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Perry for president? First he needs re-election Nov. 2, Matalin and Carville say

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DALLAS -- Gov. Rick Perry for president?

Asked whether that's a campaign the nation will likely see in 2012, two veteran political strategists didn't rule it out.

But first things first, husband and wife James Carville and Mary Matalin stressed Tuesday in an interview after they spoke at a political luncheon.

Any talk of Perry's prospects in the 2012 presidential election is premature until the longtime Republican governor faces Democratic challenger Bill White, Libertarian Kathie Glass and Green Party candidate Deb Shafto in the Nov. 2 gubernatorial election.

"He might get beat here," said Carville, a Democratic consultant. "It's not a given. People tell me it's tight. He's got to win this one; he's got to catch one before he throws it."

Matalin, a Republican strategist, doesn't think the race is that close, and she considers Perry the clear favorite.

Perry is "articulate and he's got a record and philosophy he can run on," she said. "He's obviously focused on this race right now. He deserves to be re-elected."

Beyond that, Matalin agreed that it's smart to focus on Nov. 2 before the 2012 presidential race. "No 2012 aspirants are talking beyond 2010 right now," she said. And that includes Perry.

That may be because politicians on both sides are waiting to see how the November midterm elections go, Carville and Matalin told more than 350 people Tuesday at a luncheon sponsored by the [National Center for Policy Analysis](#) at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas.

Conventional wisdom is that Democrats will take a hit, as the party in power during midterms generally does.

"If you are a Democrat, there's a hurricane in the Gulf coming for you," Carville said. "Is it a Category 5 or 3? That's the question."

"If it's a 5, you're wiped out," he said. "If it's a 3, you've still got some foundation standing to build on."

Carville said a Category 5 hurricane means "Hello, Sen. O'Donnell": that Christine O'Donnell, the controversial Republican U.S. Senate nominee from Delaware, would win. On the other hand, a Category 3 hurricane, he said, means "Hi, Gov. White."

"If it's between a 3 and a 4, the levees will hold," he said.

The best advice Carville and Matalin could give candidates now, about a month from the election, is not to draw too much attention.

"The party that talks right now is the party that's going to do the worst," Carville said. "Just try to blend in and try not to talk too much. ... Every night the Republicans lead the news is a good night."

"Less is more," Matalin said. "Some guys these days think [they need] razzle-dazzle. That's the opposite thing to do."

Carville and Matalin have both been presidential advisers and have written a book together, *All's Fair: Love, War and Running for President*.

In speaking to the crowd, they didn't interrupt each other, or finish each other's sentences. And despite having opposite political beliefs, they agreed on some points.

One is that some Republicans making news belong to the Tea Party movement.

But Matalin said that what the movement is and who is involved in it have been mischaracterized.

She said the main thrust of the movement comes not from zealots, but from community activists and organizers, mothers and fathers who focus on money issues because they balance their own budget and want to see the government's budget balanced as well.

"They are highly informed and much about the future," Matalin said. "They might be Republicans, but they are conservatives first."

Whatever they are called, Carville said, they have been successful in elections nationwide, and if Republicans find success in November, it may be affirmation for some in the Tea Party movement.

"If Republicans do really well, the argument will be, 'We went to our core beliefs ... and kicked the RINOs [Republicans in name only] out.' They will argue for a conservative presidential candidate" in 2012, he said.