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



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GUESTS: REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER
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TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today, on FACE THE NATION, an exclusive interview with John Boehner, the man who could be speaker of the House, if the Republicans take over.

And, the nation marks 911 with both reverence and harsh protests.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: As Americans we are not and never will be at war with Islam.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Nine years after the worst attack on America's homeland, the President found it necessary yesterday to underline just who are enemies are. We'll talk with the first Muslim member of Congress Keith Ellison and Tom Kean, the former New Jersey governor, who headed the 911 Commission on just where they believe the country stands today on Islam and the war on terror.

But first that exclusive interview with the man who maybe Speaker John Boehner. Will he try to block middle-class tax cuts, if he can't get the same cuts for the wealthy? We'll ask.

Then, I'll have some final thoughts on the days after 911.

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 joining us now from West Chester, Ohio, House Republican leader John Boehner. Mister Boehner, if the Republicans do take the House, you in all probability will be the new speaker and the President's already trying to make you the face of the Republican Party. He mentioned you by name eight times the other day, in a speech in your home state. Here's what he said.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: There were no new policies from Mister Boehner. There were no new ideas. There was just the same philosophy that we had already tried during the decades that they were in power, the same philosophy that led to this mess in the first place. Cut more taxes for millionaires and cut more rules for corporations.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What about that?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER (R-Ohio, House Republican Leader): Well, listen, you know, the President says with that no new ideas. But we've offered him new ideas for the last twenty months. And speaking of new, I wonder what's new about more stimulus spending, more taxes and more uncertainty for American small businesses. That's what the President is proposing. And what's new about that? If the President wants to get serious and wants to do something new why don't we cut spending and get rid of this notion that we can continue to spend our way back to prosperity.

BOB SCHIEFFER: The-- the big difference, of course, between you and the President is that you want to extend the Bush tax cuts that run out this year to all Americans, including the wealthiest Americans. The President wants to extend them only to those making less than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year. Now the President said yesterday, let's do what we

both can agree on--extend the cuts to those below two hundred and fifty thousand and then we could discuss the others. Would you be willing to extend the tax cuts to the middle class, to those lower brackets in exchange for discussing some kind of compromise for those upper brackets?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, Bob, I think raising taxes in a-- in a very weak economy is a really, really bad idea. And most economists would agree with that. And I just think that if we're going to extend the tax cuts for some Americans, why don't we extend these tax-- the current tax rates to all Americans, and-- and get rid of some of the uncertainty that is out there so that small businesses can plan and reinvest in a-- in their business and the new economy.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But-- but aren't you kind of holding the tax cuts for the-- the lower-income people, the people making less than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars hostage, so you can give those tax cuts to the-- to the upper brackets? I mean, there are a lot more people below those top brackets that there-- than are in the-- than those upper brackets. Why wouldn't you want to do something for those folks?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: I want to do something for all Americans who pay taxes. And you have to understand, Bob, that there are a large majorities of Democrats in the House and Senate. They haven't reached out to us for the last twenty months. It's not Republicans standing in the way here. There's a growing chorus of Democrats, in both the House and the Senate, who believe that they should extend the current tax rates for all Americans. When you start to look at who's going to be taxed, about half of all small business income will be taxed under the President's proposal. These are the very people that we expect to invest in the economy and to begin creating jobs. With-- why-- why would we want to punish them?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Now let me just say this. The-- the Joint Committee on Taxation, which is a-- which is a non-partisan body, says that only three percent of those small business people you keep talking about all the small business people, they're going to get taxed, only three percent would-- would be affected by that. Do you quarrel with that figure? Is that a right figure or a wrong figure?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, it may be three percent, but it's half of small business income. Because, obviously, the top three percent have half of the-- the gross income for those companies that we would term small businesses. And this is why you don't want to-- you don't want to punish these people at a time when you have a weak economy.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well--

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: We need them to reinvest--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Let me just--

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: --in their business.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me-- let me just wrap this up here. Are-- are you saying that no way, no how would you vote for the-- continuing the tax cuts for the folks in the middle class, unless it also includes the tax cuts for-- for the people in the upper brackets? In other words, you wouldn't be willing to pass those lower-bracket extensions unless you can get the-- the--

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER (overlapping): If the only option--

BOB SCHIEFFER:--the more wealthier people.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: If the only-- if the only option I have is to vote for some of those tax reductions, I'll-- I'll vote for them. But I've been making the point now for months that we need to extend all the current rates for all Americans. If we want to get our economy going again and we want to get jobs in America.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So you-- you are saying you would vote for the middle-class tax cuts if that's all you can get done.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: If that's what we can get done, but I-- I think that's bad policy. I don't think that's going to help our economy. And I think the other thing that has to happen is that we've got to cut spending. If-- if-- if we cut spending, we will help our economy. We will send signals to the markets. We will send bus-- signals to the business community that Washington's attempting to get its fiscal house in order. That's why the two things that I called on the President to do this week was to extend all of the current tax rates and let's do a spending bill this month, not after the election and not at bloated levels. Let's go back to 2008 levels, which are about twenty-two percent below the current rates, and let's do the spending bill now. And show the American people that we can work together to cut spending and to keep the current tax rates in order.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But I want to make sure I heard what you said correctly. You're saying that you are willing to vote for those middle-class tax cuts even though the bill will not include extending the tax cuts for the upper bracket American?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Bob, we don't know what the bill is going to say, all right? If the only option I have is to vote for those at two hundred and fifty and below, of course, I'm going to do that. But I'm going to do everything I can to fight to make sure that we extend the current tax rates for all Americans.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Okay. But-- but you're saying that you would do that. And-- and do you think you can get that done before the election?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: I don't control the agenda on Capitol Hill. Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid do. And I would hope that there would be an open debate, an open process. And let's let the Congress decide what the current tax rates should be and for who they should be. I think there's a growing chorus on Capitol Hill to extend all of these tax rates. And I would hope that we would do it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You-- you led the fight, it was a losing fight against the Wall Street reform that holds the big banks more accountable, gets consumers some new protections. Seventy-three percent of the American people according to some polls said they supported that legislation. Why did Republicans oppose it?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, Bob, the three problems that caused our financial meltdown--Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and subprime lending, none of the three are addressed in this bill. And what this bill is going to do is it's going to make it harder for our economy to get-- to get going again--harder to create jobs in America. Why, because, it's going to be difficult for banks to provide credit to businesses in our country under this legislation. It creates a giant new

government entity. It requires three hundred and sixty new rule-making requirements in our government and puts the government in charge of-- of making decisions about how our financial services sector is going to work. I think it is the wrong prescription for the problems that we were facing.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mister Boehner, I'm going to ask you this question because I'm not objective about this. I'm-- I'm a cancer survivor. I used to be a heavy smoker. Do you still smoke?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: I do.

BOB SCHIEFFER: BOB SCHIEFFER: You have taken three hundred and forty thousand dollars from the tobacco industry. They've been the largest contributor to your political campaigns over the year. How do you square that with the fact that cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in this country? Four hundred and thirty-five thousand people, their deaths are linked to cancer. That's one in five. Ho-- how do-- how do you justify that in your own mind?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Bob, tobacco is a legal product in America. And the American people have a right to-- to decide for themselves whether they want to partake or not. There are lots of things that we deal with and come in contact with every day from alcohol to food to cigarettes, a lot of things that aren't good for our health. But the American people ought to have the right to make those decisions on their own.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, they-- they have a right to shoot themselves if they choose to. But I mean, shouldn't we do something to try to encourage them not to? I mean, do you think that's a good example?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, listen. I wish I didn't have this bad habit, and is a bad habit. You've had it. You've dealt with it. But it's something that I choose to do. And, you know at some point maybe I'll decide I've had enough it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean, if-- if you should become speaker, you could set an example by-- for the country by saying I'm-- I'm going to try to stop smoking. Maybe you could get the President. I understand he smokes too. Maybe the two of you could-- could find a way to try to stop smoking. That'd be kind of a good thing wouldn't it?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Bob, I appreciate your suggestion.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. You-- you have said your number one priority is to repeal the health care legislation. Do you mean the entire bill, including some of the things that are so overwhelmingly popular like the pro-- prohibition on discrimination based on pre-existing conditions for children, or allowing young adults to stay on their parents' plans until their twenty-six? Do you want-- you want to-- you want to repeal the whole thing?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, Bob, what I want to do is repeal the Obamacare and replace it with common sense reforms that'll bring down the cost of health insurance and protect American jobs. And-- and the things that you rattled off are the kinds of things that we both-- both parties agree to. And we agreed to before the health care bill went into law. The Republicans outline eight or nine ideas including those-- that-- that would really bring down the cost of health insurance without putting the government in charge of our health care. Bob, you need to understand though that in my opinion Obamacare will ruin the best health care system in the country-- in the world, and it will bankrupt our country.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You have began-- been against all the programs that the administration has put out to get people back to work. What would you do to get people back to work, Mister Boehner?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, what I've said repeatedly is what we need to control spending in Washington D.C. We need to remove the uncertainty that clouds our economy from all of these new policies and programs being enacted by this Congress, and we need to provide certainty in terms of what the tax rates are going to be. And I believe that extending all the current tax rates would be a-- a very good sign to the private sector that we expect to create jobs in our country.

BOB SCHIEFFER: How do you feel right now about November? You think you-- you are going to take the House and how many seats do you think you'll-- you'll get?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Well, Bob, I think winning the House is still an uphill fight. But I can tell you that we have great candidates across the country. And we have a great opportunity. But if we were to win back the House, our goal is to renew our efforts to drive for a small, less costly and more accountable government in Washington D.C.

BOB SCHIEFFER: If you do take back the House, how much credit will you give to the Tea Party?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN BOEHNER: Listen, there-- there's a lot of Americans that are engaged in this election--the Tea Party folks, Republicans, independents, and for that matter there are a lot of Democrats that I've talked to over the last several months, who are going to show up and vote for Republicans this time. This is a-- this is a rebellion like I've never seen. I've then seen the American people more engaged in their government than what we see right now. I believe we're going to have a big chance in November. And I'm looking forward to it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right, Mister Boehner. I want to thank you for coming by this morning. I hope you'll come back again. And we appreciate it.

We'll be back in one minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And on this anniversary weekend of 9/11, we're going to talk a little bit about that and the state of the country today--Islam, terrorism and all of that. And we're joined by Congressman Keith Ellison. He is the first Muslim member of Congress--took the oath of office with his hand on a Koran. He is in Minneapolis. And, we're also going to talk with the co-chairman of the 9/11 Commission Tom Kaine. And, Governor Kaine, I want to start with you because you headed that commission that looked in to 9/11 and tried to figure out why it happened and what we should do about it. And, last week, you and your co-chairman Lee Hamilton issued another report that I must say was pretty much overshadowed by the Koran-burning controversy. So I want to put the spotlight on that for a minute. Basically, you and Mister Hamilton concluded that we have failed to anticipate the real danger we face now from homegrown terrorists. You went on to say in the report that terrorists have found our Achilles heel. Just how serious is this and what do you actually mean by that?

TOM KEAN (Co-chairman, 9/11 Commission): Well, we think it's very serious. And we think it's a growing threat because the strategy has changed. It's much more difficult for al Qaeda to maybe have a great big attack like 9/11, so they're plotting smaller attacks. And they're using non-traditional people to try to do them. So the best non-traditional people they can get frankly are American citizens--people with passports, people who can travel back and forth. People like the person who tried to blow up the bomb in Times Square. And they're recruiting these people every day over the internet. They're taking them to places not necessarily in Afghanistan, but Somalia or Yemen for training. And they're trying to get them back into this country to do us harm. And we think that's a real threat that, yeah, we've got to look at more seriously.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well, what-- what should we be doing that we're not doing here?

TOM KEAN: Well-- well, what we didn't do is a lot of recommendation. We want to alert the country. We-- we have a lot of things we can do such as making law enforcement at the local level more consistent, local law enforcement at the federal level, lot-- lot of those things. But we're going to come out later with some recommendations. What we figured in this report, the first thing we had to do was really try to alert the country and alert the federal government to what we consider a new and a very dangerous threat.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mister Ellison, as first Muslim to be elected to the Congress, what do you-- what do you think about what Governor Kean is saying here? Because a lot of people say, well, we've got to be very careful when we start trying to deal with American citizens because their-- you know their civil liberty is at stake here. And we have to be careful not to go too far. You're a Muslim. What about this putting more attention on American citizens?

REPRESENTATIVE KEITH ELLISON (D-Minnesota): Well, I think that Governor Kean is right. I think that he is correct that al Qaeda and the transnational terrorists are trying to be innovative in the ways they could hurt our country. I think the-- the question is not whether his analysis is correct, because I think it is. The real question is what do we do with the information that he has developed? I think the wrong direction is to sort of target discreet and insular minority groups like Muslims and sort of focus on that community in a strict law enforcement sense. Because, I think that could have a-- a negative effect. I think the bright thing to do is, one, reach out to mosques and list some groups all across the country to have a relationship of trust and open communication because these good loyal Americans will be among the first to say, you know what, we found somebody who's-- who's-- we believe is suspicious. Two, we need to make sure that we stand for civil liberties so that we can deprive people like Anwar al-Awlaki and Osama bin Laden of the claim that Muslims are poorly treated in America. The United States is not at war with Islam. The United States is a fair country. We know that there are occasions where people are not treated fairly but those things are not lawful. So we've got to stand on our tradition of civil liberties. The third thing that I want to say to Muslim communities across the country--talk to your kids. Talk-- don't leave people out there and understand that there are people trying to recruit your kids and so you've got to be engaged with them. You've got to talk with them and you've got to have open lines of communication with your children and with the law enforcement community. And there's more things that we can do, but I think that the information is right. The question is, what do we do with it?

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me-- let me just ask you, every poll shows that the country seems to be becoming more anti-Islam. We saw these demonstrations in New York about where to put that mosque. One in five Americans thinks that Barack Obama is a Muslim. Where is this coming from, Mister Ellison?

REPRESENTATIVE KEITH ELLISON: Well, you know, I think that one factor is technology. You know, anybody even an obscure little-known pastor like Terry Jones can-- can do something incredibly inflammatory, get it on YouTube and all of a sudden he's an international celebrity. That is one element. But then there's another one. I think there is some-- some anxiety and frustration in the country. There are some politicians who believe that it's to their political advantage to identify scapegoats and try to turn Americans on Americans for their own political advantage by pandering to our worst instincts and fears. And then, I also think, you know, you can't deny that, you know, the-- the-- the-- the criminals and the murderers who did this thing to our citizens on 9/11, you know, they did-- they did associate themselves with my faith, Islam. That's unfortunate. Nothing they did is-- is the Islam I know, or the overwhelming majority of the Muslims I know. But they click-- they did make that connection. So a lot of Americans are just-- they don't know anything about Islam. I recommend that Americans go out and get with your churches and your synagogues, reach out to a mosque. Get to know people. And in my loc-- you know, a few years ago when Ramadan was going on and Yom Kippur was going on, we got our congregations of Jews and Muslims together to break the fast.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right.

REPRESENTATIVE KEITH ELLISON: I hope people around the country do that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let me ask Governor Kean. Do you think because we mentioned the fellow down there that was wanting to go burn these Korans, he called it off, the secretary of defense called him, General Petraeus spoke out about this, a lot of people say he was just a fringe character and maybe they elevated him to another level when they did that. Do you think that they did the right thing, governor?

TOM KEAN: I think they felt they had to. But he is a fringe character, and he got blown up. But that's not what this country is about. In fact, Osama bin Laden wants this. I mean that's-- his strategy is to get this war against Islam, not a war against Islam. The majority of Islam, vast majority Islam is all with us on this-- on this fight, helping us in this fight. And-- and this is not a country about hate. Never has been. And-- and we've got to recognize that. And we've got to frankly deal with the majority of Islam in good faith and show that we're willing to work with them as they're willing to work with us to get rid of this bad element that did this terrible event on 9/11 and would like to hurt us again if they possibly could.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, governor, I just saw Congressman Ellison shaking his head. We have about twenty seconds in-- in agreement with you-- about twenty seconds left, Congressman, just a final thought.

REPRESENTATIVE KEITH ELLISON: A final thought the-- we-- is that I'm looking and talking with my colleagues about how we could perhaps pull together a bill to help study violent radicalization. We don't know enough about it. And we're operating on anecdotes. I think we need to move forward with Governor Kean's recom-- analysis and recommendation.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right.

REPRESENTATIVE KEITH ELLISON: I commend him for his work.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank you so much both of you. We'll be back with some final thoughts.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: On the Sunday after 9/11, I wrote this. Americans came together last week as they had not come together since World War II. I first noticed it as I was driving to the Capitol--the road rage of rush hour evaporated like a morning dew. Instead flags flew from car antennas and drivers waved and gave a thumbs up as you signaled to change lanes. You could feel it as at the Capitol. Congress passed forty-billion-dollar emergency appropriation by an unprecedented unanimous vote. And when Senate Republican Leader Trent Lott and his Democratic counterpart Tom Daschle approached the microphones, Lott had his arm around and his hand on the shoulder of his old political foe.

We all came together that day because we realized we were all in this together, that any one of us could have been in those buildings or on those planes. So all over America people went back to work with purpose. Military, firefighters and police and rescue peoples risked their lives for no reason of reward but to save the innocent. Partisanship faded and we set about in common cause.

We can only be saddened to look across America today, and realize we have let so much of that slip away. In the days after 9/11, we found what Americans always find in crisis, a way to come together. That ability, that special something we found that day is still deeply ingrained in the American character. And somehow we must find it again. Nine-eleven was a dark day, but the time after became one of our finest hours because we put aside those things that set us apart and recognized that for all our differences, we were first of all--all Americans. That's something we should remember on good days and bad.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we'll see you next week, right here on FACE THE NATION.