

the

boisi center interviews

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: I wanted to start off by asking a broad question that isn't particularly about Latinos, namely, what happened to religion in this election? A year ago, six months ago, there were worries about Obama's so-called Muslim roots and about Romney's Mormonism, as well as the Catholic religious freedom movement. Where are we on those issues?

: Well, in a sense you answered your own question, because both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney had good reasons not to be too overt about their religion. For Obama, of course, he had to deal with the Jeremiah Wright issue back in the previous election. He obviously had no interest in bringing that up, even though a lot of his current spiritual advisers are in fact evangelicals, sort of moderate to liberal evangelicals.

And Romney, of course, coming from the Mormon faith, knew that he had a problem, particularly within the Republican ranks, the single most important bloc within the Republican party, White evangelicals, who did not support him by and large. He did win in a couple of states, actually won the evangelical vote. But by and large, they looked for other candidates, alternatives to him.

So I think the fallback option has been for Romney to talk about values, without necessarily connecting them in any

explicit way to religion. Obama acted in a similar way, although it is interesting that we keep finding a significant amount of Americans who do not believe he is a Christian, despite the fact that he identifies as a Christian. This goes beyond the people who think he's Muslim, 17 or 18% or so; people just generally don't know what his particular religion is.

So I think there has been that dimension of it, but perhaps even more importantly has been the importance of the economy and jobs. That has been such a dominant theme that, unlike, let's say in 2004, when that was less of an issue and a lot

of the social issues came to the fore, you just don't have the kind of attention to the social issues that you've had in past elections. Those are the issues people connect most closely with religion, and so I think both of those things have contributed to religion having less of a prominent role this year.

But wait until people vote, because we've found that whether religion plays a prominent role in the political discourse or not, there are very strong religion-oriented aspects to the way people vote. We know that those who attend church most regularly tend to vote heavily Republican. Those who do not attend or attend infrequently tend to vote heavily Democratic. There are exceptions to that, of course—African-Americans most specifically on the Democratic side. But as a report we did recently on the unaffiliated noted, these are a predictor of the way people vote.

: So is the religion question under the surface assistance before participating in a panel at the Boisi Center.

if they bring religion into this thing, we would typically see their surrogates making the negative attacks on their behalf. Maybe I'm not catching the ads or I'm not on the right mailing list, but I haven't seen much of this sort of below-the-surface negative religious activity. Have you?

: Well, there has certainly been a lot of religiously-based mobilizing. That's for sure. I happen to live in Maryland, which is not electorally competitive, but there are things on the ballot—same sex marriage more specifically—where you visibly see the religious community on both sides of that issue. They are heavily mobilized.

You know, back in 2004 there were several states where same sex marriage was on the ballot. This time around it's four, Maryland being one of them, so you definitely see those constituencies. You mentioned the question of religious liberty and the whole HHS mandate. That, within the Catholic community in particular, has resonated. We asked people in our latest poll what are they hearing about in their churches, synagogues, and mosques, and so forth, in their houses of worship. Among respondents who attend at least once or twice a month, half of them say that they've heard about this election from the pulpit. About a third said they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other

issues. About 14.8 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 16.2 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 70.2 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 13.9 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 10.6 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 16 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 1.6 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 3.4 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 8.87 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 31.5 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 10.7 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 0.9 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 5 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 0.97 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 10.2 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 17.2 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 98.5 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 12.4 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues. About 5.9 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about this election from the pulpit. About 3 percent of those who attend at least once or twice a month say they have heard about abortion and same sex marriage and other issues.

: That social conservatism should make them more apt to vote for bans on abortion and bans on gay marriage, and yet you said that this is changing. Is that change due to the younger generation pushing that trend?

