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



March 28, 2010 Transcript

GUEST: SENATOR JIM DeMINT
Republican-South Carolina

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN
Republican-Minnesota

TIM KAINE
Chairman, Democratic National Committee

MODERATOR/
HOST: Mr. BOB SCHIEFFER
CBS News

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

TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, is the battle to reform health care over or is it just beginning? A Washington Post poll out this morning says the nation is still deeply divided over whether the reform passed by Congress is a good thing or bad.

We'll start today with two Republican firebrands--South Carolina Senator Jim DeMint, and Minnesota Congresswoman Michele Bachmann.

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN (R-Minnesota): This has more in common with tyranny.

BOB SCHIEFFER: They are already trying to repeal the reform. Is that even possible? And what about the violence in the wake of the congressional action--isolated incidents or signs of a dangerous anger? We'll hear from the chairman of the Democratic Party Tim Kaine.

Then I'll have a final word on one man's plan to take the partisans out of partisan politics.

But first, the aftershocks from health care reform 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. Republican Senator Jim DeMint is in his home state. He is at Greenville, South Carolina, today. We start with him.

Senator, good morning. Welcome to the broadcast. You said that this was going to be Barack Obama's Waterloo. And if the Republicans could defeat him on this, it would break him. Well, he won Waterloo, it looks like. So I guess my question to you is what do you do next?

SENATOR JIM DEMINT (R-South Carolina): Good morning, Bob. We'll find out in November who won or lost this battle. Over sixty percent of Americans still want Republicans to fight to repeal this. So what I do next is I'm trying to replace those who voted for this bill. I want to repeal it. And I want to replace it with some real reform that-- that put patients in charge of their health care again.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, you know, a new poll out this morning in The Washington Post does not suggest that a majority of Americans are against this, but what it does show is the country is still deeply divided. It says forty-six percent support this, fifty percent oppose it. That is about the same as it was before the legislation was passed. But I guess--

SENATOR JIM DEMINT (overlapping): Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --the question I have for you is--can the President expect cooperation on anything from Republicans from here on in?

SENATOR JIM DEMINT: Well, the President has burned a lot of bridges on this health care reform package that he's rammed through Congress and rammed down the throats of the American people. The procedures that were used, the backroom deals, the kickbacks ha-- have created a lot of bad feelings. Now, we're still looking for ways that we can work together with the

President, particularly on fore-- foreign policy and as it relates to the security of Americans. We have to keep that. But all of us who believe in freedom in this country recognize that if this health care bill stands, it'll not only destroy our health care system, we believe it'll bankrupt our country. So to give up on repealing this bill will be giving up on our country for me and I think for millions of Americans.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, do you plan to do anything other than just try to defeat Democrats in November at the polls? Will there be anything between now and then, any action you will take, Senator?

SENATOR JIM DEMINT: Well, Bob, it's going to be important that we help people understand what this bill does. I mean, we're already getting letters from physicians who are going to take early retirement or who are no longer going to take Medicare or Medicaid. I think as people figure out that this bill cuts from Medicare and doesn't pay doctors enough to see Medicare patients, millions of the people who they say are going to get insurance are just going to be put on Medicaid. Over half the doctors already don't take Medicaid. Businesses gon-- are going to be taxed. People are going to lose their jobs. We need to help Americans understand that there's a better way to do this. But we have to begin by repealing this bill that's based on government controlling our health care. So part of what we've got to do is just make people aware of what's really going to happen over the next few years and, hopefully, enlist them to help us repeal it by replacing those who voted for it in November.

BOB SCHIEFFER: You know one of the things the President said when you all said that we're going to continue to oppose this, he said bring it on. That he-- he was ready for the fight. And I suppose one of the ways he is doing that is he announced last night that he is going to what they call recess appoint fifteen nominees for government jobs that have been appointments that are being held up in the Senate. He's going to appoint them during this recess. And for people who don't quite understand what that means, what it means is they can go to work, fill out those positions, and continue to work in those positions until the next Congress is seated next year.

SENATOR JIM DEMINT: Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: What's your response to that?

SENATOR JIM DEMINT: Well, Bob, the President is mocking Americans who continue to be against this bill. And he said bring it on. And that's what we intend to do. Now, his recess appointments belie the fact that hundreds of his nominations have been confirmed unanimously by the Senate. But he has had mixed in with these-- these batch of nominations some pretty radical folks. Craig Becker, who was in the group that he appointed by executive fiat yesterday, is someone who has worked for unions his entire career. And he put him on a board that's supposed to be unbiased arbitrators between businesses and unions. Democrats opposed this nomination. So there's bipartisan opp-- opposition. And all we had asked for is some debate and a vote on this nominee. He decided to circumvent Congress again, which has become his style on so many issues, and just appoint him while we were out of town.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Senator, we saw some pretty scary stuff last week, both before and after this vote. We saw members' offices that were trashed. We saw death threats. We saw all kinds of things. Do you think the parties have an obligation to try to tone down some of this runaway rhetoric? Is it, in fact, dangerous?

SENATOR JIM DEMINT: Hey, Bob, I've been with hundreds of thousands of tea party patriots. And I've been with thousands of people at town halls and Washington rallies. And I've never seen any violence or heard any bad language. Now, always when you get large groups you're going to get a few bad actors. But it's unfair and untrue to try to paint this whole American awakening with some of the bad comments that we heard last week in Washington. There's no place for violence or bad language in American politics. We-- we settle our differences with our voices and our votes. But I do believe that it is the right and obligation of Americans, when they think the government is going in-- in the wrong direction, to speak out and even take to the streets in nonviolent protests to let their congressmen and senators know that they don't like the way we're going. And I think that's what we're seeing. And I think we're going to see a lot more of it. But again, I encourage all Americans to do it the way we do it right in America--no violence, just good protest, if that is necessary. But let's take this to the November elections and let those people in Congress know who you want to represent you.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Senator Jim DeMint from South Carolina. Thank you so-- so much, Senator.

And now we want to go directly to Congresswoman Michele Bachmann, who joins us from her home state. She's in Minneapolis today.

Congresswoman--and we used a little clip of what you said in the beginning of this--you said last week that health care reform was dangerous, and-- and you equated it with tyranny. Do you really mean that?

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN (R-Minnesota): I do, because now we have the federal government, Bob, taking over ownership or control of fifty-one percent of the American economy. This is stunning. Prior to September of 2008, one hundred percent of the private economy was private. Today, the federal government has taken either direct ownership or control of banks, the largest insurance company in the United States, AIG, Freddie and Fannie. The federal government now owns, Bob, over fifty percent of all home mortgages. Now, the direct student loan industry, Chrysler, GM. And with the health care industry that's an additional eighteen percent of the private economy, which means government would be making decisions over our lives from cradle to the grave. I think that's a stunning level of government takeover and control we have never seen before in the history of our country.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, we'd never seen the government on-- I mean the economy on the verge of total collapse. And-- and we have to point out that a lot of this began during the Bush administration. It was President Bush, who was President, when the law of a-- TARP law was passed to give aid to these big banks and so forth. Both people in that administration and this one--

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN (overlapping): I-- I agree and I-- I vo-- I vote--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --would say that that staved off what could have been something like the Great Depression. You don't agree with that?

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: Actually, I don't agree with that. No. I voted against the seven-hundred-billion-dollar bailout. And that was really the mother of purchasing out AIG, purchasing the-- the banks, also purchasing Freddie and Fannie, purchasing GM and Chrysler. That hasn't helped to turn our economy around. Remember, when President Obama told Congress you have to pass my trillion-dollar bailout or we could get unemployment as high

as eight percent. Here we are still at ten percent unemployment levels. And the administration has warned the American people get ready, this is the new normal. We don't have to have this be the new normal. But if government persists, remember, again, fifty-one percent of the economy is now under the ownership or control of the federal government. We need an exit strategy and we need to get back to private ownership so that we can have a productive economy.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Congresswoman, I want to ask you about something that's stirred up something of a controversy when you said it some-- some time ago. You said that you thought Barack Obama had anti-American views. And just last week you said, "I said," and this is a quote from you, "Very serious concerns that Barack Obama had anti-American views. Now I look like Nostradamus." So do you-- what do you mean the President is anti-American?

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: What I meant are the policies that I had just mentioned to you. I think it is very serious when the federal government directly owns car companies. That is not the American way, or when the American economy directly owns fifty percent of all America's mortgages or has direct ownership or control of the health care industry. Just this week, we saw American businesses announce that Obamacare will cost them fourteen billion dollars. Here in Minnesota, Medtronic announced because of the new tax increases on medical devices they could be looking at shedding an additional thousand jobs or 3M, it will cost them potentially ninety million dollars in the first quarter. President Obama's own numbers, his own economic advisor, Christina Romer, said that Obamacare could cost the economy five and a half million jobs lost. That is not going to bring us back to economic health going forward, but that's what you expect when you have massive tax increases, massive Medicare cuts, massive premium increases. You will have massive job loss.

BOB SCHIEFFER: I want to ask you about where Republicans go from here on health care reform. Sarah Palin famously said last week that it is not time for Republicans to retreat. It is time to reload. Now, she has since modified that and said she wasn't talking about guns. She was talking about getting out there and using the vote. Do you think Sarah Palin has overstated it here?

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: Well, I think that she's accurately saying that the Republican Party and-- and people who are conservatives in this country and Independents and disaffected Democrats want to have the federal government repeal Obamacare. And I would agree. I went to the House floor the first thing on Monday and put a bill in that would repeal Obamacare. So did other of my colleagues, Steve King of Iowa, also Parker Griffith of Alabama, and also other members as well. Jim DeMint also put in a bill to repeal Obamacare. That's what I believe the American people want us to do. And again, the New England Journal of Medicine released a survey the week that President Obama signed Obamacare stating that the-- ov-- over thirty percent of American physicians--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): So--

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: --would leave the profession if the government took over health care. That's very serious going forward.

BOB SCHIEFFER: So you intend to-- to oppose this, obviously. Do you think Republicans should co-- should cooperate with the administration on anything from here on in, or just put it all on the line here, oppose this administration and let people settle it in November?

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: Well, I-- I think that we need to repeal Obamacare. But I think we need to be all about the American people. That's why I oppose Obamacare and why I believe we must repeal it. We need to work together, whether we're Republicans, Independents, Democrats, we all have to work together. For whatever is in the best interest of the American people. And repeal most certainly is in the best interest--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): All right.

REPRESENTATIVE MICHELE BACHMANN: --of the people because this bill will lead to economic harm if it's left in place.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, thank you so much, Congresswoman.

We'll get a totally different view of all of this in just one minute when we talk to the Democratic Party Chairman Tim Kaine.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we're joined now by Tim Kaine, the former governor of Virginia, and the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Well, I would just say to you, Governor, you heard the Republican strategy from here on in, apparently, is to oppose to try to repeal health care. Do you think, in fact, that that's possible?

TIM KAINÉ (Chairman, Democratic National Committee): I think it's unwise. And I don't think it will happen, Bob. You know, one of the things I was struck in-- in listening to Senator DeMint and Congresswoman Bachmann is just the incredible-- just anger that's there in them. And I don't think Americans are angry people. I think Americans are upbeat, optimistic, can-do people. Now, we're in a tough time. And they want to see government that is working to obtain results. But that-- I don't think they want to see somebody who's calling the President anti-American, or a member of the Senate who says the main goal of health care should be to break the President. Now, this is about people and the problems they're experiencing. So, they may want to push forward on a repeal of health care to tell small businesses you're not going to get tax credits to pay for insurance. To tell families, you now can't keep children on your policy until you're twenty-six. To tell folks that you're now subject to these abuses of the insurance industry. I think they'd-- they'd be unwise to do it. And I think the American public will reject it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, what about this whole idea of-- of this sort of runaway rhetoric? As I-- as I said to Senator DeMint, there were so-- kind of scary pictures that we saw on television. And I know you asked the chairman of The Republican National Committee, Michael Steele, to join with you in signing a joint letter just really calling on people to be more civil in this debate.

TIM KAINÉ: Bob, I think we do need to be civil. Look, we can-- one of the great things about this country is we can disagree in significant ways about important matters. But we can do it in-- in civil and appropriate ways. And so when I saw the anger level last week, I wrote a letter to Chairman Steele and said just said, "Hey, let's do something good. Let's join together and issue a statement calling on Americans to be civil but also on our elected officials to model the right behavior." And it was in-- interesting what happened. The RNC considered my request for four or five hours, they then called the office back to say they wouldn't sign on to the statement. And one minute later, they released a press statement just blasting the DNC that they center out. We then did what we-- we were not going to do, which we just disclosed my letter in the statement. And if you read the RNC's press statement and you read the very evenhanded thing that I

asked them to-- to-- to sign, you'll see that this kind of rhetoric is not only a little bit out of control but, apparently, some think it's their-- to their strategic advantage to keep people stowed.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Did-- did you get any behind-the-scenes words from the Republicans about why they didn't want to do this or--

TIM Kaine: What-- what happened was they-- they, again, they-- about five hours after we gave them the statement and again the statement is completely evenhanded. It unpoint the fingers at any side. It just says we all ought to tone the rhetoric down. They called the office back and just said, you know, the chairman doesn't want to sign it because he thinks he's already spoken enough about this topic. But literally within a minute, the-- the press statement was out just blasting the DNC and they're arguing that we're trying to fan the flames. It's not the Democrats who are shouting down the President on the floor of Congress or calling names at members of-- of Congress, you know, like baby killer or you lie. That's not what we're doing. This week you saw the Republicans say we're not going to cooperate with the President between now and the end of the year. The Dems are not saying we're not to cooperate. We're going to con-- keep reaching out on everything and hopefully find some common ground. But I think the other side has just adopted a strategy of complete obstruction. And, you know, even beyond health care, Bob, I think that's a loser's strategy. Americans want results. That's what they want to see out of Washington--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Let--

TIM Kaine: --they want people to work together.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --let me-- let me just ask you about this because you all put out a fund-raising--

TIM Kaine: Mm-Hm.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --letter at the DNC. After all of this it raised a few eyebrows--

TIM Kaine: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --because it talked about this-- these runaway things, these demonstrations--

TIM Kaine (overlapping): The bricks through the window--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --and bricks through the windows--

TIM Kaine: Mm-Hm.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --and stuff and then used it as part of a fund-raising letter.

TIM Kaine: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Was that appropriate?

TIM Kaine: Well, Bob, I'll tell you why we did it. We-- we did put out a fund-raising letter referring to the bricks through the window and others but also referring to the fact that our

members who voted for health reform last Sunday are being hit by onslaughts of advertising in their districts criticizing them some with the most extreme language. One of my jobs as party chair is I want to be on TV thanking our members and praising them for doing an important thing for the American public, so I did. I sent out an e-mail and I said, "Look, our folks are under attack who did a good thing." And I want to be able to put ads up on the air to protect them. And so, yes, we are out there vigorously promoting our members who did a-- a very important thing for American families by, you know-- by-- by enacting this reform which will provide a path to coverage, will provide security for those with insurance. And as the CBO said we'll bring health care costs down.

BOB SCHIEFFER: A lot of people are going to be watching what happens back in these congressional home districts over this Easter recess.

TIM Kaine (overlapping): Right.

BOB SCHIEFFER: They're talking about more demonstrations and so forth. Republicans have actually-- your counterpart at the Republican National Committee actually sent Republican members of Congress a letter of things to talk about and things to stress, the high cost of health insurance and so on and so forth. Are Democrats, did you give them talking points? What-- what do--

TIM Kaine (overlapping): We--

BOB SCHIEFFER: --you expect they'll be talking about?

TIM Kaine: Well, we definitely have and at the DNC, we have a wonderful organization, organizing for America that is, you know, grassroots volunteers in every community. They did more than thirty thousand pro-health care reform events during this debate. And they're very active and engaged in each of these House districts what a member will find it helpful. We're planning on doing a lot of events this week to thank members, to support them. And to look, put out the real facts. You know, I-- I was listening to Senator DeMint. He says he wants to repeal the government takeover of health-- of the health industry. What really what he's trying to repeal is curbs on insurance companies. You know, we don't want insurance companies to be able to kick people off their policies when they get sick or turn you down when you try to get a new job because of a pre-existing condition. I don't know why the Republicans want to put insurance companies back in the position where they have that kind of whip hand over the American public. We want the doctors and the patients to make the decisions.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Do you-- do you have concerns about the safety of-- of-- of Democrats out there because Senator DeMint said, "Look, this is just the old American way. People are protesting. Yes, there are going to be bad apples here." But-- but this is just kind of how we do it.

TIM Kaine: Well, Bob, I-- I think he's being disingenuous to say that because when you as some of the members do say that this is Armageddon, you know, the-- the biblical war at the end of the world, the battlefield where it takes place, you're sending a message to folks. When you're saying that, you know, you want to target members and you have a map of the United States and you put a gun site on members' districts, when-- when the elected leadership feels comfortable yelling out "you lie" or-- or "baby killer," they're stoking anger and they need to stop it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Mister Chairman--

TIM Kaine: Thanks, Bob.

BOB SCHIEFFER: --thank you so much.

Back in a moment with some final thoughts.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally today. I am not much for radical change but watching this toxic partisan debate over health care made me take notice of a proposal by Phil Keisling, a former Oregon Secretary of State. Writing in the New York Times last week he said, "If we want to get serious about reducing hyper-partisanship and legislative dysfunction then just eliminate party primary elections." As you know most states allow political parties to hold primaries to choose their candidates. But Keisling notes what we often overlook, not many people vote in these primaries.

In 2006, fewer than five percent voted in the New York primaries, no more than fifteen to thirty percent in most states. In Texas, this year there was a record-high primary turnout, sixteen and a half percent. What this means is that those who do vote in the primaries are the most partisan activists, the party's base--the most conservative Republicans, the most liberal Democrats.

To win a primary, Democratic candidates have to move left, Republicans have to move right, which leaves the candidates stuck with positions that are less moderate than most people who vote in general elections and, worse, positions from which they can't compromise once they reach Washington.

To change this, Keisling proposes that every candidate--Republicans, Democrats, Independents--all run together in one nonpartisan primary with the top two, whatever their party, facing off in November. This wouldn't be a cure-all but Keisling believes it would reduce the disproportional power the current process gives to the shrillest and most mean-spirited partisans.

For sure, the result couldn't be worse than what our current system has produced.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's all the time this morning. Thanks for watching. We'll be back next week.

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