

Should Candidates Get Free TV Time?

An Issue Forum Sponsored by

The USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center

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CENTERTAINMENT

Exploring Implications of the Convergence of Entertainment, Commerce, and Society

Should Candidates Get Free TV Time?

This Lear Center issue forum, co-sponsored with the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles, and part of the Center's Local News Archive project, brought together leading figures to debate allowing candidates for political office access to the airwaves free of charge.

Participants

Arianna Huffington, syndicated columnist

Martin Kaplan, associate dean, Annenberg School for Communication, and director, The Norman Lear Center

Matt Klink, vice president, Cerrell & Associates

Cindy O'Connor, president, Los Angeles League of Women Voters

Andrea Sheridan Ordin, partner, Morgan Lewis

Dan Schnur, Republican strategist

Paul Taylor, director, Alliance for Better Campaigns

The Norman Lear Center

Founded in January 2000, the Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce and society. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its fellows, conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.

The Lear Center Local News Archive

Most Americans receive their information on elections from local news programs, which broadcast on airwaves belonging to the public. How effective are these programs at providing the public with what they need to cast informed, responsible votes on Election Day? The Lear Center Local News Archive responds to this question by providing an unprecedented nationwide look at the media Americans experience during campaigns. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and conducted in collaboration with the University of Wisconsin, Madison Department of Political Science, this project allows access to campaign stories aired during the height of an election, and hopes to be the impetus for better local political coverage.

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. The LWV works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. The Los Angeles League was one of the first Leagues to form and is one of the largest Leagues in the country. The LA League is currently engaged in promoting Neighborhood Councils, providing civics education to new citizens, advocating against the breakup of Los Angeles, and participating in a national project to make free air time available to candidates.

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Should Candidates Get Free Air Time?

Cindy O'Connor: Good afternoon. My name is Cindy O'Connor and I'm the president of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles. And it's my privilege to welcome all of you here today. It's wonderful to see this full room. I want to thank you all for taking the time. I know it's an odd time of day—we hoped to catch you before you went home. And we'll still get you home in time for dinner.

This Public Issues Forum on Free Air Time is being sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles and the Annenberg School at USC. The League's mission is to inform, educate, advocate and empower people. And this forum today is part of our effort to do that.

We'll be discussing a very important issue and the idea is for you to get as much information as possible so that you'll be able to evaluate the issue when it comes up again in the news and as legislation. The question today is should radio and television broadcasters be required to provide free air time to qualified candidates who have won their primaries. The issue is becoming more important as each election season goes by.

This year alone, a study has shown that there have been over \$300 million spent on media advertising to date. And we're not even into full campaign season. As you know, that figure goes up every year.

I want to say thank you to the participants—we're missing one but we're going to go ahead rather than delay any longer—for taking time to do this for us. And I hope that you will get a broad view from what they have to say. I also want to thank the USC Annenberg School Norman Lear Center for hosting us. And, of course, I need to recognize that Judy Eisenberg, our project director for this, has put in all the work. And I wanted to say thank you to her. [APPLAUSE]



Cindy O'Connor, president, League of Women Voters of Los Angeles



Martin Kaplan, associate dean, USC Annenberg School for Communication & director, The Norman Lear Center

At this point, I'm going to introduce our moderator, Martin Kaplan. He is the associate dean of USC's Annenberg School for Communication and the director of the Norman Lear Center. His career has included speech writing for a vice president. He was a Washington journalist for radio, TV and print. He was a deputy presidential campaign manager and a vice president at Disney. Most recently, he is the principal investigator of several widely reported studies on coverage of politics on local TV news. He's working with Sylvia Teague on the Reliable Resources project—a nationwide effort to improve campaign coverage. So at this point, I want to introduce Marty. He will introduce the panel and he will moderate the discussion. [APPLAUSE]

Martin Kaplan: Thank you. Thank you, Cindy. I appreciate all that you and the League have done. We're delighted to be your partners on this, and I hope in future projects as well. It's great to see so many of the people in your network here today, and we thank you all for being here.

I wanted you all to know what the Norman Lear Center is. It's research, public policy and advocacy center whose premise is that entertainment had taken over every other domain in modern life. So whether it's news or politics or education or religion or museums or you name it, the need to create audiences and to capture and hold attention and to market your product has become just about more important than any other aspect of it. There are materials in the front from both the League and the Lear Center. Please take advantage of them as you leave. On your seats, you'll also find something you can leave behind to give us your e-mail address or any other information so we can include you on the mailing lists that we have for local events.

Looking out around the room, it's great to see so many civic activists in our area, as well as a number of especially distinguished guests. And rather than single them out and recognize them, I could say that you all know who you are, and we're thankful that you could join us.

A couple of housekeeping details because this is being filmed. If you would like to avail yourselves of the refreshments, please avoid coming down the center aisle in front of the camera.

Today's *Wall Street Journal* carried an article that reported the forecasts of a prominent European firm that looks at advertising revenues. And it said that a big slump had been expected, but everyone was delighted that because the political season had unanticipatedly large buys, all the foregone revenue is going to be made up for and then some.

So it's in a context of great news for the advertising industry in today's paper that we meet. We have panelists that will be talking about the pros and cons of free air time for candidates. You'll hear plenty of meat and potatoes on that subject, so I'm not going to do much to frame the issue. That'll be coming shortly.

I do want to introduce the panelists to you. Because you have a bio sheet in your packets on your seats, I'll give only the briefest of introductions. I'd like to start by telling you who's not here. And I don't mean the empty chair here. My hope is that traffic is the problem and then it'll be filled. But I did want you to know that invitations were extended to the National Association of Broadcasters in Washington and to both the general managers and news directors of KCBS, KABC, KTTV, KTLA and KNBC. And all had an excellent reason not to be here. So we're sorry not to have them, but the panel will go forward nevertheless.



Matt Klink, vice president, Cerrell & Associates



Andrea Sheridan Ordin, partner, Morgan Lewis



Dan Schnur, Republican strategist



Paul Taylor, president, Alliance for Better Campaigns



Arianna Huffington, syndicated columnist

Matt Klink—and please hold your applause until the end—
Matt Klink works at Cerrell and Associates where he handles a variety of clients. If he looks familiar to you, it's because you have seen him on the fair and unbiased Fox Network, CNN and other outlets.

Andrea Ordin is known to many of you. It was a pleasure to watch so many people embrace her as they came in. She has been an assistant U.S. attorney. She was a prominent member of the Christopher Commission. She's now an attorney in private law practice.

Dan Schnur is a comrade-in-arms of mine, believe it or not. My background is in Democratic politics, his is in Republican, but we have worked together and I know he is deeply distressed not to be actively involved in the current gubernatorial campaign.

Dan Schnur: Yeah, right.

Kaplan: Another colleague and friend, Paul Taylor, is the director of the Alliance For Better Campaigns, a Washington based non-profit and advocacy group trying to figure out how American democracy can function up to its full potential. Please join me in welcoming this great panel. [APPLAUSE]

I'd like to begin by asking Paul Taylor to make some opening remarks. Then others will have a chance to talk. We'll talk among the panel. And then at a certain point, we'll open up to questions from the floor. So without further ado, Paul Taylor.

Paul Taylor: Thank you, Marty, and what a pleasure to be here. And thank you all for coming. I'll start with the sweetest words you ever hear from any speaker, "I'm going to be extremely brief" because I have brought a movie. It's an advocacy video. It's nine minutes. I think it does

a pretty good job of framing the issue. And I hope that the other panelists will react to it. And without further ado, let's go to the movies.

VIDEO

Walter Cronkite: What makes America great? At its root, it's our freedom and democracy. In this country, candidates for public office can say whatever they want. They can criticize the powers that be and offer up their vision for a better America.

Announcer: But what about the freedom to be heard? Well-funded candidates have no problem. They just cut some big checks to the TV stations and out their message goes. But how about challengers who aren't wealthy or don't have an "in" with special interests? They can't raise the ante to make a competitive race. The result is that most political campaigns in this country are won in a landslide.

That means the rest of us are deprived of the contest of ideas and range of choices that are supposed to be what elections are all about. And once the election's over, it means we're stuck with leaders who often owe favors to the special interests that financed their campaigns. Is there anything that can be done to open the system up?

Cronkite: Well, one place to look for answers is in my own backyard—broadcast television. The biggest reason political campaigns are so expensive are those thirty second TV ads. They chew up more than a half of all the money spent by presidential, senatorial and congressional candidates in contested races. And the problem keeps getting worse.

Announcer: Since 1980, the amount of money television stations have taken in from the sale of political ads each election year has more than quadrupled, even after adjusting for inflation. In 2000, TV stations sold more political ads than fast food ads. And in many cases, they jacked up their prices by double or even triple right before the election to take advantage of the campaign-driven spike in demand. They profiteered on our democracy. [SINGING "WE'RE IN THE MONEY"]

Cronkite: But when it comes to actually covering the campaigns, especially the back and forth on the substantive issues that affect all of our lives, television is too often AWOL.

Announcer: Back in 1968, when a national network newscast showed a presidential candidate talking about an issue, the clip typically ran for 43 seconds. By 2000, that was down to 7.8 seconds, barely enough time to complete a sentence. And things are even more barren on local TV newscasts. Viewers searching for campaign stories there are far more likely to see campaign ads instead.

Cronkite: But why should broadcasters be called on to change their ways? After all, their business is to sell air time, not give it away. Right? Actually, broadcasters are public trustees, as well as private businesses. Most people don't realize it, but ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox don't own the airwaves they use.

Man: I don't really know a lot about the broadcasting industry.

Woman: Turner.

Woman: Bill Gates.

Woman: I'm totally in the dark.

Man: I'm not exactly sure of the name, but...

Woman: I have no idea.

Woman: No.

Man: No idea.

Man: No. Private companies...

Man: Corporations own the airwaves.

Announcer: You own the airwaves and they're worth billions and billions of dollars. But the broadcasters have never paid for their exclusive right to use them. Not one penny.

Woman: They don't pay a penny at all. Wow.

Woman: No. I did not know that they pay zero.

Man: No, I did not know that.

Man: Now that surprises me. That surprises me.

Man: It would seem unlikely that someone nowadays would just get something for free.

Man: I didn't know that.

Man: Wow.

Woman: Good for them.

Man: Doesn't surprise me, so...

John McCain: The television and radio stations, unlike the print media, use the public's assets—a spectrum—in order to function. And when they get a license to use that, they

sign a piece of paper that says they will act in the “public interest.” It seems to me that the public interest is clearly that they should help with the political process in informing the American people.

Scott Harshbarger: And what we see is a startling example of failure on the part of the public broadcasting industry that has a privilege of having airwaves and failing to comply with its fundamental obligations to educate people about the democracy in which we all function.

Announcer: The broadcasters say they've scaled back on political coverage because the public just doesn't care.

John Cochran: It's not because news directors are evil or lazy or don't understand what their audience wants. It's because they do understand what their audience wants. And I'm sorry to tell you that news about politics is rather far down on the list of things that the public is interested in.

Cronkite: Imagine something different. Imagine a campaign in which broadcasters provide free air time so viewers can see and hear candidates discuss important issues.

Citizens would get a more substantive alternative to attack ads and sound bites. Candidates, even those without bulging war chests, would get a better shot at putting their ideas before the public.

Ted Koppel: The cost of campaigns is becoming so high that at some point or another, there will have to be some sort of an arrangement worked out under which during a given limited period of time, the networks will be providing free time.

Cronkite: That's the vision. And there have been a number of efforts over the past several years to make it happen.

Bill Clinton: We have to address the real reason for the explosion in campaign costs—the high cost of media advertising. I will formally request that the Federal Communications Commission act to provide free or reduced cost television time for our candidates who observe spending limits voluntarily. [APPLAUSE] The airwaves are a public trust and broadcasters also have to help us in this effort to strengthen our democracy.

Announcer: But the White House never mobilized public support for this proposal. And the broadcast industry sent out waves of lobbyists to kill it. Since then, political ads have just kept getting more expensive.

Cronkite: That's why we think it's time to pass a bill that would require broadcasters to provide free air time during political campaigns as is done in virtually all of the world's other democracies.

We'd like to see a bill that has two parts. One would require all television and radio stations to devote at least two hours a week to candidate issue discussion in the period just before an election. They could choose how to do that by airing debates, interviews, mini-debates or town hall meetings. Whatever.

The second part would create a voucher system that would give a candidate the flexibility to place his free commercials on the television or radio station most advantageous to him. The vouchers would be financed by a small tax on the broadcast industry.

Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins: We believe that if broadcasters open up their airwaves to nightly issue forms, they will help facilitate an American dialogue that is fair and cost effective. Not only for the candidates, but for the American public as well.

Announcer: This year, for the first time ever, dozens of prominent national groups are joining together in a grass roots movement to call on Congress to pass a law that would open up our political system to all commerce.

Cronkite: But we need your help. Now more than ever, as America steers her way through these difficult times, we need to make sure that in the greatest democracy in the world, our political campaigns are driven by ideas, not money.

In the land of free speech, we've allowed a system of paid speech to take hold during political campaigns on the one medium we all own—our broadcast airwaves. It's long past time to turn that around.

Woman: To receive a free activist's kit that includes a copy of this video and other information about this issue, call 1-888-6FREE TV or visit our Web site at www.freeairtime.org. [APPLAUSE]

END OF VIDEO

Taylor: I'm going to stop there just to say that the bill that Mr. Cronkite outlines is being drafted even as we speak by Senators McCain and Feingold. The hope and expectation is it'll be introduced this fall. And it'll start to work its way through the legislative process next year. And I look forward to the opportunity to talk about why I think it's a good idea.

Kaplan: Please admire the stealth with which our final panelist has joined us in that interval. Please welcome Arianna Huffington. [APPLAUSE]

So we've had a pretty comprehensive overview of the issue. And what I'm hoping now is that we can see the issue joined. Matt Klink, would you be game?

Klink: Sure. They said they were looking for some poor schmuck to come up here and argue the other side. I guess that would be me.

Now, I'm just struck by this—Bill Clinton advocating for campaign funding reform is like Ken Lay advocating for energy re-regulation.

What a classical joke. It is a pleasure to be here today to talk about the public funding of political campaigns. And I say that because what this is the first step—and an incremental step—toward government funding of political campaigns.

The video that Taylor produced—by the way, Paul, if you can cut that down to thirty seconds, I can buy some time for you. We can put that up on the air and really change some people's minds. I'm watching that and it sounds like baseball, hot dogs, apple pie. I expect to see American flags waving in the background. How could you not support that? Well, I don't know how many minds I'm going to convince in this audience tonight. But it is a bad idea. It would fundamentally harm American democracy.

And let me start by talking about a couple of the myths that the video talks about. It is correct when it says that the stations do not own the broadcast spectrum, that they use it with the public trust, and they have some type of a responsibility for it.

They really do do a lot for that multi-hundred billion dollar asset. They have to harness that electro-magnetic spectrum so that it can broadcast the shows that you and I watch everyday. That doesn't come cheap. You can't just flip a switch and expect ABC News to come on TV.

Also, they do do a lot of programming. Public affairs shows, anti-drug messages, public education messages across the spectrum. And they're spending billions of dollars to upgrade that spectrum.

And also, look at it this way. The broadcasters provide programming to the American public for free. I mean, I've moved around a lot and maybe my bill from NBC to watch *Friends* hasn't reached me at my current address. But they don't charge you to watch TV.

Monday Night Football, which comes on at 5:30, is free. They make their money by selling ad time. And they sell it all year round to people who are willing to buy it.

Congress already has a pretty sweet deal when they buy ads. They get ads at the lowest unit rate available. And now to even suggest that they get free air time is really a joke.



Free air time is a bad idea. It would fundamentally harm American democracy.
Matt Klink



Free air time is not going to make campaigns more competitive.

Matt Klink



You want to change the process? Change the way re-districting happens.

Matt Klink

And also, you want to talk about how campaigns are more competitive? It has nothing to do with free air time. That's not going to make campaigns more competitive.

Look at the re-districting process. California has 53 congressional seats. You know how many competitive races we have in California this year? Maybe one. Free air time's not going to fix that. It might make some races closer and it might make some people feel like democracy's working. It's not going to change a darn thing.

You want to change the process? Change the way re-districting happens. That will truly make a difference. Like they did in Iowa where they actually have an independent commission that re-districts. And they didn't look at who was an incumbent or who wasn't an incumbent. They just re-districted and it's so far proven to be very effective.

And last, the idea that ideas, not money, should determine who gets elected—it would be really great if we could have every single candidate do Lincoln-Douglas type debates. After about the third one, you'd have about ten people in the room and half of them would be paid people by each campaign. People just don't care.

Politics does not make that much of a difference in everybody's lives. I hate to admit it to you. You all are in the minority of the American populace. They are concerned about elections maybe on Election Day.

And that's why political campaigns have to go to such great lengths buying TV advertising time to play the same message over and over and over again to cut through the clutter of everything that's out there.

You know, I have DirectTV at home. I've got 300 stations. There's always something on my TV. I can listen to the radio. I can hop

Free air time is not a panacea, but it can make things at least incrementally better.

Andrea Ordin



So this is a modest proposal, but one that, if well done and supported by factual congressional hearings, will be upheld by the courts that review it.

Andrea Ordin

onto the Internet. I get three newspapers at home and I get hundreds more on the Internet. I get newsletters. I get magazines.

It's not 1968 where ABC, NBC, CBS have a virtual monopoly on the evening news. What Paul is proposing may have been relevant five years ago. But each year, it becomes less and less relevant. So I would say that they're a day late and a dollar short.

Kaplan: Well, you did indeed join the issue. Let's get it on. [APPLAUSE] And, as Emeril said, let's try to kick it up yet another notch. Andrea?

Andrea Ordin: I think I may not be able to kick up the extra notch. But as someone said to me as I was coming up the stairs, and I will quote him, "It's the money, stupid." And part of what we're going to be talking about here is not a panacea for a fully informed electorate, or a fair and open field for incumbents and challengers alike. I think what we're talking about is can we make it at least incrementally better, and how can we make it incrementally better.

And, of course, one of the things that unfortunately I think too many of this panel all agree about is that we need to take a lot of the money out of the campaigns.

So this is a much more modest proposal than you might think it is. And one in which I think if well done and put before the Congress and supported with good factual hearings, is one that will be upheld by all of the courts that look at it. And part of the reason I'm here is to talk about some of the legal issues that are often raised.

And I think as a bottom line that if people can rally around a proposal and get it passed and have good factual underpinnings, it's one that could again make an incremental change for the better.

Kaplan: Thank you. One of the ways in which Arianna is introduced on the program *Left, Right and Center* is that she

We have a broken political system, and that's the starting point of this debate for me.

Arianna Huffington



The American people are desperate for politicians to speak the truth to them...to speak to them as voters, not as shoppers and consumers.

Arianna Huffington

transcends all political categories. And so not knowing exactly what she's going to say, I'd like to invite her to do so.

Arianna Huffington: Thank you. I want to say that I want to start with the premise that we have a really broken political system, and that's where I think we need to start, and that's the starting point for this debate for me. This is a system, through the front pages of our newspapers, we find more ways to really fathom the depth of how broken it is.

I mean, all the corporate scandals come down to how broken our system is. They come down to this connection between money and public policy. Why do you think our politicians turn a blind eye when shareholders and workers and pension holders were robbed? I'm saying that as an introduction because we can't really have this debate in a vacuum.

This is 2002 and we have a broken system. This is not the Lincoln-Douglas debates. This is not any other period in history. This is now.

To say that the American people don't care about politics is patently wrong. I mean, just look at the numbers of people who watch *The West Wing*. *The West Wing* is about nothing but politics. It's about idealism. It's about everything that does not exist in our current system. And when NBC put it on, everybody said it will never work because the American people don't care about politics.

The American people are desperate for some politicians who are going to speak the truth to them. Who are going to speak to them as voters, not as shoppers and consumers, which is the way our politicians have been addressing us. And that's just not happening.

We have a ridiculously low voter turnout. Probably about two-thirds of eligible voters are not going to turn out to vote in November.

And probably in California, with the spectacle of Gray Davis versus Bill Simon, I don't know why anybody should turn out to vote.

Look at what happened when we gave away the digital spectrum in 1996—a \$70 billion giveaway. And in return, they were supposed to activate the digital signals, right? Well, they didn't. Their deadline was May 1, 2002. So we have a great opportunity here. They failed to meet their deadline, the condition under which they were given that spectrum. We should take it away from them.

You know, Paul, I think we should go maybe a step further. Instead of begging them for a little free time, let's just take it away from them and do with it whatever we want. [APPLAUSE] It is ours. They have failed to meet the conditions under which they were given it. They only got it because of the National Association of Broadcasters, one of the most powerful lobbying groups in the country. And the amount of money they gave to both political parties is staggering. And that's why they got it. And the American public never had a chance to vote for something that was theirs. That is ours and belongs to us.

So, for me, what Paul is proposing is just the beginning of what we need to be doing. And I wholeheartedly endorse it. And I think we should all do everything we can to make the legislation pass. Thank you. [APPLAUSE]

Kaplan: Thank you. Dan Schnur, a campaign consultant. People you work with make lots of money by doing the media buys for campaigns. Are you a popular fellow among them?

Dan Schnur: I am not a popular fellow among them for many reasons, most of which have nothing to do with how much it costs to buy air time.

If I can just start out by saying Matt, I feel for you down there. As you can see by my bio, I'm a Republican who teaches at the University of California Berkeley. And I have the only McCain for President bumper sticker in the

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**Instead of begging
 broadcasters for free air time,
 let's just take it away from
 them and do with it whatever
 we want. It is ours.**

Arianna Huffington

■ ■ ■

Young people engage the political process by giving to their community. They run Meals on Wheels programs. They tutor at-risk youth. These same young people won't take fifteen minutes every two years to vote.

Dan Schnur



That's not their fault. We have created a system that is broken. And what young people know intuitively is that it's not just broken—it's for sale.

Dan Schnur

faculty parking lot. So, Matt, I know what you're feeling right now. When I first went to the University of California six years ago to teach, I was warned by many of my friends, both Republican and Democrat, that I was wasting my time.

And what they told me was a slight variation of what Matt said a few minutes ago. People don't care. They said in particular, Dan, young people don't care. Why are you going to waste your time going to talk to kids who don't care about politics?

And what they cited were studies that I'm sure you all have seen. That young people, the people who populate this campus, people between the ages of 18 and 25, vote in lesser numbers than any other demographic in America today or in recent American political history.

And when I got to campus, I was surprised because what I found there, and what I have since seen backed up in studies done by the Pew Charitable Trusts, is that those young people do care.

Now they show the way they care in different ways than we are used to in the political process because what those young people do is put time back into their community. They volunteer. They run Meals on Wheels programs. They tutor at-risk youth. They run neighborhood watches and community clean-ups. And those same young people who vote in smaller numbers than any other demographic in America today or in recent American history—those same young people volunteer their time back into their communities in greater numbers than any demographic in America today or in recent American history.

So those same kids who put in hours and hours every week, overseeing and running and administering these volunteer programs won't take fifteen minutes every two years to vote. And that's not their fault, I've come to believe. It's ours because we have created a system, as Arianna suggested so eloquently just a moment ago, that is broken. And what these

Candidates have to raise and spend millions and millions of dollars to run TV commercials to reach the average voter who isn't paying attention to politics.

Dan Schnur



Candidates are playing a game by rules that we set up for them. We get mad at them for succeeding by those rules, but that's not their fault, it's ours.

Dan Schnur

young people know intuitively is what it's taken us much longer to figure out. It's that the system isn't just broken. It's for sale.

And candidates—Gray Davis, Bill Simon, Republican, Democrat, Green Libertarian, Vegetarian—it doesn't matter. A candidate, in order to get elected to office under this system, has to spend the overwhelming majority amount of their money—excuse me—overwhelming majority amount of their time raising money.

I don't like Gray Davis. I think of what he's done with the Governor's office and I think people, Democrat or Republican, would agree with me. He's an embarrassment, putting the Governor's office up to the highest bidder.

I don't particularly care for the way Bill Simon has conducted his campaign either. But I cannot blame either of them for the manner in which they have participated in this process any more than I can blame fish for swimming in polluted oceans. We've created the system.

We've told them you're going to have to raise and spend millions and millions and millions of dollars in order to run television commercials that are going to reach the average voter who isn't paying a lot of attention to politics. And then we wonder when those same average citizens who get ignored day after day after day after day register their disapproval of both candidates.

A recent poll done by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that 53% of the voters who disapprove of the job that Gray Davis is doing as Governor are going to vote for him anyway.

Now, I don't care what party you are. That's just a very sad statistic. I've looked at the man. I don't like him. I'm going to vote for him anyway. They all make me sick.

And the truth of the matter is—and my friends in my Republican clubs will get mad at me for saying this—is they're not bad people. Bill Simon's not bad—neither is Gray Davis. They're playing a game by rules that we set up for them. Or more accurately, that their fellow politicians set up

The mission of journalism is to make what's important interesting.
Paul Taylor



We have a pretty turned off electorate. It seems to me the appropriate response of the journalist is not to give in to that reality.
Paul Taylor

for them. And when we get mad at them for succeeding by those rules, that's not their fault. It's ours.

But much more importantly, the requirement for television news coverage of candidate debates, candidate interviews and actual news that takes place on the campaign trail may not compel voters to watch. But it may actually compel candidates to campaign. And what a refreshing change that would be. Thank you. [APPLAUSE]

Kaplan: Thank you, Dan, for giving us our sound bite. Paul, you had Walter Cronkite speak on your behalf. And we'd like to hear from you, too. Maybe I can pose a question to you that comes from the comments, but also from the tape.

On the tape, Barbara Cochran, a colleague of many of ours from various lives, says that news directors are just giving people what they want.

And they don't want this stuff. And so if you get your way and there is free air time for candidates, why won't they turn to the *Best Damn Sports Show* instead at that moment? Why would this make any difference?

Taylor: The best, short, one sentence description I've ever heard of the mission of journalism is to make what's important interesting.

Now, when Barbara Cochran says I'm sorry, people don't care, they're not interested, she is correct. If you look at any overnight rating, if you look at any survey, that's the reality that we live in for reasons that Dan and Matt and others have described. We have a pretty turned off electorate for lots of obvious reasons. I think they have figured out that the system is broken.

Now it seems to me the appropriate response, and I speak as a former journalist, of the journalist is not to give in to that reality. It's not to turn the overnight ratings in to your news director and shrug your shoulders and walk away from the enterprise. That, by and large, with a very few

Political campaigns can be tremendously entertaining. They have conflict. They have interesting characters. They have rising action, falling action.

Paul Taylor



Why can't you take all these elements and turn it into something that attracts the attentions of citizens? It's a great story.

Paul Taylor

exceptions, has been the response of the broadcast industry driven by bottom line concerns. We don't have viewers for this. They think they're all a bunch of bums anyway. It's a lot more cost efficient to cover the three car wreck on the interstate—better pictures, etc. And that's the world we live in.

It shouldn't be the world we live in. The great mystery to me, having spent years and years covering campaigns, is I actually think they are pretty interesting. If you go to what Marty talked about—the notion that entertainment values in some ways have trumped all other values—political campaigns, if you want to look at them through that lens, and it's not a bad lens to look at it through, can be tremendously entertaining. They have conflict. They have interesting characters. They have a certain rhythm to them. Rising action, falling action.

But most important of all, it has—at least it has the potential for, and Matt's point is very well taken—we have a lot of races that aren't really races to begin with. It has the potential for a suspenseful ending. And in an era of reality shows where the audience gets to choose the ending, this turns out to be something we figured out a couple of hundred years ago. Now why can't you take all of those elements and turn it into something in the last few weeks of a campaign that attracts the attention of citizens, and says by the way it's presented—this is about your life. This is about your kids' education. This is about the air you breathe. All the things that you hold most dear, you have a chance next Tuesday to make this—I mean, it sounds silly. It sounds like a broken record. It sounds League of Women Voters. But, you don't get any more fundamental and basic than that.

It's a great story. And the failure here is not in—I think there is a lot of fault frankly to the politicians because I think politicians have gone to communication by sound bite, communication by paid political advertising and don't take any risks. I think the great recent exception was John McCain, who has a very straight way of talking, and was able

We have to bring the same energy and imagination to covering politics as we do to the nightly weather report.
Paul Taylor



Mandating free air time to candidates is not going to improve the system. The second McCain-Feingold passed, the loopholes were clear. The second the initial campaign finance reform passed in '74, the loopholes were clear.
Matt Klink

to break through, and you see that occasionally on the state level as well.

Political communication is in a very deep rut. And I think the broadcast industry has walked away from it. So everybody's sort of bringing out the worst in everybody else.

Part of the goal here is to shake this system up and say look, we need to open up more avenues of communication. What will the local TV station do if they are forced to show two hours a week in the last month before every campaign? Two hours a week of some kind of political programming? Frankly, they won't have a clue. With a few exceptions, they won't have a clue what to do because they don't have anybody who covers City Hall or the State House or the candidates. They don't know what the issues are. They're in trouble.

We have to start hiring folks like that. We have to get good at it. And we have to bring the same energy and imagination that we bring to the nightly weather report, which is always the number one rated segment. And they bring endless amounts of imagination and bells and whistles and the weather map changes every six months. And it's visually stimulating. And you know what? You can do that with politics, too. [APPLAUSE]

Kaplan: Matt, people don't care. People can be caring. I can just see it.

Klink: I agree with you on the two hours of free broadcast time. That's not a problem. It's when you start mandating free air time to candidates. It's not going to improve the system that you're trying to improve, Paul. The second that McCain-Feingold passed, the loopholes were already known. The second that the initial campaign finance reform passed in '74, the loopholes were already there. We have created this monster.

And by you saying we are only going to give vouchers to contributions below \$249 or \$250, it's just as easy to raise a thousand bucks on a phone call than it is to raise \$249 on a phone call. So basically you're saying my candidate now has to work four times as hard to qualify for that voucher. You really are interested in it? Let's remove all limits. Let's have instant disclosure. That way you would know if the candidate was bought and paid for by IBM or the SCIU or the National Rifle Association. Let's blow out all the limits and say let's go for it. Raise as much as you want. At a certain point, they're going to hit a saturation point anyway.

Kaplan: Arianna.

Huffington: I'm just not sure that everybody here understands the voucher issue. I may be wrong, but does everyone understand the advertising portion of it? I think it'd be great, Paul, if you just clicked through what those provisions are.

Taylor: I'd be happy to. Very briefly, there are two parts to the bill. One is the two hour a week rule, but a second is a form of public financing. But unlike most public financing we have that is taxpayer supported, this is a form of public financing that says let's extract a user fee from the broadcasters who have gotten our airwaves for free, made tens and tens of billions of dollars a year from them.

It would work out to about one half of 1% gross annual fee per year on all broadcasters. So we create a pool of money from that tax or fee. And then candidates can qualify for vouchers by raising small dollar donations. The limit would be anything you raised up to \$250. That enables you to get some vouchers. If you raise \$1000, the first \$250 of it would qualify you for vouchers. If you're a candidate for a House seat, you raise vouchers up to, in the current draft, \$375,000 worth of broadcast vouchers.

You can take it to the radio or TV station of your choice, whatever makes sense for you in your particular district. If it doesn't make sense, if you're just running in one congressional district, it doesn't make sense to advertise to people who live in the thirty other congressional districts in the market, you can trade your voucher in to your political party for cash. The political party can move the vouchers around to places that it makes more sense.

So the basic notion here is to open up the political system to candidates who can raise money in small dollar donations, get them at least enough to be able to start to get a message out. This is pegged at \$375,000 worth of potential voucher benefits if you raise \$125,000.

That's pegged at the notion that that gets you about a half a million dollars. The typical race for U.S. Congress—the winning candidate has to spend a million dollars. There are two reasons that we don't have any competitive congressional races. Matt is absolutely right. One is re-districting, and you see that in state after state after state. It's become a fine art called incumbent protection, and both parties do it. But the second reason is the cost of running.

If you want to run for Congress and you start to make the rounds of the people who count politically in your community, the first question they will all ask is can you raise a million dollars. And the answer that most people give is no, so they don't run.

And this is a notion of saying if you can raise \$125,000 from small donors, that gets you \$375,000. That gets you half a million. It doesn't guarantee you're going to win the race. It doesn't even guarantee you're going to be competitive with resources. But it does guarantee that you start to get a message out. And once that happens, the universe of races that become competitive and therefore the choices that come before voters gets expanded quite dramatically.

Kaplan: Andrea, the National Association of Broadcasters in their response to this proposal, which has been distributed here in lieu of their physical presence, say free air time is patently unconstitutional. The courts have consistently ruled that government regulation of speech, including speech on broadcast stations, must be both the least restrictive means available and must directly advance a compelling governmental interest to be Constitutional. Free air time mandates would fail this test.

Ordin: And they're just wrong. The United States Supreme Court in *Red Lion Broadcasting v. FCC* in 1969 and *CBS v. FCC* in 1981 put forth a standard, a flexible standard, which I talked about when I was first speaking, which allows the FCC to regulate this public trust, these licenses, for which at least Walter Cronkite tells me they paid no money.

This is a public trust that serves the public interest. And it's a balancing test. And all of the cases that have looked at the types of restrictions that the FCC has passed in order to enforce either statutes or its own regulations, have been upheld. So they're right in general about this flexible test and what you have to look to. There's a difference also between our stations, our networks and our cable because of the historical difference between cable and our stations. But if we can draft a statute that allows these types of restrictions, they will be upheld. You may have some people who will dissent, as you did in some of these Supreme Court cases. But it will be upheld.

Kaplan: Arianna, Matt said in effect that this is the elephant's nose under the tent, and that public financing of campaigns would surely follow. Does it seem that way to you?

Huffington: Well, first of all, I'm entirely in favor of public financing of campaigns, so if this is the elephant's nose, I'm delighted. But I don't think it is.

I personally believe that the way things are now, we have to do some very drastic things. Taking care of re-districting would be one.

But, you know, all these great ideas are not going to happen because there's just too much power where the status quo is. And far too many people who don't want them to happen. Is anything going to change? No. This will be a very, very long battle, and it's going to be incredibly hard fought. So to think that just by giving some minimal amount of free air time—and again, I have to keep reminding you all that they're our airwaves that we gave to them, that they, in a way, bought them with campaign donations.

I really think, Paul, maybe we can reframe this debate. That it's something they owe to us. They have a civic obligation. We're not asking for any favors.

Of course, if we hadn't given it to them in 1996, we would be in a much stronger position to negotiate. All the stops they are putting out now involve saying it's unconstitutional. This will be nothing for what they got. Right? They would be willing to give it to us if we had maybe the condition in '96. But we didn't, and we can't get in a time machine and change things. So we need to remind them constantly that it's not theirs, and that they have a minimal civic obligation to do it. Now the question of how do we win this? I'd love to hear from Paul on where the poll numbers are, where the public is.

A Pew Center poll found that 73% of respondents favored free air time.

Paul Taylor



Fewer than one-third of the public understands that the public owns the airwaves.

Paul Taylor

Taylor: The Pew Center for the People and the Press did a poll on this in May. Do you favor free air time for candidates—73% in favor. I think 19% or 20% opposed. So overwhelmingly in favor.

Two other numbers from that poll—we asked people who owns the airwaves. We had a little fun with that in the video. Fewer than one-third of the public understands that the public owns the airwaves. It's a very hard concept to get your mind around because the airwaves are, in fact, not a physical entity. But the way to think about them is like a national forest or other commonly owned assets.

And finally, when you tell people—as we did in this poll—the public does own the airwaves. And through our government, we give exclusive licenses to broadcasters to use them. Do you think the broadcasters have paid for these licenses?

By a seven to one ratio, the public assumes that the broadcasters paid for them. Yes, that's what we do with grazing rights and with mining rights and everything else. That's what we do when we let commercial enterprises use our public properties.

So I think that part of the strategy for trying to get this passed is simply to educate the public on these basic facts. This world is further confused by the reality that most people get a broadcast station. But now the overwhelming majority of people receive their broadcast station on a subscription service, typically cable or satellite, for which they are paying money. The broadcasters aren't getting that money. The cable system is getting that money.

The cable system is an entirely different regime of regulation. There is some federal regulation. But in every instance, the local cable company has paid a fee to the local municipality for the rights of way to lay their cable lines. Year in and year out, the cable industry is paying more than a billion dollars in, in effect, rental fees to lay their lines. The

equivalent is the broadcasters' free use of these airwaves for which they don't pay a penny.

So I think there is a lot of educating that helps advance the issue. The difficult part of it politically to get it through is the current system serves incumbent broadcasters extremely well. And it serves incumbent members of Congress extremely well. If you have high-cost politics, it's very good if you're already in, and it's a barrier to entry for everybody else. So what you have to do is harness some of what Dan talked about—some of the energy that is out there that has given up on the political system, and to suggest there are ways of breaking this monopoly open, and I think this is one of the most attractive out there.

Klink: Paul, I have a quick question for you. What do your poll numbers do when you tell the American public about this tax that you're going to put on the broadcasting industry?

Taylor: I don't know that that one was polled. If you say look, this is an industry that's using our assets, that makes \$64 billion a year with exclusive rights. They and they alone can use our assets. Often the broadcasters say to me as an ex-print journalist, would you ever support a system where the federal government said to every newspaper you have to provide free advertising space around election time for candidates? And my answer is absolutely not. It's fundamentally unconstitutional. Then why do you want to do it for the broadcasters? The equivalent would be if, in order to publish a newspaper, you had to get your newsprint from trees in a federal forest. That was the only place there were trees. The government owned that forest. And you had the exclusive rights in your community to those trees.

That has a lot of value because it means the government is saying you can't have any competitors. You and only you get to do this. And you as an industry make \$64 billion. That's the bargain. Now, when that bargain was struck—and this goes back to the early days of radio in the '20's and '30's—the bargain was we're going to do all this for you. But you need, in return, to serve the public interest.

When you make politics relevant to people, they begin to care about politics.
Dan Schnur



What I learned in when we campaigned is that when you take an abstract principle, like the way campaigns are financed or the way ads are purchased, and relate it to people's lives, they care.
Dan Schnur

What we haven't done—and it's not just in the six years since the digital transition. It's really been for seventy or eighty years. What we haven't done is be willing to say we need some public interest return on the investment. And in the last decade or two particularly, as the costs have spiraled out of control, we need to revisit this fundamental issue and say we haven't gotten our half of the bargain.

Kaplan: So Dan Schnur, what about it? Can the volunteerism, the spirit of community participation that you see among young people in particular, be mobilized for the political realm?

Schnur: Of course, it can. And as Paul referenced a few minutes ago, I saw it during John McCain's presidential campaign in 1999 and 2000. When I first met with John McCain to discuss his campaign three and a half years ago at a coffee shop here in Los Angeles, he was running at roughly 2% in the polls. Or, as the Senator said at the time, "I'm a 2% in the polls with a 5% margin of error. Which means, if you run the math, that 3% of the people of New Hampshire may want me dead."

And what we found is that not just among young people, but upon a much broader swath of the electorate, that when you made politics relevant to them in the things that they already cared about, they would begin to care about politics.

Now, Matt's right. Most voters don't care about politics. And the reason for that is because most politicians don't make the effort to relate what they're talking about to things that are already important to voters. As Mitch McConnell will tell you with the slightest provocation, the average poll shows that voters rank campaign finance reform as an issue roughly equal to that of static cling. And he's right because in an abstract, it's just politicians talking political talk that average voters don't care about. But what I learned in New Hampshire and in South Carolina and Michigan and the other states in which we campaigned is that when you take even an abstract principle, such as the way campaigns are financed or the way ads are purchased, and you related it to people's lives—of course they can care, Marty.

When I watched John McCain talk—John McCain, on my first day with him, was asked a question about health care reform. Now I'd spent several hours before I took the job talking to him about policy, and if John McCain at that point had a position on health care reform, believe me, it was news to me. And what the Senator told the voter who asked about health care was the following. He said you're not going to get it. You're not going to get health care reform. You're not going to get a patient's bill of rights. At least, not a legitimate one and let me tell you why. Because the Democratic Party is a wholly owned subsidiary of the trial lawyers. Because my Republican Party is owned and operated by the HMO's and the insurance companies. And if you care about health care reform, then here's why you should care about campaign finance reform.

And if it can be done with the level of contributions that wealthy people are allowed to make to the candidates for office, I suspect it can be done with the type of television people see in their homes every night.

If I can just quickly address a point of Matt's. Now let me say this. Matt's a friend of mine. I like him a lot. He's good at what he does and he's smart. The reason he's smart is because he and I usually agree. Now what strikes me is the precarious nature of the ground that he has chosen to defend. He says that this may lead to public financing. Now, unlike Arianna, I oppose public financing and to me, here's the difference. A tax is a general subsidy of government operations that everyone pays. A fee or another financial transaction is a quid pro quo. I do something and in order to do that, I pay for it. I used to go out with a girl that lived in Marin County. And every time I went to see her and every time I drove home, I would have to pay three dollars for a toll. Now there are people who would argue that's a tax. But I chose to drive across the Golden Gate Bridge. And this was my fee. This was the transaction in which I engaged in order to do so.

These broadcasters, as we've talked about over the course of this panel, have also engaged in a transaction. They acquired billions of dollars worth of spectrum. And they acquired it for free.

And therefore it seems to me that it is reasonable, instead of imposing a general tax on the populace so we can finance campaigns publicly, to impose a fee in return for the billions of dollars of value that we've given to the broadcasters.

Now Matt calls it a slippery slope. Let me give you some advice that has nothing to do with TV advertising. Whenever anyone says this is a slippery slope, they have nothing intelligent to say.

No offense, Matt. Because what they are saying is that there is nothing particularly wrong with this proposal, but if it happens, it might lead to something else. And then that might lead to something else. And then it might lead to something else. And then after that, it might lead to something bad. That's what a slippery slope is.

Second, Matt says this won't fix re-districting. Well, it won't. And it won't fix static cling. And it won't cure acne. And unfortunately for me, it will not do anything about prematurely gray hair.

That's the other last refuge of someone who, Matt, doesn't have a lot to argue with—saying this won't get the Dodgers into the World Series, Paul, so therefore it's not going to do anything good for us today.

Kaplan: It's not going to get the Giants in either, though.

Schnur: I'm an A's fan and they're going to make it. Lastly, and I apologize for going on so long, Marty, but you have five people who love microphones like this, we're going to fight over it.

I want to explain to you briefly what I do for a living. I work with candidates to help them get their message out to voters who, as Matt suggests, don't care a lot about politics. And part of what I do—a lot of what I do—is to try to help them craft a message that make people care more than they already do. But I also recognize the limitations under which we're working. So the other thing I do is I train candidates, intelligent men and women, to take nuanced, subtle, complicated, difficult arguments and dumb them down to the lowest common denominator. And once we're there, to dumb them down even further.

I train a candidate to take sixty minutes of information and to funnel it into 7.8 seconds. I teach them to oversimplify their message so someone who pays only the slightest bit of attention to politics can understand or think they understand what my candidate's saying. And I wish I didn't have to do that. But, as I mentioned earlier, these are the rules that have been given to me. I get 7.8 seconds on the local news. I get thirty

seconds for an ad. And if I got more time, then I could let the candidates talk to you in the depth and the breadth and the specificity and the intelligence that you deserve.

And until we do something along the lines of what Taylor and his organization are talking about, then I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing, which is good for me from a selfish standpoint, but very bad for me and very bad for all of us from a much broader perspective.

Kaplan: Arianna, if I'm not mistaken, you wrote a book called *How To Overthrow the Government*. I'm wondering if the topic were changed to the broadcasters and big media, do you think that the kind of challenge to their power that you're talking about could be effectively mounted, whether through campaigns to stop them from renewing their licenses or any other mechanisms? Do you think there is hope for this?

Huffington: Well, there is always hope. I'm Greek and we're constitutionally optimistic. And I'm a naturalized American. This is a very optimistic nation. So it's a double whammy.

Yes, I'm optimistic. But at the same time, we cannot really overestimate the nature of the crisis in our democracy. And that's what I think we need to keep returning to to justify why we want to do things which we may not have done before, but which we need to do now.

And to take the media as you asked me to do. Let's just look at the way the media have handled the latest scandals, the corporate scandals. Basically they were part of it. I mean, CNBC was part of what happened. Every night, their anchors were in cahoots with Jack Grubman and Jim Kramer, who is now on TV with Larry Cutler sounding outraged. Nobody's saying excuse me, Jim, where is this outrage coming from? Or Larry Cutler. The first time I was on his show discussing Enron, he told me that Enron was a proof of the triumph of capitalism because it can lead to bankruptcies. And now he's saying I can't wait for these Enron executives to walk the perp walk. You have this system now where the media are not challenged and they're not challenging.

How do you change that? I think this conglomerization of the media is very unhealthy for democracy. I know that's another topic, but you asked me to expand to a general look at the media. The fact that everybody owns everybody else is not healthy.

When you have GE owning all these little groups, the fact that now we're taking on Jack Welsh and we're discovering things about this era of capitalism—thanks to his divorce papers—that we should have known before. This stuff would not have come out. Journalists were not investigating. The best investigative journalism at the moment on issues of campaigning is done by the Center of Responsive Politics.

It's amazing to me. The first time I read something was in the *Washington Journal* on Friday when they had a list of politicians who had received hard IPO's.

There was a lot of debate about CEO's receiving hard IPO's, and the *Washington Journal* came up with a list that included Barbara Boxer and Nancy Pilosi and other Democratic politicians, and a few Republicans.

I called the Center for Responsive Politics today to get the full story. I assumed the Center had taken the story to the *Journal*. They said no, believe it or not, they didn't get it from us. They were utterly amazed themselves because journalists are not really doing journalism. They're taking things from those public interest think tanks, and we're lucky if they do that. You know, I'm one of those journalists who gets things from public interest think tanks. So thank God for them, but the point is that clearly there is something very wrong with journalists. Whether they are print journalists or broadcast journalists, they have given up on a fundamental principle of journalism—that we have to take the important and make it interesting.

This is a great definition of our job, and we are definitely falling down on that. I think this whole mania for mergers and acquisitions and has, I think, been undermined to a large extent.

I think what's happened with AOL/TimeWarner is going to be a cold shower. And unfortunately, we have as the head of FCC Michael Powell, who is in favor of creating even more conglomerates than we have already. So that is a problem.

Kaplan: We have a chance for a couple of questions from the audience. There is a microphone. And if you could bring that microphone right over there to that very strongly raised hand. If you have a speech, please conceal it in the form of a question.

Woman #1: I have no speech. I am very interested in how this legislation would deal with the cable networks as well as the other media that we're talking about.

Taylor: This legislation exclusively affects broadcast license holders. There are about 1300 local television stations that have broadcast licenses. There are about twelve or thirteen thousand radio stations. This legislation would affect all of them.

Now most people get their broadcast signal on a cable and the effect would flow through that way. But to the extent that there is a burden, a fee, it would go to the broadcast license holder.

Kaplan: Who has the mic? You do. Come on up front over here.

Woman #2: Thank you. Our public airwaves used to have requirements for public service broadcasting. Does this still exist? And when they did it, it was at terrible hours like 3:00 a.m. Is there anything built into the legislation that says when these two hours a week would be seen?

Kaplan: Andrea, do you want to talk about that?

Ordin: Well, I don't know what the present legislation says. But certainly that would be something that you could add to the present legislation if it's not there. Having them run at a reasonable time so people can hear and see it. And again going back to what we were talking about. Since that had been upheld at one point, that too would be upheld.

Kaplan: There are such things in the legislation. Yes.

Man #1: I'm a strange American. I was born in the States, but I grew up in Europe. In Belgium, if you are in another country and you didn't vote, you can go to prison. This is not a democracy. The average population that votes in the United States is 14%. That means that 86% of people don't vote. And the system still works. So the rationale is politics is not important. How do we solve this problem? Who has the power?

You mentioned Senator McCain about health care—don't talk about it because you don't have the power. To make it so that those in power will have the interest to change is the only way it's going to change. If you succeed in getting your message, not to the limited number of people in this room, but to the Welsh's and the heads of the

conglomerates and make them aware of it—they are the next Enrons—unless they change and it's in their best interest, it's not going to change.

Huffington: I don't think it's going to change that way. I really think that it's only going to change when the people make it very clear they are not going to put up with it anymore. If you look at the kind of reforms we've had recently—just take the Sarbanes Bill. Before the WorldCom scandal happened, it was dead. Everybody on the Hill will tell you there was no chance of it succeeding. The only way it passed was because politicians are survivors. They only understand punishment. And when they saw the handwriting on the wall, they knew—they saw the poll numbers. They saw the public mood. They knew they had to pass something. And even Phil Graham, who had introduced thirty-two amendments to kill the Sarbanes Bill, voted for it.

So basically the only way we're going to get anything is not by going to the heads of the conglomerates or convincing politicians. It is by keeping the outrage going and mobilizing people. It's what you're doing, and that's why I so admire what the League of Women Voters is doing. For me, one of the best things about this legislation is that it is going to encourage new people to enter politics. Because the current lot—just look around. Do you want to hear more from Gray Davis? No, thank you very much. Or Bill Simon? No. And you can around the nation. There are very, very few. John McCain being an exception.

Schnur: Arianna, just because I believe in tilting at windmills, I'm going to attempt to convince you. First of all however, sir, just to clarify. In fact, Senator McCain did have a proposal for health care reform. He worked on a bi-partisan basis with Senator Kennedy and Senator Edwards on a patient's bill of rights.

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We're not going to get anything by going to the heads of the conglomerates or by convincing politicians, but by keeping the outrage going and mobilizing people.
Arianna Huffington
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Our goal shouldn't be making it easier for people to vote. It should be creating a system that informs them and educates and entertains them to a point where they are motivated to undergo those onerous hurdles that we set up to get them to vote in high school gymnasiums and basements around the state.

Dan Schnur

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The point of my comments earlier was the way to make people care about something that they don't care about is to relate it to something they do care about. So I'm sorry if I left a misimpression.

The second misimpression I may have left you, sir, is who "we" are. And in the context of the point I was making earlier—that these young people who choose not to vote are not at fault, but rather it's us for creating a system that discourages them. The "we" I'm talking about are those of us who work and oversee the political process. The people who drew the re-districting lines that Matt was talking about that leave no competitive races in California, at either the legislative or the congressional level, this year. The people in Sacramento who, faced with the public outcry for campaign finance reform in 2000, passed Proposition 34, which codified into law the pre-McCain-Feingold rules from the federal government at a state level. So whether you talk about corporate titans or the ruling political class, the "we" I talk about are the people who make the rules, not necessarily all of those of us in this room.

Finally, you talked about countries that jail non-voters.

Man #1: Theoretically. They never did.

Schnur: I guess what I would say is that type of legislation, if it were implemented in force, misses the point. You hear about Motor Voter. You hear about same day voter registration. You hear about all these different ways to make it easier for people to vote. And whether you think they're good, bad or otherwise, they're missing the point. Our goal shouldn't be making it easier for people to vote. It should be creating a system that informs them and educates and entertains them to a point where they are motivated to undergo those onerous hurdles that we set up to get them to vote in high school gymnasiums and in basements around the state.

Finally to Arianna's point on not wanting more of these politicians talking. Arianna, I guess the point I would make as someone

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There are good men and women in this system. The real tragedy of it is that most of us will never know it because of the 7.8 seconds they get on the local news.

Dan Schnur

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who works in the system, is there are good men and women in this system. The real tragedy of it is that most of us will never know it because of the 7.8 seconds they get on the local news. Or because candidates are forced to spend twenty-three hours and three-quarter hours out of every twenty-four hours raising money, we don't get a chance to hear from them about what motivated them to get into public service.

It's an easy applause line to make fun of politicians as a class. And some of them are corrupt, and some of them are horrible people. But a lot of them are truly motivated. They really do want to do something that's going to make their community a better place to live. Now Marty and I, for example, would disagree wholeheartedly on what it takes to make our community a better place. But the fact is they get into it for the right reasons. And just as Senator McCain says when he's asked to name corrupt members of the United States Congress, he says it's not that the members are corrupt. It's that the system is corrupt.

It's not that the overwhelming majority of politicians are bad people. It's that the system doesn't let us see what brought them into the process in the first place. So by all means I agree with you. Let's open this process up to people who can't get involved. But there are good people there as well. And if TV stations would make this time available to them, I think we'd get to see some of that.

Kaplan: There was a question on this side of the room. Yes.

Woman #3: To me, it sounds like we're talking about taking a teacup to the ocean. We have more bandwidth available to us. We could have entire channels of local political coverage for those 5% of the population who really care about it. If it were competitively created and produced, it would draw other

audience as well. So, when you talk about our free broadcast, we pay twelve minutes to eighteen minutes of attention for each forty-two to forty-four minutes of broadcast entertainment that we receive.

Taylor: It's up to twenty per hour.

Woman #3: In some areas, you're right. It's twenty minutes of commercial per entertainment hour. That's not free. That's costing us our lives. That's our time and attention, the most valuable commodity that we have. And what is really amazing to me is that with the FCC regulations in place right now, those local broadcast stations can take their six megahertz of channel, which right now is one broadcast station, and turn it into six channels that they will own. But nobody is requiring them to do a political program or a community interest channel. What really makes it interesting is that with current technology, we could turn each one of those local broadcast channels into one hundred or more micro-channels.

That, to me, is the biggest waste of potential for communication, for information and for empowerment that we can have. And in the current system—and I've worked for the NAB, so I know a little about how it operates—we are literally giving it away.

Kaplan: It's the dream of any moderator to have an audience in which each member could be a panelist. [APPLAUSE] And it's also a dream to have to end while so many people still want to ask questions. So I apologize. We've gone on for a while.

I'd like you to join me in doing something unorthodox. Please first give a hand to Matt Klink. [APPLAUSE] And then please applaud yourselves for your civic activism and the panel for giving us a great time. [APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

