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In Conjunction With  
The Twin-State Valley Media Network

**A Conversation with Governor Bill Richardson (D-NM)  
~ Transcript of Podcast ~**

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Gov. Bill Richardson says bipartisanship must return to Washington, D.C. Presidential candidate says that if he is elected, he will work with Congress on federal debt, Social Security and Iraq.

Q. There was a time when President Ronald Reagan and Speaker Tip O'Neill used to work together and got so much done in Washington. What happened to those times?

A. Those times died, and they were times that were good. You could leave your differences behind after the Congress adjourned. You could work out compromises, and there was civility. That's gone. And what I believe is needed is bipartisanship, an ability of Congress to work things out with the president, but most importantly I think this election is about who can bring this country together that is very divided.

Q. Now you've laid out a plan of a number of days to do specific things. What is it specifically that you would like to do to help us along the path of bipartisanship?

A: What I would do, is I would do direct practical things. I would ask the Republican leadership, let's say I won the election, and I'd say let's take three issues that we're going to settle within one year that are totally bipartisan, we can't attack each other, up- and-down vote, but we arrive at

a solution. First is the future of Social Security and Medicare, the second is what are we going to do about federal debt and perhaps we need a five-year plan to end the debt, and third, how do we end the war in Iraq, because my sense is it still will be going by 2009 and we need bipartisanship to end it.

Q. Talking about war in Iraq, two of the Democratic contenders have been having a spat this week about whether to speak to the leaders of Venezuela, Syria and Iran, and do you have any thoughts on that. You've actually done some serious negotiating.

A: Well, I've talked to Chavez of Venezuela, I've talked to Castro, I've talked to every North Korean except the leader of North Korea Kim Jong il.

Q. Did it pollute your mind, or did they get get propaganda out of it?

A: No. I think we need to talk to our enemies. It's called diplomacy. I don't think you need any preconditions, but what I objected to in the question is: Would I do it within a year? I might do it sooner, I might do it later. I just think you need an objective when you go into a meeting. Don't just have a meeting for meeting sake. But yeah, we need to talk to our enemies. I would talk to Syria, I would talk to Iran. They weren't in on that - well Ahmadinejad is on it, I don't know how reasonable Ahmadinejad is. I would talk to clerics in Iran. I would talk to influential members in the foreign ministry. I would talk to business leaders, but I definitely would open a dialogue with Iran and its leadership.

A. A couple of questions that are on the minds of New Hampshire voters,

governor. First of all, this whole issue of broadband in rural areas. As you know it's very difficult to connect broadband. And you've pointed out earlier that for competitive reasons we need to do a lot of things, and I think broadband is one of them, so would you be in favor of a rural electrification scheme, to get rural states tied on to this broadband?

A: I definitely would. I think the broadband access in the rural area is only 15 percent. We need to do it, especially in rural areas. I would be a leader in promoting Internet broadband access, because I think it's technology that is needed.. I think it's a new way for people to learn, and what I think is very important too is that within the Internet. I'm supportive of what is called net neutrality. I don't believe the Internet should be taxed. I don't believe the Internet should suffer and be part of a bureaucracy that has also brought telephone companies and others to challenge the role of the Internet. But I would be a president that would be a partner. What I want to be sure of is that when we have broadband access and Internet access that it goes to the community, that it go to schools, that it go to the private sector, that it goes to businesses, that it not just goes to government offices, county and city governments - that it be broadly based so that mainly schools can benefit from full Internet and broadband access.

Q. The other issue in New Hampshire is this Real ID Act, and there are people here who think that it is an unfounded mandate. And others think it's an invasion of privacy. What would you tell these folks?

A: I would tell them that the Real ID Act is another unfounded mandate. That it's not practical. It's almost like No Child Left Behind, which is not working. The Real ID Act is, I believe, an unfair burden on states. It's discriminatory and my hopes are that the courts will kill it.

Q. You know we've been very strong on not dealing with countries that have not signed the non-proliferation act and who are reprocessing nuclear fuel. Yet we are about to make this exemption to do business with India even though it continues to make nuclear weapons, has not signed the act and insists on reprocessing fuel. What are your thoughts?

A: We need to look at the entire nuclear proliferation arena. This is what we need most of everything. We need a treaty to contain what is called all fissionable material, that's uranium, plutonium, dirty bombs by a rogue nation. That is step number one. Step number two is we need to have a dialogue with all nuclear nations and have a sensible policy on nuclear nonproliferation - but possibly with new methods of verification. Maybe it means the IAEA needs to be upgraded. Maybe it means a new system that makes sure that when North Korea says it's going to reduce their weapons that it can be properly verified. But we need new systems of detection and verification. And I would also be a president that would propose arms control and reduction of nuclear weapons, but it needs to be negotiated by all parties.

Q. And finally I'm going to leave the floor open for you to give some advice to the news media. The national media seems to have anointed three people as

almost winners of the primaries and here's your chance to give some advice to the news media.

A. Well, I would say listen to the news media in Iowa and New Hampshire which knows there's a contest and if you look at the polls we're moving up. We're third in New Hampshire, we're moving up in Iowa. This race is not over. It's six months away. And I feel good going grass roots. My view is this election should be decided on who is the most experienced, who can bring change to this country, and who can bring reform to this country. It shouldn't be based on who is the biggest rock star or who has the best political pedigree or the most money.