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In Conjunction With  
The Twin-State Valley Media Network

**A Conversation with John McCain (R-AZ)**  
**~ Transcript of Podcast ~**

*Thursday July 26, 2007*

Read Republican Senator John McCain's "straight-talk" on why the Real-ID Act is necessary in New Hampshire, and the need for Federal assistance to connect rural America to the world via Broadband. The senior Senator from Arizona who is also the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Armed Services speaks to the Eagle Times about health-care, re-organizing his campaign, the real lessons from Iraq, and the need to bring civility back to the national dialogue on Iraq.

Q. I've been reading all these news reports about you're running out of resources, and it's time for you to give up, and I'm reminded of Gen. McAuliffe commanding the 101st Airborne in Bastogne as he was surrounded by the Germans in the battle of the Bulge, who said you have no resources you might as well give up and he [McAuliffe] famously answered "nuts."<sup>2</sup> And I wonder if you have any thoughts?

A. I am reminded of his comments as well. We're doing fine. We had to make some adjustments in the campaign. But we were just up in New Hampshire last weekend and had a very good reception, both in Concord and up in Claremont. And we're going back, were going to be on the bus, and we're going to be doing the town hall meetings and the same things we've been able to do and I'm very optimistic.

Let me ask you a couple of questions that the folks in New Hampshire are concerned about. First of all there is a great deal of opposition, senator, to this Real ID legislation and some of the legislators in New Hampshire, believe it's a call for invasion of privacy and others think it's an unfunded mandate. What would you tell these folks?

A. I'd tell these folks that the 9/11 Commission recommend that we have some kind of, at least a driver's license or Social Security card that is tamper-proof. I think that the states ought to have say in it, I think that they understand as federalist that they should be allowed a lot of latitude. Before 9/11 I would not have favored a standardized tamper-proof Social Security card. Frankly, I do now. I think that it's something we have got to get a hold of. We've got to have people in this country, we got to know who they are, we got to be able to make sure we've done everything we can to secure the nation. What I hope is that we would be able to work out some kind of agreement between the state of New Hampshire and the federal government, so that it's not such a heavy burden, not an unfunded mandate but that the federal government could help find a way that would be satisfactory to the state of New Hampshire and I think five or six other states who have

also basically taken that same position. I think over time, a little straight talk here, that we're going to have to have biometrics tamper-proof documents, probably in the form of Social Security card.

Q. Continuing on from a rural perspective, New Hampshire and also Vermont and other rural states are really feeling the need for this fast broadband to connect them to the world. And I know that you've talked about America becoming competitive, I wonder if you think that there is a need for something like a rural electrification scheme to just get this hump over with?

A. I do. I think we need to be all dismayed that we've now fallen I think No. 13 in the world on broadband access and obviously it's the rural area that are the furthest behind. I think that we should at least have a short term program to give that a boost, I'm against tax increase, but we have to be able to find some way of achieving broadband access for all America as much as it's practical.

Q. Question on health insurance. A recent New York Times poll, Sen. McCain, said that the majority of Americans believe that our health system doesn't work very well. There's a lot of uninsured, but on the other hand, a majority of Americans, when asked about their own health care, believe it works quite well. And I wonder how you reconcile that in coming out with federal policy and legislation?

A. Well, I think we do have the best health care in the world. The problem is not with the quality of it, it's affordability and availability. I am against a big government solution to it, otherwise, we'll repeat the example of European countries such as England and also Canada whose health care has been slow in crisis situations. I think it's a step-by-step process, ranging from insurance companies being encouraged to reward wellness and fitness to putting health care records online, to having truly affordable health insurance policies that is affordable to ... . I think there are a number of steps that need to be taken, but I think that a big government, single payer is not something I'm ready to embrace.

Q. But do you think that from this poll, what people are saying is, <sup>3</sup>My own health care is very good, so whatever solution you folks come up with don't mess with my health care.<sup>2</sup> And so is that the balancing act legislators need to work on?

M: Yes it is, but again, it's affordability and availability. And so the problem with health care in America today, is not the quality, it's the inflation associated with it which makes it less and less affordable. We have to take, in my view, a series of steps in order to make it both affordable and available, which we just discussed and many others.

Q. And do you think this portability issue ties in with the broadband and all the other initiatives to keep America competitive in this globalized age?

M: Absolutely, the greatest fear that people have of this new information technology, revolution which is global, is that they don't have the permanence of both job and health insurance that gives them the confidence that they will be able to enjoy a reasonably affordable

future, and be able to maintain the kinds of benefits that their parents have.

Let me wind up senator, by asking you, about Iraq. And my questions are specifically what lessons do you think at this stage do we learn from Iraq and secondly, what most concerns you about the kind of public discussion that we are now having?

M: Well the first aspect of Iraq, is that we should not have stuck with the Rumsfeld-Casey failed strategy for the years we did, and are now paying a very heavy price for it. And Americans are both frustrated and angry because of the terrible mismanagement of the war, but also saddened for the loss of American lives. The president's strategy I believe is working, and I hope we can give it a chance to succeed.

I understand the impatience of the American people, but I believe the consequences of failure are catastrophic, and if we do what the Democrats want to do, which is set a date for withdrawal, in my view and that of Henry Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft and general Zinni and many others, we will have catastrophe in the region. And it will directly threaten our national security interest. So I deeply regret the level of discourse impugning character, patriotism, the majority leader of the Senate saying the war is lost. The majority leader of the Senate alleging that general Petraeus is quote 'incompetent,'<sup>2</sup> the level of dialogue on this issue has been, in my view, incredibly unfortunate, but I understand the frustration of the American people.