

KONDRACKE: Welcome to SAGE Crossroads. I'm Morton Kondracke. We're here for another of our series of discussions about science and the science of aging. Our guest today is Chris Mooney, who is the author of a new book called *The Republican War on Science*. Chris, welcome!

MOONEY: Thanks for having me.

KONDRACKE: You are the Washington correspondent of *Seed* magazine. I don't think most of our viewers know what *Seed* magazine is.

MOONEY: Yes.

KONDRACKE: So why don't you tell us about it and a little bit about your own background.

MOONEY: *Seed* is a magazine that covers the intersection of science and culture. Its slogan is actually "Science is culture." It is sort of a great new, just-started-out magazine that I am really pleased to be working with. We've got a new issue coming out soon.

KONDRACKE: Where have you been before? What have you written for before?

MOONEY: I'm a freelance journalist here in D.C. In addition to that, I work for *Seed*. I spent several years working with *The American Prospect* magazine. Before that—

KONDRACKE: It's a liberal—

MOONEY: —I actually did some—liberal political magazine here in D.C.

KONDRACKE: Right.

MOONEY: I was the Website editor/correspondent, etcetera—and I've actually written for SAGE Crossroads, as well. I have done some more sort of straight science writing. I kind of try to blend political writing and science writing. So this book was an obvious thing to do.

KONDRACKE: Right. OK. So it's called *The Republican War on Science*.

Do you mean that the Republican Party, as a corporate entity, is sort of anti-science? I mean, there are some people in the Republican Party who are definitely pro science—Newt Gingrich or Arlen Specter, say, or Connie Mack, who are responsible for the doubling of the NIH budget.

MOONEY: Yes.

KONDRACKE: So to what extent is this a party thing and to what extent is it a George Bush thing?

MOONEY: I'm talking about the party. There are certainly a number of Republicans that I think would not really fit my critique. I actually think of John McCain, who's really great on climate science, for example. I think of Sherwood Bowler, who is the chairman of the House Committee on Science. It generally tends to be the moderate Republicans, and they are not really falling within the scope of my critique. I argue that the mainstream Republican Party is essentially the party of the modern conservative movement. The modern conservative movement, and this is the political argument that I make, is in tow to two interest groups—religious conservatives and big business. I make an argument about how both of these groups are essentially committed to distorting and abusing science on issues of concern to them. I say that they have been systematically catered to.

The Bush administration, I think, is a good example of that. But you can go back further, and you can see some of the same kinds of political tendencies. But that doesn't necessarily mean that all Republicans are to blame. I certainly wouldn't say that.

KONDRACKE: Would you say that as a corporate entity or a political entity, that the Democratic Party is pro-science?

MOONEY: I don't know if I would say pro-science. I would say that the Democratic Party has not shown the tendency to systematically abuse scientific information. I think that everyone in politics—it's just sort of natural. Science gets politicized from time to time. I think that everyone sort of cherry picks information that's favorable to their own point of view. That is widespread.

I think what we've seen with the Republican Party of late as it's dominated by the conservative movement, and what we've seen with the Bush administration—and it's something that the scientific community has complained about to a great extent—is much more systematic, sweeping and troubling.

It's not that no one ever does it. It's just that we have reached another level. I argue that it's sort of the perfect storm if you blend together the religiously conservative interests so they won't attack evolution, for example. Then you blend together some of the industry interests, so fossil fuel companies might want to challenge the science of global warming or something, then what you get is kind of a perfect storm.

It doesn't mean that the Democrats are innocent. It just means that I am arguing that the Republicans are currently much worse.

KONDRACKE: Right. I mean, I can think of, for example—when the Democratic Party advocates things which inhibit research by pharmaceutical companies—like trying to import drugs from overseas that reduce the profits. That would inhibit discovery. I mean, so—

MOONEY: Right. Well, when—I should probably maybe define my terms a little bit.

KONDRACKE: Yeah.

MOONEY: I'm not talking so much about the funding of science, how much money the government doles out for research. That's something that both parties have generally supported. We spend a lot of money, taxpayer money, as we should.

I'm talking about the use of science to make policy, and whether policymakers, whether political appointees or politicians are actually distorting, abusing and twisting information in order to justify pre-desired goals. The science is being skewed. The science is being distorted. That's the focus. I think that's where I would make the argument that the Republican Party is worse.

KONDRACKE: Right. Well, I mean, our attention on this program usually is about aging research, which has to do with biomedical research largely.

Now, what are the specific examples that you would cite of the Republicans twisting science to benefit their point of view on that issue?

MOONEY: In this arena I think that the number one issue by a long shot, and the one that I discuss most extensively, is embryonic stem cell research. On this issue I actually do talk about some things that the Democrats have done that I think they shouldn't have done. You know, I think that the Kerry campaign kind of oversold the research and promised very specific things to people. Like, "If you elect"—what did Edwards say?

KONDRACKE: Edwards say?

MOONEY: Yeah. People will get up and walk again if you vote for—

KONDRACKE: Right. Christopher Reeve—people like Christopher Reeve would get up and walk again.

MOONEY: Right. I think that he should not have said that. I would say that that's an abuse of science. I say that in the book, actually.

But then I talk about the Republican Party and I talk about the Bush Administration. I think it goes back to Bush clearly misrepresenting the number of available embryonic stem cell lines in his speech on August 9, 2001, when he set forward his policy, and it only gets worse from there because they decided to defend something they couldn't defend.

Bush said that there were more than sixty lines, and of course, there weren't. Scientists immediately pointed that out and the policy sort of crumbled. But they still tried to insist on that.

KONDRACKE: But do you believe that Bush knowingly exaggerated the number of lines—that he knew full well that there weren't sixty lines available? What are there—22 usable lines?

MOONEY: At the current moment I believe there are 22. You know, it's hard to say. I don't—I can't prove that Bush knowingly misled the country. I think what I would say, the way I would characterize it is that it's an unforgivable error, at best—

KONDRACKE: Um-hmm.

MOONEY: If you are going to set forward a policy that is based on scientific information, and you're the President of the United States, and you're going to go and announce this policy in front of the whole nation, and it's on a political issue that every one's watching, you vet that information pretty carefully. It's quite clear that that didn't happen.

KONDRACKE: Well, my understanding is that he did get the information from NIH. That NIH, the National Institutes of Health, backed up that number as the best number for a world-wide supply of stem-cell lines that it had at the time.

I remember it being disputed—

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: But was it clear at the time that there weren't sixty lines?

MOONEY: Well, it should have been if you'd looked into it closely. It appears that the NIH figure, I explained this in the book, referred to stem cell derivations. What that means is when you've got a blastocyst, a five-day-old embryo, and you crack it open, and you take some of the stem cells out of it and you put them in a dish, that's a derivation. There may have been more than sixty derivations worldwide, based on the NIH's survey.

However, derivations are not automatically scientifically useful for research and a derivation is not the same thing as a line, and Bush said "lines". And the difference is that lines are when those cells in the dish have sort of grown in a sustained way in culture. And so you have a sustained cell culture that can be shipped to other scientists that can be researched. And you don't always get a line from a derivation. There are a lot of things that can go wrong. It can die, for example.

That was the confusion. That's a pretty elementary confusion. I think that one—that serious scientific vetting of the policy clearly should have caught that. So I am saying it's not an excusable mistake for the president.

KONDRACKE: To what extent has that Bush decision actually inhibited biomedical research? That is to say, you know, Republicans would argue that there is no law against stem cell research, against embryonic stem cell research, the private sector is free to do it.

So to what extent has this done damage?

MOONEY: Practically, it's been a nightmare for scientists who now have to actually keep the funds separate if they want to use a government funded line, and then they want to use a fund that they've gotten privately. Then they have to do all these sort of accounting tricks. So just practically it's been very—it was very difficult for them for a long time to even get the lines.

It's constrained research in the sense that many scientists are dependent upon federal funding. The lines that Bush did allow, the 22 that we now know exist—there are a lot of scientific shortcomings to them.

It's a very limited group of lines that scientists can study. It's not a broad enough range for them to actually understand the basic question, which is what are the characteristics of embryonic stem cells because we can't find cures based on these cells until we know a lot more about them and this—

KONDRACKE: How many lines—there are twenty-two lines that the federal government will fund research on.

MOONEY: Correct.

KONDRACKE: How many lines are there out there being researched? Thousands?

MOONEY: That's a good question. You know, I can't put my finger on it. I believe that the last—the *Boston Globe* was reporting a while back globally well over a hundred. That was a while back. I am sure there are even more now.

A lot of these lines are very different and in some cases better for research than the ones that Bush allowed. For example, some of them are disease-specific.

The genetics of the lines matter a lot. If you can get a line that has the genes that are for a specific genetic disease, then you can study that line and you might be able to learn about how that disease develops. That is something that scientists are really—hoping to do. It's one of the many things they can't do with the Bush lines.

KONDRACKE: Now, do you interpret the administration as saying that everything that can be done with embryonic stem cells can be done with adult—so-called adult stem cells?

MOONEY: You know, it's hard to say. The Bush administration, I don't think, has clearly annunciated that position. They have talked a lot about adult stem cells and explained why they think those stem cells are great. In their base, actually the Christian conservative base, to a large extent, you will find the argument frequently made that adult

stem cells are actually better and that we don't need to worry about embryonic stem cells, because the adult ones will suffice.

In the book I talk about that. I think that's actually one of the most egregious problematic claims, and a clear distortion of scientific evidence.

So the Bush administration just sort of kowtows to it a little bit. So do Republican politicians. Some Republican politicians take it up and run with it.

KONDRACKE: Do you know how much—now, there are 22 approved lines. How much money has been allocated for embryonic and how much—this is federal dollars—for adult by the Bush administration.

MOONEY: I don't have actually precise figures, but I believe that—let me see if I can get this right.

In 2003 I think it was \$25 million, for 2003. That would be an old number now. I believe \$25 million from the NIH, from the embryonic ones, and vastly more for the adult stem cells.

Now, adult stem cells have been studied for a lot longer. We derived them in humans, I believe, around 1990—something like that. So—and embryonic stem cells were first isolated, human embryonic stem cells, in '98. So there's been a chance to build up a lot more research in that area.

KONDRACKE: Right. Now, there was just a finding based on some Harvard research, that skin cells could actually be converted back into the equivalent of—pluripotent equivalent of embryonic stem cells. I am sure that the administration is going to fasten on to this.

But what is the import of that? Does that suggest that, in fact, we don't need to have this controversy over embryonic stem cells?

MOONEY: I think it is premature to say that right now. I think the finding is significant and important and promising. That's my reading of it, and to listen to scientists talk about it.

But they also say it is preliminary. This is kind of like the adult stem cell issue, where essentially the abuse of science in this issue has been people don't want to support embryonic stem cell research, so they go grasping at straws to try to find alternatives. They'll take research that isn't very well developed and they'll hold it up and say, "Oh, we've got an alternative. We don't have to worry about the embryonic stem cells any more."

But you can't do that based on one study. You have to still stick with the mainstream line of research. All the scientists who have done this work who are giving them that

argument, aren't agreeing with that argument, because they are saying, "Well, this doesn't mean we shouldn't fund mainline research. These cells might be different. We've reprogrammed them. We've gotten them to revert back to embryonic. We don't know what that's going to do to them. Are they going to be the same as other embryonic stem cell lines?"

The scientists want to study a wide range of all different kinds of stem cells and learn about the characteristics of all of them. They want to look at it systematically. The problem is that the politicization prevents them from doing that.

KONDRACKE: Do you think that George Bush made the decision that he made in 2001 in order to service his religious right base, or out of a genuine belief that it is immoral to destroy a living thing?

MOONEY: It's hard to say. I mean, he flaunted them a little bit. It was announced as a compromise policy. It wasn't exactly what they wanted, which was no funding. He gave a little funding. He thought—he may have thought that he was really brokering a true compromise there.

I don't read it as a complete sop. I mean, clearly it was meant to humor that constituency, by not letting full research go forward.

The problem is that the policy itself ended up having a very, very weak scientific foundation, and that is why you actually—you find it falling apart now, which is the political situation right now.

KONSDRACKE: Well, I guess you can say that this is a theological dispute. If you believe that life begins at conception, then those embryos are living things.

MOONEY: Yes, absolutely.

KONDRACKE: You know, and to destroy them is morally reprehensible. So do you credit Bush for having a sincere belief along that line, or do you interpret what he does as politically throwing sops to people who have that point of view.

MOONEY: It's hard for me to say what's going—I don't—I'm not inside his mind, so it's a little hard for me to say.

I think that he clearly feels that he has to—whatever he believes, he clearly feels that he has to appeal to this base.

I think the important point here is that ethically, morally, it's fine to have that opinion. A lot of people in America do. I recognize that.

If you were just going to set your policy and say, "You know what? I think it's immoral. We are not going to support it." You know, I wouldn't be able to argue against that on a

scientific level. I would be able to say, “I disagree on a moral level.” We would have a moral debate.

But the problem is that the scientific information was distorted in order to justify the policy. That’s what I really mean when I talk about the abuse of science. So it’s something different.

It’s when you try to argue your ethics through science and then you abuse both.

KONDRACKE: Now, how do you interpret Bill Frist—Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist’s behavior on this issue? Do you think it’s political? Or do you think it’s a—I mean, he is a scientist and a doctor and he has studied this through and through, and he’s come to a point of view that first was in favor—

MOONEY: Yes.

KONDRACKE: —of the original Bush position, and now is against the Bush position. How do you interpret that?

MOONEY: I think, though, before Bush came out with his position, Frist was actually more pro-research. So you could almost say that he’s moved three times, although I mean, maybe it is not fair to judge him before Bush’s decision.

You know, I think Frist is someone who uses his doctor credentials frequently for political gain. I’ll just say that.

I really think that Frist should not have stood up on the Senate floor and tried to diagnose Terry Schiavo. I really think that Frist really, really made a bad move when—on Stephanopoulos pressed him on TV about an abstinence education program that claimed that sweat and tears could cause HIV transmission, and Frist was sort of afraid to announce that. As a doctor, he knows that’s nonsense. He should say that’s nonsense.

Now, you know, if he’s a doctor and a scientist, he’s come out in favor of the teaching of intelligent design alongside evolution in schools. You know, that’s not a position that’s going to win him any credibility with the scientific community.

So he may be supporting embryonic stem cell research, but I generally don’t think that Frist is living up to some of his medical credentials and training. I think he knows better.

I’m so hard on him! Yes.

KONDRACKE: In order to pass muster with you, would a politician have to advocate therapeutic cloning of embryos to derive stem cells, or could you credit a moral objection to the creation of embryos for their—for the purpose of medical research—the creation and destruction?

MOONEY: I would have to disagree with that moral position in an arena, a realm of moral debate, and I probably would.

But I wouldn't—if that was just a position—it was just that—and it wasn't arguing, "Oh, we don't need to do this therapeutic claim research because there's no scientific advancement from it," then they are making a scientific argument. That's a scientific argument that I don't think is credible.

If we are just having a moral debate, that's fine. I really think we should have these moral debates, and we shouldn't dress them up as scientific ones.

I think that's the problem, that moral positions are actually masquerading in scientific garb, because people are finding that they don't want to have a full-fledged ethical debate. They want actually just to—

KONDRACKE: Well, at bottom—

MOONEY: Yeah—

KONDRACKE: —at bottom this is a moral debate. This is not a—I mean, if you—there is no economic interest on the part of the religious right in stopping embryonic research.

MOONEY: Right. Right.

KONDRACKE: This is strictly a moral position on their part.

MOONEY: But my critique again is that they are arguing their ethics through science. When they say that we don't have to do this thing that we find ethically abhorrent because there is a scientific alternative, then they are misappropriating science. So instead of just arguing their ethics, and just, you know, standing on the integrity of that position, they are distorting scientific information to justify it. That's what I find troublesome. That's what I mean when I say an abuse or a misuse of science.

KONDRACKE: All right.

MOONEY: OK.

KONDRACKE: How far behind the rest of the world do you think the Bush position has put the United States in terms of stem cell research?

MOONEY: Well, I—you know, I have talked at scientists who have looked at what's happened in Korea, and they have said, "You know, it really should have happened here."

I think that the political climate, the limitations on funding have clearly had a toll. How much of a toll, how far behind are we? That's more difficult to judge. It's clear that a lot is happening in South Korea, and that several breakthroughs have now happened there.

It's clear that the Pacific Rim countries see this as an opening, and they're going for it. How far will that leave us behind? Well, it depends on what we do. It depends on how hard we try to catch up.

KONDRACKE: How much in terms of resources do the Koreans devote to stem cell research, as opposed to the United States? I can't imagine that's it's more.

MOONEY: I don't actually know. I don't know the answer to that.

KONDRACKE: I mean in terms of numbers of scientists or—do you understand why the Koreans have made these leaps when, after all, stem cells were first isolated in the United States a long time ago, and presumably that was—you've got to—

MOONEY: That was before the Bush political kerfuffle. Yeah. But—yeah.

KONDRACKE: Well, but do you know how many scientists are engaged in stem cell research in the United States? I mean, it's not as though it's banned, you know, so—

MOONEY: No. It's not as though it's banned. It's that scientists are not easily able to do the research they want to do with federal funds, I think. This is basic research, and this isn't applied research. This is not something they are going to have a drug at the end of this. This is, "Let's understand the properties of these cells so that we can figure out—" They want to figure out a number of things. They want to figure out which ones we can coax into specialized cells that may be able to cure diseases. They also want to figure out more about how human beings develop. That's very basic. You can learn a lot about how diseases develop though that process, as well.

It is basic research and the government has traditionally taken a role of funding basic research. So it is the proper venue to fund this work.

KONDRACKE: Now on what basis do you say that it has truly inhibited research? In other words, if—I mean, this has just happened, but if California decides to spend \$30 billion on stem cell research and similar initiatives exist in the private sector—somebody gave Johns Hopkins University several million dollars to—so there is money—and again, it's not against the law, on what basis do you say that it has truly inhibited stem cell research in the United States?

MOONEY: Right. Well, if enough states come in and bail out the federal government then, yeah, there, practically speaking, there may be no—

KONDRACKE: No, but have you talked to a lot of scientists who say, "Yeah, we are not doing the research because—"?

MOONEY: Absolutely. You know, they talk about the limitations of the Bush lines. They talk about how they are trying to get federal funds, etc.

I mean, I think this is pretty wide spread. I've been to scientific meetings. You see the presentation, breakdown of why these lines aren't good. Why there are 22 but actually only six or seven are good. They are contaminated. They are genetically eliminated. They don't represent a diversity of genetic make-ups, etc.

You know, I think you hear that a lot. It is traditional and standard for university-based scientists in the United States in these fields to apply for research from the federal government.

It is certainly possible that with an issue this politicized and with states actually weighing in against the federal government they may fill the whole vacuum. I am not sure that would be totally appropriate. I mean, it goes against our whole national tradition of having the federal government fund research rather than having states, and the states don't have the same sort of experience doing this kind of thing.

Maybe they can still do a good job. It's certainly possible they could completely bail out the federal government.

KONDRACKE: What does it tell you that a Republican-dominated House of Representatives passed a bill to overturn Bush's policy and that that bill apparently has enough votes, at least a majority of the Senate.

MOONEY: It tells me that Bush's policy is falling apart at the seams, and that's not surprising when you base your policy on this crucial piece of misinformation.

That was crucial to the policy, because Bush's argument was, "I'm going to find a compromise. I'm going to allow limited but significant research."

But when you find out that these lines aren't what he said, the research isn't significant. So the whole edifice of the policy is undermined. When that becomes clear, then I think that people abandon it like a sinking ship. I think, you know, even Republicans in Bush's party, abandoned it. Not most of them, but enough.

So you know, in—the House of Representatives' leadership was still backing the White House very strongly, well over 200 of them, on the floor, making these arguments about how adult stem cells are better. You know, David Welden was making that argument, actually contradicting the National Institutes of Health, which says that both kinds of research should go forward, you know. Both have shortcomings. Both have advantages. They're still making these arguments, but enough people have jumped ship.

KONDRACKE: So do you detect in the Republican party a shift on this issue, such that perhaps the next nominee for president would not have the Bush position?

MOONEY: I think that it's actually quite possible that the next nominee will not. It really does depend on who it is. But I think, you know, some time around 2004, when this issue really got a lot of attention in the context of the political campaign, Nancy

Reagan began speaking out and there was a political sea change. It was really quite dramatic.

Politics haven't changed since then. It's unpopular to be against expanding this research. The White House is fighting a holding action. We'll just see, you know, if it's really willing to use a veto, if there are really the votes to overturn it. Eventually that will all be put to the test.

KONDRACKE: How do you account for the fact that you say that in—when it distorts science, that the Republicans do it either for the benefit of their religious right constituency—

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: —or their big business constituency?

MOONEY: That's correct. Yeah.

KONDRACKE: Now, stem cells are a place where the big business constituency, the pharmaceutical companies, the biotech companies emphatically want this research to go forward.

MOONEY: Yes. Right.

KONDRACKE: How do you account for the fact that they've, in effect, dismissed that constituency in favor of the religious right?

MOONEY: Well, I think that one complication here is—specifically biotech—and I think this is more biotech than pharma at this point—is biotech a Republican constituency? I don't know, because they are constantly put into this clash with the religious conservative base. I would argue that the religious conservative base is significantly stronger than the biotech base.

If we actually really brought the religious conservative base into some kind of political conflict with one of the strong industry bases—let's say, electric power or something like that—I'm not sure how it would go. You know what I mean?

There is clearly a conflict there, but I don't necessarily see biotech as 100 percent a Republican constituency to begin with if that makes—

KONDRACKE: Right. OK. What do you evaluate—I mean I know that scientists all say that we've got to go forward with both kinds of lines, but you know, if it were possible, with proper expenditures and enough resources, to use adult stem cells for the same—and return them to a primordial state, pluripotent state—

MOODY: Yes.

KONDRACKE: It would one, not only solve political and moral problems, but it would also solve problems of—of rejection because your own cells presumably would be used.

MOODY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: Now, can't you make a case, a good scientific case, that we ought to go as hard out as we can on adult stem cells, and you know, let embryonic stem cells trail?

MOODY: If it were really the case that the science was there to back up the first part of your question, which is we now have an alternative, like a real alternative, and a sign from the community of stem cell research—who are saying, “Well, this is good enough.” Then I think that you really would have a fairly strong argument.

The problem is that it's not there on—the science isn't there. This isn't ready to be that kind of a rival yet.

The scientists are always going to say, “I don't know enough about the different kinds of cells. If you slam this door for me, I am never going to know enough and we are not going to be to the point where we can make the kind of decision you are making.”

There may come a time—it is certainly conceivable—that there may come a time when that decision could be made. But it's just we're not there yet.

KONDRACKE: But, yeah, you know, you almost think that this argument, political argument, is a kind of a scientific version of the abortion debate, and that people are lined up on this issue, just as they are on the abortion debate.

And the people who are advocating embryonic stem cell research want to use it as, you know, in a way of justifying abortion or some such thing.

MOONEY: Do they though?

KONDRACKE: It certainly applies on the opposite side.

MOONEY: I do. But is there evidence that embryonic stem cell researchers, those who want to use the embryonic stem cells, have some sort of abortion-related agenda?

KONDRACKE: I think that the—my personal opinion is that certainly the press's fascination with the stem cell issue—

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: —has little to do with its scientific potential, which is 25 years away, and has everything to do with current abortion politics.

MOONEY: Well, the press will always go for a controversy. If they have a Republican president who is perceived as catering to that base and it becomes—they'll follow it. You know, I think that you may be right about the press. I don't think that I would saddle the researchers with some sort of ulterior motives in regard to abortion politics. I mean, at least I don't have any evidence that that's what they are thinking about. I really think that these are scientists who are trying to cure diseases and learn something. So—

KONDRACKE: Do you think that scientists are concentrating their fire on behalf of embryonic stem cell research, and kind of dismissing adult stem cell research because they just want to make sure that the embryonic stem cell gets full attention and full funding. They have no bias in that direction?

MOONEY: I don't think they are dismissing adult stem cell research. A lot of these scientists are actually working with both kinds of cells.

One of the greatest proponents of embryonic stem cell research is Irving Wiseman at Stanford, who is the adult stem cell expert.

So they don't see it as either/or. They want to know about all of them.

I don't actually see scientists as snubbing them. What they don't like is when someone says, "Adult stem cells are good enough. We don't need the embryonic ones any more," because their scientific judgment is completely contrary to that.

But a lot of the—and then, you know, maybe some cures that we ultimately come up with will actually use embryonic and adult stem cells in combination. Imagine that!

I mean, it's possible.

KONDRACKE: Sure. It's entirely possible.

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: I'm sure it's entirely possible.

OK. Let's switch to some of the other elements of this argument you are making, and also—

MOONEY: Sure.

KONDRACKE: —and also, I do want to go to the issue of science funding.

MOONEY: OK.

KONDRACKE: The various—the American Physical Society, for example, and a new study that the Business Roundtable just put out, contend that federal funding of basic

research as a percentage of GDP has been falling for 20 years, which goes back long before this Republican administration.

MOONEY: Right.

KONDRACKE: How do you account for that?

MOONEY: Well, I actually don't make my argument on grounds of funding, because I—first of all, I think scientists are very unhappy right now, especially with the fiscal year 2006 Bush budget, which is perceived to either flat—you know, make the trends flat, or make them go down in almost all of the basic research areas. Scientists are very alarmed.

On the other hand, scientists are always a little alarmed about their money, and they are always trying to get more money. We do have a tradition in this country of both parties essentially funding the scientific research.

So I am a little more loathe to say that one party is responsible for, you know, cutting funds and destroying science in terms of the funding argument.

I wouldn't go there. I think it is tougher to make that argument. I really try to stick with the scientific integrity issue—which party is actually distorting information, misappropriating, misrepresenting, in order to serve its interests.

I actually try to stay away from that one. I guess that would be my answer, and I don't think that you can really point a finger very easily.

KONDRACKE: Now, I take it your next best example of Republican hostility to scientific opinion is the environment—global warming.

MOONEY: It's one of the important ones; I would say that, yeah.

KONDRACKE: So tell us about what they've done there and what importance that might have for public health.

MOONEY: Oh, I mean, the significance of global warming, the magnitude is really just staggering. It affects us all.

If you have a house on the coast—we just had a hurricane hit, and you know, the link between hurricanes and global warming is still a little bit debated.

But one thing that's known for sure is that global warming fuels sea level rise, and that can't help the problem.

So it affects everyone across the world. What we've found on this issue is that there's been really a concerted campaign to distort the information.

The global warming theory is really pretty basic. There's a greenhouse effect. Very scientifically accepted. No one disputes that there are certain gases that trap heat, and we know what they are. Carbon dioxide, methane, etc.

You know, just accepting that, you really pretty much are committed to the notion that if you get enough carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases, you are going to have a heating. So this is obvious to scientists. And then you just have to—

KONDRACKE: Well, you know, what the administration would say, I guess, or what the skeptics would say is that we don't know that the effect of our industrial activity in producing greenhouse gases trumps what Mother Nature normally is doing with changing ice ages and melting eras and stuff like that.

MOONEY: Right.

KONDRACKE: That's one area of dispute.

The second one, I guess, is what are we going to do about it? I mean—

MOONEY: What are we going to do about it? is the policy question, where you would hope that actually, you know, it would just be policy. It would be a debate about economics and what kind of risks we are willing to accept or what kind of preventive measure we are willing to take in order to avert risks.

But the first part of what you mentioned is this debate over causation. There, since 1995, the scientific community has been really pretty firmly on one page. They see the temperatures going up and they say, "OK, how do we explain this? What is causing this to happen?" They find that they are unable to explain it just in terms of part of a natural cycle. They have to take into account what's called the forcing from humans.

Then, sure enough, the models that they are using really closely fit the actual temperature trend.

So when they are searching for an explanation, this is the one that they arrive at. Then they say that they hold this explanation to be correct, with a fairly high degree of confidence.

That's the mainstream view, and you know I can cite you all the National Academy studies—

KONDRACKE: Now, what does—now, when President Bush—

MOONEY: Yeah. Yeah.

KONDRACKE: —lately he has been saying that he believes that greenhouse gases do raise the temperature of the planet.

MOONEY: He's got something of a slippery position here.

KONDRACKE: OK.

MOONEY: He seems to have moved a little bit. He's always talked about global climate change as a problem. So that would at least seem to imply that he acknowledges the basic notion that there is such a thing.

At the same time, he likes to selectively talk about uncertainty. Scientists are little bit leery about this because they feel that, "Yeah, there are some things we don't know. But why isn't the president acknowledging what we do know very strongly?"

They feel like he is selectively exaggerating uncertainty. But then the real issue for the scientific community—and this is what comes out—and complaints from groups like the Union of Concerned Scientists, is that what's happening below the radar in the administration where people in the White House are actually accused, very plausibly in my opinion—and I've looked into it—of changing the language of scientific reports that are being released by the Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies, editing out conclusions by the National Academy of Sciences, when the Bush administration itself commissioned the National Academy's report about this very subject—

KONDRACKE: About which?

MOONEY: About global warming. There is a 2001 report. The Bush administration asked for it. It said, "This is happening."

And the White House political office is telling the EPA, "Take this out of your report."

So that is seen as a very fundamental assault to the integrity of science.

I think that the administration is very generally careful about what it says. But then, when you look at what's happening in the agencies, we have some very troubling stories. I think that's where the integrity of science comes in, where it looks like scientific information is being distorted.

Editing of a report by political actors is pretty much a canonical example of the distortion of science.

KONDRACKE: Now, do you—is there any—I think what Republicans would say is, "Well, in these various agencies, what you have is people who are committed to the theory of global warming and to a policy of regulatory control, Al Gore-style regulatory control where you put limits on things, and we don't want to do that. Therefore, we think that the science has been already biased by politics, and we are correcting that."

Now, do you find any evidence to contradict that argument on that part of Republicans?

MOONEY: You know, there may be people in the agencies who have political views. But the fact is that the science itself they have on their side—I mean—“they.” I should say those who claim that humans are the predominant cause of global warming have, on their side, the National Academies, the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Intergovernmental—I mean, it’s a really pretty strong force of scientific opinion.

So I think that it’s at your own peril that you go against that.

What I’m saying is there may be political views on both sides. But the weight of the science is actually pretty firm. We could just reject all of the scientific mainstream conclusions and say it is all politicized. But I think that that would leave us with nothing. And I’m not willing to go there—

KONDRACKE: Right.

MOONEY: Yet.

KONDRACKE: OK. So what are your other favorite examples?

MOONEY: Well, I think—the number one—the great-granddaddy here is evolution. It’s the subject that you can’t stop talking about, and it’s really the one where I think that the integrity of science is most threatened. It’s that if you have a political party or a political movement, and this is what I am saying—the modern conservative movement, its religious conservative base, is very committed to trying to affect what students in America learn in biology class. They want to undermine evolution.

Over the years they have tried a lot of different strategies to do it. The latest one is intelligent design.

I’m really, really disturbed when conservative politicians humor this. I think that it’s extremely damaging to, essentially, national intelligence, to our competitiveness.

KONDRACKE: Explain the intelligent design. I mean, everybody sort of remembers, or thinks they saw something about the monkey trial, the Scopes Monkey Trial, 192—?

MOONEY: ’25.

KONDRACKE: ’25.

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: Which was plain old ordinary creation versus evolution.

MOONEY: It was.

KONDRACKE: But, OK. There was something called creation science that filled the gap.

MOONEY: That came later, yeah. What happened was—if I could—

KONDRACKE: Explain that development. Take us from the Scopes trial.

MOONEY: You have William Jennings Bryant for the prosecution, prosecuting John Scopes. He's arguing that evolution and the Bible are incompatible. You have Clarence Darrow defending Scopes, saying, "No, as long as you don't adopt a literal reading of Genesis you can reconcile them." That was the position then. It was a science versus religion clash.

After the Scopes trial, essentially the creationists were succeeding in passing laws to ban evolution in the country, and also in—the text books were sort of afraid to have evolution in them.

That changed with Sputnik and the sense that we were falling behind the Soviets in science. We needed to ramp up science education. So in this country evolution becomes a central part of science education, and the Supreme Court actually overrules a law in Arkansas that tried to ban evolution.

From that point on, the creationists could not ban evolution any more. It is seen as an assault to the First Amendment.

Then comes creation science. Because they can't ban it any more, they think they are going to create a scientific alternative. This is a new strategy. It's a legal strategy and it—Christian science is essentially the book of Genesis plus a little geology mixed in. And it—they tried to pass—

KONDRACKE: Still trying to prove that the earth was created in seven days? Or redefining days? Or—?

MOONEY: Well, it's a young earth position, so they would probably disagree about the exact age, because they have to add up the begats, etc. Does that get you to six thousand years? Is it ten thousand years? It's some range. It's clearly a young earth view. And—

KONDRACKE: This is a point of view that held sway in the creationist community—

MOONEY: Still holds sway with a lot of people. But essentially there was a law suit, a 1987 Supreme Court law suit in Louisiana in which Louisiana was trying to say that you have to teach evolution and creation science. You have to give them equal time.

Again, the Supreme Court said, “Well, this one’s not science, and so you can’t do this. This is a violation of the separation of church and state, because this one’s really religion.”

At that point the creation science strategy was dead in the water legally, and then comes the intelligent design movement, which is what we are debating today.

The intelligent design movement is much more careful than the creation science movement. It is not as easy to detect the kind of overt Biblical content there. What they make is a sort of a philosophical argument that has stripped down of a lot of scientific—stripped of much of its scientific content. They just say that living things look really complex, and complexity—

KONDRACKE: Well, they have a lot of PhD scientists who are advocates of intelligent design.

MOONEY: They’ve got some.

KONDRACKE: Yeah.

MOONEY: They’ve got PhDs in a lot of other fields, too. The actual research scientists, I’m not sure that there are that many of those—a lot of philosophers, mathematicians, theologians. It’s sort of a hodgepodge. The argument itself is a hodgepodge, because it is not really science. It is sort of more this philosophical thing.

KONDRACKE: Why is it not science?

MOONEY: Well, because—the fundamental reason I would argue that it’s not science is that it postulates something about the supernatural. The designer is intelligent. The designer is clearly a supernatural being of some sort, even if they don’t say who they think it is. We know they think it’s God.

But as soon as you bring in the supernatural, science cannot test it. There is no way of knowing how this supernatural thing acts, because it doesn’t obey natural laws. Science is limited to studying natural laws. So you banish it from the realm of science. It doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. It means science can’t detect it.

If you try to claim that this is science, then what you are essentially doing, as I like to say, you are trying to turn scientists into something much more like Ghostbusters, where, you know, it is their job to go around and detect the supernatural. That’s not what modern science is about.

KONDRACKE: Now, my understanding is that, well, the intelligent design exists in part as—in order to fight the godlessness of evolution. Evolution holds that everything proceeds from random mutations and natural selection, and it’s all by chance.

MOONEY: It's unguided. It doesn't have a guiding force. Right.

But it's important to remember that there are a lot of biologists who fully accept the theory of evolution who have their own religious beliefs, as well.

KONDRACKE: Right.

MOONEY: They don't view them as incompatible. The reason that they don't view them as incompatible is that they have a view that the creator that they believe in could have set the evolutionary process in motion, and then not done anything.

This is where the intelligent design people are saying, "Well, no, the creator was meddling with the history of life, and was coming in and changing this and changing that."

Some religious people find that very troubling, actually, the notion that you have a capricious God.

So intelligent design is theologically troubling to a lot of people, too.

KONDRACKE: Right. Well, the other argument, and I think the more interesting argument, is that evolution doesn't explain everything that evolution is supposed to explain. I mean, that the intelligent designers look for holes in Darwin, in the fossil record for example.

MOONEY: Um-hmm.

KONDRACKE: And—

MOONEY: That's an old creationist one, too. But—well, this is kind of like President Bush talking about the uncertainty in global warming. What about what we know? I mean, that's where the magnitude of what we know about evolution is really staggering.

You know, the National Academy of Sciences has laid it on the line. They have said, "We have evidence for evolution from the fossil record, from embryology, from genetic analysis, from biogeography, the distribution of species, homology, and similar structures across species." The amount of interlocking evidence is staggering.

So they can say, "Well, the Cameron explosion happened a really long time ago. We don't know exactly how it happened." Well, it's hard to figure out how it happened because it was so long ago. But the evidence in favor of evolution is staggering. So to single out things we don't know is a little bit misleading, especially since scientific knowledge is never complete. It's always tentative. There are always gaps. This is—yeah?

KONDRACKE: Now, I've seen polls on this subject that indicate that the creationists have the public by miles.

MOONEY: At least half of it!

KONDRACKE: Well, or more, I—you know—

MOONEY: It depends on how you phrase the question.

KONDRACKE: Where do you see this going? Who is winning between the intelligent design people and the evolutionists?

MOONEY: It depends on where—what forum they are fighting in. I think that in public opinion, the evolutionists are certainly having trouble.

I think that the polls—what the polls actually say is, “You’ve got about 40 percent who are young earth creationists, like we are talking about. You know, the earth is only about ten thousand years old. You’ve got 40 percent who accept some form of evolution/religion combination. You have only 10 percent or something that think that evolution is a completely unguided process. I think it’s something like that.

When it comes to the courtroom, the evolutionist defenders, I think, are still doing pretty well. They have all these Supreme Court decisions on their side.

When it comes to local, what’s happening in local areas and local schools, etc., the creationist forces are actually pretty strong. They are able to get control of school boards; they are able to intimidate teachers. This is the kind of—this is a battle that is won in communities across America. It’s rare that actually the scientists at universities are having much impact on what’s actually happening there.

KONDRACKE: Well, this bridges the whole question of if there is a war between organized science and Republicans. Right now the Republicans are in power.

MOONEY: Yes.

KONDRACKE: The question is, what do organized scientists have to do in order to assert their position?

MOONEY: Right.

KONDRACKE: Will they have allies? How do they get allies in the public?

MOONEY: This is something I discuss. Scientists have gone on the record pretty strongly—and this is what led me to want to write this book—they denounced the Bush administration in no uncertain terms for distorting and misrepresenting scientific information. They said it was the worst administration—

KONDRACKE: Who is “they”?

MOONEY: This is the Union of Concern Scientists.

KONDRACKE: Which is generally considered a liberal outfit, right? I mean it’s—

MOONEY: Yeah. They have done a lot of arms control and environment sort of stuff. The people they organized were not all Democrats. They were distinguished science policy makers and Nobel Laureates. Some of them were Republicans, actually. You actually find that there are a lot of Republican moderates who are very unhappy with the Bush administration, one of whom I profile in the book. He is Russell Train, and he was the head of the Environmental Protection Agency under Nixon and Ford. He says that he’s never seen anything like this. He says that, you know, “When I was head of the EPA—no one would come in and try to edit one of our reports,” for example. So he thinks this is something systematic happening.

So to answer your question, scientists—

KONDRACKE: Just let me interrupt you there. Did Christie Todd Whitman quit as EPA administrator over such matters, or did she—or do you know?

MOONEY: No, I don’t. It’s hard to know what’s going through her mind—

KONDRACKE: All right. It’s all right.

MOONEY: —when someone quits there.

To answer your question, “what should scientists do?” Well, one thing is they should speak out, as they did when they thought that the Bush administration had gone too far. They need to get involved in these evolution fights, as well. They need to testify in court. Major scientific societies need to sign court briefs saying, “Your Honor, this is not science. We know science when we see it. We are the ones you should listen to. And this isn’t it.”

The scientific community has a history of doing that. I would like to see the university community get involved more broadly, and defend the teaching revolution. I would like to see university presidents. I’d like to see college campuses get fired up about this.

I think—so activism and speaking out are certainly one part of what needs to happen to deal with the science abuse problem.

I think there are a lot of other things I would point out as well, and we can talk about those if you’d like.

KONDRACKE: Yep. Please. Go ahead.

MOONEY: Sure. Well, one thing that I talk about is actually legal things that can be done, laws that could be passed.

There are proposals to protect scientific whistle-blowers in government better than they are currently protected. If they think that—if someone says, “My administrator in this agency is distorting the reports,” or something—those people would be more strongly protected. I would also say we need to strengthen the government scientific advisory apparatus.

In the book I talk about how the Gingrich Republicans, I think in a really, really bad move, got rid of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, which was Congress’s eyes and ears for scientific issues.

KONDRACKE: Why did they do that?

MOONEY: Unclear. They claim that they were cutting budgets. Some people say that they were suspicious of this agency. That they thought it was a creature of Democrats.

But again, it was a very credible, world-renowned agency for its scientific analyses.

Congress now has no guidance, and what you have is politicians listening to special interests, listening to think tanks that may be politicized, and it’s not a good situation.

Even some conservatives—not the mainstream—I don’t think of the Republican Party—but some conservatives have suggested they need to bring something like that back. So that’s another kind of solution that I would emphasize.

KONDRACKE: Now to what extent have Democrats taken advantage of what ought to be an advantage at least, to be pro-science, to be the advocates of science. Is that happening?

MOONEY: It hasn’t been lost upon them.

KONDRACKE: Yeah. I think you’ve seen Howard Dean take the attack to the Bush administration; John Kerry campaigning said, “I want to be a president who believes in science.” That was clearly an allusion to the discontent of the scientific community under the Bush administration.

MOONEY: Kerry talked a lot about the stem cell issue. For him, the stem cell issue was clearly the proxy issue for the scientific community’s discontent with the Bush administration. He didn’t talk about global warming as much. He didn’t talk about the other ones that they had raised. But stem cells was the one that he really tried to campaign on, and it created a lot of prominence for this issue.

I think the Democratic politicians see this one as something they can use. It's not the one issue that is going to bring them back into power. I mean, it's not necessarily a voting issue for the American public.

I try to explain to people why this matters to them, and I try to say, "Well, bad science, bad information actually hurts people." For example, if you are denying global warming, then, you know, we are preventing taking steps to deal with it. If you are claiming that condoms don't work very well, then you are maybe deterring people from using them, and they could actually die. They could contract HIV and they could die.

There are real consequences for the environment for public health. I try to make that hit home. But I am not sure that this is a voting issue.

KONDRACKE: Well, how would the Democrats—or a moderate Republican—make it a voting issue? Are there other campaigns in which it has ever been made a voting issue, beside Kerry's attempt to capitalize on stem cells?

MOONEY: I think that's—

KONDRACKE: And exaggerating in the process?

MOONEY: I think the Kerry campaign went a little far. I do think the Bush administration has got a lot of marks against it as well.

But yet the Kerry campaign is a pretty good example of a scientific issue being extremely prominent. I am trying to think of another national campaign and I'm sort of—there are probably a lot of local campaigns where there is a specific issue that's based on science, some kind of environmental pollution issue where these kinds of things are playing themselves out.

You know, actually in the book I go back to 1964, and I talk about the Goldwater campaign. There is an analogy here. The scientists nationwide formed organizations to oppose Goldwater, and it was not because they thought that Goldwater was going to distort the integrity of science. It's not the kind of issue that we are arguing about today.

They thought that he was dangerous. They thought that he was going to get us into a nuclear war.

But it was scientists all getting very involved. I think that that was actually very politically powerful at the time.

KONDRACKE: But they were getting involved—you know that kind of thing—I think that an objective observer would suspect—

MOONEY: Yeah. Yeah.

KONDRACKE: —that scientists are overwhelmingly Democrats, and that one doesn't know for sure whether they are opposing what the Bush administration is in favor of out of their science—as scientists, or as liberals.

There is—I mean, people with advanced degrees tend to be Democrats.

MOONEY: Karl Rove has said as much, and actually defined a Democrat as someone with a doctorate.

My response to that is that may be true. I don't know of any known polling of the scientific community where you can really break it down on their politics perfectly. But let's say that it's true.

Nevertheless, we cannot throw out scientific consensus conclusions as just politicized, because if we do we are really left with nothing. It's just my opinion versus your opinion. There's no expertise any more.

We need expertise because politicians need to be informed by people who have specialization in an area. There needs to be cooperation between technocrats and Democrats, essentially.

KONDRACKE: So how much damage do you think has been done and how reversible is it?

MOONEY: It's hard to say. I think that the integrity of the federal government has been compromised. When you have the NIH putting out a stem cell number that's questionable, when you have the EPA having its global warming reports apparently tinkered with—there have been surveys done at the Fish and Wildlife Service in which a lot of the wildlife sciences are saying, “Yeah, there's a case where someone tried to change the content of this report.”

Another example is the National Cancer Institute suggested that abortion might cause breast cancer, and then it backed away. But you know, are these government agencies credible any more? If they are not, that would really erode the public's faith in the government.

I think that that's potentially long-term damage.

You know, if you re-staff the agencies and you say, “This kind of thing isn't going to happen any more,” you could reverse it and I'd like to see that happen.

The problem is, the Bush administration has not acknowledged the force of the critique that has been brought against it. Many, many distinguished scientists have signed on, and the Bush Administration has said, “We dismiss it out of hand.” You know, “We are not doing this.”

KONDRACKE: They have never answered?

MOONEY: Well, they have answered but they reject it. They reject it across the board. They reject the argument.

I've looked at the argument and I think that they are wrong in rejecting it. I think the argument is very forceful. You can point to cases where it's quite clear that a report was tinkered with, and that's improper. There are a lot of such cases.

That's why the scientists are concerned. But until the problem is acknowledged, it's hard to address it.

KONDRACKE: Now, back to the stem cell issue, one of the key participants in all of that was the President's Council on Bioethics, headed by Leon Kass, who has been a guest on this program.

MOONEY: Right.

KONDRACKE: Do you think that—I mean, there was an allegation that that panel was skewed—

MOONEY: Right.

KONDRACKE: —in favor of the Bush position on stem cells. Do you agree with that?

MOONEY: I discuss that allegation in the book. Kass, I interviewed him. He rejects that allegation completely out of hand.

What happened was that Elizabeth Blackburn is a well-regarded cell biologist at the University of California-San Francisco. She was on this panel. Then she was let go.

Someone else was let go at the same time that was also pro-research, pro-embryonic stem cell research. It turned out that that individual had asked to leave, but Blackburn had not asked to leave.

Then there were three gaps and those gaps were filled with individuals who, if you'd looked at what they'd written in the past, it was pretty clear that they were much more in Leon Kass' camp in terms of being skeptical of therapeutic cloning and embryonic stem cell research.

He says it wasn't political. But if you just look at the make up of the committee and how it changed, you cannot possibly argue that it didn't become more conservative.

So that's the point that I would make. Just look at who left and who came on.

KONDRACKE: Right. So are there—

MOONEY: Yeah.

KONDRACKE: Are there things that have to be done to make sure that the Council is fair and balanced?

MOONEY: Well, you would hope. But I mean, the president appoints this—it serves at the pleasure of the president. So there is not really anything legally enforceable that you could do to say, “You must balance this committee.” The White House controls the appointments on it, so I don’t know that you would really want to go take away the power of the White House to appoint the advisors on this committee. So I am not actually sure how you would address that.

You would hope for balance on these advisory committees. Let me just add that this is one of the things that the scientific community gets really angry about—these federal advisory committees. They are not really very well known. The Kass Council is one of the most prominent in the whole government, but there are hundreds of them serving various agencies.

They are traditionally composed of scientists. This is one of the chief entry points of scientists into the political process. So when you get a lot of stories about these committees being politicized, and there have been a lot of stories—and I talk about some in the book where I think the criticism is valid.

KONDRACKE: Like what? What’s another example?

MOONEY: The FDA Reproductive Health Drugs Advisory Committee that made the decision about Plan B contraception, which has been in the news a lot. That committee voted—I don’t think they successfully skewed the committee, because it and another committee ended up voting overwhelmingly in favor of approval of this drug over the counter, but the Bush administration had put on some people who were in the minority who were religious conservatives and who were criticized, and FDA decided to go with their opinion and ignore the mainstream view.

They had enough people on there that they could then take what I would argue is a questionable fringe scientific argument that these people are making, and make that FDA official policy. So I would say that that committee was politicized.

This kind of thing really disturbs the scientific community and that’s part of their critique.

KONDRACKE: So I take it that you don’t see much hope for Congressional correction of what’s happening insofar as the Republicans are dominant in Congress.

MOONEY: Actually, people often ask, “Why is the Bush administration worse than previous administrations?”

One of the things I say is, Reagan did a lot of bad stuff, but the Democrats controlled Congress and they held their feet to the fire when there were stories coming out of agencies. There was really this corrective force there.

Part of it is just abuse of power, the fact that Congress won't investigate when you get a very serious credible allegation that science is being abused in an agency. It's Congress' job to keep the executive branch in check, and that doesn't happen. Or not enough.

KONDRACKE: And the Congressional science committees have no interest in delving into this or they are just advancing science.

MOONEY: Well, the science committee—yeah. It hasn't investigated this. I think the Democrats on the House Committee on Science would have liked to see a lot more attention to this. Sherwood Bowler is the Republican chair. He's a moderate. I don't know why he didn't decide to look into this further.

I think that he has good credentials on science. I think that—not clear why that happened. I know that someone like Henry Waxman would really love to have investigations of this, but he can't do it. So that's part of it.

There's no corrective countervailing force.

KONDRACKE: I want to remind everyone in the audience that they can participate and add to this discussion, on the discussion forums at www.sagecrossroads.com.

Chris Mooney, thank you so much for being with us. You have obviously written a very provocative book and I'll be anxious to see how the Republicans respond to what you have to say.

MOONEY: I'm sure they'll love it.

KONDRACKE: I'm sure that they won't love it, but whether they can dismiss it out of hand—I trust that they can't.

So thanks so much for being with us.

MOONEY: Thanks.

KONDRACKE: OK.