

© 2008, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.

*PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."*

CBS News

FACE THE NATION

Sunday, May 18, 2008

GUESTS: Governor CHARLIE CRIST (R-FL)
Governor of Florida

Mr. ED ROLLINS
Republican Strategist

Former Governor MARIO CUOMO (D-NY)
Former Governor of New York

Former Governor ROY ROMER (D-CO)
Former Governor of Colorado

MODERATOR/PANELIST: Mr. Bob Schieffer – CBS News

*This is a rush transcript provided
for the information and convenience of
the press. Accuracy is not guaranteed.
In case of doubt, please check with*

FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
(202)-457-4481

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, Republicans in a dither and Democrats try to wind it down.

Republicans have lost three special congressional elections in long-time Republican districts this spring. Are those signs of what's ahead? It has worried party stalwarts asking, 'What are we doing wrong?' Is it time to break away from an unpopular president? We'll ask popular Republican Governor Charlie Crist of Florida and long-time GOP strategist Ed Rollins.

Then we'll turn to Democrats. Is an Obama-Clinton ticket the only way to bring the party together? How wide is the divide? For thoughts on that, we'll go to former New York Governor Mario Cuomo and former Governor of Colorado Roy Romer. I'll have a final word on the longest political week.

But first, Republicans in turmoil on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION, with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Joining us this morning from Miami, Governor Charles Crist of Florida. With us from New York, Republican strategist Ed Rollins. We're going to talk first about Republicans this morning.

Well, Governor, you heard what I said there in the top of this broadcast. It'll be no news to you, of course, that Republicans lost three congressional seats in special elections this spring. These were all in heavily Republican, long-time Republican districts. Do you see this as a sign of bad things to come for your party this fall?

Governor CHARLIE CRIST (Republican, Florida): Well, I certainly hope not. I mean, it's not a great trifecta, if you will. What we want to do is win, of course. But we need to realize that we need to win for the American people and do the kinds of things that we're striving to do here in Florida. We reach across the aisle, we work together, we're working for better health care, higher pay for our schoolteachers, the kinds of things that the people want. And I think listening is a really important component of that, Bob. And the more we listen, the smarter we get. We need to, as a party, go back to our roots, if you will, make sure that we understand we're the party of Abraham Lincoln, the party of Teddy Roosevelt, the party of Ronald Reagan, who had that wonderful optimism that people looked toward and were excited about and understood that there was greater hope, greater opportunity for the future. That's what the Republican Party stands for: lower taxes, less government and more freedom.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, Ed Rollins, what's your take on all this? The governor says you got to get back to your roots. What do you think Republicans have to do?

Mr. ED ROLLINS (Republican Strategist): Well, they definitely have to get back to their roots. And local campaigns really should be about local issues. You can nationalize them as you--as the Democrats probably can this election against President Bush, who obviously is not popular. But when you're running congressional races, it's really about issues that matter to the local people. And I think to a certain extent we've kind of lost our way. We think we have to run every

campaign from Washington, with Washington consultants. And the truth of the matter is, there's a lot of very first-rate people out there. We've not recruited the good candidates this cycle and we've not recruited--not raised the money like we used to. And unfortunately, we're losing young people and not registering new ones, which I think is the--is the real death knell for the long term.

SCHIEFFER: Well, since you brought it up, let's roll an ad that they played in one of those campaigns, the one in Mississippi. This is the ad that the Republicans ran against the Democrat down there, and as you say, they did try to nationalize it, tie the Democrat to Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi. Let's watch.

(Excerpt from political ad)

SCHIEFFER: Well, there you have it, Ed Rollins. What was wrong with that ad? It obviously backfired.

Mr. ROLLINS: Well, it--well, everything. First of all, Obama's not running down there. Obama's John McCain's problem, and I think to a certain extent that's going to be a tough enough campaign as is. But I think the bottom line is to try and either raise racial issues or to basically try and tie a San Francisco liberal, as Nancy Pelosi is, or Barack Obama to a race in Mississippi, people in Mississippi want to know--or in Louisiana or in Illinois, the three seats we lost--want to know what are you going to do about gas increases? What are you going to do--what are you going to do that's going to relate to my life and basically help me, help my kids?

SCHIEFFER: What's your thought on that, Governor?

Gov. CRIST: Well, I think Ed's right, Bob. I think that, you know, what you need to do is be in touch with what the people want, what their hopes and dreams are. You know, look at the Florida example. We are working together in a very bipartisan fashion, reaching across the aisle, just as John McCain does, frankly. We'll be able to sign bills. I will this week to bring about health care for the uninsured in Florida, 3.8 million Floridians who need it, we'll be able to sign that. Addition to that, we're going to be able to make sure that this certificate of need, where people had to have a bureaucratic set-up before they got health care, they're going to get it; autism, for young children. All of these bills passed unanimously in Tallahassee, in our capital. All Republicans, all Democrats working together to do what the people of Florida want. That's what we need to do in the country. And John McCain understands that, he talked about it again this week.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about what President Bush said this week, Governor. You know, he went before the Israeli Knesset and he brought up Hitler. He talked about appeasement before World War II and he said when people talk about talking to terrorists, it's sort of--it's in the same line of appeasement. Do you think that was a wise thing for President Bush to do, Governor?

Gov. CRIST: Well, it's what he felt strongly about, there's no question about that. I mean, you know, this is a man who understands how important freedom is and wants to do everything he can to make sure that we don't have attacks here on our soil. And thank God we haven't had one since 9/11. And John McCain talks about the same thing, Bob, that you need to have somebody who understands that freedom isn't free. It's not fun and it's hard and it's difficult, but you have to do what's right to protect allies like Israel.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you think--do you think it was smart politically for him to do that at that particular time, though, I guess is what I'm saying?

Gov. CRIST: No, I understand. And I don't know if it was smart politically or not, but it's what he felt in his heart and what he believes. And that's what you always have to do, no matter what you're communicating, whether you think it's smart or clever politically really isn't the issue. It's what you believe is right and what you think you're supposed to do as a leader, as somebody who understands that you've got to be loyal to those who are loyal to us. Like Israel, like others in the Middle East that understand, as Israel does, that we need to stick together in order to make the Middle East a place of peace instead of something else.

SCHIEFFER: What did you think of it, Ed Rollins?

Mr. ROLLINS: This president has to--has to realize that he's no longer on the ballot. He has to finish his seven months in office and move on. They have been in a--in a--in a seven, eight year nonstop campaign mode, but it's no longer their game. And the quicker the page is turned by many Americans, including a lot of Republicans, the better--from the Bush administration--the better the people will feel. I think it was inappropriate. I think it gave Obama an issue that he didn't have. I think it certainly stepped on the Hillary victories this week, which for our perspective, the longer the battle goes on, the better. So I think this president basically ought to just do his job, let McCain do his job, which is to basically talk in terms of what a future administration is going to be like, and congressional candidates have got to get away from Washington. And if they promise to be different, then they have to be different. We promised that we were going to be a different party, we were going to be a fiscal party. We haven't been a fiscal party, we've spent record numbers in deficits. We promised we'd be a moral party to our values voters, we basically are the ones that have had the scandals. And I think to a certain extent you've got to live up to your promises.

SCHIEFFER: Well, how far do you run from President Bush, Ed?

Mr. ROLLINS: You've got to be very careful in the sense that there's still a Republican base out there that holds him in very high regard and you don't want to step away from that. You don't want to--you don't want to attack him. You basically want to talk in terms of how, after eight years, your leadership is going to be different and how you relate to ordinary voters. This administration is pretty tired right now and I think even the most die-hard Republicans are ready to move on. But you've got to convince people that it's just not the Bush third term. Because the Bush third term, John McCain can't win.

SCHIEFFER: Governor Crist, do you think the South is up for grabs this time? It's been pretty much Republican territory in these recent elections. Do you sense that could be changing?

Gov. CRIST: I think we can do very well in the South, there's no question about it. Senator McCain has been to Florida an awful lot. He's coming back again this week, as a matter of fact. And I think showing people that you care about them by showing up is an important thing to do. And when he gets here, he talks about things that people care about, about climate change. I mean, that's something that's not a traditional Republican issue, if you will, but John McCain is an independent guy and he understands that, you know, in order to do what's right, sometimes

you reach out and you help others help you get the agenda for the people moving forward. That's why I think he has a great chance to do very well in the South and be our next president. I mean, a true American hero, a man of tremendous strength, great integrity and tremendous honor. And he says what's on his mind. I mean, this straight talk is the real deal.

SCHIEFFER: Let me get just the final thoughts from Ed Rollins on that. Do you think it's going to be tough in the South, Ed?

Mr. ROLLINS: Well, I think there's a few Southern states--a state like Virginia, where there's-- obviously, we lost a Senate race and a gubernatorial race there. I think it's up for grabs. I think that a state like Arkansas may be up for grabs. There may be--may be one or two others. That's our base. You know, I hope we're not going to lose Florida or even have to compete hard for that, but I think there's--this is not a duplicate of 2000, 2004. There are four or five other states that are in play in addition to the five or six major ones the last time. Some of these are going to be driven by Senate races--Virginia being an example, New Mexico, Colorado--in which we have open seats, and I think to a certain extent that puts us slight disadvantage. But I think at the end of the day, it's going to be a very, very close election.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, gentlemen, thank you both. And we're going to see about the Democrats and some of the problems they're facing right now when we come back in just a minute with Mario Cuomo.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now from New York City, former governor of New York, Mario Cuomo.

Governor, thank you for coming. Well, you just heard Ed Rollins line out some of the problems that the Republicans have. And there's no question, if ever there were a year when the Democrats should be favored, when you've got 82 percent of the country saying it's moving in the wrong direction, when you have a very unpopular president. And yet, as you would acknowledge, we have a real divide in the Democratic party here, where you have Hillary Clinton, who appeals to lower income, blue-collar workers; Barack Obama appeals to younger voters, to the higher income voters and also to African-Americans, where Hillary Clinton is making no dent whatsoever. Somehow or another, this divide has got to be at least narrowed if Democrats are going to have a chance in November. What's a way to do that, do you think?

Former Governor MARIO CUOMO (Democrat, New York): Well, thou hast said it. That is the question. How do we make the most of the Republican problems, all of which are Democratic opportunities? Here's what I think America wants and needs. America wants and needs everything that we got from 1993 to 2000. And here's what you got from 1993 to 2000--and just think of what Governor Crist said, and Ed Rollins said about what America wants. This is what happened: you got 22 million new jobs, you got a balanced budget, you got a potential surplus of \$5.4 trillion, you got an ascending middle class, you got a shrinking poor population, all in those years. You got peace. And that's what the United States wants to get again. That was followed by Bushism and eight years of George Bush and utter failure. How do you get that? Well, it's easy. Put together the two strengths that have been manifest in this primary, Obama and Hillary Clinton. You're right.

SCHIEFFER: On the same ticket?

Gov. CUOMO: There are two different sets of constituencies. You don't want to lose any of those people, any of the people who are voting for Hillary, any of the people who are voting for Obama. You want them both. Why not use both of them? Now, both of them have been confronted with the question, 'Would you be the vice president if your opponent won the presidency?' And Obama said he would not rule it out, he would consider it when the time came. And Hillary said she would not rule it out, she would consider it when the time came. Well, the time may be coming closely. And look at--look at what it gives you. These people have both been tested for months and months and months, and they admit that they're both capable of being a good president. That's the first qualification of a vice president, incidentally, as it is of the president. They have proven themselves, she in 17 primaries, he in more than 17 primaries. They have been tested. No other...

SCHIEFFER: Oh.

Gov. CUOMO: ...possible candidate has been tested the way they have. This is the poetry and prose coming together. It would be a wonderful solution. And I think all the objections to it, and I'm eager to hear what they are, are not strong ones, and I'd be pleased to talk about that.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let me just ask you this. Do you think...

Gov. CUOMO: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: ...it would be wise to announce that? Let's say that Senator Obama's going to get the nomination. It seems highly unlikely that he won't at this point. Do you think he ought to announce that now?

Gov. CUOMO: No.

SCHIEFFER: So that will be something people can talk about before the convention?

Gov. CUOMO: No, no.

SCHIEFFER: Or wait until then?

Gov. CUOMO: It's premature now. It would be unfair to Hillary Clinton and unfair to the process. Look, the whole process has been butchered, let's be honest. And you have to save this argument for another day. But the Democratic process has been very, very flawed. In its design, it's supposed to go through to the end to a convention, and at the convention is the only place where the votes count. Most people don't understand that all the counts that have already been--all the contests that have already been held did not produce votes. They produced pledges, which probably would be lived up to at the convention.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Gov. CUOMO: But by its design--and all the superdelegates, they should have been waiting to be the last clear chance. It hasn't worked that way. Anyway, let the project--let the process finish.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Gov. CUOMO: Go through the primaries, then start talking about a vice president. But do it as early as you can.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you this part. Number one, I think it's pretty much a known fact that these two people don't like each other very much.

Gov. CUOMO: Oh, that's not...

SCHIEFFER: OK. But that's OK, Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy were not all that close.

Gov. CUOMO: Oh, please, Bob. Bob, they would both...

SCHIEFFER: But let me just--let me just ask you this one question.

Gov. CUOMO: Excuse me, excuse me. If that--if that kind of personal consideration would rule out a vice president, then neither of them should be candidates. Of course that gets put aside.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Gov. CUOMO: Everybody gets ticked off in a close race.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me--can you put this aside? Some people say it's hard to imagine Hillary Clinton as president with Bill Clinton hanging around the White House. What would that do to cabinet members, to the vice president? What would it be like to have Bill Clinton as the second laddie, rather than the first laddie, as some people are talking about.

Gov. CUOMO: You--Bob.

SCHIEFFER: Could that work?

Gov. CUOMO: Bob, you're a real pro. You really think Bill Clinton wants to hang around the Blair House? Look, he's doing things internationally. If Hillary Clinton were the vice president, sure he'd be available to the president, to the vice president when they asked him questions. But he's dealing in Africa, he's dealing all over the world. He sees the model of Blair in Britain. Blair gets made a designee by the European Union, 450 million people, to the Middle East. That's the kind of thing Bill Clinton would want to do. He wants to operate at that level. And the notion that he's going to hang around and stick his nose into everybody's business, it's just not realistic.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Governor, it's always a pleasure to talk to you.

Gov. CUOMO: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: It's nice to get your insight this morning.

We'll be back in just a minute with former Governor Roy Romer. We want to ask him what he would do about those delegates from Florida and Michigan--he's a former head of the Democratic National Committee--in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with the former Colorado Governor Roy Romer. He has endorsed Barack Obama, did it last week. He's a former chairman of the Democratic National Committee. He joins us from Denver this morning.

Well, Governor, you heard Governor Cuomo. He not only said that he thinks the dream ticket, Obama with Senator Clinton, is the answer--he's said that before--but the way he told it this morning, that'd be a pretty easy thing to accomplish. First, do you think that's the way to go? And second, do you think it would be all that easy?

Former Governor ROY ROMER (Democrat, Colorado): First, that's a premature question. You know, right now, let's get this on the table, Obama's going to be the nominee of this party, the Democratic Party. The math is compelling. He's got a delegate lead, as of this morning, of 189 delegates. That can't be overcome. And the primaries that are left are going to divide about equally, so this race is over and Obama's going to be the candidate. Now, in regard to the vice presidential decision, that's one a president needs to--a presidential nominee needs to make. I think Hillary should be on that short list, I think others should be on that short list. But I think that this race can be won by Obama with Hillary on it or with others on it. Obama can win this race.

SCHIEFFER: Well, there's a divide there, though, don't you agree, Governor, as we were just talking about with Governor Cuomo. You've got one candidate here who seems to be the candidate of the blue collar, lower income voters. That's part of the core constituency of the Democratic Party. You've got another one that appeals to young people and intellectuals and is also very strong with African-Americans, so those are other core parts of the Democratic Party. But there's a great divide. The guys in one camp don't seem to like the folks in the other camp very much.

Gov. ROMER: That divide is overemphasized. We don't see it in the West. I mean, look at what Obama has done in the West. In this state, he won the primary--I mean the caucus--67 to 32. And if you saw how he did in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, he is very strong, and there are a lot of low-income workers who are a part of his camp. I think that divide is overemphasized. Now, I think that we're going to have to be very wise in the way we put that ticket together, but there are more alternatives. I have great respect for Senator Clinton, but that's not just the only alternative.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk a little bit about these delegations from Florida and from Michigan. As the rules now stand, their delegations are not going to be seated at the convention. Does it really make much difference, in your view? These are two pretty good sized states and two influential states. If those delegates are not seated at the convention, will that hurt the Democrats in those two states come November?

Gov. ROMER: Those delegates need to be seated. The Democratic Party needs to make that decision, not the candidates. And let me tell you, they need to be seated with some consequence for not having followed the rules. What that consequence is can be negotiated and worked out, I think, by the end of this month. But let me tell you, however those delegates are seated, it's not going to make a difference in the end result of Obama's nomination. But it needs to happen. We need to have those delegates seated, and it needs to be a compromise. I think the party will work it out. It's going to be helpful after these primaries are through in the next 10 to 20 days, because I think the delegate count is going to be so apparent it will ease us in seating those delegates.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think that Hillary Clinton is hurting the Democrats' chance in November by continuing to hang in this race?

Gov. ROMER: No. Hillary is a very strong candidate, and she's a--she's a great leader for this Democratic Party. And after this election, even though she's not going to be the nominee, she's going to be a very strong part of this nation's future in ways yet to be determined. I think that in her own good time, she should make the decision as to when she wants to end her campaign. Nobody should force her to do that. But I tell you, the campaign is done in terms of the delegate count.

SCHIEFFER: You talked a little bit about how others besides Hillary Clinton could be good running mates. You want to give me a couple of names this morning? Who ought to be on the short list?

Gov. ROMER: Well, we have--we have a neighbor out here, Governor Sebelius in Kansas. You have John Edwards. You've got a number of people within this party who are very strong leaders. And let me tell you, a--this campaign, it's the Democrats' to win, because the country's really fed up and do not want another third term for a person following Bush's foreign policy. This--the selection's going to be Democratic.

SCHIEFFER: What'd you think about the president saying that business about appeasement, and by inference, at least, suggesting Barack Obama was appeasing terrorists?

Gov. ROMER: Ed Rollins said it's a mistake. I'd say it's embarrassing. It's embarrassing for people in this country to have a president in an overseas assignment bringing domestic politics into it. And trying to associate this race with Hitler? I mean, look, this is a president that is out of touch--so out of touch it's going to harm. And for Senator McCain not to disassociate himself clearly from that I think indicates that McCain's going to have a third Bush term if he wins.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Gov. ROMER: That, American people are not going to accept.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Governor, have to stop there. Thank you so much for your insight this morning.

I'll be back with the final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And finally today, any way you cut it, as you just heard, this had to be some week, or maybe it was a year. No, it just seemed like a year, but it really was only one week. Let's just review here in closing. In West Virginia, Hillary Clinton started the week by beating the stuffing out of Barack Obama. In this goofy year, a case of too much, too late, apparently. The next day, she suddenly became available for interviews on all the evening news programs. But before the interviews had aired they were outdated, as John Edwards rushed in to endorse Obama. While people debated whether that really mattered, President Bush went to Israel and upstaged the rest of them by bringing up Hitler and accusing Obama of appeasing terrorists--or not accusing him of anything, depending on whose version you believe. John McCain, who'd been trying to separate himself from the president and his unpopular policies, rushed to the--to side with the president, which gave Obama a chance to tie them together and denounce them both. Senator Clinton took a deep breath and stood up for Obama. Republicans lost another special election and vowed to find a better campaign slogan, and Mike Huckabee made an assassination joke that defied explanation. For all of it, there was one nice thing: both Barack Obama and John McCain expressed hope to raise the level of this campaign. For sure, it won't take much to raise it beyond where it seemed to be last week.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week, right here on FACE THE NATION.

