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'The Rachel Maddow Show' for Monday, March 28th, 2011

Read the transcript to the Monday show

updated 3/29/2011 12:50:52 PM ET

Guests: Chris Hayes, Amanda Terkel

RACHEL MADDOW, HOST: Good evening, Lawrence. Thanks for having me on last hour. Good to talk with you about the speech.

LAWRENCE O'DONNELL, "THE LAST WORD"
HOST: You gave us a good, smart start.

MADDOW: Thank you.

And thanks to you for staying with us for the next hour. This is the USS Mount Whitney. It is a U.S. Navy ship that was built in Newport News, Virginia, in 1969. The USS Mount Whitney is a big command and control ship, which essentially means it can oversee really complex operations that the military is involved in.

The USS Mount Whitney was deployed to Haiti, for example, in 1994 as the United States played a role in ousting the military junta that had taken over that country.

Do you remember back in the last presidential campaign when John McCain said, "Today, we are all Georgians"? That when Russia and the nation of Georgia were having a war and John McCain sort of wanted the U.S. to start fighting Russia alongside the Georgians? During that war in 2008, it was the USS Mount Whitney

that was deployed to deliver humanitarian aid in Georgia. It was the first NATO ship to reach that particular—the particular Georgian port that it went to.

The USS Mount Whitney is considered to be the most advanced command and control ship that the United States has ever floated. The USS Mount Whitney is where the U.S. has been running the Libyan war out of. Between the ship's admiral, Samuel Locklear, and the U.S. Army General Carter Ham, this is where the U.S. has been running the war in Libya from.

But as of last night, the USS Mount Whitney, we think, is not going to be the headquarters for the Libyan war anymore, because that war effort will now be run by NATO, with the no-fly zone part of it and the "bombing Gadhafi's

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ground troops” part of it which they call something euphemistic like protecting civilians.

This USS Mount Whitney, this particular ship named after the highest peak in the Continental United States, will no longer be the place from which the Libyan war is run. But does that mean American personnel will be doing any less of the war-making in Libya? And are U.S. taxpayers going to be funding any less of the war-making in Libya, even if the United States military is not running it from that particular ship?

Answers to those questions are as yet unseen. But here is what President Obama promised on that score tonight in an address about Libya from the National Defense University in Washington, D.C.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: To lend some perspective on how rapidly this military and diplomatic response came together—when people were being brutalized in Bosnia in the 1990s, it took the international community more than a year to intervene with air power to protect civilians. It took us 31 days. NATO has taken command of the enforcement of the arms embargo and the no-fly zone.

Last night, NATO decided to take on the additional responsibility of protecting Libyan civilians. This transfer from the United States to NATO will take place on Wednesday. The

United States will play a supporting role, including intelligence, logistical support, search and rescue assistance, and capabilities to jam regime communications. Because of this transition to a broader NATO-based coalition, the risk and cost of this operation to our military and to American taxpayers will be reduced significantly.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Risks and costs to the American taxpayers and to the military will be reduced significantly. The U.S. role will shift toward intelligence, logistical support, search and rescue and jamming communications.

In terms of the specifics of the reduction of the U.S. role, today brought word that one U.S. submarine that has been involved in the military effort in Libya has now been removed from the area. That is one sign that the U.S. is beginning to scale down its effort.

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That said, the proportion of all the air missions being flown over Libya is still substantially American. Of 178 air missions flown in the last 28 hours or so, 99 of them were flown by the U.S., only 79 by other coalition nations. The United States military also revealed today that additional aircraft are now being used in this mission. American pilots are not just flying high altitude fixed-wing planes over Libya anymore, they are also flying aircraft that are frankly flown much closer to the ground, A-10 Warthogs and AC-130 inspector gunships.

The idea here is that with these types of aircraft, you can do more specific targeting so as to try to avoid civilians casualties compared with what you can do with high-flying fighters and bombers.

As President Obama addressed the nation tonight on day 10 of the America's involvement in this war in Libya—the multilateral character of the intervention, the international nature of war was sort of the president's main point, that the U.S. not only would not be in the lead in Libya, but that the international character of the intervention was a key reason why he committed the U.S. to this at all, and why he thought it was a good idea.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: America cannot use our military wherever repression occurs. Given the costs and risks of intervention, we must always measure our interests against the need for action. But that cannot be an argument for

never acting on behalf of what's right. In this particular country, Libya, at this particular moment, we were faced with the prospect of violence on a horrific scale.

We had a unique ability to stop that violence and the international mandate for action, a broad coalition prepared to join us, the support of Arab countries, and a plea for help from the Libyan people themselves. We also have the ability to stop Gadhafi's forces in their tracks without putting American troops on the ground.

To brush aside America's responsibility as a leader and more profoundly our responsibilities to our fellow human beings under such circumstances would have been a betrayal of who we are. Some nations may be able to turn a blind eye to atrocities in other countries. The United States of America is different.

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(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The United States of America is different. But he's being very careful to talk about this particular country and this particular moment, and then describing very Libya-specific reasons why this intervention made sense to him and his calculation of whether or not the U.S. should get involved, the precedent of the United States of America.

The Libyan intervention itself and tonight's speech in particular already has the beltway commentariat clucking over how this president justifies the use of American military force, how a president elected in part because of, frankly, national revulsion over the previous president's ideas about the use of military force, how this president justifies military action of his own.

Whether or not you like this intervention in Libya, it's clear that the president's explanation for why it is justified matches what he said he would do with military force, what he would see as justifiable use of the U.S. military. It is clear it matches what he said about that issue at the very start of his presidency, when in his first year as president, he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: More and more, we all confront difficult questions about how to prevent the slaughter of innocent civilians by their own governor, or to stop a civil war whose violence and suffering can engulf an entire region. I

believe that force can be justified on humanitarian grounds, as it was in the Balkans, or in other places that have been scarred by war. Inaction tears at our conscious and can lead to more costly intervention later. That's why all responsible nations must embrace the role that militaries, with a clear mandate, can play to keep the peace.

America's commitment to global security will never waiver. But in a world in which threats are more diffused and missions more complex, America cannot act alone.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: President Obama speaking in 2009. America cannot act alone.

Here he was tonight.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

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OBAMA: We know that the United States, as the world's most powerful nation, will often be called upon to help. In such cases, we should not be afraid to act. But the burden of action should not be America's alone.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: 2009, America cannot act alone. 2011, the burden of action should not be America's alone.

Whether you are for or against American participation in an international intervention like this war in Libya, it is the type of intervention that this president said at the outset he would favor as president.

As for the differences between him and the previous guy? That's where the differences between him and George W. Bush, defined sharply tonight at one point in his speech in terms of why the U.S. would not make it the goal of our war in Libya to topple the dictator there, ala, Iraq.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: If we tried to overthrow Gadhafi by force, our coalition would splinter. We would likely have to put U.S. troops on the ground to accomplish that mission, or risk killing many civilians from the air. The dangers faced by our men and women in uniform would be far greater, so would the costs, and our share of the responsibility for what comes next.

To be blunt, we went down that road in Iraq.

Thanks to the extraordinary sacrifices of our troops and the determination of our diplomats, we are hopeful about Iraq's future. But regime change there took eight years, thousands of American and Iraqi lives, and nearly \$1 trillion. That is not something we can afford to repeat in Libya.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: No military-imposed regime change, even in the context of military intervention for other means. That is not the official policy of the United States government.

Also, it is interesting throughout the speech tonight, President Obama consistently referred to soldiers and diplomats, diplomats and soldiers, talked about people using both sides of American power, using American force and using American persuasion. The elevation of the idea of diplomacy and persuasion there has been a hallmark of this presidency. It was

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quite literally specific and evident.

Tonight, I think it dovetails with the president 's overall point towards the end of his speech that essentially defined international persuasion and leadership as the apex of American strength. The idea that America can intervene in lots of places, but it will choose to intervene in places where it can persuade lots of other countries to come along, too.

There was a telling moment nine days before the U.S. intervened in Libya, when President Obama's director of intelligence, James Clapper, gave his assessment of what was going to happen in Libya between Gadhafi's forces and the rebels. Watch.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

JAMES CLAPPER, DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Just think from a standpoint of attrition, that over time—I mean, this kind of stalemate back-and-forth, I think longer term that the regime will prevail.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Over the longer term, the regime will prevail. Over the longer term, Gadhafi will win.

Again, that was before this international intervention. It was the opinion of the U.S. intelligence community that Gadhafi over time was going to win.

And then came international intervention, the

U.N. Security Council votes to authorize a no-fly zone over Libya, calls for all necessary measures to be taken to protect Libyan civilians. Here is the reaction on the ground in the rebel stronghold of Benghazi as they watched that U.N. vote for intervention, cheering in the streets.

The rebels were losing at that point. They were being forced back to Benghazi. Gadhafi's forces were about to take Benghazi back, and the international community decided to step in with military force. It was a decision President Obama referenced directly tonight in terms of the dramatic nature of its timing.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: We knew that if we wanted—if we waited one more day, Benghazi, a city nearly the size of Charlotte, could suffer a massacre that would have reverberated across the reasoning and stained the conscience of the

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world. It was not in our national interest to let that happen. I refused to let that happen. And so, nine days ago, after consulting the bipartisan leadership of Congress, I authorized military action to stop the killing and enforce U.N. Security Council resolution 1973.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The president says a massacre was averted in Benghazi. A massacre was averted in Libya.

But what about after that? What then? What now?

By all counts, the only reason the rebels are holding ground in Libya at this point, the only reason they are advancing on Tripoli tonight, we are told, is because of that international air power. It's not like we stepped in to prevent a massacre, and then backed off. The rebels utterly depend on U.S. and coalition support indefinitely, as long as Gadhafi survives.

If the U.S. and the rest of the international coalition left, and Gadhafi was still there, what do you think would happen to the rebels?

The rebels' cognizance of their dependence on international forces was putting stark relief on Thursday, when people supporting the rebels in Benghazi held this "thank you" rally. "Thank you, coalition." This in the city of Benghazi, right?

But again, what happens now? What happens

next?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: I know that some Americans continue to have questions about our efforts in Libya. Gadhafi has not yet stepped down from power. And until he does, Libya will remain dangerous.

Moreover, even after Gadhafi does leave power, 40 years of tyranny has left Libya fractured, and without strong civil institutions. The transition to a legitimate government that is responsive to the Libyan people will be a difficult task. And while the United States will do our part to help, it will be a task for the international community, and more importantly a task for the Libyan people themselves.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

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MADDOW: So, the United States wants Gadhafi gone. The United States will not use military force to force him out.

If Gadhafi is ousted, the U.S. will participate in efforts to stabilize Libya, but the U.S. will not lead those efforts.

In the meantime, the United States will participate in an open-ended international intervention to stop Gadhafi, but the goal of that mission day-to-day and the time line on which it will be carried out are, frankly, unknown.

For all the clamoring here at home for presidential communication to the nation on this—well, you got it, America. You got the clearest possible presidential statement about the muddiest, possible, ongoing, indeterminate international situation otherwise known as a war. Discuss.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

OBAMA: We have accomplished these objectives consistent with the pledge that I made to the American people at the outset of our military operations. I said that America's role would be limited and that we would not put ground troops into Libya, that we would focus our unique capabilities on the front end of the operation, and that we would transfer responsibility to our allies and partners. Tonight, we are fulfilling that pledge.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: This American military mission in Libya has been hard to get your head around. One political consequence of that is that it has also been hard for President Obama's critics in Washington to get their political attacks on him about Libya straight. Hasn't stopped them from trying, that in all its unintentional hilarious glory is next.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SEN. MITCH MCCONNELL (R-KY), MINORITY LEADER: Many Americans view our military action in Libya with anxiety and uncertainty. They are wondering why U.S. forces are once again engaged in combat action against an Arab regime in the Middle East. They're wondering when this operation will end and when their loved ones will return. And they're

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asking another reasonable question: what is the mission?

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: The top Republican in the Senate had not talked about Libya before today. Imagine being Mitch McConnell on a situation like this, knowing if you even try to say beep about your solemnly held concerns about this war on Libya, every single person seeing you talk about it will imagine the word—Iraq! Iraq! Iraq! -- flashing over your head the entire time you are talking. No wonder Mitch McConnell waited this long to say anything.

The imaginary flashing giant Iraq over his head problem also goes for Joe Lieberman, of course, and guys like John McCain, and for the panel of Iraq war cheerleaders, like even Paul Wolfowitz, who were asked to give their opinions on this latest war today at the conservative think tank called the American Enterprise Institute. Surprise, they are all in favor.

For the part of Republican and conservative establishment that has never met a military intervention they did not like, no matter the character of the war, or the point of the war, or the location of the war, or anything else going around it, you can pretty much bet the farm for these guys that if the question is war, the answer is yes. But for the rest of the Republican and conservative establishment that is frankly more animated by a desire to criticize Obama, then by anything substantive about the grounds in which they do so, the

Libyan war has been more of a pickle.

You might be reflexively pro-war, but if a Democratic president agrees with you on joining the war—what wins, your war reflexes or your ‘I hate Democrats’ reflexes?

The Republicans who find themselves in this trap, they’re flippy, floppy way out of it generally has looked like this. Step one: demand U.S. military intervention in Libya. Step two, after President Obama intervenes in Libya, say you oppose U.S. military intervention in Libya. Step three, hope no one remembers what you did in step one.

For example, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen is the chair of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Republican-controlled House. At the end of February, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen said the U.S. should enforce a no-fly zone in Libya. Two weeks later, the president said we would do just that. So, then, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen did an

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immediate 180 and questioned why we needed that no-fly zone she used to like the idea of, because she said no national security interests were at stake.

Same deal for the chairman of the Armed Services Committee in the Republican-controlled House. His name is Buck McKeon. Three weeks ago, Buck McKeon went after President Obama for the president, in his words, doing nothing on Libya. Then, President Obama announced that we will intervene in Libya, which prompted Mr. McKeon to come out against his own earlier advice, to decry this pointless this intervention in Libya that he himself had been demanding.

There are lots of other Republican members of Congress who have followed exactly the same befuddled pattern of free floating opposition without portfolio.

For ease of future reference, these people shall be henceforth known as the Gingrich caucus.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GRETA VAN SUSTEREN, FOX NEWS: What would you do about Libya?

NEWT GINGRICH ®, FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER: Exercise a no-fly zone this evening.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: That's step one. Step two: after President Obama does intervene in Libya?

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GINGRICH: I would not have intervened. I think there were a lot of other ways to affect Gadhafi.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Ta-da!

Joining us is Chris Hayes, MSNBC contributor and Washington editor of "The Nation" magazine.

Chris, it is good to see you. Thanks for joining us.

CHRIS HAYES, MSNBC CONTRIBUTOR: Great to see you, too.

MADDOW: Republicans are clearly struggling to find a way to criticize Mr. Obama on a military decision that they kind of agreed with

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in the beginning, or at least were demanding before he did it. What is the next step in that struggle? What is their next argument about what the president is doing wrong?

HAYES: So, I think the next step in the struggle is going to be very much rooted in what happens in Libya, and here's the reason why. Two reasons: one is that because there was no congressional vote, no one in Congress is actually tethered to a position on this issue. I mean, yes, we can play the tape on THE RACHEL MADDOW SHOW, and that counts for something in the case of Gingrich, but a lot of other members of Congress have sort of hedged their bets and stayed relatively mum. And so, when things go poorly, they can attack from any kind of ideological direction they want to because they are not committed on the floor of the United States Congress supporting it.

We all remember the sad fate that befell John Kerry when he attempted to run for president in 2004 largely on criticism of the implementation of the Iraq war having voted for it. That constraint is off the table. So, in that way, it's very beneficial to the Republicans because they can kind of make any possible criticism they want from any ideological direction or tactical direction whatsoever, as long as they think they can kind of make political hay out of it.

MADDOW: But you think the vote that happened in the Senate, the unanimous vote that happened in the Senate at the beginning of March, which was not use of force

authorization.

HAYES: Right.

MADDOW: It wasn't anything that direct, but it was in support of the general idea of what the president went on to do. You don't think that that unanimous vote in the Senate will bind any senators from future political criticism?

HAYES: I mean, I definitely don't. I mean, I think that their opponents will be able to bring it up. But I think, for the most part, they're going to be freelancing.

The other thing that, I think, they have to negotiate, which is fascinating about the dynamics of this, I think there's a kind of consensus in the sort of non-neocon, right wing intelligentsia against this intervention. But if you look at the polling data, the people that are most supportive are conservative Republicans and the reason is because,

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generally, they are pro-military intervention, nationalists, believe in American supremacy, and also have been told by their leaders for years that this is how—what America has to do, special burden to lead the world, and to enter into wars in the Middle East. It's very hard to turn on a dime and now say that's not the case.

And so, they actually have to negotiate their own constituency as well, which is going to be really interesting to see how it develops. My sense is that if things go poorly, support is going to drop, and they're going to will feel more liberated to throw whatever criticism they can at the intervention.

MADDOW: See, I wonder, though, if you haven't just sketched out the way the right is going to deal with this in the future. I mean, the president tonight gave a very detailed, very clear self-referential and repetitive defense of the idea of multilateralism. The idea that American leadership means diplomacy alongside force, and diplomacy means getting the world to go along with what we want, which makes us participate in things rather than lead things from a military perspective. That is multilateralism. And that's something that Republicans, particularly really hawkish Republicans like to criticize in theory.

So, doesn't this open an opportunity for Republicans just go whole hog John Bolton on the guy, to say let's get out of the U.N. and the whole other rest of it?

HAYES: Yes. And it does. And I think the

interesting thing is that when the president talked about the false choice—I mean, you sketched out the kind of, sort of, isolationist argument to sort of use a brute word on one side, and a kind of more hawkish argument, regime change argument in the other. And he said, you know, we reject both those, we sort of taking the middle path, which is the sort of Obama troupe.

The point is that he's actually opened to political attack from both ends, right? I mean, there are going to be Republicans who say, "We never should have done this," like McKeon, for instance, and there's going to be a lot more again if this drags out, if this goes poorly.

And then there are going to be Republicans who say we're doing half measures, we need to lead, that we shouldn't take second seat to France, et cetera.

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So, there's actually both of those within the Republican camps, these attacks—plausible political attacks from actually both sides of the kind of middle path that the president sketched out in the speech.

MADDOW: Do you think anything happened in the speech to affect substantively this debate about the president seeking overt congressional authority for what he's going to do in the future or what he has already done? Do you think anything changes about that or the debate stays as is.

HAYES: I was struck by the fact it wasn't mentioned. It wasn't even alluded to. There was a sort of tacit mention of consulting with the bipartisan members of Congress. But that largely remained sort of unannounced. And I think that's problematic for a lot of reasons.

But I also think it's partly, Congress doesn't want to vote on this for all the reasons I just mentioned. I mean, if you're John Boehner, you're much happier not having voted on that Libya intervention because six months from now, you can say more or less whatever you want and no one is going to throw that vote back in your face.

And the fact of the matter is, as much as this is, I think, a sort of problematic creep of unilateral authority by this sort of executive branch in sort of military operations, it's also on Congress who just sort of are shirking here. They haven't demanded any justification of the authority in masse, and it's actually on them to kind of come forward and ask for that

if they want to have that argument.

MADDOW: But it's a totally key predictive point that you just made there. That the politics of this can be explained by the fact that all of the political incentives point away from there being a vote like this in Congress—

HAYES: Absolutely.

MADDOW: -- even with the principled arguments point from the left and right. And that's I think valuable and predictive.

HAYES: Exactly right.

MADDOW: Chris Hayes, MSNBC contributor, Washington editor of "The Nation" and smart man—thank you for joining us.

HAYES: Thanks, Rachel. Appreciate it.

MADDOW: The great Republican union-busting

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political overreach of 2011 has been by a response. It is the great Democratic “hey, wait a second, that has nothing to do with the budget” response of 2011.

In Wisconsin, the Republican governor and legislature have redefined Pyrrhic victory.

And in Indiana, Democrats who’ve been out of the state for more than a month fighting this sort of thing just returned, having sort of won—having sort of won by the fact that they left. Now, that fight may be coming to Washington.

The whole story is moving very fast and we’ve got the details, coming up next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Here is how you tell the difference between a Republican governor in 2011 who wants to be president and one who just wants to be famous.

Republican Governor Mitch Daniels of Indiana appears to take everything about himself very seriously, including his own presidential ambitions. But having been George W. Bush’s budget director, having been budget director in an administration that turned a projected \$236 billion national surplus into a \$400 billion national deficit during his 29-month tenure, that is not necessarily a fiscal bona fides, political asset.

If you are Mitch Daniels and you are dragging that liability around behind you on your

hopeful way to the White House, hey, I was W. ’s budget guy—if you’re dragging that behind you into a potential presidential run, you do not also want to have, on the other side of your politics, a Scott Walker problem. You do not also want to be a lightning rod for everything the Democratic base holds dear and frankly had previously forgotten that it holds dear.

You do not want to be that guy from the left and right heading into a Republican primary, let alone a general election.

So, one way you can tell Mitch Daniels wants to be president and not just a famous Republican governor is the way that he and his fellow Hoosier Republicans are caving, and they are. They are caving right now and today.

In Wisconsin, the nation was transfixed by those 14 Democratic senators leaving Wisconsin to deny the state legislature a

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quorum, right? Scott Walker and the Wisconsin Republicans stripped union rights. We'll move on that in a moment. There's a big update on that.

But a week after the Wisconsin Democrats took off, 39 of 40 of Indiana's House Democrats also took off. They have been in Illinois for the past five weeks. Same idea: deny the legislature a quorum so the Republicans can't strip union rights and also in this case, so they can't cut the knees from public schooling.

Well, today, the Indiana Democrats are back. They are saying they got most of what they wanted. The Indiana legislature—look at this—convened at 5:00 p.m. today for the first time in five weeks, with actual Democrats there. You see the “thank you” signs from people supporting the Democratic legislators.

Democrats will still vote no on what the Republicans are trying to do, but the deal they got for standing firm for five weeks is that Governor Mitch Daniels executive order stripping union rights will not become permanent Indiana legislation, stripping union rights. The Republicans in the Indiana legislature and Mitch Daniels have decided to let the idea of making permanent the union-stripping thing, they have decided to let that idea go.

The great Republican overreach of 2011 has sounded to the Democratic base like an alarm clock ringing, waking them up after a long time of being asleep and being taken for granted.

But to Republicans, particularly to Republicans who have aspirations for running for even bigger political office, what sounds like an alarm clock to Democrats, to the Republicans, it just sounds like an alarm.

Have you heard what happened today on the Wisconsin part of this? Big news. That's next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: For a generation, the Democratic Party has taken a lot of its base for granted. On the issue of abortion rights, in particular, Democrats have bragged about how open-minded they are about pro-life Democrats getting elected and how tolerant they are of anti-abortion politics in the Democratic Party, even among their most high profile officials, all the while assuming that their pro-choice base will still keep voting for Democrats—even though Democrats haven't really been giving them a reason to do so.

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Today, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee sent out a mailer. As you can see, it is headline by Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer. It's a fundraising e-mail. It asks for donations to help keep the U.S. Senate Democratic, in part on the basis of Republicans going after abortion rights at the federal level. It remains to be seen whether pro-choice Democratic base that is used to being thrown under the bus by the Democratic Party will respond to fundraising attempts like this.

But I think it's also an unanswered question, whether Republicans are going to have some electoral trouble with this issue, too. There's a big coordinated, aggressive anti-abortion push in the States by Republican legislatures and governors this year. We've reported on this show about some small-c conservatives, small government Republican opposition to that push, in places like Wyoming, where the libertarian-minded, "leave me alone" model of conservatism isn't just a puzzled Beltway construct that doesn't translate to policy, but where Republicans actually get up on the floor of the legislature and argue against this big government conservative proposal to force the government into your doctor's appointment, to give doctors a script to read to their patients, regardless of the doctor's own medical opinion.

And now, you've got this Democratic Party in this Senate fund-raising letter attacking Republicans for saying they were focused on jobs, jobs, jobs, while instead what they're really working on is abortion, abortion,

abortion.

At "Mother Jones" magazine today, Kate Sheppard highlights that ideological disconnect on abortion issues on the right goes so far as to include a move by Republican Congressman Cliff Stearns of Florida, who along with most of the rest of the Republicans in the House, voted to de-fund Planned Parenthood last month. She reports on the move by this same guy, Cliff Stearns of Florida, to overtly spend federal taxpayer money to directly support the anti-abortion, quack, fake medical clinics that try to trick women into believing they can get an abortion there, but instead subject them to anti-abortion hectoring masquerading as medical care.

The crisis pregnancy centers, you have heard of this. In 2006, when the House investigated what these crisis pregnancy centers do, they found that 20 of 23 clinics they investigated, 20 of 23, provided false or misleading

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information about the health effects of abortion.

Regardless of how you feel about crisis pregnancy centers, House Republicans moving to give federal taxpayer money to them? To spend taxpayer money on crisis pregnancy centers? That complicates the jobs, jobs, jobs message, that even complicates the cutting spending message.

Here's another complicated Republican message. In Wisconsin, Republican Governor Scott Walker has made the idea that Wisconsin is broke -- the whole pretense of his nationally resonant, union-stripping political misadventure. Governor Walker called his union-stripping bill a budget repair bill, remember? The governor has consistently touted his willingness to take political hits on this issue because he said he had to do the hard work to cut Wisconsin spending, to cut Wisconsin's budget. He said over and over again that his budget would cut state spending by 6 percent.

"The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel" reports today that according to a report from the nonpartisan fiscal bureau of the state, actually, Scott Walker's budget in Wisconsin will increase state spending by 1 percent. So, not only is his union-stripping thing not about the budget, his budget is not about the budget.

The Republican Party set up Scott Walker to be a national hero. I think they thought this would have been a popular fight for the governor to have picked. But it turns out

Wisconsin was pretty dramatically against the governor on this. He lost the argument in terms of public opinion, and the means by which he had to get this through, having lost the argument, have become desperate to the point of comical.

Republicans passed that union-stripping bill in Wisconsin by taking it out of what had been a budget bill, calling it non-fiscal, and passing without a quorum in a big rush at night while Democrats said it was illegal. Opponents sued on procedural grounds and a judge had granted a temporary restraining order, preventing the Wisconsin secretary of state from publishing that law, that would also prevent the law from taking effect.

So, the Republican Senate leader in Wisconsin went around the judge's ruling and just had the law published anyway, somewhere else, by a different state agency that doesn't really do that. Even the head of that agency says he

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does not think them publishing that makes it law. He told “The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel,” quote, “I don’t think this act makes it become effective. My understanding is that the secretary of state has to publish it in the official state newspaper for it to become effective.”

But, regardless, the Walker administration just says it’s taking it as law. It’s deciding that it’s law, over that judge’s ruling, over the opinion of that agency they got to sort of fake publish it. They’re just going to call it law, and start enforcing it—or at least they’re going to try to.

“The Associated Press” reported today that Governor Walker’s administration started taking steps to adjust workers’ paychecks to reflect the new law that the governor says is now in effect, even though it doesn’t seem true. House Republicans at the federal level are considering voting on their own Scott Walker-esque union-stripping bill. It would affect employees in aviation and in rail. When presented with evidence how this union-stripping thing has worked out in Wisconsin—if you were a Republican strategist, would you choose to take this fight national right now?

Joining us now is Amanda Terkel, senior politics reporter at “The Huffington Post.” She’s been covering the Republican union-stripping agenda.

Amanda, thanks very much for being on the show. It’s nice to have you here.

AMANDA TERKEL, HUFFINGTON POST: Great.

Thank you.

MADDOW: So, despite the big show of support for union rights in Wisconsin and across the Midwest, national Republicans want to take this to D.C. What does this look like at the federal level?

TERKEL: Well, like you said, they are going after air and rail workers. The way it works now, if you want to form a union, you just need to get a majority of the workers who turn out to vote. But the way that Republicans would like to do it and the way that it’s been for many years is you need to get majority of all workers, even ones who don’t turn out to vote.

So, if you don’t turn out to vote, essentially you’re voting no. I mean, imagine if Mitt Romney votes against Barack Obama, and under Republican rules, if you don’t turn up to vote, you’re essentially voting for Barack

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Obama. Imagine how hard it would be for Mitt Romney to win.

MADDOW: In terms of how this will proceed at the federal level, if this is being done as part of the FAA reauthorization bill, that's a big reauthorization bill for a big agency, is the expectation here that the Senate, the Democratic-controlled Senate would vote against the entire FAA reauthorization because of this anti-union language? Are they setting this up for presidential veto here?

TERKEL: Well, the fight is being led in the House by a congressman named John Mica, who's received a lot of money from the airline industry, and it's certainly likely to pass the House. The Senate like you said is where it might get held up. Tom Harkin and Jay Rockefeller have a lot of power in this fight, and they both said that they are against what the Republicans are trying to do.

So, if it gets to the president's desk, he's going to have to decide if it has this provision, is he going to veto it, and potentially make a lot of Republicans mad, maybe make some moderates mad or is he going to sign it and really alienate his union supporters?

MADDOW: Well, in terms of the—in terms of the support on both sides about this, what do we know about how Democrats are strategizing against this and frankly how the unions are strategizing against this? Do you expect from your reporting that there's going to be the kind of in the streets mobilization that we have seen in the states around this

federal issue?

TERKEL: I think if we see it at the federal level, it will be because of the grassroots at the states. Right now, there is more interest and more focus from the media, from Democrats, from progressive activists on labor issues that I've seen in years. And this is because of what's happening in Wisconsin and what's happening in Ohio. We're seeing people travel across state lines.

So, I think if labor activists make this a big enough deal at the federal level, we could see some of those state activists coming to the capital and protesting in the numbers, in thousands, that we've seen in places like Wisconsin.

MADDOW: What I have seen in the course of my lifetime looking at Democratic politics is when particularly issues that affect the base bubble up from the states and bubble up from

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localities and bubble up from real politics happening at a local level, that is when the national party has the strongest basis on which to take those issues into a national mobilization. They too often try to do stuff top-down to be effective. And I think you're exactly right that they are sort of building from the bottom up of the pyramid here.

Amanda Terkel, senior politics reporter at "The Huffington Post"—it's been great to have you here on this. Thanks for helping with this insight.

TERKEL: Great. Thank you.

MADDOW: So, apparently, liberals just misunderstand the Koch brothers. Ed Schultz will have much more on that surprising report, coming up.

And on this show, the Republican governor of the great state of Maine could not stop himself. He said he'd stop himself, but that darn art showing people who work for a living just wouldn't stop annoying him. An update on mural-gate with, you guessed it, is also not about the budget. That's next.

Please stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: One of the hallmarks of a political overreach is that it happens quickly. It is physical manifestation of impatience. It's why overreach is over reach and not just reach.

Here's what that looks like in the great state of Maine. Maine's

Republican Governor Paul LePage was elected in November on the power of 38

percent of the vote in a three way race. Over the weekend, at the order of

38 percent of the vote Governor LePage, this mural in the state Department

of Labor—a mural documenting the history of labor in the state of Maine

this mural was disappeared.

This, of course, is what the room used to look like while the mural was up. Now, it looks like this. The spackle seems decorative, doesn't it?

Last week, a spokesman for "Governor 38" percent said the mural would remain in this

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now barren room until the “Governor 38 Percent” administration found it a new home.

This week, apparently, they just changed their mind. Not so much. Mr. LePage’s press secretary saying the mural, quote, “is in storage, awaiting relocation to a more appropriate venue. We understand that not everyone agrees with this decision, but the Maine Department of Labor has to be focused on the job at hand.”

Focused on the job at hand, which is spending the weekend taking down art the governor doesn’t agree with. Jobs, jobs, jobs.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: This is what the control room looks like that runs this show. I am an animatronic puppet who just says things that the master puppeteers program in this room. Not really. Not yet.

But control rooms are important—much more important are control rooms that put on cable news hours, or control rooms that operate and monitor nuclear power plants. This is a photo of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s boiling reactor control room simulator.

Dave Lochbaum at the Union of Concerned Scientists took this photo two years ago when the simulator’s reactor was operating at 100 percent power. He posted this on the Web site All Things Nuclear.

As you can see, Mr. Lochbaum has used red

circles and lines to highlight various indicators and monitors and such. But the takeaway for us with this photo is everything’s most definitely on. Everything seems to be working or at least telling you if it is not.

Now, look at this. This is the second photo Mr. Lochbaum has posted on All Things Nuclear. This is said to have been taken Saturday at the very real, not a simulator control room for the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant’s heavily damaged reactor number two.

All of these red lines and circles make it very clear that the control panel is offering up not a 1 ot. No time on the clock. The monitors are dark. It does not appear to be an electricity issue because overhead lights are on but the control room does not seem to be in control of anything.

All of this keeps unfolding at the Fukushima Daiichi plant without any public appearances

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by the president of TEPCO. A man named Masataka Shimizu -- he's sort of the Tony Hayward of this crisis. He has not appeared in public since March 13th.

"The Washington Post" reporting today that the man in charge of the company, in charge of the Fukushima plant, has been invisible even to his employees. Asked about his whereabouts, a company spokesman said on the record today, "I'll have to check on that." Tonight, people at TEPCO now say that Mr. Shimizu was suffering from exhaustion and that he has spent a week in virtual seclusion in his office.

We will stay on what's going on in Japan, including a report tomorrow on America's under reported history with nuclear accidents. Tomorrow's show comes with a seat belt for your use at home.

Now, it's time for "THE ED SHOW." Good night.

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