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GREATER EL PASO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
CONGRESSIONAL FORUM

 ORIGINAL

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

4:00 P.M.  
January 11, 2012  
Lockhart Room  
10 Civic Center Plaza  
El Paso, Texas 79901

MODERATOR:

Kathleen Walker

CANDIDATES:

Jerome Tilghman  
Beto O'Rourke  
Silvestre Reyes  
Ben Mendoza

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1 MR. HARRE: Good afternoon, everyone.  
2 Welcome. Before we get started, if you have a seat  
3 open next to you, just raise your hand. I notice some  
4 people are standing. Two hands, that means two seats.  
5 If you-all need a seat over here, go ahead and find  
6 your way to the people who are raising their hands so  
7 you can relax and enjoy it.  
8 Thank you. Good afternoon. Happy New  
9 Year, everyone. If I haven't met you beforehand, my  
10 name is Chuck Harre. I chair the board for 2012, and  
11 I'm real excited you're all here to attend this forum,  
12 the reason being is not only I think one of the most  
13 important rights we have is to vote, but I think even  
14 more importantly is an educated vote and to learn the  
15 process and what's going on. And today, hopefully,  
16 we'll get you part of the education and listen to the  
17 candidates' decisions and their thoughts. And I  
18 appreciate your turnout today.  
19 Before we get started, there are a couple  
20 of ground rules. This is going to be an hour and a  
21 half long, so keep it concise. We have put a couple of  
22 things in place. First of all, so you know, this is  
23 not a debate. It's a forum. And the difference is we  
24 will ask questions and they will answer the questions.  
25 They will not answer each other, okay? So they are

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1 going to answer the questions that are being asked.  
2 The second is each candidate will have  
3 two and a half minutes. If you-all are really  
4 detailed, that's 150 seconds. I don't know, but  
5 however you want to look at it. And you'll be given  
6 cues from Janice right here. Lovely Janice, here, will  
7 give you cues at two minutes, one minute, 30 seconds,  
8 and time's out.  
9 Now, let me let you know, Janice was a  
10 professional wrestler, so if you go beyond the time, I  
11 can't say what's going to happen, but I'm going to tell  
12 you she was a professional wrestler. So she'll give  
13 you a cue. Please watch her.  
14 We will devote 40 minutes to questions  
15 that were developed by the chamber leadership and then  
16 15 minutes for questions that you may have.  
17 Now, how do you get your questions asked?  
18 When you came in there should be a three-by-five card  
19 on your seat or you were given a three-by-five card.  
20 Please fill that card out with your question and then  
21 turn it in to a chamber representative. They are the  
22 ones wearing the badges, most of them standing right  
23 there by the door.  
24 They will take your questions, they will  
25 be reviewed -- trust me, they need to be reviewed.

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1 It's not like how come the Cowboys aren't going to the  
2 playoffs. That's not a good question -- but they will  
3 reviewed and the ones that have merit will come back  
4 and be asked to the four candidates here.  
5 The last rule is -- that's really for  
6 those -- that's for them. For you-all, if you have a  
7 digital device, please put it on vibrate or turn it off  
8 so to not interfere with the questions.  
9 Okay. Any comments from the candidates  
10 on the rules of the game here? No? Everyone  
11 understands? Good.  
12 Now it's my honor to introduce the 2012  
13 chair of the government relations division,  
14 Ms. Kathleen Walker. She'll be the moderator for  
15 today's event. Kathleen is very familiar with the  
16 political process. She has given testimony before  
17 Congress, the Texas legislature, she is an expert on  
18 immigration and crossborder issues and trade. So, help  
19 me welcome Ms. Kathleen Walker.  
20 MODERATOR WALKER: I understand I'm going  
21 to have a challenge with this mic, so please forgive  
22 me. If you cannot hear me, just raise your hand and I  
23 will try to scream a little louder. We're very happy  
24 that you're here and we look forward to learning about  
25 the positions of the candidates.

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1 We're going to start with a brief  
2 introduction from each candidate, and we're going have  
3 a three-minute limit on that introduction.  
4 I do want to make one announcement. I'm  
5 very sorry to hear that Congressman Reyes' wife,  
6 Carolina, is in the hospital at present. So we are  
7 going to expect one phone definitely to be on, and I  
8 understand if he will have to depart and take care of  
9 her. I'm sure the rest of us do, as well.  
10 I'm already getting a hand up to the ear,  
11 so I'm going to be yelling.  
12 So if you don't mind, Mr. Mendoza, if you  
13 could start with a brief introduction, and we have a  
14 three-minute limit. Thank you, sir.  
15 MR. MENDOZA: Good afternoon, ladies and  
16 gentlemen. My name is Ben Mendoza, and I am a native  
17 El Pasoan. I was born in El Paso back in 1955, and  
18 went to school here and then attended the University of  
19 Texas at El Paso and graduated in 1977.  
20 And then I was fortunate enough to attend  
21 the Olympics in 1976 and I was offered a job with Time  
22 magazine, and so they allowed me to complete my degree  
23 studies in criminal justice and I got my degree. Then  
24 I went to New York and I worked for Time magazine. I  
25 was the regional director for the college bureau, and I

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1 worked there for 10 years.  
2 Then I came back to El Paso and worked in  
3 the real estate business. And then I got a call from  
4 some of my colleagues and I went -- they wanted me to  
5 come and work for Newsweek, so I worked for Newsweek  
6 magazine in Los Angeles. I was a regional education  
7 director, and worked there for six years.  
8 And then I decided to retire, come back  
9 to El Paso. My parents are both in their 80s and I'm  
10 their only son, so I decided to come in and see how --  
11 to keep an eye on my parents. And I continue to work a  
12 little bit in the real estate business, and presently  
13 what I'm doing is I'm just living off of my  
14 investments.  
15 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you,  
16 Mr. Mendoza. Our next is Congressman Reyes, if you  
17 don't mind, as if he needs an introduction.  
18 CONGRESSMAN REYES: Anyway, thank you for  
19 holding this forum. I think it's important to all of  
20 us to get to know not just the work that I've done in  
21 the last 15 years, honored to be your congressman, but  
22 also what our vision is moving forward.  
23 As you may or may not know, I was born  
24 and raised here in El Paso, born on a farm. My  
25 parents, my dad had a sixth-grade education. My mom

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1 graduated from El Paso High. I'm the oldest of ten  
2 kids, so not only did I grow up with a strong work  
3 ethic, I grew up with what I think is a strong  
4 understanding and love of this area here in El Paso.  
5 I am proud to tell you that I have three  
6 children, all three are living here in El Paso, four  
7 grandchildren, so that's very important to Carolina and  
8 I.  
9 If you're looking to evaluate a track  
10 record, I'm proud of my track record. I'm proud of the  
11 work that I have done. I'm proud that in my first  
12 term, when I learned that Fort Bliss was on its way to  
13 being BRAC'd, we obviously were very concerned. But I  
14 put together and led the effort to not just save Fort  
15 Bliss, because we funded -- I had 14 projects funded to  
16 make sure that Fort Bliss was an integral part of the  
17 national security of our nation.  
18 So, we saved Fort Bliss, and not only  
19 saved it, but in the BRAC of 2005, we became the  
20 facility that gained the most of any facilities in the  
21 country. So that was a terrific turnaround.  
22 My background is I'm a veteran of the  
23 Army, served my country in Vietnam. Served my country  
24 26 and a half years, started out as an agent in the  
25 Border Patrol, and finished out my career 26 and a half

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1 years later by being the chief in McAllen, the Rio  
2 Grande Valley, and then the chief here in El Paso. So,  
3 I'm back home.  
4 I have been back home. I live here. I  
5 continue to live here. My vision is to build a  
6 community, to continue to build this community so that  
7 my kids, my grandkids, your kids, your grandkids, will  
8 want to make this home, because I don't think there is  
9 a better place to raise a family.  
10 If you're talking about work, I consider  
11 myself a workhorse, not a show pony. I don't think  
12 that I have to pass a thousand or introduce a thousand  
13 bills to prove that I'm doing the work. I measure my  
14 success by the amount of money that I bring here in all  
15 different areas, education, and otherwise. Thank  
16 you--all very much, and look forward to your questions.  
17 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you very much.  
18 And now Mr. O'Rourke.  
19 MR. O'ROURKE: Good afternoon. Good to  
20 see so many people here taking some time out of their  
21 day to get involved in the political process and in  
22 choosing our next congressman. And I also want to  
23 extend my thanks to the Greater Chamber, to Ms. Walker,  
24 Mr. Dayoub and Ms. Short, for putting on today's  
25 event.

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1 And while I recognize many, if not most  
2 of you, for those of you I don't know, I want to  
3 introduce myself. My name is Beto O'Rourke. I was  
4 born and raised here in El Paso and I've spent most of  
5 my life here. I had the great fortune after finishing  
6 high school to go to Columbia University in New York,  
7 and after graduating, had the chance to work in the  
8 emerging web and Internet technology fields.  
9 And after three years of doing that,  
10 which was really fulfilling and I learned a lot, I  
11 decided that I wanted to come back to El Paso. This is  
12 a town where my family was. I wanted to be close to  
13 them. This is a town that I knew and loved and felt  
14 comfortable in, and it was a town where I saw a lot of  
15 opportunity.  
16 And along with some friends, I started a  
17 company, Stanton Street Technology Group. And over the  
18 last 13 years, we have employed dozens of El Pasoans in  
19 precisely the kind of high-wage, high-technology jobs  
20 that far too many of our young people leave El Paso to  
21 go find in other communities.  
22 And during my time as a business owner  
23 and in running that business, I learned a lot of  
24 lessons. I learned what it's like to create a job and  
25 to hire somebody. I learned what it's like to meet a

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1 payroll every two weeks, to pay the health insurance  
2 for my employees, to balance a budget and to take some  
3 calculated risks on behalf of my company.  
4           But I didn't just come back to El Paso to  
5 be in business and to make money. I also wanted to  
6 give back to my community. So I got involved in civic  
7 life, in Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, in the Rotary  
8 Club, in the Center against Family Violence. And in  
9 2005 ran against then City Council member Anthony Cobos  
10 for the position of District 8 City Council  
11 Representative.  
12           And it wasn't so much that I wanted to  
13 defeat or unseat Anthony Cobos as it was that I was  
14 excited about El Paso, about the potential that we saw  
15 here, and expected and wanted to be part of making  
16 great things happen in our community. And I think  
17 arguably over the last six years, we've seen a  
18 renaissance in our community, and I would like to think  
19 that I was some small part of making that happen.  
20           And really, that's what motivates me to  
21 run to be your representative in the U.S. Congress  
22 today. I think we have too many great opportunities,  
23 too many pressing needs in this community to not have  
24 somebody who holds the highest ambitions for El Paso.  
25 And that's something that I feel very strongly about,

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1 something that I want to deliver to you as your next  
2 congressman.  
3           Lastly, let me say this. If you hire me  
4 for this job, I'll treat it as a job. It's not an  
5 appointment, it's not a career, and it's not a  
6 lifestyle. I want to go up to Washington and get the  
7 job done for El Paso and then get out of the way. And  
8 I look forward to answering your questions in today's  
9 forum, and hopefully meeting you out on the campaign  
10 trail. Thanks for your time.  
11           MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you,  
12 Mr. O'Rourke. Mr. Tilghman.  
13           MR. TILGHMAN: I'm unaccustomed to public  
14 speaking, so bear with me if you would, please. One of  
15 the things I want to mention very quickly, the point  
16 that Congressman Reyes raised about base realignment  
17 and closure, I was on one of the committees under Wes  
18 Jury, who was former CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, to  
19 help put the data together to do that.  
20           I was one of the first four deployed  
21 soldiers from here in the first Gulf War, and can tell  
22 you firsthand what it's like to leave Fort Bliss,  
23 mission top secret, destination and duration unknown.  
24 With the size of Fort Bliss and the role the military  
25 plays here, you want to make sure you got a soldier who

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1 knows and understands the lifestyles of the not so rich  
2 and the not so famous. Foot soldiers with boots on the  
3 ground and rifles at the ready, I can speak to those  
4 things and with the way international affairs are  
5 going, we might just have to employ Fort Bliss one more  
6 time.  
7           Two master's degrees, one in public  
8 administration, the second in human resources  
9 development. Undergraduate in public education. Also,  
10 with a degree in political science with a minor in  
11 international affairs.  
12           You know, included in the mission  
13 statement for the Chamber of Commerce, these words  
14 appear. It says, "As the voice of business, the  
15 chamber's actions are based on trust, honesty,  
16 integrity, transparency, and fairness through open  
17 communications and adherence to the highest business  
18 ethics."  
19           The community of publicly elected  
20 officials would do well to adopt the chamber's  
21 principles in the prosecution of their respective  
22 offices and their relationship with the business  
23 community as well as their public service colleagues.  
24           Their actions and activities should be  
25 above reproach. However, appearing in both print and

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1 broadcast media is a shameful roster of names,  
2 allegations, improprieties, admissions of guilt,  
3 questionable affiliations, indictments, and offenses  
4 committed by El Paso's political establishment. Some  
5 of those persons are a part of the election process  
6 this primary cycle. We would do well to do our due  
7 diligence in vetting those candidates before we go into  
8 the ballot box.  
9           There are basically two ways you get  
10 robbed in America, one is by gunpoint, the other one is  
11 by ballpoint. And we have seen ballpoint pen larceny  
12 taking place on the part of persons who purport to  
13 represent our views, values, and interests, stealing  
14 from people who can least afford to do that.  
15           We need to be mindful of the affiliations  
16 we have established with individuals and make sure that  
17 nothing that we do as an elected official is in any way  
18 called into question by the public, who counts on us to  
19 do what we're supposed to do.  
20           There is a cocktail list of things that I  
21 believe make me a better candidate than those who  
22 appear on the rostrum, and of course, that's what this  
23 conversation is all about. Two here are copartners in  
24 drafting public policy and have taken positions that  
25 have created these kinds of results.

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1 I'll finish when my turn comes again.  
2 Thank you very much.  
3 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you,  
4 Mr. Tilghman. We are now going to move into the  
5 question phase. And we have two questions that have  
6 been developed by the chamber that we'll start with,  
7 and then we will have one question that has been  
8 submitted by the audience, and then we will go back to  
9 follow-up questions.  
10 We will go ahead and rotate through each  
11 of the individuals at the panel to have a response.  
12 It's 2.5 minutes for the response, or 150 seconds, if  
13 anybody can figure that one out. So we'll commence.  
14 Here is the first question, and it will be directed to  
15 Congressman Reyes since Mr. Mendoza started the  
16 introductions.  
17 Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range,  
18 and Holloman Air Force Base obviously play a vital role  
19 in the economic vitality of our region. What do you  
20 consider the top priorities to support the personnel  
21 and their families assigned to these installations, and  
22 how will you achieve these priorities? Part one.  
23 Part two: In addition, how would you  
24 encourage or promote local businesses to be more  
25 competitive in obtaining related defense contracts?

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1 CONGRESSMAN REYES: Well, thank you very  
2 much. First and foremost, we've got to finish funding  
3 the new William Beaumont Hospital. We've done the  
4 groundbreaking, the ground preparation is well on its  
5 way. We've got the first \$167 million already in  
6 process.  
7 But I'm not telling you anything you  
8 don't already know when I say that these are difficult  
9 times. We've got Secretary Panetta coming to El Paso  
10 tomorrow, and I hope he will be able to give us some  
11 idea of how the President's strategy, unveiled last  
12 week, is going to impact our region.  
13 Having said that, I'm the second most  
14 senior Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. I am  
15 the ranking member for the Air Land Subcommittee that  
16 has issues to do with the Air Force and the Army  
17 primarily. So I get to weigh in on those issues. I'm  
18 also a member of the readiness subcommittee.  
19 Conventional wisdom right now believes  
20 that we are probably wise to prepare for another BRAC,  
21 for another base realignment and closure, because the  
22 savings that are expected to take place with the  
23 President's new strategy cannot probably be achieved  
24 without another base realignment and closure. So I've  
25 already had a number of conversations with leaders here

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1 in El Paso about starting early to make sure that we're  
2 prepared when the time comes.  
3 Now, there is a big difference between 15  
4 years ago, when we were on the cusp of being BRAC'd  
5 ourselves, to today, when we've got the largest  
6 military facility with state-of-the-art training  
7 capabilities and ranges. So we're dealing this time  
8 from a position of strength. Combine that with the  
9 seniority that I hold in Congress today, I think we  
10 will be a community that benefits.  
11 The second question was about the  
12 business. Listen. When we were getting ready for this  
13 first -- for the BRAC of 2005, we had a number of  
14 seminars with the business community so that they could  
15 understand how to compete, the issues dealing with  
16 competing for federal contracts. I'm proud to tell you  
17 that we have people that own businesses today that are  
18 doing business throughout the world as a result of  
19 those seminars and how we prepared them.  
20 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you, Congressman  
21 Reyes. Mr. O'Rourke, do you want me to repeat the  
22 question? I'm happy to do it.  
23 MR. O'ROURKE: That's okay. Thanks.  
24 First, let me say this. Fort Bliss was  
25 the single largest beneficiary in the last round of

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1 base realignment and closure and credit for that goes  
2 to many of the people who are in this room today.  
3 Certainly the Greater Chamber made it one of their top  
4 priorities, if not their top priority.  
5 I see one of the former civilian aides to  
6 the U.S. Army who made it a top priority in his role.  
7 And I want to thank the Congressman publicly because I  
8 think he had a role in making sure that El Paso was a  
9 beneficiary.  
10 But I think we can, each and every one of  
11 us, agree that we have failed to capitalize on that for  
12 our community. There is absolutely no reason we should  
13 have 10 percent unemployment, almost 35,000 people out  
14 of work, when there is over \$5 billion in economic  
15 activity going on at that base today.  
16 Exactly 100 percent of the high-value  
17 design, architecture, and engineering jobs went to  
18 out-of-town firms. And when I talk to those firms here  
19 in El Paso who missed out on those jobs, whose  
20 employees were not hired, who are now on the  
21 unemployment roles, they say they didn't have a  
22 congressman who went to bat for them.  
23 That's what we need in El Paso. We need  
24 an active, energetic congressman who is going to go to  
25 bat for the people who have jobs and the people who

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1 don't have jobs, and make sure that El Paso companies  
2 can compete and win on a level playing field.  
3 Unfortunately, this round of BRAC we didn't have that.  
4 If I'm your congressman, I'm going to make that a  
5 priority.  
6 We also have the enviable position of  
7 having Fort Bliss be part of the one of the largest  
8 contiguous military installations in the world,  
9 certainly in the United States. It means that every  
10 single weapons system in the U.S. military can be fired  
11 here. I think that it's a no-brainer for the  
12 Department of Defense to continue to invest and grow  
13 the presence at Fort Bliss.  
14 I think you and I as ratepayers with the  
15 PSB and Kay Bailey Hutchison as our U.S. Senator helped  
16 answer the water questions that have plagued the  
17 decision before. And now that we've got that answer,  
18 now that we're on a roll, we need to capitalize on  
19 that.  
20 I'm going to make that the focus that  
21 it's not enough for Fort Bliss to do well and it's not  
22 enough for the military to do well. El Paso and  
23 El Paso employers and El Paso employees need to do  
24 well.  
25 And since I still have some time, let me

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1 also add this. Until we turn around our VA system,  
2 which was ranked the worst in the country in 2008, and  
3 until we have a full-service VA hospital here, we're  
4 missing out on another piece of this, and that is the  
5 30,000 active-duty soldiers and their families will all  
6 make the decision on where they are going retire after  
7 their term of service ends.  
8 We want them to retire here in El Paso,  
9 to deepen our tax base, and to enrich our community.  
10 They are not going to do that if we don't have a  
11 world-class VA system. I'm going to make that a  
12 priority as your next congressman. Thanks.  
13 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you very much.  
14 Mr. Tilghman.  
15 MR. TILGHMAN: I'd like for you to repeat  
16 the question.  
17 MODERATOR WALKER: No problem. I'll drop  
18 the introduction. But the questions are what do you  
19 consider the top priorities to support the personnel  
20 and their families assigned to the installations at  
21 Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range, and Holloman Air  
22 Force Base, and how will you achieve those priorities?  
23 That's part one.  
24 And part two is how would you encourage  
25 and promote local businesses to be more competitive in

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1 obtaining related defense contracts from those  
2 installations?  
3 MR. TILGHMAN: I'll go to the second part  
4 first, if that's okay. I think that what we need to do  
5 is understand that the socioeconomic and political  
6 future of this community and in this country is in  
7 America's classrooms right now. And one of the things  
8 that we need to make sure of is we don't have another  
9 sin committed that we saw in the state legislature. We  
10 cut out four and a half billion dollars in public  
11 education, another 140 million in vocational education,  
12 in the name and for the sake of fiscal austerity.  
13 If we train the labor force here,  
14 everything positive will grow from that. It's a  
15 self-inflicted wound to take anything away from the  
16 seed corn that's going to finance and focus on the  
17 future of this community and this country.  
18 With respect to the first part of the  
19 question, our sin was at a national level not managing  
20 the national checkbook correctly. And what happened  
21 with the roles and responsibilities we saw in the  
22 appropriations committee in the House of  
23 Representatives, we saw an avalanche of mismanagement,  
24 earmarks that suddenly wound up on the balance sheet in  
25 the red.

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1 The congress couldn't come up with it, so  
2 we gave it to a super committee. I don't know why we  
3 gave it to the super committee, because they are the  
4 offspring of a failed congress in the first place.  
5 They couldn't put it together, so what happened was  
6 something called sequestration. The budget cuts were  
7 coming because the congress failed to manage the public  
8 checkbook correctly. We need to make sure we get a  
9 good handle on fiscal management at the national level.  
10 Now, if you want to talk about the wisdom  
11 of Fort Bliss and whether or not it will fall into the  
12 round of base realignment and closures, I don't think  
13 so. The largest air strip can take almost every  
14 airplane in the Air Force inventory. You have seen the  
15 space shuttle land here. We have training ranges that  
16 I have walked in, sweated on, fired at, and had to wash  
17 those sand granules out of my boots.  
18 You want to send somebody to congress who  
19 knows what soldiering and soldiers are about because  
20 Fort Bliss is the ship of state that keeps this economy  
21 afloat.  
22 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you.  
23 Mr. Mendoza. Do you need me to repeat?  
24 MR. MENDOZA: No, thank you.  
25 You know, these are very, very good

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1 questions because right now we're in limbo, especially  
2 if the 16th Congressional District does not have Fort  
3 Bliss as part of it. That would be a travesty. But I  
4 will come to the rescue. Trust me. I will make  
5 certain that I work with our two U.S. senators to make  
6 sure that enough appropriations and funds are earmarked  
7 for Fort Bliss, irregardless of whether I'm on the  
8 Armed Services committee or not. I believe that that's  
9 a resource that we need to use.

10 And I will also work with the Texas  
11 delegation of congressmen to help me in that effort, to  
12 make sure that not only Fort Bliss, but all the other  
13 bases in Texas are funded properly.

14 And then to the second question, as far  
15 as getting bids for local companies in El Paso on Fort  
16 Bliss, I think that's paramount. I think it's very  
17 important, and it's more timely now than it's ever  
18 been. And what I will do as your congressman, I will  
19 make certain that every single business that's a member  
20 of the chamber and even the other independent  
21 businesses are given a fair shake. Thank you.

22 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you. Apparently  
23 I'm going to be able to reduce my level of volume with  
24 the new mic.

25 Next question: Our region suffers from a

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1 lack of healthcare professionals and our current low  
2 reimbursement rates for Medicaid and TriCare are facing  
3 further cuts. What is your prescription and vision for  
4 the improvement of our healthcare services in our  
5 region?

6 Mr. O'Rourke.

7 MR. O'ROURKE: Thank you. I think that's  
8 an excellent question because given the recently passed  
9 healthcare act, many of us assume that the healthcare  
10 needs in our community and in our country are solved.  
11 But they are not. You can have mandated coverage, but  
12 if you don't have access to a doctor, you're not going  
13 to get the care that you need, that your parents and  
14 grandparents need, or that your kids need.

15 We have 126 doctors for every 100,000  
16 people in our community. The national average is 200.  
17 Our current rate puts us on par with third world or  
18 developing countries like Syria or Panama, and we don't  
19 need to be compared to those countries. We want to at  
20 least be at the national average, if not above that.

21 And so this deplorable condition where we  
22 have reimbursement rates that are at a fraction of what  
23 you get reimbursed for the same procedure in other  
24 communities is a central part of the problem. It's  
25 wonderful that we have the country's latest or one of

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1 the latest four-year medical schools, but we're now  
2 graduating health professionals from the Paul Foster  
3 School of Medicine and sending them to other  
4 communities across the country because they simply  
5 cannot afford to practice medicine in El Paso.

6 So I think our congressman needs to make  
7 his top priority changing this reimbursement rate so  
8 that our doctors can afford to practice medicine here.  
9 That will equate to actually having access to  
10 healthcare.

11 And you may have read in the El Paso  
12 Times last Sunday, this has real world implications for  
13 all of us. We have the longest waiting room times of  
14 any community in the entire country, bar none. That,  
15 to me, is simply unacceptable, and it's another  
16 manifestation of this problem. So I think we blew an  
17 absolute golden opportunity during the Healthcare Act  
18 debate where I saw representatives and senators from  
19 communities and states across the country bargain on  
20 behalf of their communities for the needs that their  
21 communities had.

22 Unfortunately, I did not see our  
23 representative do the same for El Paso. If I were  
24 there, I would have fought hard for reimbursement rates  
25 that would have made it competitive to do business and

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1 to practice medicine here, and would have turned out --  
2 would have, in return, made sure that patients got the  
3 best possible care here.

4 Going forward, I will continue to make  
5 that a top priority. I think El Paso deserves nothing  
6 less.

7 MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. Tilghman, do you  
8 want me to repeat?

9 MR. TILGHMAN: Please. I'm a public  
10 education teacher. I understand the necessity to have  
11 to repeat the questions from time to time.

12 MODERATOR WALKER: No problem. Just  
13 pardon me for this mic.

14 Our region suffers from a lack of  
15 healthcare professionals and our current low  
16 reimbursement rates for Medicaid and TriCare are facing  
17 further cuts. What is your prescription and vision for  
18 the improvement of our healthcare services in our  
19 region?

20 MR. TILGHMAN: Well, the operative  
21 question is why? Why do we have that shortage of  
22 healthcare professionals? I submit to you that part of  
23 the consideration for people moving is salary, but not  
24 as much as quality of life and concerns about what  
25 things they may encounter if they brought their family

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1 members to the 16th Congressional District.  
2 Six of nine school districts failed to  
3 meet the national education standards. So the families  
4 will look and say, gee whiz, would I stand to get my  
5 child a quality education if I come here? Big concerns  
6 for families, quality of life.  
7 The other thing is the fact that we have  
8 not arrested and reversed the avalanche of violence  
9 right across the border. Whatever the circumstances  
10 are that you might perceive here in terms of safety,  
11 other people read those numbers very, very differently.  
12 And we have got to get after the  
13 perception that the rest of the world has about  
14 El Paso. And we don't serve it well when we do things  
15 such as think that we can mitigate the misery in Mexico  
16 by legalizing banned substances on this side of the  
17 border. That's number one.  
18 And then number two, to only count the  
19 homicide rates on the north side of the Rio Grande,  
20 with one or two per hundred thousand, when last year  
21 when those numbers came out, we saw 3,000 dead not  
22 10 miles from where we're sitting right now. We must  
23 be able to define reality, improve the atmosphere and  
24 the perception of this community, and the need is here  
25 and the people will certainly come.

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1 In terms of reimbursements, I certainly  
2 want to agree with Beto O'Rourke. If you need to send  
3 a powerful message, you need to send a powerful  
4 message. No meek voices on these kinds of things. We  
5 have got to play the game with the same set of rules.  
6 And no doctor anyplace else in the United States is  
7 worth more or less than a doctor who services the  
8 public needs of the community of El Paso. We have got  
9 to make sure that that message is sent powerfully,  
10 clearly, and say my guys and my people are just as good  
11 as your guys and your people. We need to make sure  
12 that those reimbursements are on a par. Thank you.  
13 MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. Mendoza.  
14 MR. MENDOZA: Ms. Walker, could you  
15 repeat the question, please.  
16 MODERATOR WALKER: Absolutely. Our  
17 region suffers from a lack of healthcare professionals  
18 and our current low reimbursement rates for Medicaid  
19 and TriCare are facing further cuts. What is your  
20 prescription and vision for the improvement of our  
21 healthcare services in our region?  
22 MR. MENDOZA: Here again, that's an  
23 excellent question and it's timely. This region has  
24 always suffered from that, and it's a misfortune that  
25 through the years, we've continued to send a

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1 representative to Washington that has not been vocal  
2 and has not worked with the other congressmen to help  
3 him in bringing back -- well, bringing back the bacon  
4 to El Paso, especially when it comes to healthcare.  
5 You know, these doctors, you know, a lot  
6 of them don't want to practice in El Paso. And to be  
7 quite frank and honest with you, I don't blame them.  
8 If I was an M.D., I wouldn't want to practice in  
9 El Paso, especially since the majority of the people  
10 that they see and care for are under Medicaid or  
11 Medicare, and they are having problems getting their  
12 reimbursements, as well as they are also not getting  
13 paid what other parts of the country are reimbursed at.  
14 Now, that's got to stop. And as your  
15 congressman, I will put a stop to that by working  
16 diligently to make -- to make all payments equitable  
17 and there will be some parity to that.  
18 And as far as we have a great resource  
19 here, which we need to see about getting, implementing  
20 a program to bring in more physicians with the new  
21 University Medical Center. I think that should be a  
22 priority of whoever is elected to congress in bringing  
23 more federal money for that facility so that the people  
24 of El Paso and the children of El Paso will benefit.  
25 Thank you.

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1 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you very much.  
2 Congressman Reyes, do you want me to repeat?  
3 CONGRESSMAN REYES: No. Listen, in order  
4 to answer this question, you have to know what you're  
5 talking about. When the debate was going on about  
6 healthcare reform, I was the only full chairman in the  
7 state of Texas. That means I sat in on the meetings  
8 with 17 other full chairs in the House of  
9 Representatives. That means I got to weigh in where it  
10 counts.  
11 I didn't have to prance around publicly  
12 to let you know that I was advocating for El Paso or  
13 for healthcare for this community. I don't think  
14 that's the way -- it's not productive. That's not the  
15 way you do things.  
16 What you do do is you meet with  
17 healthcare professionals. You meet with the doctors  
18 and you have them come up and give testimony about the  
19 importance of doing the kinds of things that we're  
20 talking about here with this question.  
21 We did that. The House of  
22 Representatives fully passed and fully funded the full  
23 reimbursement rate for the doctors. You don't have to  
24 take my word for it. It's part of the record. Ask the  
25 doctors here in this community, because they helped me

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1 by coming to Washington, D.C., to advocate for that.  
2 So, I think it's more important that we  
3 talk about the next phase, which means the investing in  
4 the Medical Center of the Americas, which means  
5 bringing Secretary Shinseki here so that he can get an  
6 idea of the value of locating a VA facility at the  
7 Medical Center of the Americas.  
8 I think it's more important to put in the  
9 president's budget \$100 million for medical schools and  
10 research facilities that are located and serve  
11 chronically underserved regions and areas. We qualify  
12 there. We had that hundred million dollars in the  
13 President's budget.  
14 Because of the gridlock in congress  
15 today, unfortunately, that hasn't come to fruition.  
16 We're going keep putting that hundred million dollars  
17 in there to add to the \$7 million that I have brought  
18 to the Medical Center of the Americas since 2000.  
19 So, my opponents can talk loftily about  
20 all the things they want to do. I have been there. I  
21 have done it. I understand it. And I will continue to  
22 work for your best interests. Thank you.  
23 MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you very much.  
24 Now we're going into one of the questions  
25 posed by the audience. Our classrooms continue to grow

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1 in size and school budgets are addressing huge  
2 budgetary shortfalls. How can we remain competitive  
3 and provide a cutting-edge education in this  
4 environment? What solutions do you propose?  
5 Mr. Tilghman.  
6 MR. TILGHMAN: One of the things that I  
7 discovered in my years with the Greater El Paso Chamber  
8 of Commerce was that the business community would offer  
9 partnerships in education, and what that would  
10 translate to would be coupons to go to the  
11 Baskin-Robbins or to get a newspaper subscription at  
12 our school.  
13 What needs to happen, if you view the  
14 public education system as a manufacturing company,  
15 it's an assembly line. And if the education system is  
16 not producing the labor force that will fuel the  
17 business needs of this community, business needs to  
18 step in, be a part of the prosecution of the curriculum  
19 to make sure that every step along the way we are  
20 arming students to move from the classroom to the  
21 boardroom to the -- whatever the job might happen to  
22 be. There has got to be a greater integration of  
23 business in the classroom while those students are  
24 being readied for a labor force.  
25 We also need to take a look at 21st

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1 Century labor needs. When you take a look at certain  
2 surveys taking place around the community and around  
3 the country, there is a void. There is a deficit. We  
4 are training for yesterday instead of tomorrow.  
5 One example that I use on the Facebook  
6 page, Siemens Corporation had 34,000 vacant positions  
7 that they could not fill, that these were a high-tech  
8 organization. And I say if Siemens came and wanted to  
9 relocate where we're tearing down ASARCO, would there  
10 be 34,000 qualified El Pasoans to move into those  
11 hundred-thousand-dollar-plus jobs?  
12 Business has got to say what goes on in  
13 the classroom on the front end, fix it at whatever  
14 stage it's broken so that when it graduates, when that  
15 student graduates, that student is ready to transition  
16 immediately into the labor force without a skill  
17 deficit, without a language deficit, and with  
18 confidence and capability that they compete on the  
19 global stage.  
20 Because this is the international  
21 Olympics. The education system is going to determine  
22 who gets the gold, bronze, and silver, and who is not  
23 going to place at all. We've got to make sure that  
24 anytime we are in competition with any other country on  
25 the planet, make sure that the United States National

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1 Anthem is the one that's getting played because we got  
2 the best folks competing in the global marketplace.  
3 Thank you.  
4 MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. Mendoza.  
5 MR. MENDOZA: You know, this is really a  
6 good question because, to be quite frank and honest  
7 with you, I wouldn't send my kids to public school. I  
8 wouldn't. You know what? It's deplorable what's going  
9 on in those schools. These kids, you know, they can't  
10 do anything right and they can't do anything wrong  
11 either. And I'll tell you why, because they are being  
12 punished for using a cell phone or an iPod.  
13 And you see, the problem -- and I think  
14 they are even being fined. I think they fine them  
15 something like \$15 to \$25, depending on the offense or  
16 the teacher. And the parent has to come and pay in  
17 order to get that thing back.  
18 I really believe that the technology is  
19 there, and it's unfortunate that right now there is a  
20 missing link and we're not using that link. And we  
21 need to allow students to use the Internet and use  
22 the -- their iPhones and their iPads because it's  
23 important. Right now they are being discouraged in  
24 using that.  
25 And to be quite frank and honest with

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1 you, I really think we really do need to promote home  
2 schooling. I think that's important because it lessens  
3 the burden of the taxpayer because the students are  
4 being taught at home.

5           And let's be quite frank and honest with  
6 you. Irregardless, where do you learn things? Every  
7 good thing I ever learned was at home. It wasn't at  
8 school. It was because of my parents, and that's what  
9 we need to encourage. Without good parents, you ain't  
10 going to have a good future because your children are  
11 not going to be good. That's the facts.

12           And we need to face up to that, and we  
13 need to do something about it. Instead of feeding the  
14 kitty till the cat gets fat, we need to redress this  
15 and we need to allow students to use the technology  
16 that's available. Thank you.

17           MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you, sir.  
18           Congressman Reyes.

19           CONGRESSMAN REYES: Thank you. Well,  
20 again, let me go back to when we were talking about a  
21 stimulus package for the country. I sat at that table,  
22 again, I was a full chair, the only one from Texas, and  
23 argued for money to go into education. We were  
24 successful. We got billions of dollars in the stimulus  
25 act to go to education because schools around the

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1 country were falling on hard times. God knows in Texas  
2 we knew that.

3           The first round of money from the  
4 Stimulus Act, the governor, Governor Perry, very  
5 cleverly took that money from the federal -- took the  
6 federal dollars and put it in education, and then  
7 backed off money and put an equal amount of money into  
8 the rainy day fund. So it effectively neutralized what  
9 we were trying to do, and that was make up for the  
10 projected shortfalls in the education budget in Texas.

11           The second round comes along and so the  
12 Texas delegation, the Texas Democratic delegation, puts  
13 in an amendment that says every federal dollar destined  
14 for education has to go to education. And we were at  
15 odds with Governor Perry over that for almost a year.  
16 But the bottom line was we were successful. That's how  
17 \$28 million came here to El Paso directly, federal  
18 education dollars. That was done at the table with  
19 input for the agenda for the stimulus funding. That's  
20 how it's done.

21           I am proud to tell you that my wife's a  
22 former teacher. My daughter has a doctorate in  
23 education and is a principal of a middle school. They  
24 are the two that I listen to about what's going on in  
25 the schools. And I couldn't reject more what I've

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1 heard here this afternoon by one of my opponents that  
2 the schools are the problem.

3           I'm a product of public schools and I'm a  
4 product of UTEP and Community College, and I spent a  
5 year at the University of Texas. If we've got an ounce  
6 of intelligence, we will continue to focus on America's  
7 future. They are our future, they are our children,  
8 they are our responsibility.

9           MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you.  
10           Mr. O'Rourke.

11           MR. O'ROURKE: I appreciate the question  
12 and the focus on education because it has to be a  
13 priority for our community if we really want to  
14 succeed. I think all of us at the dais agree and  
15 everyone in the room would have to agree with that. So  
16 it's a matter of how we're going to prioritize and the  
17 policies that we're going to set to make that happen.

18           And since everyone told a personal story,  
19 to Mr. Mendoza's point, I feel like I had some pretty  
20 good parents who helped me do well in life. But I was  
21 also a product of the public school system and felt  
22 like I was fortunate to have some outstanding teachers  
23 and to have a chance to be educated here in El Paso.  
24 And, you know, that's helped me to do the things in  
25 life that I've been able to do.

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1           I'm also lucky to be married to Amy  
2 O'Rourke, who is an educator and who has helped advise  
3 me on issues because she sees them as a teacher and as  
4 an administrator in terms of how the policies that we  
5 set at the national level affect us here at the local  
6 level.

7           I think that the federal government could  
8 do a much better job not just in dumping money on  
9 communities and hoping that they spend it wisely, but  
10 in targeting that federal funding where it's needed  
11 most. And I would argue in El Paso we want to target  
12 that funding to early childhood education. The more  
13 young kids that we can bring into the school system at  
14 an early age and inculcate a love of learning that will  
15 last their entire life, the better the outcome that  
16 we'll have.

17           There is no reason that we should have  
18 only 16 percent of our population with a college  
19 education here in El Paso. There is no reason that we  
20 should have some of the high dropout rates that we have  
21 here. I think if we spent that money more wisely, if  
22 we prioritized more smartly where that money went and  
23 focused on early childhood education, I think we'd do a  
24 lot better.

25           I also think we could do more at the

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1 federal level to encourage and attract more math and  
2 science teachers. To Mr. Tilghman's point, we're  
3 faring pretty poorly against the rest of the world in  
4 these very important areas, and we need to do better if  
5 we want to be competitive, not just as a community, but  
6 as a country.

7         And lastly, in terms of federal  
8 priorities, I think we need do a better job with the  
9 student loan programs. I had the fortune and the  
10 opportunity to go to Columbia University, but I would  
11 not have been able to graduate without student loans,  
12 without financial aid, and without the work study  
13 program that I was able to take part in. And we need  
14 to give that opportunity to each and every single  
15 person who wants to avail themselves of it. It's truly  
16 the American dream and we want to make sure that  
17 everyone has an opportunity to live it. Thanks.

18         MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you, gentlemen.  
19 We're moving on to our last two questions posited by  
20 the chamber. Here we go.

21         The Wall Street Journal recently convened  
22 a panel of nearly 100 CEOs of large companies to  
23 discuss the policy choices facing business and  
24 government and the effects those choices may have on  
25 the global economy.

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1         The CEOs divided into five task forces,  
2 each of which produced a list of five priorities in  
3 their subject area. The full panel then ranked all of  
4 the priorities in order of their relative urgency and  
5 importance. The number two priority was to create  
6 immigration policies in support of innovation. How  
7 would you accomplish this goal?

8         Let's see. I believe we're at  
9 Mr. Mendoza.

10         MR. MENDOZA: That's an excellent  
11 question. And here again, it's unfortunate that we  
12 continue. We've always had an immigration problem in  
13 this region, and here again, it's unfortunate that  
14 through the years, at least for the last 30 years,  
15 we've sent a representative to Washington and nothing  
16 has ever been done. They know the problem, and not to  
17 disparage our current congressman, but the reason that  
18 he got elected was because of Hold the Line. Let's be  
19 quite frank and honest.

20         And I have not seen any immigration  
21 reform. He had the ear of the muckymucks up there.  
22 President Clinton was -- you know, he briefed President  
23 Clinton when he was a Border Patrol man, but yet  
24 nothing is happening. Why?

25         Well, I want to tell you one thing. This

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1 is going to end, and there is a definite solution to  
2 this. And what we need to do is -- this is going to  
3 sound really radical, but then again, that's what we're  
4 here for. I think our basic problem with Mexico,  
5 because let's be honest, that's our problem with  
6 immigration is our neighbor to the south. Mexico is,  
7 in my opinion -- congress may disagree -- Mexico is a  
8 failed state.

9         I had a meeting with some people from --  
10 that I met in Miami that were from Mexico, and they  
11 tell me that the next president is going to be even  
12 worse than this president. So what does that mean?  
13 That means things aren't going to get any better in  
14 Mexico, unfortunately.

15         So what we need to do, we need to really  
16 think about making Mexico a commonwealth of the United  
17 States. Thank you.

18         MODERATOR WALKER: I just wanted to  
19 clarify that we are talking about utilizing immigration  
20 for innovation and how do we get there.

21         CONGRESSMAN REYES: Believe me, I got  
22 that. I didn't get all the other stuff. But let me  
23 tell you, I don't think we're here to be radical.  
24 Representing this district in the congress is serious  
25 business. It's about knowing the system. It's about

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1 being able to go there and work with others to get  
2 things done.

3         I'm the only member of congress that has  
4 a background in immigration. I tell my former  
5 colleagues, because they call me, I said the good news  
6 is they ask for my opinion. The bad news is, because  
7 of the politics, they discard it all the time.

8         We're talking about one of the  
9 fundamental issues that has made this country great,  
10 and that is giving access to our educational system to  
11 foreign students, using visas to bring and educate  
12 people from throughout the world. We benefit from  
13 that. We benefit from the diversity. And by the way,  
14 I founded the diversity caucus in congress, just like I  
15 founded the science, technology, engineering, and math  
16 caucus, and the reason for that is so you can bring  
17 like-minded members of congress together so you can  
18 talk about legislation.

19         And for me, it doesn't matter if it's got  
20 my name on it. What matters to me is that it's good  
21 for El Paso and that we're able to bring things here  
22 because legislation gets accomplished. We are able to  
23 come to a compromise and be able to do the kinds of  
24 things that make a difference for this community and  
25 for future generations here.

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1 So, when you're talking about the  
2 recommendation that congress understand, I get it. I  
3 advocate on behalf of that all the time. The problem  
4 is, and has been -- and this is why congress has such a  
5 low rating -- is that newly elected members of congress  
6 have forgotten that once the election is over, it's  
7 time to govern. They don't want to compromise. They  
8 just want to do things that are going make the  
9 president look bad. So we're not able to do the kinds  
10 of things, like prioritize allowing diversity and  
11 innovation to be part of our education system.  
12 MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. O'Rourke.  
13 MR. O'ROURKE: Thank you. Why is it that  
14 we've been waiting literally decades for comprehensive  
15 immigration reform in this country, and especially for  
16 this community? Why do we keep talking about today  
17 these long-lasting problems, the low reimbursement  
18 rates that we heard about earlier, the poor performing  
19 VA, the loss of contracting opportunities?  
20 And this isn't something new, and this  
21 isn't something that happened on our congressman's --  
22 or during our congressman's first or second or third or  
23 fourth or fifth or sixth or seventh term. We're now in  
24 his eighth term in office and he is blaming the  
25 gridlock in congress, of which he is a part, for the

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1 problems that we still face.  
2 I argue that maybe it's because we have a  
3 congressman who has one of the worst voting records in  
4 the U.S. Congress. More than 95 percent of his fellow  
5 members show up to work and to vote more often than he  
6 does. He said earlier he is not a show horse and he  
7 doesn't pass bills. After 16 years, and only six bills  
8 passed, none of which had to do with immigration reform  
9 or creating jobs or helping veterans or doing better  
10 for our community, you really have to ask why we're  
11 sending the same person up year after year, term after  
12 term, and expecting something different.  
13 Why, you must ask, is the leading  
14 reformer or the leading proponent of immigration reform  
15 in the U.S. Congress from Chicago, Illinois, and not  
16 from El Paso, Texas?  
17 I think we need to expect and demand more  
18 of our congressman and hold that person accountable for  
19 the things that we know best. We know immigration  
20 better than anybody. We know border policy better than  
21 anyone. We know U.S./Mexico trade better than anybody.  
22 And unfortunately, we know the drug war better than  
23 anybody. On all of these issues we should be the  
24 leading voice.  
25 We should be building the coalitions and

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1 leading them and making sure that we bend national  
2 public policy to the needs and demands of the U.S./  
3 Mexico border. And immigration reform is key among  
4 them. You know, some people have suggested that we  
5 staple a green card to every diploma or master's degree  
6 or Ph.D. earned by any immigrant who graduates from one  
7 of our universities. That might be the right thing to  
8 do.  
9 But what I think we need to do is have an  
10 honest conversation about the fact that there are labor  
11 demands in this country, whether it's on the high end,  
12 the middle end or the low end, and there is a labor  
13 supply in this world that wants to meet it. And we  
14 need to have a rational, practical policy that marries  
15 the demands to the supply and is fair to all concerned,  
16 whether they are the U.S. taxpayer, whether they are  
17 the immigrant who is laboring right now in the shadows,  
18 or whether they are the two countries involved, in our  
19 case, the U.S. and Mexico.  
20 And so I think we have to demand and  
21 expect more out of ourselves, and when we do that,  
22 we'll start to get more from our representation.  
23 MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. Tilghman. Once  
24 again, I'd like to focus on the fact that I'm trying  
25 the get an answer on actual ways that you're going to

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1 suggest to support innovation in the United States by  
2 immigration policy.  
3 MR. TILGHMAN: Yes, thank you. First of  
4 all, to one of the congressman's comments, I know there  
5 are a lot of things that the congress is known for, but  
6 consensus is certainly not one of them. And that's one  
7 of the things that ails this country today, a failure  
8 to be able to reach consensus. I agree that people do  
9 forget that they go up to govern, but we are in the  
10 business of making policy for ourselves in congress  
11 rather than making policies for the people who hired  
12 us.  
13 Let me say that the Dream Act, number  
14 one, if we're going to invest a dollar in public  
15 education, the best dividend we're going get is to do  
16 all we can to retain the people that we educate. If  
17 you take a look at the dollar figure to educate a  
18 person from K through 12, we're talking maybe 8,000 a  
19 year. Let's use it as a round figure. And then you  
20 multiply that times 13 years, you're talking a serious  
21 investment.  
22 Now, why would you graduate that student  
23 and then allow that investment, as a matter of fact,  
24 show that investment to the door so that that person  
25 will become economic competition for us in another

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1 country because we did not have policy in place to  
2 retain a skill that we paid for? But because we lack a  
3 commonsensical immigration policy, those dollars go  
4 away, the talent goes away, and it becomes competition  
5 for us someplace else.  
6       The majority of new patents that have  
7 been presented to the patent office have come from  
8 persons who have come from other countries and come  
9 here.  
10       If you take a look at the birth rate, we  
11 have got to get immigrants into the country because  
12 we're not making babies like we used to. Some of us.  
13 But the lion's share of our birth rate, we're  
14 flat-lining. We are living longer. We have an  
15 expanding geriatric population. Baby boomers are  
16 retiring. Where will the revenues come from if we are  
17 not making babies to feed the labor force?  
18       We've got to figure out a  
19 common-sense-for-the-common-good approach to invite  
20 talent to the United States, to cultivate that talent  
21 in our public education system. And I want to say my  
22 sons are products of the public education system here,  
23 and they are living large and in charge in places other  
24 than El Paso. But the reason why is because the ground  
25 is not fertile to plant their economic seeds here. We

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1 need to change that. A Tilghman voice in congress will  
2 be the farmer to break the soil. Thank you.  
3       MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you. We've made  
4 it down to our final question, so here goes.  
5       El Paso has provided leadership  
6 nationally on improvements in the efficiency and  
7 security of border crossings in the United States.  
8 Even with the increased use of technology, our ports  
9 are still understaffed and we are still working on  
10 options to attempt to track the reasons for delays in  
11 border crossings.  
12       What would be your top three  
13 recommendations to improve the staffing at our ports of  
14 entry, as well as to improve cross border inspection  
15 efficiencies?  
16       Congressman Reyes.  
17       CONGRESSMAN REYES: Well, first of all,  
18 four years ago I worked with GSA and DHS to find out  
19 exactly what needed to be done through legislation to  
20 erase the 30-percent-plus vacancy rate that exists  
21 today across the country. What needed to be done to  
22 improve and remodel the infrastructure that is critical  
23 and vital to our trade and commerce? And that was the  
24 genesis for the putting our resources towards security.  
25 Because if you don't -- in today's atmosphere, if you

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1 don't tie legislation to security, you don't get the  
2 kind of support, you don't get the hearings, you don't  
3 get the opportunity to make a difference for anything  
4 dealing with the border.  
5       So, my legislation that I hope -- and by  
6 the way, it's been endorsed by unions and the U.S.  
7 Chamber of Commerce, the Border Trade Alliance, the  
8 Foreign Trade Association -- my legislation does that  
9 for a five-year period. It invests a billion dollars  
10 in port infrastructure and technology.  
11       It hires a thousand inspectors for land  
12 border ports on the southern border and the northern  
13 border to eliminate the vacancy rate. It hires 1200  
14 agricultural inspectors to make sure that with the  
15 passage of NAFTA, now we're importing a tremendous  
16 amount of our agricultural products into our country,  
17 yet we don't have sufficient specialists in agriculture  
18 to make sure that all that product is safe for  
19 consumption here in the United States. And it also  
20 funds some support positions. I think that's  
21 important.  
22       Last week -- and Kathleen, you were there  
23 at the meeting with CBP and the stakeholders -- we  
24 learned that the average crossing time, the average  
25 crossing time, for a truck is an hour and 16 minutes.

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1 As long as we have people grandstanding and giving the  
2 impression that it takes four and a half hours for a  
3 truck to cross that border, we're hurting ourselves.  
4 If you're a company that's considering relocating to  
5 the border community, are you going to come to a place  
6 like El Paso where you've got politicians trying to  
7 make political hay erroneously misrepresenting the  
8 crossing times, or are you going to go someplace where  
9 there is harmony? Thank you.  
10       MODERATOR WALKER: Thank you.  
11       Mr. O'Rourke, would you like me to  
12 repeat?  
13       MR. O'ROURKE: That's okay, thanks.  
14       First, let me set the context and say why  
15 I think this is a really important question, perhaps  
16 the most important question that we've been asked  
17 today. I've knocked on over 8,000 doors so far in this  
18 campaign, starting back in September, and from  
19 Canutillo to Horizon, the number one issue is jobs. We  
20 have 10 percent unemployment right now. That means  
21 35,000 of our fellow El Pasoans are looking for work  
22 and can't find it.  
23       Our ports of entry, our international  
24 bridges are responsible for 50,000 jobs in El Paso  
25 today. Those are suppliers, manufacturing jobs,

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1 logistics, and retail jobs connected to the  
2 \$1.4 billion that Juarenses spend in our local economy  
3 every year.  
4       If you read the El Paso Times last week  
5 or went to the city council meeting, you saw that the  
6 Department of Commerce just released a report. If we  
7 stay on our current trajectory, the same one that we  
8 have been on for 16 years, within five years we will  
9 lose an additional 11,500 jobs and we'll take a hit to  
10 our tax revenues of \$300 million.  
11       Truly, we cannot afford to continue on  
12 the same course. We cannot afford to send the same  
13 person back to congress for a ninth term and expect a  
14 different result. This problem has been around for a  
15 long time. It needs somebody new to offer new  
16 solutions and make sure that we turn this situation  
17 around because it's good for our economy, it creates  
18 jobs, and make sure that we don't lose our jobs.  
19       So, number one, we need to staff those  
20 ports adequately. I crossed the bridges last December.  
21 I waited in the Mexican national line for two hours and  
22 while, to the congressman's point, I wasn't bringing  
23 over cargo or trade, but I was coming over with the  
24 Mexican nationals, who spend \$1.4 billion dollars in  
25 our economy.

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1       We got to the front of the line to find  
2 that of the four inspection booths, only two were  
3 manned, and of the two that were there, frankly, they  
4 treated the Mexican nationals who were crossing that  
5 bridge like dirt. These are the people who stood in  
6 line in the freezing cold for two hours for the  
7 privilege of spending their money in south El Paso or  
8 South Stanton Street or Cielo Vista Mall. We have to  
9 do better.  
10       We must also invest in new technology to  
11 speed the crossing of goods, cargo, and people across  
12 our bridges.  
13       And lastly, I think we need to invest in  
14 new bridge infrastructure in El Paso. The last time a  
15 bridge was built within our city limits was in 1969.  
16 That's far too long to wait, and it makes us less  
17 competitive for investment, whether it's manufacturing  
18 or any other kind of investment along the border, and  
19 that investment will seek a more competitive place to  
20 go, whether that's Laredo, McAllen, or some other  
21 place. We need to be the most competitive point along  
22 the U.S./Mexico border.  
23       MODERATOR WALKER: Mr. Tilghman, would  
24 you want me to repeat?  
25       MR. TILGHMAN: I think I got this one.

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1       MODERATOR WALKER: All right.  
2       MR. TILGHMAN: I think the big gorilla in  
3 the room is the drug war, that despite what we might  
4 think we're doing in terms of effectiveness of our  
5 ports of entry, the congestion comes because we have to  
6 do double and triple scrutiny about anything that comes  
7 from there to here and going back the other way.  
8       It is too lucrative to the drug industry  
9 to compromise in any area, because we have not done  
10 enough on this side for staffing. But the void is not  
11 so much in staffing as it is in integrity. Because the  
12 lion's share of what comes into this country comes  
13 through the various ports of entry, because the  
14 economic situation makes it more profitable in the  
15 short term to make a quick cash gain by ignoring the  
16 rules and regulations and allowing those things to come  
17 through.  
18       Headline, El Paso Times, December 1,  
19 2010. Border drug cash flows. Report: Criminals  
20 smuggle up to 38 billion. United States only stops  
21 41 million.  
22       Now, if you do some simple mathematics,  
23 it does not hurt the cartels in any significant manner  
24 to send a few decoys into the system, because the  
25 lion's share of what they are trying to market to an

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1 addicted America is getting through.  
2       The void is not just in personnel and  
3 staffing. There is an integrity question that goes  
4 along with the people who are staffing the areas,  
5 number one, and number two, it has become more  
6 profitable in the short term to skirt the law.  
7       And unless and until we have an adequate  
8 strategy to address the flow along the transportation  
9 arteries north and into the veins of an addicted  
10 America, we are going to continue to have congestion  
11 problems. And if you expand it, you have just given  
12 another venue for more banned and illegal substances to  
13 enter the United States. You better get after what's  
14 going on on the other side of the border before it ever  
15 comes to a port of entry coming into the United States.  
16       MODERATOR WALKER: Would you like me to  
17 repeat?  
18       MR. MENDOZA: That's fine. You know,  
19 here again, the solution is simple. But it's  
20 unfortunate that sometimes when we don't think out of  
21 the box, the world ends. We're married to Mexico,  
22 irregardless of whatever you want to think. This is a  
23 region that was part of Mexico at one time. The only  
24 solution, my friends, and listen, and go home and pray  
25 about it, because this is the only solution. Mexico

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1 must become a commonwealth of the United States.  
2 I know you-all don't like it, but, hey,  
3 we got to call a spade a spade. Those are the facts.  
4 We have problems. And once we control Mexico, the  
5 problems will go away. Trust me.  
6 Thank you. I appreciate your vote.  
7 MR. HARRE: Okay. We'll go ahead with  
8 concluding remarks. We'll start with Mr. O'Rourke.  
9 Two-minute time limit.  
10 MR. O'ROURKE: Thank you.  
11 Well, I want to thank the Chamber again  
12 for putting on today's event, and I want to thank each  
13 of you for taking some time out to be here and giving  
14 me a chance to address you and, hopefully, answer some  
15 of your concerns going into this race.  
16 It's really amazing what we as a  
17 community have been able to do when we put our minds  
18 together and decided that we wanted to get something  
19 done. I think about downtown El Paso. A little over  
20 five years ago we decided that we wanted to make it a  
21 priority and we wanted to revitalize and reenergize the  
22 core of our city. Five years later we have over  
23 \$100 million in net new investment in downtown El Paso,  
24 and the change is apparent. It's not exactly there  
25 yet. We've got many years and many more dollars to go,

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1 but certainly we're making progress.  
2 I look at Sun Metro, our mass transit  
3 agency, which when I was elected in 2005 was one of the  
4 worst performing bus systems in the country. Last year  
5 it was ranked by the American Public Transit Agency as  
6 the top performing bus company in the country.  
7 I look at the world class neighborhoods  
8 that we've incentivized, encouraged, and helped to  
9 regulate so that we can start giving El Pasoans an  
10 additional reason to want to stay here or come back  
11 here or start a family, a business, or retire here. In  
12 all those areas, we're making progress.  
13 And it's not just what we're doing here.  
14 It's the way the rest of the world sees us. Last year  
15 Newsweek magazine named us the number one can-do city  
16 in the United States. They looked at the 200 largest  
17 communities in America and they found that El Paso had  
18 done better than any other community in improving  
19 quality of life in the shortest amount of time.  
20 I think we need to take that can-do  
21 attitude to the United States Congress and get some  
22 things done for El Paso. The only dark spots on our  
23 horizon are the ones that you heard about today: The  
24 long bridge wait times, the worst ranked VA in the  
25 country, the low medical reimbursement rates in

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1 El Paso. Those are all clearly federal issues where we  
2 have not made any progress in the last 16 years.  
3 So I'm asking you to elect me to be your  
4 can-do congressman to get something done for El Paso.  
5 Thank you.  
6 MR. TILGHMAN: I took those applause  
7 because I was standing up.  
8 Our greatest discoveries and achievements  
9 invariably involve the cooperation of many minds. In  
10 my 20-plus years in El Paso, I believe I represent the  
11 broadest cross section of what this community  
12 represents: A soldier, retiree, combat veteran,  
13 schoolteacher, parent, taxpayer, facilitating public  
14 dialogue so that we can reach some form of consensus on  
15 the direction and destiny of this community, and  
16 ultimately the direction and destiny of this country.  
17 If we are going to consider a way  
18 forward, one of the things we must do is incorporate as  
19 many minds as we possibly can. And once those voices  
20 speak in unison about an issue, we do ourselves a  
21 disservice by dismissing the voices of the majority of  
22 the population. When the voters go to the polls and  
23 tell us they want something, we in elected office need  
24 to respond.  
25 If you take a look at the track record

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1 that the congress enjoys today, it is an international  
2 embarrassment, it is a national embarrassment, and they  
3 are about as successful in passing quality legislation  
4 as one might be in passing a kidney stone. It's going  
5 to be painful.  
6 We have got to get people who can speak a  
7 very simple, plain language of dialogue, compromise,  
8 and consensus. And that we need to look at commonsense  
9 decisions for common good. The person who represents  
10 and can speak from personal experiences, from the  
11 classroom to the boardroom to the soldiers at Fort  
12 Bliss to deployments overseas, the large role that the  
13 military plays in the United States, that person is  
14 embodied in this candidacy and Jerome Tilghman.  
15 MR. MENDOZA: I want to thank you for  
16 bearing with us today, and I hope you have a blessed  
17 and sacred new year. I humbly am going to ask you to  
18 support my candidacy and I'm going to tell you why.  
19 Because I believe that if you elect Ben Mendoza your  
20 U.S. Representative, I will work to get two congressman  
21 from El Paso, unlike right now in San Antonio, I think  
22 we have three congressman. We need to cut El Paso in  
23 half where the majority of the people live in two  
24 districts in El Paso and the tail end goes to San  
25 Antonio.

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1 It's unfortunate, and shame on our Texas  
2 legislators for not having the pull, the influence to  
3 get this done. It's unfortunate.  
4 And I will tell you one thing. More than  
5 likely we're going to have a Republican governor. I  
6 will talk to our governor because I think it's  
7 important that we speak to the governor in order to get  
8 things done in El Paso, not just one person that's  
9 elected to the state house that's a Republican, you  
10 need the representative, even if he is a Democrat, to  
11 get together with the governor. Because El Paso is not  
12 a foster child of Texas, and I will see to it that that  
13 does not happen again. Thank you.  
14 CONGRESSMAN REYES: I, too, want to thank  
15 the Chamber for having us here this afternoon. And I  
16 want to tell you that it's okay to have your own  
17 opinion. You just can't make up your own facts. When  
18 we talk of downtown vitalization, one of my opponents  
19 likes to take credit for that, and most of it has been  
20 done with federal dollars. Whether you're talking  
21 about a courthouse, 70 million; you're talking about  
22 passport office, 2 million; you're talking about Sun  
23 Metro, to the tune of about 60 million; you're talking  
24 about the Plaza, the renovation of the Plaza,  
25 1.3 million; those are all federal dollars that came

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1 into the downtown revitalization.  
2 I put my office downtown across from the  
3 Placita 15 years ago because I wanted to send a message  
4 that downtown needed to be revitalized. That's how  
5 long we've been at it.  
6 The VA here, I'm a veteran. I have an  
7 account at the Veterans Administration. It's in the  
8 top 88 percent in terms of quality of healthcare in the  
9 country. This is baloney when somebody likes to quote  
10 2008 figures. I was there. I made that turnaround.  
11 When you're talking about voting record,  
12 I take my voting record seriously. This is the card  
13 that I vote with. And let me tell you, you know how  
14 you can -- figures lie and liars figure? Well, this  
15 voting card is being compared to 87 voting cards  
16 belonging to Tea Party freshman.  
17 I've been at this and I've voted over  
18 10,000 times. In the course of the last 15 years I've  
19 lost my mom, I've lost my father-in-law, and my  
20 mother-in-law. And my wife right now is at the  
21 emergency room down the street. So things happen where  
22 you have to miss votes.  
23 And I would hope that people in this  
24 district would understand when you've got those kinds  
25 of issues, that, yes, you're allowed to be home with

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1 your dying mother, mother-in-law, or father-in-law.  
2 That's -- I don't have an agenda for any  
3 kind of platform like one of my opponents does. I just  
4 want to keep working for you. My track record is what  
5 it is. I ask you to consider it and thank you again  
6 for you support.  
7 MR. HARRE: Okay. Thank you. Let's give  
8 a round of applause to the moderator, Ms. Kathleen  
9 Walker, and to our panel over here for their great  
10 views. I appreciate your views and insights. I hope  
11 you've gained some knowledge on this, and I also  
12 appreciate you sticking by the time so Janice didn't  
13 have to do her professional wrestling skills on you to  
14 bring you down.  
15 Also, I want to let you know that our  
16 chamber, your chamber is committed to the political  
17 process. We are trying to increase business  
18 participation, so you're going to see more venues like  
19 this in the future on the local, state, and federal  
20 level. So be prepared, and look in your e-mails and  
21 the paper, or whatever it is. Understand, this is  
22 going to happen again.  
23 Lastly, I'll say this. And this is my  
24 personal view, so you can't say the chamber said this.  
25 You know, a lot of people complain about the process.

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1 If you don't vote, you shouldn't complain. So go out  
2 and vote. That's what this is all about. Get  
3 educated, go out and vote, and make a difference.  
4 Okay. Thank you--all, and good night.  
5 (Proceedings concluded at 5:27 p.m.)  
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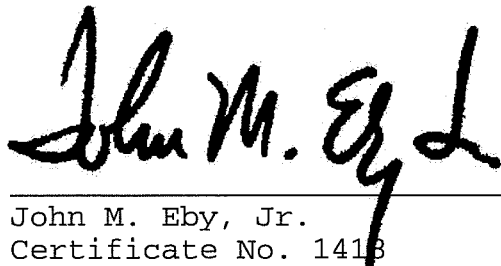
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