

(CBS) CBS News anchor Katie Couric spent much of Sept. 29 behind the scenes of the McCain-Palin campaign speaking with Sen. John McCain and his running mate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin. This is an unedited transcript of the interview portions broadcast on Sept. 30, 2008

Katie Couric: Do you consider yourself a feminist?

Sarah Palin: I do. I'm a feminist who believes in equal rights and I believe that women certainly today have every opportunity that a man has to succeed and to try to do it all anyway. And I'm very, very thankful that I've been brought up in a family where gender hasn't been an issue. You know, I've been expected to do everything growing up that the boys were doing. We were out chopping wood and you're out hunting and fishing and filling our freezer with good wild Alaskan game to feed our family. So it kinda started with that. With just that expectation that the boys and the girls in my community were expected to do the same and accomplish the same. That's just been instilled in me.

Couric: What is your definition of a feminist?

Palin: Someone who believes in equal rights. Someone who would not stand for oppression against women.

Couric: Where do you stand on the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act?

Palin: I'm absolutely for equal pay for equal work. The Ledbetter pay act - it was gonna turn into a boon for trial lawyers who, I believe, could have taken advantage of women who were many, many years ago who would allege some kind of discrimination. Thankfully, there are laws on the books, there have been since 1963, that no woman could be discriminated against in the workplace in terms of anything, but especially in terms of pay. So, thankfully we have the laws on the books and they better be enforced.

Couric: The Ledbetter act sort of lengthens the time a woman can sue her company if she's not getting equal pay for equal work. Why should a fear of lawsuits trump a woman's ability to do something about the fact that women make 77 cents for every dollar a man makes. And that's today.

Palin: There should be no fear of a lawsuit prohibiting a woman from making sure that the laws that are on the books today are enforced. I know in a McCain-Palin administration we will not stand for any measure that would result in a woman being paid less than a man for equal work.

Couric: Why shouldn't the Ledbetter act be in place? You think it would result in lawsuits brought by women years and years ago. Is that your main problem with it?

Palin: It would have turned into a boon for trial lawyers. Again, thankfully with the existing laws we have on the books, they better be enforced. We won't stand for anything but that. We won't stand for any discrimination in the workplace - that there isn't any discrimination in America.

Couric: Do you think the coverage of you been sexist?

Palin: No. I don't. It's obvious there are some double standards here. You know, in terms of

what the media has been doing. But I think that's more attributable to the Washington media elite not knowing who I am and just asking a whole lot of questions. Not so much based on gender, though. But based on just the fact that I'm not part of the Washington herd.

Couric: Having said that, do you think it would be sexist not to question your credentials and your policy positions.

Palin: It would be sexist if the media were to hold back and not ask me about my experience, my vision, my principles, my values. You're right.

Couric: If that's the case, why haven't you been more accessible to reporters?

Palin: I am so happy to talk to reporters. My life is an open book, happy to do it and very happy for more opportunities to do so.

Couric: Have you been pushing the campaign to sort of "Free Sarah Palin?"

Palin: The campaign knows that I am an open book. I mean, obviously is out there for God and everyone to judge my voting record, actions that I've taken as an administrator, as an executive, as a business owner, as a mom. My record is out there and my life is out there.

Couric: But having said that, reporters out there are extremely frustrated, as I'm sure you know, that they haven't been able to talk to you more, question you more, challenge you more on certain things.

Palin: I think this may be a little bit more about a campaign of reform, where just because maybe someone in the media elite hasn't had the access that maybe they're demanding, because we're running the campaign the way that we believe will best result in a good result for America - and that is a victory for John McCain. And maybe some are kind of put off by that. But that's all part of no more politics as usual; no more business as usual. I'm out there talking to the American people, those who I so dearly love and care about. I'm talking to them in these rallies that are attracting 20 - 30,000-plus people. I'm doing these rope-lines. I'm talking to every individual American that I can, in every hour that I have in my day. That's who I will be serving, that's who I'm connecting with today.

Couric: Governor Palin, almost every expert say it will take about ten years for domestic drilling to have an impact on consumers. So isn't the notion of "drill, baby, drill" a little misleading to people who think this will automatically lower their gas prices and quickly?

Palin: And it's why we should have started ten years ago tapping into domestic supplies that America is so rich in. Alaska has billions of barrels of oil and hundreds of trillions of cubic feet of clean, green natural gas onshore and offshore. Should have started doing it ten years ago but better late than never. We need to make sure that our nation's taking those steps to become energy independent.

Of course, ramping up supplies domestically is a key to that. But so is weaning ourselves off the hydrocarbons. We have got to get on board with the alternative fuel. John McCain has some great plans there. Also tapping into the nuclear, the clean coal to biomass, geothermal, tides, waves, all those things that we have as alternative energy sources, it's gotta be an all-of-the-above approach to energy independence. We cannot keep going down the road that we're going on now. And that's circulating nearly \$700 billion, American dollars, into other

countries, ramping up, boosting up their economy, decimating our own, not when we have the solution here domestically.

Couric: And we'll talk about alternative sources in a moment.

John McCain: Could I just mention one other thing about this. I disagree with the 10-year figure. I talked to the independent petroleum producers who said, "Look, we can do some of this in a matter of months. We can do a lot more of it ... in a matter of just a short period of time." And it's ...

Couric: Don't they have a vested interest in saying that, though, Senator?

McCain: Well, they have the capability. And I don't think they're not telling the truth. I mean, they're the ones who are out there doing it. But I agree ... with Governor Palin. What's the moral of this story? We should have done it a long time ago. But the point is that it also does have an effect on the futures, on the price of a barrel of oil. And many disagree with that. But I know that when they think that there's, when anybody market forces believe there's gonna be an increase in the supply then obviously the price of that commodity goes down, whether it's oil or any other supply and demand situation. And finally one other thing: India and China are drawing on basically a finite resource in the world. So we may have an additional supply to help us bridge between our dependence on oil and natural particularly oil ... and the future, which is alternate energy.

Palin: Yeah.

Couric: Gov. Palin, I know you'd like to see drilling take place in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And Sen. McCain, you oppose this. You call it, quote, "one of the most pristine and beautiful parts of the world."

McCain: Uh huh.

Couric: Who's right?

McCain: Did you expect two mavericks to agree on - (laughter) to agree on everything? Look, I ... we just have, we'll be talking more and more about this issue. We do agree on the off-shore drilling and other means of limiting our dependence on foreign oil. But for us to agree on everything would make us, I think, a little boring. You can ... say a lot about us, but we're anything but boring.

Couric: Who's gonna cave on this issue?

Palin: I don't think there's any need to characterize anything as caving. We'll continue to work together on this issue. And that issue is domestic supplies of energy being tapped, flowing into very, very, very hungry markets across our U.S. And we are on the same page there in seeking solutions to reach that goal.

Couric: At peak production, governor ...

McCain: I wanna go and moose-hunt with her. And then we can, maybe we can have a look.

Couric: Experts say it'll take almost 20 years and it would ...to achieve peak production ... in

ANWR. And it would still only cut foreign oil dependence by about two percent and only for a little while ... so is it really worth ...

Palin: Yeah, I don't know who the ...

Couric: The risk?

Palin: ...experts are who say that it would take 20 years. As the governor of an energy-producing state, we're supplying 16, 17 percent of the U.S. domestic supply of energy coming from my state. And as the former chairman of the Interstate Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, the geologists, the petroleum engineers whom I speak with are saying it can be done a lot quicker than 20 years from now. And, remember ANWR is a 2,000-acre plot that's in the midst of 21 million acres. That's not where the supply of domestic energy sources is, though, necessarily. I mean, that's not the be-all, end-all. Offshore is where the supply of energy is. And we'll tap into that.

Couric: Over the weekend, Gov. Palin, you said the U.S. should absolutely launch cross-border attacks from Afghanistan into Pakistan to, quote, "stop the terrorists from coming any further in." Now, that's almost the exact position that Barack Obama has taken and that you, Sen. McCain, have criticized as something you do not say out loud. So, Gov. Palin, are you two on the same page on this?

Palin: We had a great discussion with President Zardari as we talked about what it is that America can and should be doing together to make sure that the terrorists do not cross borders and do not ultimately put themselves in a position of attacking America again or her allies. And we will do what we have to do to secure the United States of America and her allies.

Couric: Is that something you shouldn't say out loud, Sen. McCain?

John McCain: Of course not. But, look, I understand this day and age of "gotcha" journalism. Is that a pizza place? In a conversation with someone who you didn't hear ... the question very well, you don't know the context of the conversation, grab a phrase. Gov. Palin and I agree that you don't announce that you're going to attack another country ...

Couric: Are you sorry you said it?

McCain: ... and the fact ...

Couric: Governor?

McCain: Wait a minute. Before you say, "Is she sorry she said it," this was a "gotcha" sound bite that, look ...

Couric: It wasn't a "gotcha." She was talking to a voter.

McCain: No, she was in a conversation with a group of people and talking back and forth. And I can tell you that I would say, if I was asked, of course we have to do what's necessary to protect America. The question is, is whether you make an outright public announcement the way that Sen. Obama did. And I don't think you do that. And ... I'll let Gov. Palin speak for herself.

Palin: In fact, you're absolutely right on. In the context, this was ... a voter, a constituent,

hollering out a question from across an area asking, "What are you gonna do about Pakistan? You better have an answer to Pakistan." I said we're gonna do what we have to do to protect the United States of America.

Couric: But you were pretty specific about what you wanted to do, cross-border ...

Palin: Well, as Sen. McCain is suggesting here, also, never would our administration get out there and show our cards to terrorists, in this case, to enemies and let them know what the game plan was, not when that could ultimately adversely affect a plan to keep America secure.

Couric: What did you learn from that experience?

Palin: That this is all about "gotcha" journalism. A lot of it is. (laughter) But that's okay, too.

McCain: We don't mind. We just ...

Palin: That's okay.

McCain: That's life.

Couric: Gov. Palin, since our last interview, you've gotten a lot of flak. Some Republicans have said you're not prepared; you're not ready for primetime. A conservative columnist, Kathleen Parker, went so far to say that you should step down from the ticket.

Palin: Well, I don't know who she is, and I apologize for that. So, and I don't wanna offend her, but I don't know who she is. So I won't take ...

Couric: But there has ...

Palin: ... her words necessarily to heart.

Couric: ... people have questioned your readiness since that interview. And I'm curious to hear your reaction.

Palin: Well, not only am I ready but willing and able to serve as vice president with Sen. McCain if Americans so bless us and privilege us with the opportunity of serving them, ready with my executive experience as a city mayor and manager, as a governor, as a commissioner, a regulator of oil and gas, not only with my résumé proving that readiness, but I think the important thing here is that John McCain and I, we share a vision for America that includes energy independence.

It includes securing our nation, first and foremost. It includes an environment where we are cherishing every child in this country and we are providing them good education opportunities. And top of our agenda, too, in getting our economy back on track, we share a vision of job creation in America so the hard-working American families can start paying their bills, not worrying so much about their future, their retirements. I look forward to working with him on those items on our agenda.

McCain: Let me just ... the end of that. This is not the first time that I've seen a governor being questioned by some, quote, "expert." I remember that Ronald Reagan was a cowboy. I

remember that Bill Clinton was, ah President Clinton was a governor of a very small state that had no experience either.

I remember how easy it was gonna be for Bush I to defeat him. I still recall, (laughter) whoops, that one. But the point is, I've seen underestimation before. And that's fine. We understand that. We understand what this is all about. So, I'm very proud of the excitement that Gov. Palin has ignited with our party and around this country. It is a ... level of excitement and enthusiasm, frankly, that I haven't seen before. And I'd like to attribute it to me (laughter.) But the fact is that she has done incredible job. And I'm so proud of the work that she's doing.

Palin: Thank you.

Couric: A former Bush speechwriter, David Frum, questioned your judgment of putting, quote, "such a neophyte second in line to the presidency."

McCain: Well, David, God bless you and good luck in your speech-writing ambitions (laughter.) And I will ask after ... for our inauguration, we'll ask you to write the speech for us.

Couric: I want to start with climate change, if I could. What's your position on global warming? Do you believe it's man-made or not?

Palin: Well, we're the only arctic state, of course, Alaska. So we feel the impacts more than any other state up there, with the changes in the climates. And certainly it is apparent. We have erosion issues and we have melting sea ice, of course. So what I've done up there is form a sub-cabinet to focus solely on climate change. Understanding that it is real.

Couric: Is it manmade in your opinion?

Palin: You know ... there are man's activities that can be contributed to ... the issues that we're dealing with now with these impacts. I'm not going to solely blame all of man's activities on changes in climate. Because the world's weather patterns ... are cyclical. And over history we have seen changes there. But kind of doesn't matter at this point, as we debate what caused it. The point is it's real, we need to do something about it. And like ... Tony Blair had said ... when he was in leadership position, he said, "Let's all consider the fact that it is real." So instead of pointing fingers ... at different sides of the argument as to who is to blame, and if nature just to blame, let's do something about it. Let's clean up our world. Let's reduce emissions. And let's go with reality.

Couric: Because, if it's not man-made, then one might wonder, well, how can human beings contribute to a solution?

Palin: Well, human beings certainly are contributing to pollution today. And to some adverse effects on the environment. And it's all of our jobs to do to clean things up. And that's what we're committed to doing.

Couric: So you do believe ... that man is contributing to global warming, because you just said they're causing pollution. Of course, pollution causes global warming.

Palin: I believe that there are a lot of causes. And there is one effect. And one is changes in

the climate. And there are things that we can do to make sure we're cleaning up the environment. I also formed an integrity office that solely is focused on petroleum, on pipelines, on those things that we do up there in Alaska to contribute to the U.S. domestic supply of energy.

Where we can focus solely on environmental protections. There are a lot of things that I've done there in that arena of environmental protection that have kind of ticked off some in my own party thinking that I went too far. But I've always been of the mind that, you know, we gotta prove that we can do this right. Safely, ethically, environmentally friendly developments, or we're not gonna be allowed to unlock our lands and tap these supplies.

Couric: John McCain proposed legislation calling for mandatory caps on global warming gases or CO2 emissions. Do you agree with that?

Palin: I support his position on that. Absolutely.

Couric: But he somewhat backtracked on the campaign trail saying it wouldn't, they wouldn't, the caps wouldn't be mandatory, they'd be voluntary. So what do you think? Do you think voluntary caps go far enough? Or they should be mandatory?

Palin: He's got a good cap and trade policy that he supports. And details are being hashed out even right now. But, in principle, absolutely, I support all that we can do to reduce emissions and to clean up this planet. And John McCain is right on board with that.

Couric: Voluntary or mandatory in your view?

Palin: We're gonna keep working on how it can be implemented to actually make sense and make a difference.

Couric: Let me get your take, if I could Gov. Palin, on a number of social issues. Because that's, they've gotten some attention, your position. If a 15-year-old is raped by her father, you believe it should be illegal for her to get an abortion. Why?

Palin: I am pro-life. And I'm unapologetic about my position there on pro-life. And I understand good people on both sides of the abortion debate. In fact, good people in my own family have differing views on abortion and when it should be allowed. So ... I respect people's opinion on this.

Now, I would counsel to choose life. I would like to see a culture of life in this country. But I would also like to see taking it one step further. Not just saying I am pro-life, and I want fewer and fewer abortions in this country. But I want, then, those women who find themselves in circumstances that are absolutely less than ideal, for them to be supported for adoptions to be made easier. For more support given to foster parents and adoptive families. That is my personal opinion on this.

Couric: But, ideally, you think it should be illegal ...

Palin: If you ...

Couric: ...for a girl who was raped or the victim of incest to get an abortion?

Palin: I'm saying that, personally, I would counsel the person to choose life, despite horrific,

horrific circumstances that this person would find themselves in. And, um, if you're asking, though, kind of foundationally here, should anyone end up in jail for having an ... abortion, absolutely not. That's nothing I would ever support.

Then, now, some may characterize my position as being extreme, because I am pro-life ... and I want women empowered to know that, you know, we can help them. They can be strong enough, and they can have the resources provided them to give that child life.

The extremism, to me, is those who would support partial-birth abortion. Those who would disallow parental consent when it comes to a minor child who would seek an abortion. I think parents should have a say in that. They should be a part of their child's health care there. And those who, like Barack Obama, would support measures that would actually allow in a botched abortion, late-term abortion, that child being born alive, to allow it to not receive medical help to save that child's life. That's extremism to me. That is so far on the left side of the political spectrum and public sentiment in this country. That's the extremism to me.

Couric: So you want more support so women have more options, or girls have more options. But you also think it should be illegal, that there should be no punishment if a woman does break the law...

Palin: I would like to see more women given more support so that those of us who say, "You know, a culture of life is what we believe." Is best ... for human kind, you know, to respect the sanctity of every human life. And to understand ... that we live in a pretty messed up world sometimes.

When you consider what's going on in this world. The most promising and good ingredients in this world ... is a child. The hope that a child brings. And just understanding that. Being near and dear to my heart. I want to do all that I can to reduce the number abortions.

And to usher in that culture of life. And in my respect for the other side of this issue, I have not spoken with one woman who do, may disagree with me on, when abortions could or should be allowed, not one woman has disagreed, as we sit down and rationally talk about ... the common goal we have, and that is to see fewer and fewer abortions. And to provide more and more women support in this world.

Couric: Some people have credited the morning-after pill as for decreasing the number of abortions. How do you feel about the morning after pill?

Palin: Well ...I'm all for contraception. And I'm all for any preventative measures that are legal and safe and should be taken. But, Katie, again and we can go round and round about the abortion issue, but I am one to seek a culture of life. I am one to believe that life starts at the moment of conception. And I would like to see ...

Couric: And so you don't believe in the morning-after pill.

Palin: I would like to see fewer and fewer abortions in this world. And, again, I haven't spoken with anyone who disagrees with my position on that.

Couric: I'm sorry. I just want to ask you again. Do you not support or do you condone or condemn the morning after pill?

Palin: Personally, and this is isn't McCain-Palin policy ...

Couric: That's OK. I'm just asking you.

Palin: But, personally, I would not choose to participate in that kind of contraception. It ...

Couric: Do you think it should be illegal?

Palin: I don't think that it should necessarily be illegal. But we can go, again, round and round. And what the foundation I believe of this debate, of this discussion, even of your questions, is do you believe in the sanctity of life? Are you are you gonna side on the pro-life position or not when decisions are in front of you and you have to make them? Now, as a vice president, what positions would a vice-president have to take on the abortion issue? They're not legislating. A vice president does not make law.

Couric: But if you have a moral problem with abortion, it seems to me you would do everything in your power to make it illegal and overturn Roe v. Wade and ...

Palin: Of course, it's the legislature, the law-making branch of our third, of our three branches of government ...

Couric: But they ...

Palin: ...makes the laws.

Couric: ...your vision or the administration's vision.

Palin: Well, let's be practical about it and let's be realistic about a vice-president's role in this debate. I can personally share my views, which I don't apologize when I share my views of being pro-life. And, you know, I'll do that all day long if you want me to. But a vice-president does not make law. And a vice-president does not interpret the law either.

Couric: So you're saying this won't be a top issue for you if you're elected?

Palin: I will do all that I can personally to encourage that culture of life, to remind women that I believe with more empowerment, they - more and more women will realize that they are strong enough ... and they are able to carry a child and still continue a career, still continue education opportunities, all with the goal being fewer and fewer abortions in this world.

Couric: Do you believe evolution should be taught as an accepted scientific principle or one of several theories?

Palin: Oh, I think it should be taught as an accepted principle. And, you know, I say that also as the daughter of a school teacher, a science teacher, who has really instilled in me a respect for science. It should be taught in our schools. And I won't ever deny that I see the hand of God in this beautiful creation that is Earth, especially coming from one of the most beautiful states in the Union and traveling around this country also in this last month. My goodness, just seeing, you know, the beautiful landscape of New Mexico recently. That was just breath taking and seeing the rolling hills in Virginia and all ... the beauty that is this Earth, I see the hand of God in that. But that is not part of state policy or a local curriculum in a school district.

Science should be taught in science class.

Couric: Should creationism be allowed to be taught anywhere in public schools?

Palin: Don't have a problem at all with kids debating all sides of theories, all sides of ideas that they ever - kids do it today whether ... it's on paper, in a curriculum or not. Curriculums also are best left to the local school districts. Instead of Big Brother, federal government telling a district what they can and can't teach, I would like to see more control taken over by our school boards, by our local schools, and then state government at the most. But federal government, you know, kind of get out of some of this curriculum and let the locals decide what is best for their students.

Couric: Your church sponsored a conference that claimed to be able to convert gays into heterosexuals through prayer. Do you think that gays can be converted, governor?

Palin: Well, you're absolutely wrong, again, on the facts. My church, I don't have a church, I'm not a member of any church. I get to visit a couple of churches in Alaska when I'm home, including one, Wasilla Bible Church, and that's the one that you're talking about.

Couric: Right. I think James Dobson's group ... had a convention or a meeting there. And your church...

Palin: No, I think they ...

Couric: ...supported it.

Palin: The Wasilla Bible Church had a flyer that was part of a bulletin or something ...

Couric: But you know what? That doesn't even matter. Let me just ask you the question.

Palin: Well, it matters, though, because, Katie, when the media gets it wrong, it frustrates Americans who are just trying to get the facts and be able to make up their mind on, about a person's values. So it does matter ...

Couric: ...you're correcting us.

Palin: But you are talking about, I think, a value here, what my position is on homosexuality and can you pray it away 'cause I think that was the title that was listed in that bulletin. And, you know, I don't know what prayers are worthy of being prayed. And I don't know what prayers are gonna be answered or not answered. But as for homosexuality, I am not going to judge Americans and the decisions that they make in their adult personal relationships.

I have, one of my absolute best friends for the last 30 years who happens to be gay. And I love her dearly. And she is not my "gay friend." She is one of my best friends who happens to have made a choice that isn't a choice that I have made. But I am not gonna judge people. And I love America where we are more tolerant than other countries are. And are more accepting of some of these choices that sometimes people want to believe reflects solely on an individual's values or not. Homosexuality, I am not gonna judge people.

Couric: You know, one thing that the press, and I appreciate your correcting that. And I'm

gonna have to go back and see the (unintelligible) for that, that your church was ...

Palin: I wish I had ...

Couric: ...sponsored it.

Palin: ...time and the consistency to be a more regular attendee of a church but, no, have not.