

Interview With Joe Templeton of ABC Radio November 8, 1994

Midterm Elections

Mr. Templeton. Good morning, Mr. President. After 8 days on the campaign trail, how do you see this midterm election shaping up?

The President. Well, Joe, I don't know. You know, I must say, there are a lot of these races that are very, very tight. And the thing I want to say to the American people today is that it's important for us not to go to the polls in a negative frame of mind. There's been a little too much negativism, some places a lot too much, in this election.

This is a very great country. I just got back from the Middle East peace signing. I am, again, captured by the idea that others know what a great country we have, that we have the capacity to seize our opportunities and to face our problems. We're trying to do that here; we just need to keep going forward. And we need to get out there, all of us, and vote today but to do it with a belief in our country, a belief in our future, a belief in our possibilities to make life better.

Mr. Templeton. Now, if Republicans win the House and Senate, and many pollsters are saying that's a very good possibility, what does this do to your prestige in the rest of the term?

The President. Well, I don't know. That'll be up to the American people to decide. But for most of the last 40 years, we've had divided Government. We've had the Congress in one hand and the Presidency in the other. The American people have kind of gotten used to that. So I don't know that it will make a great deal of difference in that sense.

I hope that the Democrats who have taken courageous decisions to bring the deficit down and to get the economy going again and to try to improve education and make the streets safer, who have taken the tough decisions, will be rewarded for their courage and not punished for it. Because you know, we always say we want people to be brave, to ignore the polls of the moment, and to take the tough decisions that will get us into the future. I think it's important when those folks come up for election that we reward them for that and not punish them for it because of the barrage of negativism

that seems to characterize so many of our campaigns.

So again, I would just urge all the people who are listening to us to vote but also to do it in a positive frame of mind. Our country is moving forward economically, we are addressing the crime problem, we're addressing some of these terrible social problems that we've ignored for too long, and we're taking up issues that have to be taken up. They don't have simple and easy answers, and I think it's important that we don't give in to simplistic and essentially negative messages about them. We are a great country; we can do what we have to do, and we ought to try to do it together across party lines.

Mr. Templeton. Now, you have been out there stumping for the Democrats for 8 days or so. Do you feel you've really made any headway?

The President. Well, you know, you never know. When I was a Governor, I was never sure that the President did any help or damage to anybody in my home State. And I never thought, really, people would listen to me in terms of telling them for whom to vote.

What I tried to do was to clarify the issues. I tried to put the record of our administration that the candidates I campaigned for supported; I tried to clarify the stakes and say from my point of view what our position toward the future was, what their position was. I did the best I could to do that.

I think people are capable of making up their minds on their own about candidates. Every race is different; every State is different. But I hope I was able, at least, to focus the attention of the public in a more positive way on the choices before us.

Mr. Templeton. Well, now they're talking about 70 million voters or so turning out today. I wonder if you voted?

The President. Oh, yes, I did. I voted early. I voted absentee back home in Arkansas.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for being with us this morning.

NOTE: The interview began at 7:29 a.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House.