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TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH GOVERNOR HOWARD DEAN

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BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

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BURKE: Governor, good morning. My name is Kevin Burke, I'm Director of University Communications at Ball State. How are you this morning?

DEAN: I'm very well. Thank you.

BURKE: Good. Thank you for giving us a few minutes of your time. I'm facilitating this morning's call. Basically, just to introduce--in addition to Nick--we have several members of our student media team this morning to ask you questions. They are Sarah Brannan, who is News Director for WCRD Radio; Bob Culp, who is Wire Editor for The Ball State Daily News; and R.J. Crace, who is a reporter with NewsLink Indiana. Our first question comes from Sarah.

BRANNAN: Hi, governor.

DEAN: Hi!

BRANNAN: With all of the advances in technology, it seems like young Americans are losing touch of politics. The Internet sometimes pulls people out of reality, but it can also be a great means of gaining political support. Do you feel like technology is hurting or helping the future of politics for young adults?

DEAN: I think it's helped enormously. The Internet has allowed people to connect with each other that couldn't. Frankly, it allows them to bypass an increasingly opinion-based quote-unquote news media, and it allows them to speak to issues that they decide to generate, rather than having politicians generate the issues. So I think it's had a huge, positive effect on getting this young generation involved in politics.

BRANNAN: Great, thank you.

CULP: Hi, governor. This is Bob Culp from The Daily News. Healthcare has sparked a lot of high emotions with a lot of people, but the youth—18 to 29 year olds—still seem to be not one of those groups. They still seem to be somewhat apathetic toward healthcare reform. I was wondering, on your opinion, why that is.

DEAN: Young people never think anything bad is going to happen to them, so they're the second-highest group without insurance—actually, they're the largest, depending on how you look at the group. They're not the most expensive, of course, because those are over 55, their older 50's. It doesn't seem as urgent to them as it is to other people because there are some who have chronic diseases or serious problems but the vast majority don't.

CRACE: Governor Dean, this is R.J. Crace of NewsLink Indiana. Just to follow up on the healthcare question, it's been pretty well publicized that there are a fairly significant number of Democrats within Congress who have expressed reservations about the president's proposal. Is there anything that the president and congressional leaders can do to get those folks on board?

DEAN: I think we *have* the votes we need. Senator Harkin has just announced this morning that he is, as you know, the new chair of the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee, that he has the votes that are necessary to pass a public option. As you know, that is the *heart* of reform. Without that, you really are just shoveling money into insurance companies. I'm still optimistic that we're going to get real reform this year.

SARANTAKIS: Governor, Nick Sarantakis here with WCRD. There's talk that my generation won't have Medicare by the time we reach that age, that the program would simply run out of money. Is that true and how can it be fixed?

DEAN: It's not true because there will be a huge penalty to pay for any politicians that allow that to happen. What *must* happen is costs must be controlled. I think that one of the advantages of the President's plan is that there's five hundred billion dollars' worth of waste in the Medicare program that comes out without having any negative effect on seniors that are in the program. Those are the kinds of reforms that you need in order to bring everybody into coverage.

BRANNAN: Hi, Governor. Sarah Brannan with WCRD again. Twenty percent of Americans are without insurance and sixty percent of Americans are moderately satisfied with their insurance programs. If sixty percent of those people are already satisfied with their insurance programs, how do you plan on persuading them that the health care reform is the best direction for America to head?

DEAN: Again, I'm with the President on this one. He is talking to people about the economic consequences of the incredibly expensive system that we have so even if you have insurance, you could lose it if you get sick. Or if you lose your job, you lose your insurance. What he is proposing to the sixty percent who are moderately satisfied is 'we can give you something that's going to make the country a much stronger country, economically, and make sure that you don't lose the things you like about your insurance system.' I think it's a terrific approach to the situation.

CULP: Governor, regarding the youth opinion on healthcare, what do you think the Obama administration can do to get more of the youth vote on-board and involved in the healthcare reform debate?

DEAN: I think, of course, a full embracement of the public option would help. I think the President has embraced it. I'm not too sure that some of the folks around him have and I think that's a problem. The young people are not going to go to the ramparts for healthcare reform. They *are* going to go to the ramparts for the President. The President needs to very clear what's in this bill so that the young people understand it.

CRACE: Governor, one thing that critics have pointed out about the President's healthcare proposal is the statistic about forty-eight million Americans being without healthcare. The thing that they say is that that number is skewed because that includes illegal immigrants, as well as people who simply don't want to get healthcare insurance for whatever reason. How would you address that criticism?

DEAN: Lots of people give statistics. There are also statistics that show the real number of uninsured people in a particular year is closer to sixty million than the forty-three million. I think we should stick to the forty-three million figure for partisan reasons. People may choose different figures, but those are pretty reliable.

SARANTAKIS: Governor, Nick Sarantakis here. When you speak on-campus in November, you'll be talking about the importance of being civically engaged in our society. It seems like this generation is all about "me." We have TiVos to watch what we want, iPods to listen to what we want—we're able to tune everything else out, like what's happening in the Middle East and Asia. Do you think we're isolating ourselves? Are we cutting ourselves off and is it dangerous?

DEAN: I actually think this generation is much less about "me" than my generation or the generation before. It's an *extraordinary* generation. Actually, most of the people that (touch tone) know at this age group have done some service project someplace. I mean the majority! I don't think we've seen a generation like that before! Teaching English in schools all over the country and the under-developed world, going to their churches and synagogues and mosques and building housing for poorer people. This is a generation that has done an enormous amount to try to make the world a better place, so I think I take exactly the opposite view. There are always some, of course, that drink a lot of beer and do a lot of video games all the time, but I think the vast majority of the leadership in this generation has done an extraordinary amount at a very young age to do something to make the world a better place. I think you see it having a huge effect in the polling and I'll talk about this when I get to Ball State. The polling on Evangelical Christians under 35 years old, they have no interest in the kind of anti-gay anti-abortion stuff. I mean, they're not *for* those things, but they really want to focus on what's positive. It's had a huge impact on the Evangelical church. These people like Rick Warren, for example, *know* that they have to talk positively about what people can do to make life better and not be preaching about all the terrible things and the sins. It's not what this generation is about. It's a very positive generation, a very service-oriented generation and I don't think it's a "me" generation at all.

SARANTAKIS: Alright, thank you.

BRANNAN: Sarah Brannan again with WCRD. Now that the Democrats have a strong majority in Congress, thanks in part to your Fifty State Strategy, what is the next step that the party must take?

DEAN: They've got to start passing some good policy the country's going to like. That's why the healthcare thing is so important. The bill in the Finance Committee is essentially the insurance companies' dream—it just take sixty billion dollars a year of taxpayers' money and gives it to the insurance companies. And if that is what passes for healthcare reform, the Democrats aren't going to have a majority for very long. We have to have real reform and the real reform allows the American people to choose their own kind of insurance. Let *them* choose between something like Medicare, single payer, or insurance companies. A lot of them *will* choose insurance companies and that's their right, and some of them will choose the public option and that's their right, too. But the choice needs to be taken away from Congress, the employers, the insurance companies and needs to be given to the American people so they can choose what's best for their families. That's the way reform really happens.

BURKE: Governor, this is Kevin Burke and the old reporter is jumping out so I want to ask a two-part question. Number one, you will speak at Ball State one year to the day from last Election Day. I wonder if that impact or have an influence on some of the reflections that you'll have for us when you appear on campus. Second, whether Indiana's switch after being a long-time Republican state to the Democratic column this year had any influence, at all, in your decision to accept Ball State's invitation.

DEAN: I'm going to disappoint you in both answers. I think the election of Barack Obama is a generational change. The last election like that was John F. Kennedy's election in 1960 when I was—my generation came to power, even though I was only twelve and John Kennedy was my father's age, he really changed the whole atmosphere in America the same way that Barack Obama has for this youngest generation. I talk a lot about the impact of the election. I'll be a pleasure to do so on Election Day on the one year anniversary. I enjoy Indiana a lot. I spent a lot of time in Indiana during the campaign because we *did* believe we could win in Indiana, so it'll be a delight to be back, but that didn't have an effect on my choosing Ball State. I enjoy it a lot. It's a great state, but I would've come, even if we hadn't won.

CULP: With Obama's approval ratings dropping and healthcare a controversial part of the agenda again, should the Democrats be afraid that the 2010 midterms will be similar to 1994?

DEAN: I don't think that's going to happen, but I do think that they should be nervous and it depends, again, what they do. There's two really bad things they can do: one is pass no healthcare bill at all and that is a disaster for the Democratic party and the Republicans know it. It's why they're not cooperating with any kind of a bill. The second is to pass a lousy bill that just gives more money to the insurance companies, who are not terrible highly-thought-of these days, for good reasons. We need to pass a real bill with real reform that makes a difference that Americans can see by the 2010 elections. If we do that, I think we'll be fine.

SARANTAKIS: Okay, Governor. We've only got a few more minutes left with you. I'll turn over the last question to R.J. Crace.

CRACE: Governor, I'm curious about your views of Indiana Senator Evan Bayh. Is he somebody that you see potentially being a presidential candidate down the line?

DEAN: Absolutely! I consider him a good friend and a terrific person. I could absolutely see that.

SARANTAKIS: Alright, Governor, we certainly appreciate you taking time out of your day to speak with WCRD, NewsLink Indiana and The Ball State Daily News. We look forward to seeing you on campus in November.

DEAN: It's my great pleasure. We'll see you in a couple months.