after the election. These are *Obama* voters. We have to turn them into Democratic voters. If Democrats can't heed that warning and understand they have to engage this younger and more diverse coalition, and make them part of their base, and if they don't work their base -

MR. MARTIN: Ap- --

MR. BELCHER: -- well, then, they *should* lose.

MR. BAKEWELL: That's why -

MR. MARTIN: -- April, you're not --

MR. BAKEWELL: -- you['ve] got to have -

MR. MARTIN: -- buying it.

MS. RYAN: I am -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- a public option.

MS. RYAN: -- *definitely* - I am -

MR. MARTIN: April, you're not -

MS. RYAN: -- *definitely* not -

MR. MARTIN: -- buying it. Why?

MS. RYAN: -- buying it.

You know, you said you - you - you built the bluep[r]int, but did you actually *build* the blueprint, or was it a referendum against George W. Bush in 2008, when people were against the economy, against the war? And this president had the headline: "I'M GOING TO PULL YOU OUT OF IRAQ, AND I'M GOING TO CHANGE THE ECONOMY."

So, is it necessarily a referendum, or a blueprint? And I think it's more so a referendum. You see the fight going on with Fox right now. The White House is trying to quell all this Fox News spin - I'm sorry. But, um, they're trying to quell all this -

MS. NELSON: [Crosstalk] -

MR. MARTIN: Well, I don't *mind* a fight. I - [crosstalk] -

MS. RYAN: -- no, but they're trying -

MR. MARTIN: -- a good fight.

MS. RYAN: -- to quell it -

MR. MARTIN: But, Cornell, you want to respo- --

MS. RYAN: -- for - for 2010, and I mean healthcare reform -

MR. BELCHER: I have to -

MS. RYAN: -- is -

MR. BELCHER: -- jump in.

MS. RYAN: Go ahead.

MR. BELCHER: I have to jump in. When we start spending money

registering people to vote, har- -- you know, hard dollars to register people to vote - something the Democratic party hasn't done in years - and we are - and we can show where our registration numbers actually impacted sort of the - our overall win numbers, when we - when we win in states like Colorado, Nevada, Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio - that's a blueprint. That is something -

MS. NELSON: But - [crosstalk] - but, Roland -

MR. BELCHER: -- very different.

MS. NELSON: -- to your point -

MR. BELCHER: We - we looked at - we looked at the electorate and said, "You know what? We "We can't win this electorate if it stays the same. We have to change the face of" -

MR. BAKEWELL: [Crosstalk.]

MS. NELSON: -- but, Roland -

MR. BELCHER: -- "the electorate."

MS. NELSON: -- to your point -

MR. MARTIN: Sophia, go ahead.

MS. NELSON: -- to your point -

MR. MARTIN: -- and -- [crosstalk.]

MS. NELSON: -- the issue becomes when Obama came in to Virginia, no Democrat had carried that state since LBJ. So, clearly, that apparatus should still be there, but if I look at all the polling data -

MR. MARTIN: A year later.

MS. NELSON: -- Deeds is in *trouble*. And - and Northern Virginia is really going to decide. The *female* vote is going to decide who becomes governor of -

MR. BAKEWELL: But also -

MS. NELSON: -- Virginia.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- it's a -

MS. NELSON: It[?] -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- function of when Obama went in, he made some very specific promises: pulling out of the war, healthcare for everybody.

MS. RYAN: Guantanamo -

MR. BAKEWELL: He's got -

MS. RYAN: -- Bay.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- to deliver on those -

MS. RYAN: Yes.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- things, and *that's* where things like public option becomes very important - because there *is* a dichotomy between what the public wants and what he can get through Congress.

MR. MARTIN: Now -

MS. NELSON: I agree.

MR. MARTIN: -- my wildcard issue for the day -

MS. RYAN: Uh-huh?

MR. MARTIN: -- I want to throw this out there -

MS. NELSON: Whatcha got?

MR. MARTIN: -- Reverend Bernice King -

MS. RYAN: Um-hum?

MR. MARTIN: -- elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Here's what I find to be interesting. You do not have the infrastructure of a progressive, evangelical base. Can she make the SCLC relevant? And can progressives who are evangelical step up and actually have an impact on national politics? Because we see what social conservatives do. We see what they are doing.

Danny, can they do it? And can she be someone who can actually start that effort?

MR. BAKEWELL: Well, I think that if anybody can do it, she can do it. Bernice is a very, very vibrant, articulate leader. She brings the name. She brings all the things that are associated with Dr. King, and she's a very young, progressive woman.

MR. MARTIN: But they have a weak infrastructure with SCLC.

MR. BAKEWELL: Well, they *do*, but I think she can build that. And I think that's really, really something that we can depend upon her [for] - and we've got to support her to be able to do it.

MR. MARTIN: Cornell, is that missing from, frankly - I won't say the Democrats' corner, but the reality is having evangeli- --

you['ve] got Reverend Jim Wallace out there. You have others out there, but you do not have a strong, progressive base. The Civil Rights Movement - that was led by ministers, and so it's not like you have not had Democrats in the past who've latched on to progressive evangelicals.

MR. BELCHER: One of the most important turnarounds over the last four years - my time when I started doing work for the DNC is under Howard Dean - watching this turnaround, is we came in, and we said, "You know what? We're losing White evangelicals. We're losing the Christian vote by too wide a margin." I don't care what we do, when we're losing evangelicals in states like Ohio by +20 points, we cannot compete. And you look at sort of - Republicans had this - this - this huge advantage on -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. BELCHER: -- sharing values and being the party most aligned with your values.

We were able to sort of shrink that to basically a toss-up at the end of this last election, where you were just as likely to say the Democratic party is the party that shares your values [as] the Republican party. And when that happens, we can compete *anywhere*.

MR. MARTIN: Sophia, Republicans [sic] [are] very weak right now when it comes to this whole issue of really getting that base generated. Can progressive evangelicals step in and seize the moment, and could the SCLC be the way to do it?

MS. NELSON: I think I agree with - [turns to Mr. Bakewell] - your comments. I think she's the right person. She can raise money and get the infrastructure built and do everything she needs to do. I think she can possibly pull it off.

MR. MARTIN: April?

MS. RYAN: She's a firebrand preacher who will make you jump over a pew, and she has the name of "King." But it's a bigger issue than this. Black preachers across the country have been very upset with this administration. They're saying that they're not hearing them, and they just recently, within the last -

MR. MARTIN: But, then -

MS. RYAN: -- few weeks -

MR. MARTIN: -- but you're - but you're - oh, no, no. Oh, no, no.

MS. RYAN: -- wait a minute.

MR. MARTIN: I['ve] gotta -

MS. RYAN: In the last -

MR. MARTIN: -- I gotta say -

MS. RYAN: -- few weeks -

MR. MARTIN: -- this, April.

MS. RYAN: -- wait a minute. They met --

MR. MARTIN: But these same -

MS. RYAN: -- with - they met with -

MR. MARTIN: -- but these same Black preachers have been quiet.

They have been -

MS. RYAN: No.

MR. MARTIN: -- weak. They've been meek.

MS. RYAN: They've been -

MR. MARTIN: No, no.

MS. RYAN: -- quiet because you have a Black president, and they said they -

MR. MARTIN: No, no, no, no.

MS. RYAN: -- would not -

MR. MARTIN: They have been qui- -

MS. RYAN: -- no, a lot of them have -

MR. MARTIN: -- they have been quiet -

MS. RYAN: -- been, Roland.

MR. MARTIN: -- also because -

MS. RYAN: They met -

MR. MARTIN: -- they have been weak.

MS. RYAN: -- they met with Josh DuBois, the head of the President's race initiative, recently, a- -

MR. MARTIN: Faith initiative.

MS. RYAN: - I'm sorry. Yes, the faith initiative and neighborhood initiative. And they met with him recently, and they said, "Look. We have issues on the table," the HBCU[s], the - the fact that the funding was sunset. Also, the prison program issue -

MR. MARTIN: Yes!

MS. RYAN: -- the different things of that nature.

MR. MARTIN: They have issues -

MS. RYAN: [Crosstalk] -

MR. MARTIN: -- but they are not -

MS. RYAN: -- but they -

MR. MARTIN: -- organized.

MS. RYAN: -- they may not be organized, but they say they are the Black community -

MR. MARTIN: But they need to get -

MS. RYAN: -- and this White House -

MR. MARTIN: -- organized.

MS. RYAN: -- is not -

MR. MARTIN: Danny.

MS. RYAN: -- dealing with it.

MR. BAKEWELL: Yes, we *all* have to get organized. The Black press is completely shut out -

MS. RYAN: *M-m-m-m!*

MR. BAKEWELL: -- okay? Look at - tell me about what -

MS. NELSON: Ooh!

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- you had Sebastian on here -

MS. NELSON: Wow!

MR. BAKEWELL: -- to - Sebeliu[s], rather, talking -

MR. MARTIN: SEBELIUS.

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. BAKEWELL: -- Sebe- -

MR. MARTIN: Secretary SEBELIUS.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- yeah - talking about the importance of getting the message out. She's not advertising on TV One. She's not advertising on any Black pub- -- Black newspapers around the country. The - *anybody* - we're locked out of the economic game, and *that's what I'm here to* -

MS. RYAN: But not just --

MR. BAKEWELL: -- *declare war on*.

MS. RYAN: -- in the economic game; in the -

MR. MARTIN: So - so - so -

MS. RYAN: -- pressroom as well.

MR. MARTIN: -- so - real intere- --

MS. RYAN: In the pressroom as well.

MR. MARTIN: All right.

MS. NELSON: But let me say this.

MR. BAKEWELL: Well, I mean -

MS. NELSON: I think -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- let's *talk* about it -

MR. MARTIN: Sophia.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- now. [If] we're going to get on this -

MS. NELSON: But - well -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- let's *deal* with it.

[LAUGHTER.]

MR. MARTIN: Sophia, go ahead.

MS. NELSON: I think both sides make good points, but I think the challenge for us as African-Americans who are journalists who are - are trying to assess the White House, as well as for the White House, is this balance. And I think that's what the *preachers* are facing. All of us are a little out of our depth here on what we do with a Black president -

MR. BAKEWELL: No.

MS. NELSON: -- when we -

MR. BAKEWELL: You need a -

MS. NELSON: -- want to be critical.

MR. BAKEWELL: -- show on *this* subject.

MR. MARTIN: No, no, no.

MS. NELSON: I - I - I *do*.

MR. MARTIN: We will -

MS. NELSON: I think it's a -

MR. MARTIN: -- but -

MS. NELSON: -- serious issue. We are -

MR. MARTIN: -- [crosstalk]- --

MS. NELSON: -- we are having -

MR. MARTIN: -- Cornell -

MS. NELSON: -- this discussion.

MR. MARTIN: -- about ten seconds. I'm going to make my final comment before - before I have to go.

MS. NELSON: [Chuckles.]

MR. BELCHER: Our religious base on the left must be as energized

and organized as they are on the - on the right, 'cause right now we're going into an election where the right is energized and organized, and we are not.

MR. MARTIN: Not - not -

MR. BAKEWELL: [Crosstalk] - use the Black press -

MR. MARTIN: and -

MR. BAKEWELL: -- to get the word out.

MR. MARTIN: -- and let me make this point to Sophia's point that is very simple, and that is we should not be concerned figuring out what to do with a Black president. If your issue is still the same, if your mission is still the same, it does not matter if that person is Black or White. You focus on the *issue*, not the person sitting in the White House office.

MS. RYAN: Hold them accountable, no matter -

MR. MARTIN: April -

MR. RYAN: -- what race.

MR. MARTIN: - April -

MS. NELSON: I don't agree with you.

MR. MARTIN: -- Cornell, Sophia, Danny, we certainly appreciate it.

MR. BELCHER: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: Trust me, we're going to have this conversation -

MR. BAKEWELL: We'll be back.

MR. MARTIN: -- again. All right.

MS. RYAN: [Laughs.]

MR. MARTIN: Absolutely.

Folks, keeping the love alive. Up next on "Washington Watch," Politico.com's Nia-Malika Henderson focuses on the First Family's marriage in our "Obama Watch."

[END OF SEGMENT.]

MR. MARTIN: Maintaining a successful, loving and well balanced marriage isn't an easy feat for any couple. It is especially difficult if your marriage is subject to the pressure of the presidency. Nia-Malika Henderson of Politico.com is here with a closer look at the marriage of the First Couple this week on the "Obama Watch."

Nia, how's it going?

MS. NIA-MALIKA HENDERSON: Pretty good. Good to see ya, Roland.

MR. MARTIN: -- all right. [The] *New York Times* Sunday magazine [ran a] *huge* article talking about the marriage of President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, and what was interesting as - as you read this article [is] it really was frank and honest in terms of the issues they've had to contend with in their marriage.

MS. HENDERSON: It's - it's *true*. I mean they very much put their marriage on the *couch* in this - in this article, and it's not something we usually see politicians do. They talk very frankly about the bumps in the road that they've had

during their marriage.

On the one hand, Michelle Obama for many years had to almost be a single mom, because Barack Obama was in the Illinois state senate and then, of course, in - in the U.S. Senate, and then of course, running for President. So, she had to essentially gather a group of friends and her mother, as well, to kind of raise the family - raise those two girls. And Barack Obama had a hard time, you know, kind of dealing with those pressures.

But they were - like you said, I mean they were very honest in this, and one of the things they talk about is, you know, wanting to have date night and really kind of wanting to keep their marriage separate from the silliness of Washington. Of course, we saw early on that they had that date night. They flew to New York, and they got some pushback for that, and - and Barack Obama said that that was something that really annoyed him, that people really tried to drag their marriage and make it political.

MR. MARTIN: But what really jumps out that people don't realize, that the article also explored [is] that this is really the first time in I think it was - what - 13 years they've actually lived full-time under the same roof. And

that's a long t- -

MS. HENDERSON: It's *right*. I mean -

MR. MARTIN: -- and - right. And they've been married - what - 17, 18 years?

MS. HENDERSON: Yeah, 17, 18 years, and it - it's the first time since 1996 that they've, you know, spent *time* together as one family unit under the same roof and had dinner together. And - and Barack Obama apparently goes, you know, up - up to the - to the residence from - from meetings to have dinner with his - his wife and his girls every night.

So, it's a different stage in their marriage, and so they're not having to contend with him being on the road and him being away. And one of the things that Michelle Obama said that she wanted to be frank and open about the marriage is that she wanted essentially to tell people that marriage is *hard* and that their marriage isn't perfect -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MS. HENDERSON: -- and that everyone has their struggles.

MR. MARTIN: You know - and something also that was interesting, because at the tail end of the article, she talked about that, look, when you're in a marriage for the long haul, there're going to be different times, frankly, when the husband is following the wife in terms of their

career, when the wife is following the husband. I think a lot of people don't understand that you have that constant give-and-take in a particular marriage.

MS. HENDERSON: Yeah. It's exactly right. And - and they also talked about wanting to have separate identities in terms of work, and you see now with Michelle Obama really trying to establish herself as a separate - as a separate person, not really necessarily weighing in so heavily on - on politics and not being, you know, kind of pulled into all of the partisan bickering that goes on in Washington. And that's one of the things that they both said was kind of important to the marriage - that they have these separate identities and these separate careers.

MR. MARTIN: Also, I - I think it's also important to note that the article also spoke to the playfulness between the two and also the showing of affection, because when I interviewed Michelle Obama on the campaign trail for the special on TV One, she made the point that her daughter said she liked the fact that they saw the interplay between mother and father. And, really, when you talk about people who have intimacy issues, it's important to have that public affection for one another, as opposed to being standoffish,

if you will, and sort of being just too cold and separate.

MS. HENDERSON: It's true. And it's not something we see very often from Black couples, quite frankly, and - and certainly not *political* couples. So, it *is* a different image that we're seeing from this White House: a very, you know, young couple. They're clearly in love. They flirt with each other, and - and it definitely gives a different - a different image of what a political couple can be.

MR. MARTIN: Although he may not want to sit here and jump up again with that Latin dancer.

MS. HENDERSON: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: So, he may -

MS. HENDERSON: Right.

MR. MARTIN: -- just wanna just leave *that* one -

MS. HENDERSON: Exactly.

MR. MARTIN: -- alone.

MS. HENDERSON: Yeah. I think - yeah. I think he learned some -

[TECHNICAL PROBLEM, INFORMAL COMMENTS, B-ROLL AND COMMENT ABOUT INCLUDING SIGN-OFF FROM HENDERSON.*]

MR. MARTIN: All right, Nia. Thanks a bunch. We certainly appreciate it.

Nia-Malika Henderson of Politico.com.

Coming up, just what is the Republican party's problem

with African-Americans? Smokey Fontaine joins us with the latest racist outrage on the Net. Our "Web Watch" is next.

[END OF SEGMENT.]

MR. MARTIN: Attracting African-Americans to the Republican party just got harder after a recent posting that appeared on the Republican National Committee's Facebook page. NewsOne.com's Smokey Fontaine is here with that story, as well as why some are accusing the NCAA [with] destroying Black families.

Smokey, welcome back to the show. Let's get right to it. What's up with this photo? President Obama eating chicken? *What's the deal?*

MR. SMOKEY FONTAINE: Well, a fan of the RNC allegedly posted this picture on Facebook.

[JUMP TO NEWSONE.COM PAGE WITH PHOTO OF PRES. OBAMA EATING FRIED CHICKEN.]

MR. FONTAINE: Obama's eating chicken. It said, "MISCEGENATION" on the top. It was a call for they want to repeal Loving vs. Virginia, the Supreme Court case. The issue is the RNC left this picture on their site for over *two weeks*.

MR. MARTIN: Well, here's what I don't understand. Anybody with any common sense would know that it's an offensive

photo. They know about the whole stereotype of Black folks and chicken, so what the hell were they *thinking*?

MR. FONTAINE: Well, this is the question. Was it negligence, or was this race baiting - right? It *has* to be the latter, Roland. We *know* this, because they monitor the site. They monitor all the members of the site, and they see these pictures. What they're doing is hiding behind a banner of user-generated content. "We can't control the Internet. This is on our Facebook site, so allow these messages to get out."

MR. MARTIN: Well, you know what? I have a Facebook page, and there's a little button they call "DELETE" when you see something stupid. To me, that qualifies.

All right. [The] NCAA destroying Black families. I - I'm not quite sure what this story's all about.

MR. FONTAINE: Well, Dr. Boyce Watkins has been blogging on the Net and receiving a lot of criticism, and some support, for a very provocative essay he wrote saying the NCAA is destroying Black families, especially Black males. Right here at the beginning of the basketball season, he's saying that they're only invested in sports. They're not going to class well enough. The schools are only exploiting them for

money and for financial gain, and we need to really regulate the NCAA's use of African-American athletes.

MR. MARTIN: Okay. Here's what I don't get - okay? Chicago, 35 [of] percent young, Black men graduating from - from high school; Detroit, something like 25 percent. And so, no. If you want to see where Black families are being destroyed, it's you['ve] got Black kids who are dropping out of school. I don't see how ripping - the NCAA somehow is going along with destroying Black families. That makes no sense to me.

MR. FONTAINE: Well, what this blogger is looking for - and what's surprising [is] it's getting a lot of support from comments that have been left on this blog is saying, "If we're going to allow our kids to be used by the NCAA, give us better education. Give them stipends. Give them the skills that they can take when the majority of the kids in the NCAA - even Division 1 - will not turn that into a professional career."

MR. MARTIN: Well, look. I say to any parent out there, "Tell your kid [to] take their butt to class, and stop putting this whole thing on the school." That's the way I

look at it.

MR. FONTAINE: Well, we need the NCAA - right? If we don't have the NCAA, enrollment in colleges will plummet. So, if we're going - we need. Let's have it used - use it to our advantage.

MR. MARTIN: All right, Smokey. We are coming upon the first anniversary of the election of President Barack Obama. And what are the things that you're hearing out there on the Web in terms of what people are saying? Are they happy with the past year? Are they satisfied? Are they criticizing him for not doing more? Or, from my vantage point, are the people saying we haven't stepped up enough, as opposed to what he's doing?

MR. FONTAINE: Obama still has universal support among African-Americans. We continue to ask this question via online polling. He's in the 80, 90 percentile in terms of his approval ratings. But what's also true, as you say, is that all the support we saw at the election - *where is that?* We need to help him fight against his critics, fight against his detractors. Let's be as vocal as we were to get him elected, to help him pass all the bills that are important to us. This is where we're needed now. We're needed now.

MR. MARTIN: Well, that's one of the points that - that -

that I've been making for quite some time, and that is you cannot sit here and just talk about what he isn't doing. You have to get involved.

And also, Smokey, in a bit I'm going to deal with "My Perspective." We have elections coming up. Are you seeing people talk about the -race in New Jersey, in Virginia, the fact that you might have a White mayor in Atlanta? Are you seeing African-Americans fully engaged in these elections? They are also really important.

MR. FONTAINE: No, I'm - I'm *not* seeing it. During the elections, we had state groups for Obama across the nation with engaged memberships. Now, all that membership has dropped down. It's dwindled. There's no activity around these state - the local and state elections, and what's going to happen is we may lose, as you know, the majorities we have in the House and the Senate, because folks feel like, "We elected Obama. Now let him do it."

But he's always said to us from day one he can't do it alone. He needs the masses behind him. He needs his Black community to help him push this through.

MR. MARTIN: All right. Smokey Fontaine, NewsOne.com, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

MR. FONTAINE: Thank you.

Mr.MARTIN: And now time for "My Perspective." If you listen to the politicians and pundits in Washington, D.C., every move being made by President Barack Obama and Congressional Democrats and Republicans is all about the 2010 midterm elections. And, as usual, voters already are wondering what is going to happen, even though a single ballot won't be cast for a year.

Well, folks, *come on!* There are elections all across the country on Tuesday. Do they matter? We will see important races for governor in New Jersey and Virginia, and mayoral elections in Houston, Atlanta, New York and other cities. Races for city council and state legislature seats and all kinds of other positions will be held, and we will all - we all should be focused on these races. Let's just be honest. The national races are the sexiest campaigns of them all, but when it comes to how your life will be impacted most, it's what happens on the local level. Whether it's the raising of fees or property taxes, making our schools more effective, fighting disparities in the criminal justice system, we are most affected by what is done in the city council, commissioners' court and sheriff's office and by local and state judges. Yet, down-ballot

racers are the most ignored.

A few weeks ago in Memphis, they held a special election for mayor. The turnout? *Twenty percent*. That's it - a lousy 20 percent.

Look, it's time for us to put the 2010 midterm elections on the back burner and find out when the next local election is. If you don't, you may miss your life being turned upside down because your eyes are on Washington, D.C., and not down the street.

I'm Roland Martin, and this is my perspective. What's yours?

[END OF SEGMENT. NO SOUND FOR FIRST 50 SECONDS OF NEXT SEGMENT.*]

CLIP OF PRESIDENT OBAMA SPEAKING AT TRIBUTE TO FORMER
SENATOR EDWARD BROOKE

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: -- to this day was, by any measure, an unlikely one. Raised nearby in a neighborhood so viciously segregated that Black residents needed a note from a White person to pass through, at a time when so many doors of opportunity were closed to African-Americans, others might've become angry or disillusioned. They might've concluded that, no matter how hard they worked, their horizons would always be limited, so "Why bother?"

But not Ed Brooke. Serving in a segregated Army, barred from facilities at the base where he trained, he fought heroically in Europe, leading a daring daylight attack against a heavily armed enemy. Rejected from Boston's old-line firms, despite his success in law school, he established his own practice, handling everything from wills and divorces to real estate and criminal cases.

And when he ran for statewide office in Massachusetts, and one reporter pointed out that he was Black, Republican and Protestant, seeking office in a White, Democratic and Catholic state, and also - quote - a "carpetbagger from the South" - and poor, Ed was unfazed. It was, to say the least, an improbable profile for the man who would become the first African-American state attorney general and the first popularly elected African-American senator.

But that was Ed Brooke's way, to ignore the naysayers, reject the conventional wisdom and trust that, ultimately, people would judge him - judge him on his character, his commitment, his record, and his ideas.

That's the legacy of our friend Senator Edward Brooke. And may we each do our part to carry it forward.

Thank you. God bless you.

Congratulations, Senator Brooke, and God bless the

United States of America.

[APPLAUSE. CLIP CONTINUES TO RUN WITH VOICEOVER FROM MARTIN.]

MR. MARTIN: Senator Brooke was appreciative of the Congressional Gold Medal, but he candidly and forcefully challenged the assembled leaders of Congress - especially Republicans - to put aside politics and work together to deliver what the American people and the world need.

But, of course. That's what would one expect of an Alpha man.

[END, CLIP.]

MR. MARTIN: Well, that's it for this week's edition of TV One's "Washington Watch." I'm Roland Martin. Goodbye and have a blessed week.

[END.]



WASHINGTON WATCH
WITH ROLAND MARTIN

TRANSCRIPT

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Host: Roland Martin

Guest: Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services

Danny Bakewell, Publisher, Los Angeles Sentinel and chairman of the National Newspaper Publishers Association

Cornell Belcher, Democratic strategist and pollster

Sophia Nelson, commentator and contributing writer to theroot.com, Huffington Post and essence.com

April Ryan, White House correspondent, American Urban Radio Networks

Nia-Malika Henderson, White House reporter, Politico

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