

USC Annenberg
Ceasefire! Bridging the Political Divide
Tuesday, June 19, 2007

11:15AM Discussion: Problem Solvers

Lauren Bon, *Trustee, Annenberg Foundation and Creative Director, Farmlab*

Sherry Lansing, *CEO and Founder, The Sherry Lansing Foundation*

Kevin Wall, *CEO, Control Room, Inc.*

Moderator: Judy Woodruff, *Senior Correspondent, "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer"*

In Attendance

Geoffrey Cowan; USC Annenberg School for Communication; Dean and Director, Center on Communication Leadership

Judy Woodruff; "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer"; Senior Correspondent

Susan Kennedy; Office of Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger; Chief of Staff

Kevin Wall; Control Room, Inc.; CEO, Executive Producer of "Live Earth"

Sherry Lansing; The Sherry Lansing Foundation; CEO and Founder

Lauren Bon; Annenberg Foundation; Trustee and Farmlab Creative Director

Steven Hill; New America Foundation; Director, Political Reform Program

David Blum

Marty Kaplan; USC Annenberg School for Communication; Associate Dean for Programs and Planning

Roger Payne; Ocean Alliance; Founder and President

Discussion

Geoffrey Cowan: This has been the most magnificent place to have this event. But we have suggested that possibly, we don't need to create a whole new glacier right here.

So as you're seated, I want to welcome you to this -- the last session of what I think has been really quite a remarkable series of discussions and presentations. And this next and last session, I think, will be at least as interesting as anything that's come before, with a very special group of people who have been in the problem-solving business; and most importantly, moderated by one of America's great journalists and anchors, who we all know from her years at NBC and CNN, and now with the "NewsHour" -- the wonderful Judy Woodruff.

Judy Woodruff: Thank you very much, Geoff Cowan. You've done a wonderful job of pulling all this together and leading us all through last evening. And today, I think everybody's buzzing, and there's just been so much to talk about.

And I'm really thrilled to be here with all of you, and particularly with this really, incredibly distinguished panel. I don't think they need any introduction, so I'm just going to say their name, and say who they represent -- Kevin Wall with Live Earth, Sherry Lansing, who is CEO and Founder of the Sherry Lansing Foundation; Lauren Bon, who is with the Annenberg Foundation and the Creative Director of Farmlab; and Susan Kennedy, who is the Chief of Staff for Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger.

I think all four of you have heard most, if not all, of what's been said over the last 18 hours. So I want to first ask each of you, how do you see this problem of the political divide? First of all, do you think there is a political divide? And if so, have you heard it defined here in the way you see it?

Susan?

Susan Kennedy: I think there's definitely a political divide. Sometimes I feel like I actually live in the divide. And it's caused by, I think, two things -- one is, we are in a perpetual state of campaign. I mean, the moment an election is over, the next one begins. And so, every single day, the object is not about policies or getting something done or solving a problem; the object is how do we position ourselves so that we are strong enough to win in the next election. Whether it's control of the legislature, control of Congress, or for the governorship or the presidency, everything we do, every single day, seems geared towards positioning rather than problem-solving. And that's just a -- that's a function of the system we're in.

And I think the second thing is, what we've done in terms of establishing the districts that we run in -- I mean, California's a perfect example -- with the safe districts that we've drawn, we don't -- the legislature doesn't necessarily represent the people of California as a whole. Each one represents their members very well. And I'm not disparaging that at all. But what you have are the extremes represented very heavily in the legislature. Arnold Schwarzenegger won -- was it -- 92, 93% of the Republican vote in the last election. And he would be hard-pressed to get three or four votes from the Republicans in his own party in the legislature for almost any initiative, and the same issues where the public supports him.

So there's a major disconnect. And it has to do, again, with the system we've set up. It's not a function of whether the media's creating the conflict, or whether the candidates are creating the conflict. The system creates the kind of tension that has resulted in political gridlock.

Judy Woodruff: Kevin Wall, you come at this from a somewhat different -- a different perspective. You're not in the middle of the political battleground every day. But you are certainly impacted by it. How do you see whether there is a divide or there isn't, and if so, what is it?

Kevin Wall: Well, I was a little shocked when I returned to the States a few months ago. And we're doing 10 major events around the world. It's for global warming. It's to stop global warming. And it's really not about the haves to the have-nots; this is about all of us as global citizens.

And after we had set the project in Shanghai and Sydney -- in Rio, London, Istanbul, Hamburg, South Africa -- we wanted to do it on the Washington Mall. And I got to the States, and I was shocked that this has become part of the political divide in this country.

You know, the other countries -- it was about policy of how to solve the problem, but there wasn't a question about the problem. When we came here, it became a congressional -- we went to the Senate. We tried to put a bill through, just to do the Washington Mall; to do what had been done by environmentalists over the years, had been done by peace-marchers, had been done by the Million Man March. This became an issue. And we -- subsequently, we had to move it to New York City.

And because I'm a private citizen, I could make those decisions and fund what I wanted to fund. So I had the opportunity to stay on issue, not pay attention to the noise, and move. But it was a shocking bit of events I didn't expect.

Judy Woodruff: So for you, the political system is more of an obstacle than it is anything that's going to enable you to get done the things that you care about.

Kevin Wall: Well, now that I've been around sort of the political world a little bit, and the NGO world a bit, I'm -- thank God, because I'm a businessman, I'm able to sort of be single-focused in terms of these issues. I'm able to hire the best people that I can possibly hire -- and in this case, taking a very complicated global issue -- and it will result that day in over two billion people being touched or affected. That would be very difficult to do. In a political area, it is very difficult, even for current charities and

NGOs, the way they're set up, to sort of take that sort of risk and sort of wrap their arms around something and do it. Fortunately, I'm able to do it, and I'm happy to do it.

Judy Woodruff: And let the government do its thing on the side –

Kevin Wall: Yes.

Judy Woodruff: -- so to speak.

Kevin Wall: Yes.

Judy Woodruff: Sherry Lansing, you obviously come out of the business world very visibly. So you're now deeply into the nonprofit world; you have your hands in a number of issues. And you were just saying to me you're dealing with politicians all the time. How do you see this?

Sherry Lansing: Well, I think there is a political divide that exists. But I'm extremely optimistic that it's changing. And I think it's up to all of us in this room -- and really, every citizen -- to say, I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore, to quote a movie.

And I think you can see it changing. And you can see it changing when you see, on the cover of *Time Magazine*, which really is a magazine that tries to get ahead of a trend, or at least identify a trend. And what you're seeing is bipartisan politics on the head of our two leaders, in this way -- obviously our governor and Mayor Bloomberg, who really stand for bipartisan politics; who really stand for people who are able to get things done, because it's irrelevant to them whether you're a Republican or a Democrat. And I have to say that part of the problem -- I've always felt that it's too easy to say it's the politicians' fault.

I have to say, I look in myself, and I actually see part of the problem, and how I had to work it out. I think from the time we're raised -- whether it's by our mother or father -- we hear politics all the time. And we are told to define ourselves as either Republican or a Democrat. Rarely are you told to define yourself as an independent. So I was raised as a Democrat.

And I share this story with you -- and Susan knows it -- because I think it's a story that probably a lot of us in the room have to face. I have been working the last three years in the nonprofit world, and working extremely well with Republicans and Democrats.

And in this last race, I got a call from a fellow regent -- and the Regents are a bipartisan group -- a man named Paul Wachter, who is a regent with me. And he said to me, We'd like you to support Arnold Schwarzenegger, and be Democrats for Schwarzenegger. And I said, Oh no, no, I can't do that. I'm a -- I've never voted Republican in my life; I'm a Democrat. My mother would roll over in her grave if I did that. And that's really what I thought.

And he said, Well, that's fine. And he said, But what's the point of all these bipartisan commission's if nobody's going to cross lines? And I said, Oh, that's not my problem. And then he said, Well, Sherry, why don't you tell me what Phil Angelides is doing that you do like, and what Governor Schwarzenegger is doing that you don't like. And in typical Hollywood fashion, I said, I'll get back to you. Because I had no answer.

And I then went for the next two weeks with some of my most liberal Democratic friends. And I said, This really brings into question not just bipartisan politics of the people that are elected, but me, as a voter, and all of you in this room, and all the citizens. Because it's just as much our responsibility to break this as it is "theirs."

And I went for walks. I went for talks. I talked to my husband, who said, Well, of course you should vote for Arnold. What are you, crazy? I mean, of course. Because he has no political affiliation. He was healthy. I went for walks with my most liberal Democratic friends. And I came to the conclusion that at 62 years of age, it was time to vote for the man, not the party; to vote for the issues, not the party.

And it was the most liberating thing that I can tell you that happened to me. And I now am so comfortable going around and supporting simply the best person, whether it's a Republican or a Democrat. And I really don't define myself as a Democrat anymore. I define myself as a person who cares about stem cell research, who cares about education, who cares about health. Yes, I am a registered Democrat. But it's irrelevant to me. I would give a fund-raiser for Arnold with such honor, I cannot tell you. And I would give a fund-raiser for other Republicans as well.

And so, I say –

Judy Woodruff: Any other Republican?

Sherry Lansing: Not any other Republican, but Republicans -- I mean, I'm a big fan of Arlen Specter for what he's done for cancer research. I'm just like telling you that.

So I'm saying to you, not any other Republican, and not any Democrat. It's up to us, is what I guess I'm saying, to look into ourselves and realize we've been raised a certain way. And I'm not saying that there isn't a huge problem in Washington, but I'm also saying that as citizens, the way to correct the problem is to liberate ourselves, and to vote for the best person. Yes, you can register whatever you want to register; that's fine. But it's really liberating to finally say, I'm voting on the issue, this person.

And so, I guess what I'm saying is the problem resided as much in me -- and I'm 62 years -- that's a long time for it to reside there -- and the funny conclusion to this is when I called my friend back and said, I'm really happy; I'm not going to slink into the booth, I want to campaign for Arnold, I really want to have fund-raisers, I really want to do this -- he said, Great. And I said, It's easy for you; you're a Republican. And there was a pause -- and his name is Paul Wachter -- he said, I'm not a Republican, Sherry; I'm a Democrat. I just support Arnold, as does Susan.

So it was so liberating to me. And I don't know how many of you were raised that way. I'll end with this -- my mother used to say to me, to my father, What is a murderer -- how do you define a murderer who's a Democrat? And my father would say, He's a Democrat. Meaning -- said it didn't make any difference to him.

Judy Woodruff: We're going to remember that.

Lauren Bon, what are you thinking as you're hearing this in particular, and from your perspective -- you're obviously affiliated with the Annenberg Foundation -- but as an artist, as somebody who comes out of that community, that has been affected by politics in this country?

Lauren Bon: Well, what I can say is it feels really wonderful to be at a private wedding today. You know, the love affair between the cameras and the politicians was absolutely beautiful. And for the rest of us, I'm wondering what we're doing sitting in a black, over-air-conditioned box on a beautiful summer's day, when there's a great grass lawn out there.

And that's really what it all seems it boils down to. I'm an artist. And as an artist, I look for reality. And I don't really think that either politics or the media are in the business of truth. And the truth is revolutionary. And as a philanthropist who is an artist, that's what I'm about. I'm out there on the streets

with Farmlab, engaging in something very private and small, which is also quite revolutionary.

Like tonight, under the cover of darkness, we're moving the last surviving great walnut trees from the South Central Farm to the only safe haven in Los Angeles for living things, and that's the Huntington Library and Gardens. Because if you didn't know, despite the mayor's Million Tree Initiative, it's illegal to plant a fruit tree in the city of Los Angeles.

Judy Woodruff: When you say -- that's (inaudible) -- when you say the media and politics, or politicians - - I think you said the media and politics are not about truth -- what do you mean?

Lauren Bon: They're about the moment. If you look at what the media and politics are about, you're looking at a very short time span. Most people in politics are looking at essentially a millisecond in the life of a planet. They're actually looking at a millisecond in their own lives. It's a very short commitment to a series of problems that are largely a construct, which no longer is even something they are inventing. They are responding to the media right now. You could see that today.

I mean, how do those of us who are not politicians respond to the fact that there's no longer a great barrier between this section and that section, where there's great lineup of photographers? It was like this cloistered, inside world-outside world; now it's gone, so we could invite the audience down. There's actually a possibility for a dialogue now.

So what I mean by "truth" is that truth is ancient. And most artists are actually in the business of becoming quiet enough to figure out what the legacy of passing on a truth is. That's not what politics is about. That's not what the media is about.

Judy Woodruff: Anybody -- Sherry?

Sherry Lansing: I respect what you're saying, but I'm not sure I agree with it. Because -- and again, I think this is a very optimistic time. And again, I see a trend of breaking down bipartisan politics. But I also see a trend of a citizens' movement, and therefore I could say an artists' movement. And I think you can get your message out.

And I look -- I'd give you an example, which to me is really revolutionary, and really, in my opinion -- actually I can give you two examples -- is really changing the dialogue around the world.

And the first one was the stem cell initiative. You all know that the voters voted to give \$3 billion to stem cell research in this state alone. That's unheard of. I mean, you don't get that kind of money from the NIH. I mean, that's just unheard of. But what's revolutionary to me about it is it wasn't a political situation. It didn't start as that. It started with patient advocates -- normal citizens whose children were sick, whose husbands were sick, whose boyfriends were sick, who were sick themselves. And they started this.

And to me -- I mean, I remember when it first started. And I'll be honest with you -- I was running a studio at the time, and I thought, Boy, they don't have a chance to get this done. They really don't have a chance. And it was dedicated families. And most people have been struck by illnesses that can be helped by stem cell research. And these people, who were not wealthy people, started doing it in a grassroots way. And to me, that means that any of us can do it, about anything that we care about.

And I just want to say -- and the environment -- I mean, the environment. Yes, there's a wonderful film, "Inconvenient Truth," which took it to a whole new level. But God, I mean, years ago, not-famous people were talking to me about the gas in your car and were talking about the environment. And I'm not going to tell you that I was all ears in the beginning. I'm not going to tell you that in the beginning I didn't think

maybe some people were hysterical, as compared to today, when I'm completely on that side.

But it starts slow. And it starts with people who have passion, who don't give up, and who can face rejection over and over again, which is the role of the artist. I mean --

Judy Woodruff: I want to pick up on what you're saying in both of those examples and come back to Susan Kennedy. Because she's describing a grassroots movement, a genuine movement, up from the people, up to the government, changing what government's doing. You in California see that more often maybe than the rest of the country, through your initiative and referenda process. Is that always a good thing, in terms of getting things done? You've had some history here in California of some changes that did come up from the grassroots, that there's still a lot of controversy over.

Susan Kennedy: I don't think it matters where it comes from. They're both right. And the reason they're both right kind of answers your question. It's about the truth, and it's about having the courage to speak the truth, that experience you went through in terms of coming out to support -- to realize that you want to support this Republican governor -- it was the same experience I went through when I decided to work for him. And it was easier to come out as gay than it was to come out as a Schwarzenegger supporter in 2005.

But the courage that it took to make that decision is about the truth. The truth was I supported what he was doing, and I was afraid to say it. And I did it anyway; overcame that. What makes Arnold Schwarzenegger and Michael Bloomberg similar? They're running counter to type. That's not campaign tactic; it's about being who they are, and not listening to the campaign consultants who are telling them, You can't do that. You're a Republican. You can't do that. You can't raise property taxes. You can't come out for global warming; Republicans don't even believe in global warming. You can't do stem cell research, or you will alienate yourself from your Republican base. Every -- when you think in those partisan terms, you start with the words "I can't." And both of these men don't believe in those words. And it's about truth for them, and having the courage to be counter to type.

Judy Woodruff: Are you saying, though, Susan, that it's always going to take somebody who's running counter to type, who disagrees with his own party, to make things happen? Does that --

Susan Kennedy: It's going to take that kind of courage and truth in order to tap into what is -- the grassroots -- what Sherry called the grassroots -- is really a -- it's the heart of where the people are at any given moment in time. And a movement is a coalescing of people's thoughts and feelings and desires.

And there was a debate last night about what leadership is. And I agree with what Matthew Dowd said about -- that leaders follow the people. And when they're not following the people is when you have this major disconnect. But it's not that the people are telling their leaders, This is where we want to go; it's the leaders tapping into where people are going in their state. And that's what this governor did, was he tapped into something that people want -- they want the truth. And they want people to solve problems.

So it's the -- sometimes it just comes together. And when it does come together, it's a very powerful force. And I think that's what you're tapping -- what you're talking about now.

Judy Woodruff: I want to bring Kevin Wall back in here, real quickly. As you listen to this, what are you thinking? Because in your experience, you were saying you tried -- the government wasn't supportive of what you were trying to do. So you, in effect, went your own way.

Kevin Wall: So our campaign is going to be a movement of individual citizens joining in. It's going to be about a pledge that Al will announce in the next two weeks. We're going to ask a number of elected

officials to sign on, but more importantly, private citizens.

And I've had a lot of conversations with them that -- if we can take a private citizen and we can empower them, we can have simple actions -- we can get them involved, much like Sherry talked about -- they will then buy green, they will then vote green. And we can take this out of what happened at the G8, where it's volunteerism with these governments around the world. We can push these governments to actually get real treaties on the table earlier, that are stronger, that are going to make change. But it's going to be driven by individuals, just like stem cell research. It's going to be -- they're going to demand it. They're going to say, We're not going -- no more excuses. This is not a partisan issue.

And fortunately, Bloomberg's done some amazing things that -- Villaraigosa's done some amazing things, Arnold's done amazing things in this area. And these guys are helping us push these things out. And I love it. I mean, I have no idea if they're Republican or Democrat.

Sherry Lansing: That's right.

Kevin Wall: They just -- they agree --

Sherry Lansing: That's right.

Kevin Wall: -- with what we're trying to do.

Sherry Lansing: That's right.

Judy Woodruff: Are we saying that government is really not so relevant anymore? I mean --

Sherry Lansing: He's saying parties aren't so relevant.

Judy Woodruff: Well, either --

Sherry Lansing: Government -- either party isn't so relevant.

Judy Woodruff: Because government's run by --

Sherry Lansing: But either party isn't so relevant.

Judy Woodruff: (inaudible)

Sherry Lansing: You can't say -- you can declare yourself a Republican or a Democrat; that's fine. You can declare yourself an independent, you can -- what [Janet] said -- a vegan -- whatever you want to declare yourself is fine. But it's not relevant anymore. What's relevant is getting something done.

And the only way to get something done about the issues that all of us care about -- whether it's the environment, health, education, art; whatever it is -- the only way to get something done is to build a consensus. And the only way to build a consensus is to talk, to listen, to hear what other people say, and to keep going back until you solve a problem. And the problems can be solved. But they will not be solved if everybody just continues this divide.

Judy Woodruff: But Susan Kennedy, do you just leave this up to -- you just wait for the people, then, to instigate all these movements? I mean, where -- how can government -- what does government need to do? You're right there in the beating heart of what's going on in Sacramento, right?

Susan Kennedy: It's a function of timing. I mean, here we have a very opportune moment in history, I think -- I mean, I think Sherry's absolutely right -- where we have political leaders that are willing to step up and say that it's the issue, not the party, that's important; a movement from the grassroots level demanding certain change -- like climate change. I mean, we're -- and when these two things come together, government becomes a very powerful tool for the good.

Judy Woodruff: Yes --

Sherry Lansing: Can I just also say one other thing?

Judy Woodruff: -- and then I want to go back to Lauren, too.

Sherry Lansing: Also, it's -- I mean, again, it comes from all of us. But if you have a great leader, you can also be influenced, and you can also listen. So if you have a great president -- the idea of the Peace Corps -- which is one of my favorite ideas in the whole world, and I'm trying to start one for people over the age of 60 -- but at any rate, one of my favorite ideas is the Peace Corps -- that came from our president. It didn't come from the bottom up; it came from our president, and it's one of the greatest ideas that I think our country's ever had.

So, our governor has great ideas; our mayor has great ideas. And sometimes we disagree with it. That's healthy.

Judy Woodruff: Lauren Bond, speaking for the arts -- and we do want to come to you in the audience in just a minute -- I'm asking you to speak for all of the arts here -- but what do you need government to do to open the way? You talked about truth, and not truth. But are you saying -- I mean, to bring it down to a practical level -- are you saying government should get out of the way, in terms of the things that you're most interested in that are your priorities, or what? I mean, how do you --

Lauren Bon: Well, again, I'm sorry, but I really can't speak for all the arts. I can give you some very specific examples of what government could do to allow the small pieces of success that we as artists are able to accomplish, or I as an artist have been able to accomplish, to not destroy them just afterwards. Okay?

Last year, I completed a project where I grew a 32-acre cornfield in downtown Los Angeles, taking a brown field -- which is at the historic epicenter of historic L.A., and now the political center of L.A. -- and redeeming it through growing corn on a site that was called a cornfield, but now is called the State Park of -- the Historic State Park of Los Angeles.

Corn purified the site; took a lot of the chemicals out. And to do that, we brought in hundreds of truckloads of clean soil, cleaned it, put the space back in play for the local citizens. And the day we moved out, they sprayed toxic-chemical Roundup back on the site, killing --

Judy Woodruff: Who is "they?"

Lauren Bon: The State Parks, right?

Judy Woodruff: Oh.

Lauren Bon: And that includes contacting all of --

Judy Woodruff: So Governor Schwarzenegger did this?

Lauren Bon: He knew about it, yes -- and everybody else. And these are supposed to be our allies -- that what politics could do to help the creative people try and make progress on some of these issues is to try not list the South Central Farm under "entertainment" on Google Earth. Right? So last year, when you would want to find out about the South Central Farm, and you would put it in your Google search engine, it would come up as "entertainment," because Daryl Hannah was in the walnut trees.

These are things which are counter-helpful to progress. So I would ask for politicians and the media to think a little bit about the meaning of the small pieces of progress that can be made by normal citizens.

Judy Woodruff: When you're making decisions -- the governor's making decisions in Sacramento, Susan Kennedy -- do you have time to think about the practical implications of them?

Susan Kennedy: At a certain level. I can guarantee you, without hesitation, that the question of whether or not we sprayed whatever that was on the corn --

Lauren Bon: Roundup.

Susan Kennedy: -- did not come to the governor's office. It -- I mean, government is -- we're the largest employer in the state of California; hundreds of thousands of people work for state government. They're all very, very well-meaning. And it's people who create the rules and regulations to try and protect -- I'm sure there was some good regulation, somewhere deep in the bowels of the history of the State Parks Agency, that did that. So it's about attracting good people that can look at the rules and say, you know what? That doesn't make sense.

Because it doesn't -- the question never rises up through government. And so it's about attracting good people into government. And that comes back to the whole question of the political divide. Who wants to serve in government today, when you're part -- you're on a live battlefield? I mean, people -- you want people who are making the decisions at the bureaucratic levels to have some connection to the good that government is supposed to -- [have] some skin in the game, some investment in the outcome.

Judy Woodruff: All right.

We do want to come to the audience. But as we do, I want to ask each one of you -- whoever wants to weigh in -- how does what we're talking about up here in the last few minutes translate to Washington, and what you see about what Washington is doing and could be doing to bridge this divide that we're here to address?

Kevin Wall: The current issue that I'm working on -- I've found that Washington is still very disconnected. I felt that it was -- the issue was page six, six months ago; it's page one today. It is in American consciousness. All the polling says that Americans are aware now and want to start to make changes. And yet, you see what Congress is doing, and you see -- and you talk to politicians in Washington -- I find that they're very disconnected with the issues. And it makes me wonder how connected they actually are with relevant issues as they're happening, versus just reacting to election cycles and platforms.

Judy Woodruff: A recommendation for how they could do that better, though? I mean --

Kevin Wall: You know, it's probably part of what Susan talked about -- it's this election-cycle problem, of they're always looking to run the next election, so they're always defining their differences. And they've

gotten into this cycle that doesn't allow them to -- I mean, I don't want to quote Al's book, "Assault On Reason," but I think he makes an incredible point in his book, when you read it, of we've lost debate, and we've lost currency, and we've just become about platforms and policy for elections. And -- so --

Judy Woodruff: Sherry, advice for Washington?

Sherry Lansing: I think, again, they're human beings, and they want to be reelected. And the only way they're reelected is if you vote for them. I think it's really that simple.

And I think they're very aware of how angry everybody is. I mean, they look at how we view the legislature, which I guess has gotten the lowest marks in the history, or one of the lowest, you know -- keeps getting lower. And they know that we're angry that nothing's getting done. And they know that this debate on immigration is ludicrous. I mean, it's just ludicrous the way it's like, just -- nobody will move one way or the other.

And I think as they go back to their constituents, as they see their constituents being angry, and as they see the presidential election unfolding, and the incredible want for an outsider to come in -- I mean, that's saying a big deal. I'm not going to put you in a position, or I'm not going to put Mayor Bloomberg, if he's still here, in a position. But there is a lot of people that are asking these people to run. And there are a lot of people, when they look at Barack Obama, who are saying, At least he's not part of the process. And that's saying something.

And so, I guess I believe in government. I'm still incredibly idealistic about it. I believe in the citizen. I just -- and I don't think -- I think it's the normal citizen that makes a difference. And I actually can go back to this glorious thing with the stem cells. But I think it's in our power to really change things, if we want to. And I think if we send those messages, those people will not be reelected. And I think they're hearing it. I mean, I think they're very aware of the anger that's out there.

Judy Woodruff: Susan, you already addressed this at the outset. But how does what you're doing here in California translate for Washington? Or does it, really?

Susan Kennedy: I think it does translate, in an important way. People follow success. And so it's not that you can replicate the political environment in California. But I've already heard some Republicans in Congress, who are far to the right of this governor, saying, You know what? The rest of the Republican Party is doing horribly on a national level; this governor's doing something right. It creates a safe place for them to be counter to type. They all get up every day, and they have to go -- they don't want to -- running for election every day of their lives. They have to, because that's the system we have set up. So they're looking at the I-can't's -- what they can't do. And they can't color outside the lines of the divide.

And so by creating a successful place, where you've got the Bloombergs and the Schwarzeneggers going outside the lines, and showing that it can be done -- and not only can it be done; you'll be rewarded by the simple act of courage of the voters, who will say, You know what? I want -- this is what I want out of my politicians. It creates the example that could be replicated in districts and other places.

We've had other Republicans from other states and from -- at the local level, in California -- want -- for the first time, they actually want to do a Republican environmental thing. They want to invite the governor down and highlight climate change; things like that. That's because he created a safe place for Republicans to talk about an issue that Republicans nationally can't talk about. I do think it's definitely replicable. But the people have to reward the politicians for doing it. And that's what makes the simple act of courage of speaking out counter to type, on an individual basis, the basis of change.

Judy Woodruff: All right.

Before I go to Geoff Cowan to help call on some folks in the audience -- and I already see a hand up back there -- Lauren, any thoughts on message for Washington?

Lauren Bon: Well, when I think of Washington, I think about the great Potomac, and the beauty of that incredible muddy water, and it takes me back to the Nile. And it takes me to the beauty of trees, and the beauty that people must have seen when they landed on this continent 300 years ago from Europe, and the incredible wisdom that was here before we got here as European settlers 300 years ago -- and brought with us 300 years ago honey bees from Africa, in order to make farms happen here. Before then, there were all kinds of pollinators flying around, and the country looked really, really different.

And if I were asking Washington to do anything different, it would be, Watch the cherry trees next year. And don't make another move until all the honey bees are back in them.

Judy Woodruff: And clean up the Potomac along the way.

Geoff Cowan -- and I'll tell you, you already have Marty Kaplan with his hand up -- but who else? Is there -- go ahead.

Geoffrey Cowan: Go ahead, (inaudible).

Steven Hill: Okay.

Geoffrey Cowan: Please identify yourself, too.

Steven Hill: My name's Steven Hill. I'm with the New America Foundation.

A couple of observations -- been a very interesting morning -- one, in terms of bridging the political divide -- one thing that I've noted is that the guests today haven't gone very far to the right. When you look -- I mean, Michael Bloomberg and Governor Schwarzenegger -- it's great that they're here. Michael Bloomberg used to be a Democrat. And Governor Schwarzenegger is hardly too far to the right.

So if we're going to really bridge the divide, at some point we've got to bring a whole other group of people into the room, it seems to me, or we won't get very far in the bridging.

The second observation is --

Judy Woodruff: Well, let me just interrupt you there. Geoff Cowan -- I know you tried to have --

Steven Hill: Oh, this is not --

Judy Woodruff: -- more Republicans.

Steven Hill: -- a criticism at all of the organizers.

Judy Woodruff: So I -- but I think that's --

Steven Hill: This is great attempt.

Judy Woodruff: -- an interesting thing --

Steven Hill: I'm just --

Judy Woodruff: -- to address --

Steven Hill: But it's --

Judy Woodruff: -- no, before you --

Geoffrey Cowan: I'll agree.

Susan Kennedy: I'll disagree.

Geoffrey Cowan: You'll disagree?

Susan Kennedy: Yes.

Unidentified Speaker: Let's have that dialogue.

Steven Hill: Well, can --

Susan Kennedy: Governor Schwarzenegger got 93% of the Republican vote in the last election. They're in the room. They're in the room by virtue of the fact that you have a Republican out there willing to go out and articulate why what he's doing is important enough that he got the kind of support that other Republicans would dream of.

So I disagree entirely. I believe they are in the room. And it's about creating a place where people can move, and actually speak their minds and speak the truth about what they believe and what they want to accomplish, and not be ostracized.

Steven Hill: Okay. The second point I was just going to make very quickly was -- and was to agree with that you said earlier -- was that I think that there are significant institutional barriers to bringing everyone into the room, as you're saying. And you mentioned redistricting, which of course -- and how districts end up as solid red or blue. So purple California doesn't get expressed. Instead, we're broken down artificially into these red and blue districts.

But it is even more than that. I mean, the winner-take-all system itself carves itself in these red or blue districts. How we elect our elected officials today, in fact, doesn't allow the full flowering of ideas to be debated and discussed. So --

Unidentified Speaker: [I agree.]

Steven Hill: -- there's a much broader conversation to have about what institutional barriers are preventing us from getting where we need to go.

Unidentified Speaker: I agree with that.

Judy Woodruff: I think at this point --

Unidentified Speaker: Yes.

Judy Woodruff: -- Iowa is the only state that's doing the apportionment differently, where they're not drawing lines precisely -- there -- starting --

Unidentified Speaker: Arizona --

Judy Woodruff: Arizona?

Sherry, were you going to weigh in?

Sherry Lansing: Well, no, I was actually going to agree a little bit with what -- but I guess maybe what you're seeing -- and I'm not a politician at all -- maybe what you're seeing is that the far right and the far left -- everybody's moved to the center. I mean, maybe that's the mood of the country, and maybe that's what everybody --

Judy Woodruff: It's not what the polls show yet, necessarily.

Sherry Lansing: I'm an idealist.

Judy Woodruff: Some have come to the center.

Sherry Lansing: I don't know, but --

Susan Kennedy: The far right and the far left are not in the room.

Sherry Lansing: That's --

Susan Kennedy: And they're never going to be in the room.

Sherry Lansing: That's what I'm trying to say.

Susan Kennedy: They're never going to be in the same room; they're never going to be in the room with us. But, I mean, I'm what you would call a very conservative Democrat. And there's very little light between a very conservative Democrat and a very liberal Republican. So the spectrum is in the room.

Judy Woodruff: Let's see -- right here?

David Blum: [David Blum].

Judy Woodruff: Turn on the mic.

Susan Kennedy: Just keep talking; it'll --

David Blum: Keep talking -- oh, there we go. I'm David Blum.

To follow on that, I just was curious if you all see any hope in the -- I think we have record low levels of party affiliation. We have Joe Lieberman being whatever he counts as -- a Democrat, semi-Democratic -- I think Jim Jeffords is still in the Senate, right, as -- and has he left? He's left. But we've got some semblance of folks who are peeling away, even at the national level. Do you all see any reason for hope or opportunity in that dropping level of party affiliation, in that people are sort of accreting in the center, as shown by their interest in not being tied to one party or the other?

Judy Woodruff: Is that right, that there is a drop-off in party affiliation?

Sherry Lansing: Yes.

Judy Woodruff: I hadn't seen it.

David Blum: I think it's at record lows.

Judy Woodruff: Okay.

Sherry Lansing: I think it's good.

Unidentified Speaker: Depends on the state.

Judy Woodruff: It depends on the state.

Unidentified Speaker: California, there's many more independents now than there used to be --

Judy Woodruff: Yes. I know nationally --

David Blum: And as goes California --

Judy Woodruff: -- I saw a poll the other day that showed the Democrats are picking up and the Republicans were dropping; that it's a seasonal thing --

David Blum: Well, that may be picking up, but I think --

Judy Woodruff: -- depends on what's going [on] (inaudible)

David Blum: -- if you look, though, at trend lines over many, many years -- sort of like union membership -- it's also dropping.

Judy Woodruff: I'm not trying to argue; I'm just trying to get clear.

Sherry Lansing: I think -- want us to cover that?

Judy Woodruff: Yes.

Sherry Lansing: I think it's a very optimistic thing, but that's my personal opinion. And I remember -- I have two young boys. And they're both of voting age. And they both registered a Democrat. We're both -- my husband and I -- are registered Democrat. And they were talking to me. And said, You know, my whole life, that's what I am. And if I was to give you advice today, I would say to you, be an independent. It's better for you. It's better for you in all ways. Because -- and I'll tell you something -- you hear things from "the Republicans;" you hear things from "the Democrats." And then I will say this to you, which is going to sound funny -- people don't take you for granted.

I mean, if you are so always a Democrat -- I mean, when I was running a studio, I used to think we were really an ATM machine. I mean, they just came all the time. And then nothing we did was enough. And then they -- I will just say this -- I say "they" -- but I just remember, when we all had to testify, everything that was wrong with the world was the violence in movies. And I thought, But how can they be constantly picking on us, and we've done nothing right? It's because we're just taken for granted. But the minute somebody knows that you actually want a dialogue, you actually get a dialogue. And you meet a lot of interesting people that you wouldn't have been exposed to before.

I don't -- I just want to say one thing -- the Regents -- which are the UC group -- are appointed by the governor, so they're an enormously bipartisan group. When I joined the Regents, I was the first Democrat to be on the Regents in like the last -- I don't know how many years. And I will tell you, I remember going, Oh, my God, I'm not going to be able to talk to any of these people. And, Oh, my God. And on top of it all, you had to be polite, because it's done by parliamentary procedure. So you couldn't say, Shut up, that's stupid. You had to like listen.

And it was --

Judy Woodruff: You mean, that's not what they do in Hollywood?

Sherry Lansing: That's what I was used to them doing in Hollywood. So I like now had to be polite, and it was all in public. And I listened. And I ended up liking every single other person, and learning. And we compromise constantly. And actually, when there were just two Democrats, we were able to get the repeal of SB 209, which was the affirmative action thing. And we were actually able to move everything, because we respected everybody.

Judy Woodruff: Marty Kaplan, question?

Marty Kaplan: I have a question, speaking as a sinner who has not yet been saved. I'm a --

Judy Woodruff: Can you be more specific?

Marty Kaplan: I'm a pre-post-partisan. And so I guess my question is for Sherry, and maybe Susan. In the 2004 presidential election, where things were at stake, as we now know retroactively -- including what's happened in Iraq, including what's happened in the Justice Department -- arguably, that election was amazingly important. And when I, who did not want the incumbent reelected, saw my likeable governor campaigning for that president in Ohio -- the state that turned it for the incumbent -- I was torn between saying, Well, I agree with the governor on some issues, but on the other hand, his support for his fellow party member -- the essence of partisanship and loyalty -- is maybe even more important than my agreement with him on issues like stem cells.

So I'm just asking how you reconcile your support as a Democrat for -- a former Democrat -- for someone who, in the macro level, maybe did more harm to your cause than anybody else.

Judy Woodruff: Susan Kennedy is dying to answer that question.

Susan Kennedy: Absolutely, on two levels.

First of all, party is not irrelevant. There was something I wanted to -- and it stuck -- that you said earlier, that I just wanted to split hairs with. Party is relevant, because it still is the way our system is set up. And the same party responsibilities that kind of influence the activities of the Republicans -- including Arnold Schwarzenegger in the election -- are the same influences that led many prominent Democrats who were sitting in this room this morning -- were very close with this governor -- to campaign for his opponent just several months ago.

And so, there were certain expectations of the party that will -- that are -- as long as we have the party system, they're going to be there. And if that's going to be the dividing line -- if I'm going to pick one issue that is the dividing line for me, I'm not going to get very far. I mean, I could ask the same question about my support, my strong loyalty, to Senator Dianne Feinstein and everybody else who voted for the

use of force.

I mean, if you're going to hold it to -- which was more important -- the election in 2004, or the vote for the use of force? You can't be unforgiving, and you can't be so rigid in your views that you take yourself out of the solution. And I think it's unfair to expect people who are engaged in politics and have had the courage to get into -- step into the breach and be a leader -- to expect that they will completely eschew any responsibilities that are expected of them in the party. [Hell,] it is what it is.

Judy Woodruff: Marty, two-word response?

Unidentified Speaker: Do you want [me to] (inaudible)

Marty Kaplan: It's interesting that -- I respect your answer. But the characterization of my position as rigidity, rather than yours, is what I'll take with me.

Susan Kennedy: How so? I mean, it's --

Marty Kaplan: Why is it rigid for me to believe that the decision with the greatest consequence to the entire nation was the outcome of that election -- that that was more important than the particulars going on in California, and the positional stances of one governor? Why is my fastening on that an index of partisanship and inflexibility?

Susan Kennedy: I think it's -- what I'm hearing you say is that one man, who went to one state at one time on one day, somehow was the deciding factor, when the majority of voters are the ones that determined the outcome of the election. But the rigidity that I hear in your stance is that nothing -- that nothing else good comes from this person because they disappointed you, or they did something that was so monumental, which -- and I would say that there's not a single politician in Washington today who didn't play a monumental role in the situation we're in today.

So I can't hold somebody to the response -- I can't hold that against this governor, when he is a card-carrying member of the Republican Party, because I think he's doing so much good for the country right now, by being a different kind of Republican, that I'm not willing to dismiss all of that because I disagreed with -- I didn't -- I wouldn't have gone to Ohio. I'm not that conservative of a Democrat.

But it's -- I wouldn't hold him -- but there were certain expectations of me as a Democrat. People -- I've lost friends -- I have people who will never speak to me again, because I defied the party ideology of going to work for a Republican; going to work for somebody not based on party.

So I am as -- I have people who speak so viciously ill of me that I've gotten -- I don't want to call them -- harmful notes -- threats -- simply because I defied the party ideology of going to work for a Republican. That is the kind of rigidity that causes the poison in our system, in my view.

Judy Woodruff: One last question -- is there somebody back there who's had their hand up a long time? There's a hand here. I just want to make sure we're getting to people in the back. Yes, sir?

Roger Payne: Yes --

Judy Woodruff: Last question.

Roger Payne: Yes. I'm Roger Payne. I'm from Ocean Alliance, part -- here also in connection with the Annenberg Foundation.

One of the things I've heard no one say at this time, which I'm very interested in, in terms of what are the causes of -- or how do we need to change things to have a cease-fire that will bridge a political divide -- is some sense of responsibility of politicians to, in fact, represent the people that they were elected to represent.

Basically, you can think of it in one respect as, if a person votes his conscience, he's a crook. He should be representing the people that he was elected to represent, not to just go about voting for what he or she believes is the necessary thing.

I also feel -- in great agreement with what Lauren Bon was saying -- I feel that, in fact, the media is failing to deal with news which has consequence over a long period of time. All of it would fail the 500-year test. Five hundred years from now, only our great-great or many-greats grandchildren, who are historically interested, will care what the blue states, what the red states, were; and whether even something called the United States even exists by then.

The only thing they will care about what we do is whether or not we leave them a healthy world in which they can make their lives. And that says that every decision which is made anywhere in the world, by any political government of any country at all, is more important if it deals with something -- however small than the environment -- than with what is spent all the time, and what we're fed all the time, with news. I'd love any comment on that.

Judy Woodruff: I would say guilty as charged, for the media. But does anybody else want to comment? I think that's a very helpful closing question -- statement.

We'll leave it at that. That was a wonderful --

Sherry Lansing: Well, I'm happy to say --

Judy Woodruff: Sherry, yes?

Sherry Lansing: Well, why not?

I think you're right. I mean, I think that we, as citizens -- I mean, you asked for a comment -- and we as citizens, and the politicians, will be judged by whether we leave this world better. That's really what we're all judged by, aren't we? I mean, what do we want our legacy to be? We hope that we leave the world a little better than when we entered it, in all ways -- with the environment, with healthcare, with our own personal relationships -- how we treat our loved ones. So yes, I think we're all saying that.

But I just want to add one other thing, I guess. I think a politician is also supposed to lead. So it's -- I think, yes, you listen to what people say. But you also have great influence, and a great podium, to take people along with you, which is why I was referring back to the Peace Corps ideas. So --

Judy Woodruff: On that note --

Geoffrey Cowan: Judy and panel, thank you so much. This was just wonderful.

And -- is it July 7th, Kevin? July 7th, we'll all be watching your concerts around the world.

This has been just a wonderful day of conversation. I don't think everything's been resolved. There hasn't even been full agreement; you wouldn't want there to be, in a discussion like this. But it's been

enormously civil. And we look forward to another year or year and a half of thinking about these issues. And I would invite any of you who think that you have follow-on ideas for us about any ways in which any progress can be made on these issues, to let us know -- of course, to do it in your own communities.

We have a lunch, which is also a lunch discussion, to follow. And it's right outside. As you go outside, there's a lunch ready. You're all invited to it. And you're all invited to continue the conversation with each other and with our panelists.

Thank you so much for being here. And once again, thanks, Judy, and to our panel.