

Sept. 26 Democratic debate transcript

Hanover, New Hampshire presidential candidate forum at Dartmouth

MSNBC

Speakers: Sen. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn.; Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y.; Former Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C.; Gov. Bill Richardson, D-N.M.; Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr., D-Del.; Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich, D-Ohio; Former Sen. Mike Gravel, D-Alaska; Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.

Tim Russert, moderator

Allison King, New England Cable News

Tim Russert: Good evening and welcome. We have some big issues to talk about tonight, so let's start right now.

Senator Obama, I'd like to start with you. General Petraeus in his testimony before Congress, later echoed by President Bush, gave every indication that in January of 2009, when the next president takes office, there will be 100,000 troops in Iraq.

You're the president. What do you do? You said you would end the war. How do you do it in January of 2009?

Barack Obama: Well, first of all, Tim, let me say thank you to Dartmouth for hosting this event.

And let me also say that had my judgment prevailed back in 2002, we wouldn't be in this predicament.

I was opposed to this war from the start; have been opposed to this war consistently.

But I have also said that there are no good options now. There are bad options and worse options.

I hope and will work diligently in the Senate to bring an end to this war before I take office. And I think that it is very important at this stage, understanding how badly the president's strategy has failed, that we not vote for funding without a timetable for this war.

If there are still large troop presences in -- when I take office, then the first thing I will do is call together the Joint Chiefs of Staff and initiate a phased redeployment. We've got to be as careful getting out as we were careless getting in, but military personnel indicate we can get one brigade to two brigades out per month.

I would immediately begin that process. We would get combat troops out of Iraq. The only troops that would remain would be those that have to protect U.S. bases and U.S. civilians, as well as to engage in counterterrorism activities in Iraq.

The important principle, though, is there are not going to be any military solutions to the problem in Iraq. There has to be a political accommodation, and the best way for us to support the troops and to stabilize the situation in Iraq is to begin that phased redeployment.

Russert: Will you pledge that by January 2013, the end of your first term, more than five years from now, there will be no U.S. troops in Iraq?

Obama: I think it's hard to project four years from now, and I think it would be irresponsible. We don't know what contingency will be out there.

What I can promise is that if there are still troops in Iraq when I take office -- which it appears there may be, unless we can get some of our Republican colleagues to change their mind and cut off funding without a timetable -- if there's no timetable -- then I will drastically reduce our presence there to the mission of protecting our embassy, protecting our civilians, and making sure that we're carrying out counterterrorism activities there.

I believe that we should have all our troops out by 2013, but I don't want to make promises, not knowing what the situation's going to be three or four years out.

Russert: Senator Clinton, Democrats all across the country believed in 2006 when the Democrats were elected to the majority in the House and Senate that that was a signal to end the war, and the war would end.

You have said that you will not pledge to have all troops out by the end of your first term, 2013. Why not?

Hillary Rodham Clinton: Well, Tim, it is my goal to have all troops out by the end of my first term. But I agree with Barack; it is very difficult to know what we are going to be inheriting. Now, we do not know, walking into the White House in January of 2009 what we are going to find.

What is the state of planning for withdrawal? That's why last spring I began pressing the Pentagon to be very clear about whether or not they were planning to bring our troops out. What I found was that they weren't doing the kind of planning that is necessary, and we've been pushing them very hard to do so.

Clinton: You know, with respect to the question, though, about the Democrats taking control of the Congress, I think the Democrats have pushed extremely hard to change this president's course in Iraq.

Today, I joined with many of my colleagues in voting for Senator Biden's plan -- slightly different that he'd been presenting it, but still the basic structure was to move toward what is a de facto partition if the Iraqi people and government so choose.

The Democrats keep voting for what we believe would be a better course. Unfortunately, as you know so well, the Democrats don't have the majority in the Senate to be able to get past that 60-vote blockade that the Republicans can still put up.

But I think every one of us who is still in the Senate -- Senator Biden, Senator Dodd, Senator Obama and myself -- we are trying every single day; and, of course, Congressman Kucinich is in the House.

Clinton: But I think it is fair to say that the president has made it clear: He intends to have about 100,000 or so troops when he leaves office.

The height of irresponsibility, that he would leave this war to his successor. I will immediately move to begin bringing our troops home when I am inaugurated.

Russert: Senator Edwards, will you commit that at the end of your first term, in 2013, all U.S. troops will be out of Iraq?

John Edwards: I cannot make that commitment. But I -- well, I can tell you what I would do as president. When I'm sworn into office, come January of 2009, if there are, in fact, as General Petraeus suggests, 100,000 American troops on the ground in Iraq, I will immediately draw down 40,000 to 50,000 troops; and over the course of the next several months, continue to bring our combat out of Iraq until all of our combat are, in fact, out of Iraq.

Edwards: I think the problem is -- and it's what you just heard discussed -- is we will maintain an embassy in Baghdad. That embassy has to be protected. We will probably have humanitarian workers in Iraq. Those humanitarian workers have to be protected.

I think somewhere in the neighborhood of a brigade of troops will be necessary to accomplish that, 3,500 to 5,000 troops.

But I do say, I want to add to things you just heard. I think it is true that everyone up here wants to take a responsible course to end the war in Iraq. There are, however, differences between us, and those differences need to be made aware. Good people have differences about this issue.

For example, I heard Senator Clinton say on Sunday that she wants to continue combat missions in Iraq. To me, that's a continuation of the war. I do not think we should continue combat missions in Iraq.

Edwards: And when I'm on a stage with the Republican nominee, come the fall of 2008, I'm going to make it clear that I'm for ending the war. And the debate will be between a Democrat who wants to bring the war to an end, get all American combat troops out of Iraq, and a Republican who wants to continue the war.

Russert: Governor Richardson...

Clinton: Well, Tim, could I just clarify that, you know, I said there may be a continuing counterterrorism mission, which, if it still exists, will be aimed at Al Qaida in Iraq. It may require combat, special operations forces or some other form of that. But the vast majority of our combat troops should be out.

Edwards: But, can I just say that my only point is -- I don't have any doubt that Senator Clinton wants to take a responsible course. There is a difference, however, in how we would go about this. And I think Democratic primary voters are entitled to know that difference.

And the difference is really very simple. I would have our combat troops out of Iraq over a period of several months, and I would not continue combat missions in Iraq.

Combat missions mean that the war is continuing.

Edwards: I believe this war needs to be brought to an end.

Russert: Would you send combat troops back in if there was genocide?

Edwards: I believe that America, along with the rest of the world, would have a responsibility to respond to genocide. It's not something we should do alone. In fact, if we do it alone, it could be counterproductive.

In fact, if I can go one step further beyond what you just asked, I think the president of the United States - and I, as president -- would have a responsibility as we begin to bring our combat troops out of Iraq to prepare for two possibilities.

One is the possibility that -- the worst possibility -- which is that genocide breaks out. Shia try to systematically eliminate the Sunni. I think we need to be preparing for that with the international community now, not later.

And second, the possibility if this war starts to spill outside the borders of Iraq, and that's a very difficult thing to contain because we know historically that it's difficult to contain a civil war.

Russert: Governor Richardson, you have said that you will bring home all troops within a year. You've heard your three other opponents say they can't do it in four years.

Bill Russert: How can you do it in one year?

Richardson: Well, I have a fundamental difference with Senator Obama, Senator Edwards and Senator Clinton. Here's my position: Their position basically is changing the mission; my position in bringing all troops out of Iraq is to end the war.

The American people want us to end this war. Our kids are dying -- the bloodiest last three months.

And my position is this: that you cannot start the reconciliation of Iraq, a political settlement, an all-Muslim peacekeeping force to deal with security and boundaries and possibly this issue of a separation, which is a plan that I do believe makes sense, until we get all our troops out, because they have become targets.

And I also disagree with Senator Clinton. I don't believe the Congress has done enough to end this war.

Russert: But, Governor, and then my question is: How are you going to do this in one year?

Richardson: We have been able to move our troops, within three months, 240,000, in and out of Iraq, through Kuwait.

This is what I would do. I would bring them out through roads, through Kuwait and through Turkey. It would take persuading Turkey. The issue is light equipment. I would leave some of the light equipment behind.

But I believe what is fundamental here is that leaving any troops behind will prevent us from moving forward to secure some kind of stability in the region. I would invite Iran. I would invite Syria. And I would make sure that the entire issue is also tied to stability in the Israeli-Palestinian issue. You cannot deal with the Iraq issue alone. You have to deal with it with the entire region.

Russert: Senator Dodd, you have heard this discussion. Where do you come down?

Christopher Dodd: Well, Tim, the question is not just how you bring the troops out, but why are we there. As president of the United States, your first responsibility is to guarantee the safety and security of the American people.

And so the question you must ask yourself as president: Is the continuation of our military presence enhancing that goal?

I happen to believe very strongly that this policy of ours, military involvement in Iraq, is counterproductive. We're less safe, less secure, more vulnerable and more isolated today as a result of the policy.

So I believe that we ought to begin that process of redeployment here. I would simultaneously engage in the kind of robust diplomacy that's been totally missing from this administration to enhance our own interests in the region as well as to provide some additional security for Iraq.

You can do this, Tim. Practically it can be done by -- military planners can tell you you can move a brigade to a brigade and a half, maybe even two, a month out of Iraq. So the timeframe we're talking about is critical.

But Congress has an obligation here. It's not enough that we just draft timetables. The Constitution gives the Congress of the United States a unique power, and that is the power of the purse.

As long as we continue drafting these lengthy resolutions and amendments here, talking about timelines and dates, we're not getting to the fundamental power that exists in the Congress; and that is to terminate the funding of this effort here -- give us a new direction.

As everyone who has looked at this issue over the last two or three years has concluded there is no military solution here. And we need to do far more to protect our interests not only in that region, but throughout the world. We're not doing it with this policy.

Russert: I want to put you on the record. Will you pledge, as commander in chief, that you'll have all troops out of Iraq by January of 2013?

Dodd: I will get that done.

Russert: You'll get it done?

Dodd: Yes, I will, sir.

Russert: Senator Biden, would you get it done?

Joseph Biden: Tim, we're begging the question here. Everyone says there's no political -- there's no military solution, only a political solution. We offered a political solution today and it got 75 votes.

And it said -- it rejected, fundamentally, the president's position that there's a possibility of establishing a strong, central government in Iraq and said we're going to have a federal system, bring in the rest of the world to support establishing a federal system.

That will end the civil war. That will allow us to bring our troops home. That is the thing that will allow us to come home without leaving chaos behind.

Now, here's the deal. The deal is to say that you are going to bring all troops home from the region -- I assume that's what you mean...

Russert: From Iraq.

Biden: Just from Iraq. You're going to bring all troops home from Iraq -- if in fact there is no political solution by the time I am president, then I would bring them out, because all they are is fodder.

But if you go along with the Biden plan that got 75 votes today, and you have a stable Iraq, like we have in Bosnia -- we've had 20,000 Western troops in Bosnia for 10 years. Not one has been killed. Not one. The genocide has ended.

So it would depend on the circumstances when I became president.

Russert: But you would not make a commitment to have them all out by...

Biden: I would make a commitment to have them all out if there is not a political reconciliation, because they're just fodder.

Russert: Congressman Kucinich, please?

Dennis Kucinich: And as the only one on this stage who actually voted against the war, and voted 100 percent of the time against funding the war, I have a rather unique perspective.

I've introduced legislation, H.R. 1234, which is the plan to end the Iraq war. To me, it is fairly astonishing to have Democrats who took back the power of the House and the Senate in 2006 to stand on this stage and tell the American people that this war will continue to 2013 and perhaps past that.

I want everyone to know -- I want the American people to know -- that I've been on this from the beginning and I know that we can get out of there three months after I take office or after the new president takes office if one is determined to do that.

And I want to make it clear that the plan includes ending the occupation; closing the bases; bringing the troops home; setting in motion a program of reconciliation, not partition, between the Sunnis, the Shiites and the Kurds; having an honest reconstruction program; having a program of reparations; and giving the people of Iraq full control over their oil, which currently most of the people on this stage have said should be privatized in one way, shape or form.

And so I believe that if we're really going to have peace, no partition; let them unite. We remember what Lincoln said years ago, it's true for Iraq as well: A house divided against itself cannot stand. If we divide Iraq, essentially we're going to be setting the stage for more war, and I stand for strength through peace, a whole new approach.

Russert: But you pledge -- excuse me. Excuse me. You'll pledge to have all troops out by January of 2013.

Kucinich: By April of 2007. And you can mark that on your calendars, if you want to take a new direction...

Russert: Well, it's September of '07 now. So we're going to have a problem.

(Laughter)

Kucinich: Make that 2009. I'm ready to be president today.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

Russert: All right.

I want to give Senator Gravel a chance.

Russert: Senator Gravel, I've listened to you very carefully in this campaign. You were in the Senate.

Mike Gravel: You're one of the few that have.

(Laughter)

Russert: You were in the Senate, and you take credit for stopping the draft.

If you were a senator right now, what advice would you give your colleagues still in Congress about how they can stop the war, even though they don't have enough votes to stop a debate or to override a veto? What should they do?

Gravel: Well, the first thing, you stop the debate by voting every single day on cloture. Every day. Twenty days, and you'll overcome cloture.

The president vetoes the law. It comes back to the Congress. And in the House at noon every single day you vote to override the president's veto. And in 40 days, the American people will have weighed in, put the pressure on those.

You tell me that the votes aren't there -- you go get them by the scruff of the neck, that's what you do. You make them vote.

Russert: Senator, are you suggesting that these candidates suspend their campaigns, go back to Washington, and for 40 consecutive days vote on the war?

Gravel: If it stops the killing, my God, yes, do it.

And, Tim, you're really missing something. This is fantasy land. We are talking about ending the war. My God, we're just starting a war right today. There was a vote in the Senate today. Joe Lieberman, who authored the Iraq resolution, has offered another resolution and it is essentially a fig leaf to let George Bush go to war with Iran.

I want to congratulate Biden for voting against it, Dodd for voting against it.

And I am ashamed of you, Hillary, for voting for it. You're not going to get another shot at this because what happens if this war ensues, we invade, and they're looking for an excuse to do it. And Obama was not even there to vote.

Russert: Senator Clinton, I want to give you a chance to respond.

(Laughter)

Clinton: I don't know where to start.

Russert: Please take 30 seconds.

(Laughter)

Clinton: Yes. Let me respond.

My understanding of the Revolutionary Guard in Iran is that it is promoting terrorism. It is manufacturing weapons that are used against our troops in Iraq. It is certainly the main agent of support for Hezbollah, Hamas and others.

And in what we voted for today, we will have an opportunity to designate it as a terrorist organization which gives us the options to be able to impose sanctions on the primary leaders to try to begin to put some teeth into all this talk about dealing with Iran.

We wouldn't be where we are today if the Bush administration hadn't outsourced our diplomacy with respect to Iran and ignored Iran and called it part of the axis of evil. Now we've got to make up for lost time and lost ground...

Russert: I just want to pick up on Senator Gravel's point.

Senator Dodd, is it practical for you as a senator and others who now serve in Congress to go back to Washington and for 40 consecutive days try to cut off the funding for the war...

Dodd: Well, I...

Russert: ... suspend your campaigns if necessary and bring the issue -- crystallize it in a way that the American people will understand exactly what's going on?

Dodd: Well, I think we're going to have that opportunity over and over again in the coming days. There's going to be a request, I think, for something in the neighborhood of \$200 billion that the administration is going to seek to continue to prosecute the war. So we'll have our chances to do it.

I think it's a little unrealistic to assume every single day you do that, Mike. But certainly you can do this when the opportunity arises.

And that, Tim, is the point was trying to make to you a moment ago, here.

We need to be take -- understanding what powers exist in the institution of the Congress, those of us who serve there, and use that opportunity to do what the Constitution has given us, and that is to stop the funding. That's what we need to be doing.

Now, look, I realize you may not get 60 votes or even 51 votes for this. But I think clarity and leadership are called for at this hour, here. If you're going to seek the presidency of the United States and you're in a position, today, to do something about this, then, in my view, it's an opportunity to stand up and lead on this issue to bring this war, which is doing great damage to our country, to a halt.

Dodd: It's hurting our nation terribly, and it needs to be brought to a halt. And the power of the purse allows you to do that.

Russert: We have so much to cover. I want to talk about Iran, and this is...

Biden: Tim, can I...

Russert: We have...

Biden: What we voted on was not partition. I don't want anybody thinking it was partition. And it's the only time we got 26 Republicans to reject the president's policies.

Kucinich: You're splitting...

Russert: All right, fine.

Kucinich: ... Iraq up.

Russert: Fine. Fine.

Kucinich: That's what it does.

Russert: OK, all right -- all right, we've had that discussion.

Senator Clinton, in 1981, the Israelis took out a nuclear reactor in Iraq. On September 6th, to the best of our information, Israel attacked Syria because there was suspicion that perhaps North Korea had put some nuclear materials in Syria. If Israel concluded that Iran's nuclear capability threatened Israel's security, would Israel be justified in launching an attack on Iran?

Clinton: Tim, I think that's one of those hypotheticals, that is...

Russert: It's not a hypothetical, Senator.

Clinton: ... better not addressed at this time.

Russert: It's real life. It's real...

Clinton: What is real life is what apparently happened in Syria, so let's take that one step at a time.

Russert: But my question -- no, let me finish.

Clinton: I know what the question is.

Russert: My question is...

Clinton: But I think it's important to lay out what we know about Syria...

Russert: What Israel -- my question is...

Clinton: ... because we don't have as much information as I wish we did. But what we think we know is that with North Korean help, both financial and technical and material, the Syrians apparently were putting together, and perhaps over some period of years, a nuclear facility, and the Israelis took it out. I strongly support that.

We don't have any more information than what I have just described. It is highly classified. It is not being shared. But I don't want to go a step further and talk about what might or might not happen down the road with Iran.

Russert: My question was...

Clinton: But I think it is fair to say what happened in Syria, so far as we know, I support.

Russert: My question is: Would the Israelis be justified if they felt their security was being threatened by the presence of a nuclear presence in Iran, and they decided to take military action? Would they be justified?

Clinton: Well, Tim, I'm not going to answer that, because what I understand is...

Kucinich: I'll answer it.

Gravel: I'll...

Clinton: ... that there was evidence...

(Laughter)

Clinton: Well, let me just finish and then Mike and Dennis can answer.

But there was evidence of a North Korea freighter coming in with supplies. There was intelligence and other kinds of verification.

So I don't think it's a question of if they feel it. That is a much higher standard of proof. Apparently it was met with respect to Syria.

Russert: You will all be running against a Republican opponent, perhaps Rudy Giuliani. This is what he said.

"Iran is not going to be allowed to build a nuclear power. If they get to a point where they're going to become a nuclear power, we will prevent them, we will set them back eight to 10 years. That is not said as a threat. That should be said as a promise."

Would you make a promise as a potential commander in chief that you will not allow Iran to become a nuclear power and will use any means to stop it?

Clinton: Well, what I have said is that I will do everything I can to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power, including the use of diplomacy, the use of economic sanctions, opening up direct talks. We haven't even tried. That's what is so discouraging about this.

So then you have the Republican candidates on the other side jumping to the kind of statements that you just read to us.

We need a concerted, comprehensive strategy to deal with Iran. We haven't had it; we need it -- and I will provide it.

Russert: Senator Obama, would Israel be justified in launching an attack on Iran if they felt their security was jeopardized?

Obama: I think it's important to back up for a second, Tim, and just understand. Number one, Iran is in a stronger position now than it was before the Iraq war because the Congress authorized the president to go in.

And so, it indicates the degree to which we've got to make sure before we launch attacks or make judgments of this sort, that we actually understand the intelligence and we have done a good job in sorting it through.

Now, we don't know exactly what happened with respect to Syria. We've gotten general reports, but we don't know all the specifics.

We got general reports in the run-up to the Iraq war that proved erroneous, and a lot of people voted for that war as a consequence.

Now, we are a stalwart ally of Israel and I think it is important to understand that we will back them up in terms of their security. But it is critical to understand that -- until we have taken the diplomatic routes that are required to tighten economic sanctions -- I have a plan right now to make sure that private pension funds in this country can divest from their holdings in Iran. Until we have gathered the international community to put the squeeze on Iran economically, then we shouldn't be having conversations about attacks on Iran.

I think what Mayor Giuliani said was irresponsible, because we have not yet come to that point. We have not tried the other approach.

Russert: So you would not offer a promise to the American people, like Giuliani, that Iran will not be able to develop and become a nuclear power.

Obama: I make an absolute commitment that we will do everything we need to do to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

One of the things we have to try, though, is to talk directly to Iran; something that we have not been doing.

And one of the disagreements that we have on this stage is the degree to which the next president is going to have to engage in the sort of personal diplomacy that can bring about a new era in the region. And that means talking to everybody. We've got to talk to our enemies and not just our friends.

Russert: Senator Edwards, would the Israelis be justified in launching an attack if they felt their security was threatened by a nuclear presence in Iran?

Edwards: Well, let me say, first of all, I think there's a clear responsible course for America with respect to Iran. And that responsible course is to recognize that Ahmadinejad is unpopular in his own country.

And if we work with our friends in Europe in the European banking system, we can put a clear proposal on the table for the Iranian people; sticks and carrots. Carrots being, we will help you with your economy if, in fact, you give up your nuclear ambitions. The flip side being, there will be severe economic sanctions if you don't.

But I want to come back to a discussion that took place a few minutes ago to make everyone understands what Senator Gravel is talking and Senator Clinton was talking about. Because there was a very important vote cast in the United States Senate today. And it was, basically, in a resolution calling the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization.

I voted for this war in Iraq, and I was wrong to vote for this war. And I accept responsibility for that. Senator Clinton also voted for this war.

Edwards: We learned a very different lesson from that. I have no intention of giving George Bush the authority to take the first step on a road to war with Iran.

And I think that vote today, which Senator Biden and Senator Dodd voted against, and they were correct to vote against it, is a clear indication of the approach that all of us would take with the situation in Iran because what I learned in my vote on Iraq was you cannot give this president the authority and you can't even give him the first step in that authority because he cannot be trusted. And that resolution that was voted on today was a very clear indication...

Russert: Governor Richardson, would you make a solemn commitment to the American people that Iran will not become a nuclear power?

Richardson: Yes. And this is what I would do. I would approach it through diplomacy.

Richardson: A fundamental goal of our foreign policy should be not to permit Iran to develop nuclear weapons.

Another cornerstone of our foreign policy should be the strength and the security of Israel. So you cannot deny a nation the right to legitimately defend itself.

Now, my approach is different. By the way, talking about diplomacy, I've talked to a lot of these bad guys already, so I would have a head start in personal diplomacy. You have to approach Iran -- first of all, you use diplomacy. Then you use sanctions.

The problem that we have with Iran is that we don't build the international support that is needed to put economic pressure on Iran. And by point here is that Iran is susceptible to economic pressure. It can do so through -- they import half of their foodstuffs, half of their gasoline. They've got domestic unrest.

I would not talk necessarily to Ahmadinejad. I would talk to moderate clerics. I would talk to business leaders. But 40 percent of the Iranian people vote for moderate candidates for president.

Richardson: So you first use diplomacy.

The problem, Tim, is we can't build the international support with the Europeans, with Russia, that has leverage on Iran, to effectively pressure them not to build nuclear weapons and to stop messing around in Iran.

But it's called diplomacy. It's called negotiation. It's called talking to Iran and Syria and trying to work out differences.

Russert: But the issue you may have to confront as president -- Israel took out a nuclear reactor in Iraq. They attacked Syria. They may conclude they need to attack Iran. If they did and you were president, would you support Israel?

Richardson: A fundamental tenet of American foreign policy is to support Israel. But Tim, you've got to bring diplomacy.

The problem in the Middle East is there is no Middle East peace process. There is no Middle East peace envoy. We don't talk to Syria.

You've got Israel today less safe than it ever was. You've got Hamas on one side, you've got Hezbollah, you've got Iran wanting to build nuclear weapons.

But you do it through diplomacy. You do it through a Middle East peace process. Get Lebanon involved. Get Syria involved.

Richardson: The two-state solution. It's called diplomacy.

Russert: Before we take a break, I want to go to Allison King of New England Cable News, who has been sifting through thousands of questions from across the country, in New England and here in New Hampshire.

Allison, a question, please.

Allison King: Thank you, Tim.

Dozens of cities around the country, including several here, right here in New England, have been designated as sanctuary cities. These are communities that provide a safe haven for illegal immigrants, where police are told not to involve themselves in immigration matters.

Would you allow these cities to ignore the federal law regarding the reporting of illegal immigrants and, in fact, provide sanctuary to these immigrants?

King: Governor Richardson, let's start with you.

Richardson: You asked me because I am the Hispanic here, but I'll answer.

(Laughter)

The answer is yes. The problem we have is the lack of a comprehensive immigration policy. This is a federal responsibility. But what we have, because of the dysfunctional relationship between the Congress and the president, there is no comprehensive immigration bill. We need to fix the immigration system that is broken.

We need to find ways, number one, to increase security at the border with more detection equipment, more border patrol -- not this silly wall.

Secondly, those that knowingly hire illegal workers need to be punished.

Third, a foreign policy relationship with Mexico where you say to Mexico, "Start giving jobs to your people; at the very least, don't give them maps on the easiest place to cross."

And, lastly, a legalization program -- earned legalization, not amnesty, not citizenship, but a process where they can earn their way into America.

They can do it by learning English, by paying back taxes, by passing a background check, by paying a fine for having come in here illegally. Then get behind those that are trying to get here legally. And then increase the legal immigration quota, the H1B visas.

But what you don't do is basically deport everybody. That makes no sense. That's not America. That's not going to work.

Is the outline that I gave you messy? Yes. Is there going to be more bureaucracy? Yes. But the problem is cities and communities are being victimized by the failure of the Congress and the president...

King: Time is up, Governor Richardson.

Richardson: ... to reach a resolution.

King: I'd like to hear from Senator Biden. Would you allow these cities to ignore the federal law?

Biden: The reason the cities ignore the federal law is the fact that there is no funding at the federal level to provide for the kind of enforcement at the federal level you need.

Pick up the New York Times today. There is a city not far across the river from my state that imposed similar sanctions.

And what they found out is, as a consequence of that, their city went in the dumps -- in the dumpsters. Stores started closing, everything started to happen and they changed the policy.

Part of the problem is: You have to have a federal government that can enforce laws. This administration has been fundamentally derelict in not funding any of the requirements of immunity -- even enforce the existing law.

And last point I'll make is, Rudy Giuliani doesn't know what the heck he's talking about. He's the most uninformed person in American foreign policy and now running for president, number one.

(Applause)

And, number two, these guys, the -- anyway...

(Laughter)

King: So, yes or no...

(Laughter)

Biden: I wish I'd get to talk about something I know about like foreign policy. You ought to count me in on this debate a little bit.

King: So, Senator Biden, yes or no, would you allow the cities to ignore the federal law?

Biden: No.

King: OK. I'd like to hear from Senator Dodd -- New Haven, Connecticut, is on that list of sanctuary cities.

Dodd: I think in circumstances -- you have to here.

And, again, New Haven, Connecticut, was a good example here, where there was a cooperative effort with the local police departments and others to deal with health issues, crime problems and the like.

The Immigration Service came in and raided basically homes in that community, causing a great deal of disruption, disrupting the relationship that was being developed with community leaders, including the local police, and dealing with matters in that community.

We need to step back. What's been said by Bill Richardson and Joe Biden is correct here. This was a failure of leadership again at the national level. We had an opportunity to draft an immigration law here that would have put us on the right track.

I certainly endorse everything Bill said here in terms of the provision. I think all of us do here, the general provisions.

We're a nation of immigrants here. We have succeeded in no small measure because we have been a welcoming people here. We also understand we cannot tolerate 400,000 to 500,000 people coming to this country as undocumented workers each year.

We need to have a far better system in place that stops that flow coming in, to deal with the 12 million to 20 million who are here illegally.

If in the meantime here we're dealing with children, we're dealing with crime problems, we're dealing with health issues at the local community, then you need to allow these local communities to do that.

If it means temporarily engaging in a sanctuary protection here, then so be it if that protects our country.

In the meantime, we need to have national leadership, a president who would be able to bring together the Congress and could pass the kind of immigration laws that we, frankly, don't have on the books today.

King: Thank you, Senator.

Tim, back to you.

Russert: I'll get all the candidates on record. Just -- anyone here who would close down these sanctuary cities, not allow them to exist?

Kucinich: I...

Russert: You would allow these sanctuary cities to exist?

Kucinich: I would like to say that we're forgetting who we are as Americans, Tim. You have to remember the message of the Statue of Liberty. That is who America is -- "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses." We're forgetting that. We should be talking about canceling NAFTA and WTO, giving workers' rights a premium in negotiations with Mexico. It's a new direction.

Russert: The question is: Would you allow these sanctuary cities to disobey the federal law?

Kucinich: You know what? The federal law -- there's a moral law here.

Russert: All right.

Kucinich: And the moral law says that the immigrants are being used and mistreated.

Russert: Senator Obama?

Obama: The federal law is not being enforced not because of failures of local communities, because the federal government has not done the job that it needs to do.

Russert: But you would allow the sanctuary cities to exist?

Obama: What I would do as president is pass comprehensive immigration reform, and the federal government should be doing what it's supposed to be doing, which is controlling our borders, but also providing a rational immigration system, which we currently don't have.

Russert: Senator Clinton, would you allow the sanctuary cities to exist?

Clinton: Well, in addition to the general points that have been made that I agree with, why do they have sanctuary cities? In large measure because, if local law enforcement begins to act like immigration enforcement officers, what that means is that you will have people not reporting crimes, you will have people hiding from the police. And I think that is a real, direct threat to the personal safety and security of all the citizens.

So this is a result of the failure of the federal government, and that's where it needs to be fixed.

Russert: But you would allow the sanctuary cities to disobey the federal law?

Clinton: Well, I don't think there is any choice. The ICE groups come in and raid individuals, but if you are a local police chief and you're trying to solve a crime that you know people from the immigrant community have information about, they may not talk to you if they think you're also going to be enforcing the immigration laws.

Clinton: Local law enforcement has a different job than federal immigration enforcement. The problem is the federal government has totally abdicated its responsibility.

Russert: Real fast.

Gravel: Real fast. This whole nation should be a sanctuary for the war -- for the world, and bring the people in.

What's going on? Again, we're in fantasy land. We're talking about a problem -- we're scapegoating the Latinos of our society because we as a society are failing in education, we're failing in health care, we're failing in our crumbling infrastructure, and we're failing by invading countries and spending our treasure.

That's what's wrong. And so I'm ashamed as an American to be building a fence on our southern border. That's not the America that I fought for.

(Applause)

Russert: Thank you, Senator Gravel.

We're going to take a quick break. We have a lot more to talk about, and a lot more time.

We are at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire. We'll be right back with the Democrats.

(Commercial break)

Russert: And we are back. Live from Dartmouth College -- Hanover, New Hampshire -- and we are resuming our debate.

Senator Dodd, let me start with you.

President Bush predicated that Hillary Clinton would be the nominee for president for your party. You issued a statement that said, quote, "I can understand why the president would want Senator Clinton to be the nominee."

What does that mean?

(Laughter)

Dodd: Well, if I were Hillary Clinton, I'd be very worried.

(Laughter)

This was the same guy who said, "Way to go, Brownie," here.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

And I think, "Mission accomplished," was the other one I saw. So, in terms of being a prognosticator of events, I'd say the president has somewhat of a bad record when it comes to that.

But certainly, we all respect and admire Hillary and we understand that, as well. But this race is going to won by voters here in this state, in Iowa and other caucus and primary states. Making predictions in September or August about who's going to win later on, I think, has proven to be rather faulty over the years. So I look very much forward to the kind of race that develops.

I said -- I walked in here this evening and a fella walked up to me and he said, "Anderson Cooper, what's happened to you here with this white hair?"

(Laughter)

Dodd: So I realized I have some gaining of ground to do here, but nonetheless, I'm counting on the American people, Democrats, make a good choice in the coming months, not the president of the United States, predicting the winners of Democratic primaries.

Russert: But your statement said, "I can understand why the president would want Senator Clinton." Why does George Bush want Senator Clinton to be the nominee of the party? That's what you said.

Dodd: I was being somewhat facetious, Tim, obviously here, in the question here of whether or not you're actually trying to in a sense encourage a certain outcome here.

And we all believe we'd be the best candidates. I certainly do, based on 26 years of working on every major domestic and foreign policy issue of our country, having proven to get results for our nation, having authored the Family and Medical Leave Act, child care legislation, dealing with Latin America, dealing with financial services.

I think people want not only promises about what you'll do, but a proven record of what you've been able to accomplish.

Russert: Experience and judgment have been two issues that have been raised in this campaign.

Senator Clinton, as first lady, your major initiative was health care.

You acknowledged that you did some things wrong in that. Democrats and Republicans both rejected your proposal. You said that the most important vote you cast in the Senate was on the Iraq war -- you voted for it.

If in fact you made fundamental misjudgments on health care as first lady and the war as senator, why shouldn't Democratic voters say, "She doesn't have the judgment to be president"?

Clinton: Well, Tim, I'm proud that I tried to get universal health care back in '93 and '94. It was a tough fight. It was kind of a lonely fight, but it was worth trying.

And, of course, I've said many times that I made mistakes. But I think the biggest mistake was that we didn't take the opportunity that was offered back then to move toward quality affordable health care for every single American.

But I've come back with a different plan that I believe is much better reflective of what people want, namely an array of choices -- you can keep what you have.

Clinton: But if you're uninsured or underinsured, you'll now have access to the congressional plan. And I think it's a different time. Many more people in business and labor, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and especially American families, know that we have to change what we do in health care.

And I think that my experience on both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, knowing how challenging it will be to take on the special interests, which I've been taking on for a very long time, gives me a special insight into what we must do.

And I intend to be the health care president. You see a lot of people with those stickers that say, "I'm a health care voter." Well, I want to be the health care president.

And I think that finally there will be a consensus behind us to do that. And I look forward to going into the White House and getting that done, because I think it's the highest domestic priority that we have right now.

Russert: Could the scaled bill -- scaled-down bill that you have now, which is very similar to what Senator Chafee, a Republican, had back in 1993 -- your bill today could have passed back then, but you refused to compromise.

Clinton: Well, I don't think that is a fair reading. If you will remember, there was a decision made by the Republicans then that they would not support extending health care to every American. I regret that and so did the late Senator Chafee, because he and I had many conversations about that.

But those arguments have been really discredited the last 15 years. People know that we can't sustain the course we're on without doing more damage, more uninsured, more people denied the care that their doctors say they need even though they have insurance, driving more doctors to distraction, overworking our nurses.

There is so much that has happened that people can see with their own eyes now that I believe that we finally have a consensus to do what we should do.

Russert: Senator Biden, you said the other day, quote, "Do you really believe that Senator Clinton can get more than 15 percent of Republicans to vote for health care?"

Russert: What does that mean?

Biden: No, what it means is that in order to get health care you're going to have to be able to persuade at least 15 percent of the Republicans to vote for it.

Russert: And she cannot?

Biden: No, I think it's going to be more difficult -- unfairly -- but I think it's more difficult for Hillary. Hillary, because she has battled the special interests, and she has.

But look at the special interests. The special interests with regard to Hillary, the feed on this, you know, this Clinton-Bush thing. It's not Hillary's fault. But the fact of the matter is, it's much more difficult to go out and convince a group of Republicans, I would argue, getting something done that is of a major consequence.

I have experience in doing that. I did it on the crime bill. I did it on, today -- first time we rejected, fundamentally rejected, the president's policy.

And I'm not suggesting it's Hillary's fault. I think it's a reality that it's more difficult, because there's a lot of very good things that come with all the great things that President Clinton did, but there's also a lot of the old stuff that comes back. It's kind of hard.

When I say old stuff, I'm referring to policy -- policy.

Russert: Senator Edwards, you said, in effect, that Senator Clinton's mismanagement of health care meant that 40 million Americans have not had it since 1993. That's a very serious charge.

Edwards: I didn't use the word "mismanagement." I think Senator Clinton actually worked -- as first lady at that time -- very hard for health care.

But here's -- I listen to this discussion, and this is what I hear: A bunch of people who've been in Washington a long time who think that everything has to be done there. It's like the rest of America doesn't exist.

They're going to have a bunch of Washington insiders who sit around tables together, negotiate, compromise -- insurance companies, drug companies, lobbyists. And they're going to figure out, together, to the exclusion of the rest of America, what should be done about health care.

I think we actually need a president who's willing to go to America and make the case for the need for universal health care. And the thing that I have committed to do is the first day that I am president, I will say to the Congress, to myself, to the vice president, to the members of the Cabinet, if you have not passed universal health care by July of this year, July of 2009, you lose your health care.

Edwards: Because there is no excuse for politicians in Washington to have health care coverage when America has no health care coverage.

(Applause)

Russert: Senator, I want to ask you, because in 2004, when you ran for president...

Edwards: Yes.

Russert: ... you said we could not afford universal health care; it was not achievable; and it was not responsible. You've changed, dramatically, on this issue.

Edwards: That's true, and so has America. I've proposed universal health care for children, at that point. And what is clear from this presidential campaign is I was the first presidential candidate -- others have followed me now, and that's a good thing -- good thing for America.

But I was the first presidential candidate to lay out a specific, truly universal health care plan. And the one thing I can tell you is anybody who knows me -- anybody who knows me knows I will never give up.

What happened in '93 and '94 is that we didn't get universal health care, but we got NAFTA.

And when I'm president of the United States, you have my word, I will never pull the universal health care bill. I will put everything I have behind making sure that it's enacted.

Russert: Senator Obama, I asked Senator Clinton about experience and judgment. You have served in the U.S. Senate about 33 months. You have no landmark legislation as such that you have offered.

When you were elected back in 2004, you said, quote, "The notion that somehow I am going to start running for higher office, it just doesn't make sense." If it didn't make sense in 2004, why does it make sense now?

Obama: Because I think that the country is at a crossroads right now, and it needs three things. Number one, it needs somebody who can bring the country together. And that's the kind of experience that I bring to this office.

When I was in the state legislature, I was able to get people who were polar opposites -- police officers and law enforcement working with civil rights advocates to reform a death penalty system that was broken; bringing people together, Republicans and Democrats, to provide health insurance to people who didn't have it.

Obama: That's number one.

Number two, we need somebody who can take on the special interests and win. And I have consistently done that on money and politics. In the state legislature, I passed landmark ethics legislation against not just Republicans but also some of the leaders of my own party. I did the same thing working with Russ Feingold with the ethics reform package that we passed last year.

And the third thing is telling the truth to the American people even when it's tough, which I did in 2002, standing up against this war at a time when it was very unpopular. And I was risking my political career because I was in the middle of U.S. Senate race.

Now, those are, I think, the kinds of experiences that people are looking for right now in this country and that's the kind of experience I bring to bear to this race.

I just want to make one last comment. I think that Hillary Clinton deserves credit for having worked on health care. I think John deserves credit for his proposal. I know that he feels that he put out his plan first. You know, Harry Truman put something out 60 years ago for universal health care. I wrote about it in a book that I wrote last year, a plan very similar to John's.

The issue is not going to be who has these particular plans. It has to do with who can inspire and mobilize the American people to get it done and open up the process.

If it was lonely for Hillary, part of the reason it was lonely, Hillary, was because you closed the door to a lot of potential allies in that process. At that time, 80 percent of Americans already wanted universal health care, but they didn't feel like they were let into the process.

Russert: I wanted to ask Senator Gravel -- you talked about running for president of the United States. In 1980, your condo business went bankrupt.

Gravel: Correct.

Russert: In 2004, you filed for personal bankruptcy...

Gravel: Correct.

Russert: ... leaving \$85,000 in credit bills unpaid.

How can someone who did not take care of his business, could not manage his own personal finances, say that he is capable of managing the country?

Gravel: Well, first off, if you want to make a judgment of who can be the greediest people in the world when they get to public office, you can just look at the people up here. Many of them have done very, very well in public office.

I left the Senate no better than when I went in. Now, you say the condo business. I will tell you, Donald Trump has been bankrupt 100 times. So I went bankrupt once in business. And the other -- who did I bankrupt? I stuck the credit card companies with \$90,000 worth of bills and they deserved it because I used the money...

(Laughter)

They deserved it -- and I used the money to finance the empowerment of the American people with a national initiative, so you can make the laws.

Now, Tim, let me just point one thing out. You were asking about special interests.

Russert: You've made your point.

Gravel: Well, I wanted to make a better point.

(Laughter)

Russert: We'll leave it at that, because I've got to give everyone a chance.

Russert: Congressman Kucinich, when you were mayor of Cleveland, you let Cleveland go into bankruptcy, the first time that happened since the Depression. The voters of Cleveland rewarded you by throwing you out of office and electing a Republican mayor of Cleveland.

How can you claim that you have the ability to manage the United States of America when you let Cleveland go bankrupt?

Kucinich: You know, Tim, that was NBC's story. Now I want the people to know what the real story was.

I took a stand on behalf of the people of Cleveland to save a municipal electric system. The banks and the utilities in Cleveland, the private utilities, were trying to force me to sell that system.

And so on December 15th, 1978, I told the head of the biggest bank, when he told me I had to sell the system in order to get the city's credit renewed, that I wasn't going to do it because, you know, I remember where I came from. I remembered my parents counting pennies to pay the utility bills in one of the many apartments we lived in.

And so I know why I went into public office. I went in to stand up for the people. And the people in Cleveland in 1994 asked me to come back to public life because at that point they expanded a municipal electric system that the banks demanded that I sell.

And I showed the ability to stand up for the people.

You know, my campaign in '94 was "Because he was right." And people put me in the Ohio Senate for that reason. '96, it was "Light up Congress," as a symbol of saving the municipal electric system. And this year, it's going to be "Light up America," because I'm going to challenge those interest groups.

I put my job on the line. How many people would be willing to put their job on the line in the face of pressure from banks and utilities?

As this story gets told, people will want me to be their next president, because they'll see in me not only the ability to take a stand, but the ability to live with integrity.

Thank you.

Russert: Governor Richardson, you talk about your experience. And yet, when you were the secretary of energy, there were security breaches at Los Alamos. You talked about Justice White being your favorite Supreme Court justice, someone who voted against Roe v. Wade.

New Mexico ranks 48 in terms of people below the poverty line, 48th in children below the poverty line.

You said that being gay is a choice.

Based on those kinds of comments, and that record of performance, or questionable activities, how can you tell people you have the experience to be president?

Richardson: I've been in public life 25 years. And you know, I may not be the perfect consultant, blow-dried candidate. I make mistakes. I admit them.

But you know, Tim, the issue is: Do I deliver? I mean, your network covered me five months ago when I brought back the remains of five of our -- remains of Korean War soldiers. I also persuaded, with others, the North Koreans to turn down their nuclear reactor.

As governor, today, New Mexico is the sixth fastest growing economy. I've insured kids under 12. Those statistics were way before me, but today, we have created a balanced budget. New Mexico is the clean energy state.

No one ever questioned me that I deliver when I brought back American hostages and servicemen from Iraq, from Saddam Hussein, from the North Koreans, from Darfur -- I got a fragile ceasefire. I've received four Nobel Peace Prize nominations.

You know -- sure, I've made mistakes. And I'm going to continue making them, I can tell you right here. But I also want you to know that the issue is: Can you deliver?

You asked Senator Clinton -- she is a candidate of experience -- Senator Obama, a fresh voice for change. With Bill Richardson, you get both: change and experience.

That's what I am conveying to the American people. You got to be able to deliver. To bring change, you have to have the experience to deliver that change.

And my record in terms of foreign policy, energy policy, what I've done for my state -- I'm the only one who has negotiated with a foreign country here -- I believe I have the best of both to be this president.

Russert: I'd like to go to Allison King of New England Cable News again for another question.

Allison?

King: Thanks, Tim.

The issues surrounding gay rights have been hotly debated here in New England. For example, last year some parents of second-graders in Lexington, Massachusetts, were outraged to learn their children's teacher had read a story about same-sex marriage, about a prince who marries another prince.

Same-sex marriage is legal in Massachusetts but most of you oppose it. Would you be comfortable having this story read to your children as part of their school curriculum?

I'm going to start with Senator Edwards.

Edwards: Yes, absolutely.

What I want is I want my children to understand everything about the difficulties that gay and lesbian couples are faced with every day, the discrimination that they're faced with every single day of their lives.

And I suspect my two younger children, Emma Claire, who's 9, and Jack, who's 7, will reach the same conclusion that my daughter Cate, who's 25, has reached, which is she doesn't understand why her dad is not in favor of same-sex marriage. And she says her generation will be the generation that brings about the great change in America on that issue.

So I don't want to make that decision on behalf of my children. I want my children to be able to make that decision on behalf of themselves, and I want them to be exposed to all the information, even in -- did you say second grade? Second grade might be a little tough, but even in second grade to be exposed to all...

King: Well, that's the point. It is second grade.

Edwards: ... those possibilities, because I don't want to impose my view. Nobody made me God. I don't get to decide on behalf of my family or my children, as my wife Elizabeth has spoken her own mind on this issue. I don't get to impose on them what it is that I believe is right.

But what I will do as president of the United States is I will lead an effort to make sure that the same benefits that are available to heterosexual couples -- 1,100 roughly benefits in the federal government -- are available to same-sex couples; that we get rid of DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act; that we get rid of "don't ask/don't tell," which is wrong today and was wrong when it was enacted back in the 1990s.

I will be the president that leads a serious effort to deal with the discrimination that exists today.

King: Thank you.

Senator Obama, you have young children at home. How do you feel about this?

Obama: You know, I feel very similar to John. You know, the fact is my 9-year-old and my 6-year-old I think are already aware that there are same-sex couples. My wife and I have talked about it. One of the things I want to communicate to my children is not to be afraid of people who are different, because there have been times in our history where I was considered different, or Bill Richardson was considered different.

And one of the things I think the next president has to do is to stop fanning people's fears. If we spend all our time feeding the American people fear and conflict and division, then they become fearful and conflicted and divided.

And if we feed them hope and we feed them reason and tolerance, then they will become tolerant and reasonable and hopeful.

And that I think is one of the most important things that the next president can do, is try to bring us together, and stop trying to fan the flames of division that have become so standard in our politics in Washington. That's the kind of experience, by the way, that we need to put an end to.

King: Quickly, have you sat down with your daughters to talk about same-sex marriage?

Obama: My wife has.

King: She has. OK.

I'd like to ask Senator Clinton the same question.

Clinton: Well, I really respect what both John and Barack said.

I think that we've seen differences used for divisive purposes, for political purposes in the last several elections. And I think every one of us on this stage are really personally opposed to that and we'll do everything we can to prevent it.

With respect to your individual children, that is such a matter of parental discretion, I think that obviously it is better to try to work with your children, to help your children understand the many differences that are in the world and to really respect other people and the choices that other people make. And that goes far beyond sexual orientation.

So I think that this issue of gays and lesbians and their rights will remain an important one in our country. And I hope that -- tomorrow we're going to vote on the hate crimes bill, and I'm sure that those of us in the Senate will be there to vote for it.

We haven't been able to get it passed, and it is an important measure to send a message that we stand against hatred and divisiveness.

And I think that, you know, that's what the Democratic Party stands for in contrast, all too often, to the other side.

King: Thank you, Senator.

Tim, back to you.

Russert: Thank you, Allison.

We're going to take another quick break. We're going to come back and talk about something that affects this generation and the next generation -- Social Security, Medicare and a whole lot more. We'll be right back with the Democrats' debate.

(Commercial break)

Russert: And we're back at Dartmouth College talking to the Democrats. I want to talk about Social Security and Medicare.

The chairman of the Federal Reserve, the head of the Government Accountability Office have both said that the number of people in America on Social Security and Medicare is going to double in the next 20 years -- there are now 40 million; it's going to go to 80 million -- and that if nothing is done, we'll have to cut benefits in half or double the taxes. That is their testimony.

Senator Biden, in order to prevent that, would you be willing to consider certain steps? For example, back in 1983, Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill, Patrick Moynihan and Bob Dole got together and changed the retirement age. It's going to be going up to 67 in a gradual increase.

Right now, you pay tax for Social Security on your first \$97,500 worth of income.

Why not tax the entire income of every American? And if you do that, you'll guarantee the solvency of social security farther than I can see.

Biden: The answer is yes. I'm probably the only one up here who's going to say that, but the truth of the matter is, you stated it. You're either going to cut benefits, or you're going to go ahead and raise taxes above the first \$97,000.

And, by the way, I was in that room with Pat Moynihan. It was Joe Biden, Pat Moynihan, Bob Dole -- it was also George Mitchell -- when we made that deal. And I'll never forget Bob Dole turning to Pat Moynihan and saying, "We all got to jump in this boat at the same time."

So the bottom line here is, you can't do it by growing the economy alone. So I would raise the cap.

Russert: Would you also, considering now life expectancy is 78, considering -- consider gradually raising the retirement age?

Biden: We did that one -- I supported that; that's what got it solvent to 2041. By simply going and taking -- raising the cap, you can solve the problem.

Russert: Senator Clinton, would you be in favor of saying to the American people, "I'm going to tax your income; I'm not going to cap at \$97,500. Everyone, even if you are a millionaire is going to pay Social Security tax on every cent they make."

Clinton: Well, Tim, let me tell you what I think about this, because I know this is a particular concern of yours. But I want to make three points very briefly.

First, I do think that it is important to talk about fiscal responsibility. You know, when my husband left office after moving us toward a balanced budget and a surplus, we had a plan to make Social Security solvent until 2055.

Now, because of the return to deficits, we have lost 14 years of solvency. It's now projected to be solvent until 2041. Getting back on a path to fiscal responsibility is absolutely essential.

Number two, I think we do need another bipartisan process.

Clinton: You described what happened in '83. It took presidential leadership, and it took the relationships between the White House and Capitol Hill, to reach the kind of resolution that was discussed. And I think that has to be what happens again, but with a president who is dedicated to Social Security, unlike our

current president, who has never liked Social Security. You can go back and see when he first ran for Congress, he was dissing Social Security.

So when I'm president, I will do everything to protect and preserve Social Security so we can have that kind of bipartisanship.

And, finally, then you can look in the context of fiscal responsibility and of a bipartisan compromise -- what else might be done. But I think if you don't put fiscal responsibility first, you're going to really make a big mistake, because we demonstrated in the '90s, it had a lot to do with moving us toward solvency.

Russert: But you would not take lifting the cap at \$97,500 off the table?

Clinton: Well, I'd take everything off the table until we move toward fiscal responsibility and before we have a bipartisan process. I don't think I should be negotiating about what I would do as president. You know, I want to see what other people come to the table with.

Russert: But Senator Biden said you can't grow your way out of this. And, for the record, when the Clinton administration left office, Social Security was only guaranteed to 2038, not 2055.

Clinton: There was a plan on the basis of the balanced budget and the surplus to take it all the way to 2055. And we know what happened: George Bush came in, went back to deficits, and has basically used the Social Security trust fund and borrowing from China and other countries to pay for the war.

Russert: So, Senator, a simple question, a simple question: What do you put on the table? What are you willing to look at to say, "We're not going to double the taxes, we're not going to cut benefits in half; I'm willing to put everything on the table, some things on the table, nothing on the table"?

Clinton: I'm not putting anything on the proverbial table until we move toward fiscal responsibility. I think it's a mistake to do that.

Russert: Senator Obama?

Obama: I think that lifting the cap is probably going to be the best option.

Now, we've got to have a process that's already been talked about. Joe participated back in 1983. We need another one. And I think -- I've said before, everything should be on the table.

My personal view is that lifting the cap is much preferable than the other options that are available. But what's critical is to recognize that there is a potential problem.

As I travel around Iowa and New Hampshire I meet young people who don't think Social Security is going to be there for them. They don't believe it's going to be there for them.

And I think it's important for us, in addition to getting our fiscal house in order, to acknowledge as Democrats that there may be a problem that we've got to take on.

And we should be willing to do anything that will strengthen the system to make sure that we are being true to the sake of trust of those who are already retired as well as young people in the future.

And we should reject things that will weaken the system, including privatization, which essentially is going to put people's retirement at the whim of the stock market.

Kucinich: I think...

Russert: Real fast.

Kucinich: ... of course, we ought to be raising the cap in order to protect Social Security, which is solid to about 2040 without any changes whatsoever.

But what everyone should realize in this country is that Wall Street is very interested in privatization. And unless we have a president who states very clearly -- no privatization, believes in economic growth -- and I'm talking about a new WPA, a Works Green Administration, creating technologies for a green America.

We have to believe in economic growth. We should raise the ceiling. And in addition to that, Tim, we should be thinking about lowering -- lowering -- the retirement age to 65. People's bodies break down. There are people who are retiring early. They don't have the kind of economic help they should get. We should be thinking: Raise the cap, lower the retirement age to 65, stop privatization, increase economic growth. That's what a Kucinich presidency will mean.

Russert: Senator Dodd, Senator Edwards invoked your name. You have 30 seconds.

Dodd: And I thank you.

What I was suggesting here -- Joe, I think, said tax everybody.

(Crosstalk)

Dodd: I think clearly that you don't have to do that.

(Laughter)

Dodd: But you can do this by basically readjusting that tax so you don't have to -- doesn't have to affect everyone in society.

So, John, I'm not suggesting...

Russert: But you'd raise it to \$500,000?

Dodd: But you've got to raise it up, clearly, to do this.

Now, let me also say something. Look, because all of this comes down to one other issue, Tim, clearly.

Joe made the point earlier. We can all talk about this. No one political party is going to do this. It's going to take people who can bring people together to get the job done.

And you need to demonstrate not just the experience but the proven ability to actually get results by bringing people together to do things that were difficult to accomplish. That's what I've done for 26 years. I know how to do this.

And I think the American people are looking for leadership that not just makes promises about what they're going to do but the ability to bring elements together, as you had happen with Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill and Bob Dole and Pat Moynihan. That kind of leadership is missing today. That's what the American people want back.

Clinton: Tim, I just have to insert something here. You know, the Democrats are against privatization. I fought against it. We all did. But in the interest of, I think, facts, we were on a pathway at the end of the Clinton administration, in the words of Alan Greenspan, of "eliminating the debt."

That was one of the excuses he gave when he voted for those horrible tax cuts in 2001, that he was so worried that he would actually eliminate the debt. So I think it's important that you cannot give away what you're going to be negotiating over when it comes to Social Security until you make it clear that fiscal responsibility has got to be the premise of the negotiation.

And if you don't lead with that, and if you don't point to the fact that the Democrats are much better stewards of our country's budget than the Republicans are -- because, once again, we're in a mess after this President Bush leaves office -- then you're going to be negotiating with yourself, and I think that's a mistake.

Russert: But Senator Clinton...

Clinton: But fiscal responsibility first.

Russert: Senator Clinton -- Senator Clinton, you would acknowledge that the programs, as they are now constructed, will not exist unless significant changes are made in them for the next generation.

Clinton: Well, I think we have to make some significant changes. And I've told you where I would start from and what I would do. And I think it's a mistake to be negotiating over what you will give away before you even get to the bipartisan process, because the fiscal responsibility is key here.

Russert: One second -- one second here.

I want to turn to another health issue, because this is important, before I bring Allison in.

Four -- over 400,000 Americans have premature deaths due to smoking or second-hand smoke.

Senator Clinton, would you be in favor of a national law to ban smoking in all public places?

Clinton: Well, we banned it in New York City, and people thought it would be a terrible idea. And everyone was really upset about it. And actually business at a lot of establishments, like restaurants and other places, increased, because many people felt more comfortable going when there was no smoking.

I think that we should be moving toward a bill that I have supported to regulate tobacco through the FDA.

And once it has those health warnings and once the FDA can regulate it, I think that will give a lot of support to local communities to make these what are essentially zoning decisions. And I fully support that.

Russert: But you're not in favor of a national law to ban smoking in public places?

Clinton: Not at this point. I think we're making progress at the local level.

Russert: Senator Obama, a national law to ban smoking in all public places.

Obama: I think that local communities are making enormous strides and I think they're doing the right thing on this. If it turns out that we're not seeing enough progress at the local level, then I would favor a national law.

I don't think we've seen the local laws play themselves out entirely because I think you're seeing enormous amount of progress in Chicago, in New York in other major cities around the country because I think we have been treating this as a public health problem and educating the public on the dangers of second-hand smoke.

That pressure will continue. As I said, if we can't provide these kinds of protections at the local level, which would be my preference, I would be supportive of a national law.

Russert: Have you been successful in...

Obama: I have. The best cure is my wife.

(Laughter)

Russert: Is there anybody here who's in favor of a national law?

(Crosstalk)

Richardson: I would...

Biden: One other point I want to make on this...

Dodd: 3,000 kids start smoking every day in this country...

Russert: OK. So Biden, Dodd, Richardson.

Richardson: I did it in New Mexico.

Russert: A national law. Kucinich and Gravel?

Kucinich: Wait a minute. I've been breathing in a lot of second-hand smoke here tonight. You bet I'll go for a national law.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

Russert: All right. So Biden, Dodd, Richardson, Gravel, and Kucinich in favor of a national law.

Allison, you're up.

Edwards: Wait, wait, wait. And Edwards.

Russert: And Edwards.

King: Susan Remacle (ph) of Canaan, New Hampshire, the mother of two young adult sons, believes that the legal drinking age of 21 is counterproductive and unrealistic, especially, she says, because...

(Applause)

Especially because we trust people at this age to make life and death decisions in our military.

King: Would you as president remove the requirement that a state have a legal drinking age of 21 in order to receive federal highway funds, thereby returning the drinking age back to the states?

Senator Biden?

Biden: Absolutely, no. I would not. You've got to calculate the costs here. The costs of alcoholism in America, the costs of accidents that flow from drunkenness are astronomical. There are 300,000 babies born deformed every year in this country because of women who are alcoholics while they're carrying those children to term.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a gigantic problem, just like the drug issue. And the idea that we're going to suggest that it makes good sense to move the age down to 18 I find to be counterproductive. I would not do that.

And the last point I'll make is, presidents are supposed to lead. How do you go out and negotiate, use health care and the Social Security system as a negotiating tool to deal with the federal deficit?

You're supposed to lead. You lay out what you want to do. You're not negotiating with yourself. You're negotiating to protect the system, and you can't use the system as a negotiating tool to get to a balanced budget any more than you can turn around and suggest that somehow lowering the drinking age to 18 is going to make anything better in America -- anything.

King: I'd like to hear from a few more of you on this, if you could keep it to 30 seconds.

Senator Dodd?

Dodd: No, I agree with Joe on this. Look, the problems associated with alcohol are significant in our country. The evidence is overwhelming. And the idea that we're going to lower the drinking age -- we know that -- and that age group here -- and, again, you can -- we have significant statistics of the problem. Fifty-thousand people lose their lives in automobiles every year in this country, many of them because of the use of alcohol.

But let me also add here as well on that smoking issue -- because it is important and it's related -- with 3,000 young people starting to smoke every single day, one of the major causes of the health care issue, Tim, that you were raising earlier and Medicare, is because of chronic illnesses associated with things like smoking.

So the idea that we wouldn't draft a national law to stop this in public places is one of the things you're going to have to do if you're going to deal with rising health care costs.

King: Thank you.

Senator Richardson?

Dodd: And the same is true of alcohol.

Richardson: No, I wouldn't lower it. In fact, at this moment my wife is hosting in New Mexico with the surgeon general a forum on underage drinking.

I think what you need, though, is a dual approach. Yes, we need to have strong law enforcement against DWI, against so many other law-related issues, but you also have to have treatment, you have to have substance abuse treatment, you have to have education, you have to have rehabilitation.

And the federal government to the states is not providing the resources and the leadership that we need.

So just as much as we don't lower the drinking age, you have to have more of a national commitment to rehabilitation and to research.

We need to have more research for diabetes, for cancer, for stem cell research, for heart disease.

We're a nation -- let me just make one final point -- we spend \$6 billion on cancer research. That is two weeks of the Iraq war. That shows the mistaken priorities that we have in this country.

Russert: In interest of time, is there anybody here, from Obama down to Gravel, who thinks we should lower the drinking age back to 18?

Gravel: I think we should lower it so anybody that could go fight and die for this country should be able to drink.

(Applause)

Russert: Kucinich -- Congressman Kucinich?

You said -- yes.

Kucinich: You know, I think not only about service, but we have to have confidence in young Americans. And a president who reaches out to them and talks to them about drinking responsibly is much better than a president who tells them "Thou shalt not," because young people will do what they do.

But they're looking for leadership from a president. I'm ready to provide that leadership.

Of course, they should be able to drink at age 18 and they should be able to vote at age 16.

Russert: Obama, Edwards, Clinton are all "no" on 18?

(Unknown): No.

(Unknown): What was the question?

Russert: Lower the drinking age to 18?

(Unknown): I would not.

Russert: We're going to take a break and come back with our lightning round. Thirty seconds to answer your question.

Gravel: It never got to the real round.

(Laughter)

(Commercial break)

Russert: We are back in New Hampshire.

Politicians spend millions of dollars on TV commercials which last 30 seconds. We want to demonstrate to the American voters tonight that you can answer a question in 30 seconds.

(Laughter)

Here we go.

Senator Obama, you go around the country saying it's time to turn the page. Are you talking about the Bushs, the Clintons or both?

Obama: What I'm talking about is ending the divisive politics that we have in this country. I think it is important for us as Democrats to be clear about what we stand for, but I think we also have to invite Republicans and Independents to join us in a progressive agenda for universal health care, to make sure that they are included in conversations about improving our education system and properly funding our public schools.

I think turning the page means that we've got to get over the special interest-driven politics that we have become accustomed to. And most importantly, it is important for us to make sure that we're telling the truth to the American people about the choices we face.

Russert: Senator Clinton, if you are the nominee, it will be 28 years, from 1980 to 2008, where there has been a Bush or a Clinton on the national ticket. Is it healthy for a democracy to have a two- family political dynasty?

Clinton: I thought Bill was a pretty good president.

(Applause)

From my perspective, you know, the values that he acted on, on behalf of our country, both at home and abroad, are ones that stand the test of time.

Clinton: But, look, I'm running on my own. I'm going to the people on my own. I think I know how to find common ground and how to stand my ground. And on all the issues that matter to America in the 21st century, I wish we could turn the clock back. But we can't, and we need to start with leadership that can deliver results and get us back to the values that make America great.

Russert: Senator Biden, do you believe that Moveon.org has changed politics for the better?

Biden: I don't think they've changed politics.

Russert: Have they been a positive force in politics?

(Laughter)

Biden: Well, on some things, yes. I mean, look, I don't think you can castigate them for the ad. I think -- but the idea that I was initially told -- I'm going to get in trouble for this -- but that it's their party; they're part of the party.

It's not their party.

Russert: Congressman Kucinich, Alan Greenspan in his book wrote something that has not received any notice. He advocates raising taxes on gasoline \$3.00 a gallon over the next 10 years, because he said

there is no way we will wean ourself off of gasoline-driven automobiles and convert to something else, like Brazil, which uses sugar cane.

Would you be in favor of a phase-in \$3.00 a gallon gasoline tax?

Kucinich: No. And he said something else that didn't receive much notice. He said that the Iraq war was about oil, something that I said on "Meet the Press," Tim, on February 23rd, 2003.

I think that we need to make sure that the next president was right about Iraq, was right about the Patriot Act.

You can have a president like that, who was right about Iraq, who voted against it from the beginning and against the funding. You can have a president against -- who was for a single-payer, not-for-profit health care system, one who will stop the Patriot Act...

Russert: Time.

Kucinich: ... or you can have a president who's tall.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

Russert: Would anyone here -- would anyone here raise the gasoline tax in order to wean America off of Middle Eastern oil?

Gravel: First off, let me qualify it. I would ask the Congress -- they won't do it -- but then I would empower the American people to do it, and that is to put a carbon tax on.

If we don't do something drastic -- you know, we can get off the gasoline in five years and we can get off of carbon in 10 years. All we got to do is want to do it. And to put a tax on gasoline permits politicians and bureaucrats to play favorites. You do it right at the lump of coal, and you do it at the gas, and you do it at the oil, and then that filters through the system properly.

Russert: Senator Dodd, you have...

Dodd: I've advocated a...

Russert: Yes, you have a carbon tax.

I have another question for you, however. You have two daughters, 6 and 2. Christmas is coming. Would you favor a temporary ban on the importation of all toys from China until we are convinced that they're not coming into our country and harming our children?

Dodd: If you promise not to tell my children, I will.

(Laughter)

And, certainly, look, I advocated this some time ago here. We would shut down a company in this country in 20 minutes if they were using excessive lead paint, sending toothpaste and animal food to this country that was contaminated, and causing great harm and danger to people here.

The idea that the president would not suspend the importation of those products to our country I think was terribly wrong-headed. And certainly I would advocate that that be done until we have the guarantees in security.

And beyond this issue, we ought to establish in this country, given the amount of products we now bring into this country off shore, that there is some sort of ability here to make some judgment about the safety and security of these products coming in, certainly before they leave their country.

So I would certainly do that.

Russert: Senator Obama, you were criticized by Jesse Jackson and others about your, in their words, tepid response about the situation in Jena involving the civil rights difficulties in Louisiana.

Should you have gone to Jena, Louisiana, in order to try to bring those communities together?

Obama: No, because I was in Washington at that time trying to bring an end to the war in Iraq, and that was something that was critical.

The fact is that I was -- before any of the other candidates on this stage, spoke out with respect to Jena. I put out several strong statements, including ones prepared with Jesse Jackson's son, Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. And, subsequently, I think Reverend Jackson acknowledged that.

This is an issue that's not black or white. It's an issue of American justice. We've got to make sure the justice system works for every single person.

Russert: Governor Richardson, if you're president of the United States you're automatically honorary chairman of the Boy Scouts of America. In light of that organization's position on sexual orientation, would you accept that position?

Richardson: No, I wouldn't. Because I think, as president, I would commit myself, number one, that I will be a leader that prevents discrimination on the basis of race, gender and sexual orientation. I will also be a president that follows the Constitution of the United States.

I will also be a president that will bring back habeas corpus and the rule of law. I will also be a president that will shut down Guantanamo. I will also be a president that will follow the Constitution and not permit torture as a tool in our foreign policy. I will not eavesdrop on American citizens. And I will not go to war, unless I get the consent of Congress.

And there are still basic differences on the war. My plans ends the war, getting the troops out, and with all due respect to Senator Obama, Senator Edwards, Senator Clinton, what I heard tonight is that even in their second terms, they will not get the troops out. Therefore, the war will not end.

Russert: Senator Obama?

Obama: You know, I'm happy to have this discussion again, Bill. I think it is important to tell the American people the truth. Now, military commanders indicate that they can safely get combat troops out at the pace of one to two brigades a month. That is the quickest pace that we can do it safely. I have said I will begin immediately and we will do it as rapidly as we can.

It is the same issue with Social Security, where the pretense is that somehow we can do this magically. We can't. I think it's important for the next president to tell the American people not just what they want to hear, or to tell our own base what they want to hear, but what they need to hear. They need to hear...

Russert: I've got to move on and give Senator Edwards a chance.

Senator Edwards, you heard Alan Greenspan recommending raising gasoline tax. We do have a dependency on foreign oil which all across America people say we must become energy independent.

Edwards: Yes.

Russert: Would you be in favor of developing more nuclear power here in the United States?

Edwards: No.

Russert: Period?

Edwards: No. So that was less than 30 seconds.

(Laughter)

Russert: Senator Obama, nuclear power?

Obama: I don't think that we can take nuclear power off the table. What we have to make sure of is that we have the capacity to store it properly and safely, and that we reduce whatever threats might come from terrorism. And if we can do that in a technologically sound way, then we should pursue it. If we can't, we should not.

But there is no magic bullet on energy. We're going to have to look at all the various options to reduce greenhouse gases and to put us on a path to energy independence.

Russert: Congressman?

Kucinich: Well, first of all, you know, I know a little bit about this because I actually blocked a nuclear dump in Ohio. And I was one of the few up here who actually spoke against having a nuclear dump in Nevada.

The truth of the matter is that nuclear power is very expensive, Tim.

They never factored in the cost of storage, which continues forever.

I want to keep utility rates low by having a Works Green Administration, emphasis on solar and wind, drive down this energy curve of hydrocarbon consumption.

And, finally, no more war as an instrument of policy. No more resource wars. We've got to make the transition away from oil, and that's what a Kucinich administration would do.

Russert: Nuclear power?

Gravel: Not at all. The solution obviously is wind power. If we manufactured 5 million of these 2.5 meg windmills across the country, we could electrify the entire nation -- the entire nation. I'm talking about our transportation system.

Why don't we do that? We know the -- this is technology off the shelf. That's why I kept saying, we can get off of gasoline in five years; we can get off of carbon in 10 years.

All we've got to want is to do it. And it will take the American people, because they can't get that through the Congress.

Russert: Senator Clinton, would you rule out expanding nuclear power?

Clinton: No, but it would not be one of the options that I favor, unless, number one, the cost can get down for the construction and operation; number two, that we have a viable solution for the nuclear waste.

I voted against Yucca Mountain. I've spoken out against Yucca Mountain. I think that recently the discovery -- there's an earthquake fault going under the proposed site at Yucca Mountain -- certainly validates my opposition.

So there are a lot of very difficult questions.

But we're going to have to look at the entire energy profile, in order to determine how we're going to move away from our dependence upon carbon-based fuels. And I will look at everything, but there are some tough questions you'd have to answer with respect to nuclear.

Russert: I want to move to another subject, and this involves a comment that a guest on "Meet the Press" made, and I want to read it, as follows: "Imagine the following scenario. We get lucky. We get the number three guy in Al Qaida. We know there's a big bomb going off in America in three days and we know this guy knows where it is.

Don't we have the right and responsibility to beat it out of him? You could set up a law where the president could make a finding or could guarantee a pardon.

President (sic) Obama -- would you do that as president?

Obama: America cannot sanction torture. It's a very straightforward principle, and one that we should abide by. Now, I will do whatever it takes to keep America safe. And there are going to be all sorts of hypotheticals and emergency situations and I will make that judgment at that time.

But what we cannot do is have the president of the United States state, as a matter of policy, that there is a loophole or an exception where we would sanction torture. I think that diminishes us and it sends the wrong message to the world.

Russert: Senator Biden, would you allow this presidential exception?

Biden: No, I would not. And I met, up here in New Hampshire, with 17 three- and four-star generals who, after my making a speech at Drake Law School, pointing out I would not under any circumstances sanction torture, I thought they were about to read me the riot act.

Biden: Seventeen of our four-star, three-star generals said, "Biden, will you make a commitment you will never use torture?" It does not work.

It is part of the reason why we got the faulty information on Iraq in the first place is because it was engaged in by one person who gave whatever answer they thought they were going to give in order to stop being tortured. It doesn't work. It should be no part of our policy ever -- ever.

Russert: Senator Clinton, this is the number three man in Al Qaida. We know there's a bomb about to go off, and we have three days, and we know this guy knows where it is.

Should there be a presidential exception to allow torture in that kind of situation?

Clinton: You know, Tim, I agree with what Joe and Barack have said. As a matter of policy it cannot be American policy period.

I met with those same three- and four-star retired generals, and their principal point -- in addition to the values that are so important for our country to exhibit -- is that there is very little evidence that it works.

Now, there are a lot of other things that we need to be doing that I wish we were: better intelligence; making, you know, our country better respected around the world; working to have more allies.

But these hypotheticals are very dangerous because they open a great big hole in what should be an attitude that our country and our president takes toward the appropriate treatment of everyone. And I think it's dangerous to go down this path.

Russert: The guest who laid out this scenario for me with that proposed solution was William Jefferson Clinton last year. So he disagrees with you.

Clinton: Well, he's not standing here right now.

(Applause)

Russert: So there is a disagreement?

Clinton: Well, I'll talk to him later.

(Laughter)

Russert: Well, that raises a question: Which foreign policy decisions of the Clinton administration were you involved in or did you advise?

Clinton: Well, I have always said that my husband and I started a conversation 36 years ago and it never stopped. So I was certainly involved in talking about a lot of what went on in terms of the president's decisions. But I know very well that the president makes the decision. Everyone in the White House is there because of one person -- the president -- including the spouse of the president.

Ultimately, the president has to sift through everything that is recommended and make her decision. What I believe is that it is the ultimate responsibility of a president to seek out a broad cross-section of advisers who will have different points of view and provide different perspectives, and that's what I intend to do, and that is certainly what my husband did as well.

Russert: Anyone else want to disagree with President Clinton on torture?

Dodd: Yes, I do.

Russert: Go ahead, Senator Dodd.

Dodd: Not that I disagree, but this was all part of the Military Commissions Act which was adopted last fall.

There were only a handful of us that voted against it at the time. And I've written legislation to overturn it. I'll offer no better witness here than John McCain, who said that during those terrible years he was

incarcerated and tortured, he would say anything to those interrogators in order to stop the physical pain. So we need to reinforce the idea here; this is a dreadful way to collect information.

We need to do other things to make sure it happens. But walking away from international conventions, as we did with the Geneva Conventions to disallow the restrictions on torture, I think, is a mistake, and also to walk away from habeas corpus.

But leadership requires you try and do something about it. And I'm doing something about it by trying to get the Congress to overturn that legislation...

Russert: Governor Richardson, this is an exception to offer a pardon to someone or to do a presidential finding because it's someone who knows a bomb is going off...

Richardson: No. I will do everything I can to fight terrorists. That's the main obligation of the American people. But that doesn't mean we become like terrorists and abridge our own freedoms. What the Bush administration has been using is called waterboarding. That is unacceptable not just with the Geneva Conventions, but in the spirit of our nation being a nation that respects human rights. That's not us. I would not permit it.

And, furthermore, I would not permit -- and here's another issue that I would like the Senate to take back - - the president of the United States has today unequaled authority to eavesdrop on American citizens, without a court order. The Congress needs to go back and rescind that.

Russert: Time.

Richardson: That is another abridgement that needs to stop.

Russert: Thank you, Governor.

Senator Edwards, the exception?

Edwards: The only thing I would -- I agree with what's been said. The only thing I would add is the problem is much bigger than this specific hypothetical illustrates. Because what's happened is, what America is has been undermined over the last seven years. And torture is a component of that, or the condoning of torture is a component of it. But it is only one component.

In addition to the torture, we need to be ending this war in Iraq. I will close Guantanamo, which I think is a national embarrassment. The idea that the United States of America would hold anybody without a right to a hearing undermines everything that we represent.

No more secret prisons. Not when I'm president of the United States.

And not only no more secret prisons; I will, the first day that I'm president, end the illegal spying on the American people.

Biden: Question, Tim, did you say pardon, as well?

I'd pardon the son of a gun, if I got an atom bomb.

Russert: That was -- that was the scenario that President Clinton laid out.

Biden: OK. Well, I would pardon -- I would not torture, but if I thought I'd get the hydrogen bomb this guy had planted, I'd say, "Man, you're out." And then I'd figure out how he got taken care of later. But I would...

(Laughter)

... I would pardon him.

Russert: So you would be in favor of...

Biden: I'd pardon him, not torture. Not torture.

Russert: No. It would be pardoning the person who...

Biden: Oh, did the torture. No, no, no.

Russert: Fair enough. All right.

(Laughter)

Real fast -- 30 seconds.

Biden: I thought you meant pardon the...

Kucinich: Thirty seconds -- you're on my time.

The metaphor that we're using here is one that relates to, really, 9/11 and the terror that followed, and the politicization of fear which occurred in this society.

A Kucinich administration will be about strength through peace. No unilateralism, no preemption, no first-strike, using -- and a rejection of war as an instrument of policy.

So of course you'd use a pardon, but we have to remember, this Constitution has to be redeemed and this administration has took us down a -- really, a (inaudible). I will not only restore the Constitution, but I want a new national security doctrine, strength through peace, that will make us safer, because the neo kind approach has made America less safe and more vulnerable.

Russert: I want to turn to politics and money. Senator Clinton, as you all know, you had to turn back \$850,000 in contributions from Norman Hsu because of his rather checkered past.

Again, President Clinton said this, "Now, we don't have to publish all our donors for the Clinton Foundation, but if Hillary became president, I think there would questions about whether people would try to win favor by giving money to me."

In light of that, do you believe that the Clinton Foundation and the Clinton library should publish all the donors who give contributions to those two entities?

Clinton: Well, Tim, I actually co-sponsored legislation that would have sitting presidents reveal any donation to their presidential library, and I think that's a good policy.

Russert: And the foundation?

Clinton: Well, it would be the same, because that's where the library comes from.

Russert: Until such legislation, would they voluntarily, the Clinton library and Clinton Foundation, make their donors public?

Clinton: Well, you'll have to ask them.

Russert: What's your recommendation?

Clinton: Well, I don't talk about my private conversations with my husband, but I'm sure he'd be happy to consider that.

Russert: Is there anyone here who doesn't believe that presidential libraries and presidential foundations should make public all their donors?

Obama: I just want to amplify on this issue. Because I think it's important not only that all this information is disclosed, but I also think that we need to have a situation in which we are disclosing the funneling of large donors.

And that is something that we were able to successfully do. I pushed it with Russ Feingold to make sure that large funnelers who were lobbyists were disclosed.

We are now in the process of presenting a bill where any large bundler has to disclose who they're bundling money from and who are they funneling it to. And I think that should be passed right away.

Russert: Senator Edwards, you mentioned candor with the candidate -- president with the American people. Your campaign has hit some obstacles with revelations about \$400 haircuts, \$500,000 for working for a hedge fund, \$800,000 from Rupert Murdoch.

Do you wish you hadn't taken money in all those cases or hadn't made that kind of expenditure for a haircut?

Edwards: Well, first of all, I think if you look at my entire life, I am proud of what I've spent my life doing. I'm not perfect. There's not a single person on this stage who's perfect, but I came from a family.

I was born into nothing. I was brought home to a two-room house in a mill village. I have spent my entire life fighting for the kind of people that I grew up with. They worked in the mill with my father. And I don't apologize for the fact that I have worked hard and built a life which I hope will make life easier for my children. I'm proud of that. I'm not ashamed of that.

And I am proud of having stood up for the people that I grew up with. It's what I have done my entire life. I did it for 20 years as lawyer. It's what I've done every minute that I've been in public life.

It is the reason that I've been going around the country helping organize workers into unions. It is the reason we started a College for Everyone program for low-income kids. It is the reason Elizabeth and I started an after-school program for kids who otherwise would have no chance to go to an after-school program, having access to technology.

I'm proud of what I've done with my life, and I do not apologize for it.

And I do not apologize for it.

Russert: But the hedge fund, as you know, had subprime mortgages, many of which defaulted in the Katrina area. If you had to do it all over again, would you not have taken that money?

Edwards: But look at what I've done. Look at what I've done.

Russert: I'm...

Edwards: No, wait a second. You asked me the question.

Russert: The specific example.

Edwards: Please let me respond.

Russert: Specific example.

Edwards: Look at what I've done. When that issue came up in New Orleans, what I did is went to ACORN, an organization I had worked with in New Orleans, and we actually set up a fund to help people whose homes were being foreclosed on in New Orleans.

I helped raise the money for that fund. Elizabeth and I made a big contribution to it ourselves, because we feel -- I feel a personal commitment to help families whose lives have been devastated. It's why I have made central to my entire campaign the issue of poverty in America.

And I am perfectly happy to have anybody in America, any voter in New Hampshire, any voter anywhere in this country judge me based on what I've done in my life.

Russert: Before we go, there's been a lot of discussion about the Democrats and the issue of faith and values. I want to ask you a simple question.

Senator Obama, what is your favorite Bible verse?

Obama: Well, I think it would have to be the Sermon on the Mount, because it expresses a basic principle that I think we've lost over the last six years.

John talked about what we've lost. Part of what we've lost is a sense of empathy towards each other. We have been governed in fear and division, and you know, we talk about the federal deficit, but we don't talk enough about the empathy deficit, a sense that I stand in somebody else's shoes, I see through their eyes. People who are struggling trying to figure out how to pay the gas bill, or try to send their kids to college. We are not thinking about them at the federal level.

That's the reason I'm running for president, because I want to restore that.

Russert: I want to give everyone a chance in this. You just take 10 seconds.

Senator Clinton, favorite Bible verse?

Clinton: The Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I think it's a good rule for politics, too.

Russert: Senator Gravel?

Gravel: The most important thing in life is love. That's what empowers courage, and courage implements the rest of our virtues.

Russert: Congressman Kucinich?

Kucinich: I carry that with me at every debate, this prayer from St. Francis, which says, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," and I believe very strongly that all of us can be instruments of peace. And that's what I try to bring to public life.

Russert: Senator Edwards?

Edwards: It appears many times in the Bible, "What you do onto the least of those, you do onto me."

Russert: Governor Richardson?

Richardson: The Sermon on the Mount, because I believe it's an issue of social justice, equality, brotherly issues reflecting a nation that is deeply torn and needs to be heal and come together.

Dodd: The Good Samaritan would be a worthwhile sort of description of who we all ought to be in life.

Russert: Senator Biden?

Biden: Christ's warning of the Pharisees. There are many Pharisees, and it's part of what has bankrupted some people's view about religion. And I worry about the Pharisees.

Russert: I want to thank you all for your answers this evening.

I want to ask Allison King for one more question. This, after all, is New Hampshire. She wants to ask you about baseball.

(Laughter)

King: For many here, in New England, the answer to this next question may be the most important one you answer tonight.

(Laughter)

Red Sox or Yankees?

Governor Richardson?

(Applause)

(Laughter)

Dodd: What is it now, Bill? Come on.

Richardson: Red Sox, because Manny Ramirez is back. The Red Sox will win the pennant and they will win the World Series.

(Applause)

King: Senator Clinton?

Kucinich: You know, I've got to take exception to this. Cleveland Indians won the central division, 92 victories -- they're going to the World Series.

(Laughter)

Hi, mom.

(Laughter)

King: Senator Clinton, where are you on this? Red Sox or Yankees?

Clinton: Well, I hate to say it in front of this New Hampshire crowd -- I'm a Yankees fan. Have been for a long, long time.

(Applause)

Russert: Senator Clinton, what a bout a World Series -- Yankees and Cubs?

Clinton: Well, you know, I've worried about that because I think, given the Cubs' record, which of course, I hope it happens, but it could very well be a sign of the coming apocalypse, were that to ever occur.

(Laughter)

It would be so out of history that you would have the Cubs versus the Yanks. Then I'd be really in trouble.

Russert: But who would you be for?

Clinton: Well, I would probably have to alternate sides.

(Laughter)

Russert: Spoken like a true sports fan.

Senator Gravel, Yankees, Red Sox?

Gravel: I'm from New England. I was born in Massachusetts. Do you have to ask that question?

Russert: Edwards?

Edwards: Red Sox.

Russert: Obama?

Obama: Sox, but the wrong color. I'm a White Sox fan all the way.

(Laughter)

Russert: Dodd?

Dodd: Sox. And tomorrow night you're going to be hosting a debate in Red Sox nation.

Russert: Yes.

Biden?

Dodd: Who's going to be the president of Red Sox nation? We all want to tune into that one.

Russert: Biden?

Biden: I was raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania, by a grandfather, if you weren't a Yankees fan you didn't eat. Yankees.

(Laughter)

Russert: Thank you all.

Thank you voters of New Hampshire and all across the country for watching the Democratic candidates tonight.

(Applause)

And thank you, Dartmouth.

Our thanks to New England Cable News, Dartmouth College. The broadcast re-airs tonight, 1 a.m. Eastern on MSNBC.

If you want to see the Republican candidates in a similar setting, NBC will bring you the debate from Dearborn, Michigan, October 9th. I'll see you this Sunday on "Meet the Press."

From Hanover, New Hampshire, good night.

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