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FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: Senator-Elect JOHN THUNE, (R-SD)

Senator-Elect JOHN ISAKSON, (R-GA)

Senator-Elect KEN SALAZAR, (D-CO)

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, three new faces in the 2005 Congress, Senators Thune, Salazar and Isakson. When Congress convenes in January, it will face some of the most contentious issues ever--the worsening of the Iraq War, the reform of Social Security and the possibility of a new Supreme Court justice, plus mounting deficits. Should President Bush try to work with or against the Democrats? Will fiscal difficulties hamstringing the administration and Congress? And will the war continue to dominate everything? We'll ask three new members of the Senate, Senators-elect John Thune, Republican of South Dakota, Johnny Isakson, Republican of Georgia, and Ken Salazar, Democrat of Colorado. I'll have a final word on the week in between Christmas and New Year's, but first, Thune, Salazar and Isakson 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.

We welcome this morning three new members of the Senate, from South Dakota, Republican Johnny Thune, from Georgia, Republican Johnny Isakson, and from Colorado, Democrat Ken Salazar. We had hoped to include the Senate's other new Democrat, Barack Obama, but he was unable to join us this morning because his grandmother is ill.

Well, gentlemen, the events of the week remind us that the issue that the administration and the last Congress grappled with is still there. Senator Thune, during your campaign, you repeatedly criticized Senator Daschle for his criticism of the war effort. How do you now see the war? What do you think the state of it is now?

Senator-Elect JOHN THUNE (Republican, South Dakota): I think the mission is the same, Bob. We still need to get a democracy stood up in Iraq. We're moving toward free elections. We need to get the Iraqi army trained and able to defend the Iraqi people. So I think that the mission has not changed. Obviously, you know, we've incurred some casualties. We knew going in this was going to be hard work but I think we do need to stay the course. And as an incoming member of the United States Senate, I want to make sure that--and a member of the Armed Services Committee--our men and women in uniform have the tools, the equipment, the weaponry, the training that they need to complete the mission. I don't think things have changed dramatically in terms of what we need to get done there, but we are moving now more quickly toward these elections and I'm hopeful that those will come off well, we'll be able to get a constitution ratified, get the Iraqi army trained and get a democracy stood up in Iraq. That's the best thing that can happen.

SCHIEFFER: Well, that is a worthy goal, but, you know, I was just looking back over things in the past and I ran across something that said in April of 2003, after the invasion, the Pentagon projected that the US occupation would end this month. Yet we saw the worst single attack last week in the 21 months since the invasion began. So when you say that we're moving forward here, what is your criteria?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Well, again I think that the time line and the goals are the same. You know, again with this last week, the insurgents aren't going away. They're going to try and make this difficult. There are a lot of folks out there who are loyal to Saddam Hussein's regime who want to make this problematic. They want to create these types of disruptions so

that Iraq can't move toward a democracy and that's going to be an ongoing problem that we're going to deal with probably for some time to come. But I think that we are in this for the long haul. We need to complete the mission. I think the military understands that. The administration understands that and I think the Congress...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sen.-Elect THUNE: ...fully understands that and I think that the president and our troops will have the support that they need to finish the mission.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Salazar, as a Democrat, let me go to you. A new poll this week showed that now 56 percent of the American people feel that the war in Iraq is not worth it. That's up 8 points over this summer. What would you do at this point? What will you propose when you get to Washington?

Senator-Elect KEN SALAZAR (Democrat, Colorado): Well, first of all, let me say that as an incoming senator-elect I am hopeful and optimistic that we're going to be able to work on a bipartisan basis to address all the issues that face our country, including the issue of Iraq. On Iraq, I think that the fact of the matter is, we are there and we need to figure out the best way in which to move forward. Part of what I have kept hearing is that we don't have the right kind of resources and the right kind of support for our troops on the ground and I think we need to make sure that we have everything available to us that we are making available to our troops so that we can, in fact, move forward. I also think that one of the things that important for us to do is to move forward in trying to internationalize the effort. We need to bring more of our allies from other countries to help us complete the mission in Iraq. I think it is not a mission that the United States can accomplish alone.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Isakson, what are your thoughts on that? Thus far, the administration has seemed to resist reaching out to other nations beyond where we are now. Do you think there is a way to bring more of the international community into this?

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON (Republican, Georgia): Well, I think the president did a great job of reaching out early on. I think the international community hasn't done a very good job of reaching out to America, in particular, the people of the Middle East. I admire the president's commitment, the commitment our men and women in harm's way are doing right now. We have over 30 nations participating. We've had great support from Great Britain and hopefully, when the result of the elections in January 31st take place and democracy begins to take root in Iraq as it has in Afghanistan, the world community will want to be there.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let's talk about some other things you're going to face. One of them is going to be Social Security. Senator Thune, do you think that there can be cooperation among Democrats and Republicans on this? The president keeps talking about the ways he wants to reach out. I'm not yet myself able to identify any areas where he has reached out. Do you see any?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: I certainly hope that we can do this in a bipartisan way, Bob. I think it's important and this is an issue of great consequence to America, not only currently but for future generations and we need to get it right. I do think that these solutions, because of the recent elections, the re-election of the president, stronger majorities in the House and Senate, are--these solutions are going to be found in the center right side of the political spectrum. But that isn't to say that there can't be a, you know, moving to the middle, where Democrats

and Republicans can't work together on an issue of consequence like Social Security. You know, in my view, we need to address this now. I don't think Congress can afford to wait.

The analogy I like to use is do you want to have a filling now, or a root canal later? You know, there's going to be some pain and discomfort associated with fixing some of these problems now, with the pain and discomfort is going to be much more extreme if you wait longer. It's important that Congress, the administration, while we have this window of opportunity, just after an election, work across party lines in a bipartisan way to try and accomplish some reforms in Social Security. And I think...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sen.-Elect THUNE: ...the president has made it clear he's committed to doing that, and I think the leadership--the Democrat leadership in the Senate and the House are willing to do that as well.

SCHIEFFER: He--in fact...

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Obviously, we're not always going to agree on every fine point.

SCHIEFFER: Yeah. If we could kind of be a little more concise, if I may. If we could--could I ask you, Senator Salazar, he has made it clear that he does wish to do something about Social Security but he hasn't as yet said how he intends to pay for his plan. Some people are saying that in general ways, the way--what the president has in mind here is something that's going to add perhaps \$1 trillion, maybe \$2 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years. Would you favor a plan like that? Do you think anything like that has a chance at all of passing either house of the Congress?

Sen.-Elect SALAZAR: You know, I'm open to working with the president and with my Republican colleagues on all issues that are facing our country including the issue of Social Security. I do think that we have concerns that need to be addressed with respect to the Social Security proposal that I have seen from the president. I haven't seen the details of it. But I do have concerns that we are looking at an additional deficit of a trillion to \$2 trillion in its implementation, and I think at a time when we're facing the largest deficits that the United States has ever faced in its history, it ought to be something that should be of concern not only to the president but to our entire country.

So I think until we figure out a way of making sure how we are going to pay for the privatization of Social Security that it ought to be a concern to us. In addition, the potential continued draining of the Social Security trust fund by the proposal is something that I know is going to be of concerns to Americans across the country.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Isakson, where do you think we can find this money if, indeed, the Congress does decide to adopt such a plan?

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON: Well, back to your first comment, Bob, I think the president in his press conference this past week did a great job of explaining in concept, but not getting into detail so the plan could get derailed early. I saw the minority leader in the House say that all issues are on the table. I've heard Ken Salazar talk about reaching across. I think we have the unique opportunity to put everything on the table and try and work towards a solution.

As far as our deficit and debt are concerned, a big part of our debt's what we borrowed from the Social Security system over the last 42 years, which is why we need to really look towards a fix now. So hopefully we can have cool heads and calm minds sit at the same table, address what is a serious problem that looms in the future and make it work, not only for current recipients but for generations to come.

SCHIEFFER: Would you ever favor reforms like raising the retirement age, for example, put in a means test for Social Security? Some people are suggesting that such things could actually go a long way toward fixing this problem.

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON: Well, such things already exist in terms of the taxation of Social Security, in terms of outside income. That's a form of means test. There've been other tweaks to the system since it was originally created. The biggest mistake for any of us to make is to take an isolated statement, one component, throw it out there and then have somebody come and try and scuttle the bigger concept over minute details early on in this debate. I think we have to get all the numbers on the table, all the ideas on the table, all the options on the table, and then come about a meaningful solution that meets the needs of the American people.

SCHIEFFER: But, Senator Thune, don't you have to--it's not a minute detail to say how you're going to pay for something. If you go down to buy a car, one of the major issues you have to deal with is how much it's going to cost. Aren't you going to have to come up with some idea of how you're going to pay for any reform plan before it has a chance of passage?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Well, I think that is the point, Bob, is that, you know, we have to look at, not early on in this process, prejudicing some of these ideas. I think that things have to--you know, we have to put these ideas on the table. There have been some other models around the world that have worked that we could perhaps choose from. But in my view, at least right now, early on in this process, if we're serious about fixing this problem, both sides have to be able to sit down at the table and be willing to put everything on the table. And...

SCHIEFFER: Do you think you ought to put on the table, for example, raising the payroll tax in order to reform Social Security?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Well, I personally--that's not something I personally would support. I don't believe in raising the payroll tax or reducing benefits. I don't see those necessarily as options, but--and I don't think that the president does either. But some of the other things that you mentioned earlier--retirement age is something that's already been addressed in Social Security. There have been some other suggestions that were advanced and forwarded by the administration this last week. So, you know, I think that short of raising taxes, short of reducing benefits, we ought to look at the array of solutions that might be out there. And I certainly think that it's important enough as a priority that this will require a strong bipartisan coalition.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let's take a break and we'll come back and talk about this and other things in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back again with Senators-elect John Thune, Johnny Isakson and Ken Salazar.

Senator Salazar, I want to talk to you for a minute because there was not much the Democrats had to be happy with in this recent election. But you won your race, one of two new Democrats to come to the Senate. I think a lot of Democrats want to know: What did you do right? What did you do differently than Democrats in other races around the country?

Sen.-Elect SALAZAR: Well, I think what we did right is we talked about the issues that affected the people of the state of Colorado. And I've always said that for me, the most important thing about me is that I'm the senator for all the people of Colorado, including Republicans and Independents. And that means that I have a responsibility to go and work with my colleagues and try to devise solutions that face the American people today and that face our people here in Colorado. I received, you know, even though Colorado has about 10 percent more registered Republicans than Democrats, I ended up getting a huge number of Republicans who also voted for me. That's because I bring a record of experience to this job where I have brought Republicans and Democrats together to work on the issues that face our state. I think our...

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just ask you about it--let me just ask you about that. What would you--what advice would you give to other Democrats around the country?

Sen.-Elect SALAZAR: Well, the advice I would give to other Democrats around the country is that it's important to be inclusive, important to know all places of your state that you represent, and make sure that you're standing up both for urban and suburban, as well as for rural issues, which is something that I've always done here in Colorado.

My major point that I'm going to bring to Washington on this issue, Bob, is that I think it's very easy to talk about the importance of bipartisanship and inclusion, but when it comes down to walking the talk, it's a whole other issue. And so one of the great challenges that we're going to see in our first 30 to 90 days here in Washington, DC, in this new Congress and with this second term of the administration is whether or not there's going to be inclusiveness of the Democrats as we try to tackle the very tough issues of Iraq and the future of Iraq, as we deal with Social Security, as we deal with the tough issues of the crippling deficit that we have in our nation today. I think if we can have an inclusive involvement of Democrats and Republicans, we can tackle the issues that face America today.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let me ask you, Senator Thune, one of the things that may come up during this session is the president may nominate someone for the Supreme Court. What, in your view, should the nominee be? Should there be any kind of a litmus test or should this be someone who must be pro-choice or must be pro-life? What would be your idea of the kind of nominee that could be confirmed by the Senate? What would you like to see?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Well, I think the president has made it abundantly clear that he isn't going to impose any kind of a litmus test. I do think that it should be a strict instructionist, someone who is going to interpret the Constitution and not try and rewrite from the bench the laws of the Constitution of the United States. And I think that is a criteria that certainly I will use, and I think that the president will use, and I would also hope that other members of the United States Senate will use.

But I think important thing here, Bob, too, is that these nominees that come forward get a vote. That was an issue that was important in this last campaign I think for a lot of us who were running is that people who were set forth by the president of the United States not be

held up because of a filibuster, because the rules of the Senate are used in some way that prevent them from getting that up-and-down vote in the Senate.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think it would be a wise thing, Senator, if the majority leader, Senator Frist, does what he has threatened to do, and that is rule the filibuster out of order?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: Well, you know, I guess my view on that is I'm open to supporting that kind of a rule change where judges are concerned because I do think it undermines the intentions of our founders with respect to the Senate's role in the confirmation process when you use filibuster to prevent judges from having an up-and-down vote. Changing the rules to that effect I know would be somewhat controversial, and everybody would argue, and certainly the minority would argue against that. My view is that we need to give these judges an up-and-down vote.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let's ask Senator Isakson: Do you think that would be a wise idea? You back in Georgia have always had the reputation for being one who could work with members of the other party. Do you think that would work in the United States Senate--you've been in the Congress; you know how it operates--if the Republicans do try to rule filibusters out of order?

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON: Well, I think the ideal situation in the upcoming Congress would be for the first judicial appointment, whoever nominee, whoever it might be, for the Democrats not to block it or try and use cloture vote to block it and, in fact, let the debate take place and the vote take place. That would really create the environment that I think John and Ken and all of us seek.

I think on the other hand, one of the reasons the outcome in this past election was as conclusive as it was was the apparent obstruction on judicial appointments in the United States Senate and I think if it continues, then we have to look to those rules and some of the precedents that exist to move these appointments to the floor and have them debated for confirmation.

SCHIEFFER: If I understand it, we've had only 10 that have been blocked and a hundred or so that have gone forward. That's not acceptable in your view?

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON: I think the Constitution of the United States is quite clear in terms of the Senate's responsibilities to confirm. It's also clear where it requires a super majority and votes on confirmation do not require super majority but the cloture rule in effect requires a super majority and I think that's obstruction and going around the intent of the Constitution.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Salazar, as a Democrat, what do you think would happen if Republicans tried to rule the filibuster out of order?

Sen.-Elect SALAZAR: You know, I think it's going to be a bloody fight and I would hope that it can be avoided and I would ask my colleagues to try to avoid that in the US Senate. I think that the best thing to do is for the president to have consultation both with Republicans and with Democrats prior to making the appointments and that way when you actually get into the confirmation process, you're going to get a judge appointed without having all the difficulty and controversy that you've seen in the limited number of appointments.

I think that to abandon a precedent which has been a part of the history of the United States Senate for more than two centuries is something that we ought not to do. I think it would

send out the wrong signal of the kind of approach that both Senator Thune and Senator Isakson and others have been trying to take and that is that we're going to work on the issues of the country together.

SCHIEFFER: Let's talk about one of the most controversial, Senator Salazar, and that is this whole question of immigration. Where do you think this is going? Do you think illegal immigrants ought to be given driver's licenses, for example?

Sen.-Elect SALAZAR: You know, I think the president has been very direct both in meetings with the new senators-elect as well as in his public statements over the last week about immigration being an issue that needs to be dealt with. From my point of view, it's a major issue for our country if we're going to address what ought to be the number one issue of our nation today and that's assuring homeland security. The president has a proposal out there on a guest worker program. There are a number of other proposals that have been put on the table. And just like other major issues that we're going to face in our country, I think they all ought to be looked at and examined and then seeing how we can put together the right kind of coalition in both the Senate and the House to be able to deliver an immigration reform package to the president that works.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Thune and Senator Isakson, we have just a little time left. In 30 seconds, Senator Thune, do you think that we should give illegal immigrants driver's licenses?

Sen.-Elect THUNE: I don't. I think this is a big issue that will be dealt with by the Congress. It's an issue that's important to the country, as Ken mentioned from a national security, homeland security standpoint, also to our economy, but I think it needs to be handled in a way that rewards people who play by the rules, who follow the law and that would be my approach with respect to that issue and I hope we can reach a consensus.

SCHIEFFER: Senator Isakson, quickly.

Sen.-Elect ISAKSON: I absolutely agree. Proof of lawful residence has to be a prerequisite to a driver's license. The 19 hijackers on 9/11 possessed 63 lawful driver's licenses. That shows you we have a broken system and we've got to stop it.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Gentlemen, thanks to all of you and I want to wish you the best of luck as you begin this new session on Capitol Hill.

We'll be back with a final word in just a second.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally, 'tis the day after Christmas and just as expected, Santa's come and departed quite undetected. The remarkable feat as he went town to town; try parking your sled on a roof that slants down. Yet stockings got stuffed. In fact, so did we, presents and carols and Christmas turkey. But now it's all past and it's time to get movin'. New year's a-coming. It's time to start groovin'. We're into that week that falls in between, so throw out the tree and take down the green. Christmas was great, a roaring success. Now take down the lights and clean up the mess.

Notes of thanks must be written for gifts we received before trading them in for something we need. What's left of the turkey was turned into hash. Oh, I'd love some, but first I must take out the trash. Honey, I'll do it, honest I will, since you're giving me one of those looks that

could kill. But here on the sofa, my eyes start to close and if I get lucky, maybe I'll doze. Of the Christmas traditions, the one I would choose most relaxing by far is the post-Christmas snooze. The grandkids have left--oh, my, they're so cute--but how peaceful it is when the TV goes mute. So let's pause and reflect on the joy and the fun and put off for a while the work to be done. New year's a-coming, Christmas we've seen. But my wish is to rest in this week in between.

That's it. We'll see you next year right here on FACE THE NATION.