



WASHINGTON WATCH
WITH ROLAND MARTIN

TRANSCRIPT

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Host: Roland Martin

Guests: Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL)

Rep. Yvette Clarke, (D-NY), Chair, House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity and Science and Technology

Rapper/Actor Ludacris

Deborah Mathis, Syndicated Columnist and Author

Robert Traynham, Roll Call TV Host

Kevin Chappell, Ebony Magazine White House Correspondent

Smokey Fontaine, News One/Interactive One Chief Content Officer



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**(SEG-
MENT 1)**

[B-ROLL. NO AUDIO.]

MR. ROLAND MARTIN: Illinois' appointed Senator Roland Burris is no stranger to controversy. He arrived in the nation's capital under the cloud of political corruption swirling around the man who appointed him, Governor Rob Blagojevich. Allegations of pay-to-play politics levied against Governor Blagojevich led to his impeachment, and all of that overshadowed the former Illinois attorney general's appointment to the seat vacated by Senator Barack Obama, [who], of course, later became President.

MR. MARTIN: But the controversy did not stop there. His own party turned him away from his first swearing-in ceremony, but now Senator Burris is the one flexing some political muscle. Now the senator says he will not support a healthcare reform bill that does not have a robust public option.

So, joining me today to discuss healthcare reform and some other issues is Senator Roland Burris.

Sir, we certainly appreciate you being here.

SEN. ROLAND BURRIS: Roland, it's my pleasure.

MR. MARTIN: Let's jump right into it. First of all, I like that

name, too.

SEN. BURRIS: My namesake -

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

SEN. BURRIS: -- absolutely.

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

First of all, the public option. Let's explain it for the person out there. Progressives are supporting this, because it basically provides coverage, like Medicare, for anyone looking for insurance, but there'll be premiums involved in paying for that. And, of course, you have people who are against that by saying that - that a robust public option could very well put insurance companies out of business, because they will not be able to compete with this government-run program.

MR. MARTIN: You have made it clear that you are an advocate for a robust public option, but what really is a "robust public option"? What does that *mean*?

SEN. BURRIS: Well, Roland, that terminology can boil down to this. I'm talking about health insurance for those persons who do not have it, that would provide choice for them, that would provide [it] at a reasonable rate, and it would be competitive, and it would be accountable.

We use the word "option," because this is in addition to the insurance companies. The scare tactics have been used about

we're going to run the insurance companies out of business. Insurance companies are *not* going to be run out of business, but what - what I will tell you [is] if we do not have the opportunity for persons to go into the market and compete with those insurance companies, the 14 and 15 percent premium increases that you see now, in the next four or five years will be 25 and 30 percent.

MR. MARTIN: And already, the insurance companies are saying that, even with the bill that - that came out of Senator Max Baucus' committee, that *that* is going to raise premiums. So, we're getting an *advance* no- --

SEN. BURRIS: No, what they *said*, Roland was they were going to raise the premiums because of that bill, and they've peeped their hold card. Now, they - what - what is [it] they're saying?

SEN. BURRIS: So, that's the reason why we're saying we need an option so we can deal with the costs.

MR. MARTIN: So, it's a -

SEN. BURRIS: The only - the only in- -- industry that's not regulated by the antitrust laws - two of them: baseball and insurance companies.

MR. MARTIN: And, of course, Democrats are saying that, because the insurance companies came out and made those statements, it's time to revisit those antitrust laws. Do you believe that

exemption should be removed, and they should be, uh - that they should not get that special exemption from Congress?

SEN. BURRIS: Roland, if a bill [were to] come to the Senate that would take antitrust co- -- antitrust authority from insurance companies, I will support that bill.

MR. MARTIN: Now, here's what's interesting. I - I talked to a lot of people this week in the nation's capitol and around the country, and they said, "Aw, Senator Burris has been irrelevant all this time," so all of a sudden, when you make this statement because how the - the, uh - the numbers are looking in the Senate, people are saying, "Uh-oh. Time for them to pay attention."

What has been the reaction from your fellow senators? What has Senator Harry Reed said? What has been the conversation since you have made it perfectly clear what you will and will not vote for?

SEN. BURRIS: Well, the reaction's been the same. One senator's being treated - I'm not being treated any differently. The senator's been treating me very professionally, and I certainly have gotten, you know, co-sponsorships on bills. I, you know, preside over the Senate. I do whatever senators do. You know, my amendment's been - been put forward in - in committees. So, there's been no different - and no one's come to me with any -

any type of bargaining chip. I'm not using this for bargaining chips. I'm using this for the people who've contacted me from Illinois, and not only that, from across the country.

SEN. BURRIS: I was flying out here to Washington the other day from Chicago, on a plane, and this flight attendant said, "Oh, hi, Senator Burris. How are you?"

So, four or five people sitting around, "B-" - "Oh, that's Senator Burris."

Three or four of them said, "Senator, stick with your public option."

I don't even know *where* they were from. Okay?

The public option situation is that the people know that these insurance companies 've taken *total* advantage of them, and now we're putting forth a program that's going to be some competition for them and give healthcare coverage to most of the people. We've been paying for it already in the emergency rooms.

SEN. BURRIS: So, what we must do is to make sure that the - those that are noninsured - or, there's something being floated also called the - "Medicare for Everybody." So, you know, that's something we're - you know, have to take a look at in terms of everyone makes sure everyone is covered, because what we're doing now and the cost of people and the type of rationing that the insurance companies are doing to - for people - it's

unconscionable and un-American.

MR. MARTIN: Now, we're hearing also that the - the - the sort of compromise will be this opt-out plan, that states would be allowed to opt out of a plan. Now, one of the issues that we recognize [is] that if you look at various states - we discussed that [on] last week's show - Mississippi, North Carolina; you look at Tennessee, Georgia, Louisiana, largely run by Republican governors, significant Black population. Is that a no - no-win - -winner for you as well - that is, this whole notion of allowing a state to opt out? Because the people who you - say, need it the most, many are living in those states.

SEN. BURRIS: Yeah, and - and that we have to assess. Not only that, it carries another problem with it on[?] the optio- -- opt-out situation, is - that is, the legislators could be highly influenced by the, uh - by the insurance companies. Take my state of Illinois. There're no limits on what they can contribute to a candidate.

MR. MARTIN: So - so -

SEN. BURRIS: S- -- s- --

MR. MARTIN: -- so, what you're saying is that -

SEN. BURRIS: -- so -

MR. MARTIN: -- so -

SEN. BURRIS: -- that's a problem, too, with -

MR. MARTIN: -- so, the insurance -

SEN. BURRIS: -- opt-out.

MR. MARTIN: -- companies will then move to impacting of the state folks -

SEN. BURRIS: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- and you're back at square one.

SEN. BURRIS: Absolutely. And you won't get the coverage, and they will still be in the - in the driver's seat and still have their high-rate premiums going and the rationing and the - and all of these other qualifications where you can't get coverage because of preexisting conditions.

MR. MARTIN: All of a sudden, now, we - we - we see poll after poll now showing that the majority of the public is in favor of a public option. We kept hearing over the last several months, "It's dead." Sen- -- one of your fellow senators, Kent Conrad, Democrat, said, "Forget about it. It is not going to happen."

Did Democrats make a mistake in declaring a public option dead? And, frankly, did that tick off progressives and liberals, especially those in the House, who have said, "Okay, fine. We're going to *definitely* push it even harder, because you say it's a nonstarter"?

SEN. BURRIS: Well, what I think happened was that the public was

not informed, and that's what you see changing the polls.

MR. MARTIN: Public was not informed on a public option.

SEN. BURRIS: Right.

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

SEN. BURRIS: Possibly, we - we didn't explain it. It's a terminology that people really don't understand what it means. And - and - and that's the reason why I broke that down and said, "Look. We['ve] got to deal with choice. We['ve] got to deal with competition. We['ve] got to deal with accountability." So, those are the things that I'm really saying that the public option will deal with, and once the people now realize this, they're saying, "Well, surely[?]. I want to be able to go get insurance company" - "my insurance company going to" - "going to" - "going to cut me off or something. I want to be able to go into the market and be able to get insurance that's reasonable."

SEN. BURRIS: So, that's what this public option will allow [them] to do, and - but they use all these scare tactics. "Yeah, well, the" - "the government's going to take over your health insurance."

We had some people out there saying, "Well" - "Well, I don't want the government messing with my Medicare."

Medi- -- [chuckles] -

MR. MARTIN: But it's government-run.

SEN. BURRIS: And it was government-*run*.

MR. MARTIN: I - I -

SEN. BURRIS: Absolutely!

MR. MARTIN: -- I['ve] got to ask you this. I mean, first of all, the whole - every time we heard about 60 votes, 60 votes.

SEN. BURRIS: Sure.

MR. MARTIN: That was not about *passing* a bill; that was about preventing a filibuster. And so for you, if - if a bill comes before the Senate, and there's no public option, will you use the filibuster tactic to prevent that bill from moving forward?

SEN. BURRIS: Roland, you're getting into the procedural matters, and we've not really disclosed what our strategy will be in terms -

MR. MARTIN: But it's on the table.

SEN. BURRIS: -- in terms of dealing with procedural matters.

MR. MARTIN: But it's on the table.

SEN. BURRIS: We have not made any - any type of position on our procedural matters.

MR. MARTIN: But you d- -- but you didn't say "no."

SEN. BURRIS: We did not make any position on our procedural matters, Brother Roland.

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.] So, you don't want to tip your hand, like the insurance companies did - right? [Chuckles.] I understand. Okay.

I'll - I'll move on to this here.

MR. MARTIN: Let- -- let's deal with the reality that you're sitting in this position right now.

SEN. BURRIS: Sure.

MR. MARTIN: And that is a lot of people - I remember when the story came up, you had Congressman Bobby Rush, who was talking about the importance of having an African-American in the United States Senate. And then you were dealing with folks on the ground that were saying pay-to-play. You are not running for re-election for the Senate seat - right?

SEN. BURRIS: That's correct -

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk]- --

SEN. BURRIS: -- for - f- for a particular reason, yes.

MR. MARTIN: -- and what's that reason?

SEN. BURRIS: Well, I had to make a decision whether I was going to be a senator, or whether I was going to be a candidate. And because of what it would cost for me to now, by February 2nd - I think the filing p- -- petitions had to be the - the last of October - I would have to raise anywhere from 6 to \$7 million, which meant that I would have no time to be in the Senate. I wouldn't be able to be working on doing all this research and background on public option or all these other issues, so I had to make a decision.

MR. MARTIN: And speaking of money, the bottom line is getting

this job has cost you tremendously. There've been attacks on your integrity, on your name, on your years in public service; but also, you have accrued some \$800,000 in legal fees. Has all of this made you angry? But have you ever said for one day, "Man. I should never have gone after this job"?

SEN. BURRIS: I have never said that, and I will never say that, because I'm here through the grace of the good Lord. I wanted to be a United States senator, and the Lord provided for that to take place. I got that appointment, and what I'm going to do is to serve. I - and - and my political career has been tremendous. I've had 20 years of elective - of service in appointive office in Illinois. My whole life has been set on public service. At the age of 16, I set two goals. One goal was to be a lawyer. Howard Law grad, Class of '63. The second goal was to be a statewide elected official of Illinois.

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SEN. BURRIS: My commitment is to public service. That's what I was destined to do, that's what I'm doing. And, Roland, I'm enjoying every day I'm in the United States Senate.

MR. MARTIN: What's the relationship with this White House? Last time you talked to the President? Are you in constant communication with him? A lot of folks from Chicago in that

White House.

SEN. BURRIS: Well, sure. I've talked with him, but I'm not in contact with the President, because there's no reason. I'm a junior senator. If he think[s] I can help him, I guess he will call me, if he thinks he needs my help. But when I first came in - [unintelligible] - a great deal of help, because they were transitioning from his office to - to get me into office. His chief-of-staff was very helpful to me. Uh, uh, Axelrod, uh, made - we made contact, and I certainly have seen the other people from Chicago. So, we - we are in contact. There's no reason for them to be in touch with me, unless they need something, and - or I need something. Right now, I haven't needed anything from them.

MR. MARTIN: Well, I['ve] got a feeling on this whole issue -

SEN. BURRIS: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: -- there might be a call to you to get that particular vote, especially if it's extremely, extremely close.

Well, Senator Burris, we certainly appreciate it, and we welcome you back to "Washington Watch" anytime.

SEN. BURRIS: It was my pleasure, and thank you, namesake. I appreciate it.

MR. MARTIN: All right. Well, you lost me 'til you had two things, and that is public service; but one also to be Alpha Phi

Alpha. I know you were -

SEN. BURRIS: I'm a big Alpha man -

MR. MARTIN: I - I -

SEN. BURRIS: -- absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- I know you want to stay[?] around and -
[unintelligible] - a fellow line member of A Phi A.

SEN. BURRIS: All right.

MR. MARTIN: We certainly appreciate it.

MR. MARTIN: Folks, an additional note about another African-American senator, a Republican and the first to serve in the Senate since Reconstruction, or as Senator Burris said, the first who was actually elected by the *people* since - uh, in *history*. I'm talking about Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts, who served from 1967 to 1979. Next week, Brooke will turn 90, and will be honored with the Congressional Gold Medal, presented to him by President Barack Obama.

We certainly wish Senator Brooke a happy birthday and send along our congratulations.

MR. MARTIN: Coming up, our "Washington Watch" panel is all ready - and I do mean ready - to talk executive pay on Wall Street. More jobs, stimulus and healthcare with Robert Traynham, host of "Roll Call TV"; Deborah Mathis, former White House correspondent and author; as well as Kevin CHAPPELL, White House reporter for

Ebony magazine. And later, Luda is in the house

**(SEG-
MENT 2A)**

MR. MARTIN: All right, folks. Time for our "Washington Watch" panel. Joining me today is Robert Traynham, host of "Roll Call TV" on the Comcast Network; Deborah Mathis, former White House correspondent for the Gannett newspapers and also columnist for BlackAmericaWeb.com; and the newbie on the panel, Kevin CHAPPELL, White House reporter for *Ebony* magazine. So, we'll have to haze Kevin, since this is his first time joining us on "Washington Watch."

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. MARTIN: All right. Big story this week - that is, Wall Street pay raises. Ken Feinberg, the pay czar, if you will, *slashing* big-time Wall Street pay. I say, "About damn time." I mean all of a sudden, *The Wall Street Journal* does a report about three weeks ago. \$140 billion in bonuses - higher than two years ago, and I'm sitting here saying, "Wait a minute! You guys are making money 'cause we saved your butts!"

MR. ROBERT TRAYNHAM: Wall Street will say, though, "Wait a minute. These folks are leaving in excess[?]," meaning all these top managers. "We['ve] got to pay them to stay."

Now, granted - look. Mom and pop on Wall Street - or -

MR. MARTIN: But where 're they going?

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Main Street -

MR. MARTIN: They're becoming a Wal-Mart greeter, now. Let's --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- well - we- --

MR. MARTIN: -- just be honest.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- look. Bu- -- but having said that, though, the bankers will say, "But we have the exper-" - "No disrespect, but we have the expertise to keep this thing afloat, so you gotta pay us what we're worth."

We live in a democratic system. We live in a capitalist system, and the mar- -- you have to pay what the market will bear.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Now, granted, look. I'm not trying to defend Wall Street, because Main Street, the folks out there that are *paying* for Wall Street, are saying, "We work just as hard as you. We know *exactly* what you" - "what you do. And having said that, these are" - "this is the reason why you're in the mess that" - "we're in the mess that" -

MR. MARTIN: He- -- he- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- "we're in."

MR. MARTIN: -- w- -- w- -- hold on, Deborah. I want to hear what the President had to say about these bonuses on Wall Street.

PRES. BARACK OBAMA: You know, I've always believed that our system of free enterprise works best when it rewards hard work. This is America. We don't disparage wealth. We don't begrudge anybody for doing well. We believe in success. But it does offend our values when executives of big financial firms, firms that are struggling, pay themselves huge bonuses even as they continue to rely on taxpayer assistance to stay afloat.

[END, VIDEO CLIP.]

MR. MARTIN: Deborah, that was my problem, and that is they are reporting all these record earnings, all of a sudden, doing great. Stocks are rising, but had the taxpayer not stepped in, none of them would be in business.

MS. DEBORAH MATHIS: Right. The taxpayer deserves the bonus. If you're going to be giving bonuses out, give the - [chuckles] - bonuses to us, because we're the ones that - that turned the ship around.

MS. MATHIS: This is absurd. Anytime that, uh - if - if I gave somebody some money to - because they said, you know, "My car's out of gas. I need some help" - okay - I'm bailing them out and giving them some money, and then they go to the movies? You know -

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MS. MATHIS: -- that's not what - what the intention was. I

mean, *really*. That is writ small - very small -- what's happening on this very large scale. It's just a matter of justice and what is right at some point. It doesn't matter. You can't do everything by the extreme and excessive letter of a law.

There *has* to be some underlying moral, and - and -

MR. MARTIN: Kevin.

MS. MATHIS: -- that's what's involved here.

MR. KEVIN CHAPPELL: Well, I - I think that - that's the problem that the White House has. I mean you have to - you have to balance that. You have to keep the talent, and you have to pay them well, but if you ever want to get your money back, if the taxpayers want to get their money back, you['ve] got to keep the talent, and you['ve] got to turn a profit.

But at the same time, the President's finally hearing from the American people that this is too *much*.

MR. MARTIN: But, Kevin, here's what I don't understand. Okay? We saw in February, in March and April all - where all across the country, when it came to - came to pay, here we are in October, and all of a sudden, they're saying, "Oh! Now it's time to slash."

MR. TRAYNHAM: Yeah, but -

MR. MARTIN: They had an opportunity earlier in the year, when there was even *more* outrage, Robert.

MR. TRAYNHAM: We were - absolutely, Roland, but there's two issues here. The first issue - and, again, I'm not the f- -- a pacifist for Wall - for Wall Street, but Wall Street will say, "These are complicated bonuses that were in" - "in place from a lo-" - "from a legal standpoint, from a contractual standpoint, years before the financial meltdown in 2008." That's one.

Two, let's be honest about this. Healthcare is not going the way - I know we'll talk about it in a few minutes. Healthcare is not going the way the White House wants it to. They want to change the topic -

MR. MARTIN: But you know what?

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- to something that's popular -

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk].

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- to something -

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

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that's popular -

MR. MARTIN: I['ve] got to disagree with you on that one, because, frankly, thi- -- this was the *last* conversation the White House wanted. The *people* drove this one.

MR. CHAPPELL: Yeah, the people drove it.

MR. MARTIN: When that *Wall Street Journal* report dropped, Kevin, people said, "Are you out of your *minds*?"

MR. TRAYNHAM: I'm not sure -

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: "One hundred and forty" --

MR. CHAPPELL: If you listen to the --

MR. MARTIN: -- "billion?"

MR. CHAPPELL: -- White House -

MS. MATHIS: That's right.

MR. CHAPPELL: -- the White House have - has been given signals all summer. "Pay bonuses 're too high. They['ve] got to come down."

MR. MARTIN: They rolled people out, saying - were talking about it.

MR. CHAPPELL: Right, right.

MR. MARTIN: It was all bark, no bite.

MR. CHAPPELL: Right.

MR. TRAYNHAM: But wait -

MR. CHAPPELL: But now -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- a minute.

MR. CHAPPELL: -- the bite has come.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Bu- -- bu- -- but wait a minute. But Ken Feinberg -- he *did* leak some of the stuff out there and say - and - and - and release that - that - that - that program last week, so -

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk] - wha- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- this is a concerted effort by the White House to change the topic from healthcare to something that's more

popular[?]. And, by the way, I don't - I don't disagree with them.

MR. MARTIN: -- right. But - but -

MR. TRAYNHAM: From a tactical standpoint, it's -

MR. MARTIN: -- but he leaked it -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- [crosstalk].

MR. MARTIN: -- after *The Wall Street Journal* report.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: My point -

MR. TRAYNHAM: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: -- the public is ticked off. That's who's ticked off, Deborah.

MS. MATHIS: Yeah, and it's also possible for there to be two hot stories at one time, too. I mean, you know, just because we might take all the intense focus off of healthcare for a moment doesn't mean we've forgotten healthcare, and it's still getting plenty, *plenty* of attention.

And the White House - I mean we - we are not attenti- -- we don't have collective attention deficit disorder - not totally, not the worst case, at least. And if -

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Chuckles.]

MS. MATHIS: -- if - if this is so complicated about, you know, the - the pay structure - and I understand it is - just - guess what? It just got uncomplicated.

MR. CHAPPELL: Real - [crosstalk].

[CROSSTALK.]

MR. MARTIN: Got *real simple* now.

MS. MATHIS: It just got uncomplicated.

MR. MARTIN: Now, speaking of - of somebody simple, former Vice President Dick Cheney.

MR. TRAYNHAM: [Laughs.]

MR. CHAPPELL: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: Here you have the former vice president this week highly critical of the President and the White House when it comes to Afghanistan. He made some comments. Let's hear from Vice President Cheney, as well as Robert Gibbs. Let's see what he had to say this week.

VIDEO CLIPS

MR. DICK CHENEY: Having announced his Afghanistan strategy in March, President Obama now seems afraid to make a decision and unable to provide his commander on the ground with the troops he needs to complete the mission. It's time for President Obama to make good on his promise. The White House must stop dithering while America's armed forces are in danger.

MR. ROBERT GIBBS: What Vice President Cheney calls "dithering," President Obama calls his solemn responsibility to the men and

women in uniform and to the American public. I think we've all seen what happens when somebody doesn't take that responsibility seriously.

MR. MARTIN: All right. I was in Cincinnati this week, talking to the Black Chamber of Commerce [and] came across a gentleman who served two two tours in Iraq. He said, "When we hit the ground, we didn't know *what* the heck was going on. There was no plan. It was figure out as you go."

Here is Cheney sitting here talking about, "Let's hurry up 'n' make a decision," after we had *eight years* of decisions by the gut.

So, what's the problem, Robert, with the President taking his time to make a decision where you're putting the lives of American men and women in harm's way? I say, "Take all the time you need!"

MR. TRAYNHAM: There is no - there - you're absolutely right. There is no reason why the President should *not* take his time with this to get it right - *no question about it*.

But what's - [the] interesting thing here is - two things, Roland. You have two 300-pound gorillas, the White House, and you have Dick Cheney going at it back and forth. And what's even more interesting about this: Dick Cheney - I don't think this is

political. This is really what he *believes*. He - and, remember, he has been vice president -

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Who's - who took five deferments in Vietnam 'cause he didn't want serve in the military.

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's another -

MR. MARTIN: Robert -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- issue.

MR. MARTIN: -- go right ahead.

MR. TRAYNHAM: He was - he was vice president for eight years and served, understandably under someone that made - [snaps his fingers] - decisions very quickly. Now, granted - now, tho- -- tho- -- those decisions may not have been the *right* decisions, but - [snaps his fingers] - he's used to very quick -

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- rapid fire.

Having said that, you now fast-forward to O- -- to President Obama who's more deliberative, who's more thoughtful. And I don't mean that in a derogatory sense.

MR. MARTIN: Even Secretary of Defense Robert Gates talked about how he loved his - how he - his whole thought -

MR. TRAYNHAM: Very methodical.

MR. MARTIN: -- process in making decisions.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Having said that, Vice President Cheney is poking

the eye, literally, by - by saying, "This White House is dithering." And you['ve] got a - he got - he's got a -

MS. MATHIS: And I wonder what -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- point. He's got a point.

MS. MATHIS: "He's got a point"? Uh, he's got a *pointer*. I wonder -

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

[CHUCKLING.]

MS. MATHIS: You know, I - I wond- -- I wonder what good he may be doing beyond his - the extreme edge of his base.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well, he sends a mixed message to our -

MS. MATHIS: I wonder -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- to our foes and allies out there. I - I'll give you that.

MS. MATHIS: Yeah, he does.

MS. MATHIS: And - and I - and I'm also wondering - I used to hear people say that knew Dick Cheney from way back when he was in Congress, representing Wyoming, and [they] say, "What *happened* to this man?" I don't - really. He has become - he's such a bitter person. He seems like he really wants to get back at somebody. He's got giant chips on his shoulders, and he has to try to stick it to - I - I - I'm not even convinced -

MR. TRAYNHAM: And w- --

MS. MATHIS: -- I hate to say this. But I'm *going* to say -

[chuckles] - it.

MR. MARTIN: Go right ahead.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Say, it girl! *Say it!*

MR. MARTIN: Go right ahead.

[CHUCKLING.]

MS. MATHIS: I'm not even convinced that, when he was in the wheelchair on Inauguration Day, it was just so he wouldn't have to stand for Barack Obama.

MR. TRAYNHAM: Oh, come on! [Crosstalk.]

MR. MARTIN: *Ah! Ah!*

MS. MATHIS: I'm gonna tell you -

MR. TRAYNHAM: Go 'head. I gotcha!

MR. CHAPPELL: [Crosstalk] -

MS. MATHIS: Let me tell you. As fa- --

[CROSSTALK.]

MS. MATHIS: -- but let me just --

MR. MARTIN: *That's* a conspiracy theory.

MS. MATHIS: -- say this. Wait a minute. And - and I'm not - I usually shy away from that, but - but I know how *crazy* that sounds, and maybe it is crazy to even *think* that.

MS. MATHIS: But here's somebody who - who - it makes *no sense* for him to be as - as destructive and disruptive and disrespectful as he has *been*. So -

MR. MARTIN: Kevin, what -

MS. MATHIS: -- I wouldn't put anything past him.

MR. MARTIN: -- Kevin?

MR. CHAPPELL: But what makes no sense to me, as a reporter coming to the White House, is why the White House even listens to him. I mean why give him - why - why give him the benefit of - of - of responding to the things that he says?

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's a good point. Because he's a 300-pound gorilla. Even though he's not in office anymore, people still *listen* to him.

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: 'Cause we're *talkin'* about him.

MR. MARTIN: No, no! But here's the deal. I mean I think the reason you respond to Dick Cheney [is] because you *want* to remind the people, "They were nuts. We're" - you know -

MR. TRAYNHAM: I'm not sure I agree -

MR. MARTIN: -- "we" -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- with you.

MR. MARTIN: -- "They were crazy. See?" And -

MR. CHAPPELL: Well, I think people already realize -

MS. MATHIS: [Crosstalk] -

MR. CHAPPELL: -- this[?], you know.

MR. MARTIN: But here's the deal, though. Re- -- but - but

Republicans are still responding to Cheney. Then, when you have the right-wing talk machine taking it up, all of a sudden you're saying, "See? They're *nuts*."

MR. TRAYNHAM: But you know what -

MS. MATHIS: But, see, the White -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- though, Roland -

MS. MATHIS: -- House is not - the White House, really, on any measurable scale is *not* really responding. Robert Gibbs responded to a question. He gave a very quick answer. That's it. You don't see any surrogates out there talking about this. You *certainly* don't see the President -

MR. CHAPPELL: Right.

MS. MATHIS: -- responding to this.

MR. CHAPPELL: The *White House* kept it going.

MS. MATHIS: I think - I think -

MR. TRAYNHAM: They - they -

MS. MATHIS: -- that they are -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- elevated it.

MS. MATHIS: -- backing off.

MR. TRAYNHAM: They - they - they - look. In - in other words, by them responding to it - although it was a question - they elevated it, 'cause they -

MS. MATHIS: If he di- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- and kept it in the news.

MS. MATHIS: -- if he d- -- if he didn't respond to the question

-

MR. TRAYNHAM: I'm not gonna de- --

MS. MATHIS: -- that would be -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- if I was Robert -

MS. MATHIS: -- a huge story.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- if I was Robert Gibbs, I'd look right into the camera, "I'm not going to dignify that" -

MS. MATHIS: If you asked Robert --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- "by commenting," and -

MS. MATHIS: -- Gibbs -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- and move on.

MS. MATHIS: -- a question - uh, *really*? Is that --

MR. TRAYNHAM: Yes.

MS. MATHIS: -- what you would do?

MR. TRAYNHAM: *Absolutely.*

MR. MARTIN: Well, actually, I probably -

MR. CHAPPELL: Well, he has to -

MR. MARTIN: -- would've s- --

MR. CHAPPELL: -- answer -

MR. TRAYNHAM: *Absolutely.*

MR. CHAPPELL: -- but - but - but he - he didn't have to elevate it -

MR. TRAYNHAM: E- -- e- -- exactly.

MR. CHAPPELL: -- like he did. He didn't -

MS. MATHIS: I don't think he -

MR. CHAPPELL: -- have to -

MS. MATHIS: -- elevated it.

MR. TRAYNHAM: But you know what -

MS. MATHIS: I don't think -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- though, Roland, very quickly -

MS. MATHIS: -- he elevated it.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- to - to Deborah's point? She says that she thinks that Dick Cheney's just, you know, bitter and the whole nine yards.

MS. MATHIS: Yes.

MR. TRAYNHAM: I interviewed Mrs. Cheney a couple of months ago right before they left office, and I asked her that very same question. "You've changed." "You and your husband have changed over the last couple of years."

And she said, "You know why? My husband reads the intelligence reports. He wakes up every, single morning with a headache." This is her words. "He wakes up every, single morning with a headache, because he understands that there're the-" - "terrorists out there that wake up every, single morning that want to kill you and I [sic]."

MR. MARTIN: But if only -

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's his thought process.

MR. MARTIN: -- but if only he had read the appropriate tel- -- intelligence report, and we had not invaded in Iraq, you know what? People would not be skittish about trying to go after -

MS. MATHIS: And here's -

MR. TRAYNHAM: But, Roland -

MR. MARTIN: -- Afghanistan.

MS. MATHIS: -- another question.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- but, Roland, that's -

MS. MATHIS: Here's another question.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that's not fair.

MS. MATHIS: Did he start reading them -

MR. MARTIN: But he pushed -

MS. MATHIS: -- after that very important -

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's not fair.

MR. MARTIN: Robert -

MS. MATHIS: -- wait a minute. Did he start - when did he start reading them? Because, apparently, he *didn't* read the one that gave us something of a heads-up about -

MR. TRAYNHAM: What he read -

MS. MATHIS: -- uh - about 9-11.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- wha- -- wha- --

MR. MARTIN: No, no, Robert.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- what - what we - what we -

MS. MATHIS: [Chuckles.]

MR. MARTIN: No, no. [Crosstalk]- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- what we all read is United Re- -- United Nations Resolu- -- Resolution 1441, back in 2002, that specifically said that Barack Obama - excuse me - that - that - that Hu- -- that, um -

MR. MARTIN: Saddam Hussein.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- Saddam Hussein - that Saddam Hussein specifically had weapons of mass destruction.

MR. MARTIN: But the problem -

MR. TRAYNHAM: We all believed -

MR. MARTIN: -- but the -

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- that.

MR. MARTIN: -- but the problem I had was when even the President, George W. Bush, was saying, "You know what? No w-" - "No weapons of mass destruction," Cheney was still saying, "They are there."

MR. TRAYNHAM: Okay. Okay.

MR. MARTIN: And - and so he -

MS. MATHIS: [Crosstalk]- --

MR. MARTIN: -- and he would *not own up to the fact that he was wrong.*

MR. TRAYNHAM: Okay.

MR. MARTIN: And tha- -- that's why right now, on this issue, he has *no* credibility when it comes to Afghanistan, because the bottom line [is] when he was sitting in the chair, he was saying,

"Just send the troops."

And we all know you cannot send American troops to a war zone area with no plan, with no w- -- no game plan. We don't even know who[?] the *government* is going to be there. It's nonsensical.

So, I say you take all the time you need to get it *right*, because the last seven years we've gotten it wrong.

MS. MATHIS: And I believe -

MR. MARTIN: Final -

MS. MATHIS: -- he believes those things.

MR. MARTIN: -- right.

MS. MATHIS: I believe he believes it, but I think he's *demented*.

MR. TRAYNHAM: That's not -

MR. MARTIN: Wow!

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- cool[?].

MR. MARTIN: *Man!*

MS. MATHIS: I just *telling* you! I mean *really*.

MR. MARTIN: All right.

MS. MATHIS: I could say *other* things about what I think of him.

MR. MARTIN: All right, folks. Hold tight. Time for us to move on to our next topic. Coming up next, uh, uh -

[INFORMAL COMMENTS.]

MR. MARTIN: All right. Robert, Deborah, Kevin, hold tight. We'll be right back with the panel.

Folks, still to come, his rhymes make you want to move when he moves. Next on "Washington Watch," rapper and actor Ludacris joins our panel to talk about President Barack Obama and hip-hop and also the good work his foundation is doing to help youth help themselves.

**(SEG-
MENT 2B)**

[B-ROLL. NO AUDIO.]

MR. MARTIN: All right. Man, our panel's been hot all day, but it's about to get hotter, folks. He's known to some as the "King of the South," thanks to his chart-topping raps. If that wasn't enough, he had mad acting skills when he snagged roles in "Crash" and "Hustle and Flow," both nominated for the Academies. Welcome to "Washington Watch" Chris Bridges, a.k.a. Ludacris. Some say "Luda"!

How's it goin'?

LUDACRIS: It's good, man.

How's everybody doin'?

MR. MARTIN: 'S all good, all good! What -

[CHUCKLING.]

LUDACRIS: I'm good.

MR. MARTIN: Glad to have you here on "Washington Watch."

Let's - let's get right into it. You were very - you were high- -- highly involved in the campaign of then Senator Barack

Obama running for President, but a lot of folks were. I mean they were really engaged, especially the hip-hop community.

MR. MARTIN: Now that he's in office, here's what Common had to say, and it was pretty interesting when he was talking about the President. He said - quote - "I also don't find as much gangsta talk. You see the whole chain-shining-and-rim era is gone. That's like super played-out. Just to have that, I think, is part of the Obama Effect."

MR. MARTIN: Have you sensed a change in hip-hop music, culture, the people following, as a result of President Barack Obama being in the White House?

LUDACRIS: Let me tell you where I've sensed a change. And I sensed the change as - as soon as Barack Obama was running for President and how people were coming together in the hip-hop community in order to try to have him win, which we were successful in doing. So, with that being said, I feel like the hip-hop community has changed in that we finally have someone we are motivated about in helping to -to win in all aspects of the word in terms of coming together, in terms of, we were already doing certain things in our community, but now we have that extra motivation for someone to follow, you know, this leader that we

feel like is going in the right direction, as opposed to being discouraged from other leaders. And that's - that's my opinion of how hip-hop has changed.

MR. MARTIN: And I want our panel to jump in on this, because when Oprah endorsed Senator Obama, she said it was something about him. She said, "He was the first one that I really wanted to endorse." And in many ways, then Senator Obama was the first candidate where this community said, and a wide number of people in the community said, "It's something about him."

I don't think it was solely because he was Black. I think it truly was the message that he was speaking to that resonated with this generation.

LUDACRIS: No, I agree. I agree 100 percent with you. It's - it's definitely something about his personality and definitely something about him, but we all have that intuition that lets us know that, you know, he's headed in the right direction. And I feel like he's doing that. And given the circumstandis [sic - phonetic] -- given the circumstances he's under, I feel like he's doing a great job.

MR. TRAYNHAM: President Obama had the perfect ingredients for the perfect recipe, where it was the charm, it was the looks. It was the right moment at the right time, given the fact that

people were sick and tired of the Bush years. So, it was all of those things. And on top of that, he just so happened to be a very good-looking, articulate African-American. But that wasn't the la- --

MR. MARTIN: He was cle- -- he was clean, too,

MR. TRAYNHAM: Well, that's -

[CHUCKLING.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- what - that's what - that's what his vice president now said, of course.

But the bottom line is that there was something about him. And my parents said this. Look, they re- -- it reminds them of Kennedy. Everyone has - now has skin in the game, because they felt as though they were part of a movement, something that was bigger than themselves.

MR. TRAYNHAM: The *real* question, Roland, is whether or not this candidate - or, now, the President - can actually deliver on some of the - the lofty rhetoric that he said all throughout 2008.

MS. MATHIS: Let me just say that I was watching some show with my - with my young adult daughter the other day. I don't remember what it was, but I told her - I said, "Do you mind changing that? I don't like the fact that this guy uses the 'b' word as a substitute for 'woman.'" "

I mean every, single time he meant "woman" or "female," he -

VOICE: Right.

MS. MATHIS: -- used the "b" word.

I said, "It'd be like me walking up to him and saying, 'Oh, you know, 'how's your mama doin'?' How old is that 'b' by - 'right now?'" You know. I said, "I'm sure he wouldn't be happy hearing *that*, and I don't want to *hear* this anymore."

MS. MATHIS: So, *what* I want to know - maybe Chris can answer *this*. Has it trickled down to the point where *content* is being changed - not just, uh - or, *attitudes* are - are being changed, that you can tell so far? When they go into the recording studio, are they changing the lyrics, so that -

LUDACRIS: [Chuckles.]

MS. MATHIS: -- maybe it's - she's not a "b"; she's a "honey," or -

MR. MARTIN: Bu- -- but -

MS. MATHIS: -- she's a "sweetie," or she's -

MR. MARTIN: -- a- -- and not neces- --

MS. MATHIS: -- something.

MR. MARTIN: -- and not necessarily just on the issue of how you're referring to a woman, but also when you think about the political consciousness, do you - do y- -- do - do you also see -

MS. MATHIS: Yes.

MR. MARTIN: -- that also -

LUDACRIS: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- come into the music?

MS. MATHIS: Yeah, yeah.

LUDACRIS: No, no, no. I see all of that. And to answer your question, I can't speak on behalf of everyone.

MR. MARTIN: Right, right.

LUDACRIS: You know -

MR. MARTIN: Absolutely.

LUDACRIS: -- what I'm sayin'?

MS. MATHIS: We understand.

LUDACRIS: But I can definitely tell you that sometimes - yes, some of that has changed, and sometimes you have to understand that there is a language barrier, I think, and - and a little bit of a generation gap from - from how we speak, to a certain degree, and -

MR. MARTIN: [Laughs.]

LUDACRIS: -- and I'm saying "generation gap" in the sense -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

LUDACRIS: -- that I think -

MS. MATHIS: You're right.

LUDACRIS: -- it's great that we are at this table, having this discussion and -

MS. MATHIS: Absolutely.

LUDACRIS: -- talking about it, because that's the only way we're going to find a solution to any of the problems as far as, I've said before on Capitol Hill, coming together - you know what I'm

saying - with the hip-hop community, or with the youth, is the way we come together and find solutions to *all* of the problems.

MR. MARTIN: And you --

MR. TRAYNHAM: And you know -

MR. MARTIN: -- know what's i- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- what's even more interesting - I'm sorry, Roland - is, you know, the President has said during the campaign trail that he had Ludacris on heavy rotation on his I-pod. We all know that Ludacris said some things, you know, in the rap thing, and he talked to the White House about that, and that's between the White House and him.

LUDACRIS: Yeah, and no- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: And I want him -

LUDACRIS: -- and not to cu- --

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- to speak for himself.

LUDACRIS: -- and not to cut you off, I don't - I - I - like, I say certain words the same way movies say certain words -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- the same way comedians say certain words in [the] entertainment business. I don't underst- -- like, I don't expect everyone to understand exactly what it is I'm trying to say, and I don't expect everyone to agree with what I'm saying. However - you know what I'm saying - I have a[n] art form the same way all of those other art forms do, like I just talked

about.

MR. MARTIN: Right.

LUDACRIS: And I feel like it's a form of expression.

MS. MATHIS: Sure.

LUDACRIS: You know what I mean?

MS. MATHIS: And I don't want -

LUDACRIS: And I feel like that's -

MS. MATHIS: -- [crosstalk] -

[CROSSTALK.]

LUDACRIS: -- exactly what I'm -

MR. MARTIN: But I want to raise this point, Kevin. Kevin, I want to - I want to go to the issue o- -- of - of the family. The President has spent a lot of time, on the campaign trail and even in the White House, talking about the responsibility of fathers and talking about what that means. And I want to pull up a photo right now of the First Family. They released a new photo this week of the First Family, and - a- -- and it's very interesting, 'cause I was at [the] Hampton University National Black FA- -- Marriage Summit, and all - and you see even a different conversation taking place among folks of a different generation, older and younger, when it comes to family and fatherhood and responsibility.

Is he also driving that? And can that also speak to this

hip-hop generation as well, Kevin?

MR. CHAPPELL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely. I mean he's, right now, America's most favorite dad. And what he's - [crosstalk] -

MR. MARTIN: Along with Bill Cosby.

MR. CHAPPELL: -- right, right. Well, he's -

MR. MARTIN: [Chuckles.]

MR. CHAPPELL: -- [crosstalk] -

MR. MARTIN: [Crosstalk].

MR. CHAPPELL: -- yeah, yeah. He's giving Bill Cosby a run for his money.

I mean I covered the campaign, and I saw how gradually more and more African-American men - men - teenagers, twenties - came out. And by the end of the - by the end of the campaign, by the time the election rolled around, I mean, there was - they were out there. They had their "OBAMA" shirts on. They felt a pride that they had never felt before, and he's continuing that throughout the, uh - being in office.

MR. MARTIN: A- -- and Ludacris, with your foundation, I mean you're touching young people in - in a unique way. Does that also speak to, then, this whole notion of what they, themselves, can do? Sure, you have institutional barriers, but in terms -

LUDACRIS: Absolutely.

MR. MARTIN: -- of what you as a[n] individual can do, and the responsibility issue?

LUDACRIS: Yeah, with - with great power comes great responsibility, and I like to, you know, think that I'm leading by example. And if people are telling me I'm influential, then let me influence you in this type of way, let you know that everything I'm doing for the community and everything that I'm trying to do in terms of trying to make a change and trying to get a solution to all these problems. And I feel like it starts with the home and, you know, who's raising the- -- these sons, a-- and who's raising these daughters.

LUDACRIS: And it's great that you're talking about being a great father, 'cause I think that's one of the most important things we need to focus on, honestly speaking.

MR. MARTIN: What's the primary focus of the Ludacris Foundation?

LUDACRIS: Helping kids help themselves, or just helping unfortunate families and helping those who want to help themselves. Like, I - I - I have to stress that, because it's not about giving handouts; it's about giving hand-ups, if you understand what I'm saying. And so with that being said, I just want to make sure I reach as many people as I possibly can, which I feel like we have done, you know, continuously over the past

eight years. `

MR. TRAYNHAM: You know, Roland, never before - never before - have we seen an African-American couple descend the, uh,- the steps of Air Force One. *Never before* have we seen an -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- African-American -

MR. MARTIN: It's a pretty cool s- -- ride, too, 'cause Kevin and I were on Air Force One.

[CHUCKLING, CROSSTALK.]

MR. TRAYNHAM: You know - well, you know, cro- -- crossing the South Lawn - but s- -- but crossing the South Lawn and seeing a - a Black, married couple holding hands - that is so- -- of course, we see that every now and then, but to see that at the White House, splashed across -

VOICE: Right.

MR. TRAYNHAM: -- front pages of the newspapers - that's different for us, and it's a - it's a - it's a wonderful, wonderful thing to see.

MR. MARTIN: You know what? And I - and let me say this here. I have enough folks in my ear telling me we need to wrap. I - I need to make this point. There's probably somebody sitting at

home right now, saying, "How you gonna' have Ludacris on this Sunday morning political talk show?"

Because - here's why. I've long believed that - I got a problem when people act as if George Clooney, Brad Pitt, Angelina Jolie are the only people who're involved in public policy, only people who're involved in action.

MS. MATHIS: Right.

MR. MARTIN: And I - we made it a point at TV One to say that Black celebrities, whether it's Ludacris, whether it's Jeffrey Wright, Don Cheadle - they need a platform to talk about the issues that they care about outside of music or entertainment.

MS. MATHIS: That's right.

MR. MARTIN: And so that's one of the things - one of the reasons we also are -

MS. MATHIS: And - and -

MR. MARTIN: -- going to have other folks on the show -

MS. MATHIS: -- and to be -

MR. MARTIN: -- as well.

MS. MATHIS: -- honored for being the brother he *is*.

MR. MARTIN: Absolutely.

LUDACRIS: And I'mma tell you like this. If we want to find solutions to these problems, as I continue to stress, you need to hear the new ideas that I might have -

MS. MATHIS: Definitely.

LUDACRIS: -- that other people may not have.

MR. CHAPPELL: And we have to give -

LUDACRIS: You talking -

MR. CHAPPELL: -- the White House credit for - for *not* shunning the hip-hop community. They could have when they got in.

MR. MARTIN: Embraced 'em.

MR. CHAPPELL: Embracing them.

MR. MARTIN: All right.

MR. CHAPPELL: Yeah.

MR. MARTIN: We certainly appreciate it. Robert; Deborah; Kevin; the newbie on the show, Ludacris - both of y'all are newbies on the show. We'll definitely have you back. All right?

LUDACRIS: It's all good.

MR. MARTIN: Also, a website for the Ludacris Foundation?

LUDACRIS: TheLudacrisFoundation.org.

MR. MARTIN: All right, folks.

LUDACRIS: Click on it.

MR. MARTIN: Coming up next on "Washington Watch," is the White House neglecting the threat about[?] terrorism? We'll explore that with Congresswoman Yvette Clarke of New York, a member of the House Committee on Homeland Security.

**(SEG-
MENT 3)**

[B-ROLL.]

MR. MARTIN: This week, a joint congressional commission took the White House to task for its lack of focus on bioterrorism. With me today is New York Representative Yvette Clarke, chairwoman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats.

Congresswoman, we certainly appreciate you being on "Washington Watch."

REP. YVETTE CLARKE: Thank you for having me, Roland.

MR. MARTIN: All right. A report by the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism - long title there -

REP. CLARKE: That's right.

MR. MARTIN: -- said that the White House is neglecting bioterrorism. Here's what they said - quote: "The threat of bioterrorism is real. ... terrorists are more likely to be able to obtain and use a biological weapon than a nuclear weapon. The consequences of ignoring these warnings could be dire. For example, one recent study projected that a one- to two-kilogram release of anthrax spores from a crop duster plane could kill more Americans than died in World War II. Cleanup and other economic costs could exceed \$1.8 trillion. Yet, the nation's level of preparedness for dealing with the threat of bioterrorism remains far lower than that of the nuclear threat."

MR. MARTIN: Now, the President and the White House, they've spent a lot of time focusing on *nuclear* arms. Are they asleep at

the wheel on this issue of bioterrorism in the U.S.?

REP. CLARKE: Well, I definitely think that they need to focus much more attention on it. It's very clear. I think one of the things that most Americans have sort of forgotten is that commensurate with 9-11, was an anthrax scare. I know that in New York, anthrax was released through the postal service.

And so it's not that we haven't had interactions with biological weapons. We were very, uh - very fortunate that we were able to address it very rapidly.

REP. CLARKE: But our attention span has waned, and I think it's important that this commission has come out with these recommendations. This is something certainly my subcommittee will be following up with in hearings. That demonstrates our lack of preparedness.

MR. MARTIN: Well, so - so - but how do we get people to that point? Because we hear from local officials, who say, "Look. We need more funding to be able to secure those particular areas." "How do we even track this?" "This is a ver-" - you know, there's so much land, so many ways to be able to go at Americans: the water system. You talk about air. And so how do you get your hands around it?

REP. CLARKE: Well, there - fortunately, there're a number of

entities that've been developed over time that address these very specific areas of emerging threats, and we need to empower them.

We need to make sure we have the right intellect and ability resident there, and the White House needs to be very much a part of that. They have to buy into the importance of the preparedness that we need to have at the local level, all the way up to the federal level; do the commensurate training that's required; and also fund it - which is, of course, one of the major challenges right now. We're severely under funded in biosurveillance, and that's one of the challenges we face.

MR. MARTIN: Now, a person sitting at home right now, w- -- when they hear this threat - let's just be honest. We have not had any particular threat in this country since 9-11, and, frankly, Americans have pretty much gotten into a particular routine. We still - we saw a terrorism arrest this week, but do you think the problem in this country [is] that we are reactive and not proactive, that when something happens, that all of a sudden all of the forshal [sic - phonetic] - forces marshal the resources. They get together, make a quick decision - as opposed to saying, "No. Let's put this stuff in place now, so that will never happen"?

REP. CLARKE: I think that we - we are, to a certain de- -- degree, reactive, and I think we're also reliant. We're reliant

on the federal government to do what it should do to protect its citizenry, and that's part of the challenge.

We have to be able to make sure that we have partnerships here - that we have partnerships with our local and our state law enforcement, that the health departments of all the counties across this nation are involved, because, you know, it's not only the terrorism threat. Part of biosurveillance is the tracking of, for instance, influenza, like H1N1.

MR. MARTIN: Um-hum.

REP. CLARKE: Anything that impacts on the homeland that could affect our populace adversely becomes a responsibility under Homeland Security for us to address, to deal with, to adequately fund. And I think that we - we are a bit behind in getting that done. And we want to make sure that we encourage this administration to really look into this and stay focused on it, as it deals with so many other issues. It's a big, multi-tasking job that this administration has to do, but it - it - these - these things are imperative.

MR. MARTIN: We're going to spend more time on the next topic down the line, but I do want to get in a question about immigration, because the President's made it clear immigration reform [is] not on the table in 2009. We may very well see it come up in terms of 2010. Not sure with the midterm elections.

But you have been very involved in this, because your concern deals with people from the Caribbean. A lot of folks in your district back in New York [are] from that area. But when you bring up immigration reform, Black folks are adamantly against, uh - you know, in terms of allowing anybody into this country, because they keep thinking in terms of Hispanics.

How do you make - make the point that, look, immigration reform goes beyond Hispanics and Latinos; you also have a black face when it comes to immigration reform?

REP. CLARKE: That's right. I - I think that we have to im- -- understand that there's a very diverse population of people who are in between status, undocumented, or are seeking to become citizens.

MR. MARTIN: Folks from the Caribbean - West Indies - from all -

REP. CLARKE: Continental --

MR. MARTIN: -- from all different places.

REP. CLARKE: -- Africa -

MR. MARTIN: Right.

REP. CLARKE: There are Afro-Latinos coming out of Cuba, coming out of Panama. All around this world, there're people of African descent who've made their way to our shores, are very productive as citizens.

REP. CLARKE: And I think that what we're seeing in New York, at

least, is sort of an opening up and an understanding that all of us working together make our nation much more productive, and our collective humanity is what's most of - important. We need to fix the broken immigration system, and we don't need to allow the forces that be, that would deny *all* of us, to - to divide and conquer us, as they have done historically.

MR. MARTIN: All right. We certainly appreciate it, Congresswoman Clarke. I'm sure we'll have you back again.

REP. CLARKE: Thank you, Roland.

MR. MARTIN: All right. Folks, can you tell the difference between Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton? Well, someone at MSNBC couldn't. Smokey Fontaine has the story in "Web Watch" when we come back.

**(SEG-
MENT 4)**

MR. MARTIN: Are interracial marriages under attack in Louisiana? And we all make mistakes, but for some those flubs are magnified. NewsOne.com's Smokey Fontaine is here with more on these stories.

Smokey, how's it goin'?

MR. SMOKEY FONTAINE: I'm doing very well.

MR. MARTIN: All right. Top story, Smokey, in our "Jurs-" - "Just Curious" category, a[n] MSNBC anchor had some issues this week, trying to identify the Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Reverend Al Sharpton. Here's what happened.

VIDEO CLIP

MS. CONTESSA BREWER: Joining me now to talk about this and the nation's real problem of joblessness, the Reverend Al Sharpton.

What's your reaction to hearing someone say, "You know, when it comes to income inequality, all's well; a rising tide floats all boats"?

REV. JESSE JACKSON: Uh, I'm Reverend Jesse Jackson.

MS. BREWER: Right. I don't - you know, I'm so sorry. The, uh - the script in front of me said, "Reverend Al Sharpton." I'm looking at your face. I know who you are, Reverend Jackson. We all do. I'm sorry.

[END, VIDEO CLIP.]

MR. MARTIN: A lot of folk make mistakes, Smokey, but trust me, the web is unforgiving when it comes to these mistakes.

MR. FONTAINE: Now, Roland, you know, Black is beautiful. We come in all different shapes and sizes and colors - clearly. I mean look at me. But *this* is MSNBC. This is a 24-hour news channel. This woman, Contessa Brewer, has *no* friends online right now for making such an *obvious* mistake.

MR. MARTIN: Well, fo- -- look. Again, though - and [the] bottom line is what often happens is, look, people get confused. I've seen it happen beforehand. So, what has been the reaction? Are folks just - just ticked off about it? Or, did the - is she having *some* sympathy online?

MR. FONTAINE: She's getting some sympathy. Some folks say, "Look. Mistakes happen. She was reading a teleprompter. She wasn't looking up to see Jesse."

But at the end of the day, she's getting paid to do a job, and all these online bloggers, many of them wish that they were her, so they're coming for her head.

MR. MARTIN: Well, also, of course, but I heard some Black journalists say, "Hey, that's also happens when you don't have enough diversity in the newsroom. If you had some diversity, folks would know the difference between Reverend Jackson and Reverend Sharpton."

MR. MARTIN: Another story that's been getting a lot of attention, Smokey, is the interracial marriage story in Louisiana. Senator David Vitter, of Louisiana, had some issues this week when it came to denouncing the justice of the peace who said he was not going to marry an interracial couple. Here's what happened.

VIDEO CLIP

REPORTER: -- from Louisiana not to have commented on the judge that refused to ra- -- marry the interracial couple?

SEN. DAVID VITTER: [Getting on an elevator.] I - I don't think that's the case.

[THE ELEVATOR DOOR STARTS TO CLOSE, STOPS, THEN OPENS.]

REPORTER: Do - do you, uh -

SEN. VITTER: I'm sorry. I - [crosstalk] -

REPORTER: -- have you commented?

SEN. VITTER: -- on here.

REPORTER: What did - what did you have to say about it?

[END, VIDEO CLIP.]

MR. MARTIN: Smokey, this story's been burning up the blogs and the websites all across the country. Here, you['ve] got a senator, one of only two in Louisiana. He won't even comment on the issue!

MR. FONTAINE: He's refusing to comment, and this is why you love

the web - because power to the people. This guy, Mike Stark, has a website called "Stark Report," and he's just doing what other, you know, news outlets have not been able to do - get the go- -- get the senator to speak on the record. And he refused to.

What's interesting, though, is that after he refused to comment to him in that video, his office released a statement online. Instead of taking the opportunity, though, to denounce the original justice of the peace, they went out to attack the blogger. They called him a "left-wing political hack."

MR. FONTAINE: Now, if that's not going to drive traffic to this man's blog, I don't know what else is. Now he's on record as being someone that the governor's office and the senator's office are - [unintelligible] - about.

MR. MARTIN: So, again - so, he doesn't criticize the justice of the peace, which has been universal. He goes after the person who asked him the question!

MR. FONTAINE: That's right. And - and, look. The governor of Louisiana, Bobby Jindal, has gone on record to denounce the justice of the peace. So has se- -- so has his senatorial colleague, but *this* senator refuses to go on record to say that. The web needs to bring him down and call him to task for that.

MR. MARTIN: Well, also remember. This is the same senator whose phone number was found in that, uh, you know, call girl phonebook

here in D.C. So, trust me. He wants to avoid *all* cameras.

Smokey, we certainly appreciate it. Thanks so much.

MR. FONTAINE: Thank you so much.

MR. MARTIN: All right, folks. That's Smokey Fontaine. We'll see him next week, and we'll be right back.

**(SEG-
MENT 5)**

MR. MARTIN: That's it for this edition of TV One's "Washington Watch." I'm Roland Martin. See you next week. Goodbye, and have a blessed week. `

[END.]