

© 2009, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS  
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



## **November 8, 2009 Transcript**

GUESTS:       SENATOR JACK REED  
                  D-Rhode Island

                  SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM  
                  R-South Carolina

                  REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON  
                  D-Missouri

                  REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ  
                  D-Florida

                  ED ROLLINS  
                  Republican Political Consultant

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

## TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, what a week: An election shakes the Democrats; a tragedy at Fort Hood; and last night:

NANCY PELOSI: The bill is passed.

BOB SCHIEFFER: The House passed the health care bill.

We'll get the latest on all of it as we talk with the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Ike Skelton. Two key senators on defense issues--Republican Lindsey Graham and Democrat Jack Reed--who also play key roles when the health reform bill gets to the Senate.

Then we'll bring in Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Democrat of Florida, and Republican political consultant Ed Rollins to talk about the impact of Tuesday's elections on both parties and the health care debate.

I'll have a word then on jumping to conclusions about Fort Hood, and I've jumped.

But first catching up on the week that was 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.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Chairman Skeleton is here in the studio with us this morning. Our two guests from the Senate, Lindsey Graham and Jack Reed, are in their home states of South Carolina and Rhode Island.

Let me start with the senators first because I want to get your take, Senator Reed and Senator Graham, on the health care bill that the House passed last night.

Do you think, at this point, Senator Reed, that there are the votes in the Senate to pass the bill that the House passed? Because it does include the so-called public option--this government health care insurance program that would be run by the government. Do you think it's-- that's going to pass the Senate?

SENATOR JACK REED (D-Rhodes Island, Senate Armed Services Committee): I believe we're going to pass health care reform. I believe we must do this because it's essential to not just the quality of life here, but our economic success in the future. Senator Reid-- Harry Reid has introduced a public option. There's strong support there. But we are far from the-- the end of the debate in the Senate. It will take time. It will be careful, thorough, and deliberate. I hope that a public option is part of the final bill.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But, candidly, right now, you don't have the votes in the Senate for that. Am I not correct in saying that?

SENATOR JACK REED: I think there's a discussion about, as Senator Snowe suggested, a trigger to the public option. Senator Reid has suggested a opt-out by the states. There is a debate, or an active debate, about how the public option might come about. But, overwhelming, sixty percent of the American public want a public option. And I think we should be listening to them as much as listening to ourselves.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let's get the take from Senator Graham. Senator Graham, your friend the independent Democrat Joe Lieberman, on this broadcast last Sunday, said no health care reform legislation is better than health care reform with the public option.

Where do you think this is going in the Senate?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-South Carolina/Senate Armed Services Committee): Well, let's start with the House bill. The House bill is dead on arrival in the Senate. Just look at how it passed. It passed 220 to 215. It passed by two votes. You had 40-- 39 Democrats vote against the bill. They come from red states, moderate Democrats from swing districts.

They bailed out on this bill. It was a bill written by liberals for liberals. And people like Joe Lieberman are not going to get anywhere near the House bill. It cuts Medicare about Five hundred billion dollars. It's over trillion dollars in new spending. It does have the public option. So the House bill is a non-starter in the Senate.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Senator Lieberman also said on that, that if it came to filibustering to keep that bill from passing in the Senate he'd join in that. Would you also be planning to do that if it looks like the public option thing's going to pass?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: And let me tell you why Joe feels that way and I do. I think the public option will destroy our private health care. Nobody in this country in the insurance business can compete with a government-sponsored plan, where the government writes the benefits and politicians will never raise the premiums. It will be a death blow to private choice.

And all of these bills depend on reducing Medicare four to five hundred billion dollars over ten years. Seniors are not going to like that. That's unnecessary. So I just think the construct out of the House and what exists in the Senate is not going to pass. And I hope and pray it doesn't because it would be a disaster for the economy and health care.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, we're going to shift now to the situation in this awful thing that happened down at Fort Hood.

Congressman Skelton, you're chairman of the Armed Services Committee. I've got to ask you. Here we have a man who was trying to get out of the Army, who had ranted about the U.S. war on terrorism, whose contemporaries had reported him to their superiors as, what is going on here? And yet somehow he winds up being the doctor that's sent down to Fort Hood to counsel our soldiers going to Iraq and Afghanistan and coming back. Who dropped the ball here?

REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON (D-Missouri/Chairman, House Armed Services Committee): Well, it's very difficult to say. We had a briefing two days ago by the Army, and they went through all that they knew at the time. And they did say to us that they are investigating it. As you know the Army has its investigators. The FBI is investigating. And, Bob, the truth will out. I-- and I--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): But shouldn't someone have caught this, Congressman?

REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON: That's wait-- that could very well be true. But let's wait until the investigation is over. If that is the case, they'll be front and center. But right now, let's give them a few days to find out just where the ball was dropped, if that's the case.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you plan to investigate?

REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON: I'm going to wait and see what they do. If they are not thorough we will, of course, have additional hearings, briefings on this. It's a tragedy of the first order. It's a tragedy not just for the soldiers and their families that were there. It's a tragedy for all of the families that wear the uniform.

You see, it-- it was not just a-- a fellow soldier that did this. It was a fellow soldier whose job it was to help people. And I can imagine how traumatized the average military family must be.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, I don't think there's any question about that.

Let me go to the senators now. Senator Lieberman-- I mean, this broadcast seems to be talking a lot about Senator Lieberman and what he thinks about things. But he said this morning on Fox there should have been a zero tolerance for the kinds of things that-- that were being said. And as chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, he says he is going to open an investigation.

Do you think that's the right way to go, Senator Reed?

SENATOR JACK REED: Well, I think we do have to look closely at what the Army has done, what the whole armed services has done. But Chairman Skeleton has put it in the right context--we have to wait for their careful deliberations. There's a criminal investigation going on.

But we have to look at the-- the broader issues, not just this incident, but are we taking adequate care of these soldiers? Are we providing the adequate support systems to their families? Are we also-- have appropriate command responsibilities for all of our soldiers, including our medical personnel?

And these are issues that go beyond this incident, and responsible for the Congress to look at them.

REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON: It brings to the top of the table the issue of the post-traumatic system (sic) disorder. And we in our committee, we in Congress, have addressed this now for three years. In the bill we just passed it increases the mental health providers. It also requires additional research into this. It-- but that is being dragged to the front and center because of this incident.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let me go now to Senator Graham. Senator graham, I think all of that is true. But after all, this doctor had not gone to Afghanistan. I mean, he hadn't gone to Iraq. He was fighting to not go there.

The question I have is what happened here that this man who had a very for-- poor performance record at Walter Reed was somehow shuttled off down to Fort Hood, and he winds up being the one talking to these soldiers? It's not clear to me how this could have happened. And, clearly, it should not have happened. Senator?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: Well, Bob, I'll be-- yes, sir. I'll be honest with you. I think, as Ike said, we're doing a lot. I'm on the personnel subcommittee to address post-traumatic syndrome, the Wounded Warrior Program. We've thrown a lot of money. We've put more medical personnel on the front lines of evaluating people.

But, about this case, you know, it's easy to second-guess. And I want to, you know, I'm not going to go down that road yet. I mean, does every soldier who shows discontent with the war and every sold-- soldier that has a bad performance report-- what are we going to do with those folks? So, at the end of the day, let's see what the evidence trail suggests here and not overreact. Because we live in a free and open society. You can be in the military and disagree with policy.

What did his co-workers say about his behavior? How strong were the warning signals? At the end of the day maybe this is just about him. It's certainly not about his religion, Islam. It's not about the Army; it's not about the war. At the end of the day I think it's going to be about him. And if we missed some signals, some clear signals, we-- we've got to fix that. And I trust the Army to want to fix it, because it means more to them than any politician--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well--

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: --because it happened within their ranks.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Senator Graham, let me just, kind of, cut to the chase here. Do you think that the fact—

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (overlapping): Yes, Sir.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --that this man was a Muslim, obviously he was either part of some terrorist plot, and I think most suggestions are that he wasn't; it's looking more and more like he was just sort of a religious nut. And-- and, you know--

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (overlapping): Yes.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --Islam doesn't have a majority, or-- or the Christian religion has its—

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM (overlapping): I'll corner on that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --its full, you know, full helping of-- of nuts too. But do you think the fact that he was a Muslim may have caused the military to kind of step back and be reluctant to challenge him on some of this stuff for fear that they'd be accused of discrimination or something like that?

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: I hope not. I hope-- I hope that's not the case. But to those members of the United States military who are Muslims, thank you for protecting our nation, thank you for standing up against people who are trying to hijack your religion.

I-- I hope that's not the case, Bob. But we need-- his actions do not reflect on-- on the Islamic Muslim faith any more than a--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well, I'm not suggesting that they do.

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: I know.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I'm just suggesting that--

SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM: But some people are. Some people are, and I want to say, as a United States Senator, that I reject that. This man's actions reflect on him. And if we missed some signals about him that we should have known, great. But let's don't take this to a level that we should not. Let's don't accuse people of-- of basically giving him a pass because he's a Muslim. Because I don't think there's any evidence of that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator Reed, what's your thought on that?

SENATOR JACK REED: Well, there are approximately three thousand Americans, men and women of the Muslim faith who are serving in the Army. They've been wounded. Some, I have been told, have been killed in action. Their record is one of service and dedication to the nation and selfless service.

So I agree entirely with Senator Graham. This is not about theology. This is about doing your duty as a soldier. And also, I think we have to be careful not to leap beyond the current investigation.

And I think, again, what we will find is that someone who has deep psychiatric problems. They're not unique to the Army. We've had terrible shootings in college campuses and office buildings. And those things are the result of ultimately of one person's psychological, psychiatric difficulties.

The irony here is he was a psychiatrist. The irony here is he joined the Army as ROTC, at Virginia Tech, came through the Army. He was not sort of just here as a transient.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Let me just interrupt you, because I want to get one final comment. The irony also is that why did he wind up there in that particular job? Do you think this is a sign that the military is simply overextended, Sen-- Congressman Skelton?

REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON: The Army is strained. I've been saying that for some time. That's why we increased the size of the Army this year.

But let-- let me say this, Bob. We should not rush to judgment. I'm an old prosecuting attorney and I know that it takes time to investigate. We have excellent Army investigators. We have the FBI, and they're as good as they come in investigating this whole issue.

The truth will out. We will soon find out answers to the very questions that you're asking. And the chips will fall where they may. Right now, I think our-- our sole concern should be those families--the military families, the Army families, and those that suffered injuries and death.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, gentlemen, I want to thank all of you for being here to talk about this this morning. We'll be back in one minute to talk about the election that now seems like it was about a year ago. It was just on Tuesday.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, we're back now with Democratic Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz from Florida and Republican political consultant Ed Rollins, whose most recent job in the last election, you managed Mike Huckabee's campaign.

So we all were being told that this-- this election was going to scare all the conservative Democrats and they'd be reluctant to vote for the health care plan. Well, a lot of them didn't vote for it in the House last night, but it passed. So?

ED ROLLINS (Republican Political Consultant): Well, there is a long ways to go. And I'm not in any way, shape, or form saying that the health care may not pass. Democrats have majorities, big majorities in both the House and the Senate.

This bill will not pass. I promise you that. No offense to you who voted for it. It wouldn't get 50 votes in the Senate today.

I think the bottom line is what this election was about is that the country is extremely concerned about deficit spending. The President is still popular, but he cannot take his political machine and make it work for other candidates. And I think that was what was proven out.

Midterm elections are a totally different entity. Historically, the party in power always loses seats. I think three times in our history it hasn't happened. I think you've got forty incumbents that you will say yourself are at risk. We probably have ten. We should pick up.

The good news for us is we lost two elections in a row--2006, 2008--we lost more than twenty seats first time in seventy five years. This was a positive sign for us. We have two new governors that obviously can rebuild states and rebuild parties.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What do you think, Congresswoman?

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ (D-Florida): Well, two important things from Tuesday. Number one, in the elections where national issues were actually on the ballot, in the congressional district in New York and in California, both Democratic candidates won and they ran on health care reform and turning the economy around. So in addition to that, particularly in New York 23, the civil war that ripped a gaping hole through the Republican Party exposed itself. And now the next battleground is my home state of Florida between Charlie Crist, our governor, and Marco Rubio, the former speaker. So the Republicans really have demonstrated that they have an internecine battle going on and it's going to really cause them some problems over the next few--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): I want to-- I want to ask Ed Rollins about that in just a minute. But did this election suggest to you that while Barack Obama was able to get out a big vote he was not necessarily able to get out a big vote to vote when he wasn't on the ballot. Did he have very short coattails, or are people just disillusioned with him right now?

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: There's a typical fall-off of turnout in a-- in a mid-term election, an off-year election. It-- it definitely demonstrated that we need to make sure that we focus for the next year and be singularly focused on the issues that matter to the voters, which is the economy and making sure that we can gin up our turnout operation so that we can get the people that voted for Barack Obama to vote for our congressional candidates up-- up and down the ballot next November.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about that race in upstate New York. And here you had a Republican candidate who was literally pushed out of the race by a conservative candidate. And that candidate got the endorsement of Sarah Palin and a whole lot of conservatives. And they say they're going to challenge Republicans now in a lot of primaries during the midterms because they want to move that party to the right. Is that a good thing? And do you think they're going to do that?

ED ROLLINS (overlapping): I think primaries are good things. I don't-- as someone has done this for a long, long time, as long as you've been alive probably, I find primaries basically create a competition, create a clarity.

What happened in New York-- and no offense to your national, you have got a safe seat in California, John Garamendi's election, and obviously the one in New York was unique. The bottom line is you had a candidate that didn't-- that was handpicked by the bosses. And she at the end of the day, after nearly a million dollars being spent by national Republicans, quit two days before and endorsed the Democrat, and then campaigned for him.

He lost by four votes. I think we'll win that four percent. We'll win that seat back again. The bottom line here is that when you go to the trenches, which is what congressional midterm elections are about, there's no national themes. And if there is, usually it goes against the party that is there in power.

What's happened is that Republicans are intense. We now think we can win again. Democrats are a little disillusioned. And I think to a certain extent, you have got to get your side back in the game, and obviously we've got to keep our-- we've got to learn the lessons of this race and move forward.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you expect, though, in more of these primaries that you're going to see maybe sometimes third-party conservatives and conservatives of another stripe challenging the incumbent?

ED ROLLINS (overlapping): It may occur. The bottom line is it's not easy to get on ballots most places. There's the two-party system. New York has-- has multiple parties and you can get-- be a conservative candidate without the whole-- but to get on in a lot of places, it's very, very difficult.

I don't ever underestimate conservative populists. I basically, as you know, managed Ross Perot's campaign for a brief period, and I watched a movement, because there was a dissatisfaction with the two parties. I think today, this conservative element is out there.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What--

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ (overlapping): Bo, the ballot access is not the issue. I mean, they're going to have a massive civil war just within their own Republican primaries, I mean, all across this country. And it's already starting to happen.

Most of our Democratic incumbents, they are ready. They have Republican primaries set up to run against them as individuals. They're battle-tested. They are out reaching out to their constituents, talking about health care reform, talking about turning the economy around. And they're going to be ready to-- for prime-time next November.

BOB SCHIEFFER: One of the things that has (sic) to worry you as a Democrat is the independent vote. Barack Obama got it. This time it went in large numbers to the-- to the other party--to Republicans.

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Well, the independent vote is singularly important. It was in '06 when we won thirty seats, in '08 when we won twenty-six seats. And it will again in 2010. We're going to make sure that we focus on things that matter to them.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): But why do you think it happened the way it did in this-- this election on Tuesday?

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: Well, I think, again, the independent voters in New York 23, which is -- and we've got congressional elections next year, so it's important not to focus on two gubernatorial races.

Look, we wish we would have won them, but the last six gubernatorial elections in New Jersey and Virginia, the President's party didn't win them. So if we had won one of those two, it would have been highly unusual.

At the end of the day, in a year from now, which is a long way off, we have congressional midterms. And those individual members of Congress are battle-tested. They've been reaching out to their constituents. They're focusing on the economy, on creating jobs, on health care reform, on making sure that we can have an energy-focused economy with green jobs. And they're going to appeal to those independents, because at the end of the day, they want to make sure that they have a job, that they have health care that costs a reasonable amount of money, and that they can put food on their table.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do either of you think there is a great deal-- and we have about thirty seconds left-- a great deal to be learned from these elections this week or were they just curtain raisers--

ED ROLLINS (overlapping): No, I think the independent vote is critical. We have now gone back to the suburbs and had success. They are the plurality of the voters. Whoever gets them is going to win.

REPRESENTATIVE DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ: The lesson to be learned is we have to focus on the economy, and our candidates are going to be doing that over the next year.

ED ROLLINS: And ten percent unemployment is deadly.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Thanks to both of you. Back in a moment with some final thoughts.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today, the President has asked the nation not to jump to conclusions about what happened at Fort Hood, which is usually good advice, but it's also what government officials generally say when the government fouls up.

Good advice or not, I am jumping to an obvious conclusion--this should not have happened. That doctor should not have been at Fort Hood. I don't care how hard-up the Army is for mental health professionals. A government psychiatrist with bad performance ratings who has been trying to get out of the Army and who had been saying what Dr. Hasan had been saying about the war on terrorism should not have been shipped off to Fort Hood to give grief counseling.

What do you suppose he was telling the soldiers? That after what they had done, they ought to feel bad?

Certainly no officer with his record would have been allowed to lead soldiers into combat. But sadly, this shows the Army still does not take protecting soldiers' mental health as seriously as it does training them to shoot.

And then there is the other part that often happens in government--don't deal with the problem, shuffle it off to somewhere else. When he had problems at Walter Reed hospital, the doctor was just packed off to Fort Hood.

Investigators confirm now that someone by his name had been posting messages on the Internet about how suicide bombers are as heroic as American soldiers who fall on grenades to save their comrades. But the investigators say it is not clear if Dr. Hasan actually wrote those messages. Based on what they found out so far, my question is, do you suppose anyone has even asked him?

Back in a moment.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Thank you and we'll see you right here next Sunday on FACE THE NATION.

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.