Let me tell you what I’m not and lower expectations, and if I made my living as a pundit, I don’t think I’d make a living. I didn’t expect what happened in the election in November. I guess I saw the direction of it, but I had no sense for what the scope of it would be.

What we are now and I’ll talk a little about the national election and I said I’d talk about 20 minutes and then we’ll talk about it. I don’t know much about local elections, but I try to keep in touch with national politics. And I guess what we’re in now is sort of a transition period. It’s where we’re in-between a time when people campaign and people then try to figure out how to govern the country. And it’s a confusing time—we’re sort of between promises and preparation and policy. It’s a pretty confusing time.
a lot of activity and I can clear up the confusion in one sense. I’ve been on Capitol Hill a couple of times in the last 10 days and you can sure tell who the winners and the losers are if you go to Washington. I’ll give you a couple of examples. I was there last week and coming out in front of the Caucus Room in the House of Representatives, where the Republicans were caucusing and deciding how they were going to carve up the House of Representatives and outside the door there were about one hundred and some odd reporters and media people, banks of cameras all waiting for people to come out of this big room and tell them what they were going to do. This week I went to a meeting right off the floor of the House Capitol and we came out of our meeting and there beside the door of the Capitol was one lonely door keeper who was sitting there drinking a Coke and I asked him what was going on inside. And he said the Democrats are meeting--they’re having their caucus. (laughter) So there’s one example. Another example, I went to see last week one of the members of Congress I campaigned with in the fall and he had lost. He was from Ohio and there he was packing up
boxes and his staff was concerned with where they were going to get a job and how fast they could pack the boxes and get out of there. The office next door to his, the painters were already there. There had been a congressman there, but that congressman was gone and they were painting, getting ready for the new one. I went up to see another one of the people who had been a winner and not a loser, and he was trying to get 15 minutes with Newt Gingrich and he was all excited about welfare reform. So you can tell the winners and losers and in some way, that's what the election is about and was one of the things at least we can see pretty visibly.

So what about the election? I describe the election as an abnormally normal election. And I think we ought to look at that election in the largest sense, first as an exercise in representative government, or an exercise in democracy if you want to look at it this way. It was proof that representative government works in this country, and my guess is that if the
founding fathers are looking down on the country, they are probably smiling. We got an alternation in power between the two parties. Founders did not expect parties as we know, but they expect an alternation in power in terms at least of who was going to be running the country and who was not. So after 40 years in which one party had control of the government almost continuously, and now I’m talking about Congress, not the Presidency, we got a change. My own view is that this election was the best thing that could happen to the country in terms of the system of representative government. That we had an alternation in power and that we were well overdue for an alternation in power and that 40 years of control by one political party is not the way the system was intended to work. That 40 years in power is much too long a cycle for one party to be in power. We had never had more since the Civil War, more than 18 years in which one party controlled the House of Representatives. And I take that to be in some sense, the people’s chamber as the closest of the national political institutions to the public. And we got out of 40 years of power by
one party a lot of stuff that was not good for the system. We got arrogance, which was reflected in something like the House bank, laziness, arrogance, ................ politics on Capitol Hill in that sense. We got something else which you probably approve of, and we can talk about later, and I do not approve of--we got a movement for term limits that would never have happened if we hadn’t had 40 years of one party in power. And we got a leader like Newt Gingrich, who is obviously a product of a frustrated and oppressed minority party over a long period of time. We can talk about some of those things. So I think in terms of the election, my view would be that it was a good thing for the political system that we had this change. Of course, the Republicans had had the Senate in the early Reagan years, so the streak had not been quite as long for the Republicans had the Senate been interrupted.

Let’s just remind ourselves, for a minute, what the results of that election were. It was an historic election. It was an election of historic proportions, I think. And the Democrats got creamed and
they were thrown out of power. It was a massive victory for the House as opposed to the ........ The electorate, as far as we can tell, was angry, frustrated, cynical, all of the above, and 39% of them at least went to the polls and spoke forcefully and as we know under our system, quite authoritatively.

The Republicans made enormous gains. No Republican incumbent in Congress was defeated. They gained 52 seats, 53 now I guess in the House of Representatives, 8 seats in the Senate, 11 governorships, they now control the Republican 17 state legislatures, they gained between 300 and 400 new seats in state legislatures combined and in some parts of the country, in the south, the Republicans made gains that were first since reconstruction. They took over the House of Representatives in North Carolina for the first time since reconstruction. It was not only wide, but it was, at least in the south, and I'll a little more about that later, deep. That is to say, it carried forward something that began under Dwight Eisenhower when the Republicans first cracked the solid south at
the presidential level and they've been taking it down, down and
they haven't quite gotten the sheriff yet, but they took over in
North Carolina, for example, almost half the county commissions,
which are basically the local governing units in North Carolina.
So it was deep and it was broad. One guy measured it by saying
that for the first time, he could now plot a automobile drive that
would take him from Portsmouth, New Hampshire to the west coast
without driving through a single Democratic district. (laughter)
They say that's a first!

Tip O'Neill had a great and important saying in political science
that's so cherished through the years which is that "all politics
is local." Except that sometimes politics is national, and this,
I think, was a kind of, at least as mid-term elections go, it was
as national election as you can get. So you could say that the
voters sent a message, but the question is, what was the message.
And I think that what we can see at this particular period, this
transition period, what the message was depends upon who is being
the messenger. I notice that the Democrats tend to call the election a catastrophe of one sort or another, it’s usually called an earthquake or a hurricane or a tidal wave or some sort of ... the moving of the tonic plates .......... all sorts of things. The Republicans like to think of it was a revolution. And so you can see it depends a little on what you think. Some people think it’s a mandate, some people think it’s not a mandate. Some people says it is an ideological election, some say it is not an ideological election. Some say it’s a repudiation of Bill Clinton, some people say it has little to do with Bill Clinton. Some people think it’s only a two year aberration, some people think it’s the forerunner of something longer than two years. So this interpretative phase is something that I think we’re going through right now, and as a political scientist, I know that historians and political scientists will try to figure out exactly what the electorate said and that will be the work of 100 Ph.D. thesis and will go on for a long time. ....... But the fact of the matter is that the interpretation that matters is the interpretation of the winner.
The losers can decide what happened in order to do something for the future, but for the moment, it is the interpretation of the winner that matters. In 1980, for an example, political scientists have figured out now there was no mandate for Ronald Reagan in the 1980 presidential election. There just was no mandate for Reaganomics and no mandate for shrinking the federal government and so forth. But what mattered was that Reagan said he had a mandate, acted as if he had a mandate and went ahead and produced a whole set of policies on that basis—not that the Republicans wouldn’t ..... at the moment. So the question of what the message was, at least for the time being, the people figured out who was in control of the Congress and who was in control of the government and they threw them out as best they could. One guy is still in there—he happens to be President and couldn’t get at him in this particular election. So it was, as I said before, an election in which the out’s certainly got creamed and the in’s were put in. And what the in’s get is the ability now of the chance, the opportunity to set the agenda, the policy agenda, ............. And we’ll talk about

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Clinton in just a minute.

There were a few interesting facts about the election that I’ll just mention in passing. The Perot voters voted, in congressional voting, Perot voters voted 50-50 Republican and Democratic in 1992. And this time they split 2-1 for the Republicans. The men voted 54% to 46% for the Republicans and women voted exactly the opposite, 54% to 46% for the Democrats. And some people interpret the election as the revenge of the white males. (laughter)

The other thing I want to mention is just to go back to the point of the salary. I think of it perhaps in historic terms and perhaps in terms that are relevant for the presidential election next time and certainly for the play of the two political parties in the United States. We grew up in the New Deal party where the solid south was absolutely essential to the Democrats. This election was a typical election. For the first time, a majority of the members of Congress from the south are Republicans. For the first time.
And that’s a huge change and it looks now as if the Republican party’s strong hold is the south. And we can talk about what’s happened, but the fact that it’s happened is tremendously important. If you look at the Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, the leaders from Georgia, the speaker-to-be, the Majority Leader from Texas, the Whip is from Texas, the Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee is from Louisiana, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committees, these are your money committees, is from Texas, and the third important committee in the House, is now in the charge of a New Yorker--Bert Solomon from Saratoga. But otherwise this is not only a new generation, all these people came up in the 60’s with the exception of Bob Dole, and Dole is the only non-southerner in the group. Metlock of Mississippi has just been put in the second highest spot on the Republican side in the Senate. But with the exception of Bob Dole, all these new leaders were people of the 60’s. They came out of the 60’s as Clinton did and so you have now in Congress this new generation. So what’s happening now on Capitol Hill? What’s JCC MEETING: MEN IN TRANSITION (12/15/94)-11
happening on Capitol Hill is for political scientists, the most fascinating thing of all, I think. What we're getting is a reversal of a trend that's been in progress in this country, at least on Capitol Hill, for 75 years. That is to say the trend since the early 20th century has been toward the progressive decentralization of power inside of Congress and away from the center and toward committees and toward groups and toward subcommittee and toward individual members. And what we're seeing now in the House of Representatives, and this is being orchestrated by Newt Gingrich, is the recentralization of power, the creation of a strong speaker and speakers organization in the House of Representatives. We haven't had anything like this since Joe Cannon in the early part of the 20th century, and Cannon, as historians may remember, was overthrown in 1910. So what we're having now is an effort to reconstitute strong central leadership inside the House of Representatives. And we can talk about the ways in which this is being done. We haven't had a speaker in my life time, and of course, they've all been Democrats in my life.
time, and I guess most of your life time, too, if this is a group of men in transition. You’ve got a real transition going on here in the outside world for all of us. My students believed that the Democrats owned the House of Representatives. My students came, left and went out and earned a living, and raised a family and still believed that the Democrats, they couldn’t imagine that the Republicans, it wasn’t part of the American system that the Republicans should ever take over the House of Representatives. But Gingrich has, he came to the House in 1978. And I actually campaigned with the man who beat him twice in 1974 and 1976. But in 1978, when he came to Congress, and almost from the beginning, he set one goal for himself was to make the Republican party a majority in the House of Representatives and everything he could do to produce that end, he produced it. And, of course, he has now pulled it off. And through that period he was a bomb-throwing, fire-breathing, anti-Congress, anti-institutional, anti-Democratic force. But he built up, among the Republicans, a kind of loyalty to himself and to his goal and he has reached out and nurtured a
we've got one year to sort of focus on what's going on in Congress without too much attention to 1996. Though, of course, the media will rush this, make us think about it. My own take on what's happening is something that is fairly long-range. And this is the way I look at it. I think somewhere in the mid 60's, about the time Richard Nixon was elected in 1968, maybe 1966, but 1968, the country began to go conservative. That is to say, the New Deal period reached it's high water mark with the election of Lyndon Johnson over Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society which was an extension of the New Deal program. We got Medicare, we got a Civil Rights bill, we got a new Elementary Secondary Education Act, we got HUD, we got the poverty program, we got a whole series of programs that really got cut off at the knees by the Vietnam War and in that period in which we all lived through, and understood something happened. Barry Goldwater, you could say, was a kind of a forerunner of his and at some point, we turned conservative and most of our presidents since then have been Republicans. But for some accidents, it seems to me, they all
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would have been Republicans. Jimmy Carter was an accident, it seems to me, produced by Watergate. He was a direct result, and a direct benefactor of the Watergate scandal, otherwise, it seems to me, we wouldn’t have had him. Bill Clinton, in my view, you can look at Bill Clinton as another accident. If George Bush had it to lose, George Bush lost it, in my view, the election was a repudiation of George Bush more than it was an acceptance of Bill Clinton and in any case. So that’s sort of the way I feel. So in looking this way toward a country that’s gotten somewhat more conservative over time, this is a fairly long run trend and I don’t profess to know whether it’s come to an end, or whether the momentum is still with the Republicans. My sense is the momentum is still with the conservatives and it is with the Republicans, but we can talk about that. For the Republicans, it seems to me, the future depends a lot on what they can accomplish. We don’t know what they’re going to accomplish. We know they’ve got a big agenda. They know right now they are certainly pleasing the public in terms of downsizing the Congress of the United States. They’re