



John Woolley and Gerhard Peters

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PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

1960 and 1976 - 2012

Republican Candidates Debate in Mesa, Arizona

February 22, 2012

Tweet

PARTICIPANTS:

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (GA); Representative Ron Paul (TX); Former Governor Mitt Romney (MA); and Former Senator Rick Santorum (PA)

MODERATOR:

John King (CNN)

KING: Gentlemen, I want to ask you to take your seats. I'll take a moment now to explain to you how our debate will work.

I'll question the candidates, as well as we'll also take some questions from members of our audience. I'll follow up and guide tonight's discussion.

Candidates, we're going to try to make sure each of you get your fair amount of questions. And you'll have a minute to answer and 30 seconds for rebuttal and follow-ups. And if you're singled out for a particular criticism, I'll make sure you get a chance to respond.

Now we're going to have each of the candidates introduce themselves. And so we have more time to debate tonight, we're going to ask them to keep it short.

Here's an example. I'm John King from CNN. I'm honored to be your moderator tonight and I'm thrilled to be in a state that reminds us baseball season is just around the corner. *[applause]*

KING: Congressman Paul, we begin with you, sir.

PAUL: I'm Congressman Ron Paul, a congressman from Texas.

I am the defender of the Constitution. I'm the champion of liberty. This shows the roadmap to peace and prosperity. *[applause]*

SANTORUM: I'm Rick Santorum.

And we have a lot of troubles around the world, as you see, the Middle East in flames, and what's going on in this country with gas prices and the economy. And I'm here to talk about a positive solutions that confront this country that include everybody from the bottom up. *[applause]*

ROMNEY: I'm Mitt Romney.

And there was a time in this country when you knew that if you worked hard and went to school, and if you learned the values of America in your home, that you could count on having a secure future and a prosperous life. That was an American promise and it's been broken by this president.

I want to restore America's promise, and I'm going to do that — *[applause]* — That's good enough. As George Costanza would say, when they're applauding, stop. Right?

GINGRICH: I'm Newt Gingrich.

And I've developed a program for American energy so no future president will ever bow to a Saudi king again and so every American can look forward to \$2.50 a gallon gasoline. *[applause]*

KING: Gentlemen, it's good to see you again.

Let's get started on the important issues with a question from our audience.

Sir, please tell us who you are and state your question.

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UNKNOWN: My name is Gilbert Fidler from Gilbert, Arizona, and I'd like to ask this question to all the candidates if I could.

Since the first time in 65 years our national debt exceeds our gross national product, what are you going to do to bring down the debt?

KING: Thank you, sir.

Senator Santorum, let's begin with you.

SANTORUM: Thank you, Gilbert.

I put together a specific plan that cuts \$5 trillion over five years, that spends less money each year for the next four years that I'll be president of the United States. So it's not inflation-adjusted, it's not baseline-budgeting. We're actually going to shrink the actual size of the federal budget, and we're going to do so by dealing with the real problem.

And here's where I differentiate myself from everybody else, including, obviously, the president. I actually have experience on tackling the toughest problems that we have in this country, and that's the growth of entitlement spending.

Obviously, the first thing we need to do is repeal Obamacare. That's the one entitlement that we can get rid of. *[applause]*

And that's a couple trillion dollars in spending over the next 10 years. But there's bigger issues.

When I was born, less than 10 percent of the federal budget was entitlement spending. It's now 60 percent of the budget.

Some people have suggested that defense spending is the problem. When I was born, defense spending was 60 percent of the budget. It's now 17 percent. If you think defense spending is the problem, then you need a remedial math class to go back to.

Defense spending will not be cut under my administration, but we will go after all of the means-tested entitlement programs — Medicaid, food stamps, all of those programs — and do what we did with welfare.

We cut the welfare — we cut spending on welfare, froze it and then we block granted it to the states and gave them the flexibility to run that program they way they saw fit with two provisos. Number one, there would be a time limit on welfare and a work requirement. We were going to say that poverty is not a disability. That these programs need to be transitional in nature. We need to do the same thing with Medicaid. We need to do the same thing with — with food stamps. All of the other means tests of entitlement programs.

And unlike the Paul Ryan plan — I see I'm out of time, but unlike the Paul Ryan plan, we also will deal with Medicare and Social Security, not 10 years from now. But we need to start dealing with it now because our country is facing fiscal bankruptcy.

KING: Governor Romney, I'm wondering if that answer satisfied you? Just in recent days you said this, quote, "If you want a fiscal conservative, you can't vote for Rick Santorum because he's not." Did he answer your questions there?

ROMNEY: Well I'm looking at his historic record, which voting for raising the debt ceiling five different times without voting for compensating cuts. Voting to keep in place Davis-Bacon, which cost about \$100 billion over — over 10 years. A whole series of votes. Voting to fund Planned Parenthood, to expand the Department of Education. During his term in the Senate, spending grew by some 80 percent of the federal government. But I — but I want to respond to Gilbert's question, which I think is a critical one.

And that is as you — as you look at this country, I'm a guy who has lived in the world of business. If you don't balance your budget in business, you go out of business. So I've lived balancing budgets. I also served in the Olympics, balanced a budget there. And — and served in the states. And all four years I was governor, we balanced the budget. Here's what I'd do at the federal level, I would divide all of the programs into three major places for opportunity to reduce costs.

Number one, I'm going to go through every single program and ask if we can afford it. And if not, I'm going to say, is this program so critical that it's worth borrowing money from China to pay for it? And if not, I'm going to get rid of it. Number two, I'm going to take programs...*[applause]*...I'm going to take programs that are important, but that could be better run at the state level and send them back to the states as a block grant and that included Medicaid and — and housing vouchers and food stamps. These programs for the poor, to be run more efficiently and can be run with less fraud and abuse at the state level. And then finally number three, with what's left of government, I'm going to cut the employment by 10 percent. And I'm going to link the pay of government workers with the pay in the private sector. Government servants shouldn't get paid more than the people who are paying taxes. *[applause]*

KING: Senator, the governor singled you out. Take a few seconds. *[applause]*

SANTORUM: Well, the governor talks about raising the debt ceiling. There was a debt ceiling vote this summer and the governor was asked the question whether he would have voted to raise the debt ceiling ultimately and he said, yes. Because government has to pay their bills. We can't default ultimately. What happened the — the 12 years I was in the United States Senate, we went from the debt to GDP ratio, which is now over 100 percent. When I came to the Senate it was 68 percent of GDP. When I left the Senate it was 64 percent of GDP.

So government as a size of the economy went down when I was in the United States Senate. Sure I had some votes. Look, I think we've all had votes that I look back on I — I wish I wouldn't have voted — No Child Left Behind, you're right, it lead to education spending. That's why I've said that we need to cut and eliminate No Child Left Behind and — and education funding from the federal government, move it back to the local level where it belongs where parents and local communities can deal with that.

But if you look at my record on spending, on taking on entitlements, never having voted for an appropriation bill increase. You look at — at my record of never having raised taxes. Governor Romney raised \$700 million in taxes and fees in Massachusetts. I never voted to raise taxes. Governor Romney even today suggested raising taxes on the top 1 percent, adopting the Occupy Wall Street rhetoric. I'm not going to adopt that rhetoric. I'm going to represent 100 percent of Americans. We're not raising taxes on anybody. *[applause]*

KING: Governor, please quickly I want to bring the congressman and the speaker into the conversation, but respond.

ROMNEY: There were so many misrepresentations there, it's going to take me a little while. Number one, I said today that we're going to cut taxes on everyone across the country by 20 percent, including the top 1 percent. So that's number one. Number two, I said yes we should increase the debt ceiling in this last vote, but only if we have a cut, cap and balance provision put in place. Only in that case. And, therefore, I did not agree with the deal that was done in Washington. That was the wrong way to go.

And finally, Senator during your term in Congress, the years you've been there, government has doubled in size. You voted to raise the debt ceiling five times without compensating cuts in spending. In my view, we should not raise the debt ceiling again until we get compensating cuts in spending. A cut, cap and balance approach must be taken. *[applause]*

KING: Mr. Speaker...*[applause]*

Mr. Speaker, join the conversation. Address Gilbert's question and if you so choose, address some criticism you've received on this issue from this state's senior Senator campaigning for governor Romney. He questioned your credentials on fiscal conservatism. He said when you were the speaker, earmarking became an art.

GINGRICH: Well when I was speaker, as I'm sure he remembers, we balanced the budget for four consecutive years, the only time in his lifetime. So I think that's a good place to start with Gilbert's question. We're meeting tonight on the 280th anniversary of George Washington's birth. You go back and look at the founding fathers, they'd have had very clear messages. Hamilton would have said you have to have jobs and economic growth to get back to a balanced budget. You're never going to balance the budget on the back of a highly unemployed country. And so I would be committed, first of all, to a program of jobs and economic growth.

Second, the energy issue is enormous. The leading developer of North Dakota oil estimated recently that, if we would open up federal land and open up offshore, you would have \$16 trillion to \$18 trillion — not billion — trillion dollars in royalties to the federal government in the next generation, an enormous flow which would drive down prices to \$2.50 a gallon, would help us balance the budget and would create millions of jobs.

Finally, I agree generally with the need to reform government. I think that, if we were prepared to repeal the 130-year-old civil service laws, go to a modern management system, we could save a minimum of \$500 billion a year with a better system. And if we then applied the tenth amendment, as Governor Rick Perry has agreed to head up a project on, I think we can return to the states an enormous share of the power that's currently in Washington, D.C. *[applause]*

KING: Congressman Paul, you've questioned the conservative — fiscal conservative credentials of all these gentlemen but particularly this week Senator Santorum. You have a new television ad that labels him a fake. Why?

PAUL: Because he's a fake. *[laughter]* *[applause]* *[booing]* *[applause]*

SANTORUM: I'm real, John. I'm real.

PAUL: Congratulations.

SANTORUM: Thank you. *[laughter]*

PAUL: No. I find it really fascinating that, when people are running for office, they're really fiscally conservative. When they're in office, they do something different. And then when they explain themselves, they say, "Oh, I want to repeal that."

So the senator voted for No Child Left Behind, but now — he voted for it, but now he's running on the effort to get rid of it. So I think the record is so bad, you know, with the politicians.

And, you know, nobody accuses me of not having voted for too much. They're always accusing me for not voting for enough. And I've been running in office, in office off and on for a good many years, and over all those years, I've never voted for a budget deficit. I never voted to increase the national debt.

As a matter of fact, there's only one appropriation bill I voted for, and that was for veterans. I assumed, from the 1970s on, that we were embarking on a very dangerous path, and we're involved in that danger right now.

So this idea of being fiscally conservative now that we're running for office and we're going to repeal something that we did

before, I mean, this — it loses credibility is what our problem is. So... [applause] And — and the one thing that I think should annoy all Americans is the voting for foreign aid? I mean, just think there are foreign aid packages that are huge, and when the member votes for it, they don't say, well, this money is going to A, B, C, because I love that country, but it's the principle of the way the government works. You vote for foreign aid because, for some weird reason, it's supposed to be good for America, but then it goes and helps all our enemies. That's what I disapprove of. [applause]

KING: Senator Santorum, respond quickly.

SANTORUM: Ron, The Weekly Standard just did a review, looking at the National Taxpayers Union, I think, Citizens Against Government Waste, and they measured me up against the other 50 senators who were serving when I did and they said that I was the most fiscally conservative senator in the Congress in the — in the 12 years that I was there.

My — my ratings with the National Taxpayers Union were As or Bs. They were very high from the Citizens Against Government Waste. I got a hero award.

I was a leader, as you know, on taking on tough issues, which is the entitlement programs, not just welfare reform, but I also worked on Medicare reform and Medicaid reform and also was a leader on trying to deal with Social Security.

And I did that not representing one of the most conservative districts in the state of Texas but in the state of Pennsylvania, with the second largest per capita population of seniors in the country.

And I can tell you those seniors really cared about Social Security. Why? Because all my rich seniors moved to Florida and Arizona. And...[laughter]... and what's left — what's left in Pennsylvania is folks who relied on Social Security. And I was out there as a Republican senator, a conservative voting record, over a 90 percent conservative voting record from the American Conservative Union.

By the way, Ron, you ranked 145th in the bottom half of Republicans this year in a conservative voting record from that same organization.

We had a strong record in a tough state to be a conservative. If I can stand up in the state of Pennsylvania, which hasn't elected a Republican president since 1988, and have a strong principled voting record on issues that were tough in my state, senior issues, imagine now, as president of the United States, with a Tea Party movement and a conservative — a riled-up conservative base, what we can accomplish in Washington, D.C. [applause]

KING: Congressman, quickly.

PAUL: You know, that's always a cop-out when you compare yourself to the other members of Congress. The American people are sick and tired of the members of Congress. They get about a 9 percent rating. [applause]

But this whole thing about comparison of conservative votes, I think you make a very important point. I don't rate what, at the top. If it's spending or on taxes I'm at the very top because I vote for the least amount of spending and the least amount of taxes, which means that some of the conservative ratings — you have to realize sometimes conservatives want to spend money, too.

When it comes to overseas spending, you vote for the foreign aid. Conservatives are quite pleased with spending money overseas. But if you're a strict fiscal conservative and a constitutionalist you don't vote for that kind of stuff and so you can't just go by the ratings.

KING: As you can see, this is a — it's an important issue to the people in the audience. I think it's one of the reasons this race has been so volatile. Voters are looking and they say which of these candidates can I trust? And each of you are trying to make your case to them.

As you try to do so, Governor Romney, you said recently that as governor you're a severely conservative governor of Massachusetts. What did you mean by that?

ROMNEY: Well, severe, strict. I was, without question, a conservative governor in my state. We balanced the budget all four years I was in office. We cut taxes 19 times.

I enabled our state police to enforce illegal immigration laws so that people could be taken out of our state that were illegally. We drove our schools to have —[applause]— campaigned for and fought for English immersion in our school, and had that successfully implemented. My policies in Massachusetts were to — were conservative, and in a state, as Rick indicated, a state that was a relatively liberal state, I stood up and said I would stand on the side of life when the legislature passed a bill saying that life would not be defined not at conception but later.

I said no. When there was an effort to put in place embryo farming and cloning, I vetoed that. When the Catholic Church was attacked, saying, look we're not going to allow you to continue to place children in homes where there's a preference for a man and a woman being the mom and dad, I worked with the Catholic Church to put legislation in place to protect their right to exercise their religious conscience.

I have through my record as a governor demonstrated that kind of conservative belief. But also, look a step back and look at my record running the Olympics. Balanced the budget there, made it successful with the help of a terrific team.

Then look back into the business. You can't be, I don't believe, anything but a fiscal conservative and run a business, because

if you don't balance your budget, you go out of business.

KING: Mr. Speaker, as you know, often when deficit reduction —[*applause*]— when deficit reduction and economic growth are priorities at the same time, some people see a collision. Some people see a conflict. You've outlined your views on taxes. Governor Romney today outlined a tax plan that would cut the — put the top rate at 28 percent, eliminate capital gain taxes for incomes below \$200,000, cut the corporate tax rate to 25 percent.

Is that the right approach? And is it consistent — and it's a tough one sometimes — with spurring economic growth at a time this state and other states are looking for jobs? But as you have Gilbert's question, also looking to make sure the next president works on the deficit?

GINGRICH: Well, look, first of all, I think that Governor Romney today moved in the right direction, and I think that that's a serious step towards trying to find — closer to supply side. I wouldn't agree with him on capping capital gains cuts at \$200,000, because I think that's, frankly, economically destructive, and I don't believe in class warfare.

And that's a number below Obama's class warfare number. So we can argue later about capital gains cuts.

But I think there's a different question. Everybody talks about managing the current government. The current government is a disaster. I mean, we don't — you know —[*applause*]— this is — it is — the reason I started with the idea that came out of Strong America Now to repeal the 130-year-old civil service laws and go to a modern management system, is you change everything.

And the fact is, if we're serious — and, in a funny kind of way, Ron and I are closer on the scale of change. We'd approach it slightly different, but I think you've got to start and say what would a modern system be like?

And a modern system would be — just take control of the border. It is utterly stupid to say that the United States government can't control the border. It's a failure of will, it's a failure of enforcement. [*applause*]

So let me just take that one example. Let's assume you could, tomorrow morning, have a president who wanted to work with your governor, that instead of suing Arizona, helped Arizona, who actually worked with Arizona. Now —[*applause*]— what's the fiscal reality three years from now in your emergency rooms, in your schools, in your prisons, of controlling the border? It's a lot less expensive. You just took a major step towards a less expensive future. So I think it is possible to modernize the federal government and cut taxes and develop energy simultaneously. And the three lead you to Gilbert's concern. Let's get back to a balanced budget. [*applause*]

KING: The Speaker raises an important point about looking forward, and I hope we spend most of the night doing that. But as you know, there's a lot of anger in the base of the party about some of the things that have happened in the past, and the Tea Party, especially.

Now, earmarks, the pork barrel spending, it's a tiny slice of the budget. I think we all know that. But if you talk to a Tea Party activist, they think — an example, a gateway to corruption.

Senator, you have said there are good earmarks and bad earmarks. And you have talked about your earmarks in the past. Any that you specifically regret? And why have you criticized — why do you think the money that went to Governor Romney for security at the Olympics, why was that a bad earmark?

SANTORUM: I didn't suggest it was a bad earmark. I voted for it and about half the money — a little over half the money that went to the Salt Lake games.

But Governor Romney asked for that earmark. That's really the point here. He's out there on television ads right now, unfortunately, attacking me for saying that I'm this great earmarker, when he not only asked for earmarks for the Salt Lake Olympics in the order of tens of millions of dollars, sought those earmarks and used them, and he did as the governor of Massachusetts, \$300 million or \$400 million. He said, I would be foolish if I didn't go out and try to get federal dollars.

So the idea that somehow earmarks during the time that I was in Congress were this thing that drove up spending in Washington, D.C., if you actually look at it, as I said before, as a percentage of GDP, actually the deficits — the debt went down. What happened is there was abuse.

When abuse happened, I said we should stop the earmarking process. But I did say there were good earmarks and bad earmarks.

We wouldn't have the V-22 Osprey, which was the most essential air platform for our Marines in particular in the war against the radical Islamists. We wouldn't have it if it wasn't for an earmark. That program would have been killed under George Bush 41. Dick Cheney, the Defense Department, wanted to kill that program, and many of us, including myself, stood up and made sure that was there.

Congress has a role to play when it comes to appropriating money, and sometimes the president and the administration doesn't get it right. What happened was an abuse of the process.

When that abuse occurred, I stepped forward, as Jim DeMint did, who, by the way, was an earmarker, as almost everybody else in Congress was. Why? Because Congress has a role of allocating resources when they think the administration has it wrong.

I defended that at the time. I'm proud I defended it at the time, because I think they did make mistakes. I do believe there was abuse, and I said we should stop it, and as president I would oppose earmarks.

KING: Governor?

ROMNEY: I didn't follow all of that, but I can tell you this — I would put a ban on earmarks. I think it opens the door to excessive spending, spending on projects that don't need to be done.

I think there are a lot of projects that have been voted for. You voted to the "Bridge to Nowhere." I think these earmarks, we've had it with them.

SANTORUM: Yes.

ROMNEY: If Congress wants to vote in favor of a bill, they should take that bill, bring it forward with committees, have people say — vote it up or down on the floor of the House or the Senate, have the president say yes or no, and move forward. But the earmark process is broken. There are thousands and thousands of earmarks, money being used inappropriately.

And I'll tell you this — he mentioned coming to the Olympics, coming to the United States Congress, asking for support. No question about it. That's the nature of what it is when you lead an organization or a state.

You come to Congress and you say, these are the things we need. In the history of the Olympic movement, the federal government has always provided the transportation and security. So we came to the federal government asking for help on transportation and security.

I was fighting for those things. Our games were successful. But while I was fighting to save the Olympics, you were fighting to save the "Bridge to Nowhere."

KING: Quickly. [*applause*]

SANTORUM: It's really interesting, Governor, because the process you just described of an open process where members of Congress put forth their suggestions on how to spend money, have them voted on individually, is exactly how the process worked. So what you just suggested as to how earmarks should work in the future is exactly how they worked in the past. So I suspect you would have supported earmarks if you were in the United States Senate.

ROMNEY: I'm sorry. The 6,000 earmarks that were put in place under the Speaker's term, for instance, were oftentimes tagged on to other bills — [*booing*]

I'm sorry. I don't mean to be critical.

That was the process. There were thousands — I mean, we've had thousands and thousands of earmarks. They are typically tagged on to — bundled on to other bills.

OK. Go ahead, Mr. Speaker. Go ahead.

SANTORUM: Wait a second. You're entitled to your opinions, Mitt. You're not entitled to —

ROMNEY: I've heard that line before. I've heard that before, yes.

SANTORUM: — misrepresent the facts, and you're misrepresenting the facts. You don't know what you're talking about.

What happened in the earmark process — what happens in the earmark process was that members of Congress would ask, formally, publicly request these things, put them on paper, and have them allocated, and have them voted on a committee, have them voted on, on the floor of the Senate.

Congressman Paul — Congressman...

ROMNEY: Attached to a bill? Attached to a bill?

SANTORUM: As part of the bill. Congressman Paul...

ROMNEY: And the president can't veto it?

SANTORUM: He can veto the bill.

ROMNEY: The whole bill, but he can't veto the earmark?

SANTORUM: Well, we tried to do that, by the way. I supported a line-item veto.

ROMNEY: That's what I support. That's what I support. [*applause*]

SANTORUM: Hold on. Hold on.

Mitt, I agree with you. I support — I support the line-item veto. I voted for a line-item veto so we could do just that. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court struck it down. I would like to go back, as president, again, and give the president the authority to line-item veto.

But that's not the issue. The issue is were they transparent? And the bottom line was, when I was in the United States Senate, there was transparency, and Congressman Paul, who is one of the most prolific earmarkers in the Congress today, is — would tell you...

And I'm not — I'm not criticizing; I'm just saying that's a fact, that...[laughter]... that he — he...[applause] [booing]

ROMNEY: I think you need a chance to say a word. [crosstalk] [laughter]

KING: Mr. Speaker, you were referenced by the governor, you first, then Congressman Paul.

Don't worry. We'll get to you, Congressman. I promise. [booing]

GINGRICH: Now, look, let me just say flatly all of you need to think about this because this is one of those easy demagogic fights that gets you into a lot of trouble. If you have Barack Obama as president and you have a Republican House, you may want the House imposing certain things on the president.

Now, when I was speaker, for example...[applause]... and we had a liberal Democrat in the White House — I actually want to reinforce what the governor said. I helped the Atlanta Olympics get the support they needed from the U.S. government to be successful. I thought it was totally appropriate to help the Atlanta Olympics. And I actually went to — to your former governor and sat down with the people originally planning the Winter Olympics and said, look, this is what we did; this is what you need to do.

I think it was totally appropriate for you to ask for what you got. I just think it's, kind of, silly for you to then turn around and run an ad attacking somebody else for getting what you got and then claiming what you got wasn't what they got because what you got was right and what they got was wrong. [laughter] [applause]

KING: Congressman Paul, answer Senator Santorum, please, sir.

PAUL: I followed that and I...[laughter]

You know, there's reason for the confusion, because...[laughter]... because it's all Congress's fault. They're all messed up and they don't know what they're doing in Congress is the real reason. [applause]

But this whole idea of earmarking — earmarking is designating how the money's spent. What a lot of people don't understand is if — if the Congress doesn't say the way the money should be spent, it goes to the executive branch, and that's the bad part. If you were actually cutting, it would make a difference. But you don't want to give more power to the executive branch.

Even if I'm president, I don't want more power over that — over that funding. That should be with the people and — and with the Congress. But earmarking — the reason we get into trouble is — is the irresponsibility of Congress.

Take your highway funds. We're supposed to pay a user fee. If we pay our gasoline tax, we should get our fair share back. But what do they do? They take the highway funds and other of these trust funds and they spend this money overseas in these wars that we shouldn't be fighting. And then when the highways need building, then you have to go and fight the political system and know who to deal with and maneuver and try to get some of your money back.

But if you say you're against — against the earmarking and fuss and fume over, the answer is vote against the bill. That is what I do. I argue for the case of the responsibility being on the Congress, but it's the responsibility of us who believe in fiscal conservatism to vote against the bill. We need to vote against the spending is what we need to do. [applause]

KING: Let's take another important economic question. This one comes to us from CNNPolitics.com, and you can see it in the audience up on the board here.

"Why was George W. Bush wrong in his efforts to save the auto industry and why was Barack Obama wrong to continue the effort?"

Senator Santorum, I want to go to you first with this question. You, like your friends on the stage tonight, opposed the auto bailout. Michigan votes on Tuesday, along with Arizona. We assume folks are watching there tonight. Address your answer to an auto worker who may believe strongly that he or she has that job tonight because of the help — the bailout?

SANTORUM: I would just say to them that I in principle oppose government coming in and bailing out a sector of the economy or an industry with government dollars and — and with government manipulation of that market, which is exactly what happened twice, in 2008 and 2009.

The first time it happened was the Wall Street bailout. On principle, I opposed the Wall Street bailout, even though I understand people — reasonable people could disagree. I felt that having the government come in in such a major way and have a huge influence over the direction of that industry, that that would be damaging to what I believe is the best way to resolve these types of problems, which lets the market work, constructive capitalism, as Governor Romney was talking about in his days at Bain Capital, and destructive capitalism.

And that means pain. I understand that. But it also means limited government and allowing markets to work because we believe they're more efficient over time. I held the same consistent position when it came to the auto bailouts. I can say that with respect to Governor Romney, that was not the case. He supported the folks on Wall Street and bailed out Wall Street, was all for it. And then when it came to the auto workers, the folks in Detroit, he said, no. That to me is not a consistent, principled position. I had one. I believe in markets, not just when they're convenient for me.

KING: Governor? [applause]

ROMNEY: Nice — nice try, but now let's look at the facts. All right, first of all — first of all let's go back to the auto industry and — and go back to 2000, I think it was 2008, President Bush was still in office and the three chief executive officers of the three major auto companies got in their private planes and flew to Washington and said, please write us a check. I think they wanted \$50 billion. And I wrote an Op-Ed in the paper and I said, absolutely not. Do not write a check for \$50 billion.

These companies need to go through a managed bankruptcy, just like airlines have, just like other industries have. Go through a managed bankruptcy...[applause]...and — and if they go through that managed bankruptcy and shed the excessive cost that's been put on them by the UAW and by their own mismanagement, then if they need help coming out of bankruptcy, the government can provide guarantees and get them back on their feet. No way would we allow the auto industry in America to totally implode and disappear. That was my view. Go through bankruptcy. When that happens, then the market can help lift them out. With regards to — to TARP it's very simple, or — or the Wall Street. Look, I don't want to save any Wall Street Banks.

I just don't want [sic] make sure we lose all of our banks. And like — like President Bush at the time, I was concerned that if we didn't do something, there were some pretty high risks that not just Wall Street banks, but all banks would collapse. And like many other people — many other economists, they were concerned that our entire currency system would go down. My view is this, we have to have industries that get in trouble, go through bankruptcy. Now, Senator you voted in favor of the bail out of the airline industry after 9/11.

I think that was the right thing to do. It was an emergency. You also voted for the bail out of the steel industry. I don't think I agree with that one, but I do believe that the right course for the auto industry was to go through a managed bankruptcy process and then to get help getting out.

KING: Governor let me ask you...[applause]...you — you mentioned — you mentioned President Bush's position on the Wall Street bail out. If you talk to people in the Bush administration at the time, they say they would have preferred the structured bankruptcy route that you talked about, but that there was no private capital available. That nobody would give the auto companies money and that their choice they say at the time, was to either give the government money or have them liquidate.

ROMNEY: Yeah, it was really interesting. Because, you know, I wrote my piece and I said look, these companies need to go through managed bankruptcy. And the head of the UAW said, we can't go through managed bankruptcy. The industry will disappear if that happens. And the politicians, Barack Obama's people, oh no, we can't go through managed bankruptcy. Six months they wrote, I think it was \$17 billion in checks to the auto companies. Then they finally realized I was right. They finally put them through managed bankruptcy. That was the time they needed the help to get out of managed bankruptcy.

Those monies they put in beforehand were — it was wasted money. And number two, because they put that money in, the president gave the companies to the UAW, they were part of the reason the companies were in trouble. Giving these companies to the UAW was wrong. [applause] [crosstalk]

KING: Mr. Speaker — one second. [applause] [crosstalk] [applause]

SANTORUM: As — as Governor Romney well knows, that the American government shut down the airline industry after 9/11. And the government by its action stopped the airline industry from functioning and yes, as a result of government action, which I thought it was appropriate for government since we shut down the industry...[crosstalk]

ROMNEY: I agree with you.

SANTORUM: ...after the events of 9/11.

ROMNEY: I agree.

SANTORUM: But government didn't shut down the banks. They didn't shut down the financial service industry. So when you compare those, it's not apples to apples, Mitt and that's not a fair comparison.

KING: Mr. Speaker, come in on the conversation. It's a tough one. It's a tough one. It's a major American industry, in a time of trouble.

GINGRICH: That's not a tough...[crosstalk]

KING: That's not tough, you say.

GINGRICH: It's not tough. First of all, there's a huge amount of the American auto industry that was just fine. BMW in South Carolina was terrific. Mercedes in Alabama was doing just fine. Honda in Ohio was just fine. So the — Toyota was

just fine. What we have is the United Auto Workers and a management system that had grown very, I think incapable of tough decisions because they were used to selling out to the United Auto Workers. And so they came in and said, oh we can't change. And this president on behalf of the United Auto Workers said, you're exactly right.

Now, the fact is, Chrysler is now Fiat. So when we talk about saving the American auto industry, let's be clear what they were doing. I think that they would have been much better off to have gone through a managed bankruptcy, I agree with Governor Romney. I think it would have happened. I think what would have happened is the UAW would have lost all of their advantages and the result was, what you had I thought was an unprecedented violation of 200 years of bankruptcy law by Barack Obama to pay off the UAW at the expense of every bondholder. *[applause]*

KING: Congressman Paul, as you join the conversation, the criticism of President Obama here, but I also want you to address the state's current Republican governor, Rick Snyder, who supports Mitt Romney, but that's irrelevant to this point. He says, "The bailout actually was something that really worked."

Is that Republican governor wrong?

PAUL: Well, you know, it's interesting when they argue that case.

First, I don't like the idea that you have good bailouts and bad bailouts. If bailouts are bad, they're bad, and we shouldn't be doing it.

But this argument about maybe one that works, you know, well, now that the bankruptcy or the bailing out of GM worked, I said that's sort of like if a criminal goes out and robs a bank, and he's successful, therefore you endorse what he did, because he's successful. But you have to rob people, you have to distort the law.

The government is supposed to protect contracts. They're not supposed to regulate contracts and they're not supposed to undermine contracts. And that's what we've been doing. *[applause]*

In the housing bubble, we undermined contracts. And this is what we're doing here. So you want to respect the contracts.

A lot of people will accuse me of advocating a free market, that there's no regulations. Actually, the regulations are tougher, because you have to go through bankruptcy and you have to face up to this.

And it isn't like General Motors would be destroyed. Newt made that point there, that there were good parts of General Motors. But politicians can't figure this out. Then they serve the special interests, and then you have labor fighting big business.

I opt for the free market in defense of liberty. That's what we need in this country. *[applause]*

KING: All right.

We're off to a good start, Gentlemen. We're going to take our first break of the evening.

In a moment, our Republican presidential debate here in Arizona continues. A lot more ground to cover, including two issues that are dominating the discussion here in Arizona in recent days, immigration and faith.

[commercial break]

KING: Welcome back to the Mesa Arts Center and the Arizona Republican Presidential debate. Let's get right back to questioning the four contenders for the Republican nomination. We take a question now from cnpolitics.com. You can see it up on the screen here.

Since birth control is the latest hot topic, which candidate believes in birth control, and if not, why? As you can see — it's a — it's a very popular question in the audience, as we can see. Look, we're not going to spend a ton of time on this but it is — please.

GINGRICH: Can I just make a point?

KING: Sure.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: These guys are giving you some feedback here, John.

KING: I see that. I see that.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I think they're making it very clear.

GINGRICH: No, I think — look, I think there's — I want to make two — I want to make two quick point, John.

The first is there is a legitimate question about the power of the government to impose on religion activities which any religion opposes. That's legitimate. *[applause]*

KING: Sure is.

GINGRICH: But I just want to point out, you did not once in the 2008 campaign, not once did anybody in the elite media

ask why Barack Obama voted in favor of legalizing infanticide. OK? So let's be clear here. [applause]

If we're going to have a debate about who the extremist is on these issues, it is President Obama who, as a state senator, voted to protect doctors who killed babies who survived the abortion. It is not the Republicans.

[crosstalk]

ROMNEY: John, what's happened — and you recall back in the debate that we had George Stephanopoulos talking out about birth control, we wondered why in the world did contraception — and it's like, why is he going there? Well, we found out when Barack Obama continued his attack on religious conscience.

I don't think we've seen in the history of this country the kind of attack on religious conscience, religious freedom, religious tolerance that we've seen under Barack Obama. Most recently, of course —[applause]— most recently requiring the Catholic Church to provide for its employees and its various enterprises health care insurance that would include birth control, sterilization and the morning-after pill. Unbelievable.

And he tried to retreat from that but he retreated in a way that was not appropriate, because these insurance companies now have to provide these same things and obviously the Catholic Church will end up paying for them.

But don't forget the decision just before this, where he said the government — not a church, but the government should have the right to determine who a church's ministers are for the purposes of determining whether they're exempt from EEOC or from workforce laws or labor laws.

He said the government should make that choice. That went all the way to the Supreme Court. There are a few liberals on the Supreme Court. They voted 9-0 against President Obama. His position —[applause]— his position — his position on religious tolerance, on religious conscience is clear, and it's one of the reasons the people in this country are saying we want to have a president who will stand up and fight for the rights under our Constitution, our first right, which is for freedom of religion.

KING: So let's focus the time — let's focus the time we spend on this on the role of the president and your personal views and question the role of government.

And Senator Santorum, this has come up — yes, it has come up because of the president's decision in the campaign. It's also come up because of some of the things you have said on the campaign trail. When you were campaigning in Iowa, you told an evangelical blog, if elected, you will talk about what, quote, "no president has talked about before — the dangers of contraception." Why?

SANTORUM: What I was talking about is we have a society — Charles Murray just wrote a book about this and it's on the front page of "The New York Times" two days ago, which is the increasing number of children being born out of wedlock in America, teens who are sexually active.

What we're seeing is a problem in our culture with respect to children being raised by children, children being raised out of wedlock, and the impact on society economically, the impact on society with respect to drug use and all — a host of other things when children have children.

And so, yes, I was talking about these very serious issues. And, in fact, as I mentioned before, two days ago on the front page of "The New York Times", they're talking about the same thing. The bottom line is we have a problem in this country, and the family is fracturing.

Over 40 percent of children born in America are born out of wedlock. How can a country survive if children are being raised in homes where it's so much harder to succeed economically? It's five times the rate of poverty in single-parent households than it is in two-parent homes. We can have limited government, lower tax — we hear this all the time, cut spending, limit the government, everything will be fine. No, everything's not going to be fine.

There are bigger problems at stake in America. And someone has got to go out there — I will — and talk about the things.

And you know what? Here's the difference.

The left gets all upset. "Oh, look at him talking about these things." You know, here's the difference between me and the left, and they don't get this. Just because I'm talking about it doesn't mean I want a government program to fix it.

That's what they do. That's not what we do. [applause]

KING: Congressman Paul?

PAUL: As an OB doctor, I've dealt with birth control pills and contraception for a long time. This is a consequences of the fact the government has control of medical care and medical insurance, and then we fight over how we dictate how this should be distributed, sort of like in schools. Once the government takes over the schools, especially at the federal level, then there's no right position, and you have to argue which prayer, are you allowed to pray, and you get into all the details.

The problem is the government is getting involved in things they shouldn't be involved in, especially at the federal level. [applause]

But sort of along the line of the pills creating immorality, I don't see it that way. I think the immorality creates the problem of wanting to use the pills. So you don't blame the pills.

I think it's sort of like the argument — conservatives use the argument all the time about guns. Guns don't kill, criminals kill. [applause]

So, in a way, it's the morality of society that we have to deal with. The pill is there and, you know, it contributes, maybe, but the pills can't be blamed for the immorality of our society. [applause]

KING: Governor, please.

ROMNEY: John, you know, I think as Rick has just said, this isn't an argument about contraceptives, this is a discussion about, are we going to have a nation which preserves the foundation of the nation, which is the family, or are we not? And Rick is absolutely right.

When you have 40 percent of kids being born out of wedlock, and among certain ethnic groups the vast majority being born out of wedlock, you ask yourself, how are we going to have a society in the future? Because these kids are raised in poverty in many cases, they're in abusive settings. The likelihood of them being able to finish high school or college drops dramatically in single-family homes. And we haven't been willing to talk about this. And when we have programs that say we're going to teach abstinence in schools, the liberals go crazy and try and stop us from doing that. We have to have a president who's willing to say that the best opportunity an individual can give to their unborn child is an opportunity to be born in a home with a mother and a father. And I think — [applause]

KING: It's an issue on which all of you have criticism on the Obama administration, it's an issue on which some of you have also criticized each other.

Governor Romney, both Senator Santorum and Speaker Gingrich have said during your tenure as governor, you required Catholic hospitals to provide emergency contraception to rape victims.

And Mr. Speaker, you compared the president to President Obama, saying he infringed on Catholics' rights.

Governor, did you do that?

ROMNEY: No, absolutely not. Of course not.

There was no requirement in Massachusetts for the Catholic Church to provide morning-after pills to rape victims. That was entirely voluntary on their report. There was no such requirement.

Likewise, in Massachusetts health care bill, there's a provision in Massachusetts general laws that says people don't have to have coverage for contraceptives or other type of medical devices which are contrary to their religious teachings. Churches also don't have to provide that to entities which are either the church themselves or entities they control. So we have provisions that make sure that something of that nature does not occur.

That's why when I worked closely with the leaders of the Catholic Church, I met with the cardinal a number of times, and with his emissaries. We talked about the issues we were concerned about.

We battled, for instance, to help the Catholic Church stay in the adoption business. The amazing thing was that while the Catholic Church was responsible for half the adoptions in my state — half the adoptions — they had to get out of that business because the legislature wouldn't support me and give them an exemption from having to place children in homes where there was a mom and a dad on a preferential basis.

Absolutely extraordinary. We have to have individuals that will stand up for religious conscience, and I did and I will again as president. [applause]

KING: Mr. Speaker?

GINGRICH: Well, the reports we got were quite clear that the public health department was prepared to give a waiver to Catholic hospitals about a morning-after abortion pill, and that the governor's office issued explicit instructions saying that they believed it wasn't possible under Massachusetts law to give them that waiver. Now, that was the newspaper reports that came out. That's something that both Senator Santorum and I have raised before. But I want to go a step further, because this makes a point that Ron Paul has been making for a generation and that people need to take very seriously.

When you have government as the central provider of services, you inevitably move towards tyranny, because the government has the power of force. [applause]

You inevitably — and I think this is true whether it's Romneycare or Obamacare or any other government centralized system — you inevitably move towards the coercion of the state and the state saying, "If you don't do what we, the politicians, have defined, you will be punished either financially or you will be punished in some other way like going to jail."

And that's why we are, I think, at an enormous crossroads in this country. And I think the fact is, for almost all of us who have been at this for any length of time, we're now looking at an abyss that forces you to change what you may once have thought — and I suspect all four of us are much more worried today about the power of the state than we would have been

— with the possible exception of Congressman Paul — than we would have been at any point in the last 25 years.

PAUL: John...[*applause*]

KING: Congressman, please.

PAUL: ... have a quick follow-up? [*applause*]

You know, we talk about the morning-after pill. Actually, the morning-after pill is nothing more than a birth control pill, so if birth control pills are on the market, the morning-after pill — so if you're going to legalize birth control pills, you really — you can't separate the two. They're all basically the same, hormonally.

But once again, the question is, if you voted for Planned Parenthood like the senator has, you voted for birth control pills. And you literally, because funds are fungible, you literally vote for abortions because Planned Parenthood gets the money — "Oh, I'll buy birth control pills," but then they have the money left over to do the abortion.

So that's why you have to have a pretty strong resistance of voting for these bunches of bills put together. Planned Parenthood should get nothing, let alone designate how they spend. [*applause*]

KING: Senator Santorum? [*applause*]

SANTORUM: As Congressman Paul knows, I opposed Title X funding. I've always opposed Title X funding, but it's included in a large appropriation bill that includes a whole host of other things, including...[*booing*]... the funding for the National Institutes of Health, the funding for Health and Human Services and a whole bunch of other departments. It's a multi-billion-dollar bill.

What I did, because Title X was always pushed through, I did something that no one else did. Congressman Paul didn't. I said, well, if you're going to have Title X funding, then we're going to create something called Title XX, which is going to provide funding for abstinence-based programs, so at least we'll have an opportunity to provide programs that actually work in — in keeping children from being sexually active instead of facilitating children from being sexually active. And I pushed Title XX to — to accomplish that goal.

So while, yes, I — I admit I voted for large appropriation bills and there were things in there I didn't like, things in there I did, but when it came to this issue, I proactively stepped forward and said that we need to do something at least to counterbalance it, A; B, I would say that I've always been very public that, as president of the United States, I will defund Planned Parenthood; I will not sign any appropriation bill that funds Planned Parenthood. [*applause*] [*crosstalk*]

KING: Senator [*sic*], go ahead.

PAUL: John, this demonstrates the problem that I'm talking about. There's always an excuse to do this. Now...[*applause*]... Title XX — I don't know whether you inferred that I would support Title XX for abstinence. No, it would cost money as a program. It's not a program of the federal government to get involved in our lives this way. If you want laws like that, maybe the state, but...[*applause*]... the federal government shouldn't even be having — spending money on abstinence. That's way too much more. I don't see that in the Constitution any... [*crosstalk*]

ROMNEY: Just a — just a brief comment. Senator, I just saw a YouTube clip of you being interviewed where you said that you personally opposed contraceptives but that you — you said that you voted for Title X. You... [*crosstalk*]

But you used that as an argument, saying this is something I did proactively. You didn't say this is something I was opposed to; it wasn't something I would have done. You said this — you said this in a positive light, "I voted for Title X." [*laughter*]

SANTORUM: I think it's — I think I was making it clear that, while I have a personal more objection to it; even though I don't support it, that I voted for bills that included it. And I made it very clear in subsequent interviews that I don't — I don't support that...[*booing*]... I've never supported it, and — and have — and on an individual basis have voted against it. That's why I proposed Title XX to counterbalance it.

So I — you know, Governor Romney, I can just say that — that, you know, we were talking about this issue before of, you know, religious conscience and protections. But this is — the whole reason this issue is alive is because of the bill that you drafted in Massachusetts, Romneycare, which was the model for Obamacare and the government takeover of health care. [*booing*]

ROMNEY: Wait a second. Wait a second. Wait a second.

SANTORUM: And there was a study...

ROMNEY: Wait a second.

SANTORUM: There was a study that just came out about 10 days ago, two weeks ago, that listed 15 ways in which Romneycare was the model for Obamacare, everything from individual mandates, everything from — from fines. Yours is different. You required businesses over 10 employees; Barack — President Obama's is over 50 employees.

But there — there's a — and even the drafter of your bill, when they were working on Obama's bill, said in fact it was the model. So here we have, as Newt said, the real fundamental issue here is government coercion and government coercion

when you give governments the right to be able to take your responsibility to provide for your own health and — and — and care, and give it to the government.

That's what Governor Romney did in Massachusetts. It would be a very — very, let say it would be a difficult task for someone who had the model for Obama Care, which is the biggest issue in this race of government in control of your lives, to be the nominee of our party. It would take that issue completely off... [crosstalk]

KING: Governor — Governor, take 30 seconds to respond and then I want to move the conversation on.

ROMNEY: Much longer than 30 seconds.

KING: I hope not.

ROMNEY: That's a — that's a long — that's a long — that's a long answer. First of all, let's not forget that four years ago, well after Romney Care was put in place, four years ago, you not only endorsed me, you and Laura Ingram, and said and this is the guy who is really conservative and we can trust him. Let's not forget you said, that number one. [applause]

Number two...[applause]...number two, under the tenth amendment, states have the right to do things that they think are in their best interest. I know you — you agree with that. But let's — let's point this out, our bill was 70 pages. His bill is 2700 pages. There's a lot in that 2,700 pages I don't agree with and let me tell you, if I'm president of the United States, I will repeal Obama Care for a lot of reasons. One, I don't want to spend another trillion dollars. We don't have that kind of money, it's the wrong way to go. Number two, I don't believe the federal government should cut Medicare by some \$500 billion.

Number three, I don't think the federal government should raise taxes by \$500 billion and, therefore, I will repeat Obama Care. And let me — let me — let me mention one more — the reason we have Obama Care — the reason we have Obama Care is because the Senator you supported over Pat Toomey in Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter, the pro-choice Senator of Pennsylvania that you supported and endorsed in a race over Pat Toomey, he voted for Obama Care. If you had not supported him, if we had said, no to Arlen Specter, we would not have Obama Care. So don't look at me. Take a look in the mirror. [applause]

KING: Senator please, quickly? [applause]

SANTORUM: So, okay Governor, let's — let's get this straight. First off number one, you funded Romney Care through federal tax dollars through Medicaid. I know it well, it's called disproportionate share provider tax. About \$400 million that you got from the federal taxpayers to underwrite Romney Care to make sure you didn't have to raise taxes right away. But of course you had to. Ask your governor, of the \$8 billion of tax increases he had to put in place.

Yes governor, you balanced the budget for four years. You have a constitutional requirement to balance the budget for four years. No great shakes. I'm all for — I'd like to see it federally. But don't go around bragging about something you have to do. Michael Dukakis balanced the budget for 10 years, does that make him qualified to be president of the United States? I don't think so. [applause]

The bottom line is, what you did was you used federal dollars to fund the government takeover of health care in Massachusetts, used it as — and — and Barack Obama...[crosstalk]

ROMNEY: ...Arlen Specter.

SANTORUM: Well, I'll get to that in a minute. [applause] But — and then Barack Obama used it as a model for taking over this health care system in America. Why I supported Arlen Specter, number one because — because Arlen Specter was a — a Senator who was going to be the chairman of the Judiciary Committee at a time when the most important issue that was coming up in the next session of Congress was two to three Supreme Court nominees that were going to be available. And one, and maybe two of them, or maybe all three were going to be out of the conservative block. And Arlen Specter as chairman of the Judiciary Committee, we had a conversation.

He asked me to support him. I said will you support the president's nominees? We had a 51/49 majority in the Senate. He said I'll support the president's nominees as chairman. Every nominee Arlen Specter supported from the time he — he took on Judge Forks and saved Justice Thomas. Every nominee he supported, passed. Why? Because it gave Democrats cover to vote for it and it gave Republican moderates cover to vote for it. [crosstalk]

And just — no because he wouldn't have been able to give the moderate Republicans and the conservative Democrats the — the leeway to then support that nominee, which is exactly what Arlen Specter did. He defended Roberts, defended Alito. We have a 5/4 majority on the court that struck down that case that you just talked about and is there as a guardian of liberty. And I did the right thing for our country. [crosstalk] [applause]

ROMNEY: ...Arlen Specter...[crosstalk] [applause]...supporting Arlen Specter — supporting Arlen Specter over Pat Toomey, that was a — that was a very tortuous route...[crosstalk]

SANTORUM: Just about as tortuous as...[crosstalk]

KING: Let's move the conversation along — let's move the conversation along and take a question from a voter down here in our audience. All right, Sir identify yourself and ask your question please?

QUESTION: Gentleman my name is Jerry Lott and I'm from Key Man, Arizona. It seems that Arizona has come under federal attack just for wanting to secure its southern border. What will you and your administrations do to fix the situation? To secure our border and to protect the American people? [*applause*]

KING: Congressman Paul, I want to go to you first on this one. You're from a border state. As you answer Gary's question, a recent federal analysis says the cost of secure fencing, which they have a good deal of the border along this state, would cost about \$3 million per mile. Is that a good investment? Money well spent?

PAUL: Probably not, but we can do a better job, and the best way to do it is forget about the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and deal with our borders, put our resources on this border. This is what we need. But we need to change the rules. We reward illegal immigration. They get benefits, Texas hospitals, and, you know, schools are going bankrupt.

The restraints on the states, and Obama's restraints on the states to deal with it. Why is it if an illegal comes across the border and they go on private property, why isn't that trespassing? And why don't you have the right to stop it? So but there should be no mandates from the federal government about what you must do under the 9th and 10th. There would be essentially none.

But the federal government does have a responsibility for these borders. And I just hate to see all these resources — I think that we should have much more immigration service on the border to make it easier — it's hard to even get to visit this country. We're losing a lot of visitors and workers that could come to this country because we have an inefficient immigration service.

And then that invites the illegal. We have to deal — we can't endorse the illegal, but the program today endorses the illegal problems. And a weak economy is always detrimental, too, because of the welfare state. We have welfare at home and some jobs go begging, we have jobs going begging in this country in the midst of the recession, has to do with the economy.

You can't ignore the economy. But also the welfare state, allowing immigrants to come over and then get the benefits — if you subsidize something, you get more of. So there's a lot we can do and should do and certainly this president is not doing a very good job. [*applause*]

KING: Mr. Speaker, the fence has been a point of contention in the race. And one of your high-profile supporters, a gentleman who's been up here during this campaign, Governor Rick Perry of Texas, is here tonight. He said this: if you build a 30-foot wall from El Paso to Brownsville, the 35-foot ladder business gets really good.

You signed a pledge to construct a double fence. Why is Governor Perry wrong?

GINGRICH: He's not wrong. They'd have to have two 35-foot ladders because it's a double fence. [*laughter*]

Look, the fact is I helped Duncan Hunter pass the first fence bill in San Diego when I was Speaker of the House. San Diego and Tijuana are the most densely populated border. It turned out it worked. It worked dramatically. Duncan and I would be glad to testify. He's former chairman of the national — of the Defense Committee — how much it worked.

However, it stopped. It stopped in part because there was a wetlands. It turned out none of the illegal immigrants cared about wetlands policy. Then you had to go and build around the wetlands, which we did. The further we have gone with the fence, the fewer the people have broken into California.

Now, the thing that's fascinating, though, John, is you quoted a government study of how much it would cost. That's my earlier point. If you modernize the federal government so it's competent, you could probably do it for 10 percent of the cost of that study.

The fact is — [*applause*] — what I would do, I would — I have — I have a commitment at newt.org, I would — to finish the job by January 1, 2014, I would initiate a bill that would waive all federal regulations, requirement and studies.

I would ask Governor Brewer here, I would ask Governor Martinez, Governor Brown, and Governor Perry to become the co-leaders in their state. We would apply as many resources as are needed to be done by January 1 of 2014, including, if necessary — there are 23,000 Department of Homeland Security personnel in the D.C. area.

I'm prepared to move up to half of them to Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. This is a doable thing. [*applause*]

KING: Governor Romney, the border security is part of the equation, what to do about whether it's 8 million or 11 million illegal immigrants in the country now is another part of the equation. And Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who's with us tonight from Maricopa County — he's in the audience — he told me — [*applause*] — he told me this week here in Mesa — these are his words — "it's called political garbage, if you will, to not arrest illegals already in this country."

You've talked to the governor about self-deportation, if businesses do their job, asking for the right documents, the people will leave. What about arresting? Should there be aggressive, seek them out, find them and arrest them as the Sheriff Arpaio advocates?

ROMNEY: You know, I think you see a model in Arizona. They passed a law here that says — that says that people who come here and try and find work, that the employer is required to look them up on e-verify. This e-verify system allows employers in Arizona to know who's here legally and who's not here legally.

And as a result of e-verify being put in place, the number of people in Arizona that are here illegally has dropped by some 14 percent, where the national average has only gone down 7 percent. So going back to the question that was asked, the right course for America is to drop these lawsuits against Arizona and other states that are trying to do the job Barack Obama isn't doing. [applause]

And I will drop those lawsuits on day one. I'll also complete the fence. I'll make sure we have enough border patrol agents to secure the fence. And I will make sure we have an E-Verify system and require employers to check the documents of workers, and to check E-Verify. And if an employer hires someone that has not gone through E-Verify, they're going to get sanctioned just like they do for not paying their taxes.

You do that, and just as Arizona is finding out, you can stop illegal immigration. It's time we finally did it. [applause]

KING: Senator Santorum, we had the conversation about the border and the fence. Governor Romney talks about E-Verify, making sure business is doing their part of the equation.

What about the individual? You said in our last debate employers should be sanctioned, as Governor Romney just said, if they hire illegal immigrants. About a quarter of all workers in private households are undocumented.

What about the homeowner who hires somebody as a household cleaning worker, as a nanny, perhaps? Does that person — if you're going to be consistent, have enforcement across the board, should that person be sanctioned?

SANTORUM: I'm not going to require homeowners to do E-Verify. I think that's one step too far. But I think what we need to do is to give law enforcement the opportunity to do what they're doing here in Arizona and what Sheriff Arpaio was doing before he ran into some issues with the federal government, which is to allow folks to enforce the law here in this country, to allow people who are breaking the law or suspicious of breaking the law to be able to be detained and deported if they're found here in this country illegally, as well as those who are trying to seek employment.

This is enforcing not just upon the employer, but on those who are here illegally and trying to do things that are against the law, like seeking employment here.

KING: It's a tough policy question, obviously, and this state has been part of the driving force. It also becomes — especially for four gentlemen who would like to be the next president of the United States, it's a difficult political question in the sense that the Latino population is the fastest-growing demographic in our country.

And some Republicans — some Republicans — Marco Rubio, for example, the senator from Florida that all of you have complimented, said — could be a leading force in your administration if you're elected — he said this recently. He says he worries that some of the rhetoric used by Republican politicians on this issue has been harsh, intolerable, inexcusable.

Mr. Speaker, is he right?

GINGRICH: I don't know who he's referring to, so I'm not going to comment in general on a statement. Is there somebody somewhere who's done that? Sure.

Was it also intolerable for President Obama to go to El Paso and make a totally demagogic speech in which he fundamentally — no. [applause]

The great failure here — I voted in 1986 for the bill which was supposed to solve all this, which Ronald Reagan solved — signed. And in Reagan's diary, he says, I signed this bill because we have to get control of the border and we have to have an employer-sanctioned program with a guest worker program.

Now, all of us who voted for that bill got shortchanged on everything we were supposed to get. President Bush couldn't get it through. President Obama can't get it through.

I believe you cannot pass a single large comprehensive bill, the 2,700-page kind of bill you described. I think you've got to go one step at a time.

The first step is to control the border. I don't believe anybody who's here illegally — and I talked last night, for example, with folks who are of Hispanic background from Nogales who are in the import-export business dealing with Mexico every day. They don't want a border that's closed, they want a border that's controlled, that has easy access for legality and impossible access for illegality. And that's the model that I think you can talk about in my community of any ethnic background in this country. [applause]

KING: All right, Gentlemen. We're going to take another quick break.

Our Arizona Republican presidential debate will continue in a moment, but here's a question. One of these men could be president just 11 months from now. How would they deal with threats from Iran and North Korea? Plus, a great question sent to us at CNNPolitics.com. Define yourself using one word, Gentlemen, and one word only.

Can the candidates keep it that short? Stick around and find out.

[commercial break]

KING: That was a good exercise. Let's move our conversation now —

UNKNOWN: It is.

KING: Let's move our conversation now to the important responsibilities one of you gentlemen could have in just 11 months as the commander-in-chief of the United States.

And Governor Romney, I want to ask you first, 11 months from now, if you're successful, you would be our commander-in-chief. The Pentagon recently announced plans to open up 14,000 new jobs to women, putting them closer and close to the front lines of combat. Senator Santorum says he sees a lot of things wrong with this.

What do you think?

ROMNEY: I would look to the people who are serving in the military to give the best assessment of where women can serve. We've had over 100 women lose their lives in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I was with Governor Bob McDonnell. His daughter has served as a platoon leader in Afghanistan. He said that she doesn't get emotional when she faces risk, he's the one that gets emotional as she faces that kind of risk. And I believe women have the capacity to serve in our military in positions of significance and responsibility, as we do throughout our society. *[applause]*

I do think that the key decisions that are being made by this administration, by President Obama, however, related to our military are seriously awry. This is a president who is shrinking our Navy, shrinking our Air Force, wants to shrink our active-duty personnel by 50,000 to 100,000, is cutting our military budget by roughly a trillion dollars.

The world is more dangerous. It is not safer.

North Korea is going through transition. The Arab Spring has become the Arab Winter.

Syria is in flux. And, of course, Pakistan, with 100 nuclear weapons or more, represents a potential threat. Northern Mexico is a real danger area.

I mean, looking around the world, you have Hezbollah in Latin America and Mexico. I mean, we face a very dangerous world. The right course is to add ships to our Navy, to modernize and add aircraft to our Air Force, to add 100,000 troops to our active-duty personnel, and to strengthen America's military. *[applause]*

KING: I want to get to some of those hotspots Governor Romney just mentioned, but Speaker Gingrich, on the question of a more prominent role for women, good idea or bad idea?

GINGRICH: Well, look, I think it's a misleading question in the modern era. You live in a world of total warfare. Anybody serving our country in uniform virtually anywhere in the world could be in danger at virtually any minute. A truck driver can get blown up by a bomb as readily as the infantrymen.

So I would say that you ought to ask the combat leaders what they think is an appropriate step, as opposed to the social engineers of the Obama administration. *[applause]*

But everybody needs to understand — and by the way, we live in an age when we have to genuinely worry about nuclear weapons going off in our own cities. So everybody who serves in the fire department, in the police department, not just the first responders, but our National Guard, whoever is going to respond, all of us are more at risk today, men and women, boys and girls, than at any time in the history of this country. And we need to understand that's the context in which we're going to have to move forward in understanding the nature of modern combat.

I think this is a very sober period, and I believe this is the most dangerous president on national security grounds in American history. *[applause]*

KING: Congressman Paul?

PAUL: The problem is the character of our wars. And I don't like to think of people in groups. Individuals have rights, not groups. You don't have women's rights or men's rights.

And we still have draft legislation. What I fear is the draft coming back because we're getting way over-involved. And the draft — we keep registering our 18-year-olds. So when the draft comes, we're going to be registering young women, and because of this they're going to be equal.

Now, the wars we fight aren't defensive wars, they're offensive wars. We're involved in way too much.

They're undeclared, they're not declared by the Congress, and so we're in wars that shouldn't be involved. So I don't want even the men to be over there. I don't want women being killed, but I don't want the men being killed in these wars. *[applause]*

But because now we have accepted now for 10 years that we're allowed to start war, we call pre-emptive war, preventive war. Well, that's an aggressive war.

I believe in the Christian just war theory that you have to morally justify the wars in defense. Now, if we're defending our

country — and we need to defend, believe me — with men and women will be in combat and defending our country, and that's the way it should be. But when it's an offensive war, going where we shouldn't be, that's quite a bit different. So it's the foreign policy that needs to be examined.

KING: Senator?

SANTORUM: I actually agree with the comments made by the two gentlemen to my left, that there are different roles of women in combat. They are on the front line right now. Their combat zone is, as Newt said, everywhere, unfortunately, in that environment.

My concern that I expressed, I didn't say it was wrong. I said I had concerns about certain roles with respect to — and particularly in infantry.

I still have those concerns, but I would defer to at least hearing the recommendations of those involved. But I think we have civilian control of the military, and these are things that should be decided not just by the generals, but we should not have social engineering, as I think we've seen from this president. We should have sober minds looking at what is in fact the best proper — proper roles for everybody in combat.

KING: Let's continue the conversation about the commander in chief question. We have a question from our audience, Sir?

QUESTION: Hi, my name is Ken Taylor from Wickenburg, Arizona and my question to all the candidates is, how do you plan on dealing with the growing nuclear threat in Iran?

KING: It's a pressing question at the moment. Mr. Speaker, let's go to you first on this one. I want to ask you in the context of the president's and this country's highest ranking military officer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Dempsey told CNN this last week, quote, "A strike at this time would be destabilizing and would not achieve Israel's long term objectives." If you win this election, General Dempsey would still be — would then be your chairman of the joint chiefs.

If the prime minister of Israel called you, said he wanted to go forward and questioned, Sir do you agree — Mr. President do you agree with your chairman of the joint chiefs? Would you say, yes, Mr. Prime Minister, please stand down? Or would you give Israel the green light?

GINGRICH: Well, first of all this is two different questions. General Dempsey went on to say that he thought Iran was a rational actor. I can't imagine why he would say that. And I just cannot imagine why he would have said it. The fact is, this is a dictator, Ahmadinejad, who has said he doesn't believe the Holocaust existed. This is a dictator who said he wants to eliminate Israel from the face of the earth. This is a dictator who said he wants to drive the United States out of the Middle East. I'm inclined to believe dictators. Now I — I think that it's dangerous not to. *[applause]*

If — if an Israeli prime minister, haunted by the history of the Holocaust, recognizing that three nuclear weapons is a holocaust in Israel, if an Israeli prime minister calls me and says, I believe in the defense of my country. This goes back to a point that Congressman Paul raised that we probably disagree on. I do believe there are moments when you preempt. If you think a madman is about to have nuclear weapons and you think that madman is going to use those nuclear weapons, then you have an absolute moral obligation to defend the lives of your people by eliminating the capacity to get nuclear weapons. *[applause]*

KING: But often...*[applause]* The American people often don't pay much attention to what's going on in the world until they have to, but this is an issue, this confrontation with Iran that is partly responsible for what we have seen daily at the gas pump. Prices going up and going up and going up. So I want — Governor Romney come into the conversation, we'll continue it with everyone at the table. As we have this showdown, confrontation, call it what you will with Iran. Should our leadership, including the current president of the United States and the four gentleman here with me tonight, be prepared to look the American people in the eye and say — and I want to hear everybody's plans, over the long run I think I can bring down the price of gasoline, or I can't if that's your plan.

But at the moment, we need to have a conversation about how as long as this continues, the prices are likely to keep going up.

ROMNEY: Look, the — the price of gasoline pales in comparison to the idea of Ahmadinejad with nuclear weapons. Ahmadinejad having fissile material that he can give to Hezbollah and Hamas and that they can bring into Latin America and potentially bring across the border into the United States to let off dirty bombs here. I mean — or — or more sophisticated bombs here, this — we simply cannot allow Iran to have nuclear weaponry. And — and — and this president has a lot of failures. It's hard — it's hard to think of — economically his failures, his — his policies in a whole host of areas have been troubling.

But nothing in my view is as serious a failure as his failure to deal with Iran appropriately. This president — this president should have put in place crippling sanctions against Iran, he did not. He decided to give Russia — he decided to give Russia their number one foreign policy objective, removal of our missile defense sites from Eastern Europe and got nothing in return. He could have gotten crippling sanctions against Iran. He did not. When dissident voices took to the street in Iran to protest a stolen election there, instead of standing with them, he bowed to the election. This is a president...*[applause]*...who has made it clear through his administration in almost every communication we've had so far, that he does not want Israel to take action. That he opposes military action. This is a president who should have instead communicated to Iran that we are prepared, that we are considering military options. They're not just on the table. They are in our hand. We must now allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. If they do, the world changes. America will be at risk. And some day, nuclear weaponry will be used. If I am president, that will not happen. If we reelect Barack Obama, it will happen. *[applause]*

KING: Senator Santorum, please? [applause]

SANTORUM: I agree with Governor Romney's comment. I think they are absolutely right on and well spoken.

I would say that if you're looking for a president to be elected in this country that will send that very clear message to Iran as to the seriousness of the American public to stop them from getting a nuclear weapon, there would be no better candidate than me because I have been on the trail of Iran and trying to advocate for stopping them getting a nuclear weapon for about eight years now.

I was the author of a bill back in 2008 that talked about sanctions on a nuclear program that our intelligence community said didn't exist and had the President of the United States, president bush oppose me for two years.

And, by the way, so did Joe Biden on the floor of the Senate, and Barack Obama. I always say if you want to know what foreign policy position to take, find out what Joe Biden's position is and take the opposite opinion and you'll be right 100 percent of the time.

But they opposed me. He actively opposed me. We did pass that bill eventually at the end of 2006, and it was to fund the pro- democracy movement, \$100 million a year. Here's what I said — we need to get this — these pro-American Iranians who are there, who want freedom, want democracy, and want somebody to help them and support them.

Well, we put — we put some money out there and guess what? Barack Obama cut it when he came into office. And when the Green Revolution rose, the pro-democracy prose, we had nothing. We had no connection, no correlation and we did absolutely nothing to help them.

In the meantime, when the radicals in Egypt and the radicals in Libya, the Muslim Brotherhood, when they rise against either a feckless leader or a friend of ours in Egypt, the president is more than happy to help them out.

When they're going up against a dangerous theocratic regime that wants to wipe out the state of Israel, that wants to dominate the radical Islamic world and take on the great Satan, the United States, we do nothing. That is a president that must go. And you want a leader who will take them on? I'll do that.

KING: Congressman Paul, all three of your rivals here make a passionate case that — all three of them make a passionate case that this is a vital U.S. national security interest. But you disagree.

PAUL: I disagree because we don't know if they have a weapon. As a matter of fact, there's no evidence that they have it. There is no evidence.

Israel claims they do not have it and our government doesn't. I don't want them to get a weapon. But I think what we're doing is encouraging them to have a weapon because they feel threatened. If you look at a map of — if you look at a map of Iran, we have 45 bases around their country, plus our submarines.

The Iranians can't possibly attack anybody. And we're worrying about the possibility of one nuclear weapon. Now, just think about the Cold War. The Soviets had 30,000 of them. And we talked to them. The Soviets killed 100 million people and the Chinese, and we worked our way out of it.

And if you want to worry about nuclear weapons, worry about the nuclear weapons that were left over from the Soviet Union. They're still floating around. They don't have them all detailed. So we're ready to go to war. I say going to war rapidly like this is risky and it's reckless.

Now, if they are so determined to go to war, the only thing I plead with you for, if this is the case, is do it properly. Ask the people and ask the Congress for a declaration of war. This is war and people are going to die. And you have got to get a declaration of war.

And just to go and start fighting — but the sanctions are already backfiring. And all that we do is literally doing the opposite. When we've been — were attacked, we all came together. When we attacked the — when we — when we put them under attack, they get together and it neutralizes that. They rally around their leaders.

So what we're doing is literally enhancing their power. Think of the sanctions we dealt with Castro. Fifty years and Castro is still there. It doesn't work. So I would say a different approach. We need to at least — we talked — we talked to the Soviets during the Cuban crisis. We at least can talk to somebody who does not — we do not have proof that he has a weapon. Why go to war so carelessly?

KING: Let's stay on this theme. We have a question from cnnpolitics.com, a question — you can see it up on the screen here. In regards to Syria, should the United States intervene and should we arm the rebellion?

Senator Santorum, let me start with you on this one. The American people have watched these videos that started months ago and has accelerated in recent days. What is the role for the United States today?

SANTORUM: Syria is a puppet state of Iran. They are a threat not just to Israel, but they have been a complete destabilizing force within Lebanon, which is another problem for Israel and Hezbollah. They are a country that we can do no worse than the leadership in Syria today, which is not the case, and some of the other countries that we readily got ourselves involved in.

So it's sort of remarkable to me we would have — here again, it's — I think it's the timidity of this president in dealing with the Iranian threat, because Syria and Iran is an axis. And the president — while he couldn't reach out deliberately to Iran but did reach out immediately to Syria and established an embassy there. And the only reason he removed that embassy was because it was threatened of being — of being overtaken, not because he was objecting to what was going on in Syria.

This president has — has obviously a very big problem in standing up to the Iranians in any form. If this would have been any other country, given what was going on and the mass murders that we're seeing there, this president would have quickly and — joined the international community, which is calling for his ouster and the stop of this, but he's not. He's not. Because he's afraid to stand up to Iran.

He opposed the sanctions in Iran against the — against the central banks until his own party finally said, "You're killing us. Please support these sanctions."

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a president who isn't going to stop them. He isn't going to stop them from getting a nuclear weapon. We need a new president or we are going to have a cataclysmic situation with a — a power that is the most prolific proliferator of terror in the world that will be able to do so with impunity because they will have a nuclear weapon to protect — protect them for whatever they do. It has to be stopped, and this president is not in a position to do that.

KING: And the question of Syria...[*applause*]... Mr. Speaker, then Governor Romney, if you were president today, what would you do differently from this president tomorrow?

GINGRICH: Well, the first thing I'd do, across the board for the entire region, is create a very dramatic American energy policy of opening up federal lands and opening up offshore drilling, replacing the EPA. [*applause*]

We — the Iranians have been practicing closing the Straits of Hormuz, which has one out of every five barrels of oil in the world going through it. We have enough energy in the United States that we would be the largest producer of oil in the world by the end of this decade. We would be capable of saying to the Middle East, "We frankly don't care what you do. The Chinese have a big problem because you ain't going to have any oil." [*applause*] But we would not have to be directly engaged. That's a very different question.

But, first of all, you've got to set the stage, I think, here to not be afraid of what might happen in the region.

Second, we clearly should have our allies — this is an old- fashioned word — we have have our allies covertly helping destroy the Assad regime. There are plenty of Arab-speaking groups that would be quite happy. There are lots of weapons available in the Middle East.

And I agree with — with Senator Santorum's point. This is an administration which, as long as you're America's enemy, you're safe.

You know, the only people you've got to worry about is if you're an American ally. [*applause*]

KING: Governor?

ROMNEY: I agree with both these gentlemen. It's very interesting that you're seeing, on the Republican platform, a very strong commitment to say we're going to say no to Iran. It's unacceptable for Iran to have a nuclear weapon.

And — and Rick is absolutely right. Syria is their key ally. It's their only ally in the Arab world. It is also their route to the sea. Syria provides a — a shadow over Lebanon. Syria is providing the armament of Hezbollah in Lebanon that, of course, threatens Israel, our friend and ally.

We have very bad news that's come from the Middle East over the past several months, a lot of it in part because of the feckless leadership of our president.

But one little piece of good news, and that is the key ally of Iran, Syria, is — has a leader that's in real trouble. And we ought to grab a hold of that like it's the best thing we've ever seen.

There's things that are — we're having a hard time getting our hands around, like, what's happening in Egypt. But in Syria, with Assad in trouble, we need to communicate to the Alawites, his friends, his ethnic group, to say, look, you have a future if you'll abandon that guy Assad.

We need to work with — with Saudi Arabia and with Turkey to say, you guys provide the kind of weaponry that's needed to help the rebels inside Syria. This is a critical time for us.

If we can turn Syria and Lebanon away from Iran, we finally have the capacity to get Iran to pull back. And we could, at that point, with crippling sanctions and a very clear statement that military action is an action that will be taken if they pursue nuclear weaponry, that could change the course of world history.

KING: Let's try to get another question. [*applause*]

PAUL: John?

KING: Congressman, quickly, please?

PAUL: No, I get a minute to go quickly. [applause]

You know, I — I've tried the moral argument. I've tried the constitutional argument on these issues. And they don't — they don't go so well. But there — there's an economic argument, as well.

As a matter of fact, Al Qaida has had a plan to bog us down in the Middle East and bankrupt this country. That's exactly what they're doing. We've spent \$4 trillion of debt in the last 10 years being bogged down in the Middle East.

The neoconservatives who now want us to be in Syria, want us to go to Iran, have another war, and we don't have the money. We're already — today gasoline hit \$6 a gallon in Florida. And we don't have the money.

So I don't believe I'm going to get the conversion on the moral and the constitutional arguments in the near future. But I'll tell you what, I'm going to win this argument for economic reasons. Just remember, when the Soviets left, they left not because we had to fight them. They left because they bankrupted this country and we better wake up, because that is what we're doing here. We're destroying our currency and we have a financial crisis on our hands. [applause]

KING: Let's take another question from our audience, please.

Identify yourself and ask your question.

UNKNOWN: I'm Marsha Crossen from Scottsdale, Arizona.

What is your stand on education reform and the No Child Left Behind Act?

KING: This came up a bit earlier in the debate. Some of you mentioned it in a general way.

Senator Santorum, to you first. Specifically, what do you do about No Child Left Behind today if you're president?

SANTORUM: Well, you know what? I supported No Child Left Behind. I supported it. It was the principal priority of President Bush to try to take on a failing education system and try to impose some sort of testing regime that would be able to quantify how well we're doing with respect to education. I have to admit, I voted for that. It was against the principles I believed in, but, you know, when you're part of the team, sometimes you take one for the team, for the leader, and I made a mistake. [booing]

You know, politics is a team sport, folks. And sometimes you've got to rally together and do something. And in this case, you know, I thought testing was — and finding out how bad the problem was wasn't a bad idea.

What was a bad idea was all the money that was put out there, and that, in fact, was a huge problem. I admit the mistake and I will not make that mistake again. You have someone who is committed.

Look, I'm a home schooling father of seven. I know the importance of customized education for our children. I know the importance of parental control of education. [applause]

I know the importance of local control of education. And having gone through that experience of the federal government involvement, not only do I believe the federal government should get out of the education business, I think the state government should start to get out of the education business and put it back to the state — to the local and into the community. [applause]

KING: Governor Romney, when you were governor, you had to deal with this law. So weigh in. And as you do, it's designed, like it or not, to help the public school system, which has struggled. Senator Santorum, just the other day, called public schools in this country factories.

ROMNEY: Well, I'm not going to comment on that unless you'd like to.

With regards to your question, I came into a state where Republicans and Democrats had worked to — before I got there to make some very important changes. They said that they were going to test our kids every year.

They said to graduate from high school, you're going to have to pass an exam in English and math. I was the first governor that had to enforce that provision.

There were a lot of people that said, oh, no, no, no. Let people graduate even if they can't pass that exam. I enforced it. We fought it. It was hard to do.

We added more school choice. My legislature tried to say no more charter schools. I vetoed that, we overturned that.

With school choice, testing our kids, giving our best teachers opportunities for advancement, these kinds of principles drove our schools to be pretty successful. As a matter of fact, there are four measures on which the federal government looks at schools state by state, and my state's number one of all 50 stays in all four of those measures, fourth-and-eighth-graders in English and math. Those principles, testing our kids, excellent curriculum, superb teachers, and school choice, those are the answers to help our schools.

And with regards to No Child Left Behind, the right answer there — President Bush stood up and said, you know what? The

teachers unions don't want school choice, I want school choice to see who's succeeding and failing.

He was right to fight for that. There are things that should be changed in the law, but we have to stand up to the federal teachers unions and put the kids first and the unions behind. *[applause]*

KING: Mr. Speaker, on that point, this is a conversation about what is the proper role of the federal government in the education issue? To the point the governor just raised about teachers unions, you have complimented President Obama to a degree on that issue, saying he had some courage to stand up to the teachers union. You went on tour with Al Sharpton and this president's education secretary in support of the multibillion-dollar Race to the Top program that essentially — I think they used stimulus money for it, but incentives to states, to schools that perform, and that enact reforms.

GINGRICH: What we did is we went around, including Tucson, in this state, and we talked about the importance of charter schools, which was the one area where I thought the president did in fact show some courage, being willing to go into Philadelphia or into Baltimore or in a variety of places and advocate — we were in Montgomery, Alabama, for example — and say charter schools are an important step in the right direction.

There are two things wrong with the president's approach. And the reason I would, frankly, dramatically shrink the Federal Department of Education down to doing nothing but research, return all the power under the Tenth Amendment back to the states.

And I agree with Rick's point. I would urge the states, then, to return most of that power back to the local communities, and I'd urge the local communities the turn most of the power back to the parents. And I think the fact is — *[applause]*

We have bought — we bought over the last 50 years three huge mistakes. We bought the mistake that the teachers unions actually cared about the kids. It's increasingly clear they care about protecting bad teachers.

And if you look at L.A. Unified, it is almost criminal what we do to the poorest children in America, entrapping them into places. No Nation Left Behind said if a foreign power did this to our children, we'd declare it an act of war because they're doing so much damage. The second thing we bought into was the — the whole school of education theory that you don't have to learn, you have to learn about how you would learn.

So when you finish learning about how you would learn, you have self esteem because you're told you have self esteem, even if you can't read the words self esteem. And the...*[applause]*...and the third thing we bought, which Rick eluded to, which is really important. We bought this notion that you could have Carnegie units and you could have state standards and you could have a curriculum everybody — every child is unique. Every teach is unique. Teaching is a missionary vocation. When you bureaucratize it, you kill it. We need a fundamental re-thinking from the ground up. *[applause]*

KING: Congressman Paul? *[applause]*

PAUL: Newt — Newt's going in the right direction, but not far enough. *[laughter]*

The Constitution is very, very clear. There is no authority for the federal government to be involved in education. *[applause]*

There's no — no prohibition in the Constitution for the states to be involved in education. That's not a bad position and we can sort things out. But once — once again the Senators for — was for No Child Left Behind, but now he's running for president, now he's running to repeal No Child Left Behind once again. But — and he calls it a team sport. He has to go along to get along and that's the way the team plays. But that's what the problem is with Washington. That's what's been going on for so long. *[applause]*

So, I don't accept that form of government. I understand it. That is the way it works. You were with the majority. You were the Whip and you organized and got these votes all passed. But I think the obligation of all of us should be the oath of office. We should take — and it shouldn't be the oath to the party. I'm sorry about that, but it isn't the oath to the party, it's the oath to our office. *[applause]*

To obey the law and the law is the Constitution. *[applause]*

KING: Gentleman, thank you. One more break. When we come back, the final question of what could be the final Republican debate.

[commercial break]

KING: Welcome back to the Mesa Art Center, our Arizona Republican presidential debate, the four contenders on stage tonight.

Gentlemen, our time is short, so one last question.

Nine states have voted so far. We talked a bit earlier about the volatility in the race. The people of Arizona vote Tuesday. Michigan, on Tuesday. Wyoming and Washington State, then Super Tuesday, beyond that. Fourteen states over the next 10 days or so.

Republican voters are clearly having a hard time.

I want to close with this question: Help the voters who still have questions about you. What is the biggest misconception about

you in the public debate right now?

Congressman Paul, we'll start with you, sir.

PAUL: I would say the perpetuation of the myth by the media that I can't win. [*applause*]

And the total ignoring some statistics that show it to be the opposite. Just recently, there was a poll in Iowa, and it matched all the four of us up against Obama. And guess what? I did the very best. [*applause*]

So I would say that is been the biggest myth. But let me tell you, though, public perception is one thing, but when you go around and talk to the American people and we have our rallies, that misconception isn't there. And I think that's the biggest misconception that I have to deal with.

KING: Mr. Speaker?

GINGRICH: I think that the fact is that the American public are really desperate to find somebody who can solve real problems. I think that's why it's been going up and down and why you have got all sorts of different folks as front-runners.

And all I can say is that my background of having actually worked with President Reagan, then having been Speaker, if there was one thing I wish the American people could know about me, it would be the amount of work it took to get to welfare reform, a balanced budget, a 4.2 percent unemployment rate, and that you've got to have somebody who can actually get it done in Washington, not just describe it on the campaign trail. [*applause*]

KING: Governor Romney?

ROMNEY: We've got to restore America's promise in this country where people know that with hard work and education, that they're going to be secure and prosperous and that their kids will have a brighter future than they've had. For that to happen, we're going to have to have dramatic fundamental change in Washington, D.C., we're going to have to create more jobs, have less debt, and shrink the size of the government.

I'm the only person in this race —

KING: Is there a misconception about you? The question is a misconception.

ROMNEY: You know, you get to ask the questions want, I get to give the answers I want. Fair enough? [*applause*]

And I believe that there's a whole question about, what do we need as the person that should be president? What is their position on this issue? Who can be the toughest going after Obama?

What we really need, in my opinion, is to say who can lead the country through the kind of fundamental change we have in front of us? And we have people here who all different backgrounds.

I spent 25 years in the private sector. I worked in business. I worked in helping turn around the Olympics. I worked in helping lead a state.

I believe that kind of background and skill is what is essential to restore the American promise. If people think there's something else in my background that that is more important, they don't want to vote for me, that's their right, but I believe I have the passion, the commitment and the skill to turn America around, and I believe that's what's needed. [*applause*]

KING: Senator Santorum?

SANTORUM: I think the thing I hear I have heard from the very beginning, can you defeat Barack Obama? And if you want to look at the people on the stage, we're going to be running against the president who is going to have the national media behind him, he's going to have more money, a lot more money, because he isn't having to spend a penny in the primary. So he's going to outspend whoever it is. He's going to have the national media on his side.

Maybe you want a candidate who is not going to be able to win an election by beating the tar out of his opponent, spending four or five to one in order to win an election in a state, but actually can run a campaign based on issues and ideas and a vision that's positive for America, to be able to be outspent and yet cut through because you have a strong vision, you have principles and convictions that is going to convince the American public that you're on their side in making a big difference in our country and keeping us safe and prosperous.

So we're looking for someone — I think people, they're looking for someone who can do a lot with a little — run a campaign on a shoestring and win a bunch of states and rise in the polls. You're looking for someone who can take what's going on in Washington and look at what went on in my campaign and see someone who can do a lot with a little.

That's what we need in Washington, not just after the election, but we're going to need to have that before the election, and I'm the best person, from a state which is a key swing state, from a region of the country which is going to decide this election, right across the Rust Belt of America. We've got the programs; we've got the plan, and we can win and defeat Barack Obama and govern this country conservatively. [*applause*]

KING: Gentlemen, I want to thank you. I want to thank all of our candidates tonight. We also want to thank our partner

tonight, the Republican Party of Arizona, and we'd like to thank our hosts here at the Mesa Arts Center, a beautiful venue here.

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