



Crossfire

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Guess Who's Coming to the Campaign Dinner?

by Michael Kinsley; John Sununu

HIGHLIGHT:

Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-CT) of the Campaign Reform Task Force and Republican fund raiser Brad O'Leary discuss how political campaigns are financed and how that process should be reformed.

ANNOUNCER: From Washington, Crossfire. On the left, Mike Kinsley. On the right, John Sununu. Tonight, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? In the crossfire, Democratic Representative Sam Gejdenson of Connecticut, Chairman of the Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform. And Republican fund raiser Brad O'Leary.

JUAN WILLIAMS: Good evening. Welcome to Crossfire. I'm Juan Williams, sitting in for Michael Kinsley. Tonight the great granddaddy of political fund raisers is underway in Washington. President Bush and the Republican elite are hosting the largest political fund raiser in American history, a dinner for Republican donors that will put \$ 7 million on the plate in one serving. Diners are paying \$ 20,000 per table. If they put up \$ 92,000, they can get their picture taken with the President. In addition, top donors will get the chance to attend a private reception with the President and Mrs. Bush, as well as to lunch with Vice President Quayle, and if they like, they can have breakfast with Republican power houses Bob Dole and Bob Michel. The dinner has stirred controversy, though. Critics charge that the White House is being auctioned off to the highest bidders, and one fund raiser has been accused of coercing an employee to contribute to the dinner. That donor allegedly hoped to use his time with the President to lobby for a presidential pardon for a criminal conviction. Meanwhile talk of campaign finance reform goes on, but President Bush says he'll veto any limits on spending for House and Senate races. Now, I'm sure that Governor Sununu has something to say before he puts on his tux and joins the party. Governor?

JOHN SUNUNU: Congressman Gejdenson, the real embarrassing campaign finance report-reform issue is the tens of millions of dollars in unreported support that the Democrats get from the unions.

Representative SAM GEJDENSON, (D) Connecticut, Campaign Finance Task Force: You'd like to change the issue tonight, wouldn't you, John?

SUNUNU: No, I want you to talk about the issue that is bigger by far than the issue-

Rep. GEJDENSON: OK. The reality is that if the President signs the campaign finance reform bill that passed the Congress, it would limit unions, it would limit corporate PAC's, and it would limit millionaires, and your party just can't stand limiting millionaires.

SUNUNU: Right now you guys get all the money from the PAC's. You get all the money from the-

Rep. GEJDENSON: And we're willing to limit that.

SUNUNU: And you get all the money from the fat cats.

Rep. GEJDENSON: That's not true.

SUNUNU: And the one place you want to limit is individual contributions.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Not true, not true. The bill limits PAC contributions-

SUNUNU: It's a phony limit on PAC contributions.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let me tell you something. That's like saying that any agreement that isn't the ultimate agreement is not acceptable. This President, the only bill he would accept is a bill that let millionaires have more access to the White House and threw little old ladies, kids, and environmentalists out on the street.

BRAD O'LEARY, Republican Fund Raiser: Congressman-

Rep. GEJDENSON: We've got an opportunity for real campaign finance reform, your party doesn't have one.

SUNUNU: You're great with one-liners but you're not very good at getting good legislation passed.

Rep. GEJDENSON: It's the facts.

WILLIAMS: Brad O'Leary-

Mr. O'LEARY: Are you going to say that public financing in presidential campaigns has worked and is not a fraud?

Rep. GEJDENSON: Well, it's not working now, there's no question-

Mr. O'LEARY: Wait a minute, wait a minute, Congressman.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Are you going to answer me a question? Let me answer it.

Mr. O'LEARY: Is it not a fraud, did it not- your last presidential candidate have a political action committee which he funneled money into, didn't Bob Farmer raise millions of dollars, better than the Republicans did, from people who gave \$ 100,000 to help your candidate win the presidency? Did not millions of dollars come into the Democratic party? Isn't it a fraud?

Rep. GEJDENSON: OK, here's-

Mr. O'LEARY: Limit presidential-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Here's your opportunity. Put your money on the table. We're willing to limit soft money, we're limiting PAC's, we limit individual contributions. We limit overall spending. Put up or shut up-

WILLIAMS: Brad-

Rep. GEJDENSON: This is a real opportunity to improve the political process.

WILLIAMS: Let me ask Brad a question. Brad, you raised, I think, it was a quarter of a billion dollars in the last couple of years through the Republicans, right?

Mr. O'LEARY: Right.

WILLIAMS: Now, you tell me, isn't it obscene when you see the big bucks guys going into Washington tonight? They get to talk to the President, they get to talk to John Sununu. They get to say, this is my problem, can you help me, Mr. President, while Mr. and Mrs. America on Main Street don't even come near.

Mr. O'LEARY: I think it's obscene when you take money from people who want to do something wrong but I don't think it's obscene when you take money from people who want to participate in freedom and want to extend it-

WILLIAMS: But doesn't it corrupt the idea of public campaign-

Mr. O'LEARY: That money goes-

WILLIAMS: -financing? It absolutely undermines all the work that's being done.

Rep. GEJDENSON: What you've got to understand-

Mr. O'LEARY: There is no presidential campaign financing. It doesn't exist.

WILLIAMS: Oh, and this has no impact on the presidential campaign, what's happening tonight?

Mr. O'LEARY: Not, no.

SUNUNU: No. That's the whole point. You missed it again, Juan.

WILLIAMS: Oh, come on, John. Are you kidding me?

SUNUNU: This is for congressional races.

WILLIAMS: That right, and it has no impact on state chairs and state party organizing, doesn't help in the federal races at all?

SUNUNU: This is just to even things out against the PAC money the Democrats get-

WILLIAMS: Gee, thanks, John.

SUNUNU: -and the union money the Democrats get.

WILLIAMS: Oh, John, you're making- I didn't understand, John, I didn't understand.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Don't those funds raise the same amount of money?

SUNUNU: No.

Mr. O'LEARY: Oh, come on, Congressman. You can't read that-

Rep. GEJDENSON: In the last presidential run, in soft money alone, the Republicans raised about \$ 2 per adult voter, the Democrats raised about 31 cents.

WILLIAMS: Let's take a break. Wait, wait, let me explain. The soft money is money that's not given directly to the candidate, but soft money is given to the parties-

Rep. GEJDENSON: It's the \$ 100,000 contribution-

WILLIAMS: -people can use it for-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let's explain statistics.

WILLIAMS: All right.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The Republicans out raised the Democrats in this category by ten and 20 to one.

SUNUNU: But the one statistic you left you is that the average Republican contribution was less than \$ 50 and the average Democratic contribution was hundreds of dollars.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Well, that's-

SUNUNU: The real contributors to the Democrats are the fat cats.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, you can't argue something that makes no sense. When you go to the dinner tonight, you're going to see-

SUNUNU: Go read the FEC.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Look at-

SUNUNU: Go read the FEC report. Look at the FEC-

Mr. O'LEARY: I'll buy a \$ 1000 ticket to your dinner if you'll buy a \$ 1000 ticket to my dinner-

Rep. GEJDENSON: I don't have \$ 1000.

Mr. O'LEARY: Well, you had \$ 800,000 in your single last race.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, you're absolutely wrong-

Mr. O'LEARY: What happened to that money?

Rep. GEJDENSON: My contributions, by the way, the majority of my contributions in this last FEC report, I think something like 65 percent were under \$ 250. I had less than 9000 of \$ 100,000 in political action committee money or just around that.

Mr. O'LEARY: How much did you roll over to this election?

Rep. GEJDENSON: Didn't roll anything over, started-

Mr. O'LEARY: Got it all on the last one.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Started the election, frankly, with a \$ 20,000 deficit and made it up with-

Mr. O'LEARY: Out matched your opponent four to one.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, not when you add in the soft money from the Republicans.

WILLIAMS: Sam, Sam, don't go off with this. What they're doing- they're making you the issue here-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Absolutely.

WILLIAMS: -while these guys are having the biggest dinner downtown-

SUNUNU: Because-

WILLIAMS: -John, the biggest dinner in American political history is being held tonight.

SUNUNU: Out front.

WILLIAMS: Unbelievable.

SUNUNU: Out front where you can all see it.

WILLIAMS: These people are- corporations are controlling the White House.

SUNUNU: Juan, out front. What you ought to be asking is-

WILLIAMS: It is out front and it outraged even George Bush-

SUNUNU: The outrage is the unreported union support of tens and-

Rep. GEJDENSON: It is reported.

SUNUNU: -and tens and tens-

Rep. GEJDENSON: It is reported.

SUNUNU: -of millions of dollars.

WILLIAMS: It's no outrage when corporations buy access to the President and get their bills and their issues put on the front burner of American political life, no outrage, John?

SUNUNU: It's simple to walk up and make contributions to the Democratic Congressmen who pass the legislation.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Absolutely not.

WILLIAMS: Let Brad in, let Brad in.

Mr. O'LEARY: Aren't we also talking about the fact that you are upset because someone was coerced into buying a ticket to tonight's dinner?

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, the real problem-

Mr. O'LEARY: No, wait a minute.

Rep. GEJDENSON: If you ask me questions- you don't let me answer any of them. The real problem is that we have a system where wealth has extraordinary access, particularly in your

party, to the political leaders. You can laugh about it-

SUNUNU: You don't let them walk in your door, huh?

Rep. GEJDENSON: When you take a look at where big money goes-

SUNUNU: It goes to the Democrats.

Rep. GEJDENSON: -it's to the Republican party-

SUNUNU: The average contribution to Democrats is almost ten times as large-

Rep. GEJDENSON: You're not looking at-

SUNUNU: -as the average contribution to Republicans.

Rep. GEJDENSON: That's not accurate.

SUNUNU: That is accurate.

Rep. GEJDENSON: You've got to add in the soft money, the \$ 100,000 corporate contributions that the Republican party lives on, and the facts of the matter are, if this President cared about reform, he'd sign the campaign finance reform bill that Common Cause has called-

WILLIAMS: Yeah, Brad, why is that?

Rep. GEJDENSON: -the most significant reform in this country.

Mr. O'LEARY: Brad, why is that? Why is that the President won't sign that bill?

Mr. O'LEARY: You want people to participate in the system. You're trying to stop people from participating in the system.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, we're letting little-

Mr. O'LEARY: You limit their participation.

WILLIAMS: Wait a minute. Look, Bush says he's against campaign controls for-

Mr. O'LEARY: How are you going to do it?

WILLIAMS: He says he doesn't want it for the Senate and House, but yet if you look back at his record, he has millions of dollars in his campaign.

Mr. O'LEARY: If you have campaign controls, you're going to have the same thing that happened in 1981. You'll have independent committees start for congressional races-

Rep. GEJDENSON: We are- our bill, if you read the bill, you'll find we deal with some of those issues. There's an opportunity-

Mr. O'LEARY: I read the bill.

Rep. GEJDENSON: There's an opportunity here to limit spending for the first time since the court in 1974 said that you couldn't do it unless you provide some type of-

Mr. O'LEARY: There's an opportunity to limit participation.

Rep. GEJDENSON: We provide a limit on spending. We put a limit on political action committees, and I think what really frustrates your party is we put a limit on how much rich people can give to House candidates. It's an important step to let the average citizen feel like they can participate in the process. If they sit there and watch \$ 100,000 contributions, unlimited PAC money, unlimited spending, the average citizen feels like they can't play at the table.

WILLIAMS: Brad?

Mr. O'LEARY: Well, I don't know how you feel but I think the American people want less benefits and less perks for Congress. They don't want another perk where they're paying for a congressman's right to run for office. You already get too many perks-

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, that's not what the bill does-

Mr. O'LEARY: You already get too many perks.

Rep. GEJDENSON: That's not what the bill does. No, John's not with us. He's not flying anymore. We've gotten rid of the House Bank, we've gotten rid of all those things. Let's focus on the issue which we don't want to focus on.

Mr. O'LEARY: No, wait a minute. We haven't stopped with perks. What about franking?

Rep. GEJDENSON: Franking?

Mr. O'LEARY: You do know franking after you've become a candidate, right?

Rep. GEJDENSON: You shut down the Interior Department, the Agriculture Department, the Defense Department, and we won't communicate with our constituents either.

Mr. O'LEARY: I didn't-

Rep. GEJDENSON: The real issue here is-

Mr. O'LEARY: -congressional candidates had those-

Rep. GEJDENSON: -campaign finance reform.

WILLIAMS: All right, gentlemen.

SUNUNU: When we return, I'll ask Congressman Gejdenson why he and the Democrats fight so hard to protect the business political action committees.

[Commercial break]

SUNUNU: Welcome back to Crossfire. Tonight, we're discussing campaign finance. There's a dinner for major Republicans going on in Washington tonight that has the Democrats green with envy. Our guests are Brad O'Leary, a Republican campaign consultant, who has raised over \$ 250 million for Republican candidates in the last ten years, and Democratic Representative Sam Gejdenson of Connecticut who chairs the Task Force on Campaign Finance Reform. Sam, you have a bill that has just smoke and mirrors when it comes to PAC's. Why don't you accept the President's proposal to get rid of those big business PAC's once and for all?

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, what the President would like to do is have a system where only millionaires could control the political process. What our bill does is give the average citizen a chance. It limits PAC's, it limits wealthy people's contributions on the House side and it leaves unlimited, within the total scope of the bill, what individual small contributions of under \$ 200-

SUNUNU: I take it that's a no. I take it that's a no, you don't want to get rid of big business PAC's.

Rep. GEJDENSON: What we don't want to get-

SUNUNU: And you-

Rep. GEJDENSON: What we don't want is the President of the United States to have what he calls reform, unlimited bundling, unlimited millionaire participation, and-

SUNUNU: The President is opposed to bundling.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The President is the biggest bundler in the country.

WILLIAMS: All right-

SUNUNU: Only to the extent that he learned the process from the Democrats-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Oh, right, it's somebody else's fault.

WILLIAMS: Now, Brad, let me just get this straight. You mentioned earlier that maybe we're really upset at this table because there was a man accused of actually coercing one of his employees to give money to this dinner. That's what bundling really is, we should at least explain it, that bundling is getting the employees in your company to all make contributions, putting

them together in a bundle and sending them off to Washington for influence in the White House.

Mr. O'LEARY: I think that's horrible. I think it's absolutely disgusting, and I think it's disgusting when labor unions coerce their people into giving to a central pot, give them no right to decide who that money is going to go to, and give it to whoever the guy at the top wants to do. I think it's bad in American business and it certainly is horrible in labor unions.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I thought-

Mr. O'LEARY: And labor unions should have stopped that practice years ago.

WILLIAMS: But it seems to me you just like very nicely let the cape and the bull go by there, what about the Republicans, and about the bundling, and what about what's going on right now this minute with people bundling and sending off their money to Washington to the Republicans in the White House?

Mr. O'LEARY: I'm against it. I'm against the Democrats doing it and Republicans doing it, but Democrats do it more than Republicans.

WILLIAMS: What happens when President Bush has a dinner, as he did in Michigan on April 14th, and he's listing companies, Upjohn and Chrysler and others, who have done just that in order to put on a major fund raiser?

Mr. O'LEARY: I think if you read the follow-up report on that, you will find that a person who worked on that dinner made a terrible mistake by listing the wrong thing.

WILLIAMS: What was the mistake? Was the mistake revealing what they were doing?

Mr. O'LEARY: Well, I think whether it's right or wrong depends on who the check came from. The check didn't come from companies.

Rep. GEJDENSON: But I think the real-

SUNUNU: The contributions were perfectly legitimate.

Rep. GEJDENSON: They came from-

SUNUNU: They came from individuals.

WILLIAMS: But, John, again, it's a sense of the law. You have totally escaped the spirit. You're not supposed to do it, John. It might be legal but-

SUNUNU: Do what? Do what?

WILLIAMS: -essentially you're undercutting the system of campaign spending.

SUNUNU: Then pass a law that changes it.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The President will veto it.

SUNUNU: Pass the President's proposal.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, the-

SUNUNU: Pass the President's proposal getting rid of big business PAC's. Pass the President's proposal to-

Rep. GEJDENSON: It's not his proposal.

SUNUNU: Sure, it is. I sent it to you.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, the President-

SUNUNU: I sent it, I know what it is.

Rep. GEJDENSON: It's not that at all. What the President wants-

SUNUNU: Read it.

Rep. GEJDENSON: I've read it. What the President wants is a system to go back before 1974 where there is unlimited spending in campaigns and where there's-

SUNUNU: That's not true.

Rep. GEJDENSON: -and where there are no limits on rich people. Let me tell you something. The American people recognize one thing: the most important thing we can do in campaign finance reform is to limit spending. Our bill does that. Our bill limits soft money. Our bill limits the amount of money that political action committees can give. The President wants to create this kind of pure political action committees that give to him and impure ones like the Sierra Club and others that don't give to him. That's baloney.

Mr. O'LEARY: Congressman-

WILLIAMS: Go ahead, Brad.

Rep. GEJDENSON: If you're going to let the board give the money, you ought to let the Sierra Club give the money.

Mr. O'LEARY: You talk about what the President wants and then you talk about what Congress wants. Well, we're forgetting what the people want. You made some statements about what the people want, but there's no poll that shows that, and, in fact, there was a study done of those people who ran last time in relationship to what they want. You've ignored that study.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, what that study said-

Mr. O'LEARY: No, wait a minute. I did that study with Vic Camber. [sp?] We offered it to your office, and your office said we had no interest in it.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The study we've seen from Common Cause and other organizations-

Mr. O'LEARY: Oh, Common Cause.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let me tell you something-

Mr. O'LEARY: Let's get a fair and impartial group to tell us what should happen in America.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Oh, you think we should go to Republicans to get that.

WILLIAMS: Brad, do you want us to just wait for another Watergate? I mean, should we just wait for another Watergate?

SUNUNU: Vic Camber's not a Republican. Come on now.

WILLIAMS: Should we just wait for another outrage, a Watergate type situation before we get some kind of campaign finance-

Mr. O'LEARY: Wait a minute. Let me ask you something. As a result of laws that were passed before Watergate-

WILLIAMS: Yeah.

Mr. O'LEARY: -fourteen businessmen were indicted and found guilty-

WILLIAMS: Right.

Mr. O'LEARY: -eleven Democrats and three Republicans.

WILLIAMS: Corruption doesn't have to know-

Mr. O'LEARY: Wait a minute. The Watergate law was passed as a result of passing a law that called for disclosure that worked.

Rep. GEJDENSON: I love how you change history. The law that came about in '74 is 'cause the Nixon administration-

Mr. O'LEARY: I'm not talking about '74.

Rep. GEJDENSON: -was laundering money through Mexico and other places and that's what

brought Richard Nixon down-

Mr. O'LEARY: Congressman, we're talking about the law in '72 that indicted 14 people.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The problem we're facing today is because the court under Buckley-Vallejo says you couldn't just limit spending. So, in our bills, yes, we entice people, through lower mail rates and other things, to come into a system that puts a control on spending. John, you've spent half your life screaming about spending in government. It's just as bad when it comes to campaigns. If we do nothing but have a race of raising money and who raises the most money, we're not going to help the political process.

SUNUNU: And what you've done is changed a system where individuals can't make contributions-

Rep. GEJDENSON: No-

SUNUNU: You're going to in essence get the unwilling contribution of the taxpayer and you're going to create another source of funds, in effect, a bank for incumbent congressmen to draw funds to run on.

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, that's not what it does.

SUNUNU: That's exactly what it does.

Mr. O'LEARY: More perks for Congress.

Rep. GEJDENSON: That's not what it does. What the bill does is it stops rich people from giving over 33 percent of the funds for a campaign. It stops political action committees from giving over 33 percent of a campaign, but small contributions, 200, \$ 250 or less, you can raise all your money from them. So, it empowers small people, and it controls wealthy people like those buying that dinner tonight.

SUNUNU: Let's talk about those statistics. By the way, the 33 percent is the average, for the Democrats it's much higher; and the 33 percent for the fat cats is the average, for the Democrats it's much higher. So, that you guys are the beneficiaries of those contributions right now.

WILLIAMS: So, John, would you put any limits on this, John?

SUNUNU: Sure would, sure would.

WILLIAMS: What would you do, John?

SUNUNU: What I would do is limit the business PAC's and the unreported union contributions that are the source of the conflict that you get in the process.

WILLIAMS: I see, and allow corporations to fly willy-nilly-

SUNUNU: No, individuals.

WILLIAMS: -and do exactly what-

SUNUNU: Individuals.

WILLIAMS: Individuals-

SUNUNU: Corporations cannot give, corporations aren't able to give.

WILLIAMS: What happened in Michigan? I wonder what- the corporation's name was on the list.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let's explain what happened in Michigan.

Mr. O'LEARY: If it happened in Michigan and it was true that it happened, somebody should be indicted.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Oh, come on.

Mr. O'LEARY: Everybody at this table agrees with that.

WILLIAMS: And there's no coercion going on among employers and employees trying to get money to Washington? Is that right, Brad?

Mr. O'LEARY: The same thing that's going on among labor unions, the same coercion that makes a person-

Rep. GEJDENSON: No, there's a democratic-

Mr. O'LEARY: -give to a fund they have no right to decide where it goes.

Rep. GEJDENSON: There's a democratic process that elects the leaders of the unions and what have you. When you take a look at what-

Mr. O'LEARY: Oh, my God.

SUNUNU: Is that democratic with a small 'd' or a big 'D'?

Rep. GEJDENSON: It wouldn't be from Republicans, you'd outlaw labor unions if you had your way.

WILLIAMS: I don't see-

Rep. GEJDENSON: But here's what happens. You get the board of directors together and there's

a wink and a nod. Those that give the \$ 1000 check, those are the ones that get the bonus.

WILLIAMS: All right.

Rep. GEJDENSON: And that's how your party raises money.

WILLIAMS: All right. When we come back, gentlemen, I'm going to ask the question, should every candidate follow the lead of Jerry Brown and Ross Perot by dialing up an 800 number for contributions?

[Commercial break]

President GEORGE BUSH: I've read some allegations that concern me very much because we ought not- there should not be coercion in fund raising. It's outrageous, and I pride myself on a good clean record in this regard.

WILLIAMS: Brad O'Leary, what are people told to get them to give that kind of money to come to the dinner tonight? What do they expect?

Mr. O'LEARY: Well, it depends- individuals raise money, and what an individual says you can't control. If they do wrong, all you can do is say don't do it.

WILLIAMS: Well, what do you say to people to get them to give big bucks to get them to come to a dinner in Washington with the President, have their picture taken, all that?

Mr. O'LEARY: Well, this may be your last time to hear, 'Hail to the Chief,' up close. I mean, there may not be another time in your lifetime to come and do it, so come and do it and participate in the political system and know that 60 percent of the money you give is going to help register people and turn out voters on election day.

WILLIAMS: So, what you say-

Mr. O'LEARY: And that's what it gets to-

WILLIAMS: What do say to people like Ross Perot and Jerry Brown who say, let's just do an 800 number, anybody can call?

Mr. O'LEARY: I'm for it. The fact is that the large number of people who give to the political process are Republicans. Republicans out raise Democrats in terms of-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Not a surprise.

Mr. O'LEARY: -numbers, in terms of-

Rep. GEJDENSON: They have disposable income.

Mr. O'LEARY: Congressman, in terms of numbers of people by almost 20 to one. For every contributor the Democrats have, the Republicans have 20 of them.

SUNUNU: Twenty small contributors.

Mr. O'LEARY: Nobody-

SUNUNU: Do you subscribe to the Jerry Brown principle of not accepting contributions over \$ 100?

Rep. GEJDENSON: The 800 number doesn't work in a congressional-

SUNUNU: Not the 800 number.

Rep. GEJDENSON: I have the highest percentages-

SUNUNU: So, you-

Rep. GEJDENSON: I have the highest percentages of small contributions.

SUNUNU: So, you'll cap your contributions and won't take over \$ 100?

Rep. GEJDENSON: What I will take is the largest percentage of my contributions will be actually under \$ 100. I'll have a small percentage of contributions above that, but when your party raises-

SUNUNU: You'll still take fat cat money, though.

Rep. GEJDENSON: When your party raises tens of millions of dollars in soft contributions, Democrats can just barely keep up.

SUNUNU: Give the challenger a break.

Rep. GEJDENSON: My challenger starts off with a \$ 200 million fund from the Republicans.

Mr. O'LEARY: Congressman, you know, you're distorting the truth. Bob Farmer raised more money-

Rep. GEJDENSON: Bob Farmer's not here-

Mr. O'LEARY: -than anyone.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The Republicans-

Mr. O'LEARY: Bob Farmer was in the last presidential campaign. Isn't that what we're talking about? Isn't this the next presidential campaign?

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let's get the facts right-

Mr. O'LEARY: Isn't he coming back with Clinton?

Rep. GEJDENSON: Let me ask you this question. In the last presidential campaign, who raised more soft money?

Mr. O'LEARY: Farmer did.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Wrong, the Republicans out raised him.

Mr. O'LEARY: Fifty-two million dollars.

Rep. GEJDENSON: The Republicans out raised us \$ 2.33-

Mr. O'LEARY: To the shame of it, to the shame of it.

SUNUNU: Tell the truth, Sam.

Rep. GEJDENSON: Just 'cause you say it doesn't mean it's-

SUNUNU: That's right, Sam, just 'cause you say it. Thanks for coming, tonight. Thank you, Brad O'Leary.

Mr. O'LEARY: Thank you.

SUNUNU: Juan and I will be back in a moment.

[Commercial break]

SUNUNU: Stay tuned for Larry King Live tonight when former Democratic presidential candidate Paul Tsongas will be on hand to discuss the results of today's Pennsylvania primary and take your phone calls. That's at 9:00 p.m. Eastern. Juan, Congressman Gejdenson comes here and talks about Republicans contributions, but the fact from FEC reports is that the Democrats get more union money, they get more unreported union support, they get more fat cat money, and they get more big business political action money. That's just not an honest way of presenting the case.

WILLIAMS: John, you're not a naive person, you know that, and you realize that money's needed in the political process, you need money. The question is, is money a corrupting influence if it comes from fat cats only? And that's what we've here tonight in Washington.

SUNUNU: Well, it's the President is proposing to get rid of all those big business fat cat PAC's.

WILLIAMS: I see him vetoing campaign finance reform, not supporting it, John.

SUNUNU: He's vetoing phony reform.

WILLIAMS: Not supporting it. From the left, I'm Juan Williams. Good night for Crossfire.

SUNUNU: And from the right, I'm John Sununu. Join us again tomorrow night for another edition of Crossfire. PrimeNews is next. Here's Bernie Shaw with a look at what's coming up. Bernie?

BERNARD SHAW, PrimeNews: Thank you, John. Pennsylvanians have been on the primary path today. We'll have early returns. An admission and proof from the United States Air Force about a, quote, 'unknown problem' with one of its newest fighters; and the latest economic figures, the best and worst in years. We'll have the details just ahead on PrimeNews.