

Politicos Search for Common Ground

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While top national political consultants from both sides gathered at Tulane on Monday (Nov. 9) to talk about "Taking the Poison Out of Partisanship," Republican pundit and co-chair Mary Matalin set the tone by proclaiming, "One man's poison is another man's Kool-Aid."



Political panelists ? from left, Democrat Hilary Rosen and Republicans Steve Schmidt, Charlie Black and Jeff Larson ? talk about "What's Fair in Politics" during Monday's (Nov. 9) summit at Tulane. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

They met up as panelists on the first day of the Bipartisan Policy Center's inaugural political summit in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall of the Lavin-Bernick Center.

Democrats and Republicans participating in the [summit](#) that continues today (Nov. 10) are the "smartest minds in politics wrestling with the toughest issues" of the day, said Ronald Brownstein, moderator of the session about assessing President Barack Obama's presidency. Brownstein is political director for Atlantic Media Co.

Walter Isaacson, moderator of the opening discussion, asked how the two sides can find common ground. Isaacson, president and CEO of the Aspen Institute, is a member of the Board of Tulane.

Kiki McLean, a Democratic political consultant who worked on Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign in 2008, said that one way to have civil discourse between opposing sides is through summits "like this where people get to know one another."



Democratic leaders (from left) Kiki McLean, Tad Devine and Hilary Rosen talk about how to "pull the poison out of politics."

Steve Schmidt, a Republican and senior campaign strategist for John McCain, agreed. While presenting contrasting ideas is good and necessary ? "in this country, we don't throw Molotov cocktails, we run negative ads " ? too much poison can backfire for a candidate.

Schmidt said that while McCain has had a bipartisan approach to politics for much of his career, in the 2008 election, it wasn't conveyed successfully enough to voters. "Obama won because he presented himself as the postpartisan candidate," said Schmidt.

Asked whether Obama's "elevator is now going up or down," John Anzalone, a Democratic pollster, said Obama "doesn't wait for the elevator, he runs up the steps."

Obama may still be a transformational president who has a "positive, consequential presidency," said Bill McInturff, a Republican pollster. "I think there is a one in four chance."