

Dole Institute of Politic Post Election Conference

Session Two: The Democratic Nomination Contests

Panelist:

Geoff Earle
Mo Elleithee
Steve Hildebrand
David Kurtz

Adam Nagourney
Kelly O'Donnell
Matt Rodriguez
Nate Silver

Joe Trippi
Bill Lacy, Moderator
Ray Strother, Moderator

Bill Lacy

Good afternoon. Welcome to our second session, the Democratic Nomination, here at the Dole Institute of Politics Post Election Conference 2008. I get to have fun this time. I don't get grilled. I get to grill these guys. It's great to be on this side of the microphone. Let me make a couple of announcements just on the outset. If you have a cell phone please turn it off. If you have a question please wait until the end. We'll try to allot fifteen to twenty minutes for Q and A. If you have a question please go to the microphone in the back of the room when we call for you. Please do ask a question and no filibustering. I'd like to ask all of the panelist to please make a special effort to speak into the microphones. You might want to pull those closer to you. If you are sharing a microphone please make sure that you're working with each other so that you are speaking directly into a microphone.

Let me introduce the panelists just briefly. You have detailed biographical information in our materials that are available on the table outside. Let me very briefly run through and introduce everyone. First, my partner in crime, Ray Strother, our Democratic Fellow at the Dole Institute, to my left, that's appropriate, isn't it Ray?

Ray Strother:

That's appropriate.

Bill Lacy:

Mr. Steve Hildebrand, deputy campaign manager for the Obama campaign, Mr. Matt Rodriguez the Western Regional Director for the Obama Campaign. My friend Kelly O'Donnell from NBC News. David Kurtz from Talking Points Memo. Geoff Earle, who we met before and is somehow related to someone from the Dole Institute, from the New York Post. Nate Silver, fivethirtyeight.com. Adam Nagourney of the New York Times. Joe Trippi, who's been to the Dole Institute before, thanks for coming back, was senior Advisor to John Edwards. And Mo Elleithee who was Senior Spokesman for Senator Clinton's campaign. We will begin, as we did with the Republican side, with a five to seven minute introduction, the "pathway to victory" with the three campaigns. We will go in Candidate alphabetical order, which means Clinton, Edwards, Obama. So Mo, you're up first.

Senator Clinton's Campaign

Mo Elleithee:

Thanks, thanks for having me here today. I thought I'd start with a very quick anecdote about how I got involved in Hillary's campaign because I think it illustrates a little bit about what our approach was to the campaign. In the fall of 2006 I was squarely behind Mark Warner, former governor of Virginia who a lot of people thought was going to run for President. I had worked for him on his governor's race and was gearing up to go work on his young campaign when he pulled out of the race, surprising a lot of people. So I kind of sat back, didn't know what I was going to do. I looked at the field and wondered who I wanted to be with. All I knew was the two I didn't want to work for were Obama and Clinton. That shows how much I know. With Obama, I liked Barack Obama, I just wasn't ready to put my money on a horse that had never run a race before. With Hillary, it wasn't that I had anything against her. I just thought, "I like her but I don't think anyone else does. She's just too divisive, she's too polarizing." That was the knock on her.

I started talking to some of the other campaigns, but some people from the Clinton campaign came and talked to me and said "why don't you at least come and talk to us." And then, after a couple of conversations, they said "why don't you at least go hear her speak." And I did and I ended up having what I call a "huh" moment. I sat there and I listened to her speak and at the end of it I said, "huh." "Huh, I didn't know she was that warm. Huh, I didn't know she was that engaging or that funny or that in tune with folks." I thought, "if she can turn my cynical view around maybe she actually has a shot at this thing." So, I went to work for her. My initial job was running the state and local press operation. I eventually went on to become her traveling press secretary.

Much what we tried to accomplish on this campaign, what we thought would lead us to victory, was not only stressing her experience, because we thought that was our leg up, but also talking about how that experience was necessary to bring change. One of the misconceptions about the Clinton campaign was that a lot of our friends in the press corps liked to make the Obama-Clinton dynamic one of change versus experience. That was never what we wanted to do. We all knew this was a change election. There was never a doubt about it. Now, ultimately, these guys did a better job of harnessing that than we did. But our approach was, yeah, we can bring change too. We all can bring change, but who's the best person to bring change and what does that person need to do? So we really focused on the experience issue early as a vehicle to bring change.

We also knew that we had to give more people that "huh" moment and so we tried to put Hillary in a lot of environments where she was interacting with people. For the first two months all we did were "conversations with Hillary." These were town hall formats where she would stay and take as many questions as she could to allow her to be seen one on one with people. In Iowa and New Hampshire, as you all know, that retail element is so important. Our goal was essentially to just get through those first couple of early states, to win them. We felt if we were able to win those first few early states we'd be fine. We'd be the nominee. We also knew though, relatively early in the process, that Iowa was going to be a problem for us. But we had a decision to make at a certain point, do we want to keep focusing on Iowa or do we want to leap frog it into New Hampshire? We decided, and Hillary herself decided pretty quickly, that skipping Iowa was not an

option. We had to compete there, but there was a series of missteps that ended up hurting us.

I think our strategy was working well probably through the end of the summer, maybe into the early fall. One was to gauge that is by looking at a lot of the polling. Typically as a candidate's name ID grows their favorability ranking goes up as well as the unfavorable rating. But with Hillary you had sort of a unique dynamic where she already had 100 percent name recognition and as the campaign progressed her favorable ratings went up but her unfavorable actually started to go down. People were starting to like her more. She was changing people's minds. But what we learned by the fall was this was all very fragile. After a series of missteps in October and early November it started to fall apart. Obama and Edwards were then able to really overwhelm us in Iowa. Once we had the loss in Iowa we had the shocking come from behind win in New Hampshire, as my friend Matt and I were just recalling. It ended up being a bit of a back and forth in the next two states so we were kind of tied going into February 5th and beyond. At that point it became clear that if we didn't have a decisive edge coming out of February 5th we were going to be in real trouble. That's what ended up happening. Our strategy was working well for a while. We just couldn't follow it through. There were a lot of other problems along the way.

Bill Lacy:

Thanks. Joe?

John Edwards' Campaign

Joe Trippi:

Thanks for having me here again. My story is pretty short actually. I joined the Edwards campaign as Senior Advisor in April of 2007. I joined on April 15th, which was the day the FEC Reports became public, so the next morning the first call I got was one of the people, I don't know it might have been Nagourney, about a \$400 haircut that I knew nothing about. One of the things that I recognized immediately was that the Edwards Campaign had billed itself as one of the three big campaigns. This was a problem because it had staff everywhere in, 10, 15 states. Clinton and Obama had the resources at that point to build those kinds of organizations. The Edwards Campaign sort of bought into this thing the press had at the time, this idea that there were three campaigns that had a chance. Edwards might be one of them. The campaign had a huge overhead at that point. The first thing we had to do is scale back as fast as we could while trying to make sure no one noticed. The Obama and Clinton campaigns were out there making sure everyone noticed that we were taking staff out of Nevada but we had to do it. We would not have lasted at all if we hadn't done that.

Our strategy was really pretty simple. You had two historic candidacies in the race. We were the last white guy standing with a shot at the nomination. We weren't gaining much press compared to the two historic candidacies. The only shot we had was to be them in Iowa. If we beat them in Iowa then let the press decide. The press cannot handle three candidacies at one time. It can't handle three for very long. It does what it can to cut it down, so we had to beat them both and figure out who our opponent was. The one thing we knew, we obviously knew that it was a change election. We thought

that if it was for a more populist change than Obama was articulating, Obama was clearly articulating change better than anyone at that point in the race, but there was an opening for us as a populist change agent, particularly in Iowa. And we wanted to continue to press Clinton as the status quo and the establishment candidate. If we could do that we might be able to get by both of them and pull it off.

Once you look at that strategy though, you see that Clinton's got four hundred paid staffers on the ground in Iowa. You see that the Obama campaign had a great candidate, a great field organization, not just in Iowa but in other places. We knew it was a tough uphill fight but John Edwards went out every day and made it tough. It scared the other campaigns a bit how fast we were starting to come on in Iowa, especially towards the end.

One of the key moments was when we went into the Daily Kos Convention determined to paint Clinton as a trapper and a status quo candidate. We went in thinking that if we could press her on taking lobbyist PAC money it would be very hard for her to come across as a change candidate for the rest of the campaign. John Edwards went into that debate and continued to press. Biden turned at the perfect moment and said, "he's got a legitimate point, will you continue to take that money?" She said, "yes, yes I will because they're good Americans too." I'm not trying to paraphrase it. She did exactly what we expected her to do and that helped. If you didn't watch those three or four debates culminating with the four different answers to the driver's license question and the Spitzer questions in New York, that's where there was a slide of Hillary Clinton as the change candidate, with the press' help. I agree with you, as the status quo she comes in third in Iowa. Second doesn't count. The only shot we had was to win. We didn't do that. I think as you went on the only other shot we would have had is if she came in third in New Hampshire. That wasn't in the cards. It meant going into the Obama-Clinton battle immediately, even though we took second. We got no coverage out of it. We had to come in first.

The only other real impact we had, we had a considerable impact when Edwards put his healthcare plan out first. Hillary had sort of talked about not having a specific plan because she learned from the first mistake, you put it out there and people beat up on it. Then Obama put his plan out and Edwards ran around for a month saying, "mine's much better than Obama's, but at least he has a plan. When's Hillary going to put her's out?" I think he just kept pushing on issues like healthcare and poverty. But in the end, after South Carolina, it was over for us. You guys ran a hell of a campaign.

Senator Obama's Campaign

Steve Hildebrand:

I'll take the first shot. Bill, thank you. It's good to be here at the Dole Institute. I grew up in George McGovern's home town. He and Senator Dole are very close friends. He was certainly my mentor in getting into politics. I also worked for Senator Daschle for a time, they were such close friends. So it's good to be here as a Democrat.

I want to talk a little bit about the lead up to Barack's announcement because we were the non-traditional entry into this campaign, the surprise in it. In the early fall of 2006 Barack wasn't really serious about running for the Presidency. Most of his advisors were saying, "this might not be the right time. We've really got to take a look at this."

The probability wasn't great. A lot of people on his team were saying, "we'll take a hard look but in the end I bet he doesn't do it." We went out to Senator Harkin's annual steak fry that he does in Iowa. It's a place where potential candidates and candidates go. Gore and Clinton both spoke there. Hillary spoke there in the past, but it was a high profile deal. A lot of national press showed up for it. Barack worked the crowd for about three hours. He was mobbed. People were just really hungry to touch this guy and it really lit a bit of a fire at that point. Leading up to the November 2006 election he was the most requested person to go out and campaign for Democratic candidates, to raise money for them, to do get out the votes events for them and the crowds were shockingly large. It was nothing that we predicted. At the same time he was doing his book tour for the *Audacity of Hope*. The book sales were incredible and the crowds at book signings were ferocious. So, we started to think that maybe there was something out there and maybe we should take a hard look at this. There were still people on our team saying, "I bet in the end he doesn't do this."

I believe it was a day after the election in '06, either a day after or two days after, I don't remember, about half a dozen of us, Barack and Michelle and their two best friends, gathered to have a session about this. It was to discuss, look at an initial budget, look at a fundraising plan, look at what a schedule might look like, to determine how much it would take him away from his family. We were looking at a staffing structure and some of those initial things that you do. Barack is a serious person. Michelle is as well, as we've all become very aware. They weren't going to take this decision lightly. They were going to make sure that any of their advisors, any of us, were serious about putting together a real planning effort, before they would make any kind of decision. We did a handful of those meetings leading up to the family's vacation to Hawaii where he said he would make a decision between Christmas and New Years and let us know. They came back from Hawaii right after New Years and no decision was made. This left us a little bit behind. The first primary is not the Iowa Caucus it's the first fundraising period at the end of March. What we didn't want to do was start this campaign and have the days go by where the first three months of the year weren't maximized.

He made the decision around January 10th or so, filed the initial papers for an exploratory committee and set up a date where we would make the formal announcement. We had really no staff, no national fundraising community. We were really at a disadvantage except that we had a great candidate and we had some people around him who were very committed to making this work. We made the decision that he would formally announce outside the capital in Springfield, Illinois. We made the decision that, even though it would very likely be a freezing day in January, we would do it outside and would work very hard to build a big crowd. About fifteen thousand people showed up for that initial announcement. He gave an incredible speech. He really set the tone for the kind of candidate that he planned to be. It was very much about wanting to fight for the people of America, not taking money from political action committees, not taking money from Washington lobbyist, working for change, changing the way Washington works or we're never going to solve the difficult problems facing America right now. He laid down the marker on the Iraq War. He emphasized the fact that he opposed it from the very beginning and that his judgment was better than others. He really tried to set the stage between judgment and experience as well as experience versus change.

I know my time is coming short. I just want to say a couple of other things that I think are important. At the end of the first quarter we really shocked the political establishment by just barely beating Senator Clinton in fundraising in that first quarter and raising about 12 or 13 million more than we ever expected we could raise. It shocked us just as much as it shocked anybody. At that point we started to get very very serious about preparing for those first four contests in Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina.

Matt Rodriguez:

I want to move on. I just want to say that I think a candidate like Barack who can actually win the primaries has been coming for awhile. There have been candidacies like Gary Hart in '84, McCain in 2000, I wouldn't say McCain, but candidates who sort of catch a moment, lightning in a bottle, and see how long that can last. One of the advantages that our candidacy had, which Steve alluded to, even with Howard Dean in 2004, they tend to be like building an airplane as it's flying. And, we had to as well, but we had a lot of resources early. I mean, Gary Hart wasn't on the ballot in '84. He just couldn't catch the wave. Whether he would have won or not, I don't know. McCain had the same thing, he had all this money coming in but he was going up against the juggernaut. It was a larger juggernaut against Bush than Clinton was relative to us. But I think with the Internet, with Barack's obviously enormous talent, it allowed us to build this enormous campaign with great staff. Not that the other candidates didn't have that, but we were just able to put the whole package together during those early summer months with a candidate that was a phenomena, I get tired of hearing that term, but he's obviously a unique talent. And when you put that all together, I think we were in a position to build around a candidate with a singular talent.

Bill Lacy:

We have a number of prominent journalist and members of the new media and I think I'll refer to you as our sephologist because that's the best word I can come up with. What was your analysis of this race, the democratic nomination at the outset?

General thoughts on the Democratic Primary

Adam Nagourney:

I wrote incorrectly, it was correct at the time, that Hillary Clinton was the leading candidate. This would have been late 2007. I quoted Joe Trippi and David Axelrod about how she was a great candidate. In fact she was. In my opinion, if Barack Obama hadn't been in the race, don't hate me for this, she would have won the nomination by February 5th. The two things she ran up against, I covered her as a Senate candidate, I watched her grow, she was a really good candidate, her campaign is another thing. She, in facing you guys, faced an extraordinary candidate. I've been doing this for forty years; Obama is the best candidate I've ever covered. In terms of appeal and intellect, ability to command an audience he's just really good at this. And you guys, it doesn't make any sense for me to suck up to you anymore because the campaign is over, you guys ran a great campaign. You guys understood the way the world was changing in a way a lot of people didn't, no offense. You understood fundraising, demographic trends, communications, the internet

and you saw it everyday. And you were willing to take chances. All that is only to say that Hillary Clinton lost the race but she lost to a candidate and a campaign that I think comes along only every thirty years.

Kelly O'Donnell

I think Senator Clinton had some different challenges. When she became a Senator she was still trying to shake off what it means to be a first lady entering politics. And at a time of war she had the Margaret Thatcher issue. Could a woman be commander in chief? There was a very different threshold that she had to surpass. Her more hawkish side was well developed. At that time it was helpful to her. You could never get past that advantage that no one could ever get back to 2002 when Senator Obama took his position on the war. There was no way you could undo that. He had a moment and he made a decision and that judgment came to be one that many people in the country came to also hold. I think the thresholds they had to meet were different.

Senator Edwards, who I also covered in 2004, was new. He was that sunshine and he was also a skillful speaker. But when he joined the ticket he was viewed as not as effective. He may have been harmed by that to some degree. In television, for good or bad, we are drawn to what is new, what is unexpected. That becomes part of the narrative. The entire country certainly knew Senator Clinton and I think those personal moments you are talking about, those are so real, but I don't think they translate necessarily in print or on television because you can't see that entire moment play out. The intimacy isn't quite there with the exception of the New Hampshire moment. So those skills that she has and those times that people always remark about and those other dimensions to who she is remained largely unknown unless you attended her events. Without even getting into the discussion of the skills of the candidate and his grace, I think those other kinds of dynamics had an effect in how they were covered.

Geoff Earle:

I'll jump in. I think Clinton's biggest problem, even though I have no doubt that she wanted to bring a number of changes and the people that were working with her did, she was identified as symbolizing the status quo. I don't think there was much she could have done to not be that candidate, although I think she improved upon that. As we say, she had 100 percent name ID. She was associated with a very unpopular war which was dominating the news at the key early months of the cycle. She'd have an event where she'd trot out, thirty generals she had at one time, in order to prove her experience and her ability to lead. All these who are now people that are now going to be running the country in the Obama Administration. To attest to her seriousness, and she's a serious person, she'd bring out all these faces from the Clinton administration. I think she and her campaign did pick up, no matter how much yearning in the electorate there was for something new, she wasn't the person to deliver that.

I agree with what Mo said. Clinton was a much better candidate than her initial reputation, once people got to see her in a small environment. That's something that she and her campaign eventually figured out, although I think belatedly. But she was also the inferior candidate. We talked a little bit about this on the Republican panel. The key ingredient to a successful campaign is to have the best candidate. She was just outclassed in almost every way in the performance. Those crowds Steve was talking about, the ones

he was getting in Iowa from the very beginning in towns with low populations, people were coming out to see him even if they weren't sure they were for him. He had a much better opportunity to make the sale to those people.

Steve Hildebrand:

Could I react a little bit to that?

Bill Lacy:

Please.

Steve Hildebrand:

In the early research that we did, polling and focus group research that we're not suppose to talk about, we certainly had a very very narrow circle to get through. The very first poll we did had Barack at 12% and John Edwards at 38% in the Iowa Caucuses. That's a long way to go. Granted we had a year to get there. In our early focus group work, there were a lot of positive anecdotes. They liked what they heard coming out of his mouth, they liked that speech they heard in 2004, but they don't really know a lot about him. When you talked about his background they'd say, "we like it, we're not really sure it makes him ready to be President. These others have so much experience; this country is in trouble. We need somebody with experience. Yes we want change, but we don't know what kind of change he's even going to bring."

A couple of disturbing but not surprising things that came out of one of our focus groups before the first quarter of 2007, and one focus group after the first quarter, both in Iowa, said "we're not sure who'd he'd surround himself with if he won the Presidency because we don't know anything about him. Is he going to surround himself with Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson?" They just didn't know. After we raised that 25 or 26 million, whatever it was after the first quarter, one of the comments in the focus groups in Iowa was "where did that money come from? Did he get it from the NAACP?" We had that racial undertone that we had to get over. And we had great crowds because he was interesting and he gave a great speech. And as you said Geoff, it wasn't necessarily because they were going to support him. We were hyper aggressive about getting people who came to our events to sign-up to support Barack and a very very small percentage in that first eight months signed a supporter card as aggressive as we were to try and do that.

Bill Lacy:

David and Nate, do you guys have any comments on this before we move?

Nate Silver:

The most interesting month of the campaign might have been November 2007 where Clinton had the missteps. There was that kind of unforced error during the debate that Joe talked about. But it was like every other day that something was going wrong in the Clinton campaign. There was the incident up in New Hampshire where a surrogate basically called Obama a drug dealer or "now the fun part starts" or kindergarten or Mark Penn having a bad appearance on Hardball. What went wrong in that month? Obviously they knew Iowa was going to be closer than the national polls at that moment. Somehow

Obama got into their head and they began to play into his hands. It's not really a comment so much as a question to ponder later on.

David Kurtz:

I'm just going to second Adam in that I got all this wrong in the beginning as well. I should preface that with full disclosure.

Adam Nagourney:

It was right at the time David.

David Kurtz:

It was right at the time. It was Hillary's race to lose and I didn't think Obama would be able to knock her off. I didn't think either one of them would be a strong general election candidate. I thought John Edwards would be the best in the general which, as we now know, would have been an utter disaster.

Joe Trippi:

Thanks for pointing that out.

Adam Nagourney:

Well it took half an hour.

David Kurtz:

So with that being said, I think one of the things that Hillary faced as the well funded candidate, the candidate of the Democratic Establishment, was that Obama represented change rhetorically and his people were a little bit more on the outside of the Democratic races. They were able to be more daring and do things that literally represented change, whether it was the fundraising, the online presence, the social media that they were able to utilize. I think all of those reinforced for people, especially the press, that this was new, this was different. It wasn't just about talking about it, but they were literally doing it on a daily basis through the way they were running their campaign. I think that had a huge impact, especially early on in the race. And it continued on to become a juggernaut of a fundraising operation. None of that would have happened without the internet. I don't think anyone with his lack of name recognition and lack of a fundraising base would have been able to do it four years ago or eight years ago.

The extended primary and the fifty state strategy

Ray Strother:

I love being moderator because I have personal opinions and don't have to say anything. I'm fascinated by Howard Dean. I think Howard Dean sort of kick started the Obama campaign. He was very controversial, he's always been very controversial and besides Donna Brazill I can't think of anyone who defended him going with the fifty state strategy. Would both of you or any of you discuss how Howard Dean's fifty state strategy helped or hurt your campaigns? We'll start with Steve.

Steve Hildebrand:

Certainly at the beginning there wasn't much of a correlation. But as we moved into Super Tuesday, I believe it was 22 states in the end that moved their primaries and caucuses up to Super Tuesday, it was an unprecedented day. This wasn't just a group of southern states. These were states all over the country, all different kinds of states and no one strategy was going to win those states. We made the decision in June that by August of 2007 we would have staff in every single one of those states and prepare for that February 5th contest.

As we did that we made a pretty big deal out of it with reporters and pundits. There was a lot of skepticism, you know, "we can't believe you're putting staff in Kansas for a Super Tuesday Caucus." In some respects we looked at the fifty state Howard Dean model and thought that if we were going to compete, we had to be there. That's something Howard Dean believes. It's not just Presidential politics where you put staff in battle ground states, but there's a lot of other important races, Senate, Congressional, Gubernatorial, and state legislative races that we've got to compete at if we're going to grow this party.

In May of 2008 we made the decision to go into all fifty states with a very aggressive voter registration drive because we had volunteers. After fighting fifty state primaries with Senator Clinton we had a huge amount of support in every single state in the country. And they were all asking us what they were supposed to do. So we put them to work with a pretty aggressive and structured voter registration drive, modeled in some respects after the Howard Dean fifty state effort. Finally, going into the General Election, we made a big deal out of the fact that we were going to dramatically expand the map beyond the typical battle ground states. There was a lot of skepticism about us doing it. People said, "why are you in Indiana? Why are you in North Dakota? Why are you in all these states?" And part of it was an opportunity to win. Part of it was we wanted additional strategies to get enough electoral votes that didn't have to include Ohio and Florida. Part of it was that we had the money and volunteer resources to do it. And fourthly we wanted McCain to have to spend money in those states.

Ray Strother:

Mo you didn't get involved in the fifty states, was it a mistake?

Mo Elleithee:

At the time a lot of people said, particularly my friends over in the Obama campaign, that the length of the primary was not being helpful, right? There were a lot of people saying, "come on Hillary, get out of the race, how long are you staying in this thing? You're hurting the party and us as the eventual nominee." Maybe this is because of a sense of self-importance, I actually think the fact that we took it to the distance made the party stronger. It allowed what Steve was talking about. It allowed an energized Democratic base of both Obama and Hillary supporters that they were able to tap into. The McCain campaign was not able to enjoy the same sort of luxury of having such a motivated group. So I think so in that sense I think the party...

David Kurtz:

It was selfless?

Mo Elleithee:

Yeah exactly. No, but I do think that it was incredibly helpful to the party that we did compete and that for the first time in modern history we had a competitive primary in all fifty states. The Obama Campaign out hustled us in the primary season. On the ground we probably lost this nomination in February. Up through February 5th it was a tie. We split the first four states and we essentially split the February 5th states. Starting with March 4th in Texas through to the end Hillary actually won more states, more votes and more delegates. But we got crushed in the eleven straight losses in February. It's because these guys saw it earlier than we did and they put boots on the ground earlier than we did.

I first saw signs of trouble, personally, in October when I was sitting at my desk in DC almost singularly focused on Iowa with a little bit of a focus on New Hampshire, wondering when we were going to start focusing on Nevada and South Carolina, when suddenly I'm starting to see press clips about Obama campaign activity in Georgia. That was a February 5th state. They're already focused on Georgia? David Plouffe was doing conference calls with Georgia reporters. At that point I knew we were going to start having some trouble in the later states. We just never got there and they did. Hats off to you guys for that.

Steve Hildebrand:

Barack benefited from having to compete so aggressively with a tough candidate in fifty states. Because he was brand new it made him much more battle tested. And it built a base of support that we wouldn't have gotten if it would have been a traditional three or four state contest. We were better going into the General Election in states like Ohio and Florida because we had to fight there.

Geoff Earle:

But why didn't Harold Dickie, who drafted the delegate rules in 1987, why didn't the Clinton Campaign anticipate this a little bit more? Because a campaign can't be in every state at once and you've got to shepherd them. You can't get blown out early. Why didn't you put more of an emphasis, even if you didn't recognize it on January 1st 2007. In October why wasn't there a shifting of resources and placing of staff in every state?

Mo Elleithee:

There was a sense internally, which was not a crazy notion, that it was going to be over on February the 5th. One way or another. We might not win, we recognized that. We might not win, but it was going to be over February 5th one way or the other. We also knew that we didn't want to come in third place in Iowa, so we had to put a lot of resources into Iowa. That was our worst case scenario. Unfortunately that was realized, but the amount of energy and resources it took to fight in Iowa and then come back in the next three states and have enough of a structure for that pseudo national primary on February 5th with the twenty some states that were voting on that day, that's where our heads were. Again, hats off to the Obama campaign for taking a look at the next step. Now I don't know if they were visionary to see past February. I remember the first

meeting I was in when Harold Dickie said, “guys,” it was right after February 5th when we started looking at it and said “oh my gosh this thing is going to have to go all the way to March.” Harold Dickie looked at us and said, “you’re crazy. It’s going to go to April. And we thought, “April, oh my god, how could that be?” We just missed it.

Adam Nagourney:

My understanding is that you guys also thought, or that Plouffe did, that the race was going to end on February 5th but you were smart enough to set up the, what was it called, the after February 5th room in Chicago. You planned ahead. They also had the benefit of having more money. I was watching this as it was going on and wondering what it was going to do to the party. I remember conversations with Plouffe, probably concurrent with Beth talking to that person at Harvard, saying, “this is not a bad thing. We are setting up primary organizations in every state. We are going to be able to compete in states that you’re not going to believe.” I remember in May saying that you guys were going to be competitive in Indiana and North Carolina. I think that is what was really going on here in terms of expansion of the map.

Matt Rodriguez:

Going back to Dean, there was a lot of social networking going on as well. We’re going to take a lot of credit for it because we won. We were going to these states in the primary and there were already organizations set up when we go there because people were finding each other. We spent a lot of money on that, that was a part of it. It put enormous pressure on the Clinton Campaign. To just say the Clinton Campaign should have been doing what we did... We were showing up and having staffers, 25 year old kids, who had been going to meetings where there were 300, 400 people for months. There was an element here, a wave that sort of overwhelmed the Clinton campaign. To just say they should have put all these people in, it would have cost \$300 million.

Joe Trippi:

That was the most interesting thing for me to watch, to understand what was happening where you guys had all these people, all these social networks building themselves. They’re actually paying you guys to pay the organizers they’re interacting with. For Hillary Clinton to miss that was a disaster. She missed creating that energy, which I think she could have but didn’t. She tried to do it in Iowa by putting 400 organizers, paid people, on the ground to make up for that lack of energy. And that got her third place. So the big mistake was the caucus states and just not competing there.

Steve Hildebrand:

I want to follow up on your comments. We spent an incredible amount of time around a large conference table in our Chicago headquarters with each of these states up on the wall going through all of the February 5th states. Seven of them were caucus states. We knew we had the opportunity to organize in those states better than Hillary’s campaign and they were the first states that we put staff into of the 22. Then we started putting staff into the other Feb 5th states and we were all, I think all of the campaigns were trying to figure out how the press and pundits were going to say who the winner was. Is it going to be the popular vote, the number of states won, is it going to be the

number of delegates won? We felt in the end that it was going to be some combination of states and delegates won with delegates won probably dominating. So we went into those seven caucus states first and foremost because they take more organization than primary states and because we were better at it, or we thought we were. It was such an advantage, and in almost all of those cases Senator Clinton chose to not compete as we were competing.

Adam Nagourney:

You competed under these crazy DNC rules. If you win by a lot, you get a lot more delegates. You understood that and I don't think the Clinton people did. You racked up more delegates by winning by big margins in caucus states and over the next eleven races. I agree with you. I think that is where the election was lost.

David Kurtz:

Well I'm curious, because there has been a lot of reporting about the Clinton campaign not being aware about the proportionality issue. At what point, internally, did you all realize that they weren't realizing it? Was there an epiphany on it?

Steve Hildebrand:

May of you in the press were saying Hillary Clinton won the Nevada caucuses because she won the popular vote. But this isn't about the popular vote. It's about the number of delegates won. I will take no credit for this because I was hiding in South Carolina at the time. Our polling trackers, Jeff Burman and Tom Nugent with David Plouffe, sat there and said, "you know we won one more delegate." We immediately called reporters. Jeff Burman talked about how we won one more delegate and how we came across winning Nevada. There was definitely a perception that she won it, but in the end, because it was a delegate battle, we won Nevada.

Ray Strother:

I don't want to cut this question off right here, but one question I want you to answer only with a nod of the head. When you look back, will you concede that it was Joe Trippi that was the father of the Obama campaign for introducing new politics?

Joe Trippi:

He didn't nod. Can I just say one thing? One thing that happened over and over again as I ran around, there were the thousands of kids out there that started in the Dean Campaign who came up to me and said, "I'm working for Obama or Edwards," they tended to be Obama, but also Edwards. Not many Clinton, but there were some. It was great to see them all out there, a lot of them working on the Obama campaign. They're the kids that started this.

Bill Lacy:

I think as Ray pointed out to me a couple of weeks ago, the genius of your nomination campaign was that you understood the caucuses and that you understood what Adam said about proportionality

Adam Nagourney:

And tried to explain.

Fundraising

Bill Lacy:

There's one other issue here that I want to bring up and you touched upon in your opening comments. You talked about money. You talked about being able to match Senator Clinton essentially dollar for dollar in the first quarter, even though she transferred ten million from her Senate account. Put that aside, money actually raised for the presidential campaign. Did you guys know, after that first quarter, that this was going to be a huge advantage for you? And I'd also like you all to comment on what points if any in the campaign did money factor into decisions about where you were going to play and what tactics you were going to deploy?

Steve Hildebrand:

For our first fundraising, we knew that in the first quarter we had to raise \$12 million to be viable in the eyes of the press and the pundits. That would more than likely put us in the top three or four candidates in terms of fundraising. Our first finance plan was not 12 million, it was 9 million. We really couldn't spend more than \$9 million coming into that first quarter.

We started to go out and do these large scale rallies in Atlanta and LA and Cleveland and Austin, Texas and other places. We started to really build a small donor network. Yes, Joe Trippi gets the credit for some of the modeling that we did trying to get there. We had no intention at the beginning of that quarter or in the middle of the quarter of coming close to Senator Clinton. It was really probably in the second week of March that we realized we could come close. I will give David Plouffe a lot of credit. For a guy who has never been a fundraiser, he was smart as could be about each month, each quarter of the campaign. There was only one month that I know of that he was off and that was January of '08 after we won the Iowa Caucus. He thought we could raise another ten million that month. We raised 55 million that month. So he wasn't off in a bad way.

He was the one who said, about eight weeks before the general election, "put together a spending budget based on \$475 million. I believe we exceeded it. But all of us thought that was an incredible amount of money to try and raise. We were all pretty nervous because you don't just put together a \$475 million budget and then in October spend it all. We were spending it immediately after July 4th when we went into eighteen states and started pretty heavily with ad buys and pretty large staffing operations. So we needed early money pretty seriously. Plouffe knew how to budget this stuff out and project the campaign.

Bill Lacy:

Do you ever recall a time in the nomination campaign where you guys made a critical decision based on the lack of money? Or were you always well funded at that stage?

Steve Hildebrand:

John Carson, who was our national field director at the time, and David Plouffe were pretty remarkable in that while we were projecting good income that we could spend, the money was just coming in and coming in and coming in. Our supporters were generous if we won and scared and generous if we lost. So, they just kept giving and giving and giving. So in a lot of respects it was the best of all worlds where what we needed to do was to be prepared to spend a lot of money in a short period of time to be highly competitive. We were constantly adding to a TV buy, constantly adding staff, constantly adding short term workers and paid phones and mail. But it really moved quickly. After Feb 5 there was an election one or two or three a week. It was very hard. Our field staff became very tired. I don't think there was ever a time that we had to make spending decisions based on not having enough. We were very fortunate.

Joe Trippi:

We spent it all. It was tearing down Nevada. Tearing down every state that we knew we had anything, turning it in to a campaign that had to win Iowa to have any shot at living. And given what both of these campaigns were spending in Iowa, I don't know if we know yet what you guys spent in Iowa. All the money that we raised in the entire campaign they were both spending, her to take third. So we were scavenging things down just to be competitive. And we still weren't. We had a lot of legacy organizers from the 2004 campaign, so it was an organization. But we could barely get by and keep competitive. We could always get Elizabeth to call Ann Coulter and drum up three thousand dollars in internet money to fund a couple more staffers. So we did that a lot. We were kind of living off the net too, but no where near the success of Obama. We don't have any complaints. We had a competitive shot at Iowa. They beat us fair and square and that was it. But yeah, money was a huge problem for us. As it was for these guys.

Mo Elleithee:

Yeah, well, money ended up becoming an issue for us. It was one of the reasons why our February strategy wasn't as robust as theirs was. One of the most remarkable moments of the campaign for me was right when the news got out that Hillary had made a personal loan to her campaign. Money started pouring in. Everywhere we went people came up to her on the rope line and said "I'd have given sooner if I had known you needed it. I'd have given sooner if you had just asked." And that was a huge wake up call. That was something these guys understood pretty early on. People aren't just going to write you the check if you don't ask for it. There was this sense of a Clinton fundraising juggernaut. Most people thought it was taken care of. Suddenly so many of our supporters started writing the same kinds of small checks. By no means was it on Obama's scale but every time from that point forward when Hillary spoke she said "go to my website."

Geoff Earle:

And that's something that I read wrong. I remember when that news came out about the \$5 million loan, I thought that was just humiliating to have to do that.

Mo Elleithee:

One of the best things that ever happened to us.

Geoff Earle:

And then it was front page of every newspaper and it just poured in and it kept pouring in through the long slog.

Adam Nagourney:

But she didn't do it for that reason right?

Mo Elleithee:

I wish I could say that was our foresight.

Geoff Earle:

That's an awful expensive gamble.

Joe Trippi:

That insight alone may be the whole reason she lost. In the end if you'd just realized the year before that if you just asked. She had the ability to do that. I remember, we were way out of the race by then, but 35 million came in in February. I remember thinking, "if they'd done that from the get go it would have been a much more competitive." Maybe then you'd have the money to compete.

Mo Elleithee:

I absolutely believe, and I give all the credit in the world to the campaign these guys ran, I honestly believe that Hillary Clinton had the same sort of passionate support behind her that Barack Obama did but they just tapped into it better than she did. They had a campaign that served their candidate better than she did in tapping into that enthusiasm.

Reflections on the Clinton campaign

Nate Silver:

What would you have done differently in Iowa in retrospect?

Mo Elleithee:

The trajectory of this campaign where we were holding steady in the spring of '07, most of the summer of '07 and even into the fall we were holding steady and everyone else was kind of stalled. No one was really breaking through yet. As I mentioned earlier, her numbers were actually getting better, but it was still fragile. There were probably three or four moments in November that turned things around.

Some of them were small. Some of them were real. Some of them weren't. Some of them were media driven, some of them weren't. The first was, I remember this because it was the day I arrived in Iowa, the story about going to a diner in Iowa and she didn't tip the waitress. It was a two day long media brew ha ha. Never mind that it wasn't true and never mind that the restaurant management came out and said it wasn't true. It was the

first time that we took a real hard media beating. Second thing was the Philadelphia debate with the illegal immigrant driver's license question. That was maybe the first debate where the press said Hillary lost.

The third one, which was maybe one of the more damaging of them, was the planted questions in the town hall meeting in Iowa which was an overzealous young staffer who thought they'd impress the boss by planting a few positive questions for her. Anyone who knows Hillary and follows her knows that she does not want planted questions. Hillary will take a question from anyone on any topic and more often than not can handle the question. She can hold her own. But when that story broke, that ended up just exploding and it reinforced everything that people thought they didn't like about her. It made it look like she was not genuine, that she was willing to say or do whatever to get elected. Never mind that it wasn't true. It really reinforced a lot of the negative stereotypes and undid a lot of the good will that she had built up. So these were a couple of such instances. That third one was really one of the more damaging ones and it wasn't even her. That was sort of the shame of it all, it wasn't her mistake. It hurt the campaign and gave the other campaigns a series of openings to run right up the middle and blow past us.

Kelly O'Donnell

Well, two of the three you mentioned were beyond her control.

Mo Elleithee:

And the third one, the one about the debate answer, I've always found it interesting how the media handled that. She took a beating for it, rightly or wrongly, she took a beating for it. Senator Obama gave a similar answer a week later in a debate, but they were able to pivot away from it a lot better than we were able to pivot away from it so they didn't take the same kind of hit on that one. That's not to say that they didn't get their fair share, but on that one I don't think they did. I don't know. I don't know what we would have done differently in Iowa other than avoid those mistakes and do a better job.

The Hillary Clinton from March on was a different Hillary Clinton than the one that was on the national stage up until then. She had moved away from the experience message and was really delivering more of a populist message similar to what John Edwards had been doing, which is kind of what she had been doing all along, but people saw it. People were seeing her as an advocate for them rather than an advocate for herself and that's when people turned. She really just ran away with those last three months. She ran away with the race, it was just too late.

The primary debates

Ray Strother:

Mo brought up debates. We had a lot of early debates. How did they affect the race? I want everyone to participate in this. How did the early debates affect the race?

Matt Rodriguez:

I don't think much at all early. I just think they reinforced what people thought; that she was head and shoulders above everyone else. I don't think it was until

Philadelphia that there was a real seminal moment. Just to get back to the debates, we're speeding into a problem that the Clinton Campaign created. We were fortunate that they let us remain the underdog and scrap for a long time. When they declared themselves as inevitable that was a problem, it went into the stuff that Mo was talking about. Fairly or unfairly it was eating away at something. Even Al Gore, who might have been an even larger prohibitive favorite in 2000, never went quite that far to say, "I'm going to be the nominee." It was all about experience and I think that ended up pulling her down. I thought most of the debates, I just don't think they were that effective.

Adam Nagourney:

I think they helped her at the beginning. There was this perception that she was getting stronger and better in the debates until the debate you mentioned, which I think was devastating. I would argue that where the early debates mattered was in the General Election. One of the reasons that Barack Obama did so well in the General Election debates with John McCain is that he went through thirty-six with Clinton and Edwards.

David Kurtz:

I think on a macro level it had a much bigger advantage for Obama because of how unknown he was and because of his race. That sort of exposure for that long, and the fact that he didn't really screw up in the debates, he was a very consistent performer, lowered the threshold of concern that a lot of people had. That level of exposure was a big advantage for him even though any one individual debate moment might not have.

Matt Rodriguez:

I agree except that there was a long period of time where the debates were actually hurting us. The reinforced Hillary as the behemoth. I was state director in New Hampshire and we weren't getting the candidate a lot. The race ended up being in Iowa so basically it was a nationalized race. I think most of the analysis on the debates was that Barack wasn't that strong and that she was just so far ahead of everyone else on state. I do think that over time, I would agree about the General Election. It helped him enormously. Being on state with McCain gave him that credibility and one last threshold to jump for. For a long time they didn't end up hurting us because we won, but I don't think it was helping us. It was absolutely helping her for a long time until she struggled at that one debate. We were effective in ending up where we wanted to but I think we were struggling there for awhile.

Kelly O'Donnell:

Did you go back and look at some of the debates where he meandered a bit and get him to tighten up?

Matt Rodriguez:

I never tell Barack how to do the debates. Barack, as we've all seen, is an enormously deliberative guy. There's no question that Axelrod and Steve were a part of that but he knew that he could do better and he spent a lot of time constantly improving. But he was like, "how can I be better?" He knew he had to be better and I think he did get better over time.

Steve Hildebrand:

Just one other comment. There were debate requests coming out of everywhere. When you fight a fifty state primary each of the states wants to have a debate and each of the major networks were constantly asking. The Clinton Campaign would accept everything. We didn't want to accept anything because we knew it would take Barack two and a half days down for preparation for the actual debate and take him away from New Hampshire or South Carolina or Nevada or one of the February 5th states. It would drive us crazy when Hillary would say yes and yes and yes because we wanted to say no no no.

Joe Trippi:

And we'd say yes because we needed any exposure we could get so as soon as she'd say yes, we'd say yes. If some of the other guys had skipped debates we might have been able to get out of it.

Geoff Earle:

I have a question about how Obama approached the debates. Because, having to sit through 17 or 18 of those god awful things, it was very frustrating because we all know he's a smart articulate guy. He's a lawyer, he's got the training for this kind of argument. It often seemed like he was not trying to score the most points or even win the debate. He was just trying to get through the thing. And Hillary and Edwards often scored the most rhetorical points in the debate and Obama was just kind of hanging back there. How would you guys approach these things?

Steve Hildebrand:

In some respects every candidate goes into a debate with a first principle of just getting through it and not screwing up. Winning is obviously great but often times there's never a decisive winner. Ours wasn't so much a concern that Barak would screw up but he had a different style than the other candidates. Given the serious nature of this guy, not that the other candidates aren't, but he is deliberative and short formats are not good for him. Which is why we pushed constantly to do longer format interviews, whether it was 60 Minutes or Larry King. We spent too much time going after the morning shows. We realized later that we needed to work hard to get long format interviews because that's the best format for him.

Sexism in the media and on the campaign**Bill Lacy:**

We're going to move to audience Q and A in just a moment, but I have one more question and Ray may have one more question. Was there a double standard in the media coverage based on gender in this campaign?

Mo Elleithe:

I had a moment in the spring of '08. I was sitting on the Hillary bus, lord knows what state we were in. Some media story broke and it was just so upsetting to me. It

dawned on me. Something that really really upset me personally, I realized I was a bit sexist and I didn't know that I was before this campaign. It's because there are certain behaviors that I saw on this campaign that I never thought twice about before this campaign, behaviors that I began to see in a very different way. It was little things. The number of times that reporters would comment on what Hillary Clinton wore. They never wrote about what Barack Obama or John Edwards wore. Other than the infamous YouTube interview of John Edwards' hair. If her hairstyle was different, the two day long story about Hillary Clinton's cleavage on the Senate floor, time after time after time stories like that were being written or there was commentary like that. It would just get glossed over.

I think that had something to do with what happened in New Hampshire. The fact that when Hillary Clinton had a genuine moment, which was portrayed as emotion, which is a bit of a charged word, we saw a rallying of women behind her. That surprised everybody, including us. I remember being at rally after rally in state after state with middle-aged women holding up signs that said MSNBC with a circle and a slash through it, sorry Kelly, hearing them yell at the press on the riser. I remember Geoff being there for a couple of those. They were yelling at the press on the riser in the back because they thought she was being treated so unfairly. I don't think that's why we lost and I would never give that impression. We lost because they ran a better campaign.

It didn't stop with Hillary Clinton and I'm no Sarah Palin apologist but I was appalled when the story came out about whether Sarah Palin could be vice president while having a new born. No one asked that of Barack Obama who has two young daughters.

Adam Nagourney:

Wasn't it the issue that her 16-year-old daughter had a kid out of wedlock and one of her kids had down syndrome? I remember that story was written by a woman, it only quoted women, the only people I've heard complain about it are men.

Mo Elleithee:

I'm not saying that that story was purely media driven because I don't think it was media driven. I do believe that there are a lot of, and I don't want to turn this into a media bashing thing...

Adam Nagourney:

Why not?

Mo Elleithee:

Because there'll be plenty of time for that later.

Bill Lacy:

We have two more sessions for that.

Mo Elleithee:

But I do think that there is a conversation about gender that this nation needs to have. I guess that is my point, and I don't think we settled it in this campaign with either

Hillary Clinton or Sarah Palin. I think we came a long way, but I don't think we settled it. I'm not saying that we settled the conversation on race either. I do think at a time there was a double standard and I do think at times she was treated differently than her male counterparts.

Geoff Earle:

Did she exploit that though? Saying "I'm your girl" and all these, she would say that.

Mo Elleithee:

I don't think that's much different than a candidate saying I'm your boy.

Geoff Earle:

But using the fact that she tried to appeal to women, she did not hide her...

Mo Elleithee:

No she didn't hide it.

Kelly O'Donnell:

I think there are some ways for women to be subtly demeaned. As a woman, not speaking for NBC News in any way shape or form, I think having that discussion is very important. One of the things that I always try to do is to refer to her as Senator Clinton. You branded her as Hillary, for obvious reasons, to distinguish her from the former President and all that. But even here it's Obama and Hillary. She's referred to by her first name. So was Governor Palin who I always try to refer to as Governor. I think those things happen because it's a reflection of society and it comes into the media. I can tell you there were live link conversations, especially among my female colleagues trying to point out these things, trying to give a different view of how the same circumstance would be viewed. It just needs to keep going. I often had women who attended events and unloaded all of their concerns, whether it was Senator Clinton or Governor Palin, because I was with John McCain so much, but many of the Hillary Clinton supporters were coming up to us or I would wade into the crowd and speak to them. So I think these things are really worthy of looking at. That perception existed and just like any other part of society we should be scrutinized for it. We should have to take a look at ourselves and how those messages were sent.

Questions from the audience

Bill Lacy:

Okay, let's move to our Q and A from the audience. Chelsea, do we have somebody back there?

Question:

One of the things that I thought really came out during this campaign was that Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton are two very different people with different skill sets and in

some ways different values. I'd like to get the panel to comment on that and any impact you saw from that on the campaign.

Nate Silver:

My joke was that if Hillary lost she'd come back in 2012 as Hillary Rodham. I think Bill made it harder for her to be a change candidate when he was out there, maybe not with the best intentions towards Obama or arguably towards Hillary. They got a lot out of Bill too. He would just barn storm some states, especially later. He would go to small town after small town for days on end. That was really valuable. I never looked at it quantitatively but you get a lot of extra votes out in some of these states. It helped them, especially in Pennsylvania, to build somewhat of a wider cushion. So the low profile Bill was good. I think the high profile Bill that you see on MSNBC and CNN might have been damaging.

Mo Elleithee:

I think Bill Clinton was an asset. If he was damaged or damaging, I don't think the Obama Campaign would have utilized him as a surrogate in the General Election. I remember they sent him to places like Roanoke Virginia in the final weeks of the campaign. Not typically democrat friendly areas, they sent him in because they knew that he could do some good. He did a tremendous amount of good for us in the primaries. I think your point about how locals were seeing him versus how he was seen in the national spotlight was a good one. He got very different coverage at the same event from the national press than he did from the local press. Democratic activist love the guy. I think they were excited to see him. He was still the best surrogate for her and the best biographer of her. But there were those key references that you mentioned where it would dominate the national story and end up being a distraction from the message we were trying to push. A lot of times you didn't feel that on the ground. I think ultimately he probably helped more than he didn't.

Matt Rodriguez:

There still is, I think you saw this definitely with the speech at the convention, there's just no one in politics, I'd argue even Barack, that makes a case better than Bill Clinton. He distilled the argument about what this race was about and he talked about what Barack's election or what a Democrat's election was going to mean for their lives. He's still head and shoulders above anybody in his ability to do that. You saw that with his speech there and he did it throughout. There is no one that makes a better case. People come to see someone, I just don't think anyone comes close to his ability to do that. It's hard to look at him as not an asset.

Geoff Earle:

Still, you're right, but I think one thing he has failed to do is change with the times and appreciate how media. He goes to a place like Roanoke, he probably thinks that he's been very effective and he's won fifty votes but he pops off and says on thing which becomes a national media story that might cost them fifty votes somewhere else.

Bill Lacy:

Next question:

Question:

I have a question for Steve. You developed your political organizing strategy from one of the smallest states in the country, South Dakota? I wonder what advantage that was or what you learned there that you may not have. What was different than if you had grown up in California or New York or Florida.

Steve Hildebrand:

In those first primaries and to a large extent the February 5th Super Tuesday states it was incredibly important to have a strong field operation. All of the candidates recognized that.

I started in 1986 with Tom Daschle when he was first running for the US Senate. Six years before that I was an 18 year old volunteering on George McGovern's final race. McGovern was the grassroots guy. Daschle was a congressman trying to beat an incumbent senator who had beaten George McGovern. We thought we could take the race close, but we never thought we could win without a strong field operation. It's really where I started learning that field and it wasn't my first race where field really mattered. We were able to dramatically increase the turnout on Indian Reservations because of the field. We raised a lot of money via the field. We had what we viewed as a very large paid field operation, I think we had twelve. When I ran the Iowa Caucuses 16 years later we had what we thought was a very large field operation with eighty paid field organizers. In Barack's campaign we had somewhere near 200 in the end. All the campaigns had very large field operations because they knew it mattered.

Going into the General Election we knew that it was going to be very difficult to win the General Election if we didn't go out and register hundreds of thousands if not millions of new voters. After my own very remedial look at the general election results I feel that there are nine states that we would not have won if we hadn't, through our field operations, through our volunteers, registered those millions and millions of new voters. If we would have lost those states I believe we would have ended up with 244 electoral votes, instead of the 365 that we won and obviously you need 270. That is the field operation with voter registration that I learned back in South Dakota.

Bill Lacy:

Okay, we have time for one last question from Mr. Ed Quick who is a former Democratic fellow here at the Dole Institute.

Question:

You mentioned that the question of race came up very early on with the Obama campaign and it didn't go away. I'd like you to explain what the reaction was to reverend Wright and Bill Clinton's comments where he was viewed as trying to marginalize black candidates like Jesse Jackson. Hillary Clinton apparently had a very high standing among black voters for a very long time, and then it went down. Also, would you comment, is Mark Penn the next Bob Schrum?

Steve Hildebrand:

We had our own problems with African American voters going into the primaries. Our early research with African American voters, specifically those with higher income, higher educated African Americans, they would support him. They wanted him to be successful. With lower income, lower educated African Americans in all pockets of the country, they had skepticism that white voters would ever allow him to become president and they were also incredibly scared about his security. In some respects people had feelings to not support him because of the security question. That was sort of disturbing.

From a perspective of how we had to deal with race, how we had to deal with reverend Wright, before Barack's announcement back in February of 2007 we knew that Reverend Wright had some potential problems that could be related to us in terms of some of the things that he had said. While he meant a lot to Barack, early on, as time went on he got to be pretty hot. There was consideration given that he participate in one of the early announcement events. After we did our own hard look at him we chose not to do that. It was one of those things where everyone expected this candidate, as we all try to do in politics on every campaign, to own the people you're associated with. And we had a bucket load of them.

I was down in Miami in the last four weeks of the campaign and I was asked at a very unfortunate event with about ninety rich people who were supposedly undecided or leaning. The last question came up when a guy said, "I want to read you a list of names," and I knew what he was going to do. He said, "Reverend Wright, William Ayres, Resco" and on and on. It thought, god, were a week out and this hasn't gone away. I think race was an undertone throughout the entire campaign. You know, when Newsweek does three or four different cover stories or large stories on race, and it was constantly in the press, it was always going to be a part of this. We didn't have to figure out how to be white, we had to figure out how to be right. I think in the end we were on the right side of the issues and race mattered less. Except when you look at some of the election results in a place like Virginia, I think we lost the white vote by 23 points. In Pennsylvania we only lost the white vote overall by 4 percent. We actually won independent whites by 15 percent. So it was very geographical but it was something to deal with throughout.

Bill Lacy:

Okay, we will break at this point.