

**BIPARTISAN FORUM
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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA**

PARTICIPANTS:

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MR. MICHAEL BLOOMBERG, Mayor of New York City

MR. DAVID BOREN, Former U.S. Senator

MR. BILL BROCK, Former U.S. Senator

MR. BILL COHEN, Former Secretary of Defense and U.S. Senator

MR. JACK DANFORTH, Former U.S. Senator

MS. SUSAN EISENHOWER, President, The Eisenhower Group

MR. BOB GRAHAM, Former U.S. Senator

MR. CHUCK HAGEL, U.S. Senator

MR. GARY HART, Former U.S. Senator

MR. ANGUS KING, Former Maine Governor

MR. JIM LEACH, Former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives

MR. SAM NUNN, Former U.S. Senator

MR. EDWARD PERKINS, Former Ambassador

MR. CHUCK ROBB, Former U.S. Senator

MR. MARK WHITE, Former Texas Governor

MS. CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN, Former New Jersey Governor

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much. Welcome to all of you. The University of Oklahoma is honored to be the setting of this forum dedicated to the restoration of bipartisanship in the political arena.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Over this past year, the University has focused on the presidency as an institution. We have hosted presidential historians David McCullough, Doris Kearns Goodwin and Michael Beschloss; former President George Bush, Sr.; White House Chiefs of Staff Ken Duberstein for Ronald Reagan and the late Jack Valenti for Lyndon Johnson. We've invited all presidential candidates in both parties to visit us. One has already come, and we hope that others will come in the days ahead.

Today we welcome a group of outstanding public servants, women and men who have served their country well with decades of combined experience. I will introduce them in alphabetical order. Please hold your applause and welcome them when all have been introduced.

The President of the Center for the Study of the Presidency, Dr. David Abshire. The Mayor of New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, an Independent. Former Republican National Chairman and U.S. Senator from Tennessee, Bill Brock, a Republican. Former U.S. Senator from Maine and Former Secretary of Defense, Bill Cohen, a Republican. Former U.S. Senator from Missouri, Jack Danforth, a Republican. President of the Eisenhower Group, Susan Eisenhower, a Republican. The Former Governor and U.S. Senator from Florida, Bob Graham, a Democrat.

U.S. Senator from --and I apologize for the misprint to the press. It says Iowa. Nebraska. It's hard for us to write that. I'm just kidding. We have great admiration even in the midst of our rivalry.

MR. HAGEL: I'm leaving.

MR. BOREN: Our unity has already been breached.

Chuck Hagel, a Republican. Former U.S. Senator from Colorado, Gary Hart, a Democrat. Former Governor of Maine, Angus King, who served as an Independent. Former Congressman from Iowa, Jim Leach, a Republican. Former U.S. Senator from Georgia and our cohost for this gathering, Sam Nunn, a Democrat. Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Edward Perkins. Former U.S. Senator from Virginia and a Former Governor of Virginia, Chuck Robb, a Democrat. And the Former Governor of Texas, Mark White, a Democrat. The Former Governor of New Jersey and Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Christine Todd Whitman, a Republican.

Please join me in welcoming this panel to our campus.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: The common denominator of this group gathered here today is the demonstrated willingness to work together across party lines to help our country. In fact, many of us came to know each other in this bipartisan enterprise.

For example, Senator Cohen and I co chaired the Senate Intelligence Committee together for four years. And during that time, we are proud to say there was not a single party line vote taken in that committee. Senators Nunn and Cohen worked together in the reorganization of the defense department. Senator Danforth and I worked together on the finance committee on tax policy and entitlement reform.

There are many, many other examples of members of this panel working together at the national, state, city, and local levels in a bipartisan fashion. We are here today because we are committed to a renewal of that kind of bipartisanship. We have come together --

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: We have come together at a crucial moment. These are not ordinary times. For the first time in history, polls tell us that a majority of Americans no longer believe that our future will be as great as our past. We must band together to reject that pessimism. We must reassert the "can do" American spirit which embraces the future and all of its possibilities.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Today we come together with hope and with determination, with a determination to stop politics as usual which seeks to divide us for political gain. We come together to resurrect that kind of bipartisan statesmanship that united us as Americans to win the Cold War.

We come together to appeal to all presidential candidates to tell us how they plan to bring us together. Today we say, Hear our plea. Bring us together, bring us together, bring us together, and the American people will assure our future.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: History teaches us that bipartisanship is possible. It is not some romantic dream. It has a proven track record in our own political system producing landmarks as the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the policy of containment of communism, which was sustained for more than 40 years through administrations of both political parties and through Congresses dominated by different political parties.

Last night and this morning we worked together to develop a joint statement of principles which we could embrace as a group. And I would now ask our co-host, Senator Sam Nunn, to come forward and read our joint statement titled, "A Bipartisan Appeal To a Nation At Risk."

Senator Nunn.

(Applause.)

MR. NUNN: Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you, David.

We've gone through probably five or six hours of discussion, debate, and drafting of this statement, which I will read on behalf of all of us that are gathered here.

It reminds me very much of the days when I used to chair the Armed Services committee, sitting around and looking at every word for sometimes hours and debating and discussing and get everybody --getting everybody on board. The distinguishing factor here, though, is we always had a quorum. I used to spend an awful lot of my time as chairman waiting for a quorum.

I think the --before I read the statement, I would just like to say that I believe that David captured the spirit of optimism this group has. We do believe we have serious problems. We wouldn't be here if we didn't think the nation was facing serious problems. But neither would we be here if we didn't think that the American people can do something about it. So that's the spirit in which this statement is being made.

Quoting from this group, the committee as a whole: America is in danger. Our ability to meet and solve the problems that face us is seriously compromised. National surveys reveal that an unprecedented seven out of ten citizens believe that life for their children will not be as good as their own. So we are heading in the wrong direction. We share this deep concern and frustration of the American people.

Approval for the United States around the world has dropped to historically low levels with only one out of four people approving of our country's actions, even in nations that are our longtime allies.

We have eroded America's credibility and capacity to lead our urgent global and foreign policy issues, including terrorism, nuclear nonproliferation, climate change, and regional instabilities.

Our budget and trade deficits are out of control. We're squandering our children's future. As we say in Georgia, we are eating our seed corn. The ominous transfer of our national wealth has made our economy vulnerable, and our economic strength and competitiveness are both declining. Middle-income Americans are struggling to keep their jobs and their homes and educate their children.

We're not as secure as we should be. Our military is stretched thin and our nation remains vulnerable to catastrophic terrorism.

We are being held economically hostage because we have no energy policy worthy of its name.

Our educational system is failing to prepare our children to succeed in a globalized and technological world.

Nearly 50 million Americans remain without health insurance, and the cost of medical care continues to spiral.

The failures of bridges in Minneapolis and levees in New Orleans are harsh metaphors for the reckless neglect of our infrastructure.

Now, these are critical issues, and they are uniquely interlocked. We must have a national strategy and a prioritization of resources. And I believe that we can and will do that because America, as a nation, historically has always risen when we're in trouble, and we have always managed to unite when we're in trouble. And we believe that we will be able to do that again.

We also asked ourselves in our discussion in the last few hours, Why is it so difficult for our country to act today to meet these challenges which are so obvious to so many? We are failing to address them primarily because rampant partisanship has paralyzed the ability of our government to act and lead and inspire.

If we allow polarizing politics to continue, we will remain a nation divided. And no matter who is elected this fall, he or she will not have a mandate for governing.

Too many in both of our political parties have sought to energize their bases instead of reaching out to address the issues that concern and affect our nation as a whole. They appeal to extremes and marginalize those in the commonsense center.

Now, these are our challenges, but our nation always rises up and responds to those challenges.

In order to break this partisan impasse, we urge the presidential candidates to provide:

Clear descriptions of how they would establish a government of national unity;

Specific strategies for reducing polarization and reaching bipartisan consensus;

Plans to go beyond tokenism to appoint a truly bipartisan cabinet with critical posts held by the most qualified people regardless of their political affiliation;

And proposals for bipartisan executive and legislative policy groups in absolutely critical areas such as national security.

On the good news side, national elections present an opportunity for candidates and citizens to have a serious and civil discussion of the imperative issues facing our country at home and abroad. This year is a year of opportunity for America. Today we urge our fellow citizens, including the news media, to join us in asking the candidates to address these fundamental challenges.

We are convinced that if we as a nation begin to ask, begin to discuss, begin to debate, and begin to address these and other fundamental issues, we can renew our commitment to community and empower those whom we elect to govern effectively.

We are convinced that if we establish a government of national unity, we can meet these challenges head on, develop a cohesive strategy prioritizing our responses and matching our goals with our capabilities.

In short, we believe that if we unify, we can turn America's peril into America's promise and that we can face our future with confidence and with optimism.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Nunn.

And I want to thank, again, the members of the panel who have spent many hours in working together to draft this joint statement and to lay down this set of challenges to our candidates. And we sincerely hope that they will respond to these questions and these suggestions for ways to create bipartisanship and unity in our government.

This is, as you know, a press conference. The audience, all of you, are here as our invited guests. The questions will come exclusively from members of the press. I would ask, as much as possible, to have those questions address the issues which we have raised and the specific appeals for bipartisanship which we have made.

Microphones will be brought to you, I believe. We have microphones that will be brought to members of the press. And, if you would, please give your name and state the news organization you represent as you ask your question.

You may ask the question to any members of the panel, and then if other --any particular member of the panel, and if others wish to comment, I will recognize them as well.

MR. SIFF: The question is addressed to both the panel and to Mayor Bloomberg. My name is Andrew Siff from WNBC in New York.

The question has to do with the timing of this summit. Given what voters just did in Iowa, choosing candidates that presented themselves as unity candidates, do you think, in essence, voters are already hearing what you're saying?

And I wondered if Mayor Bloomberg could also address that question as to whether perhaps voters are already hearing what you guys are saying together.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much. I think we do. As all of you know, this meeting was scheduled prior to the Iowa caucuses, so we had no idea what the outcome would be. We are not here to encourage or discourage support for any particular candidates at this point.

But I do think we see some encouraging signs as we listened to comments from several of the candidates in recent days that perhaps even the existence of this meeting, in advance of it, was already beginning to have some impact.

I'll call on Mayor Bloomberg to add his comments.

MR. BLOOMBERG: Well, I just --I hope you're right. I hope that all the candidates say to themselves, The public is tired with the partisanship and the special interests. And if I'm going to get elected, I've got to stand up and say what I believe, face the big issues, hold myself accountable. And maybe you are seeing that. And if it was true of a few of the candidates, maybe in the next election cycle and the next primary in New Hampshire and going forward during the month of January and February and March, each of them will do exactly the same thing.

MR. BOREN: Senator Hart wants to add a comment.

MR. HART: I'm kind of hiding behind the podium here. But one of the ways to gauge the response to your question is to watch the independent voters in the primary states where independents can vote. And that, I think, will indicate not only the party but, more particularly, the kind of candidate and the kind of presidential leadership the swing vote or the independent vote in this country is looking for.

MR. BOREN: Additional questions?

Yes.

Well, I guess --here we have the mike. I'll let the people with the microphone control where they take them.

MR. SEIFMAN: David Seifman, New York Post. What are you going to do if the candidates don't do as you want?

MR. BOREN: Are you addressing that to anyone specific?

MR. SEIFMAN: Since I'm from New York --

MR. BOREN: Pardon?

MR. SEIFMAN: Since I'm from New York --

MR. BOREN: Since you're from New York, you want to address that candidate, surprisingly, part to Mayor Bloomberg.

Mayor, do you want to take a crack at that first, and then we'll ask any other members of the panel to comment if they wish.

MR. BLOOMBERG: I think all the members of the panel are optimistic that the candidates will listen to us and will understand that there is a deep need in this country and a deep desire among the electorate to have candidates face the big issues. And if we can be a little bit of a catalyst along those lines, then we really have accomplished something. And you'll never know whether they've changed because of us or didn't change in spite of us. Who knows.

MR. BOREN: Senator Danforth wishes to add a comment.

MR. DANFORTH: The question isn't what we're going to do. The question is what the American people are going to do. What has happened in American politics in the recent years is that each of the two political parties has appealed to the base of the party, the true believers of the party. And the result of that is that instead of the two parties appealing to the center of the political spectrum and competing for the center, which traditionally they did, now each party is trying to energize the base. And the people in the center, which is most Americans, have become marginalized by the current state of partisan politics in America.

Why do political parties appeal to the base?

It's because people who are on the more extreme positions are the ones who are the most outspoken. And people in the center of American politics have not been outspoken. But I think most people in the center now feel that the politicians are not really speaking for them, that politics has gotten beyond where the average person is.

So it's not that we are some group or that we are some group of 17 judges sitting up here. It's a question of whether what we are saying resonates with the American people and whether people who are at the center of the political spectrum are going to be more outspoken and demanding that politicians come together away from these polar extremes.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: I have --Senator Cohen, Governor Whitman, and also Senator Brock wish to comment on this.

Senator Cohen.

MR. COHEN: I'd like to comment on Senator Danforth's voice, because when we were in the Senate, we always referred to him as not only the voice of reason but the voice of God.

This has not been planned. I didn't know that I would be sitting next to Senator Danforth. Let me read --let me read a statement that has been in my mind for some time.

"We fritter away our lives hustling between committee hearings, filing bills to keep our names in the paper. We have some fundamental choices to make. Do we believe in a growth society? And, if so, how do we reconcile it with environmental concerns? Are we willing to fight for anything?"

And, if so, where fundamentally? Do we want to continue to run trade deficits? If not, are we willing to adopt policies necessary to change the present decline? Unless we are willing to raise these questions and do something about them, then we will witness the decline and fall of our nation."

Those could be the words of Chuck Hagel, Senator Hart, anyone on this panel. They were, in fact, uttered by Jack Danforth March 21, 1979. Nearly 30 years ago this man sat in a room --and I made notes --and it was a powerful statement. And he and others like him have been raising these issues for some time.

So when we ask ourselves, Why are we here? why us? why now? it's because all of those who are here on this podium have been through the process, we've seen that the system can work and why it's not working.

And that's why we're here today, to make a difference, to help stimulate. Not to be here as a promoter for anybody's candidacy or any party, but to serve as catalysts for starting a deeper, more profound dialogue on what it takes to make this government of ours work. That's why we're here.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you, Senator Cohen.
Thank you very much.

I'm very alarmed to learn that Senator Cohen, when we were in rooms together, was taking notes on the things that all of us said. But I am relieved that he quoted the eloquent words of Senator Danforth.

Governor Whitman.

MS. WHITMAN: I want to add to what's been said by saying we are also, I hope, going to be able to act as a catalyst to Americans to help them understand that it's up to us as individuals, as voters, to take back this system.

Those who have allowed the parties to respond almost exclusively to the extremes have done so because they haven't participated. When you have an average voter turnout in primaries of 10 percent, you're ceding the ground. And the wonderful thing about our democracy is that we are the ones who can make the difference.

And we hope that by being here together as people who have served our state and our countries and our localities --and we have done it in a bipartisan way --we can be partisan, but we also understand that we can walk --reach across the political aisle in order to do good public policy. That's what the American people should be demanding, and we need to send that message very clearly. This is the window of opportunity to do it, and we, as the American people, need to be heard. We cannot be silent any longer on these issues.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you, Governor Whitman.

Senator Brock wished to comment.

MR. BROCK: Yeah. It may be strange to defend the two parties in a country where a plurality of us now call ourselves independent. But the truth is that a political party is the bridge between most of us in our government. It's the access point. And it is an important instrument for us as citizens.

And what's happened in the last 15, 20 years particularly is we've seen an erosion in our parties as we create these new instruments of big money, 527s, 523s, unaccountable funds coming from people at either end of the extremes. And I find that really, really dangerous.

So I don't think I want to put the burden on the parties. I do think, as Christine said, I'd like to put it on us as individuals and on the need to restore the parties to their role of being that bridge. You can't do that if the parties have an unholy and unspoken alliance between the two of them --between the two of them to carve up the congressional districts, You get all the Democrats, I get all the Republicans, and we don't have to campaign with the other party or even our own moderates because the people who turn out in our primaries are people on these single issues.

What we have learned --I think those of us who are up here --is that we can do better by working together. We can be partisan. There's something respectable about that. We are supposed to represent you, a consensus of those who compose a party. But we felt that we can serve our party best by putting our nation first. And we don't see enough of that in the Congress today. That's what troubles me.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Brock.
Dr. Abshire wanted to comment on this question as well.

DR. ABSHIRE: Well, Bill Brock got my line, because he's from Chattanooga, Tennessee too.

Let me say that I think because the nation is at a turning point, this nation is at risk. I've been around Washington for 50 years, and I've never been at a time we've lost our strategic freedom of action, our budgetary freedom of action, our financial freedom of action, our standing in the world simultaneous.

And when I studied strategy before I went to West Point, if you lose your unity of effort and your freedom of action, you're going to suffer defeat.

And I think because of the seriousness of the situation that the people not just in the center but even on the right and the left that want to put their country first --I fought in Korea. Chuck Hagel fought in Vietnam. We fought for our country and not for our party. And that's why I think we'll see a new movement in this time of crisis of putting the country first and not the party first, as important as the two parties are to us.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you, Dr. Abshire.

I think what all of you have heard is a challenge. Seventeen people sitting here cannot cause things to change. It's going to take all of us. This is really an appeal to the American people. And it's an appeal to the media as well. We must ask the candidates very specific and detailed questions and not let them get by by saying, Oh, yes, I'm for bipartisanship. We really don't expect very many people to come out against it.

But if you listen to our statement, you heard us ask for specifics. What are your strategies for getting us to bipartisan consensus? Will you appoint a truly bipartisan cabinet, qualified people without regard to party? Not just a token or two, but people in the really key positions in our government who represent different points of view and different political parties. Will you really do that?

Will you set up working groups? And will the President of the United States sit with the Congressional leaders of both parties and members of his own cabinet and all of them join together to work on these important issues like national security?

We need your help. When people go to town meetings, when they write letters, when they address the candidates, these questions must be put by all of the American people, and these questions that matter to our future must be put by the American media to the candidates. And we cannot accept generalized answers that don't provide us with specific details. That's what we're saying today.

Another question?

MR. RONAN: Senator Boren --

MR. BOREN: Yes. Could you state your --let's see. We'll find you with the microphone.

State your name and your news organization.

MR. RONAN: Yes. My name is Dan Ronan, and I'm with CBS today.

This question is directed at Mayor Bloomberg.

Mayor, you lived through the events of September 11th in your city. And in that period of time for six, eight, ten months, there was this period where the country came together and politicians were working together, it seemed, for the good of the country.

What changed in that period? And in the pretext, if you were to decide to run for a higher office, let's say, how would you change that?

MR. BLOOMBERG: Look, I'm not a candidate, number one. I am a former businessman and a mayor. And I can tell you that this country came to New York's aid right at and after 9/11, something we are deeply grateful for and something that we have tried to do whenever there's a problem elsewhere in this country; for example, in New Orleans, where we sent a lot of equipment and people down to help.

I think what has changed is that people have stopped working together. Government is dysfunctional. There's no collaboration and congeniality. There's no working together, no let's do what's right for the country. I think there's no accountability today. Nobody is holding themselves accountable to the standards of what they promised when they ran for office.

And I think, lastly, there is no willingness to focus on big ideas. Congress and all of government seems to focus on the small things until the public gets so fed up that they then have to do something. And then, invariably, what comes out of it is a compromise like you saw in the Energy Bill, which doesn't really solve this country's dependency on foreign energy or help the environment; like the way they came together on the Farm Bill, which helps 10 percent of the big agribusinesses and doesn't help most farmers in this country; like they're fighting now over No Child Left Behind when, arguably, the biggest problem we have is public education. They are not willing to stand up.

And I think every one of the people here will tell you our experience is the public may not agree with you when you take a position, but they respect you for it. We used to have that and we don't anymore.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: I would comment that the partnerships at home, which are so badly needed to make things happen, also apply to our standing abroad.

I'll never forget the day after 9/11, the leading French newspaper had a headline that --and banners that said "Today we are all Americans." We have gone from that point, with 80 to 90 percent of the people in the world sympathetic to us, approving of our leadership, to the point that we now, even in countries that have been allies of ours for a long time --Canada, France, Britain, Germany --the approval of this country's role in the world is in the low 20s at the best.

So we have to figure out ways in which we can reach out, form partnerships, listen, treat each other with mutual respect. That's another area of partnership we need to build.

Senator Robb also wanted to comment on this question.

MR. ROBB: Well, I just wanted to pick up in part on the last question as well as this question and suggest that if there's any particular element that has changed, it's related to the computer. I don't want to blame the computer entirely, but in providing the ability to micromanage the redistricting, we have enabled both parties to create districts which consisted of people that already agreed with them. So you didn't have to reach across the aisle. You concentrate, going back to your base again. That's what's really --it happened to coincide with the whole technology explosion in the beginning of the globalization at about the same period. It probably dates from the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Soviet era, and it has continued to this date.

There are --the world has changed fundamentally, and our system has not been able to adapt to those changes. And to require that the kind of reaching across the aisle that all of us believe - -certainly on this panel and many across the country --is necessary.

I took great pride in the fact that I spent more time in John Chafee's hideaway when I was in the Senate than I did in my own. John was the meeting point for those who wanted to try to work on solutions to problems and not to find ways to create a "gotcha" situation for folks on the other side. We've got to get past that mentality in terms of how we approach the political process.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Governor Whitman, did you want to make a comment?

MS. WHITMAN: It's important to emphasize that seeking solutions, seeking --seeking the middle ground is a search for solutions, not a compromise of basic principles on every issue. And that's what we've been getting. People put a barrier up and say if you start to reach out and if you're looking for a middle ground, you're compromising your basic principles. That's not it. You're seeking solutions to major problems, and you're answering the needs of the American people. That's a change that we've seen and one we've got to address.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: You know, what both of them have said, I think, brings us back to an historical development. Many years ago the party caucuses used to meet, all the Democrats and all the Republicans in the Senate, for example, once a year, maybe twice a year. Now they meet every single week without fail. They gather really to figure out how to score points on the other party.

There is no competing institution. There is no bipartisan caucus. There is no place for every week in an orderly way we always meet together to look and to work for bipartisan solutions.

That's why, in our joint statement, using the words about setting up structures and working groups, which I think the President as well as the Congress need

to form, meet together on a regular basis --these are people who have formed relationships, friendships, and then worked together. That's not happening now. We don't have any offsetting bipartisan institutions to offset these extremely partisan institutions, which are really focused more narrowly. So that's part of what's happening.

Senator Graham.

MR. GRAHAM: Thank you, Senator.

I think the issue that we focused on today is not that we have problems. Nobody here denies the validity of the list of dangers that our nation faces. The fact is most of these problems we've had for a long

time. Some of us may remember that it was Jimmy Carter who first said we had an energy issue in America. That was 1979, almost 30 years ago. And it is a call to action that has gone largely ignored.

What we are asking the presidential candidates to do is not only to tell us what their platform is but how are they going to get it accomplished. What are your ideas? What are your strategies? What are you going to take out of your toolbox of political experience to help us actually get to some solutions?

There are lots of ideas. Alan Greenspan started one of the most successful efforts at bringing people together in 1982, the Social Security Commission, which saved Social Security for about 25 years. And he started with this rule: Everybody is entitled to their opinion; nobody is entitled to their facts.

(Applause.)

MR. GRAHAM: You get --my experience is that if people have to start to deal with the same facts, the range of options becomes dramatically fewer.

Second in the toolbox is setting some goals. For instance, if we as a nation could decide that we were going to commit to the fact that we were going to be in the top five nations in the world in our public education system --and today we're in the mid 20s --that would be a goal that I think would rally Americans. It's an obtainable goal. Then the question is getting people to come together around the steps necessary to achieve a goal that is broadly shared.

Those are what we're asking the candidates to do is to tell us not just in words what your dreams are, but tell us on the ground, in practicalities, what's your strategies to get us to those dreams?

MR. BOREN: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Ambassador Perkins wanted to comment.

MR. PERKINS: Thank you very much, President Boren.

I think it's quite evident to all of us that foreign policy is a province of the American people and not necessarily people in Washington who sit behind desks and craft things to say.

I'm very concerned about our foreign policy issues, concerned about the management of it within the national security structure. I'm concerned about the support being given to our State Department in terms of positions.

Just recently the State Department was ordered to cut 5 percent from regions around the world in order to support Afghanistan and Iraq. Someone's being shortchanged. We need a continuous bipartisan, maybe even nonpartisan, foreign policy that doesn't stop when a new administration comes in.

We also need to concentrate on things and places that are going to serve as our breadbasket to the future. I couldn't --I couldn't name a better place than Africa in terms of research, trade and development.

All of these issues are a part of what's being debated today. I want candidates for president to address these issues as bread-and-butter issues and not as something to be looked at when the president is sworn in.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: I'm sorry. We need to switch sides here. Is there one here? Yes. Member of the press.

MR. MCGUIGAN: Yes. Pat McGuigan with The City Sentinel and with human events in Washington. I want to thank you, President Boren, for organizing this.

MR. BOREN: Thank you.

THE COURT: My question is actually for Governor King, who is the person on the panel that's done this as an Independent, winning an election in an interesting state.

What is it about the current situation nationally that you think is familiar from your own race and what's different?

MR. BOREN: Governor King.

MR. KING: That's --that's a unique question because I've never had it before. I appreciate it.

I think there are similarities. When I ran for governor of Maine in 1994 as an independent, we had been through a period in our state of intense partisanship, to the point where we had a governor of one party and a speaker of the house of the other party that couldn't agree on anything. The government actually closed down because they couldn't agree on a budget. And I was, in part, a product of that experience.

The reason I'm here today is that I think we're in a similar place, where we --everybody agrees we've got all these problems and we could work for a day with this group and perhaps lengthen the list or hone the list, but the point is not: What are the problems? The point is: How do we solve them?

And I am just finishing a book about Winston Churchill and the beginning of World War I --of World War II in Britain. And I subscribe heartily to Mark Twain's observation that history doesn't always repeat itself but it often rhymes. And this is a case where I think it rhymes.

When Churchill went in as prime minister, he immediately installed a nonpartisan government. He brought in Independents, Laborites, and Tories into his government. It was a government of national unity. Why? Because Britain was facing an enormous challenge, a challenge to its very survival.

I think we're facing a similar kind of challenge today, only it's a slow-motion catastrophe. We don't have troops pouring across our neighbors' borders. But we are facing a kind of slow-motion challenge that, if we don't address, our children and grandchildren are going to look at us and say, What in the hell were you doing when this country went down?

Tom Brokaw wrote a book called *The Greatest Generation*. And I'm afraid if he wrote that book today about us, we would be *The Louisiest Generation* because of what we are doing to our children and our grandchildren in terms of everything from not fixing the infrastructure, building up debts, building up a Medicare debt that's unsustainable, not developing an energy and climate change policy --and the list just goes on and on.

And the politics of this country, which have been, essentially, avoidance for a number of years, have now, I think, reached a crisis proportion. And, therefore, it's time for a kind of unity approach. And that's exactly what I tried to do in Maine. And what we found was that, A, the people liked it. The politicians didn't like it too much, at least not at first. But the public liked it. And if you reach out and try to work with people in a nonpartisan way, they are responsive.

And I think most people would say that it was pretty successful for eight years just trying to work on the problems and not worrying about who gets the credit or who is going to win the next election or what kind of a game it is that we are playing. We seem to be in a situation where it's all about the game and not about the end result.

So what if you win the next election, what are you going to do? Well, we are going to then set ourselves up to win the next election. And that doesn't --that doesn't solve any problems. We've got to have a 10- and 20-year vision in this country, not a one- to two-year vision.

So I feel that the experience in Maine was reasonably relevant. But if we don't pay attention to this and get at this problem of reaching out to people across the aisle --and, frankly, we're talking about --I made a point in our discussions, instead of "bipartisan," we should be saying "nonpartisan," because 40 percent of the American people aren't in either of the parties. So it should be nonpartisan.

(Applause.)

MR. KING: So I think that, you know, basically, we're at a place where what we've been doing all the --in recent years isn't working. And if we continue, we feel --this group feels that we are at a tipping point and that we could go into a period of permanent decline. And it doesn't have to be that way.

This country has enormous resources of talent and energy, and it needs to be tapped and unleashed, not suppressed and pushed aside.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Governor King.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Susan Eisenhower also wishes to comment.

MS. EISENHOWER: Yes. I'd like to follow up on those comments. I think they were terrific. And it is very true that we've got a crisis unfolding in slow motion. But here's the thing. We've got a number of issues that are all big-ticket items. They're all going to be very, very costly to address. That is, preparing for our energy future, all of the new investments that have to be made there. We've got a climate change imperative to go with that. Healthcare, baby boomers retiring, infrastructure. All of these are big-ticket items, and we are in a diminished financial situation.

So the reason we need bipartisanship is it's going to require political courage to make choices. And what I would like to see these candidates do is get up and tell us what their priorities are. They can give us a hundred wonderful little plans, but what is the overarching strategy for the future?

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much.

Senator Cohen also wished to comment.

MR. COHEN: You know, we're up here talking about what the candidates have an obligation to do, but I'd like to shift it just for a moment to say, What do you and I have an obligation to do? Because we're part of the problem.

Part of the problem is that everybody talks about rights, few people talk about duties. Everyone talks about benefits, few people talk about burdens. And that is what --the essence of the paralysis that we see today.

When Governor King was talking about Winston Churchill on the verge of World War II, I was thinking of Walter Whitman, a great essayist. And he was giving an address to the --his Harvard colleagues, Class of 1910, 30th reunion. And he said: Here we are today. Every time we had a tough decision to make, we took the easy way out. There's a mechanized evil at loose throughout Europe, and here we are on the edge of World War --a world war.

He said: This is the standard to which the wise shall now repair. You took the good things for granted and now you must earn them again. And so for every right that you claim, you've got a duty you must fulfill. For every hope you entertain, you've got an obligation you must perform. And for every good that you wish to achieve, you'll have to sacrifice your comfort and your ease because there's nothing for nothing any longer.

Those words spoken in 1940 --

(Applause.)

MR. COHEN: Those words are as relevant today. There is nothing for nothing any longer. We've got to pay our bills. We can't continue to borrow from our children. We are bankrupting them. We're engaged in fiscal child abuse. It used to be that our parents --
(Applause.)

MR. COHEN: It used to be that our parents borrowed so that we would have a better future. And what we are doing today is we are borrowing from our kids so we can enjoy creature comforts today. That is not a moral standard that any of us can be proud of.

So let's get back to talking about sacrifice, what each of us has an obligation to do, what we're willing to give up, what we have to pay for. And so it's not just the presidential candidates. The voice has got to come from you saying we're prepared for this.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: I've been asked for brief follow-ups from Dr. Abshire and Senator Hart.

DR. ABSHIRE: Let me just say in the historic examples, I think the next president has got a choice: A failed presidency or great presidency.

And I've got a book that's coming out in a couple of weeks that's \$17.95. It's affordable to all of your students. And it's A Call to Greatness: Challenging our Next President. And it looks through great presidents and failed presidents. It's possible to fail. And it takes as the two greatest, that knew how to organize the country in times of crisis, Lincoln and Roosevelt. And they were grand strategists.

And as we look at the interacting issues that we're dealing with, you have got to have a

transformational president of this nature.

Now, Lincoln was a genius. Maybe there are no geniuses running for the presidency. Roosevelt was not a genius, but he knew how to get the best minds, Republican and Democratic, and put them to work to win World War II. And that's what we've got to follow.

And I just end with one other historic example. Benjamin Franklin, who was 81 --I used to think that was real old --he, after four months in the Constitutional convention, when we had greater wedge issues than we've got today, greater divisions, he got up on the floor and he said, "Let's each one doubt a little bit of his own infallibility and sign on to this document."

They didn't think it was that good. In retrospect, it's the Miracle of Philadelphia. We can create, with the next president, if they're willing to rise to the occasion, another miracle in our finest hour. But it's that or loss.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Dr. Abshire.
(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Your reference to Lincoln brings back Doris Kearns Goodwin's Team of Rivals in which Lincoln reached out beyond his own political self-interests, appointed people who were not only his rivals, appointed people even who wanted to replace him in the very next election. But because they had ability, he brought them in, even if they were not of his political faction. And somehow that standard of greatness has to be met again.

MR. KING: And his vice president was a Democrat.

MR. BOREN: Exactly. Senator Hart.

MR. HART: Most Americans would respond to the question "What kind of government do we have?" by saying a democracy. And yet 220 years into our history, all of us salute the flag of the United States of America and the republic for which it stands. And the founders purposely created America as a republic and knew what they were doing. Because, as Senator Cohen has said, in a democracy, we protect our rights; in a republic, we all have duties.

Two factors that all republics since the ancient Greek city/state have been citizen duty, citizen participation, what used to be called civic virtue.

Today we are bringing democracy to the Middle East and losing American lives in the process. And an amazing number of Iraqis could tell you that 50 percent of the American people do not vote. So we cannot be the beacon of democracy in this country when our citizens don't even perform the most elementary duty of a republic and the right of a democratic citizen.

The second factor is a sense of the commonwealth. We all are members of interest groups. And we want what our interest group will give us. But to --what we are --what brings us here is that we want leadership and we want citizens to demand leadership that talk about and serve the national interests, not interest group interests, and the commonwealth, all that we hold in common. And when we get that leadership, we will

solve the problems we are here to discuss.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much.

And I know in speaking about our obligations that the panelists have mentioned, one of our obligations clearly, as citizens, is to not only ask questions and to speak out --and particularly those who want to bring us together to speak out as moderates and as centrists, but also we must educate ourselves. And I know that that's something that needs to happen.

We are very poorly informed on those issues that are really going to determine our future. How many Americans know, for example, that at the current rate of spending on our entitlement programs --Medicare, Social Security, interest on the debt --that all of our tax revenues we now collect are due to be consumed within the next decade or so just from those sources?

Senator Nunn has talked about having an educational program that is --that is brought, I know, through CSIS and other groups. I know that Senator Graham has also talked about bringing educational forums to campuses and to the public to go in depth and talk about issues. That's something else that we hope this group can do in a bipartisan fashion and be an engine for education.

Senator Nunn, would you want to comment further on that?

MR. NUNN: Bill Cohen and I are going to launch a series of discussions under the auspices of the Center For Strategic and International Studies, which I chair in Washington, and John Hamre, a Former Secretary of Defense, runs it. But it's a think tank where you have a couple hundred scholars that are involved very much in analyzing national security, economic and foreign policy issues.

So we're going to have a series of discussions where we chair those discussions with the help of the Howard Gilman Foundation, and we're going to get the best thinkers we can around the country --not simply from politics --from business, religion, nonprofit, and tackle some of these issues. Not because we think there's going to be thousands of people or millions of people watching, but because at least we're going to put it out there where we get the best thoughts to talk about how we ought to put meat on the bones in terms of addressing these fundamental issues that affect our country. So we're looking forward to that.

Bob Graham had a great idea he discussed on the plane coming out. He can elaborate. But the idea would be to really challenge the universities all over the country to really start having these kind of forums, pick out the seven or eight issues, start talking about --what Susan Eisenhower says so well is we have to have a strategy, we have to have priorities. How do we fit all of this into a coherent hole? I think those are enormously important undertakings.

And so we're going to see whether the media is interested and see whether the public is interested. But at least we're going --we're going to do it.

My father was a big conservationist long before we had an environmental movement. It was soil conservation, when a whole lot of our land was blowing away. And he was a great steward of the soil. He's also a steward in the Methodist church. And I've heard him say many times that we don't just inherit our great country from our fathers and mothers, we borrow it from our children.

So we are not just beneficiaries, we are participants and citizens in passing on this nation that we love to the next generation. At this point in time we have a challenged stewardship. And that's what I think we all, I think, acknowledge and are willing to start working on.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Nunn.
(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: I have three other members of the panel that wish to make a comment. I'm going to ask Senator Graham to add to that. His name has been mentioned about his hope that the universities will become involved across the country. Then Senator Hagel and then Governor White.

So, Senator Graham, we'll begin with you.

MR. GRAHAM: When public education was established in America in the early part of the 19th Century, the fundamental reason was to prepare our people for citizenship. When George III was kicked out of America, there was a sudden realization there is no king or other ultimate leader. We, the citizens, have that responsibility. And many of our "we, the people" weren't particularly well prepared to accept that citizenship responsibility.

I think education in America needs to return to that concept that one of our fundamental --not peripheral --fundamental responsibilities is preparing our people for citizenship. For universities --great universities like this --and I want to say I particularly admire the fact that President Boren teaches a class every semester on the issue of citizenship for those students at this university who are fortunate enough to be in his classroom.

I think we ought to, one, use the universities as an important forum for the discussion of these issues, challenge students to be creatively involved in solutions and means of getting those solutions involved, because they're going to be the ones in the not-too-distant future who are going to be making those decisions.

Second, we need to, throughout the curriculum of the universities, reinvigorate the concept of citizenship. I'd like to have an evaluation every - check all the graduates of the University of Oklahoma five years after they've graduated and find out what their score is on citizenship. What percentage of them are registered to vote? What percentage of them have been actually voting? How many of them have been participating in the organizations that constitute the civic life of our nation? Those are some of the challenges.

This is not an issue exclusive to politicians, certainly not exclusive to just presidential candidates. As has been said, we're all in this together. And great institutions like the University of Oklahoma will play a key role in our ultimate success.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Graham.

I might point out, unfortunately --and I'm glad to say the University of Oklahoma is not one of those that fail to require American History and Government to graduate, but over 80 percent of the nation's universities no longer require a single course in American Government or American History to graduate from the university. So we have a real crisis of citizenship, and I think you put your finger on it.

I have three others who wish to comment generally on this issue: Senator Hagel, Governor White, and Mayor Bloomberg. So I'll call on Senator Hagel next.

MR. HAGEL: Thank you.

Now that it has been established that I'm a Nebraska Cornhusker, I'm actually here looking for linebackers.

(Applause.)

MR. HAGEL: This has not been particularly comfortable territory for me --Norman, Oklahoma --but, nonetheless, I will move forward under the significant leadership of your respected president, David Boren. And he is, indeed, that. And we all wish to thank him and this institution for hosting the last day and a half.

I would just add to what has been noted. The world is more complicated, more combustible, more interconnected than we've ever seen. Our issues that we have been dealing with, we will continue to deal with, have been articulated here this morning over the last hour are interconnected; meaning, for example, that we cannot talk about the environment without talking about energy, our economy, our role in the world, our standing in the world, our relationships, our alliances.

We are now six and a half billion people living in a global community underpinned by a global economy.

That is interconnection.

And the opportunities that are there --and I believe every one of us in this group this morning believe there are opportunities to turn things around for our country, our future, our children, the world --are not connected only to vacuums of issues or vacuums of power.

So the next administration, the next Congress, the next set of governors, all of our leaders across this country, educational institutions, all spheres of influence must understand that these issues are now woven into one fabric. And you can't pull threads from that fabric and think you can deal with any one issue alone in a vacuum. And that's going to require a strategic thinking that we have never ever seen before.

And many of the comments made this morning have focused on that, from education to our international standing, to our defense structure, to our economy, to our citizen involvement. And that is as much about what we are here for, in my opinion, as any one thing. And I think the American people understand this. I don't think that they understand it nor need to understand it in all the specifics, but intuitively the great good common sense of this country has always prevailed.

And this is, as David Abshire has said and many others, a time that is so critical for our country. It is a turning point. It is one of those watershed moments in history. And I don't think we overstate it when we say that.

So this is as much about the overall dynamic of what we're about, what you're about, what our future is about as any one thing.

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Hagel.
(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: To show that the true spirit of nonpartisanship has broken out, I'm going to turn from a Nebraskan to a Texan.

Governor White, would you comment.

MR. WHITE: President Boren, no one was more surprised than I when I received a call from you after a recent football game, and no one was happier to hear from me than President Boren when I reminded him that I did not go to Texas University, I did not go to A&M. I went to Baylor University. And we've never done a thing to hurt OU.

(Applause.)

MR. WHITE: And even today, Senator Hagel, I'd like to say this: We don't come to Norman looking for linebackers. Baylor University comes to Norman looking for mercy.

Thank you for what you've done, Mr. President. I think it's a great thing to bring together a group of people who have been leaders in this country and still are.

I'm reminded of The Greatest Generation and what you did to fight World War II from start to finish in four years. Somehow or another, I think our Congress owes the American people --and our leaders across the national level owes the American people something more than an energy bill that says we should change our light bulbs in four years.

(Applause.)

MR. WHITE: We're a greater nation than that. And all we need are leaders to call us to that greatness.

I'm pretty much where old Larry the cable man was. He said, Men, it's time to "Git 'er done." That's what America wants is to "Git 'er done."

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you, Governor White.

Thank you, Governor White.

Our last comment on this question comes from Mayor Bloomberg.

MR. BLOOMBERG: David, following on the football theme, I don't know whether they're afraid or whether it's just too far, but I will point out that OU has never tried to schedule a game with St. John's, Fordham, NYU, Columbia. And maybe the New York teams are just too tough for them. I don't know.

MR. BOREN: I'm going to send that list over to our athletics director right away.

MR. BLOOMBERG: Please do.

You know, I was thinking last night, the group of independent thinkers that you assembled here and that I was privileged to be with last night and this morning, really what we talked about was that America is being held back and that our people and our country are being hurt by current government policies. And it isn't that we should be discussing whether it is bipartisan or nonpartisan. What we want is people to be selected for government based on competency. What we --

(Applause.)

MR. BLOOMBERG: --what we all want --and I think so do you --is we want to make sure that the ideas that come up are ideas that are considered based on whether they will work, not whose idea it was. And, unfortunately, we've gotten away from that.

The bottom line is this country is the most wonderful country that anybody has ever created. We have done some amazing things in the last 235 years domestically and to help the rest of the world. And somehow or other, we seemed to have lost our vision. We've become afraid. And there's no reason for America to be afraid.

We are a country of optimists. We believe we can do everything. And we want to get back to that. And this panel is not here to criticize. It is simply to help people find ways where we can pull together and, in the end, get what we all want, and that's results.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much.

We had agreed with all of our participants, because they have schedules, to end this --this press conference at 12:00. I'm, of course, known far and wide for my punctuality. It's now 12:07. But I do want to allow two others who've indicated a desire to comment, and that's Congressman Leach and then Senator Nunn.

Congressman Leach.

MR. LEACH: Well, thank you, Mr. President. I'll be very brief.

I do think that it's fair to suggest that everybody knows that we're trying to suggest to the world that democracy is the best way to organize politically and socially. And yet we've got some problems in our own democracy. And we've got to think them through and take stock and try to renew a sense of justice and idealism in a democratic way.

And, for example, arguably, one of the great civil rights issues of our day has nothing to do with race. It has to do with political opportunity. When money governs a system, a lot of people that have thought about running for office simply don't and can't. We have to reform the financial way we run our campaigns.

(Applause.)

MR. LEACH: In any regard, we're looking at a presidential campaign, but it's much more than that. It's the Congress, it's all levels of government. We have to reinvolve and uplift the political dialogue, emphasize some idealism, emphasize concepts like the common good that have been left out of the rhetoric of American politics, and make our system so wondrous that everybody in the world is going to want to follow it instead of becoming constrained in some sort of nonhumble, macho political presentation to the world. We just have to re-think and redo, and we can do it.

(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much.

Senator Nunn.

MR. NUNN: David, thank you and Molly for being our hosts. Thank all the people of your staff for a superb job. Thank the people of the University of Oklahoma for having such a splendid president and for, even when you lose an occasional football game, keeping him here in a position of leadership.

My closing thought is I heard a preacher say the other day --he said: If you think you're a leader and you look over your shoulder and there ain't nobody following, man, you're just taking a walk.

(Applause.)

MR. NUNN: Well, we --whether we are just taking a walk depends on you and citizens all over America. And I'm confident that citizens are going to speak to these issues this year and have these challenges to the candidates running not only for the presidency but for elected office at the national and state and local levels.

Thank you.
(Applause.)

MR. BOREN: Thank you very much, Senator Nunn.

Well, I want to thank all of you who have joined us. I'd leave with this thought: Remember that no matter how sound the plans may be, how visionary the ideas may be that our political leaders bring, that they cannot be enacted simply by the leadership of only one party.

For example, in the Senate, it takes a super majority of 60 votes to pass something into law. That means that, at least over the last several years, there have not been enough either Democrats or Republicans by themselves to pass any important or major change. It takes bipartisanship.

And so we close this meeting with an appeal to all American citizens and to the media. Help us put the questions we have raised directly to the candidates. We cannot do it by ourselves. We must ask the candidates if they plan to create a bipartisan cabinet and administration. We must ask the candidates to present a strategy --not just a statement that they want to do it, but a strategy for a unified consensus. We must ask the candidates for their strategies to build a more positive relationship with the rest of the world.

And so we close today, we leave as we came. All of us, not just the panelists, but I believe all of you, we leave filled with hope for our future and with a great determination to keep this country as great as it's been year after year.

Thank you all for joining us today for this press conference.
(Applause.)