

Democratic Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-D) Said 'Democrats are Party of Ultra-Rich and the Ultra-Poor' - Rigged System Revelations - Facts and Analysis; Atlantic Interview Attachment in Context of Sunday Recap

If someone is looking for a hyper-condensed summation of what has gone wrong in the U.S.A. in recent decades that have helped make Democrats the 'party of the ultra-rich and ultra-poor,' to paraphrase Democratic Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-D), look no further than what actor and activist [Danny Glover said over a decade ago](#). Then fast forward to the [left-leaning](#) (i.e.: meaning, more pro-Democratic) *Atlantic* revealed in a fresh interview of Rep. Moulton conducted by Russell Berman. Berman asked Rep. Moulton: "What do you think that says about Democrats?" Congressman Moulton replied: "The first thing it says is that we've lost touch with a lot of people in America. In many ways, **we have become the party of the ultrarich and the ultra-poor**, and a lot of people in the middle think Democrats are out of touch...we can't come up with practical solutions to the problems facing many Americans across the country, that **we're more concerned about identity politics than American values**. These are things that we have to address now." (Bold emphasis added by *MHProNews*). [Left-leaning NPR](#) previously called Moulton: "A critic of party leadership."

Before someone cheers or jeers as a result of what Moulton expressed in those few lines to Berman via the *Atlantic*, note that the congressman from Massachusetts briefly ran as a Democratic hopeful for president in 2020. Stop and consider the following items that were not part of Berman's *Atlantic* interview.

Per Moulton's House website, he is "a former Marine Corps Officer (four tours in the Iraq war), a member of the Democratic Party, and U.S. Representative for Massachusetts's 6th Congressional district. He is also a Harvard graduate with a B.S. in physics and master's degrees in business and public administration. His interests include better communication with young voters, biotech entrepreneurialism, and a breadth of policy issues."

[Left-leaning Wikipedia](#) stated: "during Moulton's fourth tour of duty in Iraq, General David Petraeus requested that he be assigned to work as a special liaison with tribal leaders in Southern Iraq."

Per the left-leaning Soros funded *Open Secrets* website: "**Seth Moulton's estimated net worth for 2018 is \$728534.**" But more recent information from *Quiver Quantitative* says this.



Seth Moulton Trading Activity

Seth Moulton. Democratic / House / Massachusetts. \$5.02M Net Worth Est. \$1.65M Trade Volume. 17 Total Trades. Aug 18, 2023 Last Traded. Current Member Yes ..."

So, during his term in Congress, Moulton went from a reported net worth in 2018 of **\$728,534** to a **net worth of some \$5.02 million**. That calls to mind a quote which per *GoodReads* was uttered by Democratic President Harry S. Truman, who said: "Show me a man that gets rich by being a politician, and I'll show you a crook."

Dem Rep Seth Moulton (MA-D) Said Democrats are 'Party of the Ultra-Rich and the Ultra-Poor' Rigged System Revelations; plus Sunday Weekly MHVillie Headlines Recap If someone is looking for a hyper-condensed summation of what has gone wrong in the U.S.A. in recent decades that have helped make Democrats the 'party of the ultra-rich and ultra-poor,' to paraphrase Democratic Congressman Seth Moulton (MA-D), look no further than what actor and activist [Danny Glover said over a decade ago](#). Then fast forward to the [left-leaning](#) (i.e.: meaning, more pro-Democratic) *Atlantic* revealed in a fresh interview of Rep. Moulton conducted by Russell Berman. Berman asked Rep. Moulton: "What do you think that says about Democrats?" Congressman Moulton replied: "The first thing it says is that we've lost touch with a lot of people in America. In many ways, **we have become the party of the ultrarich and the ultra-poor**, and a lot of people in the middle think Democrats are out of touch...we can't come up with practical solutions to the problems facing many Americans across the country, that **we're more concerned about identity politics than American values**. These are things that we have to address now." (Bold emphasis added by *MHProNews*). [Left-leaning NPR](#) previously called Moulton: "A critic of party leadership."

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The above is about 450 words, which takes about 3 minutes to read. Is that entirely fair to Moulton? No. Of course not. At best those few paragraphs tee up some areas of potential areas of interest and concern. But there is more to ponder as a result of Moulton's remarks: In many ways, **"we have**

become the party of the ultrarich and the ultra-poor, and a lot of people in the middle think Democrats are out of touch..."

From the USMCu.edu (United States Marine Corps University) website in an article entitled "[Political Warfare and Propaganda](#)" are these statements.



Digital influence warfare involves the use of persuasion tactics, information and disinformation, provocation, identity deception, computer network hacking, altered videos and images, cyberbullying, and many other types of activity explored in this issue of the *Journal of Advanced Military Studies*. The attacker (or "influencer") seeks to weaponize information against a target in order to gain the power needed to achieve the goals articulated in their strategic influence plan. Some goals may involve changing the target's beliefs and behaviors, prompting the targets to question their beliefs in the hopes that once those beliefs have been undermined, the targets may change their minds. Other goals may include manufacturing uncertainty to convince the target that nothing may be true and anything may be possible.³⁷ In other instances, the goals of an influence strategy could include strengthening the target's certainty, even their commitment to believing in things that are actually untrue.

The central goal of influence attacks is—according to a recent report by Rand—"to cause the target to behave in a manner favorable to the influencer."³⁸ The influencer may seek to disrupt the target's information environment—for example, interrupting the flow of information between sources and intended recipients of an organization, or on a broader level, between the target's government and its citizens. Similarly, the influencer may also seek to degrade the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the target's communication capabilities, which may involve flooding channels of communication with misinformation and disinformation. ..."

How much of such training was Moulton exposed to in his role working for "General David Petraeus requested that he [Moulton] be assigned to work as a special liaison with tribal leaders in Southern Iraq" is unclear. But is it a stretch to think that Moulton's job was in some measure to influence locals to "cause the target to behave in a manner favorable to the influencer," as the USMC and the *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* suggested?

We have been living in an era of what might be described as information warfare for decades. Some of that effort to "weaponize information against a target in order to gain the power needed to achieve the goals articulated in their strategic influence plan" arguably comes from corporations, some from trade groups, some from nonprofits, big media, big tech, and big government, foreign and domestic. Never forget what a higher-ranking Marine officer said decades before Moulton. Per General Smedley Butler, "[War is a Racket](#)." Vocabulary says that: "Informally, the word racket also means **illegal scheme**," especially for making money." Racket is the root of racketeering, which *Oxford Languages* defines as: "a person [or persons] who [engages](#) in [dishonest](#) and fraudulent business [dealings](#)." That *racket* is meant to benefit politicians and specific business interests.

[caption id="attachment_194347" align="aligncenter" width="600"]

"Maverick Marine" General Smedley Butler

<https://www.manufacturedhomepronews.com/veterans-day-facts-views-alamo-marines-at-chosin-john-pilger-the-war-you-dont-see-famous-marine-general-smedley-butler-sounds-off-u-s-military-as-wall-street-enforcers-plus-mhv/> [/caption]

Before pressing ahead, some further thoughts on Moulton, who is viewed by some as a rising star among Democrats, is useful.

Moulton clearly grasps that millions within the Democratic Party ranks are frustrated. After only some 3.3 years of Biden-Harris and largely Democratic control of the federal government, that time and those policies yielded a population that is largely worse off than it was during the Trump Presidency. Pure lies may work with some for a time, said President Abraham Lincoln (R), but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. From the perspective of someone experienced and perhaps trained in specialized (meaning, manipulative) communications, as Moulton could be, perhaps the craftier approach would be to *use some truth* and *mix in some deception*. That mix of truth and untruth, be it paltering, 'true lies,' spin, propaganda, lying by omission, or whatever someone may aptly call it, is a tactic. Why do people lie or deceive? The classic scene from the movie *Charade* explained it succinctly. Cary Grant's character Peter Joshua brilliantly summed it up: "**Usually it's because they** [the deceiver(s) or liar(s)] **want something. They are afraid the truth won't get it for them.**"

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<https://www.manufacturedhomepronews.com/masthead/charade-reggie-lampert-why-do-people-have-to-tell-lies-peter-joshua-usually-its-because-they-want-something-they-are-afraid-the-truth-wont-get-it-for-them-p/>[caption]

Moulton endorsed Joe Biden in 2020. In his interview with Bergman in the *Atlantic*, Rep. Moulton said:



I think that President Biden, in his heart, understands what I'm saying, and that's why he talks so much about being a middle-of-the-road guy. But I also think it's true that he and his administration have catered too much to the left in the past few years, pursuing policies that are popular with the base but risk alienating a lot of independents or moderate Republicans who don't fundamentally want to vote for Trump."

Moulton, based on his own statements, is apparently concerned about messaging and appearance. Moulton appears to want to explain Biden in a way that helps him appeal to the left and to more moderate Democrats. Congressman Moulton (MA-D) *wants to see his party win*. That hardly sounds like a supposed critic of his party's leadership in the way that *NPR* reported him. It sounds more like Moulton is trying to craft messages that will appeal to the maximum number of people in a way that might influence elections.

Be that as it may, Moulton's headline remarks ought to be interesting to wide swatches in or out of the Democratic party. The truth is this. For well over a century, the [ultra-rich in this country have been working at figuring out ways to get more money and more power](#), despite of the Constitutional limitations that our Republic are supposed to provide the citizens with specific protections. Warren Buffett and his late vice-chairman at Berkshire Hathaway, Charlie Munger, [expressed that notion with respect to the 21st century](#). A look at the history of the so-called 'progressive' movement in the U.S., led by President Woodrow Wilson (D) reflects as much. Promise appealing sounding things, use public relations and the

media to carry that message, and regardless of your actual intentions, package it as a benefit to everyday Americans rather than as a sly benefit to the wealthy who help put you into office.

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<https://www.manufacturedhomepronews.com/epic-historic-and-profitable-lessons-pujo-committee-report-woodrow-wilsons-big-mistakes-why-it-matters-to-america-with-compelling-mhville-facts-analysis-plus-sunday-weekly-headlines-revi/>[/caption]

While the video below about Democrat Woodrow Wilson is imperfect, it is generally accurate and largely supports the insights found in the more detailed report and analysis linked above. The video below includes several period video clips and photos.

<https://youtu.be/IWwKx0a7Fdk>

That the wealthy have been trying to hijack the American Republic is not a secret. Centi-billionaire [Warren Buffett](#) called it [class warfare](#). Buffett said [his class is winning](#). Later, [Buffett declared that his class has won](#). [Danny Glover](#), who has reported served for some time in a Buffett nonprofit board, [said over a dozen years ago](#): "It's not only a monopoly of wealth; it's a monopoly of information as well." The union of wealth and information is what is creating the "[Shadows of Liberty](#)." That groundbreaking documentary drama and its transcript ought to be must-reading and viewing for better grasping how manipulative corporate power, government, and media can be.

'The Party Of The Ultrarich And The Ultra-poor' - The Atlantic

<https://www.everand.com/article/744107488/The-Party-Of-The-Ultrarich-And-The-Ultra-Poor>

'The Party of the Ultrarich and the Ultra-poor'

Story by Russell Berman

- 19h

When the Supreme Court blocked President Joe Biden's plan to cancel student debt, his administration hurried to find a work-around. Less than a year later, Biden has now forgiven more than \$160 billion in college loans for nearly 5 million borrowers—totals that, as he often notes, would be much higher if not for the Court.

To Representative Seth Moulton, the policy that Biden tried so hard to implement is a prime example of how the Democratic Party has gone astray and why Biden might lose to Donald Trump. "In many ways, we have become the party of the ultrarich and the ultra-poor, and a lot of people in the middle think Democrats are out of touch," Moulton told me. Student-debt relief is "a terrible priority because it sends a message to everyone who didn't get the opportunity to go to college that they're less important than the people who did."

Moulton, a Massachusetts Democrat in his fifth House term, briefly ran for president in 2020, dropping out well before the voting started. Although most Democrats blame Biden's swing-state deficits on inflation and (more quietly) his age, Moulton largely blames his own party, which he believes has "catered too much to the left." Given that the GOP "is led by a convicted criminal, what does it say about us as Democrats that we're not cleaning up?" Moulton said. "Because we should be winning every race—from school board to president of the United States—in our sleep."

I spoke with him about the problems he sees for Biden and his party—and how he would fix them. Our conversation has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

Russell Berman: How are you feeling about the election right now?

Seth Moulton: Not great.

Berman: What do you think that says about Democrats?

Moulton: The first thing it says is that we've lost touch with a lot of people in America. In many ways, we have become the party of the ultrarich and the ultra-poor, and a lot of people in the middle think Democrats are out of touch, that we're more concerned about offending people than making hard choices, that we're so wrapped up in principle that we can't come up with practical solutions to the problems facing many Americans across the country, that we're more concerned about identity politics than American values. These are things that we have to address now.

Berman: What are the issues that Biden and the Democrats should be really hitting hard over the next five months?

Moulton: We should talk about his bipartisan wins, like the infrastructure bill that Republicans are touting all over the country, even when they voted against it. We should be talking about how Ukraine and Israel, despite being incredibly difficult, are going a lot better than they would under Trump. Biden might even show the humility that John F. Kennedy showed after the Bay of Pigs to admit he screwed up with Afghanistan. We should talk about how Republicans are playing politics with immigration while we're trying to fix it. We should talk about how inflation is going down because of this administration, and we should talk about how every one of Trump's economic policies—tariffs, taxes, and deportations—will make food prices go up and inflation worse across the board.

Berman: Just to play devil's advocate here, if I took that summary and showed it to the Biden campaign, they would ask if Seth Moulton is reading from their playbook. They'd say, 'This is our campaign. This is what we're doing.'

Moulton: The campaign is not effectively delivering that message, and instead it's getting hijacked by issues, like the protests over Gaza and student-loan-debt relief, that unfortunately alienate more Americans than they unite.

[Read: [Gaza is dividing Democrats](#)]

Berman: Why is Donald Trump doing so well?

Moulton: If you look at inflation, it has a huge impact on elections. It always has, and it does all around the globe. In fact, Biden is doing a lot better than his incumbent colleagues in other countries. So it is a tough time for incumbents. It's a tough time for people in the center, for moderates, and these are things that Biden represents over Trump.

But we also have to step back and ask ourselves: When the Republican Party is in the midst of a civil war playing out all across the country and is led by a convicted criminal, what does it say about us as Democrats that we're not cleaning up? Because we should be winning every race—from school board to president of the United States—in our sleep against this kind of criminal opposition.

Berman: Joe Biden has always branded himself as representing the middle class, which you say Democrats have lost touch with. He's Middle-Class Joe from Scranton, who rode the train home every night and wasn't particularly rich by the standards of the Washington elite. Do you think he's done the best he can in this political environment, or do you agree with his critics who say that he got pulled too far to the left and that's why he's not winning now?

Moulton: I think that both are true. I think that President Biden, in his heart, understands what I'm saying, and that's why he talks so much about being a middle-of-the-road guy. But I also think it's true that he and his administration have catered too much to the left in the past few years, pursuing policies that are popular with the base but risk alienating a lot of independents or moderate Republicans who don't fundamentally want to vote for Trump.

Berman: What's an example of a policy that he's pursued that he shouldn't have?

Moulton: Why on earth are we forgiving student loans for everyone who actually had the chance to go to college? I think there are good policy reasons for this, and, by the way, it would be helpful to me, because I still have student loans. But it's a terrible priority, because it sends a message to everyone who didn't get the opportunity to go to college that they're less important than the people who did and can't figure out how to pay their loans.

Berman: Was it a mistake for Biden to run again?

Moulton: I do wish that Biden were younger.

[Pause]

Berman: Is that it?

Moulton: I wish he were getting younger with every passing day and not the other way around. Look, there's no question that this is a grave concern among many Americans, Democrats and Republicans. But of course, the alternative is really old too, and far more senile.

Berman: What do Democrats need to do over the next five months to win this election?

Moulton: Biden has been a great president but a bad messenger, so we've got to get other messengers out there for the Democratic Party ... This election has to be about the future. It can't be about the past, and that's challenging for Biden, for obvious reasons. But the Democratic Party is not just about one person, and he needs to make that clear through his own words, but also through how he empowers the leaders who are the future of our party and not empower the radicals who are holding us back.

Berman: Do you feel like you're out on an island here, or are there a lot of other Democrats who share your views but are not speaking up?

Moulton: I don't think I'm on an island in thinking about this, but I know I'm on an island in saying it, and I feel like there are too few of us taking this seriously. Whenever I talk to my colleagues, I hear all sorts of excuses for why things are not that bad, and all kinds of strategies that are really just hopes. We need to recognize how dire this instance is. This moment is not just for one campaign, but for the future of our party in America. Because if we can't win now, we're toast when the Republicans actually get their act together.

America First-MAGA Backers Need to Make Paltering, Projecting, and Pandering as Commonly Understood as Fake News and Rigged System DBN <https://www.msn.com/en-ph/news/opinion/the-party-of-the-ultrarich-and-the-ultra-poor/ar-BB1oDCYn> Atlantic

<https://www.caltech.edu/campus-life-events/calendar/a-conversation-with-congressman-seth-moulton>

A Conversation with Congressman Seth Moulton

Monday, October 19, 2015

1:00pm to 2:30pm

Physics Grad, Marine Corps Veteran, Sitting U.S. Congressman

[Congressman Seth Moulton](#) is a former Marine Corps Officer (four tours in the Iraq war), a member of the Democratic Party, and U.S. Representative for Massachusetts's 6th Congressional district. He is also a Harvard graduate with a B.S. in physics and master's degrees in business and public administration. His

interests include better communication with young voters, biotech entrepreneurialism, and a breadth of policy issues.

Join us for this informal discussion on these and other issues most concerning you in congress.

Please [RSVP](#) (Priority will be given to students and postdocs.)

A light reception at 1:00 p.m. will precede the event, which begins at 1:15 p.m.

About Seth Moulton

Congressman Seth Moulton was born and raised in northeastern Massachusetts. He attended public schools, as well as Phillips Academy Andover and Harvard University on scholarships and student loans. After graduating from Harvard in 2001 with a degree in physics, Moulton joined the United States Marine Corps.

Moulton served four tours in Iraq as a Marine Corps infantry officer, including two tours as a platoon commander and two tours as a Special Assistant to General David Petraeus. In 2003, Moulton was in the first company of Marines to enter Baghdad. In 2004, he led a platoon during the Battle of Najaf, the fiercest fighting of the war to that time. As a Special Assistant to General David Petraeus, Moulton worked on a small team of Marines leading counterinsurgency operations south of Baghdad in 2005 and during the Surge. He left the Marines in 2008 with the rank of Captain.

Congressman Moulton was elected to Congress in 2014 on a platform of bringing new, bipartisan leadership to Congress. In his first term, Congressman Moulton is focused on economic growth for Massachusetts families and improving veterans' health care through the VA, where he still receives his care. Congressman Moulton serves on the House Armed Services Committee, the House Budget Committee and the House Small Business Committee in the 114th Congress.

[Seth Moulton - Wikipedia](#)

He received the Bronze Star Medal for his actions in this battle. In 2008, during Moulton's fourth tour of duty in Iraq, General David Petraeus requested that he be assigned to work as a special liaison with tribal leaders in Southern Iraq.

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/events-and-awards/kennedy-library-forums/past-forums/transcripts/a-conversation-with-seth-moulton>

A CONVERSATION WITH SETH MOULTON

OCTOBER 30, 2015

TOM PUTNAM: Good evening. I'm Tom Putnam, Director of the John F. Kennedy

Presidential Library and Museum. And on behalf of Heather Campion, CEO of the Kennedy Library Foundation, and all my Library and Foundation colleagues, I thank you for coming, and acknowledge the generous underwriters of the Kennedy Library Forums:

lead sponsor Bank of America, the Lowell Institute, the Boston Foundation; and our media sponsors, the *Boston Globe*, Xfinity, and WBUR.

It occurs to me that our programming this week runs the generational gamut. On Tuesday night, we had a forum here with Bob Schieffer, veteran CBS News anchor, who recounted that his first introduction to politics was when he was 11, attending an impromptu rally for then-Congressional candidate Lyndon Johnson during the 1948 campaign when Dewey almost defeated Truman.

Mr. Schieffer recounts that when his daughters were young, they would ask him if, when he was a little boy, he wanted to be a TV reporter. His reply, "Well, no, we didn't have TVs when I was a little boy." [laughter] Despite his Texas wit, warmth and wisdom, Bob Schieffer's message Tuesday evening was dispiriting. As someone who's chronicled national politics for close to 60 years, he suggests the system has never been more broken.

Now, I've only worked at this Library for 16 years, but I cannot tell you how many forums I've attended that end with this message. The only way to fix the system is to send new voices to Washington, who bring with them fresh ideas, a willingness to compromise, and who are ready to put the country's interests before their own.

These words are easily spoken, yet our speaker this evening, as you all know, did the unthinkable, putting himself forward as a candidate in a race that would pit him against not only a popular Democratic incumbent in the primary, but also a veteran and accomplished state legislator, who had proven himself a formidable challenger in an earlier general election campaign.

I first met Seth Moulton in this very room a few months after he announced his candidacy. He attended the Kennedy Library Foundation's 2014 Profile in Courage Award dinner. Now, there's no secret to the way that seating is handled at those affairs, and so one of our mutual associates indicated that there was someone he wished me to meet. I wondered who it might be, as he brought me deep into the darkened back corner of this room. [laughter]

Like so many others, I was immediately impressed. There was a light that emanated from Seth Moulton's words and example. And the very next day I did what he asked, like thousands of others, and went to his website to sign up for alerts and to learn more about his campaign.

John F. Kennedy believed in the nobility of politics and that entering the fray is the best way to change the system. Perhaps because it is so rare, it is exceedingly inspiring when a thoughtful, young outsider finds a way to break through, runs a campaign based on ideas and idealism, and brings a fresh, new voice to the halls of Congress. What a trajectory Seth Moulton has made, from the campaign trails to the North Shore, to Capitol Hill, from the darkened corner of this room to the glare of our stage spotlights.

Tonight's is an especially unique pair, for facilitating this evening's conversation is David Gergen, senior political analyst for CNN, and an advisor to four US presidents. He is also a Professor of Public Service and Co-Director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Mr. Gergen has been a mentor to Congressman Moulton for over 15 years. And allow me to read a brief excerpt, verbatim, from his endorsement during the 2014 campaign:

For Seth, the call to service came from the US Marine Corps, where he signed up as an infantry officer. As America went to war in the Middle East, off he went with his troops on the first wave into Iraq, an invasion he disagreed with, and then second and third tour, all in danger zones.

Thankfully, he came home safely and was preparing to pursue concurrent degrees at Harvard Business School and the Kennedy School, until General David Petraeus asked him to put his uniform back on for the surge. And off he went to a fourth tour, not in the safety of the green zone, but south of Baghdad, amid more danger.

Seth did eventually come home and earned those Harvard degrees. He worked for a start-up in Texas, trying to build a high-speed rail, and then moved back to Massachusetts to consider a run for Congress.

In an editorial in the *Boston Globe*, Mr. Gergen made a comparison that is apt for this evening: Returning from military combat in World War II, a 29-year-old John F. Kennedy hung up his uniform and embraced a new form of service back home: running for Congress from the 11th district of Massachusetts. He was one of many young veterans who ran and won in 1946 by appealing to voters' eagerness for change.

Those veterans who jumped into the political arena after the war went on to become a storied generation. Seven presidents in a row – from Kennedy through George H.W. Bush – served their country, first in military service and then in government.

Their success at governing should send a compelling message to us today. At a time when national politics is so broken, a new generation of young men and women who first cut their teeth in service to others are now venturing into the political arena, offering us fresh, idealistic leadership that may be our best hope of breaking out of today's mess.

Let me conclude this introduction with the words that could be used to describe Congressman Seth Moulton, first spoken by President John F. Kennedy in his inaugural address, describing this generation as having been "tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world." Congressman Moulton, you honor us here this evening with your presence. And just as your family cared for your safekeeping when you fought overseas, so do your constituents wish you well, as you pursue the national interests on Capitol Hill.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming presidential advisor David Gergen and Massachusetts Congressman Seth Moulton to the Kennedy Library. [applause]

DAVID GERGEN: Thank you. Wow, Seth, does the halo appear now, or do you want to pick it up at the door? [laughter]

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It can only go downhill. It wasn't so bad in the back of the room. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: I must say, when I heard this was going to be at six o'clock at night, I said, nobody will come; fighting through that traffic. And it is fierce out there. It will be impossible for people to be here. You drew a full house, congratulations. [applause] Now, I was struck that you have a number of your staff here. And they're very young. But we might want to recognize them. Do you want to say something about them, Seth? Have them stand?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: We had 1,000 people apply for the 15 positions in the office. There are a lot of people who want to make a difference in government, despite the difficulty, despite the dysfunction today. And I have an absolutely incredible staff, so I would love to

have you guys stand up. [applause] Of course, what you're seeing here – including two Marine veterans, by the way – what you're seeing here is just the district side of the staff. [applause]

DAVID GERGEN: You said this is the district side of your staff.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Right, so then we have the DC staff as well.

And it's not very big. The size of a congressional staff hasn't changed much since the 1970s, even as congressional districts have grown a lot. So they have an awful lot of work to do. They don't get paid much at all. And they're true public servants, and really the cream of the crop. We had a lot of people to choose from. I'm incredibly proud of the team that I have.

DAVID GERGEN: What was striking to me, you're the first Congressman I can remember who's appointed someone for economic development.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Yes, Jason is here tonight. The thing is, when I got elected, I recalled Albert Einstein's definition of insanity, which is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Look, we all know Washington is broken. So I said, what's the point of putting together another congressional staff that looks like all the other congressional staffs on Capitol Hill? So I sat down with some people who were really mentors of mine, some guys from the campaign, some people from the Marine Corps, some mentors from the business world, David Gergen, a mayor of a very successful city in the district.

And we started from a very high level and said, What are the core values that animate me and my mission? What do I want to be known for? Not just now, but for as long as I'm in politics. And then we talked about what our mission statement would be for the next two years. It's a very Marine Corps approach to this problem.

And then we reprioritized all the different things I had talked about during the campaign. And only then did we design a staff to meet those needs, to meet the needs of our district, rather than just doing what the Congressional handbook said.

So economic director is not a normal position on a Congressional staff, but it's the number one priority for our district. So we've got an incredible public servant here, someone who could be making a lot more money, and frankly did used to make a lot more money doing other things, but has agreed to come on the staff.

He actually has an incredible story, Jason. His brother very tragically died of a heart problem. And then the doctors conducted a test on him and determined he had the same issue. And had incredible surgery. Of course, didn't stop him from doing an Iron Man like three weeks later. In a way, his brother's death actually saved his life, and he said, "I want to devote myself to public service," and that's why Jason is here tonight. [applause]

DAVID GERGEN: What's your plan now for economic development in the district? This is your highest priority at home, aside from the veterans. Those are the two big priorities. So tell us a little bit more about what you're hoping to do in the district.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, economic development means different things for the different cities and towns in the district. And we have a very diverse district. So we've been working very closely with the fishermen up in Gloucester, for example, and trying to find some common ground between the fishermen and the environmentalists, who actually, at the end of the day, really want the same thing. We all want a sustainable fishery.

So rather than take one side or the other, we've gotten together around the theme of what's the science to get us to a sustainable fishery. And also, what other things can we be doing to get more value out of the fish that we harvest. So that's the project, that's one of the projects going on right now in Gloucester.

But the priority for my district in terms of economic development is actually the city of Lynn, which is the southernmost city in the district, and really the gateway to the district from Boston. And it has so much potential. I mean, here is a city that is a 15-minute train ride from downtown Boston, and yet has vacant land along the waterfront. There is so much potential in Lynn, and I think the time is right, now, to turn it around.

But I think that Jason will provide some of the leadership to make it happen.

DAVID GERGEN: Let's talk a little bit about your personal journey and then get into some of the issues, like the Middle East, ISIS, Russia and that sort of thing. And then we're going to be asking for your questions; we'll take questions from the floor. And there also may be questions coming over Twitter; we'll wait and see. And we're going to go to about 7:20, okay? So he and I will talk for maybe 30/40 minutes, and then we'll go to your questions, because I know he loves to answer questions from the community. But let's talk about your personal journey. Grew up on the North Shore. Family background?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I have a wonderful family, especially when they're sitting here in the front row. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: Where's your family?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's my Mom. I think my Dad's at a hockey game tonight, actually. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: He's got his values right.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right, those are his priorities. No, I come from a wonderful family. And I grew up in a nice town. Didn't have a tremendous amount of money. I'm still paying off my college loans.

DAVID GERGEN: You've not come from a rich family.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: No, I'm still paying my college loans today, even as a member of Congress. And then we're going to work on grad school after that. But I had a lot of great things in life that any kid in America would hope for. I had great public schools in my hometown. I was able to get into Andover on a scholarship. And then I was able to go to Harvard on a scholarship as well. So some of the best schools in the world.

But when I was at Harvard, I realized that I'd had all these opportunities in life and really hadn't done anything to give back, hadn't really done much service. I remembered especially the words of Peter Gomes, which is actually how we met.

DAVID GERGEN: We met through Peter, that's right.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: And he was the minister at Harvard, but also this larger-than-life moral figure for the university, had one of the most popular undergraduate courses. And he talked a lot about the importance of service, about how it's not enough just to believe in service or support those who serve. You ought to find a way yourself to serve.

And so, as I approached senior year, I looked at different options; I looked at the Peace Corps, I looked at teaching overseas. But at the end of the day, I had so much respect for the 18-to-19-year-old kids who serve on the front lines of our nation's military that I decided that's where I would do my part.

I graduated in June of 2001, so I didn't know that I would be going into a war. My training started just after September 11th. But that what inspired me to serve, was those young men and women on the front lines. And that's why I wanted to be in the infantry. I never wanted to be riding in a tank while some 18-year-old was slogging through the mud next to me.

DAVID GERGEN: But the contrast here is your desire to serve, and yet at the same time you majored in physics. Help us understand that.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I'm actually brilliant, because if you major in physics, for everybody in life who sees your résumé and not your transcript, you sound very smart. [laughter] That's most people. No, look, I liked physics. I think Harvard taught me that I wasn't smart enough to be a physicist, but— [laughter] But I was always into science. And you know what, we need more people with a science background in Congress. Not everybody in Congress believe in science today. [applause]

DAVID GERGEN: I do remember Peter Gomes well; he was a wonderful man. Peter Gomes was black, gay and a Republican. [laughter] Think of that.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: And a Baptist.

DAVID GERGEN: And a Baptist. And he lived down here on the water, south of Boston. He was a mentor to Seth and meant a great deal to him. But I know what struck Peter was the day you gave the graduation speech for your class in 2001, June of 2001.

And you said something about your generation.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I think my generation has a great opportunity to serve and to make a difference in the world. But I think that we really have to feel a calling to a higher purpose. And there's a real tendency in America to just sort of be content with mediocrity, just to be content with the status quo.

DAVID GERGEN: When Peter wrote his book, *The Good Life*, he opened it by quoting you from that, talked about you and quoted you as saying, at that graduation speech, you asked "What is the call to greatness for our generation? What is the call to greatness for our generation?" So that's something that's been very much on your mind.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: To be honest, I think it was one of those speeches that kind of went over— I mean, people didn't remember it much, right after the time. But then September 11th happened three months later. And all of a sudden I started getting phone calls, and classmates said, "Okay, this is what you were talking about."

DAVID GERGEN: So you signed up with the Marine Corps, suddenly you have 9/11, you go into training and you're in the first wave.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Actually, when I was in training, it was 2002, and everything was happening in Afghanistan. And I figured, well, I just missed the war; I'm going to get finished with training just as everybody is coming home from Afghanistan. I had no idea, as probably most of you didn't, that we would be going into Iraq.

But I got to Kuwait. I didn't think we'd invade. The lieutenants in my company, we all took bets on whether we'd invade or not. I said, There's no way President Bush is going to do this. This is just a show of force.

But then they woke me up in the middle of the night, the company commander. And it never happens at a normal time of day, like the afternoon; it happened at three in the morning. They were invading, and I ended up being the first company of Marines into Baghdad in 2003.

DAVID GERGEN: This is a war your parents really were not happy about. But you disagreed with the war as well.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I, first of all, didn't think that we would actually invade. And then as I saw more, as more came out about how the war originated and how it was being fought, I had a lot of problems with it. But the thing is, even though I disagreed with the war, every single day in Iraq, I had an influence over how it was being fought. I did a job that impacted the lives of other people, often over questions of life or death. And frankly, it's been very hard in my life to find that kind of purpose ever since.

DAVID GERGEN: That's interesting. That time in the Marine Corps, you had four years?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It was about five years in the Marine Corps and four tours in Iraq.

DAVID GERGEN: Almost five years. That was enormously influential for you. It really shaped you more than any other experience.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: The most influential experience of my life, without question.

DAVID GERGEN: Why? What was it about it? I know you had to learn how to lead your platoon. It was a really important part of that. We had conversations about the kind of decisions you had to make, to get guys to do really tough things.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I went to some of the best schools in the world, but I really hadn't been taught leadership. Maybe a little bit on the crew team, but really had never been taught leadership. And yet, leadership is actually really important in today's world. We don't have enough good leaders in today's world.

But the Marine Corps as a philosophy, they will teach leadership. They look for people who want to serve and whom they can teach to be leaders. And so, I was thrown in an OCS class with fellow college graduates from all over America. And for the first time, I was challenged to do things that I wasn't necessarily that good at. I had always been a great student, been a halfway decent athlete. But then all of a sudden, now I was challenged in ways that I'd never seen before.

And that in and of itself, just that training process was quite an experience. But then going to Iraq and having to lead my platoon in combat was life-changing.

DAVID GERGEN: Let's go to your decision. You had three tours. You went to Iraq, first wave; came back, you went to Pendleton with your troops. Then you went back to Iraq on a second mission, came back to Pendleton. Went back for a third. Always in danger, never in a really safe place. And you were done. You were done with your active duty. Your parents could welcome you home. You got through unscathed. You had no noticeable PTSD or anything. And you were ready to go back to Harvard, to the business school and the Kennedy School. General Petraeus calls you. Why? Why go back?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: To be honest, David, you bring this up a lot, and I'm honored that you do, but this is what any veteran would do. We all, back home, felt a little bit of guilt for not being over there with our colleagues. And so, to me, it was a very natural decision to go back. One of my friends name Joe, who's from Boston as well, and he had gotten out of the Marine Corps same time as me. We'd served together in Najaf in 2003/2004. And he got out of the Marine Corps and came out of the closet. And he and I, he got called back at the same time as I got that call from General Petraeus, and all Joe had to do was pick up the phone and say two words to the Marine Corps: I'm gay. And he wouldn't have had to go back.

And we talked about this; we talked about this decision. But he didn't. He fundamentally hid who he is so that he could go and serve with his fellow Marines again. That took a lot more courage than what I did. I just went back for a fourth time, like any of the other veterans here would do.

DAVID GERGEN: Your campaign. After you graduate from business school, graduated from Kennedy School, turned down Goldman Sachs. Instead went to a start-up in Texas. About trains, by the way, one of your great loves in life. You're like sort of the Michael Dukakis, the son he never had, right? [laughter]

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I talk to Michael Dukakis all the time. I believe in the development power of transportation. Transportation is absolutely key to economic development. You talk to anyone who considered moving a business to the North Shore and they will tell you—literally, I talked to someone this morning who said, "Yep, we used to be based in Beverly and now we're based in Boston or Somerville because no one could get there."

So transportation is key to economic development. And the problem in America today is we just have a highway policy, airway policy. No one ever says, How is a dollar best invested in transportation. That's why we're the only developed country in the world that doesn't have high-speed rail.

So I went to work on this high-speed rail project in Texas, actually privately funded, backed by the Central Railway of Japan, to try to make an example project and to show Americans what we're missing. I mean, Morocco has high-speed rail. It's incredible that we don't.

I left Harvard this evening 20 minutes before you, and I arrived 30 minutes before you arrived because I jumped on the T. And everyone knows, the Red Line isn't even that high speed. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: So you decide to run against a Congressman who's been there 18 years, had one bill passed in 18 years, ethical clouds gathering. But still, nobody ever beats an incumbent Democratic Congressman in a primary.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's tough. I was actually the only Democrat in the country to beat an incumbent in a primary in the House of Representatives last year. But I think this is also the kind of change that we need in our political system.

But what was hard about was every single day on the campaign trail, my team and me were told, we were told "you can't win." And even worse, "you're hurting your party because you're running against a fellow Democrat." And that was even after the polling came out that showed he probably wouldn't win the general election, that the seat would go to a Republican if I didn't win the primary.

DAVID GERGEN: But you had campaigned for several months when you took your first poll.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Yeah, we campaigned for almost nine months. We started very early. And that was actually a piece of advice given to me by Chris

Matthews. I told him I was running and he had just finished his book on President Kennedy. And he said, "I have one piece of advice for you from President Kennedy. Start early." So I started early.

DAVID GERGEN: Chris's wife is now running in Maryland.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right. And she started early as well. But after nine months of slogging it out every single day on the campaign trail, going to the Democratic meetings and shaking hands on the street and trying to raise money and everything else, we got one of the best pollsters in the country to conduct a poll.

DAVID GERGEN: It was your first poll.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Our first poll. And it's not just "where do you stand?" It was early so I knew if we had an election that day, a lot of people would still not even know who I was. But it's a much more comprehensive process that shows you a path to victory. The arguments that work in your favor and the arguments that work against him. How you get to where you need to go.

And we got the poll results back, and my pollster told me to quit. He said it's statistically impossible to win this race. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: Your campaign manager told you to quit, too, right?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right. And so, we parted ways. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: You fired him.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: He did a remarkable job actually setting up the infrastructure for the campaign. But we got to a point where we had all the pieces in place, things that I would have no idea how to put together, as someone who had never been involved in politics before. I mean, I'd never even volunteered on a campaign, and I frankly didn't hang out at the IOP at Harvard as an undergrad. So I didn't really know much about this.

But we got some professionals, including my first campaign manager, who put all that infrastructure together. But then I realized, we needed someone to lead the team through a very difficult period of

execution. We just needed to make things happen. And when I looked around at my team, I thought that the best leader I had was actually the most junior person in the organization; he was my driver. [laughter] So it was a little unconventional.

DAVID GERGEN: But military.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: But he had a background as a Marine, and he knew how to lead under tough circumstances. He knew how to rally a team. And that's what we needed at that moment. And so, I appointed my driver, the lowest person on the totem pole, to the top position. And pretty much everybody told me that was a bad idea. But you have to have some faith in your decision-making. And so I did that. And we won the race.

DAVID GERGEN: Tell me, I think everybody is curious to know, what you've learned since you've gone to Washington. You won this upset victory. You had a lot of support. The *Boston Globe's* been very supportive of you, consistently. And so, you had a great sendoff. But still, you're going into— you're one of the most junior people in a minority party, in a broken-down system. That was daunting in and of itself. But what have you discovered since you've gone to Washington?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: There are a lot of people in the room tonight. I probably have the lowest job approval rating of anybody here as a member of Congress. So it is a tough place to be. And I was very confident that I had run for the right principles. I thought long and hard about whether this was a place where I could have an impact and make a difference, and whether this was something I should get into.

But I was worried when I showed up that I wouldn't like the day-to-day, because I didn't know what it would be like. And I've actually found that this is a place where, if you work very, very hard, and you pick your battles carefully, you can have an impact and make a difference.

And I've actually been pleasantly surprised and encouraged by the impact that you can have as a member of Congress. Look, in the minority party, in a state that does not matter one bit in the presidential election, in some ways being a freshman Democrat from Massachusetts couldn't be worse.

And yet, we've been able to do a lot of good things in just the first ten months.

DAVID GERGEN: You reached out to try to find a roommate, and you asked a Republican first to be a roommate, or share a house?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I ran on a position of bipartisanship. In fact, when the political scientists look at my primary, they say what was most remarkable about winning was not just that you were the only one, but that I actually ran not by going to one extreme or the other, which is the recipe for winning primaries in America today. But I said that my opponent was too partisan, that that was why he wasn't getting anything done, and that the partisan divide in Washington today is what is contributing to making Washington so dysfunctional.

And that message resonated, not just in the general election. All the political consultants said, "Seth, that's a great message for the general election, but you can't run on that in a Massachusetts Democratic primary." But it resonated with people. I think people recognized that we've got to come together if we're going to get things done.

And frankly, when you're in the minority, you have to find some Republican support for your ideas or they're never going to go anywhere.

DAVID GERGEN: So how is it working out in terms of your search for bipartisan consensus?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I think my approach to bipartisanship is I don't ever compromise on my principles, but I work very hard to try to find common ground.

And it takes some effort in Washington. Because when you go down there, I go down there for about four days at a time, for four days of voting. And it's very easy just to surround yourself with Democrats – the caucus meetings, the pre-hearing meetings, the meetings that you have in the office, the dinners you go to at night very much are usually all Democrats. So you have to make an effort to reach out.

But I've done that. I go on runs with Republicans.

DAVID GERGEN: Are they running after you or are you running after them? [laughter]

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: We run together. And go out to dinner, go out to lunch. A good example is a Representative who is a fellow Iraq war veteran from Oklahoma, who I just got to know because I took him out to dinner. And you know what, there are an awful lot of issues that we didn't discuss. There are a lot of issues where we do not see eye to eye and we would not work together. But we found some common ground about what to do with ISIS in Iraq; and specifically some common criticisms of the administration's policy.

And so, we wrote an op-ed together in *Time*. And I think that op-ed resonated with people a lot more because it was coming from two people from very different places on the political spectrum, representing very different constituencies of Americans. If I had just written that op-ed with a fellow Democrat from Massachusetts, half of America would have dismissed it without even reading it.

DAVID GERGEN: They wouldn't have printed it in *Time*.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right. And then, I was traveling with my colleague down actually at an Army base, where we were riding around in an Army van. And he said to me, "How would you like to work on immigration reform?" And I looked at him and said, "What kind of immigration reform do you want to work on?" I mean, if I had asked my staff to go find a Republican to work with on immigration reform, just based on his politics, he would have been near the bottom of the list. But he is an example of why, if immigration reform came to a vote in the House today, it would pass, because there are a lot of Republicans who support it.

And so, but the thing is, I would never have known that about him at a professional level if I hadn't had a personal relationship.

DAVID GERGEN: And you developed a personal relationship just because you wanted to reach out to him.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right.

DAVID GERGEN: And have dinner.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right. And sit down and talk; you've got to talk. People ask me all the time, is it like *House of Cards*? [laughter] It's not, it's not that bad. [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: Some would say it's worse, but go ahead.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I think actually the personal animosity is not as bad. People aren't screaming and yelling at each other in the hallway. Sometimes we wish they would, because it would be more honest if their disagreements as opposed to just going in their corner and voting. But a lot of people just don't know each other, just don't understand the other side, and therefore can't find places where we actually do agree.

DAVID GERGEN: Isn't there a fear among a lot of people that if they do cross the aisle, if they do break with orthodoxy, if they do make that surprise decision, if you're a Republican, say, on climate change, that you're going to get clobbered in our next primary?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Yes. And it's a legitimate concern.

DAVID GERGEN: And that especially on the right, but increasingly on the left, that people are going to take you on in the press, they're going to hit you on talk radio. There are going to be a lot of other places you're going to be subjected to a fairly strong torrent of abuse.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: One of the other frequent questions I get is, why is Congress so stupid? How can Congress not believe in the basic science of climate change, for example. And I've got to tell you, I'm pretty impressed by a lot of my colleagues, by most of my colleagues. A lot of them are

actually very smart. It's not the easiest thing in the world to get elected. I think what's lacking in Washington today is not intelligence, it's courage. It's simply the willingness to stand up for what you know is true, what you believe in. But it might mean you don't get reelected.

DAVID GERGEN: I was looking at some numbers the other day, and the hollowing out of the middle where people used to work together. Politics used to be played between the 40-yard lines, is the metaphor that was frequently used. And that's because an awful lot of people, that's where they live, that's where they live intellectually and ideologically. So that in the '60s and '70s when I came to Washington, about half the members of the House and Senate were considered, quote, moderates. And today, that number is down to less than 10%. It's an endangered species. So both parties, the right moved much more rapidly and much more aggressively to the side. Now you see the rise of a populist leftwing that Bernie Sanders represents.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: To continue your analogy, even statistics show that most Americans today are still between the 40-yard lines. But the problem is, the people in the end zones make all the noise, raise all the money, and control the debate.

DAVID GERGEN: Are you finding that an issue for you? You've gotten, frankly, a lot of attention in the *Boston Globe*, so what you do is well covered. But do you find that you're still rubbing up against your party because you're not orthodox enough? Is there an inhibition on fundraising? How does that work out for you?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: There is a lot of political pressure, but I don't think it's— I just don't think it's that hard.

DAVID GERGEN: You had the Democratic establishment against you in the primary.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right. The entire Democratic establishment was against me. No one would come out and support me. It was a tough time. But there's tremendous respect in Washington for the political system and the fact that at the end of the day, the voters make their decision.

I was in a meeting with Leader Pelosi a few weeks ago. And she had all the Democrats. And she very much wanted us to vote a certain way on a bill. I think it was on the medical device tax. And she said, "We've got to oppose the effort to repeal this tax." But I had said during the campaign that I think it unfairly hurts small businesses, and therefore medical innovation, because most innovation comes from the smallest, newest companies. And so, I said, "I think we should repeal the tax." And she was going around the room, and she got to me, and she looked at me, and I said, "Well, I'm going to vote to repeal because I made that promise to my constituents." And you know what she said to me? She said, "Okay." And then she went to the next person. It wasn't that hard! [laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: Yeah?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Look, I know it's not always that easy, and I know there are a lot of pressures. And frankly, it's a little bit different when you come as an outsider and didn't get the party's support to get elected. But at the end of the day, I think there's tremendous respect out there in America for people who just are authentic and say what they believe, and follow their principles. And I don't expect that everybody in my district is always going to agree with me. I mean, I've taken a couple hundred votes so far. There's probably nobody in my district who would have voted the exact same way on every single vote.

One of the lessons I learned from Peter Gomes was, when I came out of church one day on a Sunday at Harvard, I came up to him and I said, "That was a fantastic sermon." And he looked at me and he said, "That just means you agreed with what I said." [laughter]

And it was a very good point. What I find today, if I give a talk, whether it's at a fundraiser, a group of constituents, and someone walks out of the room and says, "I'm going to support you because I agree with everything you've said," that sort of thing, maybe that guy might be a little crazy. But if someone walks out and says, "I don't agree with everything you've said, but I respect your leadership and you're the kind of person we need in Washington," that means a lot more to me.

DAVID GERGEN: I want to ask you about two or three other things and then we'll go to questions. Your support for veterans, that's been very core for you. Tell us what's going on with the Veterans Administration. Why is this so hard, to get a system that's responsive, sees people quickly and provides the best medical care?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, in general terms, I think what Congress has done over the last ten or so years – and we've really recognized with the recent wars what a problem this is – is thrown a lot of money at the existing bureaucracy. But we haven't done much to actually change the bureaucracy.

The fascinating fact: The peak of claims at the VA from World War I was not 1920 or 1925, which is what I would guess; it's 1969.

DAVID GERGEN: Whoa!

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: So the VA was really built for an entirely different generation of veterans, really designed not even for World War II veterans, but for World War I veterans. And it shows us two things:

One, it's not necessarily built for today's veterans. And the other thing it says is, look, if the VA can't handle the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans coming in the doors today, we haven't even begun to see the beginning of the problem. We haven't reached the peak of claims yet from Vietnam. A lot of Vietnam veterans are just now recognizing that their Parkinson's or cancer is traceable back to Agent Orange exposure 40 years ago.

So we have a lot of work to do to fundamentally reform the bureaucracy. And I've seen this first hand, because I made a commitment to continue getting my healthcare from the VA. And I had to have surgery earlier this year, and so I went in and checked– I'd been a patient down the street at the Jamaica Plain VA for a long time, but I went in and checked with the VA in Washington. And the one thing the VA is known for is having a great medical records system, electronic medical records system. So I gave them name, rank and Social Security number. And 25 minutes later they said, "Well, we can't prove you're a veteran, so we'll consider taking you as a humanitarian case." [laughter]

I wanted to say, "Why don't you Google me," but I was not going to say that. [laughter] Not going to play the Congressman's card. I sat down in the waiting room next to some guys who had been sitting there for five or six hours.

And then fast forward to when I got sent home from the surgery. I had surgery early in the morning because we had votes that afternoon, and my cousin came and picked me up after I woke up. And got a bag of meds from the pharmacy. They'd prescribed me Percocet and the doc said "You can try to take one; you'll probably need two." Well, I went back to Capitol Hill. I didn't take any Percocet right away because I wanted to remember how I voted. [laughter] And then after votes, the anesthesia was wearing off, it was starting to hurt, so I took a pill.

And then I got into a staff meeting with my team, and about 30 minutes in it was hurting a lot. And so, I said I guess I need a second pill. And when I went and looked at the bottle more carefully, they had prescribed me Percocet but sent me home with Advil. [audience: whoa!] And I don't know if there are any doctors in the audience, but they don't work the same way.

And by that point, they knew I was a Congressman. And yet still managed to send me home with the wrong meds.

So the VA needs a lot of fundamental reform. There are some people at the VA who do a fantastic job. In fact, my surgeon was very good, and she was appointed at GW, but she did shifts at the VA because she wants to serve veterans. She's there for the right reasons.

But obviously they've got some problems in the pharmacy.

DAVID GERGEN: It's surprising. They were famous for their electronic records. And yet, you said that when people make transition – I've heard you say this – from the Defense Department active duty to becoming a veteran, the two computer program systems don't talk to each other. So you can't leave with a computerized record sent to the VA.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Right. And now we're spending billions of dollars trying to get them to interface, when really what needs to happen is someone at the highest level just needs to say we're either using the VA system or the DoD system, and they're all going to be on the same system. But for some reason, that hasn't happened yet

DAVID GERGEN: It's astonishing. Somebody who was a big tech person for the federal government, in the Obama administration, told me recently that if you go into the VA and look for the website, there are over 1,000 websites at the VA. One thousand websites. And that veterans frequently have to have six, seven, eight, nine passwords to navigate the system. Think of that.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I think that our veterans deserve the best healthcare in the world. I think that's a commitment that all of us actually share. It's not a Republican issue or a Democratic issue, it's an American issue.

But there's more to it than that, too, because it's also just a good economic investment in our future. Veterans are disproportionately Fortune 500 CEOs. Veterans are also disproportionately homeless. Well, how does that happen?

I think a lot of it has to do with the transition, because if you can make the transition from the military to back home successfully, then you can apply all that leadership training, the ability to perform under the most difficult circumstances on earth, to the business world, to your community. Veterans are disproportionately civically engaged, much more likely to vote, much more likely to be involved in their communities than non-veterans.

So veterans are a tremendous asset to this country. That's why the GI Bill has been called the single most successful piece of legislation ever passed in our Congress's history – about a \$7 return for every \$1 invested.

But if you don't make that transition successfully, if you don't get the basic care you need for treatment conditions, like post-traumatic stress, then you can literally end up on the streets.

DAVID GERGEN: Do you think you're making progress?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's hard. It's slow, but steady. But I think we are.

DAVID GERGEN: Do you think one person can make a difference in this situation, as a Congressman? Is this an area where you can make a difference?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's a lesson I learned in Iraq. Every single day in Iraq, even in the midst of a war that I disagreed with, I saw the impact that individuals could make, the impact that leaders could have on the lives of other people. It's a lot of work. You have to be principled. And you have to find some courage. But I think the same is true in just about anything, and the same is certainly true in Congress.

DAVID GERGEN: One area where you clearly are being listened to is on international affairs, foreign affairs, especially on the Middle East. You've been on, what, a couple of Congressional delegations going overseas; codels, as they're called?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: That's right.

DAVID GERGEN: And you were in the Situation Room where the president was talking to you to persuade you to support the Iran nuclear agreement? And you were on the White House website, weren't you, they had you up?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I did, I spent some time in the Situation Room with the president. But I didn't support the Iran agreement because he supported it. I supported it because after I did an exhaustive analysis of the alternatives. And by the way, I don't think it's a great deal. But I just looked at all the different ways we could try to get a better deal and decided there's no pathway to a better deal. And we've got to do everything we can to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Once I'd made that decision though, a lot of people said, "Seth, this is going to be a very politically contentious issue. You need to go in the background. Don't announce your decision till the last minute. Don't talk about it, don't hold any open forums." That was the political advice I got.

But I wasn't elected to sit in the background. I was elected to go to lead.

DAVID GERGEN: Since the Iranian agreement has been approved in the Congress, the Iranians have now struck up a relationship with the Russians, with the Iraqis and the Syrians to try to preserve Assad. The Iranians have announced they're not going to cooperate with us on other fronts. They've violated UN agreements with their missiles.

Have they disappointed you since the accord was signed?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: No, they've completely met my expectations.
[laughter]

DAVID GERGEN: They did?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Yes. That's the harsh reality here. We've got to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, and after an exhaustive analysis of the alternatives, I think we're in a better position with the agreement than without it. Including, by the way, even if we have to take military action, which I certainly hope we don't have to. But even in that extreme scenario, we're going to have far better intelligence about where their weapons are and far more international credibility to take action having agreed to the deal than if we had rejected it. So under all scenarios, I think we're better off with the deal. But that doesn't mean that Iran is going to abide by it. I think they're going to try to cheat. And it doesn't mean that they're not going to continue doing all their other nefarious activities. They make human rights violations on a daily basis. They finance international terrorism. They directly killed American troops in Iraq, especially in the south where I fought.

So there's an awful lot of things that we need to— we're not going to be skiing in Tehran next winter. It's not going to be an alternative to New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont. I think some people think that, but the harsh reality is that they're still an enemy of the United States of America and an enemy of some of our closest allies, including Israel.

So we've got to keep the pressure on them for all these other things.

DAVID GERGEN: So it's been unclear whether the American strategy would be to try to contain Iran outside in terms of all of its terrorist activities or whether our strategy would be to try to strike up more of a partnership and to work with them to solve some of these problems. Do you think we've come down

firmly one way or the other? It's hard to see; sitting in Boston, it's hard to understand what's going on in terms of creating a strategy.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Look, candidly, this has been one of my chief criticisms of the administration, is I don't think we have a very clear strategy for the Middle East. I don't think we have a clear strategy for Iraq, for Afghanistan, or Syria. Or more broadly, against the threat of ISIS. And that means not just— putting troops on the ground is not a strategy. Putting 50 troops on the ground in Syria, putting 500 military advisors on the ground in Iraq, that's not a strategy. A strategy is having a political and diplomatic vision for where this is going.

If you think about what happened in Iraq, when ISIS invaded from Syria, sweeping through western and then northern Iraq, they didn't just defeat the Iraqi army. The Iraqi army put their weapons down and went home. Because they had lost faith in their government.

And what that tells us is that fundamentally the problem in Iraq today that's enabled so much of ISIS's expansion is a political problem, not a military problem. The Iraqi government went completely off the rails, fell apart, created a political vacuum that now ISIS has filled.

We don't fix Iraqi politics by training Iraqi troops. I think we've totally missed the mark. And if you think back to—

DAVID GERGEN: How do you do it? If you're not going to put troops on the ground and you're not going to train them, what do you do?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: You've got to be involved in the political system. You've got to have those advisors in the ministries, in the prime minister's office.

We used to have that. Don't forget, Prime Minister Maliki, as terrible as a guy he was — and we should have gotten rid of him a long time ago — we actually made tremendous progress under Prime Minister Maliki during the surge, political progress, because we had the political influence in Baghdad. We built the largest US embassy in the world in Baghdad in the world because we knew—

DAVID GERGEN: But General Petraeus, whom we both respect, argues the reason that he had so much influence politically was that we had a force there.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I think his answer actually— we've talked about this recently. I think his answer's more nuanced. I think that there's some value in having some troops there; frankly, we need some troops to protect the diplomats. But it's more about having that influence in the political system within the government.

I'm with Secretary Gates, as a former employee of the Department of Defense, who thinks we need to put a lot more resources into the Department of State. And if we put more resources into the Department of State and conducted more aggressive diplomacy, we wouldn't have to put American troops on the ground. And you wouldn't find American troops in the situation where I found myself, going back to Iraq in February of this year, the first time I'd been there since being there as a Marine for the surge. And I went back with Congress. And I saw so much of what we had fought for, and frankly even achieved, during the surge, gone to waste. Because we didn't follow through with the politics.

DAVID GERGEN: What would your strategy be in Syria? How dangerous do you think— I was there in the '70s when Henry Kissinger negotiated to get the Russians out of the Middle East. And that was a very important accomplishment. Now they're back in. Should we just say, well, they're going to be in their own quagmire, forget about it, don't worry about it? Or should this be something that goes into an overall strategy? What should our strategy be in Syria?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Syria is an incredibly difficult problem. We could talk for the next three hours just about what to do in Syria. But we've got to articulate a strategic vision. Russia has done

this. Russia has come in, in the space of just a few weeks, said, "Here's a vision for Syria, here's where we're going. Assad is going to remain in power." We haven't don't that. And today, we're sending 50 Special Forces troops into Syria, still without any political plan. And I don't want to see the same thing happen to those troops as what happened to me, which is they go back five years from now and see of their work gone to waste, because we didn't follow through with the politics.

DAVID GERGEN: Do you feel that about a lot of the work you did?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Completely.

DAVID GERGEN: In places like Fallujah?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: And when the commander from Afghanistan, General Campbell, testified before the Armed Services Committee a couple weeks ago, I'm on the committee, and my question to him was, "What are you doing, General, to make sure that we don't repeat the same mistakes in Afghanistan that we made in Iraq?" Because the worst thing that could happen in Afghanistan would be five years after we pull the troops out to have to send them back in. And that's the worst tragedy of Iraq. Under the president who ran on pulling the troops out of Iraq, five years later he's had to send them back in.

DAVID GERGEN: Help me, then, go back to this question, what should our strategy be, then, for Syria in particular and with ISIS? That seems the hardest, most tractable problem we face in the Middle East.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: If you press me on this, I think that the strategy in Syria should be a political transition from Assad's leadership. We will not support Assad remaining in power, but we're not going to necessarily just overthrow him. But that doesn't seem to be consistent with our military strategy, which is just to provide military support to his opposition. If we really believed in that strategy, we should provide a lot of diplomatic support to organize the opposition so that they can present a credible alternative. I don't think we're doing that.

DAVID GERGEN: So what would you do? I still don't quite get it.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: The point is that you need to have a political strategy. So if you believe that there should be a political alternative to Syria, then one of the things you need to do is you need to provide some unity in the opposition. So what are we doing in Syria to provide any unity in the opposition? We're not doing anything.

We're just sending in supplies to support this group, or troops to support that group.

DAVID GERGEN: We spent \$500 million to train troops and we got five. Is that really a viable alternative to strengthen these rebels who we didn't get anything out of so far?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: No. I think it's not. And yet that seems to be what we're doing again today, when the president just announced that we're sending more advisors in.

DAVID GERGEN: I still don't see what you would do.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I would send— we need to work on the politics. We need to get what I've called for in a resolution with Congressman Himes of

Connecticut, convening a political discussion about what the transition in Syria will be. And then if you need to send in troops, at least they know where they're—

DAVID GERGEN: Who would [simultaneous conversation]

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, you've got to get reasonable powers to the table.

DAVID GERGEN: What about Putin?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, I think that's an open question. That's a good debate. But the point is, we're not even starting this discussion. We're not even having this discussion. And yet, we're sending more Americans into harm's way. That's a mistake.

DAVID GERGEN: I want to tell you how much I appreciate the fact you really getting into the details of this and trying to understand it and push, because one doesn't have a sense sometimes that that happens among members of Congress.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: We've never had fewer veterans in our nation's history than we do today.

DAVID GERGEN: Really?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: And at a time when we're sending troops into combat and facing an incredible array of challenges all across the globe. I think that perspective is important.

DAVID GERGEN: Well, it's interesting. Again, going back to my own experience when I first went to Washington back in the late '60s/early '70s. About 75-78% of the members of Congress were veterans. And I think that number is down to less than 20, maybe 15/16 altogether. But the number of Afghan/Iraq veterans is much lower than that, isn't it?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's very small. And the encouraging thing is there's respect. The chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who of course is a Republican and quite a veteran Republican at that, he will sometimes reverse seniority on the committee for questions, so that the young people down front get to ask the first questions. Because he has said that some of the veterans down front consistently ask some of the best questions.

DAVID GERGEN: The younger ones, the ones who have most recently been there.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Right.

DAVID GERGEN: The floor is open. We have two microphones here. There's one on either side. And please come forward. If you would just identify yourself briefly, and remember that all questions end with a question mark. [laughter]

Q: Hi, my name is Jeff Klein. I live in Dorchester, about a mile from here. Before I retired, I worked at GE in Lynn for many years. I want to ask about Syria. We've spent billions of dollars in making war in Syria, in financing and arming various rebel factions, all without authorization from Congress or a resolution from the United Nations. One of your colleagues on the House Armed Services Committee, Tulsi Gabbard, has had what I think the frankness and courage to say that this war is illegal. And she also said that it's counterproductive. And I just want to read a sentence to you, and my question is going to be, do you agree?

Representative Gabbard said, "It's counterproductive because right now US arms are getting into the hands of our enemies – al Qaeda, al Nusra, and these other groups, these Islamist extremist groups who are our sworn enemies. These are the groups who attacked us on 9/11 and are those who supposedly trying to defeat the Assad regime. Yet at the same time, we're supporting them with arms." Do you agree with that?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, I agree with much of the statement. But I agree with the statement, not so much the implications. Congresswoman Gabbard is a fantastic colleague of mine.

Q: She's an Iraq veteran, also, and on the Armed Services Committee.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I was about to say that, but you beat me to the punch.

Q: Sorry. But I'm not running for office.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: So, she's a fellow veteran, a young veteran on the committee. I agree with her statement, that a lot of the effort that we've made in Syria has just gone to waste. And again, I would emphasize, because I don't think we've articulated a larger mission. This is one of the things I consistently heard from the troops and the generals on the ground. They didn't have a plan for where this was all going.

They couldn't even articulate a mission for the troops that we were training.

But if the implication is that we should just pull out and do nothing I think we do that at our peril. And we've got to recognize– and this is a hard thing to recognize because we don't like to admit this, because we all want to be out of the Middle East. Having been there myself, trust me, I want to be out of the Middle East. But the worst refugee crisis in Europe since World War II is a direct result of the chaos in

Syria. It's a result of the fact that countries like the United States have not taken leadership to resolve the crisis.

Q: Is it legal to make war in a sovereign country without authorization from Congress or the United Nations?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: No, it's not.

Q: Thank you.

DAVID GERGEN: Please.

Q: Yes, thank you. My name is Mike Rudman, I live in Plymouth, and I have a question. Can you give us any hope that Congress will do anything to resolve the health crisis in this country regarding gun violence?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's a great question. And there's an awful lot of frustration. I signed a letter just a week before the Oregon shooting, calling for a vote on background checks. Ninety-six percent of America believes we ought to have universal background checks for gun purchasers. Even more shocking, a majority of NRA members believe that we ought to have background checks. And yet, Congress won't even take a vote on the issue.

So this is a very serious problem. And it's embarrassing to be a member of Congress and not be able to say that we're at least voting on this incredibly important health crisis, as you say, in America.

What I think the strategy should be, what I think we need to change our efforts, for all of those in the room who support responsible measures to reduce gun violence, is we've got to talk to the opposition. We've got to talk in terms they understand. Because for years, literally decades, we've been just raising more money on the left and giving more money to Democrats who support gun control. And yet, we haven't actually made a dent in the issue.

One of the reasons why we've actually made some progress on immigration reform, why there are so many Republicans in the House today, including our Speaker, who will vote for immigration reform, is because conservative Christians have become advocates for immigration reform. Law enforcement has become an advocate for immigration reform.

These are groups that generally support Republicans. So the opposition is hearing them.

When I was running this high-speed rail project in Texas, people used to say, "You've got to talk about the environmental benefits of high-speed rail. And truth be told, there are a lot of environmental benefits of high-speed rail; they're probably greater than you realize. But the Texans who were opposed to the high-speed rail project do not care about the environmental benefits of high-speed rail.

So you've got to talk about this issue in terms that the opposition understands, and in terms that resonate with the opposition.

Q: Hi, my name is Karen Kline, from North Andover.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Hi, Karen.

Q: Hello.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Thanks for coming down from the district.

Q: Oh, yes. I have two quick questions I'd love both of you to answer. You have JFK's name behind you, and he was very respectful and inspired by Robert Frost. Who are your favorite poets? I'd like to know that, since I'm the Poet Laureate of North Andover.

And also – Seth has heard this from me before – and also what is your feeling, both of you, about term limits?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Great questions. One of my favorite poets is Edna St. Vincent Millay, which to your point earlier about my interest in transportation: "My heart is warm with the friends I meet, and better friends I'll not be knowing. Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take, no matter where it's going." [laughter/applause]

I'm not a political scientist. And there's a lot of reasoned debate about term limits. Some people feel that if there were term limits it would just give the lobbying class in Washington more influence, and that would be obviously a bad thing for our government. But on balance, I think it would be a good thing. I think it would be— we all love presidents in their second term because they just go out and try to do the right thing and don't worry about getting reelected. And I think that would be a good thing for Congress as well.

Q: First I want to say, thank you very much, Congressman, for your service to this country, not only in the Armed Services, but also in the US Congress.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Thank you.

Q: Weja, Iraq; my brother was killed in Weja in 2008. His soldier was killed. He dragged him, as far as the reports go, he dragged him behind a large tire, and then another soldier was fraged. In asymmetrical warfare, lots of things are unfeared to Western countries. And last week, for the first time, since we pulled out of Iraq, there was another soldier that was killed in Hawijah, which is the same area that Saddam Hussein came from, lots of Wahhabism, which is spread from Saudi Arabia, not Iran.

As an infantry member, which I extremely respect— I'm a Democrat, I worked on the president's campaign. I feel a little betrayed that now we have ground troops. And as a Gold Star Family member in 2008 – I worked in 2012 on the campaign – what can you say as an infantry member that does not want to see troops on the ground? What you are saying to other members of Congress when they say, "We need to put troops on the ground in Syria. We need to put troops on the ground in Libya. We need to put troops on the ground in Iran," some people, that's on the other side.

But my brother has a seven-year-old daughter that was born on 9/11, 2007. And he was stop-lossed. He only spent two weeks with her, and then he came home for Memorial Day, and was killed on June 4th of that year.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: First of all, let me thank you for your brother's service and for your family's service to the country. On the Armed Services Committee, I have been harping on this point of view, about the need for political solutions. It doesn't mean that we will never use troops. We may even get to a point where we use troops in Iraq or Syria. We've got to have a political strategy first. And we've got to use our diplomatic corps to try to prevent having to put troops on the ground. It's got to be a comprehensive solution.

And I don't think we have that. And I think our failure after we pulled the troops out of Iraq was not just that we pulled the troops out too quickly; it's that we didn't stay involved in Iraqi politics. That's when the Iraqi government went off the rails.

So I don't want to send more troops back into Iraq until we have a pathway to a political solution. And I'd rather invest more effort in the diplomatic front than in just putting more young Americans in harm's way.

Q: Thank you so much.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Thank you.

DAVID GERGEN: Yes, ma'am? Or sir, I'm sorry! I can't see with the lights.

Q: David from Wakefield, also a constituent. You mentioned mass transit. That's one of innumerable, non-defense-related priorities that are, in my judgment, perhaps yours, underfunded in the country. I'd

like to ask, do you think we're spending too much on the military? Barney Frank, when in office and out of office, has been promoting the idea of cutting the defense budget by \$100 billion annually. Where do you come down on that?

What would be your ideal defense expenditure at this point?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Well, the president and the Congress actually agree that we probably just agreed in the budget agreement, bipartisan, Democrats and Republicans, to actually raise the sequester cap, to spend marginally more on our defense, because of the breadth of the threats that we face in the world today.

But that doesn't mean that we're spending all of that money wisely. And we're wasting a lot of money in the Department of Defense when the new Secretary of Defense came and testified before the Armed Services Committee, my question to him was, "What are the weapon systems and programs that you want to cut and that we here in Congress won't let you?" Because there are an awful lot of weapons that we keep going just because they're made in some Congressional district around the country. And that is a waste of taxpayer resources. It's doing a disservice to our troops.

And so, I led an amendment to defund one of those programs and actually shift the money into unfunded requirements. It was an airplane that the Air Force wants to get rid of, called the A-10. A lot of people love the A-10, but its missions can be fulfilled by other aircraft. And frankly, it's dangerous to have up there because it's very easy to shoot down.

And yet, there were unfunded requirements for IED protection for the troops on the ground. It's the classic situation of where the big, expensive airplane gets preserved by the Congressional members who have A-10 bases in their districts, and the needs of the 18-year-old soldiers and Marines on the ground who are getting blown up by the hundreds by IEDs are not met.

Q: So spend more wisely, but not less.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: At this time, I think it would be a mistake to spend less. However, over time, if we invested more in our diplomacy, if we invested more in the State Department, I think we'd see a downturn in military spending. When you go to southern Afghanistan today, a lot of people in southern Afghanistan actually really like America. And it's not just because girls are allowed to go to school, which they weren't before; it's not just because of kicking the Taliban out of their area from terrorizing their villages. It's because of the irrigation projects that USAID did in the 1950s. That's the kind of investment we need – investment in local economies,

investment in local schools. That's a much wiser, long-term investment than just sending troops all across the globe. [applause]

DAVID GERGEN: Can you give us a sense of how big the defense budget is versus the State Department budget.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: I should know that, and I don't know the exact figures. But it's orders of magnitude different. It's unbelievable.

DAVID GERGEN: Two more questions. Yes, please? We'll try to get to three and we'll stop there. We have three people standing. Go ahead, please

Q: Hi, my name is Mary, I'm from Boston. And I want to ask you about the draft, which everyone knows we don't have now. But a friend of mine keeps telling me that we need to bring it back. And I always feel really ambivalent about that, but tonight when you were speaking about the shortage, so to speak, of members in Congress who have military service, I was also thinking that sometimes, having been an Army transportation officer myself, I find it hard to have discussions with people about concrete military issues that come up in the press, for example, because they don't understand exactly how stuff gets done.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's a great question, and thank you for your service in the Army. I get this question a lot, because I'm actually a big supporter of national service. And I think we'd be a much stronger country if more people, more young people were involved in serving their country. I don't think we need a draft. Actually, there are about five-and-a-half Americorps applicants right now in America for every one Americorps slot. So if we just opened up opportunities for national service, a lot more young people would be involved. And I think we'd be a better country as a result. [applause] But the other interesting way to look at this— General McChrystal endorsed my campaign, and everybody figured it was because we served together in Iraq — actually, we were there at the same time, but we really didn't serve together — and that's because of his work on national service. And I'm a huge advocate for national service, as is David Gergen.

How many people in the audience think that we would have invaded Iraq if we had a draft? Or if members of Congress had sons or daughters in the military? [audience reaction] Right? And I don't think it would just turn us into a nation of peaceniks. I actually think we would have invaded Afghanistan. I think we probably would have had that response to the terrorist camps that were part of the problem with 9/11. But I don't think we'd have gone into Iraq. I think we'd make those decisions a lot more carefully. And that's another reason why it would be for more people to be involved in serving their country.

DAVID GERGEN: Yes, ma'am?

Q: Caroline from Wakefield, a constituent. My question is about the work week. You mentioned that you're in DC about three days a week. Prior to 1944, the work week was five days a week, and compromise seemed to be a better word because people got to know each other; compromise wasn't a bad word. Do you think extending the work week and spending more time in DC doing committee work and meeting with other members of Congress would end the gridlock?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: It's a great question. I don't think that'll solve the problem in and of itself, but I do think it would help. Because the difference, as you said, is that most members of Congress used to basically live and work in DC, so it wasn't just you had a longer work week. We're usually there about four days a week right now; so three days back in the district and four days there. But those four days are incredibly busy. I mean, every 15 minutes scheduled from dawn until well past dusk. Today, my first appointment was at 6:30, and I'll be done after this probably about 10:00. Someone asked me if we had time for a phone call today and I gave them two 15-minute slots at different times of the day. So it's very, very busy.

And if you have a schedule like that, you never get to know your colleagues. You don't have the time to take a colleague out to dinner like I described. And you certainly don't find yourself on a Sunday evening just looking for someone to have dinner with and think to get to know and invite some of your colleagues because you're back in your district.

The problem is, back in the districts, back here in Massachusetts for me, there's tremendous pressure to always be here, to always be seen, to be campaigning and to work so hard to get reelected every two years.

DAVID GERGEN: And raise money.

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: And it's a tough balance, because you can't lose touch with your district, right? But there's an irony, in that with all the pressure to come back home—as soon as the last vote is called, there's this mad dash to the National

Airport to fly home. The irony is that it probably makes us not quite as effective in Congress at governing.

DAVID GERGEN: Yes, sir?

Q: I'm Dave from Weston. As a veteran and a person who has managed campaigns and worked in them for 50 years, I deeply admire what you have done. Right after 9/11, I called a client of mine who was a senior official at the Federal Reserve and he said, "Do you know that those SOBs in the White House-- Rumsfeld, Bush and Cheney-- appropriated money to go into Iraq but they didn't appropriate one nickel for Veterans Affairs for the people coming back?" I wondered at the time, where was the courage, or lack of it, of the Congress to change that? And I wonder if today, with this change we've had in the Republican Party in Congress and the attitude of them doing more to get things done in the last couple of weeks, if you have any feeling that we're going to make more progress in the near future than we have in the recent past?

CONGRESSMAN SETH MOULTON: Thank you for your service and thank you for your comments. I certainly hope that this will change. And I do think that veterans' issues should be bipartisan. But we've got to make a lot of it work. And we've got to through the partisan gridlock.

I sit on the Budget Committee, which is one of, unfortunately, the most partisan committees in Congress, despite in theory being one of the most important. And I had an amendment this year to the budget to increase funding for veterans, to increase funding to the VA; actually just to bring it up to the president's request, because the Republican budget had cut it from the president's request.

And I went to the Democratic staff on the Budget Committee, and they said, "Well,

Representative Moulton, I'm not sure you want to propose this amendment because the Republicans might vote for it." [laughter] Usually on the Budget Committee, you just try to score partisan points by proposing amendments that all Democrats will support and Republicans will vote against. Then you can use that in some campaign.

I said, "No, I want them to vote for it. I think this should be a bipartisan priority." So I came into the committee hearing, and I gave a two-minute speech about why we should all support veterans' healthcare, and then all the Republicans voted against it.

And when my next opportunity to speak came up, rather than speaking about my next amendment, I went back to the VA amendment. And I said, "I was really disappointed because I think this is actually a place where we can come together."

And then after that, I walked out and several Republicans came up and apologized. And they said, "I didn't know we really were supposed to actually vote for that. We never vote for Democratic amendments."

That's an example of a freshman not doing his politics; getting the policy right, but not doing the politics, not sitting down and talking with my colleagues to explain to them why I really actually wanted them to support this amendment.

But it absolutely should be a bipartisan priority. And the bills that I have in Congress, I have four bills right now working their way through Congress. And they all have bipartisan cosponsors to start reform in the VA.

DAVID GERGEN: Seth, on behalf of everyone here, I want to salute you. Thank you very much.