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In Conjunction With
The Twin-State Valley Media Network

**A Conversation with NH State Senator Bob Odell (R-Lempster)
~ Transcript of Podcast ~**

Thursday July 12, 2007

The following is the transcript of an interview with state Sen. Bob Odell, R-Lempster, conducted by Sarwar Kashmeri discussing the New Hampshire 2008 primary, its unique importance and well as what New Hampshire voters are looking for ... and more.

Q. The New Hampshire primary, do you think it continues to be as important and unique as ever given that a few weeks or days after the primary, you'll have all these big states coming in. What do you think?

A. I think that the New Hampshire primary still is the building block for a successful presidential campaign. The idea of skipping New Hampshire, for example, is not something any of the candidates are looking at. They all know that this is a very, very important place to be in early 2008.

Q. And tell me why.

A. Because of the fact that any candidate can make substantial progress in a short period of time, even though they have limited resources. The top tier candidates all have a substantial amount of money and organization, but sometimes it is the message, the energy, the strategy, the tactics that they use. Remember that Jimmy Carter did very well here staying in people's homes to save money. He just did it door by door, person by person, house by house - that potential is still here.

Q. And do you think that the New Hampshire voter has some characteristic that makes it more personal, engaging for the candidate?

A. I do. I'm very prejudice on this, but I think the New Hampshire voter is a well-informed voter, very likely to turn out in comparison to the rest of

the country. The other part is that New Hampshire has lots and lots of elections. We're used to voting. We vote for school boards, we vote at annual school meetings, we have a town meeting, we vote at the polls on municipal issues and we have our primaries and our general elections. In addition many of our friends and neighbors are politicians - with a state legislature with 424 members, the largest in the country. Lots of people are involved with politics. Lots of people take interest in it. So I think we have a very informed electorate when it comes to the primaries.

Q. In your opinion what are two or three of the top issues, that New Hampshire voters are looking for today?

A. I think without question the war in Iraq is a major issue. I think that the second thing that they're looking for is a compassionate, understanding, fair-minded person to lead the county. I think the other would be a combination of issues we deal with - education, infrastructure, what I call the vision of the domestic agenda. And I think that those three will be the kind of things, I think Americans, the New Hampshire people, want to elect a president that they genuinely can like, somebody they like to sit down with and have dinner.

Q. So it's more a family-oriented affair here?

A. I think it's a more engaged relationship that we have with candidates.

Q. And you know, that people always say all politics is a local. This time around, you mentioned and I think that most people agree, Iraq is the big issue, but leaving that aside what is a top national item?

A. I think it is a kind of leadership that each of these candidates presents. Again do you want that person to be our president for the next four years, that's a big decision. It's kind of building a relationship between the individual and that particular person. There are many other issues that are bothersome to people certainly and that would be taxes and

how we spend our money and things like these earmarks that have created a distrust between voters and the Congress and those kind of issues, but I think the most important characteristic of the way we look at candidates is we want to have that person on television every night for the next four years to be our president.

Q. And on that same point where do you think the issue of health ranks? Is it in the top two or three, or is it a bit more down?

A. I think if you're an employer who is paying the bill for health care, you certainly have a big concern about it. Or if you're a person who is uninsured and going to bed every night hoping and praying that you do not get a major illness that could potentially put you into bankruptcy ... I would say it ranks very high.

Q. And let me ask you if you were sitting in a room full of these candidates and one of them said Senator Odell you have experience in New Hampshire elections, give us your ideas. What are a couple of things you would tell them?

A. I would tell them that they should focus on two or three issues and make sure that you have the people of New Hampshire understand where you stand on those issues - very specific, very detailed, very organized. The second thing you need to show yourself as a person who is always out, with a hand out asking for the vote, engaging with the people making sure that you - whether it's on television where they watch you do this, or in the local community where they come up to you and shake your hand on the main street of a town like Claremont or Newport that they are out there earning the confidence and trust of the people the primary voters of New Hampshire.

Q. And I suppose that one of the things that that implies is they should come up as often as their time allows them to?

A. Absolutely. To be a candidate in a primary in New Hampshire and not to be

here a great deal creates a lot of uncertainty and it doesn't encourage your volunteers. It doesn't help you get your message out. It doesn't help you become a familiar person.

Those that have been successful have generally been those that have been very, very clear in their message and spent a lot of time here.

Q. And let me turn around that point now and let me put myself on the cutting line here and tell a room full of folks from the media what would you advise them to do?

A. In the media I would be trying to encourage you to get the complete story of a presidential candidate. One of the things that happens out here gobbles up the press releases and doesn't ask tough questions and doesn't follow these candidates long enough and closely enough.

Q. But I suppose that the issues there is the format of the debates and so on, when you are starting off with so many people makes it so difficult to do, doesn't it.

A. In a sense it does, but I think at times the media doesn't want to allocate the resources and to be with candidates over a long period of time, that they take the top tier candidates and spend a great amount of time and attention on them but then they are clustered with all the media people. You get down to the second tier of people they have interesting life stories, they have interesting perspectives on the issues and I think that they deserve adequate attention.