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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



## **May 22, 2011 Transcript**

GUEST: NEWT GINGRICH  
Republican Presidential Candidate,  
Former House Speaker

MODERATOR/  
PANELIST: Bob Schieffer, CBS News Political Analyst

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## TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, Newt Gingrich is with us live after a week in which he announces for President and his own party goes nuts.

SARAH PALIN: That we all have a right to ask Speaker Gingrich what in the heck did you mean that Paul Ryan's budget plan is radical?

RUSH LIMBAUGH: The attack on Paul Ryan, the support for an individual mandate in-- in health care? I-- I-- folks don't ask me to explain this.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Headlines in conservative newspapers were no kinder. Gingrich to the House GOP: Drop Dead, noted the Wall Street Journal, nor was it any smoother when Gingrich got to Iowa.

MAN: You're an embarrassment to our--

NEWT GINGRICH (Republican Presidential Candidate/Former House Speaker): Well--

MAN: --party.

NEWT GINGRICH: --I'm sorry if you feel that way.

MAN: Why don't you get out before you--

NEWT GINGRICH: I'm sorry-- I'm sorry--

MAN: --make a bigger fool of yourself?

NEWT GINGRICH: --sorry.

BOB SCHIEFFER: This morning, he's here to talk about all of it. And it's all ahead on FACE THE NATION.

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

BOB SCHIEFFER: And, good morning again. Newt Gingrich joins us live in the-- in the studio here. And, Mister Gingrich, let's just start with the overnight news. Mitch Daniels, the one that a lot of Republicans, establishment Republicans and especially a lot of people who had supported George Bush last time out were really putting pressure on him to run for the Republican nomination. He said last night he's simply not going to do it. What do you make of that and what--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Well--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --what is the impact of that on the race.

NEWT GINGRICH: I'd-- I'd-- I mean, Mitch has his own reasons for not running. But he is one of the great reform governors in this country, he's one of the hopes that you can get things fixed.

His educational reforms are remarkable. He's done a great job of bringing jobs to Indiana. His privatization program on highways is really a benchmark for the country. He has a great future and I think will play a major role in designing the platform and a major role in helping other people learn that you actually can govern and you can actually be creative. And I think the Scott Walkers, the John Kasichs, even Chris Christies all of them learned something from I mean--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Why-- why--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping):--his governorship.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --do you think he decided not to run?

NEWT GINGRICH: You'd have to ask him. But he's-- he's a terrific talent. He would have been a very formidable competitor. I mean, I really thought he would be in the frontrunners from day one if he had decided to run.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let's talk about your campaign.

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Okay.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): You heard at the top of this broadcast, we kind of laid it out there. You began your campaign last week on Meet The Press with what I have to say was just withering criticism of the plan passed by the Republican House to replace Medicare with government subsidized private insurance and-- and you heard them. You've heard them all week. Republicans from Rush Limbaugh to Governor Nikki Haley of South Carolina to Paul Ryan himself cried foul. Then you backed off and said you made a mistake. But you sounded pretty certain. And I just want to go back and-- and let's listen to what you said--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --last week.

DAVID GREGORY (May 9, 2011): Do you think that Republicans ought to buck the public opposition and really move forward to completely change Medicare, turn it into a voucher program where you give seniors--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping; May 9, 2011): Yeah.

DAVID GREGORY (May 9, 2011): --some premium support and so that they can go out and buy private insurance?

NEWT GINGRICH (May 9, 2011): I don't think right wing social engineering is anymore desirable than left wing social engineering. I don't think imposing radical change from the right or the left is a very good way for a free society to operate.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So then, you go on television and you just totally retract that. You said I've made a mistake. Well, you sounded awfully certain when you said it. What happened here?

NEWT GINGRICH: Look if-- if you go back and replay what David Gregory asked.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I did.

NEWT GINGRICH: Yeah. No, I'm just saying. If you listen to his words, he doesn't say how do you feel about Paul Ryan? I like Paul Ryan. Didn't even say how do you feel about Ryan's budget? I would have voted for Ryan's budget. He said should Republicans pass an unpopular plan? And I made the mistake of accepting his premise. I wasn't referring to Ryan. I was referring to a general principle. We, the people, should not have Washington impose large-scale change on us. Paul Ryan has begun a process-- he and I've talked about it several times this week. And we go back many years. Paul Ryan has begun a process. It's an important process. This is the third time we've seen a Medi-scare campaign by the Democrats against Reagan and--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): --now just listen-- but--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --go ahead.

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): --but-- my context was we Republicans have to go to the country, we have to explain what we're trying to accomplish to save Medicare, how we would save Medicare. The country has to have time, the American people have to have time to ask us questions, to modify the plan if necessary, to get to a point where people are comfortable with it and that was my point. I-- I probably used unfortunate language about social engineering. But my point was really a larger one that neither party should impose on the American people something that they are deeply opposed to.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well-- well, do you think Republicans ought to run with the Paul Ryan plan? I mean is it good social--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): I think--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --engineering here?

NEWT GINGRICH: --there was not a question as good social engineering. The question is I believe Republicans should start with the Ryan plan, should go to the country and explain it. But should listen to the American people and where necessary modify it. I think this is what Paul Ryan believes. It's not going to be a-- a yes or no. This is the-- and this is what's sad about what's happening. This is the beginning of a profound conversation about a fiscal crisis that is going to crush this country.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I know-- I know you said you weren't even talking about Paul Ryan. You told Rush Limbaugh the same thing. But listen to what you went on to say in this interview with-- with David Gregory. Here's part two.

NEWT GINGRICH (May 9, 2011): So there are things you can do to improve Medicare.

DAVID GREGORY (May 9, 2011): But not what Paul Ryan is suggesting--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping; May 9, 2011): I-- I think--

DAVID GREGORY (overlapping; May 9, 2011): --which is completely--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping; May 9, 2011): --I think--

DAVID GREGORY (overlapping; May 9, 2011): --changing Medicare.

NEWT GINGRICH (May 9, 2011): -- I think that that is too big a jump. I think what you want to have is a system where people voluntarily migrate to better outcomes, better solutions, better options not one where you suddenly impose upon them. I don't want to-- I'm-- I'm not against Obama care which is--

DAVID GREGORY (overlapping; May 9, 2011): --Mm-Hm.

NEWT GINGRICH (May 9, 2011): --imposing radical change and I would be against a--

BOB SCHIEFFER: So there you are. You were talking about Paul Ryan.

NEWT GINGRICH: And I said-- and I said-- and Paul agrees that the-- the plan can be modified. I would modify it frankly to start much earlier than he does but I'll modify it in a way that will move in the direction he's going and would modify it in a way that people could voluntarily decide. Are there things that can be done to improve Medicare that they would like to do? When-- when you deal with a program of this size and-- and I don't think anybody, including Paul Ryan believes that you come out and say take it or leave it. This-- this is the beginning of a conversation. He and I are on the same side in that conversation. Obama is on the opposite side of that conversation. And I think that's an important thing to keep in mind.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, as what you're saying then is that the Paul Ryan plan is not too big a jump. You said, it's--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Yes.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --too big a jump. It's too radical.

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): I'm--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): You're saying now--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Yes, it is. I think--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --it's not too radical---

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): --I think well--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --it's not too big a jump?

NEWT GINGRICH: --I think-- I think it is a big plan that needs to be worked through with the American people. In that process it will clearly be modified. And I think if Republicans approach it that way and have a conversation with the American people, we will in fact totally defeat the Democrat scare tactics and the American people will give us permission to have a very significant reform of Medicare.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Are you saying that this is going to be the Republican plan? Because here's what I'm saying to you, Democrats are just licking their chops here. They're saying, man, I hope

we can get him out there and have them against Medicare because if they can, we can beat them. I mean they're-- they're running ads with you in them saying--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): But-- right, but that--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --that.

NEWT GINGRICH: Look, this is the third time in my career this has happened. They tried to scare people about Ronald Reagan. And Ronald Reagan carried more states than FDR carried in '32. They tried to scare people in '96 about our effort to save Medicare. We were the first reelected House Republicans since 1928. If we have the courage to stand toe to toe and say this is a fiscal crisis, we have every right as a country to talk through how to get to a better Medicare system and it is shameful for the Democrats to lie about it, we will in fact win that debate for the third time in my lifetime.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about a-- a mandate that people are ought to be required to buy--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --insurance. You at various times in your career have said that they should. That everybody ought to pay and have some-- some part in paying for-- for medical care. Do you believe in a mandate or not?

NEWT GINGRICH: No. No, I do not believe in a mandate.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You do concede you have said in the past--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): Sure.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): --that you did.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, then the Heritage Foundation has said they were for it at one time. All of us have wrestled with two problems. How do we maximize individual freedom and how do we make sure that people have some responsibility for their debts? There are a lot of people who refuse to pay for their health bill, including people with money. And so, we're trying to find a way to match both. I believe that we ought to go to the Tenth Amendment approach, return a lot of this power back to the states, recognize that decades of Washington in trying to solve it have failed and try to find a way to re-approach this. I do not believe in mandates. In fact, I think that in many ways they're unconstitutional, both on religious liberty grounds and on personal liberty grounds, but we all have been wrestling with this for a long time. And I think, you know, I'm not going to get involved in a gotcha game. I-- I've voted seven thousand times and given five thousand speeches and probably ten thousand interviews. So people can go back and pick up a sentence here and there. I have a-- I'm running for President because this country needs very dramatic change. I'm going to outline a program of very dramatic change. And I'm prepared to debate and defend that program.

BOB SCHIEFFER: How much did this hurt you politically? I am told that when hours after you appeared on Meet The Press last Sunday, some of your big donors were on the phone saying you've got to get off this or your donations are going to dry up. I'm told that in fact one campaign fundraiser was canceled last Sunday. Is that true?

NEWT GINGRICH: Not that I know of. But, you know, to be honest, I-- I-- I don't know it. Look, I spent all week in Iowa. I was in seventeen towns. I was also briefly in Lacrosse, in Minneapolis. And in seventeen towns in Iowa, they managed to catch the one person. I-- I think I talked to over two thousand people in meetings. In-- in Ames, Iowa, we thought we would have forty people at two in the afternoon. We had a hundred and seventy-eight. On one particular day, we had to move three out of five meetings because the rooms weren't big enough. Everywhere I went in Iowa, people wanted to know how do we defeat Obamacare, how do we get the budget balanced, how do we create jobs, how do we solve our energy problem? They were not paying attention to the noise level in Washington, DC. And so, I had this unusual experience that I was actually having a great time. I was reading the Iowa Media, I was talking to Iowans, and the campaign looked very, very alive if you were in Iowa.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So, when people say and-- and-- and you're right.

NEWT GINGRICH: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's what they're saying in the national media. I have not heard one single Republican come to your defense, perhaps there was one. But I haven't heard it here in Washington. When they say your campaign's already imploded, that it's over before it started, you're saying not yet.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, I-- I think it's amazing, the only national reporter who came to Iowa, Mara Liasson of NPR and-- and Fox, Sunday Morning. She came to two overflow meetings and she looked around. I think it was pretty clear to her this campaign was a long way from over. None of the people rendering judgment of Washington had talked to the voters in Iowa, none.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I want to-- I'm going to ask you about President Obama's speech. I want to talk little about foreign policy. But-- but before we go to break, I want to ask you about this bizarre revelation that came up last week that your wife in 2005-2006 filed a financial disclosure because she was working for the House Agriculture Committee that revealed that you owed between two hundred and fifty thousand, a half million dollars to a jewelry company. What was that about Mister Speaker?

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, first of all, it was about obeying the law. She filed a disclosure, it's been sitting there for five years. We're private citizens. I work very hard. We have a reasonably good income. I currently owe nothing except I owe one mortgage on a house that's rental property in Wisconsin. Everything else is totally paid for. My home is paid for. My cars are paid for. We don't have a second house. We don't do-- you know, we don't do elaborate things.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Did you owe a half million dollars to a jewelry company at one point?

NEWT GINGRICH: We had a revolving fund.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, what does that mean?

NEWT GINGRICH: It means that we had a revolving fund. That it was-- it was a-- it was an interest-free account.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): I mean who buys a half million dollars worth of jewelry on credit?

NEWT GINGRICH: No, it's-- it's a-- go and talk to Tiffany's, it's a standard no-interest account.

BOB SCHIEFFER: How-- how long did you owe it?

NEWT GINGRICH: I have no idea but it was paid off automatically. We paid no interest on it. There was no problem with it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Was it--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): It's a normal way of doing business.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Why I mean that-- it's very odd to me that-- that-- that someone would run up a half million dollars bill--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): It's--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --at a jewelry store.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, go, you go talk to Tiffany's. All I'm telling you is we-- we are very frugal. We, in fact, live within our budget. We owe nothing.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What did you buy?

NEWT GINGRICH: We owe nothing. Well, it's-- it's a pre-- it's--my private life.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I understand.

NEWT GINGRICH: And-- and I understand, I'm just suggesting to you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I mean you're running for president.

NEWT GINGRICH: Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You're going to be the guy in charge of the Treasury Department. And it just-- it just sticks out--

NEWT GINGRICH (overlapping): And-- and-- and-- okay--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --like a sore thumb.

NEWT GINGRICH: And okay, I'm, you know, I'm a guy running for president who pays all of his bills and after tax income and no cost put to the taxpayer and who currently owes nothing except one rental property in Wisconsin. I am debt-free. If the U.S. government was debt-free as I am, everybody in America would be celebrating. I think I have proven I can manage money. As a small businessman, I run four small businesses. They have been profitable. They've employed people. You know, this is the opposite of the Obama model. So as a private citizen who's done well, I think I'm allowed to pick and choose what I prefer doing.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And you paid that bill?

NEWT GINGRICH: On time with no interest. I mean it-- it was a revolving account.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. We're going to take a break here. We'll come back and talk a little bit about foreign policy in a minute.

NEWT GINGRICH: Sure.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we're back with the Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich. Mister Gingrich, the President made a big speech on the Middle East last week. What did you think of it?

NEWT GINGRICH: I think it is a disaster. I think it is extraordinarily dangerous. I think that it-- defining the 1967 border would be an act of suicide for Israel. They are totally non-defensible. I think for the United States, you know-- we don't have moral equivalence here. You have Hamas which is a terrorist organization whose stated goal is the destruction of Israel. You have a democracy. Now the idea that somehow we're supposed to be neutral between Hamas and Israel is fundamentally flawed. And I do not believe that we should have any pressure on Israel as long as Hamas's policy is the destruction of Israel. And as long as missiles are being fired into Israel and terrorists are preparing to try to kill Israelis. And I think it is-- a President who can't control his own border probably shouldn't lecture Israel about their border.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I-- I-- I have to ask you though you're using words like dangerous. I mean, the President was calling for peace. How-- why-- why can you characterize that as dangerous?

NEWT GINGRICH: Because how do you have peace with a Hamas organization whose stated goal is the destruction of Israel and driving every Israeli out of the country? I mean, read what Hamas says. This idea, that somehow-- these people are firing missiles virtually every day into Israel. These people are constantly preparing for terrorism. They're recruiting children to be suicide bombers. How--how can you-- the President talks about peace when he ought to be insisting that we cut off all aid to Hamas and isolate Hamas as long as it is a terrorist organization trying to destroy an entire people. I mean, I-- I really think we've got to get over this moral equivalence thing. There is no moral equivalence between a democratic society and a terrorist group.

BOB SCHIEFFER: The President talked about President Assad of Syria this week, in that speech. And basically, he said Assad needs to leave or he needs to move on. What's your response to that?

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, con-- considering the President's ineffectiveness with Qaddafi, who on March 3rd, he said had had to go, he seems to be going around picking places to make large pronouncements with small effect. I mean, I-- I think we need a fundamental reassessment of our policy in the whole region. When we give the Pakistanis twenty billion dollars in aid since 9/11 and we learned that Bin Laden was not hiding in a cave in the mountains. He was in a fairly large compound in a major military city one mile from their national defense university, that should raise very profound questions about what's going on and how little do we understand the region. When you look at Christians being driven out of Iraq, when you look at Coptic churches being burned in Egypt, I think we need to be-- we-- we really need a much more honest and much more rigorous reappraisal of what's happening in the region.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I have to say you have not exactly been a model of consistency especially, when he talks about Libya. I-- I think it was on March 3rd, when asked what we should do about Libya when all that was breaking out here's what you said on Fox News.

GRETA VAN SUSTEREN (Fox News March 8, 2011): What would you do about Libya?

NEWT GINGRICH (Fox News March 8, 2011): Exercise a no-fly zone this evening. Communicate to the Libyan military that Qaddafi was gone and that the sooner they switch sides the more likely they were to survive.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So, you said to put in a-- a no-fly zone. Then, you know, a few-- few days later you go on the Today Show and you seem to say just the opposite it looks-- listen to this.

NEWT GINGRICH (March 23, 2011): I would not have intervened. I think there are a lot of other ways to affect Qaddafi. I think there are a lot of allies in the region that we could have worked with. I would not have used American and European forces.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What some people say, Mister Speaker, is that whatever the President said you would just take the opposite attack there.

NEWT GINGRICH: Well, if you had taken two other things. On February 22nd, I said on Fox, I think we should use indirect means, covert operations and our allies in the region. But I don't think we should get involved. On March 3rd, when you're talking about it, the President has now announced grandly, Qaddafi must go. Well, if the President's serious about Qaddafi must go, I said that night, responding to go the President, this is what we should do. Two weeks later, it's clear there was a total muddle. They had no plan. They had no ideas. The-- the no-fly zone was a joke. Qaddafi wasn't being threatened. And so-- so, you're right. As the-- as the President zigzags, as an analyst I was trying to respond to the moment that he zigzagging, but I think the policy has been a fail-- a failure. I mean, if you're Assad watching Qaddafi, why do you care what the President of the United States says, because the President of the United States has been remarkably ineffective in Libya. And I was responding at each stage to what the President said. Now I believe in the beginning what I said on February 22nd was really operative, which is, don't get directly involved. Don't put our prestige on the line. Help the people who are rebelling. Use local allies like the Moroccans, or the Egyptians or the Jordanians, or the Iraqis, and have people who speak Arabic doing that. But the President changed the rules on with-- with no planning, with no preparation on March 3rd he staked the position of the United States that Qaddafi must go. And then did nothing to make sure that Qaddafi went except wasted a lot of money and had Americans fecklessly running around not being effective and they haven't been effective up until now.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mister Gingrich, why do you think you ought to be President.

NEWT GINGRICH: I believe the United States is in the early stages of a huge challenge as a country. And I believe that President Obama is taking us in exactly the wrong direction. We need a program for very dramatic in creating jobs. I have one with five major tax policies and with deregulation. We need an American energy program not going to Brazil to praise the Brazilians for drilling offshore, and saying we're going to be their best customer. We need a program of balancing the federal budget again, which I did four times as speaker in-- in a way that people thought was impossible when I started. We need very large entitlement reform. The largest entitlement reform of our lifetime was welfare reform which I led as speaker. Two or

three people went back to work and went to school. So I think we're in a period where we face enormous choices about which kind of country we want to be. I think Obama is in exactly the wrong direction. And I think the Republicans who has actually led the Congress, achieved four balanced budgets, achieved economic growth. When I entered we had 5.6 percent unemployment. When I left it was drifting down below four percent. I think I have both a record of real achievement and a record of real choice compared to Obama.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And-- and what about your personal life and your personal behavior. Are people supposed to just put that aside.

NEWT GINGRICH: No. I think the American people have to look at it and have to decide. First of all, recognizing that I've said I did some things that were wrong. I've had to go to God and ask for forgiveness. I've had to seek reconciliation. They've to look-- look at who I am now. They've look at my marriage. You have to look at our daughters and son-in-laws. You have to look at my relationship with our grandchildren. And then they have to decide. Am-- am I now a mature person who has in fact come to grips with life and who would be an effective leader in getting this country back with jobs and with lower gasoline prices and with a real American energy plan and with a balanced budget.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And do you think you're that person.

NEWT GINGRICH: I think I can. I-- with the help of the American people, no one person can do this. But with the help of the American people as we discovered in Iowa, well, they have a huge crowds, I do believe it's possible for this country to get that job done. And I think I could help lead the American people in getting that job done.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Newt Gingrich, thank you very much.

NEWT GINGRICH: Thank you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Hope you'll come back.

Back in a moment with some final thoughts.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today, what a couple of weeks this has been. America got Osama bin Laden. I got pneumonia. As someone who prides himself as always being ready when the bell rings, I felt like someone hit me with a bell. For me there is nothing worse than a big story unfolding and not being there to cover it. There was more news than we could handle and I was flat on my back. And that was just the half of it. I had to cancel moderating the CBS News economic town hall meeting with the President. Thanks to Harry Smith for stepping in and doing a great job on that and on FACE THE NATION. We can't get along without Harry around here. I did manage to get through a commencement address to the students at American University without falling over. It wasn't easy. But I had to cancel emceeding a hung New York dinner for my friend of three decades, Joe Califano. Steve Kroft stepped in for that one. Thank you, Steve. I found a sub to give a commencement address I was supposed to give at LSU last week. And he had to cancel too. I'm really sorry all you fellows down there at LSU and ladies, but commencement is not about the speaker. It is about what you did. I can't even remember who spoke at my graduation let alone what he said. And in the middle of all of it, I was not there to hear Donald Trump say he won't run for president. It was good to know he said he could have

won if he had run, perhaps. But to update what we used to say back home, the dog would have caught the rabbit if he hadn't stopped to tweet. It's nice to be back.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And thank you for watching FACE THE NATION. We'll see you right here next week.

ANNOUNCER: This broadcast was produced by CBS News, which is solely responsible for the selection of today's guests and topics. It originated in Washington, DC.