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In Conjunction With
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**A Conversation with Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee
~ Transcript of Podcast ~**

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The following is a transcript of an interview with former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. Author Sarwar Kashmeri talks to Huckabee about his quest for the Republican nomination for president.

Q. Governor Huckabee, what do you think are the top qualifications for president heading into the 21st century, and what do you think in your background prepares you to assume the office?

Huckabee: The president first needs to have deep personal convictions. He needs to know what he believes and why he believes it, be willing to stand for those beliefs as well as to articulate them to the people, not only to get elected but to keep their confidence. There's nothing that more undermines a leader than when that leader is not only unable to convince others but he himself is not convinced what he believes.

Q. If you look back at your record as governor, what do you think the people of Arkansas would tell the voters of New Hampshire about you that perhaps uniquely qualifies you for the office?

Huckabee: Being a governor means that I've actually run something, and I've run a government. Certainly the federal government is larger but the principles are the same. You have to make the budget balance. You have to cause things to work and there's a record to determine whether or not schools are better, roads are better, the tax system was improved, the government spending was better under control. And those are issues that helped me not only to be elected but to be re-elected, and I think being

re-elected in the midst of taking tough stands and making tough decisions is as important as being elected. As a Republican in a very Democrat state and being able to show that I was able to work with people of another party to get things done but without having to compromise my core principals.

Q. Let me ask you a New Hampshire-related question, governor, the voters in New Hampshire almost since 1775 have shown a real streak of independence, and one of the things they seemed pretty riled up about these days is this Real ID the national driver's license and many of the legislators here consider it an expensive and unwarranted infringement on the state's rights - an invasion of privacy - and so what would you tell these folks?

Huckabee: Well there are several problems with the Real I.D. Act. In the first place, it really does pass on a federal responsibility to the state.

If the federal government wants to in enforce it's borders it needs to do so, but to ask the states to individually become the immigration service because our federal government is incompetent to do it is wrong on its face. The second thing is it's an \$11 billion dollar program but there was only a handful of maybe \$60 million that was even going to be allocated to pay for it. So then, it becomes an unfunded mandate for the states. The third flaw is that it presumes that the DMV entry-level person at a state ought be your primary screening point for false documents. These are not people who are trained to be Secret Service agents or INS agents, these are people that are trained basically to take applications so people can get driver's licenses.

And to put national security of an entry level state employee is absurd.

Q. But how would you then, if I might follow up, make that driver's licenses which are basically door-openers around the country, would meet a certain standard. Do you have a thought in that regard?

Huckabee: Well if the federal government believes that driver's licenses is the most effective way of identifying a person and they want there to be

standards they should accept responsibility to, if they're going to impose the standards, to pay for the uniformity of those. I know that in my own state we had just spent millions of dollars in revamping our driver's license system to go to a holograph photo on the driver's license, making it virtually tamperproof. If we do that and then the federal government comes along and says "we want a different look or a different format," then we would end up spending even more money after we've already done it with a state of the art system.

Q. Wanted to ask you about a New York Times story from Iowa. It seems the evangelical Christians have been having trouble selecting a favorite from the Republican field and some of the so-called front-runners, Gov. Romney, and others, are losing traction. And they mention you seem to be gaining traction, and I wonder why you think that is?

Huckabee: I think people are beginning to pay attention to the message of candidates. The national media has essentially anointed three people as front-runners, not because the ideas have excited Americans and I think it's pretty evident the ideas have not excited Americans., not even Republicans. So it's been based on how much money they've raised. Well, two things have happened. They haven't raised that much money this second quarter as compared to what their expectations were. They've had to, in some cases, start cutting back on staff or loaning their campaigns money to make up for the deficits for the run-away spending they've got and so you have that going on, and people are starting to look around and say "you know these guys are not representing what I stand for." They're not consistent. They say they're pro-life now when they weren't before and they say they're now for the Second Amendment when they weren't. They say they're for tax cuts when they weren't. They once were against agricultural subsidies, now they for them. You know there's just so many ways in which inconsistencies

are catching up with people. And then I think that they start looking at candidates like me who have been government and had a successful record in things like education, health care, road building tax policy, and then they look at ideas I'm presenting not just from the past but the future. To go to a fair tax system to completely eliminate the Internal Revenue Service and burdensome taxes on business that are costing a lot of Americans their jobs and to go to a consumption tax to revive our economy, put people in this country to work rather than putting people in China to work, are starting to make sense to some folks.

Q. I was watching Senator Hagel on Meet the Press and he made a point of saying that a lot of the Republican support seems to be dripping away from the president and what I wanted to ask you is, is your support for the president's Iraqi strategy weakening and, two, what lessons do you take from the Iraq war, governor?

Huckabee: I think there's been certainly a growing discontent in the American people with what they perceive as lack of progress in Iraq, but what we have to keep reminding people is, that while none of us are satisfied with what has happened, there certainly been some progress. More importantly, we can walk away, because to do so creates a complete void of American leadership in an area where these are folks who have established the beachhead of terrorism in that country. They believe that if they can wear us down and do to us in Iraq what the Taliban did to the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, they will defeat us. And they don't believe that it was Ronald Reagan in the arms buildup that collapsed the Soviet Union. They believe that it was their capacity to outlast the Soviets even though they were incredibly out-numbered and out-gunned - to out-last them, and to bring about the demise of the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc countries and they believe they'll bring America's collapse in the same way.