**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Philadelphia, you`ve got someone outstanding to vote for in Hillary Clinton. I`ll be honest -- I`ve had to bite my tongue after all of the nonsense that people have said about this election. I can only imagine what Bill and Chelsea have been going through, the vicious, crazy attacks, the double standards applied to her.

They are like nothing we have ever seen before. And what makes it worse is that most of the people saying this stuff, they don`t really believe it. They know better.

Don`t forget, when Hillary was a senator, when she was my secretary of state, she was really popular. People saw how effective she was, how she crossed party lines to get things done. Before she announced her candidacy for president, Republican leaders described her as -- and I`m quoting now - - as very impressive, someone who does an impressive job, one of the most effective secretaries of state.

Well, they were right then. I agreed with Republicans then. Hillary did a great job for America. She`s a big reason why we`re more respected around the world.

But then when it was politically expedient, those same Republicans began tearing her down. And look, when you`re subjected to unrelenting negative fire, it takes a toll.

But here`s the thing about Hillary: she doesn`t complain, she doesn`t buckle, she brushes it off like the American people, she is strong and tough and she knows that government service is not about her, it`s about you -- your struggles, your dreams.

Throughout her career, Hillary has followed that Methodist creed her mom taught her. Do all of the good you can for all of the people you can in all the ways you can for as long as you can. And she doesn`t plan on stopping now. That`s why I know she will work her heart out for you.

Everybody is still in need of a good job or a raise. For every child who needs a sturdier ladder out of poverty, for every American who hasn`t felt the progress of these past years, she will work. She will deliver. She won`t just tweet.

But she will need your help and she will need help in Washington. If you want Hillary to continue the progress we`ve made, you need to give her allies in the Senate like Katie McGinty. You cannot -- there she is right there. You cannot just stick Hillary with Republicans in Congress who are already promising even more unprecedented dysfunction in Washington. That would be hard to do but they are promising it -- more shutdowns, more obstruction, years of hearings and investigations.

You know, gridlock is not mysterious. It`s not something that happens because both sides are being equally unreasonable. It has been a stated Republican strategy since I took office and the only way to break it is to make those who engage in it pay a price, by electing more Democrats tomorrow.

Katie McGinty`s opponent, Pat Toomey, don`t boo, vote. I give him credit for working with us on background checks that 90 percent of Americans support. But you know, that position rings hollow when he supports a Republican leader who blocked that bill. And it doesn`t come close to making up for his repeated votes to make up for the wealthy just like Donald Trump would, to block a higher minimum wage just like Donald Trump would, to repeal the Affordable Care Act, like Donald Trump would.

We do not need a Trump/Toomey economy. We need someone who`s never forgotten her working class routes. The daughter of a restaurant hostess and a Philadelphia beat cop, somebody who went to college with the help of scholarships and student loans. Katie McGinty won`t just be with you part of the way, she`ll be with you all of the way, and that`s why you`ve got to vote for her.

(APPLAUSE)

Katie!

(AUDIENCE CHANTING)

Pennsylvania, if you think endless gridlock will help your family, you should vote Republican. But if you believe American can do better than that, if you care about jobs that families can live on, and child care they can afford, if you care about equal pay for women and higher minimum wage for workers, you need to vote for Democrats up and down the ticket, people like Hillary, people like Katie McGinty, people who will move America forward.

Listen, I know we live in a cynical time and I know elections and all the negative ads tend to heighten that cynicism. Last week, a journalist asked me if I still believe the optimism I expressed that night back in Boston 12 years, that we were more than a collection of red and blue states, that there was not a liberal America or a conservative America, a black America or a white America. There was just the United States of America.

He asked me if I still held on to the hope of 2008, if I still believed in change. After all, he said, the country`s so divided. Hillary`s in such a close race with someone who stands in total opposition for all that you`ve ever stood for.

Maybe her vision was misguided, he suggested, or at least very naive.

And it was a fair question. I had to acknowledge that I hadn`t fully counted on that when I first came into office and had to save the economy. I didn`t anticipate the way social media would magnify our divisions and muddy up facts. None of us knew then how deep the Great Recession would cut and how many people would suffer and how it would make so many people anxious about their futures and their kids` futures even after the economy recovered.

But despite all that, I told him, the answer is yes. I still believe in hope. I`m still as optimistic as ever about our future and that`s because of you, the American people.

In my visits to schools and factories, war theaters, national parks and the letters you`ve written me and the tears you`ve shed over a lost loved one, I have seen again and again your goodness and your strength and your heart. In 2008, you gave me a chance, a skinny guy with a funny name, and for these past eight years, I saw how hard you worked in the face of impossible odds. I saw the values you teach your children. I saw the way you treat strangers in need. I`ve seen the young men and women in uniform who meet every mission and the military families who serve and sacrifice just as well, and the wounded warriors who never, ever quit.

You bet on me all those years ago and I will always be grateful for the privilege you gave me to serve. But I`ll be honest with you, I`ve always had the better odds, because I`ve always bet on you.

And America, I`m betting on you one more time. I`m betting that tomorrow, most mom and dads across America won`t cast their vote for someone who denigrates their daughters from the highest office in the land. I`m betting that most Americans won`t vote for someone who considers minorities and **immigrants** and people with disabilities as inferior, who considers people who practice different faiths as objects of suspicion.

I`m betting that tomorrow, true conservatives won`t cast our vote for someone with no regard for the Constitution. I`m betting that young people turn out to vote because your future is at stake.

(APPLAUSE)

I`m betting that men across this country will have no problem voting for the more qualified candidate who happens to be a woman.

(APPLAUSE)

I`m betting that African-Americans will vote in big numbers because this journey we`ve been on was never about the color of a president but the content of his character.

(APPLAUSE)

I bet America will reject the politics of resentment and the politics blame and choose a politics that says we are stronger together. I am betting that tomorrow you will reject fear and you`ll choose hope. I`m betting that the wisdom and decency and generosity of the American people will once again win the day and that is a bet that I have never, ever lost.

(APPLAUSE)

Philadelphia, in this place, where our founders forged the documents of freedom, in this place where they gave us the tools to perfect our union, if you share my faith, then I ask you to vote. If you want a president who shares our faith in America, who`s lived that faith in America, who will finally shatter a glass ceiling and be a president for each and every one of us, then I am asking you to work as hard as you can this one last day to elect my fellow American, this fighter, this stateswoman, this mother, this grandmother, this patriot, our next president of the United States of America, Hillary Clinton!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC ANCHOR: President Obama introducing Hillary Clinton tonight at what I think is clearly the biggest campaign event that she has made during her entire presidential run, the campaign has estimated 20,000 people on hand outside Independence Hall in Philadelphia and many thousands more outside the secure perimeter and thus far not able to get in.

President Obama introduced by his wife, first lady Michelle Obama. She said she thought it would be one of the last times if not the last time she ever introduced him in public as my husband, the president of the United States. But that outgoing president of the United States now giving, as he has been throughout this whole period of the campaign, just a full-throated endorsement and welcome and introduction, making the case for the Democratic whom he wants to be his successor, Hillary Clinton.

We expect her to make remarks here tonight. We will carry these remarks live. We`re also expecting a further event tonight from Mrs. Clinton, a midnight rally in Raleigh, North Carolina. We are expecting also two late- night events from Donald Trump. We`ll be covering those live as they happen as well.

But let`s listen in on this event right now, this huge event at Independence Hall in Philly.

(AUDIENCE CHANTING)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Hello, Philadelphia!

Oh, thank you. I am so grateful to be here tonight and spend this time with all of you here in this historic spot and to all of the volunteers, activists, the union organizers, the hard hats I see in the audience tonight -- thank you for one last rally before Election Day tomorrow.

And personally, I am so happy to be finishing this campaign with my husband and my daughter by my side. We`ve been traveling across the country separately trying to cover as much ground as possible and talk to as many voters as we can but I`m really glad that we`re all together tonight in Philadelphia with you.

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

And how great was it to have Jon Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen with us.

But in addition to all of that, what is so special for me is that we have our amazing president and first lady with us because for now nearly eight years, they have served our nation with grace, strength, brilliance and a whole lot of cool. And they have shown us again and again, as Michelle said right here in Philadelphia back at our convention, when others go low, we go high!

I`m pretty sure, as they said tonight, that the best way to thank them is to do something really important tomorrow. To vote, every single one of you and every person you know. Because as the president just pointed out, there is a clear choice in this election, a choice between division or unity, between an economy that works for everyone or only those at the top. Between strong, steady leadership or a loose cannon who could put everything at risk.

So make no mistakes, our core values are being tested in this election. We know enough about my opponent. We know who he is. The real question for us is what kind of country we want to be and what kind of future we want to build for our children.

I`m proud that I had the chance to serve in President Obama`s cabinet. And I am proud that I could watch the extraordinary service of our first lady. And one thing I know is that, like them, I love America and I know you do, too.

We love this country, we love what it stands for, not that we are blind to its flaws, its problems, it`s challenges, but I believe with all my heart that America`s best days are still ahead of us, if we reach for them together.

We choose to believe in a hopeful, inclusive, big-hearted America, an America where everyone has a place, everyone`s included, everyone has a chance to live up to their own God-given potentials.

There have been so many memorable moments in this election for me and most of them revolve around the people that I`ve had the privilege of meeting. And last night in Manchester, New Hampshire, I had the honor to be introduced by Khizr Kahn, who`s son, Captain Kahn, was killed while serving in Iraq. Just as he did here at our convention, Mr. Kahn again reminded us of the responsibility we all share to protect and defend our Constitution.

You remember the story of Captain Kahn. The son of **immigrants**, himself brought here as a young child who grew up to join the United States army and on that fateful day, with his unit, he saw a suspicious car and he moved toward it to try to determine whether it was a danger or not, telling his men to stay back. The car was rigged, the bomb went off and he died protecting his men. He was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

And what Mr. Kahn said last night is something I want us all to remember. He said after the men derogatory and insulting comments that we`ve heard from Donald Trump, would his son, Captain Kahn, have a place in Donald Trump`s America? That`s an important question for all of us because we don`t want to shrink the vision of this great country.

We want to keep expanding it so that everyone has a place to pursue your dreams, your aspirations, the future that you want to create for yourselves and everyone else. Think about that when you go to the polls tomorrow. Think about how throughout our history, generations of Americans just like us have come together to meet the tests of their time and, yes, as President Obama said it started right here in Philadelphia, when representatives from 13 unruly colonies came together to launch the greatest experiment the world has ever seen, our parents and grandparents defended that democracy.

They built the great American middle class. They marched for civil rights and voting rights for workers` rights and women`s rights, for LGBT rights and rights for people with disabilities.

And tomorrow, we face the test of our time. What will we vote for, not just against. What will we decide is on the ballot because although my name and my opponent`s name may be on the ballot, every issue you care about is on that ballot.

If you believe that America thrives when the middle class thrives, then you have to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe all of our kids should have good schools and good teachers no matter what zip code they live in, then you have to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe college should be more affordable, you have to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe we must reform our criminal justice system so everyone has respect for the law and everyone is respected by the law, you have to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe we need to protect our kids and pass commonsense gun safety reforms, you have to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

If you believe we must raise the minimum wage and finally guarantee equal pay for women, then you need to vote.

(APPLAUSE)

Now, you know every time I say that last part about equal pay for women, my opponent accuses me of playing the women`s card. Well, you know what I say, if they are playing the women`s card, then deal me in.

(APPLAUSE)

So it is not just my name or Donald Trump`s name on the ballot tomorrow. Every issue you care about is at stake. And that is just the beginning because we have to bridge the divides in our country.

I regret deeply how angry the tone of the campaign became.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Not your fault!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

CLINTON: And, by the way, did any of you see those debates? Well, I stood next to Donald Trump for 4 1/2 hours proving conclusively, I have the stamina to be president and commander in chief!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

But I have to say --

(AUDIENCE CHANTING)

But I have to say there were so many troubling things that my opponent has said, but probably the most horrifying was at the end of the last debate, after he has insulted everyone, more than half the population, by the way, **immigrants**, African-Americans, Latinos, POWs, Muslims, women, he then launches an attack on our democracy, refusing to say whether or not he would accept the outcome of the election.

Well, let`s show tomorrow, there will be no question about the outcome of this election!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

But I also want you to know, I will be a president for all Americans Democrats, Republicans, independents. Not just those who supported me in this election, everyone, because I believe we all have a role to play in building a better, fairer, stronger America, building on the progress that we have enjoyed under President Barack Obama over the last eight years.

I am not going to let anybody rip away the progress we`ve made and turn the clock back sending us back in time where people are free to question the foundation of our country, what our founders here did -- you know, they did not agree on everything, in case you haven`t remembered. There were lots of contentious arguments but they saw a higher purpose and they came together.

That`s what I want us to do and we can take the first step tomorrow. Please, make a plan to vote. Pennsylvania, it all happens tomorrow.

(APPLAUSE)

If you text the word "plan" to 47246, we will walk you through where to vote, when to vote, how to get there. You can do that right now and please tell your friends, your family, your neighbors. And you can go to iwillvote.com and get all of the information you need.

Every person who lives in Philadelphia, lives within five blocks of your polling place. That`s it. Just five blocks. And the polls open at 7:00 a.m. And they close at 8:00 p.m. and remember, if you`re in line at 8:00 p.m., they have to let you vote.

And so, we need your help. In these last hours, we need your help knocking on doors and making phone calls, helping to turn people out, maybe helping people who need assistance to get to the polls. You can still volunteer by going to HillaryClinton.com. Because none of us, none of us want to wake up on Wednesday morning and wish we had done more.

Years from today when your kids and grandkids ask what you did in 2016, when everything was on the line, I want you to be able to say that you did vote, you voted for an inclusive, big-hearted, open-minded, country future that will make sure that we all keep moving together because I do believe we are stronger together.

And you voted for an America where we build bridges, not walls. And maybe most importantly, you voted in great numbers to demonstrate conclusively once and for all that, yes, love Trumps hate. Let`s get out and vote, Philadelphia, tomorrow! Let`s make history together! Thank you and God bless you!

(CHEERS AND APPLAUSE)

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton speaking in what will not be her final election rally but it certainly will be her biggest. There`s about 20,000 people on site there at Independence Hall in Philadelphia for the first event of its kind. You see there, Hillary Clinton along with the president, Barack Obama, along with the first lady, Michelle Obama, and, of course, joined by her husband, former President Bill Clinton and her daughter Chelsea Clinton.

We`ve seen campaigning by all of those other four people for Hillary Clinton during this campaign. They`ve never done a joint appearance like this. They`ve never even just had the president and first lady with Hillary Clinton any time other than at the convention.

So this is like their -- this is their closing night, big footprint event and it`s not a coincidence that it`s in Philadelphia. Obviously, there`s the symbolism of being in Independence Hall and its role in the founding of our nation, but it`s also foundational to the very question of who is going to win Pennsylvania. The campaigns are lavishing attention, both the Republican and Democratic campaigns, on states like Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, what we`re learning is going to be the list of toss-up states or at least the states most hard fought over in this most unusual undoubtedly historic campaign.

So, I said this will not be her last rally, that`s because tonight at midnight, Hillary Clinton is expecting to do another event in Raleigh, North Carolina. We will be bringing you that live as well. I should tell you that while Hillary Clinton was giving her remarks tonight, I think maybe actually while President Obama was speaking, Donald Trump started doing his event tonight in New Hampshire.

Donald Trump`s event in New Hampshire is his final event. He`s in New Hampshire and then has a still later event tonight which is going to be in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We`re going to be bringing you everything live that we can. We can only show one thing at a time, though. We did not cut into President Obama and Mrs. Clinton in order to bring you his remarks.

Here`s a portion that wasn`t just his regular stump speech. We will be planning to cover Trump`s late-night events live.

Here`s a little bit of Donald Trump tonight speaking in New Hampshire.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: We are going, right after this, to Michigan because Michigan is in play. And I may get there a little bit late but they`re waiting, we have thousands and thousands of people, the polls just came out, we`re leading in Michigan.

We`re leading in New Hampshire. We`re leading in Ohio. We`re leading in Iowa. We`re leading in North Carolina.

I think we`re doing really, really well in Pennsylvania. And I do believe we are leading in Florida. So it`s going to be amazing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Donald Trump speaking tonight in New Hampshire in what is the second to last event of the election eve.

Tonight, you`re looking at live pictures of a fired up President Obama along with former President Clinton, Jon Bon Jovi, Chelsea Clinton`s husband there, a big, big, big event, 20,000 people out for the Democrats in Philadelphia tonight.

We`re going to go now to Kristen Welker who has been traveling with the Clinton campaign.

Kristen, I just have to ask you, as far as I can tell, this is the largest campaign event that Clinton has done throughout this whole campaign season. Is that fair to estimate?

KRISTEN WELKER, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: Oh, it absolutely is, Rachel. And it`s hard to overstate the extent to which emotions are running high here tonight. This is a real show of force and this is what makes Secretary Clinton`s campaign so different from Donald Trump, particularly in these final days.

It has been all hands on deck for the Democratic Party. President Obama, the first lady, Vice President Biden, former President Bill Clinton, all out on the campaign trail with her and, of course, so many of them here with her tonight in Philadelphia. Also, the city where she officially accepted her party`s nomination.

So, there is a lot of symbolism here tonight, a lot of raw emotion. I heard you talking about the significance of Pennsylvania. This is a key part of her firewall, Rachel. This is a state that will deliver a lot of electoral votes and it`s a state that is most certainly a part of her path to 270. She has had a very strong lead in the polls. It has narrowed, as we have gotten closer to Election Day, and that is why you have seen her and her top surrogates making so many stops here in recent days.

And the key to winning Pennsylvania is really turns out African-American voters in force here in the city of Philadelphia and also making sure that they win the Philadelphia suburbs. That is a region that was once reliably red but in the area of about 2008, turned blue. And so, getting those voters, that is a swing area, getting them to come out and vote for Secretary Clinton will be critical.

Another state that is part of her firewall, Michigan, you`ve been talking about that as well. She made a last-minute stop to Michigan today. She crisscrossed a number of key states. But, Rachel, again, this underscores her strategy heading into the final hours of this campaign. You heard her talking about her vision, the fact that she wants to be a unifier, really trying to get trash herself with Donald Trump as she urged voters to get out and vote tomorrow, Rachel.

MADDOW: Kristen, can I just ask you, I`m -- we`re all at the point now where we`re trying to read tea leaves wherever we find them, and I`m going to be one of those creepy people on cable news who does body language analysis. I`m like watching Hillary Clinton tonight, especially having watched her a lot over the last few days. Tonight, she seemed serious to me, she seemed focus, she did not seem particularly giddy to be looking at 20,000 people in that square in Philadelphia.

Do you have -- I don`t want to read too much into that, but do you have any sense of what their confidence level is for Pennsylvania? I know they need hundreds of thousands of votes in terms of a margin out of Philly. That`s why they are in Philly tonight. Do they actually think they are going to get it?

WELKER: I think they are feeling measured confidence. They are feeling good about their ground game here. It`s second to none. They have more than a million volunteers out all across the country, thousands -- thousands of volunteers came from D.C. and New York right here to Philadelphia to try to get out the vote. They are feeling confident about their ability to close out this race.

To your point, though, and the body language, the fact that she is quite focused right now, I think you`re seeing a candidate who several days ago, prior to that bombshell by FBI director James Comey did feel as though she was on the cusp of clinching this. That, of course, changed. We saw the poll got much closer, the campaign would argue that happens as a natural part of getting closer to Election Day.

But I think it refocused them and their message has really shifted to making the argument that every vote matters and that is why you heard her get into so many specifics tonight about where people can get out and vote, what time the polling place is open. You`ll recall there was a strike here, Rachel, that was just resolved. They`re breathing a sigh of relief over that, because there was some trepidation that they could lose some critical votes due to that.

So, I think they`re very focused. They think it`s going to be tight but ultimately, ultimately they think it`s their ground game and the show of force, quite frankly, that`s going to push her over the finish line -- Rachel.

MADDOW: NBC`s Kristen Welker, excellent. Thank you, Kristen, and I really appreciate you joining us tonight from the site of that huge event in Philadelphia.

And we are now down to the point where it becomes relevant, political news what the weather is in certain states and in certain cities, it becomes very relevant political news whether or not the Philadelphia transit unions have been able to come up with a negotiated agreement, whether there`s going to be transit strike continuing. In a city like Philadelphia, that becomes not just local news, not just labor news, but national, political news as we get super, super down to the wire.

I will tell you, we do have some really specific insight into why Donald Trump is doing this last event of the night tonight in Michigan and why Hillary Clinton just did this big event in Pennsylvania. It`s not just because they are swing states. It`s not about who`s on offense or who`s on defense. There`s actually a mathematical explanation for why they`re in those two places. We`ve got that coming up tonight.

We`ve also got some really interesting perspective on why it matters and why it is unusual that both of the campaigns tonight are finishing up with big rallies in front of big crowds the way that they are doing that. You would not necessarily expect from the historical context that that would be what they are doing but we think we understand that as well. All of that still to come tonight.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: You know what? Election eve is more fun than it used to be. And I know everybody says, oh, I`ve never been more stressed about an election, our presidential election has never been more terrible. You know, nothing has ever been so innovating and weird and national politics than this election.

But you know what? It`s not true. I hereby offer definitive proof that election eve now is more fun than election eves of your.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GERALD FORD, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT: It is from your ranks that I come and on your side I stand.

Tomorrow is a very crucial election but tonight, America`s strong, America`s free, America`s on the move.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Why is he on an airplane? I mean, I know, on the move. But really?

That was election eve 1976, President Gerald Ford and his campaign on an election eve uninterrupted telecast from an airplane. There was literally no reason for him to be on board Air Force One, including the jostling camera and airplane noise because he was actually flying when they shoot this thing.

As far as we can tell, there`s no reason for him to be on board the plane for this hour long telecast on election eve, other than the fact that his campaign apparently thought it would be cool, right? It would be like he was president and he`s on the Air Force One.

But that is how election eve was spent 40 years ago tonight in 1976, the night before Gerald Ford lost that election. It`s an overlooked part of our presidential election history that for a long time in the modern era, election eve has been a night of terrible TV shows put on by the candidates. Really long form, terrible television.

The Republicans, I think, started it in 1952. They put Eisenhower on TV for an hour on election eve. He was sitting there in a chair with his wife on his right and his running mate Dick Nixon on his left. And Nixon`s wife was there, too. They were just sitting there in arm chairs and this thing went on for an hour.

I mean, Eisenhower is kind of a big deal in American political history. Kind of a towering figure in Republican politics, right? But on election eve in 1952, this poor guy, they put him in this terrible living room, they shove the camera right in his face. Apparently, they did not tell him at all what to say, and then they tried to make it seem all homey. It was just terrible.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DWIGHT EISENHOWER, FORMER PRESIDENT: The point of the show is that you share it with us, as we sit here to take a look at what they were going to do, you look also. So in that way, we all get to be together almost in your living room. So, let`s all sit together and find out.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: We all get to be together. I love me some Eisenhower but that was not some kindness to him.

Election eve was weird, awkward, long-form television involving the candidates for a very long time.

In 1968, it was even worse. By `68, Dick Nixon was not Ike`s running mate anymore. He was top of the ticket. And on election eve 1968, Roger Ailes of FOX News produced a four-hour long live Nixon telethon on the eve of the election.

Tell me if you see any foreshadowing here in terms of where Roger Ailes ended up in his career. But at the Nixon telethon on election eve `68, they had this bank of pretty girls answering the phones, including a group of stewardess for Nixon. They call them the Nixoneers. And they made a four-hour long show out of basically having pretty ladies pretend to take call-in questions for Nixon while the campaign instead asked them questions on TV that they had previously prepared him for. That was 1968 election eve on the Republican side.

But it gets even better than that because 1968 was the year when the presidential candidates didn`t debate each other even once. Nixon versus Hubert Humphrey, the reason you don`t remember those debates is because they never happened. The closest that they came to debating, was that they both on election night did these hours long -- on election eve, excuse me, they both did these freaking telethons. Nixon was four hours on NBC produced by Roger Ailes. His Democratic opponent Hubert Humphrey also did a four-hour telethon except his was on ABC and he had celebrities answering the phones, including Paul Newman.

And each of the candidates appeared for two hours in prime time, in every time zone, they were on the air in total, staging this thing for four freaking hours the night before the election. I mean, and in theory, if you`re a politics junkie and like the history of politics on TV, it might sound like it was kind of awesome but it was not awesome, having watched a number of those eight hours of election eve telethons just from 1968, I`m a person who loves political history but watching it I wanted to stab myself in the eye.

And so, it`s funny. In the television era, we went for a long time with election eve, this night every four years, this night every four years, being super long format, boring, weird, expensive, semi-fake, semi-scripted endurance contests by the presidential candidates on live TV. And it is fascinating to me that in this particularly media-driven, particularly television-driven campaign, the first presidential campaign where one of the candidates is a TV celebrity.

In this campaign, on this election eve tonight, the candidates have gone old school. They basically have gone pre-modern. I mean, they are each running a slightly longer than usual closing argument ad, they will run a two-minute ad in some markets over the next 24 hours, but neither Clinton or Trump is doing hours-long, in-studio telecasts.

What both Clinton and Trump are doing on this final night of the presidential campaign is just back in the day, old-school, soaking up the admiration soaking up the crowd.

The closest thing I know of in the sort of modern era to the way Clinton and Trump are both wrapping up their campaigns tonight is actually this from Boston Garden in 1960. Look at that.

This was John F. Kennedy, 56 years ago tonight, the eve of that presidential election. He was home in Boston, Boston Garden. Massachusetts had gone overwhelmingly Republican in the previous two presidential elections. Kennedy wanted to bring it home for the Democrats that year in his home state.

And so, he just held this big old, freaking, huge, huge rally. By the time, he got to the room, people were plugging their ears it was so loud. They were shooting confetti all over the place like it was a victory party instead of last night before people went to vote.

And yes, that was a well staged event and some of it did end up on TV, but that was real life with real people out on the campaign trail, not on some stupid staged set. And what we are seeing tonight from these candidates in 2016, it looks a lot more like that than anything else. Hillary Clinton tonight in her closing election night blowout with President Obama and the first lady, Michelle Obama, and former President Bill Clinton and Bruce Springsteen and Jon Bon Jovi there, this big blowout in Philly tonight, we saw it live on our air, she`ll now be moving to Raleigh, North Carolina, where she`ll be closing out her campaign with another big rally, this one in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Donald Trump tonight did what would usually count as a late-night rally. It was due to start at 8:00 in New Hampshire, it started a little late along with his running mate Mike Pence. But that was not even Trump`s closing rally tonight. He`s due to be in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for an 11:00 p.m. late-night rally tonight.

This is not staged. This is not a stunt. This is not a TV show created by the candidates. This is old school, people power, show of force, run right through the tape. I love it.

In terms of the last projections of this race, honestly, you`re forgiven if you want to stop paying attention to that now. But at FiveThirtyEight.com, for the record, they say the chances of Hillary Clinton has of winning the presidency tomorrow is 70 percent. "The New York Times", they say Hillary Clinton`s chances of getting elected president tomorrow are higher than that, 84 percent.

But like I said, you are forgiven if you want to ignore projections at this point. The closer we all get to waking up tomorrow, the less value there is in speculating about what might happen tomorrow, right? Just make sure you do wake up and vote if you haven`t voted already. And then we wait for the results.

The reason there is less cause to be stressed about this election tonight than there has been at any other night in this long, long campaign is because now, it really is in your hands. Now it really is just up to you. Now, you just got to put one foot in front of the other, do your part, the country needs you.

Tomorrow night for the first time since 1944, both major party candidates will hold their election-night parties in New York City. The last time that happened, we were in the middle of World War II. But tomorrow night, both Clinton and Trump will hold their election night rallies in New York City tomorrow night, history will be made.

Tomorrow night, we will either elect America`s first-ever woman president or our first-ever Donald Trump. The good news is, though, however stressed you have been, the good news is, it is now up to you -- which should be a source of calm, because you, by now, should know what you want. It is election eve, enjoy it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD NIXON, FORMER PRESIDENT: For our television audience, I think you will see this tremendous bank of girls answering your calls, those that are dressed in the rider`s costume or I would say jockey costumes are the Nixoneers. They are girls who are airline stewardesses, our volunteers. They`ve been helping us all over the country.

And there are a couple girls that you may notice, I know them quite well, my daughter Patricia is the girl in yellow up there taking a call, and my daughter Julie is right next to her.

(APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Here in Minnesota, you`ve seen first hand the problems caused with faulty refugee vetting, with large numbers of Somali refugees coming into your state without your knowledge, without your support or approval, and with some of them then joining ISIS and spreading their extremist views all over our country and all over the world.

Honestly, it`s hard to believe. It`s hard to believe. And everybody`s reading about the disaster taking place in Minnesota. Everybody`s reading about it. You don`t even have the right to talk about it. You have no idea who`s coming in. You have no idea. You`ll find out, you`ll find out.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: It`s interesting.

A lot of people have been talking about how audacious that Donald Trump in the wrapping up of his campaign went to Minnesota. Minnesota, a lot of people saying, you know, it`s audacious thing for him to be in a blue state on the eve of this election.

Whether or not he has a chance in Minnesota, in Minneapolis, where he was yesterday, I think it is worth nothing that what you just saw there, that was the message that he brought to try to get white Minnesotans in his audience there afraid of non-white people in their midst, talking about how terrible it`s been for Minnesota to have refugees in a Somali-American community.

We`re going to be covering Donald Trump`s final rally of the campaign tonight in Grand Rapids, Michigan. But before we get to that, I want to bring in to the conversation, Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar.

So good to have you with us on election eve, Senator. Thank you for being here.

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D), MINNESOTA: Thank you. I thought we were going to end tonight with Bruce Springsteen, Bon Jovi, you, me, but now, we`re including Donald Trump. So, thank you.

MADDOW: We`ll just have to put that off for a really awkward double date somewhere in the future. That will never happen. It`s fair enough.

I`m sorry. Listen, the reason I want to talk to you, Senator, is that Donald Trump took this unexpected detour at the very end of the campaign. He went to your state and he gave a speech about how terrible the Somali community is in Minnesota and what a disaster that has been for your state.

I mostly just wanted to give you a chance to respond to that and get your reaction to it.

KLOBUCHAR: Sure, this was pretty stunning. We have one of the biggest Somali communities, the biggest one in the country, and we are very proud of that community.

And yes, there have been security issues here and there, and they have been dealt with, and they have been dealt with, and he knows that, but to take and take a broad brush stroke and take on the entire community, I`d like to see him say that to my staff member who`s been with me 10 years, who just got elected to a school board.

The kids my daughter went to school with who are now graduating from college. What a contrast that is with this beautiful night in Philadelphia, with Hillary Clinton`s closing argument, which is positive about being stronger together.

MADDOW: One of the things that we are seeing in the polls in these closing days is that Trump appears to have an insurmountably low number, particularly with Latinos. That if previous voting trends hold, with a number that bad with Latinos, there`s no way he can win unless he gins up a kind of white vote we`ve never seen before.

Do you think those sorts of appeals to racial anxiety, kind of division, might spike the white vote in Minnesota or any other state?

KLOBUCHAR: I just don`t see that happening. We`ve had 600,000 people vote early, double what we`ve ever seen, 65 percent Democratic. And the Hispanic vote alone, what we`re seeing in Nevada and place the like Florida, you know, Hillary`s commercial closing set to that Katy Perry song that I`ll paraphrase, you`re as going to hear us roar. I think that`s what you`re going to hear collectively across America tomorrow, and that roar is going to be their votes.

MADDOW: Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota -- thanks for being with us late night on election eve.

KLOBUCHAR: Thank you, Rachel.

MADDOW: Enjoy. We`ll talk to you soon, Senator, thank you.

KLOBUCHAR: All right.

MADDOW: You know, as we look at the way the campaigns are spending their last days, it is interesting to see them in Michigan and Pennsylvania, both the campaigns really focusing in Michigan and Pennsylvania. One thing to keep in mind about that, early voting has become so popular that we`ve got a significant portion of the vote, like 60 percent, 70 percent of the vote in, in swing states, in places like Florida, in places like Nevada, even in places like North Carolina.

In a lot of places, there`s so much early voting that for the candidates to go to those places now, they`re competing for essentially a small proportion of the vote that`s not yet been cast.

Michigan and Pennsylvania are both places that have very little, if any, early vote, and part of the reason that both candidates are going there now is because the whole vote, basically, in those states is still to be cast. Not a lot of people are talking about that in terms of the strategy, explaining where they`re at tonight, but when you see Donald Trump late tonight live here on MSNBC doing his final event in Grand Rapids, Michigan, that`s partly why, because there`s no early voting in Michigan.

All right. That does it for us tonight. We`ll see you again tomorrow.

Now it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED. END

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**CHRIS HAYES, "ALL IN" HOST: That is "ALL IN" for this evening.

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW starts right now. Good evening, Rachel.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: God bless you, Chris Hayes. I`ve got to say, I`m not a Cubs fan, but they won last night, I was teary on your behalf.

HAYES: You sent me an all-caps e-mail which I greatly appreciated.

MADDOW: Yes, within moments. Man, congratulations. Thanks for that. That was awesome.

HAYES: Thank you.

MADDOW: And thanks to you at home for staying with us for the next hour. Happy to have you here.

Donald Trump`s largest donor is this guy. His name is Robert Mercer. He`s a hedge fund zillionaire and a Republican activist. Robert Mercer and his family have put more money into the effort to elect Donald Trump president than anybody else in the country. In this election cycle, one of the ways Robert Mercer spent his money was by funding one of the many Republican super PACs that played a role during the primary process this year.

Robert Mercer funded his own super PAC and the person put in charge of running it was Kellyanne Conway, who you know. She`s now very famous, very widely recognized as the campaign manager for the Donald Trump campaign. When Kellyanne Conway got that job, when she became Donald Trump`s campaign manager, she had to quit her old job running the Robert Mercer super PAC.

So, then the Mercers had to replace her, the guy they hired to replace her, the guy they hired to run their super PAC once Kellyanne Conway left to go to the Trump campaign, was this guy, his name is David Bossie.

But very shortly after they put him in charge of the super PAC, he also left the Mercer family super PAC to go work for the Trump campaign just like Kellyanne Conway did. He became the deputy campaign manager to Kellyanne Conway.

Robert Mercer is also reportedly the principal funder of breitbart.com. Breitbart.com is a website that`s on kind of a ragged, slightly unnerving edge of the conservative media, depending on where you`re coming from. They`ve been around for a while.

But if you want a little flavor of what Breitbart.com is like in the conservative media universe, Breitbart.com is these guys. "Birth control makes women unattractive and crazy." Breitbart famously called conservative commentator Bill Kristol "a renegade Jew", for the crime of not supporting Donald Trump.

After the massacre at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina, where nine black churchgoers were killed in cold blood by a white supremacist who fetishize the Confederate flag, Breitbart.com responded to that massacre with this. Hoist it high and proud, the Confederate flag proclaims a glorious heritage.

The Breitbart.com editors are also seemingly encouraged to make as big a splash online as they can. One of their editors very famously banned from Twitteraltogether after he led an online campaign of racist and sexist abuse against the comedian Leslie Jones. In general, Breitbart`s whole take on the "Ghostbusters" movie that featured Leslie Jones was that it shouldn`t have been called "Ghostbusters". It should have been called "weightwatchers". That`s what Breitbart`s like.

When Donald Trump said that if he is elected president, he`ll ban all Muslims from the United States, that struck most people not just as on scene but also kind of obscure, right? Where did that come from? Seemed like a nutty idea. Where would somebody even get that idea? If they were going to propose that in a political campaign.

It turns out, that`s not a nutty idea at Breitbart.com. You look at their online footprint, and it`s like, oh, #deportallMuslims. Not that you can`t come here if you`re a Muslim but if you`re Muslim here already, we`ll find you, run you up and deport you. **Immigration** is terrorism forever until you`re conquered. Close the borders. No **immigration** whatsoever.

British settlers and their descendants built civilization. Indians never bothered to build more than a few teepees. Slaves built the country as much as cows built McDonald`s. This is breitbart.com. Notice, see the word "slaves" has scare quotes around it, that they weren`t really slaves.

So, that`s a little flavor. That`s Breitbart.com.

Donald Trump`s biggest donor, Robert Mercer, is also reportedly the main funder of breitbart.com. The head of breitbart.com took leave from the publication as the same time Kellyanne Conway came over from the Mercer super PAC to become campaign manager. He took leave because the two of them at the same time were installed at the top of the masthead for the Trump campaign, the same time Kellyanne Conway from the Mercer super PAC became campaign manager, the head of Breitbart.com became the campaign CEO.

So, from two Mercer-funded outfits came the campaign manager and the campaign CEO, from the Breitbart.com and from the Mercer super PAC. I should also mention the next name down the masthead, deputy campaign manager used to run that super PAC funded by the Mercer family.

So, you`re getting the sense, right? Something to like connect desperate dots and this case, the dots are like here, here and here. It is like this is a very, very tight-knit thing. This is an orderly thing to understand. Robert Mercer and the Mercer family and the Trump campaign.

Robert Mercer and the Mercer family also fund something that`s called the Government Accountability Institute. And that sounds good, right? Sounds like a kind of generic good government thing.

It`s not a generic good government thing. It`s a right-wing activist group that is run by the head of breitbart.com and running the Trump campaign. It`s also run by this person. This person runs the Government Accountability Institute with Steve Bannon. He`s also himself a senior editor at breitbart.com, and both of those jobs are both funded by the same hedge fund zillionaire, by Donald Trump`s biggest donor.

And with that support, working for those organizations, all funded by this one guy, this guy from the Government Accountability Institute, this editor at breitbart.com, he wrote a book and you`ll be very surprised to learn this book spins some very elaborate, very damning conspiracy theories about Donald Trump. No, no. Just kidding. Not about Donald Trump.

Obviously, the book is about how terrible, terrible, terrible Hillary Clinton is. And then once he produced this anti-Hillary Clinton book with all these elaborate theories about Hillary Clinton`s terribleness, after he wrote this book, Trump`s campaign chief, this guy`s boss at Breitbart, the guy who used to run Breitbart.com, he decided to turn it into a movie of the same name.

It`s all very neat and tidy, right? It`s all of a piece. It is all one freaking donor, a specific pedigree of this one corner of the conservative media world and now the Republican presidential campaign that doesn`t really look much like anything else in Republican politics.

I mean, this is, yeah, super right wing stuff but it`s not in a lot of ways not normal Republican messaging. It`s unusual. Banning all Muslims from the country, right?

I mean, this is the corner of the conservative media world that says Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan is secretly working for Hillary Clinton. And he has been for months and he must be destroyed.

Also, they maintain that every Republican you might have ever heard of not named Donald Trump must be destroyed. Everybody from John Boehner to Eric Cantor to Paul Ryan to John McCain. In Breitbart.com-ville all of those guys, they aren`t just the household name Republicans that have led this party, who every American has heard of if they care about politics. In Breitbart.com land, all of those folks are traitors, they`re evil secret liberals who must be destroyed.

Breitbart.com has campaigned for primary challengers against John McCain, against Eric Cantor, against Paul Ryan, against John Boehner. They were the ones who led the online media campaign to throw John Boehner out as speaker of the House.

Incidentally, I should also tell you that Breitbart.com maintains that everybody in America needs to be aware of the rising threat of eco sexuals, people who have sex with trees. People are doing it with trees, you guys! It`s terrible. Eco-sexuals.

And incidentally, if you`re attracted to that story, you might notice on the side bar there, get your own copy of the anti-Hillary Clinton book. Give us your email address and we`ll send you the DVD version of it in case you don`t read. Hurry. Act now while supplies are limited.

Actually, I don`t think supplies are limited at all. I think they have a lot of them and probably have multiple copies if you want. Just give them some fake e-mail addresses.

This week, "The New York Times" and "Wall Street Journal" reported there`s been I guess you`d call it like a breakout. There`s been a breakout from this otherwise insular little Breitbart.com corner of conservative media and political activism. Those two papers reported that apparently there are Breitbart.com fans, they are Breitbart.com true believers, there are people who buy this stuff who are working inside the New York field office of the FBI.

"The New York Times" and "Wall Street Journal" first to report that the New York field office of the FBI used that anti-Hillary Clinton book and DVD of the same name from the breitbart.com guys and editor and his boss who`s now the head of the Donald Trump campaign, the one funded by Donald Trump`s biggest donor, right? They actually used that Breitbart.com anti-Hillary Clinton book as their source for launching a local FBI inquiry into Hillary Clinton. That was their evidence. That was their research.

These agents in the New York field office reportedly decided that they needed to look into what Breitbart.com was saying about Hillary Clinton. All sounds terrible. Sounds totally legit. We should look into that. We`re the FBI.

It had previously been reported that New York FBI agents had brought this anti-Hillary Clinton-Breitbart stuff to a meeting -- excuse me. Brought the anti-Hillary Clinton stuff to a meeting with career Justice Department prosecutors back in February and one of the participants in that meeting described it as, quote, "one of the weirdest meetings I have ever been to."

But all we knew before now was that they had brought some stuff of Hillary Clinton and Clinton Foundation to that meeting. We now know, based on this current reporting what the New York agents brought prosecutors at meeting wasn`t just generic anti-Hillary Clinton stuff or Hillary Clinton stuff they had cooked up on their own. No, it was this stuff that had been cooked up at Breitbart. It is the stuff that came from the eco-sexuals having sex with trees website.

That is what they had, that is what they brought to career Department of Justice prosecutors and reportedly the current prosecutors were like, oh, where you did you get this? I`m not sure that`s a case.

Thanks to Lord knows whatever`s going on apparently inside that New York field office of the FBI, that little adventure which is now reportedly over, that little adventure of the Breitbart.com readers inside this one FBI field office, that`s what`s out now in today`s news five days before the election. That`s what was breathlessly reported on FOX News last night, "based on FBI sources".

It`s breathlessly reported on FOX News as a whole new Hillary Clinton FBI investigation, one that was definitely going to lead to an indictment. FOX News since walked back that part about it, definitely leading to an indictment.

But the Trump campaign is still running with it anyway. New investigation, Hillary Clinton definitely going to be indicted.

And, of course, you know what? Do you blame them? Of course the Trump campaign is running with this. You would expect them to. I mean, they bought and paid for it.

The donor who is mostly funding the Trump presidential effort bought and paid for this. I`m not saying it hyperbolically. Trump`s biggest donor paid the people who created the story to create the story. And so, of course, the Trump campaign is going to use it.

But it`s one thing to cook up a, you know, dubious conspiratorial political attack and fling it at the opponent. It`s another thing altogether to cook up a dubious conspiratorial political attack like this and have the FBI fling it at your opponent. That`s a different thing.

And that is what the FBI, at least part of the FBI, is now doing in this election. They`re using stuff from breitbart.com apparently as their research, as evidence and then they`re leaking about their new investigation into this evidence to FOX News right before the election.

And here`s the really creepy part. Here`s the prospect that the anti- Clinton Breitbart readers in this one office of the FBI, they`re not just leaking it to the FOX News, not just leaking this stuff to the conservative media. Here`s the prospect they`re leaking it to the Trump campaign directly.

Wayne Barrett, great writer, writes today for "The Daily Beast" today, he points out that this was Trump campaign adviser Rudy Giuliani on FOX News two days before FBI Director James Comey sent his bombshell letter to Congress about Hillary Clinton`s e-mails this past Friday.

This was Rudy Giuliani on FOX, unprompted, bringing this up on this own, two days before the FBI Director James Comey sent that letter. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RUDY GIULIANI, FORMER NYC MAYOR: He`s got a surprise or two that you`re going to hear about in the next two days. I mean, I`m talking about some pretty big surprises.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I heard you say that this morning. What do you mean?

GIULIANI: You`ll see.

(LAUGHTER)

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Stay tuned. Rudy Giuliani, you`re lucky because we got to go. I`m out of time. I`m not going to keep pressing you.

(LAUGHTER)

GIULIANI: We`re not going to -- we`re -- we`re not going to go down and we`re certainly not going to stop fighting. We`ve got a couple things up our sleeve that should turn this around.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: We have a couple things up our sleeve that should turn this around. You`re going to hear about, we`ve got a couple of things -- you`re going to hear about over the next couple of days, I`m talking about some pretty big surprises. That was Rudy Giuliani two days before the director of the FBI sent that letter about Hillary Clinton and the e-mail investigation that landed like such a bombshell in this campaign and arguably has put the presidency back in reach for Donald Trump.

Rudy Giuliani two days before that saying we have a couple of things up our sleeve. You are going to hear about some things over the next couple of days, some pretty big surprises.

How did Rudy Giuliani know that? Did somebody at the FBI leak to the Trump campaign two days in advance that the FBI was about to throw an anti- Hillary Clinton grenade into the presidential race?

Today, Mark Hosenball at "Reuters", he`s really good investigative reporter. Mark Hosenball reported at "Reuters" tonight that when the FBI director sent that letter to Congress about the Clinton e-mail thing, quote, "he was driven in part by a fear of leaks from within his own agency."

Quote, "Two law enforcement sources familiar with the FBI`s New York field office said a faction of investigators based in that office is known to be hostile to Hillary Clinton."

Over at "The Guardian" newspaper today, their national security editor Spencer Ackerman, who`s a great reporter, Spencer reports this, quote, "Deep antipathy to Hillary Clinton exists within the FBI." This is according to multiple FBI sources speaking to "The Guardian". That deep antipathy has spurred, quote, "a rapid series of leaks damaging to Clinton`s campaign just days before the election."

One currently serving FBI agent tells "The Guardian", quote, "The FBI is Trumpland. Clinton is the antichrist personified to some person -- some FBI personnel and the reason they`re leaking is that they are pro-Trump."

The FBI would not comment for "The Guardian" story. They would not give a comment to Mark Hosenball and his reporting about New York`s FBI field office, essentially trying to throw the election in favor of Trump. But that`s where we are right now.

If part of the FBI is a Breitbart.com fan club and they`re trying to use the FBI, the power of the FBI to throw the election in Trump`s favor, how does Clinton fight back against that? How does anybody?

Joining us now is Spencer Ackerman, national security editor with "The Guardian" newspaper.

Spencer, it`s nice to see you. Thanks for being here.

SPENCER ACKERMAN, THE GUARDIAN NATIONAL SECURITY EDITOR: Thank you very much for having me, Rachel.

MADDOW: This current agent has told you the FBI is Trump-land. Read that reporting tonight along with this reporting we also got from Mark Hosenball, specifically naming the FBI, New York field office. We have had other reporting from other sources pointing fingers at the New York field office saying if you want to -- basically to know where the leaks are coming from and where the political impetus for them is coming, it`s that office.

Is it in your reporting, in your estimation, is that the right place to work or a more widespread thing you`re reporting on?

ACKERMAN: I would say it`s more widespread thing. The New York field office is a particular locust, particularly when you look at its connections to Giuliani as "The Daily Beast" reported today. Really powerful story there.

But a lot of this seems to be rather widespread, seems to be rather persistent within the FBI itself and now, it`s something that their Director Jim Comey is having to deal with.

MADDOW: And you`ve got FBI sources, law enforcement sources coming to you talking about this. I`m not -- I`m not -- obviously, I`m not asking you anything about -- to point at your sources but is -- is part of what`s happening now that there are some folks within the FBI who are concerned about the political interventions that are being made by some people within the FBI? Is that why people are talking to reporters about this?

ACKERMAN: A couple of levels in this. First, there are people within the FBI and in law enforcement circles that are very disturbed that in particular the FBIappears to be throwing its lot in with Trump, especially when you look kind of broader at national security circles, senior levels of the military, officer corps, very much afraid of Trump. Very much against, you know, to the degree that they can be without being overtly political. Not on board certainly. Same thing with a lot of people within the CIA and around the intelligence community.

So, it`s somewhat anomalous and striking that there are people, this sympathetic to Trump in such a high profile way.

And then there`s a kind of broader sense from within the FBI that this intervention that we saw with Comey on Friday with this very vague innuendo-filled letter is crossing a Rubicon, a threshold is crossed in American politics where now something much more familiar to the decades ago history of the FBI with J. Edgar Hoover essentially controlling a lot of people`s political fates with innuendo. No one thinks it`s that far, but if it rhymes in that kind of history it creates a great deal of anxiety.

And one more thing about this.

MADDOW: Yes.

ACKERMAN: There aren`t a lot of people within the FBI that I`ve been able to find and people sort of in law enforcement circles and intelligence circles and even in political circles broadly who knows how this ends, who knows how the FBI walks this back, who knows what the FBI will behave like if Clinton is elected or even if Trump is elected.

MADDOW: Right. What`s the relationship between the FBI as an agency and the FBI director with the new president once the FBI is known to play a role, an overt political role in trying to get one side elected. To that point in terms of how this ends, I`m wondering how this ends just over the next five days.

Do you have any reason to expect to hear more politically motivated leaks in either direction from the FBI over the next five days?

ACKERMAN: They seem to be coming every single day now. I mean, this has been -- it`s been an intense weekend. I have to tell you, when I started reporting this story, I didn`t think it was going to lead to someone saying the FBI is Trumpland or using the FBI with a description, you know, rhyming with Portlandia. That, you know, in my experience, a lot of people at the FBI are sober professionals and to hear that this is the way things have developed really was very striking.

MADDOW: Yes. And they`re using the power of that agency as a political op. It`s -- this is a big deal. Spencer Ackerman national security editor with "The Guardian" -- Spencer, I haven`t seen you in too long. It`s really good to have you back.

ACKERMAN: Thank you so much, Rachel.

MADDOW: Thanks, my friend. Great reporting.

All right. Lots to come including a big scoop exclusively here. We`ve got a story that`s going to break tomorrow morning. We`ve got it here first tonight. It`s an impressive visual associated with it, and that`s coming right up. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: I love this story.

Russia only has one aircraft carrier. They have one aircraft carrier. It`s old and it`s called the Admiral Kuznetsov. Unlike most modern aircraft carriers that use fancy high-power catapults to basically slingshot aircraft into the air, the Admiral Kuznetsov is old-school. It`s also just old.

The Admiral Kuznetsov doesn`t have a catapult system to fling aircraft into the air. So instead, look. See how its nose goes up. It`s a baby ski jump at the end. It`s basically buck tooth. The ship`s bow curves up. That`s what its planes rely on to get airborne because they don`t have a catapult.

One Russian aircraft carrier is diesel powered. So, it`s pretty. It belches this thick black plume of smoke wherever it goes, which is not subtle.

I should also tell you that once you`re on board, the ship`s plumbing reported to be so bad nearly half of the toilets are out of commission at any one time and that`s bad no matter where you are but really bad when you have a 1,700-member crew living in that confined space.

Russia, I`m sure, is psyched to have its one aircraft carrier. One is better than none. But they`re one aircraft carrier kind of sucks. When it sets sail, there`s so much fear that Kuznetsov might sink along the way or that it might get stuck or stall out that everywhere it goes, see that boat there and see how little that is? That`s the -- that`s their aircraft carrier`s tug boat. It goes with it, tugs alongside the carrier wherever the carrier goes, just in the event it breaks down and needs a push, because that happens often.

And that is what makes this really interesting. Because starting last month, Russia`s one aircraft carrier and its battleground group, including its tug, they set sail for Syria to go take part in Russia`s very controversial military campaign in the middle of the Syrian civil war.

Given the Russian aircraft carrier`s history of problems, anybody who knows about the Kuznetsov has been frankly waiting to see if it was going to make it all the way there. It`s a long sail. This is the first time they`ve even tried to put the aircraft carrier in a combat situation. There have been fears that it would conk out even before it got in theater.

Well, today, a website called Ukraine Today made some headlines today posting this article. Russian aircraft carrier towed in Mediterranean. And we have not misspelled Mediterranean in our headline. That`s the way it appears in the article.

Quote, "Satellite photos published by DigitalGlobe project showed the ship stopped moving, says the carrier is being towed to a Russian support point and then there`s a satellite photo which at first glance does seem to show the Russian aircraft, the Kuznetsov being towed by another vessel.

Don`t believe it. Don`t believe it. This is fascinating. We reached out to the U.S. Naval Institute today. Their experts told us they`re 100 percent sure, nearly 100 percent sure that the aircraft carrier not actually being towed in this picture.

For one thing, if it was being towed it would be being towed backwards in this picture and it`s almost apparently impossible to tow something as large as an aircraft carrier backwards. More importantly, there are no wakes visible in this photo. If it`s an active tow, both ships would be moving, there would be wakes behind them you can see.

We also think that the boat that appears to be doing the tugging here, we don`t think it`s a tug boat. We think it`s an oiler which is basically a floating gas tank and probably refueling the aircraft carrier. This is not the configuration that an American aircraft carrier would be in getting refueled but this might be how the Russians have to do it.

And our friends at the U.S. Naval Institute think that`s what`s happening in this photo. Thinks they`re gassing up, not necessarily being towed, although everybody`s waiting for that to happen at any moment.

The Admiral Kuznetsov has not collapsed at sea, at least not yet. Despite what you might have seen today. Russia`s one terrible aircraft carrier with the buck tooth front and the rest of it is still chugging away towards the war in Syria.

I should also tell you that Russia`s one terrible autocratic leader is also reportedly still chugging away toward trying to influence the U.S. presidential election and that, and unbelievably surprising detail about that, is something that we have gotten an exclusive scoop about tonight.

This is a story that`s going to break tomorrow. We`ve got it tonight. This is something nobody else has at this point. That`s next. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: OK. This is exclusive to us. "Newsweek" reporter Kurt Eichenwald has been on a bit of a tear of investigative reporting concerning Donald Trump this year. His first cover story blast in the late part of the campaign was a groundbreaking story about Donald Trump`s foreign business entanglements.

You might remember, that`s the story where we learned that Trump`s plan for dealing with the business conflicts of interest becoming president, his plan for dealing with that is to let his family run his business instead of himself, which, of course, wouldn`t resolve those conflicts of interest at all. They would just be about his family instead of about him.

Then, a couple weeks after that we got this from Kurt Eichenwald in Newsweek. The Castro connection, how Donald Trump`s company violated the U.S. embargo against Cuba. Kurt Eichenwald had just had these two big swats against Donald Trump in the form of "Newsweek" cover stories over the last several weeks.

Well, tonight, we have got scoop number three. And we have got it exclusively. This, ready? This is the "Newsweek" cover story breaking tomorrow.

"Why the Russians are backing Trump." And then you see the sub head there? "Inside Putin`s complex gambit to weaken the NATO alliance." This is the new cover story set to publish tomorrow in "Newsweek". It`s a Kurt Eichenwald joint once again and we have obtained an advance look at some of this story -- some of its lead and some of its details.

I have to tell you, I`m going to be a little bit wooly to quote this and describe some of the rest of it because we here at MSNBC we have not obtained the entire article. We have pieces of it. We have characterizations of the rest of their reporting and this is "Newsweek" reporting. This is not NBC or MSNBC reporting but I want to tell you what we have obtained and I want to tell you that some of it is red hot.

According to what we have seen, "Newsweek" is going to report tomorrow this remarkable detail of Donald Trump and the Russian government. "Newsweek" as far as we understand it going to report tomorrow that after Donald Trump publicly insulted the Khan family, the family whose son was killed in Iraq, Russian government officials busy hacking documents trying to influence the U.S. election, they briefly freaked out after Donald Trump insulted the Khan family because the Russians assumed that Donald Trump would be forced to drop out of the race.

According to "Newsweek`s" reporting, the Russian assessment of that political problem that they were worried that that fiasco, with insulting the Khan family made Donald Trump appear psychologically unsuitable for the presidency, that that was something he could not come back from and he would be forced out, forced to drop out of the race. "Newsweek" further reports that briefly because the Russians thought they were going to lose Trump as basically their chosen candidate in the election, the Russians stopped at that time, they temporarily stopped feeding hacked e-mails and documents back out at the U.S. to try to influence the election.

Basically, the idea is that if it wouldn`t benefit Trump anymore, if Trump was going to be replaced by Lord knows who, well maybe they wouldn`t be so good to Russia. So, they held tight for a little bit. Stopped leaking hacked documents back into the U.S. market when they thought that Trump might be about to be thrown out of the race.

The "Newsweek" report that`s due tomorrow also discusses Donald Trump`s distrust of American intelligence, specifically about Russian hacking of the DNC and Russian hacking to influence the election. "Newsweek" will report tomorrow that U.S. allies in Western Europe are worried that they won`t be able to trust Donald Trump as president if he`s not believing what intelligence tells him.

Now, this is the part where I`m going to wrote directly from the "Newsweek" article. This is what we`ve got from them that I can quote you directly. A former British official says, quote, "a lot of people are trying to connect the dots of all the data in the intelligence files to try and understand Trump. They`re certainly are a lot of conspiracy theories bandied about and concern of Trump`s head and whether we would be able to work with him."

Eichenwald reports at "Newsweek", quote, "Officials in Western Europe say they`re dismayed they feel compelled to gather intelligence on a man who could be the next president of the United States but they believe they have no choice. Moscow is seen as a direct threat to their interests, both in its aggressive efforts to reshape global alliances and its power to inflict extreme damage in Western Europe. For perhaps the first time since World War II, countries in Western Europe fear that the American election should Trump win could trigger events that imperil their national security and do irreparable harm to the alliances that have kept the continent safe for decades."

Imperil their national security and do potentially irreparable harm. Western European spy agencies collecting intelligence on Trump to try to understand that what they perceive to be that threat to them about his potential election.

This is the third investigative bombshell in a series of them from "Newsweek" and their investigative reporter Kurt Eichenwald. It will be out in full tomorrow. Those excerpts we just read, we`ve got those exclusively tonight.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: I got a really nice thank you note today from a friend of a friend saying one of the things that she likes about the show is that sometimes I give a warning if I`m going to show something that is gross or vulgar or offensive happened in politics or the news today. Thank you note said basically thanks, I watch with my kid and I`m grateful for that warning because some of the stuff I don`t want to show my kid.

So, that was nice to hear. I`m glad that that thing we do on the show sometime, I`m glad that has been helpful. That said, what I`m about to show you now, this is something from today`s news that is gross, that is offensive, but it is not the kind of gross or offensive that might make you want to cover your kid`s eyes. Your kid should be fine with this.

The thing to cover up here is your sense of civic decency, because this will definitely offend that. Have you seen any of these online?

Save time, avoid the line. Vote for text from home.

These ads have been popping up all over social media and claim to be paid for by Hillary for President 2016. Some of them even appear in Spanish which is particularly nice.

There are lots of different kinds of ways to suppress the vote, right? You can cut the number of polling places, the number of days for early voting, require new kinds of I.D. and paper work in order to vote you know people don`t have.

But trying to convince people to vote by e-mail or they can vote by email, or they can vote by hashtag or they can vote by text? That`s vile. You cannot vote by text. You cannot vote by e-mail. You cannot vote by hashtag. You cannot vote by a Facebook post.

There`s no phone number you can call in order to cast your vote. Anybody who tries to tell you any different is lying to you about that and they`re lying to you for the worst possible reasons. I know it`s the end of the campaign and I shouldn`t be surprised, but that stuff is disgusting.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Behold, your president and the osprey swoop. The osprey swoop comes from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Their mascot`s the Osprey. Ospreys are fish hawks. They swoop down from on high and snap fish up out of the water with their amazing talons.

Ospreys are also known for their huge wingspan. The average Osprey wingspan is like five feet across or something.

And from that wide winged swooping badass raptor comes the University of North Florida signature fan gesture which is the of osprey swoop. And you can tell somebody prepped President Obama on the osprey swoop before he went to the University of North Florida to urge everybody there to vote for Hillary Clinton.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: It`s good to be in Duval! Before I get started, I was taught that before I do anything else, I got to do a swoop.

(CHEERS)

Come on.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Come on. The osprey swoop.

Even if we hadn`t had the strategic swooping today, crowd goes wild. It was just a huge day in the campaign. Five days out. Shear number of events on the schedule, candidates themselves, al of their biggest surrogates campaigning all over the country.

Hillary Clinton just wrapped up a huge rally in Raleigh, North Carolina, with Bernie Sanders and Pharrell Williams. In Phoenix today, Tim Kaine held a rally with the speech entirely in Spanish. Clinton campaign says the first time a candidate on a national ticket has ever done that.

On the Republican side, Ted Cruz hit the trail for the first time for Donald Trump. Ted Cruz appeared in Iowa today along with Mike Pence. At that event, Ted Cruz refused to say Trump`s name, even though it was a Trump event, which is nice and insulting at the same time. And that is Ted Cruz in a nutshell.

In Pennsylvania, the northern Philly suburbs, Melania Trump, Mrs. Donald Trump, she made her first solo appearance of the whole campaign.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MELANIA TRUMP, WIFE OF DONALD TRUMP: Love for this country is something we immediately shared when I met Donald. He loves this country and he knows how to get things done. Not just talk. He certainly knows how to shake things up, doesn`t he? Donald Trump, with your help and God`s grace, will make America great again.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The would-be first lady of the United States, Melania Trump, speaking today.

Today, we also had the actual serving president in Florida. He made two separate stops. Did the swoop, Jacksonville, in Deval County, President Obama lost that county twice by little. Democrats are hoping to keep things at least close again there this year.

President Obama also went to Miami where he won twice by double digits. This year, the Clinton campaign is looking strong in South Florida in the early vote. President Obama today did his best to roll up more votes there. You could tell from the vote early signs from the rafters. And you could also tell from his speech.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: You don`t have to wait until Election Day to vote. What does that say up there? I`m sorry. I can`t hear you. What`s it say up there?

You know, I`m still not hearing it. What, what?

Vote early!

You know, there are times where history is movable, where you can make things better or worse. This is one of those moments. And it`s in your hands. This incredible power that each of you have.

Hillary Clinton will move us forward if you give her a chance. And if we win Florida, we will win this election. It is in your hands! So, go out there and vote!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: History is movable. It`s in your hands. We know what it looks likes to have the campaigns doing everything they possibly can to win the race, right? But in order to see if it`s working, for that you have to talk to people super, super close, not just to the action but to the data and we`ve got a very special, very specific look at that, next.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: If you got one person who you know is not qualified and you got another person who is eminently qualified, the only thing that`s left to do is vote. The only thing left to do is vote!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: President Obama speaking in Duval County, Florida, this afternoon. That`s part of the Florida that usually leans Republican. Democrats hope to if not win there at least keep it close there.

Joining us now, Steve Schale. He`s a Democratic strategist who run President Obama`s Florida campaign in 2008.

Steve, it`s nice to see you. Thanks for being with us.

STEVE SCHALE, FLORIDA-BASED POLITICAL STRATEGIST: Hey, Rachel. Thanks to be on again.

MADDOW: So, you have been, I would say, slightly bullish, slightly positive on Democrats` chances in Florida up to now. How do you think things are going in the state right now?

SCHALE: Yes, I think they`re going well. Saturday I was a bit down on it. But what we`ve seen over the last two or three days is an explosion of turnouts among African-Americans and Hispanics. At this point in the election, there have been 170,000 more Hispanics that have voted early yesterday than in the entire 2012 election.

So, you know, it`s shaping up to be a much more diverse electorate than four years ago, and that`s good news for us.

MADDOW: How much of the electorate in Florida has voted already by your estimation. We`ve seen the raw vote numbers in terms of how many votes cast. But what proportion of the electorate do you think that is?

SCHALE: Well, so we had about 4.8 million voters through last night, probably another 3,000 or 4,000 more today. We`re pushing what is likely 60 percent turnout already in. I think by the time we get to Tuesday, we`ll be close to 70 percent if not a little over of all the votes that are going to be cast in the door.

So, the good news for Floridians and Americans, I think we`ll know pretty early on Tuesday night how Florida is going to go.

MADDOW: You know, given that -- those are remarkable numbers, by the end of the weekend, we`d be at 70 percent of the Florida vote already cast. Given that, one of the things that Jon Ralston has been being raising in Nevada is he keeps saying, listen, there`s so much early voting happening in Nevada, polls don`t matter. Look at the early vote. Look who`s turning out to early vote. Polling at this point is irrelevant, because so much of the vote is already cast.

Do you think that`s the way to look at Florida too?

SCHALE: Yes, I think so. I mean, first of all, almost every poll that`s come out in the last three or four days has been within the margin of error of the other one. So, there`s varied instances in sample.

What we do know again is we`ve got, you know, 50 percent, 55 percent of state already voted. Republicans and Democrats are basically in a dead heat. We`re seeing record Hispanic turnout, very strong African-American turnout. Here`s a number for you -- 100,000 more Democrats who have no voting history or just a little bit of voting history have voted more than Republicans.

So, things like that are better indicators of where the electorate`s going to end up than looking at a poll that shows a one-point movement here or there.

MADDOW: Yes, it`s one thing to watch every twist and turn in the election, and news about the election at this point. But watching those numbers rack up, top 30 million and keep on going in terms of early vote, that`s -- the election`s already under way.

Steve Schale, Democratic strategist, thanks for your time tonight, Steve. Good to see you.

SCHALE: Thanks again, Rachel.

MADDOW: All right. We`ll be right back. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Tonight, I will be on the "Tonight Show" with Jimmy Fallon. I wore my glasses, a totally ill-fitting jacket, not this one, and I got an unexpected civics lesson from Jimmy. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The thing to watch at this point, first thing to remember is that more than 30 million people have already voted.

JIMMY FALLON, TONIGHT SHOW: Yes.

MADDOW: So if stuff happening in the last few days is going to influence what happens in the election for those 30 million people, they can stop paying attention. It`s fine. They`ve already cast their vote.

FALLON: No, because Donald Trump said we could actually change our votes. He tweeted out, you can change your vote in six states. And if you realize -- he did this once with "Dancing with the Stars," when Kate Gosling, it`s the same thing, and in some places it is legal.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: I did not know that about "Dancing with the Stars." You never know where you`re going to get your education.

That`s tonight on NBC. We`ll be right back. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: OK. This is propaganda. Really, obviously, it`s propaganda from an Iraqi group fighting. They made this propaganda video of themselves to counter ISIS propaganda.

This video they made, it shows Iraqi soldiers storming into Mosul. It`s got a lot of slow-mo. It`s got dramatic music, and there`s this one soldier who`s kind of the main character in this video who`s got that scar in his cheek.

And he enters into the city and spies a Christian church. He sees that the doors are locked on this church, and he uses the sledge hammer that he`s using to destroy the lock and open the doors to the church. Because the idea is that the door has been locked since these totalitarian monsters took control.

Throws the doors open, walks down the aisles to the altar, puts down his gun, kneels in the church, the bells ring and all these people pour into the church, presumably Iraqi Christians who`ve been locked out of their church because ISIS has occupied their city for tow years.

And the video ends with a scream in Arabic that says Mosul`s bells will ring again.

So I mean, this is propaganda, very over the top propaganda. I think particularly for a western audience and Christian audience, it is nevertheless an evocative thing to see.

I mean, one important thing to say is that Mosul in Iraq is that Mosul is a very diverse, very culturally rich city. Military offensive to take back Mosul started a couple weeks ago, and what I am about to show is you is not propaganda. It`s the real thing.

We`ve gotten in new images from Reuters, Reuters news service, and what they show, in fact, is the largest Christian church in Iraq, the grand Immaculate church near Mosul, a huge Catholic cathedral built in the early part of the 20th century, it`s a landmark, physically, it`s a landmark culturally and religiously in terms of diversity in Iraq.

Before ISIS, 3,000 people would go to Sunday mass there and these are photos of the first mass being said after ISIS occupied that city for two years.

The battle for Mosul isn`t over. Iraqi special forces are still pushing their way into the city. Once that battle is won, the battle against ISIS is still not going to be over. The tenuous time and a tenuous place, but this is a nice thing to see. We`ll see what happens next.

That does it for us tonight. We`ll see you again tomorrow.

Now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED. END

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC ANCHOR: Good evening, Chris. Live coverage indeed. Thank you, my friend.

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC ANCHOR, "ALL IN": You bet.

MADDOW: And thanks to you at home for staying with us for the next hour. We are going to be live at the Al Smith dinner in just a second for the remarks by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton or Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. We don`t even know which one goes first.

First woman nominated by a major party for president, Hillary Clinton. 2016, Democratic party. First African-American nominated by a major party for president, Barack Obama, 2008, Democratic Party. First Jewish person nominated by a major part for vice president, Joe Lieberman, 2004, Democratic Party. First woman -- excuse me, 2000, Democratic Party. First woman nominated by a major party for vice president was Geraldine Ferraro, 1984, the Democratic Party.

If you`re noticing a trend here, you`re right, because it was also Democratic Party in 1928 that made the first nomination of a Catholic for president in this country. And that was New York Governor Al Smith. Among the many glass ceilings that the Democratic Party has broken in presidential and vice presidential politics, Democrat Al Smith was the first Catholic to be a major party presidential nominee.

And he got shellacked. Hubert Hoover beat him in 40 states. That was at a time when we only had 48 states. Poor Al Smith.

But he is still remembered and honored among New York Catholics, most notably with this dinner they hold every year which is an election year turns out to always be lousy with politicians.

This is Al Smith`s great-grandson introducing one of the candidates. Let`s go to it.

ALFRED E. SMITH IV, MASTER OF CEREMONIES AT CHARITY DINNER: I was thinking, of course, about the Republican nominee, Donald J. Trump.

There are actually some rumors going around that he wasn`t going to show up tonight. He could say he wanted to keep us in suspense. We considered having a Donald Trump cutout on the dais.

But if we wanted someone still lifeless, we could ask Charlie Rose to speak again.

It is history that Donald is here tonight. That`s right, for the first time, a Catholic Church is not the largest tax exempt land owner here tonight.

We are honored to have Donald and Melania here tonight.

The Al Smith Dinner is a New York institution. Donald, the kid from Queens, with a big heart and a big mouth is without question a New York institution.

Donald, the microphone is yours, and it`s working.

(APPLAUSE)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Thank you, Al. Wow, that was good. This is a hell of a dinner.

I want to thank your Eminence. This is really great to be with you again. We love it. Governor Cuomo. Great senators.

Hi, Chuck. He used to love me when I was a Democrat, you know.

Mayor De Blasio, wherever you are, where`s Mayor de Blasio? Hello, Mayor.

See, in the old days I would have known her very well, but I haven`t been doing very much with the real estate.

And I want to thank Al and Ann Smith, just a fantastic job you do with the dinner and congratulations. A record over $6 million, right, is their record.

And a special hello to all of you in this room who have known and loved me for many, many years. It`s true.

The politicians, they`ve had me to their homes. They`ve introduced me to their children. I`ve become their best friends in many instances. They`ve asked for my endorsement, and they always wanted my money. And even called me really a dear, dear friend.

But then suddenly decided when I ran for president as a Republican that I`ve always been a no good, rotten, disgusting scoundrel. And they totally forgot about me. But that`s OK.

You know, they say when you do this kind of an event, you always start out with a self-deprecating joke. Some people think this would be tough for me, but the truth is -- true. True.

The truth is I`m actually a modest person, very modest. It`s true. In fact, many people tell me that modesty is perhaps my best quality. Even better than my temperament.

You know, Cardinal Dolan and I have some things in common. For instance, we both run impressive properties on Fifth Avenue.

Of course, his is much more impressive than mine. That`s because I built mine with my own beautifully formed hands. While his was built with the hands of God, and nobody can compete with God. Is that correct? Nobody. Right? That`s right. No contest.

It`s great to be here with a thousand wonderful people or, as I call it, a small, intimate dinner with some friends or as Hillary calls it, her largest crowd of the season.

Ah, this stuff -- this is corny stuff.

I do recognize that I come into this event with a little bit of an advantage. I know that so many of you in the archdiocese already have a place in your heart for a guy who started out as a carpenter working for his father. I was a carpenter working for my father. True.

Not for a long period of time. About three weeks.

What`s great about the Al Smith dinner is that even in the rough and tumble world of really, really hard-fought campaign, in fact, I don`t know if you know, Hillary, but last night they said that was the most vicious debate in the history of politics, presidential debate. The most vicious.

And I don`t know. Are we supposed to be proud of that? Or are we supposed to be unhappy? They did say that.

I`m trying to think back to Lincoln. I don`t think they can really compete with that. But the candidates have some life hearted moments together, which is true.

I have no doubt that Hillary is going to laugh quite a bit tonight. Sometimes even at an appropriate moment.

And even tonight, with all of the heated back and forth between my opponent and me at the debate last night, we have proven that we can actually be civil to each other. In fact, just before taking the dais, Hillary accidentally bumped into me and she very civilly said, "pardon me".

And I very politely replied, "Let me talk to you about that after I get into office." Just kidding. Just kidding.

And Hillary was very gracious. She said if somehow she gets elected, she wants me to be, without question, either her ambassador to Iraq or to Afghanistan. It`s my choice.

But one of the things I noticed tonight, and I`ve known Hillary for a long time, is this is the first time ever, ever that Hillary is sitting down and speaking to major corporate leaders and not getting paid for it. It`s true.

You know, last night I called Hillary a nasty woman, but this stuff is all relative. After listening to Hillary rattle on and on and on, I don`t think so badly of Rosie O`Donnell anymore. In fact, I`m actually starting to like Rosie a lot.

These events give not only the candidates a chance to be with each other in a very social setting, it also allows the candidates the opportunity to meet the other candidate`s team. Good team. I know Hillary met my campaign manager, and I got the chance to meet the people who are working so hard to get her elected.

There they are, the heads of NBC, CNN, CBS, ABC, there`s "The New York Times" right over there and "The Washington Post." They`re working overtime. True. True.

Well, this one`s going to get me in trouble. Not with Hillary. You know, the president told me to stop whining, but I really have to say the media is even more biased this year than ever before, ever. You want the proof, Michelle Obama gives a speech and everyone loves it. It`s fantastic. They think she`s absolutely great.

My wife Melania gives the exact same speech and people get on her case. And I don`t get it. I don`t know why. And it wasn`t her fault.

Stand up, Melania. Come on. She took a lot of abuse.

Oh, I`m in trouble when I go home tonight. She didn`t know about that one.

Am I okay? Is it okay? Cardinal, please speak to her.

I`d like to address an important religious matter. The issue of going to confession or, as Hillary calls it, the Fourth of July weekend with FBI Director Comey.

Now, I`m told Hillary went to confession before tonight`s event, but the priest was having a hard time when he asked her about her sins and she said she couldn`t remember 39 times. Hillary is so corrupt, she got kicked off the Watergate commission. How corrupt do you have to be to get kicked off the Watergate commission? Pretty corrupt.

Hillary is and has been in politics since the `70s. What`s her pitch? The economy is busted. The government`s corrupt. Washington is failing. Vote for me. I`ve been working on these problems for 30 years. I can fix it, she says.

I wasn`t really sure if Hillary was going to be here tonight because I guess you didn`t send her invitation by e-mail or maybe you did and she just found out about it through the wonder of WikiLeaks. We`ve learned so much from WikiLeaks.

For example, Hillary believes that it`s vital to deceive the people by having one public policy and a totally different policy in private. That`s okay. I don`t know who they`re angry at, Hillary, you or I.

For example, here she is tonight in public pretending not to hate Catholics. Now, if some of you haven`t noticed, Hillary isn`t laughing as much as the rest of us. That`s because she knows the jokes. And all of the jokes were given to her in advance of the dinner by Donna Brazile, which is -- everyone knows, of course, Hillary`s belief that it takes a village, which only makes sense, after all, in places like Haiti where she`s taken a number of the them.

Thank you.

I don`t know and I don`t want this evening without saying something nice about I had opponent. Hillary`s been in Washington a long time. She knows a lot about how government works. And according to her sworn testimony, Hillary has forgotten more things than most of us will ever, ever know. That I can tell you.

We`re having some fun here tonight. And that`s good.

On a personal note, what an amazing honor it is to be with all of you. And I want to congratulate Hillary on getting the nomination and we`re in there fighting and over the next 19 days, somebody`s going to be chosen. We`ll see what happens.

But I have great memories of coming to this dinner with my father over the years when I was a young man. Great experience for me. This was always a special experience for him and me to be together.

One thing we can all agree on is the need to support the great work that comes out of the dinner. Millions of dollars have been raised to support disadvantaged children, and I applaud the many people who have worked to make this wonderful event a critical lifeline for children in need. And that we together broke the all-time record tonight is really something special. More than $6 million net net net. The cardinal told me that`s net net, Donald, remember.

We can also agree on the need to stand up to anti-Catholic bias, to defend religious liberty, and to create a culture that celebrates life.

America is in many ways divided. Thank you.

America is in many ways divided like it`s never been before, and the great religious leaders here tonight give us all an example that we can follow. We`re living in a time, an age that we never thought possible before. The vicious barbarism we read about in history books but never thought we`d see it in our so-called modern-day world.

Who would have thought we would be witnessing what we`re witnessing today? We`ve got to be very strong, very, very smart and we`ve got to come together not only as a nation but as a world community.

Thank you very much. God bless you. And God bless America. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much.

MADDOW: Donald Trump wrapping up his remarks at the Al Smith dinner. We expect that it will just be a couple minutes, but then Hillary Clinton will give her remarks.

Joining me here in studio is Minnesota Senator Al Franken.

You`re a good person to watch this with, senator.

SEN. AL FRANKEN (D), MINNESOTA: Kind of fun to watch. There were some good jokes there and there were some hits at her that have no joke work whatsoever. So it`s interesting because the best joke I thought was about how the press praised Michelle Obama for her speech and then Melania gives exactly the same speech. I mean, that`s a really good joke. But it`s like a joke.

And then some that were just hits on her that had nothing like there`s something called joke work. I think Freud talked about joke work and comedy writers, you know, try to find -- it`s a skill to write a joke. And there were somewhere he just attacked her and didn`t --

MADDOW: The people in the room were screaming at him.

FRANKEN: Yes. And really -- you know, of course, you know, this is a really important dinner because the American people want their president to be the funniest person in the country. So, this is why this is so important tonight.

But you know, what`s interesting is she laughs, and I thought actually a joke that was good that Hillary knows you`re supposed to laugh and will laugh even at inappropriate moment. I think that -- see, that`s a joke and that`s hitting her.

MADDOW: She laughed really hard when he did that pardon me joke. He said she bumped into me and said pardon me.

FRANKEN: That`s a pun. But --

MADDOW: Less joke work there, I get it.

FRANKEN: No, no. It was okay. And I think that`s why when he said she`ll even laugh at appropriate moments is that she obviously knows you`re supposed to laugh.

Now, what`s really interesting is watching him and see if he can laugh. I`ve never seen him laugh. Chuck Todd made this observation today on his show, which is -- it looks like she`s ready to go up. Let`s go. You`re the host.

MADDOW: No, you`re pretty good at this. You know how to do this. Hillary Clinton taking the stage, as Al Franken says, watch to see if Donald Trump laughs. Here we go.

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Thank you. Your Eminence, your excellencies, members of the clergy, Al and Ann Smith, Donald and Melania, and all the distinguished guests.

You know, earlier tonight Al reminded me that when the first Al Smith ran for president, he chose as his running mate the progressive senator from Arkansas, Joseph T. Robinson, who was one of my husband`s political heroes.

This work that you do through the dinner, Al, you`ve done it now for 30, 30 years, is such a labor of love. You`ve been a hero for both the children of the archdiocese and for the city of New York. And I think we all owe Al Smith a great, great round of applause.

This is such a special event that I took a break from my rigorous nap schedule to be here, and as you`ve already heard, it`s a treat for all of you, too, because usually I charge a lot for speeches like this. But for me, it was kind of ironic thinking about a fiery populist, Al Smith. If he were here today and saw how much money we`ve raised for needy children, he`d be very proud.

And if he saw this magnificent room full of plutocrats celebrating his legacy, he`d be very confused.

It`s a special honor to be here with your eminence. I know, your eminence, you were criticized for inviting both Donald and me here tonight. And you responded by saying, if I only sat down with those who were saints, I`d be taking all my meals alone.

Now, just to be clear, I think the cardinal is saying I`m not eligible for sainthood. But getting through these three debates with Donald has to count as a miracle. So I guess I`m up against the highest, hardest stained glass ceiling.

But your eminence, you do deserve great credit for bringing together two people who have been at each other`s throats, mortal enemies, bitter foes. I`ve got to ask, how did you get the governor and mayor here together tonight?

Now, I`ve got to say there are a lot of friendly faces here in this room, people that I`ve been privileged to know and to work with. I just want to put you all in a basket of adorables. And you`d look so good in your tuxes or as I refer to them, formal pantsuits.

And you know, because this is a friendly dinner for such a great cause, Donald, if at any time you don`t like what I`m saying, feel free to stand up and shout "wrong" while I`m talking.

You know, come to think of it, it`s amazing I`m up here after Donald. I didn`t think he`d be okay with a peaceful transition of power.

And Donald, after listening to your speech, I will also enjoy listening to Mike Pence deny that you ever gave it.

You know, I`ve had the privilege of being at the Al Smith dinners in years past. And I always enjoy it. But remember, if you`re not happy with the way it comes out, it must be rigged.

And it`s always a special treat for me to be back in New York, a city that I love and which I think truly embodies the best of America. You know, don`t you think?

People look at the Statue of Liberty, and they see a proud symbol of our history as a nation of **immigrants**, a beacon of hope for people around the world.

Donald looks at the Statue of Liberty and sees a four. Maybe a five if she loses the torch and tablet and changes her hair.

You know, come to think of it, you know what would be a good number for a woman? Forty-five. But I digress.

Now, I`m going to try my best tonight, but I understand I am not known for my sense of humor. That`s why it did take a village to write these jokes.

People say -- and I hear them. I know. They say I`m boring compared to Donald. But I`m not boring at all. In fact, I`m the life of every party I attend. And I`ve been to three.

And when the parties get out of hand, as occasionally, they do, it`s important to have a responsible chaperone who can get everyone home safely, and that is why I picked Tim Kaine to be my vice president.

Now, you notice there is no teleprompter here tonight, which is probably smart because maybe you saw Donald dismantle his prompter the other day. And I get that. They`re hard to keep up with. And I`m sure it`s even harder when you`re translating from the original Russian.

But every year, this dinner brings together a collection of sensible, committed mainstream Republicans or, as we now like to call them, Hillary supporters.

Now, some of the critics, and I hear that, too. Yes.

They think I only say what people want to hear. Well, tonight that is true. And here exactly what you want to hear. This election will be over very, very soon.

And look at this dais. We have Charlie Rose and Maria Bartiromo and Chris Matthews and Gayle King and Norah O`Donnell and Katie Couric. This counts as a press conference, right?

It is great to see Mayor Bloomberg here.

It`s a shame he`s not speaking tonight. I`m curious to hear what a billionaire has to say.

And look at the dais, we`ve got the Honorable Chuck Schumer, the Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Honorable Mike Bloomberg, the Honorable Bill de Blasio, the Honorable Dave Dinkins and so many other wonderful elected officials. And we have Rudy Giuliani.

Now, many don`t know this, but Rudy actually got his start as a prosecutor going after wealthy New Yorkers who avoided paying taxes. But as the saying goes, you can`t beat them, go on FOX News and call them a genius.

So, as I said, we`ve now had our third and, thankfully, final debate. Sharing a stage with Donald Trump is like -- well, nothing really comes to mind.

There is nothing like sharing a stage with Donald Trump.

Donald wanted me drug tested before last night`s debate. And, look, I got to tell you, I`m so flattered that Donald thought I used some sort of performance enhancer. Now, actually I did. It`s called preparation.

And looking back, I`ve had to listen to Donald for three full debates, and he says I don`t have any stamina. That is 4 1/2 hours. I have now stood next to Donald Trump longer than any of his campaign managers.

Now, look, I have deep respect for people like Kellyanne Conway. She`s working day and night for Donald and because she`s a contractor, he`s probably not even going to pay her.

But I think the good news is that debates finally allow Republicans to unite around their candidate. The bad news is it`s Mike Pence.

And it`s been a long, long campaign. That should be one of our highest priorities, shortening the campaigns.

And whoever wins this election, the outcome will be historic. We`ll either have the first female president or the first president who started a Twitter war with Cher. And if Donald does win, it will be awkward at the annual president`s day photo when all the former presidents gather at the White House and not just with Bill.

How is Barack going to get past the Muslim ban?

Now, Republicans in particular seem frustrated with their nominee. Paul Ryan told the Republican members of the House, you don`t have to support the top of the ticket. Don`t worry about anyone besides yourself. Just do what`s in your own best interests.

So I guess Donald really has unified his party around his core philosophy. And I don`t understand their unhappiness. They say Donald doesn`t have many policies, he has no policies. I keep hearing that. I`d actually like to defend him on this.

Donald has issues, serious issues, really, really serious issues. And I worry about Donald`s go-it-alone attitude. For example, at his convention when he said I alone can fix it. You know, in the `90s, I said the same thing about America`s health care system, and it didn`t work out so well for me either.

But speaking of health, Donald has been very concerned about mine. Very concerned. He actually sent a car to bring me here tonight. Actually, it was a hearse.

But I kind of want to just put the information out there so everybody can draw their own conclusions and you can judge our relative health. We`ve each released our medical records.

My blood pressure is 100/70. His is unbelievably great. My cholesterol is 189. His is presidential. My heart rate is 72 beats per minute. His is the most beats ever or the least beats ever, whichever sounds best.

But Donald really is as healthy as a horse. You know, the one Vladimir Putin rides around on.

But I can say, without fear of contradiction tonight, that I will be the healthiest and youngest woman ever to serve as president.

But this has really been a strange campaign. You saw it last night. You saw it again tonight. Donald has attacked me for life in public service. And I didn`t get that at first. I kind of get it now.

As he told Howard Stern, he doesn`t like it when women have been around for more than 35 years. But, Donald, we have so much more in common than actually you may realize. For example, I tried to inspire young people by showing them that with resilience and hard work, anything is possible, and you`re doing the same. A third grade teacher told me that one of her students refused to turn in his homework because it was under audit.

And here`s another similarity. The Republican National Committee isn`t spending a dime to help either one of us.

So, tonight, let`s embrace the spirit of the evening, let`s come together. Remember what unites us and just rip on Ted Cruz.

I hope you enjoyed my remarks tonight. I said no to some jokes that I thought were over the line. But I suppose you can judge for yourself on WikiLeaks in the next few days.

Donald will tell us after the benediction whether he accepts if this dinner is over. He has to wait and see.

But there`s nothing funny about the stakes in this election. In the end, what makes this dinner important are not the jokes we tell but the legacy that we carry forward. It`s as often easy to forget how far this country has come. And there are a lot of people in this room tonight who themselves or their parents or grandparents came here as **immigrants**, made a life for yourselves, took advantage of the American dream and the greatest system that has ever been created in the history of the world to unleash the individual talents, energy and ambition of everyone willing to work hard.

And when I think about what Al Smith went through, it`s important to just reflect how groundbreaking it was for him, a Catholic, to be my party`s nominee for president. Don`t forget, school boards sent home letters with children saying that if Al Smith is elected president, you will not be allowed to have or read a Bible. Voters were told that he would annul Protestant marriages.

And I saw a story recently that said people even claimed the Holland Tunnel was a secret passageway to connect Rome and America to help the pope rule our country.

Those appeals, appeals to fear and division, can cause us to treat each other as the other. Rhetoric like that makes it harder for us to see each other, to respect each other, to listen to each other and certainly a lot harder to love our neighbor as ourselves. I believe how we treat others is the highest expression of faith and of service.

Now, I`m not Catholic. I`m a Methodist. But one of the things that we share is the belief that in order to achieve salvation, we need both faith and good works. And you certainly don`t need to be Catholic to be inspired by the humility and heart of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, or to embrace his message.

His message about rejecting a mindset of hostility, his calls to reduce inequality. His warnings about climate change. His appeal that we build bridges not walls.

Now, as you may know, my running mate, Tim, is Catholic and went to Jesuit schools, and one of the things he and I talked about is the idea from the Jesuits, of the magis, the more the better. We need to get better at finding ways to disagree on matters of policy while agreeing on questions of decency and civility, how we talk to each other, respect each other.

So I have taken this concept to magis to heart in this campaign as best as one can in the daily heat, the back and forth of a presidential campaign, to ask how we can do more for each other, and better for each other. Because I believe that for each of us our greatest monument on this earth won`t be what we build but the lives we touch. And that is ultimately what this dinner is all about. And it`s why it`s been such a great honor to join you all again. Thank you.

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton wrapping up her remarks at the Al Smith dinner following Donald Trump.

This is the visual here is what people imagine when they fantasize about rich elites running things behind the scenes and meeting, you know, privately. Having television cameras there interrupting the fantasy a little bit. But you see the two candidates. Cardinal Timothy Dolan between them.

SMITH: I did see candidates reach across a great divide tonight and shake hands. I think we should nominate Cardinal Dolan for the Nobel Peace Prize, what do you think?

MADDOW: Cardinal Dolan there.

The man who is speaking at the microphone is Al Smith IV, who is the great- grandson of Al Smith who was the first ever Catholic nominee for president in 1928. And this dinner has existed since the `40s. They started holding this dinner in his honor after he died. It benefits Catholic charities.

It is quite a plutocratic gathering. It is a charity event. It benefits Catholic charities but it is white tie which is the even fancier version than black tie. It`s full of some of the richest and most powerful people on earth and this is sort of the way it goes.

Al Franken is here in studio with us.

Senator Franken, I know that you`re a Hillary Clinton supporter. So, therefore, you cannot be objective as to how she did comedically compared to her political opponent.

FRANKEN: That`s right. I can`t be objective.

One thing I did notice is that Trump got the memo to smile and he smiled and then actually -- but he didn`t laugh. Remember, we were going to look for that. See him do that human thing that human beings do, which is laugh at things.

But Giuliani didn`t get the memo.

MADDOW: No. No.

FRANKEN: And that`s a moment that should be replayed, I think. It`s -- because every -- these are events where everyone takes -- it`s like a roast. Like a mild roast. And I thought that -- she had one joke that I thought was -- remember I criticized Trump for not having any joke work or something?

MADDOW: Yes.

FRANKEN: When she did a couple of those that I said, ah, and she said about the dinner, it must be rigged. If it didn`t go well, it must be rigged.

And I liked the idea that the dinner is rigged, just didn`t like the execution of that. There are really a lot of good jokes. I won`t go over them.

MADDOW: Can I ask you, I saw what she led off with, I took a break from my rigorous nap schedule.

FRANKEN: Very good opener.

MADDOW: Opener.

Something that got no laugh in the room at all but made me laugh is that she`s up against a stained glass ceiling in terms of eligibility for sainthood. You didn`t laugh at that either.

FRANKEN: I actually missed it.

MADDOW: I think many missed it in the room. You have to be Catholic to think that is funny which is possible why that moved me.

FRANKEN: I get it. That`s a human thing. But I`ve never seen Trump laugh.

MADDOW: The Statue of Liberty, Donald Trump looks at her and sees a four.

FRANKEN: Yes, that`s a good joke.

MADDOW: That`s the one when they went to Giuliani with the camera and he didn`t get it.

FRANKEN: I think the one they went to him on is we have all these great leaders, she named them, and then we have Rudy Giuliani. And he was like - - it was a very odd thing for him not to understand that there`s cameras there and they may cut to you.

MADDOW: How do you feel about -- how do you -- obviously, you had a life in comedy, and now you have a life in the Senate. I think everybody wants you to intertwine them more than you do.

FRANKEN: Right. Very disciplined.

MADDOW: In being not funny since you`ve been in the Senate. I still think you`re inherently funny no matter what you do.

FRANKEN: Thank you.

MADDOW: Do you get frustrated that we ask our particularly not funny candidates to try to --

FRANKEN: Hillary is funny. And I`ve seen Trump be funny. I`ve seen him be funny, honestly.

MADDOW: As a politician or just as a celebrity person?

FRANKEN: I thought that in the first debate, that he had, with all those candidates and she said, you`ve called Megyn Kelly, said you`ve called women pigs and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and he said only Rosie O`Donnell. And he got this big laugh in that audience. And if he had stopped there, he would have been fine.

And I`ve seen him. I mean, it`s an offensive joke, I know, in the context I just kind of told it. But in the moment, it was funny. He was -- you know.

And I think he did an aside here that was really kind of funny. Just to ad lib an aside. And I think that to his supporters, he`s funny sometimes when he goes on stage. And there`s certain thins that he`s been criticized for that I do think were actual jokes.

So --

MADDOW: Except where people took him literally and you don`t think he meant it literally. You think he was hyperbolic --

FRANKEN: But he`s also done the opposite, which is called for the Russians to release her e-mails and he wasn`t joking. And also when he said that Obama and Hillary created ISIS or Obama created ISIS, then he kept saying it was a joke, then he would literally say, it`s not a joke. And really mean it.

And so, it`s fair for everyone to discount when he says something is a joke because he`s -- look, he is this has been a very odd -- today, I came from Minneapolis today. And on the plane there was a couple there with kids and she was a seventh grade American history teacher. She`s been doing this for a while. She said, every year, she`d have kids play both candidates.

And I think this is going back to Gore v. Bush. She said this year she couldn`t do it.

MADDOW: Oh, wow.

FRANKEN: This year she couldn`t.

MADDOW: Because she didn`t want to put any kid in the position of acting out --

FRANKEN: Trump.

MADDOW: Trump.

FRANKEN: Yes. So this is -- you know, I`m not a fan of his. And I think she was right, that everyone wants this to be over as soon as it can.

MADDOW: Does it give you comfort that he bombed tonight?

FRANKEN: I don`t think he bombed. He started okay.

MADDOW: I think when he got to Haiti, he was bombing.

FRANKEN: America doesn`t want their president, it isn`t -- we want our president to be the funniest person in the country. I always -- I used to tell people like friends, I like Gore and Hillary and when they`re doing Letterman, they maybe would ask me for advice and I`d say that. Americans want you to have a sense of humor about yourself.

That`s why I think it`s good to see someone be able to laugh at a joke about them. But then his joke kind of defused that when he said that she`s going to laugh tonight and even at an appropriate moment. That`s a good joke that he told.

MADDOW: Right, then it resonated throughout the rest. And we were looking at her when she laughed.

FRANKEN: That was a good joke. I like when she said it took a village to write all these jokes. And I`m not funny and that`s why it took a village. These are interesting exercises and they`re fun and they raise a lot of money for Catholic charities, which is a good thing.

MADDOW: Senator Al Franken from Minnesota, it`s great to have you here. It`s really nice to see you.

FRANKEN: Good to see you.

MADDOW: Thanks for joining us. It`s fun to watch this with you. I feel like I`m learning things as I`m laughing. Appreciate it.

FRANKEN: Always good to learn while you laugh.

MADDOW: I want to bring into the conversation now NBC News presidential historian Michael Beschloss who is watching with us tonight.

Michael, it`s nice to see you. Thanks for being here.

MICHAEL BESCHLOSS, NBC NEWS PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN: Thank you, Rachel.

MADDOW: To Al Franken`s point about what we`re looking for in a president, presidents have been doing this event, and in fact, this specific event for decades, for 30 years.

BESCHLOSS: Even more.

MADDOW: Do they -- A, do they matter and, B, was tonight any different than it usually is?

BESCHLOSS: Yes, I think they do matter. I mean, nowadays as both you and Al Franken were saying, one of the metrics we use to measure a potential president is does this person have a sense of humor that gives us a sense that he`s one of us or she is one of us.

And that was not always the case. For instance, when Adlai Stevenson ran in 1952, he was criticized by a lot of people for being so witty and making jokes but that wasn`t something as serious as a president -- it didn`t sound like a president. Obviously, life has changed a huge amount since then.

The first one of these things where you had the two candidates was 1960, Kennedy and Nixon. They`d just been through these debates which were, you know, contested, but nowhere near as brutal and as bitter as the three debates between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton have turned out to be. And what this dinner has turned out to be politically is that you go through the debates, you go through a tough campaign, it`s nearly over. This evening when it has been held with both candidates present has been, you know, almost a healing moment.

You could almost rely on it to be an evening where the two were in harmony and each candidate would be self-deprecating and rip the other but it would be pretty gentle and funny.

The reason why I agree but, Donald Trump bombed, you could hear the cat calls and boos, and this is a very Republican audience, traditionally, was that he went beyond gentle ribbing to talk about his opponent going to jail and needing to be pardoned, and, you know, one joke after another that was really a political attack mildly veiled in humor. I think the reaction of the room was that he didn`t get what this night has traditionally been.

MADDOW: NBC News presidential historian Michael Beschloss, thank you for that. I think it`s important to figure out whether or not they`re funny and whether or not they get where they are.

BESCHLOSS: Yet another institution changed by this campaign.

MADDOW: Yes, exactly.

Thank you, Michael. I appreciate you being here.

BESCHLOSS: Sure.

MADDOW: Thanks.

You know, in terms of what happened last night and what`s happening now, one of the things that we`ve been dealing with today is trying to figure out the seriousness of one of the things that Donald Trump said last night at the debate which was greeted as sort of a shot heard round the world. Since then, in the aftermath of last night`s debate and throughout the day, people have been trying to answer, what exactly he meant by the statement of his at the debate last night that made headlines all over the country.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REPORTER: What about the idea that you will not -- he says he`s going to look in to the results of the election? Does that give you pause?

KELLYANNE CONWAY, TRUMP CAMPAIGN MANAGER: It doesn`t give me pause. Do you remember Al Gore in 2000?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Do you remember Al Gore in 2000. That`s been some of the way the Trump campaign has dealt with this issue today about what their candidate said last night at the debate, about respecting the results of the election.

You know, when we do remember Al Gore in 2000, I think there`s a piece about that, that we tend to remember wrong, particularly the liberals among us, we tend to remember it wrong. This is the Supreme Court as it was constituted in 2000. When the court ruled in Bush v. Gore. Do we have that? And made George W. Bush president, even though gore won more votes than Bush did.

You remember the ruling, Bush v. Gore, that ruling was a 5-4 ruling. We think of that falling along partisan lines, the five Republican-appointed justices voting for Bush and the four Democratic justices voting for Gore, that`s how we got 5-4, right? That`s how we think of it.

But that`s not actually true, because David Souter who voted with the Gore side in Bush v. Gore, he was not appointed by a Democrat. He named to the court by George H.W. Bush in 1990. It`s one of the things that a lot of Republicans have always held against Poppy Bush, that one of his Supreme Court appointees didn`t end up being conservative when he got onto the Supreme Court.

But David Souter was appointed by a Republican, and he didn`t end up being a conservative justice. He also didn`t end up particularly liking his time on the court. As soon as President Obama got sworn in and settled in in 2009, David Souter announced he was retiring to go back to his beloved New Hampshire in order to resume his pre-Supreme Court practice of declining all media requests and wanting to be left alone. David Souter speaks very rarely in public and when he does he chooses his words carefully.

Because we`ve heard so little from him over the years, I think the gravitas and the crackling intelligence of his speech can be kind of a surprise when you hear it. But given what happened last night, given the shock that spiked down the nation`s spinal column last night and today when the Republican nominee threatened that this little election thing you got there, this little democratic process you`ve got here, it`s nice, it`s fine, but he doesn`t necessarily plan on abiding by its decision when it comes to the presidency.

Given that shock that`s just been administered to this system, I want you to watch this. This is David Souter. He will not make you feel better about what the Republican Party has done to the country by picking this nominee. But it is comfort, it`s helpful I think, to know that there was a reason to see this whole thing coming. This is Justice David Souter in New Hampshire four years ago.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HON. DAVID SOUTER, RETIRED U.S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE: I think some of the aspects of current American government that people on both sides find frustrating are in partly a function of the inability of people to understand how government can and should function. It is a product of civic ignorance.

What I worry about is a remark that Benjamin Franklin made and Susan Leahy quoted Jefferson at the beginning about how an ignorant people can never remain a free people. Democracy cannot survive too much ignorance.

Franklin, in effect, had a comment to which the Jefferson comment is an answer or a response. And I, you`ve probably heard this, but it bears repeating. Franklin was asked by someone I think on the streets of Philadelphia shortly after the 1787 convention adjourned, what kind of government the Constitution would give us if it was adopted? And Franklin`s famous answer was "a republic, if you can keep it."

You can`t keep it in ignorance. I don`t worry about our losing republican government in the United States because I`m afraid of a foreign invasion. I don`t worry about it because I think there is going to be a coup by the military as has happened in some of the places. What I worry about is that when problems are not addressed, people will not know who is responsible. And when the problems get bad enough, as they might do, for example, with another serious terrorist attack, as they might do with another financial meltdown, some one person will come forward and say, give me total power and I will solve this problem.

That is how the Roman republic fell. Augustus became emperor, not because he arrested the Roman Senate. He became emperor because he promised that he would solve problems that were not being solved.

If we know who is responsible, I have enough faith in the American people to demand performance from those responsible. If we don`t know, we will stay away from the polls. We will not demand it. And the day will come when somebody will come forward and we and the government will in effect say, "Take the ball and run with it. Do what you have to do." That is the way democracy dies.

And if something is not done to improve the level of civic knowledge, that is what you should worry about at night.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Former Supreme Court Justice David Souter in New Hampshire, speaking more than four years ago, being prophetic enough to now be a little spooky.

At the commander in chief forum this year, Donald Trump said once he gets elected, there will be all different generals in the U.S. military, which is not the way the military works. At the last debate, he told Hillary Clinton she was infective as a senator if she couldn`t change the tax code herself while she was a senator from New York, right?

Senator sounds like such a powerful job. You`re telling me you can`t personally change the tax code even if you`re a senator?

He also said he had a plan to use the special prosecutor system to put her in jail once he`s elected, which is not how the special prosecutor system works or how our political system works. Now, as of last night, he insists there`s no reason for him to abide by or respect the results of a national election, if he thinks the media was biased against him or something else about it that he doesn`t like.

And after the national outrage about that from coast-to-coast, across both parties last night and into today, he still didn`t get why that`s a big deal thing to say, why that is not a thing that people joke about.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I would like to promise and pledge to all of my voters and supporters and to all of the people of the United States, that I will totally accept the results of this great and historic presidential election if I win!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Tat`s the joke he made today to open his campaign rally after the debate.

He doesn`t get why this is something that responsible, you know, patriotic people in politics wouldn`t joke about. Or he does see it, and he`s just trying to wear out the nerves, trying to kill the nerve endings that register the hurt of what this kind of specific threat does to our democracy. Maybe if he says it long enough, people will stop being outraged by it, right? As partisans will start to go along with it, we will lose sight of how radical this idea is, we`ll stop registering that what he`s selling is a rejection of the very basic idea of self government that is at the core of who we are as our country.

And if we lose sight of the importance of that idea of self government, well, then are we willing to give it up? Democracy wasn`t solving our problems anyway, was it? Maybe let`s try something new?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SOUTER: Some one person will come forward and say, "Give me total power and I will solve this problem." That is how the Roman republic fell. Augustus became emperor, not because he arrested the Roman Senate. He became emperor because he promised that he would solve problems that were not being solved.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: We`re having an unprecedented election. We have a candidate making unprecedented threats against our democracy.

But just because it`s unprecedented here, doesn`t mean that no one saw it coming, or that history can`t give us a guide for how to fix it.

That does it for us tonight. We will see you again tomorrow.

Now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL."

Good evening, Lawrence.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED. END

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC ANCHOR: And thanks to you at home for joining us this hour. Happy Friday to you as well. It is nice to have you here.

One of the things that happens this time of year in the great state of Michigan is something called ArtPrize. This is the eighth year they`ve done ArtPrize. It gets bigger and bigger every year.

Last year, they say something like 400,000 people went to it. It`s just become this huge phenomenon in that part of the country.

Basically what it is, as you can tell from the name, is an art contest. Anybody can enter. They call it a radically open art contest. Over the years, thousands of people have entered it.

And what is unique about it is they`ve got a panel of expert art judges that give out one big prize for the best work of art, and it`s a big prize. It`s $200,000 for the juried best artwork in the fair.

But the reason so many members of the public go, the reason it attracts these giant public crowds, it`s apparently the most attended public art event on the planet year after year now. The reason so many regular folks go because in addition to the expert jury selected prize, they also just let the regular schmoes vote. So, for free, you can show up, go look at hundreds of pieces of interesting art, and you can vote for whatever you like. Whoever is the most popular choice for the best artwork in the show, just the people`s choice, that artist also wins $200,000.

So, it`s really high stakes. It`s neat. You can be part of it. It`s a big deal. It`s called ArtPrize. The pride of Michigan this time of year.

Because it brings hundreds of thousands to the Grand Rapids area every year, it`s obviously a big deal for the local media. And so, today, all the local news outlets in Grand Rapids, including a local station called WZZM, they were all set up at ArtPrize in Grand Rapids. Technically, they were at the Gerald Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids. That`s where it was hosted today.

And much to their surprise, Donald Trump walked in. I say much to their surprise because this was an unannounced, unexpected visit. People were there to see ArtPrize. They were not there to see him. They didn`t know he was coming.

And if you`re a local reporter, if you`re like the co-host of the noon news update show on Grand Rapids Channel 13 and you see Donald Trump unexpectedly walk into the room while you`re doing your live news hit from the art fair, what do you do?

Well, if you are a spunky, quick on your feet, unafraid local reporter like Jennifer Pascua is at WZZM, apparently, you just start yelling across the room at the art fair. "Hey, Donald, hey Donald, come talk to me!"

That`s what she did. That`s how she got her presidential candidate interview today. "Hey, Donald, come over here!" Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JENNIFER PASCUA, WZZM: Our presidential candidate for the Republican party has just arrived here. He`s just right outside our 13 News desk.

Hey, Donald! Mr. Trump, will you come talk to us?

So, we have just snagged Republican candidate Donald Trump.

How is it going? I am great. Why don`t you come over here?

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: Where`s your camera?

PASCUA: Well, I need you to come over here. Can you come over here towards me?

TRUMP: I`ll come over here.

PASCUA: So, welcome to Grand Rapids.

TRUMP: Are we on already?

PASCUA: We are on. Let`s see. You`ve got a mike on.

So, talk to me. Why are you here? Why are you here at the Ford?

TRUMP: We have a lot of respect for Gerald Ford, always have. They invited us. The museum the beautiful. Look at all these people.

PASCUA: Everybody is here for ArtPrize. This is an internationally acclaimed art competition. So that`s why people are here.

TRUMP: Oh, wow.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Oh, wow. That`s why all these people -- he has no idea why all those people are there at the museum. He`s thinking, like, wow, the Gerald Ford Museum is really popular.

He has no idea why he`s there. But this great local reporter who had no idea he was coming, she thinks on her feet. She just yelling out to him, hey, Donald! She gets somebody to run over to him, snab a microphone on his tie. She doesn`t know if there`s a camera that can get him in the shot. She pulls out her phone in case that`s the only way she can broadcast it.

Ultimately, they do swing a camera around from somewhere. And she tells him why she`s there and why these people are there. Just a great, great moment. She gets this interview with Donald Trump.

He brings up Gerald Ford. So she asked him a question about Gerald Ford. This is the Gerald Ford museum.

And again, keep in mind here, she had no idea Trump was going to be there. She`s not prepared to have a presidential interview. But just watch where it goes. She asks him this next question you`ll see about Gerald Ford and then watch what she asks him next.

And just put yourself in her shoes. Think about whether you would have had the stones in that moment to ask the same thing on the fly face-to-face with Donald Trump unexpectedly off the top of her head having no time to prep, having no idea that you`re going to be talking to a presidential candidate live on TV that day. Would you have thought to do this? And would you have been brave enough to do?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PASCUA: He was known for bringing parties together. What does that mean in your presidency?

TRUMP: He did. People liked him. They respected him. He brought people together. That`s true.

PASCUA: Yes.

TRUMP: If you think of it, people have different opinions of Gerald Ford, but everybody has a good opinion. It`s very unusual.

PASCUA: You know, what`s also unusual, also unusual, Mr. Trump, is the fact that "USA Today," they`re our partners are right now, they have come out to actually first time in 34 years of existence to come out to say whether or not they support a certain candidate, in which they are saying that you are unfit for the presidency. Your reaction to that?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: She just puts that right to his face. So nice to meet you, I have no idea I was going to get to talk to you. What do you think about this idea that you`re manifestly unfit for the presidency? She just puts it right to him right there.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PASCUA: They are saying that you are unfit for the presidency. Your reaction to that?

TRUMP: Well, I don`t read "USA Today." It`s not much of a newspaper as far as I`m concerned. And you know, I really don`t know. Nobody called me. All I know is we`re leading in the polls. We`re doing well.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Donald Trump today at the Gerald Ford museum. I think not expecting to be doing that interview, not expecting to be confronted like that on the fly by a reporter who had no idea she was going to be talking to him because this was an unannounced trip. She wrangled him from across the room. Jennifer Pascua from the local Channel 13 in Michigan, God bless her.

The "USA Today" editorial she was referencing there is something that we first reported on last night. "USA Today" has never before taken a side in a presidential election. They`re not taking Hillary Clinton`s side overtly in this election. They`re not telling their readers who to vote for.

But they took this unprecedented and aggressive step to write an editorial they say reflects the consensus of their editorial board that Americans must go vote in this election but they must vote against Donald Trump.

Now, you saw there in that difficult impromptu interview Donald Trump`s defense to that was that nobody called him about it. So, he doesn`t know about it. He also says he doesn`t think "USA Today" is much of a paper.

But then he said, "All I know is we`re leading in the polls, we`re doing well." I don`t know what he was referring to. But he`s not leading in the polls in Michigan. The latest poll out in Michigan is from the Detroit News and WDIB, and new Michigan poll actually has Donald Trump trailing Hillary Clinton by about seven points in Michigan overall.

One of the most remarkable aspects of that poll today is that they also broke down responses by region within the state of Michigan. And in Michigan`s biggest population center, and its largest city by far, Detroit, Donald Trump is actually polling at zero percent in Detroit. This new Michigan poll has him trailing Hillary Clinton 46-39 in the state overall, but it has him trailing Hillary Clinton in Detroit 90-0.

And the polling in general beyond Michigan, beyond Detroit but beyond Michigan, the polling in general is not great for Donald Trump right now. He`s not overall leading in the polls. Things were tightening up substantially until the first presidential debate this week, but the first burst of polling that`s come out, the first scientific polling to reflect changes in the electorate, all the polls that have come out in the last couple of days show Clinton pulling out ahead in crucial states like Michigan but also in the national polls.

The latest national polls that`s out tonight is from FOX News. Head-to- head matchup between Clinton and Trump two weeks ago, FOX had Trump leading in a head-to-head, 46-45, leading by one. Now, as of tonight, FOX has Clinton leading by 5 in a head-to-head matchup. Her leading him 49-44.

That same FOX News poll just out tonight also asks voters nationwide who won this week`s debate. In the FOX News poll, the answer is overwhelming. Hillary Clinton won it by a 40-point margin, 61-21.

And that`s basically the theme of the week in nationwide scientifically sound polling on who won the debate. The Gallup poll has since come out about who won the debate. That found Clinton winning and that follows a handful of other polls that come out over the course of this week, all of which show Clinton leading by substantial double digit margins in terms of whether or not voters perceive her to have beaten Donald Trump in the debate.

Now, Donald Trump does not want his staffers to admit that. There was reporting today in "The New York Times" that he is displeased with his own campaign staffers for admitting in interviews that Donald Trump lost the debate. He doesn`t want his campaign admitting it.

He also does not appear to believe it himself if you believe his Twitter feed where he keeps saying he won. Based on this interview today, at the Gerald Ford During this trip at the ford museum Donald Trump also believes he is leading in the polls right now, which is not. Not even the state he was standing in when he said it.

So, there`s something going on in terms of perception of reality. But there seems to be something a little haywire going on right now in the Trump campaign. You know, it`s not like his is the only campaign that`s had a hard moment, right? All campaigns have hard moments, have low moments.

We were talking last night about Gerald Ford having his disastrous debate in 1976 when he said there was no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. Maybe Donald Trump was reflecting on that today when he paid his respects to the late president and toured his museum, toured his model Oval Office and all the rest of it.

Campaigns all have down moments. Every presidential candidate from time to time does something that he or she should not do. That said, in the history of presidential screw-ups and bad moments. I`m not sure anything has really happened like what happened today, specifically this morning.

Just to set the scene in terms of how I learned this news, this morning I got up and out a little earlier than I usually do because I really wanted to go fishing before I came to work. That`s the one thing that can make me get up early.

I was looking at the news at a time when I`m not usually looking at the news. The news note that we produce for our staff, that we all used to sort of set the news for the day, it was not out yet. I was on my way to go fishing, I didn`t have a ton of time to go scrolling through the headlines. I want a quick check in what happened in politics news specifically overnight.

So, I went over to NBC News First Read to see what they were saying in terms of the political headlines of the day. And I read something there that I think will stick with me forever. I`m not going to get it tattooed on myself. But I don`t think I need to, because I don`t think I will ever forget it.

I`m going to quote directly from first read this morning. This is how I learned this, before my first cup of coffee today. Ready. Quote, "Guys, it`s not every day when a presidential nominee tells you to watch a sex tape, especially at the same time the sitting president is eulogizing Shimon Peres."

Fair enough. But that really is what happened today. While President Obama and former President Clinton were in Jerusalem attending the funeral of legendary Israeli statesman Shimon Peres, President Obama is giving this incredibly moving eulogy for the late Israeli prime minister.

At that moment, on the other side of the world, Donald Trump, Republican presidential nominee, was in the middle of a Twitter outburst which included, again unprompted, him continuing to attack a former winner of his Miss Universe pageant who is now a Hillary Clinton supporter.

In Mr. Trump`s tweet early this morning in the predawn hours, he called the former miss universe disgusting and directed the American public that we should, quote, "check out the sex tape."

It`s Friday night now. There`s still six weeks to go until the election, anything can happen in those six weeks. It is hard to believe that this week we have just been through won`t end up feeling like it was a turning point in this election.

I mean, at the start of the week, Monday night that did go poorly for Donald Trump. The American public seems to have found him to have lost that debate by a very sound margin, even in a country that`s roughly evenly divided on who to vote for, for the presidency, the country perceives boldly for him to have lost that by a 20 point to a 40-point margin. He did just get beaten badly and obviously he behaved in a way that I think people didn`t expect even from him.

Since then, since the night of that debate on Monday night, since that evening, Mr. Trump and his campaign surrogates have decided that they`re going to start a new political tack. They`re going to try to create a political liability for Hillary Clinton out of the fact that her husband is known to have cheated on her.

That new point of political focus from the Trump campaign started as soon as the debate was over. It has been led by Mr. Trump himself, as well as two of his most recognizable surrogates, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

And I don`t have any individual interest in any of these men`s personal history, but if you were going to make a deliberate decision as to who should try to make a presidential political issue out of men cheating on their wives, who would design a political strategy where the spokesmen for that attack are Donald Trump, Rudy Giuliani and Newt Gingrich? Between them they have nine wives. That`s wives with a w, not lives like a cat. Nine wives between the three of them.

And they`re all famous, each of them, for having cheated on their wives and getting caught for it. But it has been three days now, four days now, where they`ve been trying on that line of political attack. On the issue of the former Miss Universe who Donald Trump was calling disgusting in the predawn hours this morning, he and his campaign have continued to press personal attacks against her all week long.

With Mr. Trump himself and Mr. Gingrich in particular taking the lead on attacking the former Miss Universe specifically for her weight.

Again, I`ve had no issue in the weight of Donald Trump or Newt Gingrich, but again, just design a political strategy in which Donald Trump and Newt Gingrich are the spokesmen for political attacks that are based on body mass index.

Glass houses do not begin to cover it. This is like glass outhouses, which I`m sorry to say extends even to Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump telling the country this morning that what we should look up about the former Miss Universe, if we want to learn more about why Donald Trump thinks she`s disgusting and why he`s taking time to spend five days attacking her in the middle of his presidential campaign, unfortunately, the glass houses concept here extends even to the specific issue he raised today of a sex tape.

I have a lot of respect for Andrew Kaczynski and his colleagues at "BuzzFeed News". I think they do great work. They`re masters of hidden archives. They turn up all sort of stuff that nobody else finds.

That said, I do not envy their workplace today. I do not envy the task they had today of scrolling through this video Playboy video centerfold, playmate 2000 starring twins.

Thanks to the hard working, under compensated staff at "BuzzFeed News", we can tell you a little bit about this film. I`m just going to quote "BuzzFeed" here.

I should also tell you if you`re watching with your kids or just not into hearing this, you may just want to go la, la, la, la and cover your ears for a second. It`s not going to take a long time. It`s only going to take a second.

But I`m just going to read "BuzzFeed`s" description here. They did the reporting to figure this out. They should be honored for it. So, let me just -- let me just do this.

Quote, "Scenes from the film feature fully nude women posing in sexual positions, dancing naked, touching themselves while naked, touching each other sensually, rubbing honey on themselves, taking a bath, and dressing in costumes."

Well, the costumes part might be family friendly. I don`t know. It might just be a Halloween-themed thing.

But the reason we have to know that description of what`s in the Playboy video playmate 2000, the reason we have to know that, is if you`re a presidential candidate who will stay up all night to attack your female political opponents and call them disgusting and say they have been in sex tapes, then news organizations are going to turn up ratty old VHS copies of the soft porn videos in which you, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump apparently had a cameo role.

Again, according to "BuzzFeed", quote, "on a bus tour hunt for the 2000 playmate of the year around the country, the playmates traveled to different cities including New York, Vegas, Chicago, Nashville, San Diego, Donald Trump welcomes the Playmates in New York and pops a bottle of champagne to kick off the New York stop. Trump then pours the champagne over the Playboy bunny logo."

Here`s the clip of that cameo appearance followed by that champagne pour and then presumably thereafter is when the Playboy bunnies, you know, start pouring the honey on other things.

And in a normal year -- can I even say that anymore? Can you even say in a normal year, in who knows what is normal in 2016? In what used to pass for a normal year, I don`t know if America would care that the presidential nominee is somebody who had a cameo in a soft porn video.

But when that nominee is telling the American public 38 days before the election that what we should do is seek out alleged and apparently apocryphal sex tapes showing how disgusting these women are who are against him, then it does become the press corps` job to go troll through the bargain bins at adult video stores to see what else Donald Trump might have been in, because he apparently was in that one.

So, things are not going great for the Trump campaign. Donald Trump still has a grand total of zero daily newspaper endorsements for the general election. We believe that is a modern American record for a major party presidential nominee.

"USA Today" did make this remarkable decision to anti-endorse him yesterday. The first time they`ve ever taken sides in a presidential race.

Two more papers today broke with longstanding tradition to overtly not endorse the Republican nominee for the first time in a dog`s age. "The San Diego Union Tribune" for one, they`ve been a paper for 148 years. They`ve not endorsed a Democrat for president, but today they endorsed Hillary Clinton.

Tonight, "The Washington Post" took the wholesale unanimous un-endorsement of Donald Trump that they`ve already made a step further. "The Washington Post" has already made clear that they`re against Donald Trump in this election, but as of tonight, they say they`re kicking off what will be a series of editorials, just an extraordinary editorial volley from one of the top newspapers in the country, the first one, which is out tonight, is called the clear and present danger of Donald Trump. They say it is the first in a series of editorials they will lay out over the course of next week showing why Americans have a responsibility to vote against Trump.

They`re contending that he -- there`s no chance that he would be harmless as president, that he would not be constrained by the other elements of our political system, contrary to some popular belief. They say in this first editorial, that he could, quote, "unilaterally," meaning on his own, "unilaterally change in country to its core."

So, this has been a bad week for Donald Trump. Today, he started raising the prospect that he may not participate in the second presidential debate. I don`t know if that will happen yet or not.

But after this very, very bad week for Donald Trump, looking ahead, especially toward that "Washington Post" context for next week, my guess is that next week might be even worse, unless somebody sort of gets hold of him and stops him from texting about sex tapes at 3:00 in the morning. I don`t know.

But Donald Trump is on his third campaign manager in the campaign thus far. There are unconfirmed reports to NBC News this week, single-source reports that Trump may right now be looking for a fourth campaign manager at this juncture.

But at a certain point, I think it has to sink in that it`s not necessarily the campaign, right? It`s the guy.

I have no idea what`s going to happen here next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So we`ve got a lot in this show tonight. We`ve got some good news to bring you exclusively about the decorated Afghanistan veteran, that incredibly well-spoken accomplished young marine who we had on the show last night.

We`ve got some tremendously heartening news, good news about him and the campaign he`s running in conjunction with this year`s election. That news is coming up in just a moment.

We`ve also got a spooky postscript to the big scoop that was published by "Newsweek" magazine yesterday morning, that story about Donald Trump`s company allegedly violating the Cuba embargo, something that appears to have happened as a consequence of that story which is a little spooky.

And we`ve got Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar here.

I told you, it`s a big night. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Add this to the list of things you never expected to be happening in a presidential campaign. Earlier this evening, the website "BuzzFeed" an article with the headline Donald Trump appeared in a Playboy soft core porn.

"BuzzFeed News", this is my favorite detail, obtained the footage from the online only Buffalo, New York, based adult video store Cinema Cornucopia.

We reached out to the Trump campaign for comment on this story tonight. They have not responded. But the Clinton campaign has.

The Clinton campaign spokesman telling NBC News tonight, quote, "There`s been a lot of talk about sex tapes today. In a strange turn of events, only one adult film has emerged today and it stars Donald J. Trump."

You know what`s awkward? Having to report that just before I get to say welcome to Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democratic senator from Minnesota. She`s a supporter of Secretary Clinton.

Senator, I`m sorry.

SEN. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D), MINNESOTA: That`s fine. It was a great segue.

MADDOW: You know, through no fault of your own, you join us on the night that we`re talking about what happened in that Playboy video.

KLOBUCHAR: The world of Donald Trump.

MADDOW: I mean, let me -- I have a few things to ask you about what`s going on right now. What does it mean that we`re talking about a Republican -- a presidential candidate`s cameo in a soft core porn video which he has made newsworthy because he`s citing sex tapes as part of his political attacks?

KLOBUCHAR: Well, exactly. He`s brought us here. He`s had bad weeks before going after the well-respected Hispanic judge, going after our gold star mom who appeared at the Democratic convention.

He`s said that there`s nothing that compares to this. Really topping it off early in the morning where I thought to myself only in Hawaii did they appreciate that six hours ahead of time. And maybe he got a few insomniac votes, but it really was something.

He`s led us down this path with the kind of vulgarities and the things that he`s been focusing on and how he keeps obsessing about women and talking about how people look. And it just keeps going. He doubles down every time one of these things happen.

And I thought maybe Hillary Clinton said it best today when she talked about how this also goes to, do you really want somebody with their finger on the nuclear code, you want someone that hangs on to this anger and shows this kind of a demeanor? I don`t think you do.

MADDOW: There`s a strategic question, just as a matter of political tactics, as to how Hillary Clinton responds, whether she continues to basically get him to sort of show his true colors on issues like this because it hurts him, I think, when he does show who he really is on things like this. There`s a strategic calculation there and we`ll see how the Clinton campaign handles it.

There`s a bigger question which is, what`s our politics like after this?

KLOBUCHAR: I think that`s very good. That has a lot to do with what the American people do on election night. You know, what kind of results do we have? Right now it`s clear that they did not like how he performed in the debate. You just showed those polls and it change the trajectory I believe of this election. So, I think that will matter.

MADDOW: So, you think if he loses his sort of violations of these norms of decency and accepted politics, they`ll be re-established because the rejection of him will include --

KLOBUCHAR: And if people got to vote, that he`s been attacking, which really means everybody. But, you know, the **immigrants** and people of color and women and everyone that he`s been attacking, if they go out and vote and husbands go out and vote and say, I don`t want people talking about my wife this way, then I think it`s going to matter. And that`s what will bring us back.

The other thing that will bring us back is the economic need, whether it`s income inequality, whether it`s the work we need to do on **immigration** reform, and Hillary Clinton has been steadfast in focusing on those issues.

Just today in Florida on national service and yesterday or the day before with Bernie Sanders in New Hampshire, talking about student loans. She`s been keeping on focus. Maybe not everyone is talking about that, but that does matter to people.

MADDOW: One of the other things I wanted to talk to you about tonight is this issue of the Cuba embargo, because you`ve been so involved in that as a legislator. Later on tonight in the show, we`re going to talk about something spooky that happened to "Newsweek" magazine after they said something about Donald Trump`s company -- alleging that Donald Trump`s company violated the Cuba embargo in the `90s, spent money in Cuba when it was illegal to do so.

You`ve been involved in trying to get the embargo rolled back, trying to rescind the embargo. What do you make about the politics around that issue? Obviously, you want the embargo not to exist?

KLOBUCHAR: I do. In fact, it`s a bipartisan bill I`m leading with Senator Jeff Flake. And Donald Trump has been bad on this issue for my perspective. He wants to close down our embassy. I was there when the flag went up. It was a historic moment. The Cubans are interested, Americans are interested.

And yet the hypocrisy. He`s not only been bad on the policy. If he wants to work with us on it, fine. But he`s showed no sign of that.

What he`s talking about now is the fact that behind people`s backs, he`s telling the Cubans in Florida, "oh, yeah, I`m on your side," then it turns out he`s trying to do business. He`s at the best skirting the law, at the very worst, it was illegal.

MADDOW: Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democrat of Minnesota, are you enjoying -- I know you are a political animal and you like politics. Are you more spooked out or more excited? Are you still having fun yet?

KLOBUCHAR: That moment after she did such an incredible job for 90 minutes, then he said she didn`t have the stamina and every woman in America screamed at the TV, that was like -- that was the moment of we`re going. We`re going to win this.

MADDOW: I collapsed at that point. I was having my Gatorade and getting a massage I was so exhausted.

KLOBUCHAR: I`m positive about how this is going. I am going to New Hampshire tomorrow to get my sweater, go out there and to help her out. So, I think there`s a lot of good stuff going on.

MADDOW: Senator, good to see you. Sorry about the Playboy thing.

KLOBUCHAR: That`s OK.

MADDOW: I`ll never do that to you again.

KLOBUCHAR: Thanks.

MADDOW: Lots to come tonight. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

PETER KIERNAN, IVY LEAGUE VETERANS COUNCIL FOUNDER: You know, when I was in Afghanistan, taxes paid for my body armor. Taxes paid for my weapons and my ammunition. Taxes paid for the emergency life flight that my buddies got flown out on when they lost their legs. Taxes pay for Gold Star families for the 14 children that I know today without fathers.

And more than that, you know, they support cops and firefighters, you know, every public service that this nation offers. And where I come from, leaders are meant to lead by example. And you inspire those to follow you. And I think that if Trump`s free riding on the political process and the system, then I think that sets a dangerous precedent as a leader.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: On this show last night, we talked with a decorated U.S. Marine Corps veteran named Peter Kiernan. He`s a marine special operator who served in Afghanistan. He`s now back home stateside. He`s about to get his college degree.

And in the meantime, he`s started up this kind of genius political project. He says he`s bothered by the prospect that we might get a new commander in chief without knowing anything about his financial ties and his history of paying taxes or not. And so, he`s decided to try to exert an unusual kind of pressure on Donald Trump to release his taxes. He`s using crowdpack to crowdsource donations that would go to ten different veterans charities if and only if Donald Trump releases his tax returns.

The way it works is people pledge to donate, but they don`t have to actually make the donation, they don`t have to pay until Trump puts out his taxes any time before the day of the third and final debate, October 19th.

Recently, the billionaire co-founder of LinkedIn pledged that he would match everybody else`s donations 5-1 up to $5 million. So, that means if Afghan war vet Peter Kiernan can crowdsource a million bucks in donations, this tech billionaire will add $5 million more to the pot, for a total of $6 million that would go veterans charities if and only if Donald Trump would release his tax returns.

So, we had Peter Kiernan here to talk about it. I`m here to report now that overnight, they added another half million dollars in total pledges that they`ve got. They were aiming -- they went from $400,000 up to $938,000. They`re aiming at a million bucks. They`re close to that.

At the current rate, they`ll likely eclipse that million dollar mark very soon. That will mean $6 million is on the table ready to go to ten different vets charities. All Donald Trump has to do to make that happen is release his taxes, just like every other presidential candidate in modern history has ever done.

Six million bucks would do a lots of good for America`s veterans, Mr. Trump. You don`t get the money, the veterans do. Is that OK?

The pot might get even bigger, though. Peter Kierna tells us tonight that if they do hit a million bucks which, of course, will instantly become $6 million for veterans with Reid Hoffman`s $5 million pledge, if they do that, they`re going to try to keep it going. They`ll set a new goal of $10 million for veterans. Maybe that will be enough to sway Donald Trump and his campaign. We`ll see.

Watch this space.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

TRUMP: We`re going to win Ohio. We`re going to win the White House.

GOV. JOHN KASICH (R), OHIO: Who can win a general election? Who can win Ohio?

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Turn out for me. We`ll win Ohio. We`ll win this election.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Campaigns here in must-win Ohio tonight.

If Mitt Romney doesn`t win Ohio, it is very unlikely that he will hold on to the presidency.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: She can win Ohio.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: Ohio, Ohio, Ohio. Since 1960, since JFK won Ohio in `60, no candidate has ever become president without the great state of Ohio. For over 50 years, Ohio has been the must-win state. That`s why campaign events in Ohio tend to look like rock concerts.

John Kerry, Bruce Springsteen in Cleveland, then Columbus, 2004, President Obama`s 2012 re-election kickoff also in Ohio. Hillary Clinton kicked off her general election campaign in Cleveland this summer.

So, yes, the common wisdom has been if you want to win the presidency, go to Ohio and preferably stay in Ohio. But you know what?

Something is only considered common wisdom until it`s not. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has not led in the polls in Ohio since August. She also has not campaigned in Ohio since Labor Day. She is heading back to Ohio for the first time next week after being away for a month.

But "The New York Times" has an interesting reporting today that Secretary Clinton may be thinking of stepping back to Ohio and not making a big push to winning this state that we think is so essential to winning the White House. There`s a legitimate demographic argument to be made that stepping back from Ohio might be a good idea for Democratic candidate.

Democrats have, of course, done well among young voters, minority voters, voters with college degrees. In Ohio, the population is growing older, whiter, and it is less educated than the rest of the country. That`s part of the argument for the Clinton campaign to at least dial back on trying to win Ohio, to find a path that doesn`t go through Ohio.

Here`s the thing, though -- if it is, in fact, smart for Secretary Clinton to get out of Ohio, much as that scrambles our long-held political expectations, where should she try instead? There`s an increasingly loud argument now that she should maybe refocus her resources and her efforts in a place like Georgia.

Ohio has 18 electoral votes, Georgia has 16 electoral votes. So, they`re close to equal in Electoral College world. Georgia has also typically been a red state, but its changing demographics are moving that state in a purple direction. According to the most recent census statements, the white population in Georgia has dropped nine points since the year 2000, the Asian population is set to double, the Latino and African-American population has also seen significant growth.

And a lot of that has to do with growth in urban centers in big cities like Atlanta. The mayor of Atlanta, Kasim Reed, says he met with the Clinton campaign last week to plead his case for his state and for his city, but specifically for his state to play a much bigger role in the election. If Democrats could make a real play there, Georgia could be part of the path.

He`s arguing that if the Clinton campaign spent the same amount of resources in Georgia and in North Carolina, he thinks Georgia would be the more winnable of the two states. Very provocative concept.

Kasim Reed says he`s lobbying the Democratic Party to shift more resources to Georgia. We`ve asked him today if his office has heard back from the Clinton campaign after making this case. They haven`t heard back yet.

We know from the Clinton campaign in terms of how they work, that they make decisions like this on a rolling basis. We also know this has been a weird and record-breaking and expectations busting election, but is this a weird enough election that a state like Ohio might not be essential to winning the White House? Is it weird enough that Democrats should drop Ohio and go for a state like Georgia instead?

Joining us now is the great and the good Joy Reid, host of "A.M. JOY", weekends here on MSNBC.

Joy, always great to have you here.

JOY REID, MSNBC`S "A.M. JOY" HOST: Great to be here.

MADDOW: First of all, is it -- I mean, there`s no connection between Ohio and Georgia.

REID: Right.

MADDOW: It doesn`t have to be out of one into the other.

REID: That`s right.

MADDOW: The reason I paired them up here is because if feel like I can see the sort of same -- I give the same weight to the argument for getting out of Ohio and into Georgia. How do you see it?

REID: Well, yes, it is just a game of math, right? So, if we`re doing the math to your point, you just shave two electoral points off and Georgia is a valuable state.

But, you know, campaigns have limited resources. You have to make hard decisions about not only where to play but where you might have room to force the other team to play. That`s what`s happened in Pennsylvania. The Trump team seems to be playing there. So, you`re going to see the Democrats playing hard there even though Pennsylvania is reliability in the Democratic column most of the time.

Ohio is a weird state. My team and I were in Lorain, Ohio, talking to Democrats union men who weren`t high on Hillary Clinton, really angry about trade. They started sounding like Staten Island Democrats when we spoke to them. These are people who voted for Bill Clinton, voted for Barack Obama, very disillusioned.

So, there`s a lot about Ohio that makes it a Trump state. On the other hand, pulling money out of Ohio for a state like Georgia that`s been out there in the ether as the white whale for Democrats the way Pennsylvania has been for Republicans, it may not be the smart thing, and I only say that because in Ohio right now, there`s such a concerted voter suppression effort taking place. The secretary of state in Ohio is aggressive, in court constantly with the ACLU and others over ways to invalidate ballots, making it harder for people to vote.

You have a lot of motivation among particularly African-American Democrats in places like Cuyahoga County, who feel they`re under siege. So, there`s a possibility that there could be a real spike in turnout among African Americans for that reason. So, whether you`re having keep the DSCC double down or keep the resources in place, or the campaign itself, it does seem to be smart.

And as you said, Hillary is going back there, they had the west wing cast last week, they had Bill Clinton in there. I doubt they will completely pull --

MADDOW: Yes, they`ve never -- to be clear, she`s going back and they have been sending other very high level surrogates and folks there. But there is these rumblings. You know, I have to wonder, if that Ohio Senate race were closer, if Strickland, the Democrat was any closer to knocking off Rob Portman there, the calculus would be different for Democrats that they`d want to stay in there to give Strickland a chance of knocking off Rob Portman.

Now that that doesn`t necessarily in the realm of possibility, they`re willing --

REID: That also makes a reason for the DSCC getting in there. You know, they got to do a better job in terms of these Senate races, because Portman is looking pretty good. That said, I will tell you that campaign sources I spoke with today were saying that the spending at the Clinton team is going to stay in for now at the same level.

So, as you said, there`s no sign that they`re really yanking resources. It`s risky to throw money at large into Georgia when you really do need to hold your base. But Democrats can win the White House without Ohio. Trump could win Ohio and Florida and Nevada and still lose.

MADDOW: OK, I see the crazed look in your eye. Not because I know you`re an insane person, because you`ve been walking around the office playing that thing. You`re playing the electoral map game like it`s Space Invaders.

REID: I`m giving Trump all these states. But it`s so much fun, Rachel.

MADDOW: I mean, I know we all do this as research. You`re actually now doing it for fun?

REID: I have been doing it since I knew I was booked on this show. I just keep playing with it. I do all these different scenarios. And it is amazing, that as long as Hillary Clinton holds Virginia and Colorado Donald Trump could run the table on much of what`s open out there. He could pick up all these states. He could even get New Hampshire with Ohio, with Florida, with Nevada and still come up short. He`s at about 268 with all those states.

MADDOW: Before you leave this state, I want to make you play Fruit Ninja. Forget it. Forget it, Joy. It`s an intervention.

Joy Reid, host of "A.M. JOY" weekend mornings on MSNBC, at 10:00 a.m. Eastern. Drop the phone, Joy. Drop it.

All right. We`ll be right back. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

REID: I mentioned earlier in the show that something potentially creepy has happened in response to "Newsweek" magazine`s big story that they posted yesterday about Donald Trump. This report alleging that the Republican nominee violated the U.S. embargo against doing business in Cuba in the late 1990s.

At the same time, of course, he was telling Cuban-American voters in Florida that he was a big supporter of the Cuban embargo. Well, "The Newsweek" reporter behind that story, investigative reporter Kurt Eichenwald also posted a document that appears to show Mr. Trump`s company paying, being invoiced for, later paying for a consulting trip to Cuba which appeared to prove Mr. Eichenwald`s point.

That said, Mr. Trump insists that he never did any business in Cuba. He`s denying what`s in the "Newsweek" story.

Somebody appears to be taking it quite seriously, though. Because look at what happened after "Newsweek" posted that report yesterday morning. Their site crashed, "Newsweek`s" website crashed. And first, it looked like the site have maybe just been overwhelmed by people trying to read that big scoop, but "Newsweek" says that wasn`t it. They say that their site was taken down by hackers.

The editor in chief telling us tonight that after Kurt Eichenwald`s Cuba scoop was published, their website was hit with a massive DDOS attack, a hacker attack that jams the site with a ton of robot-generated bogus traffic from lots of different locations until the servers can`t keep up.

According to "Newsweek`s" editor-in-chief, quote, "As with any DDOS attack, there were numerous IP addresses involved, but these ones were mainly Russian. Our IT team continues to investigate. Numerous IP addresses involved, but they were mainly Russian."

You know, there are multiple moments every single day when I think to myself, well, it`s not going to get any weirder. And then the story breaks about Donald Trump allegedly breaking the Cuban embargo and then the people who broke that story reportedly attacked by Russian hackers and then we wake up to this sex tapes story and there`s the other sex tape, and then -- 38 days until the election.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: It`s Friday night. I know you`re excited for the weekend. I will tell you, though, that there are some very important and highly compensated people among us who are way more excited for their weekend than you are for yours, and I can prove it, next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY), MAJORITY LEADER: The Senate in the last few years basically doesn`t do anything. We don`t even vote.

The first thing I need to do is to get the Senate back to normal. And that means working more. That means occasionally burning the midnight oil. I don`t think we`ve got any votes on Friday in anybody`s memory.

We`re going to function. We are.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: We are. We`re going to function again. We`re going to work Fridays.

That was the promise from the Republicans when they first got control of the Senate. And then the very first week they were in control, they broke that promise. Literally, the first week the Republicans got control, they cast a vote on a Thursday afternoon, and then they booked it. They ditched even their very first Friday.

This Congress has not exactly been working their hearts out. This summer on July 14th, Congress adjourned for its summer break and took seven and a half weeks off. They took off 53 days.

They return the first week in September, worked 15 days over the course of this month, and now, as of today, they are gone again. They had 53 days off, came back and worked 15 days over the course of a month, and now, they`re gone again for 46 more days.

As of today, members of Congress have packed their bags and gone home for a 46-day weekend.

Over the course of this entire year, the Senate is expected to work 114 days for a year. Senate Democrats say that`s the fewest days worked since 1955.

I do hope you enjoy your weekend. If you dream of being a senator, the good news about that is that your weekend would go on for an extra 44 more days after the rest of us have to come back to work on Monday.

That does it for us tonight. We will see you again on Monday.

Now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED. END

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**CHRIS HAYES, "ALL IN" HOST: Yes, there is still just a massive black box at the center of this entire enterprise. It`s totally unprecedented.

David Fahrenthold and April Ryan, thank you very much.

That is "ALL IN" for this evening.

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW starts right now.

Good evening, Rachel.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Chris, we were rooting for you and you did us very, very, very proud.

HAYES: Thank you. Thank you. You know, the funny thing about it, right, is that it`s not a difficult physical task. It`s purely a difficult psychological task not to psyche yourself out to overcompensating or you know --

MADDOW: You`re talking yourselves out of a real compliment now. Getting the ball to the pitchers mound on a Major League diamond to the plate without bouncing it, I`m telling you, I think it`s legitimately a big deal.

HAYES: I will take the compliment. Thank you very much. Have a great weekend.

MADDOW: Thanks, man. I appreciate it.

And thanks to you at home for joining us this hour. Happy Friday. Thank you for being here.

There`s a couple of different ways to take a snapshot of where we are right now just in terms of the news writ large. I mean, from the widest lens in terms of our country in the world right now, there are a few very fraught things going on right this second in the news.

This week, after North Korea launched its nuclear test, the U.S. military flew nuclear capable B1 bombers over the Korean Peninsula as a show of force.

We are in the habit of doing this now whenever North Korea gets up on its hind legs and tests dangerous weapons. But right now, flying these nuclear weapon capable bombers, this was also a sign that the only real leverage we are exerting over North Korea as they get closer and closer to proving that they are capable of launching a nuclear attack on another country, our best national leverage against them to try to stop them to from doing that is basically just flat out using a show of force to show them visually, to effectively threaten to launch a nuclear attack against them.

There`s a gambit with them now. So, there`s that. And that is unsettling.

Also in Syria, this is day five of tenuous, tentative sort of half ceasefire that was negotiated by us, and Russia. Russia, so far, is not letting through the crucial city of Aleppo. Secretary John Kerry threatened today that the whole deal, the whole ceasefire might be off, unless Russia acts to let those medical supplies and those food trucks go through to Aleppo. Those trucks, all of that aid has been basically idling for days now, waiting to get in and then everything hangs in a balance as to whether or not they`re going to be allowed to proceed.

For a little perspective on what this means in the global scheme of things, here are small numbers that mean a lot. The U.S. military has ten aircraft carriers right now, globally. We have ten aircraft carriers.

Russia has one. Russia has one. It`s 26 years old. It`s known mostly for breaking down and spilling fuel and catching fire. It has never been in a combat deployment.

But Russia right now is sending that aircraft carrier to Syria for its first ever combat deployment and for what are supposed to be coordinated military maneuvers wit the U.S. military in Syria. Us and Russia working this war together, it`s already the most awkward and tenuous and dysfunctional thing possible. Now they are sending their one leaky, accident-prone, rookie aircraft carrier into the mix as well, basically to show off that they have got one. And oh my God, what could possibly go wrong?

That`s one little sliver, right? But that`s one way of looking where we are in the world, where our country right now in the news.

I mean, the U.N. general assembly is underway in New York. One of the things we see next week in the news is Hillary Clinton, former secretary of state. She`ll be having one on one meetings with lots of foreign heads of state next week, because they`ll be here in New York for the U.N. General Assembly.

My best guest is honestly that Donald Trump will have some of those one on one meetings too, because a lot of countries like to hedge their bets on who the next president of the United States will be, particularly when the election looks like it might be close.

That brings us sort soft to another snapshot of where we are right now, closer. "The New York Times" electoral projection used to be up in the 90 percent range for Hillary Clinton, not that she win with 90 percent of the vote. But there was 90 percent chance that she would win now that it is down below 75 percent, or 74.26.

FiveThirtyEight.com, their likelihood of Clinton winning has slipped to 60/40. FiveThirtyEight.com says if the election were held today, there`s only a 57 percent chance that Hillary Clinton would win. Of course, the election isn`t being held today but it is approaching. It is less than 2 months from Election Day.

This is a time when swing state North Carolina is already voting, and the polls are getting closer. So, that`s another snapshot of where we are right now. But what I want to start with tonight is an even closer snapshot that tells you how things are going right now and I think where they are heading.

And it may change your view on how close this election is. You know, it`s a high stakes world. This is a high stakes time for our country. I think it is scary to a lot of people who are scared by the prospect of a Trump presidency, that things in the campaign are so close right now.

But just take this closer look, this closer specific snapshot of how these guys are comporting themselves right now, how they are behaving in the campaign because I do think it matters. We`re going to be talking later this hour about the catastrophic birther thing that Donald Trump did today in Washington, the spectacle where he tried to make the media broadcast a promotional tour from his new hotel and the backdrop collapsed and all of the reporters were yelling out questions because they billed it as a press conference and then they didn`t take any questions and then the press ended up angrily deleting their footage from the hotel because of the fight with the Trump campaign.

I mean, the whole point of this exercise, even if it had gone well, was to tell two lies about Donald Trump`s history of birtherism. And now that birther issue is back at the center of his campaign. It was a terrible move by Donald Trump today. It was a stunningly, poorly played instance of very bad politic. I think it was a major screw up.

And we`ve got Barbara Lee here, a member of the absolutely outraged Congressional Black Caucus. She will be with us in a few minutes to talk about what happened there.

There has been a lot of attention to that today. But just go one level below that. One level a little deeper and a little lower down the campaign. I want to take this one other snapshot of how the Trump side is behaving, how they are trying to win the presidency, and that starts in a very specific geographic place. It starts in downtown Washington, D.C. There`s a place you have definitely heard of, right there at the center of the map there called the National Press Club.

Go to the left there. You see, it`s very close to the White House. Over to the right there is where Lincoln was shot. I is right no downtown D.C. Incidentally, I marked that T.J.Maxx on the map because I once bought three umbrellas for less $20 there, when Susan and I got caught on the downpour. I was so grateful, I bought an extra umbrella even though there were only two of us.

A very convenient location, lots of foot traffic, right in the middle of everything in D.C., the National Press Club.

Last Friday, the National Press Club was due to host a press conference. It was not a particularly mainstream thing, but it was a provocative enough thing that they`re pretty much guaranteed a lot of reporters showing up. And in fact, that press conference planned there for last Friday, it was provocative enough that apparently it got to be a little too hot for the National Press Club to handle.

And so, the organizers announced after billing this thing as the National Press Club press conference, they announced it won`t be there after all. They sort of cancelled it at the last minute. There was this weird exchange of information. It was kind of hard to pin down.

Ultimately, the organizers said it was National Press Club. No, it`s not. The whole thing is off. And then they said it was back on, except now it wouldn`t be at the National Press Club, it would be somewhere else in the neighborhood. They wouldn`t say where. It`s not standard far press conference, right?

Reporters who still wanted to go, get this, were instructed to go stand outside the entrance to this restaurant and look for a man wearing a brown tie with a dark gray suit. If they were able to find that man, that man would tell the reporters one by one in person not online, not in writing. He would tell them where they could go to find this now secret press conference.

It turned out to be a windowless basement conference room of a hotel nearby the National Press Club. And in that windowless basement conference room, we finally got to hear from the leading low lights of the white supremacist movement in the United States.

This was last Friday, they held this cloak and dagger press conference explaining that despite their new high profile in this country, thanks to this year`s presidential contest, they still feel that they are misunderstood. In particular, they want to be clear that no matter what you have heard about them, no matter what term you want to call them, no matter what umbrella term you might want to apply to their movement, they want to be clear, especially since they are getting all of this attention. They want you to know they are racist.

They want you to not downplay the race parts. It was amazing. There is all of this diversity among us white supremacists, but at core, we are one thing. We are white pride, white power. That`s what we all agree on.

You cannot separatist from racism. We are racists. Don`t forget. Don`t misunderstand us. That`s their core belief.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JARED TAYLOR: The egalitarian orthodoxy in which the alt-right is in unanimity about rejecting, and rejects probably with the most enthusiasm, is the idea that the races are basically equivalent and interchangeable.

East Asians have the highest IQs. It`s about the average of 102/103. Next come whites, about 100. Next come Hispanics, which are very varied population, hard to put a figure on them. And then blacks, an average 10 of about 85.

Now, the evidence is absolutely overwhelming that there is a substantial genetic contribution to these differences, whether we like it or not.

PETER BRINELOW: Richard is probably the most radical of any of the three of us here. He just said he wants a white homeland. A white identity.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Don`t get us wrong, we believe a lot of things but we all believe in the genetic superiority and we want a white homeland. Don`t misunderstand us. We are so misunderstood.

The reason these guys were out there last week clarifying these matters, crowing in this downtown D.C. hotel barroom about what they think is inferior about black people and Latinos and why white people need to segregate themselves and live alone and the United States needs to become an all white country, the reason these guys feel like they can come out of the woods a little bit, they no longer have to meet around the burning cross in the dark anymore, the reason they feel like now is time to show up in hotel ballrooms in D.C. and invite reporters to listen to their eugenics insanity is because basically they are making it right now, for the first time in their little racist lifetimes.

I mean, their ideas about race, their ideas about Jews, they feel like they are finally getting the mainstream support and attention and respect they have always wanted. They feel like they are turning up in mainstream politics. They feel like this is their moment and its` because they finally got a very mainstream champion.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD SPENCER: Certainly we have been, you could say, riding his coattails, there has been more interest in us because we are generally pro- Trump, because we were inspired by him and things like that.

The fact that Trump defined his campaign in terms of **immigration** I think it was key.

PETER BRINELOW: Trump implicitly, not explicitly, but implicitly is countering because he`s appealing to white America.

SPENCE: I think it`s really about Trump`s style, the fact that he doesn`t back down, the fact he`s willing to confront his enemies, mostly on the left. There`s something about him, there`s something high-energy, that is infective. That you look at that and you think, "This is what a leader looks like."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: So all of the nationally known leaders of America`s white supremacist movement help this press conference in D.C. to declare how much they are inspired and how much his campaign speaks to them and that sort of sends a shiver down your spine for specific reason. I mean, the candidate is, of course, not responsible for all of his or her supporters but this press conference that they held in D.C. was billed with the headline what is the alt-right?

The Trump campaign CEO Steve Bannon, he comes from a website, he ran the website that calls itself, quote, "the platform for the alt-right". He calls it that himself. That`s a direct quote from him. We are the platform for the alt-right. That`s the alt-right.

The one nice thing about that in terms of getting a snapshot of where were are as country is that when rabid white supremacists and anti-Semites stop just meeting in the woods and, you know, accidentally setting their sheets on fire, when they come out of their hidey holes to brag about how they feel they have got a real leader in Donald Trump, they also end up explaining some of what`s going on inside that campaign that otherwise doesn`t really make sense. They end up explaining something that explains how the Trump campaign is still even now blowing itself up.

It`s an odd source of comfort but it might be one and that`s next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: This is not Republicanism as we have known it. These are racist ideas, race-baiting ideas, anti-Muslim, anti-**immigrant**, anti-woman, all key tenets making up the emerging racist ideology known as the "Alt-right."

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Pepe!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: What was that?

That was Hillary Clinton`s speech a few weeks ago, denouncing the self- proclaimed alt-right and their support of Donald Trump and Donald Trump`s campaign cultivating that support. And you remember the speech, you remember the whole discussion around that.

Bt there was a weird heckling moment in that speech. Here it is again.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: All key tenets making up the emerging racist ideology known as the "Alt-right."

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Pepe!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: So it`s not like an applause moment or booing moment or whatever, it`s quiet. Everybody is listening to what she says. As soon as she says that phrase "alt-right", some guy yells out from the crowd, "Pepe!"

To most people, that was a totally inexplicable thing at the moment. It must be totally random. To the white supremacist, anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi right in this country, that guy yelling that out in that moment, that was a moment of triumph. That was the most hilarious thing they had ever heard in their lives, because "Pepe" refer to Pepe the frog, this otherwise innocuous cartoon character, which as unlikely it may sound, it is one of the thing that the racist right has adopted as a symbol online.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SPENCER: So, who are we? I think if I were to describe what a lot of people know about the alt-right, it`s probably some things they have seen online. It`s the Pepe memes, tit`s the parentheses, it`s the take-no- prisoners attitude on places like Twitter and things like that.

We live in a society of a great deal of degeneracy. We live in a society in which the fundamental moral norms are liberal, and we are attempting to fight our way out of that. And sometimes, that`s going to involve using the memes that are at hand. That`s going to involve being a part of this fragmented group. That`s going to involve dank memes. It`s going to involve Pepe. It`s going to involve unleashing a little hiccups.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: When you say that people convey that idea that the parentheses, Pepe, what are the ideas that are doing the work for you, what is that work?

SPENCER: In particular?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Both. The frog --

SPENCER: The frog is an expression of a certain, it`s a smug frog that is an expression of a willing -- this is someone who is willing to speak the truth.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: It`s ridiculous, right? This smug frog is willing to, you know, speak about race and the Jews. This is the guy that designed the new space aged logo, that he wants the alt-right to use. He is a guy who just wants a white homeland. Is that too much to ask?

You know, here these guys are, emboldened by how well Donald Trump is doing, because the is the kind of leader they want. There he is in D.C. explains to the press hopefully that the white supremacist movement has taken over online the meme of this otherwise innocuous cartoon frog and use to try to infiltrate references and sort of knowing winks to white supremacist ideas and anti-Semitic ideas and racist ideas wherever they can.

And so, while Hillary Clinton is denouncing Trump, cultivating the racist right, some guy yelling "Pepe" out in the crowd is the funniest thing these guys have heard in their lives. If you want to grab a little bottle of Ipecac and head over with me to the David Duke Twitter feed, you can see alongside the standard more recognizable racist stuff you would expect from a David Duke stuff like for example Hillary Clinton with her forehead marked with a kosher symbol and David Duke lamenting that she is getting the Jewish vote or a Jewish guy with Tim Kaine. From David Duke`s perspective, this is damming evidence of the great Jewish conspiracy behind Clinton and Kaine.

Alongside that kind of stuff which you might expect, which is pretty easy to decode from a former Klan leader, there`s also David Duke tweeting out Pepe the frog supporting David Duke and his Senate race in Louisiana. There is Pepe the frog again as Donald Trump and his wall on the southern border.

This one is just from yesterday on David Duke`s Twitter feed. Donald Trump kissing Pepe the frog, the little white supremacist baby signifier. Right?

It`s weird. It`s deliberately weird. It`s meant to be an unmistakable symbol that won`t blend in anywhere but you always know what it means.

This frog they`ve taken over started as an anodyne thing. They have taken it over as a white supremacist symbol. So, when Hillary Clinton made those remarks at that fundraiser last week, once you called out racists and xenophobic extremists supporting Trump, right, the "basket of deplorables" thing, racist and anti-Semitic try today turn it into a badge of honor. And somebody created this image of the proud deplorables.

Look carefully at all of the heads there. Donald Trump flanked by each of his sons, Eric on the left side of your screen, Don Jr. on the right side of your screen, there`s also Mike Pence just to the left of Trump. There is Chris Christie, Rudy Giuliani.

There`s the editor on the far right there. That`s the editor from the Trump campaign CEO`s website who was banned from Twitter for racist abuse. You also see Ben Carson there. Next to the racist abuse guy with the dagger, that`s the conspiracy theory guy from Info Wars who says that Sandy Hook was fake and so was 9/11.

And then right alongside Donald Trump, right between him and Rudy Giuliani, there is the frog. It`s like Donald Trump and his crew, Donald Trump and his team, we`ve got your back. All of your family, your super far right crazy conspiracy racist media buddies, we are all here with you. We have got your back. And white supremacists, we are right here behind you, standing your shoulder. It`s creepy, right?

That image was not created by Donald Trump Jr. but it was posted by Donald Trump Jr. It was posted on his Instagram account, still there tonight. What is Donald Trump Jr. doing posting the neo-Nazi frog thing?

I mean, it stands out, right? It`s not like the subtle thing you don`t notice if you don`t think it means anything. If you`re Donald Trump Jr., I mean, in this picture, you`re in between Alex Jones and Rudy Giuliani. But two ahead of you, in terms of closeness to your ad is this big green frog.

If you don`t know what it is, don`t you wonder? Do you ask somebody? Do you really not know? Or do you know what it is?

Donald Trump Jr. told ABC this morning he had no idea what he was posting when he posted that, no idea. Maybe that`s true. Maybe he had no idea.

But this has come up around Donald Jr. in a couple of other ways too. In March, you might remember, he accidentally says he went on an overtly white supremacist radio show that`s called the Political Cesspool. His excuse at the time was that he didn`t know where he was when he did that interview. He had no idea he was talking to white supremacists.

Now in another radio interview Donald Trump Jr. raised the speck to of gas chambers when making a point about his father`s candidacy.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, JR., SON OF DONALD TRUMP: Without the media, this wouldn`t even be a contest. But the media has built her up. They`ve let her slide on every, you know, indiscrepancy, on every lie, on every DNC game trying to get Bernie Sanders out of this thing. I mean, if Republicans were doing that, they`d be warming up the gas chambers right now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Donald Trump, Jr. on warming up the gas chambers.

The Anti-Defamation League responded to that basically with a whoa, dude, you want to take that back?

The conservative protest candidate Evan McMullin who`s going to be on the ballot in Utah, Idaho, maybe other states, he responded by calling that an unsurprising Nazi reference. This is the real Trump.

The Trump campaign later explained that the gas chamber line from Trump`s son had nothing to do with those kind of gas chambers. He meant something totally different.

Maybe that`s true. That said, after an initial angry and defensive statement about the gas chamber thing, blaming the media for blowing it all out of proportion today, Mr. Trump Jr. conceded that maybe the whole warming up the gas chamber thing was a poor choice of words, surely.

But given this recent history, given where else he has been in public at the top of dad`s campaign, it is hard to buy yourself the benefit of the doubt on issues like this. It is hard to buy yourself some slack in terms of people knowing exactly what you mean.

So, I mean take the snapshot as wide as you want. There is a lot going on, from U.S. troops at war in Syria, and a leaky Russian aircraft carrier stemming that way to U.S. nuclear capable bombers flying over the Korean peninsula and a show of force, from the swing state polls starting to jump around like popcorn and the national polls getting to the point where they are tied. Take it as wide as they want.

In terms of seeing where we are, in terms of the way American politics is being conducted today, it will matter. It has to matter that one side of American politics the pulling through what gets flushed out of normal politics. From the candidate himself, from the top of his campaign, from his son, the way they are front paging even at this late date in the campaign is really, really, really fringe racist conspiracy theories and tropes.

And I know, I know the polls but -- when you`re doing it that way it cannot win. It can`t win. It can`t.

We`ll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLP)

TRUMP: Welcome to all of you deplorables!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: `Tis the season. Last night, Republican candidate Donald Trump went on "The Tonight Show" with Jimmy Fallon, and Jimmy Fallon`s big gag with Trump was messing up his hair, which in fables versions of this campaign, that would have the effect of ending the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump because now we know that he is kind of bald and that he has a huge comb over. He`s got hair that`s like 10 inches long that he sweeps over the top of his mostly bald head, which is sad. And we can see it now. And if this is a vanity candidacy, something like that, in the story, that ends it.

But this is not a fable. This is our lives and he`s not quitting.

But `tis the season. Tonight it was Hillary Clinton who just taped her bit with Jimmy Fallon and we happen to be in the same building with them. So, we got ahold of a clip of her appearance. We are, I`m told, turning that around right now. We will have that for you in just a minute.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Watch this. This is a visual one. So, if you`re doing the dishes, for a second just listening, it`s just a second. Come over to the TV. Just look.

I`m going to show you what looks like a normal news coverage clip from today on MSNBC, but watch Katy Tur on right side of your screen here. Just watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KATY TUR, NBC NEWS CORRESPONDENT: He has been hammering Hillary Clinton and he was hammering her before she gave her press conference recently for hiding. It is important to note that Hillary Clinton has given -- and the stage is falling apart behind us. I don`t know if you can see this. Anyway --

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Anyway, Katy Tur sort of admirably handling the unexpected right there, as the news gods prove to us once more that they may or may not have a sense of humor but they definitely do write poetry. In this case, with event drapes and American flags. Nobody was hurt.

This was the poetically fitting end to Donald Trump`s disastrous press conference in Washington today, where he caved -- collapsed like that stage. He reversed himself. He inexplicably stopped believing something he has purported to believe for years without any explanation.

As soon as he said, he ran away without taking questions even though he and his campaign billed this as a press conference. Donald Trump today tried to say he has not been promoting the idea that President Obama is secretly foreign for years now. He said today he finished that years ago in 2011 when President Obama produced his birth certificate.

I should say, what you`re seeing here, all of these clips on your screen right now are him promoting that idea since then, since 2011. He also today tried to blame this whole thing on Hillary Clinton. He tried to say it was her racist conspiracy theory about President Obama and not his.

What happened today I think is that he got scared and sort of fell apart. I think maybe he did not want to have to defend his craziness about the president`s birthplace and birth certificate in the forthcoming debate. Maybe that`s why he crumbled. I don`t know.

But he crumbled. He collapsed. He caved and he told all of these laugh- out-loud obvious lies about it as he did it then he ran away from reports. I mean, this was a collapse, a total abandonment of what was his signature issue, his signature belief, with no explanation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: I finished it. I finished it. You know what I mean?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That`s what he tried to say about this today. And no, that`s another lie. I don`t think you finished it at all.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REP. JIM CLYBURN (D), SOUTH CAROLINA: This is not just about a contest for the presidency. This man is on a mission to heap as much insult on this president, to do as much as he possibly can to delegitimize his presidency.

REP. G.K.BUTTERFIELD (D), NORTH CAROLINA: This is a disgusting day. Donald Trump is a disgusting fraud. By any definition, Donald Trump is a disgusting fraud. He started this silliness years ago by saying that President Obama is not an American citizen. He had no proof of it.

He would not have done that to a Mitt Romney. He would not have done that to a John McCain, or any other white who was running for president of the United States. But he has leveled his criticism against President Obama.

REP. GWEN MOORE (D), WISCONSIN: Be clear, this is not just about degrading the reputation of Barack Obama. It`s about degrading the American Dream for all African-Americans.

BUTTERFIELD: So instead of being the states man that he should be, instead of going before the cameras today and apologizing to President Obama and apologizing to the American people for his fraudulent behavior, he simply comes to the microphone. I`ll quote what he said. He said, quote, "President Obama was born in the United States, period." Then he takes his seat and then gives a guided tour of the Trump hotel to the news media that was assembled.

That is disgusting. The Congressional Black Caucus Political Action Committee finds it disgusting. Every American needs to understand that this man is fraud. He is an insult to the intellect of the American people.

REP. BARBARA LEE (D), CALIFORNIA: I think that this is a moment, it`s the defining moment, for all of those who want to denounce bigotry and racism to step forward now and to really demand first that Donald Trump stop it, but secondly to demand an apology, an apology from this man because this is what his presidential campaign has been about.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Press conference today by members of the Congressional Black Caucus. With this birther press conference today Donald Trump said literally I finished this. Oh, no you didn`t. You didn`t finish it and politically today, with what the Trump campaign did, they just set it on fire.

And Congresswoman Barbara Lee is here next. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: We know who Donald is. For five years, he has lead the birther movement to delegitimize our first black president. His campaign was founded on this outrageous lie. There is no erasing it in history.

MICHELLE OBAMA, U.S. FIRST LADY: But back then people had all kinds of questions about what kind of President Barack Obama would be, things like, does he -- does he understand us? Will he protect us?

Then, of course, there were those who questioned and continue to question for the past eight years up through this very day whether my husband was even born in this country. Well, during his time in office, I think Barack has answered the questions with the examples he set by going high when they go low.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The first lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, speaking today in Virginia. Hillary Clinton speaking in D.C. today. Both speaking after Donald Trump caved today and changed his mind, I guess implicitly admitting he was wrong all along, about the insane conspiracy theory and he was still pushing earlier this year, that President Obama was secretly not born in the United States.

When he got up today and said actually it had been Hillary Clinton`s racist theory and he finished it in 2011, those lies today were not just him abandoning, they were such lies that the entire press corps finally balked and put it in their headlines.

In addition to that, though, Hillary Clinton frankly went nuclear on him on this today. Look, what Trump just did is a disgrace. When Trump tries to deflect blame for denying that he was born in America, he is lying. The birther lie is what turned Trump from an ordinary reality TV star into a political figure. That origin story cannot be unwritten.

Trump`s birtherism stems from the same innate beliefs that led to discriminating against black tenants early in his career, can`t be undone. Trump has spent years peddling a racist conspiracy aimed at undermining the first African American president. He can`t just take it back.

Those were all rapid fire from Hillary Clinton today and there was more of them in addition. If you`ve the sense that there`s a little lightning in a bottle here, I think you`re right.

Joining us now is Barbara Lee, Democratic congresswoman of California. She and other black caucus members also went slightly nuclear on Donald Trump over this issue today.

Congresswoman Lee, thank you for being here. I hope you don`t mind me putting it that way.

REP. BARBARA LEE (D), CALIFORNIA: Happy to be with you, Rachel. We are angry, first of all. I think the country should be angry and demand first that Donald Trump apologized to President Obama. He is the founder and he`s the leader of birther movement and he is the nominee of the Republican Party. Come on.

You know, to have a nominee of a political party run in for the presidency of the United States and to continue to lie like this, shame on Donald Trump. You know, we need to demand, everyone needs to demand that he apologized and stop this. This country cannot tolerate a man as unqualified and unfit and as bigoted as Donald Trump.

MADDOW: Can you -- on that point of bigotry, can you spell it out for me? Can you tell me why you think bigotry and racial bigotry is at the heart of this claim that the president is secretly foreign? Can you tell me why that is?

LEE: Well, when you try, first of all, to delegitimize the first African American president, I don`t believe Donald Trump has done this to anyone else in the past. I don`t remember anyone trying to delegitimize any president. Donald Trump chose to do this with President Obama.

Why did he do this? You know, he is rallying around the forces and rallying to, you know, his party the forces that have been fairly quiet for a while, been very insidious in their racism. But now, he has allowed race to be swept from under the rug.

And there are those in this country who really believe that people of color, African-Americans, you know, people who deserve to be here and deserve to live the American dream just like they do, they don`t want them here.

So, Donald Trump has just allowed the presidency of our first African American president, he has played on this to really surface. Many of the negative racist attitudes that still have not been addressed in our country. And a healing process should take place.

It`s going to take a while, but I think we are now seeing exactly what we are dealing with in this country. And Donald Trump is the leader of this movement.

And again, he needs to apologize. He needs to apologize to Secretary Clinton for trying to blame her. Can you imagine trying to turn this around now?

Now, this man is sinister. To try to say he is finishing something she started? My gosh, if the public does not understand that this man cannot be president, someone who will be responsible for our national security, you know, I can`t believe America would allow this to go down.

MADDOW: You know, today watching you and so many members of the congressional black Congress talk about this in many cases with a lot of emotion, watching First Lady Michelle Obama talk about this with some emotion today, watching Secretary of State Clinton talk about this today before that huge audience of African American women at the conference she was at in D.C., I found it very moving in terms of this being a racial fault line, this being a racist insult in the way that people have basically stepped up and been willing to call it that.

I just -- I wondered, this has been out there and around there for a long time. Everybody has known that it is a racist thing far long time. Over the course of this election, over the course of the time it has been in the news, have any of your colleagues ever reached out and said, you know, hey, politics aside we don`t like this stuff either or I don`t like this stuff either or I`m sorry for the kind of racist insult that`s behind this? Have you ever had those kind of conversations in private?

LEE: No, Rachel. I really haven`t. You know, we have to remember, now, other times that Republicans have tried to really delegitimize President Obama. I mean, remember, one called him a food stand president. That`s cold, right? Another member of Congress, Joe Wilson, stood up and said you lied at the State of the Union.

I mean, you know, you can go back and cite, you know, how Donald Trump really felt he have the legitimacy and credibility to move forward and run for the presidency because he has been part of this movement that has been taking place over the years, with many and I`m not saying with all the Republican members of Congress or the Republican Party. But you have systematically seen this build up.

There is a long history of Republican members of Congress really attempting. Look at what they did in terms of not supporting the president in the Recovery Act, not supporting the president to provide health care for those that don`t have health care. No votes at all for President Obama`s agenda. Mitch McConnell said they wanted to make sure it was a one-term president, and so, stop his agenda.

So, you can see and look and go back to what the Republicans have been doing during the time that President Obama has been president and he has done -- the president has done an unbelievable job in spite of the obstructionist Congress. And I have seen over and over again this happened. So, Donald Trump, you know, felt like he had the legitimacy and backing to be who he is.

This is who he is. He`s the founder and leader of the birther movement. He needs to apologize and he needs to let the country know this is not the American way. This is really un-American.

You know, I was talking, Rachel, I just have to comment on this, to my predecessor, a great human being, Ron Dellums, great member of Congress. And we were talking a little bit about the history and Ron said to me and I hope people have really listened to what he said, because he said that this campaign should be really a referendum on bigotry. And when you look at the history of struggle and movements in this country against racism, against sexism, against all of the injustices that we are still addressing, you know, there have been moments of young people, people of color, people of conscience.

You know, everyone has come together to put forward candidates that really want to stop this and try to create a world worthy of our children and the American dream. Donald Trump is doing just the opposite. We cannot have him as our commander-in-chief, and once again, he should apologize to the president and he should apologize to Secretary Clinton. We need to move forward and make sure the public understands that we have one choice come November if we want to make sure our country moves forward and gives people the opportunity to live the American dream and that`s to really vote for Hillary Clinton. That`s the only thing.

I think today was a defining moment in this election which will hopefully let people understand that who he is, which we know who he is and have known who he is for many, many years.

MADDOW: Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California, thank you for your time tonight, ma`am. When I saw your remarks today at that press conference -- I knew I wanted to talk to you tonight. Thank you for being here.

LEE: Thank you, Rachel. Good being with you.

MADDOW: If there`s any doubt as to whether or not this birther and Donald Trump putting it back the way he did today has fired up core supporters of Hillary Clinton, let that put it to rest, right? We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Two things you need to put on your calendar tonight.

The first is Monday, on Monday, the bridge gate trial starts in New Jersey. We are planning full coverage of those opening statements and the full trial here on MSNBC. It starts Monday morning, Bridgegate.

The second thing we need to put on the calendar. We did get the clip of Hillary Clinton on the "Tonight Show." That`s next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Behold, we`ve got the clip. Hillary Clinton on the "Tonight Show" with Jimmy Fallon tonight. She got an unusual welcome from her host.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIMMY FALLON, THE TONIGHT SHOW: Welcome, welcome, welcome, welcome. Thank you so much. It is great to have you here. Let`s talk about everything.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Jimmy Fallon towing the line on making fun of pneumonia. The other clip they have given us has him asking about what he calls -- forgive me, bad-ass Hillary.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FALLON: I want to talk about campaigning. Because when you campaign, I feel like it`s so tricky, because you have to go, and you have to say hi to everybody and be happy, and you do. But also, people kind of want to see this Hillary, which is the bad-ass Hillary and the serious Hillary. So, you have to laugh, but they want to see someone who`s going to protect us and be strong and tough.

CLINTON: Right.

FALLON: You have that reputation.

CLINTON: It`s especially tricky for women. It just is, because there`s a lot of serious things. The other night I was on a show and being asked about ISIS and Iran. I was serious. These are important issues that the country needs to talk about.

And the Republicans were saying, oh, she looks so serious.

Well, you don`t talk about ISIS with a big grin on your face. They`re a barbaric, evil group that we have to defeat and wipe out, but it is a constant balancing act. How do you keep the energy and the positive spirit while taking seriously what you need to?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Secretary Clinton earlier this evening during a taping of the "Tonight Show" starring Jimmy Fallon. I should tell you, that airing is not airing tonight. It`s going to air on Monday.

But we`ve got more to come tonight. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Today in the Rhode Island state capital, it was fun. The secretary of state`s office used the state lottery machine to establish the order in which candidates will be listed on the ballot in November. So, now we know, thanks to the lottery machine, it will go Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, Green, something called American Delta and there will be the write in.

And the big news is that the Libertarians made it there. Earlier in the week, Gary Johnson jumped the gun when he was still short of qualifying in Rhode Island. That report was true when Gary Johnson ran this ad in "he New York Times" saying I`m on the ballot in all 50 states, he was not actually qualified in Rhode Island, but now he`s got those last 71 signatures certified and so, the Libertarians have qualified for that ballot. They`ll be on the ballot in all 50 states and mazel tov. That makes the first third party candidate to pull that off since Ross Perot.

Gary Johnson, you are now free to move about the nightmares of the major party nominee. Gary Johnson also incidentally learned today that he is not polling high enough nationwide to make the first presidential debate, but why focus on that? At least he made the ballot, baby steps.

That does it for us tonight. We`ll see you again Monday.

Now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED. END

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**JOY REID, MSNBC ANCHOR: Our coverage continues with Rachel Maddow.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC ANCHOR: We`re going to be moving on to other breaking news over the course of this hour.

But right now, we will go back to Hillary Clinton at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: -- the right thing to do, but it will add $700 billion to our economy and enable America to be what it has always been -- a place where people from around the world can come to reunite with family, start new businesses, pursue their dreams, apply their talents to American growth and innovation.

Now, I know this has been a long road and we wouldn`t be where we are today without your persistence and the quiet courage of families in every state of our union, and we certainly wouldn`t be here without the bravery of the young men and women who have risked their very place in the United States by coming forward and fighting for their own future and the future of millions of others. They helped change the conversation. And when President Obama created DACA, it changed their lives.

Right now, 750,000 undocumented young people in America are going to school, working, and planning for their future. They`re DREAMers in much more than name. I`ve met so many. I`ve listened to their stories. They`ve done everything we`ve asked of them and made our country stronger in return.

So when Donald Trump promises to rip that all away on day one, when he promises to round up and deport all of the 16 million people living and working among us, including American citizen children who were born here to parents who are undocumented, these are the faces I see.

I picture Astrid Silva who I met in Las Vegas. Many of you know her story: She came to this country from Mexico at the age of four with nothing but a doll, a cross, and the dress she was wearing. Now, she`s in her 20s, advocating for the rights of **immigrants** everywhere.

I picture a young man I never met, whose high school teacher wrote me a few months ago to share his story. His teacher told me that his former student was funny, enthusiastic, and patriotic. He played the drums in the school marching band and after graduation in 2005, proudly enlisted in the U.S. Army. Before shipping off to Iraq, he stopped by the school so everyone could see him in his new uniform.

He was, his teacher wrote, "as respectful and optimistic as any student who ever entered my classroom." He was also a DREAMer, brought here as an undocumented child. He loved America, and hoped one day to earn his citizenship.

But in April 2007, while on a mission in Baghdad, he was killed by an improvised explosive device. He was just 19. The Army called him a hero and he was posthumously granted the American citizenship he`d always wanted.

All these years later --

(APPLAUSE)

His teacher still treasures his memory. And this teacher wanted me to know -- he wanted me to know that despite what Donald Trump may say, **immigrants** are not rapists and criminals. The truth is, this young man may not have been born here, but he represented the best values of our country.

(APPLAUSE)

We teach our children that America is one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Not just for people who look a certain way or worship a certain way, but for all. Everywhere I go, people tell me how concerned they are by the extreme policies and divisive rhetoric they`ve heard from my opponent -- from the racist lie about Mexican **immigrants** that launched his presidential campaign to his racist attacks on a federal judge.

And every time we think he`s hit rock bottom, he sinks even lower. His latest target? A minister in Flint, Michigan, who respectfully asked him not to use her pulpit for political attacks. He called her a nervous mess.

How insulting, how dead wrong.

Reverend Faith Green Timmons is not a nervous mess. She`s a rock for her community in trying times, and she deserves better and so does America.

(APPLAUSE)

And again today, he did it again. He was asked one more time, "Where was President Obama born?" And he still wouldn`t still say Hawaii. He still wouldn`t say America.

This man wants to be our next president? When will he stop this ugliness, this bigotry?

Now, he`s tried to reset himself and his campaign many times. This is the best he can do. This is who he is.

And so we need to decide who we are. If we just sigh and shake our heads and accept this, then what does that tell our kids about who we are? We need to stand up and repudiate this divisive rhetoric. We need to stop him conclusively in November in an election that sends a message that even he can hear.

We need to set the kind of example we want for ourselves and our children and our grandchildren.

Parents and teachers are already worried about what they`re calling the "Trump Effect". Bullying and harassment are on the rise in our schools, especially targeting students of color, Muslims, and **immigrants**.

At a high school basket game in Indiana, white students held up Trump signs and taunted Latino players on the opposing team with chants of "Build the wall" and "Speak English."

Donald Trump is running the most divisive campaigns of our lifetimes. His message is you should be afraid -- afraid of people whose race or ethnicity is different, or whose religious faith is different, or who were born in a different country. There`s no innuendo or dog whistles anymore. It`s all right out there in the open now. So we`ve got to come back twice as strong and twice as clear.

Just this week, a mother in Florida wrote to me about her 11-year-old son, Francisco. He`s proud to be American, Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Puerto Rican.

(APPLAUSE)

As he calls it, a potluck of Hispanic heritage. And Francisco has been following this election very closely, his mother told me. He wears his "Love Trumps Hate" pin every day and refuses to take it off. When his father warned him that might make him a target for bullies, Francisco looked his father in the eye and he said: "I was always told to stand up for myself and what I believe in. And I believe Trump is wrong."

And good for you, Francisco.

That`s what we have to do in this election, and that`s what so many of you are doing already: standing up to the bullying and bigotry wherever it comes from.

Together, we must send this resounding message, and we need to inspire a level of turnout that will help us win up and down the ticket.

We`ve set an ambitious goal of registering and committing 3 million people to vote in this election that would not have otherwise voted, and we can`t do it without you. Nearly half of Latinos in America are under 35, and we need you to show up and make your voices heard in this election.

(APPLAUSE)

So, we`re going to keep asking for your help. Keep hitting the campaign trail. Please talk to your friends, your neighbors, your community -- everyone you see between now and November 8th. Tell them to go to hillaryclinton.com, or text JOIN, J-O-I-N to 47246 to get involved.

This -- this election is too important for anyone to sit on the sidelines, as we heard from Congresswoman Sanchez.

So, let`s stand up for a future where we put families first. Where we build bridges, not walls. And yes, together we can prove love trumps hate.

Thank you all very much!

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton speaking live tonight at the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. That`s the CHCI that you see on the graphic behind her. This is their annual gala dinner.

Speaking to a big room of people at this event in D.C., and a pretty boisterous room. A lot of people shouting out. A lot of applause, a lot of support for Secretary Clinton in this room. But also a lot of people doing -- not call-in response. That was not the structure of the speech. Shouting out throughout the speech in a supportive and encouraging way to Secretary Clinton.

Secretary Clinton herself being a little self-deprecating in those remarks about the fact she was following President Obama. She said tonight in these remarks that he is a hard act to follow, in a lot of different ways.

So, it`s interesting. I have to tell you, we have a bunch of balls in the air right now in terms of what`s going on in the news. Those speeches we were monitoring out of Washington, D.C.

There`s breaking political news tonight that unfolded while those speeches were happening, including this little bombshell that Robert Costa set off at the front page of "The Washington Post". We`re going to have more on that in a second, including Joy Reid, who I have asked to stick around even in addition to her other hosting duties, come talk to me about this, because I think it`s potentially a very big story on two different levels.

In terms of the setting here and what happened today, today was the day Hillary Clinton first got back on to the campaign trail. This was the candidate`s first personal appearances since she fell ill on Sunday. So, she got ill on Sunday. She`s had three days off since then, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, at home resting. She`s back as of today.

This image here is from her speech that she gave in North Carolina today. She walked out to the strains of "I feel good." It was not very subtle.

After her speech in North Carolina, she gave a press availability thereafter. Took a bunch of questions from the press corps following her travels on the campaign trail. You might remember before she got sick, before this weekend, Hillary Clinton had just started doing more and more of these press availabilities. The Trump campaign and increasingly a lot of other people were criticizing her for not doing formal press conferences, for not generally taking questions from the press on a regular enough basis.

They started having her do more press availabilities before she had that incident with her health this weekend. Apparently, now, after her unplanned break from the campaign trail, they will stick to that schedule, stick to that plan of making her more available to reporters. Maybe even on a daily basis.

So, she`s back on the campaign trail. Today, we saw her in North Carolina. Then we saw that long press availability.

After that this afternoon, Hillary Clinton and President Obama both spoke tonight in the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. This is their big annual dinner in D.C. It`s always a big deal in Washington, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute is a big deal in Democratic politics in particular.

But in terms of our national politics right now, these evening, these back to back speeches gave us a snapshot of what we are expecting to be a doubleheader from President Obama and his would-be Democratic success for the rest of this campaign.

The Clinton campaign and the White House have made clear this week that they are expecting President Obama to be doing lots and lots and lots of campaign events for Secretary Clinton, maybe even so many campaign events that it will be unprecedented in terms of a serving president endorsing and working for his successor. The White House raising the prospect he may be on campaign trail for two days a week from hereon out until the campaign which -- until the election, which I think -- we did a little research on it. We think that might be the most any sitting president has ever done for his would-be successor.

So, we saw a snapshot of them tonight with their back to back speeches. It also showed tonight with her remarks she seems to be doing just fine after her bought with pneumonia.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: **Immigrants** aren`t somehow changing the American character. **Immigrants** are the American character. That`s who we are.

That`s the American I know. That`s the America I believe in more strongly than ever. So, thank you for picking me up every step of the way. Thank you for making this country great. We`ve got more work to do, but we will keep on making progress and create a brighter future for everybody in this country we love. Si se puede.

CLINTON: When you hear a presidential candidate spewing bigotry and hate, it`s easy to get discouraged. But we`re here because we know this election is a choice between not just two people but two very different visions for America`s future. Either we`re going to make our economy work for everyone or just those at the top. Either we`re going to fear our differences or embrace and celebrate our diversity. Either we`re going to pit Americans against each other and deepen the divides or we`re going to be stronger together.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama both speaking tonight in Washington.

There`s a lot going on. Like I said, there`s a lot of balls in the air right now. In addition to this full day back on the campaign trail for Hillary Clinton tonight, I should tell you that her husband, former President Bill Clinton, is due to appear on "The Daily Show" on Comedy Central tonight.

We do not have a clip from that. We hope to get one during the course of this hour. I will give that clip to you. I will show it on TV if we do get in that clip tonight.

On the other side of the campaign, for his part, Donald Trump tonight spoke in Laconia, New Hampshire. Although, I will say on TV, I think his remarks -- his live remarks were overshadowed by the return of his opponent to the campaign trail and President Obama`s remarks tonight.

I should tell you, though, that Donald Trump will not be overshadowed much later tonight when he appears on "The Tonight Show" with Jimmy Fallon. Now, I do have two clips from that appearance to show you.

There`s one sort of kind of normal politician on a late night show clip we have. And then there`s one not normal at all clip. Let me show you the normal one first.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JIMMY FALLON, THE TONIGHT SHOW: Thank you for giving us the material that we`re doing. It`s been amazing to follow and exciting, because you say some shocking things. I can`t even believe --

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: But I`m trying not to anymore.

FALLON: See, that`s changing. That`s what I`m talking about.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That`s the normal one. OK. That`s Donald Trump. He is going to be on "The Tonight Show" with Jimmy Fallon tonight.

But we also got a second clip in this appearance tonight and I kind of can`t believe it happened. I mean, it`s definitely Jimmy Fallon and it`s definitely Donald Trump. I don`t think anybody is a body double, or a head double. You will see what I mean.

But this is really something. This really happened. Behold, a moment which the audience can`t quite believe. The audience actually can`t be brought to stop clapping in the middle of this. But this is a moment in which Jimmy Fallon is allowed to physically do something to Donald Trump that is almost impossible to conceive of. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FALLON: Can I mess your hair up?

(CHEERS)

FALLON: I will be gentle. I will be gentle.

TRUMP: As long -- the answer is yes. But the people in New Hampshire where I`m going to be in an hour from now, I hope they`re going to understand.

FALLON: You say yes?

TRUMP: Go ahead.

FALLON: Yes. Donald Trump, everybody. I will do it as well. Donald Trump, everybody.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That is a thing that happened. I almost can`t believe it. My hat is off -- my hat is tipped. I am very impressed by Jimmy Fallon that he had the -- that he pulled it off and Donald Trump let him. You know what I mean? This is an important moment.

That`s not really an important moment. But still, rather stunning. All that`s happened, basically within the course of the last hour.

When I say we have a lot of balls in the air, that`s what I just showed you is some of what I mean. Biggest deal that I think has just happened, even just in political news, is this late breaking reporting that was just posted from Robert Costa at "The Washington Post."

OK, Robert Costa got an interview with Donald Trump on board his private plane. This is just posted tonight. And there`s a couple of big headlines here.

I will give you the headline one first in terms of what "The Washington Post" puts on its headline. "Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump remains unwilling to say that President Obama is born in the United States." Now, even though this is just posted within the last how or two, you saw Hillary Clinton turn this around and remark on this in her speech tonight at the Hispanic caucus.

This is quoting again from "The Washington Post" piece, Trump refused to say whether he believes Obama was born in Hawaii. Quote, "I will answer that question at the right time," Trump said. "I just don`t want to answer it yet."

Obviously, the political salience is myriad. Donald Trump played with the idea of running for president back in the `80s, back in the year 2000. When he started flirting with the idea of running for president in 2012, his entire platform basically was going to be this birther idea, this idea that President Obama was not really the president, that he was secretly foreign, that he wasn`t born in the United States. A lot of people see that as a deeply, deeply racist effort to undermine the authority and legitimacy of our nation`s first African-American president.

Donald Trump was essentially the captain of that team in 2012. He has stopped talking about it recently. He has not made it a centerpiece of his campaign in 2016. He has very cagey as to whether he renounces those previous views or whether or not he still holds them.

It`s sort of a threshold issue, particularly for a lot of African-American voters. But also just for a lot of reality-based Americans who know that this crusade against President Obama was somewhere between evil and crazy and maybe even beyond.

Robert Costa has got him to comment on this. There have been surrogates and Donald Trump`s campaign manager who has recently -- who have recently said Rudy Giuliani and his campaign -- Trump`s campaign manager Kellyanne Conway have said in recent days that Donald Trump no longer is a birther, that he no longer believes that President Obama is secretly foreign, that he wasn`t born in the United States. They have asserted plainly within the last week that that`s no longer his view.

Well, Robert Costa asked him about that directly tonight. It turns out they are not right about that. Trump refused to say whether he believes Obama was born in Hawaii. Robert then followed up, "When asked whether his campaign manager Kellyanne Conway was accurate when she said recently that Trump now believes Obama was born in this country, Trump responded, `It`s okay,` she`s allowed to speak what she thinks.` He continues, `I don`t talk about it anymore`."

If it is an issue for you whether or not Donald Trump still believes and still maintains that President Obama is secretly foreign and therefore secretly not president, should not be counted as a president of the United States because his presidency is illegal because he was secretly not an American, then Donald Trump is still there.

Two other smaller stories and one big one out of this interview. The two smaller ones both concern Roger Ailes, the ousted CEO of FOX News. Mr. Ailes obviously pushed out of FOX amid myriad of allegations of -- there`s that word. Sorry, lots of allegations of sexual harassment, including a very large financial settlement paid to one former FOX News host who says she was sexually harassed by Roger Ailes.

It has been reported multiple sources, multiple contexts that Roger Ailes is now advising Donald Trump`s presidential campaign. That has been a source of contention for me, between me and the Trump campaign, because when the Trump campaign made their campaign manager Kellyanne Conway available to this show to come on the show, I asked her directly whether Roger Ailes was in fact a formal or informal adviser to Donald Trump. She said he is neither a formal nor informal adviser.

Donald Trump telling Robert Costa tonight that he is not a formal adviser. "There is no role," he said. But he described him as a trusted friend. "I love the benefit of his experience and knowledge. He has certainly been very successful at what he does and on occasion we will talk."

Robert also getting Donald Trump to say tonight that he has no plans with Roger Ailes of launching a media venture, sort of a Trump news venture, if he, in fact, loses the presidency. That had been another source of speculation. But Donald Trump telling Costa that those conversations haven`t happened, quote, "I have no interest in a media company, false rumor."

Now, here is the last big thing here. This is what I have asked Joy Reid to come back down to the studio to talk with me about. Robert Costa says in this interview, "Trump took an unprompted shot at Anderson Cooper of CNN who is one of the moderators selected by the Commission on Presidential Debates to moderate one of the presidential head to head debates this year."

An unprompted shot means Robert did not bring up this as an issue, but Trump himself went out of his way to say this. This is the direct quote from Trump in tonight`s Washington Post. Wow.

Here it goes, "I don`t think Anderson Cooper should be a moderator because Anderson Cooper works for CNN, and over the last couple of days, I have seen how Anderson Cooper behaves." I don`t know what he is talking about there.

Quote, "He will be very biased, very biased. I don`t think he should be a moderator. I`ll participate but I don`t think he should be a moderator. CNN is the Clinton News Network. Anderson Cooper, I don`t think he can be fair."

I have felt from the very beginning that it was 50/50 as to whether or not Donald Trump was actually to go through with the presidential debates this year, by flat out saying that Anderson Cooper should not be a moderator, I think we`re further down that road than we were before.

Lots of breaking news tonight. Lot`s of stuff still going on. Joy Reid is going to be with us next.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: This is one of those days and one of those nights when the news is going to keep breaking late into the evening. In fact, the news is still developing over the course of tonight in terms of the presidential campaign.

Let me tell you a couple things. First of all, the big breaking news story tonight in terms of information we have just gotten in is this blockbuster interview that Robert Costa has done with Donald Trump in which Donald Trump refuses to say whether or not President Obama was born in this country.

He is going back to his birther roots. It`s an incredible time in the campaign to be doing that. He is also raising the prospect he objects to one of the moderators who has been chosen for the debates. Does that mean the presidential debates will not go on as scheduled?

I should tell you that Robert Costa will be live with Brian Williams on this network at 11:00. That`s in the "11TH HOUR" tonight with Brian Williams. You should know that.

I should tell you that Bill Clinton is doing this appearance on "The Daily Show" with Trevor Noah on Comedy Central tonight. And we have just gotten word that we`re about to keep a clip from that. So, we will have that for you in just a second.

Joy Reid with us next. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: Today, he did it again. He was asked one more time, "Where was President Obama born?" And he still wouldn`t say Hawaii. He still wouldn`t say America. This man wants to be our next president?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton speaking tonight to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus at their big annual dinner Washington, D.C. Those remarks were moments ago. But, of course, everything she did today is more newsworthy than usual because this is her first day back on the campaign trail.

Those remarks we played there right now, those were specifically notable and news worthy because she turned those around right quick.

This interview tonight in which Donald Trump indeed refused to say whether or not he believes President Obama is an American, whether or not he was born in the United States, this interview has just posted this evening at the front page of "The Washington Post".

Joining us now is Joy Reid, host of "A.M. JOY", weekend mornings on MSNBC, doing triple duty tonight.

Hi, dear. Thank you for being here.

REID: Thank you for having me.

MADDOW: I want to take a step back. There`s an interesting history about Donald Trump and this claim about President Obama being secretly foreign and not really president. There`s history about it in terms of his campaign manager saying he no longer believes that.

Just -- can you explain to me your view of what -- what is so politically salient about that claim from him?

REID: Well, you know, for one thing, there`s a large percentage -- it`s hard to tell what it is. I was looking up polls of what percentage of Republicans actually agree with Donald Trump on the birtherism issue. There were polls taken during the primary that showed a high number. One in two Republican primary voters believing his birthplace was suspect more than believed for instance about Ted Cruz. And there`s one poll, there was YouGov poll --

MADDOW: Ted Cruz was, in fact, born abroad.

REID: More people believed Ted Cruz was born in the United States than believe that Barack Obama was born in the United States. So, I think part of it is the base. But I think the other part is you are seeing Donald Trump at his sort of peak self-confidence when he gets into the mode of saying he doesn`t have to change fundamental things like birtherism is because he feels right now that he is winning.

So he is going back to the well, going back to things he thinks make him popular. And for part of the base, these make him popular. The interesting thing is he is giving Hillary Clinton an opening that she needs, because Hillary Clinton right now needs to do two things. She needs to remind voters, particularly young voters and voters of color that you need to be afraid of a Donald Trump presidency. You need to be excited about voting against him.

But she`s in the polls this week has learned she needs to create affirmative support for herself. So, I think, tonight, she did the affirmative part in her speech. You see they made sure they got in the birther thing. It`s very helpful particularly with African-Americans.

MADDOW: On that last point there, today one of the things that I was researching and looking at and try doing some sort of additional reporting on or getting some new perspective on was the trip that Donald Trump took to Flint yesterday. A few different headlines out of that. He is finally trying to get involved in the Flint issue. Good for him. He is getting involved in a way that the mayor and local officials are like, you are not helping.

But he had this incident at the church. He is speaking before a stony- faced, not interested, sparse group of mostly African-Americans, sort of a youngish -- mostly African-American crowd. The headline moment was when the pastor said, this is not what we asked you to come here for.

REID: Yes.

MADDOW: You are not supposed to make a political speech to talk about Flint. And that was a confrontation. There`s a lot of story about that.

But I was looking at first person video shot by people in the room. Trump said today on Fox that that room loved him. That pastor was terrible but the room loved him. The audience was with him.

From the perspective of people in the audience, they were yelling at him the whole time. The pastor saved him. The last thing that was really literally screamed at Donald Trump as he was run out of that room, uncomfortably, was, "Do you admit that President Obama was born in the United States?"

REID: Yes.

MADDOW: Why is it such a flashpoint?

REID: Because for African-Americans , it was the attempt by this then- gadfly Donald Trump to humiliate the first black president of the United States, to make him show his papers as if we were in apartheid South Africa.

It`s one of the reasons African-Americans are the most diametrically opposed to Donald Trump even though he is doing this pinball thing where he is trying to pull in African-Americans in part by turning them against migrants of Hispanic origins. It`s one of the things he does.

But what is interesting about that Flint trip and about the interview with the pastor, our understanding is that Armstrong Williams sort of informally helping the Trump campaign --

MADDOW: Yes, he thanked Armstrong from the podium. It`s one of the things I didn`t understand who he was talking to, because you couldn`t see Williams in the frame. But he was talking to him backstage.

REID: Exactly. So, you have a certain number of African-American Republicans who are trying to help Donald Trump do this black outreach. But when they put him in front of African-American audiences, he gets quite a negative or a stoic or a non-reaction. And so, I think what you are going to start to see is let`s attempts to listen to those advisers and put himself in those rooms, because invariably Donald Trump turns around and makes a completely different story about what happened for a white audience when he goes to FOX News which has a very tiny African-American audience, he can confidently boast that, oh, the room loved me and that pastor was horrible.

But in fact, he backed down to that pastor. He was incredibly passive in her presence. Donald Trump the blusterer is not the same guy when he is in front of the audience he is insulting, when he is in front of the Mexican president.

MADDOW: When he is confronted by anyone.

REID: When he is confronted, he backs down immediately and then turns around and tells a story about how tough he was.

I think that the more he puts himself in front of audiences of color, the more he shows off that he is both passive and aggressive. He is only aggressive when he is not in the presence of the person he is bullying. When he gets in front of the person that he previously insulted, he becomes incredibly passive.

MADDOW: If we are back to Donald Trump`s birther days, if that`s what we are back to on the campaign trail, it`s another I think 90-degree pivot. I don`t know what comes next.

REID: Absolutely.

MADDOW: Joy Reid is the host of "A.M. JOY", weekend mornings on MSNBC, and batting cleanup for all of us around here these days. Thank you.

REID: Thank you. Always great to be here.

MADDOW: All right. Much more ahead this business news night. We are cueing up -- we have now? We now have the clip of Bill Clinton on "The Daily Show." We think we will have it for you next.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: OK, first of all, by popular demand, here is that clip again of Jimmy Fallon touching the hair. Just one more time.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

FALLON: Can I mess your hair up?

(CHEERS)

FALLON: I will be gentle. I will be gentle.

TRUMP: As long -- the answer is yes. But the people in New Hampshire where I`m going to be in an hour from now, I hope they`re going to understand.

FALLON: You say yes?

TRUMP: Go ahead.

FALLON: Yes. Donald Trump, everybody. I will do it as well. Donald Trump, everybody.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: OK. That is part of your late night TV experience tonight.

But so is this. Former President Bill Clinton just taped an appearance on Comedy Central`s "The Daily Show." I have not seen this clip yet. But this is the clip that we got from that taping. I am forewarned that it`s not funny.

But here`s what we got.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BILL CLINTON, FORMER PRESIDENT: I think that both these candidates have had a lot of experiences, they have made a lot of decisions. Those decisions have had consequences. There`s a record of them.

So, this is being -- saying she`s an insider, I`m an outsider, there`s one big difference. Most of her strongest supporters are people who have worked for her or have done business with him. They are for her, too.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: And then Trevor Noah messed up his hair. No, he didn`t.

Lots going on tonight. Please stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So, what is the right height? For the right height for trees, see the great state of Michigan.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MITT ROMNEY (R), FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE: I love this country. I should love this state. Just feels good being back in Michigan. You know, the trees are the right height.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Michigan famously has trees that are just the right height. The right height for a presidential candidate, that`s a more complicated question.

Actually, even the height of a current presidential candidate, that turns out to be a complicated question. For example, Google thinks that Donald Trump is 6`2". Something called celebsmemoir.com says that Donald Trump is 6`2". The Forbes chronicle of Donald Trump`s life, it says Donald Trump is 6`2".

But this new health letter from Mr. Trump`s doctor says he is not 6`2", says he`s 6`3", which might be a minority opinion. But if he is 6`3" instead of 6`2", at his weight, that would bump him up from obese at 6`2" to just technically overweight at 6`3".

So, maybe there`s some intensive in the height there. Who knows? I mean, who knows? Maybe he expands and contracts with the weather. Maybe he is still growing. Maybe he`s still growing. I don`t know.

But hold that thought.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DR. MEHMET OZ, THE DR. OZ SHOW: Your liver function, your thyroid function is all normal. You have a colonoscopy performed July 10th, 2013, which is normal. No polyps. Calcium score in your heart in 2013 also was low at 98.

My goodness. EKG chest x-ray on April 14th was normal. A normal echocardiogram was done two years ago. And your testosterone is 441 which is actually, it`s good.

(LAUGHTER)

(CHEERS)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: For the first time in the history of the republic, a would-be president of the United States has made a public declaration of his level of testosterone. And he got a round of applause for it.

Romney, Obama, even John McCain with his hundreds or thousands of pages of documentation, nobody ever publicly proclaimed their testosterone level before Donald Trump did today. Medical significance, I don`t know. I`m not that kind of doctor.

We do have one here, maybe she can tell us the medical significance of why that was brought up. I don`t know.

Psychological significance, what it`s doing for insecurities in the world. You can talk amongst yourselves.

Last night, we got medical information released by the Clinton campaign on both Hillary Clinton, from her doctor, and Tim Kaine from his doctor.

NBC`s Dr. Natalie Azar was here with us looking at the documentation to explain the significance of that information and to give us the bottom line on the candidate`s health. I said last night with frustration that we didn`t really have any information to go on about the other candidate, Donald Trump. And so, it wasn`t really possible to make a comparison.

Well, now we`ve got that new information, including his testosterone level, who asked for that?

Joining us now is Dr. Natalie Azar, NBC News medical contributor.

Dr. Azar, thank you again for being here. Appreciate it.

DR. NATALIE AZAR, NBC NEWS MEDICAL CONTRIBUTOR: Thanks, Rachel. Thank you for having me.

MADDOW: You said last night that we just didn`t have enough information to go on in terms of a layman`s characterization of Donald Trump`s health. Having seen this letter that came out today, do you feel like there is -- that you understand more than you did before?

AZAR: Yes, I think that the letter that we got, the information that we got does give us a lot of information. And I would argue at this point an adequate amount of information, just to get a good picture of his general health.

We have laboratories, we have his lipid profile, which was excellent, by the way, which I would anticipate, since he`s on a statin drug.

MADDOW: Sorry. Lipid means and stuff?

AZAR: His good cholesterol is very good. His bad cholesterol is nice and low. His triglycerides are normal. That`s all very good.\

MADDOW: But if it looks good and you are on a medication, that means that it`s working for you.

AZAR: Absolutely, which is good, because that`s healthy for you.

MADDOW: He said he did go through four different drugs before he found one working for him. Is that a common thing?

AZAR: The statin, the efficacy of the statin is pretty good. Sometimes people don`t tolerate them. You know, they got a lot of muscle pain and whatnot. So, I don`t know the details of why he had more than one. But suffice it to say, it appears to be working.

MADDOW: OK.

AZAR: We have, as you calculated, or mentioned, we have some vital signs for him, blood pressure, height and weight, BMI, some results of some screening tests, colonoscopy. We had EKG, chest x-ray, really nothing that I could see that was omitted. He`s had, you know, I mentioned the cancer screening, age appropriate health maintenance stuff.

I didn`t hear a lot about immunizations. That`s important, but it`s not, it`s not the, the omission of that doesn`t mean anything significant to me.

MADDOW: One of the things we talked about last night was the type of imaging that Hillary Clinton got that diagnosed her pneumonia on September 9th. There was an interesting moment where the TV doctor, Dr. Oz said, is reading through this letter which we`re told he never had seen before he saw it on camera, and he exclaims, "My goodness, his EKG, chest x-ray on April 14 was normal, a normal echocardiogram." He seems to be exclaiming that he`s had those tests, that he`s had those exams.

Do you have any insight there?

AZAR: You know, I saw the clips also. And I don`t know how much of his reaction or his response was really trying to convey something to us. I think he was pleasantly surprised that he had all of this information in front of him. That was really pretty complete if you`re talking about cardiology and cardiovascular stuff which we`ve been kind of rehashing a little bit this week about cardiovascular, risk factors and whatnot.

So, look, I mean, I think we got a lot of good information. We got a lot of information from Clinton`s camp. I think we`ve spent a lot of time talking about who is healthy and who is healthier and I think the conversation is probably better focused on rather comparing the two, because it`s almost like comparing apples and oranges.

Some of Trump`s data was a couple of years old. He`s an older male, it really is, you really can`t discuss evidence-based to compare a man and a woman together per se, you know what I`m saying? But rather that is each person healthy enough? Is there anything that seems to be disqualifying in their medical histories that would render either of them to be unfit as president?

And I think most of us who`ve analyzed the information as we do all the time, analytically look at people`s records and make, you know, draw conclusions from that, I think most of us would think that both of them are healthy enough.

MADDOW: Have made adequate disclosure and seem, based on those disclosures seem to meet baseline requirements for doing this type of job.

AZAR: Exactly, Rachel.

MADDOW: And it`s gratuitous or not gratuitous to throw in your testosterone level in a public document like this?

AZAR: It`s interesting. And for him, I will say that`s a good number to have, because it`s cardio-protective. It`s a check mark in his favor. And it`s almost time to move on, you know?

MADDOW: It definitely is.

(LAUGHTER)

AZAR: They`re both healthy enough to be president in most of the experts` estimations, and I think we should close the record on the scrutiny.

MADDOW: Well, it didn`t need to be this much of a circus but --

AZAR: It took on a life of its own, you know, certainly the need to defend Clinton`s health, because of, you know, the spotlight that was shown on it in the last week or two.

MADDOW: Dr. Natalie Azar, NBC News medical contributor, thank you. I appreciate it. I don`t anticipate we`ll be talking about this tomorrow.

Thank you. I jinxed it. I jinxed it.

We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: What I said at the top of the show that there`s a lot of balls in the air tonight, I meant that literally in one sense. Chris Hayes threw out the first pitch at Wrigley Field tonight, did you see how it went? Did you see? That and more, still ahead.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Our own Chris Hayes throwing out the first pitch at Wrigley Field tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: A life-long Cubs fan, Chris Hayes!

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Oh, God bless him.

Chris went up to the mound, threw it.

He described it himself as a ball about three inches off the right side of the plate to a righty. He wrote on Twitter, "Crucially, didn`t bounce it." Ha, God bless you, Chris Hayes, may the baseball gods always smile upon you, unless your Cubs happen to be playing the Red Sox.

That does it for us tonight. We`ll see you again tomorrow.

Now it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**CHRIS HAYES, "ALL IN" HOST: That is all this evening.

THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW starts now. Good evening, Rachel.

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST: Good evening, Chris. Thanks, my friend.

HAYES: You bet.

MADDOW: And thanks to you at home for joining us this hour.

Will artificial intelligence enslave humanity before the globalists do? Ever wondered? Do you also know that Hillary Clinton uses a wheelchair? Her personal vehicle had to be outfitted with a wheelchair lift because she is not a person who can actually walk. She secretly uses a wheelchair. All the times you think you`ve seen her walking, she hasn`t been walking. Did you know that?

Did you know Hillary Clinton has Parkinson`s disease? These things are true. I know they are true because I read them in the headlines. Here, I will prove it to you.

Will artificial intelligence enslave humanity before the globalists do? AI, artificial intelligence, is taking over. That was a special report.

Here was the shock headline on Hillary Clinton`s wheelchair vehicle.

Just one column over from that, there was also this seemingly competing news. Hillary Clinton -- does Hillary Clinton have Parkinson`s disease. The subhead, we can all see she has very serious health problems.

At this same news source, for all those stories, you can also find important, maybe life-saving health information, about a powerful new micronutrient that fights the Zika virus. You`ll be happy to know once you`ve learned about this micronutrient, this service -- this website will sell you the micronutrient, thus curing your Zika.

They`ll sell you that alongside their super male vitality potion, which is I`ve got to say, a little steep, $59.95 plus shipping and handling, for the increase to your male vitality. If that price tag is too high for your below-the-belt problems, fellas, spend half that much to get the survival shield X2, apparently, according to the description, leading the way into the next generation of super high quality nascent iodine.

The big bargain, though, I think at this news site as to be this one. Their deep cleanse elixir. I don`t totally understand the description here. It either has powerful nano-colloidal zeolites or it will get rid of your nano-colloidal zeolites. I can`t quite tell. But your neo colloidal zeolites will never be the same.

All of this incredible news about the artificial intelligence that is enslaving humanity before the globalists do and the secret micronutrients that cure Zika and the male vitality potions and the nascent -- all of this stuff is, of course, available through InfoWars.com.

Info Wars is the conspiracy theory website, sort of mega website, where the dimmer bulbs among us have gone to get themselves brightened up without benefit of a surge protector.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIPS)

ALEX JONES, INFO WARS: The government lies out of hand. You`re saying, why do you believe in the moon lander?

I have sources inside NASA. They put on some fake stuff for you. There was a lie. See, it`s not just did we go or didn`t we go. You were shown the tinker toy stuff because you`re not supposed to see what they have.

You`re not supposed to know the thousands of astronauts that have died. Oh, yes, I should do a show on that.

We`re already in a tyranny. Then operation Jade Helm gets announced. It was put on the army website last week. We reported on it first.

It`ll have some real admissions, mixed in to confuse the idiot public, kind of like cyanide pills, you know, taste sugar, or 80 percent sugar.

Yes. So, Sandy Hook is a synthetic, completely fake, with actors, in my view, manufactured. I couldn`t believe it at first. I knew they had actors their clearly, but I thought they killed real kids. And it just shows how bold they are.

You saw them staged Fast and Furious. Folks, they staged Aurora. They staged Sandy Hook. The evidence is just overwhelming.

But the reason there are so many gay people now because of the chemical warfare operation the government documents said they were going to encourage homosexually with chemicals to people don`t have children. I even catch myself, Bob, drink out of the estrogen mimickers.

For those watching on PrisonPlanet.tv, here is the inside of the juice box. If they zoom in more, see the thin plastic? It`s got it. I`m letting my children drink this.

After you`re done drinking the juices, I mean, you`re ready to go out and have a baby. You`re ready to put makeup on. You`re ready to wear a short skirt.

That is space cult, suicide cult, exterminism craziness. The eugenics transhumanist cult wants to confuse the general species, ahead of rendering us down and removing us.

The decision has been made. Cheer up. The post-human era is dawning. The plan is that an asexual humanoid, even if they decide to keep us around.

(END VIDEO CLIPS)

MADDOW: Got all that? I actually think, having reflected upon this, the last part, I think when he says that the eugenics, transhumanist cult that wants to confuse the general species ahead of rendering us down and removing us, I think when he says, rendering us down, I literally think he means we`re going to be melted and turned into candles, like they`re going to use our fat to make soap. I think rendering, I think he`s literal on that.

That is the -- the pilot, the captain of America`s conspiracy theory mothership, Alex Jones. Alex Jones has been around forever. I`m assuming he will be around forever.

He says Hillary Clinton is going to kill him. He has publicly asked Hillary Clinton not to kill him. So, who knows?

But, honestly, he`s going to be around a while. It is a lucrative gig he has going on. He basically got nationally famous, kind of came off the fringe and became bigger fringe when he proclaimed that 9/11 was not carried out by al Qaeda. 9/11 was actually committed by the U.S. government against our own country.

He took the notoriety he earned from that 9/11 truthism and he has now been running with it and expanding on the idea. Very successfully for the last 15 years.

You sometimes have people ask, especially people in other countries, well, look at the American electorate, ask in sort of serious, sociological, poly sci terms, why is it an advanced and fairly well-educated country like ours is nevertheless getting to be as susceptible to political conspiracy theories as broadly uneducated countries in faraway lands? Why is it that we get more and more susceptible conspiracy theories as time goes on? We don`t seem like the kind of country where they would have as much traction as they do now in our contemporary era in politics.

Part of the season why we`re so susceptible to conspiracy theories, is that guys like Alex Jones make a ton of money circulating them as wide as they possibly can. They use multiple platforms. They use talk radio, and the Internet, and they live stream their fake TV shows. They make a very good living doing it.

And they`re going to be around because of it for a long time. Usually, this kind of stuff has no major effect on the United States of America. Other than lowering our median IQ a couple points and making us seem slightly more embarrassing on an international stage. Every additional year, they have the **alien** people lizard on everything, we get a little bit dumber. It`s the major effect it has on the United States of America.

But this year is different, because this year, that little corner, that little niche of organized and profitable American insanity, this year, they`re out of their corner because this year, they`re presidential politics.

After NBC and MSNBC and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America hosted the Commander-in-Chief Forum last night with Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, after that last night, this morning, Donald Trump Jr. woke up and tweeted this direct link to the Alex Jones Info Wars expose of what really happened on board the Intrepid last night at the Commander-in-Chief forum. Got to hit the shift lock key because it`s all in capital letters when you get there.

But what he`s linked to is this Info Wars Alex Jones piece. Was Hillary wearing an ear piece during last night`s presidential forum? This is an Alex Jones Info Wars conspiracy theory exclusive.

They took a screen grab from last night`s Commander-in-Chief forum, with the light hitting Hillary Clinton`s left ear in the right way, it appears a suspicious glare in that. I mean, if you wanted to take this accusation seriously, that she was wearing an ear piece, she was on stage for more than 20 minutes. You could take lots of different angles, camera angles, showing the same ear but without the glinted light, right?

Here are other images of Hillary Clinton`s ear -- the ear in question from the same event last night. None show the secret ear piece that Alex Jones has exposed.

But I mean, consider the source. Consider the context. This ear piece story at Alex Jones Info Wars, it`s running alongside other headlines up that says Hillary Clinton uses a wheelchair, that she has Parkinson`s disease. Info Wars also announcing today that they`ve got the video proof that Hillary Clinton is a mass murderer.

So, you know, the secret ear piece thing, that`s journalistically sound compared to the rest of the stuff chair putting out there. That could be a mainstream scandal. I mean, this year in 2016, with Donald Trump at the top of the ticket for the Republican Party, Alex Jones is no longer just broadcasting to your fillings and your molars. He is apparently with the upper echelons of the Republican presidential campaign. It`s reading and citing and circulating, even at this late date of the campaign.

And it matters, because it`s not just the kook fringe, it`s just not the sort of remunerative conspiracy theory world, that part of the conservative media machine. It`s not even just whacky people who made their way into Republican politics to the surprising high. It is the top of the Republican ticket. It`s after Labor Day and this is a presidential year.

All day today, after Donald Trump Jr. tweeted the Info Wars Alex Jones conspiracy theory, all day today, this was the headline about the Commander-in-Chief Forum at the mega-conservative news site that drives more traffic online than anything else on the right. This was the headline all day today at the Drudge Report. They led with this, as the most important thing in presidential politics right now.

Which on the one hand is hilarious, right? On the other hand, this is this great moment. This is like a snapshot, a microcosm of why this campaign is hard to follow. Sort of why it`s hard to get a sense of what the narrative is of the campaign this year. Why it can be maddening to follow what`s going on in the campaign. Why it can be painfully ridiculous to follow what`s going on in the campaign any given day now.

It`s because there really just these two sides in the campaign. We are in a presidential election contest. We have two major parties. And these are the two candidates for those parties.

It just so happens that one of them is stuck on the juice boxes make you gay channel, and the other one is nevertheless trying to conduct a campaign as if this is normal politics. I mean, these are not two campaigns that are doing the same thing. Not two candidates making the same kind of case. These are not two political organizations that are even speaking the same language.

I mean, one side is literally tweeting Info Wars, which believes that invisible **alien** lizard people drive most U.S. policy now. This is from the Info Wars internet TV show. This is for the skeptics don`t believe they`re moving among us, mostly invisible, secretly controlling American policy, in order to demonstrate their influence, they dress up as **alien** lizard people at InfoWars.com to show you the effect that the lizards are having on the United States government, so you can recognize their work when they surface among us, even though most of us can`t see them. Some of us can see them.

That`s one side. In what is supposed to be a contest between two equally feasible political choices, to be the leader of the free world, commander- in-chief and president of the United States. And what we`re going to talk about tonight is if you are the other side, what do you do with that?

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Meanwhile, bizarrely, once again, he phrased Russia`s strong man, Vladimir Putin, even taking the astonishing step of suggesting that he prefers the Russian president to our American president.

Now, that is not just unpatriotic and insulting to the people of our country, as well as to our commander-in-chief, it is scary, because it suggests he will let Putin do whatever Putin wants to do. And then make excuses for him.

I was just thinking about all of the presidents that would just be looking at one another in total astonishment. What would Ronald Reagan say about a Republican nominee who attacks America`s generals and heaps praise on Russia`s president?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Hillary Clinton today at a press conference with reporters, invoking Donald Reagan to try to make the case that it is just legitimately nutty to have an American presidential candidate saying he prefers the Russian president to the American president.

Simultaneously, as Hillary Clinton was invoking Donald Reagan`s name to make the case today, Donald Trump`s running mate was in California, literally calling Donald Trump the second coming of Ronald Reagan.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. MIKE PENCE (R), VICE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: What you had in Ronald Reagan, God rest his soul, and what you have in Donald Trump are two men who fundamentally were raised to believe in the American Dream.

1980, 2016, two different men, two different times. But so much seems familiar, does it not?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: While Mike Pence was trying to sell Donald Trump as the second coming of Ronald Reagan today, Republican House Speaker Paul Ryan was back in Washington actually having a hard time explaining Donald Trump`s warm to the point of romantic feelings about the Russian president.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REPORTER: At the candidate forum last night, Donald Trump had high praise for Putin. I`m just curious sort of what you think about that, if you`re concerned at all about --

REP. PAUL RYAN (R-WI), SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: I read the little snippet. Let me say this about Vladimir Putin. Vladimir Putin is an aggressor that does not share our interests. Vladimir Putin is violating the sovereignty of neighboring countries. It certainly appears that he is conducting in state-sponsored cyberattacks on what appears to be our political system. That is not acting in our interests. That is an adversarial stance and he`s acting like an adversary.

REPORTER: Just to follow up on that, are you concerned though of Donald Trump praising Vladimir Putin, someone who --

RYAN: I made my points about Putin clear right there. I`ll just leave it at that.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The chairman of the Republican Party, Reince Priebus, got questions on this matter today. He tried to clean up further in an interview with the "Associated Press", which they quote him as saying that Donald Trump, quote, "was not endorsing Putin at all."

The chairman of the Republican Party is having to clarify whether or not the Republican Party`s presidential nominee is endorsing the Russian president, because for the record, this is what Donald Trump said last night about the Russian president which has everyone twisted up in knots.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MATT LAUER, NBC NEWS ANCHOR: Let me ask you about some of the things you`ve said about Vladimir Putin. You said, I`ll tell you in terms of leadership, he`s getting an A. Our president is not doing so well.

And when referring to a comment that Putin made about you, I think he called you a brilliant leader, you said, it`s always a great honor to be complimented by a man so highly respected within his country and beyond.

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Well, he does have an 82 percent approval rating according to the different pollsters who, by the way, some are based right here. Look --

LAUER: He`s also a guy who annexed Crimea, invaded Ukraine, supports Assad in Syria, supports Iran, is trying to undermine our influence in key regions of the world. And according to our intelligence community, probably is the main suspect for the hacking of the DNC computers.

TRUMP: Well, nobody knows that for a fact. You want me to start naming some of the things that President Obama does at the same time?

LAUER: Do you want to be complimented by that former KGB officer.

TRUMP: When he calls me brilliant, I`ll take the compliment. If he says great things about me, I`m going to say great things about him. He`s very much a leader. You can say, isn`t that a terrible thing? The man has a very strong control over a country.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Donald Trump at the Commander-in-Chief Forum last night with Matt Lauer, restating his admiration for Russian President Vladimir Putin. "If he says great things about me, I`m going to say great things about him. When he calls me brilliant, I`ll take the compliment, OK?"

Here`s the thing, you want to know the real crazy, Bilderberg lizard people, fake moon landing, juice boxes make you gay truth about this particular issue in our presidential politics? Vladimir Putin never actually called Donald Trump brilliant. Oh, no, this is going to unravel the whole thing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

INTERVIEWER: You made some comments about the American Republican presumptive nominee, Donald Trump. You called him brilliant, outstanding, talented. These comments were reported around the world. I was wondering, what in him led you to that judgment? Do you still hold that judgment?

VLADIMIR PUTIN, RUSSIAN PRESIDENT (through translator): You personally are very famous in our country. You are not only famous as a journalist in one of the biggest TV stations, but as an intellectual. Why do you always change the meaning of what I said?

Because at the moment, you speak as a journalist, not as an analyst. Why are you juggling with what I said? I only said that he was a bright person. Isn`t he bright? He is. I did not say anything else about him.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: See? This is -- this shouldn`t be important, but this year it is.

This whole thing about Trump praising Putin because Putin praised him. This whole thing that has turned the Republican Party into a pretzel because now their presidential nominee is saying he prefers the Russian president to the president of the United States of America. This whole thing about Putin praising Trump and that led to this whole problem for Republicanism, let alone the Republican nominee, let alone the Republican Party, appears to have been a misunderstanding.

It`s true that the word "brilliant" was initially reported when Putin made his comments in Russian about Donald Trump last December. But the news sources who originally translated his remarks that way, they later corrected themselves, to say the Russian word that Putin used when talking about Donald Trump only means brilliant in one sense. It means brilliant in the sense of shiny, brilliant as in a bright light, not as in a bright person.

NBC went to the chair of the Russian department at Dartmouth College today and asked about the actual words Putin used when he described Trump in December. Asked about the difference between our concept of the word "brilliant," which can mean both shiny or genius -- asked about that difference between our concept of the word brilliant and the Russian word that Putin actually used.

It turns out, had Putin meant to call Donald Trump brilliant, as in a genius, as in a smart person, which is what Donald Trump thinks Putin said about him, turns out if that`s what Putin meant, he would have used this word, which I am not going to pronounce because I do not speak Russian, apologies to my ancestors.

He did not use that word, which would mean brilliant in the sense of being a genius, being a very smart cookie. Instead, Putin, when talking about Donald Trump, used this word, which I will also not pronounce. Russians use this word to mean brilliant in the sense of bright light or bright colors.

And so, the initial translations of Putin last December calling Donald Trump brilliant were all corrected after the fact. "The Guardian" news issued a print correction at the time, changing their translation to say that Putin did not call Trump brilliant, he called him colorful. Other translations were amended to show that Putin actually called Donald Trump a word more like flamboyant.

And Putin himself has clarified with Fareed Zakaria this past June, that he did not call Trump brilliant, in that genius sense. He was not complimenting him in that way. He doesn`t think he is a genius. He thinks he`s flamboyant and colorful, and that is not nearly as nice a thing to say.

You know what? It shouldn`t matter. On the one hand, who cares? On the other hand, we now have to. This is apparently an election where the Republican presidential campaign does its research at the number one online debunker of 9/11 and the Oklahoma City bombing and the "Challenger" disaster and the Aurora movie theater and the Sandy Hook shootings and the Boston bombings because all of those things didn`t really happen, they`re all government conspiracy theories.

On the one hand, that is their new source, that is what they at the highest levels are circulating to the American public as the truth they ought to know about their country. This is an election year where the Republican Party is running as their candidate for president. A candidate who is self-centered and narcissistic that a flippant and apparently misquoted compliment from another foreign leader was enough to put enough stars in his eyes that the Republican Party`s presidential nominee says he prefers the president of Russia to the president of the United States.

This stuff is crazy. And it should be irrelevant. But this is the highest level of our politics right now. And it`s so easily manipulable, because that`s what it is.

I mean, nobody has done it already, but somebody should send a fake mash note from Kim Jong-un to Donald Trump, complimenting him on his suit or his hair or something. And then wait five minutes and ask Donald Trump if he thinks the United States should give North Korea a state dinner, seriously.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So, we`ve got lots of news tonight. Some presidential news. Some not presidential news. Including why a whole bunch of American public officials who tonight are rotting in jail because they were in prison for corruption -- tonight, there`s news about why those convicted bribe recipients and crooks had a tremendously awesome day today.

It`s a weird story. That`s coming up. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: So last month, on the eve of his first intelligence briefing as the Republican Party`s presidential nominee, Trump was asked if he trusted the intelligence he was about to get at that briefing. He said he probably wouldn`t trust it.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REPORTER: Do you trust intelligence?

TRUMP: Not so much from the people that have been doing it for our country. Look what`s happened over the last ten years, look what`s happened over the years. I mean, it`s been catastrophic.

In fact, I won`t use some of the people that are sort of your standards. You know, just use them, use them. Very easy to use them. But I won`t use them because they`ve made bad decisions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That was August 16th. I won`t use them.

The following day, August 17th, Trump received that secret intelligence briefing as a candidate. He brought two advisers along with him, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and retired General Michael Flynn.

Donald Trump also later received a second intelligence briefing last Friday.

Well, those briefings came up at last night`s commander in chief forum. Donald Trump responded to that question by talking about those briefings in a way that no candidate has really ever done before.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: What I did learn is that our leadership, Barack Obama, did not follow what our experts and our truly -- when they call it intelligence, it is there for a reason -- what our experts said to do. I was very, very surprised. In almost every instance, and I could tell. I`m pretty good with the body language, I could tell, they were not happy. Our leaders did not follow what they were recommending.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: I could tell. I could tell they were not happy. I`m pretty good with the body language.

The briefers from the National Intelligence Office were conveying to Donald Trump with their body language their policy disapproval of President Obama. Really?

Today, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, which conducts the briefings, would not comment on Donald Trump`s remarkable remarks about what happened there. But, apparently, somebody has something to say about those briefings and what happened there.

NBC News had a remarkable report on this today. Look at this. Quote, "Four sources with knowledge of the briefing, including two intelligence officials who spoke to people in the room, said General Flynn repeatedly interrupted the briefers until Governor Chris Christie intervened." Quote, "Two sources said Christie verbally restrained General Flynn. One saying Christie told Flynn to shut up. The other reporting he said, calm down. Two other sources said Christie touched General Flynn`s arm in an effort to get him to calm down and let the officials continue."

Really? And how do we know this? How could we know? Who -- what?

Both General Flynn and Governor Christie are absolutely denying that any of this occurred. Governor Christie says the story is categorically untrue. He says, it is a complete work of fiction. General Flynn called NBC News tonight said the report of conduct was, quote, "total BS". He says, "These are unanimous sources. They`re lying." He says, "This is just a smear, lying bologna."

He further said, this crowd has nothing else to go after so they`re trying to go after credibility of people. I`m OK with that because I know what I was a part of and what I witnessed.

Asked as a follow up what he meant by this crowd, General Flynn replied, quote, "The Clinton machine." The Clinton machine.

How did intelligence briefings turn into this this year? Intelligence briefings for the candidate, usually the least controversial thing in the whole campaign -- the one thing we can count on to be a non-partisan thing taken seriously and treated seriously. How did this happen?

Joining us now is David Priess. He`s a former intelligence officer and briefer under former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He wrote the book on presidential intelligence briefings. It`s called "The President`s Book of Secrets", and he`s been our sort of secret decoder ring for these stories this year.

David, it`s nice to see you again. Thank you for being here.

DAVID PRIESS, FORMER CIA DAILY INTELLIGENCE BRIEFER: Thank you for having me back.

MADDOW: So I don`t have any inside information as a person who works at MSNBC as to the sourcing of this NBC story, about what happened inside the briefing. Have you ever heard of briefers leaking information from inside those briefings about what happened? Especially contemporaneously, like in the same news cycle.

PRIESS: No, certainly not contemporaneously. And, in fact, not much in terms of the long history of this, long after presidents are gone, the presidents themselves will talk about their briefings and the briefes will do that.

But there is a sense of the sanctity of these briefings where the briefer comes in, the briefer does her job or his job communicating the assessments, and that`s all. There is no policy recommendation. No talking after the briefing about what was discussed and had how it was discussed. That`s unusual.

MADDOW: See, the body language assertion stuck out for me. Because I don`t know what it means to be an intelligence officer giving a briefing like this, and also because it seems like Mr. Trump was reading a lot into what he described as the body language of the briefers.

This idea that he was able to discern from the -- from intelligence officials body language that they were unhappy -- that President Obama didn`t follow their advice and they were unhappy about it. Can I get your reaction to that, broadly speaking?

PRIESS: Yes. On two fronts, that strikes me as odd.

First of all, it`d be unusual for a briefing to be talking in any way, and I include non-verbal communication, in any way about the policy of the sitting president. That`s not the job of intelligence, number one. And it violates the ethic of responsibility of the intelligence officers, to call things like they see it about the foreign situation.

Secondly, as a former intel briefer myself, I can tell you, very few people are more self-aware of how they communicate information. About what they`re saying and what they`re not saying. Because our primary goal is to make sure the message we`re conveying about sensitive issues with big impact, that they`re not misunderstood in any way.

Trying to give some subtle body language to communicate that this isn`t really what I`m saying, but it`s not what I`m not saying, if you know what I`m saying, I don`t understand how one would do that. And, certainly, I don`t understand why one would do that.

MADDOW: David, one last logistical question. One of the things we`ve talked about the last couple times you`ve been here is the number of briefings. It seems like the intent was that each of these candidates would have a single briefing. We know that Trump has had a follow-up briefing.

Because he`s had a second, do you expect Hillary Clinton will also have a second one now?

PRIESS: I suspect she will. If nothing else politically, it gives her the chance to preempt a Trump comment that, well, I`m getting more briefings than she is. She doesn`t care about this.

It might be a good strategy for her to keep the intel briefings going as long as possible, because we keep talking about Donald Trump and the way he`s handling these briefings and what he`s saying about them. That`s pretty rich fodder in this election campaign.

MADDOW: David Priess, former election -- excuse me, former intelligence officer and briefer and author of "The President`s Book of Secrets" -- it`s pleasure to have you here as always, David. Thank you very much.

PRIESS: Thank you.

MADDOW: All right. We`ve got much more ahead. Lots of news. Presidential news and not presidential news. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: If you`re just listening and you`re not looking at your TV, like if you`re washing the dishes or listening on the bus and you`re zoning out and just listening, you have to look at this. You have to look. Visual. Ready?

May I present the USS Zumwalt. Look at that, 610 feet of naval bad assery, seen here cruising out of the bath iron works in Maine. What a strange and amazing looking ship.

The Zumwalt is the most sophisticated destroyer ever built for the U.S. Navy. It`s also most expensive, $4.4 billion for that ship.

Yesterday, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump proposed a huge, huge military buildup for the United States of America, beyond even the most 1980s bellicose dreams of the Ronald Reagan era. As for how we would pay for this massive, massive, massive buildup, including more than 70 new ships for the Navy, more than 80 new planes for the Air Force, 13 new battalions for the Marine Corps, 50,000 new soldiers to the army. How we`d pay for it? Well, he just will. He just will. Zumwaltz for everyone.

We are in this moment where important and serious stuff in American policy is kind of evaporating like bubbles from soda into the politics of this election fight. But one of these important policy things has just been introduced into the presidential fight, and I think it seems likely to stick and I think it`s really important and Richard Engel is here to talk about it, next. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Last night for the first time ever, we got to see both candidates for president participate in a forum devoted to veterans issues, and foreign policy and war and peace. And, yes, it was short and it definitely didn`t get to all the things it could have gotten to. There was a lot of dancing around stuff that should have been straightened out. Yes, yes, yes.

But you know what? We did get something new on a key foreign policy issue that we`d never really got before. And that`s great, because campaigns are supposed to be about debate. And the new thing that got introduced into what ought to be our foreign policy debate is something that is an open and interesting question that people of good faith on both sides can reasonably disagree on.

It`s a real question as to whether or not this is the right way to do it. We`ve now got a concrete proposal. This is what we ought to do.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

HILLARY CLINTON (D), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: It is in our national security interest to defeat ISIS, and I intend to make that happen.

MATT LAUER, NBC NEWS: Thank you very much for your question.

CLINTON: We`re going after Baghdadi, the leader, because it will help us focus our attention, just like going after bin Laden helped us focus our attention in the fight against al Qaeda.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Interesting. Even as Matt Lauer was trying to wrap her and move to the next question, Secretary Clinton pushing aside the interruption and bringing us this last point. She intends to go after ISIS, but you know what? She intends to go after the named head of ISIS. She names him.

She says, we need to go after Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the same way we went after Osama bin Laden when we were going after al Qaeda. She volunteered the information, she went out of her way to do it and circled back to it this morning in her press conference.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

CLINTON: We should hunt down the leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, and bring him to justice, just as we did with Osama bin Laden.

As with that operation, getting al Baghdadi will require a focused effort driven at the highest levels. But I believe it will send a resounding message that nobody directs or inspires attacks against the United States and gets away with it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDDOW: Secretary Clinton talks a lot about is. But she is sticking a flag in this tactical, planned pursuit. She`s sticking a flag and going after this leader, right? Reminding everybody of what she said last night, circling back to it and saying it`s important we not only go after ISIS as an organization but that we personally go after the named head of that organization.

OK. Let`s talk about it. Is that a good idea? Substantively, is that a good idea, in terms of how we approach and make our priorities in counter terrorism and the fight against ISIS?

Joining us live from Istanbul, Turkey, is Richard Engel, NBC News chief foreign correspondent.

Richard, thank you for staying us into the wee hours. I know you did it last night, too, to watch this forum.

Let me just start off by asking you about Hillary Clinton`s pronouncement, whether this is a big deal?

RICHARD ENGEL, NBC NEWS CHIEF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT: No, I don`t think it is a big deal. There is already a campaign to hunt down Baghdadi. I know people involved in the campaign, they very much want to find and kill or capture Baghdadi. I think it`s a way for Hillary Clinton to remind the voters that she was involved in the hunt for bin Laden and that al Qaeda was decimated once bin Laden was killed.

I`m not totally convinced, by the way, that al Qaeda was totally decimated. I think it is a narrative the intelligence community has put out. I`m not at all sure that it`s accurate.

When you see Syria right now, I think we`re in a situation where ISIS could very well be eliminated and what we`ll be left with is a very strong al Qaeda base in Syria.

So, I think she`s trying to remind people of that and put the flag down. Yes, I`m going to kill Baghdadi, just the way I was involved in the death for bin Laden.

But the fact remains, there are more numerically and more dangerous terrorists now in the world on the loose than there were a few years ago, than there were five or six years ago. Whether the death of bin Laden or whether the death of Baghdadi, there are still more and more dangerous terrorists out there now than there were before.

MADDOW: That`s why this seems like a substantively interesting point for her to have raised and kind of stuck this flag in, because there is this count terrorism debate. As to whether or not going after the named guy, going after, you know, the head of the snake, right, picking recognizable in the West targets, people like bin Laden, people like Baghdadi, and focusing resources on that makes sense in terms of counterterrorism strategy in terms of decimating the organizations or whether it`s something that works in the West that`s designed for American public, that it does make the most sense strategically.

ENGEL: Well, there`s both. There is the idea that, sure, you shouldn`t focus on the boogie man and believe that if you eliminate the leader that the problem will go away, the problem of terrorism and anger towards the United States didn`t go away with the death of bin Laden.

But leaders do matter. Some individuals are more skilled than others. If you look at the history of is when it used to be al Qaeda in Iraq. When you killed Zarqawi, when U.S. troops killed Zarqawi, it did set the organization back.

And then, he was replaced. There was another leader named Abu Ayyub al- Masri. You probably don`t remember him very much because he was a terrible leader. There are many in the counterterrorism world that wish he had been left in place because he was so efficient as a leader, and by killing him, this replacement to Zarqawi, we ushered in a new generation of more effective leaders.

So, yes, not all terrorist leaders are created equal and killing the most charismatic ones set the organization. It`s not a silver bullet. I think what she`s trying to do is remind people she was involved in that very symbolic and I think very important decision and very important mission that killed bin Laden. But, the fact remains, there are still ISIS now when there was not ISIS before.

MADDOW: And the symbolic value here is not -- I mean, symbolism is important, strategically and politically here. I hope there is a fight, a robust about this. I think there are lots of different ways to argue this. I feel there was this substantive nugget that came out of last night.

Richard Engel, NBC News chief foreign correspondent, joining us from Istanbul, tonight, Richard, thank you. It`s great to see you, my friend.

ENGEL: Good to talk to you.

MADDOW: I do -- you know what, with -- in terms of national security issues and veterans` issues and getting those things spot let with this forum. I think it`s worked. I think the campaign turned towards those issues in anticipation of last night`s event.

The question is whether after last night`s events, they end up finding the substantive differences between themselves of the issues that they were asked about and whether or not they get better of tweezing out the differences between them on this stuff, and the issue whether we should be targeting Baghdadi personally is a way of going after ISIS, I would love to hear them fight about that. Please, fight about that. Try that.

All right. More ahead tonight. Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Two years ago, September 2014, Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell was convicted on multiple felony corruption counts. The court found that the personally engraved Rolex and use of awesome white Ferrari and more than $100,000 in gifts, and cash and loans that were all accepted by Governor McDonnell, court found those were a quid pro quo, that after receiving those things he used the power of his office as governor to tried to help out the businessman who had given him the loot and loan him the car.

Governor McDonnell was convicted on 11 counts, sentenced to two years in prison. But he always maintained his innocence. He appealed his conviction and in June, the Supreme Court threw his conviction out. The court called the governor`s actions tawdry and distasteful, but in a unanimous decision, they said it had not been proven that those tawdry and distasteful actions counted as official corruption.

Since that ruling, it has been up to federal prosecutors to decide what to do next, they`ll decide whether they would try the case again or let it go. A week ago, "The Washington Post" reported that they were going to try it again, that the prosecutors who brought the charges against Governor McDonnell were raring to go. They wanted to charge him again. They want to get, essentially, a second conviction under the terms set out by the Supreme Court.

But that didn`t happen. Today, the Justice Department announced that, no, Governor McDonnell will not be retried. The charges against are dropped.

And with that, we get to the end of the Bob McDonnell saga. But we also lose any clear sense of what does constitute bribery of a public official anymore. If what Governor McDonnell took from this guy and did for this guy in return isn`t corruption, then how would anyone prove bribery by any public official from here on out?

So, watch the space, but particularly watch to see how many currently imprisoned public officials use this Bob McDonnell case now to get their own convictions overturned. I`m telling you, it was a happy today in a lot of minimum prison security blocks.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: We`ve got some late breaking news tonight that`s just come to us. Since we`ve been on the air this hour, there are indications tonight that North Korea has conducted an underground nuclear test. South Korean officials say they detected a tremor emanating from North Korea but they described it as an artificially caused tremor, meaning it was not caused by an earthquake. Usually, that means a large explosion caused by a test, corroborating that, the U.S. U.S. Geological Survey said it registered a 5.3 magnitude seismic event out of North Korea.

But again, indications are that this is not a natural earthquake, this is a nuclear test. If confirmed, this will be North Korea`s fifth nuclear test in total, it will set off a whole new round of international recriminations and worries. Their last test was in January of this year. If this is a new one, this is going to be very big news over the next few days.

That does it for us tonight. We`ll see you again tomorrow.

Now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

**NEW\_DOCUMENT\_HERE**STEVE KORNACKI, MSNBC GUEST HOST: Joy Reid, thank you for that.

As you have figured out by now, Rachel Maddow, she has the night off. She will be back tomorrow. And guess what? She will be part of the show tonight. We are going hear from her and her thoughts on Donald Trump`s big **immigration** speech. You are not going to want to miss that.

But, first, a lot has happened in 24 hours since Trump gave that speech last night. There were two things he needed to accomplish yesterday with that last minute trip to Mexico in the afternoon, and then the big speech in Phoenix at night.

Number one, Trump said he was going to clarify his position on **immigration**. Remember, he said two weeks ago, he might be softening his view. He was going to tell everyone what he meant.

And last night, in the speech, he presented a list of ten principles, ten key principles on **immigration**. It is fair to say they were ten hard lying principles on the subject. This was the most hardlined speech on **immigration** that we have heard a major party nominee for president ever deliver in the modern era.

Now, the more specific challenge for Trump last night was this. He`s losing right now. He`s losing in this race. He is behind Hillary Clinton nationally. He is behind her in the battleground states.

And there`s a very specific reason why he`s behind her. When you break down all the numbers, there`s one group of voters who have always been there for Republican presidential candidates going back generations now. Those voters have been seriously turned off by Donald Trump in this campaign. He has been running at fatally low levels of support with them. He needs to turn that around if he`s going to have a chance in November.

And the group I`m talking about is actually white voters. More specifically, talking about white college educated voters, suburbanite, upscale economically, white collar professionals. Reps have never, never lost this group in a presidential election, but Donald Trump just might.

So, the challenge last night, in part, was for him to say something, somehow, in some way that might win some of them back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP (R), PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE: Today, on a very complicated and very difficult subject, you will get the truth. The fundamental problem with the **immigration** system in our country is that it serves the needs of wealthy donors, political activists and powerful, powerful politicians.

Let me tell you who it does not serve. It does not serve you, the American people. Doesn`t serve you.

We have to listen to the concerns that working people, our forgotten working people have over the record pace of **immigration** and its impact on their jobs, wages, housing, schools, tax bills and general living conditions. These are valid concerns expressed by decent and patriotic citizens from all backgrounds.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: That was Trump`s message last night.

If you look back the last election in 2012, Mitt Romney won the white vote by 20 points, that`s what a Republican is supposed to get, at least 20 points there. But Trump, well, a new poll out today has him winning white voters by just eight points, that would be a disaster for a Republican presidential candidate. And again, it is even more dramatic when you compare whites who don`t have college degrees, blue collar white voters.

Trump would then -- he is doing pretty well. Compare it to whites who do have college degrees. Romney won white college educated men by 21 points in 2012. A FOX News poll has Trump ahead of that group by 11. That would be a disaster for a Republican.

Here`s the killer, though, when it comes to college educated white women, Hillary Clinton is beating Donald Trump by 20 points. That would be absolutely unprecedented in our political history. This is why Donald Trump is losing.

These are voters Republicans have always relied on and they are turned off by Donald Trump. They are telling pollsters they are profoundly uncomfortable with his rhetoric, his nativist appeals, with his racially charged messages. They do not want to be associated with a white supremacist like David Duke who`d been out there praising Donald Trump.

That is what Donald Trump was up against last night and the home stretch of this campaign. If you want to know whether Donald Trump can come back, win this election and become president of the United States, this is where to look when you look inside the numbers. This is where he needs to move the needle and needs to move it in a big way.

Did he make progress last night? That is the bottom line question. Did it reassure voters seeing Trump alongside the Mexican president -- did it make him look more presidential or is it possible his hard lined message will actually drive up blue collar support so high that it makes up for the beating he is taking with upscale white voters?

There`s also a cynical interpretation of something else that Trump is doing now. Cynical, but maybe accurate. It has to do with the outreach he is doing to minority voters. Again, that`s something he tried to do last night.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Hillary Clinton is going to do nothing for the African-American worker, the Latino worker. She is going to do nothing. She`s done nothing.

And I say, what do you have to lose? Excuse me, watch how good we are going to do together. Watch.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: But, was he even talking to minority voters there, or is he trying to send a message to white voters who have been so uncomfortable with his campaign to date, was he trying to make them feel he is putting in the effort trying to win black and Latino votes so that those white voters might feel more comfortable supporting him. Maybe that`s his real goal because if it`s not, if he`s just making a straight-up pitch to minority voters, then there are new signs that it is failing more than ever.

Trump, today, losing high profile support from several conservative Hispanics who were not happy with the speech last night. A number of Hispanic business leaders and even Hispanic Trump advisers have said they can no longer support him.

One former Trump endorser tweeting after the speech, quote, "This is how I feel, disappointed and misled."

And Trump was probably never going to do that well with the Hispanic vote to begin with. A recent poll of Hispanic voters shows him with just 20 percent of the Hispanic vote, getting clobbered by Hillary Clinton there. There is one Hispanic adviser to Donald Trump who, even after last night speech says he is not yet ready to drop Donald Trump.

And joining me now is the Reverend Tony Suarez, executive . He is a member of the Trump campaign`s evangelical advisory committee.

Reverend Suarez, thanks for joining us tonight. I really appreciate it.

I wanted to talk to you in particular because you`ve sort of been very public about grappling with whether to support Donald Trump, how comfortable you are with Donald Trump. I know at the beginning of this campaign, he was putting on a clinic of how not to win Latino votes. You are now supporting him.

We`ve heard other leaders come out today who`ve been supporting Trump and say, they didn`t like the speech last night. What was your impression of it?

REV. TONY SUAREZ, NATL. HISPANIC CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONF. EXEC. VP: Well, I want to be clear. It`s not that I`m supporting Donald Trump. I have a pastor`s heart. I was invited to an advisory board of Donald Trump. If Hillary Clinton made a similar invitation, I would join her board as well. But to date, Hillary has not invited the evangelicals to come and talk with her.

Last night was disappointing. Yet, it`s disappointing and confusing. It gives you more questions than it does answers.

You would think that after an hour and 20 minutes or an hour and 30 minutes of hearing point by point, these ten points of what he`s going to do with **immigration**reform, you would think we`d have a clear cut answer. Yet, at one moment, he says all illegals are going to have to leave the country, and then come in the same way. You`re all going to have to reenter the country.

Yet, a few minutes later, he says after we have implemented the ten points of my plan, then and only then can we talk about those remaining. Well, if everyone is left, or everyone has been deported, who are the people that are remaining?

There`s I think he needs to make clarifying remarks. I think he still needs to explain to us what he`s going to do or what the plan is for the 11 million documented **immigrants** that are in the country.

KORNACKI: So, you are on the advisory committee. Did you advise him? Did you talk to his campaign? Do you feel you were listened to?

SUAREZ: Well, yes, absolutely. My boss, the Reverend Sam Rodriguez, the president NHLC, and there was others. We met with Donald Trump at Trump Tower a few months ago, and Pastor Sam -- Reverend Rodriguez said to him, said, Mr. Trump, if you are going to build a wall, you must build bridges into the Latino community.

I was on MSNBC on Saturday and I said, you know, I`m the first evangelical to come on and say I believe in evolution. Donald Trump is evolving in front of our eyes. We were celebrating the change that we saw. And then, last night happened.

It was confusing. It was disappointing. But I hope he is listening and I hope there`s an opportunity to continue speaking to him.

Reverend Rodriguez has told us for months. Our job as Christians, evangelicals, believers, is to be light, you have to be light in a dark place. So, I have battled, do I leave, walk away, do I wash my hands or do I stay? How can I be light if I walk away? How can I influence if I walk away from the table of reason?

And at the end of the day, I`m not a politician. I`m a pastor. I have a pastor`s heart. What if I had a church member who I didn`t agree with it and they just -- I said, well, then I`m done with you. I won`t talk to you anymore. That`s not what my calling is.

My calling is to say, I don`t agree with you and this is what I think you need to do, and I hope we can still entertain dialogue and be able to speak to one another. But if today I say, Trump, I`m done with you, no more, I won`t talk to you anymore, then how can I continue to be a voice for the voiceless, how can I be light in the midst of darkness? So, that`s why I have grappled with the decision. And this moment, I`ve decided that I`m still going to remain on the evangelical advisory committee.

KORNACKI: You are still on the committee. Are you support like -- if the election were today, would you vote for him?

SUAREZ: I haven`t endorsed Donald Trump. I`ll be honest with you today. If the election were today, I don`t know how I`m going to vote.

But Mrs. Clinton hasn`t helped me make my decision any easier. Her position on later term abortion, the vagueness on religious liberty make it almost impossible for an evangelical, a conservative, to say, you know what, I`m going to give my vote to Mrs. Clinton. She could really help the decision by coming to a table of reason with evangelicals as well, and discussing this issue.

But as of right now, Mr. Trump, with all the bad you can see in him, is the only one that`s been willing to sit down with evangelicals.

KORNACKI: All right. Reverend Tony Suarez, executive vice president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, a member of Donald Trump`s evangelical advisory committee -- appreciate the time. Thanks for joining us.

SUAREZ: Thank you.

KORNACKI: All right. There is a lot more ahead, including another side to the speech that he took further today.

And, later, Rachel is going to be here with choice things to say about the Trump speech last night.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: Tonight, the people of Florida are hunkered down as Hurricane Hermine is set to make lands fall. Hermine is a category one storm with winds of 75 miles an hour. People on Florida`s Gulf Coast are dealing with flooding and heavy rains are expected to continue into tomorrow.

There is also a tornado watch in place for central Florida through late tonight. Hermine is supposed to diminish in power through the weekend. But effects of this storm may be felt along the Virginia coast, even as far north as Delaware and New Jersey.

We`ll keep you posted on the latest. We`ll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: We also have to be honest about the fact that not everyone who seeks to join our country will be able to successfully assimilate. Sometimes, it`s just not going to work out. It`s our right, as a sovereign nation to choose **immigrants** that we think are the likeliest to thrive and flourish and love us.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: Donald Trump making the case that assimilation, the idea of merging culturally with other Americans, ought to be key in considering which **immigrants** to admit to this country. Among **immigration** hard liners, that part of the speech last night was a very big hit.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

KRIS KOBACH (R), KANSAS SECRETARY OF STATE: I haven`t heard a presidential candidate or a president talk about assimilation in our **immigration** system in a long time. You know, it`s so important that we welcome **immigrants** here. But that`s just the first half. You have to make people become American. And that`s something we should not be ashamed of, adopting our values.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: That`s Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach there back in 2010. He wrote what was then nation`s strictest piece of anti-**immigration** legislation, Arizona`s "papers please" law, he says he helped also to come up with Trump`s border wall plan this year.

In a speech to the American Legion today, Trump suggested that under his administration, the concern over assimilation wouldn`t just be about new arrivals to the country.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: Promoting American pride and patriotism in America`s schools. Very important.

In a Trump administration, I plan to work directly with the American Legion to uphold our common values and to help ensure they are taught to America`s children.

We will stop apologizing for America and we will start celebrating America.

(APPLAUSE)

We will be united by our common culture, values and principles, becoming one American nation. One country, under one Constitution, saluting one American flag and always saluting it.

(APPLAUSE)

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: United by our common culture, becoming one American nation, always saluting the flag. It`s not just his hard line stance on **immigration**. That`s something we haven`t seen a major party nominee embrace like Trump has in the modern era.

But that **immigration** message is also tied in with a bigger and broader appeal to nationalism. That is something else we haven`t seen a major party presidential nominee express like this in a very long time.

It really is an untested thing in the modern era, in terms of the appeal of this kind of message. There`s clearly some market for it. There was enough to carry Donald Trump to the Republican nomination, at least. But does it have enough appeal to carry him farther?

Joining us now is E.J. Dionne, "Washington Post" columnist and author of "Why the Right Went Wrong: Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond." That`s coming out in paperback this month.

E.J., thanks for joining us tonight.

E.J. DIONNE, WASHINGTON POST: Good to be with you.

KORNACKI: So, listening to the clip from Kris Kobach saying he can`t remember the last time a presidential nominee talked about assimilation. I think I can. I think it was Pat Buchanan. I think it was Pat Buchanan about 20 years ago and that really is more than we`ve seen with anybody else since then, a key part of Trump`s message.

DIONNE: Well, you know, we have don through periods like this before, where there was heavy emphasis on teaching Americanism and assimilating **immigrants**. And there`s one important fact that helps us understand why all this is happening now. That is that we do, at this moment, have an unusually high number of foreign born Americans.

In 1970, only 4.7 percent of us were foreign born. As of 2013, 13.1 percent of us were foreign born. We haven`t seen numbers like that since the turn of the last century, during that great wave of **immigration** back then. And there was a backlash back then. There was the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.

So, I think this is a normal American thing, even though it seems very strange, but usually, and in the past, we have always overcome it. And your point about nationalism is really well-taken because in many ways, the Trump message is much more like the European far right, which is very explicitly nationalist than it is like traditional American conservatism.

Yes, sometimes American conservatives and liberals engage in some nationalism. But this is a peculiar campaign in our tradition, compared to the Europeans where they are a accustomed to this from the far right.

KORNACKI: And how widespread do you think the feeling is? You are talking the change circumstances with the pace of **immigration** over the last decade, couple of decades, really. How widespread do you think is the feeling, the apprehension you are describing?

DIONNE: Well, you know, the polling suggests when you ask people do they want comprehensive **immigration** reform that would allow people who came here illegally to get on a path to citizenship, that has a majority support in the country. If you ask people what`s the most important issue facing the country, **immigration**is not very high on that list.

So, I think you are talking about a significant minority, but still a minority of Americans. It`s a bigger part of the Republican Party, which is why this message went down better in the Republican Party than it is in the general election.

I was trying to think of what the heck was Trump doing last night? You know, he talked a lot about softening his position. There was talk out of the campaign saying that, you know, he wanted to appeal to middle of the road people and Latinos, then comes this big, hostile bang.

All I can think of is he`s trying to raise the **immigration** issue saying this links to everything else, crime, the fact somebody might lack a job.

So, I think he`s trying to change the issue structure of the campaign by screaming so loudly about **immigration**. And I don`t think it will work. But that`s the only rational thing I can think of that he was up to last night.

KORNACKI: I`m going through similar thinking in my head, some of the groups, when you reduce this to crude demographic terms, the groups Donald Trump is struggling with that Republicans don`t normally struggle with. The question I`m asking myself last night, and I really find myself asking every time I see him speak now is, is this doing anything for him to move the needle with people who aren`t already with him, with people who had reservations about him. Did you see anything in the speech that might?

DIONNE: I saw nothing in the speech to help him with the groups mentioned in the beginning of the show. I was talking to a Clinton supporter today who said, you know, I was a little worried when the press started saying how presidential he looked when the media on TV started saying how presidential he looked in Mexico. Then I heard that speech and I went to bed totally unworried. He didn`t move those voters.

There has been a theory if only the Republican Party could increase its share with white voters and particularly white men, you know, maybe they could overcome the deficit with minorities. That`s not happening. It`s not happening because even if he does gain some votes in the white, working class, he`s losing them at the upper end, just as you said at the beginning of the show. I really don`t think last night helped him with them.

KORNACKI: All right. E.J. Dionne, "Washington Post" columnist, author of "Why the Right Went Wrong" -- thanks for the time.

DIONNE: Great to be with you. Thanks.

KORNACKI: All right. And still ahead, we are going to take a trip over to the big board to look at why the Trump campaign is so worried about the electoral map. And also, Rachel is going to be here with thoughts on Donald Trump`s **immigration** speech.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RICHARD NIXON, FORMER PRESIDENT: Sixteen years, ever since the Hess case, you have had a lot of fun. A lot of fun that you have had on opportunity to attack me and I think I have given as good as I have taken. As I leave you, I want you to know, just think how much you are going to be missing. You won`t have Nixon to kick around anymore.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: There`s a famous clip. Richard Nixon just after the 1962 California gubernatorial election. He lost that race, the lowest moment of his career before he came back to win the presidency on his second try.

It is every politician`s dream to exist in the world without the media challenging, following, questioning their every move and one controversial political leader now doing everything he can try to make that dream come true. That story is ahead and so is Rachel.

Stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: Maybe hard to believe, but voting for the November election starts a week from tomorrow. It`s when absentee voting starts in the state of North Carolina. This as concerns are mounting within Republican circles about Donald Trump`s shrinking electoral map.

"The New York Times" reporting that on Monday, Mr. Trump`s son, Eric, met with senior officials at the RNC where he was warned his father`s already narrow path to the presidency could vanish entirely. From the article here, "Going through the swing states one by one, party officials showed Eric Trump his father was drastically underperforming other Republicans in the polls."

So, we saw the article. We thought about it. And we said, maybe this is a good way to use our old friend, the big board.

So, here`s what we`re going to do. We`re going to assume -- I`m going to assume the role of an RNC staffer and I`m going to show you what the briefing might have looked like. Donald Trump`s -- his son was there, maybe other folks. What was the RNC telling him? What would the presentation look like? What would the message be? It might be something like this.

So, Mr. Trump, here is what the board was supposed to look like. We thought at the start of the campaign, in the home stretch, it`d be a pretty race, and in the gray states in here would be the swing states. We`d have basically a 50/50 shot of getting there. A couple of these states could put us over 270. That was the plan.

A couple problems happened along the way, though. Number one, a couple states that were used to being swing states, that are always swing states, suddenly, they are not looking swing states. Look at this -- Virginia, Hillary Clinton is up double digits in Virginia. Colorado, Hillary Clinton is up 14 points in Colorado.

These are always supposed to be swing states. I have to be honest with you, Mr. Trump, they look like Hillary Clinton states. That`s your first problem.

Here is another problem. Some of these red states on here, we always think they are Republican. We never think we have to worry about them. Well, suddenly, we have to worry about a couple of them.

Let me show you what I mean. How about North Carolina? In 2012, Mitt Romney won the state. Hillary Clinton is actually ahead in the latest poll in North Carolina.

How about Georgia? Last time it went for a Democrat, 1992. Hillary Clinton within striking distance. We have to worry about Georgia, Mr. Trump.

How about Missouri? Look at this, a double digit win for Romney in 2012. Trump by a single point in the latest poll.

Go out to Arizona. Donald Trump up three points in a new poll. Again, that was a double digit state for Mitt Romney four years ago.

We got a bunch of red states here. I`m not saying Hillary Clinton is going to win them, but Trump is not guaranteed to win them, either. We`ve got to say right now, these are states we cannot count on Mr. Trump. We`ve got to worry about them.

And then, there are the other battleground states. Let`s show you how you`re doing, how your campaign is doing in those states. New Hampshire, it was a six-point win for Obama four years ago, Hillary Clinton is outperforming that, she`s up nine in the most recent poll.

How about Pennsylvania? It was five in 2012. Again, Hillary Clinton is outperforming. Bad news for Mr. Trump in those states.

How about Florida? OK, very close race in 2012. Still a very close race. You have to improve there a little bit. At least that`s within striking distance theoretically.

Ohio, again, down four points. Probably going to be a must win state. Look at Wisconsin. This might be good news for the Trump campaign. A poll yesterday had the lead at only three points for Hillary Clinton.

Again, if you are Donald Trump, you`ve got to be winning. That`s a couple point win. Iowa, there`s a tie. That`s the best Trump is doing in any swing state right now. There is a tie in the most recent poll in Iowa. That`s a state Obama won by six points.

You can look at Nevada. Again, closer than it was in 2012, but Hillary Clinton still in the lead in Nevada.

So, if you go back to that map from those swing states we just showed you - - look, Hillary Clinton is outperforming Obama in New Hampshire. She`s outperforming him in Pennsylvania. That`s a stretch for Republicans.

So, that`s pretty much what the map is looking like now. The bottom line for Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton is very close to 270. Donald Trump is very far away.

That would mean Donald Trump would basically have to run the table on all of these gray states, basically all these gray states to catch Hillary Clinton or he would have to take some of these blue states where she`s doing very well and seems to be running away with it and somehow make them competitive.

That is a steep hill to climb with only eight weeks to go. That`s your presentation, Mr. Trump.

We`ll be back after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: What you are looking at right now is hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets of Caracas earlier today, calling for the removal of the Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. The Venezuelan economy is in the throes of full-on meltdown and Maduro`s party has begun cracking down on its political opponents.

Maduro is accusing the position of trying to instigate a coup. But the coalition of parties against the president say they are merely working toward a presidential recall than it has their political right. This afternoon, pro-government police fired tear gas into the crowd, trying to disperse the protest.

And meanwhile, the opposition says they are preparing the next demonstration. Watch this space.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: For the last few days, this show has been covering the saga of Maine Governor Paul LePage, who has introduced a new twist.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

REPORTER: The leaders in the Senate say they are expecting to hear some sort of a plan for you of how you are going to --

GOV. PAUL LEPAGE (R), MAINE: I will tell you this --

REPORTER: -- change yourself going forward.

LEPAGE: I will be seeking spiritual guidance with my wife and my children. I will tell you this, though, to whomever it was, I`m not an alcoholic and I`m not a drug addict. I don`t have mental issues. What I have is a backbone and I want to move Maine forward.

REPORTER: Besides spiritual counseling, do you believe there`s anything you need to do going forward to change your style, work better with the rest of the state government?

LEPAGE: Yes, yes.

REPORTER: Talk about that.

LEPAGE: Yes, I will no longer speak to the press, ever again after today. They got Adrian. And I`m serious, everything will be put in writing.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

KORNACKI: So, he says he`s done talking to the press, which may be a challenge since Paul LePage`s term as governor doesn`t expire until January of 2019. Now, all of this coming after the past week which has featured LePage haranguing the press about black people who he says are coming from out of state to inflict violence on Maine.

LePage left an obscenity-laced voice mail for a Democratic legislature and telling them to give it to the press. LePage telling reporters he would like to point a gun between that legislatures` eyes and also LePage claiming to the press that black and Hispanic people are, quote, "the enemy in a shooting war."

Also, in the middle of all that spending, publicly mulling whether he might resign as governor and then deciding not to and then saying that he will no longer speak to the press ever again. Today, legislative leaders in Maine held a special meeting about all of this, and they still couldn`t decide what to do. It is not the first and probably not the last time that Paul LePage has left a lot of people very confused.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KORNACKI: So, last night, late last night, Rachel did a special live edition of her show at midnight after Trump`s **immigration** speech. Her reaction to that speech is something you ever want to miss, but we have a feeling you might have because it was so late. Maybe you were sleeping instead. We want to make sure you get to check it out.

Here is Rachel.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

RACHEL MADDOW, MSNBC HOST, TRMS: Pop quiz. Pop quiz about Abraham Lincoln.

Abraham Lincoln, famously a Republican, I think inarguably the greatest American president in the history of American presidents. One of the greatest and most consequential of Americans of any stature to ever walk the earth.

Clearly, I think the greatest and most consequential Republican politician to ever walk the earth.

So, here is the pop quiz about Abraham Lincoln. What party was Abraham Lincoln before he became a Republican? Because he became a Republican right at the beginning of Republicans. Their first national convention as a party was 1856 in Philadelphia.

Lincoln was there at that convention. He almost got picked as the brand- new Republican Party`s vice president that year at the first convention. But that was their first convention, the Republican Party didn`t goat founded until then.

What was Lincoln before that? If you said he was a Whig, you win the nonexistent prize for this pop quiz. He was a Whig. He`s in the Whig Party before the Republican Party existed, and he became a Republican.

Abraham Lincoln even ran for the party. The Whig Party has kind of a funny name, right, but it was a major political party. At one point or another, Presidents John Quincy Adams, and Benjamin Harrison, and Chester Arthur and Rutherford B. Hayes and Abraham Lincoln, at some point, in all of their careers, all of those American presidents were all members of the Whig Party.

William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor, Miller Fillmore, they were all Whig Party members while they were president. The It was a really big deal. Then they weren`t. Then they fell apart.

The Whigs were riven by internal divisions dealing with emerging things as the nation grew and changed. A lot of the division had to do with the issue of slavery and some other principled issues. But the Whig party, it had been a huge deal, and then it fell apart.

And political parties back then weren`t exactly what they are today. But when the Whig Party fell apart, the two-party system at the time fell apart as well. You have two parties and one collapses. It doesn`t just mean good news for the other party, it mean that is two-party system that counts on tension between the two parties, that falls apart if one party ceases to function.

And when the two-party system fell apart because the Whigs fell apart, when that two-party system rocked by them collapsing as a major party, what was left behind in American politics, for a while, at least, turned incredibly nasty -- a little bit violent, but also nasty.

One of the things that happened in American politics at that time is that we got a series of secret societies that formed, basically to try to drive Catholics out of this country. One of them was a secret Order of the Star Spangled Banner. There was also a Secret Order of United Americans.

So, all these different groups, they all had different names. But their whole reason for existing, their animating cause was that they were against Catholics. They were against these filthy **immigrants** who were destroying America for native born Americans. Americans who had been born here were having their birthright torn from them by this filthy interlopers, these Catholics, these suspicious, these unassimilable people from other countries who were running everything here -- criminal, filthy, irretrievably **alien**.

When the movement embodied by the societies spread out of the cities of the East Coast and spread out of New England and went big nationwide, it did go big nationwide, the movement, it was interesting, it morphed a little bit depending on where it was. It was very strikingly anti-Catholic in, say, Massachusetts.

By the time that movement was ready to spawn its sort of offspring or offshoots in California -- well, in California, it didn`t that that much sense to be rabidly anti-Catholic. In California, the version of it became rabidly anti-Chinese, because those were the **immigrants** they had out there, if you want to blame something on **immigrants**, well you`ll be an anti- Chinese party out there.

This movement in American politics around the time that the two-party system collapsed because the Whigs fell apart, it was nativism. They hated **immigrants**. They blamed everything wrong in the country on **immigrants**. And it started as disparate movements and disparate secret societies.

But eventually, they got a name. They became known as the no nothing movement, which is also a funny name. People remember it to this day in part because it`s a strange thing to call some sort of political movement.

But the origins are simple. If you ask them about their party, they didn`t profess to be ignorant. Their origins were in secret societies, if you were a member of the movement, you`re supposed to say, oh, I know nothing. Do you go to meetings with this movement? I know nothing. Are you in the secret society? I know nothing. That`s how they got the name, know nothings.

But for a brief period in our history, around the collapse of Whigs before the civil war, the know-nothings got really big and fast and they did that in the waste land of this two-party system getting rattled. The Whigs collapsed, two major party democracy fell apart for a time because of that, and so, we got these know-nothing politicians, this know-nothing movement across the country. They`re very successful.

The know-nothing mayor of Chicago declared there will be no city job for any **immigrant** of anywhere. The know-nothing mayor of Philadelphia said there would be no political appointments for any **immigrant**. Native born Americans only.

And they took over major cities. They took over the legislature in Massachusetts. They spread nationwide and they had more than a million members. Know-nothings were a big deal in American politics for a couple of years, as the normal party system broke itself down and stopped to function.

But then they collapsed. I mean, if you think about it, it`s kind of hard to run a national party big enough to sustain itself and grow. If the reason you exist is to carve out a large chunk of the people in this country, **immigrants**, and define them as the problem, define them as the thing that`s causing all of the other ails in this country. The thing on which you can blame all the dissatisfaction of every other thing in this country that you might be satisfied about.

And if you`re blaming **immigrants**, you`re blaming anybody born in any other country, then, only pure Americans, right, native-born Americans meet your standard for who can be in your party. Problem is, we`re just not that kind of a country, population wise, we`re basically all **immigrants**.

And so, the know-nothings did rise all of a sudden when there was no longer the system of two-strong parties to take up the space and define the space where constructive and sustainable American politics could happen. They rose for a hot minute in that environment when that two-party system stopped working, it didn`t last, couldn`t last. I mean, they`re nativist, blamed the **immigrants** party, it dried up and blew away, became historical curiosity.

But since then, periodically, particularly at times of stress when the two parties are not pulling their weight and not functioning well as national parties, now we know from history to expect this sort of stuff to come back. It`s does -- it does come up. It`s like anthrax in our soil.

We are a nation of **immigrants** who turn on **immigrants** as scapegoats when normal politics doesn`t work any more. And so when the wind is just right and the host is weak, just wait, the blame the **immigrants** that`s always around at some level, it comes back. It comes out of the secret societies it comes roaring out once again out of the dark.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

TRUMP: He was murdered by an illegal **immigrant** gang member previously convicted of burglary, brutally beaten and left to bleed to death in his home, 90 years old and defenseless. The perpetrators were illegal **immigrants** with criminal records a mile long.

Sexually assaulted and beaten to death with a hammer. Her killer had been arrested on multiple occasions, but was never ever deported.

Dangerous, dangerous, dangerous criminals, deadly, and it is deadly, non- enforcement policies that allow thousands of criminal **aliens** to freely roam our streets, walk around, do whatever they want to do, crime all over the place. If these violent offenders cannot be sent home, our law enforcement officers have to release them into your communities. And, by the way, the results are horrific.

As many as 30 percent committed new offenses, including rape, attempted murder, and child molestation.

We take `em. We take `em. We take anybody, come on in, anybody, just come on in. Not any more. My first hour in office, those people are gone.

(CHEERS)

If you can call it deport it, if you want, the press doesn`t like that term. You can call it whatever the hell you want, they`re gone. They`re going to be gone. It will be over.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses earning to breathe free, the refuge of your teaming shore, send these the homeless, tempest toss to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Republican Party has been anti-**immigrant** for a few years now and it`s current iteration, right? Remember John McCain proposed **immigration** reform and then when he was running for president as a Republican, he said, actually, now, he would vote against his own bill. That`s a good sign, right? The Republican Party moved in recent years, over the last few years they have been getting more hard line against **immigrants** and **immigration** for a few years.

But this nativist tirade for claiming that cutting off **immigration** is the most important -- she said it is the only conversation we should be having at this time, that -- that is older and deeper than the recent Republican Party drift toward harder line conservatism on this issue. That is the kind of anti-**immigrant** nativism that we have had in our country before, but when we get it, is when normal politics collapses.

We are a system that was never explicitly designed this way but we became this way really fast. We are a system, a democratic system that is basically designed to work with two major parties. We`re a two-party democracy, and yes, there are minor parties, and yes, the party names have shifted over time.

But when -- we now know from centuries of existence, right, we now know -- when two parties in America cannot equally hold their weight in argument, when they cannot take up space in the tension between them to define the realm of decent political discourse, this happens. This has happened before. This happens in our country.

There`s a reason that David Duke from the Ku Klux Klan praised Donald Trump`s praised the tirade as an excellent speech. It`s not because David Duke is a creep. It`s because in the 1920s era clan was the next iteration, right, after the 1850s era, no-nothings. They were prove you iterations of this kind of thing that seeps out of secret societies and into our real politics when real politics fails.

Donald Trump humiliated the Republican Party this year, right? They ran all of those senators, former senators, governors, former governors, all of those mainstream figures of their party against them, and he destroyed all of them. Donald Trump destroyed and humiliated the Republican Party this year because the Republican Party was weak and failing.

When it fail, the weed that grew up in the space that that tree use to occupy, is a weed that our country has seen before. It`s in our soil. It grows when we give it space. It`s a weed we`ve uprooted before. It does keep growing back perniciously.

It is one of the ugliest things we have ever been as a country and we are now living it in our generation again.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

KORNACKI: That was Rachel very early this morning with her reaction to Donald Trump`s **immigration** speech and Rachel will be back here tomorrow night, and I`ll see you tomorrow afternoon at 4:00.

And now, it`s time for "THE LAST WORD WITH LAWRENCE O`DONNELL".

Good evening, Lawrence.

LAWRENCE O`DONNELL, LAST WORD: Good evening, Steve. Thank you very much.

KORNACKI: Sure.

O`DONNELL: You know, I`m no good with lyrics. I don`t know all the lyrics or even most of the lyrics to most of my favorite songs, because it`s the music that moves me. I hear the music more than the lyrics.

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