



Politico Murphy Kicks Off Political Season at SSA Foundation Forum

What will congress do about the debt limit?... the budget deficit?... and how will it affect my business?

By John Dunlap – Editor, SSA Globe

Mike Murphy is a creative force of nature and, at the same time, a man who often defies conventional thought. He was born in Detroit, Michigan, attended the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University and was an Institute of Politics Fellow at Harvard's JFK School of Government. He lives in Los Angeles and works as a writer/producer in the entertainment

industry. That certainly adds up to qualities you might find in a dedicated liberal Democrat, right?

Wrong. Murphy is considered one of the top conservative pundits in America, a man who has handled strategy and advertising for over 26 successful GOP senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns, including the successful gubernatorial races of Jeb Bush, Mitt Romney, John Engler, Tommy Thompson, Christie Whitman, Dirk Kempthorne and Terry Branstad as well as the successful senatorial races of Lamar Alexander, Slade Gorton, Spence Abraham, Jeff Sessions, Dirk Kempthorne, Steve Symms, Paul Coverdell and Larry Pressler.

Murphy is also a well-known commentator and analyst in the media. He is a contributing editor at *TIME* magazine, where he writes the widely followed "Murphy's Law" political column. He's a regular roundtable guest on *Meet the Press with David Gregory* and is frequently heard on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*.

And now, he'll be a regular on left-leaning pundit Keith Olbermann's latest talk show *Countdown with*

Keith Olbermann on Current TV, a new network run by Al Gore.

"I guess hell will freeze over," Murphy laughs when asked about his latest gig.

But what makes Murphy so much a man-in-demand is the fact that, beside having a healthy sense of humor, he is completely candid about his opinions of both liberal and conservative politicians. He'll be bringing an entertaining and thought-provoking talk to the SSA's Fall Conference & Trade Show in Las Vegas as the Foundation Forum speaker on September 8.

Behind the Curtain

"I hope to bring a look behind the curtain of what is going on in American politics," Murphy says. "I'll try to provide some insights that will allow the people attending the SSA gathering to win some bets with the folks at home."

For example, he'll bring his thoughts concerning the Republican party's efforts to find a worthy candidate to take on Barack Obama in the 2012 Presidential campaign. That effort started in June when the first debate

took place among the myriad of candidates. And Murphy's thoughts about that initial gathering?

"It was very, very long," he says. "By hour number two I was worn out and they never dealt with major issues, like concerns about China. In the end, Mitt Romney went in as the front runner and didn't do anything to lose that spot. Of course, being the front-runner is great if you start that way and finish that way. But the problem is that you are everybody's target."

Among the other candidates that Murphy felt got off to a good start was Michele Bachmann, the congresswoman from Minnesota who also has backing from the growing Tea Party.

"She held up well," says Murphy, "but I don't think she'll get the nomination. If she does the Republicans will lose 45 states (in the presidential election)."

All of which brings up the concept of a woman being elected president of the United States. Although there is much talk about Bachmann and Sarah Palin, he still thinks it is a tough path for a woman to the presidency.

"It will happen one day...it *should* happen one day," Murphy adds.

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“But, right now, it is still harder for a woman to get elected—a real uphill fight. It seems that we have so many women who get elected to Congress, but those aren’t jobs that necessarily train you for the White House. Governorships would be better training grounds, he believes.”

When Will It End?

Addressing the contentiousness that has marked politics over the past decade, notably politicians voting almost exclusively along party lines and making little effort to meet the rival party halfway, Murphy says, “I hope it does end, and soon. I don’t want to watch as China becomes the top world power. There doesn’t seem to be any real leadership in D.C. right now and we’ve got some very

real problems: a debt abyss, India and China rising, among others. We don’t need people spending all their time vilifying each other. But all this bipartisan contentiousness will end when the voters demand that it change and take people out of office.”

Murphy is anything but contentious. An affable and entertaining soul, he found himself at a crossroads prior to the last election when two men he had worked for, Mitt Romney and John McCain, were both running for president. That’s when a new door opened up for him—the chance to be a TV pundit and personality.

“It happened primarily because of my dear friend, the late Tim Russert,” Murphy says. “I couldn’t work against either Mitt or John, so I went neutral. Tim asked me to come in and be part of *Meet the Press*. I instantly enjoyed it. And then I also started doing some

speaking because I’ve always been a bit of a ham and I like performing in front of people.”

He also enjoys being a part of Hollywood, a carryover from his time helping Arnold Schwarzenegger become governor of California. Murphy is currently developing shows for HBO and other networks, as well as some film possibilities.

When reminded that he has all the traits of a renaissance man, he laughs and says “I’m pretty much just a two-trick pony.”

Whatever the case, Mike Murphy is nothing if not interesting and entertaining, and SSA conference attendees at Ceasar’s Palace in September will have the chance to benefit from his expertise. And maybe even be ready to win a few bets back home. ❖



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