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'The Rachel Maddow Show' for Monday, April 4th, 2011

Read the transcript to the Monday show

updated 4/5/2011 3:34:41 PM ET

Guests: Chris Hayes, Scott Randolph, Jeremy Scahill

RACHEL MADDOW, HOST: Good evening, Lawrence. Thank you.

And thanks to you at home for staying with us for the next hour.

In 1988, an Aloha Airline short hop flight from the big island of Hawaii into Honolulu had something horrible happen in flight. An elevation of 24,000 feet, part of the fuselage of that plane just ripped open. What you're looking at here as you can see is the first class cabin of this airline. Amazingly, the pilots were able to land that flight safely, but not before one person was killed and everybody who saw this picture let alone who survived this flight was just terrified.

When the National Transportation Safety Board investigated why this happened in '88, they blamed something called metal fatigue as well as corrosion. Two summers ago, in July of 2009, the same aircraft, 737, had this piece fly off of it, mid-flight. It's about a football size chunk of the plane's fuselage.

This grainy cell phone video shows the results of that chunk flying off. That is the sky actually that you can see there. Yes, planes don't have

skylights. That is the sky you can see from inside the plane.

This Southwest Airlines flight lost cabin pressure, but the pilots were ultimately able to land safely in West Virginia. When the NTSB looked into that one, it appeared again to be metal fatigue that caused the fuselage to break open like that.

This past Friday, another Southwest Airlines Boeing 737, took off from Phoenix, Arizona. It was heading for Sacramento with 118 people aboard at 34,000 feet. This happened. A five-foot long hole tore open in the roof of the fuselage.

The cabin lost pressure and the people on board were able to see the outside world

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through the big hole in the plane. A couple people passed out. But again, the pilots were able to safely bring that plane down for an emergency landing in Yuma, Arizona.

That investigate into what happened there is ongoing, but what has been turned up so far is extensive cracking on the fuselage of this 15-year-old plane. Cracking that would suggest metal fatigue.

That sort of cracking is the sort of thing that maintenance crews are supposed to look for when they look for metal fatigue but they don't tend to look at that particular part of the airplane as part of their regular checks.

An NTSB board member telling the "Associated Press" today that the part of this plane that ripped open was not previously believed to be subject to a metal fatigue problem. So, in terms of regular inspections, crews just weren't looking there before this incident happened. Now, of course, they will. And in fact, now they are.

Southwest grounded some of its fleet of this model. They are now in the process of doing emergency inspections and they have found cracking bad enough in three other 737s that they will permanently ground them.

When you think about an accident like this, whose job is it to make sure not just this one company that flies these kinds of planes does new inspections but every company that flies these planes now will do these inspections? If the companies want to do inspections out of

the goodness of their hearts or fear of bad P.R. or something, right? That's great.

But what if the companies don't want to do it? Should there be somebody who makes them do new inspections when we learn new information like this?

Now, that we know because of this very scary picture, now that we know that this part of those planes should be looked at regularly to see if there's metal fatigue there too, who is going to make the airlines look at that part of their plane as part of their regular inspections?

Don't tell the people who say the government isn't the solution to our problems. Government is the problem. Don't tell those guys. But it is the government that does that.

Part of the federal government known as Federal Aviation Administration, which tomorrow will order that every airline that flies

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this kind of plane must inspect it for the kind of cracks that caused this incident on Friday over Arizona. That's the FAA's job. That's what they do.

That is what is demonized as red tape. That's regulation. Making companies do something that they don't necessarily want to do. That is big bad government.

This past weekend, a number of news sources both in the U.S. and the U.K. reported that BP, the company famous for this, BP was in negotiations with the Department of the Interior to start drilling for oil again in the Gulf of Mexico. BP is already a financial partner in the first well that got a permit since the big BP blowout last year.

But how about BP running its own deepwater drilling operations once again in the Gulf of Mexico? Last time they did that in the Gulf, this happened. How about now?

We are not yet a year out from the BP oil disaster and the government is not done with the investigation of exactly why that accident happened, but BP apparently wants back in. And even though the government is denying reports that it is in negotiations with BP, about 10 of these deepwater wells, the government is very busy handing out new drilling permits. The most recent one coming this past Friday, the eighth new permit handed out in the last few weeks.

We have been raking the Interior Department over the coals on this issue because despite

their own report indicating that blowout preventers may not necessarily prevent blowouts despite a report saying that what we think of as a fail safe isn't a fail safe, they are still approving permits for wells using that technology.

When we started complaining about that on the air, they told us they did not want to comment on their whole "technology doesn't work" report because that issue is still under investigation. However, the fact that the investigation is still going on is not apparently keeping them from handing out new permits. It's just keeping them from commenting on how on Earth they can justify giving those permits out while the investigation is still ongoing.

The government making sure that drilling is safe. That is a core government function. That's what regulation is for. That's what we think of the government as being capable of doing

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and needing to do.

Individual humans are not capable of making sure that giant oil companies drilling 5,000 feet under the sea are doing it in a way that's going to keep us all safe. And who knows, maybe there are good hearted oil companies out there who are only out for the general welfare. I'm an oil man because I love dolphins. It could happen. Maybe that exists.

But on the odd chance that it doesn't, what the Interior Department appears to be sort of blowing right now is a really important thing that government is supposed to do. Yes, it is about keeping people alive and keeping millions of barrels of oil out of the Gulf of Mexico again and not destroying America's fishing industry. It is about all of those things.

But you know what else it's about? It is about politics. When Barack Obama put out his announcement that he was running for re-election today, the Republicans put out an immediate response to it.

And look what they go after President Obama for on the first day of his re-election campaign. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

NARRATOR: We hoped and you hoped—

BARACK OBAMA, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: My hope is, my hope is, my hope is—

NARRATOR: But hope isn't hiring.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Did you catch that little quake thing there? Not quite subliminal, but did you catch it? Right. What was it? Oil disaster.

On day one of President Obama's re-election campaign, the Republicans are going after him for the BP oil spill, which did after all happen on his watch—the same Republican Party that is for deregulating every industry in the country, including oil industry; the same Republican Party that calls safety standards red tape, right; The same Republican Party that wants to keep subsidizing the oil and gas industry even as they cut everything else in the budget. Even after BP, they want to keep subsidizing the oil and gas industry. That Republican Party is going after President Obama for the BP oil spill. The drill, baby, drill guys.

Seriously? Yes, seriously. They are totally

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doing that. And they will keep doing it.

If you are the Obama administration, you have a responsibility to the country to get this deepwater permitting thing right. We cannot go through this again.

But if you are president Obama running for re-election, not only do you not need another offshore oil spill on your watch, you need to not only win the policy here, you need to win the argument. You need to be able to explain why this is important. Why regulation in this case needs to be not only existent but smart and tough.

This is a fundamental difference between the two parties. Is there a role for government in protecting the public interest when corporations won't do it on their own? Is there a role for government or isn't there? You don't need to think corporations are evil to recognize that there is a role for government, whether it's enforcing safety standards for aging Boeing 737s, or withholding permits until the wildly profitable oil drilling industry can get its act together on its blowout preventer technology that has been proven to be faulty. It is the overall idea that government has a role to play.

Conservatives do not agree with that idea.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RONALD REAGAN, FORMER U.S. PRESIDENT:
Government is not the solution to our problem. Government is the problem.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Government is the problem. No role for government. That is the conservative case and the conservative cause. It always has been.

It hasn't always been the Republican case in the Republican cause but in this year, the conservative movement and Republican Party are one. This year, in this Republican Party, that is the same thing. The conservative cause and the Republican cause, our government can't do anything right. We need to get rid of government.

And for the 2012 presidential campaign, Republicans have just handed President Obama the platonic form of this distinction between the parties.

Even for a country that is sort of bad about articulating abstract concepts

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about social contract and whether or not we like government in the abstract

the one thing that everybody knows they like, frankly, is Medicare. If you are over the age of 65, buying private health insurance is a ridiculous prospect. To any insurance company, your 64 previous years on this earth look like a pre-existing condition.

So, we made a deal in this country that once you are 65, you do not have to be in the private health insurance market anymore. You are in Medicare.

The Republicans today introduced the official budget proposal which kills Medicare, phases out Medicare over ten years—privatizes it and then gets rid of it. If you are 65 years of age or older, and the Republican vision of America, you can go buy private insurance. They will give you a coupon. Good luck with being old thing.

This is the difference between the two parties. This is at least the difference between the conservative vision of how America should be changed and what everybody else thinks. From FAA regulations, to drilling permits in the Gulf, to Wall Street reform, to whether there ought to be an Environmental Protection Agency, to nuclear reactor safety standards, to what credit card companies are allowed to get away with in the fine print, to whether or not being a teacher is a good job anymore, to police officer staffing levels, to everyone getting Social Security to there being a good government program called Medicare to which

you get health insurance once you're 65 years old.

Is government important? Is there a role for government?

There's a fundamental difference in vision about whether we ought to insist on a government that runs well because it has important work to do, or whether government work by definition because it's government is never important. In fact, it ought to be dismantled, privatized, hacked off.

The White House says that President Obama's re-election effort starts today. Republicans picked today to announce their intentions to kill Medicare. This is a long slow curveball over the plate if the president and Democrats are willing to try to win this next election by winning the big argument.

Democrats in the states—hello, Madison—

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Democrats in the states have started on this one. They want the big argument. Will D.C. follow?

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

Chris, it’s good to see you. Thank you for being here.

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

MADDOW: President’s re-election campaign starts today. Does this end up being a big question, big argument election? Or will the White House try to make it not one of those?

HAYES: Well, I think probably the latter to be honest. I mean, I think one of the things that we’ve seen is the White House which has always had kind of discomfort with ideology writ large, right? Big ideological arguments.

And, in fact, one of the troughs (ph) that has almost kind of and recently on one hand on the other but we take the middle path. I think you’re going to see a lot of that. The reason I think you’ll see a lot of that is because, you know, inside the strategy team there, they are very concerned about the moderate voters and independents and swing voters, and they think that’s the kind of rhetoric that appeals to them.

I happen to believe you could actually win ideological arguments like the kind that you

spelled out if you root them in the facts on the ground, even to people who don’t consider themselves particularly ideological.

MADDOW: The idea being that you win the argument without winning the election. You win the argument without saying “I am a liberal and I’m here to die on liberal hill and I hate conservatives.” You don’t have to do it, for example, the way that you and I would do it.

(LAUGHTER)

(CROSSTALK)

HAYES: Look, I think—I think actually, this is—on this sort of basic regulation question, this is a perfect example, right? This is popular stuff. Consumer safety is really popular.

People don’t like it when their pet food kills their dog, right? And they certainly don’t like it when airplanes fall out of the sky with big

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hunks in the middle of them and this is not something even though there's an ideological sub-street to it, there's an ideological basis to the belief that government is there to protect consumers from the sort of privations of the market. You can make the argument to people that don't consider themselves particularly raging lefties because that you're standing in a very solid ground.

There are places where it's not the case. I mean, there are places where, you know, you really are sort of rolling the rock up the hill in terms of public opinion. But regulation, particularly in this respect, I think is a place where you actually have the public on your side if you go out and make that argument.

MADDOW: And same deal with Medicare. So, you get the Republicans announcing on the occasion of the start of the re-election campaign from the White House. You get Republicans announcing their official budget—not just Paul Ryan's idea—but their budget plan that they're going to kill Medicare and soon.

HAYES: This is the biggest, craziest softball I have ever seen. They are going to make them vote on a nonbinding resolution to kill Medicare. Everybody who is watching this—this is what is going on. The Republicans are saying “We want our caucus to vote on a no nonbinding resolution to kill Medicare.” It would be like the Democrats said, we're going to take a vote on a nonbinding resolution to raise everyone's taxes a ton and all of you have to walk the plank and vote for it and it's

going to never become law. I think it's total madness and I don't I mean, it's political malfeasance if they do not just totally kill them over this.

MADDOW: Well, but here's the amazing thing. I completely agree with you on that. And Beltway reaction to the Republicans announcing today that they're going to kill Medicare has been pretty positive.

HAYES: Totally. Absolutely.

MADDOW: This is one of those things like, I mean, just like whatever the next war is, I feel like this is one of those things where the Beltway common wisdom has no relationship to actual human American common sense.

HAYES: Yes, absolutely. There's a real disconnect. I mean, particularly on these kinds of issues. Medicare is extremely popular. It's one of the most popular things out there. And

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there's a kind of like weird P. Pearson (ph) "Washington Post" editorial board nexus of people who want to get rid of, quote, "entitlements."

If the Republicans—I mean, I would be amazed if they allow themselves to believe that those are actual voters in America, because it's completely unrepresentative.

Now, let me say this. The only way that the Republicans are not destroyed politically by this is if the White House gives them cover for it.

MADDOW: Ding!

HAYES: If the White House basically says, well, we're glad. We'll work in a bipartisan way to reform, blah, blah, blah, blah, boom. OK, fine. Then it lives. And then you know what? Medicare is in serious danger.

But if any do, it would be very obvious, simple politically astute thing which is to whack them endlessly over it, and then the Republicans are in trouble.

Let me just say one more thing which is let us all remember what was the top line critique the Republicans used in the last election against Obamacare. It was \$500 billion in Medicare cuts.

MADDOW: Right.

HAYES: They spend the whole thing attacking because it was going to cut government

spending on Medicare, right? There was no ideological consistency to it. They just understood the basic—the sort of basic lay of the land politically.

MADDOW: That's exactly right. If you want to know what it will be like if the White House endorses this Republican idea to cut Medicare—

HAYES: Exactly.

MADDOW: -- they will just—they will just change the little, I'm blah, blah, blah, and I approve this message tag at the end of all the ads they just ran in 2010. It's beautiful.

HAYES: Yes.

MADDOW: Chris, one of the things I like most about my job is when you and I both get so excited about the same topic that we just scream at each other going, yes, yes, yes, and I

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realize we just did that on TV, which is a little embarrassing. But I really enjoyed it. So, thank you.

HAYES: I think I was bouncing too much. It was wonderful. Thank you.

MADDOW: All right. Chris Hayes, MSNBC contributor and Washington editor of “The Nation” and someone who else gets excited about same things I do.

Why today was one of the weirdest possible days for the White House to announce that President Obama is running for re-election. That is next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STATE REP. SCOTT RANDOLPH (D), FLORIDA: If my wife incorporated her uterus, you all would say hands off. If my friends incorporated their bedroom, you would say hands off.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Incorporating one’s uterus and what exactly is the man who said that got reprimanded for. It’s not what you think. It’s coming up in just a moment. Please stay with us.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: In downtown Manhattan last year, this man was put on trial and was found guilty

in the American embassy bombings in Kenya and in Tanzania. Jury convicted him. He was sentenced to life in prison. The trial happened in lower Manhattan last year.

Also last year, in Brooklyn, this man pleaded guilty to trying to blow up part of the New York City subway. He pled guilty in a criminal court in Brooklyn. He is now facing life in prison.

Also last year, also in New York City, down on Pearl Street, this man pleaded guilty in criminal court to trying to blow up Times Square with a car bomb. He’s now serving life in prison.

Also last year, a grand jury in Michigan indicted this guy—you may know him as underwear bomber. He’s in a federal prison awaiting trial. Criminal investigators say he has confessed.

If that confession sticks, he will be up for a

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long time in a federal prison, which is where we put people who are convicted of serious crimes. Except when we don't, because even though the record of charging people with crimes and convicting people of crimes when they have committed terrorist acts is the kind of record that would make a Dodge City sheriff's candidate blush with pride, the Obama administration has decided that some terrorists, some crimes, will be treated the way the Bush administration treated them—which is not like crimes at all, but rather something that has to be handled outside of the court system in a fake court tribunal system for which we maintain an offshore prison so the prisoners don't by stepping on U.S. soil accidentally trigger any expectations of how America treats people.

When you consider the two major things that happened in Democratic politics today, it is sort of amazing that they both happened on the same day.

Today is the day that President Obama announced he's running for re-election. He did it with this ad—this ad that you are seeing here. You will notice this ad has no Barack Obama in it. It's just Obama supporters, people who supported his election in 2008 and who say they will work to re-elect him next year, too.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MIKE, NEW YORK: I just saw the energy and hope that he had for this country. Even though I couldn't exactly vote at the time, I knew that

some day I'd be able to help re-elect him. That's what I plan on doing.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We're not leaving it up to chance. We're not leaving it up to "Oh, you know, the incumbent," that type of thing. It's an election that we have to win.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: President's re-election campaign launched today without showing the president, highlighting purely and only the president's base, the people who worked their butts off to elect him in 2008 -- the president is depending on to be just as motivated, just as hardworking, just as enthused this time around.

And on the same day the president launches his re-election campaign with this ad in this way, with that bullhorn summoning of the base, on the same day, the administration did

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this to the president's base.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRIAN WILLIAMS, NBC NEWS: The Obama administration has pulled the plug tonight on one of its signature efforts. It now says it has given up on a courtroom trial for the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks here inside the United States. Instead, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and others will be tried before military commissions at the U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Attorney General Eric Holder announcing that despite what he said two years about bringing terrorism prosecution out of the murky legal underworld of Guantanamo and it's made-up, fake court offshore tribunals, despite those promises, despite President Obama, as one of his first officials actions as president, declaring that Guantanamo would be closed within a year—despite those things that conservatives may have liked but the base was, you know—conservatives may not have liked but the base is pretty psyche about, the administration said today that it will go ahead with Guantanamo and the fake court offshore tribunals for the alleged 9/11 mastermind, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

The Beltway media reaction to this story was that this was all

politics. This was all about making the timing

of this happen in such a

way that would be of most political advantage to the president and to his

re-election effort.

That sort of tells you everything you need to know about how the Beltway sees the relationship between the Democratic Party and the Democratic Party's base. If he announced he was actually pro-choice or pro-gay marriage, or that he was closing Guantanamo, if a Republican candidate announced that the same he launched his reelection effort, the Beltway would convulse with shock over that Republican president alienating his base on day one of his campaign.

But a Democratic candidate kicks his base in the teeth on something as fundamentally as civil liberties. He puts the nail of a coffin of a civil liberty's promise he made on his first full

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day in office, and he does it on the first day of his re-election effort—Beltway reaction to that is, well, good move.

That's the difference between Republican politics and Democratic politics. The Republicans may not love their base but they fear them and they play to them. The Democratic Party institutional structures of D. C. and the Beltway press, in particular, not only hate the Democratic base, they think it's good politics for Democratic politicians to kick that base publicly whenever possible. Only the base itself will ever change that.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: If you live in the great state of Indiana, the next time you go see your doctor, you may want to arrange maybe carpooling, some sort of a larger vehicle maybe than you might otherwise take to a doctor's appointment. You may also want to call ahead and ask for some sort of special group seating accommodations for the doctor's visit, because the way things are going in Indianapolis, before long, it is not just going to be you and your doctor at your doctor's appointment, it is going to be you and your doctor and the Indiana state legislature, all together collectively making decisions about your medical future.

As if they were creating a textbook case study for conservatism of the big intrusive government variety, conservatives in the Indiana House have passed legislation that will force your doctor to read you a script written

by the Indiana state legislature. Your doctor will not be allowed to just say what he or she believes is in your medical interest, your doctor will be forced by law to say out loud to you and to put in writing information that is not true about an imagery link between having an abortion and getting breast cancer. There is no link between having an abortion and getting breast cancer.

The anti-abortion movement has pushed that idea that there is for a long time, but it is not medically proven. In fact, it's medically disproven.

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says it is not true. The Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer in looking at 53 studies involving 83,000 women with breast cancer for 16 countries, they said it's not true. The National Cancer Institute says it's not true. The American Cancer Society says it is not

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true. It is not true.

But the Indiana legislature will force your doctor to read you a script that is not true about cancer.

Here's the most beautiful detail in all of this. As the Indiana legislature continues to wrangle over this bill that's passed the House and it's now being debated in the Senate, where a senator, a Democratic, suggested a rather modest amendment. The amendment proposed that if the Indiana legislature was, in fact, going to force doctors to say specific things to their patients, at least what doctors were being forced to say would be, quote, medical and scientifically accurate.

That amendment was voted down. The Senate committee voted against making sure the script they are forcing doctors to recite to their patients is medically and scientifically accurate. How's that small government thing going for you?

The "Indiana forced doctor to read false information from a script and other abortion matters" bill is one of so many anti-abortion bills being proposed and passed by Republican-led legislators this year, it is impossible to keep up. On our staff, we have been trying to keep track of them in what had been a big sort of crowd-sourced, Frankenstein monster style word processing document full of hyperlinks and end notes and pictures and stuff, we finally had to convert those notes into a spreadsheet.

In Florida alone, there are at least 18 anti-abortion bills moving through the state legislature. At least 18 bills put forward by conservatives to increase the power of the government to monitor the pregnancies in the state and maybe squeeze into your doctor's appointment with you as well.

Last week, one Florida state representative, A Democrat, had become so frustrated with this state of things, with not just the conservatives' push to make the government in Florida so big it could monitor every pregnancy in the state, but their simultaneous insistence that they are small government party, he responded by saying this during a debate over what was an anti-union bill.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

STATE REP. SCOTT RANDOLPH (D), FLORIDA:
Members, it's easy to practice an ideological of convenience. If my wife incorporated her

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uterus, you all would say hands off. If my friends incorporated their bedroom, you'd say hands off. But, now, we're saying we're going to increase regulation on one specific type of membership organization and that's unions.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Because of that speech, Florida State Representative Randolph was chastised by the Republican leadership of the state legislature. They did not appreciate his use of the word "uterus" on the House floor. Republican leaders said Mr. Randolph was not to discuss body parts on the House floor. We will find out what Mr. Randolph thinks about that directive and whether he has followed it. He joins us next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

RANDOLPH: I'm asking you, members, we constantly talk about not putting more and more regulations out there. But yet again, it comes to my wife's uterus, more regulations. It comes to my friend's bedrooms, more regulations. It comes to unions, more regulations. Don't practice an ideology of convenience. Look into your heart and practice exactly what you preach.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

MADDOW: Joining us now is Florida State Representative Scott Randolph, Democrat from Orlando. Since he said that in the Florida state

legislature, the Florida ACLU has bought the URL, incorporatemyuterus.com, which is genius and I'm a little jealous that they beat us to it.

Mr. Randolph, thank you very much for your time tonight.

RANDOLPH: Thanks, Rachel. Thanks for having me. I hope you had great birthday last week.

MADDOW: Oh, thank you. That's nice of you to say. It would have been better if I got to incorporatemyuterus.com before the ACLU. But I will survive.

RANDOLPH: I should have got that for your birthday present.

MADDOW: Yes, well, I'll be watch like a hawk for it to expire.

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uterus modest proposal in the legislature, in order to avoid excessive regulation therein, how did the Republican leadership in the statehouse respond to you?

RANDOLPH: Well, they immediately went to my Democratic leader and my Democratic rules chair and told both of them that I was no longer allowed to use any body parts at any point in time on the floor anymore.

MADDOW: Wow. The justification for that is that the mention of the body parts that they are regulating with their 18 anti-abortion bills is the name of the body part that's the problem?

RANDOLPH: Apparently so. You know, they want to control it. But I guess they don't want to respect it.

MADDOW: What was your—what has been your response to this? Obviously, you have struck a cord with what the ACLU has done, with the fact that I'm talking to you right now, with the fact that about 40 people that I know sent me links to Florida papers reporting on what you said. How do you feel about this so far?

RANDOLPH: Well, I—honestly, I never thought something like this would take off. But I think, you know, it has hit a cord with people and especially women and it's reminded them. Like you said before, the 18 anti-choice bills that are moving their way through the legislature and what a far right legislature that we have in state that really is going to be the biggest

tossup state probably in the next presidential election.

MADDOW: When you called what Republicans were doing an ideology of convenience, what did you mean by that?

RANDOLPH: Well, it's classic. You know, it's always small government for big Wall Street corporations and it's always big government for the little guy or gal or women—you know, whether it be women rights, whether it will LGBT rights, whether it would be unions, or the middle class, it's always big government for the little guy. But yet when it comes to simple regulation for any type of big corporation, it's always hands off. And it's the classic ideology of convenience. Whatever is convenient for their donors is what they believe in.

MADDOW: Well, in terms of the last election and how the state legislature in Florida ended

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up so very Republican right now, do you think that Floridians knew they were getting the kind of legislature that would pursue 18 anti-abortion bills all at once? I mean, was the last election all about stuff like abortion rights?

RANDOLPH: Well, you know, to somewhat it was muddled. We had a moderate Republican Governor Charlie Crist, who vetoed the last bill that made it through the last legislature. I think it lulled a couple of some people to sleep. And, then, of course, now, we have a much far right governor in Governor Rick Scott.

And at the legislative level, you know, so many of these guys don't get challenged because the districts are so gerrymandered that quite frankly, probably, two-thirds of the legislature was certified on the day that qualifying ended and their names never ended up on the ballot even. In fact, we have a guy who is going to be speaker of the House in four years and his name has been on the ballot one time.

MADDOW: Wow. I mentioned this before the break that we have—we've

been looking at this all across—all the country in terms of the number

of states that are pursuing, in particular, a very aggressive anti-abortion

very aggressive anti-abortion agenda but it's not just abortion.

There's a lot of sort of big government conservatism things going on, declaring

English as official language, Sharia law prohibitions—these sorts of things, these real strongly culturally conservative bills that aren't so much about jobs and the economy, that aren't even about things that have secondary or tertiary economic impacts but really are pure socially conservative things.

And I wonder if you see, as a Democratic in Florida, if you see that there might be a Democratic backlash to this strong social conservatism.

RANDOLPH: I think there is. I mean, I have actually seen a lot of people on my own Facebook and social media from Republicans, from independents, women especially, who have said this is ridiculous. This is uncalled for.

You know, but what—and I think what they found out as in Wisconsin as they finally come together, is that the people who are financially

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backing this attack on social rights are the same exact people who are backing the—who are financially backing attack on the middle class. And that’s the Chamber of Commerce, whether it be the U.S. Chamber. And, of course, in Florida, it’s the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

And those people that are financially backing those people are the same people that are moving this social agenda.

MADDOW: Florida State Representative Scott Randolph, thank you very much for joining us tonight, sir. It’s been nice to have you here.

RANDOLPH: Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

MADDOW: When you are reading about dictators in foreign countries, reading about something you think is foreign, maybe it has no connection to the United States or only a tenuous connection to the United States, reading about something happening with foreign dictator and up pops the certainly C Street, and that pops up while you’re reading about it, that is never a good thing. What the house that built the sex scandals of John Ensign and Mark Sanford and Chiperling—Chip Pickering has now rocked overseas with a dictator.

That’s next.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: In Wisconsin, “Milwaukee Journal

Sentinel” reports today that Democrats are vastly outspending Republicans in their efforts to recall state senators. In the official campaign filings with the state of Wisconsin, the recall campaigns against eight Republican state senators have, so far, raised nearly \$250,000. The campaigns have spent nearly all of it in efforts.

In contrast, the recall campaigns against four Democratic state senators have raised less than a tenth of that, and they spent barely half of what they raised.

As to what that apparent enthusiasm gap for the recall effort translates to—well, that’s why all eyes will be on the first election to be held in Wisconsin since Governor Scott Walker signed his anti-union bill. We’ll have more on that in just a moment.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

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MADDOW: In November, there was an election that had been put off six times. It was supposed to have happened six times before it finally happened. The guy finally running for re-election in that contest, his term in office, had technically ended in 2005, but he was in no hurry to leave. So, finally, when the election was held in November, five years late, he lost.

Every country in the world that pays attention to these sort of things responds to these sort of things responded by recognizing the guy who did win that election as the new president of that country. That election was six months ago now and the whole world recognizes the guy who won that election. But the other guy will not leave. He will not give up power.

And it has turned into a bloody war between the old president and almost everybody else in the country. That country is Ivory Coast. It's in western Africa.

And yesterday, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reiterated the U.S. government's insistence that the old guy who won't leave, leave. His name is Laurent Gbagbo.

Because this is apparently what France does now, French and U.N. helicopters have started using military force to get Mr. Gbagbo out. They struck near his compound today and they hit two military bases nearby. That was dramatic development today in dictators.

One weird thing about what's going on the Ivory Coast has to do with American politics. Republican Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma

knows Mr. Gbagbo, the dictator there, really well. He knows him through the secretive Christian organization known as The Family and its house that is called a church for tax purposes, better known as C Street.

Even though it is official U.S. policy that Mr. Gbagbo relinquish power, Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma is on the Mr. Gbagbo's side. He's on the side of the dictator, going so far as to lobby the State Department to change its position on Ivory Coast to instead keep Gbagbo in power. C Street never ceases to amaze.

Elsewhere in today in dictators, in Kazakhstan, the dictator there is avoiding any similar controversy in terms of pesky election results. Nursultan Nazarbayev has been in office for 20 years and in the election held yesterday, he got 96 percent of the vote. Sorry. Control room saying I have actually wildly overstated that. He got 95.5 percent of the vote. I'm very

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sorry. Oh, by the way, that was an election.

Elsewhere in today in dictators, in Libya, it continues to be a good news/gross news situation. The good news is that there are continuing signs that regime around Libya's Moammar Gadhafi is disintegrated like powdered sugar in a rainstorm. Gadhafi's own sons reportedly offered a deal this weekend that they would take over, and they would push dad out. Two Gadhafis for the price of one, this is an improvement.

And the defection last week of Libya's intelligence chief was followed by news today that the United States is unfreezing all of the intelligence chief's personal assets. Obviously, this is supposed to be an incentive and examples to others in the regime who might also be willing to defect and further isolated dictator there.

The super gross news is here is that the intelligence chief is considered by the U.S. and other intelligence sources to be the guy who planned the Pan Am 103 bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland. So, at least some of his assets frozen since last month are all freed up for him to use now.

Our last stop in today in dictators is Yemen, where the United States has long propped up the dictatorship there, pouring \$300 million a year into the desperately poor country, all in the name of fighting terrorism.

Toda, the U.S. made a rather radical shift in its policy toward Yemen. Instead of propping him

up, the U.S. has apparently decided now that in the fact of today's and recent weeks huge protests, that Ali Abdullah Saleh should go.

Joining us now is Jeremy Scahill, national security correspondent for "The Nation" magazine. His latest articles are all about the U.S. relationship with Yemen.

Jeremy, thank you for joining us.

JEREMY SCAHILL, THE NATION: Thank you.

MADDOW: In terms of the Yemen protests, how important has the U.S. support for Saleh been in the face of the protest movement there?

SCAHILL: Well, I think it sends a message to people in Yemen that the United States is siding with a brutal dictator whose forces have been sniper shooting people in the head and a dictator who's been misusing U.S. military aid,

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Rachel. Ali Abdullah Saleh gets a tremendous amount of training for his special operations forces of U.S. weapons and vehicles and helicopters, and he is supposed to be fighting al Qaeda with them. But what we've seen is he regularly turns around and uses them against his domestic opponents.

So, I think it's been sending the wrong message to the people of Yemen that the U.S. has waited this long to give any indication that they are not 100 percent behind Ali Abdullah Saleh.

MADDOW: In terms of the protesters' perspective, do you see what they are protesting against and what is motivating their movement as being consistent with the other movements we've seen in the sort of "Arab Spring"?

SCAHILL: I mean, if anything I would say what has really put the Yemen protests on a platform which we should be paying attention to is how incredibly nonviolent they've been. They've been youth-led and they've been centered around largely domestic issues there—corruption, nepotism, the fact that this regime has been pilfering from the people, brokering deals with Saudi Arabia and the United States that benefit him and his military and give nothing to the people.

They're going to run out of water in Yemen. They're running out of oil. It's the poorest country in the Arab world. People are fed up with 30 years of his dictatorship and I think they're mad about U.S. support but they are

singularly focused on trying to get that guy out of power.

MADDOW: If he ends up leaving, either by being forced out, by being killed or choosing to leave, what's likely to happen to Yemen? Is it the kind of country that can hang together given the different ethnic divides, sectarian divides in some cases and the other divisions in that country?

SCAHILL: I'd be lying if I give you a definitive answer on that. What I can say is that the people that are going to call the shots in Yemen are not the al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, not the U.S. and not the military. As one Special Forces colonel who sued used to go hunting with Saleh told me, it's the tribes that are going to make the decision here.

And I think, for the U.S., the real dangerous game is they've gone so far in the direction of focusing on the targeted killing campaign and

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allowing Yemen to lie and says it's Yemen bombs and not U.S. bombs, that the U.S. doesn't have much credibility to broker any kind of good relationship in the immediate term with anyone except his military forces. And that, to me, is probably the most dangerous aspect of the U.S. current relationship with Yemen.

MADDOW: Does that mean—do you think then that the shift in U.S. policy toward the dictator there reflects a U.S. perception that the military is changing sides in this conflict?

SCAHILL: Well, the military, senior military commanders have indeed changed sides.

MADDOW: It's been sort of a divide, hasn't it?

SCAHILL: Right. I mean, you know, there's no question it's divided, but the most senior military figure in the country, the commander the first armored division, very publicly broke with Saleh after a major massacre happened a couple weeks ago in Sana'a. I think, unfortunately, the sad thing is that the U.S. has just caught up to the ground truth which is that Saleh is going to go one way or the other, and I think they are behind the game in terms of figuring out who they want to deal with. Unfortunately, it's going to be the military, I think.

MADDOW: Do you think the U.S. is dealing with the tribes at all, or is capable of dealing with the tribes?

SCAHILL: I think there are some U.S. diplomats, but if you talk to people like G

regory Johnson, one of the leading U.S. experts who's work for USAID on the ground there, the U.S. hasn't been sending in people that are fluent in Arabic, people that stay long enough to develop those kinds of relationships.

So, I think the real politic answer here is: no, I don't think the U.S. has the kind of relationships right now and the vast majority of Yemenis are against the way the U.S. and Saleh had their relationship and conducted it while in Yemen. So, I think if there were elections there, what may come out is something that Washington might not like.

MADDOW: In terms of the death toll thus far, the most conservative estimates say that up to a hundred people have been killed. Other estimates say that the number is far higher.

Is there a threshold or an expected potential event that would tip this over into a situation

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where international intervention would be expected, not necessarily with Libya as a precedent, but where it would be expected in terms of the kind of thing the U.N. gets involved in?

SCAHILL: You know, I was communicating with a colleague who's on the ground, another reporting who's on the ground in Yemen right now and what she told me is that so far people are not calling for military intervention there. If Ali Abdullah Saleh, the president of Yemen, were to use his most elite U.S. trained forces in a systematic way to target the protesters, you could see massive bloodshed that would probably spark calls for that.

But I think that the U.S. would be wise to be very conservative about intervening further in Yemen. Remember the U.S. has been bombing Yemen for a long time covertly and bumping people off left and right with our special ops guys. So, I think less U.S. military there would be the way to go now.

MADDOW: Jeremy Scahill, national security correspondent for "The Nation," rounding out our pair of "Nation" guests tonight, which I think meets our quota for today's Monday.

SCAHILL: It's a day of dictators.

MADDOW: Thank you, Jeremy. Appreciate it.

SCAHILL: Thanks.

MADDOW: When Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated 43 years ago, he was in Memphis.

Why was he in Memphis? Because he was supporting the sanitation workers who were on strike there. Ed Schultz will be talking with some of those workers. Next.

We'll be right back.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

MADDOW: Polls open at 7:00 a.m. local time tomorrow in an election that will be the first test of how Wisconsin really feels about the giant political hullabaloo that state found itself in this year.

A conservative Supreme Court justice associated with Republican Governor Scott Walker is facing re-election. The reason you can say the judge is associated with the governor or any other politician is because Wisconsin follows the somewhat creepy practice of electing its judges. And while that is weird for the whole concept of an impartial

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judiciary, it is handy for taking the state's political temperature.

Outside groups, including those associated with the Koch brothers, are spending hand over fist to try to re-elect the conservative judge, David Prosser, and groups opposed to Governor Walker and the Republicans' union-stripping efforts are spending to support his challenger,. Joanne Kloppenburg.

All politics is local, even all creepy elected judicial politics is local. But in this case, this particular set of local politics in Wisconsin with the union-stripping stuff and the giant backlash against it, these particular local politics resonated from coast to coast like somebody stuck a giant tuning fork in Madison and everyone in the country heard it thrum. We have never before covered a state Supreme Court election on this TV show, but tomorrow, we will be all over David Prosser, incumbent, versus Joanne Kloppenburg, challenger, and the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

And you know what? Everybody else in the country will be reading that election's tea leaves, too. There may not be any Republicans running for president yet, but election season is starting up. Yee-haw!

Now, it's time for "THE ED SHOW." Have a good night.

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END

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