

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH BEN CARSON

SUBJECT: DR. BEN CARSON, NOTED NEUROSURGEON AND AUTHOR OF THE NEW BOOK WHICH HE WROTE WITH HIS WIFE, CANDY CARSON, IS TITLED: "A MORE PERFECT UNION: WHAT WE THE PEOPLE CAN DO TO RECLAIM OUR CONSTITUTIONAL LIBERTIES."

MODERATOR: MYRON BELKIND, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: NATIONAL PRESS CLUB BALLROOM, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 1:00 P.M. EDT

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2015

(C) COPYRIGHT 2008, NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, 529 14TH STREET, WASHINGTON, DC - 20045, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FOR INFORMATION ON BECOMING A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, PLEASE CALL 202-662-7505.

JOHN HUGHES: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome. My name is John Hughes. I'm an editor for Bloomberg News First Word, that's Bloomberg's breaking news desk here in Washington, and I am President of the National Press Club. [applause] Thank you. Thank you. Our guest today is republican Presidential candidate and neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson. He'll discuss his newest books, one he wrote with his wife Candy, titled *A More Perfect Union: What We the People can Do to Reclaim our Constitutional Liberties*. But first I would like to introduce our distinguished head table. This head table includes club members and also guests of the speaker.

From the audience's right, Joseph Morton, he's a Washington Correspondent for the *Omaha World Herald*, and he is the Membership Secretary of the National Press Club. Ferdous al-Farouque. He's a reporter for the Gray Sheet. Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, President of Respectability USA. Benjy Sarlin, he's political reporter for MSNBC. Candy Carson, she's the wife of our speaker. [applause] Thomas Burr, he's the Washington Correspondent for the *Salt Lake Tribune* and he is the Vice-President of the National Press Club. Myron Belkind. He's a George Washington University professor and former President of the National Press Club. Kevin Merida, he's the managing editor of the *Washington Post*. Gabriel Debenedetti, he is the national political correspondent for Politico. Yasmine El-Sabawi, she's the correspondent for the Kuwait News Agency. And Dakarai Aarons, he's Director of Strategic Communications for the Data Quality Campaign.

[applause]

I also want to welcome our other guests in the room today and our CSPAN and Public Radio audiences. I want to welcome our audiences watching the live stream on our website Press.org. And you can also follow the action on Twitter. Use the hashtag NPCLive. That's hashtag NPCLive.

Well our speaker today has never served in Congress or as the Governor of a state or in any elected office of any kind. He did tell me he was elected—[applause]—and that gets applause. He did tell me that he was elected to the Yale Board, so there's an elected office, but that's as close as it comes to being elected to any kind of public office. And this is one of the reasons Dr. Ben Carson's supporters say they want him to be the next President. He's not part of the Washington establishment that so many fault for gridlock and ineffectiveness.

So far on the campaign trail he's separated himself from better-funded candidates with the political experience that he lacks. Recent polling has Dr. Carson running second nationally for the GOP nomination behind Donald Trump and ahead of Carly Fiorina. In campaigning he has shown his sharp opposition to Obamacare, his support of the Second Amendment, his concern about the federal debt, and his goal to stop abortion. He also says all options must be on the table when confronting Russia's Vladimir Putin.

His life story has become familiar to many. He grew up poor in Detroit with a single mother and excelled in school. He rose to become the Director of Pediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins for 29 years. He became the first person to successfully separate Siamese twins joined at the back of the head. He won the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2008. And he has published several books, including his autobiography *Gifted Hands*.

During various media appearances, he has made a lot of headlines on issues such as the mass shooting in Oregon, the debt limit, and whether he could vote for a Muslim for President. But we all know the best place to make news is in this room and at this podium. [laughter] So let's be about it. Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm National Press Club welcome to Dr. Ben Carson.

[applause]

DR. BEN CARSON: Thank you. Well thank you very much. Candy and I are delighted to be here. And I will just get right into it, because I don't have a whole lot of time. And we're going to want to leave a little time to answer some questions. You know, why did I write this book? And America is such a great place, and I am so glad that I was born here. You know, I have traveled to 57 different countries, gotten to know lots of people and a lot of other ways of life. But this remains the place that is the land of dreams.

And I know a lot of people like to criticize our nation, and demonize it, and say it's responsible for a lot of horrible things. And yet I see a lot of people trying to get in here, and not a lot of people trying to get out. So I'm not sure that that really is all that legitimate, to be honest with you.

But, you know, growing up in poverty, with a lot of disadvantages, the thing that was really great is I was still able to focus on my dream of becoming a doctor. It was the only thing I ever wanted to do. I skipped right by policeman and fireman and went straight to doctor. And, you know, I loved anything that had to do with medicine. I even liked going to the doctor's office. And I would gladly sacrifice a shot just to be able to smell those alcohol swabs, you know, it was so cool.

And on through the whole process, were there a lot of hurdles along the way? Absolutely, tremendous hurdles along the way. But, nevertheless, it was still possible to realize that dream. And I want to make sure that that continues to be the case. And one of the reasons that it was possible is because we have a system that did everything possible to create fairness, even when there were people in the system who did not want to be fair. And that's why it is so important that we must preserve our Constitution. Virtually all Americans know that we have a Constitution. But how many people actually know what's in it? And how many people actually know what's behind it?

And, of course, it is the mechanism that guarantees our liberties and that provides the guidelines for the restraint of government. Because our founders recognized that it was the natural tendency of government to grow and to invade every aspect of your life and to try to control your life. That's what people do. And that's what they wanted to avoid by doing this. And that's why it's so important that we understand it.

You know, in 1831, when Alexis DeTudville[?] came to America to study our great country, because the Europeans were just so flabbergasted that this fledgling nation, barely 50 years old, was already competing with them on virtually every level, he was going to really dissect it and see what was going on. But one of the things that really impressed him was how educated the people were. You know, anybody finishing the second grade was completely literate. He could find a mountain man on the outskirts of society and the guy could read the newspaper and could tell him how our government worked.

And nowadays, we don't seem to emphasize, you know, civics and things like that in school anymore. And I'm sure some of you have seen some of those man on the street interview situations, where they go out and ask just really basic questions, and people have no clue what you're talking about. And you know, they think, you know, you say, "Well who's the first President," and they say, "Reagan?" I mean they just—[laughter] They just—they have no idea.

And it's funny, but it's so sad, because our founders, and particularly Franklin and Jefferson, emphasized education, and they emphasized being informed. And they said, "Our system of government and our freedoms are dependent on a well informed and

educated populace,” because they recognized that, if the people were not well informed, that they would be easy to manipulate. And all it would take was dishonest politicians and a complicit news media and off you would go into another direction very, very quickly.

Now, I'll tell you right off the bat, before I go any further, I'm not politically correct. I will not be politically correct. And that's one of the reasons that a lot of the people in the press don't like me. But it's okay, because you know, what I really love is this country. I don't necessarily care whether the press likes me or not. And therefore, I'm not going to conform to all their little requirements. Like people ask me all the time, “Well why don't you just do this and do this? And then they won't say bad things about you.” Because this is America, that's why I'm not going to do that. And I never will do that.

But I want to touch on some of the aspects of America that I touched on in the book, like the balance of powers, the check and balance system, the separation of powers. I believe this is so vitally important. And it was a touch of genius by our founders because they recognized that each branch, Executive, Judicial and Legislative would want to maintain their power. And therefore, they would push back against excesses in the other branches.

And that works extraordinarily well in a government like we have when they all are exercising their power appropriately. Unfortunately, we have a legislative branch that really acts more like a peanut gallery. You know, they sort of sit there and watch what the others do, sometimes complain about it, but really don't offer any resistance, because they're afraid somebody might blame them. News flash, they're going to get blamed anyway. So what they really ought to be thinking about is how do they get involved and be more proactive?

You know, case in point, I think about the recent decision by the Supreme Court on gay marriage. Now first of all, let me just say, I have nothing against gay people whatsoever. I know a lot of people don't believe that because we live in a society now where, if you don't accept their entire agenda, then you're a homophobe. But, you know, I personally believe that any two people, regardless of sexual orientation or anything else, have the right to associate together. If they want to have a legal contract drawn up which allows them to share property, have hospital visitation rights, do whatever they want, absolutely. I don't have any problem with that. That's the kind of country that this was designed to be, live and let live. Not impose your values on everybody else. And that's the problem.

But with the Supreme Court ruling that changes essentially the definition of marriage, it doesn't take into consideration the implications of that. If you change it for one group, why won't you change it for the next? What defense do you have against the next group? You're going to say, “We can only change it this one time. We're never going to change it again”? Well that wouldn't be very fair. So why change it in the first

place? It's been working very well for thousands of years. And that's what happens when people go in and start tinkering with things without thinking about the implications of it.

And the legislative branch, however, I would have thought would have been already prepared with legislation in case the Supreme Court came down with that decision, to make sure we preserve the rights, the religious rights of everybody. Not everybody agrees with their new definition of marriage. And it's a conviction and a religious conviction. And they need to make sure that they protect people's religious rights. They bring Johnny-Come-Lately, but I call upon Congress to do that now, because there are people who are losing their jobs, their livelihood. And it's not fair. That's not what America was supposed to be.

But, unless all the branches of government are functioning the right way, these are the kinds of things that happen, because there will be overreach by any of the branches, because they're composed of people and people are not perfect. But that's why we have the counterbalance in order to be able to rectify the situation, because one group may not take into consideration the ramifications of what they are doing.

Also, the Constitution indicates that, you know, civil issues really should be dealt with at the local level, at the state level. There was a reason for that. It was because the legislators and the judiciary at the local level are subject to the will of the people. The people vote them in, the people vote them out. And our founders felt that the people should be the ones who determine how things worked and the standards by which they lived.

When you take those issues and you bump them up to a level where the people making the decisions have no obligation whatsoever to the people, then you wind up with an oligarchy type government. That was not what the founders intended for America. So we are somehow going to have to look into ways to rebalance that, because if we continue down that pathway, you can see how virtually everything that they intended will be upset. We don't want that to happen.

The Preamble to the Constitution talks about the role of the government in terms of promoting the general welfare. That doesn't mean that we want to put everybody on welfare. That's not what the general welfare is. It means that, when we do things, we want to do them in a way that they benefit the entire society. And it is very important, you know, that we take care, that we make sure that everybody is taken care of in an appropriate way. But, when I say "we," that does not necessarily mean the federal government.

You know, I get criticized sometimes, inappropriately by the way, by people who say, "Carson grew up very poor. He must have benefited from some government programs. And now he wants to withdraw all the safety nets." Well this is nothing but a blatant lie by people who need to characterize me as heartless. They love to do that. They love to say, "Carson is insensitive, and he's heartless, and he hates people," because they need that narrative. That's the only way that it can be acceptable, because I'm—I don't fit

into their general description. You know, a black people who is a conservative? They can't quite deal with that. Who talks about self-reliance, and that you're not dependent on them? Oh how could you possibly say such heresy?

So, you know, it's necessary to demonize individuals like that. And I understand that. And I'm actually willing to fight with them. I will continue to fight with them. But I'm fighting for something even greater. And that is, I'm fighting for the people of the United States, because you see, we have very, very smart and very, very capable people in our nation who would be extremely good leaders, but they say, "Why would I get into that cesspool and be attacked and have my family attacked and have people going through every aspect of my life and trying to demonize me?" And people don't want to do that.

Well, I am going to fight that fight for them. And if I am successful, I expect that maybe a lot more of the people in our country who are not professional politicians will say, "You know what? He did it. I'm going to do it too." And I think we'll be much better off as a country when we once again understand that this country is for everybody and not for a specific political class.

[applause]

But as far as the whole safety net argument is concerned, my mother worked extraordinarily hard, three jobs at a time, leaving the house before five in the morning, getting back after midnight, because she didn't want to be dependent. And she occasionally accepted some aid. But, for the most part, was able to stay off of it. And she refused to be a victim. And she refused to let us be victims.

And it wasn't that she didn't recognize that there were problems out there. But she chose to focus on other things. And she would say to us, "If you walk into an auditorium full of bigoted, racist people," she said, "You don't have a problem, they have a problem." She said, "Because when you walk in there, they're all going to cringe and wonder if you're going to sit next to them. Whereas you can sit anywhere you want." [laughter] And you know, that's kind of the way that I have chosen to lead my life.

Have there been obstacles? Of course. Have there been racist people around? Of course there have. But I said, that's their problem. I've got some very important things that I need to do. So I can get wrapped up in their problem, or I can do the important things. Not everybody chooses to lead their life that way, and that's fine. But that's the way that I chose to lead mine. And it works pretty well, if I do say so myself.

Having said that, I am very concerned about the downtrodden people in our society. And I do believe we have a responsibility to take care of them. But when I say "we," I'm talking about we the people. I'm talking about the private sector. I'm not talking about the government. You know, the government has been taking this on really since Woodrow Wilson, but it kept increasing. By the time we got to Lyndon Johnson and the

war on poverty, it was, hey, we're the savior, we're going to take care of you guys. We're going to solve all these problems.

Well here we are, all these years later, \$19 trillion dollars later, did we solve the problem? We have ten times more people on food stamps, more people in poverty, welfare, broken homes, out of wedlock births, crime, incarceration, everything that was supposed to be better is not only worse, it's much worse.

So I'm not going to sit here and demonize the government for doing that, but I'm saying, isn't it time to wake up and start thinking about another way to do things, rather than driving ourselves into debt without solving the problem? And that is a tremendous responsibility of the government as well, to remain solvent, because you are the guardian of the people's future. I mean how can we enjoy the liberties and have our posterity, enjoy the liberties if they are overloaded with debt? \$18 ½ trillion dollars, the national debt? Think about that. To pay that back at \$10 million dollars a day, it would take you over 5,000 years. That's absurd. And we're putting that on the backs of our young people.

And now, here we are, sitting here saying, oh, let's increase the debt some more. Let's raise the debt ceiling some more. Did it ever maybe occur to us that there's another way? I mean there are 4.1 million federal employees. I would offer that that's too many. And there are 645 federal agencies and sub-agencies, all of whom have budgets. This is absurd. And we've had people saying, "If you cut the budget by one penny, it will be a disaster." Nancy Pelosi. You know, I mean, this is absolutely absurd, okay.

But we must think about the children. And that really is the main reason that I've gotten into the fray here, as a pediatric neurosurgeon, my whole professional career centered on the children and on the future for the children. And what we had to do to improve quality of life for them. How can we in good conscience continue this charade of responsibility knowing what we are doing to their future?

If I had time, I would really get into the fiscal gap and all the implications of that, and what the implications of the debt is on the Fed, and how they're irresponsibly printing money, and how the low interest rates are hurting the poor and the middle class because, you know, putting money into a savings account or buying bonds doesn't help them. The only people who can really make money are people who can have a risk tolerance which allows them to go into the stock market.

And I would talk about the regulations and how every single regulation costs money in terms of goods and services, and how those are the things that are really impacting the middle class and the poor people. It doesn't matter for wealthy people if a bar of soap goes up ten cents, but it matters a lot for the middle class and for poor people. You think about that regulatory burden and who it is really hurting.

You know, it goes on and on and on. When we're promoting the general welfare, those are the kinds of things we have to be thinking about. We have to be thinking about

mechanisms for allowing the downtrodden in our society to escape from dependency and move up into the fabric of success in our country. And we have to understand that we only have 330 million people. Sounds like a lot, but China has over a billion, India has over a billion. We need to get the bang for the buck out of all of our people. We need to be thinking about policies that allow all of our people to rise and stop all this silly class warfare stuff.

And we can get immediate, immediate stimulus by thinking about the over \$2 trillion dollars that exist overseas right now. We need to bring that money back. I can remember many an afternoon sitting around the Board table at Kellogg or Costco, talking about the money overseas, and what we were going to do with it, and how we would love to bring it back in order to build another factory or do something else. But the corporate tax rates were too high.

Well, what if we had a six month hiatus on those corporate taxes overseas, let that money be repatriated. I've been talking about this for several months. And we wouldn't—it wouldn't cost them anything to repatriate it. We would only request or require that 10 percent of it be used in enterprise zones that are set up in our major cities or to provide employment for people who are unemployed or on welfare. You want to talk about an incredible stimulus that didn't cost the taxpayers one penny, that would be the biggest stimulus probably since FDR's New Deal. That's low hanging fruit. It's low hanging fruit.

[applause]

And you know, that's what we've got to do, deal with this low hanging fruit. The other thing is, it gets business and industry once again thinking about how do we invest in the people around us? This is what we used to do, before the government started taking over everything, because Americans are very generous people. You think about the early America, and you had these communities all over the place, in many cases separated by hundreds of miles. How did they survive, and how did they thrive? Because at harvest time, if a farmer was up in an apple tree picking apples and fell out and broke his leg, everybody else pitched in and harvested his crops. If somebody got killed, everybody else pitched in and took care of their family. That's who we are. When there's disaster in the world, who is always on the front line? It's us. So let's utilize that and recognize that we are our brother's keeper, and it is our duty to take care of the indigent, it is not the duty of the government. And if we learn that—[applause]

And then, another important aspect of our government is to provide for the common defense. Now I could talk about this for a long time. But simply to allow our military to deteriorate the way it has, to fail to take care of our veterans to the point where we have 22 to 23 suicides every day, it makes absolutely no sense. To leave our electric grid unprotected, it needs to be hardened. We need to have several layers of alternative energy. You know, this is criminal what we're doing, because we are so vulnerable. And, you know, we need to really beef up our cyber capabilities.

And I'll tell you, under a Carson administration, if another country attacks us with a cyber attack, they're going to get hit so hard, it's going to take them a long time to recover. We can't sit around and let people do stuff and just say, "You're bad. I don't like you," you know. [laughter] We can't do that. [applause] And, you know, we have to understand—[applause] We also need to reinvigorate our space program. I think it is a crime that we have moved away from that. Think about all the inventions, the innovation that came out of that. Your cell phone, so many things. And the important thing is, in the future, he who controls space controls the earth. We cannot be tardy to that when there are others who are working very hard in order to conquer that area. [applause]

And then, the last area I just wanted to mention briefly, and I could really go on for quite a while on this one, but there is only one business in America that is protected by the Constitution. And that is the press. And there was a reason for that. It was because the press was supposed to be an ally of the people. And they were supposed to expose and inform the people in a nonpartisan way. When they become partisan, which they are, they distort the system as it was supposed to work. And they allow the side that they pick to get away with all kinds of things.

And I think there's still hope for the press. I think it is possible that some of them will recognize that it's almost a sacred obligation that they have to the people to be honest. [applause] Now you know, just in the last week, in my own case, they take something that I say about the shootings in Oregon, and don't put the part in where I was answering the question, don't put the question in, just give the response, and say, "See, he's being critical of the people." I mean the good thing is that a lot of the people in America are onto them and understand what they're trying to do. And that's one of the reasons we're doing well. And it seems like the more they attack me, the better we do, because people expect that, you know. [applause]

And last week, I'm leaving a press conference, getting ready to get on a bus, and the reporter says, "Can you tell me what you're going to do about hurricanes?" I said, "Goodbye. I don't know." The next day, "Carson wants to be President, has no idea what to do about hurricanes," you know. This is the level of insincerity that we see. And it really is kind of embarrassing to see that. And it happens on the other side, too. It's not just on one side, you know.

I was doing an interview with Wolf Blitzer yesterday, and he was asking about renewal of the Voting Rights Act. And of course I want renewal of the Voting Rights Act, or at least an aspect of it that protects all Americans' rights to vote. But it's a much longer conversation about what needs to be done to it before it is renewed. It was something based on conditions 50 or 60 years ago. A lot of things have changed since that time. We certainly don't want to empower the Department of Justice to do some of the things that the Holder Justice Department did based on that bill.

So everything needs to be looked at in its context. And when news media pick one word or one phrase and they run with it and they try to characterize people like that, I got

to tell you guys, that's why people don't trust you anymore. I mean you're down there with used car salesmen. And, you know, we should—[applause]

So what is it going to take to save our country? Courage. It's going to take courage by all of us, including the press. And we have to begin to think about those who come behind us. Because what would have happened to us if those who preceded us were little chicken livers? What if they weren't willing to take risk? What if on D-Day our soldiers invading the beaches of Normandy had seen their colleagues being cut down, 100 bodies laying in the sand, 1,000 bodies laying in the sand? What if they had been frightened and turned back? Well I guarantee you, they were frightened. But they didn't turn back. They stepped over the bodies of their colleagues, knowing in many cases that they would never see their homeland or their loved ones again. And they stormed those Axis troops. And they took that beach, and they died. Why did they do that? They didn't do it for themselves, they did it for you, and they did it for me.

And now it's our turn. And what are we willing to do for our children and for our grandchildren? Are we willing to stand up? Or are we afraid that somebody is going to call us a nasty name, or that we're going to get an IRS audit, or that somebody is going to mess with our job? You know, we have a lot less to lose than they did. And the people who were always telling me, "Hang in there, don't let them get to you," believe me, do not worry about it, because the stakes are much too high. Thank you very much.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: Thank you Dr. Carson. I have many questions, including many questions about foreign policy. We have President Putin intervening in Syria, supporting the Assad regime. And this morning we learned that the President of the United States is ending the program for training the anti-Assad rebels. How would you as President approach the Syrian situation? What actions would you take?

DR. CARSON: Well I think it's a very serious situation, and I think we cannot simply be passive in a situation like this. You know, when the Russian Generals tell us, "We don't want you guys flying in this area," my response to him would be, "Go take a flying leap. We'll fly anywhere we want to." But I think we ought to be establishing our own no-fly zone in conjunction with Turkey. And I think we need to recognize that, why is he really there? You know, he said he was coming there to fight ISIS. Has he really been fighting ISIS? Or Al-Nusra and Al-Jilani, and everybody who, in fact, is opposing Assad? I think that's the real thing.

And you'll look and see that Assad is also getting a lot of help from Ali Khomeini, the Supreme Leader of Iran. What's going on there? Because, you know, these relationships are complex. Some people were a little surprised when I indicated that Putin and Ali actually have a long-term relationship, as does Mahmoud Abbas. Abbas and Khomeini were in the same class in Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, graduating class of '68. And they were already quite familiar with a young Vladimir Putin at that time.

And I believe that Putin is very desperate right now because oil prices are very low. That's what's really been precluding his expansionist activities, and not us, believe me, it's the economic situation. Now, he can get a foothold in Syria and then begin to spread his influence throughout that region. And if he can gain control of significant energy reserves, he might then be able to have a much more control on energy prices throughout the world. And that will then embolden him, because he will be strengthened to do what he needs to do.

But we need to fight him everywhere. You know, we need to be reestablishing the missile defense system, I think, in Eastern Europe. We need to be supplying arms to the Ukraine. We said we were going to protect them if they gave up their nuclear weapons. They gave them up. Did we protect them? Of course not. You know, we've turned our back on Israel.

You know, I don't think the rest of the world is idly sitting by and noticing that we renege on our responsibilities. So we need to oppose him at every step. We also need to take advantage of his economic weakness by using our economic strength in very wise ways.

MR. HUGHES: The House is looking for a new Speaker. And there's a report that Mitt Romney called Paul Ryan and urged him to run for Speaker. Is Paul Ryan the guy? Should he run for Speaker? And as President, how would you work with Congress to end the gridlock that's defined Washington so often?

DR. CARSON: Paul Ryan is a fine person. I like him. I like a lot of people in Congress. I hope the process plays out. I hope that a number of people will present their philosophy for leadership and that there is an opportunity for the members of Congress to see who they want to work with as their leader. And what I would do is I would have a policy of talking. You know, the current administration doesn't talk a lot to the people in Congress, not even to their own party. How can you come to resolutions without talking?

I mean what happens before people get divorced? They stop talking. The next thing you know, their spouse is the devil incarnate, you know. That's what we're seeing. And you know, we all basically want the United States to succeed. We have different philosophies about how that's going to be done. But I think if we're willing to sit down and talk about, then we find that we're not nearly as far apart as we think we are. We do have to keep the instigators out and the people who try to irrigate and agitate.

You know, a good example of that is a few weeks ago when I was on Meet the Press, and I said, I think anybody from any religion or any background who is willing to embrace our values and is willing to put our Constitution above their belief system is acceptable to me. I don't know why that is a difficult subject for people to understand. But anyone whose belief system does not conform to our Constitution and who is not willing to put that under our Constitution, why would that person be the leader of this country? That doesn't make any sense.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: In your first three months in office, what would be different? And how will the people know it?

DR. CARSON: Well first of all, I would call for a joint session of Congress. And I would want them to know that under a Carson administration, we recognize that the people are at the pinnacle, and that we work for them, and they don't work for us. And we have to begin to also understand that we are Americans first and democrats and republicans second, or maybe even third. We have to stop fighting each other, because one of the things that I think threatens to destroy our nation is the extreme divisiveness. And we've gotten to the point where we believe that if somebody disagrees with you, then you need to try to destroy them, destroy their family and their livelihood. Where did that come from? I guarantee you, it did not come from our Judeo-Christian values and roots.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: As President, who would you want as Chairman of the Federal Reserve? And/or what kind of qualities do you want in that person?

DR. CARSON: Honesty and commonsense would be good starters. And that's not to say that we haven't had such people. You know, I like Janet Yellin. You know, I've served on a board with her. She's a very decent person. I think she's trying very hard. But you've got to realize that we've put the Fed in a very difficult position right now, because of the amount of debt that we've accumulated. It's very hard for the Fed to allow interest rates to rise to a reasonable level with an \$18-plus trillion dollar national debt. The debt service with an interest rate suppressed almost to zero is still \$250 billion dollars a year. Can you imagine what it would be if we allowed the interest rates to rise to their normal levels?

So we need to be working on driving that debt down. And I have some ideals about how that can be done. And that can have a very ameliorating effect and some freedom for the Fed. But the other thing is, I would like to see somebody who understands that we can't just print money based on the good name and faith and credit of the United States of America. You know, we decoupled, you know, in 1971—1933 and 1971 from the gold standard. It doesn't have to be gold. There are other things that it can be coupled to. But we need to have some responsible underlying to what we do. And I think it would make a big difference.

MR. HUGHES: You mentioned your comments on Meet the Press, and I've gotten several questions from the audience related to that. One questioner says, there are Muslims serving in our United States military and our police forces, in our courts, our school boards, our city councils, so on and so forth. So how is it okay for a Muslim to serve and die in the military to defend our values or for a judge to uphold the

Constitution, even though the faith of those individuals are incompatible with the Constitution they are sworn to protect and uphold? Long question, but you get where they're going.

DR. CARSON: Well again, a good understanding of the Constitution answers that question for you, because when you look at the Article 2, and we're talking about requirements for the President, and they have to be a natural born citizen, now why is that the case? I'm sure if you had gone to the founders and said, "But what about this person? They may not be a natural born citizen, but you know, they've been in America for most of their lives. And they're fine, upstanding citizen. They've served in the military. They came back. They were on the police force. Can't they be the President?" And they would have said, "No." They said, "We don't even want to take the slight chance that we would put someone in that position who had different loyalties." That's the answer to your question.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: Questioner about your opposition to Obamacare. And the question along the lines of, you're a doctor. And obviously, all the parts of medical care are important to you, preventative care, many of the things that Obamacare provides. So the questioner is wondering how your values as a doctor, and the importance of people getting healthcare squares with your opposition to this program that has given so many access to healthcare.

DR. CARSON: Chomping at the bit for that one. First of all, the reason that I don't like the so-called Affordable Care Act is not because it doesn't work, and not because it's not affordable, but the real reason is because it flies in the face of the very principles of the establishment of this country. This country was supposed to be of, for and by the people, with the government there to facilitate life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. With that Act, the government comes along and says, "I don't care what you people think. This is what we're doing. We're cramming it down your throat. And if you don't like it, too bad." Well that is antithetical to the whole concept of the people being at the pinnacle and the government there to serve it. It basically flips the relationship and puts the government in the driver's seat with us at its beck and call. And if they can do that with the most important thing you have, your health and your healthcare, it's not long before they can do it with every aspect of your life. And it begins the fundamental changing of America. And that's why I want to stop it in its tracks, turn it around. I think most people did not recognize what was happening. We have to, once again, restore the people to the pinnacle.

Now, having said that, I do want everybody to have good care. It is consistent with who I am. And you know, I've talked about a healthcare system. But let me just talk about the part for the indigent. How do we take care of the indigent now? We have Medicaid, \$4-\$500 billion dollars a year. How many people participate? About a quarter of the population, which is way too many, by the way. And we can address that by, how do we get the economy rolling again?

But if 80 million into \$400 billion goes 5,000 times, \$5,000 dollars every man, woman and child on Medicaid, that's how much is allocated. What could you buy with that? Most concierge practices cost between \$2 and \$3,000 dollars a year. So you can put them all in a concierge practice and still have a couple thousand dollars left over for their catastrophic insurance, which is much cheaper, because there's something else that we've done with that, that I don't have time to explain.

But I'm not saying that we do that, but I'm saying we have enough money to do that. And what's the result of that? Now, when Mr. Jones has that diabetic foot ulcer, he's not going to go to the emergency room where it costs five times more, he's going to go to the clinic, where he gets the same treatment. But, instead of just patching him up and sending him out, they're going to say, "Mr. Jones, let's get your diabetes under control so you're not back here in three weeks with another problem." A whole 'nother level of savings, which is not being recognized right now. And we're teaching him personal responsibility rather than dependency. Those are the kinds of things that we should be doing. That will cost us a lot less money. And everybody will be of equal value. You won't have people that people say, "I don't want to see them. You know, they're going to have to go to the emergency room." And it's going to cost us actually less money. That's the kind of thing we should be doing. And that's the kind of thing we can be doing when we take something so important as medicine out of the political arena and start taking care of our people.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: I've received several questions from the audience about guns and your comments about the Holocaust and if Jews had been able to protect themselves, much of it could have been prevented. I'll let you clarify that. And also, the whole approach to these mass shootings, is having more people armed the kind of thing that can stop more of these mass shootings, do you think?

DR. CARSON: Okay, well you know, the Holocaust issue, that's just the left wing press again trying to stir up a controversy, and which I expect of them. That's what they do. But basically, what I said is that when tyranny occurs traditionally around the world, they try to disarm the people first. And that's exactly what happened in Germany in the mid to late '30s, they started a program of disarming the people. And by the mid '40s, look at what had happened. And it's happened in a number of other countries as well.

Daniel Webster said tyranny would never occur in America because the people are armed. So there's a reason that we have the Second Amendment. And it doesn't mean that I'm not happy to look at ways to keep these tragedies from occurring, as long as they don't interfere with the Second Amendment. That's what we have to keep in mind. And then, what was the other part of that question?

MR. HUGHES: Will it help to prevent more of these?

DR. CARSON: Well, with the mass shootings, one of the things that many people have noticed is that they tend to go to places that are gun-free zones. So even though they may be mentally disturbed, they're not so mentally disturbed as not to be able to realize that, if you go someplace where people can shoot you, you're probably going to get shot. So what I'm saying is that it's probably a good idea to make sure that there are people in the areas where we have vulnerable people who can oppose these people, not with just words, but who are trained. You know, they can be retired policemen, retired military, some teachers might have the ability to do that. But I would feel much safer if my kid or grandchild was in a school where I knew that there were people who could protect them if somebody like that came in.

To me, what I'm talking about is commonsense. To some of the people out there, there is no such thing as commonsense.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: We are almost out of time. Before I ask the final questions, I have some housekeeping. The National Press Club is the world's leading professional organization for journalists. And we fight for a free press worldwide. To learn more about the Club visit our website, that's press.org. And to donate to our nonprofit Journalism Institute visit press.org/institute.

I also want to remind you about some upcoming events. On Thursday, October 15th, the Club will hold its annual Fourth Estate Award Gala. This year we will honor Gwen Ifill, moderator and managing editor of Washington Week and co-anchor and managing editor of the PBS News Hour. On Wednesday, October 21st, we will reprise a Press Club event from 100 years ago, when Senator Tim Kaine and other members of Congress face off against members of the news media in the Politicians versus the Press Spelling Bee. And on Friday, October 23rd, Oscar Winning director and actor Kevin Costner will be here to discuss his new book.

I would now like to present our speaker with the honorary National Press Club mug. [applause] You have been here before, so you're developing a collection.

DR. CARSON: Thank you.

MR. HUGHES: So a couple of final questions. If the situation was right down the campaign trail, circumstances change, would you consider being Donald Trump's running mate?

DR. CARSON: The press will have a field day with this one. [laughter] And, by the way, before I answer that question, I just want to mention, many in the press will say that I'm sensitive and that I should not be thinking about running for office because I get offended by what they do. Of course they'll say that. But the reason that I expose the press is because I want the people of America to understand what they're doing. So it's

not because I'm sensitive, I will continue to expose them every time they do something. Because as more people understand who they are and what they're doing, it will negate their effect. And that's, until they have the kind of transformation that is necessary for them to become allies of the people, we have to know what they're doing.

Now, in terms of—Trump? How could I forget. [laughter] You know, I believe that Donald Trump has been very useful, because he's brought in a lot of people, brought in a lot of curiosity and enthusiasm. And whoever the eventual nominee is will benefit from that, even if it's him. That's a good thing. So you know, that's one of the reasons I don't talk about him, I don't talk about anybody else.

But in terms of a Vice-President, I would obviously want somebody who is compatible with me. I would not necessarily be looking for somebody who can bring in this demographic or that demographic, because the things that have to be done are very, very serious things, quite frankly. This can't be tampering around the edges. We've got to go to the heart of the matter. And I don't think we have a whole lot of time to do that. So it would have to be somebody who is very compatible, who understands the urgency of what we are doing, who is willing to suffer the slings and arrows to get it done. That's what it will take.

[applause]

MR. HUGHES: Ladies and gentlemen, please give a round of applause to our speaker.

[applause]

I would also like to thank staff members of the National Press Club and Journalism Institute for their work in preparing for today's event. For a copy of today's program, or to learn more about the National Press Club, go to that website, press.org. Thank you. We are adjourned. (gavel)

END